Why did the british lose so amny lives at the somme

History

On the 1st of July 1916 the great battle of the Somme began. It was a British offensive against the Germans on the western front. All organised by Sir Douglas Haig on the British side as the British general and Flakenhayn as the German general. It was a lasting war fought in trenches with very little advance on either side. The Germans had planned to attack the French at Verdun so they could ferry through ammunition and heavy guns towards the Somme. They met strong resistance from the French. On the first day 58 000 British soldiers were injured and out of that figure 21 000 were killed.

Overall 419 000 soldiers were lost in the Somme battle alone and 650 000 Germans. The battle ended on the 19th of November 1916 with a British victory despite all the men that were lost. There are many reasons as to why so many British lives were lost for example; poor training and bad planning. These are just two of the many reasons. There were many tactics employed by the British such as; to look out for any German artillery by use of plane and then come back and bomb it, to cut the German barbed wire to make for an easy advance towards the German frontline, and kill all the German soldiers by bombing them.

The problem was that in reality these tactics didn't work because there was low cloud so the artillery could not be spotted easily. With the low cloud the pilots could not see what they were bombing and in an attempt to cut the barbed wire by bombing all it done was throw it up into the air and when it landed it come down in a worse state. Other problems were that the Germans were expecting an attack after the British bombardment and the British did not realise that the Germans were hiding in big concrete dug outs

and had practiced a routine for when they needed to join back to the frontline.

When the British came over no mans land to advance on the Germans the Germans came out and manned their machine gun posts and killed nearly British soldier along the advance line. Overall it was a bad plan, as Sir Douglas Haig did not cover all the angles. Here we see whether the losses of British men were inevitable or if they weren't what major problems should have been dealt with to prevent so many men being killed. In Source D3 it tells us that no matter how good the training of the soldiers or no superiority of ammunitions the nation must prepare o see heavy casualty lists.

Field marshal Haig wrote this in June 1916 the very month that the battle started. He is basically saying that no matter what happened the losses were inevitable and anything that the British troops could do it still wouldn't prevent huge casualties. This would have been a very reliable source but maybe also slightly biased as Haig might be trying to cover his own mistakes before he makes them. In source D4 John Laffin is saying that Haig had underestimated the Germans and with a General like Haig the losses of men would be inevitable because Haig's strategy was to kill more Germans than to protect his men.

This was written in 1996 this is 80 years after the battle but it is written by a historian who would have researched, also he has no reason to be biased against Haig. Personally I believe that D3 is more reliable as Haig was there at the time and he would have done everything I his power to prevent the inevitable losses. Source D5 tells us that they were told to go 2 High Wood to

go over the top of the battlefield even thought there was heavy German artillery and they were waiting there to use their machine guns to annihilate the British as they walked over in a horizontal line.

Source D6 tells us it was a vigorous attack by the British and also that there was a hugebombardment of the German trenches beforehand so the Germans were expecting an attack so this made it easy for the Germans to target the British as they came over no man's land. Source 5 tells us that it was basically pointless going over no mans land because the Germans new exactly were to fire as they new were the British had cut the wire.

Despite the fact that in source d6 it tells us that the casualty's had not been heavy this was there just to make all the families and friends fell better about the war so they had no reason to worry about their loved ones. Overall I believe that source d5 is more reliable as an actual private in the battle wrote its self. D6 was written by a British newspaper that is very biased and will write in the paper to make it sell. It was written to show the people what a wonderful job the troops were doing. There are many reasons for death in the war but training was a major aspect.

B3 tells us that in the earlier parts of the war the training was adequate, but in the later parts of the war it was inadequate and very little in the way of training was carried out as the soldiers had to be sent straight to the frontline quickly. Also at the start of the war there were better officers training new soldiers. In b1 it tells us that the training in the later stages of the war was poor, also it tells us that when it came to fighting they didn't no

what to do. Source B3 is written by a WW1 soldier so should be very reliable and there would be no need for bias.

The most obvious reason for heavy deaths in the Somme was the Weaponry. Many of the attacks launched on the Germans were poor because only 1/3 of every shell dropped actually exploded plus the ~Germans hid in deep concrete dugouts like in source C2 so it was difficult to kill any German soldiers. Source c3 tells us that lines of men were disappearing as if it was target practice for the German frontline, as they new exactly where the British had cut lines n the barbed wire so the Germans new were the British would try to cross no mans land. The British failed to realise this.

Source c3 and c5 are both very useful and reliable but are different types of source as c3 is a personal recollection and c5 is an overview. C3 tells us that the machine gun was used to just mow down the British frontline and that only a few made the wire and even fewer survived. It gives us the impression that the machine gun as the biggest killer of the British troops. Whereas c5 tells us that in actual fact steel/mortar killed the most statistically. The source only indicates what killed whom in the battle of Mammetz Wood which was only a small section of the battle of The Somme plus it says ' causes of wounds'.

Source c5 should be very reliable, as extensive research has been done as it is in a school textbook. Overall I believe they are both hugely useful. When troops were being collected from no mans land through the frontline it was a risky business as the stretcher could come under heavy fire and be easy targets as they had no ammunition to fire back at the Germans with. As

source e 2 shows us the British troops and stretcher-bearers were knee deep in mud so the would make slow progress with the weight that they had to carry.

With all the mud around injured men's open wounds they would often catch diseases such as gangrene and septicaemia would set in and spread round the body and gradually kill them. 1/3 of all troops recovered died from their wounds and the poor conditions they were operated on in. many operations were carried out whilst the surgeon would be working on many other patients at the same time so the surgeon would get tired and confused over what needed doing to each patient, he would often let assistants carry out dangerous tasks like stitching up and anaesthetising whish they were not qualified to do.

This had to happen, as the surgeons were so busy. Personally I believe the main reasons why so many Br troops died in the Battle of the Somme are; he tactics were poor so this made it easier for the Germans to create the massive damage they could with their impressive weaponry, poor training this meant that when it came to battling on the frontline of the trenches was poor and the medical services could have been improved especially in the operation room.

Although all these reasons add up to why so many British troops were lost I believe there are to main reasons for it. The Germans were capable of massive damage with their weaponry so any slight mistakes cold lead to a bombardment of troops dying and the tactics were not well planned or thought out so once again the Germans could easily cause damage to the

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