

THE FRONT LINE

Edition: 65

THE WGG'S FIRST WORLD WAR NEWSPAPER
FOR HISTORY MATTERS

25th June 1918

Defeat Near for Austria Hungary?? Victory for Italy & Allies at the Piave River!

The Second Battle of the Piave River appears to mark the beginning of the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as the Italian army have firmly defeated their opponents in this 8 day battle, which began on the 15th June. The Italian victory was decisive - a definite blow to the strength of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and therefore the Central Powers as a whole. General Erich Ludendorff himself reportedly stated after hearing news of the defeat that he "had the sensation of defeat for the first time".

After Russia peace earlier this year, Austria-Hungary was able to send significant forces to the Italian Front, receiving additional reinforcements from their German Allies. Austro-Hungarian Emperor Karl recently reached an agreement with the Germans to undertake a new offensive against Italy, a move supported by both the Chief of the General Staff Arthur von Straußenburg and the commander of the South Tyrolean Army Group Conrad von Hötzendorf. Last Autumn, the Germans and Austrians defeated the Italians at the Battle of Caporetto with the Italians falling back to the Piave, reinforced by six French infantry divisions and five British infantry divisions as well as sizeable air contingents.

The defeat at Caporetto has led to an administrative upheaval within the Italian army ranks. General Luigi Cadorna was dismissed, replaced by General Armando Diaz who set up a strong line of defence along the Piave and altered strategies in order to minimise casualties, doing so successfully. This time the Italians sustained 87,181 casualties and losses in comparison to the 118,000 Austro-Hungarians.

The Italian army, along with the French and British, were able to gather 57 divisions between them, amounting to 965,000 soldiers, as well as



Winners & Losers:
General Armando Diaz (top left)
Emperor Karl (top right).
Right: The Italian position along the Piave River



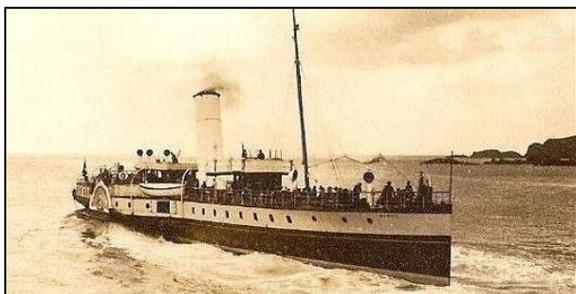
7,000 guns, 2,400 mortars and 676 aircrafts, whereas the Austro-Hungarian Empire, despite collating 58 divisions of 946,000 men, only had 6,830 guns.

Over the course of the 8 days of the battle, the Italians persevered with their offensive strategy, forcing the Austrian soldiers to begin retreating to their defensive positions. Consequently, the Austro-Hungarian army suffered with diminished strength and lacking supplies, whilst facing attacks by armoured units. The Austro-Hungarians were ordered to retreat on 20 June by Emperor Karl, who had taken personal command. By 23 June, the Italians recaptured all lost territory on the southern bank of the Piave - and victory was secured!

Reporter: Anya Kakkad



VALIANT HMS SNAEFELL TORPEDOED OFF COAST OF MALTA!



SS Snaefell during military service in 1917.

The SS Snaefell has been tragically struck by a torpedo from a German submarine under the direct orders of German Commander Wilhelm Marshall on the 3rd June. The hit to the Snaefell was unexpected but due to the impressive and heroic actions of our navy, only three lives are said to have been lost during the explosion. Floating for up to an hour after the initial hit, the vast majority of our men were rescued and are thought now to be safe, with limited injuries. It is thought that the ship was sailing from Alexandria for Malta at the time of the incident, escorted by a sloop and two armed trawlers. The Snaefell left Alexandria on the 31st of May before being caught and torpedoed 240 miles south east of Malta 4 days later.

The SS Snaefell was initially built in 1910 as a British passenger ferry for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. In 1914 it was chartered by the British Government and, armed with weapons; two 12 pounder guns and one 2 pounder quick firing AA gun, was pulled for military service. The valiant ship and crew served our military well, providing security in the English Channel, escort duties, landed troops at Gallipoli, patrolled the Bulgarian coast as well as having an important role in the evacuation of Gallipoli troops between 1915 and 1916. Lives lost include: PRIVATE Walter Alfred Langworthy of the Royal Marine Light Infantry aged 25, PRIVATE John Middlemass of the Royal Marine Light Infantry aged 24 and SIGNALMAN James Clifton Tayton of the Royal Naval Reserve aged 23.

