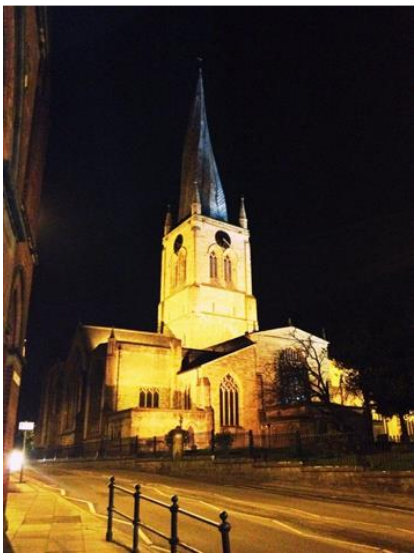
The Spire Sentinel



The Newsletter & Magazine of The Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front Association

ISSUE 68 – September 2021

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the Great War'.

Issue 68 – list of contents

September 2021 WFA Webinar (Planned Presentations)

WFA ZOOM MEETINGS For September, but please keep an eye on the Website and Facebook pages as sometimes there are amendments during the month Follow these links for registering (please note dates and times) Note that the 11th September one is a hybrid meeting which will be 'live' and 'online' at the same time. It will be streamed live into zoom from the branch event which will be taking place in York on Saturday 11 September at 2.30 pm UK time.

11 SEP 2021 HYBRID ONLINE/LIVE MEETING: Learning on the Job – Sir Douglas Haig 1916-1918 by Clive Harris http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/hybrid-onlinelive-meeting-learning-on-the-job-sir-douglas-haig-1916-1918-by-clive-harris/

13 SEP 2021 John Terraine as a Military Historian, Revisited' a presentation by Prof Gary Sheffield http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-john-terraine-as-a-military-historian-revisited-a-presentation-by-prof-gary-sheffield/

27 SEP 2021 The Canadian Corps in the Hundred Days: Two talks by Tim Cook and Bill Stewart http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/events/online-the-canadian-corps-in-the-hundred-days-two-talks-by-tim-cook-and-bill-stewart/

Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter /Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general

Our Speaker – Tuesday 7th September – Steve Brunt

Stephen Brunt – MA, BA Hons – Honorary Alderman of Chesterfield . CWGC Kantor Volunteer Speaker

Steve's presentation to the Chesterfield Branch of the WFA will look at who the CWGC are and the origins of the organisation, it's national and international commitment and its work going forward.From 1994 to 2015 Steve worked at Northern College for adult residential education as a Senior Tutor/Business Development Manager. In his former role he was able to develop and deliver a series of courses around the Great War. He first visited the western front WW1 battlefields with his wife Jill back in 1996 and they have been visiting them ever since. The knowledge he has gained through numerous visits enabled him to develop a unique expertise in the field. He joined the Western Front Association 20 years ago and his first Bulletin is dated September 2001.

As a Councillor and senior Cabinet member on Chesterfield Borough Council Steve initiated a Whistle for the Somme ceremony and event in front of the Town Hall. The ceremony was extremely well attended and took place on 1st July 2016 to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the start of the infamous battle of the Somme. Steve also delivered a series of presentations across the Borough and beyond examining the Somme battle of 1916 in greater detail. As Mayor of Chesterfield (2016/2017) he along with his wife Jill and Councillor John Burrows laid a wreath at the Menin Gate in Ypres, for the people of Chesterfield in January 2017. Steve was also instrumental in developing and chairing the WW1 Commemorations group on Chesterfield Borough Council which initiated a number of commemorative events across the borough for the centenary of the Great War. This was recognised locally and nationally as a huge success and certainly did the Town of Chesterfield proud during that commemorative year.

In 2020 during the lockdown he undertook a series of interviews and training events (on zoom) organised by the CWGC to enable him to become a CWGC volunteer speaker for the organisation.

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September 22nd – our next Branch webinar- with Lincoln At 7pm

https://my.demio.com/ref/sTs3L2VM4VAuF9Z7.

The British Army and the Greeks at Salonika in 1918 presented by Jake Gasson.
Jake Gasson is a second year History DPhil student at the University of Oxford researching the Salonika campaign of the First World War. His doctoral research examines endurance and morale in the British Salonika Force. He previously completed an MSt in the History of War at Oxford, with his thesis examining attitudes amongst British soldiers at Salonika towards the armies of the Entente and the Central Powers.

October Meeting – Tuesday 5th @ 7.30pm

Women Ambulance Drivers on the Western Front 1914 – 1918.

The talk covers women's experiences driving ambulances for the British, Belgium and French Armies on the Western Front during WW1. The talk is complimented by many original, rare and wonderful photographs from Paul's private collection, and also reflects on the Edwardian prejudices towards women and how their war experiences changed their lives.

Biography of Paul Handford MBE

Paul joined the West Midlands Police 1976.
He helped to establish and develop the National Neighbourhood Policing Programme and in 2006 his work was recognized in the Queen's New Year's Honours list when he was made a Member of the British Empire, ***"for services to policing"***.
Since retiring in 2006, Paul was able to focus more on his passion, the research and medal collecting to British civilian volunteer ambulance drivers and units during WW1. Paul and his wife Su, have travelled extensively along the entire length of the Western Front in pursuit of this research. Paul also enjoys presenting talks on the subject to various history groups and organisations up and down the country and has supported exhibitions at the 'In Flanders' Fields Museum' in Ypres, Belgium, and the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham, where medals and other related items from his personal collection were exhibited. Paul is a member of the Orders of Medals Research Society and was a guest speaker at their 2014 and 2019 National Conferences; a member of the Western Front Association, Chair of the Military History Society of West Midland Police, Committee member of the Birmingham Medals Society and Committee member of the West Midlands Police Heritage Museum.

November – 2nd with Tim Lynch

The Home Front 1914-18

The First World War created an entirely new sphere of war - the Home Front. Every single person in the country was affected in some way by the experience. In this talk Tim will look at some of the bits of the history that have been overlooked including a Hull man's plans for a Kamikaze unit to tackle Zeppelins, the danger of transvestite spies, the importance of cocaine, lipstick, knickers and elephants and why feeding ducks could mean a six month jail sentence.

December 7th with John Taylor

'A Prelude to War' (An Archduke's Visit) – a classic and true tale of `what if ?`

John is a professional historian, researcher, lecturer and guide specializing in military and arts history from The Norman period up to the Nineteenth Century but I also venture into a much wider field as and when required. I have appeared on TV and radio and acted in a research capacity on numerous occasions for various media sources. The talk will be about the visit of Archduke Franz Ferdinand to Worksop and Welbeck Abbey in November 1913 …..and an event which could have changed world history

Secretary`s Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the September issue of the Branch newsletter and magazine.

It was great to have our first `real` meeting in August, great to see so many of you coming along, glad to be out and about and trusting that what covid plans were deemed necessary, appropriately applied. Thank you – good to see several new faces at the meeting – I hope you enjoyed our company and we look forward to seeing you .

Just to recap, here`s the conditions which we agreed with our hosts the Chesterfield Labour Club.

1. Hand sanitizer is provided at the entrance and must be used. It will also be provided in the meeting room.

2. Masks must be worn while at the bar, otherwise discretionary.

3. No leaning on, or touching the bar.

4. Windows of the meeting room to be open to provide ventilation.

5. As far as practicable, seating to be distanced.

I had a welcome visitor several weeks ago – Pam Ackroyd – founder member and former Branch Treasurer. Pam is looking well, doing good and happy to be picking up the threads of life again. Hopefully she will be amongst us again soon. The reason for her visit was to drop off a large part of her late husband Malcolm`s collection of books, bequeathed to the Branch which he loved to attend – indeed he was a committee member for many years. Part of the collection had been catalogued – these lists have been circulated to all we are in contact with – and are available to any member. All we ask is a modest donation to Branch funds (and postage if appropriate). If anyone wants a book (s) let me know and I will bring them to the next Branch meeting (Tuesday 7th September). There are still several boxes of books to be listed, I will circulate these when they have been catalogued.

In addition to our normal raffle at the end of the meeting, I will be having a book sale table. No fixed prices…take your pick…all we ask is a modest donation to Branch funds

We have arranged another webinar jointly with our friends at Lincoln Branch for September 22nd at 7pm…..do join us…the Demio link is here

https://my.demio.com/ref/sTs3L2VM4VAuF9Z7.

The British Army and the Greeks at Salonika in 1918 presented by Jake Gasson.

Salonika is a much forgotten theatre of the war and I think we will all learn more about the British Army deployed there, and its sometimes complex relationship with the Greek Army

Our next speaker on Tuesday 7th September is local WFA member and former Chesterfield Councillor Steve Brunt. Steve is now a volunteer with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (as is Jon-Paul Harding, one of our Branch Committee). Steve is going to speak about the CWGC – more details elsewhere in this newsletter.

I am pleased to advise that we now have speakers lined up for October / November /December….more about these elsewhere. Now that these are in place, I am looking to prepare a list of presentations for next year…any suggestions from members on subjects or speakers themselves would be most welcome.

Look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Tuesday

Take care

Grant Cullen…….Branch Secretary…….07824628638

Garrison Library

The Journal of the Royal United Services Institution. Gold Medal (Military) Prize Essay for 1918 ***" How can moral qualities best be developed during the preparation of the officer and the man for the duties each will carry out in war`***

War in History. ***Sir John fisher and the Policy of Strategic Deterrent 1904-1908***

War in History. ***The Impact of War: Matching Expectation with Reality in the Royal Navy in the first Months of the Great War***

Journal of Strategic Studies. ***The Morale Maze: the German Army in Late 1918***

War in History. ***The Chemical Dimension of the Gallipoli Campaign: Introducing Chemical Warfare to the Middle East.***

NWC Review Summer 2007. ***Expectation, Adaption and Resignation…British Battlefleet Planning, August 1914-April 1916***

Air Power Review. ***Haig and Trenchard: Achieving Air Superiority on the Western Front***

WW1 Listserve ***Falsehood in Wartime: by Arthur Ponsonby MP (1929)***

Christopher Phillips ***Civilian Specialists at War: Britain's Transport Experts and the First World War***

Elizabeth Greenhalgh: ***Ferdinand Foch and the French Contribution to the Somme 1916***

William Stewart: ***When the Learning Curve Falls – the Ordeal of the 44th Battalion, Canadian 4th Division, 25 th October 1916***

Meleagh Hampton: ***Hubert Gough, the Anzacs on the Somme. A Descent into Pointlessness***

Brett Holman: ***Constructing the Enemy Within; Rumours of Secret Gun Platforms and Zepellin Bases in Britain, August to October 1914***

Gary Sheffield: ***A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity – Personal Reflections on the Centenary of World War One in 2014***

