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# THE SOMME

110th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE JOURNAL



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## THE SOMME

110th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE JOURNAL

### IN TRIBUTE & REMEMBRANCE

*"If ye break faith with us who die We shall not sleep,  
though poppies grow In Flanders fields"*

John McCrae

His wish for the sacrifice of so many to be remembered by their compatriots is completely understandable and strikes a chord with anyone who has lost someone in war. The worst fate of all is to be forgotten.

Almost One Hundred years later, Colonel McCrae would be moved to witness how strongly remembrance burns in a grateful nations collective conscience. The cemeteries are lovingly attended and visited in enormous numbers by the descendants of those that fell and by thousands of their countrymen who merely wish to pay their respects.

The shock waves of past conflicts still shimmer on the edge of our folk memory, the sacrifices have not been forgotten. Britain's casualty figures affect the country still.

Their Name Liveth Forever More.

Soldier poet Richard Aldington wrote:

*"You are the future of a far-flung past. You are the generation for whom we wept and died."*

The covenant has been kept. WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

# THE SOMME

## 110th Anniversary Commemorative Journal

THEIR NAME LIVETH  
FOR EVERMORE

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BUCKINGHAM PALACE

# MESSAGE FROM HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III



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On this solemn anniversary, one hundred and ten years since the Battle of the Somme, we pause to remember the countless men who fought, suffered, and fell upon those fields of northern France.

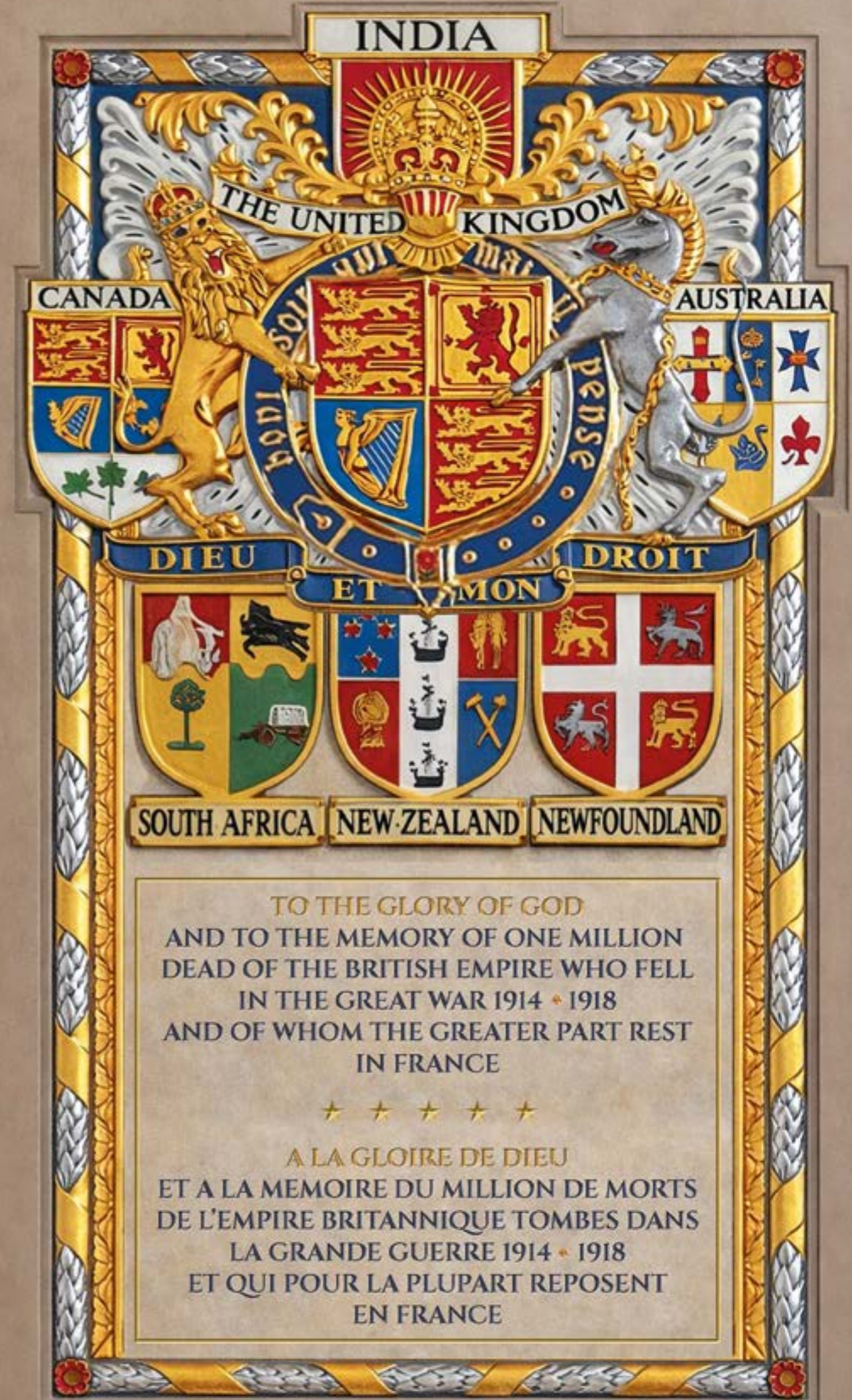
The Somme endures as one of the most profound and tragic chapters in our nation's story, a place where courage and sacrifice stood against unimaginable hardship.

We honour the service of all those who took part, soldiers from across the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and our allies, who fought not for glory, but for duty, comradeship, and the hope of a better world. Many never returned home, and yet their legacy endures in the freedoms we hold dear and the peace we continue to cherish.

As we reflect upon their sacrifice, we also pay tribute to the families who bore their loss, and to the generations who have kept their memory alive. It is our solemn duty to ensure that their names and their deeds are never forgotten.

May we continue to draw inspiration from their courage, unity, and resolve, and may their spirit guide us always in the pursuit of peace, understanding, and compassion among nations.

CHARLES R.  
2026





Dedicated to the memory of

# Private Walter James Talbott

## THE SOMME 110

from The Editor, Tony Talbott Royal Corps of Signals (ret'd)

One hundred and ten years have passed since the guns first opened along the rolling chalk uplands of the Somme, yet the echoes of that summer still resonate with undiminished force. Time has softened the landscape, restored the fields to cultivation, and returned birdsong to woods once shattered by shellfire. But memory does not fade so easily. The Battle of the Somme endures not merely as a defining episode of the First World War, but as a defining moment in the shared history of nations, communities, and families across the world. This journal is offered in remembrance of that moment, and of those who lived and died within it.



The Somme Campaign, fought between July and November 1916, was conceived as a great offensive to break the deadlock of trench warfare. Instead, it became one of the costliest battles in human history. On its first day alone, the British Army suffered nearly 60,000 casualties, of whom more than 19,000 were killed. By the time the fighting ended, losses on all sides ran into the hundreds of thousands.

These figures are often quoted, yet numbers alone cannot convey the full human cost of the Somme. Behind every statistic lies an individual life: a son, a father, a brother, a friend; a story interrupted, a future never fulfilled.

This journal marks the 110th anniversary of that campaign not to rehearse familiar narratives of tragedy, nor to dwell solely on loss, but to remember with clarity, dignity, and purpose. It seeks to honour those who served, volunteers and conscripts alike, who endured conditions almost unimaginable to modern sensibilities, and who carried out their duty with resilience, courage, and often extraordinary self-

sacrifice. It also seeks to reflect on what the Somme came to mean: to those who fought there, to the societies that sent them, and to the generations who have inherited its legacy.

The Somme was not fought by one nation alone. It was a truly imperial and international endeavour, drawing men from across the British Isles and far beyond them.

Soldiers from The United Kingdom and Ireland stood shoulder to shoulder with comrades from South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Newfoundland, India, the Caribbean and Africa.

The French Army, already grievously tested at Verdun, fought with determination and skill on the southern flank. The German Army, entrenched and resolute, suffered grievously as the months wore on. The Somme was a meeting place of peoples and cultures, united by circumstance, divided by allegiance, yet bound together by shared endurance and suffering.

For The United Kingdom and Ireland, the Somme left scars that reached deep into civilian life. The losses fell heavily on towns and villages where men had enlisted together, served together, and in many cases died together.

The so-called "Pals" battalions, raised from workplaces, sports clubs and neighbourhoods, embodied the enthusiasm and optimism of 1914. On the Somme, that optimism was brutally tested. Entire streets mourned; entire communities were changed forever. In Ireland, the Somme occupies a complex and sometimes contested place in historical memory, particularly in relation to the 36th (Ulster) Division. Yet the courage shown there, like courage shown elsewhere on the Somme, transcends politics and speaks to shared human values.

The experience of the Somme was not uniform. Some units advanced only a few hundred yards at terrible cost; others achieved limited but significant gains. Some soldiers endured the terror of going "over the top" into machine-gun fire; others fought

Service No: 306274 | Territorial Army No: 4228 • 1st/8th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment  
Killed in action, 1st July 1916, The Somme. Aged 21

### Great Uncle of The Editor Tony Talbott

Walter James Talbott was born on 3rd March 1895 in the Somerset market town of Wincanton, the sixth of thirteen children to James Francis and Bessie Talbott of Mill Street.

Life in rural England at the turn of the century was hard but close-knit; Walter's father worked as a gardener; his mother cared for a large and lively household.

Like so many young men of his generation, Walter left school early to work, first on the land, then as a coal miner in the Welsh valleys, and later as a steelworker in Birmingham. It was there, on 2nd October 1915, that he enlisted at Aston Barracks, answering Lord Kitchener's famous call, "Your Country Needs You!".

He joined the 1st/8th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment with the Territorial Army number 4228, later receiving the Army Service Number 306274 before shipping to France in March 1916.

At this time, Britain's armies were swelling with volunteers - "Kitchener's Men" - civilians who became soldiers in a matter of months. Walter's battalion, like so many others, would soon be part of one of the largest offensives in history: the Battle of the Somme.

On 1st July 1916, as dawn broke over northern France, the 1st/8th Battalion advanced across no man's land in the opening attack. Their objective: the German strong-points around the Quadrilateral Redoubt and Munich Trench. For a moment, it seemed possible - they pushed 1,500 metres into enemy lines.

But machine guns in the village of Serre and fierce hand-to-hand fighting took a terrible toll. By nightfall, 573 of the 600 men who had advanced were dead, wounded, or

missing. Among them was Private Walter James Talbott, aged just 21. His body was never recovered.

The Battle of the Somme would last 141 days and claim over a million casualties. Yet for families like the Talbott's, the war's impact was deeply personal - the empty chair at the table, the son who never came home, the brother whose laugh was never heard again.

Walter is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing - Pier and Face 9A 9B and 10B. 72,150 men with no known grave are remembered here. His story, like theirs, speaks to both the courage and the cost of that long summer of 1916.

More than a century later, we honour him not only as a soldier, but as a son, a brother, and a young man whose life was given in the service of others. His memory, and the memory of all who fell, endures in the quiet gratitude of generations who followed.



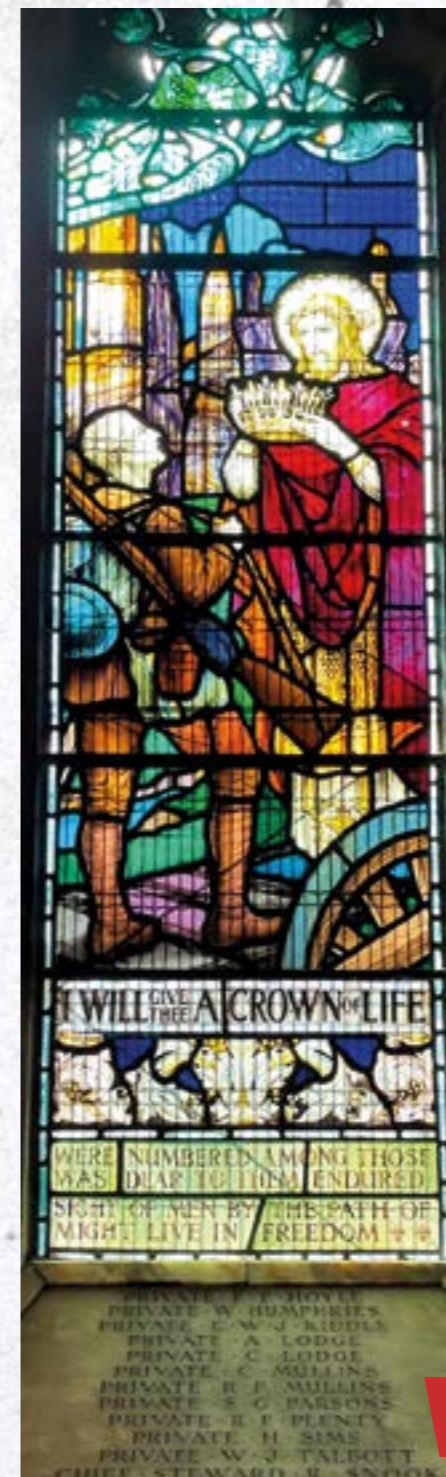
This tribute to Private Walter James Talbott is placed by the Talbott family in proud remembrance.

His story, like those of all who fell, remains part of the heritage we honour and preserve.

Walter's Medals



Walter's name is featured on the Great War Memorial at St Peter & St Paul's Church, Wincanton. Image Rachel Feltham.



bitter close-quarter battles in shattered woods and ruined villages such as Delville Wood, Guillemont, Flers and Thiepval.

The introduction of the tank, tentative and unreliable though it was, signalled the first stirrings of a new form of warfare. Artillery tactics evolved, communications improved, and lessons, often paid for dearly, were learned. By November 1916, the British Army that emerged from the Somme was very different from the one that had entered it in July.

Yet any discussion of tactics, innovation, or command must always return to the human dimension. The Somme was fought by ordinary men placed in extraordinary circumstances. They endured weeks and months of mud, filth, exhaustion and fear. They lived among rats and lice, endured constant shelling, and faced the ever-present threat of death or mutilation. Many carried physical wounds for the rest of their lives; many more bore psychological scars at a time when there was little understanding of what we now recognise as combat trauma. The courage required simply to endure, to remain in the line, to obey orders, to support comrades, was immense.

This journal also remembers those whose service did not end when the guns fell silent. For many veterans, the war continued long after their return home. Injuries, both visible and invisible, shaped lives and families for decades.

Widows and parents grieved sons and husbands who never came back. Children grew up with an absence at the hearth that could never be filled. The Somme's legacy extended far beyond the battlefield, influencing politics, society and culture throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

Commemoration, therefore, is not an exercise in nostalgia, nor an attempt to impose meaning where suffering defies explanation. It is an act of respect and responsibility.

To remember the Somme is to acknowledge the cost of war in human terms, and to honour those who bore that cost. It is also to recognise the duty of the present to engage honestly with the past: to tell its stories fully, to confront its complexities, and to preserve its lessons.

The pages that follow bring together a range of perspectives on the Somme Campaign. They explore the experiences of particular regiments and units, the contributions of nations from across the world, and the stories of individuals whose actions exemplified courage, leadership and compassion.

They examine memorials and places of remembrance, where names carved in stone stand as silent witnesses to lives cut short. Throughout, the emphasis is on remembrance rather than glorification, on understanding rather than judgement.



*“The Somme is like the Holocaust. It revealed things about mankind that we cannot come to terms with and cannot forget. It can never become the past”*

**Dame Patricia Barker DBE FRSL FBA**  
Booker Prize Winner

In marking the 110th anniversary, we are conscious that living memory of the First World War has long since passed. No veteran remains to tell his story first-hand. Responsibility now rests with historians, educators, families and communities to ensure that the voices of 1916 are not lost to time. This journal forms part of that responsibility. It is intended not only for those with a long-standing interest in the Great War, but also for new generations encountering the Somme for the first time.

We hope it encourages readers to pause and reflect: to consider the realities faced by those who served; to think about the societies that shaped them and were reshaped by their loss; and to recognise the enduring relevance of remembrance in a world that continues to experience conflict and division.

The Somme reminds us of both the fragility and the resilience of the human spirit. It challenges us to remember not only how wars are fought, but why peace matters.

As Editor, I am deeply conscious of the privilege and responsibility involved in presenting this journal.

No publication can fully encompass the scale of the Somme or the depth of sacrifice it entailed.

But through careful research, thoughtful reflection and respectful tone, we hope to do justice, however imperfectly, to those whose lives are commemorated here.

Above all, this journal is dedicated to the men who went to the Somme and did not return, and to those who returned forever changed. It is dedicated to their families, then and now, and to the countless communities across the world for whom the Somme remains a place of mourning and memory.

May we remember them not as abstractions of history, but as individuals who lived, hoped, feared and endured.

In welcoming you to the Somme 110th Anniversary Journal, I invite you to read these pages in the spirit in which they were written with respect for the past, compassion for those who lived through it, and a renewed commitment to remembrance.

Our thanks are also extended to our contributors, advertisers, and supporters.

*The fields of the Somme may be quiet now, but they speak still – if we are willing to listen.*

Regional Flag of the Somme in Hauts-de-France, France's northern most administrative region.

# THE SOMME

*Measured in numbers, remembered in lives*

## British Casualties at the Somme by Nation, 1916

*Estimated distribution based on recruitment patterns and unit composition*

### The first day of the Somme

The bloodiest day in the British Army

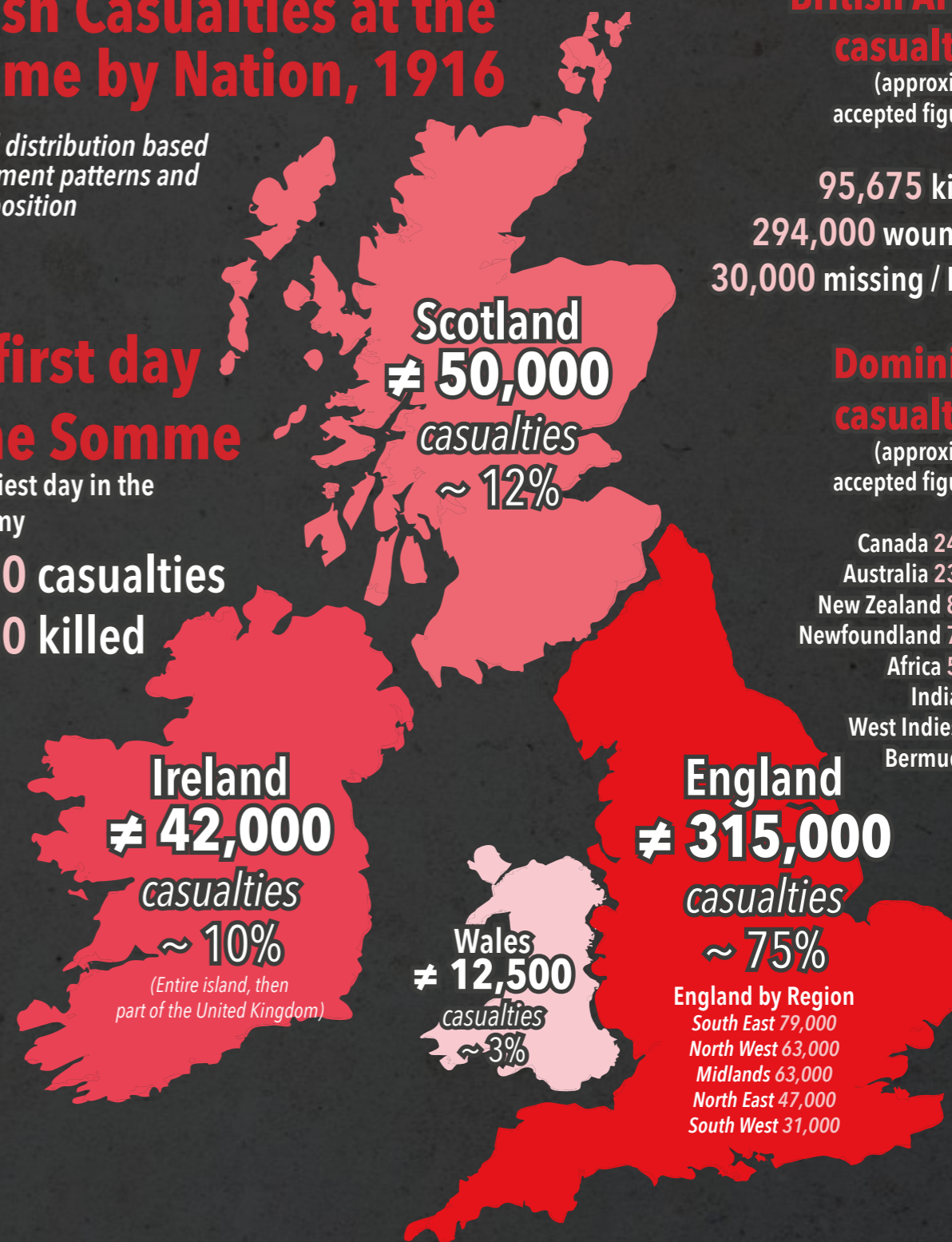
57,470 casualties  
19,240 killed

**British Army casualties**  
(approximate accepted figures):

95,675 killed  
294,000 wounded  
30,000 missing / PoW

**Dominion casualties**  
(approximate accepted figures):

Canada 24,000  
Australia 23,000  
New Zealand 8,000  
Newfoundland 7,000  
Africa 5,000  
India 200  
West Indies 185  
Bermuda 40



#### Note on figures

No official regional casualty records were kept in 1916. These figures represent historically accepted estimates derived from recruitment patterns, unit composition, and population data.



MESSAGE FROM

**AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR R KNIGHTON** KCB ADC FREng  
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF



As we pause to reflect upon one of the most defining and devastating battles in British military history, the Somme stands as a solemn testament to courage, sacrifice, and endurance, a reminder of the immense cost of freedom and the extraordinary resilience of those who served during the First World War.

The Somme was a campaign that tested the limits of human endurance, yet through unimaginable hardship, the spirit of those who fought remained unbroken. Their courage and determination continue to inspire all who wear the uniform today.

The fledgling Royal Flying Corps, from which today's Royal Air Force would later emerge, played a vital role in reconnaissance, artillery spotting, and air combat, helping to pave the way for combined operations that are now fundamental to modern military strategy.

As we reflect on that distant battlefield, we also recognise that the world remains uncertain and fraught with danger. The challenges of our time, from global instability and terrorism to the resurgence of state-based threats and new domains of warfare such as cyber and space, demand the same courage, innovation, and unity of purpose that our forebears displayed on the Somme. The character of conflict may have changed, but the values that underpin our Armed Forces - duty, service, and sacrifice - remain as vital today as they were in 1916.

The men of the Somme fought in defence of a world they hoped would be safer and more just. It is our responsibility to honour their legacy not only through remembrance but through our continued commitment to peace, stability, and the defence of democratic ideals.

As Chief of the Defence Staff, I am deeply conscious of that legacy. The freedoms we cherish were purchased at great cost, and it falls to us to protect them. On this anniversary, we remember the courage of all who served and fell on the Somme and we reaffirm our resolve to stand guard over the peace for which they gave their lives.

2026

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# MISSING OF THE SOMME

Displayed at the Thiepval Visitor Centre

adjacent to the Thiepval Memorial





THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF CANTERBURY

MESSAGE FROM

THE MOST REVD AND RT HON DAME SARAH MULLALLY DBE  
106TH ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY



As we mark the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we remember all those who gave their lives, those who carried the wounds of that devastating conflict, and all whose families and communities were forever changed by the suffering in the fields of northern France.

The Somme remains one of the deepest scars in our shared human history, as men and women from all nations, backgrounds, languages and traditions - all made in the image of God - made sacrifices that many of us would find unimaginable. They fought for a future that many of them would not see, and it is incumbent upon us to protect those hard-won freedoms that we enjoy today, to ensure that their courageous sacrifice was not in vain.

The Christian faith teaches that the light is not overcome by the darkness. As we look back on this solemn anniversary, we must recommit ourselves to the hard work of pursuing peace, unity and reconciliation. In an age still marked by conflict and division, the memory of the Somme compels us to do all we can to work for peace and seek the common good, resisting everything that diminishes God's creation.

May God bring comfort to all those who grieve, healing to the nations and peace to the world.

2026

The VC for a heroic Chaplain :  
King George V decorating the Rev T B  
Hardy, 24 August 1918.



# A Reluctant Hero

*The Reverend Theodore Bayley Hardy VC DSO MC*

Reverend Theodore Bayley Hardy was not the sort of man many imagined as a hero. A former schoolmaster and parish priest, he was quiet, unassuming, short-sighted, teetotal, vegetarian, and already 51 years old when war broke out in 1914. One former pupil later described him as "the last person you would expect to win a VC." Yet Hardy would become one of the most highly decorated non-combatants of the Great War.

At the outbreak of war, Hardy was serving as vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale in Cumbria. His wife had died shortly before the conflict began, and despite his age he applied to join the Army Chaplains' Department. He was rejected several times, but as the war consumed younger chaplains and the need grew, he was finally accepted. He arrived in France in the autumn of 1916.

Hardy was first posted to a transit camp on the Channel coast, but he longed to serve nearer the men in the line. In December 1916 he joined the 8th Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, at Vielle Chapelle. On his way to the front he met another famous chaplain, the Revd Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, known to the troops as "Woodbine Willie". Kennedy advised him to live with the men, share their risks, laugh with them, pray for them always, and carry "a great deal of love" in his heart. Hardy took those words deeply to heart.

He lived among the soldiers in the forward trenches, often under shellfire and sniper fire. He handed out sweets and cigarettes, wrote letters for the men, comforted the dying and helped stretcher-bearers bring in the wounded. By day he carried out his duties as chaplain; by night he visited the

trenches, often going without sleep. During the Battle of Arras in April 1917, senior chaplains found him working for 36 or even 48 hours at a time and had to order him to rest. At Passchendaele in July 1917, the Lincolns suffered heavy casualties. Hardy spent night after night helping rescue wounded men from the mud. After several days he was reported missing and was eventually found asleep in a waterlogged shell hole, having collapsed from exhaustion. In October 1917 he received the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry and devotion to duty after rescuing wounded men from no-man's land despite suffering a broken wrist. In December he was awarded the Military Cross for again going out under heavy fire to help stretcher-bearers during an attack.

In April 1918, during fighting on the Second Battle of the Somme, Hardy's courage reached its highest point. On 5, 25 and 27 April, he repeatedly went forward under enemy fire to help the wounded. On one occasion he persuaded a sergeant to accompany him to rescue a man lying within ten yards of an enemy pillbox. For these actions he was awarded the Victoria Cross. When told he had been nominated, Hardy simply replied: "I really must protest." King George V offered Hardy the chance to return home as his chaplain, and the Bishop of Carlisle offered him a parish in Cumbria. Hardy refused both. His place, he believed, was with his men.

On 10 October 1918, while the Lincolns were crossing the River Selle at night, Hardy was hit by machine-gun fire. Those who reached him remembered his gentle words: "I've been hit. I'm sorry to be a nuisance." He died on 18 October, three days before his 55th birthday and less than a month before the Armistice.

Theodore Hardy is buried at St Sever Cemetery, near Rouen. His medals are held by the Museum of Army Chaplaincy.

To the men who served beside him, he was more than a chaplain. Private Jimmy Watson recalled: "He was always with us. He was always in the front line." His Commanding Officer, Colonel Sheringham, said he would never forget the men's faces when they heard that "the Padre was dead." Hardy's life stands as a powerful symbol of the courage and sacrifice of army chaplains in the Great War. He simply felt his place was beside the men, especially when they were frightened, wounded or dying making his courage feel even more profound.

Men who carried no weapon, yet walked willingly into danger to bring comfort, faith and humanity to the battlefield.





# THE SOMME

## A Chronology of 141 days

1st July - 18th November 1916



From the optimism of Zero Hour to the frozen mud of the Ancre in November, the Battle of the Somme unfolded across 141 relentless days. What began as a breakthrough offensive became a grinding contest of endurance, marked by shattered woods, ruined villages, and the first appearance of tanks on the battlefield. Yard by yard, ridge by ridge, the line moved forward at immense cost. This chronology traces not only the sequence of operations, but the slow transformation of hope into hard-won experience – and reminds us that behind every date lies sacrifice measured in lives, not miles.

# 110 YEARS OF HEROES



The Great War Cemetery



Bayeux War Cemetery

## First World War Fatalities 704,803

Britain during World War I fought the largest and most costly war in its long history. Unlike the French and German Armies, its units were made up exclusively of volunteers - as opposed to conscripts - at the beginning of the conflict. Furthermore, the British Army was considerably smaller than its French and German counterparts.

- 6** Weeks the average junior officer would spend in the trenches before killed or wounded.
- 20 000** Died on the 1st July 1916, the first day of the battle of the Somme - Britain's bloodiest day.
- 53** British villages suffered no deaths in the war. One, ironically called Upper Slaughter in Glos, had no fatalities in the Second World War either.
- 16 000** Men registered as conscientious objectors when conscription was introduced in 1917. Half failed and were drafted.
- 1.6M** Women performed essential war works as munitions workers and other occupations. As a 'reward' Parliament granted women the vote after the war.
- 306** British soldiers were executed for desertion, cowardice and other offences. They were given a posthumous blanket pardon in 2006.
- 16M** People died in the war, a million from the British Empire.
- 40M** Killed by Spanish flu pandemic that swept the globe in 1918 - it is thought to have originated from the trenches.

## Second World War Fatalities 383,800

The British Army during the Second World War was, in 1939, a volunteer army, that introduced limited conscription in early 1939, and full conscription shortly after the declaration of war with Germany. With mass conscription, the expansion of the army was reflected in the formation of larger armies and army groups. From 1943, the larger and better equipped British Army hardly suffered a strategic defeat.

- 34M** Approximate number of civilians killed.
- 61 715** British troops landed at Normandy on D-Day, approximately 2,700 died.
- 3M** Children were evacuated from British cities to avoid German bombings.
- 5300** Tonnes of high explosives dropped on London during The Blitz.
- 2739** Aircraft were shot down during the Battle of Britain from both sides.
- 80 000** Taken prisoner during the fall of Singapore - Britain's greatest defeat.
- 182** Victoria Crosses were awarded to recipients for their brave actions.
- 3.5M** Men had served in the British Army during the Second World War.



# ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT

## BATTLE HONOURS

- KURDISTAN 1922 - 1924
- IRAQ 1923 - 1925
- TRANSJORDAN 1924
- KURDISTAN 1930 - 1931
- PALESTINE 1936 - 1939
- HOME DEFENCE 1940 - 1945
- EGYPT & LIBYA 1940 - 1943
- HABBANIYA
- SYRIA 1941
- IRAQ 1941
- EL ALAMEIN
- NORTH AFRICA 1942 - 1943

- ARAKAN 1942 - 1944
- SOUTH-EAST EUROPE 1944 - 1945
- GUSTAV LINE
- GOthic LINE
- SICILY 1943
- ITALY 1943 - 1945
- NORMANDY 1944
- MANIPUR 1944
- BURMA 1944 - 1945
- FRANCE & GERMANY 1944 - 1945
- SOUTH ATLANTIC 1982
- GULF 1991
- AFGHANSTAN 2001 - 2014

## THE ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT



FORMED BY ROYAL WARRANT OF  
HM KING GEORGE VI AS A CORPS  
WITHIN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE  
1st FEBRUARY 1942

THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED  
TO ALL WHO SERVED IN THE  
ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT  
AND TO THOSE  
WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE  
FOR THEIR SOVEREIGN AND COUNTRY

1st APRIL 2011

*Commemorating those of the British, Commonwealth and Allied Forces  
Who fought with distinction in the Great War and for those who  
paid the ultimate sacrifice*

Sponsored by the Centurion Fund of the RAF Regiment and the Executive Council of the Corps Memorial Garden.

# 110 YEARS OF HEROES

Since World War II, 3,473 UK troops have died in operations around the world - from colonial unrest to allied invasions and territorial disputes. Below are some of the details of these military campaigns.



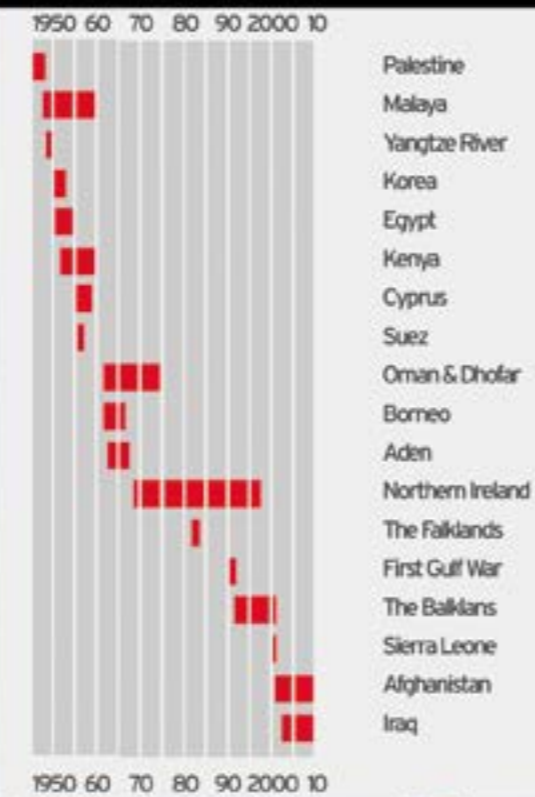
**Palestine 1922-48**  
Fatalities 233

British forces incurred casualties throughout Britain's involvement in Palestine which stretched from its mandate granted in 1922 by the League of Nations through to the declaration of Israel's independence in 1948. This period was punctuated by unrest and violence, sometimes directed at British forces. The bloodiest period was the run up to Israel's independence when Zionist underground forces targeted British presence.

**Malaya 1948-60**  
Fatalities 340

Lasting from 1948 until 1960, the Malayan emergency was a period of unrest following the creation of the Federation of Malaya after World War II. British forces were used to suppress the uprising led by rebels of the largely Chinese Communist Party of Malaya. Its policy of relocating rural Chinese into "new villages" proved especially unpopular. Later, after addressing political grievances, the uprising petered out.

## British military campaign timeline



**Yangtze River 1949**  
Fatalities 46

On 20 April 1949, HMS Amethyst was steaming up the Yangtze River during the Chinese civil war when it came under attack from the People's Liberation Army. The PLA was advancing on Shanghai at the time. The frigate grounded but in such a way that it couldn't bring its guns to bear on its attackers. The vessel took dozens of direct hits and its crew was forced to evacuate many of its wounded. Months later the ship managed to slip past Chinese guns and make it back out to the open sea.



**Korean War 1950-53**  
Fatalities 765

Britain responded to the United Nations' call to send military assistance to the Republic of Korea following an invasion across the 38th parallel by the North Korean Peoples' Army. After initial battlefield successes, the North Koreans were beaten back by a multi-national force to the area of the 38th parallel despite assistance from China. Some 100,000 British men and women served in the region during the conflict.



**Canal Zone 1951-53**  
Fatalities 54

Britain's post-war presence in Egypt was increasingly unpopular. Anti-British demonstrations were followed by guerrilla warfare against Britain's garrison in the canal zone. British reprisals led to the bombing of Cairo in 1952. The unrest lasted three years. British troops left in 1955.



**Kenya 1952-60**  
Fatalities 12

In 1950, the Mau Mau, an African nationalist movement, was banned by British authorities. Two years later, following growing unrest and a campaign of sabotage and assassination, the British Kenya government declared a state of emergency and began four years of military operations against the rebels. Thousands of rebels were killed but ultimately the uprising led to Kenya's independence.



**Aden 1963-67**  
Fatalities 68

The same for the insurgency against British rule that was mounted by two rival nationalist groups vying for control of the country following Britain's promised departure. British forces withdrew abruptly at the end of the conflict, paving the way for the creation of Southern Yemen, now merged with the north to form modern-day Yemen.



**N Ireland 1969-98**  
Fatalities 763

Tensions between the Catholic and Protestant communities spilled over into violence, prompting the government to order troops onto the streets of Northern Ireland in 1969. Direct rule was imposed in 1972 as the violence escalated. Paramilitary groups became increasingly deadly and the violence spread to mainland Britain. More than 3,600 people, most of them civilians, died.



**Falkland Islands 1982**  
Fatalities 255

After months of sabre-rattling, Argentina's military rulers ordered troops to invade on 2 April 1982. Britain dispatched a military force to eject them. The Argentine garrison commander in Port Stanley surrendered on 14 June. The fighting cost the lives of 655 Argentine and 255 British servicemen. Diplomatic relations were restored in 1990, but Argentina maintains its claim to the islands it calls Las Malvinas.



**First Gulf War 1990-91**  
Fatalities 47

Iraq invaded the oil-rich state of Kuwait, prompting what became known as the first Gulf War. US-led coalition forces were sent to the region and in January 1991 launched Operation Desert Storm - a sustained aerial bombardment involving cruise missiles launched from US warships and US, British and Saudi Arabian fighter planes, bombers and helicopters. Four days after the Allied and offensive began on 24 February, US President George Bush declared victory. Kuwait was liberated but Saddam Hussein remained in power.

## OPERATIONS SINCE 1945. FATALITIES: 3802



**Cyprus 1955-59**  
Fatalities 371

Having withdrawn from Egypt, Cyprus became Britain's new location for its Middle East HQ. A campaign to gain independence for Cyprus and unite the island with Greece was launched against the British presence which had begun in 1925 in the aftermath of World War I.



**Suez crisis 1956**  
Fatalities 22

Having colluded with Israel to attack Egypt to provide an excuse for intervening, Britain, allied with France, mounted a military campaign to seize control of the Suez canal after Egypt's ruler, President Nasser, nationalised the key waterway. The combined forces soon defeated the Egyptians but the venture sparked a major international crisis and Britain, France and Israel were all forced to remove their troops.



**Oman 1962-75**  
Fatalities 24

Opposition to the oppressive rule by the Sultan of Oman led to the emergence of a rebellion in the Dhofar region. British forces trained and advised the Sultan's military in combating the uprising which received help from China and the Soviet Union. The rebellion was finally crushed in 1975 through a combination of Jordanian and Iranian troops. British equipment and personnel with financial backing from Saudi Arabia and UAE.



**Borneo 1962-66**  
Fatalities 126

British forces were involved in what amounted to an undeclared war between Indonesia and Malaysia, the latter backed by the British government. Indonesian nationalists, keen to see the unification of the island's territories, backed rebels who launched raids along the border between Indonesia and Malay-controlled Borneo.



**The Balkans 1992-2001**  
Fatalities 48

British forces were deployed to the former Yugoslavia as part of the United Nations peace force. Its bitter civil war engulfed much of Bosnia. British troops were caught in the crossfire keeping the sides apart. Later, as the war spread to Kosovo, British forces suffered casualties both during and after Nato's air campaign which forced Serb troops out of the Albanian majority province.



**Sierra Leone 2000**  
Fatalities 1

British troops launched a rescue mission in September 2000 after renegade militia group the West Side Boys threatened to kill six British soldiers being held hostage in a remote jungle stronghold. Some 12 soldiers were injured in the mission and one was killed. About 1,000 British troops had initially been sent to Sierra Leone to help with the evacuation of foreign nationals, but they went on to provide logistical support to the beleaguered UN operation, and training for government forces.



**Afghanistan 2001-14**  
Fatalities 448

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the US, the UK joined US-led forces in the so-called "War on Terror" - with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan as the principal target. The Royal Navy and RAF launched missile strikes against the Taliban and al-Qaeda bases in October. Royal Marine commandos were sent in a month later. Since the fall of the Taliban, the UK has played a major role as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to establish and maintain security and train Afghan forces.



**Iraq 2003-09**  
Fatalities 179

US and British forces launched their "shock and awe" bombardment of Baghdad in March 2003 as coalition ground forces moved in to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. Iraqi forces resisted until 9 April. Saddam fled but was later captured, tried and hanged. After the war, British troops were mainly based in the southern city of Basra to maintain security and help train the new Iraqi forces. The UK's combat role in Iraq was declared complete in April 2009 and combat troops withdrew.



In the summer of 1916, the gently rolling farmland of Picardy would become synonymous with industrialised warfare on an unprecedented scale. The Battle of the Somme did not emerge suddenly from the fog of war on 1 July; it was the product of eighteen months of strategic frustration, coalition politics, hard-learned lessons, and an ever-deepening commitment to a war that neither side could yet bring to a conclusion. To understand the Somme, one must first trace the road that led inexorably to it.

#### Stalemate on the Western Front

By the end of 1914, hopes of a short war had vanished. The initial German advance through Belgium had been halted at the Marne, and the subsequent "Race to the Sea" produced an unbroken line of trenches stretching from the Swiss frontier to the Channel coast. Attempts by both sides to restore manoeuvre warfare failed at appalling cost. The Western Front settled into a grim equilibrium: fortified trench systems, belts of barbed wire, deep dugouts, and mutually supporting machine-gun positions that overwhelmingly favoured the defence.



Throughout 1915 the Allies searched for a way to break this deadlock. British and French offensives at *Neuve Chapelle*, *Aubers Ridge*, *Loos*, *Artois*, and *Champagne* demonstrated tactical bravery but strategic futility. Artillery preparation proved inadequate, communications unreliable, and infantry assaults, however courageous, were repeatedly shredded by uncut wire and intact enemy positions. The cost in lives was severe, while territorial gains were negligible.

For Britain, the year marked a profound transition. The small, highly professional *British Expeditionary Force* of 1914 had been largely expended. In its place came a rapidly expanding citizen army, *Kitchener's New Armies*, still in training and untested in large-scale operations. France, meanwhile, carried the main burden of the fighting, her army bleeding steadily on ground fought over again and again.

#### Coalition Strategy and the Need for a Joint Offensive

By late 1915, Allied leaders accepted that success on the Western Front would require a coordinated effort rather than piecemeal national offensives. At the Inter-Allied Conferences held at *Chantilly*, the Allies agreed in principle to simultaneous offensives in 1916, on the Somme in the west, in Italy, and on the Eastern Front, to stretch German resources and deny them the ability to reinforce threatened sectors.

The Somme was selected as the focal point for the Anglo-French effort. Crucially, it lay on the boundary between the British and French sectors of the Western Front, making it an ideal location for a combined operation. The plan envisaged a powerful French thrust, supported on its northern flank by British forces, to rupture the German lines and exploit the breakthrough into open country beyond.

#### Why the Somme?

Geography and logistics played a decisive role. The Somme region offered relatively good communications, including railways capable of sustaining a major offensive. The terrain, while not flat, lacked the extreme marshland of *Flanders* or the mountainous

complexity of the *Vosges*. Importantly, German defences in this sector were considered less formidable than those further north, where the enemy had enjoyed longer periods to fortify. Equally significant was the political and strategic imperative to bring Britain more fully into the land war. By 1916, Britain's industrial and manpower mobilisation was reaching maturity. A major offensive would not only relieve pressure on France but also demonstrate Britain's commitment as a principal military partner, not merely a supporting power.

#### Verdun Changes Everything

In February 1916, German strategy reshaped Allied intentions overnight. The opening of the *Battle of Verdun* was designed to bleed the French Army white by attacking a position of immense symbolic value. The scale and ferocity of the fighting forced the French High Command to divert men, guns, and ammunition on a massive scale.

The planned Somme offensive was transformed. What had been conceived as a Franco-British attack with the French in the leading role became, by necessity, an operation in which the British would bear the principal burden. The objective also shifted: from decisive breakthrough to attritional relief – drawing German forces away from Verdun and easing the pressure on France.

*General Sir Douglas Haig*, newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the *British Expeditionary Force*, accepted this altered role. He believed that sustained pressure, properly supported by artillery, could wear down the German Army and eventually restore mobility to the battlefield. The Somme would test that belief to its limits.

#### Preparation for Battle

The months leading up to July 1916 witnessed an unprecedented concentration of men and materiel. Railheads, roads, and supply dumps proliferated behind the British lines. Artillery parks grew to immense size, reflecting the belief that firepower could neutralise German defences and spare the infantry the worst of the slaughter seen in earlier attacks. Over half a million men and 1537 guns were allocated for the British offensive which would be launched on a frontage of 14 miles from *Serre* in the north to *Montauban* in the south.

A prolonged preliminary bombardment was planned, intended to destroy enemy trenches, cut barbed wire, and crush morale. New technologies were introduced: aerial reconnaissance to direct artillery fire, creeping barrages to shield advancing troops, and the first tentative steps toward armoured warfare – though tanks would not be ready in significant numbers for the opening day.

Yet beneath this confidence lay uncertainty. Many of the British divisions were new, led by officers learning their trade under fire. German defences, especially their deep dugouts, were stronger than Allied intelligence fully appreciated. The road to the Somme had been paved with experience, but also with assumptions that would soon be brutally tested.

#### The Threshold of the Somme

By late June 1916, the armies stood poised along the banks of the Somme River. For the men in the trenches—British, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, French, and from across the wider Empire – the coming battle represented both anticipation and dread. For their commanders, it was a calculated gamble born of necessity.

The road to the Somme was shaped by stalemate, alliance politics, industrial mobilisation, and the grinding logic of attrition. When the whistles blew on the morning of the 1st of July 1916, the battle that followed would come to define not only a campaign, but a generation's understanding of modern war.

# ROAD TO THE SOMME

*How strategy, geography, and stalemate led Europe to the banks of the Somme in 1916*



# HAIG'S GAMBLE: LEADERSHIP & LEGACY

*Field Marshal The Earl Haig KT GCB OM GCVO KCIE*

**When the Second Inter-Allied Conference was held at Chantilly, France, from December 6-8, 1915, to develop a unified strategy for 1916, the British were still regarded as junior partners in a predominantly French-led war effort. That perception would soon change. The aim of the conference was to move beyond independent national strategies and coordinate a joint, simultaneous offensive on all fronts (Western, Eastern, and Italian) to prevent the Central Powers from shifting reserves to threatened points.**

When the Second Inter-Allied Conference was held at Chantilly, France, from December 6-8, 1915, to develop a unified strategy for 1916, the British were still regarded as junior partners in a predominantly French-led war effort. That perception would soon change. The aim of the conference was to move beyond independent national strategies and coordinate a joint, simultaneous offensive on all fronts (Western, Eastern, and Italian) to prevent the Central Powers from shifting reserves to threatened points.

In the months that followed, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the 10th of December 1915. He was 54 years old. Haig would make decisions that would define not only the coming year but also his own place in military history.

