

THE NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE EVENT TO MARK THE CENTENARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Thiepval Memorial
to the Missing of the Somme

1 July 2016



His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales



CLARENCE HOUSE

It is truly terrifying to imagine the destruction wrought across this landscape one hundred years ago today. However, we now return to the battlefield in a spirit of reconciliation and respect.

From the numerous hallowed spots across the battlefield, to the war poetry, poignant tales of comradeship between men, and the infamous Somme mud, the Battle of the Somme is an important part of our shared history. For many in Britain, the Battle holds a special place in the public consciousness.

We honour the men who served from across Britain and Ireland, the Commonwealth and from France. We remember, too, the men from Germany who fought and fell in this most futile of conflicts... Their perseverance and courage when faced with such a monumental challenge are truly humbling.

The Battle of the Somme was unlike any battle that had preceded it. The sheer scale of the operation required a mobilisation like no other. The invaluable contribution of medical staff and volunteers, the critical provision of artillery from factories at home, and the construction of a vast infrastructure along the front will all be recognised as part of this important commemoration.

The Battle also saw the development of new technologies that would later become an integral part of modern warfare. The first tanks were deployed on the Somme, while aircraft fought above the battlefield for air supremacy and to provide photographic reconnaissance.

This centenary provides us with an opportunity to show our deepest respect to our ancestors. Their sacrifice and suffering will never be forgotten.

Chanel



The Right Honourable David Cameron MP
The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

We come together today to honour all those involved in a battle that is seared onto our national consciousness.

For many the Somme Offensive came to define the First World War. The scale of the sacrifice – almost 20,000 British dead on the first day; a million casualties on all sides overall – is reflected by the sheer size of the towering Thiepval Memorial.

We think of the volunteers of the Pals' Battalions, formed of men from the same communities, workplaces, clubs and schools – clerks, teachers, butchers, footballers and more who would never return home.

We think of the impact of the devastation – felt by almost every community in Britain – which left mothers without sons, wives without husbands, and children without fathers.

And we think of the joint nature of the Somme offensive, with this Anglo-French battle memorial bearing over 72,000 names of those who have no known grave. So this is an opportunity to reflect upon, and strengthen, Britain's historic bond of friendship with the French Republic.

It is a chance to stand together as friends with the representatives from the participant nations of the battle who are here today – from Germany, Ireland, and from across the Commonwealth – honouring the contribution of all nations.

It is a chance for all the people here whose relatives fell in that battle – indeed, almost everyone in our countries today will be related to someone who fought – to remember what their ancestors' sacrifices meant for our nations.

It is vital we ensure the battle, the sacrifices, are never forgotten, and today's commemorations will help to do just that.

David Cameron



M. Manuel Valls, Prime Minister of the French Republic

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PREMIER MINISTRE

On this 1st of July, we come together, French, British, descendants of the colonial empires and members of the Commonwealth, to commemorate together the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. Here at Thiepval, before these graves, we pay tribute to all those soldiers who took part in what was to be one of the most ferocious battles in History.

A ferocious battle, because it was long and difficult. One must picture the soldiers in hand to hand combat, across this rugged land of steep banks, and ridges and hastily dug trenches, amid German shelling and machine-gun fire. We have to realise also, apart from the bitter fighting, what might have been the rigour of their living conditions...or rather of their survival conditions. Here, during the 141 days of combat, in makeshift shelters covered in mud and crawling with rats, it is the hunger, thirst, intense cold, deafening noise, and fear which were the worst enemies of men.

A ferocious battle also, for the exceptional violence it deployed. Never had we witnessed such a deluge of iron and fire. Never had there been so many casualties, so many left maimed and mutilated. Of all the important battles of this war, the Somme was the bloodiest: out of three million soldiers who took part, almost 400,000 lost their lives – and around 800,000 were injured. The Somme marks the start of a new era, the era of “industrial warfare”. As the English poet and soldier, Wilfred Owen, expressed with unparalleled poignancy, men here died not as men but “as cattle”.

A ferocious battle, finally, because, despite fraternity in arms, and moments of understanding between troops on both sides, it eventually took on a different significance in our respective historical memories. Whereas across the countries of the Commonwealth, the Battle of the Somme was becoming the symbol of the Great War, it was being eclipsed in France, by the memory of the Battle of Verdun. Yet both battles are intimately linked: It is the push on the Somme which forced the Germans to reduce their numbers on the heights above the Meuse, opening opportunities for allied forces. Above all, it is this battle which was the decisive one, and not Verdun: by forcing the Germans to enter into all-out submarine warfare, it precipitated the entry of the United States into the conflict, and therefore helped bring to a close the very first worldwide war.

To remember “the Somme” is to take a step towards repairing this injustice. Standing side by side with the people of Britain, Ireland, Canada and Newfoundland, South Africa and New Zealand, but also Germany, it says we recognise the sacrifice and suffering of those who fought. And above all, it says that we have learnt the lessons the Somme has taught us, the need to unite, to gather around values of justice, freedom, peace and respect for human dignity.

Fully aware of our responsibilities and confident in our ability to face challenges together, one hundred years on, this is the only way for us to remain faithful both in spirit and in deed, to the memory of those who fought on the Somme.



His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent
President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



It is my honour, as President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, to welcome you to these commemorations at the Thiepval Memorial.

This Memorial to the Missing of the Somme might be described as the crowning stone of the work of the CWGC. Certainly, its sheer scale is almost overwhelming, particularly in the seemingly endless lists of names inscribed upon the Portland stone panels of its columns.

There are more than 72,000 servicemen commemorated here. The youngest was a mere 15 years of age, the eldest 59, when they lost their lives. None has a known grave, and so the Commission built this memorial to ensure their names would live on in perpetuity.

Our memorial mirrors the Somme Offensive itself, which was fought on a human and industrial scale unparalleled at the time. But unlike that fierce struggle a century ago, this monument is a creative force – a physical expression of our determination to never forget what took place here. The alliances and friendships forged, both individual and national, the heroism, destruction and, of course, loss were on an unprecedented scale, which was felt across the British Isles and our Commonwealth.

Today, the landscape around us is peaceful. Alongside rebuilt farms and villages are tens of thousands of war graves in cemeteries of which the Commission remains a proud custodian. In the shadow of this great monument lie soldiers of France and the Commonwealth, side by side, symbolic of a common purpose and a common sacrifice. Today, tomorrow, and for as long as stone stands on stone, we will always remember them.

THIS COMMEMORATION IS HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

WELCOME

An edited version of IWM's (Imperial War Museums) film *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) will be screened before the service, accompanied by music composed by Laura Rossi and performed live by The BBC Symphony Orchestra. *The Battle of the Somme* was filmed by two newsreel cameramen, Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell, who were given unique access to record the British Army's offensive as it unfolded, from positions right on the front line. Despite the difficulty and danger inherent in filming a battle, the cameramen secured some powerful and candid scenes of the fighting, which were regarded by audiences at the time as unprecedented in their realism. In 2005, *The Battle of the Somme* was inscribed on the UNESCO 'Memory of the World' register, the first British document and one of the first films from any nation to be registered. The extract screened today is taken from reels three, four and five covering the infantry attack on 1 July and its aftermath.

A military vigil has been maintained at the Thiepval Memorial overnight, and will be remounted at the start of the service.

In the presence of

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall

Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Wales

Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester

His Excellency Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

M. Manuel Valls, Prime Minister of the French Republic

The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, Prime Minister of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

His Excellency Prof. Dr Horst Köhler, former President of the
Federal Republic of Germany

Representatives of nations that fought in the Battle of the Somme

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

ORDER OF SERVICE

Narrators Charles Dance, Joely Richardson and Jason Isaacs

***Please stand for the playing of the National Anthems.
Please then be seated as the service commences.***

Narrator

For four and a half months in 1916, the fields around us saw one of the defining events of the twentieth-century. The Battle of the Somme was one of the most significant battles of the First World War, yet did not bring about an end to the war, as the Allies had hoped. On 24 June 1916, in an attempt to destroy German defences here on the Somme, British and French guns began the largest artillery bombardment in history.

Henry Holdstock of the Sixth Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service, wrote:

Reading by Sub Lieutenant Jack Charles Carlisle, Royal Navy

On the eve of the battle, the night before they were to go over at dawn the next morning, the combined armament were crashing all together. The whole earth trembled. You could feel the vibrations coming up through the earth, through your limbs, through your body. You were all of a tremor, just by artillery fire only. Not so much from the crashing of the shells, as the gunfire from the rear, all concentrating in one wild blast of gunfire. The whole ground trembled, and you felt sorry for anyone within half a mile of wherever they were piling it. It must have been terrible for them.

Narrator

The Germans waited out the terrifying bombardment in their well defended positions. A delay of two days for rain increased the tension amongst those waiting to go over the top. Among those preparing to attack uphill not far from here at Thiepval Wood was the 36th (Ulster) Division, including the 21-year-old Billy McFadzean.

Reading by Captain Richard Scott, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, British Army

Private Billy McFadzean grew up in Belfast and joined the Belfast Young Citizens' Battalion. He became an expert grenadier, or 'bomber' as they were known. At 6.45am on 1 July 1916, he was stationed at Thiepval Wood in a narrow assembly trench. As he was preparing for the attack, an ammunition box turned over and spilled two live grenades primed to explode. Billy threw himself on top of them. He was killed at once, but his action saved the lives of many of his comrades. In a letter to Billy's parents his commanding officer described it as 'one of the finest deeds of a war that is so full of big things.' Billy was awarded the highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross.

Reading by Private Sean Fendley, The Yorkshire Regiment, British Army

Private Donald Cameron was with the 12th Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment, from Sheffield, attacking the village of Serre on 1 July. He describes going over the top.

The first wave went over at 0720. They lay down about a hundred yards in front of our own barbed wire. Then the second wave went over, and lay down about thirty yards behind them. During this time, there was high explosives, shrapnel, everything you can imagine, coming over. Terrific hurtling death. It was soul destroying, but I wasn't frightened: I was impatient, I wanted to get moving. When we saw people dropping like ninepins on either side, we bent double, and in the end we started crawling. After a while, three of us, and Sergeant Callimore, got down into a shell-hole. I must have prayed a dozen times. I used to go to church when I was a lad, but I prayed more in that shell-hole than I ever prayed in church.

Narrator

By the summer of 1916, the British Army's ranks had been swelled by wartime volunteers. They came from every walk of life: coal mines, building sites, offices, factories and farms. In France, they were joined by men from every corner of the British Empire.

Some of those who attacked on 1 July belonged to Pals' Battalions, drawn from the same workplace, social club or community. They had enlisted together, trained together, and now they would fight together. For many, the Somme was their first taste of battle.

Music *Keep the Home Fires Burning*

Performed by Morryston Orpheus Choir, with The Band of the Welsh Guards

Arrangement by Alwyn Humphreys

They were summoned from the hillside
They were called in from the glen,
And the country found them ready
At the stirring call for men.

