

# CENTENARY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR THE BATTLE OF AMIENS



## The Centenary of the Battle of Amiens

Notre Dame Cathedral, Amiens  
8 August 2018

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**Front cover** Men of the 95th Siege Battery RGA loading a 9.2 inch howitzer near Bayencourt during the Battle of Amiens, 8 August 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q 10377)



Canada





His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge, KG, KT



KENSINGTON PALACE

It is an honour to be here today, in this stunning cathedral, to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Amiens.

One hundred years ago today, the Allied forces of Britain, Australia, Canada, France and America launched a surprise attack which would have a significant impact on the course of the war. It is fitting that today those nations have returned to the city which gave its name to the Battle, to recognise its importance and to remember those who served.

The Battle of Amiens was a historic point in a global conflict which had wreaked unparalleled levels of havoc, devastation and death during the preceding four years. A conflict which had touched people in almost every part of the world and to which there seemed no end. Yet three months after the Battle, the Armistice was signed, and at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month the guns fell silent.

The Battle of Amiens – and the continued fighting which followed during the summer of 1918 – brought the Allies hope and optimism after four long years of bloodshed and stalemate. While it is right that we have collectively commemorated many of the significant battles and campaigns of those years, it is important that the success of the Battle of Amiens takes its rightful place in our shared history.

We come together today to recognise that importance and to give thanks to all those involved for their part in bringing the War to an end.



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA



The Right Honourable Theresa May MP  
The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland

Her Majesty's Government, in partnership with the Governments of Australia, Canada, France and the United States of America, welcomes you here today to commemorate the centenary of one of the most significant battles of the First World War.

Following the success of Allied forces at the Second Battle of the Marne in the preceding weeks, the Allies adopted a number of tactics at the Battle of Amiens which continued that success: secrecy and surprise, the use of targeted air power led by the Royal Air Force, the phasing of the attack to allow for rest and consolidation and, perhaps most importantly of all, the co-ordination of Allied troops working together in coalition. Under Marshal Foch's overall strategic command, British, Australian, Canadian, French and American troops worked together to drive the German army back in a decisive advance – which would be followed by the Hundred Days Offensive and would ultimately lead to the signing of the Armistice on the Western Front.

Today we commemorate that success, but we also reflect on the fear and hardship experienced by the people of this city and the surrounding battlefields, as well as the immense suffering and demoralisation of the German troops. We remember with profound respect all those who served on both sides of the Battle and we give thanks for their courage, bravery and skill which would lead to what the world had long yearned for – the guns finally falling silent.

THIS COMMEMORATION IS HOSTED BY THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT  
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND IN PARTNERSHIP  
WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, CANADA,  
FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE EVENT

**In the presence of:**

His Royal Highness, The Duke of Cambridge

The representative of the French republic

The Right Honourable Theresa May MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

His Excellency, Mr Joachim Gauck, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Canada

The Honourable Darren Chester MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Defence Personnel and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac, Australia

Her Excellency Ms Patricia O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland to France

Her Excellency Jamie D. McCourt, United States Ambassador to France and Monaco

Representatives of those nations who served on the Western Front during the summer of 1918

**Welcome** by the Bishop of Amiens, Monseigneur Olivier Leborgne

'Peace be with you.' It is with the first words that the resurrected Jesus spoke to his disciples that the Catholic liturgy usually begins when it is presided over by a bishop. 'Peace be with you!' It seems to me that these words are appropriate while we come together in this cathedral to remember the Battle of Amiens which in 1918 was decisive in leading to victory.

I am happy to welcome you to this cathedral, a sign of hope in the Somme for almost 800 years. I particularly wanted to pay tribute to the representatives of our allies who, some coming from the other side of the world, were essential in putting an end to the Great War. Soldiers from Great Britain and Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States of America came to fight alongside the French Army. They sacrificed their lives to allow us to come out of this disastrous conflict. It is important that we are able to honour them together.

I also pay tribute to the representatives of Germany who have joined us. It is together that we wish to build the future.

For we have not only gathered together in this cathedral to remember. Our presence here, remembering the senselessness that penetrated the First World War, is also a resolute commitment to peace. We know that it can only be built within justice and truth. The sense of remembrance is always turned towards the future, which calls on our responsibility.

I wish you an excellent commemoration.

## **Reading** by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Cambridge

I am delighted to join you all today to mark this important centenary in this historic Cathedral of Amiens.

From the very start of the First World War, Amiens found itself at the heart of the conflict. For most of the war, it was just behind the Allied front lines, and military personnel soon became a familiar sight on its streets, around its shops, cafés and hotels. For thousands of servicemen, it became a home away from home.

Above all, Amiens was a city of connections. Its railway line was a vital link between Paris and the north. Here, the armies of France and the British Empire came together. It connected the Allies.

During the defence of the city against the great German offensive in April 1918, shelling and bombing destroyed many of the buildings here. Thankfully, this great cathedral was spared significant damage.

In the summer of 1918, this was the springboard for the Allies' offensive which would eventually lead to victory on the Western Front. After French, American and British forces had turned the tide against the Germans in the Second Battle of the Marne, the scene was set for a truly co-ordinated Allied effort to strike back.

What began here on 8 August was truly a coalition operation under the strategic command of a great Frenchman, Marshal Foch; a battle in which the forces of many nations came together to fight; in which aerial, mechanical and human courage and ingenuity combined with devastating results.

Amiens was symbolic of the Entente Cordiale, the co-operation without which victory was impossible. It is entirely fitting therefore, that today, that same international coalition has returned to Amiens with our former enemy, in peace and partnership.

It is fitting too that we come together here, in this magnificent Cathedral, which has such a profound connection to all those that served. After the war, a commemorative tablet was installed here by the Imperial War Graves Commission, 'In sacred memory of six hundred thousand men of the armies of Great Britain and Ireland who fell in France and Belgium during the Great War.' Memorial tablets were subsequently installed by other nations to honour their fallen. And the Chapel of the Allies, where today we will renew the bonds forged during the War, is a lasting testament to the continuing relationship between those who served here a hundred years ago and the people of Amiens.

Today we return to learn more about the experience of those involved during the historic summer of 1918, to honour the fallen of all nations, to commemorate all those who participated in this great endeavour, and to celebrate the bonds of friendship which unite our nations.

## **BEFORE THE BATTLE**

### **Reading**

Account of Marguerite Comte, Red Cross Nurse, on the atmosphere in Amiens as 11,000 refugees pass through between 22 and 27 March 1918

*On Saturday 23 March, the anxiety became general. Reading the communiqués announcing the progressive withdrawal of the British army, and the sight of more and more refugees, in a pathetic state, making their way through the town were panicking a fair number of the inhabitants of Amiens who were already preparing to depart. Monday 25 March was a day of fear. Military equipment from the Albert, Bray, Chaulnes and Montdidier areas flooded into Amiens, either by train or on lorries which were being driven at top speed and increased the terror of the inhabitants of Amiens even more as they laid siege, literally, to the police stations, to get passes. The city's banks were feverishly preparing for a possible evacuation. There was panic everywhere. On the morning of 26 March the news on the streets was more and more alarming.*

### **Reading**

An account by a Havas correspondent on 22 April 1918

*When I returned to Amiens, which I had seen a fortnight before, I immediately experienced the same fear as I had felt, not long before, when entering Arras and Armentières. I immediately had a premonition of the disaster that I was going to witness. The electric cables for the trams and the telegraph wires were hanging pathetically across the streets, a shell had broken a water main which a few valiant men were trying hard to plug here and there. Dogs killed by explosions or simply struck down were bathed in their own blood. The beautiful Promenade de la Hotoie was riddled with shell holes. Every street, every district had 1, 2 or 3 houses indiscriminately ruined by a bomb dropped from an aeroplane or a shell.*

**Reading** by Lieutenant Marc Meissner, German Army

*Read in German*

A letter from Wolfgang Panzer to his parents and siblings on 3 August 1918

*The situation here is more peculiar than anywhere on the front line.*

*In Artois and in French Flanders, villages even kilometres behind the first position were nothing but piles of rubble, and it still occasionally fills me with dread when I look at the map and retrace our steps this spring through the scenes of carnage from the Battle of the Somme. Everyone in our fatherland should have been there, and then they'd perhaps be better able to judge whether it was a wise move to retreat at the Marne. We look upon the events without surprise and without the slightest fears, and I thank my creator for giving us leaders who have the courage and the sense of responsibility to confidently surrender what could only be retained through senseless bloodshed and for no purpose at all. So, we're remarkably untarnished, while the enemy, in a blind fury, drives one division after another to their destruction. Everything will turn out for the best. That's all for today.*

*Your loving Wolf.*

**Music** Advance and Retreat from Gallimaufry

**Performed** by an international military band led by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force

**Composed** by Guy Woolfenden

**Reading**

Marshal Foch, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, to General Debeney and delivered by Colonel Desticker to General Debeney on the morning of 9 August 1918

*It is well understood that the French 1st Army must reach Röy as early as possible, and reinforce the IIIrd.*

*When the result has been obtained, the situation itself will indicate what is to be done: halt or move forward again.*

*It is precisely because one cannot settle it today that no option must be ruled out. With this aim, never must any Infantry Division be sent to the rear. Those which can no longer advance are to be bypassed, pass to the second line, and provide support until the result desired by higher command is obtained.*

*Therefore: Move quickly, march hard, manoeuvring as you advance: support from behind with everybody until the result is obtained. If these conditions are fulfilled, losses will be avoided in a few days.*

**Reading** by General Curtis M. Scaparotti, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe

Text from General John J. Pershing – in response to the spring offensives – addressed to Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, Marshal Foch and Marshal Pétain at Foch's headquarters in Clermont on 28 March 1918

*I have come to tell you that the American people would consider it a great honor for our troops to be engaged in the present battle. I ask you for this in their name and my own. At this moment there are no other questions but of fighting. Infantry, artillery, aviation, all that we have are yours; use them as you wish. More will come, in numbers equal to requirements. I have come especially to tell you that the American people will be proud to take part in the greatest battle of history.*

