

The Somme



Key Stage 3 Study Pack



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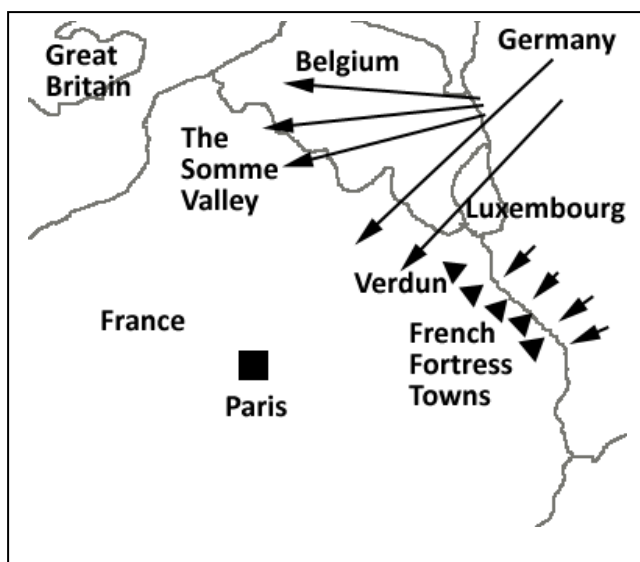


The Somme Valley

The Battle of the Somme

The main battle of the Somme was fought between July 1st and November 18th 1916 and was perhaps one of the greatest disasters experienced by the British army. The offensive was planned in late 1915 by British High Command, led by Sir Douglas Haig, and was intended to be a joint British and French attack.

At the start of 1916 the Germans attacked Verdun and this resulted in the French having to send most of their manpower to fight there. This attack on Verdun really changed the intent of the Somme attack because the French demanded that the attack due to start on August 1st be brought forward to July 1st, the reason being that the French wanted to divert German resources from Verdun to the Somme.

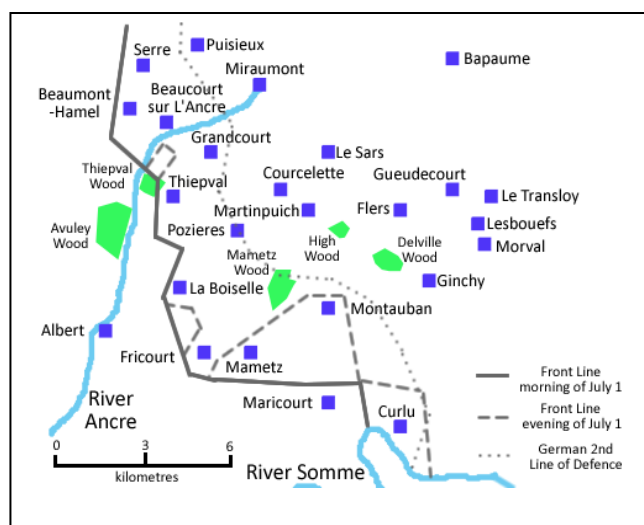


The aim of the Attack

The plan was to take the German front line, capture fortified villages and the high ground the Germans had held since 1914 from Serre to Montauban on July 1st.

They would then attack the German second line of defence finally reaching Bapaume and beyond all in a matter of a few days.

This became known as **“The Big Push”**



"The nation must be taught to bear losses. No amount of skill on the part of the higher commanders, no training, however good, on the part of the officers and men, no superiority of arms and ammunition, however great, will enable victories to be won without the sacrifice of men's lives. The nation must be prepared to see heavy casualty lists."
 - Written by Haig in June 1916 before the battle began





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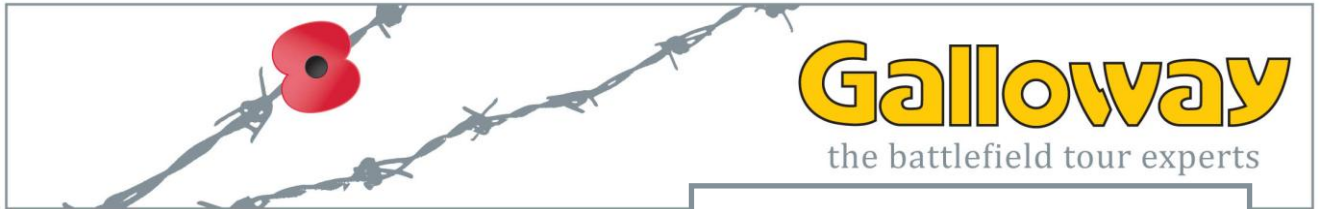
The Somme Valley

1. What was the main reason for the French changing the date of the Somme attack?

2. What positional advantage did the Germans have over the British?

3. Why would this be an advantage? Try to explain your reasons.

4. What is Haig saying will happen in his quote?



The Battle of the Somme

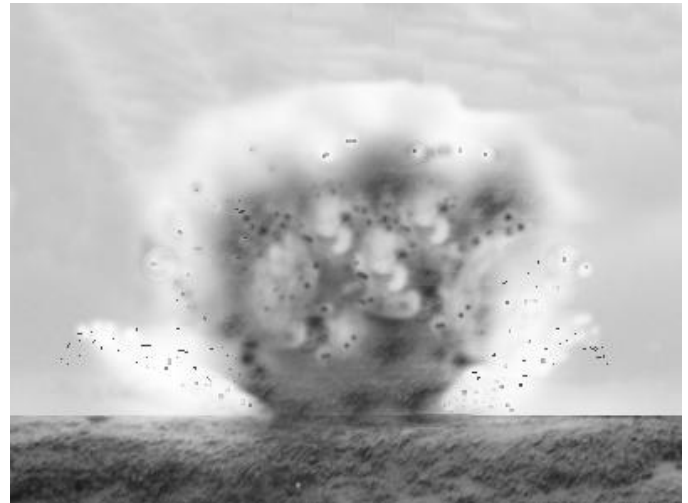
Preparation for the attack on the Somme.

Starting on June 24th a preliminary bombardment began on the German trenches. This lasted 24 hours a day until July 1st and the noise could be heard in southern England. 1500 British guns along with a similar number of French guns fired 1,732,873 shells. High explosive shells were used to kill German troops and shrapnel shells to cut the barbed wire.

Mines had been constructed to be detonated at 7.30 on July 1st. It was expected that this bombardment would be effective enough to allow the British troops to successfully gain German held land along this Front.

The Attack

The attack itself began at 07:30 on 1st July with the detonation of a series of 17 mines. The first, which was actually exploded ten minutes early, went off at 07:20.



At 7.30 the British artillery was to be silent whilst 100,000 British troops climbed out of their trenches to walk across No Man's Land and attack the German trenches.

What went wrong?

The shelling had failed to kill the Germans as the British expected because they had been sheltering in very deep dug outs, concrete bunkers and tunnels. German machine gun fire ripped into advancing troops as they emerged from their trenches.

The constant shelling had turned No Man's Land into a sea of craters making it difficult for the British soldiers to cross. The shrapnel had failed to break the barbed wire in front of the German trenches and in many cases, had caused it to become entangled and impassable.

