

LIVE CHAT – 27 June 2009 – The Somme

[KevinEndon] I am finally going to be on the Somme for the 1st July, Lochnagar for 7:30 Thiepval for 10 and Beaumont Hamel for 4

[Brian Curragh] Good one Kevin - you will enjoy it

[KevinEndon] I just hope I can get parked at these places as walking is impossible

[Brian Curragh] I have been to Serre & Thiepval for 7:30 - no problems there

[Paul Reed] Kevin - there is no parking at the Crater on 1st July

[Paul Reed] You have to walk up from the village

[KevinEndon] Arghhhh even though I have a blue badge Paul

[Paul Reed] I would email the Friends of Lochnagar ASAP and ask them

[Brian Curragh] How's the racket from Glastonbury then, Alan ?

[MagicRat] Can't hear a thing - went into the garden hoping to hear Neil Young but not a note

[MagicRat] last night that is

[Paul Reed] Do you live nearby then Alan?

[MagicRat] 5 miles away

[Brian Curragh] Might be louder tonight

[MagicRat] what, that Springsteen fellow?

[KevinEndon] email sent Paul; I would hate to miss out

[Paul Reed] I am sure they will help

[KevinEndon] If they can't then I suppose the sunken road for 7:30 is just as good

[KevinEndon] does anyone know how close i can park for the service at Thiepval owing to being disabled, will they let me get beyond the car park and closer to the grass area of the memorial

[Peter Woodger] My wife warned me about these chat rooms but i have been here 10 mins and have not been groomed yet

[KevinEndon] that's pants Peter especially if you are a horse

[Brian Curragh] Kevin, you can normally park at the gates, not sure when there's something on

[Paul Reed] Kevin I would mail the RBL Somme branch for advice

[KevinEndon] I will do, I would hate to get out there and can't go anywhere because its all shut off to vehicles

[Paul Reed] The trouble is the French are not good at recognising the need for disabled access

[Paul Reed] I had major problems with that down in Normandy with a group of vets

[Brian Curragh] Alan - how was Martin Middlebrook's talk then?

[MagicRat] Oh very good, I thought - who else has heard him speak?

[Paul Reed] Several times, but not for many years

[Brian Curragh] What was the focus of the talk on?

[MagicRat] He's shameless about selling his books at events where he speaks - but why not?

Would it be fair to say he was one of the first authors to popularise WW!?

[Brian Curragh] Or Lyn Macdonald

[[MagicRat](#)] The talk was on the why the Somme occurred, and a little about its legacy

[[skipman](#)] What year was 1st day Somme written?

[[bmac](#)] 1971

[[Paul Reed](#)] Middlebrook, MacDonald, Coombes and Giles were those who helped re-ignite interest in the Great War

[[bmac](#)] Lyn MacDonald's Somme 83

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Middlebrook got me started.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Plus Malcolm Brown with his Somme documentary in 1976

[[bmac](#)] Ralph, same here

[[skipman](#)] How about Brian Gardner, The big push? That was my first

[[bmac](#)] Middlebrook's interviews with vets was the thing

[[Paul Reed](#)] It didn't say anything new in the way the other books did

[[Peter Woodger](#)] When someone of Middlebrook's reputation makes an incorrect statement should one argue or shut up

[[bmac](#)] Argue. Why not?

[[Paul Reed](#)] Always argue as no-one is infallible and Martin would be the first to admit it

[[KevinEndon](#)] argue, even someone of his stature has been known to be wrong

[[skipman](#)] what was the mistake?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] He made a mistake on a German unit designation, something common.

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] The one I can recall at present.

[[Brian Curragh](#)] Does he regard himself as an "historian"?

[[KevinEndon](#)] if he is the man I think he is he would thank you for pulling him up on something and not to try and lie his way out of it

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Everyone makes mistakes at some point; from my contacts with him I have found him to be honest and forthright.

[[Peter Woodger](#)] He says that all the small cemeteries were moved from the area of Thiepval to make space for the memorial. The cemeteries were concentrated in 1919 and Thiepval was chosen in 1927

[[bmac](#)] There is a question about his story about 2nd Lt Arthur of the Cheshires at Gommecourt but he was fine/amused about the info I had on it. No problem at all

[[Brian Curragh](#)] What was the question?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Also, information and details from the Somme are popping up all the time from new sources.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Peter is that in First Day?

[[Paul Reed](#)] Remember he did the research for that in the 60s, long before most of what is available now was available

[[bmac](#)] Ralph, his view entirely, Always something new coming along

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] So what are the major changes since 1973?