**Reading** by Major General Gavan Reynolds AM, Australian Military Representative to NATO and the EU

General Sir John Monash's message to the troops the day before battle

*For the first time in the history of our Corps, all five Australian Divisions will to-morrow engage in the largest and most important battle operation ever undertaken by the Corps. Because of the completeness of our plans and dispositions, of the magnitude of the operations, of the number of troops employed, and of the depth to which we intend to over-run the enemy's positions, this battle will be one of the most memorable of the whole war. The work to be done to-morrow will perhaps make heavy demands upon the endurance and the staying powers of many of you; but I am confident that, in spite of excitement, fatigue, and physical strain, every man will carry on to the utmost of his powers until his goal is won; for the sake of AUSTRALIA, the empire and our cause.*

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**Reading** by Brigadier-General Gregory Smith, Canadian Commander Formation Europe, Canadian Military Representative to SHAPE

Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie in a special order to the Canadian Corps in March 1917 [re-stated during the 1918 German spring offensives]

*Under the orders of your devoted officers in the coming battle you will advance or fall where you stand facing the enemy. To those who will fall I say you will not die, but step into immortality. Your mothers will not lament your fate, but will be proud to have borne such sons. Your name will be revered forever and ever by your grateful country, and God will take you unto Himself.*

**Reading** by General Sir Nicholas Carter, CBE DSO ADC Gen, Chief of the Defence Staff

Extract from Field Marshal Haig's diary – 7 August 1918

*At 2.45 pm I left for Fléxicourt [sic], where I had a talk with General Rawlinson.*

*Everything is going on without a hitch and the Enemy seems in ignorance of the impending blow! I then went on to HQ Canadian Corps at Dury and saw General Currie commanding the Corps. The latter said it had been a hustle to be ready in time, but everything had been got in except 2 long-range guns. The platforms were ready for them and they would be got in by tonight. Last night was our most critical moment. If the Germans had bombarded the Canadian zone, we could not have retaliated last night.*

*Tonight the situation is quite different and we are ready!*

#### **Music Over There**

**Performed** by The National Youth Choir of Great Britain and an international military band led by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force  
**Composed** by George M. Cohan

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## THE BATTLE

#### **Reading**

Extract from the memoirs of Alphonse Thuillier, "A veteran of the 94th Infantry Regiment". Second-in-command of 10 Company

*The attack on 8 August, at first light, was launched on an 80 kilometre front. We had British forces in the form of Canadian troops on our left.*

*When the artillery barrage started, the sky became completely red in a moment. We started the attack as day was breaking.*

*A German machine gun positioned on top of the ravine on our side, that is to say opposite us, began spraying us with bursts of fire. We had to go to ground and crawl to shell holes to take cover, and try to get round it. The machine gunner with me fired a burst at the German machine gunner, while I was aiming at the officer who was there. He immediately put his hands up, and remembering the slaughter from the previous year at Verdun, I changed the aim of the muzzle of my rifle and shot him in the head. As the machine gun was no longer firing, all the riflemen in the flat open country could approach safely to take the ravine where a battery of German heavy artillery was located. The German gunners, who had gone into dugouts during the shelling by our artillery, were taken prisoner. Special grenades were placed in the muzzles of the guns to damage them severely and prevent them being used again in case of an enemy counterattack and us being forced to withdraw. We had advanced about ten kilometres.*

*During our daytime advance we saw the bodies of French soldiers who had been killed during the German advance in March and who had remained on the ground where they had fallen.*

*The death toll for the attack on 8 August 1918 was one dead, one too many alas, the section's machine gunner, but there were a lot of wounded.*

**Reading** by Second Lieutenant Collette Broome, Royal Artillery

Major General A. A. Montgomery, British commander of the Fourth Army (XIII Corps), from "The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days" (published 1919). On the Americans at Amiens from the 9 August attack on Gressaire Wood

*... the Americans swept everything before them, and the German resistance collapsed. So precipitate was the retreat of the enemy that a German battalion commander fled from his dug-out, abandoning his orders, maps, and telephone switchboard. The Americans were so impetuous that they outstripped the British on the left, and it was due to them that the objective was so quickly and rapidly gained on the front of the 58th Division.*

**Reading** by Major Ryan Pearce, Royal Australian Armoured Corps

Private Southey, Australian Corps from "Forgotten Voices Of The Great War" by Max Arthur and Imperial War Museums published by Ebury Press

*The morning of 8th August started very foggy indeed, and as our barrage opened, a tremendous barrage, we were wondering how we were going to get on. But, forward we pushed, and met comparatively slight opposition. Some Germans surrendered quickly, others fought to the end. As we pushed on wondering where we were, the sun broke through and we began to see the countryside that we hadn't seen for quite a time. It was unscarred, all sorts of cultivated land, and we began to feel, 'By Jove, the war's coming to an end. We're getting through.' And we had a feeling of great uplift about the whole job.*

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**Reading** by Captain Yves Germain, Royal Canadian Navy

Extract from the war diary of Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas-Louis Tremblay, Commander of the 22nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

*Last night was quiet; the enemy doesn't seem to suspect that a terrible attack is imminent. Thousands and thousands of men have been concentrated into our front lines and formidable tools of war are at the ready, awaiting the signal to unleash a terrifying campaign of bombardment against the enemy. Finally at 4:20 this morning, the storm surged with incredible violence and under cover of this steel sheet blowing everything up in the enemy trenches, our infantry advanced, supported by tanks.*

*Over the course of the day, we took considerable implements of war, cannons, hundreds of machine guns; prisoners were taken in the thousands. The French attack was also a great success. In fact, it is the best day the Allies have had since the beginning of the war. The enemy was clearly beaten today and our confidence in our final success has been bolstered. Our losses total 40 men.*

**Reading** by Major Mike Fielder, Royal Tank Regiment, British Army

Tank Commander Wilfred Bion on 8 August 1918 from "The Day We Won the War" by Charles Messenger

*At 9.50pm Handley Page bombers were due to start flying along the front; the noise of their engines was supposed to cloak the roar of the tank engines so the enemy would not become suspicious. Soon we heard the characteristic pulsating tone. Just then from two miles away we heard the roar of the first tank engine starting up. The tanks, after the first one, helped to screen each other. As each engine started, the driver throttled down to slow speed so that the roar became a diffuse murmur, and the murmur became an undifferentiated noise like traffic on the roads; it was just possible to believe that the enemy would be deceived.*

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**Reading** by Lieutenant Commander Kai Schönfeld, German Navy

Extract from the post-war memoirs of Paul von Hindenburg,  
German Army Chief of Staff on the Battle of Amiens, 8 August 1918

*On the morning of August 8th our comparative peace was abruptly interrupted. In the southwest the noise of battle could clearly be heard. The first reports, which came from Army Headquarters in the neighbourhood of Péronne, were serious. The enemy, employing large squadrons of tanks, had broken into our lines on both sides of the Amiens-St. Quentin road. Further details could not be given.*

*The veil of uncertainty was lifted during the next few hours, though our telephone lines had been broken in many places. There was no doubt that the enemy had penetrated deeply into our positions and that batteries had been lost.*

*On this August 8th we had to act as we had so often acted in equally menacing situations. Initial successes of the enemy were no new experience for us. We had seen them in 1916 and 1917, at Verdun, Arras, Wytschaete and Cambrai. We had only quite recently experienced and mastered another at Soissons. But in the present case the situation was particularly serious. The great tank attack of the enemy had penetrated to a surprising depth. The tanks, which were faster than hitherto, had surprised Divisional Staff in their headquarters and torn up the telephone lines which communicated with the battle front.*

*I had no illusions about the political effects of our defeat on August 8th. Our battles from July 15th to August 4th could be regarded, both abroad and at home, as the consequence of an unsuccessful but bold stroke, such as may happen in any war.*

*On the other hand, the failure of August 8th was revealed to all eyes as the consequences of an open weakness. To fail in an attack was a very different matter from being vanquished on the defence. The amount of booty which our enemy could publish to the world spoke a clear language.*

*Both the public at home and our Allies could only listen in great anxiety. All the more urgent was it that we should keep our presence of mind and face the situation without illusions, but also without exaggerated pessimism.*

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**REMEMBRANCE**

**Please stand**

Wreaths will be laid at the memorial tablets by young people

**Music** Evening Hymn, Last Post and Sunset

**Performed** by an international military band led by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and The National Youth Choir of Great Britain

**Arrangement** by Wing Commander Barrie Hingley

**Reading** by Cadet PO1 Jenna McKay, Royal Canadian Sea Cadet

*Commitment to Remember*

They were young, as we are young,  
They served, giving freely of themselves.  
To them, we pledge, amid the winds of time,  
To carry their torch and never forget.  
We will remember them.

**Reading** by Cadet Sergeant Heidi Kelly, Royal Canadian Air Cadet

*Commitment to Remember*

They were young, as we are young,  
They served, giving freely of themselves.  
To them, we pledge, amid the winds of time,  
To carry their torch and never forget.  
We will remember them.

**Reading** by Sergeant Quentin Davis, Infantry Brigade Combat Team,  
U.S. Army

Quote from George S. Patton

*It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died.  
Rather we should thank God such men lived.*

**Reading** by Australian Defence Force Cadet

*These Following Men* by Dame Mary Gilmore

They are not dead; not even broken;  
Only their dust has gone back home to the earth:  
For they—the essential they—shall have re-birth  
Whenever a word of them is spoken.