Haig inherited an army in transition. Britain's small pre-war professional force - the "Old Contemptibles" who had fought with distinction in 1914 - had been all but destroyed by the grinding battles of the *Marne*, *Ypres*, and *Loos*. In its place stood a vast army of volunteers, the product of Lord Kitchener's call to arms. By early 1916, over 2.6 million men had volunteered for service: patriotic, largely untested, and brimming with confidence in their cause. Haig's task was to turn this army of civilians into a disciplined, coordinated fighting machine.

From the moment he took command, Haig made it clear that he believed victory would come only through decisive, offensive action. His strategic philosophy was grounded in the principle of "attrition" - the gradual wearing down of the enemy's strength until a breakthrough became possible. It was a view shared by the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joseph Joffre, though their partnership was often strained by differing priorities.

The Somme offensive, originally conceived as a joint Franco-British operation, was intended to relieve pressure on the French at *Verdun* and to deal a hammer blow to German defences. When the Germans attacked *Verdun* in February 1916, the balance of the plan shifted dramatically. French forces became heavily engaged and depleted, forcing Haig's army to assume the dominant role in the forthcoming attack. The Somme, once designed as a supporting assault, now became Britain's main effort. Haig decided that *Verdun* had 'worn down' the Germans enough and that a decisive victory was possible at once. The Government had concerns about the offensive,

preferring smaller more probing attacks but Haig eventually decided to attack on the 29th of June (later put back to 1st July).

Aided by General Rawlinson, Haig believed that careful preparation and overwhelming artillery fire could destroy the German front lines, allowing the infantry to advance with minimal resistance. His plan called for a seven-day bombardment across a 25,000-yard front, involving over 1,500 guns and more than 1.5 million shells. "Not even a rat will be alive," one optimistic officer remarked. The confidence was sincere - and tragically misplaced. General Noel Birch, Haig's artillery advisor had warned the artillery could become overstretched.

The German defences were far stronger than intelligence had suggested. Their deep dugouts, often thirty feet underground, sheltered entire companies from the bombardment. Much of the barbed wire remained intact, and the German machine-guns, carefully positioned to enfilade no man's land, waited. When the whistles blew at 7:30 am on 1 July 1916, the result was catastrophic.

Nearly 60,000 British soldiers were killed, wounded, or missing on the first day alone - the heaviest loss in the history of the British Army. News of the slaughter shocked Britain and strained faith in the generals who directed the war. Haig, stoic and reserved by nature, did not waver. To him, the Somme was not a single battle but a campaign - one that, if pressed relentlessly, could still achieve its strategic purpose.

Over the ensuing months, the fighting dragged on through summer and into the autumn rains. Haig adapted, introducing new tactics and weapons as the campaign evolved. Small-unit coordination improved and by September, the first British tanks rumbled into action near *Fleurs-Courcelette*, a glimpse of the mechanised warfare to come.

Despite these developments, the cost remained staggering. By November 1916, the Somme offensive had consumed more than a million casualties on both sides for a gain of just a few miles. To many observers, it was proof of futility; to Haig, it was the price of progress. He believed that the Somme had drained the German Army of its offensive power, setting the conditions for ultimate victory.

In a sense, Haig was correct. The German General Erich Ludendorff later acknowledged that the Somme marked the

true breaking point of the German Army's morale. German losses were severe, and their faith in their defensive system was shaken. When the British and French attacked again at *Arras*, *Messines*, and *Passchendaele* in 1917, they did so with the lessons of the Somme ingrained in their doctrine.

Haig's critics have never been silent. He was a commander faced with unprecedented challenges - learning, often painfully, how to fight an industrial war with the tools available. Haig's resolve bordered on obstinacy, yet his leadership provided the continuity and stability that Britain's expanding army desperately needed.

He was not blind to the suffering his decisions caused, though he rarely showed emotion. His private diaries reveal a man haunted by loss but convinced of the righteousness of his mission.

Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end. This was never more evident than Haig's 1918 'Backs To The Wall' order where he stated 'Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.'

*'Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end'*

Field Marshal Douglas Haig

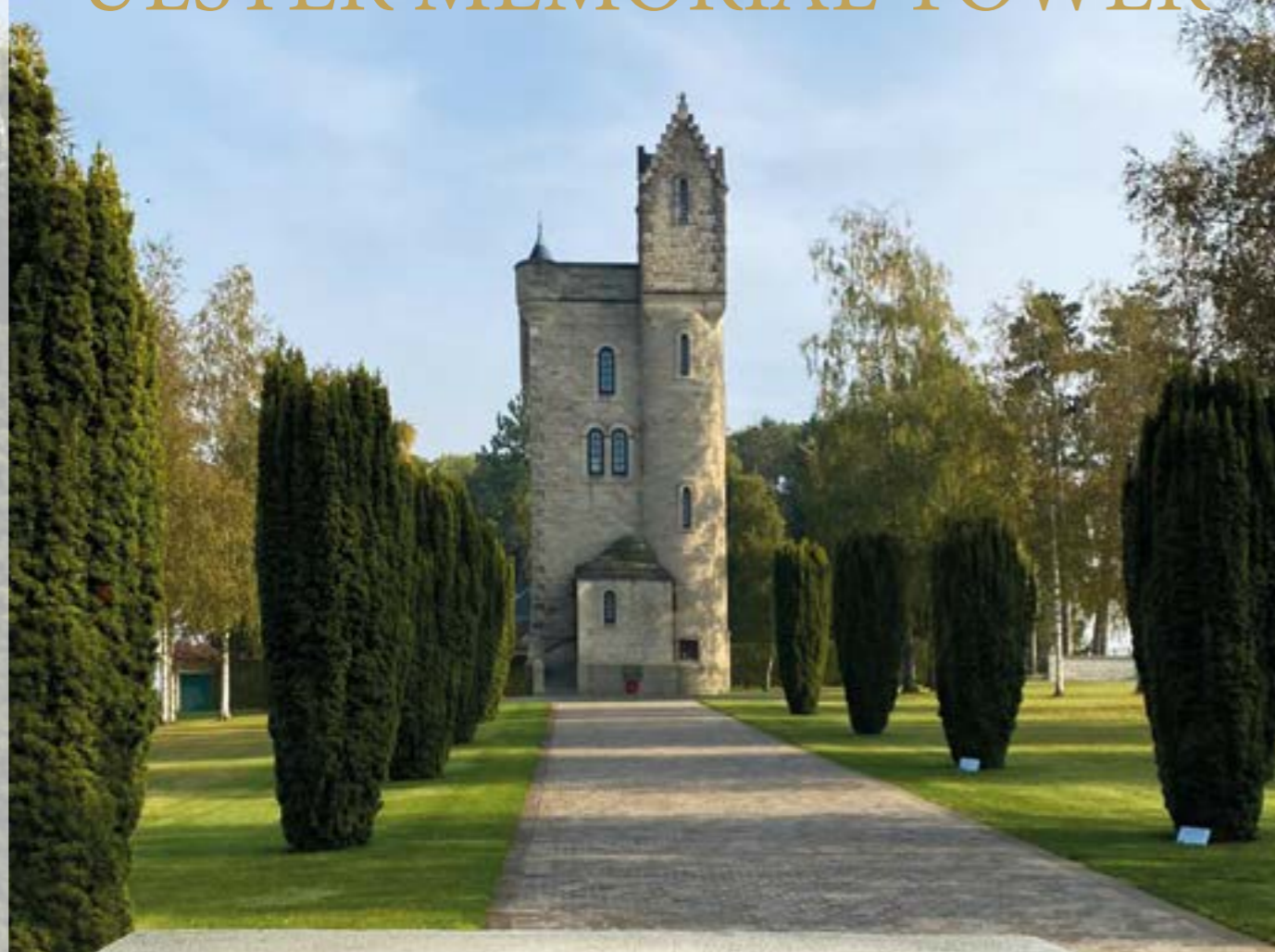
In the years that followed, as the BEF evolved into a formidable fighting force, Haig's persistence bore fruit. By 1918, the British Army - rebuilt, retrained, and battle-hardened - would deliver the blows that ended the war. The road to that moment began on the Somme, amid the failure and endurance of 1916. History's verdict on Haig remains divided, but his influence is undeniable.

The Somme was his gamble - costly, controversial, and transformative. It revealed the tragic arithmetic of modern war, yet it also marked the emergence of a new kind of army: one forged not in triumph, but in the endurance of adversity. For Haig, and for Britain, the Somme was both catastrophe and catalyst - a crucible of courage that would shape the final victory two years later, and the memory of which still commands reverence, reflection, and debate more than a century on.



The Ulster Tower, located in Thiepval, France, is Northern Ireland's National War Memorial. It was one of the first memorials to be erected on the Western Front

# ULSTER MEMORIAL TOWER



In eternal remembrance to the men of the 13 Battalions of the 36th (Ulster) Division, who stood with courage and sacrifice at the Somme, their valour forever woven into the fabric of our history.

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Roll Call of the 2nd Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders, near Beaumont Hamel on the afternoon of 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme. They are wearing the haversack, rolled groundsheet and mess tin instead of the large pack. The insignia on their sleeves indicates that they were part of the attacking force. Image: IWM (Q.746)



# AT ZERO HOUR

*The first Day of the Somme, 1st July 1916*

The morning of 1 July 1916 broke clear and warm across the rolling countryside of Picardy. As the sun rose, it illuminated a landscape already scarred by months of shellfire, yet for many British soldiers waiting in the trenches, the day carried a powerful sense of expectation. This was to be the decisive moment. The whistles would blow, the men would advance, and the long deadlock of the Western Front would be broken.

Along miles of British front line, soldiers stood ready in the half-light. Many had been told that the enemy's defences were shattered, that German wire had been destroyed, and that resistance would be minimal. Some carried footballs, others extra rations, souvenirs, or letters to be posted once the objective was secured. There was tension, certainly, but also confidence - an optimism carefully nurtured and widely believed. **At 7.30 am, the whistles sounded.**

Men climbed from their trenches and began to move forward in extended lines, walking at first, just as they had been instructed. The ground before them—No Man's Land—was uneven, cratered, and churned into dust by artillery fire. Almost immediately, the illusion began to collapse. German machine guns, sheltered deep in concrete dugouts, opened fire with devastating effect. The artillery bombardment that was meant to neutralise the defences had failed to do its work. Wire lay largely intact. The defenders were alive, prepared, and deadly.

In many sectors, the advancing troops were cut down within moments. Lines faltered, stalled, and fell. Men dropped where they stood; others pressed on, stepping past the wounded and the dead. Officers, conspicuous by rank and duty, were often among the first to be hit. Communications broke down quickly.

Units became fragmented, disoriented, pinned in the open or trapped against unbroken wire. Yet amid the carnage, there was courage of an extraordinary order. Small groups pushed forward under intense fire, attempting to reach enemy trenches that still spat bullets and grenades. Stretcher-bearers moved repeatedly into exposed ground, often unarmed, often under direct fire, refusing to abandon the wounded. Runners carried messages across ground swept by machine-gun fire, knowing the chances of survival were slim. Acts of bravery were everywhere, though rarely witnessed in full amid the smoke and chaos.

In some areas, limited successes were achieved. A few positions were taken; a handful of men reached their objectives. But these gains

were isolated and costly, unsupported by neighbouring advances that had collapsed almost as soon as they began. By mid-morning, it was clear that the hoped-for breakthrough had not materialised. The battlefield had become a vast killing ground.

As the day wore on, the sun climbed higher, bearing witness to a scene almost beyond comprehension. Wounded men lay stranded between the lines, many calling for help, others silent. Attempts to retrieve them were often fatal. The heat, the dust, the smell of cordite and blood - all combined to make the battlefield unbearable. Some soldiers clung to shell holes for hours, unable to move forward or back, praying for darkness.

By afternoon, commanders were struggling to make sense of events. Reports were incomplete or wildly optimistic, masking the scale of the disaster unfolding. In the rear areas, fresh troops waited under the impression that progress was being made. At the front, survivors knew otherwise. Whole battalions had been shattered in minutes.

In many cases, the men advancing that morning represented friends, neighbours, brothers—entire communities advancing together and falling together.

As evening approached, sporadic attacks continued in places, but the momentum of the day had long since been lost. Darkness finally brought a measure of relief. Under cover of night, wounded men were dragged back, those who could be found. Others were left where they had fallen, beyond reach. The

cries that had echoed across No Man's Land gradually faded.

When the roll was finally taken, the scale of the loss became clear. Nearly 60,000 British casualties in a single day - over 19,000 dead. It remains the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army. For those who survived, the memory of that day would never leave them. For those who did not, 1 July 1916 marked the end of everything they had hoped for and believed in that morning.

Yet to remember the day solely by its losses is to risk missing its deeper meaning. The men who went forward did so because they believed they were doing what was required of them. They advanced not out of ignorance, but out of duty—to their comrades, to their units, and to something larger than themselves. Their courage was not diminished by the failure of the plan or the brutality of the outcome.

Today, the fields where they fell are quiet. Grass grows where once the ground was torn apart by fire. Names carved into stone stand in place of the men themselves, row upon row, known and unknown. The optimism of that July morning and the tragedy that followed are inseparable, bound together in the story of a single day that changed lives, families, and a nation forever.

To remember 1 July 1916 is not to dwell on defeat, but to acknowledge sacrifice on an almost unimaginable scale. It is to stand between hope and loss, just as those men did when they climbed from their trenches at dawn - and to ensure that they are never forgotten.



Serre Road Cemetery No.2 faces the British lines of the 1st of July 1916, next to what was one of the Battle of the Somme's key objectives: a fortified German strongpoint known as "the Heidenkopf" or, due to its angular shape, "the Quadrilateral". By November, the Quadrilateral was finally captured by the allies but at a heavy cost. There are 7,127 burials, of which 4,944 are sadly unidentified, making it one of the region's largest CWGC cemeteries.



The Speaker

MESSAGE FROM

# THE RT HON SIR LINDSAY HOYLE

SPEAKER OF THE UK HOUSE OF COMMONS



As we come together to mark the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we are reminded of one of the most harrowing yet defining moments of the First World War. The Somme has become synonymous with courage, sacrifice, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable hardship.

On the morning of 1st July 1916, men from towns and villages across Britain climbed out of their trenches and advanced into history. Among them were the Chorley Pals, ordinary men from my own constituency of Chorley who had enlisted together as friends, neighbours, and workmates in September 1914. They became part of the 11th (Service) Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment - one of the many "Pals Battalions" created so that men who signed up together could serve side by side.

The sense of camaraderie and duty among these men was extraordinary. They trained together, shared letters and laughter, and supported one another through the long months before the Somme offensive began. But on that first day, as they bravely went over the top, the battalion faced devastating losses. Out of the 720 men of the 11th East Lancashire Regiment, at least 584 were killed, wounded, or reported missing before the day was out.

It is hard for us today to comprehend the scale of the sacrifice made on that battlefield 110 years ago. Yet it is our duty to remember. The Chorley Pals Memorial, for which I have the honour of serving as Chairman, stands in the heart of our town to ensure that the names and stories of these men are never forgotten. It is a place of quiet reflection, a reminder that behind every name etched in stone was a son, a brother, a husband, a friend - a life full of hope and promise - [www.chorleypalsmemorial.org.uk](http://www.chorleypalsmemorial.org.uk).

The Somme was not just a military battle; it was a human tragedy on an unimaginable scale. But it also demonstrated the extraordinary bravery and resilience of those who served. Their courage helped shape the world we live in today. As we commemorate this 110th Anniversary, we pay tribute not only to the Chorley Pals but to all who fought and fell on the Somme.

We owe them a debt we can never fully repay. The best way we can honour their memory is by ensuring that future generations understand the cost of war and the value of peace. Their sacrifice must never be forgotten.



2026



# THE DUKE OF LANCASTER'S REGIMENT

*'Difficulties be Damned'*



## SOMME 110th ANNIVERSARY

The Regiment is proud to remember and pay tribute, on this Anniversary of The Somme, to our antecedents who served and made the ultimate sacrifice.  
Lest We Forget.



# THE LANCASHIRES AT THE SOMME

*Invincible determination, cheerfulness and gallantry*

Article by Lieutenant Colonel John Downham (Retired),  
former Regimental Secretary of the Queen's Lancashire Regiment

Battle of Albert. Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers fixing bayonets prior to the attack on Beaumont Hamel, July 1916. They are wearing 'fighting order' with the haversack in place of the pack, and with the rolled groundsheet strapped to the belt below the mess-tin which contained rations. The officer in the foreground (right) is wearing other ranks uniform to be less conspicuous.

Original image Image: IWM (Q 744)

**Eighteen battalions from Duke of Lancaster's forebears fought in this epic four-and-a-half-month struggle, which has ever since remained an emotive and tragic symbol of gallantry, endurance and sacrifice, earning two Victoria Crosses, eleven hard-won Battle Honours, and numerous other awards for bravery.**

#### 'The First Day on the Somme'

At 0730 hours on 1st July 1916 the artillery lifted and the British infantry, including the 1st and 11th *East Lancashires*, advanced in extended lines towards the German trenches. For a few moments there was silence, and then suddenly machine guns opened from behind largely unbroken wire and cut down the attackers in swathes. The casualties, some 57,470 men, were the worst ever suffered by the British Army on a single day.

On the far left of the British attack the 11th *East Lancashires* (the famous 'Accrington Pals') assaulted the village of Serre, while a mile to their south the 1st Battalion (the old 30th Foot) attacked to the north of Beaumont Hamel. Despite rapidly mounting casualties, the *East Lancashires* moved steadily forward, as if on parade, until they melted away under the fire. Small parties of both battalions entered the German trenches, but they were never seen again.

Within a few hours *The East Lancashire Regiment* suffered more casualties than on any other day in its long history. Out of 700 officers and men of the 1st Battalion who went into action, only 237 were present to answer their names when the roll was called, while the 11th Battalion lost 594 killed, wounded and missing out of the 720 in the attack. This memorable devotion to duty is commemorated in the Regiment annually to this day, most notably by a Service in Blackburn Cathedral.

#### Albert - The Break-in Battle

La Boisselle. This village, on the Albert-Bapaume Road astride the main thrust of the British offensive, was eventually cleared on 4th July by the 'New Army' 19th Division after severe close-quarter fighting with bomb, bayonet and Lewis gun. The 7th Battalions of the *East Lancashires*, *South Lancashires* and *Loyal North Lancashires*, all in the same brigade of that division, took part in the fight around La Boisselle where, on 5th July, a posthumous

Victoria Cross was earned by *Lieutenant Thomas Wilkinson* of the *Loyal North Lancashires*.

Thiepval Some two miles north of La Boisselle, on 3rd July, the 2nd *South Lancashires* attacked the strongly fortified Thiepval Spur, the highest point of the German defences, losing 14 officers and over three hundred other ranks. Despite repeated assaults on this dominating feature, including attacks by 8th Loyals on 24th and 26th August, and by 2nd and 8th *South Lancashires* on 3rd September, the trench systems around Thiepval remained in German hands until late September.

Ovillers-La-Boisselle On the next spur north of La Boisselle, the fortified village of Ovillers was the centre of fierce and protracted fighting from 7th to 15th July in which the 2nd and 8th *South Lancashires* and 8th and 9th *Loyal North Lancashires*, all in the 25th Division, played a prominent role in capturing the ruins from the Prussian Guards.

#### Attacks on the German Second Line

South of the Albert-Bapaume Road the initial British attack had met with greater success, in particular on the extreme right of the British advance where 30th Division, supported by the 11th *South Lancashires* (known as the 'St Helens Pioneers'), penetrated the German defences at Montauban. This created the Fricourt Salient, which over the next few weeks was progressively enlarged by a series of costly local attacks against the German second line of defence, which ran along the ridges from Thiepval to Pozieres, on the Bapaume Road, and then through Bazentin and Delville Wood to Guillemont.

On 7th July the 2nd *East Lancashires* attacked Contalmaison, on 14th-15th the 8th *East Lancashires* and the 1st and 10th Loyals were in action around Pozieres, where the former suffered 374 casualties, while on the 23rd the 1st *Loyal North Lancashires* and the three 7th Battalions saw heavy fighting on Bazentin Ridge.

Guillemont On the right flank, the 55th Division (*West Lancashire Territorials*), including the 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions of the *South Lancashires* and *Loyal North Lancashires*, made a gallant but unsuccessful attack on Guillemont on 7th August, when *Second Lieutenant Gabriel Coury* of the 1/4th *South Lancashires* earned a Victoria Cross for acts of gallantry which included bringing in a wounded Commanding Officer over ground swept by machine gun fire. Two days later in the same area the 1/5th *South Lancashires* lost ten officers and 204 other ranks to artillery and machine gun fire in a failed attack afterwards commemorated each year by the *St Helens Territorials*. The Division was back in the line early in September and took part in heavy fighting between the notorious Delville Wood and Ginchy.

#### The Final Phase

On 15th September a renewed British offensive was launched to clear the last German strongpoints on the high ground and to break out towards Bapaume. This attack was supported by the first ever appearance of tanks, two of which were dug out of the mud by the 1/4th *South Lancashires* during the action known as Flers-Courcelette.

Meanwhile, 2nd and 8th *South Lancashires* and 8th and 9th Loyals were involved in operations to clear the northern end of the Thiepval Ridge, successfully storming the Stuff and Regina trenches there on 21st October in the battle of the Ancre Heights. On the 18th October the 1st *East Lancashires*, who had only recently returned to the Somme, attacked at Le Transloy through "a vast lake of mud, pitted with shell-holes", losing all the officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs of the assaulting companies and a total of 362 other ranks, while on the 23rd the 2nd *East Lancashires* captured and held German positions near Guedecourt.

Further north, near Beaumont Hamel, 8th *East Lancashires* and 10th *Loyal North Lancashires* attacked side by side on the 15th of November in the battle of the Ancre, but failed with severe casualties. The final act of the Somme offensive opened on 18th November, when the three 7th Battalions assaulted the village of Grandcourt in appalling weather. Winter now brought an end to this terrible battle, in which the men of the *New Army* had most worthily maintained the reputation of the Lancashire regiments for invincible determination, cheerfulness and gallantry.

*Article courtesy the Lancashire Infantry Museum*



Soldiers from the 1/4th *South Lancashires* rescue two British tanks from the mud of the Somme battlefield. The burst of an enemy shell can be seen beyond the tree. Initially, this first appearance of tanks struck terror into the enemy, but most either broke down or became mired in the mud and their shock value was squandered.

# THE WELSH CAVALRY AT THE SOMME

*The steadfast service of the King's Dragoon Guards and Queen's Bays in a battle that changed warfare forever.*

**The Queen's Dragoon Guards (ODG) trace their lineage to the 1st King's Dragoon Guards and the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) – two cavalry regiments whose reputations were already centuries old by 1916.**

**At the Somme, both regiments served within the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions, held in reserve for the long-awaited breakthrough that never came.**

**Although the Somme was primarily an infantry battle, the cavalry's role was far from passive. These mounted troops provided mobile reserves, conducted reconnaissance, and were repeatedly prepared to exploit gaps in the German line, often waiting under shellfire in exposed forward positions.**

#### Cavalry at the Somme: A Changing Role

The Somme battlefield was never intended to be solely an infantry struggle. British High Command envisioned the cavalry divisions poised behind the lines, ready to surge through German positions once the infantry created a breach. This was the strategic doctrine that shaped the deployment of both the King's Dragoon Guards (KDG) and the Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards), who served with the 1st Cavalry Division throughout 1916. In practice, however, the terrain, the depth of German defensive systems, and the devastating failure of the first day's objectives rendered cavalry exploitation impossible.

What remained for the British cavalry was: *Holding sections of the line as dismounted infantry, carrying out long-range reconnaissance, engaging in wire-cutting patrols, conducting local counter-attacks and standing ready for rapid exploitation that never came.*

Where necessary, they fought on foot, carbines in hand, often acting as "emergency infantry" whenever the line buckled. This hybrid role—mounted mobility with dismounted fighting—became the cavalry's hallmark during the Somme.

#### The 1st King's Dragoon Guards

Part of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, saw their first sustained action in the Somme theatre in late July 1916. Their war diaries describe repeated movements between reserve positions, forward trenches, and exposed communication routes. The regiment's responsibilities included:

Manning trenches near *Meaulte* and *Bray-sur-Somme*, carrying out night-time patrols against German raiding parties and supporting infantry units exhausted by continuous assaults. The KDG's deployment frequently involved relieving units shattered by the heavy fighting around *Mametz*, *Fricourt*, and *Longueval*. Though not engaged in the mass infantry attacks of July, they were under constant shellfire, sniping and machine-gun harassment.

**Flers-Courcelette and the Advance Toward High Wood**  
During the *Battle of Flers-Courcelette* (15-22 September 1916), the KDG were placed in readiness for breakthrough exploitation. Their mounting points were established near *Montauban* and *Guillemont*, with the regiment ordered to be prepared for an advance through *High Wood* should the infantry gain the ridge. This advance never came.

Continued on Page 38



Battle of Flers-Courcelette. 15-22 September. Troops of the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) on the march approaching Hardecourt Wood, 18 September 1916. Image: IWM (Q 4239)

# 1ST THE QUEEN'S DRAGOON GUARDS

(The Welsh Cavalry)

*Pro rege et patria*  
*'For King and Country'*



**SOMME 110**

IN PROUD MEMORY OF OUR ANTECEDENTS  
WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE IN WWI

If you would like to support or find out more about our Regiment and its Comrades Association, please visit our website:

[www.qdg.org.uk](http://www.qdg.org.uk)



1st King's Dragoon Guards



2nd Dragoon Guards  
(The Queen's Bays)

*High Wood* became one of the most contested locations on the battlefield. The *KDG*, though not committed to a mounted charge, supported the infantry by pushing forward dismounted troopers to assist exhausted Guards Division units. The regiment suffered several casualties from German artillery, which targeted cavalry concentration points in an effort to prevent any massing for a breakout.

**Transition to the Autumn Battles**

By October, the Somme battlefield had deteriorated into a sea of mud. Horses struggled through the thick ground, and the practical function of cavalry units diminished further. The *KDG* continued to serve primarily in: *Trench garrison duties, travelling between brigades as mobile emergency reserves and manpower reinforcement for depleted infantry battalions.* It was an unglamorous but vital role in sustaining the front.

**The Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards) at the Somme**

The *Queen's Bays*, also of the 1st Cavalry Division, shared a very similar operational role with their sister regiment. By the time they arrived in the Somme sector in August 1916, they were already seasoned by earlier campaigns at Ypres and in the early months of trench warfare.

Throughout the Somme they undertook: *Continuous cycling between reserve, support, and front-line trenches, night patrols in no man's land, counter-sniper operations and rapid reinforcement of infantry divisions.*

The regiment's war diary frequently records small numbers of dismounted *Bays* holding battered trench segments against German probing attacks. Their ability to stabilise confused tactical situations was repeatedly praised by divisional commanders.

**Morval & Lesbœufs (25-28 September 1916)**

During the offensives toward *Morval* and *Lesbœufs*, the *Bays* again stood ready to exploit breakthroughs that never materialised. As with the *KDG*, their role became one of flexible support. Their patrols advanced as far forward as *Gueudecourt*, reporting on the state of shattered German front-line trenches. These reports helped guide later infantry assaults within II Corps.

**Losses and Notable Actions**

Dismounted actions in exposed trenches took their toll. Several small-scale engagements occurred when German storm troops attempted raids shortly before dawn. In one such defence, a squadron of the *Bays* prevented a German sap (tunneling) from expanding into a captured British trench, an action noted in brigade diaries for its steadiness under pressure. Though the Somme did not offer the *Bays* an opportunity for mounted heroics, their contribution was marked by: *Discipline under heavy fire, reliability in reinforcement duties, consistent effectiveness in dismounted fighting.*

**The Experience of Horse and Rider**

A crucial dimension of the *QDG* antecedents' Somme story lies in the fate of their horses. Cavalry mounts suffered significantly. Artillery fire caused heavy equine casualties. Mud incapacitated many horses. Logistic columns struggled against destroyed roads and supply lines and watering parties were frequently sniped at. Yet the bond between cavalymen and their mounts remained strong. Letters home frequently mention caring for horses as a source of psychological stability amid the chaos.

One *KDG* trooper wrote: *"There is little cavalry work to do here, though I confess the comfort I find in grooming my horse is greater than anything the trenches can offer."*

**Cavalry in the Shadow of the Somme's Tragedy**

The history of the Somme often underplays the cavalry contribution. But the regiments of the 1st Cavalry Division were indispensable. They held the line when infantry divisions were shattered. They served as rapid reserves during emergencies. They provided the eyes and ears of the front through patrols and they stood ready, always prepared for a breakthrough that never came. Their service was one of quiet professionalism rather than dramatic charges - but professionalism of the highest order.

**Remembrance - A 110th Anniversary Reflection**

The story of the *KDG* and the *Queen's Bays* forms an important part of the living heritage of the *Queen's Dragoon Guards*.

Their contribution to the Somme was not defined by sweeping cavalry movements, but by steadfastness, adaptability and duty under circumstances far removed from the traditions of the cavalry arm. The fields they once patrolled - *Montauban, Guillemont, High Wood, Gueudecourt, Courcellette* - are now peaceful farmlands. But cavalymen of 1916 still rest in Commonwealth War Graves across the region.

Their names, and the thousands whose graves were never located, are found on memorials such as the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing and the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.

As we remember them, we honour not only what they achieved, but the spirit in which they served—quiet courage, uncomplaining endurance, and unwavering loyalty to their regiments, their horses, and one another.

Their story is now the story of the *Queen's Dragoon Guards*. Their legacy endures in every trooper who wears the cap badge and if their deeds are remembered, these cavalymen of the Somme will never be forgotten.



**The Change from the Habsburg Eagle**

The 1st King's Dragoon Guards proudly wore the double-headed Habsburg eagle, a unique distinction granted in 1896 when Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria became the regiment's Colonel-in-Chief. This rare honour symbolised a close diplomatic bond between Britain and the Austrian Empire, and the emblem became one of the most recognisable cavalry badges in the British Army. However, the outbreak of the First World War - and particularly the reality of fighting against Austria-Hungary - rendered the badge politically untenable. In 1915 the regiment relinquished the Habsburg eagle, adopting instead an eight-pointed star surmounted by a crown, which it would carry for the remainder of the war. The change reflected both wartime necessity and the evolving identity of a regiment whose heritage bridged European alliances, yet whose loyalty remained firmly to the Crown.



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# COMBATSTRESS

MESSAGE FROM

ADMIRAL SIR PHILIP JONES GCB DL  
PRESIDENT, COMBAT STRESS



As we gather to mark the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we do so with a deep sense of respect for those who fought in one of the most testing chapters of our nation's history. The Somme has become a symbol of the extraordinary courage, resilience, and endurance shown by so many soldiers, and also sailors and marines too, drawn from every corner of the UK and across the Commonwealth - young men who faced unimaginable hardship in the pursuit of duty.

In reflecting on their sacrifice, we must also acknowledge what was far less understood in 1916: the psychological toll of warfare. The men who endured the Somme witnessed horrors that defy description, yet the concept of shell shock, as it was then known, was only just beginning to be recognised. Many faced their torment alone, without adequate understanding, support, or treatment. Today, we would recognise much of what they experienced as post-traumatic stress disorder.

As President of Combat Stress and having served for four decades in the Royal Navy - including as First Sea Lord - I am deeply aware of the enduring impact of conflict on those who serve. I am honoured to lead an organisation that, for over a century, has been dedicated to helping veterans affected by psychological trauma sustained in service to their country.

On this anniversary, as we honour the memory of those who fought and fell at the Somme, it is our duty not only to remember their bravery, but also to learn from their experience. By recognising the full cost of conflict - physical and psychological - we reinforce our commitment to the welfare of those who serve and have served today.

The legacy of the Somme is not only one of sacrifice, but of responsibility: to care for our veterans, to support their families, and to ensure that the lessons of the past continue to guide our compassion in the present.

2026

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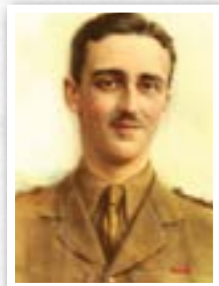


**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
LEARNING

# WHEN THE WAR CAME HOME

*Royal family kinship, the Somme, and the cost paid by ordinary families*

In the summer of 1916, the Somme became the focal point of Britain's war effort and the crucible in which a generation was tested. For many families, the battle was not an abstract military operation fought on distant fields in northern France, but a deeply personal catastrophe whose consequences would be felt for decades. The scale of the Somme's losses ensured that no section of society remained untouched – not even those families whose descendants would one day stand at the heart of the British Royal Family. The distant relatives of today's Princess of Wales and Queen Camilla did not serve in positions of safety or exemption. They joined the Army as thousands of others did, trained alongside their contemporaries, and faced the same dangers in the same conditions. Their stories, preserved through family memory and regimental record, offer a powerful reminder that the war came home to Britain not only in casualty lists and telegrams, but in the permanent absence of sons, brothers, and heirs.



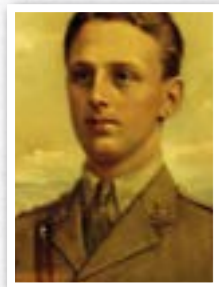
**Captain Henry Archibald Cubitt**  
3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards; killed on the Somme, September 15, 1916.

## Queen Camilla

A similar pattern of sacrifice is found in the family history of Queen Camilla. In a small Surrey church, three portraits hang together—young officers, their lives cut short within a span of eighteen months. Harry, Alick, and Hugh Cubitt were brothers, and all three were killed between 1916 and 1918.

Their younger brother, Roland "Rolie" Cubitt, later the Queen's beloved grandfather, had also joined the Army, following Harry into the Coldstream Guards. Unlike his brothers, however, he was prevented from serving on the Western Front. The decision spared him the Somme, the German Spring Offensive, and the final Hundred Days, but left him to live with the knowledge that his brothers would not return.

Captain Harry Cubitt, serving with the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards, was killed during the Somme on 15 September 1916, the opening day of the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. Leading his men in a dawn assault near Ginchy, he was cut down by machine-gun fire before advancing a hundred yards. He was 24 years old, mentioned in dispatches, and awarded the Légion d'Honneur. He is buried at Carnoy Military Cemetery.



**Lieutenant Alick George Cubitt**  
15th (King's) Hussars; died of wounds in France, November 24, 1917, after extensive fighting in early battles like Mons and Ypres.

His brother Alick, aged 23, served with the 15th (The King's) Hussars and was killed during the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, as cavalry units were increasingly forced to fight on foot amid the first mass use of tanks. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Louveral Memorial.



**Lieutenant William Hugh Cubitt,**  
Lieutenant, 1st (Royal) Dragoons; died of wounds near the Somme, March 24, 1918.

The youngest, William Hugh Cubitt, served with the 1st (Royal) Dragoons and was killed aged 21 during one of the war's last cavalry actions. Leading his men with drawn swords in March 1918, he was mortally wounded and died shortly afterwards at a casualty clearing station. He is buried at Noyon Cemetery.



**Lieutenant Lionel Martineau Lupton**  
Royal Field Artillery; killed on the Somme, July 16, 1916.

## The Princess of Wales

The Princess of Wales's great-great-uncle, Lieutenant Lionel Martineau Lupton, was killed during the Battle of the Somme after enlisting alongside Albert Spencer, 7th Earl Spencer, the grandfather of Diana, Princess of Wales. The two men shared more than a wartime commission. Both attended Trinity College, Cambridge, where they studied the same subject and overlapped between 1910 and 1913.

When war broke out, they answered the call together, part of a generation for whom service was seen as an unquestioned obligation.

Commissioned into the Royal Field Artillery, Lieutenant Lupton experienced the attritional nature of the Western Front at first hand. He was wounded, recovered, and returned to duty, and was twice mentioned in dispatches for his conduct. During the opening weeks of the Somme offensive, his battery was engaged in sustained bombardment of German positions, supporting infantry assaults along the shattered front line.

Shortly after midnight on 16 July 1916, a German shell struck Lupton's artillery position, killing him instantly. He was 24 years old. His nephew, Captain Peter Middleton, later recorded the circumstances of his death in a family history, describing the relentless bombardment that preceded it and the sudden finality of the shell burst that ended his life.

The Lupton family's sacrifice did not end there. Lionel's brothers – also great-great-uncles of the Princess – were both killed elsewhere during the war. Captain Maurice Lupton died in the trenches near Lille in June 1915, while Major Francis Ashford Lupton was killed in February 1917 after going missing on a reconnaissance patrol near Miraumont. All three brothers had followed a shared path from Rugby School to Trinity College, and all three were lost before the war's end.

## Shared loss

These family histories underline a simple truth: the Somme did not distinguish between households of influence and those of obscurity. The same telegrams arrived at country houses and terraced streets alike; the same names were carved into memorials at home and abroad. For the families now connected to the Crown, as for so many others, the war left an absence that no honour or remembrance could fill.

In marking the 110th anniversary of the Somme, these stories remind us that remembrance is not about proximity to power, but proximity to loss—and about the countless lives interrupted, wherever their descendants may stand today.

# THE ROYAL DRAGOON GUARDS

*Quis Separabit*  
*'Who Shall Separate Us'*

## SOMME 110



IN PROUD MEMORY OF OUR ANTECEDENT REGIMENTS  
WHO SERVED AT THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME



4th (Royal Irish)  
Dragoon Guards



5th (Princess Charlotte of Wales's)  
Dragoon Guards



6th (Inniskilling)  
Dragoons



7th (Princess Royal's)  
Dragoon Guards

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MESSAGE FROM

**GENERAL SIR ADRIAN BRADSHAW** KCB OBE DL  
GOVERNOR OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL CHelsea



One of the darkest chapters of the First World War, the Battle of the Somme, marks its 110th anniversary this year. It is important that we take time to reflect on the sacrifice of those who fought and died, and to consider the warnings that still speak to us today.

The Battle of the Somme took place during a time of profound change in warfare. Industrial technology was transforming the battlefield: machine guns, heavy artillery, and poison gas caused destruction on an unprecedented scale. Training and tactics lagged behind these new realities, and the courage of young soldiers, many barely out of school, was met with devastating loss. The conflict shaped military thinking worldwide, forcing armies to adapt to industrialised warfare leaving a legacy that continues to influence how we understand conflict today. More than a million soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded during the conflict.

The generation who fought at the Somme has almost entirely passed from living memory, yet their legacy endures in the freedoms that are now so important. We must recall not only the scale of the loss, but its manner: soldiers advancing across open ground under relentless fire, enduring months in trenches in harsh and terrifying conditions. To forget is to risk repeating such tragedy.

The Battle of the Somme left the once peaceful fields and river valleys of Picardy in Northern France scarred for generations, with villages in ruins, farmland rendered unusable, and unexploded shells that remained dangerous long after the guns fell silent. Though today's soldiers are better trained, better equipped, and supported by advanced technology, the reappearance of trench warfare in parts of Eastern Europe shows that the lessons of history remain close at hand, and that the shadow of the Somme still falls across modern conflict.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea, home of the Chelsea Pensioners, stands as a living memorial to service and sacrifice. On this anniversary, we honour those who fell at the Somme, and we commit ourselves to ensuring their suffering is remembered—not as distant history, but as a reminder and a call to peace.

2026



**'We're really trying to reach those veterans who miss that sense of camaraderie and support.'**

-Chelsea Pensioner, Ivan

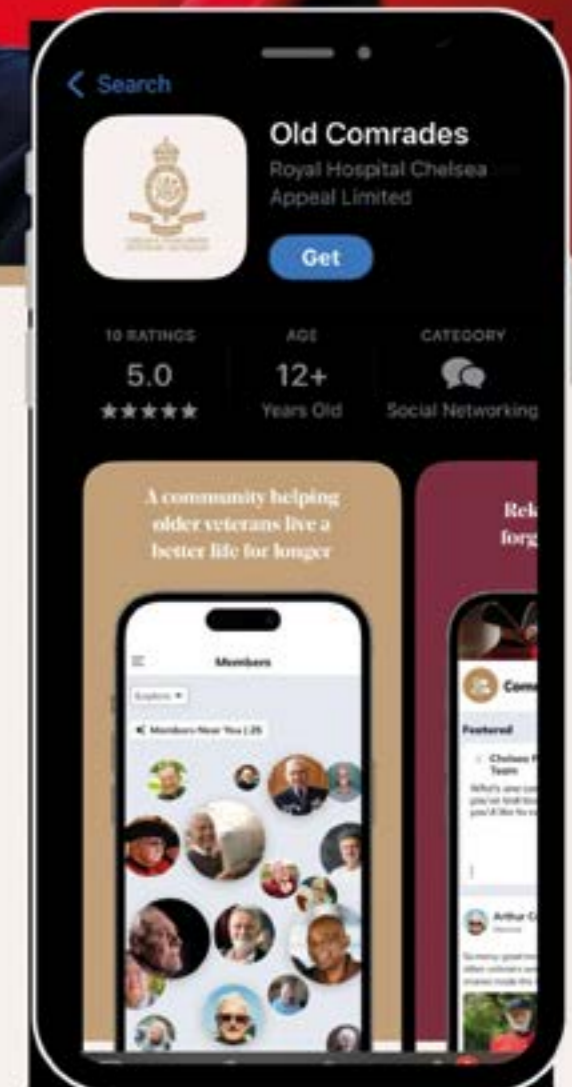
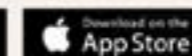
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MESSAGE FROM

# GENERAL (RETD) SIR JAMES EVERARD KCB CBE COLONEL, THE ROYAL LANCERS (QUEEN ELIZABETHS' OWN)



As we mark the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we pause to reflect on the extraordinary courage, endurance, and sacrifice of all who served during that momentous and terrible campaign. The Somme remains one of the defining battles of the First World War, a symbol of both the tragedy of industrial warfare and the unbreakable spirit of those who fought.

For the Regiments that today form The Royal Lancers, the Somme was a chapter written in both valour and sorrow. At the outbreak of the battle in July 1916, our antecedent cavalry regiments were already well accustomed to the grim realities of the Western Front. Though originally raised for mounted warfare, by the time of the Somme the cavalry was increasingly employed in dismounted roles, fighting as infantry, manning trenches, and providing vital support and reconnaissance under constant fire.

Among these were the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers, 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers, 12th (Prince of Wales's Royal) Lancers, and the 16th (The Queen's) Lancers - each carrying forward proud traditions of service and courage. Throughout the long summer and autumn of 1916, detachments of these regiments undertook reconnaissance patrols through the shattered landscape, relaying vital intelligence to the infantry and artillery commanders, often at great personal risk.

Notably, elements of the 9th Lancers and 12th Lancers played crucial roles in maintaining communications and exploiting breakthroughs during the later stages of the Somme offensive, as the British Expeditionary Force sought to push forward through the German defensive lines. Their work exemplified the adaptability and determination of the cavalry - men and horses operating in conditions for which no training could have fully prepared them.

It is worth remembering that the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) during the Somme, Field Marshal Douglas Haig, 1st Earl Haig, had himself once commanded the 17th Lancers. His leadership at the head of the BEF, and his deep understanding of cavalry tradition, reflected the spirit and professionalism of the Lancers at a time when warfare was undergoing profound transformation.

The Battle of the Somme served as a turning point in the evolution of modern warfare. For the cavalry, it marked a transformation from traditional mounted action to a more flexible, mechanised role - a change that would continue into the interwar years and culminate in the birth of the armoured regiments we know today. The legacy of the Lancers who served on the Somme lives on in this adaptability, professionalism, and enduring sense of duty to the mission and to one another.

As Colonel of The Royal Lancers, I am deeply proud of this heritage, of those who went before us and of all who continue to wear the Lancer cap badge today. Their service reminds us that courage takes many forms, from the charge of cavalymen across open fields to the quiet resolve of soldiers enduring the mud and fear of the trenches. We will remember them.

2026

# THE ROYAL LANCERS (QUEEN ELIZABETHS' OWN)

Colonel-in-Chief : HM The Queen



The Regiment is proud to remember and pay tribute, on this 110th Anniversary of The Somme, to our antecedents who served and made the ultimate sacrifice



5th Royal Irish Lancers



9th Queen's Royal Lancers



12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's)



16th The Queen's Lancers



17th Lancers (Duke of Cambridge's Own)



21st Lancers (Empress of India's)

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A Military Mounted Policeman escorting German prisoners



# THE RED CAPS AT WAR

*The vital and often misunderstood role of the Military Police*



A Military Foot Policeman in France - red cap cover, MP armband and police whistle clearly visible.

The view of the Military Police as martinetts with red caps, dispensing summary justice behind the lines - common during the conflict - is a false one. Although initially few in number, the "Redcaps" swiftly asserted their professionalism, growing into their roles despite constraints of industrial warfare. At the outbreak of the First World War, the strength of the Military Police Corps (comprising the Mounted and Military Foot Police) stood at 526 Regulars, supplemented by 235 Reservists recalled to the Colours. By July 1st 1916, an additional 3,425 had joined the Corps. These men came from all parts of the United Kingdom, and from all walks of life. Many men had already seen military service, with more than 360 Boer War veterans in the ranks. Within this body of men were at least 1650 former civilian policemen - by the Armistice of 1918 over 12.5% of the Corps were pre-war policemen - their experience was viewed as particularly relevant to the duties of the Corps.

Their duties were many and varied. An article from The Police Chronicle of 22nd September 1916 highlights some of these duties in the field. "The (military) mounted policeman must know every unit in his garrison or corps, where it is to be found, also its offices and officers.

He must also know the towns, villages and roads in the area, see that the rights of the road are observed so that there will be no delay in the transport of troops, guns, ammunition, or supplies to the firing line, where delay would cause disastrous results." He must "look out for and collect stragglers, and see that the walking wounded get to the nearest dressing station or hospital, and that ambulances are given the best opportunity for removing the wounded".

One particular duty was manning Straggler or Battle Posts. Desertion and absence were rife, and soldiers often used the confusion after an offensive to slip away from the front. Redcaps were stationed at strategic points, as much to detect malingers as to collect lost soldiers. These would then be escorted back to their units - by 1918, such posts were dealing with up to 5,000 men per day.

The seismic effects of the Somme campaign on the British Army in terms of numbers engaged and casualties suffered were also reflected within the Corps. On a single day - 1st October 1916 - no fewer than 1346 additional men were transferred into the MPC. Their service and devotion to duty was recognised by both Britain and her allies by conferring honours and awards -

during the Battle of the Somme, fourteen Military Medals were awarded to members of the Corps. Although not always beloved, the sight of a red cap cover and MP armband would become ubiquitous within the Army.