Let no tears add to their hardships
As the soldiers pass along,
And although your heart is breaking
Make it sing this cheery song.

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Overseas there came a pleading,
"Help a nation in distress."
And we gave our glorious laddies
Honour bade us do no less,
For no gallant son of freedom
To a tyrant's yoke should bend,
And a noble heart must answer
To the sacred call of "Friend."

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Narrator

At dusk on 1 July, as roll calls were taken, the gravity of the losses became clearer, but only later did the full scale of the British Army's casualties emerge: nearly 60,000 casualties; of these, nearly one third were dead or would die from their wounds. It was the greatest loss of life in a single day in British military history. Yet there was no question of calling off the battle. The offensive would continue.

The scale of the casualties required unprecedented medical care. Alongside the devoted staff of the Royal Army Medical Corps were thousands of nurses, women of all ages and backgrounds. One volunteer nurse present from the start of the battle was a schoolteacher called Olive Dent.

Reading by Caroline Squire, First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps)

On and on we worked, forgetful of time and remembering our own meal only as we became exhausted. Whatever our hand found to do on that memorable day and the four following days we did with all our might. Laughter, tears, immense satisfaction and pleasure, immeasurable pain and disappointment were commingled that day.

Today's stories of the fighting, told to us red-hot from the lips of the boys who lived them, those stories and the many little incidents we have all witnessed, have shown us that while war may be a great wastage, it is also a great purifier. It has brought out valour indescribable, self-sacrifice unforgettable, patience and magnificent endurance untellable. And are these worth nothing...?

I am too tired to sleep, too tired to do anything but lie and look up at the wooden roof of the hut, too tired to do anything but think think think, too tired to shut out of sight and mind the passionate appeal of two dying eyes and the low faint whisper of 'Sister, am I going to die?'

Narrator

In early July, the 38th (Welsh) Division took Mametz Wood, sustaining 4,000 casualties. No tree in the wood was left unbroken. Other British forces then took Bazentin Ridge, in a surprise attack at dawn. But soon the battle became a struggle of attrition, with fierce fighting for every village, farm, wood and rise. As the weeks turned into months both sides were reluctant to pull back after suffering such heavy losses.

During an assault on Delville Wood, the 17th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, known as the Footballers' Battalion, played a prominent role.

Reading by Sol Campbell, Former England Footballer

One member of the Footballers' Battalion was William Jonas, who played for Clapton Orient, now called Leyton Orient. He was a popular player, receiving 50 fan letters a week. His fellow player, Sergeant Major Richard McFadden, wrote to the club to inform them of his fate at Delville Wood.

I, Richard McFadden sadly report the death of my friend and O's colleague William Jonas on the morning of Thursday 27th July, aged 26. Both Willie and I were trapped in a trench near the front in Somme, France. Willie turned to me and said 'Goodbye Mac, Best of luck, special love to my sweetheart Mary Jane and best regards to the lads at Orient.' Before I could reply to him, he was up and over. No sooner had he jumped up out of the trench, my best friend of nearly twenty years was killed before my eyes. Words cannot express my feelings at this time.

Narrator

Throughout the battle, the British Army was bolstered by forces from across the Empire.

Some came from across the Atlantic: the Newfoundland Regiment, which suffered huge losses on 1 July, members of the Bermuda Volunteer Rifle Corps, men of the British West Indies Regiment, who moved from support roles into the front line, and the four Canadian divisions which drove the line forwards at Courcelette.

Others had further to travel: Indian cavalrymen who charged at High Wood; Australian soldiers who fought fierce battles around Pozières; New Zealanders who helped capture Flers.

The South African Infantry brigade, or S.A.I., went into action on 15 July at Delville Wood as part of the Scottish Division. Among them were two inseparable brothers, Arthur William Robins, known as Willie, and Percy James Robins, who was wounded at Delville. Percy wrote to his family in Durban the next day.

Reading by Warrant Officer Class 1 Walter Raphulu, South African National Defence Force

Dear Dad & Mam, & Allan,

Just a line to let you know I am quite O.K. We went into action last Saturday morning and we weren't at it more than 10 minutes or maybe 15 when I got a bullet through the calf of my left leg. Luckily old Will was with me and he put a Field Dressing on it. I tell you Willie was a perfect Angel of Mercy and a little Hero. I expect to be sent across to England soon. What price the S.A.I. now, eh? They've made a name for themselves but at a sad cost. It clearly shows the opinion those in authority have of the S.A.I. that they should have given the task of clearing the wood.

Your affectionate Boy, Percy

Narrator

Neither Percy nor Willie would survive the war.

When British 'Tommies' went over the top on 1 July, they were joined by 'Poilus' from across France and its Empire. Already fighting a fierce battle at Verdun, the French Army advanced at great cost to recapture many villages on the Somme.

Music *La Madelon*

Performed by The Choeur de l'Armée Francaise

Composed by Camille Robert

Words by Louis Bousquet, 1914

For the soldier's repose and his pleasure
There, a stone's throw from the forest,
There is a house all covered in ivy
The Tourlouroux, that's the name of the cabaret.
The waitress is young and kind
Light as a butterfly
Just as the wine, her eyes a'twinkle
We know her as La Madelon.
We dream of her by night
And think of her by day
It's only Madelon
But to us, she is our love

When Madelon comes round to serve our wine
Under the trellis we brush against her petticoat
And each of us tells her a tale
A tale all of his own.
La Madelon is never harsh on us
When we reach for her waist or her chin
She laughs, that's all the trouble we are in
Madelon, Madelon, Madelon

Reading by M. Manuel Valls, Prime Minister of the French Republic

Sur la Somme, from *Civilisation*, by George Duhamel, 1918

I had been walking, my arms stretched out before me; my hands had touched a palisade; and at once I knew the sense of leaning over the balcony of hell. What human storm! What fierce outburst and expression of hatred and destruction! It seemed as though a troop of giants forged the horizon of the earth, pounding relentlessly amid a million sparks. Made up of an infinity of furtive glimmers, lived one immense, continuous source of light; one palpitating mass which surged and cast its rays at both the earth and clouds. Great iridescent sprays of brightness burst high up in the sky, like sledgehammers to the incandescent iron. For me, here, outside the trench, each of these firework-like signals conveyed its own message, directions, orders, desperate pleas for help, signals from cut-off troops, and I decrypted this awesome brazier as though it literally spelt out the fury and distress of those fighting.

Towards Combles, just left of Maurepas, the fire raged even more intensely in one particular spot. This was where both armies, the British and the French, joined up; this was where the enemy chose to concentrate its turbulent and pounding fire. For weeks on end, I saw each night light up, in this same spot, the same devouring flame. Each and every second that went by, the fire raged with such intensity that every second felt as though it might well be the last. But hours, and weeks, and months rolled sluggishly along through all eternity, and each of these horrific moments seemed to reach new peaks in an infinity of peaks. It is the same of pain from wounds, which seem they should not tolerate more pain; yet death does not yield gladly to the desires of men, it strikes when well it pleases, as and when, and suffers not seduction nor advice.

Morning broke. To those of you who have witnessed the dawn in wartime fields, after nights spent in combat or consumed in tireless and bloody work as ambulance personnel, you will have known one of the ugliest and saddest faces the world could ever offer.

Narrator

On 15 September, the British Army unveiled an extraordinary new weapon: the tank. Developed in secret, tanks arrived on the Somme under heavy tarpaulins; some British troops even believed them to be literally 'tanks' for holding reserves of water. The first tanks were unwieldy monsters. Some got stuck and some broke down. But some were able to cross trenches and crush barbed wire. Men on all sides were shocked to see these gigantic machines. One soldier of the 4th Bavarian Infantry Division describes his first encounter with a tank.

Reading by Corporal Eric Szklarek, Mechanized Infantry Brigade 41,
Operations Department, Neubrandenburg, German Army

Official report of the 4th Bavarian Infantry Division

Gegen 6 ° morgens des 16. Septbr. bewegte sich ein sonderbar geformtes Fahrzeug vom Nordostausgang von Flers auf dem Feldwege gegen unsere Stellung von Gueudecourt langsam aber unaufhaltsam vorwärts. Das Ungetüm wurde von unsern Mannschaften zuerst neugierig, dann mit grossem Erstaunen bei seinem Vorwärtsdringen beobachtet. Es wurde dann mit Infanteriegewehr- und Maschinengewehrfeuer überschüttet, und als das Panzerauto sich trotzdem sicher vorwärts bewegte, verwandelte sich die Neugierde in stummes Entsetzen. Der Panzerwagen fuhr auf dem Feldwege ungehemmt weiter, blieb hinter unseren Stellungen halten und begann dann von rückwärts mit seinen Maschinengewehren die Gallwitz-Stellung abzustreichen. Eine inzwischen aufmerksam gewordene Feldart.-Batterie nahm den Panzerwagen aufs Ziel und erledigte ihn beim dritten Schuss durch einen Volltreffer. Der entsetzliche Bann war zerrissen und die aus dem explodierenden Wagen springende Besatzung von 7 Engländern war in kurzer Zeit das Opfer der Wut unserer Leute.

Translation:

On the morning of 16 September a vehicle of peculiar shape was moving to the north-east exit of Flers along the track which ran towards our positions in front of Gueudecourt. It was driving slowly but it kept on coming. At first our men observed the monster with interest, which turned into considerable astonishment at its advance. Rifle and machine-gun fire poured down on to the machine which continued on its way regardless, and now all curiosity was turned into a sense of dumb horror. The armoured vehicle continued along the road unchecked, halted behind our positions and shot up Gird Trench from the rear with its machine guns. An alert field artillery battery then brought the tank under fire and knocked it out with a direct hit at the third shot. The fearsome monster was ripped asunder and the crew of seven Engländer who clambered out of the exploding vehicle soon fell victim to the wrath of our men.

Reading by The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Even at the height of the battle, there were still moments of humanity and mutual respect between enemies. Corporal Jim Crow, 110th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, describes a brief unofficial truce on the front line.

One of our infantrymen was on the German barbed wire, badly wounded. We could see him moving every now and again. In the end, Major Anderton pulled his revolver out, climbed over the parapet, walked straight to this man, picked him up and carried him back. He walked as though he was on parade. The Germans never fired a shot at him as he went, they never fired a shot as he went back, and they cheered him as he lifted the man on to his shoulders.

Reading by Jason Isaacs

Break of Day in the Trenches by Isaac Rosenberg, 1916

The poet Isaac Rosenberg served on the Somme with The King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. He continued to write in the trenches throughout the battle, including this poem.

The darkness crumbles away.
It is the same old druid Time as ever,
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
A queer sardonic rat,
As I pull the parapet's poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver – what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe –
Just a little white with the dust.