Soldiers walked slowly towards the German lines, laden down with supplies, expecting little or no opposition



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The Battle of The Somme

1. How long did the British think would be long enough to bombard the Germans into being weak enough to attack?

.....

2. What would the ordinary British soldier in the trench think the constant bombardment was for?

.....

.....

3. What would the Germans do when the bombardment came to a halt at 7.30?

.....

4. What sound do you think the Germans heard as the British started to go 'over the top'?

.....

.....

5. Having read the plans, what was the reality?

.....

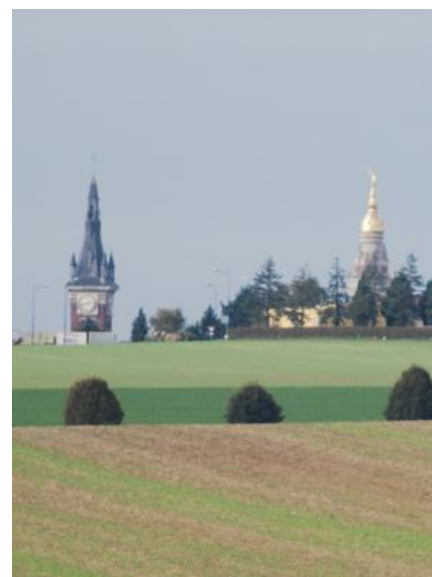
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Albert

Albert was an ordinary town before 1914 with an impressive basilica. The tower was topped by the Virgin Mary holding up the infant Jesus. The statue was known as the 'Golden Virgin'.

In 1914 the town nearly fell to the Germans but fortified by the British and French it managed to hold out. The Germans shelled the town heavily, with the basilica being hit by a shell in 1915, toppling the Golden Virgin to a precarious angle of 90 degrees.

The wartime legend of the 'Leaning Virgin' was that the war would not end until she fell. As the war was not likely to end in 1915 the Royal Engineers secretly wired the statue so that it would not topple. The statue could be seen, in the distance, from virtually anywhere in the Somme and became a symbol of hope for the soldiers during this time.



Whilst the British and French held Albert the tower of the basilica was an artillery observation post to see the effect of shelling on the Pozieres Ridge.

When the Germans captured Albert, they did not use it for the same purpose, but the British artillery brought the whole lot crashing down with their artillery fire in April 1918 thinking that they would.

The British were able to recapture it on August 22nd 1918 with the war ending in November of that year. The figure of the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus was not found after the war.

Albert had been reduced to rubble during the war, like Ypres, and had to be totally rebuilt afterwards. Special care was taken to reconstruct the basilica as it was before and the new statue, still visible from many parts of the Somme seems to symbolise people's efforts to make up for mistakes of the past.

The plaque on the Town Hall wall in Albert says of the town in 1918
"Nothing remained but name, glory and ruins".

1. What is a basilica?

.....

2. Why did the Germans not use the basilica tower as a look out post when they captured it in 1918?

.....
.....
.....

3. Why was the 'Leaning Virgin' so important to so many British and French soldiers?

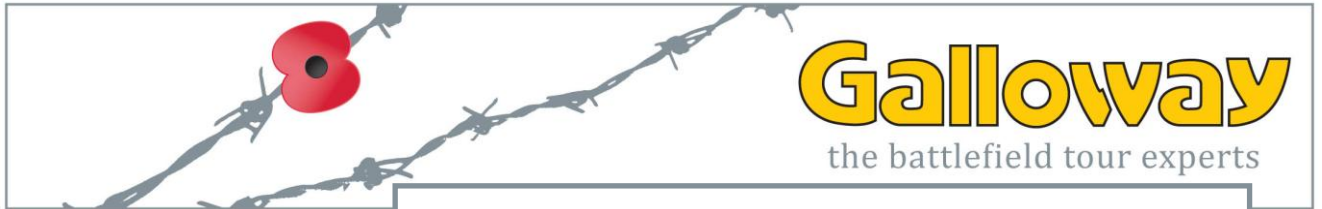
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4. What is meant by the words on the plaque on the Town Hall wall?

Name _____

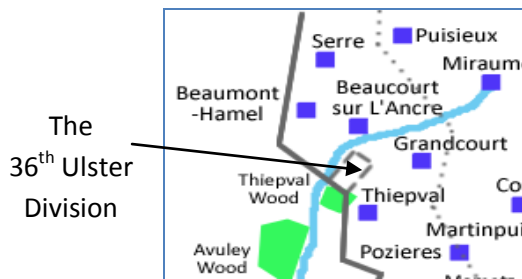
Glory _____

Ruins _____



Ulster Tower and the Schwarben Redoubt

On July 1st, after effective bombardment by the British, the 36th Ulster Division were able to very quickly take the German front line. The Germans did not have time to emerge from the Schwarben Redoubt dug outs and take up their positions. The redoubt was taken but the Ulstermen had advanced so quickly that they reached the German second line south of Grandcourt only to come under fire by their own artillery which was not due to be lifted until 10.00 am.



The divisions beside the Ulstermen were cut down by machine gun fire which left a bulge (salient) in the line leaving them exposed to attack on three sides. They were running out of supplies and ammunition. Later that evening a full German counter-attack forced the Ulsterman to withdraw, thus giving up virtually all their gains of the day including the Schwaben Redoubt. This remained in German hands until the middle of October 1916.



The photograph, taken from close to Thiepval Memorial shows the area over which the 36th Ulster Division advanced on July 1st 1916.

To the left is the Ulster Tower.

To the right is Mill Road Cemetery which is on the line of the Schwarben Redoubt. The gravestones have to be laid flat because there is still subsidence in the old underground tunnels.



The Ulster Tower is an exact replica of one known as Helen's tower, set in the grounds of the estate of the Marquess of Dufferin in County Down, where the division trained before coming to France



Ulster Tower and the Schwarben Redoubt

1. What is a redoubt?

.....
.....

2. Why do you think the Ulster Division were able to advance so quickly, whilst other divisions in the immediate area were unable to do so?

.....
.....
.....

3. Look for a black memorial with the words 'In God We Trust' under a crown. To whom is this memorial dedicated?

.....

4. Look around you and at the picture of the monuments. Why might the landscape be so deadly?

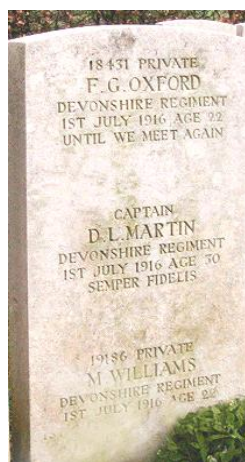
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Mametz Wood and Devonshire Cemetery

Whilst the 36th Ulster Division were fighting on the Schwarben Redoubt the 38th Welsh Division were fighting for Mametz village and then the wood. It took the Division from the 7th to 12th July to achieve this aim and cost them 4000 casualties (600 killed). The Division was not held in high regard by the British High Command because they thought the time to capture the wood was excessive. Today the red dragon of the 38th Welsh Division looks out across the fields towards the southern end of the wood.