Jim Beach: ***Doctrine Writing at British GHQ 1917-1918***

Andrew Whitmarsh: ***British Strategic Bombing 1917-1918. The Independent Air Force and its Predecessors***

Christopher Philips: ***Civilian Specialists in War – Britain`s Transport Experts in WW1***

British Journal of Military Research ***Volume 1 – October 2014***

Micharl St. Maur Sheil ***Does the Performance of the RFC at Cambrai in 1917 illustrate demands for aerial observation lead to the development of air power.***

Jonathan Krause ***Early Trench Tactics of the French***

Paul Mulvey ***The Western Front and Gallipoli 1915***

Unattributed ***Gallipoli Landings from the Perspective of the Lancashire Fusiliers***

Unattributed ***Gallipoli – The Last Batle of the Victorian Era ?***

James Kitchen ***Going to War – Europe and the Wider World 1914-1915***

Institute of Historical Research, Andrekas Varnava ***Imperialism first – War second ?. The British deliberations on where to attack the Ottoman Empire Nov 14 to April 15***

International History Review: ***Sir Basil Zaharoff and Sir Vincent Caillard as Instruments of British Policy towards Greece and the Ottoman Empire during the Asquith and Lloyd George Administrations, 1915–8***

Scientia Militaria. Ian van der Waag. ***The politics of south Africa`s `Second Little Bit` and the War on the Western front 1914-18***

Peter Doyle, Peter Barton, and Johan Vandewalle. ***ARCHAEOLOGY OF A GREAT WAR DUGOUT: BEECHAM FARM, PASSCHENDAELE, BELGIUM***

RUSI Journal ; Jonathon Krause; ***Ferdinand Foch and the Scientific Battle***

Peter Doyle ***Geology and the war on the Western Front, 1914–1918***

Simon Birch ***The abortive British attack on the Gommecourt salient, in support of the IV Army assault on the Somme, 1 July 1916. An operational case study at divisional level.***

Dominiek Dendooven In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, Belgium ***Indians in the Ypres Salient 1914-1918***

E Tufan ***The Late Ottomans' path to alliance with Germany in 1914, Revisited***

Dr Anne Samson, Independent Historian, co-ordinator of Great War in East Africa
With Lettow and Smuts through Africa: World War 1
Copies of any of the above papers can be obtained via e mail…..contact grantcullen@hotmail.com Let me know what ones you want and I will send them to you.

BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available.
Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-11)
www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2
or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.
Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) **www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/**
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)

1	Fridge Magnet	(£5)	59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover
2	Anniv' Coaster	(£8.50)	4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize
3	Mousemats	(£6)	196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer
4	Bookmarks	(£2)	(dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage
5	Baseball Caps	(£8)	Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all
6	Ties	(£11)	Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester
7	Lapel Badges	(£2.50)	25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin
8	Mug	(£10)	11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)
9	Messenger Bag	(£27)	37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres
10	Despatch Bag	(£30)	40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres
11	Shoulder Bag	(£25)	40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres
12	Oxford Shirt	(£27)	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester
13	Breathable Jacket	(£71)	Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating
14	Rugby Shirt	(£25)	Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton
15	Fleece	(£24)	Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill
16	T-shirt	(£17)	Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton
17	Sweat Shirt	(£22.50)	Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan
18	Polo Shirt	(£20.50)	Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton

WFA 2022 Calendars

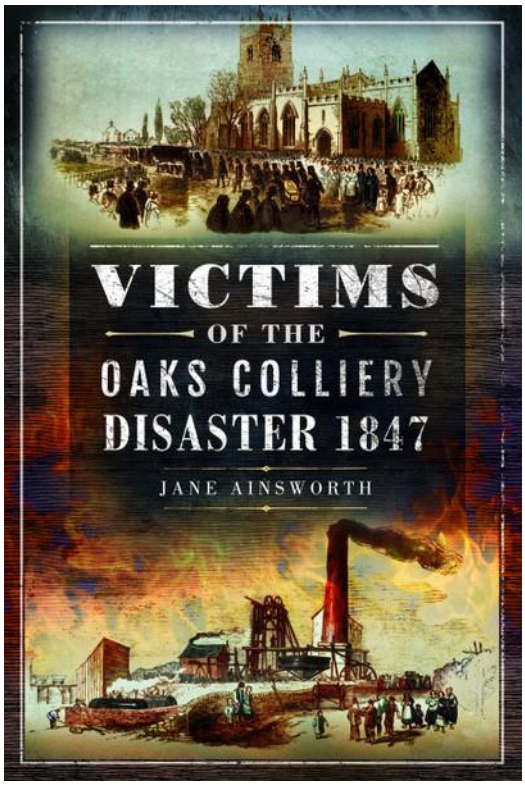
Statement from Branded Goods Trustee

Because of the Covid 19 Situation and Regulations we realise that the sale of Calendars is a bit later again this year, a major factor being that good Images have been hard to come by this time due to people not going to France for nearly 2 years. but now all hurdles should now be overcome with most Branches now restarting regular meetings, The situation will be monitored regularly, so as it stands at the moment Calendars will once again be available for purchase at Branch plus on the Website (eshop) or phone Sarah or Maya at the Office, I will shortly be writing to Branches giving them an update, once the calendars are available This routinely turns a profit, also it enables branches to gain some income through branch sales Please keep checking Website for up to date information, (these have as yet not been finalised so not gone into print yet)

Mark Macartney

New Book

Regular attender at Branch Meetings, Jane Ainsworth has just had her latest book published. It`s not about The Great War, but is well researched on a local history subject.



The Centenary of the First World War and discovering more about the fates of two great uncles inspired the author of this book, Jane Ainsworth, to initiate several projects in Barnsley. It also led to the publication of her first two books by Helion & Company. Great Sacrifice: the Old Boys of Barnsley Holgate Grammar School in the First World War (March 2016) and Keeping Their Beacons Alight: the Potter Family of Barnsley and their Service to our Country (November 2017) have received acclaim for their tenacity in revealing detailed stories about the individuals and families.

This new book has developed as a result of Jane's deep interest in her coal mining ancestors - both paternal great grandparents, Charles Ernest Hardy and Edwin Hall Bailey, worked in collieries in the Barnsley area as did their descendants. At the end of 2017, Jane transcribed a ledger containing the minutes of the Colliers' Relief Fund Committee for the 1847 Oaks Colliery Explosion for Barnsley Archives. This stimulated her empathy and curiosity about the lives of the people referred to in the minutes - widows, orphans and a few survivors of the disaster – as well as the 73 victims. She was determined to research all of the individuals in as much detail as possible, despite the challenge of limited early records, to flesh out their stories and to pay tribute to the families of mineworkers whose lives at that time were considered of little value to the colliery owners and managers. Once again, Jane has created 'a memorial book like no other' as a contribution to Barnsley's mining heritage

Pen & Sword History

Pages: 208
Illustrations: 60 black and white illustrations
ISBN: 9781526745736

Published: 30th November 2021 £10.39 Introductory Offer RRP £12.99

https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Victims-of-the-Oaks-Colliery-Disaster-1847-Paperback/p/20119

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AUGUST MEETING

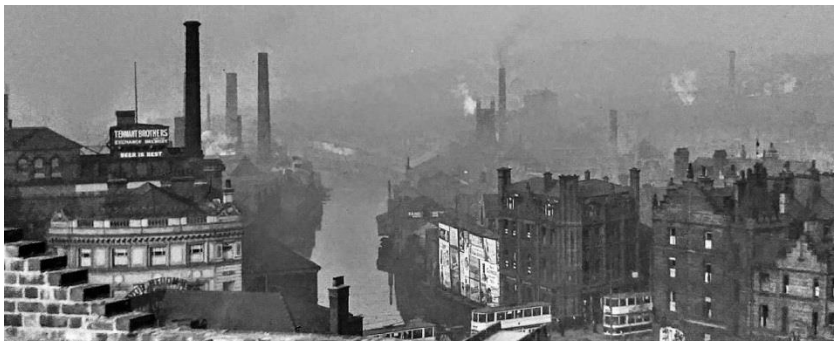
Speaker at our august meeting was ANDY RAWSON who has over forty books to his name, including eight Pen and Sword 'Battleground Europe' travel books and three History Press 'Handbook' reference books. He has edited the minutes of the Second World War conferences and the top-secret correspondence between George C. Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower. He books include covering Poland's struggle in the twentieth century, Auschwitz Extermination Camp and wartime Krakow. He has also written a ten-part series on the Western Front campaigns between 1914-18. He has a master's degree with Birmingham University's history department. Andy has been a regular visitor to Chesterfield WFA Branch meetings over the past few years and indeed but for `Covid` should have delivered presentation just over a year ago. The title of Andy`s talk was `The Real Peaky Blinders'. The story of ex-soldiers running amok with gambling and gang warfare across Sheffield in the 1920s. Andy`s great grandad was a police officer at the time and his workmate's grandad was a gang enforcer in the same area. After years of looking at battles and battalions Andy is getting immersed in social history during and around the war. After all 1914-18 was only four years in people's long lives.

Branch chair, Tony Bolton introduced Andy referring to him as `someone who he had known for more years than he cared to remember` having worked for the first time in 1984.

Andy introduced himself by saying he has become increasingly interested in The Home Front and the social history of the Great War period….we don't hear much about people`s lives ***before*** the war, neither do we hear much about their lives ***after*** the war.

Why did Andy get into this topic..? It was a mixture of family history and his own history which criss-crosses the story. For sources he has used his father`s books and the British Newspaper Archive. He mentioned the TV series `Peaky Blinders` about fictional gangs of ex-servicemen in the immediate post WW1 years, which were in fact based upon pre-war gangs in Birmingham.

This talk would be about real people and real events in Sheffield.



Sheffield – the smoke and grime from industry

A Day at the Races, George Mooney, born in Ireland but his family had relocated to Sheffield to find work in the steel industry. He was a troublesome teenager making money from stealing, illegal gambling and `bottling`…crowding round people in the street and robbing them. They also went to the races, threatening legal bookmakers to hand over their pitches, making a few quid in the process.

When war broke out Mooney and his gang all joined up together, hoping to stay together and they all enlisted in the 12th Yorks and Lancaster Regiment who were known as the Sheffield City Battalion. The training begins at Redmires Camp on the outskirts of the city. Andy mentioned his grandmother watching the battalion marching past.

The Sheffield City Battalion then moved to Clipstone Camp and it was from there that Mooney subsequently absconded, going drinking, was arrested and banged up in the `glasshouse`. Upon release he absconded again, but this time kept his head down and spent the rest of the war in obscurity in Ireland, but returned to Sheffield when the war ended, looking to make a living in a city with few opportunities. The Sheffield steel industry had had a rich war having expanded tenfold as it struggled to make incessant demands from the Ministry of Munitions for weapons and ammunition. Over 100000 people were employed in 200 foundries and factories, many of whom were women. Overtime was compulsory and wage packets were well filled from making 11 million items for the war effort.