Close Protection - a Military Foot Policeman with the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII)

## THE ROYAL MILITARY POLICE CENTRAL BENEVOLENT FUND



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### Somme 110th Anniversary

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MESSAGE FROM

**ADMIRAL DAVID JOHNSTON** AC RAN  
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE, AUSTRALIA



The Somme was one of the defining struggles of the First World War, and a campaign that forever shaped the story of Australia's armed forces. Its fields bore witness to the bravery of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) - a testament to the Anzac spirit of courage, endurance and mateship.

On the Somme in 1916, soldiers of the AIF fought with extraordinary courage and determination in battles that would become etched into our national memory. From the fields around Pozieres and Mouquet Farm to the later fighting at Flers and Gueudecourt, Australian troops endured relentless shellfire, bitter conditions and devastating losses. At Pozieres alone, the Australian divisions suffered more than 23,000 casualties in just six weeks - a stark reminder of the terrible price paid in the struggle for the Somme.

Yet amid the destruction and hardship, the character of the Australian soldier shone through. The men of the AIF demonstrated resilience, initiative and mateship under the most trying circumstances. Their determination helped secure hard-won gains that contributed to the wider allied effort on the Western Front.

Today, more than a century later, we remember those Australians who served on the Somme - the thousands who never returned home, and the many more whose lives were forever changed by their experiences there. Their sacrifice is honoured in the quiet cemeteries and memorials of northern France, and in the enduring gratitude of the nation they served.

As members of today's Australian Defence Force, we carry forward their legacy. The courage, professionalism and commitment shown by the men of the AIF on the Somme continue to inspire the values that guide our people today.

On this 110th anniversary, we pause to remember their sacrifice, to honour their service, and to ensure that the story of those Australians who fought on the Somme will never be forgotten.

2026

# VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

*Australian War Cemetery*



**Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery** stands on the former Hill 104, overlooking the Somme countryside near Amiens. Within its grounds rises the Australian National Memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled in 1938, commemorating more than 10,000 Australian servicemen who died in France and have no known grave. With its ordered rows of headstones, Cross of Sacrifice and memorial tower, Villers-Bretonneux remains one of Australia's most sacred sites of remembrance on the Western Front.



Manchester Piccadilly

Victory Over Blindness is a bronze sculpture by Johanna Domke-Guyot. On Piccadilly Approach outside the main entrance of Manchester Piccadilly station and was commissioned by Blind Veterans UK and unveiled in October 2018. It is believed to be the only memorial to depict those wounded in the First World War.

# FROM THE SOMME TO TODAY

*Blind Veterans UK and 110 years of support*

**Blind Veterans UK** traces its origins to one of the most devastating periods in British military history: the First World War. Founded in 1915 and formerly called **St Dunstan's**, the charity emerged in response to growing numbers of servicemen who returned from the front blinded by modern warfare. The Battle of the Somme in 1916, with its heavy artillery and shrapnel, came to symbolise both the scale of the conflict and the life changing injuries endured by thousands.

Little could be done medically in 1916 for catastrophic eye injuries. Survivors often faced a future of isolation, poverty, and dependency. In this context, Blind Veterans UK played a revolutionary role. Rather than treating blindness as the end of a useful life, it helped veterans rebuild independence, confidence, and purpose. Training in mobility, everyday skills, and employment challenged the assumption that people who had lost their sight were destined only for charity or institutional care.

Central to this transformation was Sir Ian Fraser, later Lord Fraser of Lonsdale. Fraser was himself a product of the Somme. Serving as a young captain with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, he was blinded by a bullet during the battle in 1916. Sent to St Dunstan's to recover, he experienced first hand the charity's pioneering approach to rehabilitation—an experience that shaped both his own future and the organisation's direction.

Fraser became Chairman of St Dunstan's in 1921, a role he held for more than fifty years. As Lord Fraser, he was a leading national advocate for blind and disabled people. He believed rehabilitation should be practical, demanding, and rooted in dignity. Under his leadership, the charity expanded training programmes and strengthened its commitment to supporting veterans not just at the point of injury, but throughout their lives.

Lord Fraser also became a powerful link between battlefield experience and civilian society. He demonstrated that

disability need not limit ambition. Beyond the charity, he served as an MP and a Governor of the BBC, using his platform to challenge wider perceptions of blindness. His leadership helped cement St Dunstan's reputation as a forward thinking organisation shaped by veterans, for veterans.

The legacy of the Somme and the First World War remains embedded in Blind Veterans UK's identity and public memory. A statue of blind WWI soldiers has stood outside Manchester Piccadilly Station since 2018, reminding passers by of the human cost of conflict and the determination required to rebuild a life without sight.

The charity still supports men and women who lose their sight as a result of military service. Today, it also supports veterans who lose their sight later in life, whether or not the cause is directly connected to service ensuring they can access specialist help, community, and practical tools to live well.

While methods and technologies have evolved, the core mission remains unchanged from 110 years ago: to help blind veterans live lives of independence, fulfilment, and dignity.

From supporting young soldiers blinded on the muddy fields of the Somme to helping modern veterans navigate life after service, Blind Veterans UK stands as a bridge between past and present. Its continued work is a



Lord Fraser of Lonsdale

testament to the resilience of those it serves, and to the enduring vision first championed in the shadow of the First World War. The need for that support has not disappeared, only the context has changed.

Visit [blindveterans.org.uk](http://blindveterans.org.uk) to find out more about the charity's history, how it supports veterans today, and how you can support this life-changing work.



# Then. Now. Always.

**1916:** There for those losing their sight at the Somme.

**2026:** There for all veterans who have or will lose their sight.

For over a century, Blind Veterans UK has helped veterans rebuild their lives after sight loss. Restoring independence, dignity and hope.



110 years on, we're still here. Thanks to you. Help us be there for the next generation.

[blindveterans.org.uk/somme](http://blindveterans.org.uk/somme)

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The Association remembers with gratitude all those who served, suffered and fell during one of the defining battles of the Great War. Their courage, endurance and sacrifice continue to inspire those who serve today. As custodians of service, duty and support to the Army family, we honour their memory and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that their names, deeds and sacrifice are never forgotten.



We are the focal point for serving & veteran members of the AGC and their families.

It offers financial support to those experiencing hardship and difficulty to assist with life's unforeseen challenges.

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SOMME 110



## THE ARMY AIR CORPS CHARITY

Charity No: 1184333

On the 110th Anniversary The Army Air Corps remembers with pride all who served and sacrificed on the battlefields of the Somme. Their courage, duty and devotion remain an enduring example to all who serve today.



If you would like to support the AAC Charity please contact:

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# THE ROYAL SCOTS DRAGOON GUARDS (CARABINIERS & GREYS)

*Nemo Me Impune Lacessit*  
'No one provokes me with impunity'



SOMME 110



3rd (Prince of Wales's)  
Dragoon Guards



6th Dragoon Guards  
(The Carabiniers)



2nd Dragoons  
(The Royal Scots Greys)

On this solemn anniversary, we remember with pride and reverence the service of our antecedent regiments - 3rd (Prince of Wales's) Dragoon Guards, 6th Dragoon Guards (The Carabiniers) and 2nd Dragoons (The Royal Scots Greys) - who stood ready in France during The Battle of the Somme in 1916 and bore witness to the endurance and sacrifice of all who fought.

We honour the memory of those who gave their lives amidst the mud and fire of the Somme, and we reaffirm our duty to carry forward their legacy of service, unity, and remembrance.

To donate to The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Charity please visit:

[www.scotsdg.org.uk](http://www.scotsdg.org.uk)



MESSAGE FROM

# GÉNÉRAL D'ARMÉE AÉRIENNE FABIEN MANDON

FRENCH CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF



One hundred and ten years ago, on the fields of the Somme, Europe endured one of the most intense and defining battles of the First World War. The landscape of northern France became a place of immense sacrifice, courage, and endurance. Today, as we pause to remember, we do so with humility and gratitude - for the lives given, for the bonds forged, and for the legacy that continues to shape our shared security and values.

The Battle of the Somme stands as a solemn reminder of the human cost of war. French and British soldiers fought side by side. Their determination was not only military, it was moral. In the trenches, comradeship transcended language and uniform, laying the foundations of a partnership that endures to this day.

We also honour the paramount contribution of soldiers from across the Commonwealth. Men from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Newfoundland, and many other territories answered the call. Far from their homes, they fought and fell on French soil, leaving an indelible mark on our history. They are our brothers-in-arms.

The Somme was also a crucible of transformation. For the first time, tanks were introduced on the battlefield, heralding a new era in land warfare. Though rudimentary and imperfect, they symbolised the determination to adapt, to innovate, and to find new ways to break the deadlock of the trenches. In the skies above, air power emerged as a decisive factor. Aviators flying fragile aircraft with extraordinary bravery, fought for air superiority - conducting reconnaissance, protecting troops on the ground, and engaging in combat that would shape the future of air warfare. Their pioneering efforts laid the groundwork for the integrated, joint operations that define modern deployments.

Remembering the Somme is not only about looking back; it is about understanding what was forged there. The close cooperation between France and the United Kingdom, tested in the harshest of circumstances, became a cornerstone of European security up until today.

On this 110th anniversary, I want to convey my gratitude to all who fought at the Somme. We remember the fallen with respect and honour the living legacy they left behind.

2026

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SOMME 110

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### FIRST AUSTRALIAN TOUR Through the Somme

Since 2010, a family-friendly version of this tour has been offered, allowing children to participate free of charge while only parents pay.

This full-day tour explores key Australian battlefields, memorials and places of remembrance across the Somme.

The day begins in Amiens with a visit to its magnificent 13th-century cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of France's greatest Gothic landmarks. The cathedral contains a French commemorative plaque honouring Australia's contribution to victory in the First World War, as well as the Australian fighting flag first presented by General Sir William Birdwood.

The tour then continues to Villers-Bretonneux, one of the most important places of Australian remembrance on the Western Front. Here you will visit Adelaide Cemetery, where the Unknown Australian Soldier was chosen, the Victoria School and Franco-Australian Museum, and the Australian National Memorial, with its white tower and wall of honour. This is also the site of the ANZAC Day Dawn Service and the Sir John Monash Centre, which tells the story of Australia's role on the Western Front. After lunch beside the canal, the tour moves on to Le Hamel, where the Australian Corps Memorial Park explains the decisive role of Australian forces in the battles of 1918.

At Pozieres, you will visit the 1st Division Memorial, the Windmill site on Pozieres Ridge, and Mouquet Farm, one of the most sombre Australian battlefields on the Somme. The village also contains three Australian battle plaques, underlining its lasting place in the nation's military history.

The tour concludes with a return to Amiens station in time for the direct evening train to Paris.



MESSAGE FROM  
**GENERAL JENNIE CARIGNAN**  
CMM MSC MSM CD  
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF, CANADA



We honour the extraordinary courage, endurance, and sacrifice of all who fought in one of the most defining and costly battles of the First World War. The Somme stands as a solemn reminder of the price of freedom, a campaign that tested every fibre of human strength and resilience.

For Canada, the Somme marked a significant and deeply formative chapter in our nation's military history. The Canadian Corps, already gaining a reputation for determination and effectiveness, entered the battle in late August 1916. Though the fighting had already raged for nearly two months, the Canadians were tasked with some of the most difficult objectives of the campaign. They fought with courage and precision in a series of fierce engagements that demonstrated their growing skill, leadership, and unity as a fighting force.

At Courcelette, on 15th September 1916, the soldiers of the 2nd Canadian Division achieved one of the few clear successes of the battle, capturing and holding the village in a determined and costly struggle. It was also the first time the new British tanks were employed in combat, marking the dawn of mechanised warfare. Canadian troops fought alongside them with remarkable bravery, adapting quickly to the evolving demands of this new and brutal form of battle.

In the weeks that followed, the Canadian Corps continued its advance through relentless mud, shattered ground, and withering fire, capturing key positions such as Regina Trench and Kenora Trench before the offensive drew to its close in November. The cost was heavy with more than 24,000 Canadian casualties.

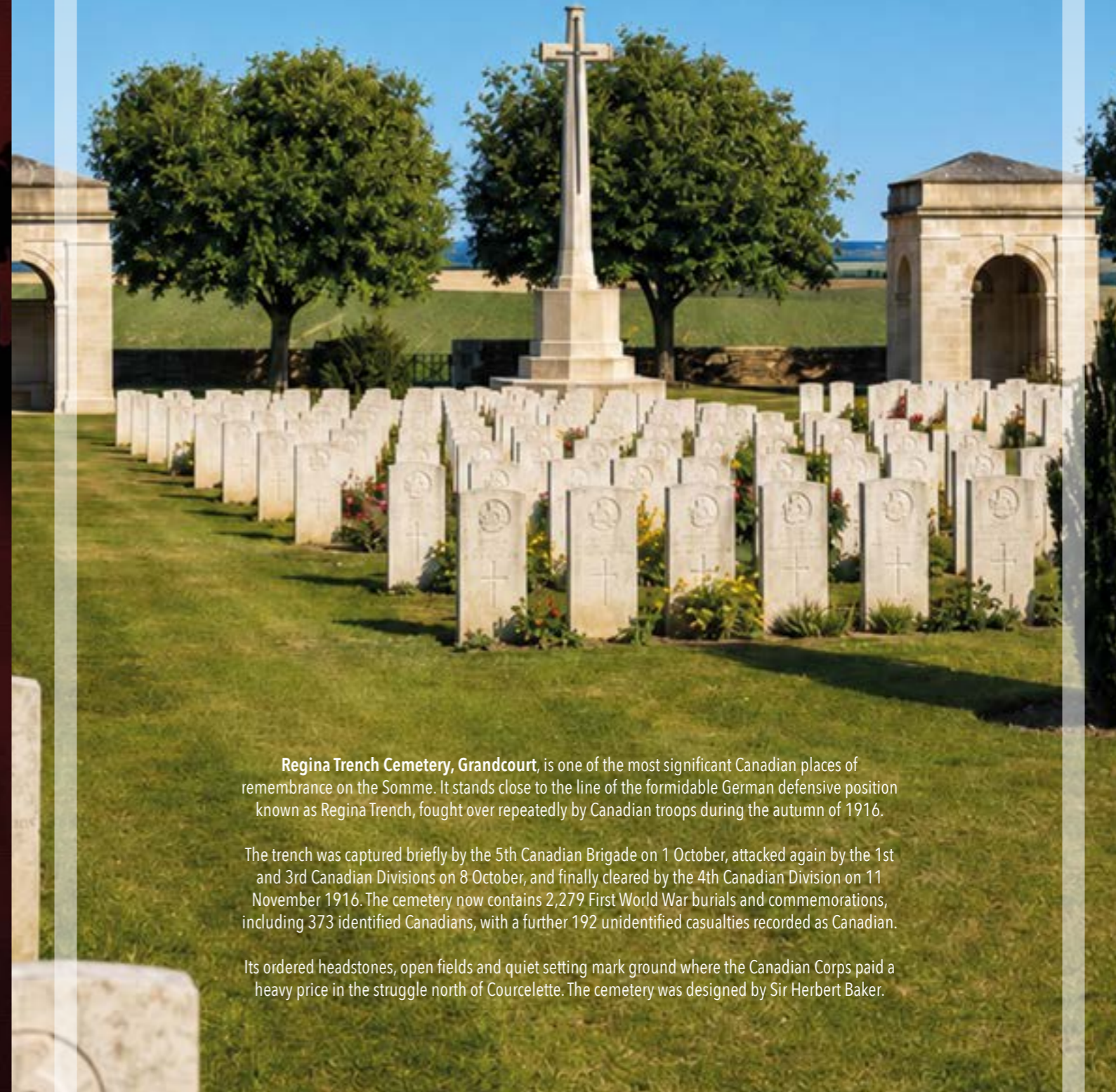
The Battle of the Somme was a crucible in which the character of the Canadian Army - and, indeed, of Canada itself - was forged. It was here that our troops earned a reputation for professionalism, innovation, and indomitable spirit that would later reach its height at Vimy Ridge and beyond. Those who served on the Somme laid the foundations for the modern Canadian Armed Forces - a force rooted in service, sacrifice, and steadfast commitment to the ideals of peace and freedom.

As we remember them today, we do so with humility and gratitude. We honour their courage under impossible conditions, their unwavering loyalty to one another, and their faith in a cause greater than themselves. Their legacy endures in our Armed Forces, in our national identity, and in our collective commitment to ensuring that the horrors of such conflict are never repeated.

On this solemn anniversary, we remember all who fought and fell on the Somme - Canadians, allies, and adversaries alike - and we pledge once again to carry forward the values for which they gave their lives.

2026

# REGINA TRENCH



**Regina Trench Cemetery, Grandcourt**, is one of the most significant Canadian places of remembrance on the Somme. It stands close to the line of the formidable German defensive position known as Regina Trench, fought over repeatedly by Canadian troops during the autumn of 1916.

The trench was captured briefly by the 5th Canadian Brigade on 1 October, attacked again by the 1st and 3rd Canadian Divisions on 8 October, and finally cleared by the 4th Canadian Division on 11 November 1916. The cemetery now contains 2,279 First World War burials and commemorations, including 373 identified Canadians, with a further 192 unidentified casualties recorded as Canadian.

Its ordered headstones, open fields and quiet setting mark ground where the Canadian Corps paid a heavy price in the struggle north of Courcelette. The cemetery was designed by Sir Herbert Baker.

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**MAKING SOLDIERS'  
LIVES BETTER**



**Major Stewart Walter Loudoun-Shand VC**

Born Stewart Shand in Ceylon, on October 8th 1879, he was the second of six sons.

When war erupted across Europe in the summer of 1914, Stewart left Ceylon and returned to England. That November he was commissioned into the Yorkshire Regiment.

Promotion came swiftly. By September 1915, when he and his battalion deployed to the Western Front for the first time, he was already serving as a Captain; three months later, in December, he had risen to the rank of Major.

On 1 July 1916 - the opening day of the Battle of the Somme - The Major led his men over the top near Fricourt. They were met immediately by intense machine-gun fire. Refusing to seek cover, he deliberately exposed himself in order to steady and drive his men forward. Even after receiving a mortal wound, he demanded to be propped up so that he could continue to watch the advance and urge his soldiers on.

For his exceptional gallantry, resolute leadership, and conspicuous bravery under fire, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross - one of nine VCs granted for acts of valour on the first day of the Somme.



Troops of the 10th (Service) Battalion (1st Hull), East Yorkshire Regiment marching to the trenches near Doullens, 28 June 1916. Image: IWM (Q 743)

# The White Rose in Picardy

## The Yorkshire battalions over the top together

On 1 July 1916, as the whistles blew along a front stretching from Gommecourt to Montauban, Yorkshire went forward. Clerks from Leeds, dockworkers from Hull, mill hands from Bradford, miners from Castleford, farm labourers from the North Riding – men of four great county regiments – climbed out of their trenches and stepped into history. Today, their legacy lives on in the modern The Yorkshire Regiment, but in 1916 they wore different cap badges: the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, the Green Howards, and the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. All four fought on the Somme. All four left their dead in its chalk.

### The West Yorkshire Regiment: The Leeds Pals and the northern flank

The West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) was deeply committed on the northern sector of the Somme battlefield, particularly around Serre and the villages facing the German strongpoints of the Ancre heights.

Most famous - and most tragic - were the 11th and 12th Battalions, the Leeds Pals. Raised in the heady recruiting drives of 1914, they embodied the civic pride of Leeds: workmates, neighbours, brothers-in-law serving side by side. On the morning of 1 July, they advanced towards Serre under the weight of an artillery bombardment that had failed to cut wire or silence machine guns. Within

minutes, lines dissolved under concentrated fire. Officers and men fell in swathes. Entire streets in Leeds would later mourn together.

Other battalions of the regiment fought across the Somme front throughout the campaign - the 1st Battalion, the 1/6th and 1/7th Territorials, and further Service battalions committed in later phases. They endured the grinding struggle that followed the failed opening: renewed assaults, counter-attacks, reliefs through shattered trenches, and the endless labour of consolidation. The Somme for them was not one day, but months of attrition.

### The East Yorkshire Regiment: Hull's battalions in the storm

If Leeds suffered, so too did Hull. The East Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own) sent multiple battalions into the Somme fighting, including the celebrated Hull Pals – the 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions.

On 1 July they attacked north of the Albert-Bapaume road, advancing towards German lines near Serre and Beaumont-Hamel. The ground was open, the wire often intact, and the defenders prepared. Casualties were severe. The optimism of the spring - that the "Big Push" would break the deadlock - died in the wheatfields and shell holes of Picardy. Yet the East Yorkshires continued to serve through the

long campaign. Later phases saw Yorkshire battalions engaged in actions around Thiepval and the Schwaben Redoubt as the British Army adapted its tactics: shorter bombardments, creeping barrages, more coordinated infantry-artillery cooperation.

The regiment's battalions endured the mud of autumn and the creeping cold as the offensive ground on into November. Hull's sacrifice became woven into the city's identity. The Somme was not an abstraction. It was absence at the docks, empty desks in offices, silent pews on Sunday mornings.

### The Green Howards: From the North Riding to Bazentin Ridge

The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment) were equally present in the Somme campaign, their battalions fighting in several of its defining actions.

The 6th Battalion attacked on 1 July, while other battalions became involved in the great effort to seize the Bazentin Ridge on 14 July 1916 - one of the few moments in the campaign when surprise and coordination yielded significant gains. In the grey dawn, Yorkshiremen moved forward behind a creeping barrage, capturing objectives that had seemed unattainable weeks before.

From Bazentin the battle rolled towards High Wood - that dark, splintered wood which became synonymous with confusion and ferocity. Fighting there was close, disorientating, often hand-to-hand among shattered trunks and churned earth. The Green Howards, like so many units, experienced the Somme as a sequence of partial victories, costly footholds, and renewed assaults.

By late summer and autumn, the regiment's battalions were veterans of a new kind of war. They had seen the first appearance of tanks in September. They had advanced behind improved artillery plans. They had learned, painfully, how to survive in a landscape stripped of all-natural cover.

### The Duke of Wellington's Regiment: The West Riding in the line

The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding Regiment) brought battalions from the industrial towns and rural valleys of the West Riding into the Somme struggle. Regular battalions and wartime Service battalions alike took part in the offensive's successive stages.

Elements of the regiment fought in the protracted struggle around Pozières and the approaches to the high ground dominating the Somme battlefield. Here the fighting became a contest of artillery and endurance.

Positions changed hands under constant shellfire; trenches were obliterated and re-dug; battalions were reduced and reconstituted. By autumn, as rain turned the battlefield into a quagmire, the Dukes - like their county counterparts - were engaged in attacks aimed at grinding down German resistance. Objectives were measured in yards, not miles.

Gains were consolidated under fire. Reliefs were hazardous journeys through mud-clogged communication trenches. For the West Riding, the Somme was not defined solely by 1 July, but by persistence - by the determination to hold, to advance, to endure.

### A County at War

Though separated by regimental identity, Yorkshire's soldiers often fought shoulder to shoulder. The Somme offensive drew divisions from across Britain into contiguous sectors; battalions from Hull might relieve those from Leeds; North Riding men might find themselves alongside West Riding comrades in the same shattered trench.

By late 1916, distinctions blurred in the shared experience of the campaign. All had marched into Picardy with confidence that massed artillery and moral purpose would carry the day. All had learned that modern industrial war was governed by machine guns, deep dugouts, and the brutal arithmetic of attrition.

Yet the Somme was not futile in the simple sense often portrayed. The British Army that entered the battle in July was not the same army that emerged in November. Tactics evolved. Artillery coordination improved. Infantry platoons became more flexible and specialised. The presence of Yorkshire battalions in successive, increasingly sophisticated operations reflects that transformation.

In July 1916 Yorkshire went forward together. It suffered together. It learned together. And in the quiet rows of white headstones beneath the vast skies of Picardy, the story of that shared sacrifice remains - not as myth, nor as abstraction, but as history written in chalk and blood.



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*Manui Dat Cognitio Vires - "Knowledge gives strength to the arm"*



## SOMME 110


As we mark the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we remember all who served amid its terrible trials, including those whose work was often unseen yet vital to the armies in the field. During the Somme, British military intelligence was supported by the wartime Intelligence Corps, formed in 1914, though the modern permanent Corps would later be established in 1940. Guided today by the motto *Manui Dat Cognitio Vires* - "Knowledge gives strength to the arm" - we pay tribute to those who gathered, interpreted and safeguarded information in the service of their comrades. Their quiet diligence, courage and judgement remain part of the enduring story of sacrifice, duty and remembrance.

If you would like to support or find out more about The Regimental Association, please visit our website:

[www.roseandlaurel.uk](http://www.roseandlaurel.uk)



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Final of the 48th Divisional (Fanshawe) Cup. 1/7th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment versus 1/7th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment played at Trissino, Italy. April 1918. Image IWM Q 26357

|||||  
COMMONWEALTH  
WAR GRAVES  
|||||

# TAKING THE FIELD

*Footballers who died in The Great War*

We remember the Commonwealth international footballers who gave their lives in the Great War

*By Alec Malloy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission*

## FOOTBALLERS AT WAR - INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALLERS SERVING IN THE RANKS

On the face of it, footballers have many attributes that would make them ideal soldiers:

They're fit, active young men in the prime of their lives, they already know about the value of teamwork in competitive environments and the power of the bonds forged, they have a cutting edge that makes them want to win and succeed at all costs

Indeed, many thousands of professional players would enlist during the World Wars, joining many other athletes serving in wartime. During both conflicts, football was used by enlisted men for some much-needed recreation. Regiments, battalions, companies, ships, and squadrons all formed their own sides

for friendly competition to help blow off some steam after their front-line service.

Then there is the now legendary Christmas Truce football match. Yuletide 1914 brought a miraculous day of peace and reconciliation for some of the Imperial German and British troops facing each other in Belgium and northern France.

A letter published on the 1st of January 1915 edition of The Times from a Royal Medical Corps officer suggests his regiment played against Saxons, resulting in a (typical) 3-2 victory for the Germans.

While there is little corroborating evidence to suggest the event happened, one German lieutenant, Johannes Niemann of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, also wrote of it. Many soldiers wrote about attempts to

arrange a match between the two warring powers as well.

It's more likely that some impromptu kickabouts occurred up and down the line in places where the guns fell silent on Christmas Day. Whatever the truth about a proper match (3-2!), the stories go to show the power of football and sport in bringing people together even in the most extraordinary circumstances.

## THE GREAT WAR AND THE BIRTH OF THE FOOTBALL BATTALIONS

Between 1915-1919, professional football was cancelled. Exhibition matches and tournaments would continue to take place, but manpower needs meant every available man was expected to take part in the war effort. Professional clubs, whose livelihood at that point relied almost entirely on match day takings, were

Continued on Page 68

SOMME  
MESSAGE FROM  
**SIR GEOFF HURST** MBE  
COMMEMORATING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ENGLAND'S WORLD CUP WIN - 1966

Sixty years have passed since that extraordinary afternoon at Wembley when England lifted the World Cup for the first, and so far only, time. July 1966 remains a moment of immense pride — not just for those of us fortunate enough to play that day, but for a nation brought together in celebration.

Yet as we mark that sporting anniversary, it is right that we also pause to remember a far more solemn milestone: the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. It was a battle that defined a generation, where sacrifice on an unimaginable scale was endured in the service of something greater than oneself.

For those of us who grew up in the shadow of the Second World War, remembrance was never abstract. The legacy of earlier conflicts — of fathers, uncles, neighbours, and teammates who had served - shaped our understanding of duty and humility. Football, like life, does not exist in isolation from history.

Before the roar of Wembley, before packed terraces and international honours, many footballers exchanged boots for uniforms. Across the First World War, men from professional and amateur clubs alike answered the call to serve. Players who had thrilled crowds one season found themselves in the trenches the next - some returning, many not. The Somme claimed lives from every walk of British society, including footballers whose promise was cut short in the mud and wire of northern France.

I have always held deep admiration for the men who served in the Armed Forces - for their courage, discipline, and selflessness. Those qualities are timeless. They are not confined to battlefields or stadiums; they are values that endure. In our own small way, the England team of 1966 tried to reflect some of that spirit - unity, resilience, and belief in one another.

The World Cup victory was never just about football. It belonged to the people - to those who had lived through hardship, to families still shaped by loss, and to a country that understood the cost of freedom. If that triumph meant something more, it was because it came from a nation that remembered sacrifice.

As we commemorate both anniversaries — sixty years since 1966 and one hundred and ten since the Somme - we honour two very different forms of service. One brought joy; the other demanded everything. Both are part of our shared story.

2026

against having their talents serve and games suspended. Public opinion began to turn against football clubs.

There was even a suggestion that King George V should remove his patronage from the Football Association.

However, politician William Joynson-Hicks organised the 17th (Service) Battalion as part of the Middlesex Regiment in December 1914. The Football Battalion was born with England international Frank Buckley being the first professional to enlist.

A second Football Battalion, the 23rd (Service) Battalion was formed in 1915 with former Tottenham Hotspur player Alan Haig-Brown assigned as its commanding officer in 1916.

Entire teams signed up. Leyton Orient - then Clapham Orient - signed up to fight as one, as did the Heart of Midlothian squad from Edinburgh, who served with the 16th Royal Scots (McCrae's Battalion).

At the breakout of the Great War, there were around 5,000 professional footballers in England and Wales. By the war's end, 2,000 or so signed up to serve. Approximately 300 would lose their lives during the conflict. Speaking of the professional footballers who served in his unit, the 17th (Service) Battalion's Commander Colonel H.T. Fenwick said:

"I knew nothing of professional footballers when I took over this Battalion, I have learnt to value them. I would go anywhere with such men. Their esprit de corps was amazing. This feeling was mainly due to football - the link of fellowship which bound them together. Football has a wonderful grip on these men and on the Army generally."

**WOMEN'S FOOTBALL ON THE HOME FRONT**

Interestingly, the First World War had a strong impact on the development of women's football in the United Kingdom.

While men were away at the front, women had been recruited into the workforce in greater numbers than ever, working in munitions factories and similar industries to support the war effort.

"Munitionettes", as they became known, were also encouraged to play sport, with football being exceptionally popular. Soon, teams like Dick, Kerr Ladies were playing massive exhibition matches, raising morale and money for charitable causes.

Sadly, despite the enormous popularity of the women's game in wartime, the Football Association banned women from playing on its affiliated grounds in 1921, saying the football was "unsuitable for females".



A recruitment poster for the Football Battalions

This decision had major implications for the growth and development of the women's amateur and professional football in the UK. We are only now seeing it grow in tandem with the men's game.

*This article and the Stories OF Fallen Footballers first appeared on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website (www.cwgc.org) in 2022 and has been reproduced with the permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*

Officers versus other ranks football match played by members of the 26th Divisional Ammunition Train, ASC near their camp, just outside the city of Salonika, Christmas Day 1915. Image IWM Q 31574



**The Battle of the Somme was the largest battle of the First World War and one of the most harrowing in human history. It was fought between July 1 and November 18, 1916, and saw more than one million people killed or wounded.**

The first day on the Somme was, in terms of casualties, the worst 24 hours throughout the existence of the British Army with more than 57,000 casualties. Britain's troops in action featured the remains of the regular army, the Territorials and a force of volunteer recruits including many Pals Battalions of neighbours and workmates.

Among the Pals participants was the 17th (Service) Battalion, an infantry battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. At its core was a group of professional footballers plus others who were recruited locally and featured a large number of the Spurs ground staff. Parades and target training were staged at White Hart Lane, and our players were well represented throughout its ranks.

The Lane was requisitioned by the Ministry of Munitions for the duration. While we played locally based "home" games at Homerton or Highbury, Kinglers Manufacturers used our ground to make protective clothing such as leather hoods for Navy gunners plus an estimated 11 million gas masks.

The 23rd (Service) Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, was formed in June 1915, and became known as the 2nd Football Battalion as football on a national basis was suspended throughout the country and pressure was put on sportsmen at all levels to serve on the Western Front.

Our former winger **Alan Haig-Brown** was appointed commanding officer of the 23rd and two other Spurs players - **George Bowler** and **William Oliver** - were among the first recruits when the club staged a rally at the stadium to encourage players and fans to join up. **Haig-Brown**, from Cambridge, had played for Charterhouse (where his father was headmaster), his hometown university and Corinthians before he joined us as an amateur in October 1901, in our Southern League days.

He survived the Somme - as thankfully so did half-back **Bowler** and outside-left **Oliver** - and **Alan** also came through after a spell on the Italian front. He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order but sadly died in March 1918, when he returned to France during the German Spring Offensive. He was 40.

**Bowler**, from Newhall, Derbyshire, lived on until the age of 58, while Walthamstow-born **Oliver** suffered a knee injury early on active service and was subsequently discharged from the army in September 1916.

Our England international centre-forward **Vivian Woodward** served as a captain in the Football Battalion with **Walter Tull**, fighting for both the 17th and the 23rd. **Tull** was a sergeant on the Somme and when he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, he became the army's first black combat officer in the field. **Tull**, born in Folkestone from where he embarked with his regiment for the front, had joined us from Clapton in 1909 having served an apprenticeship as a printer at an orphanage in Bethnal Green. He got through the Somme and was recommended for the Military Cross for "gallantry and coolness" in Italy but died in action on his return to France at Pas-de-Calais in 1918. He was 29.

**Woodward** was wounded and, although he was able to fight on for the duration, his injuries forced him to retire from football at the cessation of hostilities.

Another pair of former Tottenham players who served in the regiment and happily survived the carnage were sergeant **Ernie Coquet** and private **Percy Humphreys**, an England international inside-right. Sadly, two ex-Spurs men who made the ultimate sacrifice on the Somme were **Archie Wilson** and **Norman Wood**. Born in Ayrshire, **Archie** started out with Nottingham Forest and joined our junior staff in December 1909, at the age of 18. However, there were doubts about the tricky winger making the grade and so he joined Southend United in the summer of 1911. He did well there and continued his emergence as a quality player with Middlesbrough from July 1914. When war broke out, he joined the London Scottish Regiment and returned to guest for Spurs. After playing 10 games for us, he left for the Front where he was killed on the first day of the Battle. He was 26.

**Norman** came from Streatham and played for Bromley before he was spotted by Spurs when representing the London FA. He joined us in 1907 and played on the left wing for our Reserves for two years before spending time with Crystal Palace,

Plymouth Argyle, Croydon Common, Chelsea and Stockport County. He was also serving with the Middlesex Regiment, as a Sergeant at Delville Wood during the Somme onslaught, when he was killed in action on July 28, 1916. He too was 26. His name is inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial.

Ten more Spurs players would die in other sectors of the conflict. They were (with ages where known) - **George Bodenoch** (27), **Jim Fleming** (33), **Fred Griffiths** (44), **John Hebdon**, **Alf Hobday** (28), **John Jarvie** (27), **Ed Lightfoot** (28), **Harold Lloyd**, **Alexander MacGregor** and **Findlay Weir** (29).

**We salute them all.**

Article by John Fennelly





# OVER THE TOP

*The East Surreys and footballs at the Somme*

by Colonel (Retired) Patrick Crowley MBE DL, Deputy Colonel Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

On 1 July 1916, several footballs, different sources say 2, 3 or even 4, were kicked 'over the top' just before 'zero hour', 0730 hours, on 1 July 1916, by the East Surreys, to encourage the attack. The idea belonged to Officer Commanding B Company, Captain Wilfred 'Billie' Nevill, who had purchased some footballs on his last leave trip to Blighty. He believed that the use of footballs in the assault would calm his men. Prior to the attack, one football had 'G' and 'B' written on it; 6 Platoon, B Company. One ball had chalked on 'The Great European Cup-Tie Final. East Surreys v Bavarians. Kick off at zero'. Another had 'NO REFEREE' written on it.

The Battalion's objective was the enemy's *Breslau Trench* on *Montauban Ridge*. The Battalion had a frontage of 300 yards, B Company left forward and C Company right forward, however, B Company had the furthest to go to reach the German front line of trenches; 400 yards. As the attack began, one observer recorded:

I saw an infantryman climb onto the parapet into No Man's Land, beckoning the others to follow. As he did so he kicked off a football; a good kick, the ball rose and travelled well towards the German line. That seemed to be the signal to advance.

A prize was offered for the platoon that first succeeded in scoring a 'goal' in the *Breslau Trench*; this may have been a £1 note. Different sources state that B Company's second-in-command, Lieutenant Bobby Soames, and Private Furseys kicked two balls forward.

They reached the enemy trenches within twenty minutes, but it was during this short period that most of the casualties took place, including Captain Nevill, who was shot dead through the head.

Unlike most of the Somme attacks, this one was relatively successful with all objectives captured by 1330 hours. It was, however, at great expense. 50% of the East Surreys were dead, wounded or missing, including seven officers killed and seven wounded. For just this action, the Battalion was awarded two Distinguished Service Orders, two Military Crosses, two Distinguished Conduct Medals, one bar to the Military Medal and 8 Military Medals.

Amidst the bad British news of the day, this was some good news that the newspapers made the most of. It spawned these lines in the Daily Mail:

*On through the hail of slaughter  
Where gallant comrades fall,  
Where blood is poured like water,  
They drive the trickling ball.  
The fear of death before them  
Is but an empty name:  
True to the land that bore them  
The Surreys play the game!*

Fortunately, the Germans did not counter-attack against what was left of the Battalion that evening; its strength had been reduced from over 800 to about 250 men. The 8th East Surreys performance at the Somme, with its unique story of footballs, inspired the press to make the most of the story in the midst of such misery.

Major Alfred Irwin was the acting commanding officer during the Battalion's attack and this is an extract of the letter he wrote to Captain Nevill's mother on 3 July 1916:

*Death must have been absolutely instantaneous. He was one of the bravest men I have ever met, and was loved and trusted by his men to such a degree that they would have followed him anywhere, and did follow him that morning through an inferno of shell, rifle and machine-gun fire... He started his company in the assault by kicking off a football which his men dribbled right up to the German trench. I have been able to get that ball since, and will of course send*

*it to you if you should want it as a memento of him, but I and the other officers of the Battalion would be very grateful to you if you would allow us to keep it as a regimental trophy, and in memory of your son's gallantry.*

The two surviving footballs were returned to the East Surrey Regimental Depot at *Kingston Barracks*, where a special parade took place to mark The 8th Battalion's achievement. The commanding officer of the Depot, held one of the actual footballs aloft and gave a stirring speech, finishing with the words:

In affectionate memory we shall lay it up, and in years to come it will be a fitting memorial to the sacrifice of the gallant Battalion of this Regiment who played the game so well on that eventful day and who served so faithfully their God and Country.

**The Sole Surviving Football**  
(Queen's and PWRR Museum, Dover Castle)



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(Middlesex Regiment)

On the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we honour the valour and sacrifice of the antecedent regiments. These units fought with distinction across the Somme's shattered fields, from the opening assault on July 1st to the bitter struggles at Thiepval, Beaumont-Hamel, and Ginchy. Whether advancing under fire, holding trench lines, or supporting wounded comrades, their courage and resilience remain etched in our regimental memory.



THE SOMME 110



MESSAGE FROM

# LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROSSA MULCAHY

CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCES



We join with our neighbours, friends, and partners in solemn remembrance of one of the defining battles of the First World War. The Somme stands as a place of immense human cost, where thousands of lives were given in the belief that their sacrifice might help shape a more peaceful future.

Among those who fought were many men from across the island of Ireland. Their service came from different backgrounds, different beliefs, and different traditions, yet they stood together in the same mud, endured the same hardship, and faced the same terrible dangers. The story of the Irish at the Somme is one of bravery and heartbreak: from the men of the 36th (Ulster) Division to the 16th (Irish) Division, both of whom suffered grievous losses, shoulder to shoulder with comrades from across Britain and the wider world.

In honouring them, we remember that our shared history is complex, yet our shared humanity is unmistakable. The courage, loyalty, and endurance displayed on those fields continue to speak to us today, reminding us that even in the darkest moments, compassion and solidarity endure.

As we reflect, we also look to our present and future responsibilities. The pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and mutual understanding on this island and beyond remains central to who we are and the values we uphold. The memory of the Somme reminds us not only of what was endured, but also of what must never be forgotten.

Let us remember them with dignity. Let us speak their names with respect. And let us continue to build a world worthy of their sacrifice.

2026



## THE SOMME NURSING HOME

We are proud to support the 110th Anniversary of The Somme

**Established in 1914 to provide treatment and quality care for ex-service people and their spouses. We provide long term and convalescent nursing care for sick, wounded and disabled.**

### A caring past

The historic Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was legally founded in 1912-1913 to resist the imposition of Home Rule in Ireland and maintain Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom. The Somme Nursing Home in Belfast grew out of the UVF's medical service during World War I and was later renamed to distance itself from contemporary paramilitary associations.

In 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, the UVF leadership offered its entire medical organisation to the British War Office to run a fully equipped hospital for wounded and sick soldiers. This was accepted and a UVF hospital at Craigavon House, James Craig's own residence, opened in early 1915 as a charity hospital treating large numbers of soldiers, primarily from the 36th (Ulster) Division, the UVF's military grouping.

The hospital at Craigavon House continued for decades as a specialist facility, caring for First World War veterans and later ex-servicemen from subsequent conflicts, so the UVF-origin institution became part of Belfast's long-term ex-service welfare landscape.

In the early 1990s, the UVF Hospital closed under that name, and the extended facility on the same site formally reopened as the Somme Hospital (or Somme Nursing Home), still dedicated to ex-service personnel and their spouses. The choice of the name "Somme" reflects the strong identity with the 36th (Ulster) Division's losses on 1 July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

### A caring future

Today, Somme Nursing Home operates as a charitable nursing home providing long-term and convalescent care specifically for ex-servicemen and women, their spouses, and related groups such as Merchant Navy veterans and former police and prison officer veterans.

It continues the tradition begun under the historical UVF medical scheme in 1914, maintaining a focus on the needs of veterans while functioning under modern care standards and charity regulation in Northern Ireland.

We are very proud of the history and traditions embedded in the Somme Nursing Home and the continuum of top-quality care provided here. This is why our charity need your help.



Telephone: +44 (0) 28 9076 3044 | Web: [sommenursing.org](http://sommenursing.org)

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MESSAGE FROM

AIR MARSHAL TONY DAVIES MNZM  
NEW ZEALAND CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE



The 1916 Battle of the Somme was the New Zealand Division's first large-scale engagement on the Western Front. Over 23 days from the 15th of September, the Division conducted four major assaults and advanced over 4 kilometres into the German positions, before being withdrawn. Elements of the Division, including the artillery and the Pioneer Battalion, were in the line for significantly longer, with the gunners firing around half a million shells over 52 days. These successes, however, were purchased at great cost. The Division suffered around 8,000 casualties, of whom 2,100 lost their lives, more than half of whom have no known grave. They are commemorated on the New Zealand Memorial to the Missing in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, near Longueval.

Although the cost to New Zealand was great, the overall cost of the campaign was truly shocking. Casualties on both sides reached 1.2 million, including more than 250,000 dead from twenty-five countries. We should also remember that there was still more than two years of grueling war to endure after the Somme. Over a century later, it remains as important as it ever was to reflect on the courage displayed, the horrors endured by these men, and the sheer scale of the loss.

The men who lost their lives in the hundreds of thousands have lived on in the anguish of the loved ones whom they left behind, in the grief of their mothers and fathers, their children, and the generations who join in reflection today. We remember that whilst these men died as soldiers, more importantly, they were sons, brothers, fathers and uncles, whose lives were cut tragically short. The shared experiences of these men, and those left behind to grieve connect us today, families and nations intertwined through the human tragedy of the battle.

In November 2004, the New Zealand government brought home the remains of a New Zealand soldier from Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, which is part of the Somme battlefield. He now lies in the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, at our National War Memorial, Pukeahu, in Wellington. He reminds us of the many who did not return, and who now lie in graves in the far reaches of the world.

As we remember the past, let us also think of our future. As tensions increase across the world, let us learn from those who fought at the Somme. The peace which was fought for was short-lived, and only two decades later the world was once again at war. It is only through constant vigilance and by standing up to injustice that we are able to protect and maintain the peace and freedom for which these men fought, suffered, and died.

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# OUR TŪRANGAWAEWAE ON THE WESTERN FRONT

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# Elizabeth II: A Hundred Years

1926-2026



*In 2026, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II would have reached her 100th year. Though she is no longer with us, her century remains - written across history, memory, and the quiet continuity of the Crown.*

*Born in 1926 into a world still shadowed by the Great War, she would come to embody stability through another global conflict, decolonisation, social transformation, and the dawn of the digital age. Across seventy years of reign, she became not merely a monarch, but a constant - a steady voice in times of uncertainty.*

*Her centenary is not simply a birthday remembered; it is a moment to reflect on duty carried without complaint, service given without self, and a life lived in steadfast commitment to country and Commonwealth.*

## 100 YEARS OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Issued on 21 April 2026, '100 Years of Queen Elizabeth II' celebrates the life and legacy of Britain's longest reigning monarch. The late Queen is fondly remembered in Jersey, which she visited officially on six occasions between 1949 and 2005.

A stunning gold-foil finish has been used to complement the stamp's image of the Queen during the 1951 Trooping the Colour. Products available in the issue include a presentation pack, first-day cover, sheet of four, and a new limited-edition product, the Premier Wallet. This wallet features a key milestone timeline and includes the sheet of four.



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## The Royal Air Force Association of Jersey 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



In 2025, Jersey Stamps commemorated the centenary of The Royal Air Force Association of Jersey (RAFA). Illustrated by Harry Milburn, the artwork takes inspiration from original RAF recruitment posters, using a retro colour palette that brings a sense of nostalgia to the issue.

The set highlights the various work and projects the charity has undertaken over its 100 years, featuring six stamps, a souvenir sheetlet and miniature sheet.



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MESSAGE FROM

LIEUTENANT GENERAL M R ELVISS CB MBE  
COMMANDER FIELD ARMY & MASTER GUNNER, ST JAMES'S PARK



It is important to pause and remember one of the defining struggles of the First World War, and to honour all those who served and were ultimately sacrificed in the fields and villages of northern France.