Opposite Mametz village is the Devonshire Cemetery where the 9th Devons suffered very badly. From the moment the first troops went into No Man's Land they suffered a devastating machine gun barrage. All their movements were completely exposed to the German machine gun posts. Many casualties occurred about half-way across No Man's Land. After only ten minutes all of the Devon's officers and most of its men had been cut down.

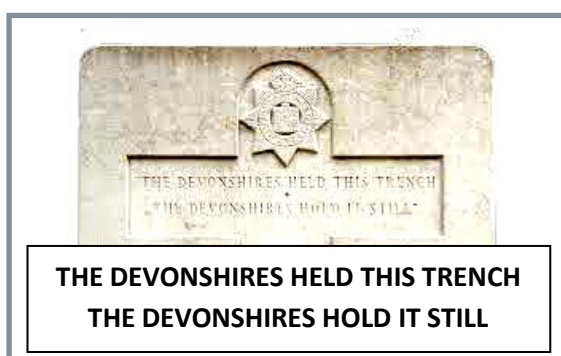
One officer to die was Captain D L Martin whom, whilst on leave, had created a plasticine model of the area over which the Company he commanded were to advance on July 1st. He predicted they would be exposed to the German machine gun posts (especially if there was one at 'The Shrine', the village cemetery of Mametz).



William N Hodgson MC. He was a bombing officer in the 9th Devons and was also a poet. He must have had similar misgivings about the attack as Capt. Martin had, on the eve of the attack he wrote a poem called 'Before Action'.

The final verse of Before Action

I, that on that familiar hill
 Saw with uncomprehending
 eyes
 A hundred of Thy sunsets spill
 Their fresh and sanguine
 sacrifice,
 Ere the sun swings its noonday
 sword
 Must say goodbye to all of this;-
 By all delights that I shall miss,
 Help me to die, O Lord.





Mametz Wood and Devonshire Cemetery

1. Why did the Germans use the 'Shrine' in Mametz as a machine gun post?

2. Why are there three names on Captain Martin's headstone?

3. Explain how both Captain Martin and Lieutenant Hodgson felt about the attack that was to take place on July 1st.

4. What do you think the words on the Devonshire Memorial mean?



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La Boisselle

Mine warfare had been carried out in the area long before July 1916. In June the British had blown 101 mines, the Germans 126. Some of the tunnel shafts in the area are over 30 metres deep with tunnels of up to four levels.



When the mine was detonated it was attacked by the Tynesiders without success because after the explosion the Germans had regrouped and slowed the British attack. The Worcesters took the crater and the village of La Boisselle on July 3rd 1916 but lost one third of its fighting force.

Look back from the village and you can see where the British had to advance from with Albert in the distance

Facts about the Lochnager Crater and its effects

- The largest crater on the Western Front, measuring 100 metres across and is 30 metres deep.
- 60,000 pounds of explosives were used (detonated beneath the German lines).
- It was blown up, along with others at 7.28 on July 1st 1916.
- Many Germans were blown hundreds of metres into the air.
- The debris rose around 1300 metres into the air.
- It took ten minutes to settle again.
- Shockwaves were felt in London.
- Some British infantry waiting in no-man's land were hit by falling debris.
- One man, bracing himself in a nearby trench had his leg broken. It had to be amputated later.

The explosion was witnessed from the air by 2nd Lieutenant Lewis of No. 3 Squadron Royal Flying Corps.

"The whole earth heaved and flashed, a tremendous and magnificent column rose up in the sky. There was an ear-splitting roar drowning all the guns, flinging the machine sideways in the repercussing air. The earth column rose higher and higher to almost 4,000 feet. There it hung, or seemed to hang, for a moment in the air, like the silhouette of some great cypress tree, then fell away in a widening cone of dust and debris".



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La Boisselle

1. Look at the cross for George Nugent. What regiment did he belong to?

2. How long had his body been missing before it was identified?

3. Where had he been commemorated until he was finally laid to rest?
What then happened to his name?

4. Looking at the crater and understanding that 60,000 pounds of explosives were used what reaction do you think any soldiers in the immediate area would have? Try and explain your answer.

5. A pound is a pre-metric measure of mass equal to 454 gms. What is 60000 pounds in kilogrammes?



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Poizieres

Poizieres was a village totally obliterated in August 1916 after intense fighting. It was finally captured by a joint British and Australian attack. Today the ruins of the windmill can be seen rising out of a mound of earth. This is reputed to be the costliest place on earth in terms of human life.



“The ruins of Poizieres windmill, which lies here, was the centre of the struggle in this part of the Somme Battlefields in July 1916. It was captured on 4th August by Australian troops who fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other battlefield in the war”.

This site was bought by the Australian War Memorial Board.



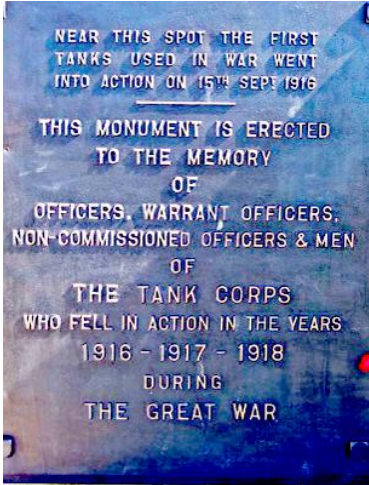
Tanks were first used on the Somme on September 15th 1916. Out of the 49 tanks used only nine reached the German trenches. Most of them broke down, some got stuck in the mud and in the shell craters created by heavy British military bombardment.



Opposite the windmill is a memorial to the Tank Corps, on the spot from where the first tanks went into action. On the four corners of the monument are accurate replicas in bronze of the tanks from the time.

One, the ‘Whippet’ has a hole in its side through which a spent round can be seen. This was the result of a ricochet from a Hawker Typhoon fighter which strafed retreating Germans on the same road in 1944.

- Tanks weighed 28 tonnes
- Had caterpillar tracks
- Had an average speed of half a mile to 4 miles per hour
- They were fitted with large guns on the sides and machine guns
- Had a crew of 8





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Pozières

Look at the rolling landscape immediately around you and imagine it with no trees, hedges or grass, just trenches, mud and shell craters.

1. How do you think the Germans felt when they saw a tank coming towards them? What could they do to stop it?

2. Tanks moved slowly. What advantage do you think the Germans had because of this?

3. What problems did shell craters make for the tank?

4. Why were there so many Australians fighting in World War 1?

 **The Somme**

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Dartmoor British Cemetery

The Dartmoor British Cemetery, just outside Fricourt, contains 768 named graves. For every four men who died, one was unidentified.



Some of the people buried here are:
Lt Henry Webber of the 7th Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment, who was the oldest serving member of the British army to die at the age of 68.

Sergeant G. Lee and Corporal R.F. Lee, a father and son killed on the same day. Plot I, Row A

Private J. Miller VC who won the Victoria Cross. Plot I. C. 64.

Private J. J. Sweeney who was executed by a firing squad for desertion Plot 2. B. 1.

Graves of a Muslim and Jewish soldier.