From this money comes unwise spending including drinking, indeed Lloyd George said that alcohol was as big an enemy as the Germans. Gambling was a popular pastime although back then there was no high street bookmakers with illegal gambling pitches being set up around the city. These were set up in out of the way places, easy to guard and post look-outs who would give warning if the police came on the scene.

Sky Edge, this was on the south east side of Sheffield, a derelict building with a track on a high piece of land from which it was easy to keep a good look-out. A chap called `Snaps` Jackson set it up before the war. Jackson was a bookmaker covering legal race days and Sky Edge on other days. He made a fortune from the steelworkers during war, one of his clients was Sheffield United and England footballer, Bill

Fowlkes – known as `Fatty` Fowlkes due to his 6`9 ins massive frame which weighed in at 24 sts. During the war Sky Edge became well known as a hangout for conscription dodgers and deserters so the authorities decided that they had to take action. With a biplane circulating overhead to keep a look-out and military police drafted in to back up the civil police, the gamblers were arrested with Jackson being conscripted. This was not the end of Sky Edge, they regrouped but attendance was restricted to hardened gamblers. One of these was George Mooney who watched and learned how the business was run and took over Sky Edge at the end of the war.

The Armistice came in November 1918 and its signing was tinged with sadness as so many had lost sons, husbands, brothers in the conflict and they were not there to celebrate the victory. Sheffield was also a city ravaged by Spanish Flu and in November 1918, in the city alone, 1300 people died. For most people it was important to keep `bright` and in the gambling ring business boomed with out of work ex-soldiers and miners who had been given a `thank you` bonus for their efforts during the war. The ex-soldiers, many of whom had served on the front line – they weren`t afraid of anybody – they could defend the `ring` from troublemakers and chase up unpaid debts.

There was a post war recession and, unfortunately for the nation, Lloyd George`s promise of a ‘land fit for heroes` sounded hollow although some form of Nationalisation for industry mitigated the effects somewhat. One of those industries was the steel industry and Sheffield was reeling from the reduction in work because weapons and munitions were not needed any more and on top of that taxes had to rise to pay for subsistence for the growing number of unemployed. So everyone had less money and that included less money for gambling. So what did George Mooney do ?...he employed les staff, keeping only `his` boys from the West Bar part of the city and sacked the ones from the Parkhill district which was in fact closer to Sky Edge. Samuel Garvin had left Mooney some time before over a disagreement and had avoided military service by moving around, committing petty crime. He was a well

built, violent man – he was also charismatic and well dressed. He kept out of trouble by employing others to do his dirty work for him. He formed the Park Brigade and they were soon sending their enforcers to seek out new `business in the city – loan sharking – because at that time few people had bank accounts and if you wanted to borrow a few quid then the only alternative was the loan shark – with exorbitant interest rates. Far from being a 'land fit for heroes`….it was a `dog eat dog` society. The strong thrived and the poor survived.

Unemployment was as high as 50% among men and incalculable among women, most of whom had lost their jobs in industry when the war ended. There was riots in the city in august 1921 when men demonstrated outside the newspaper offices. Mounted police were deployed and violence broke out at various locations throughout the city. Unemployed men then started going round factories in the city to highlight their plight by stopping men working. At Jessops on Brightside 3000 men marched on the works and rushed the four constables on the gate and started smashing every window in the buildings. It took dozens of mounted officers who were rushed to the scene to sort it all out.

Andy then said that it is at this point his personal interest becomes involved….his great grandfather PC469 Charles Rawson who lived at the police house in Walleye.

One small incident shows just how low the country had fallen – the Battle of Providence Road in June 1922. Andy`s great grandfather was at this disturbance – Andy had gleaned this from contemporary newspaper reports. Ironically Andy's mate Carl, his grandfather was a gang enforcer at the same time, so we see different sides of the same story. A chap called Harold Cundy was about to be evicted. A former council employee he had been laid off and had got behind with his rent so he, his wife and two children were to be thrown onto the street. A 400 strong crowd marched to Providence Road to stop the magistrates order being carried out, and their they were met with a police superintendent and seven police officers in attendance to make sure the evictions were carried out. The officers were forced back into the yard where the children were sitting on the family`s few possessions. The crowd wanted to put the furniture back into the house but Councillor Butcher stood up and addressed them. Then the missiles started flying – there was a brick yard located nearby – until a further 16 police offices turned up, some mounted, and a baton charge dispersed the crowd. Throughout the country this was how ex-soldiers and their families were treated.

Sam Garvin had a burning ambition to take control of the Sky Edge `ring` and did this by intimidating the gamblers as they were going up whilst others would threaten the `look outs` for the `pitch and toss` schools. Finally Garvin put a message under Mooney`s door in January 1923…and this led to three years of gang warfare in the city`s back streets. It started with a Park Brigade man being beaten unconscious in April followed by an attack on Mooney`s men as they left a brothel. The police turned

up and both gangs promptly turned their anger on the officers. One of Mooney`s men was arrested but when he appeared in court Mooney turned up to make sure his fine was paid.

So, policing in the City…we have to remember than the police in the 1920s had none of the modern equipment taken for granted today, There was very few telephones, no cars and often it was too dangerous for police to go in to certain areas as an increased presence was sure to stir up trouble. What did a policeman get after 25 years on the beat?.....a watch…Andy showed the one his great grandad was given

Andy then put up a slide showing a map, with Mooney`s house in red and the location of West Bar police station. The Park Brigade gathered outside Mooney`s house and threw bricks at the house, but scattered when the police arrived. Mooney`s house was searched an a number of guns were found, similarly when other houses belonging to his gang members were raided. One gang member was released but got a kicking on leaving police station…and promptly ran back inside for protection.

The next picture showed the building which is now the Emergency Services Museum.

When Mooney and his gang went to court, witnesses had been intimidated, others failed to appear, whilst Mooney admitted to having a gun which he said, was for his own protection as he claimed the police had refused to help him, with the result that all those accused were fined. Then when it came to the Park Brigade court case similarly, they too were only fined, despite the police, in both cases having advised the Bench to lock everybody up and advisedly so as shortly after mounted police had to be sent to Parkhill where Albert Foster`s house was being besieged by Mooney`s gang . Foster was escorted away and placed under police protection. Again only fines were handed down. One of Mooney`s men, `Spud` Murphy shouted out the name of a horse – everybody bet on it – it won – and all the fines were paid.

Peace was restored as the two gangs returned to making money, meanwhile the two top men took a step back while they got the younger men to do all their dirty work

Sheffield had parallels with Chicago where Al Capone was king and everyone in the city was worried about the escalation in violence.

Lt.Col. John Hall Dalwood was head of Sheffield city police. He was a Boer War veteran and became involved in a war of words in the press – he saying – look – we are arresting these gang members but the courts are letting them off with a fine instead of a prison sentence. Quite a few people suspected that the gangs were bribing the magistrates to ensure none were sent to prison. The City Watch Committee was supposed to oversee law and order but refused to be drawn into the argument. Meanwhile the politicians of the day had plenty to say and the papers were full of stories.

Journalists described gang members in the following words " …..they have calculated quite coolly and calmly against everyone by a terrifying outlawing….they are prepared to put up a stiff fight for supremacy…strong measures will be necessary to beat them down. The boys in the gangs dressed well, wearing gold watches to display their wealth. There was also rumours that the Park Brigade were in contact with a

well-established Birmingham gang led by Billy Kimber. Billy Kimber features in `Peaky Blinders`…..fact meets fiction.

Kelham Island, now home to many cafes and restaurants along the River Don and is also home to Sheffield`s industrial museum. George Mooney decided that now was a good time to tell his story to the newspapers, complaining that he was blamed for too many things and that his activities were blown out of all proportion but he also made the mistake of naming his associates…not a good idea. `Spud` Murphy was the first to attack him followed by an attack by others on Mooney`s house where he had to barricade himself inside.

George Mooney`s House

Murphy lost the plot and attacked the pregnant Mrs Mooney and was sentenced to six months hard labour. Garvin put `the boot` in when on Christmas Eve 1923 a `little bird` told him that Mooney was in bed poorly. He broke in scared the four children but failed to spot his enemy hiding in a cupboard. This brought Garvin a three month prison sentence – with hard labour. However, he got what he wanted as by now, Mooney had had enough and he left the city with his family.

Garvin let the dust settle after his release but then gave the order to finish off Mooney`s gang. Murphy and several others were at his home on Christmas Eve when bricks came flying through the windows and a revolver was fired. The police arrested five of the Parkhill gang and found razors, coshes and weighted chair legs. Depending on how serious you `offence` was you could get hit with the blunt end of the chair leg…or the other end which had razors imbedded in it.

Again witnesses failed to appear or refused to give names but an out of town Judge gave long sentences but again…Garvin walked free…someone was bribing somebody. At New Year a truce was called with Garvin suggesting to Mooney they share the Sky Edge business…an `armistice` was in place, the feud was to end and the people of Sheffield breathed a sigh of relief. However the truce didn`t last, Garvin changed his mind. He invited Mooney and others to a meeting but chased them through the streets until they found sanctuary in a police station. What was the problem…it was the football pools which Littlewoods had introduced and which had taken off…a low risk bet, potential high return and the coupons delivered to your doorstep. This meant that the feud was back on and Mooney decided to return to Sheffield where he was joined by George Newbold, a bit of a psychopath who was upset by Garvin…what Garvin did…he gave Newbold a good hiding at his home. A reprisal attack against George Butler resulted in his assailant getting 18 months in jail.

The Old Town Hall – Sheffield`s Court House

Andy now turned his attention to William Plommer…Bombardier William Plommer…nicknamed Jock as he was originally from Glasgow who had left the army in 1912 but was called up as a Reservist and after the war settled in Sheffield having a job at Phoenix Bessemer steelworks.

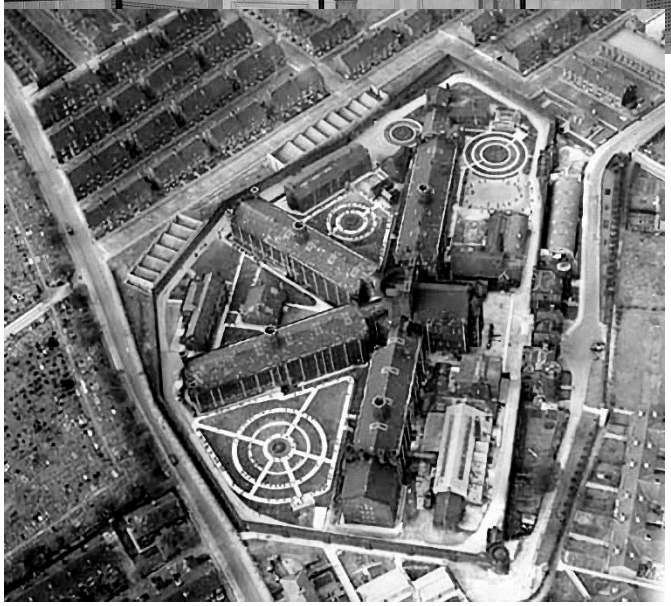
William Plommer (left)

Now Jock`s mate , Harry Liversedge, was  a bit of a crook and two brothers, William and Lawrence Fowler were new members of the Park Brigade. Garvin told them to go down and sort out Liversedge, for reasons that we will never know. They found him at the Windsor hotel and gave him `a bit of a slap`. Liversedge called his mate Bonner to help him get revenge and together they beat up the Fowler brothers. Garvin was furious that two of his men had been humiliated.