For the Royal Regiment of Artillery, the Battle of the Somme was a clash of unprecedented scale and consequence. Never had British guns been assembled in such numbers, nor employed with such intensity. Gunners of the Royal Field Artillery, Royal Garrison Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery fought tirelessly to support the infantry advance, suppress enemy batteries, cut wire, and break fortified positions. Their fight was physically demanding, mentally challenging, technically complex, and always perilous. Moreover, it was conducted in appalling conditions of mud, noise and constant danger.

The opening bombardment of July 1916 represented a sincere and determined effort by the artillery to enable and protect those who advanced across no man's land. Throughout the long months that followed, artillery fires remained central to the evolving conduct of the battle. Techniques improved, counter-battery fire developed, and cooperation between gunners, infantry and airmen laid the foundations of modern combined-arms warfare. These lessons were paid for at great cost by the men who served and who were served by the guns.

Thousands of gunners did not return. Their sacrifice is remembered today in cemeteries and memorials across the Somme. Their legacy endures in the professionalism, adaptability and courage that continue to define our modern Royal Regiment of Artillery.

As Master Gunner St James's Park, I am humbled and deeply honoured to pay tribute to the memory of those gunners who served at the Somme, and all who fought for good there from across the Allied nations. We remember them for the values they represent. For their profound sense of duty and service, and for their selflessness. Not for how they died, but for the duty they upheld, the innovation they forged, and the service they gave in the most testing of circumstances.

The guns are silent now. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten. *Ubique*.

2026

# ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY THE GUNNERS



## SOMME 110

We honour the fallen of the Somme and remember with reverence the immense sacrifice of all who served. We pay tribute to those whose ceaseless fire supported the infantry across the shattered fields of France.

From the opening bombardment to the long months of attrition, their steadfast duty was both burden and bond, sustaining the Army through unimaginable loss. Their courage and endurance remain the foundation of our Regiment's spirit.

As we mark 110 years, we carry forward their legacy with pride and humility.  
"We will remember them."

To donate to the Royal Artillery Charitable Fund please visit: [racf.enthuse.com](http://racf.enthuse.com)

[www.thegunners.org.uk](http://www.thegunners.org.uk)



Three 8-inch howitzers of 39th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), firing from the Fricourt-Mamez Valley during the Battle of the Somme, August 1916. Image: IWM (Q 5818)

# The Guns That Thundered

## *The Royal Artillery at The Somme*

On 24 June 1916, long before the infantry went “over the top”, the landscape of the Somme - from the rolling fields of Albert to the ridges above the Ancre - was transformed into a furnace of fire and noise. For the British Army, the success of the offensive that lay ahead would rest overwhelmingly with one branch of service: the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

### A Prelude of Shellfire

In the months leading up to the Battle of the Somme, the British Army undertook an unprecedented artillery mobilisation. Commanded by General Sir Douglas Haig and executed under Fourth Army commander Sir Henry Rawlinson, this build-up saw an immense concentration of guns - far greater than any previous British bombardment - arrayed along a 25,000-yard front.

Heavy guns and howitzers, alongside field artillery, were assembled to cut wire, smash

trenches and destroy German defensive works. The artillery plan was meticulously detailed. Field guns were assigned to cut and clear belts of barbed wire that snaked in front of the German lines; heavier guns targeted enemy strong-points, observation posts and fortifications; and deep-buried dugouts were to be shattered by high-explosive fire.

Preparatory bombardment was scheduled over five days (U, V, W, X and Y days), culminating in the infantry assault on Z Day.

Yet even before the first shells fell, Royal Artillery gunners faced challenges of scale and terrain that no previous training could fully prepare them for.

Despite the vast weight of metal hurled at the German lines – millions of shells were fired in the week leading up to 1 July – the defences remained far stronger than anticipated. German wire often remained intact, and many deep dugouts survived the assault, allowing defenders to emerge unharmed as the bombardment lifted.

### The First Day: Thunderous and a Harsh Reality

On the morning of 1 July 1916, at 07:30 am, the preliminary bombardment lifted and the infantry of the British Fourth Army began their advance. The Royal Artillery's field guns switched to a “creeping barrage” in front of the advancing troops - a novel and complex tactic intended to keep enemy heads down and obscure their vision. In many places, however, the artillery had not cut the wire or neutralised machine-gun nests as planned.

Heavy artillery units, such as the 95th and 39th Siege Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery, continued to pound German positions throughout the morning, lifting fire ahead of advancing troops and engaging targets deep in the enemy rear. In the sector facing *Gommecourt*, for example, Royal Artillery howitzers opened a concentrated bombardment hours before zero hour, intending to destroy wire and soften the defences. While initial advances were made,

German counter-battery fire and intact defensive positions soon blunted these gains.

The intensity of artillery on Z Day was staggering, but the limitations of the period's technology were equally evident. Techniques for accurate counter-battery fire - to locate and silence German guns - were still in their infancy; aerial observation, weather-dependent and rudimentary by later standards, could not reliably correct fall of shot. As a result, many German batteries remained operational, barraging British positions and no man's land as the assault unfolded.

### Aftermath: Lessons Forged in Fire

The Somme would continue for nearly five months, and the role of the Royal Artillery evolved dramatically throughout the campaign. Units adapted their methods, improved coordination with infantry and aircraft, and refined techniques such as the creeping barrage and counter-battery fire. These innovations had profound effects on later

battles - most notably at *Messines* in 1917 - where artillery would decisively shape the battlefield.

Yet it was on the fields of the Somme in 1916 that this transformation was born. Here, amid mud, thunder and smoke, the Royal Artillery learned the terrible art of modern industrial warfare. Their guns did not win the battle alone - infantry courage, cavalry exploitation and logistical support all played their part - but without the relentless, thunderous effort of the artillerymen, the Somme would have been a vastly different and even more costly affair.

*“Nothing could exist at the conclusion of the bombardment in the area covered by it.”*

General Sir Henry Rawlinson

# THE REME ASSOCIATION

FOR THE REME FAMILY

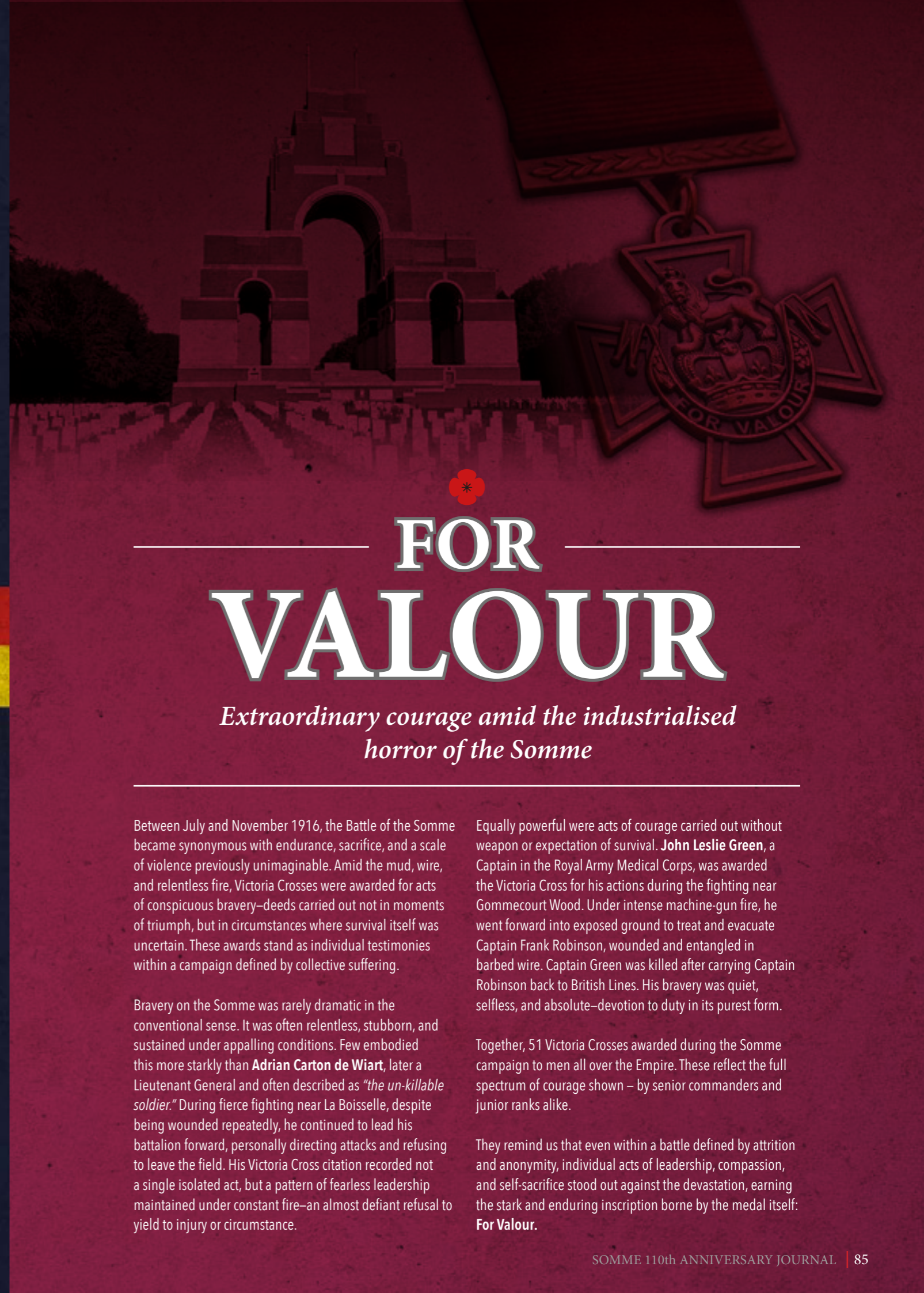
*Arte et Marte - By Skill and By Fighting*

**SOMME 110**



The Corps of **Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers** was formed in 1942, but the spirit of REME reaches back through every campaign in which soldiers relied upon skill, ingenuity and resolve to keep the Army moving. At the Somme, amid mud, shellfire and exhaustion, countless craftsmen, artificers, armourers, mechanics and repairers worked behind and near the line to keep guns firing, transport moving and equipment in service. Their labour was often unseen, but it was never secondary. In war, the ability to repair, recover and restore can be the difference between failure and endurance.

Today, REME carries forward that same tradition of technical excellence and soldierly courage. Guided by the motto *Arte et Marte — By Skill and By Fighting*, the Corps remembers all who served at the Somme, and pays tribute to those whose hands, knowledge and determination sustained the fighting soldier in one of the most demanding battles in British military history.



## FOR VALOUR

*Extraordinary courage amid the industrialised horror of the Somme*

Between July and November 1916, the Battle of the Somme became synonymous with endurance, sacrifice, and a scale of violence previously unimaginable. Amid the mud, wire, and relentless fire, Victoria Crosses were awarded for acts of conspicuous bravery—deeds carried out not in moments of triumph, but in circumstances where survival itself was uncertain. These awards stand as individual testimonies within a campaign defined by collective suffering.

Bravery on the Somme was rarely dramatic in the conventional sense. It was often relentless, stubborn, and sustained under appalling conditions. Few embodied this more starkly than **Adrian Carton de Wiart**, later a Lieutenant General and often described as *“the un-killable soldier.”* During fierce fighting near La Boisselle, despite being wounded repeatedly, he continued to lead his battalion forward, personally directing attacks and refusing to leave the field. His Victoria Cross citation recorded not a single isolated act, but a pattern of fearless leadership maintained under constant fire—an almost defiant refusal to yield to injury or circumstance.

Equally powerful were acts of courage carried out without weapon or expectation of survival. **John Leslie Green**, a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions during the fighting near Gommecourt Wood. Under intense machine-gun fire, he went forward into exposed ground to treat and evacuate Captain Frank Robinson, wounded and entangled in barbed wire. Captain Green was killed after carrying Captain Robinson back to British Lines. His bravery was quiet, selfless, and absolute—devotion to duty in its purest form.

Together, 51 Victoria Crosses awarded during the Somme campaign to men all over the Empire. These reflect the full spectrum of courage shown – by senior commanders and junior ranks alike.

They remind us that even within a battle defined by attrition and anonymity, individual acts of leadership, compassion, and self-sacrifice stood out against the devastation, earning the stark and enduring inscription borne by the medal itself: **For Valour.**

**Lt Col Tom Edwin Adlam VC**

*Bedfordshire Regiment  
Thiepval - 27th September 1916*



**Capt William Barnsley Allen VC**

*Royal Army Medical Corps  
Mesnil - 3rd September 1916*



**2nd Lt Donald Simpson Bell VC**

*Green Howards  
Horseshoe Trench - 5th July 1916*



**Capt Eric Norman Frankland Bell VC †**

*Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers  
Thiepval - 1st July 1916*



**Pte Thomas Cooke VC †**

*Australian Infantry  
Pozières - 23rd July 1916*



**Capt Gabriel Coury VC**

*South Lancashire Regiment  
Arrow Head Copse - 8th August 1916*



**Pte John Cunningham VC**

*East Yorkshire Regiment  
Ancre - 13th November 1916*



**SSgt Joseph John Davies VC**

*Royal Welch Fusiliers  
Delville Wood - 20th July 1916*



**Capt Eugene Paul Bennett VC**

*Worcestershire Regiment  
Le Transloy - 5th November 1916*



**Brigadier Arthur Seaforth Blackburn VC**

*Australian Infantry  
Pozières - 23rd July 1916*



**Lt William Ewart Boulter VC**

*Northamptonshire Regiment  
Trônes Wood - 14th July 1916*



**Brig-Gen Roland Boys Bradford VC**

*Durham Light Infantry  
Eaucourt L'Abbaye - 1st October 1916*



**Sgt Robert Downie VC**

*Royal Dublin Fusiliers  
Lesboeuifs - 23rd October 1916*



**Cpl Frederick Jeremiah Edwards VC**

*Middlesex Regiment  
Thiepval - 26th September 1916*



**CSM William John George Evans VC**

*Manchester Regiment  
Guilleumont - 30th July 1916*



**Capt William Frederick Faulds VC MC**

*South African Medical Corps  
Delville Wood - 18th July 1916*



**Sgt Donald Forrester Brown VC †**

*New Zealand Infantry  
Le Transloy - 1st October 1916*



**Brig-Gen John Vaughan Campbell VC**

*Coldstream Guards  
Ginchy - 15th September 1916*



**Lt-Gen Adrian Paul Ghislain Carton de Wiart VC**

*Gloucestershire Regiment  
La Boisselle - 2nd/3rd July 1916*



**Sgt Claud Charles Castleton VC †**

*Australian Infantry  
Pozières - 28th-29th July 1916*



**Lt-Gen Bernard Cyril Freyberg VC**

*Royal Naval Brigade  
Beaucourt-sur-Ancre - 13th November 1916*



**Sgt Albert Gill VC †**

*King's Royal Rifle Corps  
Delville Wood - 27th July 1916*



**Capt John Leslie Green VC †**

*Royal Army Medical Corps  
Gommecourt Wood - 1st July 1916*



**Pte Albert Hill VC**

*Royal Welch Fusiliers  
Delville Wood - 20th July 1916*



**Lt Geoffrey St George Shillington Cather VC †**

*Royal Irish Fusiliers  
Beaumont-Hamel - 1st July 1916*



**Capt Noel Godfrey Chavasse VC**

*Royal Army Medical Corps  
Guilleumont - 30th July 1916*



**Sgt Lionel Beaumaurice Clarke VC**

*Canadian Infantry  
Flers-Courcelette - 15th September 1916*



**Maj William La Touche Congreve VC †**

*Rifle Brigade  
Longueval - 20th July 1916*



**Maj John Vincent Holland VC**

*Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment  
Guilleumont - 3rd September 1916*



**Pte Thomas Hughes VC**

*Connaught Rangers  
Guilleumont - 3rd September 1916*



**Sgt David Jones VC**

*King's Regiment  
Guilleumont - 3rd September 1916*



**Pte Thomas Alfred Jones VC**

*Cheshire Regiment  
Morval - 25th September 1916*



Maj Henry  
Kelly VC

Duke of Wellington's Regiment  
Le Sars - 4th October 1916



Pte John Chipman  
Kerr VC

Duke of Wellington's Regiment  
Courcellette - 16th September 1916



Pte John  
Leak VC

Australian Infantry  
Pozières - 31st July 1916



Maj Stewart Walter  
Loundoun-Shand VC †

Yorkshire Regiment  
Fricourt - 1st July 1916



Sgt Walter Potter  
Ritchie VC

Seaforth Highlanders  
Beaumont-Hamel - 1st July 1916



Sgt Robert Edward  
Ryder VC

Middlesex Regiment  
Thiepval - 26th September 1916



Capt George  
Sanders VC

West Yorkshire Regiment  
Thiepval - 1st July 1916



Pte Willaim Henry  
Short VC

Green Howards  
Contalmaison - 6th August 1916



Pte William Frederick  
McFadzean VC †

Royal Irish Rifles  
Thiepval - 1st July 1916



LSgt Fred  
McNess VC

Scots Guards  
Ginchy - 15th September 1916



Pte James  
Miller VC †

King's Own Regiment  
Bazentin-le-Petit - 31st July 1916



Sgt Martin  
O'Meara VC

Australian Infantry  
Pozières - 9th-12th August 1916



Sgt James Youll  
Turnbull VC †

Highland Light Infantry  
Authuille - 1st July 1916



Pte Thomas George  
Turrall VC

Worcestershire Regiment  
La Boisselle - 3rd July 1916



Cpl Theodore William Henry  
Veale VC

Devonshire Regiment  
High Wood - 20th July 1916



Col Archie Cecil Thomas  
White VC

Green Howards  
Stuff Redoubt - 27th Sept-1st Oct 1916



Sgt Robert  
Quigg VC

Royal Irish Rifles  
Hamel - 1st July 1916



Pte James Cleland  
Richardson VC †

Canadian Infantry  
Ancre - 8th October 1916



Lt Thomas Orde Lawder  
Wilkinson VC †

Loyal North Lancashire Regiment  
La Boisselle - 4th July 1916



This list reflects the accepted 51 Victoria Cross citations awarded for actions during the Somme campaign.

Despite extensive cross-checking against London Gazette records, historians continue to debate classification in a small number of cases where citations do not explicitly name the battlefield.

† Awarded Posthumously



# THE DONCASTER SEVEN



George  
Harry  
Wyatt VC  
A Police  
Constable

Gilbert  
Insall VC MC  
A Pilot

Laurence  
Calvert VC  
A haulage hand

Thomas  
Norman  
Jackson VC  
A locomotive  
Engineer  
Killed in Action

William  
Hackett VC  
A tunneller  
Killed in Action

John  
Harper VC  
A Peat digger  
Killed in Action

Thomas  
Bryan VC  
A Greengrocer

## MEN OF EXTRAORDINARY VALOUR, DEVOTION TO DUTY & SELF-SACRIFICE

Doncaster holds the record for the most Victoria Cross recipients for a town having seven men who served their country and local communities during World War I and II.

Each have incredible stories and those who returned from the wars came back to the pre-war livelihoods in and around Doncaster. Only two, Wyatt VC Bryan VC are buried in Doncaster, whilst Insall VC was cremated there.

Calvert VC returned to Dagenham late in life and was buried there whilst Jackson VC and Harper VC are buried in CWGC cemeteries.

William (Bill) Hackett VC is buried where he fell, in the tunnels he was digging beneath Givenchy-en-Basse when a German mine exploded and entombed

him and several others. Bill helped six of them escape but refused to leave one badly wounded colleague stating 'I am a tunneller I must look after the others first'. The tunnels caved in and he and his colleague were lost.

Nominated for the King's Award for Voluntary Service, The Victoria Cross Trust maintains the memories and memorials of these men and other VCs across the UK raising all funds through donations and retail sales at their Doncaster shops. They placed memorial plaques in Doncaster to recognise the actions of these men and to create a lasting legacy for their extreme valour, devotion to duty and self-sacrifice.



Nominated for the  
King's Award  
for Voluntary Service.



If you would like to support the charity then visit their Just Giving page to make a Donation or their website [www.victoriacrosstrust.org](http://www.victoriacrosstrust.org).



# DONCASTER REMEMBERS



Wounded Doncaster soldiers  
in front of Egbert the Tank.  
Doncaster Local Studies Library

## SOMME 110

The City of Doncaster Council is honoured to support the 110th Anniversary Commemorative Journal of the Battle of the Somme, remembering with great respect all those from Doncaster whose lives were touched by the events of 1916. Across our city, towns and villages, men left their families, workplaces and communities to serve, and many never returned.

Their sacrifice became part of Doncaster's story, carried forward through memorials, family histories and acts of remembrance that endure to this day. In marking this anniversary, we pay tribute to their courage and service, and we stand together in ensuring that their memory continues to hold a valued place in the life of our borough.

[www.doncaster1914-18.org.uk](http://www.doncaster1914-18.org.uk)  
[www.doncaster.gov.uk](http://www.doncaster.gov.uk)



City of  
Doncaster  
Council

"Over the top "Somme" where in France". Photograph of The Royal Scots on the frontlines of the Somme.  
(From the photograph album of Lt.-Col. N Charteris)



# BETWEEN THE LINES

Contextualising a personal account of The Royal Scots at the Somme

*"I think tomorrow will see something important coming off"*

Corporal John Paul, The Royal Scots. 30th June 1916.

The Battle of the Somme is one of Britain's most well-known offensives, reaching the peak of its infamy within the first few hours of the months-long combat. The 2nd, 5th/6th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 15th, 16th and 17th Battalions of The Royal Scots all served at the frontlines of the Somme in the first month on the battle.

The 15th and 16th Battalions, both raised in Edinburgh, were tasked with advancing in the first wave of attacks on 1 July 1916. The two Battalions suffered so greatly in the first month that they could not differentiate between those killed, wounded or missing. The war diaries simply state 628 casualties for the 15th Battalion and 472 casualties for the 16th Battalion, nearly 60% of their respective total manpower.

## Corporal John Paul

Cpl Paul enlisted with the 15th Battalion and his diary begins with his deployment in January 1916. Throughout the war he served with distinction, receiving the Belgium Order of Leopold II with Croix de Guerre, Chevalier and being mentioned in despatches for his conduct in the field. By the end of the war, he had transferred to the 11th Battalion The Royal Scots and received promotion to the rank of Sergeant.

The following extracts from his diary detail his experience of the prelude to, and first month of, the Battle of the Somme. By taking his recollections alongside other contemporary accounts and modern research, we can contextualise his service and draw new appreciation for the experiences he and his fellow soldiers endured.

## Extracts from the Diary of 17718 Cpl John Paul

**24th June 1916** "A bombardment of the German lines began this morning"

**28th June 1916** "It is now 28th and bombardment has been going on all this time - sometimes quite quietly - sometimes so loudly that you have to shout to hear your own voice."

**29th June 1916** "Our farm received 5 more gas (lachry) shells into it today. I have a piece of one of them, or a piece of shrapnel which come over at the same time. I was told off to fill up a shell hole (lachry) and by gum it smelt - just about turned me into a water tank - so much water poured out of my eyes and nose. I have a piece of copper driving band I found when filling the hole."

The British Army prepared for The Somme with a week's worth of bombardment of the German lines. The goal was to overwhelm their forces and destroy their infrastructure and morale so that, when the time came, the British Forces could begin their slow march and simply walk across No Man's Land.

During this week, the 15th Battalion were surprised to be defending their position when a German party attempted to launch an attack. The 'lachry' shells refer to lachrymatory, also known as tear gas. With the initial assault of the Somme postponed, they spent their nights repairing the trenches in the rain and mud.

**30th June 1916** "I think tomorrow will see something important coming off."

**1st July 1916** "Yes - I was awakened at 6 a.m. and with Captain Greif, the Staff Captain went up the trenches as far as the Brigade observation post. At 7.30 a.m. the whole ground shook as if in an earthquake. All the while our guns kept snapping as hard as they could go. We had some French .75mm and they are beauties. They were firing a treat. A minute after the first shake, another rumble came, shaking the ground again and then I could see our troops getting out of the trenches and walking

across in the open. The Germans then opened fire with shrapnel and machine guns and for half an hour the sight was awesome. Smoke everywhere the thunder of guns was the only sound to be heard.

Our troops steadily advancing in spite of the German fire, which, by the by as not nearly so heavy as I had expected. Something just over the horizon to the left was blazing furiously, set alight by our guns and spurts of white smoke and black smoke both in the air and on the ground - both German and British were appearing suddenly amongst the din. Fortunately, no enemy shell struck me and about 9 a.m. or 9.20 am, Captain Greif and I retired to Bellevue Farm where we got our bicycles and cycled down to our temporary quarters at Dernancourt.

It is now past 3 p.m. and I will put down some facts here of the day's doings.

1. Brigadier General Cameron, 103rd Brigade was wounded in the very beginning of the battle.

2. I saw a party of German prisoners at Moulin Viviers at 11:00 am.

3. Our battalions are said to have taken the 5th line from the enemy.

4. It is rumoured that the 16th Royal Scots have almost reached Contalmaison.

5. The wounded have been passing through Dernancourt all morning. They have had five miles to walk, poor chaps. They are coming in thick, in fours and sixes. Feet, hands, bodies, necks wounds in all places all smeared with blood."

At 7.30 am the first and second waves of the 15th Battalion advanced. It is reported Pipe Major David Anderson played the regimental march, Dumbarton's Drums, as he headed over to give heart to his fellow soldiers to advance into No Man's Land. From the war diary, it was clear from the offset that smoke, gunfire and considerable loss of key personnel led to confusion across all ranks. Part of the 15th is recorded as consolidating considerably to the right

of their main objective, becoming intermingled with the neighbouring 21st Division. As all but one of the officers in the first waves were killed; most information relayed came from the soldiers.

**8th July 1916** "It is now the 8th July and our "bit" is over and we are back in a rest camp about 7 miles from the line. Our casualties were very heavy. . . Most of my chums have come through, although several of the old Scout platoon have been killed or are missing.

I spent one night in Becourt Chateau waiting to guide our Brigade to where hot tea awaited them. I was waiting from 10 p.m. till 5 a.m. as they were very late coming out. They were dirty and tired when they at last arrived, but they did justice to their tea, poor chaps.

Our Brigade did very well and on the whole we are doing well on this front. All the fiercest fighting is being done at our corner.

I hear we are going up the line again in a day or so."

In the week between Cpl Paul's entries, the 15th Battalion endured significant losses that left only 462 of 988 men remaining. Despite the week of attacks on the German trenches, the damage had not resulted in the significant reduction of the German defence, and the 15th entered the battlefield to be faced with artillery and machine-gun fire. In an address to his home congregation, the reverend of the 16th and 15th Battalions, Reverend James Black, reflected:

"Well, the 15th and 16th used to have many disagreements. The 15th used to say, "Just the 16th", and the 16th used to say, "Just the 15th". There is not a word of that now. These two battalions are knit together, because they lived together and they died together and were heroes together"

Throughout the following weeks of the Somme, the 15th and 16th would continue to relieve each other on the front lines.

**23rd July 1916** "Major General Ingouville Williams was killed in action yesterday and was buried at Warloy Cemetery in ceremony today at 4:00 pm."

Major General Williams was popular amongst the ranks and had been watching and encouraging the soldiers of the 15th the very morning he was killed.

At his funeral, the 15th Battalion furnished the firing party, and the band was provided from both the 15th and 16th Battalions.

**31st Jul 1916** "I spent all last night in a tent and had a cold sponge in the morning - we have just had dinner (2:00 pm) and we go up the line at 3:00 am.

There are plenty of shells coming and going here.

There's a big German shell away overhead to Albert just now - good luck to anyone in its way."

1st August 1916 "We have now arrived well into the German lines at Bazentin-le-Petit Wood and by God it's a hot place.

1. We were all half dead with exhaustion when we arrived. The sun was so hot, the water was no service, and warm at that and our packs were so enormous.

2. We had to carry great weights (so they seemed to us, although they were perhaps about 100 lbs each) for a quarter of a mile across ground absolutely stinking with decaying corpses - we saw an occasional hand, foot, or even a whole body, sticking out of shellholes - and this did not help us much I can tell you.

3. Shells - shrapnel and HE (high explosives) - were landing freely around and this was another slight drawback.

4. When we reached our new Brigade headquarters we found they were in an old German trench, which had been well catted by our artillery some time previous. We dug up tons of old German uniforms and equipment of all sorts - there were 2 decent dugouts, but I am in a rather poor one as an office and as a sleeping place. I have an ordinary manhole in the side of the trench where you can lay your head and shoulders and leave out your feet for everyone to trample on passing up and down the trench.

Occasionally while asleep, somebody comes around with the "wind up" as it is called and wakens you up and tells you to "stand to" - coming back perhaps an hour later, wakening you again and tells you to "stand down" - exceedingly awkward I can assure you.

5. With all these drawbacks it doesn't seem to be so bad."

The war diary on the 15th Battalion, penned by Lt-Col. Rose, remarks that it was an incredibly trying march for the men, enduring the heat and shelling. Remarkably, they reported no casualties in the battalion this day.

To make the trenches suitable for habitation, the men of the 15th spent the 1st and 2nd of August clearing trenches, including recovering and burying the German dead. Lt Col Rose, now commanding officer of the 15th Battalion, noted how the front trenches and no man's land remained littered with bodies, with the smell infecting their area.

## His Testimony

In reading Cpl Paul's diary, the Battle of the Somme is stripped of abstraction and returned to the men who endured it. Personal recollections permit us access to those front lines in a way denied by the official accounts, seeing events unfold as they, for a moment, take time to process all they have seen in the confines of a diary.

Paul's understated tone is perhaps the most striking element of all, concluding July with "With all these drawbacks it doesn't seem to be so bad." The quiet resilience reflects a wider regimental spirit. As Reverend James Black observed, the rivalries between the 15th and 16th Battalions faded in shared ordeal. Through Paul's diary, we witness not only the confusion and cost of 1st July 1916, but also the solidarity.

To contextualise these experiences is not intended to confirm casualty figures or trace the movement of lines. It gives a voice to the nameless who stood in the trenches, who endured the shells and smells and the sleepless nights of "stand to" and "stand down." The Somme persists in Britain's memory because of its scale, but it resonates because of men like John Paul who continued to write, observe, and endure as history unfolded around him.

Between the lines of his diary and The Somme, we find not only a record of battle, but a testament to human endurance: ordinary men meeting extraordinary violence with duty, comradeship, and the drive to move forward again.

The full diary of Cpl Paul is available for viewing through The Royal Scots Regimental Museum: [Diary of 17718 A/CQMS John Paul 11th Battalion, Royal Scots Attached to 101st Infantry Brigade. January 1916 to 1919.](#)



"First request of all wounded "Give us a Fag Mate""  
A soldier of The Royal Scots being tended to at The Somme.  
(From the photograph album of Lt.-Col. N. Charteris)

# THE ROYAL SCOTS (THE ROYAL REGIMENT)

Supporting our veterans through The Royal Scots Regimental Trust  
(SC052009)

## THE SOMME 110th ANNIVERSARY



We remember those who served and made the ultimate sacrifice

2nd Battalion • 5th/6th Battalion • 8th Battalion • 9th Battalion  
11th Battalion • 12th Battalion • 13th Battalion • 15th Battalion  
16th Battalion (McCrae's) • 17th Battalion (Rosebury)



For more information please visit our website or contact our Regimental Office

[www.theroyalscots.co.uk](http://www.theroyalscots.co.uk)

Telephone: 0131 557 0405 Email: [admin@theroyalscots.co.uk](mailto:admin@theroyalscots.co.uk)



C Company at Strensall Training Camp, North Yorkshire

# HEARTS, HEARTS GLORIOUS HEARTS



## HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN FC AND THE SOMME

Heart of Midlothian Football Club was experiencing one of the finest seasons yet as war broke out, losing just one league game out of sixteen and firmly leading the Scottish Football League. However, public opinion was soon shifting against the playing of football while so many men suffered on the battlefields. When legislation had been passed for enlistment, "professionals" were not included, and that covered football players.

In November 1914, Sir George McCrae, a charismatic Edinburgh MP and businessman, obtained permission to raise and command a new battalion in Edinburgh, which became the 16th Royal Scots. His recruitment drive was given significant impetus when thirteen Hearts players immediately signed up having been assented to a break in their contracts by Club Directors. The club now had sixteen men in service, while others were rejected on medical grounds. Hearts' minute book recorded that, "the lead established by these gallant youths reverberated through the length of the land". In a record six days, footballers from other Scottish Clubs had joined up, alongside hundreds of Hearts supporters and ticket holders, to form 'McCrae's Battalion', of 1,350 officers and men.

Meanwhile, back at the Hearts stadium Tynecastle Park, Manager John McCartney was campaigning hard to raise money for the war effort, and with the 'Football for Soldiers' fund, sent more than one thousand footballs along with letters from Tynecastle, to most of the British Army battalions, with letters of thanks received in return; "The football came to hand in the trenches, and the boys are in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect of a game".

The summer of 1916 brought terrible news to Tynecastle, particularly after the allied offensive on the River Somme began on 1 July 1916 - three Hearts players were quickly lost in the carnage, Ernie Ellis, Harry Wattie and Duncan Currie. Bullets or shrapnel wounded several others and Hearts also lost James Boyd who was killed in August 1916. By the end of the war 7 active Hearts players and 10 ex-players had lost their lives.

On 9 April 1922, the Haymarket War Memorial, largely funded by Hearts supporters, was unveiled at Haymarket before a solemn crowd of 35,000. The ceremony conducted by Mr Robert Munro, Secretary of State for Scotland, The Edinburgh Evening News recorded that, "some of those lads fell in the Battle of the Somme. They fell in the morning of their days with the dew of health upon their brows". It was an extremely moving occasion.

On Remembrance Sunday, the players, staff and supporters of Heart of Midlothian Football Club gather at the memorial at Haymarket, to pay respects and remember those lost to war. Hearts carried out works to further dignify the memorial in the Summer of 2024, with generous funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, installing decorative stonework around the base, inscribed with poignant quotations.

By Lianne Parry, Head of Heritage, Heart of Midlothian FC, with thanks to David Speed, Club Historian and Jack Alexander, McCrae's Battalion Trust.

[www.heartsfc.co.uk](http://www.heartsfc.co.uk)



HAYMARKET WAR MEMORIAL

Unveiled 9 April 1922, in memory of Hearts players, ex-players and supporters who gave their lives.



1914-1919 Football and War medals from the Hearts Collection

# THE PHOTOGRAPH REMEMBERS

Albert Riley is happily dating Lily Bullimore and enjoying his painting business when World War I is declared.

Enlisting with the 8th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, he marches 20 miles in new boots to embark on the train to hell. His blistered feet a sign of the unknown terror to follow.

**"Once a son, brother, husband, father, and then a grandfather never known, his legacy lives on and is a constant reminder of the sacrifices made to maintain our freedom today. The photograph hangs on my writing room wall – a proud tribute to Albert and Lily and a reflection of the sacrifice of millions."** (Renee Foster, Motorfinity, Granddaughter).

## The Story Behind the Photograph

The year is 1916, young Albert, 21, returns from France to marry his sweetheart, Lily, 19. His uniform sodden and full of lice, he's stripped and his old uniform is burnt beneath the copper's flames. A fresh uniform is purchased. Lily, in service at the time, is gifted a roll of bright blue velvet by the lady of the house and fashions her wedding gown.

The ceremony is simple and there's just time to pose in Newark Castle grounds. Two faces bright and tender on this April 1916 day.

**The photograph remembers what the consequences of war would steal away.**



## Albert at war

Back to the trenches he marches to face the Somme's unyielding hell.

He serves his captain well as a batman in the fight. He follows orders to fetch the rum – doses of courage for the men about to go into battle. While death is raging far and wide, he finds shelter in a crater:

**"A bomb won't strike twice here."**

And there in the mud, he drinks his liquid cargo and passes out beneath the screaming skies.

Failing to return, the men lament young Albert's demise:

**"That's the end of Albert".**

His unit continues its quest as decoys in the Battle of the Somme's sacrificial plan. On the 1st day of battle, 1st July 1916, he's with his Brigade when it attacked at Gommecourt.

Then tasked with finding his younger brother, Harry, he searches among the gassed and dead.

When hope is almost lost, he sees him standing there, though what a bitter cost – the gas, the wounds they bear.

Returning home, Albert does not mend. The war lives on in his brain and in his lungs until his days end – a life cut short.

**The photograph denies the sorrow yet to come and how they face tomorrow when the guns of war fall dumb.**

## Lily, the young widow

In 1942, while two sons are away serving in the Army during WW2, Albert dies from lung disease aged 47.

Too soon.

Mother of 7, Lily with youngest babe in arms, stays forever strong and true. She works on in the local hospital and only stops when, at seventy years old, she reaches the NHS retirement age.

Petite but awesome, she spends 53 years without her Albert but remains there for all – family, friends and those less fortunate than herself.

Ignoring the law re feeding the homeless, 'tramps' would sit on her doorstep to receive her tasty offerings.

Despite her laborious life, Lily flies through five books a week and soars to ninety-eight years old, blessed with grandchildren and great grandchildren.

**The photograph remembers what the living slowly learns. Hearts so young and tender face the crucible of war. But love survives the sorrow and resilience finds a way. Lessons for tomorrow through the stories we narrate.**



## A toast

Here's to those before us in their khaki and velvet blues who weathered war's dark chorus and survived to tell the tale.

Let's listen to their voices. Honour every sacred thread. Remember all their choices, and the lives they bravely led.

**The photograph remembers, hanging on the writing room wall, two souls who gave their all. From Newark Castle grounds to Somme's relentless drums, their legacy resounds.**

**Albert and Lily, married 6 April 1916  
Battle of the Somme, 01 July 1916**

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With thanks @Research at Museum of the Mercian Regiment for their services confirming Albert's records.

# THE AIR WAR OVER THE SOMME

How air power shaped artillery, intelligence, and combat in 1916

Sponsored by the  **CENTURION FUND** [www.centurionfund.co.uk](http://www.centurionfund.co.uk)



A Nieuport 17 patrols the skies over the Somme battlefield much like RFC pilot Ace Albert Ball VC died in 1917, aged 20.

By the summer of 1916, the Western Front had extended decisively into the sky. Over the Somme battlefield, the struggle for air superiority became a prerequisite for success on the ground. Aircraft of the Royal Flying Corps and the German *Die Fliegertruppen des deutschen Kaiserreiches* (renamed *The Deutsche Luftstreitkräfte* in October 1916) flew continuously over the front, often at low altitude, photographing trench systems, gun emplacements, and supply routes.

Observers directed British artillery fire by wireless, correcting fall-of-shot in real time; much of the detailed planning for 1 July relied on aerial photography gathered under fire. Without control of the air, artillery coordination simply did not function, and the battle below stalled.

Aircraft were also increasingly used for ground attack. RFC crews strafed trenches, roads, and troop columns, flying dangerously low in slow, fragile machines. These attacks disrupted German movement and communications at critical moments, but at a terrible cost. Aircraft offered almost no protection, and casualties among aircrew were heavy. Many pilots went into combat without parachutes; a damaged aircraft often meant death.

The Somme also marked a decisive shift in fighter combat and air superiority. It brought an end to German dominance following the "Fokker Scourge", the terror of the skies, of 1915. The RFC countered this threat with the French built *Nieuport 17* which was a superior fighter to anything the British had at the time. Britain did introduce newer aircraft such as the *Sopwith Strutter* and the *Airco DH2*, while Germany responded with the formidable *Albatros DI* and *DII*. Control of the air shifted back and forth, sometimes daily, and by late summer 1916 aerial combat had become constant, organised, and extremely lethal.

It was here that the fighter ace emerged as a defining figure of modern warfare. German pilots such as **Oswald Boelcke**, architect of modern air-combat tactics, and **Manfred von Richthofen** (the infamous Red Baron)

scored early victories over the Somme, while Boelcke's 'Dicta Boelcke' (a list of aerial combat manoeuvres he formulated) - forged directly from combat over this battlefield - shaped air fighting for the rest of the war.

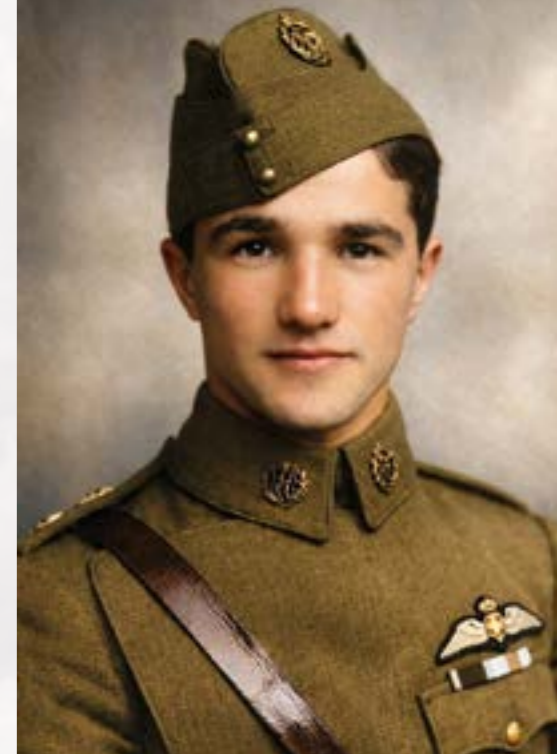
The RFC did not cultivate individual heroics in the same way, yet pilots such as **Albert Ball VC**, aged 19, emerged from the brutal learning curve of the Somme air war, becoming symbols of skill, courage, and endurance under extreme conditions. He was Britain's leading Ace of 1916, flying the *Nieuport 17* and a national hero during the Somme.

The human cost in the air was stark. RFC losses were particularly severe in the early months of the campaign, and the average life expectancy of a newly arrived pilot could be measured in weeks - sometimes days. Despite this, British air activity increased rather than diminished, reflecting a growing understanding that air power was no longer optional, but essential. They sustained approximately **576** casualties between July and November 1916.

By the end of the Somme campaign, the lesson was unmistakable. Aircraft had proven decisive in artillery effectiveness, battlefield intelligence, and the disruption of enemy movement.

The Somme helped transform aviation from a supporting novelty into a strategic arm of war - a transformation that would culminate in the creation of the Royal Air Force on the 1st of April, 1918, the world's first independent air force.

A German Albatros DII which was introduced in 1916 to counter the Nieuport 17 and Airco DH2, becoming the superior fighter in the skies over the Somme.



**ALBERT BALL VC DSO MC\*\***

During the Battle of the Somme, Albert Ball emerged as one of the Royal Flying Corps' most remarkable young pilots, embodying both the promise and the peril of early air warfare. Still only nineteen when the Somme offensive began in July 1916, Ball was already establishing a fearsome reputation in the skies over the Western Front.

Flying largely solo patrols, often at low altitude, Ball hunted enemy aircraft with a determination that set him apart from many of his contemporaries. While the air war over the Somme was dominated by reconnaissance, artillery spotting, and hard-won air superiority, Ball's aggressive style helped wrest control of the skies from German aircraft during a critical phase of the campaign. His preferred tactics - closing in from below and behind, striking suddenly, then disappearing - earned him the nickname "the Lone Hunter."

By the end of 1916, Ball had become Britain's leading ace, his growing tally of victories matched only by the strain of constant combat. Despite his success, letters home reveal a young man increasingly affected by the relentless nature of the fighting and the loss of fellow airmen. In April 1917, during what became known as "Bloody April" for the RFC, Captain Albert Ball was killed in action while engaging enemy aircraft near Annoeullin, France. He was just twenty years old. His courage, skill, and extraordinary devotion to duty were recognised with the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross - the highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy.

Albert Ball's legacy endures as a symbol of the air war over the Somme: youthful, daring, and perilously exposed. His brief life reflects both the rapid evolution of aerial combat and the heavy price paid by those who fought for mastery of the skies in the First World War.

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## Royal Naval Air Service



by Commander Sue Eagles (retd)

**On this 110th anniversary of the Somme, the colossal impact of the Great War has been extensively documented, yet public awareness of the daring and courageous exploits of the Royal Naval Air Service and the influence of Naval Aviation in the First World War is still little known.**

The Royal Naval Air Service (1914-18) fought with distinction and valour on all fronts during WW1, pioneering many aspects of aerial warfare, winning two Victoria Crosses and leading the way in innovation and endeavour that was to establish the ethos and spirit of the Fleet Air Arm today.

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, and even though flying was barely out of its infancy, within weeks the RNAS had pioneered the first strategic air raids against Zeppelins in their bases many miles from the sea - outstanding achievements in navigation and daring.

Winston Churchill saw the potential of naval aviation from the outset. The RNAS raid on the Zeppelin factory at Friedrichshafen on 21 November 1914, a flight of 250 miles across enemy country, into gunfire, completely destroying the Zeppelin sheds, was an extraordinary accomplishment and is recognised today as the first strategic bombing raid in history.

A few weeks later in December 1914, the RNAS raid on Cuxhaven was another defining moment in history, being the birth of 'Carrier Strike', the first time, aircraft operating from ships at sea achieved strategic effect ashore. Naval Air Squadrons also flew alongside the Royal Flying Corps in combat over the trenches, making an important contribution to the Western Front air war.

The young airmen of the RNAS were spirited and ingenious adventurers with a zest for life and pushing the boundaries. In four short years they pioneered the development of ship-borne combat aircraft, anti-submarine warfare and the first aircraft carrier, skilfully building the RNAS into a highly effective naval air arm. It is often overlooked that the RNAS also developed the first armoured cars. By the end of the war, the RNAS had 55,000 personnel, 3000 aircraft and 103 airships. Their efforts and sacrifice not only established the origins of the present day, Fleet Air Arm but live on through the work of the Charity, Navy Wings.

# FORTUNA



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**We remember with gratitude all those who served.**

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IN MEMORY OF

# FIELD MARSHAL THE LORD GUTHRIE OF CRAIGIEBANK GCB, GCVO, OBE, DL



Image: Diana Ashmore

Field Marshal The Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, who died on 18 September 2025 aged 96, devoted his life to the service of Crown and country. A soldier of resolve and intellect, he rose to become Chief of the General Staff and later Chief of the Defence Staff at a pivotal moment in Britain's modern military history, guiding the armed forces through a period of profound change in the years following the Cold War.