**Reading** by Sydnee Thorne, the Duke of York Royal Military School, Dover

*For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

#### **One Minute Silence**

**Music** *Hymn to the Fallen*

**Performed** by The National Youth Choir of Great Britain and an  
international military band led by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force

**Composed** by John Williams

#### **Reading**

*Hymne (first strophe), from "Les Chants du crépuscule"*  
by Victor Hugo (1835)

*Those who have died in honour for the nation,  
And now lie quiet at rest beneath the pall,  
Merit the presence and the prayers of all  
Who come to stand in silent contemplation.*

*Their name is fairer than the fairest name.  
The glory of the world cannot outlast their fame;  
And, as their mothers bore them in the womb,  
A nation's voice will rock them in their tomb.*

#### **Please be seated**

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## AFTER THE BATTLE

### Reading by Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Hone, Canadian Armed Forces

Canon Frederick George Scott CMG DSO, Senior Chaplain – First Canadian Division, Canadian Expeditionary Force, from his book, "The Great War As I Saw It"

*Here and there I met wounded men walking back, and many German prisoners. In the fields in different directions I could see rifles stuck, bayonet downwards, in the ground, which showed that there lay wounded men. I found that these were chiefly Germans, and all of them had received hideous wounds and were clamouring for water. Poor men, I was sorry for them, for I knew it would be long before they could be carried out or receive medical attention, owing to the rapidity of our advance. I made my way to each in turn and gave him a drink from some of the water bottles which I carried round my belt. I think all the Germans I saw that morning were dying, having been wounded in the stomach. After attending, as far as it was possible, to their bodily needs, I endeavoured to minister to their spiritual. As they happened to be Roman Catholics, I took off the crucifix which I wore round my neck and gave it to them. They would put up their trembling hands and clasp it lovingly, and kiss it, while I began the Lord's Prayer in German. This happened many times that day. One man who had a hideous wound in the abdomen was most grateful, and when he handed me back the crucifix he took my hand and kissed it. It was strange to think that an hour before, had we met, we should have been deadly enemies.*

**Reading** by His Excellency, Mr Joachim Gauck, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany

*After a Bad Dream* by Gerrit Engelke, 1918

*Read in German*

I am a soldier and stand in the field  
And know of no-one in the world.  
Thus I cannot celebrate this rainy day,  
So tenderly concerned, damp and leaden  
Since at night your image broke my sleep  
And brought me near to you.

I am a soldier and stand in the field,  
Gun on the arm and far from the world.  
Were I at home, I would close door and window  
And remain alone for a long time,  
Sink into the sofa's corner,  
With closed eyes, think of you.

I am a soldier and stand in the field.  
Here the old human world ends.  
The rain sings, the wet skeins flow.  
I can do nothing – only shoot lead.  
Don't know why, I still do it, as if I must  
Into the grey weather a shot cracks!

**Reading** by Lieutenant Delphine Astier, Royal Australian Corps of Transport

Quote from LT Harold Williams, 5th Division Australian Imperial Force, wounded in the Battle of Péronne and evacuated to a casualty clearing station at Daours

*That these women worked their long hours among such surroundings without collapsing spoke volumes for their will-power and sense of duty. The place reeked with the odours of blood, anti-septic dressings, and unwashed bodies. The nurses saw the war stripped of even the excitement of an attack. They saw soldiers in their most pitiful state – wounded, blood-stained, dirty, reeking of blood and filth. The strain was such that it was almost incredible that a woman could stand it and retain her sanity.*

**Reading** by Captain Maxime Fournier Canadian Armed Forces

Letter from Frank Cousins, Canadian soldier, to his mother on 12 November 1918

*My Dear Mother:*

*The remarkable and long-looked for day has at last arrived and the happenings of the past week are beyond my power of description. How much has happened since on the morning of August 8th we were awakened out of our doze in that motor lorry as the big guns belched forth the first rounds of the barrage for the Amiens affairs. How little we thought that in less than four months the victory would be won. It is hard to realize that it is all over and for me over here the truth will not be fully appreciated until we reach home. But war is no more – in our time at least and we can once more “move and live and have our being” – in short be human.*

**Reading** by Sergeant First Class Kennerly Pence, Infantry Brigade Combat Team, U.S. Army

Major General George Bell of the U.S. Army to Lieutenant General R. H. K. Butler of the British Army, 11 August 1918

*The Division is proud to have participated in this historic battle with the gallant British troops under your command. Permit me to send you the most hearty congratulations on the brilliant work of your forces and to express the confident hope of further and combined victories for our combined arms.*

**Reading** by the Mayor of Amiens, Brigitte Fouré

Extract from the diary of Herménégilde Duchaussoy, Mayor of Amiens 1916 – 1919

*Thursday 8 August: 8 August will remain famous in history as the start of a battle which will last three months, first of all freeing Amiens, showing the attrition of the German armies and finally giving us victory.*

*The communiqué of 10 August becomes, for all the inhabitants of Amiens who have fled, “the finest serial to be continued”. Our troops have captured Pierrepont. During the day, after taking Davenescourt, we attacked south of Montdidier, then set about Faverolles. I had tears in my eyes as I read the communiqué, it is victory and moreover the liberation of Amiens, so one is going to be able to return. We will no longer be refugees! For me, there is no home left, our house being uninhabitable. We will have to look for somewhere else to put up the family.*

*12 August: The officer from the Forestry Department and his interpreter want to take me to Amiens. I have seen Commander Quirot from the Paris fire brigade and Sub-prefect Pignet who is no longer concerned with evacuation. During the day King George, coming from the front, visited the cathedral and decorated the Prefect and the Army Commander. In Flixecourt he offered tea, notably to Marshal Foch. The city is really sad. In spite of what I have seen already, I am always badly upset by our shell-damaged buildings and our houses which are in ruins or burnt down.*

*13 August: At 10.15, stand-to and gunfire: bursts of shrapnel. Amiens is empty. The shops have nothing to sell and the factories have no looms or raw materials, or coal. Obviously the population can only be called upon to reoccupy Amiens after a complete and permanent organisation of food supply and the material means of housing.*

**Reading** by The Right Honourable Theresa May MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Extract from the War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1918

*The fact of the matter was that the British Army itself did not realise the extent and effect of the triumph they had won that day. They were thinking in the terms of past offensives when a gain of a few kilometres in an attack was as much as they could hope to accomplish, and experience had taught them the dangers of advancing too far because the Germans invariably rallied, brought up their reserves and counterattacked with verve and skill. They had not yet understood that they were confronted to-day with an enemy who had lost much of his dash and combative strength.*

*The reports of the battle received by the Cabinet from the front showed how little even the victors understood the immense effect of the triumph they had won. The actual ground captured was not extensive. The effect of the victory was moral and not territorial. It revealed to friend and foe alike the breakdown of the German power of resistance. More finally even than by the French counter-offensive of July 18th were the Germans driven by the British stroke of August 8th to realise that all hope of victory had passed.*

*After the July defeat, whilst they came to the conclusion that their offensive had finally failed they still hoped to reorganise their army effectively for an impenetrable defence. After the Amiens battle even this seemed impossible. Ludendorff admits: – “The 8th August demonstrated the collapse of our fighting strength, and in the light of our recruiting situation it took from me any hope of discovering some strategic measure which would reestablish the position in our favour. An end must be put to the War.”*

**Please stand**

**Music** National Anthems  
**All, led** by The National Youth Choir of Great Britain

The National Anthem of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**God save our gracious Queen!**  
**Long live our noble Queen!**  
**God save the Queen!**  
**Send her victorious,**  
**Happy and glorious,**  
**Long to reign over us,**  
**God save the Queen.**

The National Anthem of the Republic of France

**Allons enfants de la Patrie,**  
**Le jour de gloire est arrivé!**  
**Contre nous de la tyrannie,**  
**L'étendard sanglant est levé,**  
**L'étendard sanglant est levé,**  
**Entendez-vous dans nos campagnes**  
**Mugir ces féroces soldats?**  
**Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras**  
**Égorer nos fils , nos compagnes!**

**Aux armes, citoyens,**  
**Formez vos bataillons,**  
**Marchons, marchons!**  
**Qu'un sang impur**  
**Abreuve nos sillons!**

**Please be seated**

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## REAFFIRMATION OF FRIENDSHIP

Head of State and Head of Government representatives will lay flowers in the Chapel of the Allies as a symbol of friendship between the Allies, Germany and the city of Amiens.

**Music** *De Profundis (Psalm 130) Gregorian plainchant*  
**Performed** by the National Youth Choir of Great Britain

**Please remain seated**

### Concluding music

*Brigg Fair* (Traditional English arr. Percy Grainger)  
*Calme des nuits* (Camille Saint-Saëns)  
*Seig sind die Toten* (Heinrich Schütz)  
*Ubi Caritas* (Maurice Duruflé)  
*Viel freuden mit sich bringet* (Traditional German arr. Ben Parry)  
**Performed** by the National Youth Choir of Great Britain

**Music** *Benedictus* from *Mass of St Thomas Aquinas*  
**Performed** by The National Youth Choir of Great Britain and an international military band led by the Royal Air Force Central Band  
**Composed** by Martin Ellerby

**Please remain seated until the Head of State and Head of Government representatives have departed when you will be invited to leave the Cathedral by ushers**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Central Band of the Royal Air Force  
Director of Music: Flight Lieutenant Christopher l'Anson BMus (Hons)  
LRSM LTCL LLCM RAF  
Drum Major: Chief Technician P. Phelan BMus (Hons) LLCM

National Youth Choir of Great Britain  
Artistic Director: Ben Parry

International trumpeters:  
Corporal Timothy Hynd, Central Band of the Royal Air Force  
Corporal Matthew Creek, Australian Army Band Corps  
Corporal Davide De Silva, Governor General's Foot Guard, Canada

Recorded music in the Cathedral before the event composed by Jacques de la Presle:  
*Le Jardin mouillé*  
*Chanson de la rose , La branche d'acacia, Heureux ceux qui sont morts O morts (texte de Dorin)*  
*Petite berceuse*  
*Suite en sol euse*  
*Guitare*

Born on 5 July 1888 in Versailles, Jacques Guillaume de Sauville de la Presle studied music at the Conservatoire de Versailles, and then at the Conservatoire de musique et de déclamation de Paris. He left for the front at the start of the War as a stretcher-bearer for the 119e Régiment d'Infanterie. He had several spells of duty at Verdun. He was serving in the Amiens area when he was badly gassed, on 15 August 1918. He then spent seven months in hospital, hovering between life and death. On returning to civilian life he took up his musical studies again and had a career as a composer and professor of harmony at the Conservatoire de Paris, before dying in Paris on 6 May 1969.