Narrator

Isaac Rosenberg was one of many who wrote poetry to try to capture something of their experience of the battle. Others wrote diaries or letters home.

An Eala Bhàn, or The White Swan, is a Gaelic love song by the poet Donald MacDonald, who served with the Cameron Highlanders, composed during the Battle of the Somme. It is addressed to his sweetheart, Maggie MacLeod.

Music *An Eala Bhàn (The White Swan)*

Performed by Julie Fowlis in Gaelic, with Patsy Reid, *viola*, Alistair Iain Paterson, *harmonium*, Tony Byrne, *guitar*

Translated by Fred MacAulay

Published in Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna – Òrain is Dàin le Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach à Uibhist a Tuath

I feel desolate, my heart seared by sorrow,
Since I left the high misty hills,
The beguiling glens of loch, bay and strome,
And the fair swan who stays there whom I pursue unceasingly.

Maggie, my love, do not grieve even if I die –
Where is the man among us who is immortal?
We are all of us on a brief journey,
Just like the field flower that grows and succumbs to the changing season,
The sun no longer able to revive it.

On my elbows in the trenches my mind dwells on you constantly, my love;
In sleep I dream of you and my health suffers;
My soul is overcome with longing
And my locks which once grew ginger are now turning white.

Goodnight, my love, in your warm fragrant bed,
A quiet sleep to you and a joyous wholesome awakening.
I am here in a cold trench, the sounds of death constantly in my ears,
With little hope of emerging victorious, and the sea is too wide to swim.

Gur duilich leam mar tha mi
'S mo chridhe 'n sàs aig bròn
Bhon an uair a dh'fhàg mi
Beanntan àrd a' cheò
Gleanntannan a'mhànrain
Nan loch, nam bàgh 's nan sròim
'S an eala bhàn tha tàmh ann
Gach latha air 'm bheil mi 'n tòir.

A Mhagaidh na bi tùrsach
A rùin, ged gheibhinn bàs-
Cò am fear am measg an t-sluaigh
A mhaireas buan gu bràth?
Chan eil sinn uile ach air chuairt
Mar dhithein buaile fàs
Bheir siantannan na blianna sios
'S nach tog a' ghrian an àird.

Tha 'n talamh leir mun cuairt dhìom
'Na mheallan suas 's na neòil;
Aig na 'shells a' bualadh –
Cha leir dhomh bhuam le ceò:
Gun chlaisneachd aig mo chluasan
Le fuaim a' ghunna mhòir;
Ach ged tha 'n uair seo cruaidh orm
Tha mo smuaintean air NicLeòid.

Air m' uilinn anns na truinsichean
Tha m' inntinn ort, a ghràidh;
Nam chadal bidh mi a' brúadar ort
Cha dualach dhomh bhith slàn;
Tha m' aigne air a lionadh
Le cianalas cho làn
'S a'ghruag a dh'fhàs cho ruadh orm
A nis air thuar bhith bàn.

Reading by Company Quartermaster Sergeant Gerard White, 1 Brigade Engineer Group, Irish Defence Forces

Soldiers from across Ireland served in the British Army. In early September, the 16th (Irish) Division fought at Guillemont, one of the fiercest parts of the battle. Soon afterwards, the Irish politician, poet and journalist, Tom Kettle, led his company into action at Ginchy. In a letter to a close friend he wrote:

We are moving up tonight into the battle of the Somme. The bombardment, destruction and bloodshed are beyond all imagination, nor did I ever think the valour of simple men could be quite as beautiful as that of my Dublin Fusiliers. I have had two chances of leaving them – one on sick leave and one to take a staff job. I have chosen to stay with my comrades. I am calm and happy, but desperately anxious to live.

Narrator

Ginchy was captured within 45 minutes, but Tom Kettle did not survive, and is commemorated here on the Thiepval Memorial. The high ground where we gather today was eventually taken on 28 September. Lieutenant Tom Adlam VC of the 7th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, proudly described his men in action.

Reading by Clive Adlam, son of Lieutenant Tom Adlam VC

They went like a bomb, they really did. They all up and ran and we got into our little bit of trench. I got a whole lot of bombs ready and I started throwing them as fast as I could. We just charged up the trench like a load of mad things, luckily they were running, we never caught them, but we drove them out. In the end, with these few men I had, we got right to our objective that the battalion was down to do. I was frightened, I don't mind telling you. You did a job out there and I never realised that there was anything unusual about it. There was a job to be done and you just got on and did it. I was more frightened going up to the trenches, sitting, waiting to start, I was very frightened then, very frightened indeed. You've got a group of men with you, you're in charge of them. We were taught we had to be an example to our men and that if we went forward, they'd go with you, you see. And you sort of lose your sense of fear, thinking about other people.

Narrator

Offensive operations were called off on 18 November, as the first snow of winter began to fall. By then, Allied and German casualties – killed, wounded, missing or captured – came to more than one million. An area of 100 square miles was a mass of shell holes and mud, flooded by early winter rain. No tree was left unblasted, no wall left standing; where once there had been farms and villages, there was only rubble and brick dust. Everywhere, the mud was strewn with rotting corpses. It was a scene of desolation that has haunted Europe ever since.

Grieving families had to make their peace as best they could. In the months and years to come, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission built cemeteries for the fallen across the battlefield, and memorials for those whose remains had never been recovered or identified.

Florence Scarlett's husband, Second Lieutenant Harold Ernest Scarlett, of the London Regiment, Royal Fusiliers, was killed on 17 September. She wrote a letter of thanks to Captain Arthur Agius, who had informed her of her husband's death.

Reading by Clare Scarlett, granddaughter of Florence and Harold Scarlett

Dear Captain Agius,

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking you for your kind letter of sympathy, and for the few details you were able to give me concerning my dear husband's death. The sad news was a terrible shock to me, and, up till now, I have felt too ill to write to you, although I have been eager to do so.

If it is not taking too great an advantage of your kindness, will you please let me know whether, at the time my dear one fell, there were any personal possessions on him that could be sent to me. I know there was nothing of real value, but I think you will understand that any little thing no matter what it is will become one of my most cherished possessions.

It was a great relief to know that dear Harold did not suffer any pain, although what would I not give to have had one last message from him. We have been married such a short time (only five months) and I cannot realise that he has gone – never to see him again. The last time we were together he was so happy and well and eager to do his level best for his Country at all cost.

This horrible war is dealing some cruel blows, and one is apt to grow hardened to the Casualty List until someone very dear is taken. There is scarcely a home, but what the occupants have some great trouble to bear, and sometimes I think, knowing this, helps us to bear our grief more bravely. Will you please also tell me, if possible, where my husband was struck. I feel I would like to know. After the war, I hope to be able to visit his last resting place. Once again thanking you for your kindness in writing to me.

Narrator

Like so many others, Florence was never able to find her husband's final resting place. Harold is commemorated here on the Thiepval Memorial, one of over 72,000 with no known grave: the Missing of the Somme.

Music *Sospiri*

Performed by BBC Symphony Orchestra

Composed by Edward Elgar, 1914

Images of men commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial will be screened, provided by the Missing of the Somme Project.

Reading by Charles Dance

Aftermath by Siegfried Sassoon, 1919

Have you forgotten yet?...

For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.

But the past is just the same – and War's a bloody game ...

Have you forgotten yet?...

Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz –
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?

Do you remember the rats; and the stench

Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench –

And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?

Do you ever stop and ask, 'Is it all going to happen again?'

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack –

And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then

As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?

Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back

With dying eyes and lolling heads – those ashen-grey

Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

Have you forgotten yet? ...

Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.

Reading by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales

The writer John Masefield travelled to the Somme battlefield in 1917 and wrote *The Old Front Line*, a record of the devastated landscape that he witnessed.

Beyond the trees, on the other side of the marsh, is the steep and high eastern bank of the Ancre, on which a battered wood, called Thiepval Wood, stands like an army of black and haggard rampikes. But for this stricken wood, the eastern bank of the Ancre is a gentle, sloping hill, bare of trees. On the top of this hill is the famous Schwaben Redoubt. One need only look at the ground to know that the fighting here was very grim, and to the death.

Near the road and up the slope to the enemy the ground is littered with relics of our charges, mouldy packs, old shattered scabbards, rifles, bayonets, helmets curled, torn, rolled and starred, clips of cartridges, and very many graves. There is nothing white, nor alive, nor clean, in all its extent; it is a place of ruin and death, blown and blasted out of any likeness to any work of man, and so smashed that there is no shelter on it, save for the one machine gunner in his box. On all that desolate hill our fire fell like rain for days and nights and weeks till the watchers in our line could see no hill at all, but a great, vague, wreathing devil of darkness in which little sudden fires winked and glimmered and disappeared.

All wars end; even this war will someday end, and the ruins will be rebuilt and the field full of death will grow food, and all this frontier of trouble will be forgotten. When the trenches are filled in, and the plough has gone over them, the ground will not long keep the look of war. One summer with its flowers will cover most of the ruin that man can make, and these places, from which the driving back of the enemy began, will be hard indeed to trace, even with maps. In a few years' time, when this war is a romance in memory, the soldier looking for his battlefield will find his marks gone. Centre Way, Peel Trench, Munster Alley, and these other paths to glory will be deep under the corn, and gleaners will sing at Dead Mule Corner.

Music *Abide with Me*

Words by Henry F. Lyte, 1847

Led by Morriston Orpheus Choir

Samuel Boden, *solo tenor*

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Please stand and all sing.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,
And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee.
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, Thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

THE COMMEMORATION

Prayer by The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby,
Archbishop of Canterbury

Eternal God, our refuge and strength, on this day we remember before you all who experienced the battle on the Somme: those who faced the terrible waste and devastation, who fought against all the odds, endured the clinging mud, and the squalor of the trenches.

We recall with thanksgiving the loyalty shown to comrades and the bravery of those who overcame their fear, the courage of those who daily faced the pounding of artillery, gun-fire and shrapnel.

May we never forget the devastating loss of this battle, the anxiety on the home front, and the sacrifices that were made.

Through our remembrances today, strengthen our resolve to oppose naked aggression, to defend the weak, and to speak your word of peace in times of conflict and insecurity. This we ask in the name of the Prince of peace, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reading by Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, Commonwealth War
Graves Commission

For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon, 1914

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.

All We will remember them

At the sounding of La Sonnerie aux Morts and The Last Post, officers in uniform are to salute and gentlemen in hats to uncover.

La Sonnerie aux Morts

The Last Post

Two Minute Silence

The end of the silence will be marked by the Guns of the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery.

Poppies and cornflowers, the British and French flowers of remembrance, will fall from the monument.

Reveille

Please remain standing.

Music *The Banks of Green Willow*

Performed by BBC Symphony Orchestra

Composed by George Butterworth in 1913.

