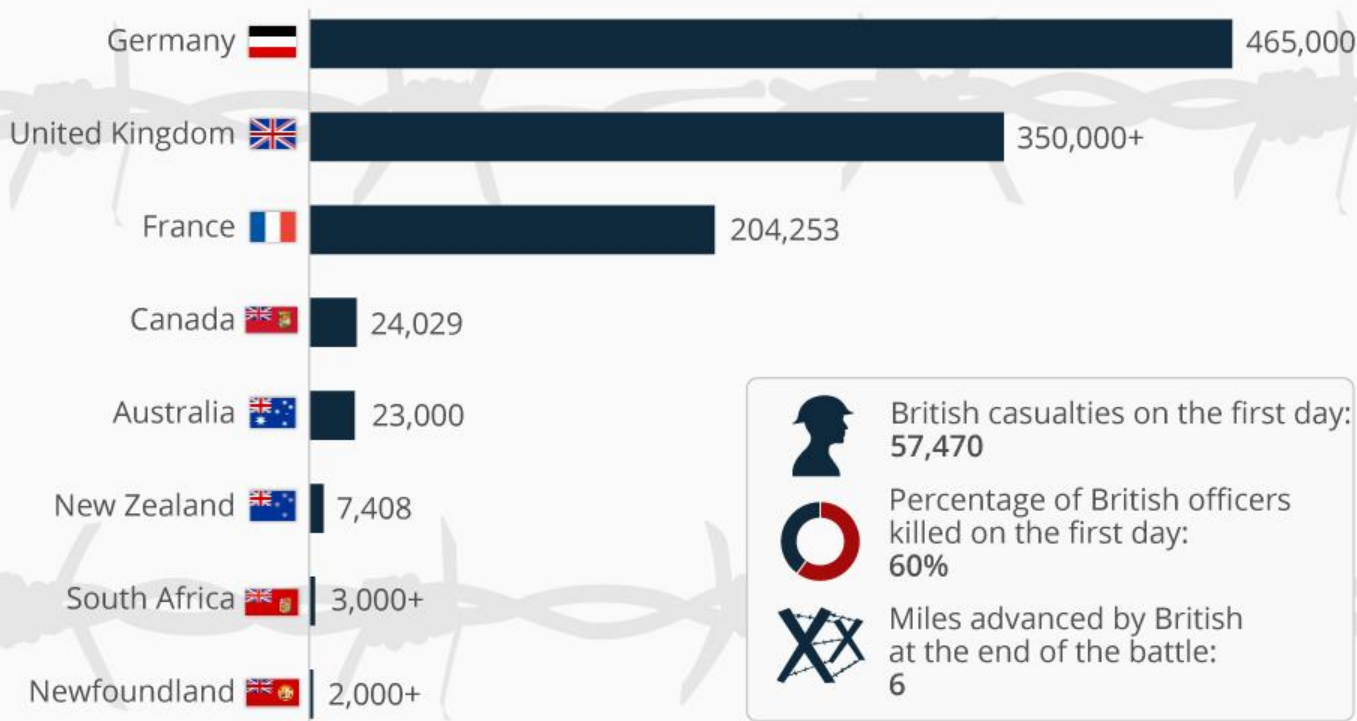


The Battle of the Somme

There were over a million casualties at the Somme

Estimated number of casualties by country at the Battle of the Somme*



* Flags as of 1916. Casualties include dead and wounded.

@StatistaCharts

Sources: Historical records, Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches (1920)

statista

The four-month Battle of the Somme was fought from 1 July to 18 November 1916.

German Defences Unscathed by Artillery Barrages

The joint Allied offensive planned for French forces to play a prominent role, but heavy casualties at Verdun reduced their ability to participate. As a result, British and other imperial forces, under the command of Sir Douglas Haig, assumed responsibility for most of the front.

The German defenders along the Somme had constructed deep dugouts that were difficult to find, much less to destroy with artillery fire. Many of the hundreds of thousands of British shells fired before the attack were inoperative “duds” due to quality control problems in their manufacture. Others lacked fuses sensitive enough to explode on contact with barbed wire, which further reduced the bombardment’s effectiveness. Because of this, many German machine-gun positions and dugouts remained largely unscathed, and deep rows of barbed wire uncleared.

Text for this handout taken from the website of the Canadian War Museum.