[Peter Woodger] No Paul it was in his guide

[skipman] Were Battalion diaries available to Middlebrook then?

[Paul Reed] I think he got to see them early as they were still being released

[Paul Reed] Peter _ I would ask him about it

[bmac] There is no reference to War Diaries in the book. Regimental histories yes

[Ralph J. Whitehead] From my point of view, 18 months of Feldpost from an NCO in RIR 119, ended on his death on 1 July 1916. Items like these are turning up every month it seems. Also a large photo album from RIR 99 (26th Reserve Division) from Beaumont-Hamel, Thiepval, etc.

[Stephen Garnett] Where did you find them Ralph?

[skipman] Can you get access to the Butte de Warlencourt? Or is it covered in trees?

[Paul Reed] you can get to the top

[skipman] Good, I am going in couple of weeks

[Ralph J. Whitehead] EBay, both items. The letters were written almost daily, the photos were in the hundreds.

[Brian Curragh] Ralph, was there much of a fight to get them?

[Paul Reed] nice find, Ralph

[Andrew Hesketh] Evening all. Due to 'other things' this is a brief appearance - sorry.

[Stephen Garnett] Blimey! Is that common?

[skipman] Well done good price?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] The photos went for several thousand Euros all told and as such my share puts me in the doghouse and poorhouse.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] The letters, postcards and memorial scroll went for a song.

[skipman] Is there much of that on eBay then?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] The bidding was still on the photos, there were simply so many and all relative to my research. The problem was choosing which ones to bid on.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] From time to time, it runs in spurts then a long spell with nothing.

[Brian Curragh] They got split then?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] As German families clear out grandfather's junk they sell off everything relating to the war. The memorial scroll was still in the mailing tube.

[skipman] If there was one area not to miss on Somme which would it be?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Each photo or similar group was sold separately. The letters & such in 2 lots.

[Pighills] Skippy, I suppose that would depend on your area of interest

[Pighills] what's your interest?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] If not I would never have a chance to bid on any of them.

[Andrew Hesketh] Thiepval has to be a visit - especially if it's your first time.

[Brian Curragh] Ralph - true - but it's always a shame to see them go separate ways

[skipman] I suppose so, am interested in it all really, but specifically 8th York and Lancaster

[Desmond7] Apologies thought it was 9pm!

[Pighills] but there is so much to see around the Thiepval area it would almost be a crime not to get there

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Walk down to the Leipzig Redoubt, check out the lay of the land and visibility, no wonder it was a hard place to capture.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Hi Des, feeling better?

[Desmond7] Two ticks and I'm raring' to join in

[Desmond7] Ta Ralph - a bit!

[GlenBanna] Hi everybody. Hope you don't mind me butting in. Can I pick your brains as to the best balanced modern book on General Haig to read.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] In my case almost all will be in volume 1 or 2 of my Somme book so they will be put to good use.

[Brian Curragh] Ouch - we're into DH already!

[Stephen Garnett] If you hold the view that the German Army was never in a position to win the war following the Somme, then I would hold the view that the war was won between Contalmaison and Fricourt on July 1st.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Why?

[Andrew Hesketh] This could be a long answer to type!!

[skipman] Did the 8th York and Lancasters go over top at 'the Nab'?

[bmac] yes

[skipman] cheers , I thought so but wasn't sure

[Desmond7] For Ralph - heard a guy on video claim there were 32 machine-gun posts in Hamel sub-sector ... surely too many? Or is he in the ballpark?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Could be that many posts but not that many guns, there were multiple sites for each weapon.

[Desmond7] That explains it my man.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] At best two MG companies, up to 24 guns at most with extras. I believe the 26th Res. Div. had all told 72 heavy machine guns for all regiments.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] That would be four, RIR 99, RIR 119, RIR 121, RIR 180.

[Desmond7] One more question for Ralph ... when is book 2 due ?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Des, with the disaster on the first volume, probably 2010. Vol. 1 is set for December 15th 2009.

[bmac] Better renew my Amazon order then

[Desmond7] Ta. Have my eye on that one .. big time!

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Got some excellent MG photos a few days back that will be in them.

[skipman] who's the best forum person to ask a German ww1 machine gun question, then can pm sometime

[Andrew Hesketh] Just in time for Christmas!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] 750 copies only, I added several dozen original photos and 18 months of Feldpost letters just the last few months.

