



[Embargoed until 1 July 2015](#)

Help Lives of the First World War remember every soldier who fought during the Battle of the Somme

With one year until major commemorations begin across the country Imperial War Museums (IWM) needs the public to help complete the life stories of every soldier who served during the Battle of the Somme on our permanent digital memorial [Lives of the First World War](#).

Diane Lees, IWM Director General says, "The Battle of the Somme was a defining moment in the First World War, and affected millions in Britain and across the Commonwealth. Sons, brothers and fathers risked their lives to undertake one of the bloodiest battles in this world altering conflict, whilst women and millions at home worked to supply the frontline with the need ammunition and supplies. Ahead of the 2016 centenary IWM would like everyone to think about the ordinary men who went over the top on the 1 July and to help complete their stories on *Lives of the First World War*."

In the early morning of 1 July 1916 the British army launched its infantry attack on the German front lines. By the afternoon the British army had suffered the greatest disaster in its history. Almost 20,000 soldiers were killed, with an additional 37,646 reported wounded or missing.

Few regiments obtained their objectives and the army's artillery had failed to cut through German barbed wire defences.

The Somme would continue for five months with total allied casualties of 600,000 and an estimated 500,000 German casualties.

IWM wishes to commemorate each individual allied soldier on its permanent digital memorial [Lives of the First World War](#).

Did you have a relative who served in the Somme? Can you help us complete the stories by uploading photos, linking to evidence and adding stories?

The website has over 7 million life stories waiting to be updated, including from the first day of the battle

- Second Lieutenant **Kenneth Macardle*** played a key role in the most successful part of the Battle's opening day, but was killed a week later while attempting to continue his battalion's advance. www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/2742240
- **Percy George Boswell*** was 22 years old when he was killed in the first hour of the Battle of the Somme. www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/423045
- Serjeant **Percy Allsup*** who waited anxiously for news of his brother who was injured in the first wave of attack www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/lifestory/36026

Help piece together more life stories, remember and share your First World War connection on www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org

Later this year IWM will announce further commemorative plans to mark the Battle of the Somme centenary in 2016.

Ends

For further information, images and interviews please contact:

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The total number of life stories available to search on the site now stands at 7,662,316 out of 8 million men and women who served. To date 128,689 life stories have been remembered on Lives of the First World War (as of 22 June).

***Case Studies:**

[Kenneth Macardle](#)

Born in Ireland in 1890, Macardle was ranching in California when the First World War began. He returned home and obtained a commission in the Manchester Regiment (under the name Callan-Macardle). In February 1916 he was sent to France with a reinforcement draft. At Etaples, he was posted to the 17th Battalion, the Manchester Regiment, known as the 2nd Manchester Pals, part of the 30th Division.

After the first wave of the 30th Division advanced at 07.30, the 17th Manchesters followed an hour later, moving through the captured German first line. Macardle's B Company pushed forward for one and a quarter miles and he was one of the first to enter Montauban at around 10.00. His men took up a position on the east of the village and remained there, despite intensive shelling and heavy casualties, for 48 hours. In his journal, written on 6 July, Macardle noted that for 60 hours he got no sleep.

The battalion was relieved early on 3 July. Five days later it went forward again and around midnight on 8-9 July it was ordered to attack Trônes Wood. Now in command of A Company, Macardle led his men to the top of the wood where he was killed in the confused fighting towards late afternoon. His body was never recovered and today he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Writing about his experience of that first day on 6 July Kenneth noted:

"At six a.m. the intense bombardment began; word was passed down that 'zero' was 7.30 o.c. At Zero the 89th and 21st Bgds went over and took the Bosch first & second lines and Glats Redoubt and Dublin Trench. At 8.30 we went through them and took Montauban. The German shells littered the battle field with dead and wounded; all around us and in front men dropped or staggered about; a yellow mass of lydite schrapnell would burst high up and a section in two deep formation would crumple up and be gone. 'A' Coy was in front of us, advancing in sections with about 20 paces between blobs in perfect order at a slow walk; a carrying party of Scots came next and then our Coy."