Private J. Miller

An extract from the London Gazette dated September 8, 1916 records the following posthumous award of the Victoria Cross:

“For most conspicuous bravery. His battalion was consolidating a position after its capture. Private Miller was ordered to take an important message under heavy shell and rifle fire and to bring back a reply at all costs. He was compelled to cross the open, and on leaving the trench was shot almost immediately in the back, the bullet coming out through his abdomen. In spite of this, with heroic courage and self-sacrifice, he compressed with his hand the gaping wound in his abdomen, delivered his message, staggered back with the answer and fell at the feet of the officer to whom he delivered it. He gave his life with supreme devotion to duty”.





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Dartmoor British Cemetery

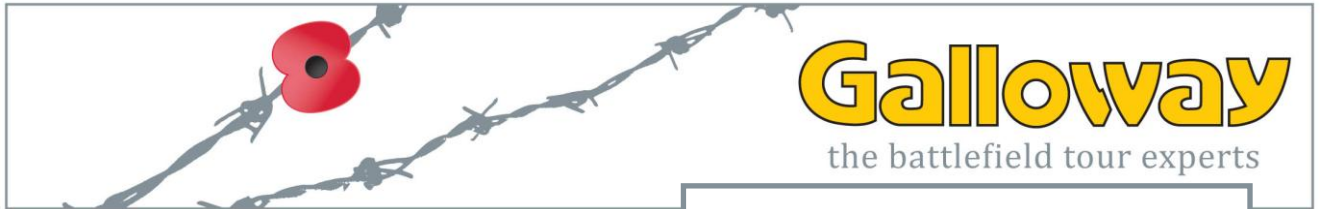
1. Buried side by side in Plot I, Row A is George and Robert Lee, who served and were killed in action on the same day. Find this plot. Which regiment did they belong to?

2. How old were George and Robert?

3. What date did they die?

4. Find the gravestone of Private James Miller Plot I. C. 64. How old was he when he died?

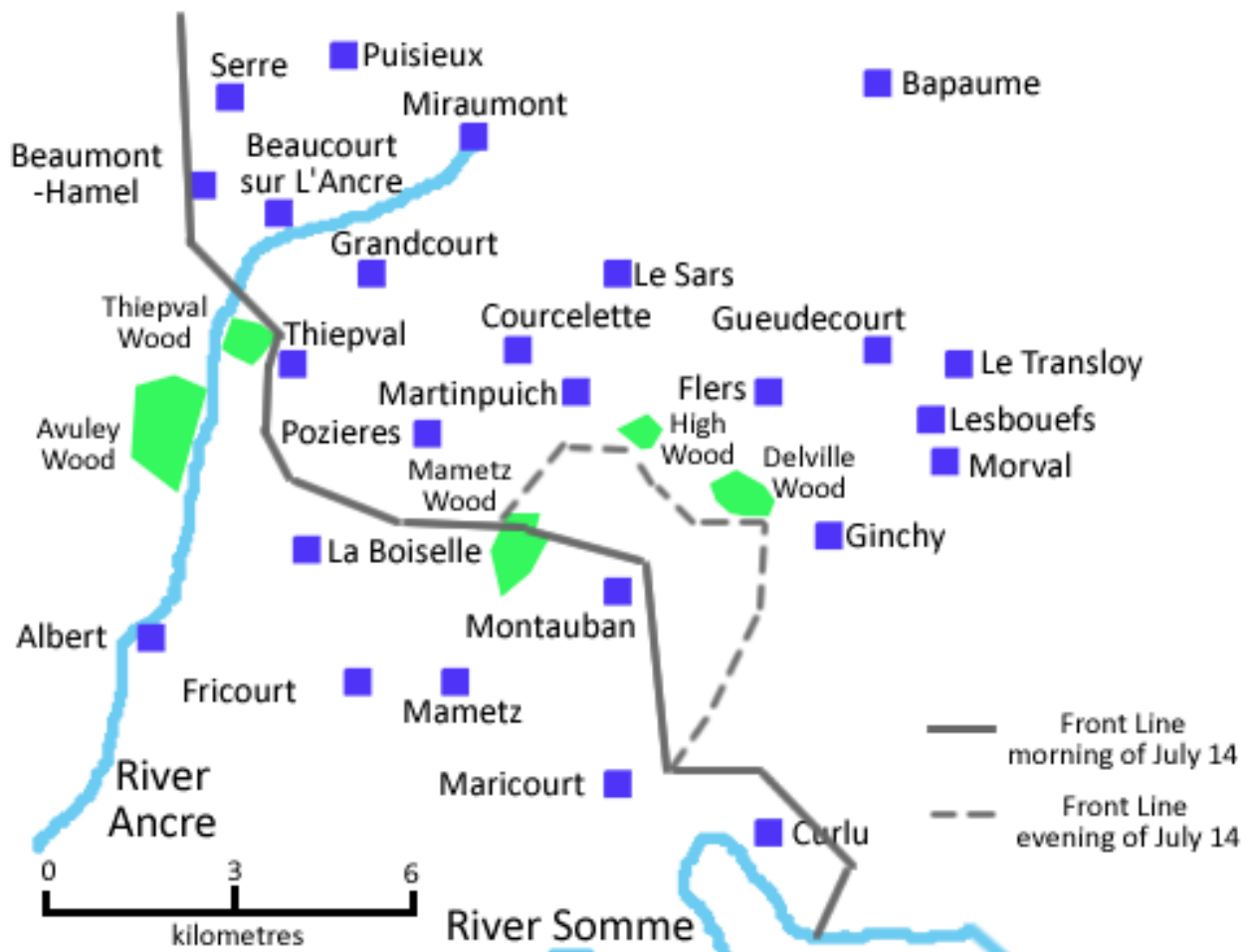
5. What type of man do you think he was after reading the extract of his actions?



The Battle of The Somme

The Front Line on 14 July 1916.

What had started out to be an attempt to breakthrough across the whole front in The Somme was now reduced to attacks concentrated in specific areas. However, advances were made and consolidated even though the cost in lives was high. For the next two months little ground was gained and it was not until September that the offensive gained momentum again.





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Delville Wood

Delville Wood and Longueval was sometimes known as Devil's Wood, and the fighting there during the battle of the Somme was particularly ferocious. The South African Brigade were ordered to take and hold the wood at all costs in July 1916. They dug in through tree roots and mangled wood, which proved difficult, and were subject to German bombardment and gas shell attacks. The majority of the wood was eventually taken on the 15th of July 1916, and they held on grimly during numerous German counter-attacks for six days.

The South African Brigade

Went in: 15th July 1916
121 Officers 3032 Men

Emerged; 20th July 1916
29 Officers 751men

South African National Memorial

After the war, South Africa purchased the site in 1920, and it serves as a memorial to those of that nation who fell, not just here but all the 10,000 South Africans who died in the First World War.



Delville Wood Cemetery, is not a war-time cemetery but one which was created after the Armistice. It was made by the concentration of graves from a number of smaller cemeteries from the area (including Bazentin-le-petit, Courcellette, Guillemont, Loungeval, Maricourt and Martinpuch) but mainly from burials of those recovered from the battlefields. This is the third largest Allied cemetery on the Somme, with 5,523 graves.

Haig in his diary recorded on the 15th of July 1916 ***"Enemy counterattacked wood in force from north and northeast at 2.45 p.m. and was repulsed"***.