[[Desmond7](#)] For Peter Woodger - how far on in the cemetery analysis are you Pete? Still mysteries cropping up?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Skipman, what sort of question do you have?

[[skipman](#)] a value question

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Modern values?

[[skipman](#)] ball park figure of what one might be worth

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Sorry, can't help with that. Actual use, deployment, etc. then I could help.

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] The flanking support offered by a successful Division seems to have been crucial to success that day. The 15th and 16th Royal Scots and the 21st Division's penetration into the German defences secured a foothold above Fricourt and La Boisselle, without it

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] My wife's great uncle came home with an MG 08/15 from the war as a souvenir.

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] ...would La Boisselle or Fricourt have fallen?

[[Pighills](#)] My tea has arrived so I shall say goodnight to you all, have a good chat!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] From the German point of view there are many reasons for the differences in success from the Ancre area and north and the area by Mametz/Fricourt.

[[Andrew Hesketh](#)] I'm being called - sorry for the brief visit. Enjoy the chat.

[[Peter Woodger](#)] Hi Des I have some 10 complete pictorial registers with many others that require photo retakes. I have been able to work out a lot about the post 1921 clearances but there are still some gaps where I do not know which cemetery they were using. I have been

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Ralph, were the German positions weaker in the south or had they been weakened previous to July 1st?

[[Desmond7](#)] Questions rolling in

[[Peter Woodger](#)] I hit the send button early, working on Ovillers & am surprised with the result

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] The southern part was a mess, bad planning, poor position preparation, deploying units too widespread, etc.

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] The northern area was better suited for defense from what I can tell.

[[Desmond7](#)] Pete - Surprise equal maintenance of interest! Where would be without the annoying puzzles?

[[bmac](#)] Was there a difference in morale south of La Boisselle?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] 6th Bavarian Reserve scattered and used up in trench restoration, etc. Thrown in at last minute and unfamiliar with area.

[[Desmond7](#)] Bmac - that intrigues me .. expand thinking?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Morale good all over, just that at the last the German units were switched around to provide better coverage, a serious error in my opinion.

[[bmac](#)] The performance around Montauban was pretty woeful well before the attack

[Desmond7] British performance? I take it?

[bmac] British patrols spending an hour in German trenches up to their 3rd line

[bmac] No German

[Desmond7] Oops

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Many of the dugouts were shallow and collapsed, squeezing survivors into fewer and fewer and preventing full coverage of the front.

[bmac] The front line at Montauban was barely occupied on 1st July

[Stephen Garnett] So the artillery bombardment worked?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] RIR 109 suffered almost full destruction on 1st July, casualties in the thousands.

[bmac] only around the Craters was there any significant resistance

[bmac] though some MGs caused heavy casualties

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Spherical trench mortar shells, the toffee apples were the most feared and the most devastating. The shrapnel was useless & HE was used in the rear most of the time.

[Desmond7] And the big question ... if the British units to the south had pressed harder would it have been a fatal blow to German defences to the north? I know it's a what if .. and it may upset some BUT ... opinions?

[bmac] Toffee apples were front line weapons as far as I know

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Machine gunners for the most part seasoned men, knew the terrain and were dedicated to their part in the defense.

[skipman] chained to guns?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] There were German reserve units nearby and I doubt such a massive breakthrough was possible.

[Desmond7] I have pictures of Toffee Apps being fired from positions in saps in front line.

[bmac] There was no question of a further advance on 1st July logistics, reserves, etc., all against it

[Ralph J. Whitehead] If that is true, it was a lone example of one man.

[bmac] They would have created a dangerous salient had they done so

[skipman] Yes, I just remember reading it somewhere.

[Desmond7] Bmac - agreed on that one. Flanks all over the show

[bmac] The Montauban ridge was a good defensible position

[Ralph J. Whitehead] German had been sending reserves toward the Somme well before the battle, numerous guns and support units were in the general area including the 16th Bavarian IR that missed the fighting on 1st July.

[bmac] But most went north to Gommecourt and Serre I believe

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Toffee apples made huge craters and collapsed dugouts and entrances of those that survived.

[bmac] But apart from the 8 min hurricane bombardment at 7

[bmac] oops 7.22 were used a lot for wire cutting

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Support units were in position to be sent almost anywhere. 15th RIR was intact and by Gommecourt while others were coming from nearby locations.

[Stephen Garnett] Agreed Bmac. It's clear from the 18th Div War Diaries that they would not have got on if the 30th Division had not controlled the Glatz Redoubt and beyond.

