



First Day of the Somme: The Complete Account of Britain's Worst-ever Military Disaster

Andrew Macdonald

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The complete account of Britain's worst-ever military disaster.

It took several million bullets and roughly an hour to effectively destroy General Sir Douglas Haig's grand plans for the first day of the Somme, 1 July 1916. By day's end, 19,240 British soldiers were dead, crumpled khaki bundles scattered across pasture studded with the scarlet of poppies and smouldering shell holes. A further 35,493 were wounded. This single sunny day remains Britain's worst-ever military disaster. Responsible were hundreds of German machine guns and scores of artillery batteries that had waited silently to deal death to the long-anticipated attack.

Reviewing the day's events fully from, for the first time, both the British and German perspectives, Andrew Macdonald explains how and why this was a disaster waiting to happen. While laying the blame for the butchery squarely on widespread British command failure, he also shows that the outcome was a triumph of German discipline, planning and tactics, with German commanders mostly outclassing their opposite numbers.

Published for the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in July 2016, this is a major contribution to World War 1 history and an epic story of courage, misery and endurance in its own right.

'Macdonald has given us one of the best battle histories in years, a detailed account of the tactics, bombardments, generals, soldiers and events that led up to and took place on that first day on the Somme' NZ Listener



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