Often described as forthright and unyielding, Guthrie combined a soldier's instinct with a strategist's clarity. During the early years of Sir Tony Blair's government, he worked closely with ministers at a time when Britain undertook interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

Though some characterised him as "political", he maintained that a senior commander's duty was to remain close enough to government to give honest counsel - to set out clearly what was achievable, and what was not. He opposed ill-judged ventures, resisted proposals he believed unwise, and later expressed scepticism about the long war in Afghanistan. His counsel was always rooted in professional judgement rather than fashion.

Physically imposing, with craggy features and a direct manner, he was known for defending the interests of the armed forces with tenacity, particularly amid the financial retrenchment that followed the Cold War's "peace dividend". He worked constructively with ministers, including Defence Secretary George Robertson, yet never hesitated to challenge where he believed defence capability was at risk. His loyalty was to the Service and to those who served within it.

Born in London to Ronald and Nina Guthrie, and educated at Harrow, where he excelled at rugby and became head of school, he was commissioned into the Welsh Guards in 1959 after training at Sandhurst. Early postings took him to Aden and to London, where, in a lighter interlude, he participated in the long Guards tradition of assisting at Covent Garden - an experience that fostered his lifelong love of opera.

Selected for the SAS in 1965, he served in Aden, the Gulf, Kenya and Malaysia before returning to regimental duty in Germany and Belfast during the early years of the Troubles. He later commanded in Berlin and undertook one of the Army's most demanding postings

in South Armagh. His leadership there earned him appointment as OBE and brought him to wider national attention. Staff appointments in Whitehall followed, including a period overseeing significant reductions in Army strength. Appointed Chief of the General Staff in 1994, and Chief of the Defence Staff three years later, he assumed the latter role as a new government took office and crises in the Balkans intensified. He supported NATO's intervention in Kosovo and the operation in Sierra Leone, believing decisive action could shorten conflict and prevent greater suffering. Yet he remained cautious of overreach and sceptical of proposals for a European army independent of NATO, a position he maintained in later public life.

Retiring in 2001, he was created a life peer and sat as a crossbencher in the House of Lords. Elevated to honorary Field Marshal in 2012, he continued to contribute to national debate, co-authoring *Just War* in 2007 and publishing his memoir, *Peace, War and Whitehall*, in 2021. He also served in academic and charitable roles, bringing measured experience to discussions of strategy and ethics.

In ceremonial life he held appointments including Gold Stick in Waiting to the Sovereign and honorary positions with the Intelligence Corps and the Life Guards.

Field Marshal Lord Guthrie's life spanned peace and war, austerity and intervention, ceremony and combat. Through each he remained steadfast in his belief that the first duty of a soldier is service - and that sound judgement, honestly given, is the highest form of loyalty.

*I had the privilege of being the FM's tennis partner when he was GOC BAOR in JHO Rheindahlen 1992. An accomplished sportsman. He was the most generous and kindest officer that I had the honour of serving under during my thirty years of Army service*  
- Tony Talbott, Editor

# THE WELSH GUARDS (THE GUARDS DIVISION)



### 110th Anniversary The Somme

*Ginchy, Lesboeufs, Gueudecourt where courage held the line  
and the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards stood firm in 1916.*

# THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY

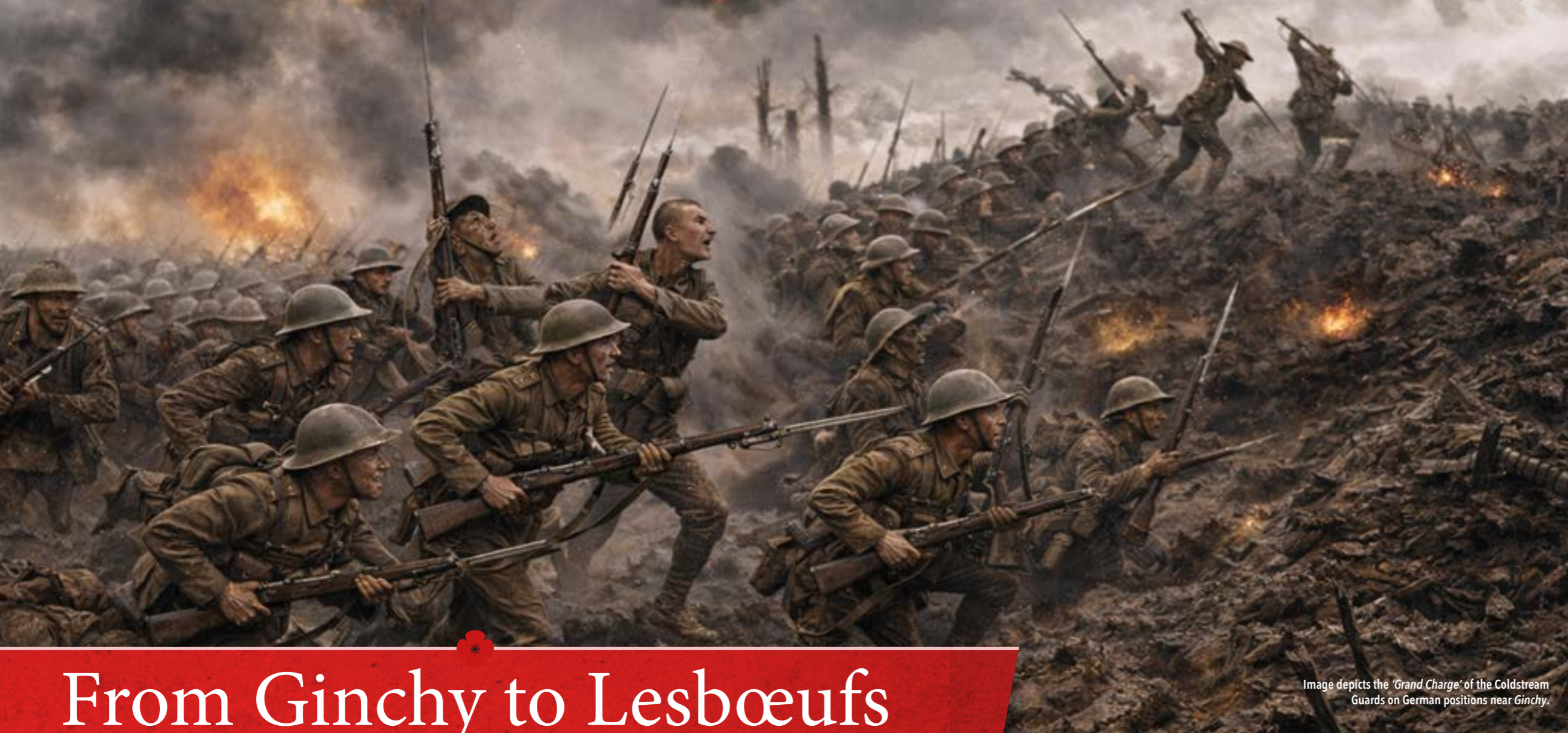
### 110th ANNIVERSARY - THE SOMME



*At the Somme, the Household Cavalry set aside tradition to fight as infantry.  
Their sacrifice endures in honour.*

HOUSEHOLD  
CAVALRY  
FOUNDATION





**Brigadier-General  
John Vaughan Campbell**  
VC CMG DSO

Campbell was born in London. His father, Ronald George Elidor Campbell (1848-1879), was the second son of the 2nd Earl Cawdor and an army captain, was killed at the Battle of Hlobane in the Zulu War in 1879.

He was educated at Eton College and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, before entering the Coldstream Guards in 1896. He served through the Second Boer War, in which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and twice mentioned in despatches.

Campbell was 39 years old, and a temporary Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 15 September 1916 at *Ginchy*, France, during the Battle of the Somme, Lieutenant Colonel Campbell took personal command of the third line when the first two waves of his battalion had been decimated by machine-gun and rifle fire. He rallied his men and led them against the enemy machine-guns, capturing the guns and killing the personnel.

Later in the day he again rallied the survivors of his battalion and led them through very heavy hostile fire. His personal gallantry and initiative at a very critical moment enabled the division to press on and capture objectives of the highest tactical importance.

Not mentioned in the citation but much reported in the popular press, by which he was dubbed the "*Tally-Ho VC*", is that he rallied his men under fire by blowing a hunting horn and giving the traditional hunting cry.

**- Nulli Secundus**

Image depicts the 'Grand Charge' of the Coldstream Guards on German positions near *Ginchy*.

# From Ginchy to Lesbœufs

## *The Coldstream Guards in a Battle of Attrition*

The fall of Ginchy on 9 September 1916 marked a rare moment of progress on the Somme, yet it brought little sense of resolution. Beyond the shattered village lay a landscape stripped of all definition, where objectives were measured not in miles but in yards, and every advance exacted a heavy price. For the Guards Division, Ginchy was merely a threshold. The true objective lay to the east: Lesbœufs.

In the days following the capture of Ginchy, the Guards Division moved forward to relieve exhausted formations and prepare for renewed offensive action. The terrain they inherited defied conventional warfare. Trench systems were fragmented or obliterated, shell holes overlapped one another, and landmarks used on maps no longer existed on the ground. Navigation was uncertain, communication unreliable, and control increasingly fragile even before the next attack began.

At the centre of the Guards' effort were three battalions of the Coldstream Guards, deployed in an unprecedented formation. For the first time in

their history, the three battalions would advance in line abreast, from left to right, the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Battalions. To their right were companies drawn from the Grenadier, Scots, and Irish Guards, followed by two further Grenadier battalions. The intention was to apply weight and cohesion across a broad front, overwhelming German resistance and driving the advance through to Lesbœufs.

On 15 September 1916, the opening day of the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the Guards went forward at 06:20, advancing behind a creeping barrage. Almost immediately, the advance encountered severe resistance. Smoke, dust, and debris reduced visibility to a few yards. German machine-gun positions, many surviving the bombardment, swept the open ground. Direction was difficult to maintain, and communication between battalions rapidly collapsed.

As the attack progressed, the carefully ordered line disintegrated. Units lost touch with one another, and companies became scattered across broken ground. Coldstreamers found themselves advancing alongside Grenadiers, Scots, and Irish Guardsmen, forming improvised groups bound together by circumstance rather than formal command. Later

reports consistently described this intermingling, not as a failure of discipline, but as an unavoidable consequence of fighting in terrain where structure could not be imposed for long.

Despite determined efforts, Lesbœufs was not captured on 15 September. While ground was gained and forward positions established, the German defence proved resilient, and the Guards suffered heavily. The village itself remained firmly contested, its approaches dominated by machine-gun fire and artillery observation. In the days that followed, the advance slowed to a series of costly local actions, marked by incremental progress rather than decisive breakthrough.

Throughout this period, officers such as John Vaughan Campbell, commanding the 3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards, exemplified the leadership required in such conditions. Like many senior officers at the Somme, Campbell frequently found himself directing mixed groups of men, rallying advances when formations dissolved under fire. His presence was characteristic of the wider Guards experience: leadership exercised amid confusion, when authority depended less on rank and more on personal example. Yet Campbell was one figure

among many, operating within a broader struggle that extended well beyond a single day's fighting.

From 16 to 24 September, the battle settled into a grinding phase. The Guards Division held forward positions under constant shelling while successive attacks were mounted to improve the line and edge closer to Lesbœufs. The ground between Ginchy and the village became a killing zone, swept by fire from multiple directions. Progress was measured in short advances, consolidation under fire, and frequent counter-attacks. Rain and mud added to the exhaustion, turning shell holes into water-filled traps and further complicating movement and supply.

By late September, the pressure on Lesbœufs intensified. The village, already reduced to rubble, was now little more than a collection of shattered cellars and debris, yet it remained a tactically significant position anchoring the German line. Its capture was essential if the British advance was to continue eastwards towards Gueudecourt and beyond.

The final assaults came on 25 and 26 September 1916, a discreet operation compared to the fighting earlier in the month. After weeks of attritional fighting, British forces renewed their effort with coordinated attacks supported by artillery. This

time, resistance within the village began to collapse. German positions, worn down by sustained pressure and heavy losses, were overrun, and Lesbœufs was finally secured. The capture marked the culmination of a prolonged struggle that had begun in the ruins of Ginchy more than two weeks earlier. For the Coldstream Guards, the advance from Ginchy to Lesbœufs was not defined by a single dramatic moment, but by endurance.

Their experience reflected the reality of the Somme in its later phases: attacks fragmented by terrain, units intermingled by necessity, and success achieved only through persistence over time. Leadership was exercised continuously, often at close quarters and under extreme danger, but victory came slowly, measured in days rather than hours.

When Lesbœufs finally fell, it stood as a testament to the cumulative effort of many battalions and many individuals, rather than the action of any one man. The Coldstream Guards' role in its capture was shaped by adaptability under fire and the willingness to continue advancing when clarity and cohesion were repeatedly stripped away. In that sense, the journey from Ginchy to Lesbœufs encapsulates the Somme itself - a battle not of swift manoeuvre, but of relentless, costly determination.



# THE IRISH GUARDS

*Duty, Endurance & Remembrance*

Raised in 1900 to honour Irish soldiers who served during the Second Boer War, the regiment entered the First World War already distinguished by character, discipline and esprit de corps. By the summer of 1916, when the British Expeditionary Force prepared for what would become the Battle of the Somme, the Irish Guards were seasoned, respected, and—like so many units—tragically destined to suffer deeply in one of the conflict's most notorious campaigns.

The Somme has come to symbolise the staggering cost of industrialised warfare. Yet behind the vast numbers of casualties lie the specific, human stories of battalions that advanced, held, endured, and bled on that chalky, shell-torn ground. Among them marched the Irish Guards, whose experience at the Somme speaks of determination, sacrifice, and quiet heroism.

## On the Eve of Battle

By 1916 the Irish Guards consisted of two battalions: the 1st Battalion, which had served from *Mons* through the long fighting retreat and the chaos of First Ypres; and the 2nd Battalion, raised in 1915 to expand the Guards Division. Both battalions would play their part in the Somme campaign, operating mainly under the command of the 1st Guards Brigade of the Guards Division, a formation widely regarded as one of the finest in the BEF.

The Guards were not part of the assault on the opening day. Instead, they entered the battle in mid-July, as the high command launched further major offensives to push the German Army off the ridge that dominated the central Somme region. The build-up to their involvement involved long marches under oppressive heat, labouring in assembly trenches, and enduring the noise and tremors of the relentless British artillery bombardment that heralded every new phase of the battle. Their time was coming.

## The Attack on Guillemont (September 1916)

The first major engagement for the regiment came during the push toward *Guillemont* and *Ginchy*, two villages sitting on high, reinforced ground that had repeatedly defied British attacks in August 1916. These shattered hamlets—little more than rubble and cratered earth—were tactically vital. They formed the German defensive hinge on the right of the Somme front, anchoring the line that protected the approaches to Comblès. On the 3rd of September, the Guards Division was tasked with supporting a renewed

assault. The 2nd Battalion Irish Guards moved into the line near *Leuze Wood*, in preparation for the attack on *Guillemont*. Fighting there was ferocious. Machine-gun nests, deep dugouts, concealed snipers and tangled wire networks slowed the attacking waves to a punishing crawl. The Irish Guards advanced in difficult conditions: communication between units was intermittent at best; smoke and dust obscured the battlefield; shelling remained constant. Over the next forty-eight hours, the battalion suffered heavy casualties yet displayed the disciplined aggression for which the Guards were renowned. When *Guillemont* finally fell on the 3rd of September—and *Ginchy* six days later—Guards units, including the Irish Guards, had played a key role in securing the flank that allowed further British advances.

Though overshadowed by larger offensives such as the attacks at *Thiepval* or *Delville Wood*, the struggle around *Guillemont* demanded intense courage. In the official battalion records, officers write of men advancing through “bullet-swept fields,” digging in under fire, and holding captured positions against determined counter-attacks.

## The Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 1916)

On the 15th of September 1916, during the wider Battle of *Flers-Courcelette*, the Guards Division again entered action. This battle is remembered for the debut of the British Army's newest weapon: the tank. Though only a handful reached the front line, their appearance marked the beginning of mechanised warfare.

The Irish Guards advanced near *Ginchy*, now a wasteland of churned earth. Though conditions remained appalling—mud, shattered trench lines, and tenacious German defenders—the division made steady progress. For the Irish Guards, this phase of the Somme was characterised less by dramatic breakthroughs and more by grinding, attritional combat: taking a trench here, consolidating a shell hole there, enduring ceaseless shelling and sniper fire. One Irish Guards officer wrote afterwards:

*“It was like fighting across the face of the moon. Nothing remained where it had been the day before.”*

The battalion's casualties during these engagements were significant. Officers frequently fell leading their men, and company strength often withered from well over 200 to fewer than 80 within a single day's fighting.

## Lesboeufs: A Hard-Fought Victory

The climax of the Irish Guards' Somme campaign came with the capture of *Lesboeufs* on the 25th of September 1916. This attack was part of a broader push to exploit the gains from *Flers-Courcelette* and drive the Germans further back before autumn rains made movement impossible. The 1st Battalion Irish Guards played a central role. As part of the 1st Guards Brigade, they advanced against well-entrenched German positions, supported by an artillery barrage that was, for once, reasonably effective in cutting wire and suppressing enemy guns.

Yet the advance was no easy matter. The ground sloped upward toward *Lesboeufs*, giving the German defenders a commanding view. Enemy machine-guns—protected by deep dugouts—opened up as soon as the Guardsmen crested the rise.

Casualties mounted quickly. In spite of the intense fire, the Irish Guards pressed forward, gaining the first

Continued on Page 108

# THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS (THE GUARDS DIVISION)



110th Anniversary The Somme

*Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Lesboeufs, Morval -*  
We remember the 1st & 2nd Battalions, Coldstream Guards

# THE IRISH GUARDS (THE GUARDS DIVISION)



110th Anniversary The Somme

*Guillemont, Flers-Courcelette, Lesboeufs, Morval -*  
We remember the 1st & 2nd Battalions, Irish Guards

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objective and continuing the advance. Battalion histories record numerous acts of bravery: men carrying wounded comrades back through shellfire, Lewis-gun teams sprinting forward to establish new firing positions, and platoons fighting trench-to-trench through smashed German lines. By evening, *Lesboeuifs* had fallen, representing one of the most successful British attacks of the entire Somme campaign. It was a hard-won victory, bought at heavy cost, and the Irish Guards were at the forefront.

**Rudyard Kipling and John Kipling**

Perhaps the most publicly recognised story associated with the Irish Guards is the tragedy of *Second Lieutenant John Kipling*, son of the writer *Rudyard Kipling*. Though John had been killed the year before, at Loos in 1915, his father continued throughout the war to follow the fortunes of the regiment with close interest.

At the Somme, this history became part of Kipling's broader attempt to honour the men among whom his son had served - and died. Kipling's close personal connection with the regiment accounts for his willingness to write on its behalf. Early in 1917, he had already agreed to write what was a new kind of book for him, a chronicle of what the Irish Guards did in the war. *The Irish Guards in the Great War*, compiled from soldiers' diaries and letters, and thought by some to be Kipling's masterpiece, came out in two volumes in 1923. Though he does not pick out his son's part in the war, let alone his death, a quiet paragraph in his introduction might be taken as his only elegy for *Second Lieutenant John Kipling*, who died six weeks after turning eighteen.

John Kipling's grave was identified in 1992 by historian Norm Christie and recorded at St Mary's ADS Cemetery, Haisnes. In 2002, historians Tonie and Valmai Holt argued it belonged instead to Arthur Jacob of the London Irish Rifles. Further research in 2016 by Graham Parker and Joanna Legg confirmed the original attribution, which the Commonwealth War Graves Commission welcomed.

**A Regiment's Experience in Letters and Diaries**

Much of what we know about the character of the Irish Guards at the Somme comes from the letters and diaries preserved in regimental archives. These personal accounts frequently contrast the brutality of the battle with moments of tenderness, humour, and stoicism.

One Guardsman wrote simply: *"We keep our pride. The others may say we are mad. But we are Irish, and the Guards, and that is enough."*

Another recorded seeing the first tanks rumbling past: *"Monstrous things - like metal beasts. The men cheered them, though we did not know whether they would help or bring down more fire on us."* These observations help us visualise not only the military

events but the human responses within them: confusion, bravery, exhaustion, and an unwavering sense of duty.

**Losses and Legacy**

By the time the Irish Guards were relieved from the line in late autumn 1916, the regiment had suffered heavily. Entire companies had been reduced to skeletal strength; officers who had marched in proudly that summer were now dead or wounded. The Somme, more than any battle to that point, hollowed out the professional core of the British Army - and the Irish Guards were no exception. Yet the regiment's professionalism remained intact. Despite casualties, despite fatigue, the Guards held the line, captured objectives, and maintained cohesion. Their conduct earned commendations from brigade and division commanders, affirming the reputation the Irish Guards already possessed as one of the finest units in the field.

**Enduring Memory: A Regiment Remembered**

As we observe the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the story of the Irish Guards continues to resonate. Their contribution to the campaign is not measured solely by ground gained or casualties inflicted, but by the qualities they embodied: loyalty, courage, endurance, and comradeship. Many of the men who fought at *Guillemont*, *Ginchy*, or *Lesboeuifs* have no known grave. Their names are carved into the stones of Thiepval, the largest Commonwealth memorial to the missing in the world. Among those endless lists one can find "Irish Guards" repeated time and again - ordinary soldiers whose lives ended in extraordinary circumstances. Walking the Somme battlefield today, one still senses the weight of what happened there. The fields have grown green again, the villages have been rebuilt, and the trenches reclaimed by the earth. But in the cemeteries that dot the old front line - *The Guards' Cemetery* at *Lesboeuifs*, and many others - the Irish Guards are remembered among comrades from every corner of the British Isles and Empire.

**A Closing Reflection**

The Somme remains a place of pilgrimage. For families, for historians, for descendants of those who served, and for the regimental community of the Irish Guards, it is a landscape where memory, grief, pride, and history converge. They marched not knowing what awaited them, yet they carried out their duty with a steadiness that has become central to their regiment's identity. The Irish Guards at the Somme remind us that sacrifice is personal; that courage is often quiet; and that remembrance is our duty as much as theirs was to fight. Their story endures because we choose to remember it. And in remembering the Irish Guardsmen who fell, we acknowledge the broader story of thousands who stood beside them across that scarred French landscape. Today, their legacy lives on in the regiment that still bears their name - the Irish Guards, steadfast in duty, unwavering in spirit, and forever bound to the memory of those who fought and fell on the Somme.



**THE IRISH GUARDS - Rudyard Kipling**

We're not so old in the Army List,  
But we're not so young at our trade.  
For we had the honour at Fontenoy  
Of meeting the Guards' Brigade.  
'Twas Lally, Dillon, Bulkeley, Clare,  
And Lee that led us then,  
And after a hundred and seventy years  
We're fighting for France again!

*Old Days! The wild geese are flying,  
Head to the storm as they faced it before!  
For where there are Irish there's bound to be fighting,  
And when there's no fighting, it's Ireland no more!  
Ireland no more!*

The fashion's all for khaki now,  
But once through France we went  
Full-dressed in scarlet Army cloth,  
The English - left at Ghent.  
They're fighting on our side today  
But, before they changed their clothes,  
The half of Europe knew our fame,  
As all of Ireland knows!

*Old Days! The wild geese are flying,  
Head to the storm as they faced it before!  
For where there are Irish there's memory undying,  
And when we forget, it is Ireland no more!  
Ireland no more!*

From Barry Wood to Gouzeaucourt,  
From Boyne to Pilkem Ridge,  
The ancient days come back no more  
Than water under the bridge.  
But the bridge it stands and the water runs  
As red as yesterday,  
And the Irish move to the sound of the guns  
Like salmon to the sea.

*Old Days! The wild geese are ranging,  
Head to the storm as they faced it before!  
For where there are Irish their hearts are unchanging,  
And when they are changed, it is Ireland no more!  
Ireland no more!*

We're not so old in the Army List,  
But we're not so new in the ring,  
For we carried our packs with Marshal Saxe  
When Louis was our King.  
But Douglas Haig's our Marshal now  
And we're King George's men,  
And after one hundred and seventy years  
We're fighting for France again!

Ah, France! And did we stand by you,  
When life was made splendid with gifts and rewards?  
Ah, France! And will we deny you  
In the hour of your agony, Mother of Swords?

*Old Days! The wild geese are flying,  
Head to the storm as they faced it before!  
For where there are Irish there's loving and fighting,  
And when we stop either, it's Ireland no more!  
Ireland no more!*

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The Guards Cemetery at Lesboeuifs

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Proudly remembering all those who served and made the ultimate sacrifice.  
**110th Anniversary The Somme**

The Souls Brothers. From left to right: Alfred, Arthur, Albert, Walter and Frederick.



# THE LOST SOULS

*The Tragic Story of the Souls Brothers of the Great War*

In the opening scenes of *Saving Private Ryan*, the audience is confronted with the brutal chaos of war and the tragic story of a family who have already lost several sons in battle. The film's central premise - an effort to bring the last surviving brother home - resonates deeply because it touches upon a universal fear of war: that a single family might lose everything. The story is powerful precisely because it seems almost unimaginable.

Yet during the First World War, tragedies like this were not fictional. Across Britain and the wider Empire, families sent their sons to war in the belief that they were defending their country and their way of life. Many never returned. In the quiet Gloucestershire village of Great Rissington, one such family endured a loss even more devastating than the one depicted in Spielberg's film... The Souls family lost all five of their sons to the Great War.

Before the war, the Souls family lived an ordinary rural life. William and Annie Souls raised their children in Great Rissington, a small village in the Cotswolds where farming and agricultural labour formed the backbone of the local community. Like many families in Edwardian Britain, the Souls were large and close-knit. William worked as a farm labourer, and his sons followed similar paths, growing up amid the rhythms of village life and rural work.

When war broke out in August 1914, Britain responded with a surge of patriotic volunteering. Young men from towns and villages across the country stepped forward in vast numbers, convinced that the war would be over quickly and that their duty lay in service to King and country. For the Souls brothers, as for many others, enlistment came naturally.

The five who would eventually serve—and die—were Albert, Walter, Frederick, Alfred, and Arthur Souls.

Their youngest brother, Percy, was still too young to serve. What followed would become one of the most tragic family stories of the war.

### The First Brothers to Serve

Among the first to enlist were Albert and Walter, who joined the 2nd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment. Like many early volunteers, they were quickly thrown into the harsh realities of modern industrial warfare.

By 1915, British forces were locked in bitter trench fighting along the Western Front. One of the first major battles faced by the Worcestershire Regiment during this period was the Battle of Loos, fought in September of that year.

It was a costly engagement, marked by heavy casualties, confusion, and the first British use of poison gas. Albert and Walter survived Loos, but the war was far from over.

In time both men were transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, a formation created during the war to concentrate

and better coordinate the devastating firepower of machine guns on the battlefield. But the dangers remained ever present. On 14 March 1916, tragedy first struck the Souls family. Albert Souls was killed in action, becoming the first of the brothers to fall.

For William and Annie Souls in Great Rissington, the news must have been devastating. Yet even as they mourned their youngest serving son, four more remained serving in uniform. The war, however, was entering its most destructive phase.

### The Somme and the Loss of Frederick

Only months after Albert's death, the British Army launched its great offensive on the River Somme in northern France.

Over the months that followed, hundreds of thousands of men would be killed or wounded in the grinding struggle to break the German lines. Among those fighting on the Somme was Frederick Souls, known as Fred.

He served in the 16th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, one of the so-called "Bantam battalions." These units were composed of men who were slightly below the standard height requirement for the army but were otherwise strong and determined volunteers.

On 19 July 1916, during the Somme offensive, Fred went into action with his battalion.

Like so many soldiers of that battle, he never returned. Frederick Souls was listed as missing, presumed killed.

Back in Gloucestershire, his mother Annie reportedly kept a candle burning in the window, hoping that one day her son might return home. For many families, the uncertainty of a missing soldier was one of the cruelest burdens of the war.

But Fred would never come home.

### Walter's Final Battle

Another of the brothers, Walter, also saw action during the Somme campaign. He survived the fighting but was seriously wounded. Evacuated from the battlefield, he was taken to a military hospital in Rouen, France.

There, it seemed possible that he might recover. But fate intervened in the cruelest way. Walter died suddenly following surgery, reportedly from a blood clot in the heart.

Within months, the Souls family had lost three sons. The war still had two years left to run.

### The Final Losses

Despite the mounting tragedy, the remaining brothers continued their service.

Alfred Souls was killed in 1918 during the German Spring Offensive, when German forces launched a massive attack along the Western Front in an attempt to win the war before American forces could fully arrive. The offensive triggered chaotic fighting and desperate defensive battles as Allied troops struggled to halt the German advance. Alfred was among those who did not survive.

The final blow came with the death of Arthur Souls, who served as a Lance-Corporal attached to the Royal West Kent Regiment. Arthur was Alfred's identical twin, born an hour apart, dying 5 days apart.

Arthur distinguished himself in combat and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery, a decoration recognising acts of courage under fire.

But bravery did not guarantee survival.

He was killed during fighting near Villers-Bretonneux, another key battlefield of 1918.

With Arthur's death, the Souls family lost their fifth and final son.

### A Family Without Sons

By the end of the First World War, all five of the Souls brothers who had served were dead.

Three had died in 1916, two more in 1918.

Their youngest brother Percy, who had been too young to serve, later died at home from illness.

For William and Annie Souls, the war had taken an entire generation of their family.

The government provided small pensions to parents who lost sons in service, but no payment could ever compensate for the loss of five children.

In villages like Great Rissington, the war's impact was deeply personal. Communities that had sent dozens of young men to serve often saw many of them never return.

But the Souls family's loss stood apart even among the countless tragedies of the war.

### Remembering the Souls Brothers

Today the names of the Souls brothers are remembered on war memorials and in the historical record, but their story continues to resonate because it reminds us that behind every casualty statistic lies a family forever changed.

In *Saving Private Ryan*, the United States Army attempts to save the last surviving brother so that one mother will not lose all of her sons. For the Souls family of Gloucestershire, no such rescue ever came.

Their sacrifice was total.

Five brothers answered the call to serve.

And five brothers never returned.



The Souls brothers names are featured on the war memorial in St John the Baptist church, Great Rissington

### PRIVATE ALBERT SOULS

Service Number: 17208  
Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), 5th Coy.

Died 14th March 1916 age 20 years old.

Buried/Commemorated at  
BULLY-GRENAY COMMUNAL CEMETERY,  
FRENCH EXTENSION. A. 41. France.

### PRIVATE FREDERICK GEORGE SOULS

Service Number: 21686  
Cheshire Regiment, 16th Bn.

Died 19 July 1916 age 30 years old

Buried/Commemorated at  
THIEPVAL MEMORIAL  
Pier and Face 3 C and 4 A. France.

### PRIVATE WALTER DAVIS SOULS

Service Number: 17209  
Machine Gun Corps (Infantry), 5th Bde.

Died 02 August 1916 age 24 years old

Buried/Commemorated at  
ST. SEVER CEMETERY, ROUEN  
B. 29. 33. France.

### PRIVATE ALFRED SOULS

Service Number: 21525  
Cheshire Regiment, 11th Bn.

Died 20 April 1918 age 31 years old

Buried/Commemorated at  
STRAND MILITARY CEMETERY  
IX. B. 9. Belgium.

### LANCE CORPORAL ARTHUR WILLIAM SOULS MM

Service Number: 21683  
Cheshire Regiment, 16th Bn.

Died 25 April 1918 age 31 years old

Buried/Commemorated at  
HANGARD COMMUNAL CEMETERY  
EXTENSION, I. G. 7. France.



MESSAGE FROM

**GENERAL ANIL CHAUHAN** PVM UYSM AVSM SM VSM  
CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF (INDIA)



The 1st of July 2026 marks the 110th anniversary of the "Battle of the Somme" one of the most decisive yet dominating battles of the First World War. It can be termed as a major turning point in British History. Thousands of Indians fought and fell in the battlefield of the Somme along with their compatriots from the Commonwealth. On this solemn occasion we remember their courage, sacrifice and commitment of duty.

Between 1914 and 1918, over 1.3 million Indians served overseas across multiple theatres of the war. During the Somme campaign of 1916, Indian formations were engaged in some of the fiercest fighting on the Western Front. Units of the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 8th Gurkha Rifles, the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 20th Deccan Horse and infantry battalions drawn from Sikh and Rajput regiments displayed extraordinary courage and steadfastness under conditions of relentless combat and extreme hardship.

Indian cavalry formations, including elements of the Indian Cavalry Corps, also played a significant role in the later phases of the campaign. Operating in terrain scarred by trench warfare and devastation, they adapted swiftly to the evolving character of battle. Their actions reflected discipline, professionalism and resilience, qualities that continue to define the ethos of the Indian soldier.

The cost of the war was profound. More than 130,000 Indian soldiers laid down their lives during the First World War, with over 9,000 casualties in the Somme sector. Their names are inscribed on memorials such as India Gate in New Delhi and Neuve-Chapelle in France, enduring reminders of their sacrifice.

These soldiers came from every corner of the Indian subcontinent, men of diverse regions, languages and faiths but united by honour, discipline and selfless devotion to duty. On distant battlefields, they upheld the finest traditions of soldiering and forged a legacy of courage and professionalism that continues to inspire the Defence Forces of India.

As we mark the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we remember them with solemn pride and enduring gratitude. Their sacrifice reminds us that the values of courage, duty and professionalism transcend time, geography and circumstance.

On behalf of the Defence Forces of India, I pay tribute to the gallant Indian soldiers who fought and fell in the Somme campaign. Their story is not merely one of the past, it lives on in the ethos, resolve and fighting spirit of the Indian Defence Forces.

Their sacrifice is remembered. Their honour endures. Their legacy will continue to inspire generations of soldiers.

Jai Hind!

2026

# MISSION MARIGOLD

Mission Marigold is a UK-based remembrance initiative dedicated to honouring the Indian soldiers who served alongside the British and Allied forces during the First and Second World Wars. It brings to light the immense contribution made by the largest volunteer army in

human history: 1.4 million Indian troops in the First World War and 2.5 million in the Second World War. By encouraging people to wear the marigold alongside the traditional poppy on Armistice Day, 11 November, the project aims to honour their courage and sacrifice.



लाइव्होण  
लमारिगोल्ड

UNITED IN REMEMBRANCE



Thousands of Indian cavalrymen of the 1st and 2nd Indian Cavalry Divisions took part in the Battle of the Somme. Caught between their age-old cavalry traditions and the brutality of industrial war, they rode across unfamiliar lands toward near-certain death during the darkest periods of the Great War. Mission Marigold stands to ensure that this sacrifice is no longer overlooked.

This man in his own country prayed we know not to what Powers.  
We pray Them to reward him for his bravery in ours  
- Rudyard Kipling, Hindu Sepoy in France, Epitaphs of the War

What began in 2020 with just a handful of people has grown into a movement of more than 10,000 participants, ensuring that these soldiers and their service are remembered with the honour they deserve. Many schools and organisations across the UK are participating in the initiative to carry this message forward.



In November 2025, an Early Day Motion (EDM 2264) was tabled in the UK Parliament, formally recognising Mission Marigold's efforts to honour Indian soldiers. Through public outreach, the initiative encourages participation in commemorative events and the use of the marigold symbol during the remembrance period.



# THE BLACK LIONS of FLANDERS

## *New ceremonial troop honours Sikh soldiers from the First World War*

A special new military troop has been created to remember the brave Sikh soldiers who fought for Britain in the First World War. The 1914 Sikhs Ceremonial Marching Troop was launched last in November 2025 at Wellington Barracks in London, next to Buckingham Palace. It is the first troop of its kind. The Sikh Military Foundation worked with the British Army to create this historic event. It honours more than 100,000 Sikh soldiers who fought for Britain between 1914 and 1918.

Major Daljinder Singh Virdee led the 1914 Sikhs onto the parade ground. The soldiers wore real First World War Sikh infantry uniforms and carried period equipment like Lee Enfield rifles.

Most of the troop members are serving personnel from the Royal Navy, Army and RAF. Each one represents the proud fighting tradition of Sikh soldiers. The Irish Guards band played military music as soldiers marched in authentic 1914 Sikh uniforms.

The ceremony mixed remembrance of the past with today's discussions about diversity and belonging in the British Army.

After an inspection by Major General John Kendall, the Deputy Commander of the Field Army, and Mr Gurpreet Singh Anand, the soldiers said the Ardaas (a martial prayer) and gave the Sikh War Cry: "Jo Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal," meaning "Whoever utters (this) shall be fulfilled; True is the Great Timeless One".

The 1914 Sikhs Standard was presented and a remembrance service for those killed in the First Battle of Ypres was held.

Simran Singh Stuelpnagel read a letter from a Sikh First World War soldier, and The Last Post and Reveille marked a one minute's silence. The 1914 Sikhs then marched past the General with great pride to begin their duties.

Many people today do not know about the sacrifices made by Sikh service personnel. The new ceremonial troop will remind people of this history through public appearances across London.

The project is part of the Sikh Military Foundation's work to preserve and promote Sikh military heritage. Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP explained: "From the battlefields of the Great War to modern day operations across the globe, Sikh soldiers have served with courage, loyalty and distinction."

Sikh beliefs combine spiritual discipline with protecting others and upholding justice. This shaped how Sikhs served on First World War battlefields.

Over 100,000 Sikhs served in the Indian Army during the First World War. They made up nearly 20% of forces in France and Belgium, even though Sikhs were only 2%

of India's population. They fought in every major area: Flanders, Gallipoli, East Africa, Mesopotamia and Palestine. The cost was heavy - at least 8,000 were killed and more than 21,000 were injured.

Sikh troops were among the first Indians sent to fight on the Western Front. At Ypres, the Lahore Division held their positions under constant attack. Some Sikh battalions lost over 75% of their men but kept fighting with determination. Their courage impressed both sides. German soldiers called them "the black lions of Flanders".

The sacrifice of Sikh soldiers created a lasting bond with Britain that continues today. Sikhs still serve with pride across the Royal Navy, Army and RAF.

Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton said:

*"The strength of our armed forces and their ability to deter, fight and win, depends critically on the courage, skill and unity of our people. The Sikh community's proud tradition of courage and commitment continues to play a vital role in our national security, and initiatives like the 1914 Sikh Ceremonial Troop ensure that legacy is recognised and carried forward."*

Today's service personnel show the same courage, loyalty and duty as those who fought at Ypres. The 1914 Sikhs ceremonial troop now march in their honour, keeping their legacy alive for future generations.



# The Delhi Memorial (India Gate)

## *A Monument to the Missing of the Indian Army, 1914–1921*

The India Gate is the second-tallest Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) memorial to the missing – a monument that stands among the most imposing commemorations of imperial sacrifice anywhere in the world. Officially known by the CWGC as the Delhi Memorial, it rises from the heart of India's capital, Delhi. At 42 metres it is second only to the Thiepval Memorial on the Somme, which reaches 54 metres.

### **A Lutyens Masterpiece**

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the foremost British architect of his age, the memorial embodies the same monumental clarity and restraint that characterise his work on Thiepval and the Cenotaph on Whitehall. Lutyens deliberately echoed the proportions of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris: slightly taller at 50 metres - creating what he described as a "universal architectural style free of religious ornamentation," appropriate for the multi-faith composition of the Indian Army.

The foundation stone was laid in 1921 by Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, Queen Victoria's third son. His presence was symbolic: the new imperial capital was largely Lutyens' creation, and its central commercial district, Connaught Place, still bears the duke's name.

The memorial's construction took ten years, involving thousands of craftsmen.

### **Commemoration and Loss**

The memorial honours 82,000 members of the Indian Army who died between 1914 and 1921. 74,187 serving personnel and 8,000 non-combatants.

Inscribed on the walls are the names of 13,216 individuals whose resting places are unknown and who are not commemorated elsewhere.

These men and women served across the global battlefields of the First World War, from France and Flanders to East Africa, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, and beyond. Among them were Indians, British personnel serving within the Indian establishment, and soldiers from the wider Indian Empire.

### **From the Delhi Memorial to India Gate**

In 1971, the Government of India designated the site as its principal national war memorial and renamed it India Gate (not to be confused with Mumbai's Gateway of India,

which is ceremonial rather than military). Responsibility for maintenance passed from the CWGC to Indian authorities, though the original Book of Names remains on site.

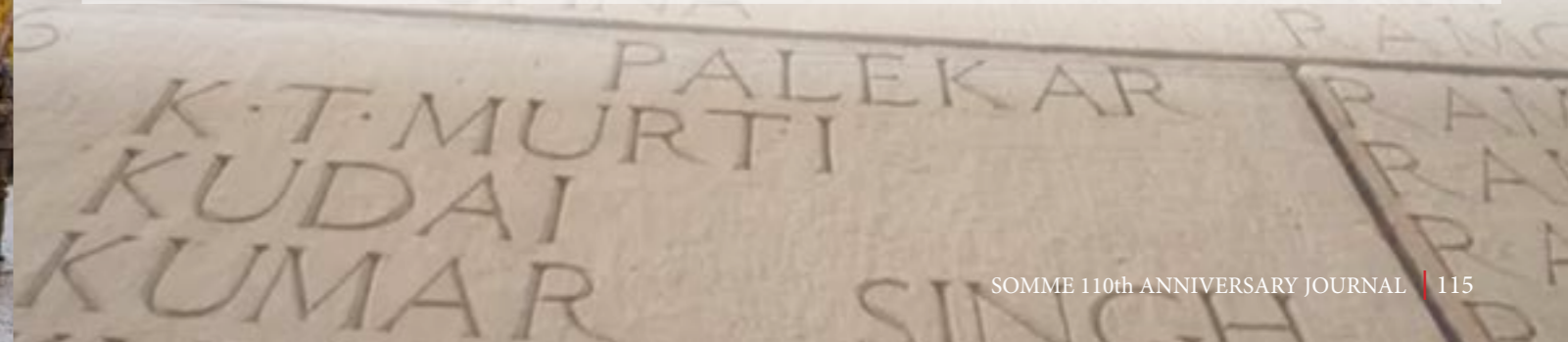
### **The Amar Jawan Jyoti**

The Gate had stood quiet and largely overlooked but this changed after the Kargil War of 1999, when the *Amar Jawan Jyoti* - the Flame of the Immortal Soldier - was installed beneath the arch. Modelled conceptually on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior beneath the Arc de Triomphe, it comprises four eternal flames, guarded continuously by India's armed forces. A fifth flame sits atop the structure but is lit only on rare occasions.

The arch is now illuminated nightly for two and a half hours, and on national days it glows in the colours of the Indian flag. Traffic is permanently barred from passing beneath it, preserving the site as a space of remembrance.

### **A Growing Memorial Landscape**

The Indian government is expanding the ceremonial district around the Gate. A National War Memorial commemorating post-1914 conflicts now stands nearby, with a National War Museum planned to join it. Both are designed largely below ground level so that Lutyens' great arch remains the dominant visual landmark.





# SOMME 110: Rediscovering History, Remembering the Fallen

In the summer of 1916, the Battle of the Somme became one of the most devastating campaigns of the First World War. Launched to relieve pressure on French forces fighting at Verdun and to inflict significant losses on the German Army, the offensive would come to symbolise both extraordinary courage and unimaginable sacrifice.

On 1st July 1916, the opening day of the battle, British and Commonwealth forces advanced into relentless German machine-gun fire. Facing heavily fortified positions and six well-prepared German divisions, the assault resulted in catastrophic losses, with approximately 60,000 British soldiers killed or wounded on the first day alone – the single heaviest day of casualties in British military history.

More than a century later, in 2026, Challenge The Wild will mark the 110th anniversary of the Somme through SOMME 110, a significant expedition of remembrance, reflection, and respect. The journey will follow sections of the Western Front Way, retracing the footsteps of those who fought across some of the most important battlefields of the war.

**Dan Searson, Expedition Leader says**  
"Leading SOMME 110 is both a privilege and a deeply personal journey for me. As a former Army Officer, I've always carried a profound respect for those who served before us but knowing that one of my own relatives fell on the Somme makes this expedition especially poignant."

Walking the same ground where he and so many others made the ultimate sacrifice is

both humbling and a reminder of the duty we all share to remember. To lead this expedition, carrying the Principal Lamp Light of Peace back to the battlefields where it belongs, is something I feel incredibly proud to be part of.  
  
It is not just about history – it is about honour, legacy, and ensuring their sacrifice is never forgotten."

The expedition will visit key memorials and cemeteries across the Somme, paying tribute to those who never returned home. It will also include Vimy Ridge, where Canadian forces achieved one of the most significant victories of the war in 1917, and continue into Ypres, where the scars of conflict remain etched into the landscape and remembrance is honoured daily.

At the heart of the expedition is the Principal Lamp Light of Peace, a Miners Lamp taken from the Somme in 1916, which Challenge The Wild proudly serves as custodian of. This symbolic lamp represents remembrance, unity, and peace, and during SOMME 110 it will be returned home for a series of poignant services and acts of commemoration across the battlefields where so many lives were lost.

Accompanied by a military piper, whose presence will bring ceremony and emotion to key moments of remembrance, the expedition will be led by a decorated former Army Officer, offering military insight and a deep understanding of leadership, sacrifice, and service. SOMME 110 is not simply a journey across historic ground – it is an act of remembrance, ensuring the stories, sacrifices, and legacy of those who served on the Western Front are never forgotten.

"The Somme is not just a battlefield – it is sacred ground. Standing where thousands of men fought, sacrificed, and never returned puts everything into perspective. For me, being part of SOMME 110 is about respect, remembrance, and ensuring we never lose sight of the cost of freedom. To walk the Western Front Way, visit these incredible memorials, and be part of returning the Principal Lamp Light of Peace to where it belongs is something truly special. It's an honour to stand alongside those committed to preserving this legacy and paying tribute to the fallen."

**Ant Middleton, Expedition Ambassador**

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CHALLENGE THE WILD Principal Lamp Light of Peace





MESSAGE FROM

# GENERAL CARSTEN BREUER

GERMAN CHIEF OF DEFENCE



I offer my respectful remembrance of one of the most devastating chapters of the First World War, and I pay tribute to all those who lost their lives - soldiers of every nation, drawn into a conflict whose scale and ferocity reshaped Europe and the world.

From a German perspective, the Somme stands as a place of profound loss and reflection. Hundreds of thousands of young men of the German Army fought and died along its fields, villages, and wooded ridges. They endured relentless artillery fire, harsh conditions, and unimaginable hardship, often holding their positions for months at a time under constant threat. Many never returned home, and countless families across Germany bore the enduring grief of sons, brothers, and fathers lost far from their homes.

