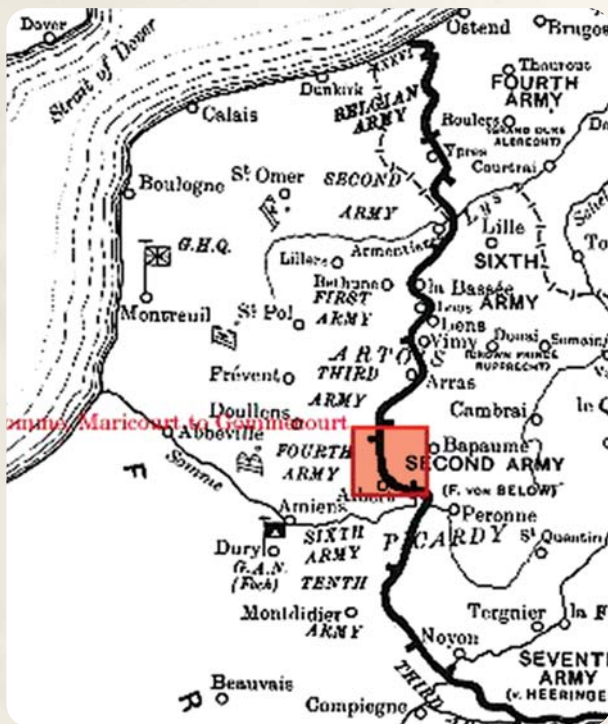


Sunderland in the First World War



LOCAL STUDIES CENTRE FACT SHEET NUMBER 27

Battle of the Somme



The Battle of the Somme, also known as the Somme Offensive, was fought by the armies of the British and French Empires against the German Empire. It occurred between 1 July 1916 and November 1916 in France and was one of the largest and bloodiest battles of the First World War in which more than 1,000,000 men were wounded or killed.

By the end of the first day, 20,000 men had been killed and another 40,000 injured.

The first British tank to be used in warfare entered the battlefields of the Somme in September 1916.

When the Battle of the Somme ended in November 1916 the Allies had managed to advance only five - seven miles in four months at the cost of over 420,000 British casualties, 195,000 French and 650,000 Germans.

Over 500 Sunderland born soldiers were killed throughout this duration, over 170 Wearside soldiers on the first day of the battle alone.

There are over 250 military cemeteries and memorials on the Somme battlefields for the many thousands of casualties who fell during this offensive.



Pozieres British Cemetery

1914 - 1918



Sunderland
City Council

Sunderland and the Somme

Sunderland affiliated units deployed in the Battle of the Somme included Durham Light Infantry (7th and 20th), 160th Brigade Royal Field Artillery and Northumberland Hussars to name but a few. These units were recruited in Sunderland and the Territorial Force units were based at the Drill Hall, which was situated near Green Terrace and the Empire Theatre in Sunderland city centre.



Durham Light Infantry 20th Division

Football in Flanders

The majority of Sunderland Association football players had signed up during the Great War, many serving during the Battle of the Somme such as Charlie Buchan, Leigh Richmond Loose, Bob Young and Thomas Sowerby Rowlandson. Some returned with military medals, others not at all.

During the war many Sunderland footballers played on "The Wearside Heavies" a team that had gained formidable playing reputation.

SAFC footballer Norman Gaudie, was a Conscientious Objector, refusing to pay the 40 shilling fine. He became one of the infamous

Richmond 16, imprisoned at Richmond Castle until removed to France and sentenced to death for refusing to partake in war work. This was later commuted to 10 years imprisonment.



SUNDERLAND CUP TEAM. 1913.

Find out more about the Sunderland in the First World War

For more information visit the Local Studies Library at Sunderland City Library which has books such as

- Sunderland in the Great War by Clive and Gillian Dunn
- Sunderland and the First World War by Trevor Thorne

More information and images can be found on the following website:

- www.sunderlandfirstworldwar.co.uk/history-notables

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