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Delville Wood

1. What were the main reasons for so many of the South African Brigade losing their lives?

2. When was the Armistice?

3. How many officers and men did the South African Brigade lose?

4. What is so different about the Delville Wood Cemetery to others you may have visited?

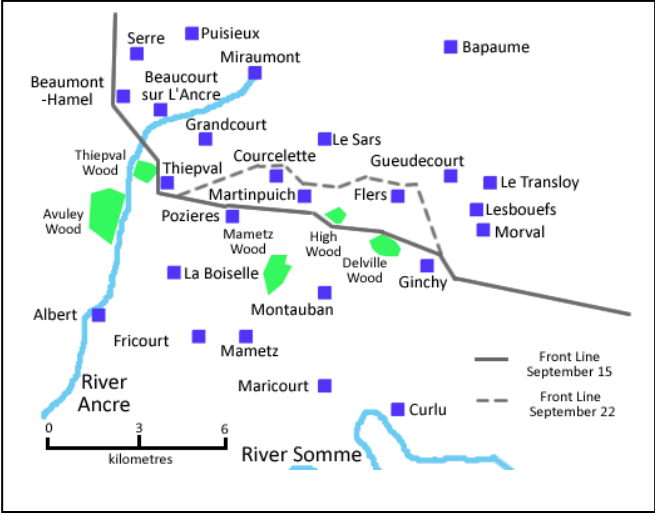
5. Why were there South African troops on the Western Front?



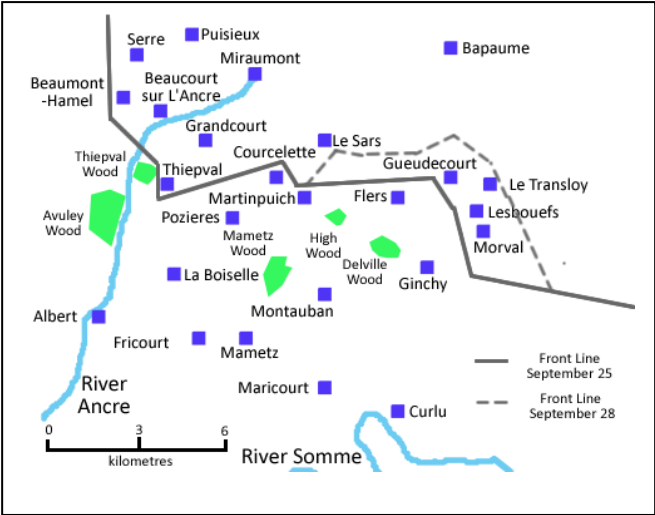
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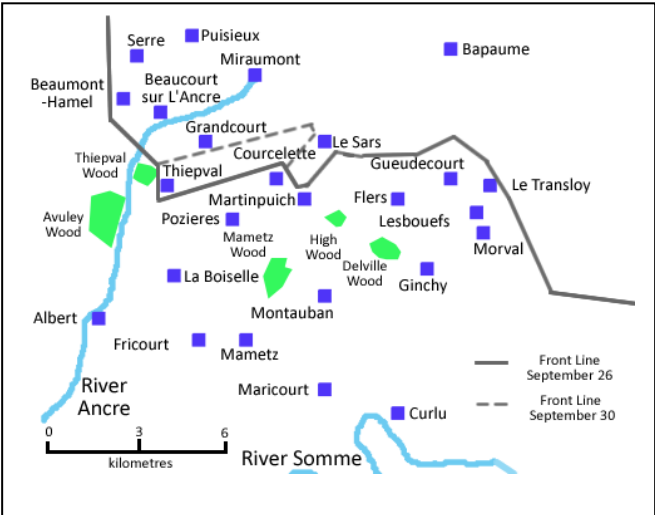
The Battle of The Somme



The Front Line between 15 September and 22 September 1916



The Front Line between 25 September and 28 September 1916 around Gueudecourt



The Front Line between 26 September and 30 September 1916 around Thiepval

Thiepval

Thiepval was a fortified village held by the Germans on July 1st 1916. The village was destroyed apart from one part of the chateau.

The flattened houses had deep cellars where the Germans held out and their machine gun posts were not destroyed in the bombardment. To the south of the village the 32nd Division attacked and to the north it was the 36th Division. The village was not taken until late September 1916.



The Somme, like Ypres has its own Memorial to the Missing representing over 73000 men who died on the Somme and have no known grave. Like the Menin Gate in Ypres, their names are inscribed on huge panels. The slight decrease to today's numbers (just over 72000) is because of the identification of bodies since, thus making the soldier no longer 'missing'.



The memorial is around 50 metres high, with laurel leaves carved at the top of the pillars. The memorial was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and built in red brick and limestone between 1928 and 1932.

During the mid-1980's it was refaced with sturdy Manchester house bricks due to deterioration of the original materials. Behind the memorial is a joint British – French cemetery.



"A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR
CHESHIRE REGIMENT
KNOWN UNTO GOD"



Thiepval

1. Try to find someone with your surname on the Thiepval Monument. Note their regiment, initials and rank. Could they be a relative of yours?