Garvin and the Fowler brothers and others turned up at the pub. Bonnar wanted a one to one fight but Garvin`s crowd mobbed him. Garvin, who had set this up escaped the scene by tram and while doing so he stabbed some random person….why would he do that…to give himself an alibi that he had been somewhere else. Two police officers found the Fowler brothers near to where Bonner had been injured and other members of the Park Brigade were arrested nearby and taken down to the police station. The mood changed, however, when news arrived that Bonner had died of his injuries. Subsequently thousands turned out for his funeral.

The Rawson Arms

Ten men were sent to Leeds Assizes for trial 23rd April 1925. The trial was a bit of a farce, with alibis, lies and refusals to implicate others. There was also a plea of `self-defence `…ten men against one! Finally Liversedge took the witness stand and he pointed the finger of blame at the Fowler brothers.



Leeds Assizes

Subsequently witness after witness appeared and collaborated this story that it was the brothers who had murdered Bonner. Three out of the ten received received long sentences for manslaughter, Garvin 18 months for stabbing someone else! The Fowler brothers were found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by hanging and taken to Armley Gaol to await the sentences being carried out. As an anecdote, Andy then mentioned that in his working life he had worked building the extension to Armley Gaol.

Attention was then turned to the formation of the `Flying Squad`. William Joynson Hicks, the Home Secretary, gave Sheffield Police permission in May 1925 to form a special group to take on the gangs, any place, anytime, anywhere and they quickly became known as the Flying Squad, headed by Sergeant William Robinson, a former Coldstream Guards Officer, PC Walter Locksley, a champion shell carrier in the Royal Garrison Artillery, PC Herbert Blount, a retired heavyweight boxer and the four were completed by PC Jack Farrely, who just loved a good punch up ! They worked in plain clothes and carried short heavy truncheons They went around the pubs looking for gang members, beat them up then report that they had fallen over whilst resisting arrest. They visited gang members as soon as they had been let out of prison, put the pressure on them, gave them a slap and tried to make them inform on their colleagues. They were allowed to use all necessary without the threat of repercussions. Lawyers complained about the legality of such actions but the public were pleased that the Flying Squad were at last taking the fight to the gangs. Now the Flying Squad may have been forged under Hall-Dalwood`s time but his time was up as

he had lost the support of the Watch Committee, the Magistrates and more importantly the people. What did he do like most other public servants in a similar situation – he went on sick leave and took early retirement.

38 year old Captain Percy Sillitoe took command of Sheffield`s Police Force. He was a Londoner with no links to Sheffield, had served in the British South African Police in South West Africa and Tanganyika. He returned to England in 1922 and served two years as Chief Constable of Chesterfield. He went on raids with the Sheffield Flying Squad, attended court on their cases. His first day on the job coincided with the first day of the General Strike of 1926 and the police had organised a special force of 7000 special constables to police the protests by thousands of strikers and there was an uneasy time for 9 days until the strike came to an end.

Sillitoe increased the size of the Flying Squad, improved the training, including introducing Ju-Jitsu.

Andy went on to look at three examples of how the Flying Squad operated.

September 1926 the entered the Red Lion pub, frequented by Mooney`s men and told the landlord to make several men leave. One, George Blakewell refused, he was knocked out and dragged outside and arrested. Despite injuries showing that excessive force had been used, he was given three months hard labour for assaulting a police officer. Next we have the case of Thomas Windle, he had just returned after spending 9 months in prison for carrying out a razor attack. He was seen in a pub, asked to step outside where members of the Flying Squad beat him up and was given 3 months hard labour for assaulting an officer. Another target was Albert Foster, known as the razor king. He always carried a piece of wood in his sleeve – with a razor blade embedded in the wood. Locksley and Blount arrived at a pub in West Bar – and Foster arrived at the local police station a bloodied mess! He was charged with being drunk and disorderly and assaulting a police officer. When he appeared in court, swathed in bandages, his solicitor pointed to Windle who said he wished to change his plea to attempted suicide which brought much laughter to those gang members in the public gallery, but he too got 9 months hard labour.

Andy now returned to the fowler brothers, Wilfred and Lawrence. They had been sharing a cell in Armley gaol, Lawrence (left) was the outgoing one, Wilfred (right) the quieter of the two.

Now, after a long time in the cells they were both in a state of shock and depression. They had not been allowed any contact with the gang members but they assured their family that everything had been done to change their sentences

Wilfred saw his wife and daughter but Lawrence`s wife refused to take the children into the prison.

The brothers` solicitor appealed the sentence saying that both could not be accused of the same crime and he thought that they were being scapegoated for the gang activity. The Court of criminal Appeal agreed that a challenge could be made but it would take another eight long months to prepare the case. April 1926 the brothers appeared in London where their solicitor citing conflicting evidence asked that the charge be reduced from murder to manslaughter but the Lord Chief Justice Gordon Hewitt rejected the appeal and the sentences stood stating that more of the gang should have been sentenced to death, not less. Lawrence slumped in the dock while Wilfred shouted out that others were guilty as well. There was no concrete evidence to convict the brothers…but there was a mountain of circumstantial evidence. As far as the Lord Chief Justice was concerned, a man had been killed in an affray and the two men must hang. When news filtered back to Sheffield that the appeals had failed, the police were put on the alert but there was only a few minor incidents.

Net morning the dead man`s widow found a letter on her doorstep threatening her with harm for having involved the police. Similar letters were sent to friends of Bonner and they and the widow Bonner were put under police protection.

Similarly, Lawrence Fowler`s wife received an anonymous letter saying that someone desired to get revenge on behalf of her husband. Witnesses also received threatening letters, sometimes being handed to them in the street in person. 'Spud` Murphy took exception to one of these, thumped the man who gave him it, then casually went to the pub for a pint!

The Home Secretary, William Joynson Hicks, said there would be no further appeals and meanwhile their families had suffered eighteen months of abuse while their men had been in jail. They visited them in August and the Notice of Execution appeared on the prison gates on the 2nd of September. In a cruel twist the brothers were to be hanged on consecutive days, Joynson-Hicks thought this would increase the message being sent out to the gangs about their activities. Thomas Pierrepoint, uncle of Henry and brother of Albert the hangmen, was selected to carry out the executions, two out of the 300 he carried out throughout a long career. The families of both men made final visits before each spent the last night alone in the condemned cell, under guard. Wilfred wrote out a confession, hoping that this would spare his brother but Joynson-Hicks would have nothing of it and he was hung at 9am the next morning, alongside a Rotherham man who had murdered his girlfriend. Both were executed in Armley Prison garage as recently a reporter had scaled the prison wall and taken a photograph of an execution.

There was no chime of the prison clock and the crowd who had gathered outside only knew when a notice was posted outside. Lawrence collapsed when his time came the following morning and he was carried to the scaffold. This time the bell tolled at 9am as the hatch opened underneath him. Wilfred was 23, Lawrence 25.

Sheffield was quiet for a few months as gang members served out their sentences with Mooney keeping a low profile but the police wanted him off the street.

Now, a landlord, Harry Flood of the Raven Tavern wanted to make some money put up prize money of £100 if George Mooney and Sam Garvin would fight in a boxing match.

Ironically, it never happened, but there was a fight in his pub. Mooney and Murphy walked in and saw Garvin having a drink and a fight ensued. Flood decided he didn`t really want a boxing match in the middle of his pub so he called the police. Three of them left before the police arrived. Mooney and Murphy decided they would carry on drinking at the Royal Hotel and it was there that three men of the Flying Squad tracked them down. After a brief fight they were arrested but Mooney and Murphy required a doctor`s attention before being taken to the cells. Both were sent down for two months for assaulting a police officer.

This brought an end to gang activities across the city as the people of Sheffield accepted that police violence was preferable to gang violence.

So what happened to everybody?

Garvin and Mooney became bookmakers at Owlerton Greyhound track. The Flying Squad was eventually would up in 1928. What about Captain Sillitoe, he left Sheffield in 1931 and moved to Glasgow to become Chief Constable where he took on the infamous razor gangs. He introduced wireless radios for the police comments. and the black and white checked band called the `Sillitoe Tartan` based on the Glengarry pattern worn by Scottish Regiments. He subsequently moved to Kent but his career culminated as head of MI5 in 1946. His reputation was tarnished, however by the defections to the Soviet Union of Burgess and McLean in 1951, MI5 being accused of being slow in sorting out the cases and he had to step down in 1953.

That concluded Andy`s talk and during the Q & A session, he and Branch Chair Tony, swapped anecdotes of their time working on construction work at Armley Gaol.

Before we wound up Tony asked all in attendance if they had been happy with our Covid 19 arrangements, all seemed in agreement, there being no dissenting voices or comments.

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General Ferdinand Foch and the French Contribution to the Battle of the Somme

ABSTRACT

As commander of the Northern Army Group, General Ferdinand Foch was responsible for the major French contribution to the Battle of the Somme. Using lesser known archival sources this article illuminates the tensions both between the allies and within the French army, looking at the planning, the prosecution of the battle and the aftermath. Although frustrated by having to fight on a battlefield he considered to be unfavourable, the lack of what he considered sufficient resources and the general slowness of operations, Foch learned much about alliance warfare and worked hard to build a relationship with Haig that benefited him as Generalissimo in 1918.

In Anglophone countries especially, the name of Ferdinand Foch is rarely associated with the 1916 Battle of the Somme, usually considered to be a British affair. Even in France, 1916 is remembered for Verdun in eastern France rather than for the Somme in Picardy in northern France. The fighting at Verdun began on 21 February 1916 and continued for ten months as a solely Franco-German battle. Yet Foch, the general who was appointed to supreme Allied command in March 1918, had an important role to play during the 1916 Somme fighting. This article analyses that role and reveals not only the difficulties of fighting a coalition war but also the strains within the French high command and government.