[Desmond7] Selfish question ... Ralph ... units which were thrown into Schwaben counter-offensive, from basic organisation, issuing of throw 'em out orders to actual combat contact ... timescale?

[bmac] Ralph, the only NEW division though was the 2nd Guard Reserve at Gommecourt by 1st July

[bmac] This helped compress and strengthen the line north of the Ancre

[Ralph J. Whitehead] The units used were all present on the morning of 1st July, primarily RIR 99, Bavarian RIR 8, a reinforcement unit, a number of recruit companies and the combined weight of almost every 26th Reserve Division gun and trench mortar.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] It was but others were present that evening and more the following day. If pushed additional units could be drawn in rapidly.

[bmac] The 52nd Division's front was halved as a result

[Ralph J. Whitehead] RIR 15 and RIR 77 were basically intact following 1st July, they were used in the following days and months.

[Peter Woodger] I have to go the boss is calling Goodnight

[Ralph J. Whitehead] RIR 55 and RIR 91 bore the brunt of Gommecourt fighting with the help of artillery from the neighboring division (111th I believe).

[Paul Reed] Ralph - is all this covered in your book?

[bmac] and various Bavarian artillery units and help from the 52nd Artillery

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Why go, it's only 4.06 p.m.?

[Desmond7] Hope so!

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Yes Paul, it is. The last chapter covers the week long bombardment.

Chapter 1 of volume 2 is about 350 double spaced pages and covers Gommecourt, Thiepval and Ovillers, Curlu/Montauban, etc. are in the works.

[Desmond7] You ever come across 'Der Stammler' mention Ralph?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Not familiar with it, what is it?

[Desmond7] From BBC programme. .. Hikel's memoirs .. the Stammerer .. apparently crack shot against 'my boys'

[Ralph J. Whitehead] I suspect each sector will have a chapter, too much information for one.

[Desmond7] Sorry is it Hinkel?

[Paul Reed] When is the book due out Ralph?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Yes, he was in the 7/R99 near Thiepval and he is mentioned in the regimental history RIR 99.

[Desmond7] Paul - is Uncle Bill still at Thiepval Centre?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Volume 1 December 15th 2009, volume 2 in the works.

[Stephen Garnett] Desmond, if Thiepval village had fallen would the 36th have held the Schwaben?

[Ralph J. Whitehead] 378 photos, more than half from my collection, all but 3 relate directly to XIV Reserve Corps units.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Possibly but there was always Grandcourt and north of the Ancre where support fire was also coming from.

[Desmond7] I could only say it SHOULD have been easier to reinforce and resupply them ... which logically should have meant they could have held on longer.

[bmac] I would venture that had Thiepval fallen Ovillers would have gone PDQ too.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] MG's by Thiepval & further south covered no man's land with a curtain of fire.

[Desmond7] But even if Thiepval had gone down they were still very exposed.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] I agree, Ovillers would have been vulnerable.

[bmac] Certainly the 36th Ulster Division would have had trouble from Beaucourt Redoubt etc whatever happened

[Desmond7] The plateau as a whole would have got a good hammering from anything north of Ancre which had nothing else to fire at?

[Desmond7] Bmac just answered that one for me!

[skipman] I think once I have been there, I will be able to visualise these places better.

[Desmond7] I think everything hinged on everything else. Which really makes a mockery of the post war statements that the attack north of Ancre was of 'lesser importance' etc

[Ralph J. Whitehead] If the German trenches had looked like those in late 1914 & early 1915 then the battle would have been entirely different, there most likely would have been a breakthrough.

[Stephen Garnett] The War Diaries do seem to suggest that each Division was very reliant on those on its flank and this was the key for the British that day.

[Desmond7] You will love it - superb ground to walk.

[Ralph J. Whitehead] When you do visit you might be surprised by how small everything looks in distance and scale. I was quite surprised on my first trip.

[bmac] The Germans had had 18 months to fortify the place and get it right

[Ralph J. Whitehead] It all appears so much bigger in the books and period photos.

[skipman] Am sure I will be surprised.

[bmac] Fewer trees then, cut down for trench works

[Desmond7] But the small scale helps Ralph - in my opinion

[Ralph J. Whitehead] And with each French attack, with each new experience by Vimy Ridge/Arras the German lines were improved and expanded.

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Des, I agree as regards north of the Ancre. If they had penetrated there, then the fire previously mentioned would not have fallen south of the Ancre.

