



The Bulldog Bulletin



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Warwickshire

RBL Chairman's December report,



For those members who are finding it difficult receiving the Legion Magazine, I thought it may be a useful link to access it.



<http://www.legion-magazine.co.uk/>



It is with great sadness, that I have to inform you of the death of Edward Ward , who passed away November 15th after a short illness. Ed was one of the original members that organized the festival of remembrance at Grace Cathedral. He will be greatly missed.

It is with great sadness, that we also have to report the passing of Heather Mander, the wife of Danny Mander.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone that was involved in the arranging of the Festival of Remembrance, without your support and help this would never be possible.

Returning to attend the Festival of Remembrance this year, we once again welcomed M. Andre Schmidt, Vice President of the French War Veterans in Mulhouse, Alsace, France. Andre makes the long trip to San Francisco every year and is very proud to be a part of the Festival. During his visit, Andre presented the RBL with a plaque from the French Veterans, for which we are very grateful.

Pictured right are Sharon and Alan, who show up every year to drop the poppy petals from the catwalk.

This is the most important job of the whole service, and we are lucky to have them, as this is the most impressive part of the service.



Sharon Ewing and Alan Ball

Poignant survivor... a poppy from First World War trenches to go on sale

WHAT is thought to be the oldest surviving poppy from the battlefields of the First World War has emerged for sale – almost 100 years after it was picked.



The flower was taken from the front-line trenches of Arras in northern France by 17-year-old British soldier Private Cecil Roughton in 1916.

Pte Roughton was stationed with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment when he picked the poppy – one of only a handful that survived from the Great War – as a souvenir following a fierce battle with German troops. He brought it home to Birmingham pressed flat in his notebook.

In awe of his bravery, his 13-year-old next-door neighbour, Joan Banton, asked him to sign her autograph book in 1923. Pte Roughton gave her the poppy, two years after the flower had been adopted as a symbol of remembrance.

The poppy which is nearly 100 years old will go on sale [BNPS]

The poppy is expected to fetch at least £1,000 when it is auctioned in Dorchester on December 6

He stuck it in a page in her book and wrote: "Souvenir from a front line trench near Arras. May 1916. C. Roughton 1923."

The poignant memento has remained in Mrs Banton's family since 1923 and is now being sold by her daughter Sue Best.



Here is a German trapeze couple who are somewhat different!
I loved the expressions on her face; it's a good laugh from start to end.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=717211468307619&set=vb.234538950336&type=2&theater>

The Vinkt Massacre (May 26/28, 1940)

One of the first war crimes committed by the German Wehrmacht (Not the SS or Waffen SS) in World War II took place at and near the Vinkt bridge over the Schipdonk Canal in Belgium. As the German 225th Division approached the bridge they found it blocked by refugees fleeing south. Soldiers of the 225th then took a number of refugees and used them as human shields. Others were herded into the Meigem church where a grenade was thrown in amongst them killing 27. For no known reason the 225th started to execute their hostages. Next day (May 28) the Belgium army capitulated in the early morning and another nine hostages were shot. Altogether the number of hostages shot amounted to 86. Others killed in the cross-fire on the bridge brought the total to around 140. After the war, two German officers, a Major Kuhner and Lieutenant Lohmann were arrested, tried and convicted of the crime. They were both sentenced to 20 years imprisonment but released after only five years.

[Sonar and radar hunt begins for legendary £1billion in Nazi gold dumped in a lake near Berlin](#)

Some 18 crates of gold and platinum may lie buried under the bed of the Stolpsee, a 988-acre stretch of water to the north of the German capital. Yaron Svoray, who has the backing of German authorities, will use the latest sonar and radar equipment to locate the gold, which, the story goes, was dropped into the lake as the Red Army made its final push for Berlin in March, 1945. One eyewitness, Eckhard Litz, told a post-war commission that he saw 30 concentration camp prisoners unloading heavy crates from lorries parked by the Stolpsee. The boxes were then ferried into the middle of the lake, and thrown into its waters. "When the last case had been thrown overboard, the men returned to shore, were lined up and the last thing I saw were the flashes of the machine guns of the guards as they were killed."