These two overarching themes – tension between allies, and tension within the French Army – are illustrated very clearly in General Foch's handling of the fighting on the Somme. The huge historiography of the battle pays him little attention (excluding, of course, studies of Foch himself). This is because the strategic decisions about the place and the timing were taken by the French commander-in-chief, General Joseph Joffre, and his British counterparts, Field Marshal Sir John French, succeeded by General Sir Douglas Haig. Then the story of the prosecution of the battle became predominantly British. The arguments over the origins of, and reasons for, the battle are not treated here; they have received considerable attention elsewhere. Furthermore, the role of the German commander, General Erich von Falkenhayn, his intentions in launching the offensive at Verdun that imposed far- reaching changes on the French command, and his replacement at the end of August 1916 by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, are not discussed in detail.

Rather, the focus is on the role of Foch, and is based on little used archival sources. These include Foch's own notebooks with their scribbled musings and annotations, so very different from Haig's daily diary entries; Foch's letters to his wife and her own informative diary record; the diary record of the British Fourth Army commander, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, and of Foch's British liaison officer, Colonel Eric Dillon;

and finally the wealth of documentation in the annexes volumes of the French official history. For the three volumes dealing with 1916, there are an additional ten volumes of documents (7516 in all). The relevant records of the two French armies, their corps, divisions and regiments are often to be found among these annexes. They are rarely abbreviated; even marginalia on the original documents are reproduced. After a brief analysis of Foch's position relevant to the French Army and to the British authorities, his role in the planning of an operation in which he had little faith is examined. This sheds light not only on his thinking about tactical developments, but also on Haig's thinking. Next, his actions during the course of the battle are discussed, concentrating on the lesser known battles during the last three months of the campaign, rather than the usual emphasis on the fighting on 1 July or on the tanks in September, because it is the later battles which illustrate a greater degree of Franco-British cooperation. With the exception of William Philpott's study of the Somme campaign, most accounts adopt a national perspective and ignore the international aspects of a battle in which British, French and German armies fought for almost five months. In short, this article exploits rarely used sources to illuminate the international battle of the Somme in its centenary year from the perspective of a level of command, that of the French army group, which receives little attention in the literature.

It is at this level of command that the difficulties of fighting a coalition war are revealed most acutely.

Command of the French Northern Army Group

At the beginning of 1916 the Northern Army Group consisted of two of France's armies, the Sixth and the Tenth, and the Dunkirk garrison. The army group was a new level of command, created provisionally in October 1914 when the fighting in France had moved northwards to Ypres, and then confirmed in June the following year. It had proved too difficult to manage the nine French armies, holding a line across the whole of France from the North Sea to Switzerland, solely from Joffre's Chantilly headquarters (Grand Quartier Général, or GQG). Three army groups shared the task of high command, their commanders having 'full authority to settle the zones of action of their armies, to share out the front between them, to create their own reserves of men and mobile heavy artillery, and to conduct the operations that they propose themselves or are ordered by the commander-in-chief'.

Appointed to command the Northern Army Group from its inception, Foch had the additional task of acting as Joffre's 'adjoint' or deputy and also of coordinating French action with that of the Belgian and British armies. Foch's successful coordination of the tangled fighting around Ypres in October 1914 had impressed Haig and King Albert of the Belgians, Joffre and Foch worked closely together at this time, with frequent meetings and communications between them. In 1915 Foch had the responsibility for the fighting in Artois, carrying out the northern portion of Joffre's double-pronged offensive strategy to drive the Germans out of the salient that they occupied. So Foch was an experienced general, well qualified to coordinate the 1916 campaign on the Somme.

The value of the army group level of command, with its principal purpose as coordination, is best illustrated by comparing the case of the German armies in 1914 at the Battle of Marne. The three army commanders on the German right flank – First Army under Alexander von Kluck, Second under Karl von Bülow, Third under Max von Hausen – acted independently of each other, having no means of rapid communication. Furthermore, Chief of the General Staff (de facto commander-in- chief) Helmuth von

Moltke was many miles away. The arguments over whether his envoy, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hentsch, exceeded his authority in ordering a retreat has continued over the years since 1914. The necessity for an army group commander on the German right flank is patent. Indeed, by 1916 Moltke's replacement von Falkenhayn had realised this and made a group of his armies on the Somme.

In theory, therefore, Foch should have coordinated the entire planning and prosecution of the Somme battle yet his role was limited by two important factors. First, his position as army group commander was a hindrance because it had no equivalent in the British Army. The Somme sector had been chosen in order to widen the front of attack: the French and British lines met there, and the original proposed front, running from Hébuterne in the north to Lassigny in the south, extended for about 75 kilometres. However, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was no longer what it had been in 1914 and 1915. The professional British army had been almost wiped out at Ypres and the British contributions to the 1915 fighting had been small. Foch had found it difficult to cope with Sir John French, although his friendship with General Henry Wilson, chief liaison officer between GQG and GHQ, eased the problem. In 1916 Foch had to interact instead with General Sir Douglas Haig as the new C-in-C of a much bigger BEF. The arrival in France of Kitchener's new volunteer recruits meant that the BEF consisted in 1916 of four (later five) armies, in effect the equivalent (more or less) of a French army group. As C-in-C Haig preferred to deal with Joffre, the French C-in-C. The two army commanders involved, General Sir Henry Rawlinson (Fourth Army) and General Emile Fayolle (French Sixth Army), communicated with each other at the same level of command, and had liaison officers attached to each other's headquarters to deal with the difficulties of language. This left Foch in a sort of limbo with no direct British counterpart and he had to work hard at creating an effective working partnership.

The second factor affecting Foch's role in the Somme battle was his own thinking and his relationship with Joffre. He did not consider the Somme to be the right sector for an operation of any magnitude; he did not believe that he had the material means to carry it out successfully; his strategic thinking was beginning to diverge from that of his C-in-C whom he believed was becoming increasingly tired. Foch's experience of the 1915 offensives had convinced him that the key to success lay in guns, lots of them, and especially lots of heavy artillery. His notebooks leave no room for doubt about what came to be known as the 'scientific method'. In order to carry out a successful attack, he argued, each army corps should have 100 heavy guns – that is to say 3000 guns for the 30 corps. This required that the output from French factories be about 125 per month whereas it was lower than 100. If the French were to be ready in 1917, this situation must improve immediately and certainly *for 1916 will not give any results*. So, in 1916, Foch had a complicated and difficult role to play.

Planning

The broad outlines of the 1916 campaign had been settled in conference at French GQG the previous year. Then Joffre had insisted that French losses had already been so high that the Allies had to shoulder more of the burden of expelling the enemy from France. To this end, the BEF must play a larger role, and all the Allies must undertake coordinated action on all fronts so as to prevent the Germans from moving troops along their interior lines to meet emergencies on one front or another. Foch was not present at this conference; nor was he present in February 1916 at the meeting between Joffre

and Haig when they reached agreement that the British and French contribution to Allied coordinated action was to be a joint attack around 1 July on a 65-70km wide front in Picardy, where the two armies joined. For this operation Joffre would allocate to Foch three armies (39 infantry divisions, plus three territorials). Already, before the end of 1915, Joffre had asked his three army group commanders to indicate what operations they might undertake in the 1916 campaign. Clearly Foch believed in the need for some declared strategic purpose beforehand because he wrote in the margin of Joffre's letter: 'Offensive en vue de?' Foch's response indicated that the most useful operation was the completion by his Tenth Army of the capture of Vimy Ridge. In 1915 Tenth Army had mounted two large offensives against the ridge, in May/June and again in September. Some progress had been made, and French troops now clung to its western side, but that progress had been bought at enormous cost in men. The purpose of the repeated assaults had been to gain good observation over the German communications around Douai. The Germans recognised that occupation of the crest of the ridge was crucial; this is proved by their tenacious defence, again at great cost. Although an attack on the Vimy Ridge meant hitting again at the same points that had been attacked in 1915, there was no other sector of the Northern Army Group's front that offered the same possibilities.

Joffre was not convinced, and maintained the Somme region as the sector and 1 July as the approximate date, with the Russian and Italian offensives to begin slightly beforehand. Foch was obliged to begin preparations for action on the Somme, despite the start of the German offensive at Verdun on 21 February just a week after Joffre and Haig's agreement. On 20 April Foch sent out a long document containing his 'general directives' for Joffre's operation. The depth of the enemy defensive positions, Foch emphasised, required a sustained offensive, conducted methodically and supported by the artillery. Only the artillery could destroy the enemy positions and the infantry should attack only once these had been destroyed. A longer artillery preparation was required for the first defensive position, because this was the strongest, but once this was captured there should be a rapid shift to the next and any successive positions. Action should be on a wide front and the creation of small local salients should be avoided. The methodical nature of the preparation is seen clearly in the listing of the tasks for each calibre of artillery (counter-battery work, for example, was the province of the corps artillery) and in the insistence that firing must be controlled. Likewise, the infantry action was to be directed closely. Simply committing troops *pêle-mêle* created disorder and made it impossible to coordinate their action. Speed was of the essence after the position had been taken and consolidated and the artillery should be moved up for the attack on the second and subsequent positions even before the capture of the previous one was complete.

These directives reveal a huge problem, one that would not be solved in 1916. Methodical artillery preparation was essential, however long a time was required for the purpose, but so too was speed in moving the artillery forward to deal with second and subsequent enemy defensive lines. Yet the more methodical and lengthy, hence successful, the preparation on the first position, the more the ground was churned up, and so the slower the re-positioning of the guns. More method in the first meant less speed in later phases.

Of course, this problem had already been overtaken by an even greater one. Although at Verdun the Germans had achieved some startling captures in the opening days, Foch had been confident that the offensive would lose momentum and, indeed, the enemy

made little further headway in March and April. However, as pressure began building there again in May, the resources available to Foch for the Somme dwindled. Instead of 39 infantry divisions plus three territorials, supported by 1700 heavy guns, on 26 April he was promised 30 divisions supported by only 312 heavies. On 28 May the number of divisions fell once more, to 20 (plus two territorial and one cavalry) supported by 136 heavies. Thus Foch now had about half the original number of infantry and, much more importantly, only about a twelfth of the heavy artillery.

From this, he drew the obvious conclusion: there was little point mounting the operation. He made this very clear at a meeting on 31 May with Joffre and Haig and the French politicians – the premier, the war minister and the President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré. At this meeting Haig described Foch as looking 'untrustworthy and a schemer', adding that he 'came in for a reprimand' because he had 'spoken to politicians against taking the offensive this year'. According to Poincaré's account, Foch had to be pressed to give his opinion although his staff were free with their views that there should be no offensive. The war minister managed to get Foch to admit that an offensive might be useful, necessary even. Nevertheless it should not be an offensive aiming at breakthrough, but rather at simply easing the pressure on Verdun. A serious offensive, Foch declared, should only be undertaken in 1917 when they had more resources. Thus did Foch stand by his 'scientific method' in the face of the war minister, his commander-in-chief and the President of the Republic. Poincaré recognised that Foch was at odds with his commander-in-chief who hankered after 'strategic results'.