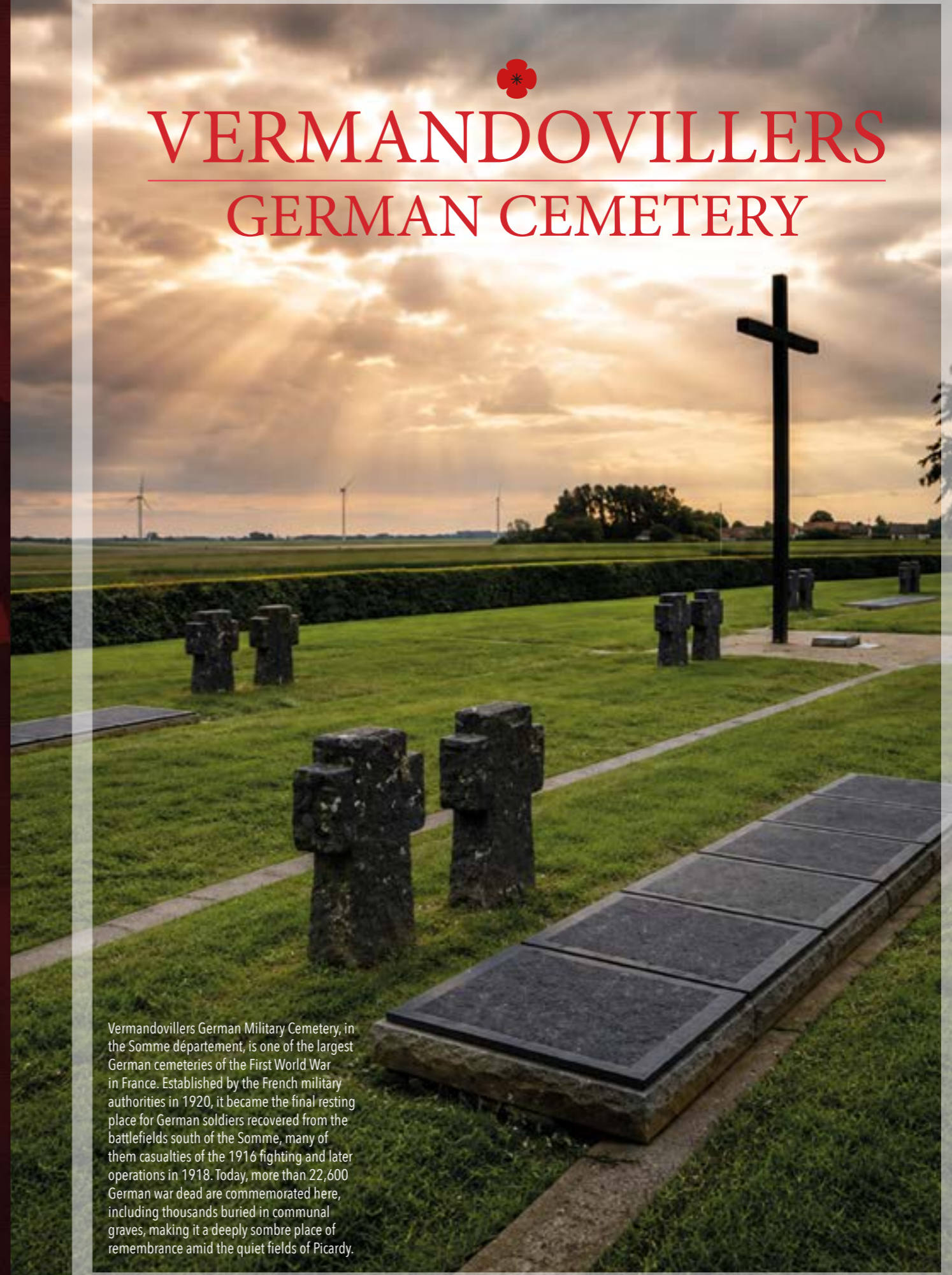
Yet the Somme is not remembered solely as a German battlefield, nor as the suffering of one nation alone. It is a shared graveyard. British, French, Commonwealth, German, and later many other nations' dead lie together in the soil of northern France. The battle reminds us that the human cost of war knows no national boundary. Uniforms differed, languages differed, but the fate endured by the soldiers was tragically similar.

Today, more than a century later, remembrance carries a different meaning. Former adversaries now stand together in shared commemoration, united by a common responsibility to remember the past honestly and to safeguard the peace that followed such sacrifice. For Germany, remembrance includes acknowledging the immense suffering caused by the war and recognising the duty of modern generations to ensure that such devastation is never repeated.

The Bundeswehr, alongside its allies and partners, is committed to the values born from the hard lessons of the twentieth century: cooperation, restraint, and the defence of peace within a framework of international law and collective security. Remembering the Somme is not only an act of mourning, but also a reaffirmation of that responsibility. On this solemn anniversary, we honour all who fell - known and unknown - on every side of the Somme. May their suffering never be forgotten, and may their memory strengthen our resolve to pursue peace, understanding, and reconciliation between nations.

2026

# VERMANDOVILLERS GERMAN CEMETERY



Vermandovillers German Military Cemetery, in the Somme département, is one of the largest German cemeteries of the First World War in France. Established by the French military authorities in 1920, it became the final resting place for German soldiers recovered from the battlefields south of the Somme, many of them casualties of the 1916 fighting and later operations in 1918. Today, more than 22,600 German war dead are commemorated here, including thousands buried in communal graves, making it a deeply sombre place of remembrance amid the quiet fields of Picardy.



# FRANZ VOLZ AT THE SOMME

*A Volksbund history by Melissa Grosche*

*“We are coming to the Somme now. I know my fate,” German soldier Franz Volz told his brother Lorenz. On 27 August 1916, Franz Volz was deployed to one of the deadliest battles of the First World War: The Battle of the Somme.*

Born on 27 March 1895, Volz grew up in Ingolstadt and later moved to Aschaffenburg. Two weeks after finishing school, the outbreak of the war shattered his plans to study medicine. Instead, he joined the 3rd Battalion of the 18th Bavarian Infantry Regiment as an officer cadet.

Volz was known for his perfect pitch. He played the piano, violin, organ, and cello, and at a very young age he had already composed a march and several songs. Yet he never had the chance to publish his works.

Franz Volz spent the first two years of the war in the trenches of Belgium and France, documented in numerous photographs. Just before his regiment was transferred to the ongoing Battle of the Somme, Volz met his brother Lorenz for the last time in August 1916.

His premonition proved true: after fourteen days of fighting at the Somme, he was killed by shrapnel to the chest near Martinpuich on 8 September 1916. As British forces had captured his unit's trench the following night, Lieutenant Volz could not be buried by his fellow Germans.

The Battle of the Somme was a turning point in German sepulchral history. Until then, the burial of the dead and the notification of families had depended on the efforts of individual military units. The development of the war and the sheer number of casualties at the Somme in 1916 forced the Prussian War Ministry to establish a formal war graves bureaucracy in the form of the “Gräberverwaltungsoffizier” (War Grave Administration Officer). These officers, however, were also unable to access bodies left behind enemy lines.

Two years later, the rushed German retreat following the armistice in November 1918 abruptly ended all military burial efforts. Grave records and cemetery locations were lost - a grim no man's land emerged. Unlike in other countries, the political situation in Germany prevented the state from organizing a

functional war grave administration. Yet hundreds of thousands of German relatives longed for clarification about the fate of their loved ones.

What, then, happened to Franz Volz and the other 465,000 German casualties at the Somme? Although the Treaty of Versailles was widely resented in Germany, the Foreign Ministry noted that paragraphs 225 and 226 proved valuable. They obliged the Entente powers to care for and restore German war graves on their territory at their own expense.

This provision enabled the interment of Franz Volz at the German war cemetery in Fricourt. In 1920, the French military administration created the cemetery and reinterred German war dead from 79 surrounding communities, soldiers previously buried in field graves, provisional sites, or discovered during postwar battlefield clearance. Volz was among them and now rests in a collective grave in Fricourt.

Meanwhile in Germany, former members of the war grave administration founded the non-governmental organization “Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge” (German War Graves Commission) in 1919. In addition to maintaining existing cemeteries, their aim was to recover the remains of missing soldiers, give them a dignified burial, and keep their relatives informed. Initially viewed as a humanitarian endeavour, inspired by Christian-humanist ideals, revisionist ideas began to find their way into the organization from the 1920s onwards; these ideas glorified the death of soldiers as a ‘hero’s death’.

Based on a Franco German agreement of 1926, the Volksbund took over restoration work at German cemeteries in France. From 1929 onward, the Fricourt cemetery was renovated: steps, a wrought iron gate, and trees were added. A persistent issue, however, was the need for permanent grave markers: a problem resolved only after the Second World War through another Franco German agreement in 1966 regulating German war cemeteries in France.



Since then, the Volksbund has maintained more than 830 cemeteries in over 45 countries worldwide. We can reconstruct Franz Volz's participation in the Battle of the Somme due to the continuous work of the Volksbund who maintain cemeteries, register grave locations, and stay in contact with relatives. One hundred and ten years after Franz Volz's death in the trenches of the deadliest battle of the First World War, he received his final resting place through a joint, multinational effort to preserve his memory. An outcome he likely never foresaw.



The Volksbund, the German War Graves Commission is a non-profit organisation that carries out its work for the German government relying primarily on the generosity of donors. Your support makes a difference!



Learn more about our work!



# Brothers In Arms

*These mist covered mountains  
Are a home now for me  
But my home is the lowlands  
And always will be  
Some day you'll return to  
Your valleys and your farms  
And you'll no longer burn  
To be brothers in arms*

*Through these fields of destruction  
Baptisms of fire  
I've watched all your suffering  
As the battles raged higher  
And though they did hurt me so bad  
In the fear and alarm  
You did not desert me  
My brothers in arms*

*There's so many different worlds  
So many different suns  
And we have just one world  
But we live in different ones*

*Now the sun's gone to hell  
And the moon's riding high  
Let me bid you farewell  
Every man has to die  
But it's written in the starlight  
And every line on your palm  
We're fools to make war  
On our brothers in arms*

- Mark Knopfler

*Brothers In Arms lyrics reprinted with permission*

In honour of all  
brothers and sisters, of  
all nationalities,  
who died in war.



#### HOW IT BEGAN

In 2006, while laying gas pipelines in Zonnebeke, the remains of five World War I soldiers were discovered. Among them, a carefully buried body was identified, using DNA, as that of Australian soldier John Jack Hunter.

His family confirmed that John had been buried there by his younger brother Jim. John was fatally wounded during the attack on Polygon Wood and died in Jim's arms on 26 September 1917. Jim intended to repatriate his brother after the war but was not able to find his body again.

The excavation of John Hunter's body and hearing his family's story deeply moved amateur archaeologist Johan Vandewalle and his team. The idea of a Memorial, symbolizing all lost brothers and sisters in various wars worldwide, kept growing as was his determination to reunite the souls of the brothers.

#### BROTHERS IN ARMS MEMORIAL PROJECT VZW

A group of enthusiastic amateur historians joined Johan, and the non-profit Brothers In Arms Memorial Project was founded. Landscape architect Andy Malengier designed a unique plan for the Memorial park, a strong symbolic concept of the eternal union of the brothers. Artist Sören Hawkes drew the design for the bronze statue, based on a sketch by Johan. It was sponsored by an Australian philanthropist Bill Gibbins and sculptor Louis Laumen from Melbourne created a moving, detailed monument of the Hunter brothers.

#### REALISATION OF THE MEMORIAL

After years of private fundraising, support from the National Lottery, and countless hours of construction, the Memorial was officially inaugurated on 25 September 2022. Besides the 66 meter-long pedestal for the statue, three monuments or 'standing stones' in Belgian blue-stone were completed.

They gave the Memorial form and dimension. The first stone, the site's facade, bears the name 'Brothers In Arms'. With permission of Mark Knopfler (front man of the rock band Dire Straits), the second stone features the hand-carved lyrics of his song 'Brothers in Arms'. The third stone incorporates two bronze rings as a figurative image of eternal unity and connection.

#### SYMBOLISM OF THE MEMORIAL

The Brothers In Arms Memorial is a timeless commemorative park with impressive architecture and deep symbolic value. It honours all brothers and sisters who lost their lives in war worldwide. The park is located amidst the history between the spot where John's body was found and the place where he died. The highlight of your visit is the detailed bronze statue of the dying soldier John in the arms of his brother.

The statue overlooks a long pedestal towards the bronze rings made from war scrap found in Zonnebeke soil. These embody the soul of the Memorial and symbolize the infinite and eternal unity and connectedness. This commemorative park also carries a strong message of peace to the world and stands as a symbol of reconciliation, love and worldwide peace. This is powerfully conveyed.

#### GROUP VISITS

The Brothers In Arms Memorial welcomes group visits on a guided tour during which you'll hear all about the actual story and the park's symbolism.

Additionally, you can listen to the song 'Brothers in Arms' and participate in a Last Post ceremony at the statue. The visit lasts about one hour and can be made daily by appointment. For more information, please contact us.

#### YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Every contribution helps to maintain and further develop this beautiful commemorative park. The access road and the memorial corner are still awaiting completion.

For this we rely entirely on private donations and merchandise sales. You can support us by making a donation or purchasing merchandise through the QR code.

Help us spread our message of unity, connectedness, and worldwide peace. We wish you a pleasant visit and thank you in advance for your generosity.

Brothers in Arms  
Memorial Park  
Lotegatstraat 26,  
8980 Zonnebeke,  
Belgium

Web: [brothersinarmsmemorial.info](http://brothersinarmsmemorial.info)  
Email: [biamp.belgium@gmail.com](mailto:biamp.belgium@gmail.com)





MESSAGE FROM

# LIEUTENANT GENERAL PR GRIFFITHS CB

MASTER OF SIGNALS, THE ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS



On this 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, we pause to remember the immense courage and sacrifice of those who fought in one of the most demanding and tragic conflicts. The Somme not only tested the resolve of soldiers on the front lines but also fundamentally changed the face of warfare - and with it, the role of military communications.

At the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, fewer than 6,000 men served in the Royal Engineer Signals Service, a small yet dedicated branch comprising just twelve companies. Their work - providing reliable communications between headquarters, artillery, and the front lines - was often dangerous, frequently carried out under fire, and proved vital to the coordination of the war effort.

The scale of the conflict soon changed everything. The extensive use of artillery, the introduction of new weaponry, and the evolving complexity of battlefield tactics demanded ever greater communication capabilities. Dedicated signal sections were formed to support the artillery alone, highlighting the growing recognition of how essential the signals service had become.

Towards the end of the war, the nature of combat itself shifted dramatically. What had begun as a war of trenches and attrition developed into a more sophisticated form of warfare - one involving carefully coordinated attacks between infantry, armour, cavalry, artillery, and aircraft. This change resulted in some of the most significant Allied advances of the war, including the Germans' greatest defeats since 1914.

Such complex, combined-arms operations required communications that were faster, more secure, and more reliable than ever before. It became clear that a new generation of technically skilled, highly trained, and specialist soldiers was needed to meet these demands. From this realisation came the decision to create a dedicated signals corp.

However, policy considerations delayed its formation until after the war. It was not until 28th June 1920 that a Royal Warrant was signed by the Secretary of State for War, the Right Honourable Winston S. Churchill, with the sovereign's approval to form a new 'Corps of Signals.' Just six weeks later, on 5th August 1920, His Majesty the King conferred the title 'Royal Corps of Signals' upon the new formation.

Today, as we reflect on the 110th Anniversary of the Somme, we honour not only the bravery of those who fought and fell on the battlefield but also those whose technical skills and quiet dedication laid the foundations for modern military communications. Their legacy endures in the Royal Corps of Signals and in the countless soldiers since who have carried forward their proud tradition of service, innovation, and sacrifice.

We will remember them.

2026

# THE ROYAL CORPS of SIGNALS



In Commemoration  
110th Anniversary of The Somme



To donate to the Royal Signals Charity please visit:  
[www.paypal.com/paypalme/RoyalSignalsCharity](http://www.paypal.com/paypalme/RoyalSignalsCharity)

[www.royalsignals.org](http://www.royalsignals.org)



**Laying the Cable in the Field - Gilbert Holiday, c. 1924**

This First World War study of a cable wagon under fire in Flanders in 1914 was painted by the Gilbert Holiday who is believed by many to be the most accomplished action painter of the horse in the history of English art. Holiday visited the Western Front in 1914 as an unofficial war artist and may have based this painting on sketches he made at that time. His three paintings, along with *Through by Franc Martin*, were the first to be hung in the HQ Mess.

# THE HISTORY of the ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS

*Depicted in the Corp's paintings*

On its formation the Royal Signals inherited from its parent unit, the Royal Engineer Signal Service, four major works of art, *Through* by F P Martin, and three paintings by Gilbert Holiday, which depicted the work of signallers during the First World War. In the next fifty years the Corps added portraits of its first Colonel Commandant, Lieutenant General Sir John Fowler and of its first Colonel in Chief, HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Mary.

In 1961, the Corps Committee decided to commission a series of paintings to commemorate the work of the Corps in the Second World War.

This was the first of several commissions which have sought to depict the achievements of the Corps throughout its history.

To refresh the Corps corporate memory and to reintroduce the paintings, the collection will be serialised within the Journal's History Section. The Summer 2025 edition featured C Telegraph Troop, Royal Engineers and the series continues with *The Great War*.

The British Expeditionary Force was deployed around *Mons* on the 22nd of August 1914 and to serve this force, a GHQ signal company, 2 Army Corps headquarters signal companies, 6 divisional signal companies, one cavalry signal Company, eight cable and five airline sections, and one lines of communication signal company were formed and sent to France. The total commitment was 75 officers, 2346 men.

The despatch rider came into prominence during the retreat from *Mons* and Lord French wrote in his despatch of 20th of November 1914. "...I am anxious to bring to notice the splendid work which has been done

throughout the campaign by motorcyclists of the Signal Corps. Carrying messages at all hours of the day and night in every kind of weather, and often traversing bad roads blocked by transport. They've been conspicuously successful in maintaining extraordinary degree of efficiency in the service of communications..."

The Signal Service had been designed to operate with a moving army and during a mobile phase of the war the cable detachments kept divisions and brigades in touch by laying Telegraph lines from the cable waggons, often under fire. But the growth of trench warfare entirely altered the requirement, and the work grew out of all proportion.

In 1914, a signal office at a corps headquarters would consider 100 messages a day as exceptional. In 1918, the average daily number

in such a headquarters was 4500. The two opposing armies settled down along a line some 500 miles long, which brought new problems to the Signals organisation.

The telephone system came into universal use as a means of communication in the trenches, but the continuous destruction of the lines by shellfire caused considerable problems, heliograph signalling lamps and other forms of visual signalling were also used by both sides.

Carrier pigeons became a valuable means of communication, and the importance of wireless began to be appreciated. Both sides introduced overhearing equipment, highlighting the danger to the security of communications. Captain A C Fuller of the Royal Engineers invented an instrument which made the buzzer telephone signal secure. This was named the Fuller Phone and remained in service until the end of the Second World War.

Meanwhile, to protect vulnerable telegraph and telephone lines, trenches six feet deep were dug into which armoured cable was laid and buried. Communications were also provided during the campaigns in *Salonica, Palestine, Mesopotamia*. Again, a mixture of line telegraph, wireless, pigeon and heliograph communications were used. During the campaign to reach *Jerusalem* in December 1917, the heliographs were successfully operated by Moonlight.



**Menin Gate - Gilbert Holiday, c. 1924**

This is a study of a despatch rider passing the Menin Gate during an artillery bombardment. Gilbert Holiday served mainly in the Ypres Salient and so would have had first-hand knowledge of the scene depicted here.

In the course of the war, new and improved equipment was brought into service. A London bus was converted into a pigeon loft.

Camels were used in the Middle East to transport airline poles. Wireless was fitted into aircraft and tried in tanks and wireless lorries were at last successfully introduced into service.

The Royal Engineer Signal Service had to adapt to these changes and developments and at the end of the war its prestige stood very high.

In 1914 and 1918, the Royal Engineer Signal Service had, under the directorship of Major General Fowler expanded to 70,000 men. Even before Armistice Day, the War Office were considering the formation of a separate corps as it was already seen that the signal service had become virtually a separate entity from its parent corps, the Royal Engineers.

*Article reproduced courtesy The Journal of the Royal Corps of Signals.*



**Laying Cable in a Trench - Gilbert Holiday, c. 1924**

The painting is a study of a party of men from the Royal Engineer Signal Service laying heavy cable in a trench in Flanders in 1915.



# “THROUGH”

by Francis Patrick Martin

Francis Patrick Martin was a soldier, telegraphist and artist. The picture “Through” is his most well-known WW1 battlefield picture. It holds a special place within the Royal Corps of Signals, the original painting hangs in the HQ Officers’ Mess in Blandford.

The picture captures the plight of the *lineman-telegraphist* during World War I: exposed under fire and alone on the Western Front. His telephone can be seen beside him and the implication of the picture is that the soldier has made the connection through himself, in order to maintain communications.

Martin served in the Boer War, learning there how to ride and manage horses. He then left the army to join the GPO as a telegraphist. He re-enlisted in 1914 in the 5 Scottish Rifles (Cameronians), but in his own words, “The GPO gave him away” and he was brought back into the RE Signal Service Regiment based in Jardine Street, Glasgow - today the HQ of 32nd Signal Regiment. His experience with horses meant he worked

with cable laying teams. Martin saw service in France with the Indian Corps, gaining much experience of laying line on the front line.

In 1917, after promotion to Sgt, he became an instructor at the Bedford Signals Service Training Centre (SSTC), ending the war there as RSM. SSTC’s motto was “*Be thorough to be through.*” It was SSTC’s motto that inspired his title for this painting. He returned to work for the GPO after WW1 and became a famous artist in his own right. During WW2 he continued to work for the GPO and served in the home guard.

His picture remains an inspiration to us all in respect of service, teamwork, duty and professionalism.

Reproduced Courtesy The Royal Signals Museum [www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk](http://www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk)

## Communications from the Somme to the Modern Battlespace



Connecting People  
Securing Systems  
Protecting Data

In remembrance of all those who served and sacrificed during the Battle of the Somme, and of the generations of signallers whose role has remained essential in every conflict since.

### Lessons from the Somme

The Battle of the Somme marked a turning point in military communications. Industrial warfare demanded faster, more reliable information, yet in 1916 systems remained fragile and easily disrupted. Telephone lines were vital but often destroyed by artillery. When they failed, runners, signal lamps, dispatch riders and carrier pigeons carried messages at great risk, often too late to influence events. The lesson was clear: communications were no longer just a support function. Reliable command and control had become essential, helping shape military signalling as a dedicated capability and contributing to the formation of the Royal Corps of Signals in 1920. More than a century later, the technology has changed, but the need remains the same: trusted information, delivered under pressure.

### From the Fog of War to Tactical Clarity

The gap between communications at the Somme and those available to modern forces is the difference between operating in uncertainty and achieving real-time tactical clarity. In 1916, commanders often waited hours for updates by runner or messenger, while artillery could sever telephone lines and isolate frontline units entirely. Today, systems such as the Silvus Technologies StreamCaster use MANET architecture and advanced MIMO mesh networking to create self-forming, self-healing wireless networks. When routes are disrupted, traffic can be dynamically re-routed, maintaining connectivity in contested environments. Voice, data, sensor feeds and low-latency video can now move across dispersed formations, creating a shared operational picture unimaginable in 1916.

### Communications in the Electromagnetic Battlespace

Security and survivability are now central to military communications. During the First World War, enemy listening posts could intercept telephone conversations through ground induction, forcing operators to use abbreviated or coded language with mixed success. Today, forces operate in a far more complex electromagnetic battlespace, where interception, electronic warfare and spectrum denial are constant threats. Capabilities such as Low Probability of Intercept and Low Probability of Detection waveforms allow tactical networks to communicate with greater resilience and discretion, reducing the risk of transmitting units being located or targeted. The principle remains unchanged: communications must continue functioning under pressure.

### The Importance of Integration and Understanding

As communications technology has advanced, so too has the importance of integrating and employing it effectively. Modern tactical networks are capable of delivering enormous operational advantage but achieving that advantage depends not only on the equipment itself, but on the engineering, integration and user understanding behind it. That is an area where companies such as C3IA Technologies increasingly contribute across the defence and security community, helping ensure advanced communications capabilities are integrated effectively and understood by the teams using them in demanding operational environments.

### The Signal Endures

The methods have changed dramatically since the Somme. Field telephones and dispatch riders have given way to resilient mesh networks, encrypted wireless communications and real-time digital situational awareness. Yet the core requirement remains constant. Military operations still depend on trusted communications, and on signallers, engineers and operators able to maintain the flow of information under pressure. The signallers of the First World War helped lay the foundations for the capability modern forces rely upon today. Their legacy endures through the Royal Corps of Signals and the wider defence communications community.

“From field wires in the mud to resilient networks in the cloud, our mission endures: delivering trusted communications and tactical clarity when it matters most.”



C3IA.co.uk

# The Sapper



The Sapper Magazine has a proud heritage dating back to 1895, when it was founded by Corporals Piggott, Avis and Beaumont. From its earliest days, the magazine has been built on the contributions of the Corps' Warrant Officers, NCOs and Sappers, who provided the notes, sketches and stories that captured life within the Corps. Today, the Magazine remains an essential historical resource including articles from the entire Sapper Family. **FOLLOW YOUR SAPPER!**



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# THE WIRE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS

WE REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED - SOMME 110



Whether you're serving, retired, or simply proud of our heritage, The Wire keeps you in touch with the pulse of the Corps.

The official magazine of the Royal Corps of Signals, the British Army's communication experts. The magazine features news from across the Corps, articles on people, units, and events, as well as historical content.

The latest editions of The Wire are available in both print and online formats through the official website: [royalsignals.org/royal-signals/wire-and-journal](https://royalsignals.org/royal-signals/wire-and-journal)



MESSAGE FROM

# GENERAL RUDZANI MAPHWANYA SM MMM

CHIEF OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE



On this solemn occasion, we pause to honour the memory of all who served and sacrificed during one of the most devastating battles of the First World War. The Somme stands as a powerful symbol of human endurance, courage, and the terrible cost of conflict.

For South Africa, the Somme holds particular and enduring significance. Men of the South African Brigade, drawn from across our diverse nation, served with distinction on the Western Front. Their most grievous sacrifice came in July 1916 at Delville Wood, where South African soldiers fought with extraordinary determination under relentless fire. Of those who entered the wood, only a fraction emerged unscathed. Their steadfast defence has become a defining chapter in South Africa's military history and a cornerstone of our national remembrance.

These soldiers fought far from home, motivated by duty, comradeship, and a belief in a cause greater than themselves. Their actions at the Somme demonstrated resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity and forged a legacy of service that continues to inspire the South African National Defence Force today. As we remember the fallen, we also honour the families who endured their loss, and we reaffirm our commitment to preserving the memory of those who gave their lives. Their sacrifice reminds us of the responsibilities that rest upon all who wear the uniform: to serve with integrity, to uphold peace, and to strive always to prevent such suffering from being repeated.

May the courage and sacrifice of South Africa's sons at the Somme, and of all who fought there, never be forgotten. May their legacy guide us as we work together - across nations and generations - in the pursuit of peace, stability, and mutual respect.

2026



# DELVILLE WOOD

## The Stand of the 1st South African Brigade

The Brigade, part of the 9th (Scottish) Division, was composed of four infantry battalions that reflected the diversity of South Africa at the time. English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans served alongside volunteers from Rhodesia, united by a common purpose far from home. On 15 July 1916, the Brigade advanced into Delville Wood with clear and uncompromising orders: to seize the position and hold it at all costs.

Those costs proved catastrophic. Almost immediately, the South Africans came under sustained and accurate German artillery fire. The dense wood, initially offering concealment, became a death trap as trees were smashed into splintered stumps and trenches collapsed under the bombardment. Communication broke down, supplies ran dangerously low, and relief proved impossible. Repeated German counter-attacks followed, fought at close quarters amid smoke, shattered timber, and the dead.

For six days and nights, the men of the Brigade held their ground. Their defence was marked by extraordinary discipline and endurance, even as casualties mounted to devastating levels. By the time the remnants were finally relieved on 20 July, fewer than 800 men remained from the more than 3,000 who had entered the wood. Whole companies had ceased to exist. Of the original battalion commanders, few survived unscathed.

The ordeal was later captured with stark clarity by the writer and historian John Buchan, who described how

*"the six days and five nights on which the South Africans held the most difficult post on the British front, a corner of death on which the enemy fire was concentrated at all hours from all sides... constitute an epoch of terror and glory scarcely equalled in the campaign."*

His words encapsulate both the horror endured and the courage displayed by those who fought there.

Yet Delville Wood was held. In strategic terms, the stand contributed to the wider Allied effort to secure Longueval and maintain pressure on German defences during the Somme offensive. In human terms, however, the cost was almost beyond comprehension. News of the losses sent shock-waves through South Africa, where the sacrifice of the Brigade came to symbolise both the nation's commitment to the war and the profound price paid by its soldiers.

In the years that followed, Delville Wood assumed a powerful place in South African remembrance. The Delville Wood South African National Memorial, inaugurated in 1926, stands amid the regrown forest on land presented in perpetuity to South Africa. It commemorates not only those who fell during the battle, but all South Africans who died in the First World War, regardless of race or background.

Today, Delville Wood remains sacred ground. It stands as a testament to courage under impossible conditions, to unity forged in adversity, and to a sacrifice that shaped South Africa's military identity. More than a century on, the stand of the 1st South African Infantry Brigade continues to speak with quiet authority, reminding us that the Somme was not only fought by great powers, but by nations and individuals whose stories deserve enduring remembrance.



## Why Delville Wood Mattered

Though small on the map, it sat at the hinge of the fighting around Longueval and controlled ground the British needed to hold if the offensive was to continue.

**A key tactical position.** Delville Wood lay on high ground east of Longueval, overlooking approaches towards Guillemont and Ginchy. In German hands it offered excellent cover for machine-guns and artillery observers, allowing fire to be directed onto British advances across open ground.

**Protection of Longueval and the British flank.** By mid-July 1916, Longueval had been captured at great cost, but it was vulnerable to counterattack. Holding Delville Wood was essential to anchor the British line and prevent German forces from rolling up the flank of the 9th (Scottish) Division and neighbouring units.

**Observation and artillery control** Despite its shattered state, Delville Wood provided crucial observation points.

**Momentum in the Somme offensive** Abandoning Delville Wood after capturing it would have undermined morale and invited counter-attacks elsewhere along the front.

**Symbolic importance** Delville Wood came to represent the principle that ground, once taken, would not be surrendered. Orders to hold it "at all costs" reflected the prevailing British doctrine of the time, even when that ground was reduced to a killing zone.



HMS Invincible and HMS Inflexible steaming out of Port Stanley to engage the German fleet

# The Battle of the Falkland Islands

*Revenge, Resolve, and the Restoration of Sea Power*

On the 8th of December 1914, in the far reaches of the South Atlantic, the Royal Navy delivered one of the first great naval victories of the First World War. The Battle of the Falkland Islands was more than a tactical success: it was a moment of national recovery, a demonstration of imperial reach, and a stark reminder that command of the sea would remain central to Britain's war effort.

The battle came only weeks after the shock of Coronel, off the coast of Chile, where Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock's squadron had been overwhelmed by the powerful German East Asia Squadron under Vice-Admiral Maximilian von Spee. Coronel was a rare and painful naval defeat for Britain. Two armoured cruisers, *HMS Good Hope* and *HMS Monmouth*, were lost with all hands. In a navy that had long regarded sea mastery as both inheritance and obligation, the blow landed hard. The Admiralty's response was swift. Battlecruisers *HMS Invincible* and *HMS Inflexible*, under Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, were dispatched south with one clear purpose: to find Spee and destroy him.

That reckoning came at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands. Spee, hoping to strike the British coaling station and wireless facilities, instead found a superior force waiting for him. Once the British squadron had raised steam and put to sea, the outcome became a contest of speed, gunnery, and endurance. The German ships fought with skill and courage, but they were outmatched. One by one, Spee's cruisers were overtaken and destroyed. His flagship, *Scharnhorst*, went down with the admiral aboard; *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg* followed. Only *Dresden* escaped, and only temporarily. By day's end, the German East Asia Squadron had effectively ceased to exist.

In strategic terms, the significance was immediate. The destruction of Spee's force removed a major threat to British trade routes and restored confidence in the Royal Navy after Coronel. It also underlined

a truth that would shape the whole conflict: Germany could challenge Britain at sea, but only at enormous risk and for limited duration. The Falklands reaffirmed the global reach of British naval power. Even on a remote station near the edge of the world, Britain could bring overwhelming force to bear.

Yet the battle should not be remembered simply as a triumph of steel over steel. It was also an intensely human encounter. More than 2,000 German sailors were killed, including Spee and his two sons. British losses were light by comparison, but the scale of German sacrifice gave the victory a sombre edge. Spee himself was no reckless adventurer; he was an able and honourable commander, carrying out his duty in increasingly hopeless circumstances. There is tragedy in that final action, and dignity too.

For Britain, then, the Falkland Islands was both vindication and warning. It avenged Coronel, but it also revealed how quickly complacency could be punished in a global war. Naval supremacy was not a static possession; it had to be maintained, projected, and proven. In the cold waters off the Falklands, the Royal Navy did exactly that.

More than a century on, the battle endures as a defining episode of the war at sea: a clash born of defeat, answered with determination, and resolved with overwhelming force. It stands as a reminder that in 1914 the oceans were not a backdrop to the war, but one of its decisive theatres - and that on those oceans, empires lived or died by the power of their fleets.



Left: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee, 1st Baronet, GCB, KCMG, CVO (9 June 1859 - 7 May 1925)

Right: Vizeadmiral Maximilian Johannes Maria Hubert Reichsgraf von Spee (22 June 1861 - 8 December 1914)



## THE FALKLAND ISLANDS ASSOCIATION

Supporting the right of Falkland Islanders to decide their own future

Throughout the First World War, Falkland Islanders answered the call from their mother country in numbers out of all proportion to the tiny population. Some 112 men served of whom 22 made the supreme sacrifice for King and Country; three women signed up as nurses with the Red Cross. Meanwhile at home, the War came quickly with the Battle of the Falkland Islands on 8 December 1914 being one of the most important naval engagements of the War. The Royal Navy's victory is still commemorated every year in the Falkland Islands as a public holiday on 'Battle Day'.

In 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. At a cost of 255 British servicemen and 3 Falkland Islanders killed, HM Armed Forces saved the Islands from annexation by an Argentine state that played little heed to human rights. Even now however, Argentina continues to relentlessly pursue its baseless sovereignty claim, ignoring the Islanders wishes despite the 2013 Referendum when 99.8% of Falkland Islanders confirmed their overwhelming desire to remain a British Overseas Territory.

The Falkland Islands Association (FIA) is committed to supporting the inalienable right of Falkland Islanders to decide their own political future for themselves, as enshrined in the UN Charter. Through our twice-yearly Newsletter and our website, we show how the Falkland Islands have developed since 1982 into a vibrant, successful and diverse community, as well as debunking Argentina's spurious claims.

Above all, we seek to maintain a worldwide membership of people who love the Falklands and are prepared to raise their voices whenever the Islanders right to self-determination is challenged - an ever-present threat whilst Argentina maintains its sovereignty claim, since 1994 enshrined in its Constitution.

If you share this commitment, please join us either online at [www.fiassociation.com](http://www.fiassociation.com), by scanning the QR code, or emailing our membership secretary on [membershipsec@fiassociation.com](mailto:membershipsec@fiassociation.com)





# ROLL OF HONOUR

Those Falkland Islanders who served, those who died, and those remembered

## SERVED

ADAM Norman  
 ALAZIA Charles  
 ALDRIDGE Henry  
 ALDRIDGE Horace  
 ALDRIDGE Richard  
 ALLAN David  
 ASPINALL Shirley  
 BAILLON Wilfred  
 BARNES Arthur  
 BARNES Louis  
 BEAN Thomas  
 BIGGS Rae  
 BIGGS William  
 BLAKE Arthur L  
 BLAKE E W H  
 BLAKE Norman  
 BLAKE William  
 BLAKELEY Adam  
 BONNER Sam  
 BOOTHROYD Ernest Northern  
 BOUNDS Stanley  
 BUCKLEY Bernard  
 BUCKLEY Peter  
 BUCKLEY -  
 CAMPBELL William  
 CARNIE William  
 COBB Edward C  
 COBB Hubert  
 COLEMAN John  
 DAPRATO T

DEAN George  
 DEAN John "Jack" W  
 DETLEFF William  
 DICKIE -  
 DOUGLAS William  
 DUROSE Rupert  
 EWAN Dick  
 FELTON Evelyn  
 FRAZER David  
 GIRLING Barry  
 GIRLING Chris  
 GLEADELL William  
 GOODHART Eric  
 GORDON George  
 GOSS Ernest  
 GOSS Stanley E  
 GOSS Sydney  
 GRIFFITHS S  
 HARDING Hugh  
 HARDY Valentine  
 HARVEY James  
 HOWATT Frank  
 KIRWAN Arthur  
 McATASNEY Edward  
 McCALL Archibald  
 McCALL James  
 McCALL William  
 McDONALD Kenneth  
 McEWAN Peter  
 McPHEE Donald

McTRAVERS Archie  
 MARTIN Thomas  
 MATHEWS Edmund Gray  
 MOIR John  
 MORRIS George  
 MURPHY Michael  
 OGILVIE Arthur  
 OGILVIE Henry  
 OSWALD -  
 PAULINE Fred G  
 PHILLIPS Gilbert  
 PHILLIPS Walter  
 PITALUGA Stanley  
 RICKETTS Harry  
 ROBSON George  
 RUTTER William  
 SMITH Charles  
 SMITH Henry  
 STICKNEY Robert  
 STOKES J  
 TUCKER -  
 TURNER -  
 TURNER Jack  
 UWINS Richard  
 WATT Norman  
 WATT Stanley  
 WILLIAMS Douglas  
 WILLIAMS George  
 WILLIAMS Jack  
 WILLIAMS Phillip

## DIED

AITKEN Norman  
 ALLEN James  
 BAILLON Gerald Wolstan  
 BIGGS Frederick  
 BLYTH William  
 BONNER Singleton  
 DICKIE James  
 DOUGLAS Robert Greenshields  
 GAYLARD Herbert  
 GOODHART Eric John  
 HARDY Claude

KELWAY Ernest Arthur  
 LEES Andrew  
 MATHEWS John Waldron  
 McKAY Peter  
 NEWING Charles  
 PACKE Robert  
 PHILLIPS Henry  
 SHIRES Walter  
 SPENCER Ernest  
 WILLIAMS Maxwell Henry  
 WILLIAMS Stuart Duncan

## OTHER

BLAKE Dorothy  
 BLAKE Violet  
 MATHEWS Louisa Ellen

*Names recorded with gratitude and remembrance.*

We are proud to support the 110th Anniversary of the Somme and remember with gratitude all those who served and sacrificed.

There has been a huge amount of development and progress in the Falklands, perhaps for us the most notable being the declaration of the fishing zone in 1986. The creation of this zone provided the foundation for a new sector in the islands and over the years the licensing system has developed to a stage where we now own long term property rights.

These rights provide us with security and confidence to continue developing the Falklands fishing industry which will not only benefit the companies directly involved but also the Falklands as a whole. RBC owns the property rights in the Loligo squid and Finfish fisheries and these form the core of our assets. As such, our primary objective is the efficient and sustainable utilisation of these rights. Through a number of companies we also part own deep sea freezer trawlers which operate around the Falklands.

Whilst our primary objective concerns the utilisation of these rights, we believe that for our long term existence, we must widen our activities beyond a purely catching operation. Our secondary objective therefore is to extend our interests into other areas of the seafood sector which will provide a platform for future development and reduce our exposure to the volatility of the catching operation.





## WE REMEMBER SOMME 110

Operations in the Falkland Islands date back over 170 years and the Falkland Islands Company was granted its Royal Charter in 1852.

From its early days as a major landowner and sheep farmer, controlling almost half the land area of the islands, the Company has steadily widened its activities to provide a broad range of essential services to the people of the Falklands. The islands now have a population of around 3,000, with over 65,000 tourists visiting the islands in the 2025/26 season via cruise ships alone.

The company's areas of activity embrace retailing (including food, clothing, electrical goods, home furnishings, gifts and DIY), residential and commercial property, the sale and hire of 4x4 vehicles, travel services, including flight bookings, airport transfers and luxury coach and walking tours for tourists, insurance, agency services for cruise ships, and the provision of freight and shipping services to and from the islands.

The Falkland Islands Company and Falkland Island Shipping are wholly-owned subsidiaries of FIH Group plc, a publicly-owned company quoted on the AIM market in London.



[www.the-falkland-islands-co.com](http://www.the-falkland-islands-co.com)

# Kidney Cove Tours

## FALKLAND ISLANDS

The Falklands, far-flung yet forever faithful,  
remember the fallen of the Somme

*From the windswept shores of the Falkland Islands to the scarred fields of the Somme, the Great War bound distant places in shared sacrifice. As we mark the 110th anniversary, we honour all who served and fell, wherever their journey began, and wherever their sacrifice is remembered.*

### LISA & ADRIAN WELCOME YOU TO KIDNEY COVE TOURS

Based at Murrell Farm, a small holding of 3000 sheep, Kidney Cove tours can offer you exclusive tours in and around our farm. We have been running tours since 1999 and have invested in our infrastructure during this period.

We offer a great range of ways for you to enjoy your stay, on your arrival at this great destination of wildlife & beauty. Whatever you would like the day to be, even pick up and drop of for a penguin tour. (Penguin tours are from October to the end of March).

We have tours that are run for the many cruise ships that call in to Stanley, and for the tourists who are in the Islands for a longer period known as land-based tourists.

We are available any day, get in contact to arrange a tour at our website. We hope you enjoy your stay, please don't leave here without seeing anything, it would be a lost opportunity.



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## DUTY, COMPASSION & ENDURANCE

### *The Royal Medical Corps in The Great War*

The Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) was formed on the 23rd of June 1898. The formation was the merger of the former Medical Staff with the Medical Staff Corps thus uniting the Senior Officers with the lower ranks. There was an element of the new Corps at the Boxer Rebellion in China, but the first warfare experience was in the South African War of 1899-1902 where the embryo of modern warfare took place, and the first results of high velocity rifle fire were found. The experiences of that war set up the organisation that took the field in France in 1914, but by 1918 it was a vastly different service indeed.

At the outbreak of the Great War, just 16 years after its formation, there were 9,000 Warrant Officers and Men of the RAMC; this grew to 113,000 by 1918.

The British Army had never fielded a field ambulance in conflict, the last of the great armies to have understood the importance of medical discipline, and hold medical science in high esteem, within their fighting forces were the old civilisations, such as the ancient empires of Greece and Rome.

Even today there is a general misconception that the function of the Medical Services in war is to just bind up wounds, but for centuries all knowledge had become lost. This resulted in medical affairs going way down on the list of priorities in the face of the enemy, and throughout this time Doctors and Physicians ranked below washerwomen.

The management of care and welfare for the sick and the wounded was, therefore, inadequate, and many men were left neglected or were treated by untrained and unskilled individuals. Several were left in the hands of the enemy, and it has even been recorded that many, who appeared helpless or unlikely to make a recovery, were killed by their own troops to put them out of their misery.

As each war ended, the implication was always to improve better care for the sick and the wounded, it was eventually

realised that during active service many medical personnel not only lacked medical, but also military training. One important creation of this war was the formation of RAMC Sanitary Sections that checked the sanitation of all barrack areas, billets, cook houses, washing facilities, waste disposal, incineration, water conservation etc. Only highly trained personnel were used in this service which included Sanitary Inspectors, Architects, Engineers, Builders etc.

It was also realised that a man's chances of survival depended on how quickly his wound was treated; modern warfare was now producing vast numbers of casualties requiring treatment at the same time. It was impossible for surgeons to evaluate and practice successfully on the front lines. Efficient and rapid movement away to what was sufficient was, therefore, the only way to achieve success.

For this reason, a system was set up and became known as the Chain of Evacuation. Each section of the chain had its own agenda but the objective was the same - to deal with all medical matters, and to treat the sick and the wounded to get them back into the fighting force.

It has been documented that on the Western front alone, the wounded that returned to the firing line, represented a manpower saved of 1,600,000. It has been acknowledged that this enormous number of men conserved to fight again was almost enough to turn the scale of war in the

British Armies favour. This was also achieved through RAMC personnel worked alongside drivers of the Army Service Corps and carpenters of the Royal Engineers in all units.

Also, in the Casualty Clearing Stations and the General Hospitals there were Sisters of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, and nurses of the Joint Red Cross and St. John, and Voluntary Aid Detachments of the Red Cross. There was no Army Dental Corps at first, but Dentists acted as anaesthetists as well as performing dental work as RAMC officers.

The RAMC was not a fighting force, but its members saw the full horror of the war. It must be remembered that Warrant Officers and men performed their duties unarmed and the Corps lost themselves no less than 6,873 personnel; of these an estimated 470 officers and 3,669 other ranks were either killed in action or died of wounds.

To date the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are still adding names to their roll of honour. Throughout the war RAMC personnel were praised repeatedly in despatches.

By 1929 the Corps could proudly boast ownership of many foreign orders and various foreign medals, along with:

**1,111 Meritorious Service Medals** including one extra bar, **3,002 Military Medals** including 95 with one extra bar, and 4 with 2 extra bars, **395 Distinguished Conduct Medals** including 9 with one extra bar, **3 Albert Medals**, **1,484 Military Crosses** including 61 with one extra bar, 22 with 2 extra bars and 1 with 3 extra bars. **499 Distinguished Service Orders** including 25 with 1 extra bar and **7 Victoria Crosses**, two of which included 1 extra bar.

Being a stretcher-bearer was a very arduous job. We had to carry stretchers for a hundred yards, up to our knees in mud, and there would be other men to take the man back to the advanced dressing station. And then, further back, there would be a main dressing station, and finally a casualty clearing station. There were times when we had so many casualties coming in at one time that we didn't always have [sic] adequate staff to deal with them. We did the best we could with them. On one occasion, we had a small truce. We had so many dead over the top - and so did the Germans - that we called a truce. An hour or two would be allowed, to go over the top and bury the dead.

