

# History – does general haig deserve the title the butcher?

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General Haig's status prior to the Battle of the Somme had been remarkable. In 1885 General Haig was commissioned in the cavalry and served in several campaigns - Sudan and in the Boer War in South Africa between 1899 and 1902. In the Boer war General Haig had served with distinction and showed a lot of potential and was later promoted to the war office. Many people during this period after his first taste of success thought he had a lot of potential. And he didn't disappoint. In August 1914 when WW1 had started, General Haig was commanding his first army corps.

General Haig and his men fought in several battles e. g. Battle of Mons and Battle of Ypres - In which he was very successful. All of this success led to extremely high expectations of him as WW1 had started. However General Haig's title of 'the butcher of the Somme' originated after the First World War, when, due to large number of casualties Britain suffered from the war and mostly the Somme. In which 20, 000 died in the first day of the Battle and many were injured. The people of Britain wanted someone to blame.

This was a coping mechanism in which people could deal with the loss of the 'lost generation'. Does General Haig deserve the title 'Butcher of the Somme'? In this essay I will discuss whether General Haig deserves to be remembered as 'the butcher of the Somme'. General Haig's title of 'the butcher of the Somme' originated after the First World War, when, due to large number of casualties Britain suffered from the war and mostly the Somme. The people of Britain wanted someone to blame. This was a coping mechanism in which people could deal with the loss of the 'lost generation'.

Arguably Haig does deserve his nickname. This is because Haig sent thousands of men to their deaths continuously after his war efforts seemed

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not to be working. For instance 60, 000 soldiers died in the first day alone in the battle of the Somme. The reason that so many people died was that Haig ordered his men to walk across no-mans land. They were easy targets for the German machine guns. However Haig assisted Britain in winning the war and although he did so with tremendous loss of life, these men did not die pointlessly.

They died to protect their families and everyone else on the home front, and they died to prevent Britain from becoming a German Nation. Haig was also faced with an almost impossible task of winning the war in the quickest means possible. Haig was under constant pressure from the government to have a large victory to boost morale. This factor as well as the fact that Haig was not used to the tactics of a war of attrition may have caused Haig to act rashly and therefore if he was not under so much pressure he may have acted differently. Haig was also fed false Intel that was meant to boost morale.

Haig was advised that his seven day artillery bombardment had proven to be successful (the aim of the bombardment was to brake all the barbed wire and kill most of the Germans in the trenches) therefore he ordered his men to walk across no-mans land and look for mines. This shows that he thought about what to do and what was in the best interest for his men as there was no point in telling his men to run across no-mans land to be blown up by mines. It is debatable that Haig deserves his nickname as, while his men are starving in the cold and muddy trench, Haig is sipping French wine.