The Banks of the Green Willow became closely associated with the Battle of the Somme after Butterworth was killed in action during the battle. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Wreaths will be laid at the Cross of Sacrifice

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales alongside M. Manuel Valls,
Prime Minister of the French Republic

His Excellency Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, Prime Minister of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Prof. Dr Horst Köhler, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany

Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Representatives of nations that fought in the Battle of the Somme

Music Piper's Lament, *The Battle of the Somme*, by Lance Sergeant R. Wilson,
1st Battalion, Irish Guards

Children from across the United Kingdom, Ireland and France will lay floral tributes on each grave.

***Please remain standing for the playing of the National Anthems
and all sing.***

The National Anthem of the French Republic

**Allons, enfants de la Patrie
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous, de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé

L'étendard sanglant est levé
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!

Aux armes, citoyens!
Formez vos bataillons!
Marchons, marchons!
Qu'un sang impur
Abreuve nos sillons!**

The National Anthem of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland

**God save our gracious Queen!
Long live our noble Queen!
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen.

Thy choicest gifts in store
On her be pleased to pour,
Long may she reign.
May she defend our laws,
And ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice,
God save the Queen.**

***All guests will be given an opportunity to lay wreaths or tributes at the
Monument. Please remain in your seat until you are asked to move.***

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Music

The Band of the Welsh Guards

Senior Director of Music Household Division, Lt. Col. Kevin Roberts

La Musique principale de l'Armée de Terre

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Leader, Stephen Bryant

Chief Conductor, Sakari Oramo

Morrison Orpheus Choir

Conductor, Joy Amman Davies

Chœur de l'Armée française

Samuel Boden

Julie Fowlis, with Patsy Reid, *viola*, Alistair Iain Paterson, *harmonium*, Tony Byrne, *guitar*

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery

Commanding Officer, Major R. A. Skeggs RHA

Regimental Sergeant Major, WO1 (RSM) J. H. Grantham

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery comprises 7 officers, 160 soldiers and 109 trained horses. The guns are 13 Pounder Quick Fire guns, and saw service in the First World War. One of the King's Troop's guns is believed to have seen service in the Battle of the Somme.

Exhibition contributors

The Tank Museum, Bovington

The National Army Museum

The London Transport Museum

The Yorkshire Air Museum

The Royal British Legion

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

With thanks to those below for their support

Sebastian Faulks

Paul Hughes, BBC Symphony Orchestra

Charles Giry Deloison

The Imperial War Museum

The Royal British Legion

Laura Rossi

The Missing of the Somme Project – Pam and Ken Linge

The World War One Aviation Heritage Trust

Eurostar

Catherine Desclaux

Educational programme

L'académie d'Amiens, the Amiens education authority, and the British Council selected 12 schools from France and 12 schools from the UK and Ireland, allowing 600 children to participate in the ceremony at Thiepval. The schools took part in a bilateral educational programme to learn more about the Battle of the Somme with each pair of schools working on a joint project, illustrated through the production of original artwork. This programme has supported the development of dynamic and sustainable education partnerships between schools in France and the UK.

The participating schools are:

Bangor Grammar School, Northern Ireland
Bow School, London
Greenfield Community College, Durham
The Hermitage Academy, Durham
Millbrook Primary School, Newport, Wales
Moat Community College, Leicester
North Lakes School, Penrith
Ridgeway School, Plymouth
St. John's Catholic School, Durham
St. Paul's Community College, County Waterford, Ireland
Thorpe Hall Primary School, London
Walsingham School, Durham

Ecole Primaire de Courcelles-lès-Gisors
Collège Jules Ferry, Conty
Ecole Notre Dame, Albert
Ecole Primaire Rene Gerard, Lehaucourt
Ecole Primaire Jean Zay, Ham
Collège Arthur Rimbaud, Amiens
Collège Henri Baumont, Beauvais
Collège Anne-Marie Javouhey, Senlis
Collège Catholique Charles de Foucauld, Albert
Lycée Louis Thuillier, Amiens
Collège Pierre Sellier, La Capelle
LP Julie Daubié, Laon

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

On the morning of 6 December 1915, representatives of the Entente powers congregated at the French Army headquarters, located in the Hotel du Grande Condé at Chantilly, north of Paris. Delegates from Britain, Russia, Italy, Serbia and Belgium attended the conference under the chairmanship of Joseph Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of the French forces.

Men of the
4th Battalion,
Worcestershire
Regiment (29th
Division), marching
to the trenches,
27 June 1916
© IWM Q 716

Since the trench lines of the Western Front had been established in the autumn of 1914, attempts to achieve a significant breakthrough had resulted in heavy

casualties and little gain. The German Army had pushed back Allied lines around Ypres in Belgium, and achieved significant victories in the East against Russia. Yet Allied attempts in the autumn of 1915 to dislodge German forces in Champagne, Artois and at Loos had failed, and a campaign to secure the Ottoman-controlled Dardanelles by landing troops on the Gallipoli peninsula ended in defeat.

Joffre emphasised the need for a co-ordinated strategy in 1916, involving combined attacks on both the Western



Men of the 10th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment (31st Division), known as the Hull Commercials, marching to the trenches, 28 June 1916
© IWM 9724



and Eastern Fronts, to wear down the Central Powers and erode their reserves, preventing the German and Austro-Hungarian armies from sustaining their military efforts. In early February, the new commander of the British Army, General Sir Douglas Haig, agreed to a joint offensive with the French astride the River Somme in Picardy, where the British and French lines met.

Only a few days later, on 21 February 1916, the German Army launched its own offensive at Verdun. Fought until the end of the year, the struggle for control of this French stronghold would become one of the fiercest battles of the war. More than 700,000 French and German soldiers became casualties, including some 300,000 killed. Although the German attack had stalled by the summer, far fewer French divisions were now available to fight on the Somme, and the forces of the British Empire would take the leading role.

British troops had begun to take over responsibility for the line north of the

River Somme in mid-1915. Preparations for the forthcoming offensive transformed the region. Soldiers and horses marched through quiet villages, while Amiens and Albert were alive with military activity. New roads and railways were constructed to supply the front, along with a vast infrastructure: from medical facilities to munitions dumps, administrative headquarters and accommodation billets, wells and pumping stations, and hundreds of miles of cable and wire.

By the summer of 1916, the British Army could deploy well over one million men on the Western Front, and incorporated troops from across the British Empire. Unlike the mass conscript armies of France and Germany, it had begun the war as a small professional force but its ranks were now filled with wartime volunteers, encouraged by a recruitment campaign led by the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener. Almost 2.5 million men had joined up in Britain and Ireland by the end of 1915. To encourage enlistment, the military authorities



The 10th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (37th Division), known as the Stockbrokers' Battalion, marching to the trenches
© IWM Q 1608

had sanctioned the creation of battalions formed of men from the same communities, clubs, schools, and workplaces. Within two months of the outbreak of war, over 50 towns had mustered what the Earl of Derby termed 'a battalion of pals'.

Some cities raised several Pals' Battalions, including Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Hull, Birmingham and Glasgow. Many towns and cities, from Cardiff to Cambridge, saw volunteers from all manner of institutions and groups: public schools, football teams and their supporters, Boys Brigades, stockbrokers and tramway companies. Some would fight as part of existing army divisions, others formed New Army Divisions, bolstered by more experienced men to support the citizen soldiers. The 'Pals' had trained together, and served in the trenches, yet few had

experienced a major offensive. For most, the Somme would be their first test.

The offensive was planned for the end of June, and would be by far the largest yet undertaken by the Allies on the Western Front. The British Fourth Army would storm the German defences along a front of more than 14 miles (22km) from Serre in the north to Montauban in the south, while the French Sixth Army would attack on either side of the River Somme. Already benefiting from the advantage of the high ground, the German positions were protected by thick barbed wire, and arranged in three connected lines of trenches. Fortresses known as 'Redoubts' protected key points, troops could shelter in deep concrete dug-outs, and machine-gun positions covered every approach. French villages had been fortified, houses and cellars lined with concrete, to create formidable strongholds.

Artillery of prodigious proportions would be required in order to destroy this defensive system. On 24 June, Allied guns began an awesome and terrifying bombardment. By its end, more than 1.5 million shells had been fired. For German soldiers, relieving exhausted men in the shelters, rescuing the wounded, or even bringing up supplies became almost impossible. Yet the length of the front and the wide area behind the front line across which the shelling was spread, along with manufacturing defects in many British shells, meant that, in many places, the well-constructed German defences remained intact. During the last days of June, the bombardment continued as heavy rain and thunderstorms impeded artillery observation and delayed the infantry assault. British troops studied their instructions and wrote letters home as they waited for their orders. As the weather improved, the reserve areas

and assembly trenches began to fill with men. Over the night of 30 June, advanced parties sneaked into no-man's land while others moved into the foremost trenches and prepared to attack.

1 JULY 1916

On the morning of 1 July, the sky was clear and the sun shone. The bombardment reached its greatest intensity in preparation for 'zero hour', accompanied by the detonation of explosives placed in mines dug under German positions, where fighting began almost immediately. At 7.30am, the artillery lifted onto German positions further back, whistles were blown along the line, and some 55,000 soldiers rose from their advanced positions or climbed from their trenches and began the attack.

The men of 31st Division had arrived in crowded, waterlogged trenches near the German-held village of Serre in the early



*The Great Mine,
La Boiselle,
William Orpen
© IWM (Art.IWM
ART 2379)*

hours of the morning. Many were 'Pals' from the north of England: pitmen from Leeds and Barnsley, clerical workers from Sheffield, others from Bradford, Durham, Accrington. When the whistles blew, men clambered out of their trenches and moved forward to join those already in no-man's land. They met a hail of German machine-gun and artillery fire. Many were trapped, enveloped in a cloud of smoke and surrounded by exploding ordnance, searching for gaps in the barbed wire. In barely an hour, over 2,000 men had been killed or wounded.

Similar casualties were suffered two miles to the north at Gommecourt, where a diversionary attack by the 56th (1st London) and 46th (North Midland) divisions was intended to draw German forces from the main battlefield. To the south of Serre, the 4th and 29th Divisions also suffered greatly. Near Beaumont-Hamel, explosives in the 'Hawthorn'

mine had been detonated ten minutes before zero hour, giving the Germans warning of the impending attack. The 1st Battalion Newfoundland Regiment, part of the 29th Division, suffered catastrophic losses: of some 780 men, only around 100 survived unscathed, and every officer was killed or wounded. These losses had a profound impact in Newfoundland, which was then a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire with a small population. Today, 1 July remains a date on which Newfoundlanders remember their fallen.

From trenches alongside Thiepval Wood, the men of the 36th (Ulster) Division swept from no-man's land across the Schwaben Redoubt, making some of the furthest advances of any British troops. Yet with little support, they were gradually pushed back by German reinforcements, leaving hundreds of dead and wounded behind.