Reporter: Saxon Callaghan



The 2018 Front Line Editors: Chief Editor Rebecca Davies (centre) and Deputy Editors Eleanor Gontier (left) and Ayesha Afzaal (right).



THE FRONT LINE REMEMBERS 'LEST WE FORGET'



ALBERT F. YOUNG

In remembrance of Albert Franklin Young. He was an Air Mechanic in the Royal Flying Corps. Died in London 9th June 1918, after wounds received when his airfield was bombed in France, age 18.
He attended WBGs from 1913 – 1915

EDWARD S. AYLING

In remembrance of Edward Stephen Ayling. He was a Sergeant in the London Rifle Brigade. He died in France from illness on the 2^{4th} June 1918, age 34.
He attended WBGs from 1901-1904

Contributor: Ayesha Afzaal

The Front Line Recommends...

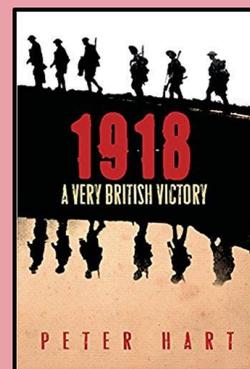
1918: A Very British Victory by Peter Hart

1918 was a critical year as the World War reached it's climax. Warfare of an epic scale was fought on the Western Front, where ordinary British soldiers training was put to the test more than it ever had been before.

Historian Peter Hart gives a vivid account of this last year of conflict - what it was like to fight on the frontline, through the words of the men who were there. He explores these battles in great depth and brings to life the final year of WW1 in 1918.

This book is perfect for expanding your factual knowledge on the last battles of WW1 from a contemporary first person perspective.

Contributor: Ellie Gontier





Counter-Offensive: Battle of Belleau Wood: An Update



US Marines gather in France prior to the Battle.

A scenic area once known as the 'Bois de Belleau', or now more commonly known as 'The Battle of Belleau', was a poised hunting preserve fenced by wheat fields, located about 50 miles from Paris. A recent interview with American military commanders explains how it was once deemed a 'quiet sector', but the battle there in June, as a response to the German Spring Offensive, is a part of the Allied drive eastward. It is said the Germans had come dangerously close to breaching the Allied lines protecting Amiens and Paris. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions of the US Army have been given the task of clearing Belleau Wood itself. Half of the 2nd Division is made up of units of the US Marines. It appears that the Americans arrived in high morale, with an eagerness to fight the Germans. It is expected that the US soldiers will be fighting strictly according to American tactics; a rush, halt, a rush again, and so on, before plunging ahead with confidence. Marines have had to cross wheat fields and meadows, ensuring they strategically place their machine guns to continuously sweep the once beautiful fields with accurate and high intensity fire. The morning of 3rd June showed the fields to be glowing yellow wheat; the majority of the land is now destroyed, no longer a scenic view. It has been suggested that French officers advised the US marines to turn back and, after resisting, US Marine Captain Lloyd Williams replied "Retreat? Hell no, we just got here". Reports coming in suggest high US Marine casualties - possibly the highest in the Corp's history, with numbers increasing as we go to press. It is expected the fighting will continue for several weeks more.

Reporter: Sarah Ahmed

One of those Millions

Part 19

The continuing saga of one man's story on The Front Line –

All leave had been suspended since well before the start of Operation Michael on 21 March. Paul was desperately looking forward to the day when he could take his wedding leave but, like soldiers on all sides, he was also prey to the semi-superstitious fear he might die before he could use his precious entitlement. That he also had good reason for his fear was shown on 25 April, when he had 'a very close call. I was sent up from the reserve area to the front line in Ville with the machine-guns, through areas that were under constant artillery fire. One man sprained his ankle during the march and when I walked over to have a look at him, a shell struck the ground right in front of me. Luckily, it was a dud, otherwise...

'Pigeons have become scarce and shy here now, but today I was able to shoot one; it made a good lunch. My people were grinding wheat all day in a coffee grinder. Tomorrow they want to reap the benefits of their work and cook beans with the flour. I'm intrigued how that'll work out without meat broth.

'There's nothing left standing here. Just the ruins of one house. The trees are all stumps, but every night, from what's left of the wood, you can here the nightingales sing! It's so beautiful! Just imagine, in the middle of the battlefield, nightingales. Just a few kilometres away, one shell after another, continuous firing.

'My dear friend Lutz from Plochingen is dead – hit by a bullet, killed instantly. We buried him yesterday. I cried as they threw earth on his body; another of my closest friends is in his grave.'

