

The witness cemeteries of the conflict worldwide

War memorial Laventie

This remarkable monument sculpted by Maxime Real Del Sarte and completed in 1933, tribute to the 133 Laventinois who died for France and also to the 52 civilian victims of the war. In 1916, almost 50% of the population was still living in the middle of the British troops and under the regular bombardments

The plaque of 61th DI

During the whole war position, the village of Laventie housed the British quarters. The units 61st division took here their quarters before to take part in the battle of Fromelles. Yvor GURNEY war poet, (his photo is on the cover page), was present in the sector. In 1935, the survivors of this division placed a commemorative plaque on the wall of the Town Hall.

Laventie Military Cemetery

This necropolis illustrates what the war was. The troops of the British Empire are buried there, also from India up to Australia, without forgetting a Chinese worker. We can also notice a long row of graves, bonded together, which contains the soldiers remains of the 61st division fallen in the battle of Fromelles.

Canadian and ANZAC Military Cemetery, Sailly sur La Lys

Sailly sur la Lys was more in withdrawal from the front than Fleurbaix. The necropolises which are localized there are the cemeteries of the back front, where we can notice the diversity of the Commonwealth troops. Canadians were engaged in the sector of the Pays de l'Alloeu from March 1915. The ANZAC troops mass landed from April 1916.

Pont du Hem Military Cemetery

The area of Pont du Hem was an important point of Portuguese military troop in 1917. At the back front of Neuve-Chapelle, on the road which linked up La Bassée to Estaires, artillery positions were installed. A very large British military cemetery is now located there where the grave of an American aviator (Kissel) is and an important square of German soldiers killed during the battle of the Lys.

Trench warfare

The Abbey of Boutillerie, Fleurbaix

The area of Boutillerie to Fleurbaix, was regularly mentioned in official reports which related the military operations during the war of position. Many sudden attacks were made at tis place, on each side of the front line. The remains of the Abbey, built in the 17th century, were gradually destroyed by the bombing. A few sections of wall stil remain witnesses of artillery fire.

Third phase: end of 1918

The military cemetery of Laventie

On 9 April 1918, the German troops managed to pierce the front line between Bois-Grenier and Givenchy. The British and the Portuguese repelled, le Pays de l'Alloeu was therefore conquered and occupied by the Germans. The front was stabilized at 15 km away, around the Nieppe forest. Laventie became a rest zone for the Germans who also implanted several temporarily military cemeteries, which were gathered after 1919 to form the big cemetery of Masselot street where 1978 soldiers rest in peace.

German military cemetery of Sailly

From September 1918, British troops took the Pays de l'Alloeu. A month later an English photographer took first series of shots of the German cemetery of Sailly where already more than 5 000 wooden crosses were installed. Today the number of German military cemeteries is relatively limited because they were created to gather the burials, except the Brithis politics who has chosen to maintain the majority of many war cemeteries of his army instead of not to move bodies.



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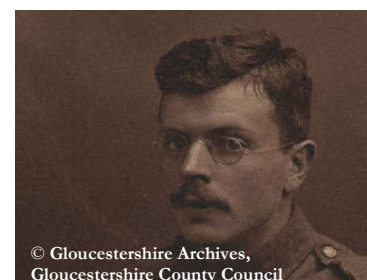
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The Pays de l'Alloeu in the war



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The military context

Between late October 1914 and the end of September 1918, the front line had stabilized between Armentières and La Bassée, the Allied troops occupying the area at the West of this line, namely the Pays de l'Alloeu, le Bas-Pays de Béthune, the Lys plain and the Germans occupying the territories at the East of this line, including a few sectors of Laventie and Fleurbaix close to the river des Laies, but particularly the territory of the Weppes, the Lille region and a part of the mining area.

Nevertheless, during the movements and the offensives from October 1914 to October 1918, the German army overtook twice this line, towards the West coast direction.

Thanks to the **“Race to the sea”**, series of military operations which aimed at outflank the opponent on his flank, the struggles went towards North, approached la Bassée, Lille, Armentières, the Weppes and the Lys. From 9 of October 1914, German troops took the Pays de l'Alloeu, advanced on the North Bank of the Lys, occupied Estaires, Douliou, La Gorgue, and moved towards to the gates of Lestrem and Merville. The line was moving, fluctuating depending of the daily furtive attacks. During this short invasion, war crimes were committed against civilians. A lot of historical reports and the memorials bear witness. From 15th of October 1914, the French-British troops counterattacked and repulsed the Germans on the borders of the Pays de l'Alloeu and on the ridge line of the Weppes where the last ones resisted. Then the long and terrible war of position began. British, Indian, Canadian, Australian, Portuguese, Allied troops settled in the Pays de l'Alloeu. On 9 April 1918, using of a new tactic (violent bombing, use of gas and the Sturmtruppen) on a portion of the weakened front between Givenchy and Armentières, the German army managed to break through the front, to invade the territory of the Pays de l'Alloeu, and to take Merville and Bailleul. From mid-August 1918, the British, taking advantage of the German weakening, went forward and gained the lost position. In the end of September the Pays of l'Alloeu was released.

First phase : October 1914

Cemeteries related to the « War of movement »

Laventie Communal cemetery

The necropolis has several military squares. One of them contains the graves of horsemen and French hunters as well as that of a German soldier, all killed during the struggles of the **“Race to the sea”**. The city accommodated, at this time, a military hospital in the premises of the hospice Saint Jean. In the weeks that followed, the British buried their victims in another square.

Sailly sur la Lys Communal cemetery

The struggles between Germans and French for the bridges control were heavy in October 1914. The grave of a French cavalryman bear witness the street fights. A mass grave contains the remains of unknown civilians shot by the Germans during the October invasion of 1914. Subsequently, a British military square took place in the cemetery.

Second phase : from the end of October 1914 to 9 April 1918

The front cemeteries

Fauquissart Military Cemetery

In the end of the **“Race to the sea”**, the front had stabilized at the limit of the Pays de l'Alloeu and the Weppes, along the river des Laies. The trenches quickly ploughed the plain between Aubers and Fauquissart. A military cemetery was erected in the hamlet of Laventie so as to receive the remains of the British killed in the first lines.

The cemeteries related to the proximity of the aid post, the ambulance or the hospital

Bacquerot street, Laventie

All along the front and just behind the first lines, the aid posts were created. The military cemetery of Bacquerot Street, whose one part is entirely devoted to Indian soldiers, results from the proximity of such aid post, near the battle field of Neuve-Chapelle.

Trou Aid Post, Fleurbaix

Behind the British front facing Fromelles, British set up a first aid post just behind the first line of fire, in a locality called le Trou (The Hole) in the commune of Fleurbaix. The bodies of fallen soldiers in the battles of Auber's ridge (on 9 May 1915) and Fromelles (on 19-20 July 1916) were buried there.



Trou Aid Post, Fleurbaix

Legend:

- German offensive on 8, 9 et 10 of October 1914
- Cemeteries
- Battles
- Stabilized front during the war of position
- German thrust in April 1918