The United Kingdom Guard of Honour is provided by the 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment, "The Vikings"  
Commanding Officer: Lieutenant Colonel Philip Moxey MBE, Regimental Sergeant Major Warrant Officer Class 1 C.J. Holmes.  
Guard of Honour: Commander Major Drew Reed, Guard of Honour CSM  
Warrant Officer Class 2 G. George

U.K. Flag Bearer Contingent  
Provided by European Joint Support Unit, SHAPE.  
Warrant Officer Class 2 (RQMS) Bruce McAulay, Royal Regiment of Artillery  
Staff Sergeant Scott Rainsley, Royal Logistic Corp  
Sergeant Richard Mitchell, RAF Regiment  
Corporal David Archer, RAF Regiment  
Corporal Stephen Hall, The Royal Irish Regiment

Australian Flag Party  
Ensign: Captain Isaac Williams, Royal Australian Engineers  
Escort: Sergeant Tyrone Tynan, Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers  
Escort: Corporal Samantha Mackie, Royal Australian Corps of Military Police  
Stepliners:  
Warrant Officer Class One Nathan Holdforth, Royal Australian Army Medical Corps  
Corporal Brad Devlin, Royal Australian Army Medical Corps

Canadian Flag Party  
Sergeant Jean Paul Cloutier, Canadian Armed Forces  
Corporal Tyrell Burge, Canadian Armed Forces  
Corporal Justin Lewis, Canadian Armed Forces  
Stepliners:  
Sergeant Eric Belley, Canadian Military Police  
Sergeant Martine Leboeuf, Canadian Armed Forces  
Corporal Maxime Savoie-Chenard, Canadian Armed Forces

German Flag party  
Flag bearer: Staff Sergeant Alain Alexander Beaujeant, German Air Force  
Escort: Captain Moritz Jost, German Army  
Escort: Lieutenant Jens Christoph Pirzkall, German Army

U.S. Flag Bearers  
Sergeant Tyler Cheshire, Armoured Brigade Combat Team  
Sergeant Ian Ramey, Infantry Brigade Combat Team

University College London Institute of Education, who have delivered a programme for young people from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, U.K. and U.S.A. as part of the Centenary of the Battle of Amiens commemorations.

National Citizen Service graduates who have supported the delivery of this commemorative event.

## SPRING 1918: 'TO THE LAST MAN'

By early 1918, years of war had taken a toll on all the belligerent nations. A major Allied offensive at Ypres in late 1917 had failed to achieve its ambitious goals, and resulted in heavy casualties for British Empire troops. America had joined their cause, but it would take time before its manpower could be mobilised. In October, Italy had been rocked by disastrous defeat at Caporetto, and on the Eastern Front, the Russian armies were fatally undermined by the upheaval of political revolution.

Germany, meanwhile, began to transfer troops from the Eastern Front to the Western Front. After the failure of their unrestricted submarine campaign, German leaders sought to seize the initiative before the arrival of large numbers of American troops, which would likely be fatal to German hopes of a favourable end to hostilities. In late January 1918, the German High Command decided to attack north and south of St Quentin (Aisne). Here, east of the old Somme battlefields, the British-held defences were weak. By mid-March, the Germans were ready to launch the Kaiserschlacht – the 'Kaiser's Battle'.

The German Spring Offensive 1918: German stormtroopers advancing through clouds of smoke towards enemy positions ©Imperial War Museum (Q 47997)

French and American officers cutting barbed wire in preparation for a patrol to move at Badonviller, 17 March 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q 70258)

### 'OPERATION MICHAEL': THE SOMME, 21 MARCH – 5 APRIL 1918

By the early hours of Thursday 21 March 1918, a thick mist had settled over much of the 80 km front occupied by British Fifth and Third Armies from Arras to La

Fère. Around 4.40am, the quiet was shattered by the roar of a vast artillery bombardment, as thousands of German guns suddenly opened fire. For five hours, high-explosive and gas-shells wreaked havoc on British command and communication centres, and heavy gun positions far behind the front, before the fire switched to the beleaguered garrisons of the British forward defences.

At 9.40am, German infantry attacked, led by elite storm troops. Hidden from British machine-guns by fog and smoke, they quickly overran the shocked troops in the front lines and pressed on, picking their way round centres of resistance, always striving to move forward. From the south of Fifth Army's front came alarming reports of serious German breakthroughs. The position worsened in the afternoon, and it became clear that the British had suffered severe losses. Fifth Army was ordered to make a limited withdrawal during the night.

German progress was slower elsewhere, particularly in the north. With French divisions sent to support the British, a German assault at Arras was repelled. German commanders redirected their offensive towards the vital rail hub of Amiens.

With German armies less than 25km from Paris, French and British political and military leaders met at Doullens on 26 March. Among the attendees were Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of





Infantry of the French 22nd Division and British 20th Division man a line of newly scraped rifle pits covering a road near Nesle, 25 March 1918  
©Imperial War Museum (Q 10810)

France, and Lord Milner, British Secretary of State for War; Philippe Pétain and Douglas Haig, respective Commanders-in-Chief; and Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Henry Wilson, and his French counterpart Ferdinand Foch. It was agreed that more effective co-operation was now imperative. Foch was ordered to co-ordinate the Allied armies.

At a further meeting at Beauvais on 3 April, attended by British Prime

Minister Lloyd George, Clemenceau stated that 'Un pouvoir de direction suprême me paraît indispensable à l'achèvement du succès'. He proposed that Foch should now oversee 'the strategic direction of operations', although military commanders would retain control over the tactics and conduct of their respective national forces, as well as staff work for preparing and executing battle plans. Despite some reservations, both the American

and British leaders agreed, and Foch would be named Supreme Commander, or Generalissimo, of the Allied armies.

It would prove a decisive appointment, since mutual support was proving critical in holding back the German onslaught. Although the 'Michael' offensive was unprecedented in scale, in ground gained, casualties incurred, prisoners taken, guns lost and stores abandoned, it did not achieve a breakthrough. Over 16 days of intense fighting, Allied forces rallied and reformed, allowing reserves to gradually arrive and stem the tide.

#### OPERATION 'GEORGETTE': FLANDERS, 9 – 29 APRIL 1918

On 9 April, the German armies launched a second major offensive, this time in Flanders. Though smaller in scale than 'Michael', it also achieved early success and generated a far greater sense of military and political crisis than the fighting on the Somme. In 21 days of intense and sometimes bewilderingly complex fighting, a series of German attacks targeted weak spots in the line, particularly to the south of Ypres, where Portuguese forces suffered terrible losses. German troops advanced towards the railway centre of Hazebrouck and around the symbolic city of Ypres, threatening to cut off British and Belgian forces to the north.

On 11 April, after Messines Ridge had been abandoned and with German infantry within eight km of Hazebrouck, Douglas Haig issued a special Order of the Day, exhorting his troops to: 'fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end.'

Driven back but not broken, the exhausted Allied defenders were gradually shored-up by reserves, but not before

German progress by 14 April convinced British command to shorten the line and relinquish the gains of the previous year's fighting around Passchendaele. Ferocious assaults wrested Mount Kemmel from the French on 25 April, but this proved the last significant German success and 'Georgette' was soon called off.

#### THE DEFENCE OF AMIENS: THE ACTIONS AT VILLERS-BRETONNEUX, 24 – 25 APRIL 1918

While fighting continued in Flanders, the strategic prize of Amiens, far to the south in Picardy, proved irresistible to German commander Erich Ludendorff, who decided to launch a renewed attack on its outermost eastern defences, at Villers-Bretonneux. His aim was to secure the town and the surrounding high ground, from where artillery could systematically destroy Amiens and render it useless to the Allies.

In dense fog early on the morning of 24 April, an intense bombardment smashed down on Villers-Bretonneux's defences before German infantry, supported by tanks, overran the Allied positions. That evening, a surprise counter-attack began in moonlight. Spearheading the operation were the 13th and 15th Australian Brigades, supported by the British 54th Brigade. In darkness and confusion, the Australian infantry broke the German lines and, by early morning on 25 April, had effectively recaptured the town. German progress towards Amiens had been stopped for good.

#### THE DEFEAT OF THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES

In the six weeks between 21 March and the end of April, British Empire casualties were estimated at 240,000 (wounded, killed or captured) and French around 92,000. But German casualties amounted to near 348,000. Despite these losses, and the exhausting



American soldiers passing through St. Martin-au-Lært, 8 July 1918  
©Imperial War Museum (Q 46445)

failures to break the Allies, the German Army still remained a potent force. Ludendorff sanctioned a series of diversionary attacks between late May and mid-July, targeting French, American and British forces in the south, intending to draw Allied reserves far away from the Flanders front where he hoped to launch another major campaign.

The first attack on 27 May along the Chemin des Dames was codenamed 'Blücher'. By the end of the day, German forces had crossed the Aisne and advanced over 17 km, reaching the Marne two days later, only around 80 km from Paris. But French and American forces eventually held back the advance, leaving the Germans in a deep and vulnerable salient.

Another German attack on 9 June, codenamed 'Operation Gneisenau', attempted to improve this precarious position and draw in even more French reserves. Attacking towards the River Matz, the Germans achieved another unexpected success, gaining nearly 10 km on the first day. But French resistance hardened and a counter-attack on 11 June, in which tanks and aircraft were employed to great effect, brought the German advance to a halt. Beginning on 15 July, the next German assault was pre-empted by French intelligence. Although German troops were able to cross the Marne on both sides of Reims, they made little progress.

### THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE

On 18 July, the Allies launched a surprise counter-attack, beginning what became known as the Second Battle of the Marne. Along a 55 km front, the French Tenth and Sixth Armies, supported by American, British and Italian units, attacked German lines around the Marne salient. A 'rolling barrage'

protected the advance, while some 470 tanks went into action and French and British aircraft seized control of the air. German forces were driven back to their previous lines between Reims and Soissons, beyond the Marne river. A pocket of resistance at Château-Thierry was eliminated on 3 August, and Allied forces cleared the road between Paris and Strasbourg. Suffering from inadequate rations and a growing influenza crisis, German forces were unable to resist, and the Allies took 35,000 prisoners. On 6 August, Foch was bestowed with the title Maréchal de France. The Second Battle of the Marne was a turning point: after surviving the spring, it was time for the Allies to attack.