Two days later Paul wrote to his parents 'For a few days now, my company leader Lieutenant Schurr has been so ill that all the work of the company is on my shoulders. Last night I went back into position [in the front lines]. Of course it was raining cats and dogs and in the darkness of the night I couldn't see a thing, so I arrived here absolutely drenched and covered in mud. Static warfare with all its stupidity has restarted... We've reached the point now that we need some rest and I don't know why the relief is taking so long. I'd love to change my clothes and sleep in a real bed for twenty-four hours non-stop. We were given the opportunity to have a bath recently, but the delousing unit had not been completed... Daily louse hunts and washing have almost become a routine, and when I itch, I scratch furiously. But why

should I have no lice when everybody else suffers? How sick I am of this war and how I long to be at home! My thoughts are always with you and when I get such nice letters from you, homesickness grips me... Father, I thank you very much for the 100 Marks that you credited to my account as a war loan. You know that one day, when I'm older and earn more money, I will maintain you, too.'

On the last day of May 1918, even as the tide of war continued to turn decisively against Germany, Paul was finally granted a few precious days' wedding leave. 'If everything goes to plan I'll arrive in Stetten on the fifth or perhaps even the fourth [of June], but please don't make too much of a fuss, I'd like to enjoy this time with you in peace and quiet... I'll tell you everything else when I see you.'

On 11 June 1918, he and Maria were at last married in a 'war marriage' in the Castle Chaplaincy in Stetten.

Contributor : Mr. P. Hinsley



FRONT LINE BOOK REVIEW:

“Counter-Attack and Other Poems”

Editor’s note:

Last month the war poet Siegfried Sassoon published a collection titled “Counter-Attack and Other Poems”. Here, the Front Line takes a closer look at this controversial new work.

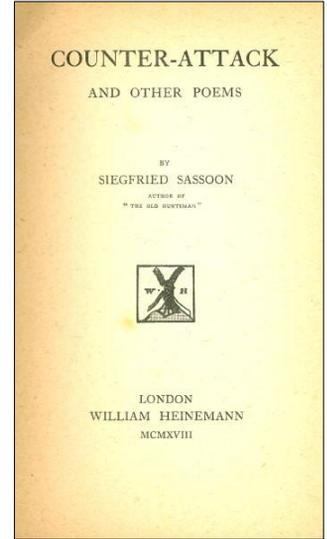
The 8th September, 1886 marks the birth of Siegfried Sassoon, the English poet, writer and soldier. Following the outbreak of the war Sassoon served with Royal Welsh Fusiliers, seeing action in France in late 1915. Decorated with the Military Cross for his bravery on the Western Front in 1916, he has now become a leading and controversial war poet and an outspoken critic (some sources regard him as treasonous) of the war since last year. His recent release, ‘Counter-Attack and Other Poems’, is a collation of sixty-four poems discussing the horrors of the trenches and his ultimate belief that ‘this war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it’.

Whilst some critics have complained that Sassoon’s poems have depicted little patriotism, or are simply too violent, reaction has been strong - and has in fact, created a lot of publicity around this matter. Sassoon delves into shockingly realistic depictions of the war, highlighting what we at home are unable to witness or truly understand and dispelling some of the myths about trench warfare seen in propaganda. One of these poems, ‘Suicide in the Trenches’ emphasizes the shockingly miserable effects of war on young people lives who in turn seek for any way to reach an end to their suffering. It states:

*“I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.*

*In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.*

*You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go”.*



Second Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon (photographed in 1915) and his controversial new collection of poetry published last month.

Discussing such a soldier’s dilemma depicts the harsh reality of war and has caused an outcry in the public eye due to its cynical description. The poem suggests that war is a part of ‘hell’ which destroys any sense of nativity within youth, as well as any happiness. Therefore, this leads one to assume the worst when picturing what these soldiers are dealing with and seems to counter what authorities would have us believe about trench life. Indeed, to avoid the public controversy of a court martial, the War Department is said to have ordered the outspoken Sassoon’s admittance to an Edinburgh asylum for treatment for shell shock.

Evidently, the poems have been argued to be too gruesome, but it is clear that Sassoon has done a brilliant job in illustrating what is truly happening in the war and so, has brought some harsh reality home with him and to us. As a consequence, he has managed to capture the feeling of trench warfare and the frightening pain that the British soldiers endure, mentally as well as physically. Thus, we at home take a keen interest in this eye-opening account of war, which we are sure will be remembered.

Contributor: Chloe Brenner