(telegraph.co.uk)

The treasure belonged to Hermann Goering, pictured right, with wife Emmy, left and Benito Mussolini, who stored it at his hunting lodge Carinhall

Read more:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2281243/Israeli-researcher-hunt-1BILLION-looted-Nazi-gold-Berlin-lake-given-German-backing.html#ixzz2jvTx2YOh>

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[Figure this one out, put it on full screen after you click on the link](#)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5gK2MxGR0M>



The Battle of the Somme (French: *Bataille de la Somme*, German: *Schlacht an der Somme*), also known as the **Somme Offensive**, was a battle of the First World War fought by the armies of the British and French empires against the German Empire. It took place between 1 July and 18 November 1916 on either side of the River Somme in France. The battle was one of the largest of World War I, in which more than 1,000,000 men were wounded or killed, making it one of humanity's bloodiest battles. A Franco-British commitment to an offensive on the Somme had been made during Allied discussions at Chantilly, Oise in December 1915. The Allies agreed upon a strategy of combined offensives against the Central Powers in 1916, by the French, Russian, British and Italian armies, with the Somme offensive as the Franco-British contribution. The main part of the offensive was to be made by the French Army, supported on the northern flank by the Fourth Army of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

When the German Army began the Battle of Verdun on the Meuse in February 1916, many French divisions intended for the Somme were diverted and the supporting attack by the British became the principal effort. The First day on the Somme was a serious defeat for the German Second Army, which was forced out of its first line of defence by the French Sixth Army, from Foucaucourt-en-Santerre south of the Somme to Maricourt on the north bank and by the British Fourth Army from Maricourt to the vicinity of the Albert–Bapaume road. 1 July 1916 was also the worst day in the history of British Army, which had c. 60,000 casualties, mainly on the front between the Albert–Bapaume road and Gommecourt, where the attack failed disastrously, few British troops reaching the German front line. The British Army on the Somme was a mixture of the remains of the pre-war regular army, Territorial Force and the Kitchener Army which was composed of Pals battalions, recruited from the same places and occupations, whose losses had a profound social impact in Britain.

The battle is notable for the importance of air power and the first use of the tank. At the end of the battle, British and French forces had penetrated 6 miles (9.7 km) into German-occupied territory, taking more ground than any offensive since the Battle of the Marne in 1914. The Anglo-French armies had failed to capture Péronne and were still 3 miles (4.8 km) from Bapaume, where the German armies maintained their positions over the winter. British attacks in the Ancre valley resumed in January 1917 and forced the Germans into local withdrawals to reserve lines in February before the scheduled retirement to the *Siegfriedstellung* (Hindenburg Line) began in March.

General Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the BEF and General Henry Rawlinson commander of the Fourth Army, have been criticised ever since, for the human cost of the battle and for failing to achieve their territorial objectives. On 1 August 1916 Winston Churchill criticised the British Army's conduct of the offensive to the British Cabinet, claiming that though the battle had forced the Germans to end their offensive at Verdun, attrition was damaging the British armies more than the German. Though Churchill was unable to suggest an alternative, a critical view of the British on the Somme has been influential in English-language writing ever since.

A rival conclusion by Terraine, Sheffield, Duffy, Chickering, Herwig and Philpott among others, is that there was no strategic alternative for the British in 1916 and that an understandable horror at British losses is insular, given the millions of casualties borne by the French and Russian armies since 1914. This school of thought sets the battle in a context of a general Allied offensive in 1916 and notes that German and French writing on the battle puts it in a continental perspective, which is inaccessible to anglophone monoglots because much of the writing has yet to be translated. The Battle of the Somme has been called the beginning of modern all-arms warfare, during which Kitchener's Army learned to fight the mass-industrial war, which the continental armies had been engaged in for two years. This view sees the British contribution to the battle as part of a coalition war and part of a process, which took the strategic initiative from the German Army and caused it irreparable damage, leading to its collapse in late 1918.

Tobruk

22 January 1941. The Australian 2/11th Infantry Battalion regroups on the escarpment at the south side of Tobruk harbour, after penetrating the Italian outer defences and attacking anti-aircraft positions.