**Sergeant Frederick Goodman, 1st London Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps**

A day of days. We were up at 6am and were greatly surprised to find the ground covered with snow. Zero hour was at 6.10am and to the second our artillery started. It was a wonderful sight: dawn just beginning to break through; the ground, the trenches, shell holes all dead white; a low mist above the ground and with this the flashes and noises of the guns and in the distance the Boche star signals of red and white. It was the weirdest awe-inspiring sight that I have ever seen - words fail.

**Captain Geoffrey Hardwick, 59th Field Ambulance, 19th Division, diary entry for 18 November 1916, the last day of the battle**

A French orderly carrying a wounded British soldier on his back. They move through swirling smoke, and a light shines from the right of the composition casting their shadows on the earth behind. Painting by William Orpen.  
Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 2959)

## Bearing the Wounded: The RAMC



British soldiers taken prisoner on the first day of the Somme campaign, 1st July 1916. The soldiers in kilts are from the London Scottish, probably taken prisoner at Gommecourt.

# Prisoner of War

## Endurance behind the wire during the Great War

Statistically, the vast majority of soldiers were, as one might expect, never taken prisoner. While 50 percent of all those who served could expect to be killed or wounded, only around 2.8 percent, or approximately 170,000 British servicemen, were captured on the Western Front, over half of these being taken prisoner only during the last eight months of the war. Set against this number the grim figure that two million men were wounded and around one million killed, and there is apparently ample reason to explain why capture came as such a surprise.

Yet statistics alone do not give the whole picture. The soldier's surprise at capture was as much sociological as it was statistical, being bound up partly in the way men were brought up to see themselves.

From the time school-children were taught the dates of innumerable British battlefield victories, boys, in particular, were infused with the history and the glory of Empire. Any defeats were glorious because of the apparent self-sacrifice of the defenders, narrow victories were won through the determination of the thin red line not to give in or give way.

Surrender, though it occurred more often that it was polite to mention, was politically not on the agenda. Young lads were brought up with the "Boy's Own" interpretation of warfare and no one was there to refute that idea. There was no great legion of veterans to tell alternative stories of warfare, and no bomb damage to show the consequences of fighting.

The last significant engagement had been the Boer War, when despite failures Britain had still won through. Defeats such as Spion Kop were immortalised for their heroism, and reliefs, such as at Kimberley and Mafeking, were characterised by their steadfastness and their very unwillingness to surrender.

When these boys joined up for the First World War, the last thing on their or anyone else's minds was the notion of surrender. Training was tough and, for the majority, thorough. The Kitchener recruits typically had a year's training before they saw action overseas.

Few, if any, were ever taught what to do in the event of being cut off and surrounded other than to fight their way out. What to do in the event of capture was couched in terms not of how best to surrender to survive but in terms of how, once caught, one might cause the enemy as much trouble as possible.

Escape of course was the ultimate aim. As school history taught no lessons on surrender, so the army used regimental tradition and honour to reinforce the notions of what was proper and right.

If those going to the front did not imagine themselves performing great heroics and some no doubt did for a while then they certainly expected to do their duty to King and Country. In part, this meant trying not to bring dishonour to the Regiment, but most of all it meant standing true with your pals, through thick and thin.

There were pressures on officers and men not to surrender, but less so than one might imagine, as few conceived of such an eventuality.

However, after their imprisonment many officers were asked to write accounts of their capture, explaining the exact circumstances by which they came to surrender.

Quite clearly, there was an air of suspicion attached to capture that was missing from most cases of personal injury or death. Did the army foster this climate of mild suspicion to ensure that officers kept to the highest traditions or did they undertake enquiries in order to guard against an officer's reputation being unduly impugned? Who knows?

What is certain is that many officers were happy to write such reports, in the aftermath of which they received a letter exonerating them of any blame.

No such reports were asked of the ordinary ranks, not least because, as they were under orders, the precise circumstances of their capture would not have been of their making.

**THE ROYAL ARMY PHYSICAL TRAINING CORPS**

*'Mens Sana in Corpore Sano'*  
*'A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body'*

We pause in solemn remembrance of all who served, suffered and fell during one of the defining battles of the Great War. We honour the courage, endurance and sacrifice of those who faced unimaginable hardship in the service of their country and comrades. Their strength of spirit remains an enduring example to all who serve today, and we will Remember Them.

**THE SAS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION**

The SAS Association is honoured to join in marking the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. We remember with deep respect all those who served, suffered and fell during one of the defining battles of the Great War. Their courage, endurance and sacrifice continue to speak across generations.

We pay tribute not only to those who gave their lives, but to all who carried the burden of war, and we reaffirm our duty to ensure that their service is never forgotten.

**IN REMEMBRANCE**

**Consolidated Fisheries Ltd**, based in Stanley in the Falkland Islands, is proud to support the 110th Anniversary commemorations of the Battle of the Somme. Across distance and time, we honour all who fought, suffered and fell, and remember with gratitude a generation whose sacrifice must never be forgotten.

[www.consolidatedfisheries.com](http://www.consolidatedfisheries.com)

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An officer lecturing to troops of the Northumberland Fusiliers in a reserve trench at Thiepval, September 1916. Image: IWM (Q 1349)



# NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS

## A Regiment Across The Battles

When the Battle of the Somme began in the early hours of 1 July 1916, the Northumberland Fusiliers were already positioned to take part in one of the greatest and most costly offensives in British military history. Over the months that followed, the regiment would be drawn repeatedly into the fighting, its service stretching from the disastrous opening day to the final winter assaults that brought the campaign to a close. The Somme, for the Northumberland Fusiliers, was not a single battle but a prolonged trial of courage, endurance, and sacrifice.

The regiment's Somme experience opened amid the thunder of artillery and the confident expectation that the preliminary bombardment had broken the German line. On 1 July, fighting around South Thiepval placed the Northumberland Fusiliers against one of the most formidable defensive systems on the entire front. Thiepval Ridge, honeycombed with dugouts and protected by interlocking machine-gun fire, proved devastatingly resilient.

As British troops advanced, they were met by fire from positions that had survived almost intact. Progress was limited, casualties severe, and the objectives of the First Day remained largely out

of reach. For the regiment, as for so many others, the Somme began not with breakthrough but with bitter realisation: the war would not be won quickly, and the cost would be immense.

**Early July: consolidation at a terrible price**  
In the days immediately following the opening assault, the battle shifted into a grim pattern of consolidation and renewed attack. On 5 July, the regiment was involved in the attack and capture of *Quadrangle Trench*, a German position that dominated approaches south of the *Albert-Bapaume* road. Such actions rarely made headlines, yet they were essential to maintaining pressure on the enemy and preventing German recovery after the First Day. Two days later, on 7

July, the fighting moved into wooded terrain with the attack on *Bailiff Wood*. Woods on the Somme were death traps: shattered by shellfire, stripped of cover, and criss-crossed by trenches and wire. Here, progress was slow and confused, with visibility reduced and resistance stubborn. Casualties continued to mount, often without any dramatic advance to show for the effort.

### Mid-July: night fighting and the Bazentin breakthrough

A turning point came in mid-July as British commanders sought to regain momentum. On the night of 14 July, the Northumberland Fusiliers were engaged in operations around *Ovillers*, part of a wider effort to exploit surprise and reduce German strong points under cover of darkness. Night fighting on the Somme was disorientating and dangerous, yet it offered a chance to negate German machine-gun dominance.

That same day marked one of the most significant moments of the campaign: the attack and capture of *Bazentin-le-Grand* during the Battle of *Bazentin Ridge*. Advancing before dawn behind a tightly controlled barrage, British troops achieved a rare success. For the Northumberland Fusiliers, *Bazentin-le-Grand* stood in stark contrast to the slaughter of 1 July—a demonstration that lessons were being learned, even if the cost remained high.

**Late July: pressure along the Bazentin Ridge**  
Success at *Bazentin* did not end the fighting. Instead, it drew the regiment into further operations along the shattered ridge and the approaches to High Wood. On 23 July, the regiment took part in the attack on *Piccadilly*, a German trench system and strong point guarding the eastern approaches to the ridge. *Piccadilly*, like so many Somme objectives, was less a place than a scar on the landscape—a maze of trenches, shell holes, and broken ground. Fighting here was attritional, with gains measured in yards and held only under constant threat of counter-attack. The struggle for the ridge would continue long after July ended.

### Autumn fighting: trenches, tanks, and attrition

As summer gave way to autumn, the Somme settled into a brutal routine. Between 15 and 21 September, the Northumberland Fusiliers were engaged in the attack and capture of the right

section of *Hook Trench*, part of the methodical effort to dismantle German defensive networks piece by piece.

On 1 October, the regiment was involved in the wider Battle of *Fliers-Courcelette*, a phase of the campaign remembered for the first use of tanks. While the machines captured public imagination, the fighting on the ground remained dominated by infantry advancing under shellfire, through mud, wire, and shattered trenches.

Just days later, on 6 October, came the attack and capture of *The Tangle*—a notorious labyrinth of trenches that epitomised the close-quarter savagery of late-Somme fighting. Such objectives demanded endurance more than dash, as soldiers fought at close range in conditions of exhaustion and exposure.

### The closing act: Serre and the Ancre

The Somme campaign drew to its close in November 1916, as British forces sought to secure ground that had resisted capture since the opening day. On 13 November, during the Battle of the *Ancre*, the Northumberland Fusiliers were involved in the attack on *Serre*—a grim echo of the fighting of 1 July.

Though gains were finally made, they came at the end of a campaign that had consumed hundreds of thousands of lives. Winter weather, mud, and exhaustion brought the Somme to a halt, leaving behind a landscape permanently scarred by months of relentless warfare.

### Endurance and remembrance

From *Thiepval* to *Serre*, from the catastrophe of the First Day to the hard-won success at *Bazentin-le-Grand*, the Northumberland Fusiliers' Somme story is one of sustained commitment rather than a single defining moment. The regiment returned to the line again and again, absorbing losses and continuing to fight as the campaign evolved.

Many of those who fell have no known grave. Their names are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial, where the scale of sacrifice is rendered in stone. More than a century later, the Somme remains inseparable from the identity of the regiment—a testament to courage under unimaginable conditions, and to the enduring cost of the battle.



## NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS ROLL OF HONOUR

The following are the 24 battalions of the Regiment who participated at the battle of the Somme

1st Battalion

1/4th Battalion

1/5th Battalion

1/6th Battalion

1/7th Battalion

8th Battalion

9th Battalion

10th Battalion

11th Battalion

12th Battalion

13th Battalion

14th Battalion

16th Battalion (Newcastle)

17th Battalion (NER Pioneers)

18th Battalion (1st Tyneside Pioneers)

19th Battalion (2nd Tyneside Pioneers)

20th Battalion (1st Tyneside Scottish)

21st Battalion (2nd Tyneside Scottish)

22nd Battalion (3rd Tyneside Scottish)

23rd Battalion (4th Tyneside Scottish)

24th Battalion (1st Tyneside Irish)

25th Battalion (2nd Tyneside Irish)

26th Battalion (3rd Tyneside Irish)

27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish)

Tyneside Irish advancing from Usna Hill to La Boisselle, 1st July 1916.

The 20th Deccan Horse, part of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division, in Carnoy Valley shortly before their unsuccessful attack at High Wood on the evening of 14 July. Together with the 7th Dragoon Guards, they suffered 102 casualties and lost 130 horses. Image: IWM (Q 824)



# The Forgotten Horsemen

*The Indian Cavalry Corps and its overlooked contribution to the campaign*

**The Battle of the Somme is most often remembered through images of infantry assault: long lines of men advancing into shellfire, shattered ground churned to mud, and the grim, attritional struggle of trench warfare. In such a landscape, cavalry can appear almost out of place – a relic of an earlier age caught in the machinery of industrial war. Yet cavalry did serve on the Somme, and among those mounted formations were the regiments of the Indian Cavalry Corps, whose contribution remains one of the campaign's most neglected stories.**

By 1916, much of the Indian infantry that had fought on the Western Front had already been withdrawn to other theatres, but Indian cavalry remained in France. Their continued presence reflected both necessity and expectation. British planners still believed that if the German line could be broken, cavalry might at last be released into open country to exploit the success, widen the breach, and turn battlefield advantage into decisive victory. It was an idea rooted in pre-war military thinking, but one not yet wholly abandoned. Thus, when the Somme offensive began on 1 July 1916, Indian cavalry units were among those held in readiness, waiting for the opportunity that commanders hoped would come.

That opportunity, of course, did not materialise in the manner imagined. The Somme did not produce the clean

breakthrough for which cavalry had been kept in reserve. German resistance, uncut wire, deep dugouts, shell-torn ground and relentless machine-gun fire combined to deny the mobility upon which mounted action depended. Yet to suggest that the Indian cavalry simply waited in vain would be to misunderstand their service.

On the Western Front, cavalry had already been forced to adapt. They were not merely horsemen awaiting a dramatic charge, but soldiers required to fight in whatever role the battlefield demanded. They served dismounted, occupied trenches, undertook labouring duties, and stood prepared to move at short notice whenever an opening seemed possible.

This adaptability was no small matter. The regiments of the Indian Cavalry Corps were serving far from home, in

an unfamiliar climate and in a form of warfare radically different from anything for which cavalry traditions had prepared them. The mud, the shellfire, the confined violence of trench lines, and the ever-present strain of attrition made service on the Western Front a harsh test of endurance. Yet these troops continued to perform their duties with discipline and steadiness, even when the battlefield offered little scope for the mobility and élan for which cavalry was intended.

Their most notable moment during the Somme campaign came in mid-July, during the fighting around Bazentin Ridge and High Wood. As British forces pressed forward on 14 July, cavalry was summoned in the hope that the long-awaited opening had finally appeared. In that moment, Indian cavalymen took part in one of the Somme's best-

known mounted episodes, advancing in conjunction with British cavalry near High Wood. It was a rare and dramatic action, but also a sobering one. The advance encountered the same brutal realities that had blunted so many hopes on the Somme: difficult ground, determined opposition, and devastating fire. Any prospect of sweeping exploitation quickly faded, and the action ended not in breakthrough, but in loss.

Even so, the significance of their service should not be judged solely by whether cavalry achieved the decisive result once imagined for it.

The Indian Cavalry Corps represented something larger: the truly imperial character of the Somme campaign. Men from India stood on the same battlefield as troops from

across Britain and the wider Empire, sharing in the danger, frustration and sacrifice of one of the war's most punishing offensives. Their presence is a reminder that the Somme was not only a British battle fought in northern France, but part of a vast imperial war effort sustained by soldiers from many lands.

The story of the Indian cavalry on the Somme is therefore one of endurance as much as action - of men prepared for movement but condemned to stagnation, trained for manoeuvre but required to survive industrial slaughter.

Their role was limited by circumstance, but their service was real, their courage undeniable, and their place in the history of the Somme deserving of far greater remembrance.



# THE WAR HORSE

*Remembering the thousands of horses who perished in the service of the Great War*

The Great War is remembered in rows of white headstones, in long rolls of names, and in the grief of families who lost fathers, sons and brothers. Yet among the countless dead were other silent casualties: the horses, mules and donkeys upon which the armies of 1914-18 still depended.

Modern memory often imagines the First World War as an industrial struggle of guns, shells and steel, but it was also a war pulled, carried and endured by animals. More than eight million horses, donkeys and mules are estimated to have died during the conflict, 484,143 British. Victims not only of shellfire and gas, but of mud, exhaustion, disease and overwork.

For the British Army, the scale of that dependence was immense. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Britain had only around 25,000 horses immediately available to the Army.

By the end of the war, it had purchased more than 460,000 horses and mules from Britain and Ireland, with many more arriving from overseas. Horses hauled artillery, carried ammunition, pulled ambulances and supply wagons, and moved men across terrain where engines failed, and roads disappeared into churned earth. In a war so often defined by mechanisation, the horse remained indispensable.

That is where Romsey enters this story with particular significance. The Remount Depot at Romsey, Hampshire, became one of the great processing and training centres through which horses passed on their way to the Western Front. In little more than 3 years, it prepared 120,000 horses and mules for war service.

Situated close to Southampton docks, it was kept busy day and night as animals arrived from across Britain and from overseas. There they were inspected, checked for disease, sorted for military purpose, trained where necessary, and prepared for shipment to France.

Romsey was not a battlefield, but it was part of the machinery of war all the same: a place where the Army transformed civilian and imported animals into military assets.

There is something especially moving about that link. In Romsey, one can glimpse the hidden chain that connected English towns and fields to the devastated landscapes of Flanders and the Somme.

The horses that passed through the depot did not choose the uniforms they served, the guns they hauled, or the fire into which they were driven. Their labour was unquestioning, their suffering unrecorded in the language of medals and honours. Most had no grave, no named memorial, and no family history passed down in letters. Yet their service was woven into every campaign.

Today, when we remember the fallen of the Great War, we should also remember these animals, whose strength carried armies and whose loss was measured not in speeches, but in silence.

The story of Romsey Remount Depot helps restore that forgotten dimension of the war. It reminds us that remembrance should be broader than the battlefield alone. Behind the marching men and the thunder of guns stood the faithful horse, exhausted, frightened, and utterly essential. To remember them is not sentimentality. It is an act of honesty.



This moving statue stands in Romsey Memorial Park, and commemorates horses in the service of war. The statue commemorates the role of Romsey in the First World War when the Romsey Remount Depot stood on Pouncefoot Hill to the south-west of the town. Here horses from England, Ireland, and the USA trained for military duties, before eventually being shipped to France from Southampton.

After the war, the depot buildings were demolished and the materials used as hardcore to raise the ground upon which the park was created. Under the footings of the War Horse statue, four horseshoes found on the battlefields of France, a Remount Depot Cap badge and two terracotta horses made by local school children, are buried.

The statue is made of bronze resin, and was sculpted by local artist, Amy Goodman. It was unveiled by HRH The Princess Royal in July 2015 to mark the centenary of the opening of the Romsey Remount Depot.

For further information visit [www.ltvas.org.uk/romsey-war-horse](http://www.ltvas.org.uk/romsey-war-horse)



## Navigating Towards a Better Future Together

### Enhancing the Seagoing Experience

Polar Seafish Ltd stands out as a robust and forward-thinking fishing company in the Falkland Islands, placing a strong emphasis on active involvement and control in its fishing operations. This control extends to the improvement of welfare amenities on our vessels, encompassing dedicated cabins, fostering a healthy and contemporary working environment, and ensuring internet connectivity for all seagoing employees, among other benefits.

### A Safe Harbor for All

Moreover, the company makes substantial investments in local charities that address prevalent issues, and it extends its support to the Seaman's Mission charity, aligning with its commitment to the well-being of all maritime workers.

*Polar Seafish contributes to the community through funding, sponsorship, and mentorship*

### Championing Local Talent

Beyond its operational focus, the company is actively engaged in supporting the local community. Polar Seafish contributes to the community through funding, sponsorship, and mentorship in various sports such as basketball, cricket, and hockey.





## THE ROYAL TANK REGIMENT CAPBADGE: MEMORY CAST IN METAL



Regiments carry their history in stories, in colours, and - quietly, insistently - in the symbols they wear every day.

For the Royal Tank Regiment, the badge is a condensed statement of origin: a First World War tank within a laurel wreath, surmounted by a crown, with the motto "FEAR NAUGHT."

What makes it particularly fitting for this commemorative journal is that the badge's central image is an early pattern tank, explicitly tied in museum description to the force's earliest combat employment - *Flers-Courcelette* on 15 September 1916. The Regiment quite literally wears the silhouette of its beginning: the ungainly, riveted shape that first crawled forward on the Somme, when "modern" warfare was still being invented in real time under fire.

The badge itself belongs to the moment when the Tank Corps was becoming a permanent arm. The Tank Museum notes that when the Tank Corps was formed in July 1917, a new cap badge was selected from multiple submitted designs and approved by King George V on 11 September 1917. Traditions were being set deliberately: a corps with a new role chose a symbol that anchored it to battlefield proof rather than abstract heraldry. Even the motto carries that blend of bravado and practical professionalism. Regimental custom records that an early suggestion was "*Dread Nought*", but it was **Colonel JFC Fuller** who proposed "*Fear Naught*", which was adopted. It is a motto that sounds like a rallying cry - but for those first crews, it was also a kind of instruction: to keep going when engines coughed, tracks slipped, and the world outside was a storm of metal.

When the Royal Tank Regiment wears a Mark I tank at the heart of its cap badge, it is not merely celebrating invention. It is remembering a morning in 1916 when a new weapon rolled out into the mist - unreliable, imperfect, astonishing - and the battlefield began, slowly, to change shape around it.

**A Mark I Tank in battle worn detail. This is Tank No. 19 of C Company.**



# These Extraordinary Monsters

## The day armoured warfare stepped onto the battlefield

By the late summer of 1916 the Somme had become a landscape of grim arithmetic: yards gained for thousands lost, trenches re-dug as fast as they were taken, and machine-guns reigning over every open slope. The British Army had thrown courage, artillery, mines and massed infantry at the problem of the Western Front, and still the battle seemed to grind forward by attrition rather than decision. It was in that moment - when necessity pressed hardest - that a new idea, half industrial miracle and half desperate improvisation, was committed to the mud.

At dawn on Friday, 15 September 1916, during the Battle of *Flers-Courcelette*, tanks went into action for the first time.

**Before the first "zero hour": secrecy, scepticism, and a machine built for a cratered world**

The tank was not born from a love of novelty. It was born from a brutal question: how do you move men across a battlefield laced with barbed wire, swept by machine-guns, and cut by trenches wide enough to swallow whole platoons? Development had begun under conditions of strict secrecy. Men detailed to the new machines remembered sentries, guarded parks, and the sense that they were handling something both precious and dangerous to talk about. One soldier recalled the intense security and the practical business of learning to handle the vehicle - building ramps and testing what it could climb, in training that felt more like engineering school than infantry drill.

Even those slated to fight alongside tanks saw little of them beforehand. The Imperial War Museum records an officer's memory of how limited the preparation could be: *one tank allotted to a brigade, just enough to learn how to follow it and keep distance, and no more.* The weapon was new, scarce, and unreliable - yet the need for something, anything, that might break the stalemate was pressing.

**The day itself: *Flers-Courcelette* and the tank's first battlefield test**

The plan for 15 September was ambitious in concept and fragile in execution. The intent was clear: send tanks ahead of the infantry in small groupings to crush wire, negotiate trenches, and knock out machine-gun posts - those hard points that had turned so many earlier attacks into slaughter.

In practice, the tank's debut was marked as much by breakdowns as by breakthroughs. **Forty-nine Mark I tanks** were earmarked for the assault, but only **thirty-two** reached the start line, and **eighteen** eventually went into action; the rest failed mechanically or became trapped in shell holes and torn ground. The Somme battlefield was not a proving ground; it was a wrecking yard. Even on relatively dry ground, the craters and collapsed trenches made the tanks pitch and lurch "*like ships in a rough sea*". And yet - where they did move - they changed the feel of the fighting instantly.

An infantryman's first sight of tanks captures the shock, even from the friendly side: he watched "*a dozen tanks*" coming over shell holes "*no stopping*", and admitted to the odd, almost uncanny sensation that *these terrifying things were on our side, not the enemy's*. It is hard to overstate what that meant for soldiers who had spent months learning that nothing crossed No Man's Land without paying in bodies.

From above, an airman of the Royal Flying Corps watched the assault unfold after a "*hurricane bombardment*", and described lanes cleared through the ground for the tanks to file up - three or four in line - sailing over trenches that would have stopped any man on foot. In that view from the air there is something almost modern: the sense of an operation shaped by corridors, movement, and planned penetration rather than simple waves and endurance.

On the ground, where the tank succeeded, its psychological effect could be decisive. The tanks' "unusual appearance" and apparent invulnerability to small-arms fire induced fear and confusion among German troops in their path. The Imperial War Museums oral histories echo that first, stunned reaction: the Germans were "*shattered*" by the surprise of the machine.

Contemporary reporting amplified the sense of a new terror. Press recordings describe German outposts in the morning mist seeing "*two mysterious monsters... crawling*

*towards them over the craters*". Even allowing for wartime flourish, the language is telling. The tank was not portrayed as merely a vehicle; it was presented as a creature - something outside the previous grammar of the battlefield.

**A new, modern way of fighting - and the hard truth beneath the legend**

It is tempting, with a century's hindsight, to make 15 September 1916 a clean turning point: old war replaced by new. The truth is more sobering and, in a way, more instructive. The tank did not *solve* the Somme. The day did not deliver the longed-for breakthrough.

Mechanical unreliability, limited numbers, and the sheer violence of the ground meant the tank could not yet carry an offensive on its own. In those first hours, armoured warfare arrived not as a perfected system, but as a promise - demonstrated in flashes, interrupted by stalled engines and bogged tracks. But that promise mattered. It mattered because it pointed towards a different logic of battle: protected mobility combined with firepower; the capacity to cross wire and trenches rather than die on them; and the idea that technology and tactics could be fused to restore movement to a front that had congealed into siege warfare. In other words, 15 September was not the day the tank won the war. It was the day the tank proved it could belong to war.

**From secret weapon to a fighting arm: the road to the Tank Corps and the Royal Tank Regiment**

Once the tank existed, it demanded more than bravery to operate it: it demanded doctrine, training, mechanics, supply chains, and a distinct professional culture. The British Army's earliest tank units began within the **Heavy Branch of the Machine Gun Corps**, and the arm expanded rapidly after its Somme debut.

By November 1916, the companies of the Heavy Branch had increased, and were expanded and reorganised into battalions. Then, on 28 July 1917, those battalions were officially split away to form a separate corps: the **Tank Corps**.

This was more than administrative tidying. It was recognition that armoured warfare was not merely an attachment to infantry or machine-gunners; it was becoming a distinct arm with its own requirements and identity. Over time that identity hardened into tradition. In 1923, the corps was granted the right to use the title "*Royal*", becoming the **Royal Tank Corps**. And in 1939, as the Army reorganised its mechanised forces, the Royal Tank Corps became the **Royal Tank Regiment** within the newly formed Royal Armoured Corps.

The through-line from *Flers-Courcelette* to the modern Regiment is therefore not just technological; it is institutional and human.

The tank required crews who were not simply soldiers *riding* a machine, but soldiers whose war was inseparable from the machine's capabilities and limitations - men trained to fight inside heat, fumes, noise, and steel, and to keep moving even when the vehicle itself seemed to fight them.

# SOMME AMERICAN CEMETERY

Set on the rolling Picardy landscape near Bony, in northern France, the Somme American Cemetery stands as a solemn reminder of the United States' sacrifice during the First World War. Though America entered the conflict later than many of the Allied nations, its soldiers were soon drawn into the final battles of 1918, helping to break the German defences.

The cemetery contains more than 1,800 American war dead, including servicemen who fought around the Hindenburg Line and a small number of American nurses whose service brought them close to the suffering of the front. Their presence among the graves is deeply moving, reminding us that courage in war was not confined to the battlefield.

At the heart of the cemetery stands the memorial chapel, its pale stone walls bearing sculpted military emblems and inscriptions. Within are recorded the names of hundreds of missing American soldiers – men whose bodies were never recovered or identified, but whose sacrifice remains permanently honoured. Outside, ordered rows of white headstones and carefully tended lawns create a landscape of calm and dignity. Although called the Somme American Cemetery, its story is especially bound to the fighting of late 1918, when American troops contributed to the Allied advance that brought the war to its end. These were young men and women who crossed an ocean and gave their lives on foreign soil.

Today, the cemetery's stillness stands in contrast to the violence that once consumed the surrounding countryside. As we mark the 110th anniversary of the Somme, it reminds us that remembrance extends beyond borders. Here, beneath the French sky, American sons and daughters rest among the fields of an old European war – their courage part of the shared Allied story, their sacrifice never forgotten.

**Major Sir William Orpen** In 1915, he was commissioned into the Army Service Corps and carried out routine administration work at Kensington Barracks. He served as an official War Artist on the Western Front from 1917 and was knighted for his services in 1918. Image: IWM (HU 93498).

**Self Portrait** A head and shoulders self-portrait of the artist wearing a steel helmet and sheepskin jerkin. Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 2993).

## THE ART of ORPEN

### Official War Artist on the Western Front

**Major Sir William Newenham Montague Orpen**, portraitist and subject painter, born in Dublin, was one of the most successful artists of his generation. He enlisted in the British army in December 1915 and was appointed an official war artist in January 1917. Stationed in France, he produced a large body of work depicting different aspects of the war and its impacts.

When Great Britain entered the First World War, in August 1914, Orpen was known as one of the most sought-after society and political portraitists of his generation. The war quickly impacted his career, however, and commissions became less frequent, were cancelled or left unpaid.

#### Official War Artist

A wide public interest in pictures of the war and exhibitions of paintings by artist soldiers led to the establishment of the British war artist scheme in May 1916. Muirhead Bone (1876-1953) was appointed Britain's first official war artist. The Daily Mirror announced Orpen's appointment as an official war artist by Sir Douglas Haig (1861-1928) on 30 January 1917.

Orpen was promoted to the rank of major and arrived in France on 8 April (Easter Sunday) 1917. He spent much of the next two years in France, far longer than any other British war artist. Orpen's rank and personal connections ensured that he experienced a relatively comfortable lifestyle as a war artist. He was afforded a personal car and driver; he employed a batman and assistant at his own expense; and he enjoyed an unusual freedom of movement and access to senior military personnel.

Unlike other war artists who had served in the army, Orpen never experienced or witnessed combat first hand.

He worked instead behind the frontline and produced a large body of paintings and drawings representing different aspects of military and civilian life as well as more subjective reflections on the effects of war. This included portraits of senior ranking officers, generals, infantry soldiers and other service people; scenes of everyday life in the towns and villages along the Western Front; allegorical images; representations of shellshock; and depictions of war-torn landscapes in the aftermath of notable battles.

From Amiens, Orpen made his first visit to the Somme battlefields, some five months after the battle had ended. He wrote later that, "I shall never forget my first sight of the Somme ... there was this endless waste of mud, holes and water ... miles and miles of it, horrible and terrible, but with a noble dignity of its own."<sup>3</sup> Orpen's fascination with the Somme manifested itself in a series of views of the battlefield, made through the spring and summer of 1917. There is a notable absence of human activity in these pictures, which instead contemplate the terror of the conflict through the remnants and traces of battle that were left on the landscape, in its aftermath.

Orpen painted military portraits throughout his time in France. He was intrigued, in particular, with the fighter pilots of the air corps. During a sitting with Douglas Haig, the field marshal told him, "why waste your time painting me, go and paint the men, they're the fellows who are

saving the world and they are getting killed everyday."<sup>4</sup> In June and July Orpen visited Cassel and the Ypres Salient.

He visited the support and reserve trenches, and made individual studies of soldiers waiting to advance or returning from the front line. He also sketched German prisoners.

#### Aftermath

Orpen donated the majority of his war art to the British government. These are now in the collection of the Imperial War Museum (IWM). Orpen was appointed knight commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1918. He returned to France in July and continued to paint portraits, more views of the Somme, and scenes set in the aftermath of other battles, notably at Zonnebeke.

After the war, the IWM commissioned Orpen to paint proceedings at the Paris Peace Conference, which commenced in January 1919. Orpen also worked a painting "To the Unknown British Soldier in France" in remembrance of the British soldiers who had lost their lives in combat. The painting was the subject of public controversy due to Orpen's choice of imagery. The IWM declined to accept it until he removed portraits and nude military figures from the composition in 1927.

Orpen's experience of the war affected him deeply. Although his celebrity as a war artist brought him greater fortune and fame, he never recovered from both the physical and mental trauma of the experience. His health deteriorated over the subsequent decade until his death in 1931, at the age of fifty-two.



*Left (clockwise)*

**Tank** The underside of a tank cresting a low rise, with the sky above obscured by clouds of exhaust smoke.

Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 2370).

**The Manchesters, Arras (1917)** This portrait depicts a soldier of the Manchester Regiment shortly after the Battle of Arras in 1917. The strain of the fighting is shown in his face as he sits smoking a cigarette, whilst still wearing his pack, helmet and gas mask.

**The Somme** A view over the landscape including the British trenches at La Boisselle. Grey coloured rocks merge out of the grass, and are spread across the fields in the distance.

Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 2970).

**Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, KT, GCB, GCMG, KCIE, Commander-in-Chief, France, From December 15th 1915.** Painted at General Headquarters, May 30th 1917.

Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 324).

*Right (clockwise)*

**A Grenadier Guardsman** (later identified as Sergeant Stanley Burton - 1883-1962). Set against a deep blue sky. He sits in full kit, his arms resting on his thighs, his rifle gripped firmly in his hands.

**Thiepval** The ground is littered in debris, including two human skulls, bones, and items of clothing. A large rock-like structure stands in the centre background.

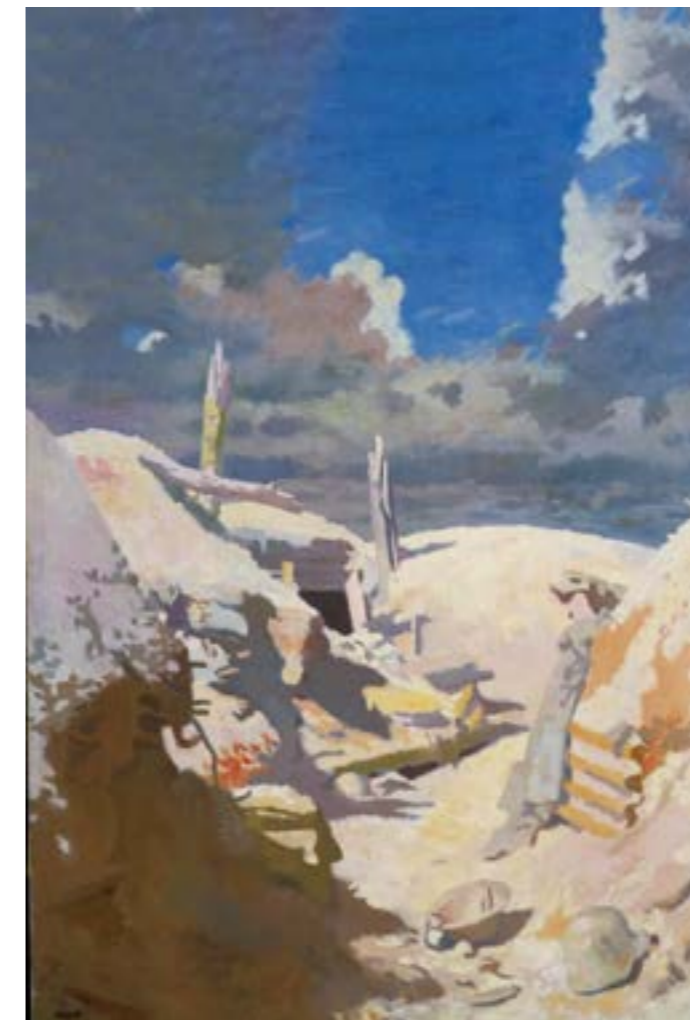
Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 3045).

**German Wire, Thiepval** A view of a large, sunlit crater blasted into white chalky soil.

Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 3006).

**A Gunners' Shelter in a Trench, Thiepval** A view along a deserted trench, with the doorway to a dugout on the corner.

Image: IWM (Art.IWM ART 2963).





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# BATTLE OF THE ANCRE

*The Royal Naval Division : 13–14 November 1916*



In the closing months of 1916, the British Army was still reeling from the immense losses of the Somme. Determined to restore its reputation, the High Command resolved upon one final offensive before winter brought operations to a standstill.

It was a decision weighed with heavy hearts. Senior officers knew the cost of another assault could be devastating.

The battlefield itself was already a ruin: roads shattered, trenches churned to mud by months of shelling, and autumn rains turning the ground into a quagmire. Several times the attack was delayed, in the hope that frost might harden the mire and ease the way forward.

### Into Position

By October, the 1st Battalion Royal Marine Light Infantry (1RMLI), together with the rest of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division, took their place north of the Ancre River.

Conditions were appalling. Trenches had collapsed into chains of shell holes, supplies had to be carried across open ground under constant fire, and the men endured bitter weather with little shelter.

Despite this, working parties pressed on, stockpiling ammunition and stores for the assault. Battalions that once numbered 700 men now barely mustered 500. On the 10th of November, final orders were given.

### The Plan

The objectives lay ahead in the following named stages:

- **Dotted Green Line** – the first German trench system.
- **Green Line** – a fortified ridge beyond Station Road.
- **Yellow Line** – Beaucourt Trench, guarding the village of Beaucourt-sur-Ancre.
- **Red Line** – the final position, to be secured after the village's capture.

The 188th Infantry Brigade 1RMLI, Howe, Hawke, and Hood Battalions - would strike first. Once they seized the **Dotted Green Line**, the 189th Brigade (2RMLI, Anson, Nelson, and Drake) would pass through to attack the **Green Line**. Survivors of the first wave would then press on to the **Yellow Line**.

### The Assault

On the evening of 12 November, "Y Day," the assault troops moved into position. At 3 a.m., 1,000 men of 1RMLI and 2RMLI crawled through the mud into No Man's Land, waiting in the rain.

At 5:45 a.m. on 13 November, the British barrage thundered once more. Through thick mist, the Marines advanced. German artillery and machine guns answered immediately.

More than half of 1RMLI fell in No Man's Land, including all four company commanders - Captains Loxley, Hoare, Browne, and Sullivan. Yet some pressed on, storming all three German trenches in brutal hand-to-hand combat to seize the **Dotted Green Line**.

2RMLI followed, suffering heavy losses but joining the survivors to hold the position west

of Station Road through shellfire that raged day and night.

### Courage Amid Loss

By morning on 14 November, remnants of RMLI regrouped. Lieutenant Commander Gilliland rallied survivors from Howe, Anson, and RMLI to assault the next objectives. The toll was staggering. Of 490 men in 1RMLI, only 138 remained fit for duty. Of 22 officers, just two survived unscathed.

Elsewhere, Hood Battalion fought with ferocity, capturing all three trench lines in their sector. The Honourable Artillery Company seized the "Mound," a vital strongpoint, and cleared German dugouts along the railway embankment.

When Drake Battalion faltered under devastating fire, Hood's Lieutenant Colonel Freyberg pressed on regardless. With 300 of his own men and 75 survivors from Drake, he stormed Station Road, captured 400 prisoners, and secured the **Green Line**.

### The Redoubt and Beaucourt

Hawke and Nelson Battalions faced the deadliest obstacle: a concealed German Redoubt. The mist had hidden it from view, and the British barrage missed it entirely. Machine-gun fire erupted, cutting down nearly 400 men. A handful broke through, joining Freyberg's command at the **Green Line**.

Gilliland, leading 180 men from Anson, crossed Station Road and reached the ridge. Alongside Freyberg's force, these were the only units to break through. By late afternoon, both groups had reached the **Yellow Line**.

Fighting raged through the night. At dawn on 14 November, Freyberg - wounded several times - personally led a mixed detachment of Marines, Fusiliers, and Riflemen straight into Beaucourt. By 10:30 a.m., the village was reported captured. Fresh troops consolidated the position, and fears of a German counterattack faded under heavy British bombardment.

On 15 November, the exhausted 188th and 189th Brigades were finally withdrawn, marching back to Engelbelmer village.

### Great Sacrifice

The Battle of the Ancre was a brutal, mud-soaked struggle marked by courage, sacrifice, and staggering losses. For the Royal Marines Light Infantry, it was a test of endurance in the face of overwhelming firepower.

Their determination carried them through the mire, the mist, and the storm of steel - at a terrible cost.

It remains a solemn chapter in the history of the Royal Marines and Royal Navy, a reminder of the price paid in duty and the resilience shown in the darkest of conditions.

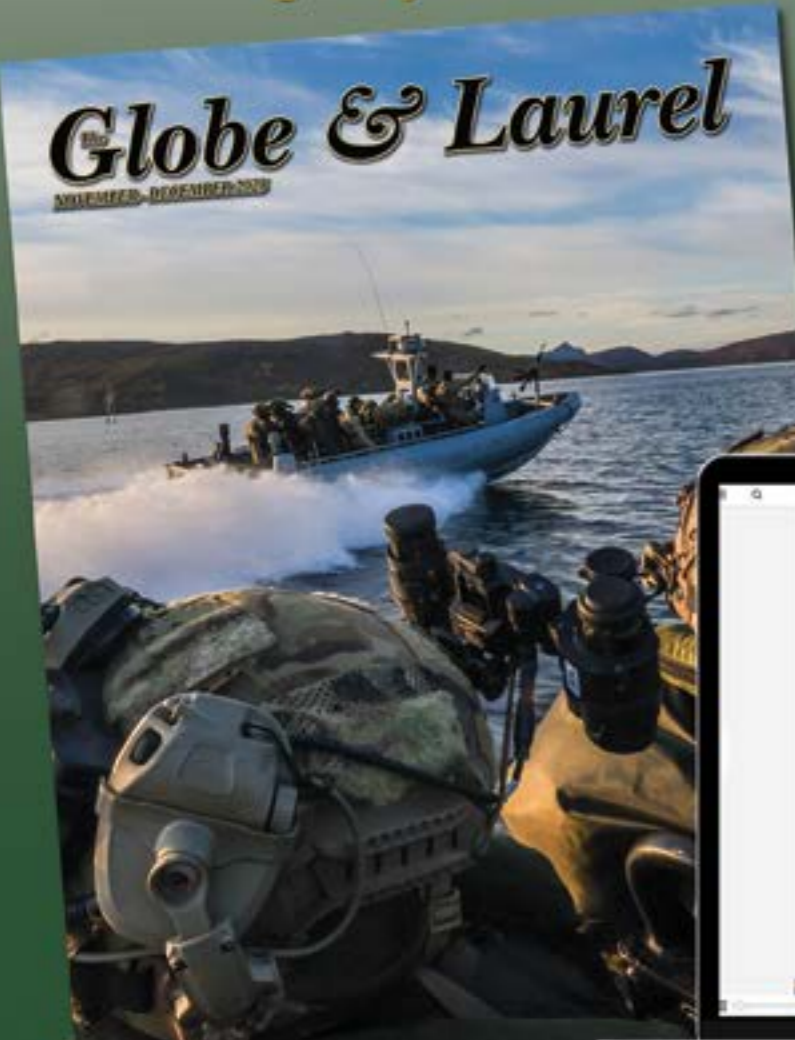
### For the day's fighting the Royal Naval Division recorded 793 of its men as killed-in-action:

- Anson Bn 110 | Drake Bn 53
- Hawke Bn 111 | Hood Battalion 58
- Howe Battalion 97 | Nelson Battalion 115
- 1st RMLI Battalion 100
- 2nd RMLI Battalion 84
- 1st RN Field Ambulance, RM Medical Unit 1
- 2nd RN Field Ambulance, RM Medical Unit 4
- 2nd Field Company, Divisional Engineers 3
- 3rd RN Field Ambulance, RM Medical Unit 1
- 63rd Divisional Engineers 1
- 63rd Medium Trench Mortar Battery 1
- 189th Machine-gun Company 25
- 190th Machine-gun Company 13
- 190th Light Trench Mortar Battery 3

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# ABOVE THE VALLEY DHOFAR

*Operation Storm, 1970 - 1976*

**On the 11th of December 1975 Sultan Qaboos announced to his people publicly that the Dhofar war was over.**

17th December 1975, London, at the House of Commons. A motion was read out

*“That this House is greatly encouraged by the successful conclusion to the ten year war in Oman, congratulates The Sultan’s troops on achieving one of the very few victories over communist-inspired rebels since the Second World War, records with pride the contribution made by hundreds of present and former members of the British Armed Forces, and pays special tribute to the work of The Special Air Service training mission.”*

The war which had been running in the southern province in Dhofar since the 1960s, had finally ended with victory for the Sultan. In 1970 Sultan Qaboos father Said bin Taimur had been deposed in a bloodless coup. This allowed the young Sultan Qaboos to start on a program of bringing Oman, then a closed medieval society into the 20th Century. As well as building schools, medical facilities and roads in the north of the country, he wanted to bring the long running insurgency in Dhofar to a successful conclusion. The rebellion was backed by the neighbouring communist state of Yemen, who sought to replace the strict Muslim code followed by the Dhofaris with Communism.

Starting in the autumn of 1971 the SAS on Operation Jaguar led a new force of local tribesmen known as Firqat up onto to the Jebal above Salalah. Fighting was fierce for weeks as they secured bases that would allow resupply and reinforcements to be brought in by air.