### PLANNING FOR THE OFFENSIVE

On 24 July, while fighting continued in the Second Battle of the Marne, Foch met with the commanders of the British, American and French forces – Douglas Haig, John J. Pershing and Phillippe Pétain – at the Chateau de Bombon, south-east of Paris. He outlined a plan for the Allies to take the offensive, after months of defensive actions. This would be a co-ordinated effort and, crucially, would be a sequence of major attacks, a 'series of movements': powerful, surprise assaults across the Western Front punctuated only by short pauses, intended to land a 'succession of blows' which would overwhelm German forces. The primary objectives were to secure three railways which were vital to the Allies: the Paris-Avricourt line in the Marne area, the same line in the Verdun area, near Saint-Mihiel, and the Paris-Amiens railway, which would be secured by an Allied attack at Amiens.

The terrain to the east of Amiens was promising: open and rolling, with hard soil which would make tanks more effective and, perhaps most importantly,

limited German defences. Amiens itself was close to the frontline, and civilians had been evacuated by the French authorities. It had sustained some damage from German artillery, including the ancient cathedral, but had largely escaped serious destruction. The presence of vital railway lines gave Amiens its strategic importance, and it was here that the British and French lines met. As at the Somme in 1916, the Battle of Amiens was to be a joint operation.

### THE ARMIES OF 1918

The Second Battle of the Marne had proved a turning point: boosting Allied morale after months of defensive action, and provoking a crisis of confidence among German commanders. By the summer of 1918, the balance of forces on the Western Front was no longer in their favour. German troop numbers peaked in June 1918 at just over 1.6 million, but afterwards casualties they could not replace meant a steady decline. Foch recognised the Allies' morale and material advantages, but also that more effective co-ordination was needed to make this advantage count: for the Amiens attack, the French 1st Army would join the British Fourth Army.

By this time, hundreds of thousands of American soldiers were arriving every month. The capture of Cantigny, near Montdidier, by the US 1st Division on 28 May had demonstrated that American infantry were capable of overcoming battle-hardened German troops. Both the increasing numbers and potential impact of American forces profoundly influenced strategic thinking on both sides. On 1 May 1918, there were some 430,000 American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) troops in France, but by the end of the month there were more than 650,000. By

November, they would form the single biggest army on the Western Front.

Despite having suffered terribly in the German offensives of March and April, British Empire forces were reorganised and replenished in both troops and equipment. By 1918, the British Army had become an immense and complex multi-national organisation, comprising five 'armies' with over sixty fighting divisions – of which five were Australian, four Canadian, one New Zealand and two American.

By August 1918, it numbered some 2,400,000 men. Australian and Canadian units, despite being under strength and lacking reinforcements, were often experienced and battle-hardened. Many of the replacements arriving at the front from the United Kingdom were conscripts. Some were very young – eighteen or nineteen years old – and most were inexperienced.

By this time, training programmes had become more complex and responsive. As early as 5 April during the first phase of the German offensive, soldiers were issued with 'Notes on Recent Fighting', analysing the lessons of 21-22 March. Decisions were increasingly delegated, allowing for more initiative and innovation. Accurate and controlled 'creeping' barrages protected the infantry, who were now trained to fight in small units, armed with light machine guns, mortars and rifle grenades. They would be supported by armoured vehicles, including the 'Whippet' and recently-introduced Mark V tanks, and sometimes aircraft. This all relied on an immense industrial effort: supplies of weapons, ammunition and equipment from British and American munitions factories were complemented by the efficient work of logistics units.

### LE HAMEL

On the evening of 3 July, troops of the 4th Australian Division, along with four companies of American infantry, prepared for a surprise attack on German lines around the village of Hamel, near Villers-Bretonneux. In a comprehensively planned and limited operation, intended to improve the Allied defensive lines and gain observation along the Somme valley, little had been left to chance. Special training and precise orders were given to the infantry, tanks, aircraft and artillery, which would all be working together.

At 3.10am on 4 July, infantry and tanks advanced behind the cover of a devastating creeping barrage. Heavily defended German positions were dealt with by special detachments, while the remaining attackers pressed on to their objectives, and in around ninety minutes they had gained their objectives at a cost of around 1,000 Australian and American casualties. German losses were considerable, and over 1,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner. It was a sign of things to come on a larger scale in the Allied offensive which would begin at Amiens the following month.

Many of the lessons of previous offensives had been learned: the element of surprise could be critical, mobility and flexibility were paramount, and success could only be achieved through effective co-operation between all arms of the military. Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps, would state that:

*"...the true role of the infantry was not to expend itself upon heroic physical effort, not to wither away under merciless machine-gun fire, nor to impale itself on hostile*

*bayonets...but on the contrary, to advance under the maximum possible protection of the maximum possible array of mechanical resources, in the form of guns, machine-guns, tanks, mortars and aeroplanes; to advance with as little impediment as possible; to be relieved as far as possible of the obligation to fight their way forward..."*

# THE BATTLE OF AMIENS: 8–11 AUGUST 1918

American soldiers line up for decoration by King George, 6 August 1918, in Molliens-au-Bois, France. Photo: US Signal Corps, US National Archives



On 8 August 1918 at 4.20am, just before first light, almost 100,000 Canadian, Australian and British infantrymen, with the support of hundreds of tanks, advanced on a front of over 22 kms, behind a devastating artillery barrage. Shrouded by dense mist, the assault was a complete surprise to the German army. In combination with a French attack in the south, the advances of Fourth Army saw the leading shock-troops of both the elite Canadian Corps on the right, and Australian Corps in the centre, reach their first objectives by around 7.30am. Supported by wire-crushing

tanks and ground-strafing aircraft, they achieved their final objectives by early afternoon, and the fighting was largely over by 2pm. The only setbacks occurred on the extreme flanks of the attack, especially north of the Somme River, where British III Corps encountered stiff German resistance. The day was a stunning Allied success and a triumph of all-arms co-operation. German casualties were estimated at 27,000 killed, wounded or captured. The German Army and its leaders had been dealt an overwhelming physical and psychological blow.



Men of the 95th Siege Battery RGA loading a 9.2 inch howitzer near Bayencourt during the Battle of Amiens, 8 August 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q 10377)

## PREPARATIONS

Surprise and secrecy had been critical. The preliminary planning meetings were held at several different locations; reconnaissance had been low-key; instructions were issued at the last practical moment; all movements were at night, under cover of aerial patrols; artillery fire was carefully regulated as more guns were installed, so that there was no obvious increase in firepower. There was a disciplined campaign to avoid careless talk, and an elaborate scheme to hide the presence of additional Australian units and the Canadian Corps, since their reputation as assault troops would warn the Germans of an imminent offensive. They took up their positions at Amiens only two hours before the main attack.

The Allied attack front ran roughly from the River Ancre in the north to near Moreuil in the south: some 32 km overall. The British Fourth Army's 22 km sector ran from just east of Villers-sur-Ancre to the Amiens-Roye road, while General Debeney's French First Army operated south of the road on a front of around 11 km. The final objective for Fourth Army's advance was set as the old 'Amiens Outer Defence Line' – between 9 and 13 km distant. As this distance represented a physically exhausting undertaking for the attacking infantry, it was decided to break the advance into three separate 'steps' or 'bounds' – with pauses for rest and consolidation between, which would also allow for the reserve forces to catch up and move



Soldiers getting 60-pounder heavy field guns into action less than a kilometre away from enemy lines during the Battle of Amiens in August 1918. Photo: Library and Archives Canada PA-040172

through the first wave of attacking units on to the next objective.

Fourth Army's attacking troops were supported by over 2,000 artillery pieces. One Australian infantryman who took part on the morning of 8 August described the terrifying effectiveness of the protective barrage:

*"At zero hour the bombardment fell in one mighty blast. The rush of shells through the air sounded like express trains passing. The mist was stabbed with flashes. The earth appeared to tremble with the concussion... Company after company, platoon after platoon, moved forward into the bank of mist. Up in front the barrage sounded like the strokes on a mighty drum. We knew that at the first descent of this curtain of shells the men of the 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions, the Tommies on our left, and the Canadians on our right would, in their battle formations, advance behind that moving wall of death, to assault the front line of the German trenches..."*

#### ADVANCES

Three divisions of the Canadian Corps on the right, next to the French First Army, had been given a frontage of about 6.5 km between the Amiens-Roye road and the Amiens-Chaulnes railway.

The 3rd Canadian Division on the extreme right had to cross the difficult marshland in the valley of the River Luce and faced fierce German resistance in Railway Wood. On the left, 2nd Canadian Division worked well with the Australians on their immediate left and cleared the village of Marcelcave, with the assistance of tanks, in under an hour. Vicious fighting took place in Morgemont and Hangard Woods, but the Corps attained its final objectives by early afternoon: an advance of around 13 km.

The frontage of the Australian Corps extended from the Amiens-Chaulnes railway to the River Somme: about 6.5 km. Attacking over more favourable ground than the Canadians, and supported by four battalions of the V Tank Brigade, the Australians made tremendous progress and profited from excellent covering artillery fire. The only significant setback occurred on the extreme left of the Australian advance, where the Australian 4th Division was severely hampered by German defensive fire from positions on the dominating Chipilly Spur. Nevertheless, Australian forces reached their final objective at about 12.30pm.

North of the Somme, the British III Corps had suffered a strong and disruptive German raid on 6 August, just before the Allied assault. The British were to support the left flank of the Australians, securing

the positions overlooking the Somme. But facing difficult ground, with limited tank support, III Corps met determined German resistance. While Morlancourt was taken by 12th Division, units to the south made only limited progress, particularly at the strongly-defended German positions on the Chipilly Spur, and by the end of the day the Corps had advanced only around three km.