Following the fall of Bardia, 7th Armoured Division with Australian 19th Brigade advanced to Tobruk which was isolated by the 7th Armoured Division on 6 January. By 9 January it was surrounded. After a twelve-day period building up forces around Tobruk, O'Connor attacked on 21 January and Tobruk was captured 22 January, yielding over 25,000 prisoners along with 236 field and medium guns, 23 medium tanks and more than 200 other vehicles. The Australian losses were 49 dead and 306 wounded. Some fierce fighting took place and a company was forced to withdraw in an Italian counter-attack, in which the Australian troops lost 100 killed, wounded and captured.



There were approximately 25,000 Italian defenders at Tobruk under the overall command of General Petassi Manella, commander of the XXII Corps. Besides "fortress troops," the defenders comprised the 61st "Sirte" Infantry Division, sixty-two tankettes, twenty-five medium tanks, and some two-hundred guns. The perimeter was about forty-eight kilometers long and was fortified with a combination of anti-tank ditch, wire, and a double row of strongpoints. In many ways the defenses at Tobruk were a replica of the defenses at Bardia.^[14]

The Allied infantry force comprised the 16th, 17th and 19th Brigades of Australian 6th Division under Major-General Iven Mackay supported by the 16 remaining Infantry tanks of 7 RTR and the machine-gun battalions of the Northumberland Regiment and Cheshire Regiment. 7th Armoured Division with its unit of Free French Marines were to play the same containing role they had at Bardia. Given the lack of tank numbers, heavy artillery bombardment was used to soften the Italian defenses.^[46] With their Browning machine guns, and four bombs each, the Vickers Wellington and Blenheim bombers also played an important part in the softening up of defenses of the Tobruk garrison.

British 6-inch howitzers firing on Tobruk, January 1941.

On the morning of 21 January, the assault went in under the cover of darkness. Once it appeared that the 2/3rd Battalion had breached the Italian defenses, the leading companies of the 2/1st Battalion started their advance. However, one of the companies ran into booby-traps that killed or wounded several in a platoon. Major Abbot's company was given the task of clearing the forward platoon outposts, which it took after some confused fighting, having initially been held up by Post 55. Sergeant Hoddinot hurled grenades to overcome the bunkered platoon. At Post 62, despite tank and artillery fire, the enemy stood firm. Lieutenant Clark poured a mixture of crude oil and kerosene through the gap in the bunker to silence it. Eleven Italians died and 35 surrendered. As Captain Campbell's company reached the end of the first phase of the advance it came under fire from dug-in tanks. Captain Anderson and Lieutenant Russell were wounded and Lieutenant Russell killed. Despite encountering some stiff opposition, the 2/8th Battalion took 1,300 prisoners. At the same time, Italian gunners brought down fire on the battalion and Italian infantry counterattacked with the support of nine tanks. Under pressure from this strong battalion force, Campbell's company was forced to withdraw, having lost 100 killed, wounded and captured. At this point help arrived in the form of two British Matilda tanks. The companies fought their way forward with grenade, Bren, rifle and bayonet. They were met by a hail of fire. Lieutenant Trevorrow and Sergeant Duncan were seriously wounded, and two of the platoon commanders had bullet holes in their clothing or equipment. At this point Captain McDonald called forward two of the British Infantry tanks to engage a platoon holding Post 42. Some close-quarter fighting saw the enemy cleared from Post 41. As Captain Abbot's company continued its advance it came under fire from the Italian platoons dug in Posts 34 and 35, and was forced to withdraw.



During the night 19th Brigade HQ attempted to negotiate a ceasefire with the commander of the Italian XXII Corps and garrison in Tobruk. It was hoped they would succeed, but a telephone call from the Italian supreme command put paid to their efforts. Mussolini himself had spoken personally to General Manella, forbidding him to surrender, and informing him that squadrons of Italian bombers were on their way as reinforcements. Later that night Italian [SM.79s](#) carried out a surprise low-level attack, which bombed some 8,000 prisoners who had been gathered inside a fenced enclosure, killing and wounding hundreds of their men. This bombing broke the will of many among those still prepared to fight.

In the end, General Manella surrendered some 12 hours after the fighting began. But Manella refused to order the surrender of his forces. This meant that it took a further day to clean up any resistance.