Regiment _____

Initials _____

Rank _____

Relative or not? _____

2. You may see some names blocked out on the memorial. Why do you think that is?

3. What is the main difference between the French and British gravestones in the cemetery?

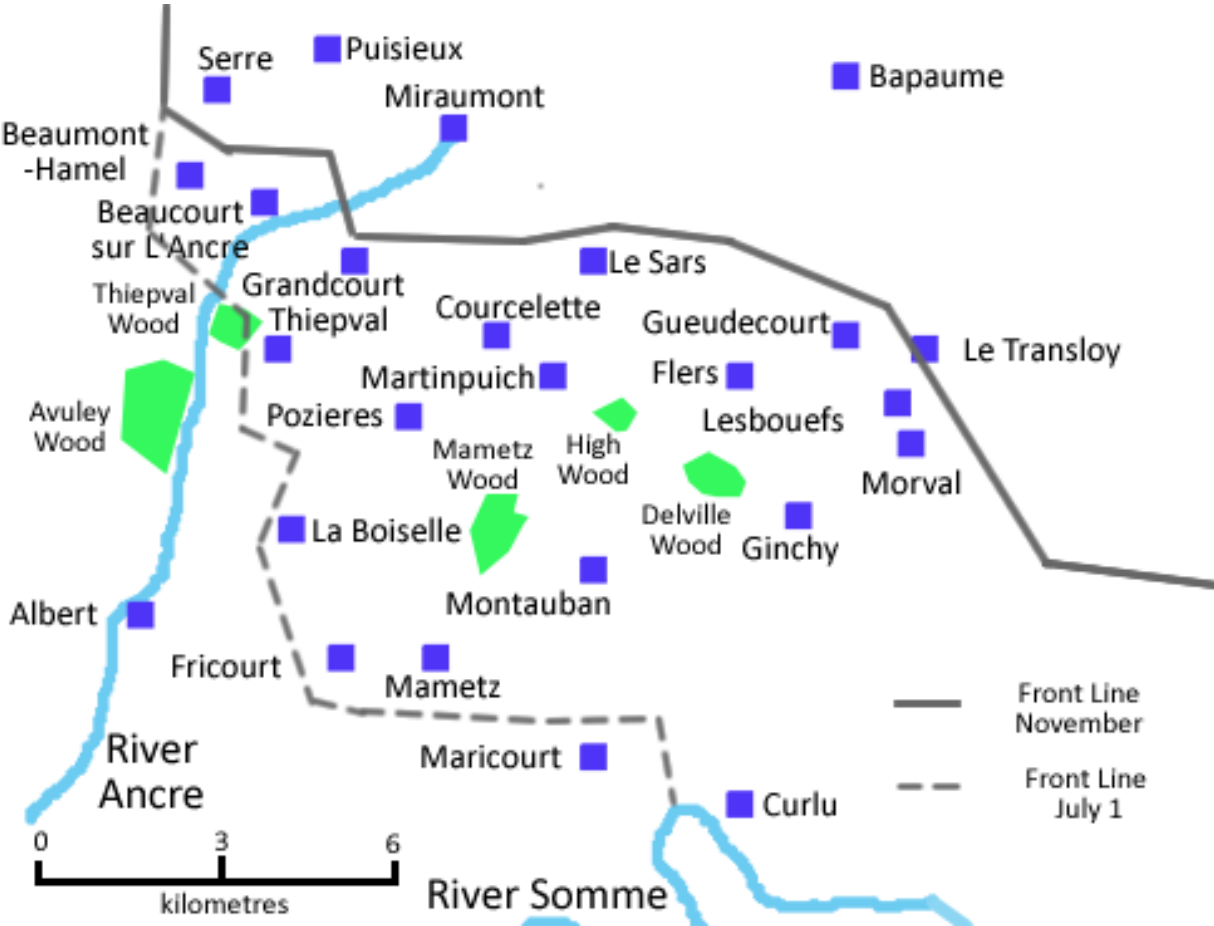
4. What does the word 'Inconnu' mean on the French gravestone?



The Battle of The Somme

The Front Line at the end of the offensive in November 1916.

At the end of the battle, the Allies had advanced less than 10 kilometres and suffered well over 400,000 casualties. The French had around 200,000 casualties and the Germans had over 650,000 casualties.





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Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

The park was bought by the Newfoundland Government as a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who fought and died in the First World War. At the base of the Caribou there is a memorial with three bronze panels listing 814 names of the missing Newfoundlanders. These are Newfoundlanders who died on land and at sea in the First World War and who have no known graves. The Caribou was on the badge of the Newfoundland Regiment.

At 7.20am on July 1st 1916 a mine containing over 18000 kilogrammes of explosives was detonated under the Hawthorn Redoubt, a German machine gun post that overlooked the British trenches in this part of the Somme. Many Germans were killed. By 7.30am the machine guns had been moved to the edge of the crater by German reserve troops and were ready to fire on the advancing British.



The First Wave

At 7.30 on July 1st the bombardment on the Germans lines stopped. The artillery was ordered to remain silent for ten minutes to give the advancing soldiers time to reach the German trenches without fear of being hit by their own shells. The British left their trenches and, at walking pace, advanced over No Man's Land covered with shell craters, towards the enemy trenches. The German barbed wire remained uncut, or so badly mangled it was impassable, but this was unseen by the British because of the angle of the slope. Many men were cut down by German machine gun fire as they were forced to bunch up to pass through their own barbed wire lanes. Many did not even get this far.



 **The Somme**

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Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

1. Go to the Caribou Monument and look across the fields. You need to get yourself orientated so that you can see where the British were hoping to attack. What problems do you think the British troops faced in their attack on the German trenches?

2. From the British trench estimate the distance to the German front line. (This runs from just in front of the Highland Memorial to the Y ravine cemetery).

3. Remember, the British had barbed wire in front of their trenches which had been cut into 'channels' in preparation for their offensive and they believed the German barbed wire had been destroyed by the artillery bombardment. Why did the British troops have so much trouble with the barbed wire in their attack?

A) British barbed wire.

B) German barbed wire.



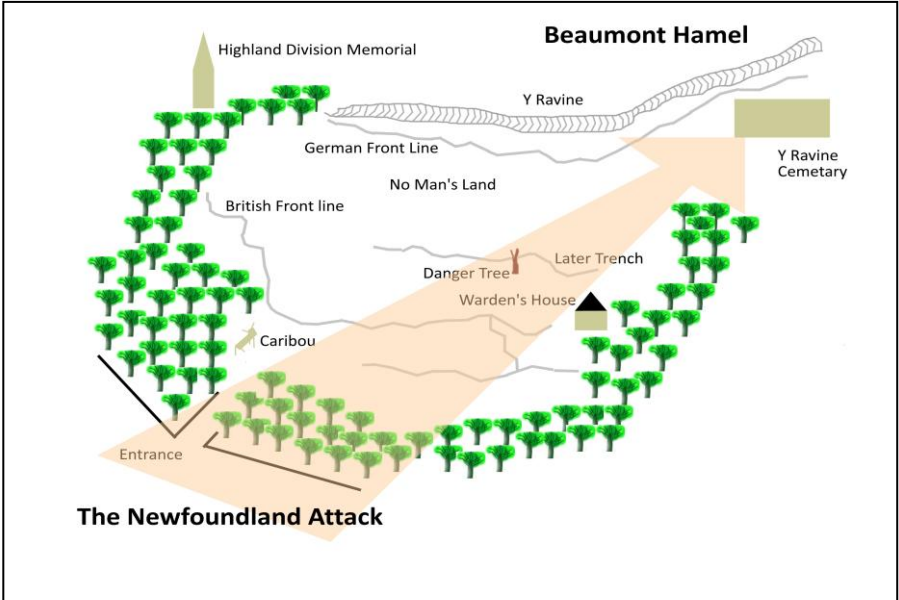
Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

The Second Wave

Believing that the British had already captured the German trenches the 1st Newfoundland Regiment started their attack from a position known as 'St. John's Road', that was actually behind the front line. To speed up the attack they were told not to use the communication trenches as they were full of casualties.

The Newfoundlanders began their attack over nearly 200m of open ground in full view of the German machine gun posts. Many were mown down before they even reached the British front line trench let alone No Man's Land and the Danger Tree.

At 09.15 the 1st Newfoundland Regiment started its attack. By 09.45 many of the men in the regiment were either dead or wounded. 801 men went into battle at 09.15. By next day only 68 men were at roll call. 255 men had been killed, 386 men were wounded and 91 were classed as missing.



The Danger Tree

The original tree had somehow survived the fighting in the area. As the Newfoundlanders advanced down the slope towards the German trenches, the tree offered the only form of shelter on any part of the battlefield. The Germans realised this would be the area where the Newfoundlanders would group together before making any further advances. They heavily shelled the land that contained what was to become known as the 'Danger Tree'. Most of the Newfoundlanders did not get this far!



Afterward, the Divisional Commander was to write of the Newfoundlanders effort:
"It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour, and its assault failed of success because dead men can advance no further."



Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

- 1. How far behind the British trench did the Newfoundland Regiment wait before attacking?**

- 2. Is there any evidence of where they were waiting outside the Park?**

- 3. Go to the Danger Tree. Why was it important for the German machine gunners?**

- 4. Why was it important for the advancing troops?**

- 5. Why were the communications trenches not used for the advance?**

Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

Y Ravine

Y ravine, the German front line in this area, was at the bottom of a slope, a few hundred metres from the British front line. During the week of heavy bombardment the Germans had survived in concrete bunkers and casualties were light. When the British artillery fire stopped, a few minutes before Zero Hour, of 07.30, the German soldiers at the bottom of the hill near Y Ravine were able to get back quickly into their battered trenches and man their machine guns.



'Y' Ravine cemetery

The cemetery holds 366 burials of men who fell between July and November 1916. The deep natural Y ravine lies to the left of the cemetery.

The headstones of the 38 Newfoundlanders buried in this cemetery are engraved with the woodland caribou, the badge of their regiment

German machine-gunner at the Somme.

'The officers were in the front. I noticed one of them walking calmly carrying a walking stick. When we started firing we just had to load and reload. They went down in their hundreds. You didn't have to aim, we just fired into them.'



Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

1. Go into the German Trench. Why do you think the Germans never launched an attack on the British?

2. Go to the position that looks over Y Ravine. Here the Germans had cut underground shelter into the base of the ravine. Why would it be a good place for the Germans to hide?

3. What is the German machine-gunner saying in his quote?

4. What is Zero Hour?



Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

On the 13th November 1916 the last attack on the Somme took place with Beaumont Hamel being finally captured. Again a mine was detonated under the Hawthorn Redoubt but this time at 5.45am in the morning.

This time the Germans were not as prepared as they were on July 1st. The British had been firing an artillery barrage at 5.45am each morning for the last month. On this day the Germans sheltered in their dugouts thinking this was like any other morning.

The British also fired a large number of shells filled with deadly phosgene gas and chlorine gas into Y Ravine, ensuring the German troops there would be unable to fight. By the end of the day Beaumont Hamel was in British hands with the loss of 2000 lives.

51st (Highland) Division Memorial

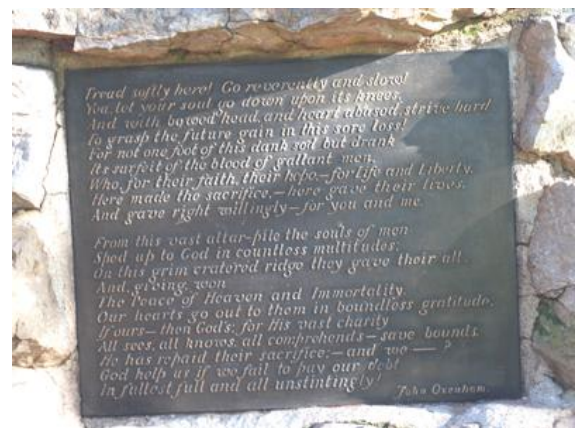
On 13th November 1916 the village of Beaumont Hamel was attacked and captured by the 51st (Highland) Division.

The memorial was unveiled in 1924 and is a sculptured statue of a Scottish soldier in his kilt. He looks across the landscape over the Y Ravine and beyond the German Front Line where this successful action took place.



Tread softly here! Go reverently and slow!
 Yea, let your soul go down upon its knees,
 And with bowed head and heart abased strive hard
 To grasp the future gain in this sore loss!
 For not one foot of this dank sod but drank
 Its surfeit of the blood of gallant men.
 Who, for their faith, their hope,—for Life and
 Liberty,
 Here made the sacrifice,—here gave their lives.
 And gave right willingly—for you and me.

From this vast altar—pile the souls of men
 Sped up to God in countless multitudes:
 On this grim cratered ridge they gave their all.
 And, giving, won
 The peace of Heaven and Immortality.
 Our hearts go out to them in boundless gratitude:
 If ours—then God's: for His vast charity
 All sees, all knows, all comprehends—save bounds.
 He has repaid their sacrifice:—and we—?
 God help us if we fail to pay our debt
 In fullest full and unstintingly!



At the park entrance is a poem by

John Oxenham





Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland Park

1. Having spent some time at Beaumont Hamel try and put down some of your thoughts about what happened here and over the four years of the First World War.

Write single words about your experience and try and explain why you have written them.

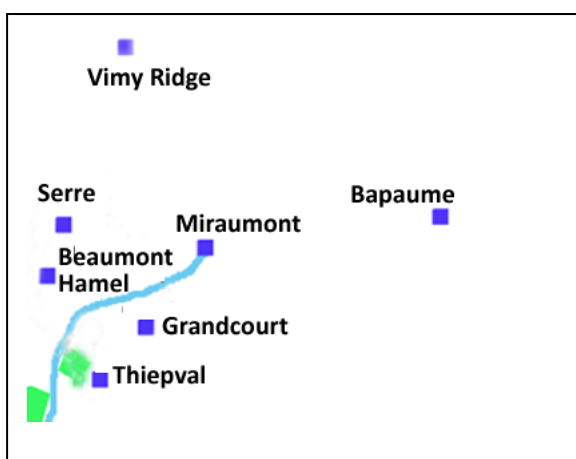
2. Write a longer account about your thoughts and feelings about the Somme.

A popular phrase at the time was 'lions led by donkeys'. What do you think this meant?



Although not part of the Somme battlefield proper, Vimy Ridge is remembered for particularly fierce fighting. A huge memorial tops the ridge on Hill 145 and the whole area has been left with shell holes pock-marking the terrain. There are Canadian fir trees and shrubs planted in the 250 acre park, one for every person named missing on the memorial.

The Germans had captured the ridge early in the war and made it into a strong defensive position. After two and a half years of war four Canadian Divisions would work together to try and capture Vimy Ridge.



The French had lost many soldiers in earlier attacks at Vimy Ridge.

It is said that when learning of the victory, a French soldier replied, "C'est impossible!" and upon learning it was the Canadians who won, changed his answer to, "Ah! les Canadiens! C'est possible!"

Preparation for Attack

- The Canadians moved towards the front line in late 1916 and spent the winter strengthening the lines and gathering intelligence.
- They rehearsed attacks. Soldiers were given maps and informed of objectives.
- Tunnelling was carried by the Canadians into Vimy Ridge. These were dug to carry troops and supplies to the underground storage spaces. There were underground guard rooms, commander's quarters, hospital, cook house and ammunition dumps.
- Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew MacNaughton was in charge of the artillery plans and using new optical and acoustic methods, perfected new ways of locating enemy artillery guns. These could then be easily shelled and knocked out.
- The Canadians used heavy, continuous shelling in a strategic area rather than hitting a specific target.
- The heaviest shelling was spread over a week so the Germans would not know when the attack would take place. This period, when over a million shells hit the Germans, was known as **'The Week of Suffering'**



Vimy Ridge

1. What is your first impression of the Canadian Memorial?

2. Why was the highest point of Vimy Ridge called Hill 145?

How else was it known?

