

THE FRONT LINE

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FOR HISTORY MATTERS

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NEW ROYAL AIR FORCE - AND WRAF!

On 1st of April, the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service united to create the new **Royal Air Force**. Previously, the RFC was the air arm of the British Army and the RNAS served the same purpose for the Royal Navy. However, considering the future of air power, a report to the War Council on the potential for the 'devastation of enemy lands and the destruction of industrial and populous centres on a vast scale', recommended that a new air service be created that would be on equal footing with other military branches. Thus, the amalgamation of the RFC and the RNAS, creating a separate military force positioned beside the Navy and the Army. This action is significant and strategic for Britain because it ends the inter-service rivalry between the two air forces, which has had an adverse effect on aircraft procurement. For example, this unification will allow under-used resources and men of the RNAS to be made available for the Western Front.

This new air force will be under the control of its own Air Ministry considering it is now a separate military force - and the new uniform is advised to be donned as soon as possible, creating a single identity for the new RAF.

In this new age of equality, the Women's Royal Air Force was formed on 2 April from those serving in air units of the Women's Royal Naval Service, Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, Voluntary Aid Detachment and Women's Legion..



Recruitment posters for the new RAF and WRAF, the RAF insignia granted by HM King George V and 2018 centenary commemoration logo.



It has been announced that Miss Sylvia Hodkinson will become the first Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) recruit, which will hopefully encourage more women to join military service in the future.

(Editor's Note: The RAF is said to be the world's oldest and most famous independent air force, which makes the amalgamation of two auxiliary air forces- Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service- a key turning point in British military history.)

Reporter: Nazish Bibi



THIRD BATTLE OF THE AISNE: PARIS UNDER THREAT?

After the first battle of Aisne in 1914, and a second battle in 1917, the German forces are putting up their strongest fight yet as they now pursue an attack at the Aisne River on the Western Front.

On the 27th of May, the Third Battle of Aisne began with the strongest attack and largest advance from Germany since the beginning of the war and the start of trench warfare.

After a quiet night from the enemy, without any shells being fired, the battle began when the German offense fired what appeared to be two million shells within four hours of the attack. Soon after, the our forces were being attacked from seventeen divisions causing our lines on the Chemin des Dames to be shattered.

During the second battle, the Allied forces, led by General Charles Mangin managed to capture a four km stretch of the Chemin des Dames ridge from the German army. This year, the German forces are attempting to take this territory back, showing no mercy in the progress.

A 4000- gun bombardment caused heavy casualties in the allied front-line trenches, and a gas attack. which caused panic, was followed by an advance from the German army. Along with the other allied forces, we suffered many losses due to the reluctance to let the ridge fall into German hands.

On the first day, the German forces advanced thirteen miles and captured the bridge across the Aisne river. Based on the Germans route, it is believed that they will begin to advance towards the Marne.

On the morning of the 28th, it seemed that the German forces had stopped advancing, but as the day went on, it could be seen that enemy artillery and transport was pouring in across the open country of eastern France. On the 29th, German forces arose early, and it has been reported that large bodies of infantry issued from the woods, however, the our boys are not yet done fighting. The capital of France has been at threat from this attack, and by the 30th of May, the German forces were 90 km away from Paris, but have moved closer in recent days. Additionally, to this, the German forces have captured an estimate of 50,000 soldiers; worryingly, the power and threat of Germany seems to be increasing.



Men of the Worcestershire Regiment hold the river bank during the Third Battle of Aisne

Reporter: Kif Cook

ARCHDUKE'S ASSASSIN DIES IN PRISON

Gavrilo Princip, former member of the secret Black Hand nationalist society and assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, has died in prison at Terezin n Austria-Hungary on 28 April .

Princip has been reported to have been in ill health throughout his life, most notably during his incarceration where he was transferred between his prison cell and the prison hospital where he was treated for tuberculosis.

The assassin was in Franz Joseph Street in Sarajevo on 28 June, 1914 and seized his opportunity by taking aim at Franz Ferdinand in his car at close range. The Archduke and his wife, Sophie were both shot in the neck and in abdomen and later died in hospital.

Princip attempted to evade prison by turning the gun to his own head but was tackled by a pedestrian and later arrested. Eight collaborators were charged with murder and treason - but Princip (aged 19) had again avoided death due to not being old enough to face capital punishment.

Speculation has arisen due to the death of eight of the thirteen plotters in prison. However, considering his sickly appearance and illness, Princip's death does come as a surprise.

Reporter: Candy Gratton

The Front Line Recommends... Thirty-Seven Days BBC Documentary Series



A TV mini-series that unveils the behind-closed-doors story of the final weeks before the outbreak of World War I - from the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand to the declarations of war by the various contenders. The thirty seven days are those which elapsed between 28 June (the assassination) and 4 August 1914 (the outbreak of war) – especially relevant with the anniversary of the death of the assassin Gavrilo Princip this month.



One of those Millions

Part 18

The continuing saga of one man's story on the front line –

By 2 April, Paul was able to write to Maria. 'You are curious about where I am, aren't you? Oh, it must have been a hard trial of your patience to endure such a long time without letters. Today I'll try to give you some details. I'm writing this letter on my lap, sitting on a broken chair that has been fixed again by a private. Next to me there's an open fire and the smoke is driving tears to my eyes time and again. Lieutenant Schurr is next to me, kneeling on the floor. One thing right at the start: Don't expect any tales of heroics. You'll find those in the papers. The rubbish that they write only brings a smile to our faces. Oh Lord, what sort of ideas will you all be getting about the "Kaiserschlacht"! I would love to chase those newspaper people over the Ancre down to the Avelny Forest. They would stop fantasising soon enough...

