

Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme took place during the First World War in France by the River Somme. It was between the German army and the French army. The British Army was ordered to help the French.

It began on 1st July 1916 and ended on 18th November 1916.

Trenches

During WWI, huge trenches were dug into the ground wherever there was a battle. The soldiers would live in the trenches and, when ordered to, had to climb up out of the trenches and run towards the enemy troops.

This was called 'going over the top'. Trenches were muddy, narrow and damp.

The British Plan

The British Army were told to fire machine guns at the German lines and then walk over to them and fight them face to face.

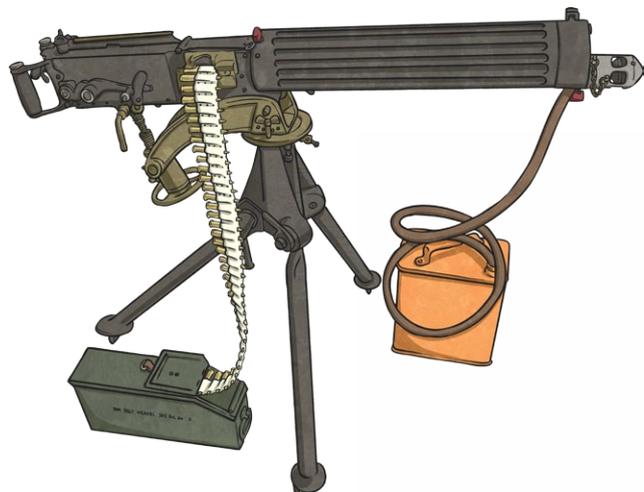
On Day 1 the British Army fired 1 738 000 shells at the German trenches. Then they started walking over to them.

As the British soldiers walked towards them, the Germans started firing their machine guns. 20 000 men were either killed or seriously wounded!

Many people in Britain were angry at the huge loss of so many young men and called it 'The Lost Generation'.

Back in Britain, people began to build simple war shrines in honour of the fallen soldiers.

These were simple, wooden, handmade tablets with the names of the men carved into them.



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Did you know?

The British Army had soldiers from other countries fighting with them. The men came from Ireland, Newfoundland, South Africa and India.

The End of the War

Winter was closing in. The terrible weather meant men were trying to fight in muddy, boggy fields. Fighting was suspended. The plan was to carry on fighting in February, but the Germans decided to retreat. The battle was officially over on 18th November 1916. The British Army had failed to defeat the German army.

Battle of the Somme Facts

- It had been a terrible battle, with 420 000 casualties for the British Army.
- The French lost 200 000 men.
- The Germans lost 500 000 men.
- Many men from Britain had been grouped together in battalions from the same town. The groups were called British Pals.



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1. What date did the battle begin?

2. In what country was the Battle of the Somme?

3. What do you think it would have been like in the trenches?

4. Name two other countries where soldiers from the British Army came from.

5. How many British soldiers were killed or wounded on the first day of battle?

6. Why did people build war shrines?

7. What were they made from?

8. Why did it matter if the fields were muddy and boggy?

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9. Why was it a terrible battle?

10. What do you think about the Battle of the Somme? Was it a successful battle?



Battle of the Somme Answers

Answers

1 What date did the battle begin?

1st July 1916

2 In what country was the Battle of the Somme?

France

3 What do you think it would have been like in the trenches?

Dirty, muddy, horrible etc

4 Name 2 other countries where soldiers for the British Army came from?

Any of the following: Ireland, Newfoundland, South Africa, India.

5 How many British soldiers were killed or wounded on the first day of the battle?

20,000

6 Why did people build war shrines?

To remember the soldiers who had died.

7 What were they made from?

Wood

8 Why did it matter if the fields were muddy and boggy?

It would have been very difficult to fight in muddy fields.

9 Why was it a terrible battle?

Because so many men died or were wounded.

10 What do you think about the Battle of the Somme? Was it a successful battle?

Own answer, must be justified.