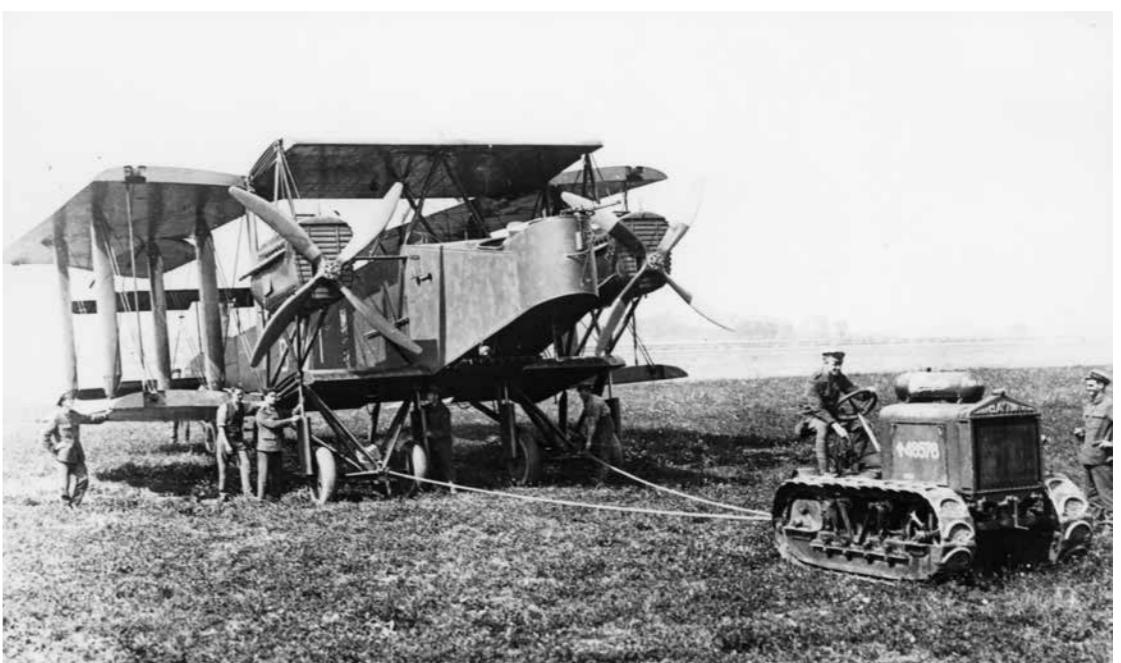
Attacking to the south of Fourth Army, twelve divisions of the French First Army provided protection for the main assault carried out by the Canadians and Australians, in what became known in France as the 3rd Battle of Picardy. Without the assistance of tanks, and attacking over difficult ground, French soldiers advanced towards Roye, gaining around eight kilometres by the end of the day. Some units pushed as far as Faverolles, east of Montdidier, and by 10 August they reached the lines once held back in 1914.

#### COMBINED ARMS

Allied air power played an important role before and during the attack on 8 August. Though outnumbering Germans in terms

of machines, the thick mist prevented serious Allied air activity until around 9am when the fog began to clear. Thereafter, the skies above the infantry saw bombing and strafing of German machine-gun posts and artillery, trucks and cars, and horse-drawn transport. In the afternoon, RAF command focused their attacks on the Somme bridges in an attempt to disrupt German movements. During these bombing operations the RAF suffered heavy losses as increasing numbers of German fighters joined the fray.

Tanks and armoured cars also played a vital part. Their presence in the initial assault was an invaluable boost to morale among the infantry. Over 340 Mark V tanks were present at first, with more in support, and dealt with pockets of resistance, machine-gun nests and barbed-wire entanglements. But the tanks' slow progress, mechanical unreliability, and their high profiles, rendered them highly vulnerable to shell fire and resolute German field gunners wreaked havoc with the advancing tanks once the mist started to clear.



Handley-Page 0400 heavy bomber being towed by a tractor. Two of these aircraft took off during the night before the battle and flew dangerously low back and forth in the dark over the frontlines to drown out the engine noise of the tanks assembling for the attack. Photograph: RAF Museum

Men of the 5th Australian Brigade outside Warfusée-Abancourt, 8 August 1918 AWM E04922



## RESULTS

Gunners of the Royal Horse Artillery examining a captured German 77mm field gun and Maxim machine gun at Malard Wood, Battle of Amiens, 9 August 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q 6931)



By the end of the day, Fourth Army had moved its line forward in places by 13 km. Casualties were estimated to have been less than 9,000 wounded, killed and captured. Although it had not secured any location of strategic importance, the German threat to the railway at Amiens had effectively been neutralized. The main achievement of the fighting was simply the

damage done to the German Army. Some 9,000 German soldiers had been killed or seriously wounded. Losses of weapons and equipment were also significant.

An estimated 18,000 German prisoners had been captured: around 15,000 by Fourth Army and 3,000 by the French. This was a particularly ominous development, since it called into question the limits of German resolve. There was a perceived shift in German morale, according to observations of German soldiers' performance and the circumstances of captured prisoners. Many were not wounded, displaying an unusual willingness to give themselves up. Ludendorff would later describe it as a 'black day'. The German Official History stated bluntly that: 'As the sun set on August 8th on the battlefield the greatest defeat which the German Army had suffered since the beginning of the war was an accomplished fact.'

## 9 – 11 AUGUST 1918

Having secured the 'Old Amiens Outer Defence Line' on the afternoon of

Capture of the Chipilly Ridge by the 58th (London) Division, 9 August 1918. Signallers of the Royal Field Artillery using heliographs in a German trench, captured on the previous day ©Imperial War Museum (Q 9191)



8 August, British Empire forces could see many German ammunition dumps ablaze in the distance. Early in the morning of 9 August, the village of Le Quesnel was captured by Canadian forces. But a long delay followed, after confusion around operational orders, and further Canadian and Australian attacks began sporadically later in the morning and early afternoon. Some were supported

by artillery, some by tanks, but at other times infantry advanced without this vital assistance. Of some 400 tanks which had taken part on the first day, only around 150 were now ready for action. Many of the surviving tank crews were also exhausted by the incredible heat they experienced inside their vehicles during the fighting, along with their incessant targeting by German firepower.



Australian stretcher bearers of the 53rd Battalion move through the damaged streets of Harbonnières, 9 August 1918 AWM E02845

Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade armoured cars advancing eastward during the Battle of Amiens on 9 August, 1918. Photo: Library and Archives Canada PA-003016



Australians from the 6th Battalion rest in a trench captured on the 10 August 1918. The trenches in the area mostly dated from the earlier 1916 Somme fighting AWM E02866



At Chipilly Spur, the American 131st Infantry regiment (attached to British 58th Division, III Corps) took part in an attack against strong German positions described by the British Official History as a 'little fortress'. Rising steeply from the

marshes of the Somme, this high ground was protected by a narrow valley covered by machine guns, some in concrete emplacements. Yet by nightfall it had been captured. Despite this important success, the overall Allied advance was restricted to around five km.

The next day, 10 August, a fine summer's day, saw more piecemeal attacks, amid stiffening German resistance. There were advances on the extreme right of the battlefield by the French Third Army, and Montdidier was occupied, but poor communications and command anxieties about German counter-attacks constrained the advance elsewhere. The topography was now more difficult, including the old trench lines of the previous year, with shell holes, barbed wire hidden by long grass, and abandoned trenches which proved useful for German defenders.

The Allies' established telephone systems were now far behind them, and despite the efforts of signallers, relay chains of runners, cyclists and horsemen, communications proved comparatively slow and unreliable. Tank casualties remained high as German field gunners ruthlessly targeted British armour. What was known as 'semi-open warfare' brought with it particular problems. Fourth Army's maximum advance, in the Canadian sector, amounted to around three km. The good weather continued on 11 August, but it was a day of minimal gains for Fourth Army as re-organised German defenders offered increasingly fierce resistance.

A convoy of boxes of artillery crosses the village of Ressons-sur-Matz on the 11/12 August 1918  
©Jacques RIDEL/SPCA/ECPAD/Défense - SPA 58 W 2409

The Battle of Amiens was over. Huge gains had been made in the four days' fighting, but offensive operations were now wound down as preparations began for another attack north of Albert. Over the three days of fighting, British Empire and Allied forces had taken over 29,800 prisoners



and 240 guns, at a cost of some 22,000 casualties (wounded, killed and captured), including nearly 6,000 from the Australian Corps and over 9,000 from the Canadian Corps. American forces suffered more than 1,400 casualties. The French Armies, meanwhile, had captured over 11,300 prisoners and more than 250 artillery guns, at a cost of over 24,000 total casualties between 6-15 August. A truly multi-national force took part in the battle, including American, Australian, British, Canadian, French, and French Colonial troops. It was a victory for co-operation and co-ordination, and initiated three months that would eventually bring the German Army to its knees.

# AMIENS TO ARMISTICE

The Allies' success at Amiens was followed by a series of co-ordinated assaults which drove the Germans from the old Somme battlegrounds. They would seek shelter behind the formidable prepared defences of the Hindenburg Line until these, too, were overcome. On 4 October, Germany sent a formal request to US President Woodrow Wilson for an armistice to be negotiated. While talks were underway, fighting continued until the armistice was signed on 11 November, bringing an end to hostilities on the Western Front.



Canadian troops taking cover in a ditch alongside the road from Arras to Cambrai in September 1918.  
Photo: Library and Archives Canada PA-003153

The campaign from Amiens to the Armistice became known as the 'Hundred Days' offensive, recalling the Napoleonic Wars. It was fought by service personnel from many parts of the world: the French and Belgian armies; British Empire forces from Australia, Canada, India, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the West Indies, as well as all parts of Britain and Ireland; American forces; and many allied units, including those from Portugal, Italy and Siam (now Thailand). Each had its own significant role to play, but this outline focuses on the contribution of British Empire forces.



Battle of the Drocourt-Quéant Line. Royal Engineers laying the railroad at Écoust, 6 September 1918  
©Imperial War Museum (Q 7059)

## THE BATTLE OF ALBERT, 21 – 23 AUGUST 1918 THE SECOND BATTLE OF BAPAUME, 31 AUGUST – 3 SEPTEMBER 1918

At 4.55am on the foggy morning of 21 August, five divisions of the British Army advanced on a 11 km front in the wake of a precise creeping barrage. With the initial aim of gaining the line of the Arras-Albert railway, at the heart of the Somme battlefields, the preparations were undertaken with the utmost secrecy, completely surprising German forces. Albert was taken the following day, and on 23 August British and French armies attacked on a battlefield of around 53 km, pushing ever closer to Bapaume and Péronne.