'On 21 March, at 9.40, under cover of a dense fog, a division from Württemberg lying in front of us attacked the enemy. We were told to be ready to move up time and again, but the order to advance was not finally given until four in the afternoon. By then the fog had lifted and the sun was shining. We weren't told how the attack was going ahead of us... the stone bridge over the Schelde river was under fire and we crossed by the artillery footbridge. There were convoys everywhere, and continuous heavy shellfire. It was only with great effort that I and my three machine-gunners forced our way through the press of people. Gailsdörfer, Faber, Wirt and Walker. Everyone was groaning with cold and all around us gun batteries were blasting. What a din! On the evening of the 22nd, we reached the first English position... hats off to our infantry, they took the trenches. Bands of prisoners marched passed us. Here and there lay dead Englishmen, and here and there also our own dead.

'The horizon was ablaze – the English were blowing up their ammunition dumps. That fire, coupled with reports that Reims had fallen and 29,000 prisoners had been taken, filled everyone with excitement.

'At seven o'clock on the 23rd we marched on, not even stopping for coffee, through Heuticourt, Fins, Equancourt and Etricourt. The English had converted these villages into encampments and, to our great delight, a huge amount of supplies had been abandoned there – jam, tinned food, clothes and shoes. If only we hadn't had to carry all this ourselves!... the wonderful British supplies even include biscuits, ginger, whisky and English cigarettes.'

On the 5 April, Paul wrote a further letter to Maria, 'We have suffered quite heavy losses. Twenty of our officers are down, five of them dead... We have been sitting in the same spot for eight days now. We lie piled on top of each other like sardines to keep warm. We wouldn't have put up with these conditions in the trenches, but in a war of movement anything goes. We will be setting off again soon – I get tired of lying around doing nothing – and with luck, I will be fine just like before. Your dream where you saw me wounded was just that – a dream. Sometimes when I see the lightly wounded going home, I think that I would gladly swap places with them, if only to see you again. But it's great to take part in this kind of movement... That's when we find booty. The English tins of meat are fantastic compared to ours and English sugar tastes so good, but unfortunately, we've finished the English cigarettes and biscuits.'

Despite Maria's repeated pleas, Paul had always refused to consider a wedding before the end of the war, but now, in the spring of 1918, he at last changed his mind. Perhaps, having already survived so much, he now felt confident of reaching the war's end alive, or perhaps he was fearful of losing her, the one bright light in the bleak, dark world he inhabited.

By 15 April, Paul's elation at the early German advances had given way to profound depression and pessimism. 'We feel so abandoned here. We can't go very far because we are now surrounded on all sides. The first few days we went pigeon-hunting. I shot some too. They tasted delicious. There were many sheep there, but the Prussians eat them all. Some of our infantrymen said that dog tastes just as good and brought one in. Of course, it's all a matter of taste.'

Paul wrote to his mother, 'There hasn't been much loot for us here, well, not for the fighting troops at the front anyway. Those coming behind us had better luck and after two days even the biggest stores have been cleared. When I get the chance again, I will stock up, but mother, so far I am unable to find any' (his mother had asked him to keep an eye out for woollen yarn for mending the family's threadbare clothes – there was none to be had at any price in Germany).

Contributor : Mr. P. Hinsley



THE FRONT LINE REMEMBERS 'LEST WE FORGET'



MORRIS DAWES

In remembrance of Morris Dawes, a Second Lieutenant in the 10th Essex Regiment. He was killed in the final German Offensive on the 26th April 1918, aged 24.

He attended WBGs from 1906 – 1911.

Contributor: Rebecca Davies



CONSCRIPTION : IRISH STRUGGLING TO SEE THE PROS IN THE NEW ACT!!

The 18th of April marked the introduction of the Military Services (No.2) Act 1918. This has legally extended military conscription to men up until the age of 51 - but also for the first time to Irish citizens. The introduction of such legislation comes as a response from Lloyd George to the German's recent launch of a major offensive, and it will see these newly conscripted men working alongside the American forces due to arrive soon.

The introduction of conscription has been met unfortunately with opposition in Ireland. John Redmond's (former leader of the Irish Party) own proclamation that 'the enforcement of conscription is an impossibility' just 3 years ago in 1915 is a clearly a sentiment still echoed within the country. Perhaps a false sense of security was provided in 1916 when they were excluded from the initial Military Services Act, but their support is needed more than ever now to help provide glory to our nation, and to the Allies! If America can lend a hand from across the Atlantic, surely they can from across the Irish sea.

It is reported that on the 18th, when the law was passed, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Laurence O'Neill, chaired his own conference to coordinate the opposition. 1,500 delegates met at Mansion House and the campaign was decided, taking the approach that they should be 'denying the right of the British government to enforce compulsory service in this country, we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal'. This message is already visible in Ireland's own propaganda released regarding the introduction of conscription. Religious support has also been provided to the movement, Catholic bishops publically labelled the legislation as 'oppressive and inhuman', but in effort not to incite violent opposition also stated 'the Irish people have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of god.' The Irish have achieved this initially through increased contributions to the National Defence



Dublin protestors gather at a an anti-conscription rally in response to the new Military Services Act, which includes Irish citizens for the first time.

Fund, which has now reached £76,754, and also the national strike which occurred on the 23rd of April which William O'Brien, president of the Dublin United Trades Council, proposed at the conference on the 18th of April.

However, most significantly on the 16th of May a German plot involving Sinn Fein was declared, and 70 members of Sinn Fein were subsequently arrested. This has heightened tensions between the government and the Irish, many of the Irish sceptical of such accusations and declaring them false.

Hopefully, focus will be able to be redirected onto the war effort, and all will be able to unite against the German's cause, whether English, Irish, Protestant or Catholic.

Reporter: Emily Turvey