Two important consequences followed from this meeting. First, Foch's dislike of the proposed operation was now patent to the French government and would be factor in his removal from command at the end of the year. Second, Haig seems to have taken renewed confidence from the meeting and expanded his strategic objectives. He even mentioned reaching the Rhine, requesting that troops be brought back from Salonika to achieve this. He expanded Rawlinson's initial plans to include Bapaume as an objective and converted his reserve force of infantry and cavalry into a Reserve Army under General Hubert Gough. This force was given the task of exploiting the advance northwards towards Arras and rolling up the enemy's lines 'in flank and reverse'.

So British and French planning continued, but had diverged. Foch calculated the length of front that he could attack with the reduced numbers of guns now at his disposal and concluded that 15 kilometres—not the original 40—was as much as he could handle. Haig, on the other hand, was obliging Rawlinson to aim further and wider without reference to the number of available guns. On 6 June Joffre released Haig from his original support role. Instead of the French forcing a passage across the Somme upriver from Péronne, supported by British troops on the northern bank, the operation became one of French support for British action.

Foch's dislike of the operation became irrelevant, therefore, and now he put all his energies into practical details. No meetings between Foch and Haig have been recorded in June following the 31 May conference, the result perhaps of Haig's known dislike of receiving orders from the army group commander. Foch had made a particular effort to make friends soon after Haig succeeded Sir John French, inviting an unwilling Haig to dine at his headquarters. Haig may have been suspicious of the Wilson–Foch friendship throughout 1915, considering Wilson to be an intriguer. Because Wilson had left GHQ on 22 December 1915 to take over a corps command, Foch had lost his

ready access to British thinking at GHQ, but Colonel Eric Dillon was appointed to act as Haig's liaison officer at Foch's Northern Army Group HQ, taking up his duties on 17 May. He spoke frequently with Foch's trusted chief of staff, Maxime Weygand, and so got a good insight into Foch's thinking. He described Foch as a 'good old thing', and recorded him as being 'in roaring spirits' on 25 June.

Foch had also made an effort to get to know Rawlinson. In February Rawlinson found Foch 'most amenable and amusing', and during March they had lunched in each other's messes. Foch told his wife that Rawlinson was a great friend of Wilson's whom he was cultivating. He and Rawlinson met several times during June, as French units began arriving (some of them from Verdun) to man the three corps of Fayolle's Sixth Army. This was now the only army in Foch's Northern Army Group to begin the campaign, all the Tenth Army units having gone to Verdun, leaving behind only a headquarters staff. Next to the British and north of the Somme, XX Corps was in line by 3 June; the two corps south of the river were in place a week before the battle began. Foch was involved, therefore, in such practical details as settling boundary lines, dates and timings. In addition he paid particular attention to improving road communications and the aeronautical service.

On 20 June Foch issued his final tactical notes, incorporating the lessons from the Verdun fighting. Verdun had shown that dense attacking formations were to be avoided, replaced by a strict minimum of troops in first line, with the remainder ready to reinforce and to manœuvre as required. Foch's calculation of the length of front to be attacked on the basis of the number of available guns rather than on the numbers of attacking infantry has already been noted. At General Rawlinson's HQ they were calculating the length of front to be attacked with reference to the number of available divisions (using the formula: 8–9 men of an attacking division per yard) and planning to send dense formations to storm the enemy trenches.

Foch's new instructions were distributed down to battalion level…..they emphasised the role of the artillery, whereas:

the infantry's role is limited to taking and occupying the ground which the artillery has destroyed effectively and completely, and to holding on to it. Furthermore the capture must be only be carried out after prudent reconnaissance, so as to avoid any surprise fire when the artillery destruction has not been effective and under the constant protection of the guns.

Therefore, the 'notion of an assault breaking all resistance and sweeping it away with great force must be abandoned', because successive waves of units lead to chaos, excessive losses and powerlessness. The role of the commanding officer was to deploy units in depth and on a wide front, and to maintain an ordered and continuous line of attack, with no wild rushing about. Each commander in the field should be in the midst of his troops so as to be informed of events as quickly and as completely as possible, with divisional commanders placing themselves so as to be in contact with their brigade commanders. The instruction concluded:

Battle at present is a long-lasting struggle. So as to achieve a decisive result, the infantry must be conserved at all costs. Therefore it is of prime importance to use the infantry with strict economy, only to ask of it an effort of which it is capable, and to direct it methodically and closely.

Foch's final intervention in the planning process came when Joffre found out that Haig did not intend to move eastwards along the Bapaume–Cambrai road, the proposed 'axis of progression', towards the enemy communications hub around Cambrai-Valenciennes-Maubeuge. Instead, after capturing Bapaume, Haig intended to push Gough's Reserve Army northwards towards Arras. The letter informing Joffre of this is dated 26 June, that is to say a day after the start of the artillery preparation, although the change of strategic direction to the north had been ordered earlier, on 16 June. Such is hardly the best way to conduct a joint battle! Foch asked Dillon to explain what Haig intended. Foch pointed out the dangers in Haig's plan of fighting on a narrow front with unconquered German positions on the flank, and suggested an alternative method of advancing on a wide front, with the French to take over more of the line north of the river when there was enough room to do so. Dillon took these criticisms 'in an unsigned paper from Foch' to Haig, who did not respond. Haig refused to have anything to do with it, telling Dillon that Foch 'was a wily old devil'.

Prosecution

Despite having been obliged by his C-in-C to plan for a battle in which he had little faith, Foch acted energetically once it began. As army group commander, Foch's tasks were to coordinate the timing of the attacks of the British and French armies, to bring in the second of the French armies (Tenth Army under General Alfred Micheler) once units and artillery had returned from Verdun and to control the heavy artillery. For this last task, he had placed an officer in his own army group headquarters, so that he could keep as much control as possible over the most important element in his offensive. Much of the necessary coordination amounted to 'administering ginger', to use Dillon's phrase.

The results of the first two days' fighting in the French southern sector of the battlefield were most encouraging. Fayolle's Sixth Army had three corps in action, XX Corps north of the river and 1 Colonial Corps and XXXV Corps on the south side. Next to the British, XX Corps took all its objectives, carrying the German front line with very few casualties. South of the river, the 1 Colonial Corps did even better, capturing ground beyond the enemy's first line. As is well known, the only British success came in the sector next to the French, doubtless helped by the French artillery barrages, whereas further north uncut wire and German machine guns made progress impossible. The French were forced to mark time until the British caught up.

Joffre intervened on 3 July, when he learned that Haig intended to abandon the northern and concentrate on the southern part of the British front, next to the French. This decision negated the principle of attacking across a wide front. Joffre was furious and had a row with Haig, thumping the table hard enough to break it and stating 'you will attack'. Wilson visited Foch two days later and learned that Foch was 'very pleased with his own advance and displeased with ours', judging that Haig had not yet understood the cause of the failure, namely 'not nearly sufficient concentration of fire before an infantry attack'. Foch recounted how an 'infuriated' Joffre 'simply went for Haig and … was quite "brutal". Haig said he was not speaking as one gentleman to another, and old Joffre said he would have no further dealings with Haig over this matter and that Haig must work it out with Foch'. Thus Foch took over Joffre's role, in addition to his frequent visits to Rawlinson (every 3–4 days throughout July), acting, he told his wife, as the 'pot of glue', something he had been doing for two years, to hold the alliance together. Dillon persuaded Haig to invite Foch to lunch following the row,

so as to keep on friendly terms.

In addition to giving Foch the primary French role in the continuation of the Somme battle and the opportunity to forge a closer relationship with Haig, the Joffre–Haig row had a further consequence. The significant successes south of the river gave rise to the idea of exploiting southwards and leaving the British to muddle along by themselves. Foch has been blamed for being too slow to seize the opportunity to build on the gains in the south, principally by those commanders who felt deprived of the opportunity. Foch did order Fayolle to establish a front on the Amiens-Péronne road so as to be ready to set off to the south, but several days elapsed before this was achieved. Fayolle had responded correctly that this was a whole new operation that would require a new artillery preparation. Hence the legend grew up that a great opportunity had been lost. However, this is to ignore that Foch never lost sight of his primary purpose to support the British; that there was no strategic value to be gained from the area with its many waterways; and finally that the purpose of establishing a position along the Amiens-Péronne road was to cover the entry into line of the Tenth Army. It was GQG and Joffre who wanted to press on south of the Somme, partly in reaction to the failure to get Haig to maintain a wide front north of the river.

So the French could only mark time in their narrow northern sector as the British next to them gradually completed the capture of the German second line with the 'success by night' of 14 July. The frustration was compounded over the following weeks as Foch tried to arrange another 'concerted action similar to 1 July' with 'British and French troops each moving in their own sector but in close liaison' against a known first enemy position and then a second. But throughout the rest of July, the whole of August and well into September there was a significant absence of 'concerted' action with the weather adding to the difficulties. A series of disjointed, frequently delayed, and ineffectual local offensives characterised both British and French operations during this period. Foch was reduced to constant urging and to acting as Joffre's messenger.

It was only in September that the effort to conduct a truly allied offensive, including joint Franco-British action, came to fruition. Joffre had already consulted with Foch over a letter that was sent to Haig on 11 August. In it Joffre urged simultaneous attacks on the 22nd so as to reach a suitable jumping-off line for another 'big push' as on 1 July, stretching from the Ancre to the Somme. He wanted a return to the original purpose, namely a joint wide-front offensive, as soon as possible. This renewal of the wide-front offensive was to begin on 1 September.

At the same time, Joffre had been engaged in negotiating the agreement with Romania to enter the war on the Entente side. The initial success of Russia's Brusilov offensive persuaded the Romanians that the Entente offer of a piece of Austria– Hungary was more achievable than the offer from the Central Powers. A convention was drawn up in Paris on 23 July between France, Romania and Russia and, after some haggling over Russian material support and French-supplied munitions, the Romanian prime minister signed it on 17 August. A timetable was agreed for Allied action to cover the Romanian Army's entry into the war (Romania declared war on Austria–Hungary on 27 August, whereupon Germany, Bulgaria Romania's signature and its declaration of war, the date for the renewed Anglo- French action on the Somme could not be altered.

In addition to support for Romania, Russia was demanding action in France. Brusilov's

offensive that had begun in June had run out of steam, and the addition of Romania to the Entente was an added military burden. All supplies of materiel and men had to come from or transit through Russia. Because Brusilov's offensive had eased the pressure on Verdun before the start of the Somme fighting, the justice of Russian requests for action in the west was acknowledged. Faced with this double pressure in the east, Joffre attempted several times to get Haig not to delay the next 'big push', but Haig was waiting for his new weapon, the tanks, to arrive and refused to be hurried.

