

Langemarck German Cemetery

recommended
reading: extract
from "storm of
steel" by ernst
junger

overview

Langemarck Cemetery is the only German one in the Ypres Salient and contains 44,292 burials. An oak panel just inside the entrance to the cemetery lists the names of the German missing.



Langemarck changed hands several times in the war. The Germans took the town in 1915 as part of the first campaign to use poison gas. They then installed a number of large "pillboxes" which were only taken by British troops in 1917. In 1918 it fell into German hands again during the "Spring Offensive" and was finally retaken by the Belgians on 28 September.

The first large headstone is a mass grave containing 25,000 soldiers. Flat stones mark burial plots: often up to eight soldiers share a (sometimes unknown) grave, buried in a "standing up" position below your feet.

Adolf Hitler, who served on the Western Front in World War One, paid an official visit after the fall of Belgium and France in 1940.

Q. Why are so many German soldiers are packed into each grave?

Q. What is the main difference between Langemarck and Tyne Cot?

Q. Why do you think they differ so much?

independent tasks

The photograph on this page is of mourning German soldiers at Langemarck in 1918. The soldier second from right was killed just two days later.



This photograph inspired the sculpture of the “four mourning soldiers” which is situated at the far end of the cemetery.

Q. What mood does the sculpture seek to evoke? How does it do so?

The sculpture was originally situated at the edge of the “mass grave”. It was moved to the “horizon” of the cemetery in the 1970s as part of general restoration work.

Q. Do you think that the sculpture is more effective in its current position? Explain your answer.

Q. Look at the dates of death on a sample of gravestones. In what periods does the fighting here appear to have been at its heaviest?