Next day, the capture of the remaining outposts from R1 to S11 was completed and assisted strongly by Infantry tanks of the Support Group and the 2nd [Rifle Brigade](#) and 1st [King's Royal Rifle Corps](#) which had arrived as reinforcements that morning. Meanwhile, the 7th Armoured Division which had also entered the perimeter from the Derna road that morning stood by to advance into the town if required. On the afternoon of 22 January, [Brigadier-General Vincenzo della Mura](#) and the remaining 17,000 defenders surrendered. General della Mura was the commander of the 61 Infantry Division Sirte. The Italians had lost 25,000 killed, wounded and captured. The Australians by comparison had 400 killed, wounded and captured.

The Suez 'Crisis', 1955.

The history of the battle for control of the Suez canal dates back to the reasons for its construction. The British Empire, desperate for easier shipping routes to India, opened the canal in 1869. The canal runs through the then British territory of Egypt. After the second world war, many old British colonies began to fight for their independence. When India won its freedom in 1949 it signalled the end to an old world order, the old European colonial powers were no longer in charge of the world, the USA and the USSR were the new superpowers. The conflict also has a root in the establishment of the Israeli state in former Palestine in 1948. The final nail in the coffin of the British empire came when General Nasser, president of Egypt, attempted to nationalise the canal so that profits derived from its use would go to the Egyptian state rather than into British and French coffers. A large conspiracy surrounding the outbreak of hostilities has only recently been uncovered, the British, French and Israeli governments colluded to invade Egypt. The Israelis would invade on a security pretext before the British and French would come to the region in order to 'protect' their interests in theatre.



The Suez canal.

In military terms, the Anglo-Franco-Israeli force defeated the Egyptian army. The defeat for Britain and France came in the form of international politics. By the time of the conflict neither country was the dominant power in the west, and pressure from the U.S. (due the fact that Washington was unwilling to condone the Anglo-French actions while condemning the Soviet actions in Hungary) forced a UN ceasefire upon the region. The conflict formed a turning point in world politics, no longer would Britain and France have a free reign around the world. The resignation of the then British Prime Minister (Anthony Eden) and the level of propaganda in the British media against Nasser at the time of the crisis serves as a reminder that, even in the post modern age of a western democracy, cynical manipulation of public opinion and conspiratorial international politics are still common. Spurious counter argument...The Suez crisis wasn't a war, merely a 'crisis'. British troops *did* win the battle, the conflict was lost in international diplomacy.

The first argument is just semantics, we could easily call the conflict 'The battle for the Suez canal'. The second argument has more validity, but Britain's loss was its credibility as an international superpower and control of the canal rather than a loss in terms of strict military casualties or territory gained.

'Good ol' Freda': The loyal Beatles secretary talks about life with the Fab Four for the first time in 50 years



They don't make many girls like Freda Kelly any more. They really don't. Freda's employer was a young man called Brian Epstein and her job was to run the Official Beatles Fan Club. It was she thinks, the best job in the world, and back in the Sixties half the teenage girls in the country, if not the Western world, would probably have agreed. Yet for the past 50 years she's hardly ever talked about her role with the Beatles, neither in private with her children nor in public, and has rejected all bribes and attempts for her to write the real insiders book.

Hanna Reitsch (1912-1979)

Born in Hirschberg, Silesia, (now Jelenia Góra, Poland) she became Germany's leading woman stunt pilot and later in 1937, chief test pilot for the Luftwaffe. She worshipped Hitler and the Nazi ideology and became the only woman to win the Iron Cross (First and Second class). Hanna Reitsch spent three days in the Bunker just before Hitler's suicide on April 28, then flew out with the newly appointed Chief of the Luftwaffe, General Robert Ritter von Greim, whose orders were to mount a bombing attack on the Russian forces who were now approaching the Chancellery and the Führerbunker. Hanna Reitsch survived the war and resided in Ghana from 1962 to 1966 where she founded and ran a gliding school. She died on August 24, 1979, aged 67, in Frankfurt from a heart attack.

Von Greim was arrested and while awaiting trial committed suicide in a Salzburg hospital on May 24, 1945. (The graves of Von Greim and Hanna Reitsch can be seen in the Kommunal Friedhof in Salzburg.)

