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The Great War Seen From The Air: In Flanders Fields, 1914–1918



Synopsis

Aerial photography was a relatively new technology at the onset of World War I and was embraced as an indispensable tool of wartime intelligence by all nations involved in the conflict. As a result, thousands of photographs taken from the air over the battlefields of the Great War have survived in archives throughout Europe, Australia, and the United States. These pictures present the war from a unique perspective, clearly showing the developing trench system, artillery batteries, bunkers, railway lines, airfields, medical evacuation routes, and more. They reveal the expanding war in Flanders Fields as the hostilities spread, kilometer by kilometer, devastating the environment and resulting in the complete destruction of the landscape at the front. This illuminating volume, the results of a collaboration between the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, the Imperial War Museum, London, and the Royal Army Museum, Brussels, features hundreds of photographic case studies, illustrating in unprecedented detail the physical extent of World War I and the shocking environmental damage it left in its wake. Supplementing aerial images with maps, documents, and photos taken from the ground, this one-of-a-kind visual record stands as an important contribution to World War I history, revealing the wartime landscape of Flanders Fields as rarely seen before.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Splendid . . . chilling . . . Publishers are flooding the market with books describing various aspects of [the Great War]. But none of them can surpass this book’s visual

explanation.”
•Anthony Brandt (blog review) (Anthony Brandt Completely Out of My Mind)
"Stichelbaut and Chielens offer a meticulous work based on careful examination of WWI aerial

photographs taken in Flanders, in northern Belgium. This volume investigates how the war, in all of its tragic dimensions, destroyed, modified, and altered features of the terrestrial topography and landscape." P.D. Thomas, CHOICE (P.D. Thomas CHOICE 2014-07-01) "The photographs collected in [this] book give modern readers a new perspective on the war. . . . Even from a thousand feet in the air, it's a crushing thing to see." Nick Stockton, Wired (Nick Stockton Wired) "[An] unusual, pathbreaking book . . . unique . . . accessible . . . forcefully clarifies how massive an endeavor the Great War really was . . . [and] presents awful and inspiring visual confirmation of the written record of the war in the trenches." Cathal J. Nolan, Michigan War Studies Review (Cathal J. Nolan Michigan War Studies Review)

Birger Stichelbaut is a postdoctoral researcher based in the department of archaeology, Ghent University, Belgium. Piet Chielens is coordinator of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres.

This book is a stunning historical record of the brutality of the Great War. I've seen many photos of the war from ground level but to see field after field filled with craters really brought home the level of destruction. The photos are amazingly revealing, given the primitive equipment used in aerial photography. Each photo comes with commentary and often with transparent overlays to help the reader understand what the photos reveal. The authors and institutions that made this work possible must be commended.

This is an incredible book. The text is fascinating and the way the photographs are presented gives you a deep insight into the devastation caused by the Great War.

Great book to give a unique perspective on the War to end all Wars.

Truly remarkable and informative book exhaustively researched. It makes it clear that if GHQ did not know of the conditions in which they sent men to fight it was because they did not want to know. Not a surprise as Kiggell is supposed to have said.

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