[Percy George Boswell](#)

Percy George Boswell was 22 years old when he was killed in the first hour of the Battle of the Somme. He had been commissioned as a Second Lieutenant only ten months earlier in the 8th Battalion, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

For most of June 1916 the 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry trained for the Battle behind Albert. On 29 June they moved up into trenches running along the eastern edge of Authuille Wood. The following day, Boswell wrote a final letter to his father in Streatham, London, that he hoped would never be sent. In a determined but optimistic note, he tried to reassure his father that he would be fine but 'in case the unexpected [did] happen', he wanted him to know that he was happy and believed he was doing his duty. On the left of the 8th Division's line, the 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were positioned roughly midway between The Nab and Ovillers. They were to attack over a long, gentle slope into strong German positions containing well-sited machine guns. The battalion's first wave advanced under cover of the British guns, suffering relatively few casualties as they entered the German first line. Behind them, however, over half of the second wave was cut down as they crossed the 320m of no man's land. All 25 officers, including Boswell, were either killed or wounded.

Confused fighting continued all day, until the British troops withdrew to their original trenches at the end of the afternoon. The 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry suffered nearly 550 casualties – 80% of their attacking strength. Percy Boswell is today commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

In Percy's final letter to his family he wrote:

"I am absolutely certain I'll get through alright, but in case the unexpected does happen I shall rest contempt in the knowledge that I have done by duty – and one can't do more."

Serjeant Percy Allsup

Before the war, Percy worked as a Reacher in Swansea Textile Mill. Both he and his older brother James joined the 11th Service Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment, known as the Accrington Pals. It is believed that Percy lied about his age in order to join up. Percy kept a diary from December 1915 until he was wounded in 1917. He recorded his experiences during the first day of the Battle of the Somme:

"1 July 1916

Batt. in trenches ready [for] advance. Myself put on reinforcements. Advance starts 7.30AM. On fatigue work in afternoon carrying bombs. Went to reinforce our chaps at 8.0PM, bombardment very heavy. I was hit on shoulder blade with a piece of our own shell 11.30PM, returned to party still feeling dizzy. Officer ordered me back to camp, got back 3.0AM."

"2 July 1916

Waiting anxiously for reports of our men, most of all my brother, heard he had been wounded in shoulder at 9.0AM, men dribbling in one by one in terrible state in No 4 Camp Buss Wood [Bus Wood]. Weather Medium, rest through day. No blankets nor Great Coats to sleep on at night. Walking up & down the wood to keep ourselves warm at night."

His brother James was wounded during the attack at Serre and invalided home. After recovering, James trained to become an officer and served with the Machine Gun Corps.

Percy was injured during a gas attack in 1917, and after recovering gained the rank of Sergeant and returned to the Western Front. Percy's younger brothers Arthur and Charles also served in the war.

Images are available via IWM's press extranet

To download images, visit:

<http://press.iwm.org.uk>

Username: First World War

Password: IWM/press

Select *Lives of the First World War* on the left hand navigation.

Notes to Editors

- The Imperial War Museum was founded in 1917 when the First World War was still being fought to ensure that future generations would understand the toil and sacrifice of those who participated in the conflict.
- Over the Centenary (2014-2018) *Lives of the First World War* will grow to become the permanent digital memorial, accessible to millions of people regardless of their location.
- *Lives of the First World War* will be maintained and preserved by IWM beyond the centenary as a research tool for future generations.
- *Lives of the First World War* is being delivered in partnership findmypast Ltd.
- It is **free** to discover, remember and share information on *Lives of the First World War*, including uploading pictures and adding family stories.
- Subscription is only necessary if visitors wish to research using premium data sets that currently exist behind pay walls, or if they want to access special features such as creating their own Communities.
- To support the permanent digital memorial and access premium genealogy research records visitors can become a Friend of *Lives of the First World War* for £6 per month or £50 a year.

Imperial War Museums is not seeking original copies of letters, photographs or diaries. We encourage people to keep these in family collections for future generations and to upload and share their digital images on *Lives of the First World War*.

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, four year programme of cultural activities across the world including. For more information visit www.1914.org

About Findmypast

Findmypast (previously DC Thomson Family History) is a British-owned world leader in online genealogy. It has an unrivalled record of online innovation in the field of family history and 18 million registered users across its family of online brands, which includes Mocavo, Genes Reunited, The British Newspaper Archive amongst others.

Its lead brand, also called Findmypast, is a searchable online archive of over two billion family history records, from parish records and censuses to migration records, military collections, historical newspapers and lots more. For members around the world, the site is a crucial resource for building family trees and doing detailed historical research.

In April 2003 Findmypast was the first to provide access to the complete birth, marriage, and death indexes for England & Wales, winning the Queen's Award for Innovation. Since that time, the company has digitised records from across the globe, including major collections from Britain, Ireland, Australia, and the United States.