At 5am on 31 August, 5th Australian Brigade assaulted the commanding high ground of Mont St Quentin, resulting

in bloody fighting but no breakthrough by nightfall. The following morning 6th Australian Brigade attacked and gradually took control of the hilltop village. Meanwhile, 14th Brigade attacked Péronne, and by evening almost all the town had been secured. Seemingly strong German defensive positions had been broken, and German troops retreated towards the Hindenburg Line.

## THE BATTLE OF THE SCARPE, 26 – 30 AUGUST 1918 THE BREAKING OF THE DROCOURT-QUÉANT LINE, 2 – 3 SEPTEMBER 1918

As German forces reeled from the attacks on the Somme battlefields, the British Army's focus shifted northward: to the German positions around the River Scarpe near Arras, and the defences of the Drocourt-Quéant Line. At 3am on

Australian soldiers from the 45th Battalion fire on withdrawing German troops on the Hindenburg line, 18 September 2018 AWM E03260



26 August, in drizzle and darkness, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions advanced, supported by the 51st (Highland) Division. Despite early success, increasingly poor weather and resolute German resistance slowed progress over the next few days. After vicious fighting on 30 August, German defences were partly breached and the advance was halted to prepare for a full assault on the Drocourt-Quéant Line.

Over the next two days, British artillery pounded the dense mass of wire entanglements shielding the German defences. Attacking at 5am on 2 September, in early morning half-light, 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions led the assault up the exposed ridges, behind an intense artillery barrage, while the British 4th Division advanced on their left. Tanks crushed paths through the barbed-wire and dealt with German strongpoints. The

first objectives were reached before 9am, and follow-up battalions passed through the leading waves of attackers to continue beyond the range of artillery support. After brutal fighting, the Drocourt-Quéant Line had been breached by nightfall, and Canadian Corps units surged into the open country beyond. During the night of 2–3 September, German forces retreated, and British forces cautiously moved forward to within striking distance of the Hindenburg Line.

#### THE HINDENBURG LINE

The Siegfried Stellung – known to the Allies as the ‘Hindenburg Line’ – was a series of well-defended zones, extending from Tilloy, outside Arras, in the north, to near Vailly on the River Aisne in the south. Imposing and formidable, these positions confronted the advancing armies with unprecedented challenges.



Tanks move forward into action as American and Australian divisions begin their attack on the Hindenburg Line, 29 September 1918. They carry strong wooden frames to help them cross the trenches AWM H12514

Constructed between late-September 1916 and March 1917, they included major fortifications built with steel-reinforced concrete, and represented a major task of engineering. They required vast quantities of materials and manpower, including the forced labour of civilians and Russian prisoners of war. For the German Army, holding the Hindenburg Line was a last-ditch attempt to prolong the fighting into 1919.

#### SAINT-MIHEL, 12 – 15 SEPTEMBER 1918

After cautious advances between 3 and 10 September, Allied commanders were eager to take advantage of the retreating German forces. In order to secure the Paris-Avrecourt line, German positions in the salient at Saint-Mihiel would have to be eliminated. On 12 and 13 September, some 264,000 Allied soldiers attacked on a front of around 65 kilometres between the Eparges and the Moselle.

It was a major operation, supported by over 1,400 aircraft, 3,100 guns and over 250 tanks. Significantly, nearly 216,000 of the assaulting troops were American, alongside 48,000 French. Fierce fighting continued as the salient was gradually eliminated. On 15 September, 4,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner. By the end of the battle, the Allies had suffered 7,000 casualties.

#### THE BATTLE OF HAVRINCOURT, 12 SEPTEMBER 1918

#### THE BATTLE OF ÉPEHY, 18 SEPTEMBER 1918

British Empire troops were nearing the outer ‘approach defences’ of the Hindenburg Line, where they sought to obtain better positions for observation and preparation for the main assault. At 5.25am on 12 September, infantry brigades from the New Zealand Division, 37th Division and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division attacked the high



Three soldiers resting on ground near Épehy captured by the 12th Division that day, 18 September 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q11326)

ground at Havrincourt. During fierce close-quarters fighting, German counter-attacks disproved any notion that their morale was broken. On the morning of 18 September, having assembled in darkness and drenching rain, infantry of Fourth Army attacked near Epéhy. Regardless of the weather, sodden ground, poor visibility and German resistance, there was considerable progress, especially by the Australian Corps which managed to overrun German lines. By nightfall, British Army forces had advanced around three km and captured over 9,000 German prisoners. Encouraged, Allied commanders began to plan for a breakthrough.

**THE BATTLE OF THE CANAL DU NORD, 27 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 1918**  
**THE BATTLE OF THE ST QUENTIN CANAL, 29 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER 1918**

In the last week of September, several major Allied offensives were launched on the Western Front. British First and Third Armies were to assault across the northern extension of the Hindenburg Line, towards Cambrai. At 5.20am on 27 September, following a night of heavy rain, soldiers of the Canadian 4th and 1st Divisions left their cramped assembly positions and attacked behind a devastating creeping barrage. With dense clouds of smoke blowing towards German lines, the leading Canadian assault troops quickly crossed the canal. Royal Engineers immediately began bridging operations to bring troops, guns and supplies over the captured barrier. After fierce fighting, the important high ground of Bourlon Wood was in Canadian hands, and Allied troops had advanced elsewhere, threatening Cambrai. Over two days, British Empire forces had advanced nearly 10 km, capturing 10,000 German prisoners and 200 guns.



One of the American casualties in the attack on the Hindenburg Line receives assistance from Australian soldiers, 30 September 1918  
AWM E03384

Opposite:  
Brigadier-General John Vaughan Campbell VC addressing men of the 137th Brigade (46th Division) on the Riqueval Bridge over the St. Quentin Canal (part of the German's Hindenburg Line) which they crossed on 29 September 1918 ©Imperial War Museum (Q 9534)



Another attack on the Hindenburg Line was launched on the morning of 29 September, this time on the St Quentin Canal. Among the attacking troops were two American Divisions. Confounded by fog and wire, their progress was slow and casualties heavy, while supporting Australian units were drawn into a fierce struggle for vital high ground. Elsewhere, troops of the 46th (North Midland) Division overran the German outer defences, stormed across the canal and captured the surviving bridges intact. Despite some setbacks, both canal operations were dramatic successes, with two key positions in the Hindenburg Line emphatically broken.

#### **MEUSE-ARGONNE, 26 SEPTEMBER – 11 NOVEMBER 1918**

On 26 September, American and French forces attacked German lines in the Argonne, near Verdun. It was the start of a fierce, bloody, offensive to drive along the River Meuse, which lasted until the final moments of the campaign on the Western Front. Soldiers of the US First Army fought alongside the French Fourth Army in three successive phases which saw the German armies retreat first to the Aisne and then to Sedan (Ardennes) in early November. American casualties reached more than 26,000 killed and 96,000 wounded. The Meuse-Argonne offensive became the greatest engagement of the American Expeditionary Forces in the war.

#### **THE BATTLE OF YPRES, 28 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER 1918 THE BATTLE OF THE BEAUREVOIR LINE, 3 – 5 OCTOBER 1918**

While Allied troops attacked the Hindenburg Line in France, Foch's series of co-ordinated offensives continued on 28 September in Flanders, where Allied forces under Belgian command attacked around Ypres. Despite bad weather and difficult ground, the advance was swift: 9th (Scottish) Division moved past

Westhoek; the 29th Division pushed towards Gheluvelt; 14th Division overran 'The Bluff'; and Belgian forces achieved similar success. Allied assaults continued on 29 September but torrential rainstorms slowed forward movement and, with the arrival of German reserves, the first phase of the Flanders operation was brought to a close on 2 October.

By then the Germans were desperately trying to hold the advances further south, after the breaking of the St Quentin Canal defences. Between 30 September and 2 October, Allied forces pushed the Germans back to their final prepared defences: the Beaurevoir Line, roughly three km behind the main Hindenburg System. The fighting here proved ferocious and intense, but on 5 October Australian and British infantry eventually secured these last German positions. Open country lay ahead.

#### **ARMISTICE NEGOTIATIONS**

In early October, Germany petitioned the US President Woodrow Wilson for an armistice, on the basis of his 'Fourteen Points' first articulated earlier in the year. The breaking of the Hindenburg Line was only one of several factors which culminated in a crisis among German command. Although the Western Front was the defining theatre of war for the Allies, it was only one of several fronts on which the Central Powers were coming under increasing pressure by late 1918. On 29 September, Bulgaria agreed terms after an Allied offensive into Serbia and the mountains north of Salonika. It was a crushing blow for Ludendorff, who suffered a breakdown and advised a German crown council that terms should be sought immediately. Over the following weeks, Germany's allies would each suffer devastating reversals: in Palestine, the battle of Megiddo precipitated the collapse of the Ottoman Empire's war effort; the battle

Field Marshal Douglas Haig and French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau in conversation with a French priest who remained in Cambrai during the German occupation, 13 October 1918  
©Imperial War Museum (Q 9549)



of Vittorio Veneto in northern Italy was a turning point in the campaign against Austria-Hungary. Each would seek terms in October and early November. Talks with Germany proceeded while the co-ordinated Allied attacks continued.

#### **THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI, 8 – 9 OCTOBER 1918 THE BATTLE OF COURTRAI, 14 – 19 OCTOBER 1918 THE BATTLE OF THE SELLE, 17 – 25 OCTOBER 1918**

In the Argonne, on the Aisne, and in Flanders, logistical difficulties and the onset of autumn rains seriously impeded communications, transportation of supplies and the forward movement of heavy artillery. Douglas Haig, in command of British Empire forces, sought to reinvigorate the impetus of Allied attacks by initiating a major joint Army assault south of Cambrai, aiming to pile the pressure on the retreating Germans and break their rapidly improvised defensive line.

