

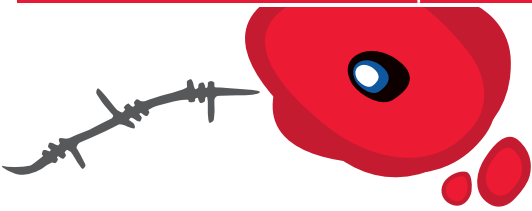
Elsbeth SCHRAGMULLER

°1887 †1940

Elsbeth (Elisabeth) Schragmüller would actively take part in WWI. When the war broke out she managed to obtain a laissez-passer and proceed to Brussels. German General Governor Colmar von der Goltz appointed her to Sektion VII of the Kommandatur of the Brussels Garrison . The section screened letters confiscated from Belgian soldiers for any useful information. From 1915 she managed the military intelligence service in Antwerp. By the end of the war Elsbeth 'Mademoiselle Docteur' or 'Fräulein Doktor' had the rank of Oberleutnant and an Iron Cross 1st Class.

Elsbeth Schragmüller, born in Schlüsselburg (Nordrhein-Westfalen), was one of the first women in Germany to graduate in political sciences from the University of Freiburg in 1913. Before WWI she lectured at the Berliner Lette Verein, a training institute for women. In the late twenties she and her family moved to Munich. In 1934 her brother Johann Konrad, member of the SA, was shot dead in the Röhm affair. Elsbeth then stopped her professional career for unknown reasons. She died in 1940.





Maurice TUYTENS



°1896 †-



↑

War volunteer Maurice Tuytens from Bevere (Oudenaarde) enlisted as a soldier in the 8th Line Regiment on 13 October 1914. After training in the Champagne he left for the Yser front in February 1915. From Wulpen they moved to the first line and from there to an outpost in the Ramskapelle sector (called 'Ramschrapnelle' by the soldiers), a 30 minutes march on a ramshackle wooden bridge over the water. On 22 April 1915 a shell hit their shelter. Of the six injured, two died. Of the other four victims Maurice was in the worst shape. He was taken to hospital l'Océan in De Panne, but his right leg later still had to be amputated.

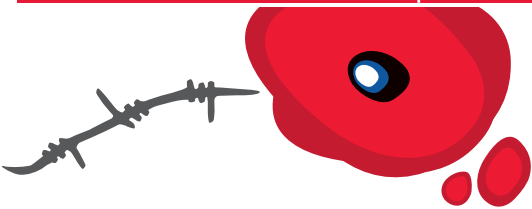
The front diary of East Flemish Maurice Octave Tuytens which he had kept since 21 February 1915 was brought to an abrupt end on 22 April 1915. Besides the minutiae of daily life it contains some personal reflections. Maurice hoped for example that the new khaki uniforms would be of better quality than the existing ones. He dutifully carried out his task on the front line: "When we are resting we are surprised to hear gun shots; you ask yourself why we keep shooting at each other; we became pacifists; but when we are in the trenches we find it natural to hear the guns; we then had a completely different nature that makes us belligerent."



↑



Frontzate: the old railroad Nieuwpoort-Diksmuide
Dodengangstraat, 8600 Diksmuide



Nellie SPINDLER



°1891 †1917



↑

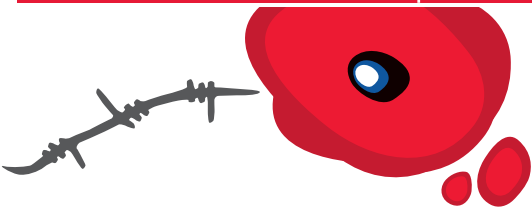
Nurse Nellie Spindler from Wakefield (UK) is the only woman to be buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Poperinge amongst 10,800 men. She was mortally wounded on 21 August 1917 by a grenade when the enemy fire aimed for the railway and the ammunition dump next to the field hospital (CCS 44) at the Brandhoek (Vlamertinge) got her. Nellie died half an hour later. Field hospital 44 was hastily evacuated and transferred to Lijssenthoek near Poperinge the same day. Nellie's body was transferred too. She was given a stately funeral the next day.

Because the British army needed qualified nurses, Nellie Spindler enlisted in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service and went to work in the field hospitals on the western front. Initially she was far away from the danger zone, but in the summer of 1917 she arrived at field hospital 44 at the Brandhoek, specialising in abdominal wounds. The hospital was nearer the front, because abdominal wounds had to be treated as quickly as possible due to infection risks. On 31 July 1917, the first day of the Third Battle of Ypres, the hospital was flooded with the injured. Nellie worked in difficult circumstances and the matron was full of praise for her.



Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Poperinge
Boescheepseweg, 8970 Poperinge Graf XVI. A. 3.

Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery ↑



Gerard DE MARTELAER

°1891 †1934



↑ Gerard De Martelaer, left

In 1998 the children of Gerard De Martelaer donated their fathers' arm prostheses to the In Flanders Fields Museum. Gerard died in his native village of Uitbergen (East Flanders) on 31 January 1934, barely 42 years old. During WWI he was severely wounded on the third day of the allied Final Offensive in Moorslede, when a grenade exploded directly next to him. His right arm was torn off and his abdomen ripped open. He survived however. After lengthy rehabilitation Gerard was given a first prosthesis: nothing more than a wooden stump with a hook. He was later given a real wooden artificial arm.

Both before and after his national service in 1911 Gerard De Martelaer helped his parents on the family farm. He was mobilised on 4 August 1914. After service in the trench artillery he was enlisted in the 9th and 11th Artillery Regiment. As an artillery soldier he was never in the first line. Although his unit's position often came under fire, Gerard was never wounded. At the start of the allied Final Offensive on 28 September 1918 the Belgians attacked east of Ypres. In the heat of the battle Gerard met a wounded villager on 30 September 1918, who he helped bring to an ambulance under constant fire. He was hit a few hours later?



Gerard, right ↑

 In Flanders Fields Museum
Grote Markt 34, 8900 Ieper

arm prostheses in the collection from the In Flanders Fields
Museum