Soldiers of the 16th Battalion, the Middlesex Regiment (29th Division), near Hawthorn Ridge, 1 July 1916
© IWM Q796





The ruined village of Thiepval, from Thiepval Wood
© IWM Q 1076



Men of the 8th Battalion, the Border Regiment, resting in a captured German trench near Thiepval Wood, c. 3 July 1916
© IWM Q 872

Thiepval itself had been transformed into one of the formidable positions on the Somme, and was the objective of the 32nd Division. 'So intense and accurate was the machine-gun fire that whole lines of men were swept down dead or wounded,' stated the official British historian. 'It was said, with some truth, that only bullet-proof soldiers could have taken Thiepval on this day.'

Attacking at Ovillers and La Boisselle, on either side of the Albert–Bapaume road, the 8th and 34th Divisions made little progress, despite the detonation of explosives in two mines known as 'Y Sap' and 'Lochnagar'. The 34th Division included brigades of the Northumberland Fusiliers, the Tyneside Scottish and the Tyneside Irish, as well as battalions from Edinburgh, Cambridge and Grimsby among others. It would suffer the heaviest casualties of any British division on the first day.



Sentry of the
Worcestershire
Regiment looking
through a loop-
hole in a trench
at Ovillers,
August 1916
© IWM Q 4100

In the south, the 21st Division and a brigade of the 17th (Northern) Division advanced around the village of Fricourt, while the 7th Division entered Mametz and captured the high ground above it. The 18th Division attacked from shallow tunnels dug to within 20 yards of the German lines, and reached its objectives on the high ground above Montauban by mid-afternoon. Supported by French artillery, the 30th Division – including Pals' Battalions from Liverpool and Manchester – captured the village itself and joined up with the French forces to their right.

In the French sector, General Fayolle's Sixth Army overran the German lines from south-east of Montauban to the Somme river. This part of the German front line was reinforced by fewer strongholds than in the north, since the Germans did not expect a significant assault here.

Battle-hardened and experienced French troops made significant gains, supported by concentrated and effective artillery. They captured much of the German front line and consolidated their positions. The attack of the I Colonial Corps and XXXV Corps was delayed by two hours, but nevertheless achieved all its objectives and dug in close to the German second line.

Throughout the day, attempts to breach the German defences continued in the north of the British sector of the battlefield. Some men were hit while still in their own trenches, some had barely stepped into no-man's land when struck by bullet or blast. Others fell while crossing the field of fire, some caught in the German wire, some while attempting to retreat. With the attacks in the north an almost unmitigated failure, the axis of the advance would shift to the south of the Albert–Bapaume road, and this was where the offensive would continue over the coming weeks.

It was apparent by the evening that the day had been devastating for the British Army, although the scale of the losses was not fully known. Total casualties on 1 July would reach over 57,000 men, of whom more than 19,000 had been killed. Some of the heaviest casualties were suffered by the Pals' Battalions. In a matter of hours, the lives of families and communities across the United Kingdom had been irrevocably altered.

JULY – SEPTEMBER

In the days which followed, the French Army continued its advance, recapturing 11 villages including Curlu. British forces captured Fricourt and La Boisselle, and held them against counter-attacks, while torrential rain and the ensuing mud hampered attempts to seize Contalmaison.

In preparation for a major assault on the second line of German defences across



Shell hole on a sunken road near Contalmaison, September 1916
© IWM Q 1093

the high ground known as Bazentin Ridge, the 38th (Welsh) Division began a series of attacks to drive German forces from their strong concealed positions in Mametz Wood, a struggle which continued for several days.

In the early hours of 14 July, British troops moved quietly into position in no-man's land between Bazentin-le-Petit and Longueval. At 3.20am an intense five-minute bombardment hammered German

positions before lifting, and some 22,000 British soldiers – including New Army volunteers – attacked through the mist. Aided by the element of surprise, they quickly overran the German positions and moved into the village of Longueval. Advance parties found High Wood abandoned, but by the time elements of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division were brought up and charged across the battlefield in the early evening, German forces had returned. More than 9,000 men were killed, wounded or captured in taking Bazentin Ridge, but the following days and weeks would develop into an attritional struggle.



A captured German gun in Mametz Wood, 10 August 1916
© IWM Q 1040

On 15 July, the South African Brigade of the 9th (Scottish) Division was tasked with securing Delville Wood. The South Africans fought their way through tangled undergrowth, fallen trees and shell craters, and dug in. Over the following days, they

The 20th Deccan Horse, Indian Army, shortly before their attack at High Wood, 14 July 1916
© IWM Q 823



were subjected to intense shelling, machine-gun fire, sniping and hand-to-hand combat with bomb and bayonet, day and night, until they were relieved on 20 July. By this time the Brigade had lost more than 2,300 men killed, wounded or missing. The struggle for Delville Wood, and similarly brutal fighting at High Wood to the west, would continue for weeks.

The 35th Field Battery, Royal Field Artillery, passing through the devastated Delville Wood, September 1916
© IWM Q1211



The German defences around the village of Pozières formed a key position along the ridge which ran north-west towards Thiepval. At 12.30am on 23 July, after an intense 'hurricane' bombardment, men of the Australian Imperial Force, supported by British troops, advanced towards the village. They faced intense artillery fire and ferocious counter-attacks over the following days, until the crest of the ridge was finally taken on 6 August. Australian troops had taken part in a disastrous diversionary attack at Fromelles on 19 July, but this was the first deployment of Australians on the Somme, and many were veterans of the fighting at Gallipoli.

Between Pozières and Thiepval lay the fortress of Mouquet Farm, where a vicious struggle continued into September, often fought with bomb and blade. Meanwhile, throughout August, the French Army

continued to support the British to the south, advancing towards the villages of Maurepas and Rancourt after several days of artillery bombardment. In bloody fighting, Maurepas was finally taken on 25 August.

The British Fourth Army made repeated attempts to take and hold Guillemont, to the east of Trônes Wood. By early September, the village was in ruins and the surrounding fields a wasteland, but German soldiers remained. On 3 September, as part of a joint Franco-British attack, Guillemont was finally captured by infantry supported by artillery which employed new techniques such as the 'creeping' barrage, which fell only 25 yards in front of advancing troops. On 9 September, as French forces attacked around Combles, British Army troops advanced on Ginchy, which was captured by the 16th (Irish) Division within 45 minutes.

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER

In mid-September, with French reinforcements arriving from Verdun, the Allies attempted a renewed and co-ordinated offensive. The British Army would attack across a wide front, from Mouquet Farm to Morval, towards the villages of Courcellette and Flers, while the French Sixth Army would strike to the east of Combles. Artillery bombarded German lines for three days until 6.20am on 15 September, when the advance began in the morning mist and smoke. A new invention was used by the British for the first time: 49 Mark 1 'tanks'. Moving at no more than four miles an hour, they proved mechanically unreliable, and most broke down or foundered in the mud. But some managed to break into German lines and helped the infantrymen to capture enemy defences, terrifying German soldiers.

A Mark 1 tank at the Battle of Flers–Courcellette, the first time tanks were used in action
© IWM Q55



The 41st Division and New Zealand Division captured the village of Flers, while High Wood was finally secured by the 47th (London) Division, and the 2nd Canadian Division reached Courcellette as the evening closed in. Although German forces had been driven back, in places to their third line of defence, there was no breakthrough.

As September rain fell on the Somme, the Franco-British advance continued in the north-east of the battlefield towards Morval. With the arrival of the French Tenth Army, the allies attempted to co-ordinate their attacks even more closely. On 25 September, British troops crossed no-man's land shielded by a 'creeping' barrage. Morval and Lesbœufs were taken by mid-afternoon, and the following day British and French forces occupied Combles.

Meanwhile, another attempt to seize Thiepval Ridge began at noon on 26 September, after three days of artillery bombardment. While Canadian forces advanced towards the commanding German position known as Regina Trench, what remained of Mouquet Farm was captured. At Thiepval itself, the 18th Division advanced up the slopes systematically and, after hard close-quarters fighting, most of the area was secured.

In October, as autumn turned into winter, the French Army continued to drive east, taking the village of Sailly-Saillisel. The British Reserve Army – soon to be renamed Fifth Army – fought at the Schwaben Redoubt and the high ground above the Ancre, while the Fourth Army continued its push towards the Transloy Ridge. Progress was slow and costly in the rain and mud, through Eaucourt l'Abbaye and Le Sars, and



British soldiers eating hot rations in the Ancre valley, October 1916
© IWM Q 1580



Trônes Wood after a snowstorm, November 1916
© IWM Q 1622

towards a 60-foot high mound called the Butte de Warlencourt. By now the battlefield was a quagmire, and guns became so clogged with mud that soldiers relied on bomb and bayonet.

In the darkness and early morning fog of 13 November, the final phase of the Somme offensive began along the Ancre valley and to the north – the scene of such catastrophe on 1 July. Visibility was poor, enemy fire was fierce, and the mud was deep. While the attack foundered once more at Serre, the Hawthorn mine was blown again as the 51st (Highland) Division attacked Beaumont-Hamel. The location may have been familiar, but some of the tactics and technology were new. Supported by a creeping barrage and effective machine-gun fire, British forces captured the village by the afternoon, while the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division took the shattered railway station at Beaucourt.

While the midsummer sun had shone on the first day of the offensive, the last of its 141 days saw the first snow of winter. Soldiers fought, as the British official historian put it, ‘in whirling sleet which afterward changed to rain. More abominable conditions for active warfare are hardly to be imagined: the infantry, dark figures only visible for a short distance against the white ground, groped their way forward as best they could through half-frozen mud that was soon to dissolve into chalky slime.’

On 18 November, offensive operations were called off. Smaller skirmishes would continue over the winter, but for Britain it marked the formal end of the Battle of the Somme.





German soldier
in the shell-ruined
and deserted
Péronne, 1916
© IWM Q 87632

AFTERMATH

An estimated 3.5 million men took part in the Battle of the Somme in 1916. By its end, well over one million had become casualties. Precise figures are almost impossible to calculate. The British official history concluded that the forces of the British Empire had suffered some 420,000 killed, wounded or missing, although the total was almost certainly higher. The French Army sustained more than 204,000 casualties. German records documented a total of nearly 430,000 killed, wounded or missing, but other estimates using different measures suggested a far greater number.

For those who fought this industrialised attritional battle, it appeared to herald a new phase in the war. German soldiers faced an onslaught of manpower and munitions unlike any previously deployed by the British Army. This *Materialschlacht*

took a heavy toll on both men and morale in the German Army. In August 1916, its commander Erich von Falkenhayn was replaced by Erich Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg, who introduced new defensive tactics intended to reduce the losses. Construction soon began on new defences some 20 miles behind the front, called the *Siegfriedstellung* – ‘the Hindenburg Line’ to the British – to which German troops would retreat the following spring.