3. Explain what was meant by the 'Week of Suffering'.

4. What was the difference between this attack and other attacks on The Somme?

Vimy Ridge

The Attack

- 20,000 Canadians were in the first wave to move forward over muddy shell holes, craters and barbed wire.
- They were behind a heavy barrage of artillery fire on the Germans. This allowed the Canadians to capture German positions before they had got to their posts.
- Most of the Ridge was captured by noon on April 9th. Hill 145, 'The Pimple', was captured the next day and the Germans were forced to withdraw.



The distance from one trench system to the other is frighteningly small in many places, and snipers would have been able to make out targets with deadly ease.

In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation – Brigadier General Ross



Galloway

the battlefield tour experts

Vimy Ridge

1. What is a barrage?

.....
.....

2. How far apart are the German and Canadian trenches?

.....

3. What is a sniper?

.....
.....

4. List any other memorials you see in the Park. Note to whom they are dedicated.

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Crosses

The Cross of Sacrifice instantly identifies a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) war cemetery and was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

It is a tall, sandstone or limestone cross usually standing on an octagonal base with a downward pointing bronze sword attached to its face. Together, the sword and cross show the military and spiritual nature of the cemetery.

The Cross was intended to represent the faith of the majority of the dead it overlooks. A Cross of Sacrifice is a feature in war cemeteries with 50 or more burials. Depending upon the size of the cemetery, it can range in height from 4.5 to 9 metres.

It is always precisely positioned so as to enhance the overall design of the cemetery and provide a point of focus.



The Victoria Cross

The Victoria Cross is the highest award for heroism awarded to officers and men alike. Many were awarded posthumously (after death).

During the First World War 628 were presented (193 posthumously). From these 168 were given in 1917, mainly for deeds of bravery during the Third Battle of Ypres.



During the First Battle of the Somme, which lasted from July to November 1916, 51 Victoria Crosses were awarded, 14 of these posthumously.

On July 1st 1916, the first day of the battle of The Somme, 9 were awarded.



The Crosses

1. Why do you think the sword on the Cross of Sacrifice points downwards?

2. What is written on one of the Crosses of Sacrifice you see?

3. Why were so many Victoria Crosses awarded posthumously?

4. What other medals for bravery were awarded?



Everyone has a relative who lived through or during the First World War. Many of you may well have relatives who died on the Western Front.

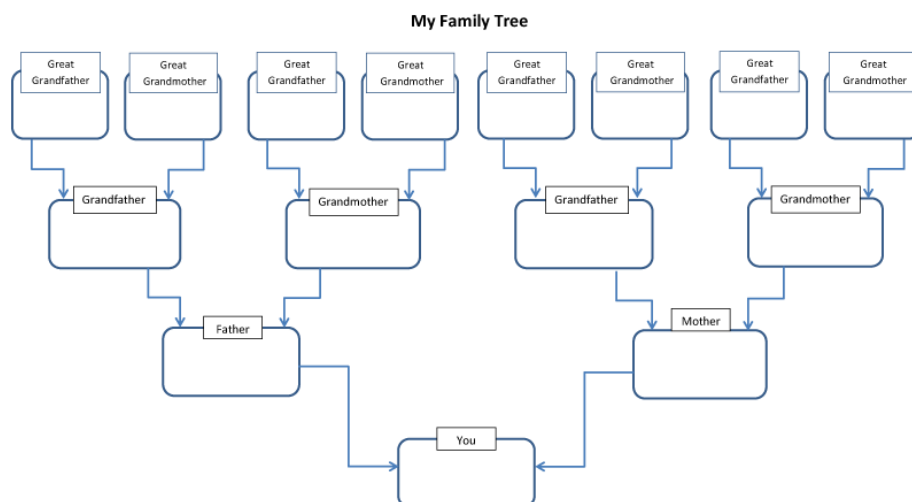
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for running all of the British and Commonwealth cemeteries that you will see on your tour. They also have a record of all the servicemen who were killed in World War One.

It would be amazing to find a relative's grave on your tour and be able to pay your respects!

Follow these simple steps and make it happen!

STEP ONE

Complete as much of the "My Family Tree" worksheet as you can. Allow a few weeks if possible. Go as far back in history as you can and if need be include other relatives, for example, uncles.





STEP TWO

Once you have reached back to relatives from the time of World War One make a careful note of their names and as many other details about them as you can, such as if they died in the War, when and where they died and what service they were in, for example, the Army.

STEP THREE

Go to www.cwgc.org . On the homepage there is a simple form to enter the details that looks like this:-

The example shows J Smith, serving in the Army in World War 1.

Learning and Resources News & Events Contact Us

Find War Dead Find a Cemetery

Surname: smith Initials: j Service: Army War: First World War

Advanced Search **SEARCH**

After entering the information click **SEARCH**



You will then be shown the CWGC records that look like this:-

Name	Rank	Service Number	Date of Death	Age	Regiment / Service	Service Country	Grave / Memorial Reference	Cemetery / Memorial Name
SMITH, J	Private	8171	13/03/1915	19	North Staffordshire Regiment	United Kingdom	I. C. 55.	CITE BONJEAN MILITARY CEMETERY, ARMENTIERES
SMITH, J	Private	15247	14/04/1916		Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)	United Kingdom	I. G. 62.	CITE BONJEAN MILITARY CEMETERY, ARMENTIERES
SMITH, J	Private	122850	28/09/1918	27	Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)	United Kingdom	A. 37.	LOUVERVAL MILITARY CEMETERY, DOIGNIES
SMITH, J	Gunner	4856	19/02/1918		Royal Garrison Artillery	United Kingdom	V. C. 8.	ESTAIRES COMMUNAL CEMETERY AND EXTENSION
SMITH, J	Private	20477	21/04/1918		Border Regiment	United	H. C. 9.	LILLE SOUTHERN

Surname

 Surname
 Forename
 Country (as memorial is)

 Cemetery or memorial
 War

 Date of death (starting)

 Date of death (ending)

 Served with
 United Kingdom Forces
 Australian Forces
 New Zealand Forces
 Canadian Forces
 Indian Forces
 South African Forces
 Served in
 Trench
 Air Force
 Sea
 Merchant Navy
 Out of the Deal
 Miscellaneous
 Rank

 Service Number

 Regiment

 Secondary Regiment

 Resources and Assets
 Please email
 Additional Information

To narrow your search try to put in as many other details that you have found in the Filter Results form that looks like this:-



Then click Filter Results





The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

STEP FOUR

Click on their name and you will see more details about them and where they are buried.

Casualty details

SMITH, JOHN WILLIAM [VIEW CERTIFICATE](#)

Rank:	Lance Corporal
Service No:	241822
Date of Death:	26/09/1917
Age:	21
Regiment/Service:	Leicestershire Regiment 2nd/5th Bn.
Grave Reference	XIV. B. 1.
Cemetery	TYNE COT CEMETERY

Additional Information:
Son of John and Eliza Smith, of 95, Leicester Rd., Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

This is a PDF file and requires Adobe Reader to view.

TYNE COT CEMETERY



Country:	Belgium
Locality:	West-Vlaanderen

Find out more about this Cemetery including, visiting information, reports and plans and any emergency notices.

[Find out more >](#)



My Family Tree

