



COXA visit to Somme Battlefields 11th & 12th October 2014

Come and find out what happened at the Battle of the Somme. Why did the Army have to endure such horrendous death tolls and casualties? The Clapham Old Xaverian Association will be laying a wreath at the iconic Thiepval Memorial in memory of our fallen Old Boys.



Saturday 11th

6.00am Depart Purley Station

8.20am Crossing via Eurotunnel

- **Visit Vimy Ridge, a preserved area of the battlefield with trenches and craters. Today a huge monument to the Canadian soldiers can be seen overlooking the former battle sites.**
- **Lunch in Arras.**
- **Guided tour of the amazing tunnels beneath the streets of Arras used during both World Wars.**

18.00 Check in at our Hotel Ibis Amiens Centre Cathédrale, 4 Rue Marechal De Lattre, 8000 Amiens.

TELEPHONE: 0033 322 925733

- **Evening free for dinner and a few beers in the lovely city of Amiens.**



Sunday 12th

8.00am Breakfast.

9.00am Visit Thiepval Memorial and Museum, Ulster Tower, nearby trenches, The Thiepval Memorial Arch designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens contains the names of 73,357 missing soldiers from the Somme battle. The Memorial to the Missing.



COXA will lay a wreath in memory of those Old Boys who fell here.



11.00 Visit the mine crater at La Boisselle, stories of what happened to soldiers here and nearby.

Lunch.

Guided Walk of the 1st July 1916 Battlefield at Serre and visit Beaumont Hamel's Newfoundland Memorial Park.

5:00 Return journey to Calais.

7.20 Crossing (local time).

9.00 Arrive back at Purley station.

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The Story of Collective Sorrow

There were many disasters for the British during World War One, but one stands out for the numbing sadness engendered back home in some towns or cities; the Battle of the Somme. The massacre involved men who enlisted in what came to be known as 'Pals' battalions. These battalions were mostly made up of volunteers who all came from the same locality or town. Husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, cousins, uncles, nephews, friends, fiancés, boyfriends, work colleagues, acquaintances and neighbours. It would be great for comradeship in the training and during the battle, so the generals, and indeed everyone, thought before the battle. After the battle, minds changed. Why was that? In the days when people knew most locals, when the population was much more static, absences would be noticed and lots of absences, noticed all the more. There could be no hiding the collective local grief.

On July 1st 1916, the British launched an almighty offensive against the Germans, after 7 days shelling, in a previously quiet sector of the Western Front. By the end of the day the official British and Empire death toll was 19,240, with 57,470 casualties. It was the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army. The agony of the Somme dragged on for 4 months and as casualties rose to 419,654 for the British Empire troops, 204,253 French troops and 434,515 German soldiers. The total dead and missing tolls were over 210,000. Casualties numbered over a million collectively.

- Why were so many killed on the first day and what lessons were learned?
- Who exactly were the Pals battalions?
- Why did the battle carry on for four months?
- What was gained and what was lost?