France's commitments to Romania and Russia, for which Haig refused to advance his own operation, meant that what had been intended as another joint, simultaneous and wide-front offensive became disjointed. The French contribution was bigger than it had been on 1 July, because Tenth Army had now joined the Sixth, having been brought back up to strength during August and gradually extending its front. By September it consisted of six army corps and was commanded by General Alfred Micheler. Although munitions were limited, Tenth Army was well supplied with guns: 708 heavy guns (amounting to one gun for every 29 metres of front); 64 extra heavies (one gun per 328 metres); 636 (159 batteries) standard field artillery, the 75mm gun, being one battery for every 132 metres; plus mortars and other trench artillery. Abominable weather made it impossible to launch attacks on the Somme at exactly the same time as Romania began its offensive. Tenth Army south of the Somme attacked a few days late on 4 and 5 September, making small but significant gains. Because of the huge additional expenditure of shells at Verdun, Tenth Army lacked sufficient munitions to exploit these gains. Foch was frustrated by criticisms made against Micheler for expending too many shells, when Micheler's Army could have had an even greater success if it had been better supplied. Next, Sixth Army attacked north of the river on 12 and 13 September and had a bigger success, capturing Bouchavesnes on the Péronne–Bapaume road. Two days later, 15 September, the British captured Flers and Courcelette, although the 32 tanks that managed to cross the starting-line had not contributed a great deal to that success. In the original plan Fayolle's Sixth Army was to have attacked in conjunction with Rawlinson's Fourth, but the necessity for the French attack to be made as early as possible prevented this. Sixth Army was too exhausted by the capture of Bouchavesnes to offer much support for the British right flank in the latter's and Turkey declared war also). Because the convention had specified the ten-day interval between operation two days later. So Joffre's renewed 'big push' for 1 September became three staggered operations: Tenth Army a week after Romania; Sixth Army a week later; British Fourth Army two days later still. Nonetheless, each army had made gains.

Although Joffre's return to direct contact with Haig after the conclusion of the Romanian negotiations left Foch with the sole task of bringing Tenth Army into the offensive, September's events brought Foch further benefit. First, despite his reaching retirement age for generals in October on his sixty-fifth birthday, this was not to become effective and he was to retain his rank and position. Second, he was able to profit from the tank experiment. He noted that during an artillery battle the new weapon could help the infantry to get beyond an enemy's first captured position; tanks could take a lightly held enemy position in a surprise attack, but, because the tank's enemy was artillery fire, it would be especially important to develop powerful counter-battery procedures. Finally, he was able to ingratiate himself further with Haig.

When Lloyd George visited the front in September as Secretary of State for War, he

went to Verdun (where he made an emotional speech in the citadel to the 'sentries on these impregnable walls', praising their 'victorious resistance'), thence to Foch's HQ where he compared the British (unfavourably) with the French – so few prisoners, so little ground, such heavy losses. Immediately, Foch recounted Lloyd George's comments to Henry Wilson: 'L.G. [sic] said he gave Haig all the guns and ammunition and men he could use, and nothing happened'. After telling Wilson what had transpired, Foch then went to see Haig in person (17 September) and told him confidentially the same thing. This was more than the military trade union closing ranks against the politicians. Foch took advantage of the opportunity to get on better terms with Haig.[38]

Much more important was the reaction on 'the other side of the hill' to September's events. Romania's defection to the Entente had proved the final element in the campaign to unseat the German C-in-C, General Falkenhayn. His failure to achieve anything other than enormous losses for the German Fifth Army at Verdun had already eroded support. The Kaiser gave way and replaced him with the pair who had done so well as commanders in the east: Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff. On 8 September in Cambrai they met Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria and the German Crown Prince, Wilhelm, together with their chiefs of staff. The forces of the former had faced the onslaught on the Somme and the latter had failed before Verdun. The Germans were obviously shaken severely and suffering from manpower shortages. Rupprecht reported that his two armies were stretched by the addition of an active front south of the Somme, while at the same time munitions supply was increasingly difficult because of bombing attacks on stations by British and French airmen. His infantry was out-numbered two to one, and they faced one-and-a-half times as much enemy artillery. Although they did not visit the Somme front, Ludendorff made changes immediately on learning of events there. First, offensive action at Verdun was halted; second, the tactic of immediate counter-attacks to recapture lost ground was abandoned, because it was too costly in manpower; third, the defence was to be made more 'elastic'. This elasticity meant that front lines were no longer crowded with troops, but were replaced by outposts, usually machineguns in shell craters, with a deep defensive zone behind. Ludendorff sanctioned the production of a new instruction on defensive warfare based on these principles. It was published in December but was already being applied by troops who had learned from experience. These changed tactics made it much more difficult for the British and French on the Somme to repeat the successes of the first half of September.

Nevertheless, success had been a boost to morale and the advent of Romania meant that the Entente Allies, including Italy, were making their biggest joint effort of the war. Even at Verdun, the planning had begun for the operation against Fort Douaumont that succeeded (on 24 October) in recapturing the fort, lost so spectacularly only a few days after the start of the German offensive. Foch began, therefore, to press for a continuation on the Somme of the operations that, at last, were beginning to pay dividends. Indeed, in the opinion of Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, the British operations in the second half of September, despite their limitations, 'were the most successful carried out on the Somme'.

As happened so frequently, the weather intervened to prevent an immediate exploitation of the gains of 15 and 16 September, and so a short delay ensued. Foch did not waste any time. His visit to Haig on the 17th about Lloyd George was not only intended to improve mutual relations, but Foch wanted to ensure that Haig would

continue the battle. There was little risk that the British C-in-C would want to call a halt and Haig ordered Rawlinson the same day to prepare a further attack, with Gough of Reserve Army to do likewise. Also the same day, Foch informed Joffre that Haig was in an 'excellent state of mind', and ready to undertake a joint Franco-British 'general offensive from the Ancre [conducted by Reserve Army in the north] to the Somme' in four days' time. Foch asked for an extra French infantry corps to be made available for this operation. In the event, the renewed offensive began on 25 September and, for the first time in the Somme campaign, the French and British managed a common start time. William Philpott writes that it was 'their most powerful combined attack since 1 July'.

With British Fourth Army's capture of Morval and Les Boeufs on the first day, 25 September, combined with Sixth Army's earlier capture of Bouchavesnes on the Bapaume–Péronne road, the small town of Combles was now encircled from the northwest by the British and southeast by the French. Combles sits in a small valley, surrounded by hills and connected by roads to all the villages around and to the Bapaume–Péronne road as well. Because of these relatively good communications, it had become a well-defended German strongpoint with the cellars of the houses converted into *Stollen* (shelters), and storage for a great stockpile of munitions. Foch saw the potential for a joint operation to pinch out the town, instead of a bloody frontal assault, and so he intervened in Fayolle's orders to his Sixth Army. Fayolle had ordered two separate actions: the left of his army was to advance northwards up the Bapaume–Péronne road towards Rancourt and St Pierre Vaast wood, and the right- hand units were to move eastwards towards the line of the Tortille river and the unfinished canal du Nord. At 10am on the 26th, however, Foch sent a personal instruction to Fayolle to limit the action on the right. The situation on the British front had so developed that it was imperative to push northwards along the Combles-Morval road in order to maintain contact with the British, and even further north along the Bapaume–Péronne road so as to reach Sailly-Saillisel, thereby establishing and east–west line from Morval (in British hands), across the road to Bapaume, as far as Haplincourt, even further north.

In this way, on 26 September, a degree of Franco-British cooperation that had not been seen hitherto produced a truly joint action. In order to cut off and capture as many enemy as possible, the 73e *Régiment d'infanterie* (73 RI) entered Combles from the south and the British 56 Division from the north after completing the encirclement. Although, following the new doctrine of not defending every square inch, the Germans had already ordered the evacuation of Combles, the Allies took over 3000 prisoners and huge stocks of shells, grenades, and medical supplies. It had been an extraordinarily speedy operation and it was not the only successful action on 26 September. The British took Gueudecourt, the next German strongpoint north of Morval/Les Boeufs; Reserve Army began its operation against Thiepval and completed its capture on the 27th; the French took Rancourt and Frégicourt, reaching the northwest corner of St Pierre Vaast wood.

After three whole months, the Battle of the Somme seemed to be making progress. Rupprecht reported to OHL (German headquarters) that attacks against his army group were likely, both on the north bank of the Ancre and against Péronne. He was suffering great shortages in officers and trained soldiers. Indeed, September proved to be the costliest month for the German First and Second armies on the Somme: 135,000 casualties. Among this number were higher than usual numbers of men taken prisoner,

an indication of lowered morale amongst German troops.

As the rain began to fall in October the Franco-British battle had reached the original German third line. However, in order to protect Bapaume, the Germans had begun to construct another defensive line through Le Transloy and two more in front of Bapaume. The village of Le Transloy lay on the Bapaume–Péronne road, only five or so kilometres from Bapaume itself, and the new German position ran north- westwards from the village along a slight ridge. The October operations, for the British against the ridge and for the French up the road from Rancourt to Sailly- Saillisel and then to Le Transloy, did not meet with the same success as in September. The lesson about the efficacy of wide-front and joint (simultaneous) operations seemed not to have penetrated, although the volume of rain that fell during October – it rained on 21 of the 31 days – was a great impediment to progress.

Le Transloy and the ridge line were attacked repeatedly during October. The action on the 18th illustrates the contrast with the earlier joint capture of Combles. Joint attacks made on 7 and 12 October, the British against the ridge and the French against Sailly-Saillisel, had achieved little. The next attack on the 18th was remarkable for the huge gap in the start times. The British division on the right, next to the French IX Corps, was 4 Division (XIV Corps); the French unit had arrived only on 6 October. The British and French commanders had agreed that the 4 Division's 11 Brigade was to 'keep in touch with' the French unit alongside, linking the French and 'conform' to the French movements 'in order to protect its left flank'. The Brigade order continued with the seemingly contradictory statement that zero hour for 18 [French] and 4 Divisions 'will not coincide'. It seems that the brigade commander was left to his own devices to reconcile the differing start times with the instructions to maintain contact and protect the French flank. Since it was pitch black and pouring with rain when the British set off at 3.40am, it is not surprising that by the time that the French 18 Division too began to move at 11.45 (eight hours later) the British cover of its left flank was of little use. The battalion on the left of the French line 'was unable to leave its jumping-off trenches, being caught in machine-gun fire'. South of the river Tenth Army was to attack as well on the same day, but was left free to choose the hour – yet another example of uncoordinated start times.

