While the above information provides a general description of the Yser Medal, it does not convey a sense of the excitement and importance surrounding the event it commemorates. The Yser Battle was not just another battle; it was a battle of significance for the history of Belgium and the First World War, and cannot be overestimated. In this fight, the battered remnants of the Belgian Field Army, under Albert, King of the Belgians, turned on their Germanic tormentors and made a heroic defensive stand, redeeming Belgian honor, protecting a small corner of Belgium, and assuring an ultimately victorious Belgium as a functioning ally of France and England.

Following the battle, or more properly, the "maneuver" of the Marne in September 1914, the Allied and German armies probed for the open flank of each other in a series of running battles known to history as the "Race to the Sea", September-November, 1914. The failure of either side to gain the desired flanking position, ultimately doomed all to the attrition of potential trench warfare until the spring of 1918. The First Battle of Ypres, of which the Yser Battle was a part, represented the last attempt by the Germans to turn the Allied flank and secure the quick and decisive victory demanded by their original War Plans. They hurled 15 fresh regular and reserve infantry divisions into the battle. It was inadequate; the Allied line held.

The Battle of Yser took place on the extreme left of the Allied Front. The Belgians held the lines from the North Sea Coast just north of Nieuport, along the banks of the Yser river, to Dixmude, Belgium, a town which was held by the French. The total distance was hardly 14 kilometers. The town of Nieuport is on the coast at the point where the Yser River flows into the North Sea tidal estuary. A railroad on a raised embankment, runs in a relatively straight south-eastern line from Nieuport to Dixmude. The Yser, canalized in its lower reaches, wanders rather erratically from Dixmude to Nieuport, an average of two to four kilometers north of the railroad embankment mentioned previously. Within the area of the battle are a number of small villages; unknown and unremembered today but worthy of note during that fortnight in 1914. Mannekensvere, Schoore, Schoonbakke, St. Georges, Caeskerke, Ramsappelle, Weslande, Dixmude and Nieuport; all were scenes of crushing artillery bombardments and savage fighting; fighting which very often devolved into an elemental struggle between individual men using bayonets and clubbed rifles as weapons.

During the first week of the battle, the Germans attacked the two ends of the Yser position, along the coast toward Nieuport and at Dixmude. The Belgians were forced back to their positions just outside Nieuport, but they retained control of the all-important gates and locks which controlled the flow of the Yser and the North Sea tides in the estuary. At Dixmude, a Brigade each of French Marines and French Colonial troops, successfully held off all German attacks throughout the two week period, a spectacularly brutal fortnight for both antagonists. Finally the Germans attacked and overwhelmed the center of the position along the meandering Yser. The Belgians were gradually forced back to the railway embankment. The Germans even formed a "bridgehead" over the embankment for a few hours but were thrown out in a classical bayonet counter-attack by a combined Belgian and French force. At this point, the Belgians reversed the gates at Nieuport, preventing the Yser from reaching the sea and, alternately, allowing the sea to enter the Yser basin during periods of high tide. The result was the inundation of almost the entire area bounded by the railway embankment and the Yser from Dixmude to Nieuport. Many Germans were drowned, but almost all were withdrawn to positions above the flooded area. They were forced to abandon much of their hard-won territory along the Yser. This portion of the Front would remain relatively quiet until the victorious allied advance in the Autumn of 1918. The Yser had seen its day of blood.
Editor's Note: A French table-medal for the Battle of Yser

While the French did not have enough troops committed for this engagement to afford the issue of a special medal, the Paris mint did strike a large bronze table-medal for the action. In my collection this serves as an association piece to medals of the World War I period.

The medal is approximately 2 3/4 inches in diameter having on the obverse two cameo busts of French Admiral Ronarch and General Foch, both within a spray of laurel leaves. The reverse scene depicts the female figure of France, Marianne, standing with arms folded on her breast and looking left to a group of French Marines firing from behind ramparts. At her feet is the Gallic rooster battling the German eagle and apparently getting the best of him. To her right is a group of soldiers presumably going to reinforce the ramparts, but one of them is struck in the head and the others stop to watch him. The legend on the top of the piece is, "Bataille de l’Yser - Octobre - MCMXIV ".

The Germans in their official reports referred to this phase of action as part of the Battle of Flanders, and it may be interesting to hear of other numismatic articles which were struck or issued for this period in history.

F.v.A.

GEORGE MEDAL WINNER MEETS THE GIRL HE SAVED

from the "London Times" 13 August 1971

Mr. Bill Scott, former bombardier, now aged 63, tried to sell the George Medal he won when he rescued a girl from a minefield nearly 30 years ago. And that led yesterday to an unexpected reunion between the two.

On Christmas Eve, 1941, two children took a short cut across a beach minefield at Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire. Gilbert, aged 11 was killed instantly. His sister, Norah, aged four, was blown into a deep hole. When she scrambled out she saw a soldier waving, and ran towards him, but was caught, screaming and wounded, in a tangle of barbed wire.

Mr. Scott recalled: "I saw the little girl running across the minefield and get caught in the barbed wire so I went and fetched her off."

Norah spent 10 months in hospital and the two lost touch. Then some 30 years later, Mr. Scott, a widower of Elizabeth Way, Felixstowe, Suffolk, tried to sell his George Medal to pay for a holiday. But a Mablethorpe hotelier, a former Gurkha officer, pleaded with him not to, and offered him a free holiday. When Mr. Scott arrived at Mablethorpe he was given a civic reception and the freedom of all the public houses and clubs in the town.

Yesterday he was taken on a Rolls-Royce "mystery tour" which finished 80 miles away at Pontefract — at the home of the child he rescued, now Mrs. Norah Hammond, mother of four children.

"I've often thought about Norah and wondered where she was", Mr. Scott said.
THE KNIGHTS OF ST. DENNIS
A LEGEND IN THEIR OWN TIME

THE SOVEREIGN GREEK ORDER OF THE KNIGHTS
OF ST. DENNIS OF ZANTE

(Jerusalem 1096-1291. Cyprus 1292-1310. Rhodes 1311-
1523. Zante 1524. United States 1953)

IS an international, interdenominational chivalric Order of
Knighthood Spiritual Seat: Zante, Greece. Administrative Headquar-
ters: New York City. Under the Direction of the Prince Grand Master,
His Most Eminent Highness, Brigadier General Pericles Count Voultos
(Vourtzis) descendant of one of the oldest families of Zante, Dukes
of Antioch.*

HAS its origin in ancient Greece, attested to in myth, legend,
and recorded history.

WHEN Mary Magdalene converted Zante to Christianity in 33 A.D.,
the Order was dedicated to her memory and named after her.

PARTICIPATED in early Crusades of the 7th-8th centuries and aided
Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium recover the True Cross.

TOOK PART in the liberation of the Holy Land under Grand Master
Favius Segur. Segur, a Norman, one of the 24 Knights who followed the
renowned Tancred in the first Crusade, was an ancestor of St. Dennis.

FOUGHT in the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571, in company with its
sister Order of the Knights of Malta. (Both Orders took part in the
Crusades as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.) After being expelled
by the Saracens from Jerusalem, Cyprus and Rhodes, the Catholic Knights
settled on the island granted them by the Emperor Charles V, assuming
the name of Knights of Malta. The Orthodox Knights returned to Zante
settling in the Commandery of Rhodes in Kalipado.**