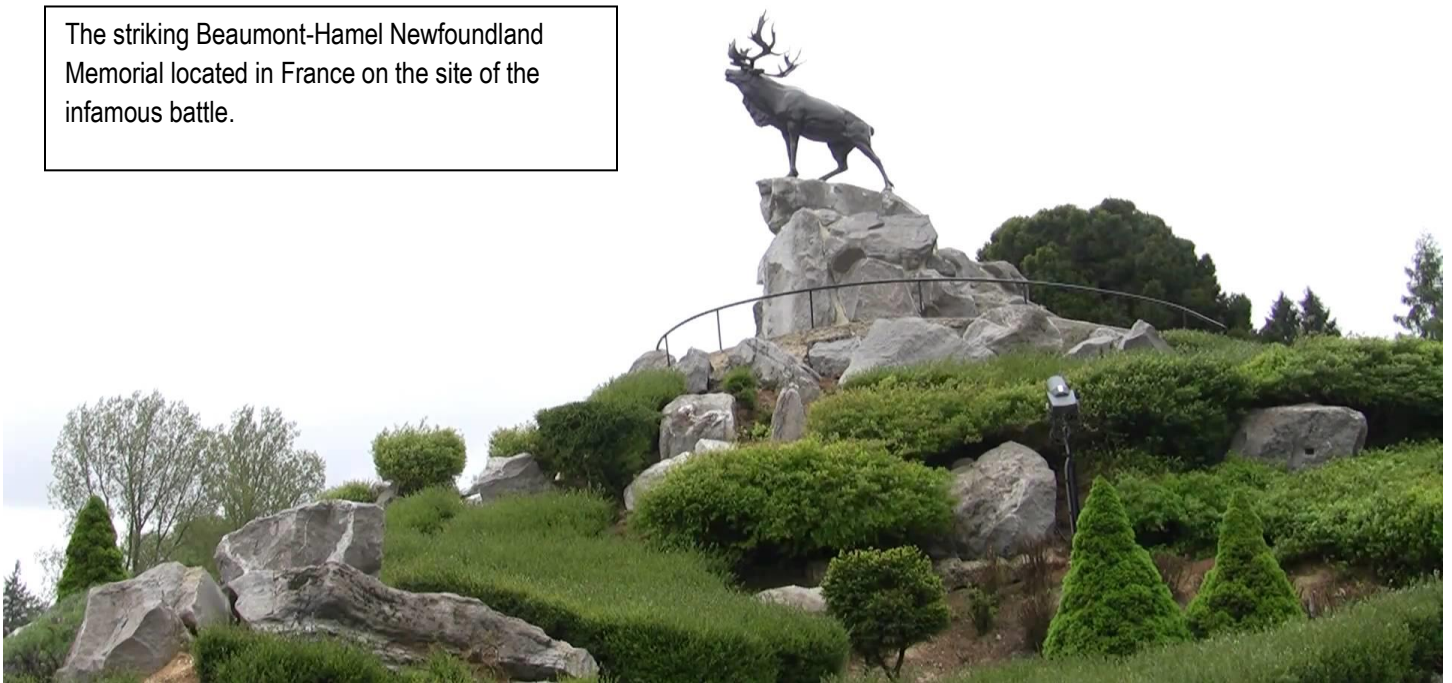
<https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/battles-and-fighting/land-battles/the-somme/> [17 September 2018]

A Disastrous First Day, A Catastrophic Battle

British troops went “over the top” on 1 July 1916 expecting, after the fury of their own barrage, an easy walk onto the German lines. They were met instead by terrible fire from rifles, artillery, and machine-guns seemingly unhurt by the bombardment. The first day of the Somme battle was a disaster, with nearly 60,000 casualties.

No Canadian infantry units participated in this attack but, at Beaumont Hamel, the **1st Newfoundland Regiment, attached to a British division, was cut down on 1 July by German machine-gun fire as it attacked over open ground. Within 30 minutes, the regiment suffered a crippling 324 killed and 386 wounded out of a total of 801 soldiers.**

The striking Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial located in France on the site of the infamous battle.



The First Day of the Somme

The first day of the Somme was a catastrophe for the British Army and a shock for all the Allies. Despite the limited Allied gains, German forces had also suffered horribly. The British pressed the attack for months, well into the fall. By the time the battle ended, each side had suffered more than 600,000 casualties.

Text for this handout taken from the website of the Canadian War Museum.

<https://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/battles-and-fighting/land-battles/the-somme/> [17 September 2018]