

The Great F&*%-Up

The Somme was an attempt by the British to break through the trench lines and move the front eastwards, against Germany. The plan was:

1. Starting 24 June 1916, use artillery bombardment for a week, directed at the enemy trenches and supply lines.
2. On 1 July, at 6:30am, the barrage started. It was intended to immobilize the enemy while the offensive advanced--keeping the German soldiers in their shelter until the attacking soldiers actually reached the enemy line. The barrage was to be effective for 4,000 yards, and the British soldiers were to walk behind it.
3. At 7:30am, the British were to leave their trenches, jump over the parapet shielding their positions and cross no-man's land toward the German trenches, advancing with bayonets. At the same time, the Germans were trying to get out of their trenches.
4. On the German side, machine guns were raised and fired at the advancing British.
5. It was impossible for the British to use individual guns or bayonets. The barrage continued, making craters everywhere that made the land impossible to cross. Yet the barrage often failed to break down the barbed wire protecting the German positions. Communications broke down, and there was mass confusion.
6. 21,000 British soldiers were killed in the FIRST HOUR of this battle. By the end of the day, on 1 July 1916, 60,000 had been killed or wounded. The Germans, who were in the defensive position, lost "only" 6,000 soldiers.

During the rest of 1916, fighting took place repeatedly at the Somme. Altogether, 419,654 British soldiers died there and 200,000 French soldiers.