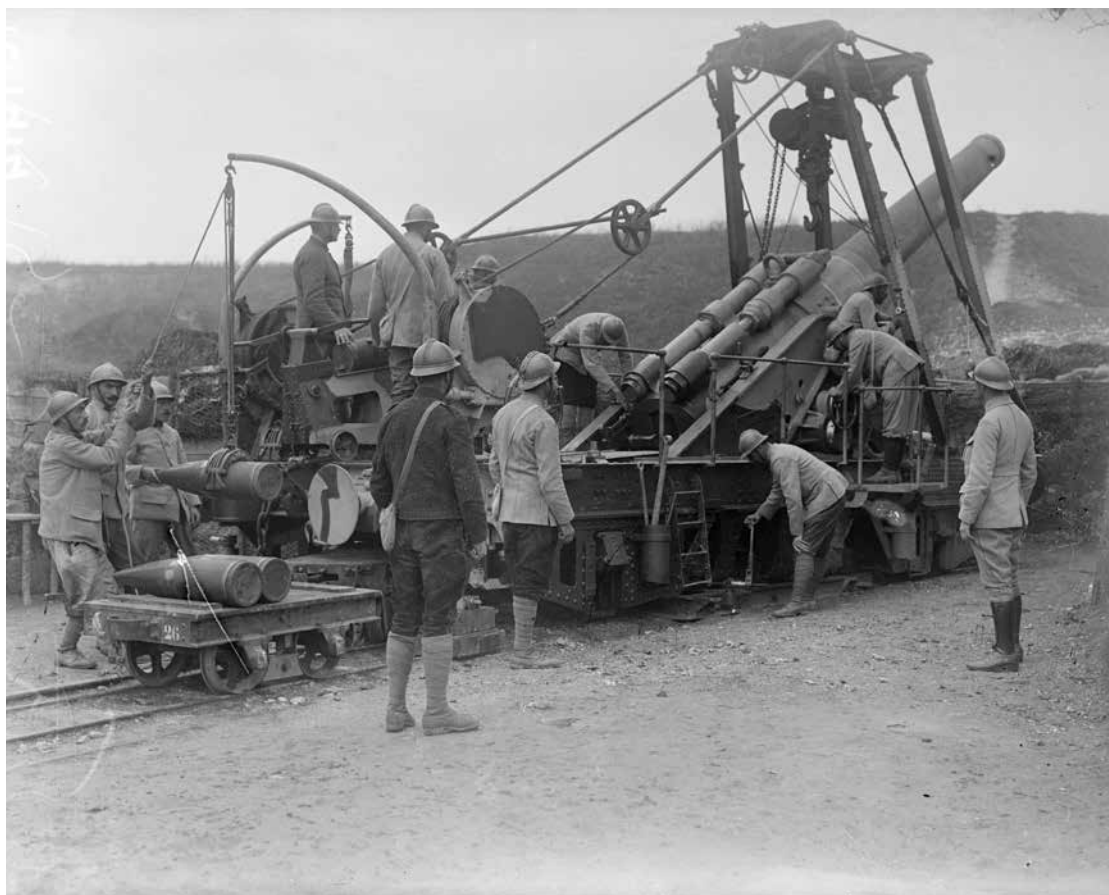
The Battle of the Somme made a compromise peace less likely, hardening attitudes to war aims on both sides. Diplomatic initiatives in late 1916 came to nought, and the conflict would continue for two more years. Fighting returned to the Somme battlefields in 1918, when the German spring offensive swept through the region, before the Allies finally recaptured the ground over

Opposite:
A wounded
French soldier
being taken to a
dressing station
© ECPAD SPA
42S 2189

British soldier carrying a wounded comrade to a dressing station, September 1916
© IWM Q 1334

the summer, during the advance that would eventually lead to victory. After the Armistice, it was reported that more than 400 communities around the Somme had suffered serious damage, 25 villages had been utterly obliterated, and many others were marked only by scattered ruins. Emergency aid was provided by so-called 'Ville Mairaines': towns which acted as 'godmothers' by raising money or providing supplies. Among them were 21 from across the British Empire which adopted a French equivalent. The cost of rebuilding was eventually estimated at 2½ billion francs.

The Battle of the Somme was fought by a British Army very different from that which had begun the war. Its citizen soldiers sustained a major and prolonged offensive against an experienced enemy, with evolving infantry tactics, new weapons, artillery methods, and



French artillery, September 1916
© ECPAD SPA 27 R 1414



technology which dramatically altered fighting techniques. Above the battlefield, the airmen of the Royal Flying Corps fought for air supremacy, seeking to dominate the skies, while photographic reconnaissance and observation proved essential to artillery and mapping sections. They dropped 176,000 bombs, and destroyed more than 160 enemy aircraft. Field companies of the Royal Engineers and pioneer battalions played an important role throughout the battle. At times overwhelmed by the early casualties, medical staff worked tirelessly in field ambulances near the front, casualty clearing stations behind the lines, ambulance trains and base hospitals, from surgeons to stretcher bearers, volunteer nurses and specialists.

The British Army was formed not only of men from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but also from across the Empire, including from Australia and

Heavy trench mortar pit at the Third Army Trench Mortar School, August 1916
© IWM Q 1049



Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) troops carrying the wounded on to a hospital barge at Vaux-sur-Somme, 25 August 1916
© IWM Q 4151

British and German wounded on stretchers outside a dressing station near Carnoy, August 1916
© IWM Q 906



Troops of the British West Indies Regiment in camp on the Albert-Amiens road, September 1916
© IWM Q 1202



SCALA THEATRE,

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when they will present

OFFICIAL PICTURES

of the

“BATTLE of the SOMME,”

Taken by Special Arrangement with the

WAR OFFICE

and under their direction.



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Advertisement
for *The Battle of
the Somme* film
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New Zealand, from Canada and Newfoundland, South Africa and India. Two battalions of the British West Indies Regiment served during the battle, as well as the Bermuda Garrison Artillery and the Bermuda Volunteer Rifle Corps, which was attached to the Lincolnshire Regiment.

Fighting an offensive on the scale of the Battle of the Somme was only possible with the mobilisation of national and imperial communities. The critical importance of artillery to military success demanded the development and full exploitation of industry to feed the insatiable guns. Factories in Britain became increasingly reliant on a growing female workforce to produce the vast quantities of shells and explosives now required. Public appeals emphasised the sacrifices made by soldiers, and encouraged

munitions workers to forego bank holidays in order to sustain them.

In August 1916, millions flocked to cinemas to watch a film entitled *The Battle of the Somme*. Drawing on authentic footage shot on the front line before and after the start of the offensive, as well as some recreated scenes, it brought home the realities of the conflict like never before.

The Somme would also influence some of the most significant art and literature of the war. Both during and after the battle, many poets and writers produced work which was deeply influenced by their experiences, including David Jones, Siegfried Sassoon, Frederic Manning, Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg and J.R.R. Tolkien. Many evocative visual depictions of the devastated landscape were created by war artists, commissioned

by a newly introduced government sponsorship programme. Among them were Muirhead Bone, who visited the Somme during the battle, and William Orpen, who depicted its aftermath in 1917.

Throughout the battle, local and national newspapers reported and commented on the progress of the fighting, carrying accounts from correspondents and serving soldiers, as well as registers of the dead. Improvised memorials began to appear in villages, towns and cities, often listing the names of those still serving as well as those who would never return. Suffering was felt across society: both the British Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, and the leader of the Labour Party, Arthur Henderson, lost their sons on the Somme. Asquith's tenure as Prime Minister ended shortly after the battle, in December 1916, when he was replaced by David Lloyd George.

Many men returned home with physical or psychological wounds which never healed. Even those who survived unscathed would carry their experiences for the rest of their lives. The names of rivers, villages, farms and woods previously unknown would become seared into the memories of individuals and communities across Britain and its Empire: Serre, Beaumont-Hamel, Ancre, Mametz, Longueval, Delville Wood, Pozières, Guillemont, Courcelette, Thiepval. For Britain, the Battle of the Somme would remain the longest and most costly battle of the war.

The Battle of the Somme, 1916,
Muirhead Bone, 1918
© IWM (Art. IWM 000684 4)





*German Wire,
Thiepval,*
William Orpen,
1917
© IWM ART 3006

COMMEMORATING THE BATTLE



A man of a
working party
attending to a
war grave,
August 1916
© IWM 4095

By the spring of 1917, when the German Army withdrew to the Hindenburg Line, the Somme battlefields were utterly devastated. Where once had been little villages, farms and factories, dense woodland and proud churches was now shattered earth, scored by trenches, full of the detritus of battle, and the dead.

At that time, only some of the fallen had been laid to rest. Although the ground was dotted with hundreds of tiny cemeteries where men had been buried by their comrades where they fell, the nature of the fighting left thousands unrecovered and unidentified, while the ceaseless pounding of artillery meant that many were lost without a trace.

The permanent cemeteries and memorials constructed by the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission in the 1920s and '30s now stand as monuments to the men who fought and died. They also reveal a great

deal about the battle and how it was fought, by whom, where and when. Today, there are hundreds of CWGC cemeteries across the Somme region, and each tells its own story.

In the midst of the fighting, soldiers were often buried in shell holes or small sections of trench. On 1 July 1916 men of the Devonshire Regiment suffered heavy casualties during an attack from Mansel Copse. Three days later they buried 161 of their dead in a section of the old front line trench, now Devonshire Cemetery, 6km east of Albert. Afterwards they erected a sign: 'The Devonshires held this trench, the Devonshires hold it still'. Little cemeteries were also begun around medical posts, near supply or ammunition dumps, at the ends of communication trenches or trench railways, at roadsides, or in extensions to French communal cemeteries.

Although the painstaking work of recovering and burying remains began immediately, it was delayed when fighting returned to the Somme in 1918. After the Armistice, the area was swept at least six times in the search for bodies. Between 1934 and 1939 alone, some 3,000 bodies were found. Even today, soldiers who lost their lives in 1916 continue to be buried with full honours in the cemeteries of the Somme.

Much of the clearance work in the northern part of the battlefield was conducted by V Corps in the spring of

Serre Road
Cemetery No.3
© CWGC





Delville Wood Cemetery
© CWGC

1917. Here, the front line moved little during the battle, and today a series of small cemeteries lie along it, near Serre and along Redan Ridge, where once lay British and German trenches. The dates 1 July and 13 November appear frequently among the headstones. Many bear no names, the remains they mark having lain in no-man's land for months. The great 'concentration' cemeteries were built around existing cemeteries, others on entirely new sites. Many lie in the most fought-over areas of the battlefield and mark significant moments in the battle. The largest is called Serre Road Cemetery No. 2. Begun in the spring of 1917 but not completed until 1934, it is the final resting place of more than 7,000 soldiers, of whom some 5,000 remain unidentified.