The attack began at 1am in darkness and rain on 8 October, with further assaults launched before dawn. There were significant advances despite German counter-attacks, some using captured British tanks. New Zealand troops and the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division achieved notable successes, while Fourth Army joined the advance, including American II Corps, with support from French forces. By evening, the German positions at Cambrai were untenable, and German troops evacuated the city early the next morning, retreating behind the River Selle. In Flanders, almost two weeks were needed to restore roads within the morass of the battlefield before offensive operations could be resumed. In the north, French and Belgian forces advanced towards Ghent, supported by the British Second Army near the River Lys, while the British Fifth Army advanced past Lille, in the south. From 14 October, a series of co-ordinated attacks pushed the Germans back to the Lys and then beyond it, with Allied forces occupying Courtrai on 19 October.

Meanwhile, British forces were preparing to attack the hastily-prepared German positions on the River Selle. After a six-day halt for preparations and artillery bombardments, Fourth Army troops attacked in thick mist at 5.20am on 17 October. Infantry and tanks, preceded by a creeping barrage, moved forward on a 16 km front south of Le Cateau. By nightfall, enemy defences had been broken and Le Cateau captured. Severe fighting continued on 18 and 19 October, by which time Fourth Army, assisted by the French First Army, had advanced over eight km towards the Sambre-Oise canal. Co-ordinated attacks continued over the following days, with the advancing forces capturing over 20,000 German prisoners.

#### **THE BATTLE OF VALENCIENNES, 1 – 2 NOVEMBER 1918 THE BATTLE OF THE SAMBRE, 4 NOVEMBER 1918**

By the end of October 1918 it was clear that Germany was losing the war. On the Western Front, signs of disintegration in her armies were increasing. Allied commanders were hopeful that another major blow might induce the German High Command to accept armistice terms before the end of the year. In preparation, the Canadian Corps and British XXII Corps attacked the German stronghold of Valenciennes on 1 November. After a day of heavy fighting around the Schelde Canal and defences around a steelworks at Marly, German troops were forced to withdraw.

Retreating German forces now attempted a last-ditch stand on the line of the Sambre-Oise Canal and at the Forest of Mormal. On a near 64 km front running roughly north-south from Condé to Oisy on the Sambre, three British armies launched a major offensive designed to bring about the utter collapse of their enemy.

Just before dawn on 4 November, infantry advanced through dense mist across

difficult country behind a supporting bombardment. Heavy casualties were suffered during the British 1st Division's attack on the canal, while 32nd Division faced stern German resistance near Ors, where the poet Wilfred Owen was among those killed. Yet vital bridgeheads were eventually secured by infantry, sappers and pioneers. In the north, Allied infantry strove to drive the Germans from their positions within the dense woods of Mormal, while the ancient citadel of Le Quesnoy was dramatically captured by the New Zealand Division.

It was the last formal 'battle' of the war for British Empire forces, although sporadic fighting continued over the following days, with British and Canadian troops pushing closer to the familiar territory of the Belgian mining town of Mons, where the British Expeditionary Force had first confronted the German army in 1914.

#### **ARMISTICE, 11 NOVEMBER 1918**

Between mid-July and mid-November, the Allies had suffered just over 1 million casualties wounded, killed, and missing. Of these, more than 530,000 were French troops, around 410,000 from British Empire forces, and 127,000 American forces. But German forces had lost over 1.1 million casualties, including over 380,000 captured.

By the beginning of November 1918, the German Armies on the Western Front were nearing the end of their endurance. Repeatedly pushed back by relentless Allied advances, and with few reserves to fill the ranks, morale was ebbing away. Germany's allies had fallen away in southern Europe and the Middle East. On the German home front, hunger and political upheaval produced an atmosphere of acute military, political and social crisis.

On 6 November, an armistice commission was appointed in Berlin, chaired by



A group of Australian army nurses on the troopship Osterley returning to Australia in late 1919 AWM D00988

government minister Matthias Erzberger, along with military and diplomatic representatives. The following day they travelled at Foch's invitation to French lines near Haudroy, near La Capelle (Aisne). A cease-fire was arranged and the delegation were conveyed in French cars to a special train, which brought them in the morning of 8 November to a railway siding near Rethondes, deep within the forest of Compiègne (Oise), where another train contained the mobile headquarters of Marshal Foch, Head of the Allied Commission.

Presented with the Allies' terms, the German delegation was given a deadline of 11am on 11 November to accept. German requests for an immediate general ceasefire were refused. Meanwhile, Germany was in turmoil, with a Republic declared on 7 November, and riots in

Berlin forcing the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II two days later.

In the early morning of 11 November, the German delegates entered Foch's dining car, which had been prepared for the signing of the Armistice. After several hours of discussion and minor amendments, Erzberger became the first signatory at 5am, followed by his three colleagues. Foch signed for France, and Admiral Wemyss, First Sea Lord, for Britain. At 11am, on a dull and cold Monday morning, the Armistice came into effect, officially ending hostilities on the Western Front.

# AMIENS REMEMBERED

Vis-en-Artois Cemetery,  
Haucourt, France.  
Photograph:  
Commonwealth  
War Graves  
Commission



Many of those who lost their lives in August 1918 were laid to rest in marked graves across the area around Amiens, and further behind the lines, where medical facilities and hospitals treated the wounded. The Imperial War Graves Commission had been established by Royal Charter in 1917, a year before the battle. By the summer of 1918, it was already registering and marking graves and, in some cases, formalising existing soldiers' cemeteries with flowers and shrubs. After the war, the IWGC began the monumental task of creating lasting cemeteries and memorials.

Today, they remain under the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, whose gardeners tend to these gardens of remembrance all year round. Among the most famous is at Villers-Brettoneux, where a memorial alongside the cemetery honours 10,000 servicemen of Australian forces who died in France and have no known grave. Nearby is Adelaide Cemetery, from where an unknown Australian soldier was exhumed, to be reburied at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Many headstones bearing the Canadian maple leaf stand at

Caix British Cemetery. The dead of August 1918 – including those of several British regiments – can also be found at many other nearby cemeteries such as Beacon Cemetery and Heath Cemetery, near Harbonnieres.

A memorial was constructed at Vis-en-Artois, near Arras, to commemorate



by name over 9,000 servicemen who died between the Battle of Amiens and the Armistice in France, and have no known grave. It was designed by John Reginald True love, with a remarkable sculpture of George and the Dragon by Ernest Gillick. Similar memorials at Arras and at Pozieres, on the Somme, commemorate those who died attempting to hold back the German advance in the spring.

French soldiers' graves can be found in many cemeteries around Amiens. Almost 2,740 are buried at Saint-Acheul, and some 1,300 at Saint-Pierre. Monuments honouring American forces stand at Cantigny and at Bellicourt, while the Somme American Cemetery, near Bony, contains the graves of over 1,800 AEF servicemen, with more than 300 commemorated on the Walls of the Missing. Over 22,000 German soldiers are buried at Vermandovillers Soldatenfriedhof, of whom some 13,000 lie in 15 mass graves. In July 1923 a plaque was unveiled in Amiens Cathedral. Designed by Henry Philip Cart De Lafontaine, it was the first of many memorial tablets installed in the 1920s and 1930s by the Imperial War Graves Commission at cathedrals across France and Belgium.

Commemorative  
Tablet, Amiens  
Cathedral.  
Photograph:  
Diocesan Archives  
of Amiens

# NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL, AMIENS

The magnificent setting for the commemoration of the centenary of the Battle of Amiens is the 13th century cathedral of Notre-Dame, Amiens. The cathedral is France's largest Gothic building at 145m by 70m and has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1981.

During the First World War, the surrounding area saw fierce fighting, but the City of Amiens itself remained behind the front lines. The City was occupied for just a few weeks at the beginning of the War, but was later used by the Allies as a garrison. The people of Amiens protected their Cathedral and it suffered very little damage. In 1916, the choir screens, transept bas-reliefs and the choir stalls were placed behind clay bags for the duration of the War. The choir screens date back to the 16th and 17th centuries with sculptures depicting the lives of St Firmin and St John the Baptist.

Following the Armistice, a thanksgiving mass was held at the Cathedral on the 17 November 1918 and the Cathedral soon became a focus for remembrance. The Cathedral contains commemorative plaques to Marshal Foch, General Marie-Eugène Debeney, liberator of Montdidier, and to Lieutenant Raymond Asquith, son of the then British Prime Minister, as well as to the soldiers who came from all over the world to fight in the Somme region, such as the Australian Imperial Force, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, The Newfoundland Regiment, and the Officers of the Sixth Regiment of the

United States Engineers. The members of the Parish of Notre-Dame who lost their lives are also commemorated in the south ambulatory, with a plaque with 159 names and a bronze urn containing the names of thousands more.

In the Sacré-Coeur Chapel, the national flags of six Allied nations hang in what is now popularly known as the Chapel of the Allies. The Chapel was opened on 2 November 1920, although some of the flags had already been presented to the Cathedral.

The Australian flag was presented to the Cathedral on 3 August 1919 by General Sir W R Birdwood, the British Commander of the Australian Corps from 1916. On the same day, General Birdwood also presented the City of Amiens with a 15-inch German gun captured by the Australians at Proyart in August 1918. The Australian flag was replaced in 1971 and the original sent to the War Museum in Canberra.

The Union flag was presented to the Bishop of Amiens by General Henry Rawlinson, who had commanded the Fourth Army during the Battle of Amiens, on the 29 December 1920. The original flag still hangs today, along with the original South African flag.

The Newfoundland Blue Ensign was presented on 27 August, 1922 by Sir Richard Squires, K.C.M.G, then Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, during the inauguration of the Newfoundland plaque.

Protection of the Choir Stalls, 1916. Photograph: Diocesan Archives of Amiens





HM Government

To honour and remember the lives of those who served in and were affected by the war, the UK Government is leading a national centenary programme of ceremonial events, cultural activity and education.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, supported by 10 Downing Street, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for Education, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other stakeholders, and working in partnership with key delivery partners, is the lead UK Government Department for the commemoration of the First World War. The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport chairs an expert advisory panel to oversee the four-year programme, building a commemoration fitting of this significant milestone in world history.

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