The lack of progress prompted Joffre to write again to Haig. Although acknowledging what had been achieved, Joffre pointed out that once again the principle of wide- front operations was being breached. Public opinion would not understand how the British could 'slow down and stop', when they were so well supplied with artillery and munitions, and when the enemy was in disarray. This caused outrage at GHQ, and Haig replied that he alone was the judge of what could be achieved and when. At a lunch Haig reinforced the message: the British Army could never be placed under Joffre's orders. If Foch had had a hand in writing the letter, as Dillon claims, the tactic had backfired.

The final *joint* action of the campaign on 5 November was a disaster, with a minor British revolt by the XIV Corps commander causing the cancellation of British infantry support of yet another French attempt to take Le Transloy. Rawlinson had found 'things on the flank next to the French most "irritating"', and accepted the XIV Corps view that it would be nothing but a sacrifice of men to attack the ridge in support of the French. Foch managed to persuade Haig that the British attack should take place but, in the end, Haig changed his mind and ordered only counter-battery fire against the enemy guns 'as if we were about to attack'. Unsurprisingly Rawlinson had found

Foch 'rather stuffy', when they all met on the 4th to arrange the matter.

The French attacked the next day, but with 'mediocre' results. Despite this failure of *joint* action, *separate* successes were recorded in the final days of the campaign: in the north, by Fifth Army at Beaumont Hamel and, in the south, by French Tenth Army's capture of the two villages of Pressoir and Ablaincourt. Then mud put an end to the Battle of the Somme. 'Of all the muds that were, for the *poilu*, one of the most cruel sufferings of the war, that of the Somme occupies the first place in his memories. Heavy, sticky mud, which you don't risk disappearing into as in the Woëvre [east of the Meuse, south of Verdun], but which you cannot get out of.

A frustrating year

In conclusion, then, it had proved a frustrating year for Foch; the tensions between allies and within the French Army had not been resolved. First, Joffre had overridden Foch's preferred sector for the 1916 campaign and imposed the Somme. Next, because of his 'scientific' calculations, Foch knew that he did not have the necessary guns and munitions to achieve a great success; he would have preferred to hold and wait for French industry to produce what was required. Then, Verdun reduced even the limited means at his disposal and imposed a secondary role for the French on the Somme. Foch could only try to be patient as the British edged their way forward to the original second German defensive position throughout July. The weather had proved a further frustration as a very wet summer in Picardy turned the battleground into a muddy quagmire, so that by October men were wading forward to attack with mud up to their thighs.

In his notebooks Foch expressed this frustration very clearly. Slowness was a constant theme. No successful action had been followed up swiftly so as to take advantage of a momentary superiority. This permitted the enemy to improve or construct more defences, thereby negating the progress made. Partly this was caused by the methods employed, heavy shelling making the movement of guns so difficult; partly also, the need to agree dates and times with an allied, not subordinate, army caused extra delays.

Foch's notebooks reveal his thinking about this problem and how to fight a modern industrial war in coalition. The planning for the Somme reveals a commander taking account of his limited means and drawing up a plan in accord with those limitations. Afterwards he amended his 'scientific method' to take account of the Somme lessons. He believed that rapid-firing and mobile heavy artillery was the answer, along with tanks. The German tactic of placing machineguns in shell holes had to be overcome by 'armoured infantry'. 'Thinking of combating machine guns with artillery is to take a cudgel to hit a fly. In addition, at the Northern Army Group HQ Foch's artillery chief was preparing a 105-page document that would distil the artillery experience of the battle.

Now his thinking was diverging from that of his C-in-C. On several occasions Foch complained that Joffre was too tired, lacked energy and authority. Foch's political agitation over the provision of heavy artillery – as already noted, in his view the essential element for success – was doubtless a factor. In his view, the establishment of a programme for heavy artillery, submitted by GQG only in May 1916, ought to have been pushed much more vigorously by Joffre. In Joffre's defence it must be said that he

was under considerable pressure in 1916: Pétain's constant calls for reinforcements; the Balkan front at Salonika; negotiations with Romania; unremitting criticism from French politicians demanding the right to inspect and meeting in secret sessions to air grievances about the state of Verdun's defences.

A further frustration had been the necessity to deal with a prickly British C-in-C, who first resented having to deal with someone lower in the hierarchy than Joffre, and then came to resent having to deal with the French at all. The reports to GQG from the French military mission at GHQ emphasise Haig's increasing desire for independence from French influence. This frustrating experience was not without some benefit for Foch. He had worked with Haig in 1914 in front of Ypres, and during 1916 he made a real effort to handle Haig in an effective manner, revealing (he told his wife) depths of patience that he did not know he possessed. Furthermore, Foch's experience of both Haig and the Somme battlefield proved an advantage in August 1918, when the second Allied attack on enemy forces was delivered in the Amiens–Montdidier offensive. This time Foch had the authority to insist that Rawlinson act in concert with the French First Army, and to insist that Haig both launch the offensive on the date proposed and continue it by extending operations laterally.

At the end of the battle, there were mixed feelings. Gradually the BEF took over Sixth Army's front down as far as the river Somme, amid a lot of ill-tempered disagreements over dates (yet again) and the state of the trenches. Foch believed that it would be dangerous to leave the only offensive area, that is to say the northern bank of the river, in British hands. He pointed out to Joffre 'the dangers of leaving to the large British army the area north of the Somme which constitutes a magnificent domain bounded by the Somme and with easy access to England … deliver[ing] up provinces which constitute the only offensive front of the French armies without ensuring that we will be able to return and use them as the route of an offensive of liberation which we cannot entrust entirely to our Allies. The frequent complaint that the British were fighting to the last Frenchman re-surfaced. A French Army morale report of mid-November stated: 'The idea that the British owe it to us to extend their front in order to allow us to shorten ours is spreading.' On the other hand, a letter home from a soldier of 69 Infantry Regiment asserted, after seeing the British at work: 'I assure you that this mix of British tenacity and French *furia* was not unconnected to our success, which is only a beginning.

Finally, on 15 December, Foch was sacked from his command of the Northern Army Group. Even more frustratingly, Haig's reward was a field marshal's baton. The circumstances of Foch's removal are somewhat mysterious, but it is clear that there was a campaign of denigration mounted against him and Joffre had not defended him. Joffre too had lost the confidence of the government and the parliament and he was promoted to a shadowy powerless position, from which he resigned. Foch was furious, but he had the sense to bend before the storm and obey orders.

He would not be long in the wilderness.

107 YEARS AGO

107 years ago, Great Britain declared war on Germany and commenced the mobilization of its Armed Forces. Whilst the political manoeuvrings are still the subject of historical debate today, the actual military processes followed were quite straightforward on the face of it. But if you strip things away they were actually very complex indeed. For background, the British had previously committed to send an expeditionary force (consisting of six infantry divisions and a cavalry division) to support France, in the event of an outbreak of war on mainland Europe. This post will attempt to describe the mechanism that the British Army followed as it transitioned from a peacetime posture to a war footing.

In 1912, the War Office published a 'War Book' which detailed the duties and responsibilities to be borne in the event of a general war occurring. The overriding principle was that schemes for mobilization were based on stations and barracks within Great Britain and Ireland and not on individual units. Therefore, when a unit changed stations it handed over its mobilization scheme and stores over to the incoming unit. The 'War Book' was updated annually.

Mobilization was broken down into three phases, all initiated by the British Government:

1. Precautionary Stage - dealt with the threat of war with another maritime power and its two objectives were the protection of naval bases and vulnerable points in Britain and Ireland. This would mainly involve Regular troops and a few Territorials.
2. General Mobilization - defined as 'the possibility, imminence or declaration of war with a first-class European Power which would entail the complete mobilization of the whole of the Naval and Military forces of the Crown'. However, it could not take place until the monarch had approved it and a Royal Proclamation was issued. In addition to announcing the call-up of reserves and embodying the Territorials, the Royal Proclamation also empowered the government to take over the railways (essential for the initial deployment phase), requisition animals, vehicles, vessels and aircraft for military use and requisition civilian properties for the billeting of troops.
3. Declaration of War - a political act carried out entirely by the British Government.

On 27 Jul 14, some precautionary measures were quietly enacted; all troops who were currently on training exercises (both Regular and Territorials on their Annual Camps) began to be recalled from the training areas to their duty stations, annual leave for Regular soldiers was stopped and all those on leave recalled, training courses were cancelled and the students sent back to their units. Additionally, Regular Army units began to quietly prepare things within their own unit lines (mainly administrative actions) in anticipation of what was to come.
On 4 Aug 14, following the expiry of the ultimatum the previous midnight, the Cabinet agreed that full mobilization should occur and the Royal Proclamation was consequently issued at 1100 hrs. The 'War Book' was opened and the clock started ticking. The first thing that occurred was that telegrams were sent out to all Reservists ordering them to report to their respective Regimental Depots. Once there, they were medically examined, issued their uniforms and equipment and then despatched in trains to their units throughout Britain and Ireland. Upon arrival they were then integrated into their units - some units received hundreds of Reservists in order to bring them up to strength. The above was all to be completed within five days of the mobilization being announced and was carried out simultaneously with the Territorials being deployed to their wartime defensive locations, the various HQs of

the BEF being expanded too and individual units packing away all the trappings of peacetime soldiering.

It was a truly mammoth task!!

The next phase was the movement of the BEF to the continent. Detailed railway and shipping timetables had been previously drawn up for the transportation of every single element of the BEF (plus all stores and equipment) from their duty stations in Britain and Ireland to their designated ports of embarkation (Southampton, Newhaven, Avonmouth, Liverpool, Belfast, Dublin and Queenstown). The Lines of Communication troops went first so that they could set things up prior to the arrival and reception of the combat elements. All stores and equipment had to be loaded in such a way that high priority elements could be unloaded first on the other side. From there, they were then transported by sea to one of three ports of disembarkation (Boulogne, Le Havre and Rouen). Upon arrival (and following reception), they were then taken by trains up to the concentration area around Maubeuge.

This was a massive administrative and logistical undertaking, as illustrated: 'The railway system, however, would remain under French control and there was a stark difference in the two philosophies for running a military railway system. The British believed in running medium-sized troops trains at speed, while the French ran very long trains at low speed. This meant that a French troop train could lift one battalion but it took two British trains to do the same. Since the mobilization plans could not guarantee to put the two halves of a battalion on the same ship, it was decided that, on landing in France, units would remain in their port of disembarkation for some 24 or 48 hours to allow them time to come together again prior to being moved to the BEF's concentration area' ('Call to Arms' - Charles Messenger).

There is a saying in the British Army which states that, "Prior Preparation and Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance" (usually abbreviated to simply the "7 P's"). A mobilization scheme which put a force of over 100,000 troops onto the ground in France ready to fight in under three weeks is a cracking example of that; especially when you considered that none of it had been previously rehearsed practically!

Edit: just to add, that whilst the British Army was implementing all of the above, the Royal Navy was mobilising as well. It was a very busy time!!