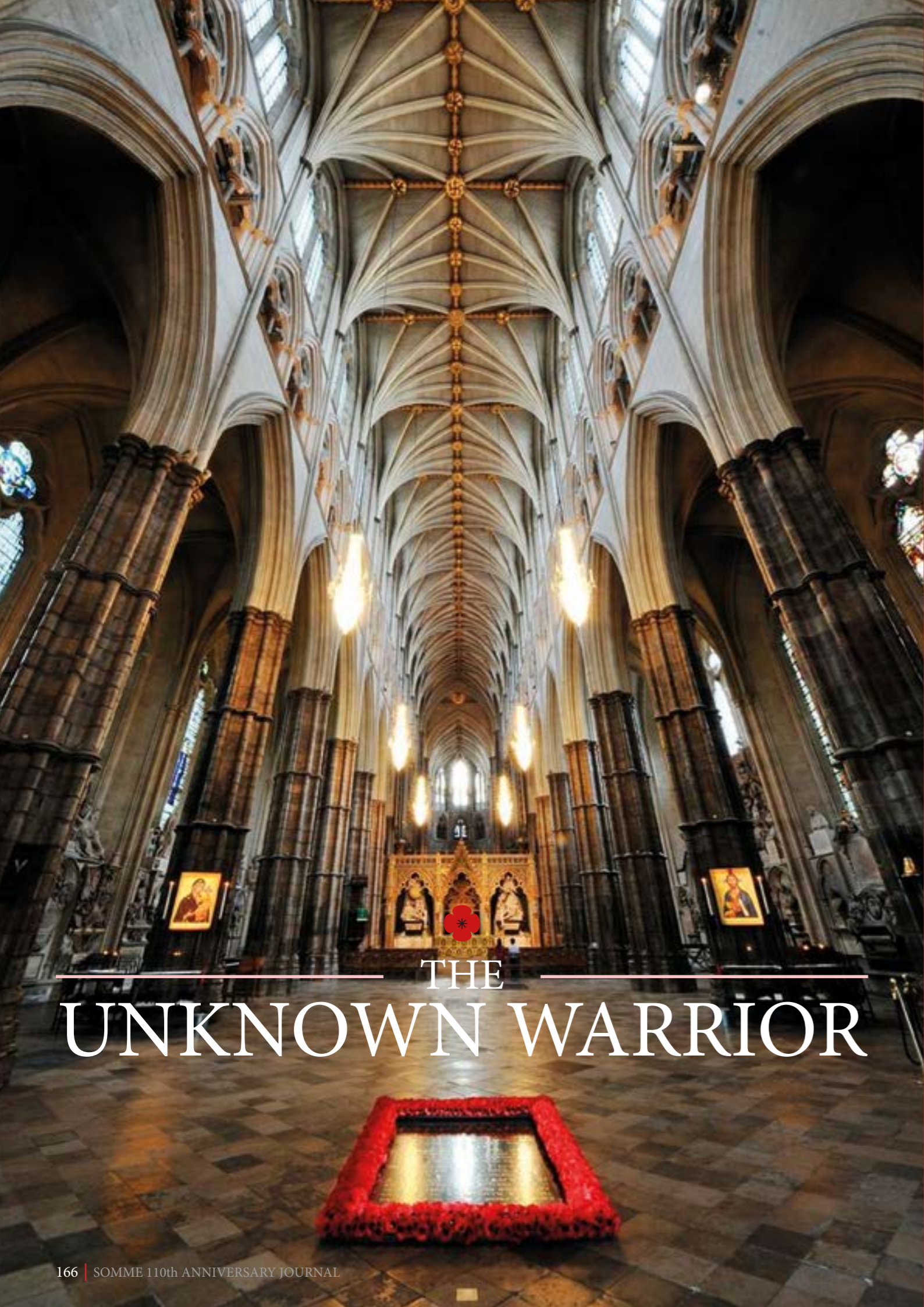
For the next four years the SAS along with seconded and contract British officers and NCOs fought alongside the regular Sultan’s Army, Air Force and Navy against the Adoo, as the insurgents were known. The Sultan was also aided by forces from Iran, Jordan and Pakistan during the war.



## Oman-Dhofar War SAS Roll of Honour

**Cpl P Reddy** G Squadron 1970  
**Capt I Jones** RAMC Medical Officer 1971  
**Sgt S Moores** G Squadron 1971  
**Tpr C Loid** G Squadron 1971  
**Cpl R Ramsden** A Squadron 1972  
**Tpr M Martin** B Squadron 1972  
**Cpl Labalaba** BEM B Squadron 1972  
**Tpr T Tobin** B Squadron 1972

**Cpl A Kent** A Squadron 1974  
**Capt S Garthwaite** A Squadron 1974  
**L/Cpl K Small** D Squadron 1975  
**Tpr C Hennessy** D Squadron 1975  
**Sgt A Gallagher** D Squadron 1975  
**Sgt FB McAuliffe** G Squadron 1987 (Died of Wounds)  
**Capt (SSF) A Fleming** MBE D Squadron 1994 (Died of Wounds)



# THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

At the heart of Westminster Abbey lies a single grave that speaks for millions. The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior contains the body of an unidentified British serviceman, brought home from the battlefields of the First World War and laid to rest on Armistice Day, 11 November 1920. Chosen at random from among the fallen, he represents all those who died without name, grave, or recognition.

The idea was radical in its simplicity. Rather than commemorating a general or a decorated hero, the nation chose one ordinary soldier to embody the sacrifice of all. He could be from any regiment, any part of Britain or the Empire; his anonymity is his power. In him are reflected the sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who never returned, whose families were left with absence instead of certainty.

To ensure that the Unknown Warrior truly represented every loss, the selection was carried out with solemn care. Four bodies of unidentified British soldiers were exhumed from different battle areas in France and brought to a chapel at Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise. There, with no distinguishing marks or records, one was chosen at random by a senior officer, who closed his eyes and placed his hand upon a coffin. No one present knew – or would ever know - which battlefield the soldier had come from.

Buried among kings, the Unknown Warrior was deliberately placed at the centre of the nation's spiritual life, a powerful reminder that sacrifice, not rank, defines honour. Soil from the battlefields of France was scattered into his grave, binding him forever to the Western Front and to places like the Somme, where loss reached almost unimaginable scale.

The black Belgian marble slab above him bears words of profound simplicity and weight: a tribute not only to one soldier, but to an entire generation who "gave the most that man can give - life itself." The tomb is never walked upon, a mark of respect observed by millions over the past century.

In silence, the Unknown Warrior continues to serve. He reminds us that remembrance is not about numbers alone, but about individual lives - lived fully, lost suddenly, and forever held in the nation's memory.



BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY  
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR  
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK  
BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG  
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND  
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY  
11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF  
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V  
HIS MINISTERS OF STATE  
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES  
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION

THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY  
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT  
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT  
MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF

FOR GOD  
FOR KING AND COUNTRY  
FOR LOVED ONES HOME AND EMPIRE  
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND  
THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD  
THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE  
HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD  
HIS HOUSE

Around the main inscription are four texts:

(top) THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS,  
(sides) GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS  
UNKNOWN AND YET WELL KNOWN, DYING AND BEHOLD WE LIVE,  
(base) IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE.

The Unknown Warrior's coffin resting in Westminster Abbey, 1920.





# THE CENOTAPH

*Unveiling the Cenotaph, November 1920*

Originally designed as a temporary structure erected for a peace parade following the end of the First World War there followed an outpouring of national sentiment and it was replaced in 1920 by a permanent structure and designated the United Kingdom's primary national war memorial.

The architects waived their fee for designing the cenotaph, meaning that it cost £7,325 to build, a sum equivalent to £425,000 when adjusted by inflation in 2026.



# THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

## *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*

Rising from the chalk uplands of the Somme, the Thiepval Memorial – The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme stands not as a grave, but as a witness.

The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial, recognising the joint nature of the 1916 offensive, and at its foot lies a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves.

Carved into its vast red-brick and stone arches are the names of more than 72,000 soldiers of the British and South African forces who died on the Somme and have no known grave – an absence rendered permanent in stone. From this height, the memorial looks out across ground once torn

apart by artillery and wire, now returned to silence, its scale a deliberate reminder of loss beyond comprehension.

The decision to build the memorial at Thiepval was both practical and profoundly symbolic. The village lay at the heart of the Somme battlefield, close to the front lines attacked on 1 July 1916, where British losses were at their greatest and where so many of the missing were last seen advancing.

Set on high ground, the memorial was deliberately positioned to dominate the surrounding landscape, visible for miles in every direction. It stands where many of those it commemorates fell, not removed from the battlefield but rooted within it, ensuring that remembrance remains inseparable from the land itself.

The memorial was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, one of three principal architects appointed by the Imperial War Graves Commission to shape Britain's commemorative response to the First World War. Alongside Lutyens, the Commission entrusted remembrance to Herbert Baker, whose work included the South African Memorial at Delville Wood, and Reginald Blomfield, designer of the Cross of Sacrifice and the Menin Gate at Ypres.

Together, the three architects established a unified but varied language of remembrance - balancing abstraction, classicism, and imperial scale. Of them, Lutyens proved the most uncompromising. His design for the Cenotaph in Whitehall rejected triumph and overt symbolism, and at Thiepval he extended that philosophy on an unprecedented scale. Sixteen colossal piers interlock to form vast arches that are both solid and hollow, creating a structure that feels monumental yet incomplete - an architectural expression of absence, loss, and the lives that could never be accounted for.

At the heart of the memorial are the names themselves, carved into the stone with deliberate order and restraint. More than 72,000 men are listed not by rank, but by regiment, with officers and other ranks recorded side by side in death as they were in service. This decision rejected hierarchy in favour of collective sacrifice, allowing each name to stand equal within the vastness of the structure. The regimental groupings also preserve bonds formed in life - of comradeship, locality, and shared experience - restoring, in memory, the identities that war so often erased.



Model of original Thiepval Memorial - note the dome on the top.  
© IWM (Q 56989)

Walking the length of the memorial, the repetition of names becomes overwhelming in its own way. Familiar surnames appear repeatedly, sometimes dozens of times within a single unit. For visitors, the effect is cumulative rather than singular; it is not one name that arrests attention, but the realisation that entire communities are represented here in stone. Brothers, schoolmates, workmates and neighbours are reunited not by choice, but by loss. In this way, Thiepval restores something the battlefield destroyed - a sense of shared identity - while confronting the visitor with the human scale behind the statistics of the Somme.

## Thiepval Memorial Key Facts & Figures

**Official title:** Thiepval Memorial – The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme

**Location:** Thiepval, Somme, France

**Commemorates:** British and South African soldiers with no known grave

**Period covered:** July 1915 – March 1918

**Number of names:** over 72,000

**Forces represented:** British and South African

**Listed by:** Regiment (not rank)

**Architect:** Sir Edwin Lutyens

**Commissioning body:** Imperial War Graves Commission  
(now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission)

**Construction period:** 1928–1932

**Unveiled:** 1 August 1932

**Unveiled by:** The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII)

**Height:** over 45 metres (148 feet)

**Structure:** 16 massive piers forming interlocking arches

**Materials:** Red brick faced with Portland stone

**Status:** Anglo-French Battle Memorial

**Adjacent site:** Cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves



Constructed between 1928 and 1932, the memorial's immense scale shaped both its design and its execution. Built from red brick faced with Portland stone, Thiepval was engineered to endure, its foundations sunk deep into the chalk subsoil to support the weight of its towering structure.

The precision of the stonework demanded exceptional craftsmanship; every name was hand-carved, checked, and rechecked, reflecting the Commission's determination that remembrance should be exact as well as enduring. Unlike triumphal monuments raised quickly after earlier conflicts, Thiepval took shape slowly and deliberately, mirroring the nation's long and difficult process of mourning.

The memorial was unveiled on 1 August 1932, sixteen years after the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, at a ceremony attended by thousands of relatives, veterans, and dignitaries. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, formally dedicated the memorial on behalf of a nation still living with the war's consequences. For many families, the unveiling marked the first time a permanent place of mourning existed for those whose bodies had never been found. As the names were revealed, Thiepval became not simply a monument, but a surrogate grave for the missing - a site where private grief and public remembrance met in silence beneath its vast arches.

In the decades since its unveiling, Thiepval has required careful and ongoing conservation to ensure that its meaning endures as solidly as its structure. Exposure to

weather and time gradually took its toll, and in the early twenty-first century a major program of restoration was undertaken by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This work focused on repairing the Portland stone and brickwork, preserving the legibility of the inscriptions, and safeguarding the memorial for future generations. Carried out with restraint and respect for Lutyens' original vision, the restoration reaffirmed Thiepval as a living site of remembrance rather than a relic of the past.

Over time, Thiepval has come to represent more than the Somme alone. It stands as a symbol of industrial warfare, where the scale of loss outpaced the ability to recover, identify, or bury the dead. For later generations, unfamiliar with the immediacy of the conflict, the memorial offers a tangible connection to that reality.

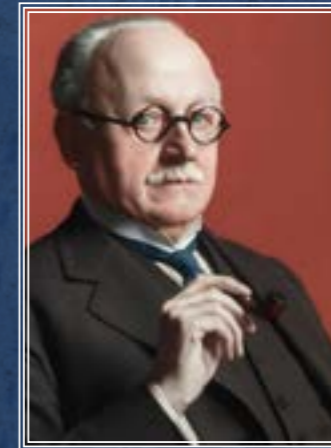
Visitors encounter not a narrative of strategy or command, but a record of absence - a reminder that remembrance is not confined to anniversaries but carried forward through continued engagement with the past.

Today, the Thiepval Memorial endures in quiet watch over the Somme landscape, its arches framing fields long returned to peace. The experience it offers is not one of spectacle, but of stillness - of reading names, pausing, and looking out across ground once defined by violence and loss. In its scale, its restraint, and its silence, Thiepval continues to speak - not of victory or defeat, but of remembrance shared, sacrifice endured, and the enduring obligation to remember.



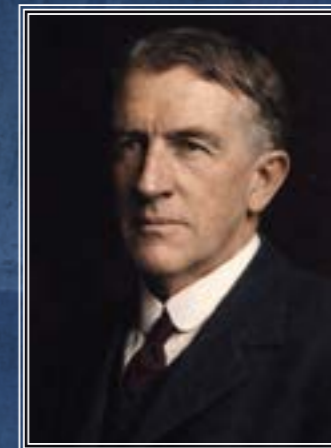
## The Architects of Remembrance

The Imperial War Graves Commission appointed three principal architects to shape how Britain and its Empire would commemorate the dead of the First World War. Together, they established a restrained and enduring language of remembrance that still defines Commonwealth war memorials today.



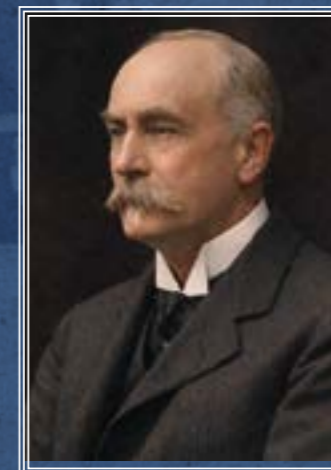
### Sir Edwin Lutyens

Lutyens was the most radical of the three, favouring abstraction and monumental form over symbolism. His work rejected triumphalism entirely, seeking instead to express loss through scale, geometry, and silence. His designs include The Cenotaph and the Thiepval Memorial, the largest memorial to the missing anywhere in the world.



### Sir Herbert Baker

Baker brought a more classical and imperial sensibility to commemoration. His memorials emphasised dignity, order, and architectural tradition, most notably the *Delville Wood Memorial*, which commemorates the great sacrifice of South African forces on the Somme.



### Reginald Blomfield

Blomfield provided the Commission with its most recognisable symbol: the Cross of Sacrifice, found in nearly every Commonwealth war cemetery. He also designed major memorials including the Menin Gate, combining formal classicism with powerful ceremonial presence.

Together, the three architects ensured that remembrance was unified in purpose yet varied in expression - a balance that allowed grief, dignity, and memory to endure across continents.



# AFTER THE ANCRE

## *The Somme Draws to a Close*

When the fighting around the River Ancre subsided in mid-November 1916, the Somme campaign came quietly to an end. There was no single moment of conclusion, no triumphant announcement, no decisive breakthrough to signal that one of the greatest battles in British history had finally run its course. Instead, there was cold, exhaustion, and silence - a slow fading of gunfire as winter closed in over a landscape already pushed beyond endurance.

The Battle of the Ancre, fought between 13 and 18 November, delivered the final territorial gains of the campaign. Ground that had resisted every assault since July - most notably Beaumont-Hamel - was at last taken. For the first time in months, the British Army could look upon the northern Somme and claim success. Yet by then, the meaning of success itself had changed. What had begun on 1 July with optimism, confidence, and a belief in decisive action ended not in victory, but in understanding.

### **From Expectation to Reality**

In the summer of 1916, the Somme had been conceived as a breakthrough battle - a blow that would rupture the German line and restore movement to a war that had become paralysed in trenches.

The vast preliminary bombardment, the scale of the infantry assault, and the rhetoric surrounding the offensive reflected that hope. By November, such illusions had long since been stripped away.

The Somme had become a grinding, attritional struggle measured not in miles advanced but in yards gained - and lives lost. Month after month, divisions rotated through the line, attacking, holding, and attacking again, often over the same shattered ground. Woods vanished, villages were erased, and landmarks disappeared beneath shellfire until maps bore little resemblance to reality.

Time itself seemed distorted. Days blurred into weeks, weeks into months. For the men at the front, the Somme did not unfold as a campaign with a beginning and an end, but as a continuous ordeal.

### **A Changed Army**

Yet amid that ordeal, the British Army was transformed.

The force that attacked on 1 July was largely composed of volunteers - men who had answered the call in 1914 and 1915, many with little experience of modern warfare. By November, that army had been bloodied, hardened, and reshaped by necessity. Artillery techniques had improved markedly; creeping barrages were better timed and better understood. Infantry learned to advance in smaller units, to exploit cover, to consolidate rather than simply press forward.

Air power, once auxiliary, became essential to reconnaissance and artillery coordination. Tanks, unreliable and embryonic, nonetheless hinted at a new future of warfare.

None of these lessons came cheaply. They were paid for in casualties measured on an almost unimaginable scale. But by the time the final attacks crossed the frozen ground north of the Ancre, the British Army bore little resemblance to the force that had first gone over the top in July.

The Somme did not produce victory - but it produced experience, and experience would shape every major battle that followed.

### **The Human Cost**

No account of the Somme can avoid its human cost - and no closing reflection should attempt to soften it.

Across Britain, Ireland, and the wider Empire, the Somme emptied communities. Entire streets lost their young men. Football teams, workplaces, schools, and families were altered forever. Telegrams arrived in towns and villages with devastating regularity; names appeared in casualty lists and never returned.

For many families, the campaign did not end in November 1916. It continued in uncertainty, in men listed as missing, in bodies never recovered, in graves marked only with the words *Known unto God*. For others, it continued in the changed faces of those who came home - men older than their years, quieter, burdened

by memories they could not easily share. Survival was not an escape from the Somme. It was often another way of carrying it forward.

#### The Landscape of Loss

As winter settled over the battlefield, the Somme itself seemed to absorb what had happened there. Mud froze into rutted iron; shell holes filled with water and ice; shattered trees stood like blackened skeletons against a grey sky.

The chalk soil of Picardy, once farmland, became a vast, broken grave.

In places, the dead still lay where they had fallen. Burial parties worked tirelessly, but the scale of destruction was overwhelming. Many men would not be recovered until years later; many would never be found at all. The battlefield was not simply the site of battle – it was the resting place of a generation.

Long before memorials were built, the Somme had become a cemetery.

#### What Was Achieved

Measured narrowly, the Somme achieved limited territorial gains. Measured strategically,

it relieved pressure on the French Army at Verdun and inflicted significant attrition on German forces. Measured historically, it marked a turning point in how the war was fought.

But measured in human terms, the Somme stands apart. It ended any lingering belief that the war could be won quickly or cheaply. It exposed the true nature of industrial warfare – relentless, impersonal, and unforgiving. Courage remained essential, but courage alone was no longer enough.

The Somme forced nations to confront the cost of modern conflict in its starkest form.

#### The End, and What Followed

When the Somme campaign finally ended, attention shifted elsewhere - to Arras, to Vimy Ridge, to Passchendaele. New battles followed, informed by the lessons learned in Picardy. The war continued for two more brutal years.

Yet the Somme lingered. It became shorthand for loss, for sacrifice, for the terrible price paid by ordinary men in extraordinary circumstances. It shaped how the war was remembered, how it was written about, and how it was mourned.

For those who had fought there, the Somme was never entirely left behind.

#### Remembrance

Today, the Somme endures not as a single battlefield but as a place of memory. Cemeteries and memorials now stand where trenches once ran. Names carved in stone replace the shouted roll calls of 1916. Silence has returned to ground once shaken by constant gunfire.

To remember the Somme is not to glorify it. It is to acknowledge what was endured, what was lost, and what was learned – at terrible cost. It is to recognise that the campaign did not end neatly, and that its legacy cannot be reduced to victory or failure.

The Somme ended as winter fell, but its meaning has not faded with time.

It remains a reminder - of sacrifice shared across nations, of lives interrupted and futures denied, and of the enduring responsibility to remember not only how the campaign ended, but why it must never be forgotten.



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Flooded area in the Ancre Valley, November 1916.  
Image: IWM (Q 1568)



As we mark the 110th anniversary of the Somme, we honour the soldiers who gave their lives, the families who bore their grief, and the communities across the world that were forever changed by the Somme. Their service must never be forgotten.

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# Lessons of the Somme

*How the British Army learned to fight a modern war*

The Somme has come to symbolise loss on an industrial scale. Its name is inseparable from images of men advancing into machine-gun fire, weighed down by equipment, doctrine, and assumptions inherited from an earlier age. Yet to see the Somme only as a tragedy is to miss its deeper and more uncomfortable significance. For the British Army, 1916 was not merely a catastrophe - it was a brutal education. Out of that education came a transformation that reshaped how war was fought and, ultimately, how it was won.

In the summer of 1916, Britain entered the Somme campaign with an army still in transition. The pre-war professional force had been largely destroyed in 1914. In its place stood a mass citizen army: volunteers and conscripts trained rapidly, led by officers often learning under fire, and operating within doctrines better suited to colonial warfare than to the killing fields of northern France. Courage was abundant; experience was not.

The Somme exposed this imbalance mercilessly.

Infantry advanced in rigid waves, tied to fixed timetables and objectives that could not adapt once the battle began. Artillery bombardments, lengthy and thunderous, warned the enemy while often failing to cut wire or neutralise machine-gun positions. Communication broke down almost immediately.

Once plans faltered, there was little flexibility left to recover momentum. Losses mounted not because men lacked bravery, but because the system in which they fought had not yet caught up with the realities of industrial war.

Yet the British Army did something remarkable after 1916: it learned.

By 1917, the infantry platoon had been fundamentally reimagined. Instead of acting as a mass of riflemen advancing together, the platoon became a small combined-arms unit in its own right. Lewis guns provided mobile firepower. Bombing sections cleared trenches with grenades. Riflemen manoeuvred in support. Each element had a defined role, and crucially, soldiers were trained to act independently when officers fell. This decentralisation of command marked a quiet revolution. Initiative was no longer confined to rank; it was expected at every level.

Artillery, too, underwent a transformation. The crude firepower of 1916 evolved into a precise and devastating instrument. Creeping barrages were timed to the pace of the infantry, lifting forward in carefully measured increments. Counter-battery fire targeted enemy

guns before an attack even began, aided by sound-ranging, flash-spotting, and increasingly accurate aerial photography. By 1917, British gunners could isolate a battlefield, suppressing German artillery and allowing infantry to advance with a degree of protection unimaginable a year earlier.

The introduction of tanks followed a similar trajectory. Their debut on the Somme in September 1916 had been dramatic but flawed - mechanically unreliable and tactically misunderstood. Rather than abandoning the concept, the army refined it. By 1917, tanks were deployed in mass, coordinated with infantry and artillery, and used to restore surprise by eliminating the need for prolonged preliminary bombardments.

At Cambrai, wire was crushed, trenches crossed, and defensive systems ruptured in hours rather than weeks. The promise glimpsed in 1916 was finally realised.

Behind these visible changes lay a deeper cultural shift. The British Army became an organisation that captured lessons systematically and disseminated them rapidly. Training manuals were updated constantly. Units rotated out of the line not just to rest, but to retrain using the latest tactical thinking. Non-commissioned officers were empowered as leaders. The army that emerged in 1917-18 was not simply better equipped; it was more intellectually agile.

Even the soldier's burden began to change. Lessons from the Somme forced a reconsideration of what men carried and why. Loads were reduced where possible. Specialist equipment was distributed more intelligently. Logistics

improved, with better supply routes, more effective medical evacuation, and a growing understanding that exhaustion could be as deadly as enemy fire. Conditions remained appalling - mud, shellfire, gas, and loss never disappeared - but they were no longer compounded by avoidable chaos.

The proof of this transformation came in 1918. During the Hundred Days Offensive, British forces advanced not in yards but in miles.

Attacks were characterised by coordination rather than attrition, momentum rather than stagnation. Infantry, artillery, tanks, aircraft, engineers, and logistics functioned as a single system. German defences, once seemingly impregnable, collapsed in sequence. The army that had struggled so painfully on the Somme became one of the most effective fighting forces on the Western Front.

This does not diminish the horror of 1916 - nor should it. The cost of learning was appalling, paid in lives that can never be recovered or justified. But it does challenge the notion that the Somme was meaningless. The lessons written in blood along the Ancre and the Pozieres ridge reshaped warfare. They informed every successful operation that followed.

To remember the Somme is not only to mourn the dead, but to recognise what was forged in its aftermath: an army capable of adaptation, innovation, and ultimately victory. The men who endured 1916 did not live to see the full consequences of what they endured. But the transformation they forced upon the British Army changed the course of the war - and the nature of modern combat itself.



## The Weight of War

At the Somme in 1916, a British infantryman advanced under a crushing physical burden. His steel helmet, introduced during the campaign, offered vital protection against shrapnel, while the 1908 Pattern webbing carried ammunition, rations, tools, and personal effects.

In his front pouches were typically 90-120 rounds of .303 ammunition for the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield rifle, which weighed around 9 lb (4 kg) unloaded and was often fitted with a long bayonet. An entrenching tool, mess tin, water bottle, iron ration, and spare clothing filled his pack. A gas mask, worn or carried at all times, added discomfort and constant anxiety.

Before major attacks, extra ammunition and grenades increased the load to 60-70 lb (27-32 kg) or more. Across mud, wire, and shell holes, this weight exhausted men and slowed advances - shaping the deadly reality of the Somme battlefield.

# Somme 110th Anniversary

## Events in 2026

In 2026, the Somme will be moving to the beat of the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. Ceremonies, exhibitions, concerts, hikes and gatherings will provide opportunities for locals and visitors to remember, pass on and share the history of the area, which was so affected by the Great War. These moments of remembrance will also focus on peace: remembering in order to act, so that the past enlightens our present and inspires the future.

### JULY ...

#### The Somme 110 Expedition. 1st - 5th.

Join *Challenge The Wild* on an expedition that retraces history's footsteps. Explore the trenches where soldiers awaited their fate, visit monuments and memorials to our brave soldiers and delve into the strategic decisions that shaped the course of World War I.

**Battle of the Somme Commemorations (Ovillers-la-Boisselle, Contalmaison, Thiepval, Beaumont-Hamel, Fricourt).** From sunrise to sunset, the area pays homage to those who fell in the Battle of the Somme. Ceremonies, wreath-laying and moments of are reminders that their memory is very much alive.

**Inauguration of an FT17 tank (Somme 1916 Museum).** A unique opportunity to view this emblematic historic vehicle, in the midst of the 110th Anniversary commemorations.

**Living history weekend (Albert public garden) 3 days to relive History:** historic reenactments, military parade, tea dance and entertainment for all ages: commemorate the 110th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in the vibrant heart of a village of remembrance.

**Guided tour of Notre-Dame Cathedral (Amiens).** Offered by the Amiens Tourist Office, this guided tour in English explains the architecture and history of the religious building, as well as its unique role as a place of remembrance of the Great War.

**Commemoration in remembrance of poet Allan Seeger (Lihons National Necropolis).** A moving tribute to Allan Seeger, the American poet who fell in the Battle of the Somme, and to all the soldiers buried at the Lihons national necropolis.

**Inauguration of Dodgson Memorial (Contalmaison)** by the Western Front Association to pay tribute to Francis "Toby" Dodgson, Captain of the 8th Yorkshire Infantry Regiment, killed on July 10, 1916.

**Commemoration of the Battle of Pozieres (1st Australian Division Memorial-Pozieres).** This night service is in honour of the Australian soldiers who fought at Pozieres in 1916. A military encampment, parade, projections and special effects to immerse spectators in the tale of the battle.

### AUGUST ...

**Ceremony in remembrance of the composer George Butterworth (George Butterworth Memorial).** Ceremony in honour of George Butterworth, interspersed with bagpipe music, brass band, and wreath-laying.

**Poppy ride and walk (Mametz).** A sporting event that invites you to cycle or walk circuits combining sporting effort and discovery of the Somme's memorial heritage.

### SEPTEMBER ...

**Commemoration of the Battle of Mount St-Quentin (2nd Australian Division Memorial - Péronne).** A ceremony recalling the Australian role in the liberation of the town of Péronne.

**Remembrance walk (Former village of Faÿ).** A walk, setting off from the former site of the village of Faÿ, organised by Péronne Haute Somme Tourist Office with animation and commentary by members of Le Sapeur Picard association in period costume. Followed by a discovery tour of the Faÿ trench, to find out more about the soldier's daily life.

**Souvenir Français Commemoration (Rancourt and Bouchavesnes-Bergen).** A tribute to remember and honor the memory of German, French and British soldiers, whose sacrifice during this historic battle is commemorated in the cemeteries of Rancourt and Bouchavesnes-Bergen.

**European Heritage Days (The Remembrance Trail).** On the theme of "Endangered Heritage", events and guided visits showcasing the fragility of heritage in the Somme, especially at sites linked to the First World War.

### NOVEMBER ...

**Remembrance Week (Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial).** Commemorations and remembrance events throughout the week of 11th November, in homage to veterans as well as serving members of the armed forces.

**Dates with World History (The Remembrance Trail).**

*On the Armistice commemorations, Somme Tourisme and the Somme Battlefields' Partner network are organising a weekend of guided visits in the area, to enable you to learn about the history of the sites marked by the Battle of the Somme. Meet the guides, visit the international sites, and walk in the century-old footsteps of millions of soldiers.*



## THE SOMME IN PERSPECTIVE

### Historical Significance and the Scale of Loss

*Few battles in history carry the weight of the Somme. Its name alone has come to signify not just a place or a campaign, but an idea - the terrible cost of modern war, the endurance of ordinary men, and the moment when the industrial age revealed its full destructive power. More than a century later, the Somme remains a reference point against which sacrifice, leadership, and loss are measured.*

Between July and November 1916, the Battle of the Somme consumed armies on a scale previously unimaginable. Over 141 days of continuous fighting, more than one million men were killed, wounded, or listed as missing. The British Army alone suffered around 420,000 casualties; the French approximately 200,000; German losses are estimated at between 450,000 and 500,000. These numbers defy easy comprehension. They represent not statistics, but lives interrupted - families altered, communities diminished, futures erased.

The first day of the battle, 1 July 1916, stands as the darkest single day in the history of the British Army. Nearly 60,000 men became casualties before nightfall, of whom more than 19,000 were killed. Entire units were devastated within minutes. In towns and villages across Britain and the wider Empire, telegrams arrived in clusters, reshaping neighbourhoods and silencing streets. The Somme was not distant; it reached into homes, factories, schools, and chapels.

Yet to understand the Somme solely through loss is to risk missing its wider historical significance. The battle marked a turning point in the nature of the war - and in the armies that fought it. In 1916, Britain was still learning how to fight a continental war on an industrial scale. The Somme was a

brutal classroom. Lessons were learned at appalling cost: how artillery and infantry must cooperate; how rigid tactics failed against modern defences; how command structures had to adapt.

By the end of the campaign, the British Army that emerged was markedly different from the one that had gone into battle in July. Though victory on the ground was limited, the experience gained would shape later successes at Arras, Messines, and ultimately during the final offensives of 1918. German commanders, too, later acknowledged that the Somme had irreversibly weakened their army. The battle did not end the war - but it altered its trajectory.

The Somme also carried profound cultural and psychological consequences. It marked the moment when the romantic illusions of war finally collapsed for many at home. The idea of glory gave way to a more sombre understanding of duty and sacrifice. For a generation, the Somme became synonymous with loss - a name spoken quietly, often without explanation, because explanation seemed inadequate.

Perhaps most enduring is the battle's legacy of remembrance. The scale of loss meant that many of the dead had no known grave. Their absence reshaped how

nations remembered war. Memorials were built not as celebrations of victory, but as acknowledgements of sacrifice. Names were carved where bodies could not be found. Silence became as important as speech.

Today, the Somme stands not only as a testament to those who fought and died, but as a warning written into the landscape of history. It reminds us of the human cost of decisions made far from the battlefield, and of the resilience demanded of those who carried them out.

To view the Somme in perspective is not to judge it solely by miles gained or lost, but by what it revealed about war itself - and about the men who endured it. Their sacrifice did not end in 1916. It lives on in the fields, the memorials, and the quiet understanding that some losses are too great to be measured, yet too important ever to be forgotten.

*"Their name liveth for evermore."*

- Ecclesiasticus 44:14



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## Remembrance

From the heart of Stanley, the Falkland Islands have long understood the meaning of distance, duty and remembrance. Though separated from the battlefields of the Western Front by thousands of miles, island communities across the South Atlantic shared in the sacrifice of the Great War, standing with Britain and the wider Commonwealth at a defining moment in history.

As we mark the 110th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, Chandlery Supermarket joins in honouring all those who served, suffered and fell. We remember the young men who left home for a distant front, the families who waited for news, and the generations forever shaped by the cost of war.

Today, remembrance remains a bond between communities - from the windswept shores of the Falklands to the quiet cemeteries and memorials of the Somme.



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Newfoundland Memorial Park, Beaumont-Hamel. A 74-acre preserved battlefield and memorial park, it serves as a tribute to the soldiers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2023.

# FROM MUD TO MEMORY

## *How the Somme Battlefield Has Been Preserved*

In the summer of 1916, the ground of the Somme was reduced to something scarcely recognisable as earth. Fields became seas of mud; villages vanished beneath shellfire; woods were splintered into blackened stumps. The land itself seemed to recoil under the weight of modern war. Those who fought there spoke of a landscape stripped of life and meaning - churned, cratered, and soaked with rain, blood, and exhaustion.

More than a century later, that same land lies quiet. Crops grow where trenches once ran. Skylarks rise above fields that were once raked by machine-gun fire. To the untrained eye, the Somme might appear peaceful, even ordinary. And yet, beneath the soil – and within the carefully preserved memorials that rise above it - memory endures.

The preservation of the Somme battlefield was never inevitable. In the immediate aftermath of the war, northern France faced the immense task of rebuilding shattered towns and restoring farmland essential to survival.

Vast areas of the battlefield were cleared, levelled, and returned to agricultural use. Shells were removed, trenches filled, and scars softened by time and necessity.

Had memory relied solely on the landscape itself, much of the Somme might have vanished from view entirely. What prevented that erasure was an act of collective remembrance. Cemeteries, memorials, and preserved sites were deliberately created to anchor memory in place. They were not designed as triumphal monuments, but as spaces of reflection – places where the scale of loss could be confronted quietly and with dignity.

The cemeteries of the Somme are among the most recognisable features of its preserved landscape. Their uniform headstones, aligned with quiet precision, speak of equality in death regardless of rank, wealth, or background. Each name – and each unknown soldier – represents an individual story subsumed into a collective sacrifice.

The care with which these cemeteries are maintained today reflects an ongoing commitment: that the dead should not fade into abstraction.

Above the fields, larger memorials rise where bodies could not be recovered and names had no known grave. They stand not to dominate the landscape, but to mark absence - tens of thousands missing, remembered only in stone.

These structures transform loss into permanence. They ensure that remembrance is not dependent on memory alone, but physically embedded in the land where the fighting occurred.

Preservation, however, is not only architectural. It is also emotional and interpretive. Certain sections of the Somme battlefield - preserved trenches, mine craters, and wooded remnants - have been left intentionally untouched. Here, the ground still bears the shape of war. These places offer no spectacle, no narrative resolution. Instead, they confront visitors with the rawness of what once was, allowing silence to do the work that words cannot.

Modern remembrance has added another layer to preservation: pilgrimage. Each year, visitors arrive from across the world - descendants, soldiers, students, and the simply curious. They walk the fields, trace regimental paths, and stand quietly before names carved into stone. For many,

the journey is personal; for others, it is an act of learning. Together, they sustain the relevance of the Somme by engaging with it directly.

Preserving the Somme has also required restraint. Unlike some historic battlefields, it has not been over-interpreted or overwhelmed by reconstruction.

The landscape has been allowed to remain largely agricultural, living and working as it did before the war. This balance - between remembrance and normality - is perhaps the most powerful tribute of all. Life has returned, but memory has not been erased.

In this way, the Somme has become more than a battlefield. It is a shared space between past and present – a place where devastation has given way to reflection, and where the passage of time has softened the land without dulling its meaning.

To stand on the Somme today is to understand that remembrance is not frozen in 1916. It evolves, just as the landscape has evolved. The mud has long since dried. The trenches have filled. But memory, carefully preserved, respectfully maintained, and continually renewed - remains.

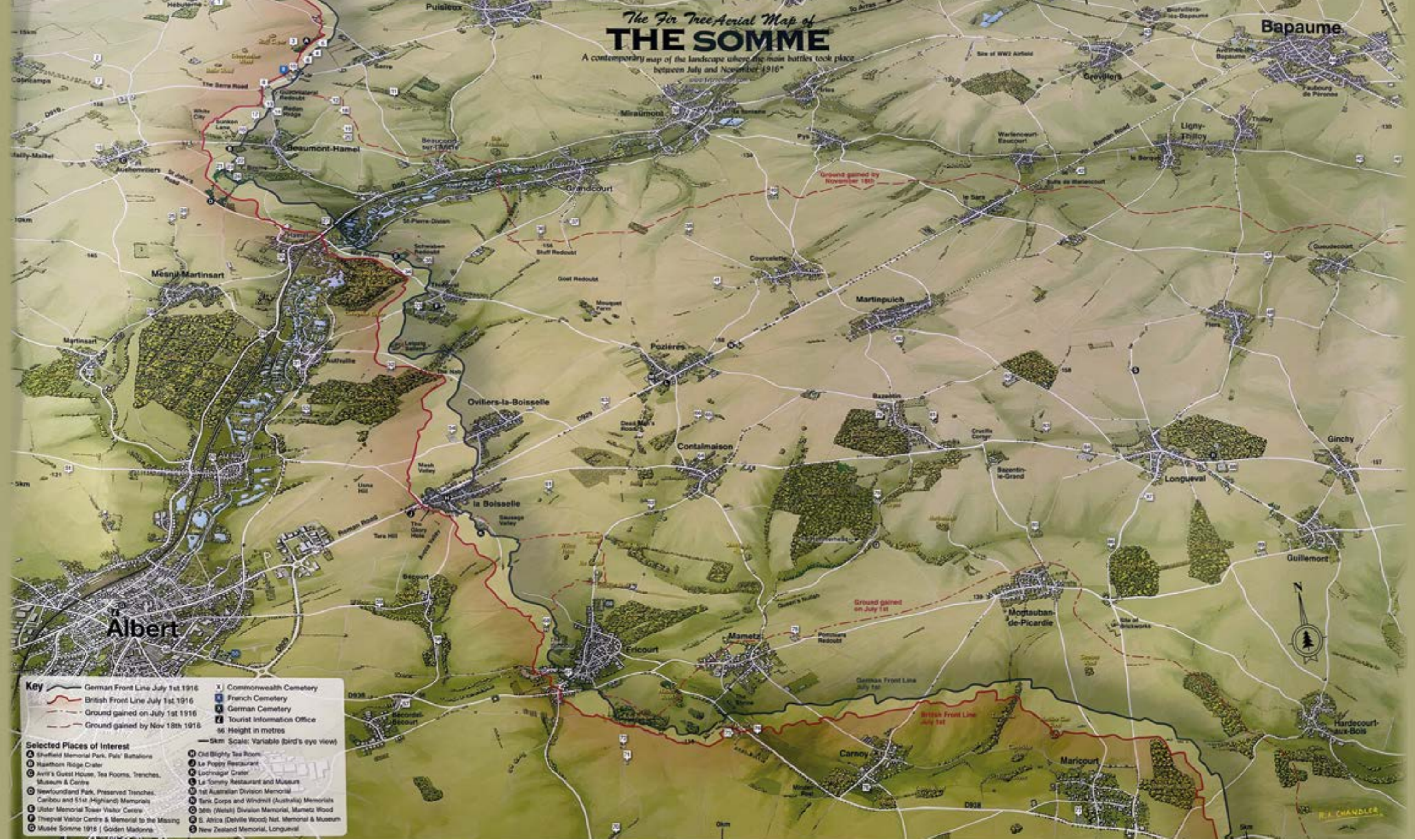
*From mud to memory, the Somme endures.*



Newfoundland Memorial Park from the air.

# The Fir Tree Aerial Map of THE SOMME

A contemporary map of the landscape where the main battles took place between July and November 1916\*



**Key**

- German Front Line July 1st 1916
- British Front Line July 1st 1916
- Ground gained on July 1st 1916
- Ground gained by Nov 18th 1916
- Commonwealth Cemetery
- French Cemetery
- German Cemetery
- Tourist Information Office
- 56 Height in metres

**Selected Places of Interest**

- Sheffield Memorial Park, Pals' Battalions
- Hazethorn Ridge Crater
- Avril's Guest House, Tea Rooms, Trenches, Museum & Centre
- Newfoundland Park, Preserved Trenches, Caribou and 51st (Highland) Memorials
- Ulfater Memorial Tower Visitor Centre
- Thiepval Visitor Centre & Memorial to the Missing
- Musée Somme 1916 | Golden Madonna
- Old Blighty Tea Room
- Le Poppy Restaurant
- Lochnagar Crater
- Le Tommy Restaurant and Museum
- 1st Australian Division Memorial
- Tank Corps and Windmill (Australia) Memorials
- 38th (Welsh) Division Memorial, Mametz Wood
- S. Africa (Devil's Wood) Nat. Memorial & Museum
- New Zealand Memorial, Longueval

5km Scale: Variable (bird's eye view)

**Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

AIF Burial Ground, Piers	47
Adnac Military Cemetery, Miraumont	40
Ancre British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	56
Ancre British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	27
Auchonvillers Military Cemetery	15
Authuille Military Cemetery	31
Aveluy Communal Cemetery Extension	52
Aveluy Wood Cemetery (Lancashire Dump)	29
Bapaume Australian Cemetery	44
Bapaume Post Military Cemetery, Albert	60
Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery Extn.	81
Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery	79
Beaulencourt British Cemetery, Ligny-Thillois	45
Beaumont-Hamel British Cemetery	16
Bécart Military Cemetery, Bécordel-Bécourt	59
Bemaluy Wood British Cemetery, Montauban	86
Blighty Valley Cemetery, Authuille Wood	53
Bouzincourt Ridge Cemetery, Albert	51
Bulls Road Cemetery, Piers	48
Carnoy Military Cemetery	76
Bapaume Australian Cemetery	84
Citadel New Military Cemetery, Fricourt	70
Connaught Cemetery, Thiepval	34
Contalmaison Château Cemetery	64
Courtolette British Cemetery	41
Dartzig Alley British Cemetery, Mametz	75
Dartmoor Cemetery, Bécordel-Bécourt	57
Devil's Wood Cemetery, Longueval	88
Devonshire Cemetery, Mametz	73
Euston Road Cemetery, Colincamps	2
Flation Copse Cemetery, Mametz	78
Frankfurt Trench British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	19
Fricourt British Cemetery	67
Fricourt New Military Cemetery	68
Gordon Cemetery, Mametz	74
Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovillers-la-Boisselle	61
Grandcourt Road Cemetery, Grandcourt	36
Grivillers British Cemetery	43
Guillemont Road Cemetery, Guillemont	89
Hamel Military Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	30
Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery No.1, Auchonvillers	22
Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery No.2, Auchonvillers	21
Hébuterne Communal Cemetery	1
Hunter's Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	23
Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart	26
London Cemetery & Extn, High Wood, Longueval	82
Longueval Road Cemetery	87
Lonsdale Cemetery, Authuille	32
Luke Copse British Cemetery, Puisieux	5
Martinsart British Cemetery	50
Martinguich British Cemetery	80
Mesnil Communal Cemetery Extension	28
Mesnil Ridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart	25
Mill Road Cemetery, Thiepval	35
Miraumont Communal Cemetery	39
Munich Trench British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	12
New Munich Trench British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	20
Norfolk Cemetery, Bécordel-Bécourt	58
Ovillers Military Cemetery	54
Peake Wood Cemetery, Fricourt	62
Péronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt	77
Point 110 New Military Cemetery, Fricourt	71
Point 110 Old Military Cemetery, Fricourt	72
Pozieres British Cemetery, Ovillers-la-Boisselle	63
Quarry Cemetery, Montauban	85
Queens Cemetery, Puisieux	4
Railway Hollow Cemetery, Hébuterne	3
Redan Ridge Cemetery No.1, Beaumont-Hamel	13
Redan Ridge Cemetery No.2, Beaumont-Hamel	17
Redan Ridge Cemetery No.3, Beaumont-Hamel	14
Regina Trench Cemetery, Grandcourt	38
Serre Road Cemetery No.1, Hébuterne	10
Serre Road Cemetery No.2, Beaumont-Hamel	8
Serre Road Cemetery No.3, Puisieux	6
Stump Road Cemetery, Grandcourt	37
Sucrerie Military Cemetery, Colincamps	7
Sunken Road Cemetery, Contalmaison	66
Ten Tree Alley Cemetery, Puisieux	11
Thiepval Anglo-French Cemetery	33
Thillois Road Cemetery, Beaulencourt	46
Thistle Dump Cemetery, High Wood, Longueval	83
Wagon Road Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	18
Warlencourt British Cemetery	42
'Y' Ravine Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel	24

Some Commonwealth Casualties were interred in Village Communal Cemeteries. Only those Communal Cemeteries that were extended are included in this list. Further information can be found at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

**German War Graves Commission**

Fricourt	69
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**French National Cemeteries**

Albert	55
Serre-Hébuterne	9

Some place names indicated are those adopted by the British Army. This map may be used for navigating, however roads marked are not necessarily public rights of way. No responsibility can be accepted for any errors or their consequences. Original artwork hand painted and published by Richard Chandler © 2015. [www.firtreeapps.com](http://www.firtreeapps.com) Tel: +44 (0) 1453 885528

# For the Fallen

BY LAURENCE BINYON. 1914.

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea,  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow,  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;  
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.

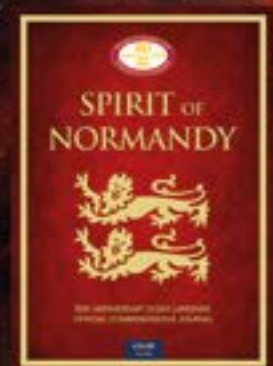
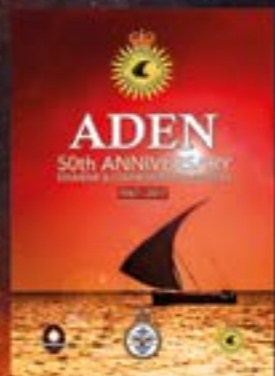
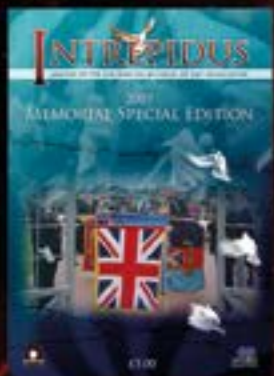
But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.

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**'Ascension'**  
Special Air Service Memorial,  
Hereford Cathedral.  
Window by John Maine RA  
March 2017



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