

**Immediate release****Imperial War Museums announces new screenings of the 1916 blockbuster film *The Battle of the Somme*.**

To commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, the First World War Centenary Partnership, led by Imperial War Museums (IWM), will be screening the 1916 documentary film *The Battle of the Somme* across the globe throughout the year.

The Somme lasted for 141 days, and more than one million men from both sides were killed, wounded or captured. *The Battle of the Somme* film was released on August 21 1916 and recorded the early stages of the battle. It is one of the most successful films in British cinema history and was seen by nearly half the population at the time of release.

In 2016 screenings will take place in more than 300 locations across the UK and abroad. Major screenings are planned at venues such as the Royal Festival Hall, the National Archives, and Dover Castle in the UK, with screenings abroad planned in France, New Zealand, Canada and Germany. IWM commissioned Laura Rossi to write a score to accompany the film for the 90th anniversary of the Somme in 2006. Somme100 FILM is an international project to mark the centenary of the Somme with 100 live performances of the score with both amateur and professional orchestras between July 2016 and July 2017.

**Screenings include:**

- **Imperial War Museums** and **Somme100 FILM** are working in partnership to present the UNESCO-listed film *The Battle of the Somme* accompanied live by the **BBC Concert Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall** on the centenary of the final day of the Somme. (18 November. Tickets range in price from £15 – 30. [Booking is essential](#)).
- **The National Archives** are screening *The Battle of the Somme* film to accompany other commemorative Somme events and exhibitions, including **Changing Landscapes**, an exhibition that follows the first-hand account of Rifleman Barney Griew. Barney sent over 180 illustrated letters, photographs and postcards home during his five months in France where he sadly died during the first day of the Somme. (Screening takes place on 1 September 2016, free. Exhibition runs until 17 September 2016, also free).
- A screening of *The Battle of the Somme* is taking place at **Dover Castle**. Organised by English Heritage the film will be screened in secret wartime tunnels 100 years to the day that it was first shown in Dover. The film was so popular in its initial showing that it was brought back to Dover for a second time in November 1916. (11 September 2016, free, [booking required](#)).
- **The Platt War Memorial** in Kent will screen the film in September, almost a century after it was first shown at the nearby Electric Ballroom in Borough Green. (6 and 8 September, [limited tickets available](#), free).
- **St. George's Church** in Cambridge is one of many organisations taking part in the Somme100 FILM project. The church will screen *The Battle of the Somme* along with a live orchestral performance of Laura Rossi's score. (10 September, tickets £10, booking required).
- **Blakesley Hall** in Yardley, Birmingham, was built in 1590 and was originally an Elizabethan yeoman's house before opening as a museum in the 1930s. A series of screenings of *The Battle of the Somme* are taking place throughout the 141 days of the battle at the historic building. (11 September, 16 October and 13 November, [pre-booking is advised due to limited places](#), free).

- [Staffordshire Archives and Heritage](#) are hosting a free screening of *The Battle of the Somme* in September. (16 September, free).
- [Denbigh Museum](#), a newly-established museum in Wales, is screening the film in September as part of their plans to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. (23 September, free).
- [Fife Cultural Trust](#) have organised an event at Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline, to commemorate the Battle of the Somme centenary. This includes a display about the local soldiers who were wounded at the Somme and a free screening of *The Battle of the Somme* film. (27 September, free, [registration for tickets required](#)).
- [The Abbey United Reformed Church, Romsey](#), is screening *The Battle of the Somme* along with an exhibition about how the 1916 film was made and about the local men from Romsey who fought in the Battle. (Screening takes place on 29 September, exhibition runs from 29 September until 1 October, free).
- [St Barnabas Church, London](#), is screening the film along with a live orchestral performance of Laura Rossi's score as part of the Somme100 FILM project. The score will be performed by Ealing Symphony Orchestra and is conducted by John Gibbons. (1 October, £1-14, [booking is required](#)).
- [The Gala Theatre](#), Durham, is taking part in the Somme100 FILM project and screening the film along with a live orchestral performance. (4 November, tickets £5 - £10, [booking required](#)).
- [Holy Trinity Church](#), in Formby, Liverpool, is also taking part in the Somme100 FILM project. The Works Community Orchestra, conducted by Steve Cook will perform the Laura Rossi score live to accompany the screening of *The Battle of the Somme*. (9 November, [booking is required](#), prices tbc).
- [St Andrew's Church](#), in Sutton, London's screening of *The Battle of the Somme* will feature a live performance by The Sutton Youth Symphony Orchestra as part of Somme100 FILM. The piece will be conducted by Philip Aslangul. (11 November, free, [booking is required](#)).
- The Stockport Symphony Orchestra is performing Laura Rossi's score live to accompany a film screening at [Stockport Town Hall](#). The orchestra will be conducted by Wynn Davies. (12 November, [booking is required](#), tickets £10-12).
- [The National Centre for Early Music](#) is screening *The Battle of the Somme* at St Margaret's Church Walmgate. The screening takes place in a former church where the memorial to local men who died in the Great War includes 12 men who died at the Somme. There will also be an accompanying exhibition about Walmgate during the First World War. (13 November, free, [registration required](#)).
- [Worthing Symphony Orchestra](#) are performing as part of the Somme100 FILM project. Conducted by John Gibbons the performance takes place at Worthing Assembly Hall. (13 November, [booking required](#), tickets £19 - £28).
- [Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life](#) is planning to screen *The Battle of the Somme* every day until 18 November along with screenings across North Lanarkshire. (Every day until 18 November, free).
- [Ealing Youth Orchestra](#) are performing *The Battle of the Somme* score, conducted by Leon Gee at a screening of the film at St Michael & All Angels, Chiswick. (18 November, [booking required](#) tickets £4 - £12).
- [Keighley Library](#), Yorkshire, is screening the film throughout the Somme centenary along with an exhibition on the local men who fought in the Somme. (Until 19 November, free).

