

The British Sector of the Western Front, 1914-1918 (Part I: the War)

Key Dates		
20 June 1914	Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand	Trigger for the war
4 August 1914	Britain declares war on Germany	
Oct-Nov 1914	First battle of Ypres	British casualties were over 50,000 but kept control of Channel ports.
Apr-May 1915	Second battle of Ypres	Germans move 2 miles closer to town of Ypres; first use of chlorine gas ; British losses of 59,000.
July 1916	Battle of the Somme	The Allies advance 5 miles using artillery bombardment to break through enemy lines. This leads to much higher casualties (400,000 men).
6 April 1917	America enters the war	Blow to German morale and a decisive turning point in the war.
Apr-May 1917	Battle of Arras	British advance 8 miles ; 160,000 casualties.
July 1917	Third battle of Ypres	Moved the edge of the salient back 7 miles; 245,000 casualties .
Oct 1917	Battle of Cambrai	First large scale use of tanks .
July 1918	Hundred days offensive	Allies launch a series of sustained attacks against the Germans which leads to Germany's surrender .
11 Nov 1918	Germany surrenders	End of World War I at 11.00 am .

Key terminology	
Barbed wire	Metal wire with sharp points used in no-man's-land to protect from enemy attack. It made it difficult for men to get through without being trapped by the wire.
Blighty wound	A wound serious enough to get a soldier away from the fighting and back to Britain .
Brodie helmet	Steel helmet held with a strap. Introduced in 1915, it reduced fatal head wounds by 80%.
Chlorine gas	Causes burning pain in throat and eyes and can lead to death by suffocation . First used by Germans in the second battle of Ypres, 1915.
First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY)	A women's voluntary organisation which provided medical services on the frontlines such as driving ambulances and emergency first aid.
Machine guns	Guns that could fire 450 rounds a minute ; their bullets could fracture bones or pierce organs.
Mustard gas	Odourless gas which passes through clothing to burn the skin , causing internal and external blisters. Gas masks offer little protection against mustard gas, as it goes through clothing. First used by the Germans in 1917.
No-man's-land	The area between two opposing lines of trenches.
Phosgene gas	Similar to chlorine gas but faster acting and can kill exposed person within 2 days. First used end of 1915.
Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC)	The branch of the army responsible for medical care.
Salient	An area of a battlefield that is surrounded by enemy territory on 3 sides .
Trench system	A complex network of trenches in which men could live and fight. Trenches were dug to a depth of about 2.5m in a zig-zag pattern to confuse the enemy. Trenches were built over a distance of 400 miles all the way from the northern French coast to Switzerland.
Shrapnel	Fragments of metal from exploded shells.