At High Wood, a small burial place called London Cemetery was extended from around 100 graves to nearly 4,000, more than three-quarters of which are unidentified. Delville Wood Cemetery, created after the war, is the third largest on the Somme with more than 5,500 graves.

At Ancre British Cemetery, just south of Beaumont-Hamel, many of the 2,500 graves belong to those killed in the area in the last push of November 1916.

Soon after the end of the war, other memorials began to be constructed across the former battlefields in honour of divisions, groups and individuals. One of the earliest private memorials was the Ulster Tower, erected near Thiepval on the ground where the 36th (Ulster) Division had attacked on 1 July 1916. It was modelled on Helen's Tower at Clondeboye, where the division had trained.

At Beaumont-Hamel, a kilted Highlander marks the efforts of the 51st (Highland) Division in November 1916, while a red dragon facing Mametz Wood honours the 38th (Welsh) Division, and a Celtic cross in Guillemont commemorates the 16th (Irish) Division. At Thiepval itself, a memorial marks the efforts of the 18th Division, and many other divisions honoured their achievements on the ground where their men fought and died.

Several significant battlefield features have been preserved, including the mine crater called 'Lochnagar' at La Boisselle, and the infamous Butte de Warlencourt, which marks the furthest point of the advance in 1916. In 1936, a small copse near Serre was preserved as a memorial to Pals' Battalions from Sheffield, Accrington and Barnsley, and became known as Sheffield Memorial Park.

Newfoundland Memorial Park was created after the war to mark the area near Beaumont-Hamel where the Newfoundland Regiment suffered so badly on 1 July. Today, the trenches here have been preserved, and a bronze caribou stands over the landscape. At Delville Wood, the South African National Memorial was constructed and unveiled in 1926. It honours all those South Africans who served and died in the war.

New Zealand erected a memorial at Longueval, with a design similar to others built where New Zealanders fought across the world, including the inscription 'From the Uttermost Ends of the Earth.' At Pozières and Mouquet Farm, several memorials mark the sites where Australian divisions fought, while a memorial at Courcellette commemorates the efforts of the Canadian forces.

For France, the Battle of Verdun overshadowed the Somme. Fewer French monuments and cemeteries now lie here than around Notre Dame de Lorette, on the Chemin des Dames, or at Verdun. After the war, hundreds of thousands of bodies were interred at great ossuaries, while large French cemeteries remain at Maurepas and Rancourt, which is the most important French site of remembrance on the Somme with a chapel maintained today by the Association Souvenir Français. German cemeteries are fewer, but two of the most significant are at Fricourt and

Rancourt, close to those of the British and French armies.

British pilgrims began to visit the Somme while the war was still being fought. Soldiers and military staff toured the region after the German withdrawal, while the landscape and its famous sites quickly began to be immortalised by authors including John Masefield, whose lyrical description of the battlefields in *The Old Front Line* was published in 1917.

After the Armistice, organised tours were arranged by travel agents, often with the support of charities such as the British Legion, and publishers began to produce guides to the region. Travellers could take the train direct from Paris to Albert, before proceeding up the Ancre valley to the railway station at Beaucourt. Among the early visitors were many bereaved parents, widows and children, searching the emerging cemeteries for the resting places of their loved ones.

THE THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

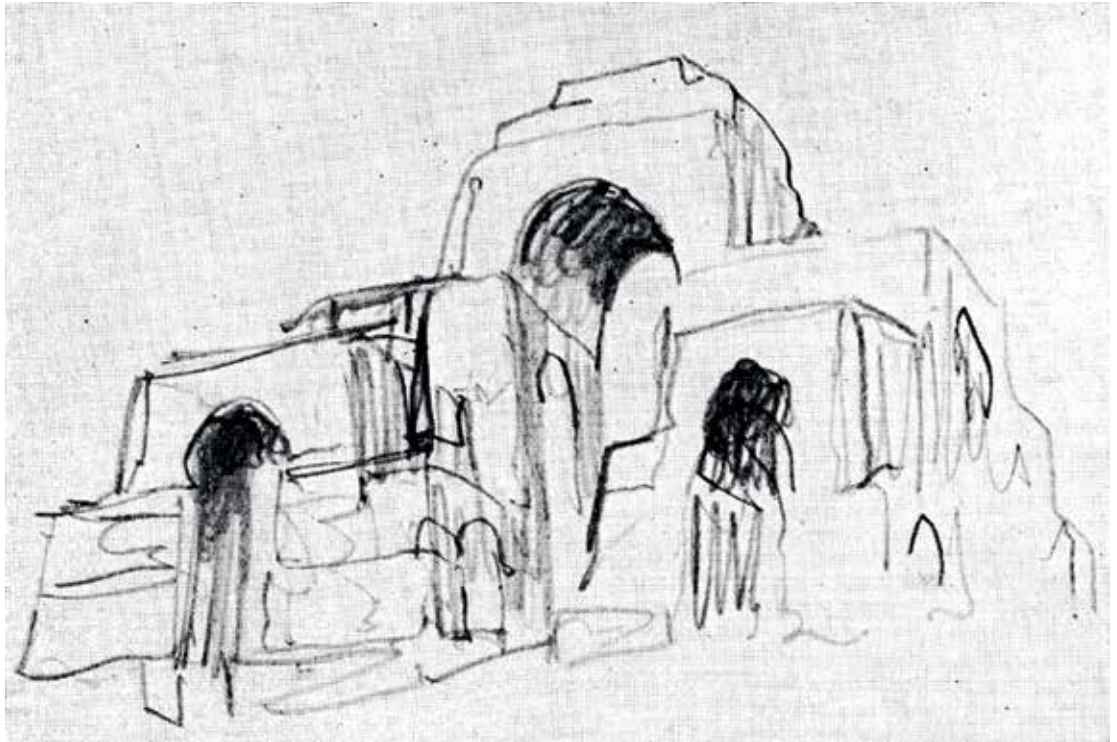
By the end of the Great War, the Imperial War Graves Commission estimated that of the 'million dead' of the British Empire, only half had identified grave sites. The remainder were 'missing': their bodies had not been recovered; their graves had been unrecorded, lost or destroyed by battle; or their remains could not be identified and had been buried beneath a headstone bearing Rudyard Kipling's haunting inscription, 'Known Unto God.' The Thiepval Memorial is dedicated to 'The Missing of the Somme': more than 72,000 members of British and South African forces who were killed in the sector between July 1915 and March 1918.

Early plans envisaged many more memorials to the missing than were eventually constructed, as well as separate 'Battle Monuments' marking key moments in the British Army's war. French advice as well as logistical restraints reduced the quantity of monuments, if not their scale, as well as making the memorials to the missing perform the function of marking battles as well as bearing names. While South Africa decided to commemorate the names of its missing at Thiepval, other governments listed their Somme missing elsewhere: Australia at Villers-Bretonneux, Canada at Vimy, India at Neuve Chapelle, Newfoundland at



The Thiepval
Memorial
© CWGC

Sir Edwin Lutyens' sketch for a proposed memorial at St. Quentin
© CWGC



Beaumont-Hamel, and New Zealand at Longueval.

The architect appointed to design the memorial was Sir Edwin Lutyens, one of the Commission's Principal Architects, who had created several other prominent cemeteries and memorials including the Cenotaph in London. His design was originally formed as a sketch for a proposed memorial at St. Quentin, to stand over a road in the manner of the Menin Gate at Ypres.

Construction at Thiepval began in 1928. Foundations were dug to a depth of around 29 feet, uncovering many German tunnels and unexploded ordnance. Around 10 million bricks and 100,000 cubic feet of stone were used, at a cost of £117,000. Standing some 45 metres high, it takes the form of a series of arches, interlocking at right-angles, rising to a tower. Around the base of each of its 16 ground-level piers are panels of Portland stone inscribed with names. Each man is listed by surname and initials, grouped by regiment and rank. Since their initial

installation, the panels have been amended to add names or remove those whose remains or graves have been identified.

Originally raised in the bleak landscape above the Ancre, the monument is now surrounded by mature trees and countryside. It was originally known as the 'Somme Memorial', and from an early stage it was intended to honour the alliance between Britain and France. High on its façade is inscribed, in French, 'To the French and British Armies, from the grateful British Empire'.

Plans were under way for the unveiling of the memorial in May 1932, when the French President, Paul Doumer, was assassinated at a book fair in Paris. The ceremony eventually took place on 1 August 1932, attended by Edward, Prince of Wales, and Doumer's successor as President, Albert Lebrun. On a rainy afternoon, both men paid tribute to those who had fought and died on the Somme, as well as their allies in the great struggle. The Guard of Honour included Spahis, cavalry recruited in North Africa. The

The Thiepval Memorial under construction
© CWGC



French and British military bands were conducted by the celebrated conductor Adrian Boult, then director of music at the BBC, which broadcast the service in the UK and across the Empire.

Speaking in both French and English, the Prince of Wales also declared the Imperial War Graves Commission's determination to honour the dead by 'material expression... as enduring as human hands and human art can make it.' Present were both Major-General Fabian Ware, Vice-Chairman of the

The Thiepval Memorial, 1932
© CWGC



Commission and the driving force behind its creation, and Sir Edwin Lutyens. Among the veterans in attendance were several who were employed by the Commission as gardeners, remaining in France to tend the graves of their fallen comrades.

During the Second World War, Thiepval was occupied by German forces until September 1944. No damage was done to the memorial, although German graffiti remain at the very top of the staircase leading to the roof. Since then, it has required constant maintenance. The staircase leading from the memorial to the cemetery was built in the 1960s, when there were other amendments to the walls around the memorial. In the 1950s, and again in the 1970s, significant refacing and then replacement of the brickwork was required as a result of erosion.

The unveiling ceremony of the Thiepval Memorial, 1932
© CWGC



In 2015, a major project was announced to perform further conservation work, funded by the UK Government and the CWGC. In advance of the centenary commemorations, substantial repointing took place across the brickwork on the upper tiers of the memorial. Renovation of the roof ensured that significant flaws were addressed. New lighting illuminated the memorial for the first time on the night of 30 June 2016. A second phase of work, scheduled to take place after July 2016, will address the internal drainage, which has been the chief cause of structural problems since construction. By completion, the project aims to ensure that the great memorial continues to stand sentinel over the Somme for another century.

Thiepval has formed the focal point for commemoration of the Battle of the Somme for more than 80 years. In recent years, the Royal British Legion has organised an annual ceremony on 1 July in association with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The 50th anniversary of the battle in 1966 was attended by many veterans.

In the cemetery beneath the memorial are 300 Commonwealth and 300 French graves, the final resting places of servicemen whose remains were recovered from the surrounding region. The majority remain unidentified. On the cross which faces them is the inscription: 'That the world may remember the common sacrifice of two and a half million dead, here have been laid side by side soldiers of France and of the British Empire in eternal comradeship.'