- [Hull Philharmonic Orchestra](#), conducted by Andrew Penny MBE, are performing Laura Rossi's score live for a screening of *The Battle of the Somme* at Hull City Hall. (26 November, [booking required](#), tickets £8 - £27).

For events, exhibitions and screenings of *The Battle of the Somme* in your local area please visit: [www.1914.org/somme](http://www.1914.org/somme)

## Ends

**For further information, images and interviews please contact Faye Jackson in the IWM press office on [f.jackson@iwm.org.uk](mailto:f.jackson@iwm.org.uk) or 020 7416 5420.**

### Notes to editors:

#### Information on the Battle of the Somme:

The Battle of the Somme saw the British Army suffer more casualties on 1 July 1916 than in the entire Crimean, Boer and Korean Wars combined. Within the first 24 hours there were 57,740 casualties.

For more than 60% of the Army, this was their first experience of battle. A seven day initial artillery bombardment was planned from 24 June until 1 July in attempt to destroy German trench defences and artillery. In the week leading up to the battle, over 1.5 million shells were fired. Although this bombardment was the biggest yet, many of the British shells were duds which did not explode.

At 7.30am on Saturday 1 July 1916 British troops advanced across no man's land towards the German lines. Within a few hours 19,240 British troops had been killed, out of a total of 57,470 casualties. Despite the costly first day, the Somme offensive continued for another four and a half months until 18 November 1916. It became a battle of attrition and over the 141 days of battle the British took a strip of territory 10km deep and 32km long. Over the course of the battle over one million men from all sides were killed wounded or captured.

The early stages of the Battle of the Somme were filmed for a documentary film, *The Battle of the Somme*. The film, which is listed on UNESCO's 'Memory of the World' register, was the first feature-length documentary to record war in action. It was seen by over 20 million people, almost half the population of Britain at the time, and is one of the most popular and successful films in British cinema history.

#### Information on *The Battle of the Somme* film:

- *The Battle of the Somme* was released on 21 August 1916. It was the first feature-length documentary to record war in action and was seen by around 20 million people – almost half the population of Britain at the time. It is one of the most successful films in British cinema history.
- The film is listed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register and has been part of the IWM collections since 1920. In November 2005 the film was restored by IWM. In 2006 IWM commissioned composer Laura Rossi to create a score that would help contemporary audiences engage with the film on an emotional level.
- The film aimed to record the British victory and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Army, covering the build-up and opening stages of the battle. Anticipating the desire of the audience to spot their loved ones, the cameramen captured as many faces as possible, often encouraging the men to acknowledge the camera; British soldiers in turn can be seen encouraging German prisoners of war to make sure they are 'in picture'.
- Historians have estimated that all but 70 seconds of the film are genuine. Only the 'over the top' sequence, certain 'shelling' footage and 'clearing the battle field of snipers' are understood to have been staged.
- The film was the first to record a major battle in moving images and the first to feature vast numbers of Britain's citizen army.
- The impact of *The Battle of the Somme* prompted the Germans to make a competing film, *Bei Unseren Helden an der Somme*, however due to timing this film did not include authentic footage from the Somme.

- The film was shot by two camera men; Geoffrey Malins and John B McDowell. Malins was attached to the 29th Division and McDowell to the 7th Division.
- Filming took place between 25 June and 9 July 1916, covering the initial bombardment and opening stages of the battle, although it is possible that the faked sequences could have been shot slightly later.

## IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches attract over 2 million visitors each year. [IWM London](#), our flagship branch, marks the Centenary of the First World War with new permanent First World War Galleries and a new Atrium with iconic large object displays. Our other branches are [IWM North](#), housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; [IWM Duxford](#), a world-renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; [Churchill War Rooms](#), housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser [HMS Belfast](#).

### About the First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, five year programme of cultural activities across the world. This year is the centenary of the Battle of the Somme. IWM will be announcing its programme to mark the anniversary later this year. For more information visit [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org).

