Flanders Fields.
A place to remember.
VISITFLANDERS is the tourist board for the northern part of Belgium which includes the area around Ypres where some of the heaviest conflicts took place.

It's easily accessible from the UK with various accommodation choices from hostel to hotel accommodation, making it easy to stay in the area where history was made. You may wish to stay in one of the other Flanders cities such as Bruges and Ghent and combine a battlefields visit with other Great War exhibitions in the cities.

The Last Post
Since 1928, at 8pm, the notes of the Last Post have broken the silence across the cobbled streets of Ypres, the same streets that were destroyed during WW1. Played by volunteer buglers from the local fire brigade, the nightly service takes place at Menin Gate, one of the grandest memorials of the Great War. Both are a fitting tribute to the thousands of soldiers that set off from this point to the Ypres Salient, Western Front. During the Second World War the ceremony took place at Brookwood Military Cemetery in England. The 30,000th Last Post will take place on 9th July 2015 led by local fire brigades around the world. Access will not be available on this day but on other days it is possible for school groups to request The Last Post Association for the opportunity to lay a wreath or read a poem for instance. www.lastposte.be/en

Ypres – In Flanders Fields Museum
This recently refurbished museum has a special programme of WW1 exhibitions. It displays more than 2,000 original objects and documents and through interactive kiosks it transports you into the past where you can follow personal stories.

Brussels Expo 14–18
It's our History
This special exhibition at The Royal Army Museum in Brussels looks at the war and everyday life during the occupation and illustrates how the conflict impacted on the history of the 20th century and continues to do so today.

Curriculum Areas:
AQA GCSE History B: Origins of the First World War
Edexcel GCSE History A: War and the transformation of British society 1903-1928/ The part played by the British on the Western Front
Edexcel GCSE History B: The changing nature of warfare
OCR GCSE History A: Peace & War International Relations 1890-1941
OCR GCSE History B: Causes and events of the First World War 1890-1918
OCR level (unit F966): Changing nature of warfare
AQA AS: WW1 Literature
The themes section can assist and reinforce your classroom teaching by providing cultural and social experiences in locations outside the classroom.

There are many exhibitions taking place during the centenary with links to the themes.

28 JUNE
Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary is assassinated by a Bosnian Serb.

19 OCT-22 NOV
First Battle of Ypres.

APRIL
Fierce battles rage for the control of Hill 60.

BETWEEN 25 SEP 1915–18 NOV 1916
Three major battles in France – Loos, Verdun and the Somme.

1914
4 AUGUST
Germany invades Belgium. Britain declares war on Germany.

1915
30 OCTOBER
The sluices at Nieuwpoort are opened to flood the Yser plain and halt the German advance.

25 APRIL
ANZAC-Day, the Australian and New Zealand troops join the war.

1916
22 APR–25 MAY
Second Battle of Ypres
The Germans use chlorine gas for the first time in the war.
Women in WW1
The Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D.) was set up in 1909 by Lord Kitchener and allowed nurses to be part of the military set up for the first time. Other women took it upon themselves to support the war effort.

Edith Cavell was a British nurse executed by the Germans for protecting and assisting British soldiers through her work in a hospital in Brussels.

Nellie Spindler a staff nurse working with No 44 CCS at Brandhoek in 1917 as the 3rd Battle of Ypres got underway. On August 21st a shell landed and Nellie was fatally injured. She was buried the next day aged 26 at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, the only woman amongst over 10,000 men.

“The Angels of Pervyse” Mairi Chisholm, a Scottish nurse and ambulance driver with her friend Elsie Knocker won numerous medals for bravery and for saving the lives of thousands of soldiers on the Western Front. The two became the most photographed women of the war, achieving recognition for working on the front lines against official British regulations.

The Commonwealth & WW1
The contribution of Commonwealth countries is reflected in the cemeteries and memorials across Flanders Fields. They came from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, India and the Caribbean. Visit the Canadian Monument, the Brooding Soldier. This position, ‘Arms reversed’, is the traditional military greeting to fallen soldiers. Two thousand Canadian soldiers died here during a gas attack in April 1915.

New developments
- First use of chemical warfare with the use of chlorine and mustard gas
- Trench warfare led to the development of the concrete pill box
- Tank technology and mechanised warfare
- Combined cyclist infantry and machine guns mounted on motor cycle sidecars led to the origination of motor machine gun units in 1915
- World War 1 was a catalyst for the rapid development of blood banks and transfusion techniques.

Other subjects:
WW1 Literature, Changing Nature of Warfare

Key dates for 2015:
- 22 APRIL - First chlorine gas attack
- 25 APRIL - ANZAC day
- 9 JULY - 30,000th Last Post
- 11 DECEMBER - Opening of Talbot House

Download the full programme from the website

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How a flower became a symbol of remembrance

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian doctor, was tending to soldiers brought to the Essex Farm Dressing Station, near Ypres, which was also a British cemetery. As he looked at the grave of his friend and brother-in-arms Alexis Helmer, killed the day before, he saw beds of blood-red poppies growing among the graves and was inspired to write the first words of what was to become a famous poem, In Flanders Fields (see right).

McCrae worked on the poem for several months. 'In Flanders Fields' became the most popular poem of that time but McCrae would not live to see his success. It was rejected by the Spectator in London but was later published by Punch. John McCrae died of meningitis in January 1918 and is buried at the British war cemetery in Wimereux in France.

On November 9th 1918 Professor Moina Michael of the YMCA in New York read the poem and the last words "We shall not sleep though poppies grow in Flanders fields" moved her deeply and she pledged to wear a red poppy as a token of remembrance. She even penned her own poem in response:

Oh! You who sleep in Flanders Fields,
Sleep sweet – to rise anew!
We caught the torch you threw
And holding high, we keep the Faith
With All who died.

Moina began a crusade and the Flanders Fields Memorial Poppy was accepted as America's national symbol of remembrance at the convention of the war veterans association National American Legion. Anna Guerin of the French YMCA was at that conference decided to sell silk poppies to support French children orphaned by the war and she worked to get the poppy accepted as a remembrance symbol by the allied nations in the Great War. Great Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand recognised the symbol for those soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War and in future wars.

The poppy has many links to war. Poppies can be found in places where the soil is frequently disturbed, so there was an abundance of poppies across the battlefields of Flanders. In Dutch the poppy is called slaapbol (sleeping ball) as it is akin to the opium poppy, used for the production of morphine administered to the wounded soldiers. It's deep red colour symbolises the blood of the soldiers, a black heart like a shot wound. The remembrance poppy has different colours and shapes. In Canada and Scotland poppies also have four petals with a black centre and no leaf.

Le Bleuet

In France, the cornflower is the symbol of The Great War, a result of a campaign led by battlefield nurse Suzanne Lenhardt. Like the red poppy the cornflower Ile Bleuet in French was the only colour on the battlefield. The blue colour also referred to the light blue uniform French conscripts wore in 1915.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

"In Flanders Fields" the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn. Saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae, May 1915

Resources

Trade Brochure: See below

WW1 Special Edition Flanders Fields Post:
www.visitflanders.co.uk/discover/flanders-fields-/index.jsp

Website: www.flandersfields1418.com

Image Gallery: www.visitflanders.co.uk/trade/image-library/

For further information and to request a copy of the Trade Brochure contact:
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