TIMELINE

- July 1915:** Troops of British Third Army begin to move to the Somme region, and take over responsibility for the line north of the river.
- 6 December 1915:** Inter-allied military conference at Chantilly.
- 19 December 1915:** General Sir Douglas Haig replaces Field Marshal Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France.
- 9 January 1916:** Last British troops evacuated from Gallipoli peninsula.
- 11 February:** General Joffre suggests 1 July 1916 as date for General Allied Offensive.
- 21 February – 20 December 1916:** German Army launches an offensive against the French at Verdun. The battle continues here for the rest of the year.
- 2 March 1916:** Military Service Act comes into effect in Great Britain (excluding Ireland), introducing conscription.
- 31 May – 1 June 1916:** Battle of Jutland fought off Denmark by British and German fleets.
- 4 June – September 1916:** Russian Army launches the 'Brusilov Offensive' against Austro-Hungarian and German armies in modern-day Ukraine. Austro-Hungarian Army suffers heavy casualties.
- 5 June 1916:** Death of Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, when HMS *Hampshire* is sunk by a mine off Orkney.
- 24 June 1916:** British Army begins artillery bombardment of German lines north of the River Somme.
- 28 June 1916:** Heavy rainfall causes a delay of the attack until 1 July.
- 1 July 1916:** British and French troops begin their offensive astride the River Somme.
- 1 – 13 July 1916:** Battle of Albert.
- 14 – 17 July 1916:** Battle of Bazentin Ridge.
- 15 July – 3 September 1916:** Battle of Delville Wood.
- 19 July 1916:** Attack at Fromelles by the 5th Australian Division and British 61st Division.

- 23 July – 3 September 1916:** Battle of Pozières Ridge.
- 6 August – 17 August 1916:** Italian Army attacks in the Sixth Battle of the Isonzo. Austro-Hungarian Army is driven back but the Italian Army suffers heavy casualties.
- 3 – 6 September 1916:** Battle of Guillemont.
- 9 September 1916:** Battle of Ginchy.
- 15 – 22 September 1916:** Battle of Fliers-Courcelette, in which the tank makes its fighting debut.
- 25 – 28 September 1916:** Battle of Morval.
- 26 – 30 September 1916:** Battle of Thiepval Ridge.
- 1 – 20 October 1916:** Battle of Transloy Ridge.
- 1 October – 12 November 1916:** Battle of Ancre Heights.
- 13 – 18 November 1916:** Battle of Ancre.
- 18 November 1916:** Final day of Somme Offensive.
- 11 January – 13 March 1917:** British Army conducts minor operations along the Ancre valley.
- 14 March – 5 April 1917:** German Army retreats east from the Somme to prepared defences called 'Stiefriedstellung', known to the British as the 'Hindenburg Line'.
- 3 March 1918:** Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ends the war between the Central Powers and Russia.
- 21 March – 5 April 1918:** German Army launches Operation Michael, pushing the British Army back across the old Somme battlefields of 1916.
- 21 August – 3 September 1918:** British Army recaptures Somme battlefields, in the Second Battle of the Somme.
- 11 November 1918:** Armistice comes into effect on the Western Front.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Edwin Adlam VC

Born in Salisbury in 1893, Tom Adlam joined the Territorial Force in 1912. In November 1915, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and travelled to the Western Front in 1916. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his leadership at Thiepval Ridge on 27 and 28 September, which was successfully captured. He served a total of 14 years in the British Army over two world wars, and later served as the headmaster of Blackmoor School, Hants. He had four children with his wife 'Ve', and was a keen sportsman and gardener.

George Butterworth

The composer George Butterworth served with the 13th Durham Light Infantry from 1914. He was killed in action on 5 August 1916 during the Battle of the Somme and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. He was awarded the Military Cross twice, the second being posthumously awarded for his bravery at Pozières.

Olive Dent

Olive Dent was working as a school teacher when war broke out in 1914. She volunteered as a nurse with the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in 1916, working at a general hospital in Rouen, Northern France, for two years. She wrote of her experiences throughout her time in France, and published her memoir, *A V.A.D. in France*, in 1917. Olive died in 1930, aged 45, in the care of a Marie Curie cancer hospital in London, which named a ward after her.

Georges Duhamel

Born in 1884, Georges Duhamel trained as doctor and served as a frontline surgeon in the French Army throughout the war. In 1918, he wrote the novel *Civilisation*, which drew on his experiences of treating the wounded on the battlefield, and was awarded the Prix Goncourt.

Tom Kettle

Born in 1880, Tom Kettle was a poet and writer, and a committed Irish nationalist. He was elected as an Irish Party MP at Westminster in 1906, stepping down in 1910 to pursue an academic career as Professor of National Economics in Dublin. Having witnessed at first hand the German invasion of Belgium in 1914, he returned to Ireland to urge his fellow countrymen to fight to defend their values before joining up to serve with the 9th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His best known poems were written on the Somme, and attempt to find meaning in the devastation of the battle. Tom was killed in action at Ginchy on 9 September 1916 and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Donald MacDonald

Donald MacDonald, known as Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, was born on the rural island of North Uist in 1887, which has a rich tradition of Gaelic oral poetry and song. Donald joined the 1st Battalion, Cameron Highlanders, and saw action in Ypres and on the Somme. He continued to produce poetry while in the trenches, which reflected his experiences. He was wounded during the Battle of the Somme and never fully recovered from his injuries. His war poems are considered some of the finest in Gaelic literature, and were written down for the first time in 1969.

Isaac Rosenberg

The poet and artist Isaac Rosenberg was living in South Africa recovering from ill health when war broke out in 1914. From its outset, he wrote poetry about the war, beginning with his *On Receiving News of the War*. Rosenberg returned to England in October 1915 and enlisted in the British Army, arriving in France with the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment in June 1916. He continued to write poetry in the trenches. As well as serving in the Battle of the Somme, Rosenberg went on to serve on the Western Front throughout 1917. He was killed on 1 April 1918 at Fampoux, Northern France, in the Spring Offensive.

Siegfried Sassoon

The English poet and writer Siegfried Sassoon served with the Royal Welch Fusiliers in France from 1915. From 1916, his war poetry moved from patriotic idealism to descriptions of the horrors of the battlefield. On the Somme, his battalion fought in and around Mametz Wood, which saw fierce close combat fighting. He was decorated twice for his bravery. Sassoon became one of the leading poets of the First World War.

RECOLLECTIONS

Tonight's the night! Tomorrow is 'der tag' Tonight in the dark we assemble – brigades and brigades – tomorrow in the pale dawn we go over the lid.

Second Lieutenant Kenneth C. Macardle, 17th Battalion (2nd City), Manchester Regiment, 30 June 1916. From *To Fight Alongside Friends: The First World War Diaries of Charlie May*

At seven-thirty that morning, the ground rumbled, the trenches rumbled, the earth rose up in the air and the explosion of the mine blackened out the sun.

Lieutenant A. Dickinson, 10th Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, 1 July 1916

The guns were literally wheel to wheel and we were firing, firing, firing twenty-four hours a day. It began to get on your nerves after a while but what really began to get me was the sound of our own guns. The sound waves were going over your head all the time, like a tuning fork being struck on your steel helmet. A terrible sound – ping, ping, ping, ping – this terrible vibration day and night and this noise in your head, just like a tuning fork being rung again and again. It went right through you. You couldn't get away from it. It went right down into your nerves.

Gunner George Worsley, 2nd West Lancashire Brigade, 55th Divisional Artillery, at Guillemont, July 1916

...any of the of thousands of seconds in the July day might reduce myself into a like travesty of living man, useless lumber best thrown away near some heap of rubble at Mametz, 'where Ruin calls his brother Death'.

Captain Llewelyn Wyn Griffith, 15th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers, Mametz, July 1916

The defile proved to me little more than a series of enormous craters full of pieces of uniform, weapons and dead bodies; the country around, so far as the eye could see, had been completely ploughed by heavy shells. Not a single blade of grass showed itself. The churned-up field was gruesome. In among the living defenders lay the dead. The defile and the land behind was strewn with German dead, the field ahead with British. The village of Guillemont seemed to have disappeared without trace... Now and then, by the light of a flare, I saw steel helmet by steel helmet, blade by glinting blade, and I was overcome by a feeling of invulnerability. We might be crushed, but surely we could not be conquered.

Ernst Jünger, 73rd Infantry Regiment, 19th Division, German Army, describes action at Guillemont in his 1920 memoir *Storm of Steel*

One of our Scottish infantrymen was perched on a ledge in the wall of a sodden trench. The trench was almost knee-deep in liquid mud. The ground outside and the approaches was a viscid, glutinous morass. Pitiless rain was pouring down. He was pulling a sock through the clenched fingers of his left hand. Mud oozed through the clenched fingers and around the top of his sock and he pulled the sock, which, saturated with mud was as slimy as an eel. I asked him what he was doing. He answered simply, 'I'm doing a bit of washing, Sir!'

Medical Officer Lieutenant Lawrence Gameson, 73rd Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, October 1916

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 had [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

Never shall I forget my first sight of the Somme in summer time. I had left it in mud, nothing but water shell-holes and mud – the most gloomy, dreary abomination of desolation the mind could imagine; and now in the summer of 1917, no words could express the beauty of it. The dreary, dismal mud was baked white and pure-dazzling white. White daisies, red poppies and a blue flower, great masses of them, stretched for miles and miles. It was like an enchanted land; but in the place of fairies there were thousands of little white crosses, marked 'Unknown British Soldier', for most the part.

The war artist William Orpen describes the landscape of the battlefield in 1917





Opposite:
Poilu and Tommy,
William Orpen,
1917
© IWM (Art.IWM
ART 2959

British soldiers
watching a
bombardment
at Mametz,
4 July 1916
© IWM Q774



HM Government

To honour and remember the lives of those who served in and were affected by the war, the UK Government is leading a national centenary programme of ceremonial events, cultural activity and education.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, supported by 10 Downing Street, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Education, the Department for Communities and Local Government and other stakeholders, and working in partnership with its key delivery partners Imperial War Museums, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Arts Council England, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, is taking forward plans for the commemorations. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport chairs an expert advisory panel to oversee the four-year programme, building a commemoration fitting of this significant milestone in world history.

14 — Mission 18 CENTENAIRE

Since its establishment in 2012, The Mission du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale, The Commission for the Centenary of the First World War, has been responsible for preparing and organising the centenary commemorations of the First World War for the Government of France. The Centenary Commission has three main objectives: to organise large-scale commemorative events, to coordinate public and private, local, regional and national initiatives organised for the centenary of the war, and to implement a policy of information and communication for the public.



The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was founded by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917 and is responsible for the commemoration of almost 1,700,000 members of the Commonwealth forces who gave their lives in the two world wars. The graves and memorials of these men and women, who came from all parts of the Commonwealth and who were of many faiths and of none, are found around the globe at a staggering 23,000 locations, in 154 countries.