[[Brian Curragh](#)] Yes, the distance between Connaught & Mill Road for example

[[Desmond7](#)] Especially for unit-centric characters like me!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] North of the Ancre was excellent terrain for defense, limited visibility, etc.

[[bmac](#)] And where it wasn't a near miss at Redan Ridge

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Odd thing, the Germans noted one major thing. The number of trees cut down before the battle by the British indicated a massive expansion program for the trench system, a sign of trouble ahead.

[[bmac](#)] And yet there was a shortage of materials on the British side. We had to pay for stuff.

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Also at one point they noticed the British were not repairing damaged wire, another sign an attack was coming.

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] The 86th Brigade was very aware, as July 1st progressed, of their need to support the 4th Division.

[[bmac](#)] But the 29th Division had been stopped literally dead and could do nothing

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Germans noted French civilians leaving after British arrived and wondered why the British seemed to need more living space than the French did.

[[bmac](#)] And the French weren't happy with their nice fields being used for training grounds for the attack

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Not as much concern about that on the other side.

[[bmac](#)] Labour and materials were a bit cheaper too!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] It seemed that every German worked like a dog, they even combed out older men unfit for trench duty and they were used solely for manufacturing items needed at the front and entrenching as were all recruits sent up as reinforcements.

[[Desmond7](#)] You know one thing which always strikes me about the ground? The wilderness of what NML must have been on 1st July - over grown fields, nettles etc. Until I started researching seriously I had just imagined the Somme campaign was just mud, mud & more mud

[[bmac](#)] Grass and weeds over 3 feet high

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Mostly grass everywhere.

[[Paul Reed](#)] The photo panoramas clearly show that

[[bmac](#)] Concealed a lot of wire

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Old turnip fields, etc. some areas cleared from heavy fighting like at La Boisselle.

[[bmac](#)] Sugar beet was the big thing pre war thus all the Sucrieries

[[Desmond7](#)] Down near Ancre they had crackling of reeds to deal with on night patrol.. Must have been hairy in the silence when a reed cracked!

[[Paul Reed](#)] Do you remember that field I showed you Des?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Each time a German unit was involved in serious fighting they brought back their experiences and had training sessions, expanded the wire, used everything they could think of to increase defenses.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Which looked very much like NML on 1st July

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Now I am jealous, oh to have been able to come over for that trip.

[[Desmond7](#)] Do indeed.

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Broke and no prospect for a trip now. I am getting ready to fire 1/3 of my staff if things do not improve.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Never mind Ralph - we'll all meet up over there one day

[[Desmond7](#)] I remember getting very emotional when I first reached the crossroads at Thiepval, Paul!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I suspect we will Paul, until then I will have to be satisfied watching you on one of several shows you appear in.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Oh gawd, yes it was a surprise Last Day had reached the US

[[Brian Curragh](#)] Be Oprah next!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] After standing where the men fought and realizing the implications of what happened then it is very moving. I also realized my view was not correct, they would be barely able to see anything down in the trenches.

[[Paul Reed](#)] I do have the distinction of turning down Richard & Judy...

[[Desmond7](#)] I loathe that man Paul Reed for getting to work with the wonderful Kirsty Wark .. a symbol for men of a certain age!

[[Brian Curragh](#)] ?!?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Yes, a few shows do make it here, but too few and too long after airing in the UK.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Kirsty Wark is a lovely lady

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Do you have an itinerary planned Skipman?

[[skipman](#)] Yes, with the one and only Mr Chris Baker

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] How long for?

[[skipman](#)] 4 days with Chris

[[Paul Reed](#)] Is he acting as your guide?

[[skipman](#)] Yes

[[Desmond7](#)] Enough nonsense, so I'll just say when Kirsty was younger.. drool. OK no more on that subject from moi!

[[Paul Reed](#)] Should be a great few days then

[[skipman](#)] Absolutely! By the way I used to see Kirsty everyday in Glasgow

[[egbert](#)] hi guys. Anything going on?

[[Brian Curragh](#)] We've been at it for 90 minutes so far

[[egbert](#)] ah time difference

[skipman] Vive la

[Desmond7] Questions firing - go for it Egbert - everybody's doing their controversial question ..
The big what ifs etc

[Paul Reed] How about a question from me?

[Desmond7] Shoot Mon. Reed

[Paul Reed] If you were going to make yet another TV documentary about the Somme - what angle/story/issue do you think it should take?

[Desmond7] Thinking time required.

[egbert] grandfathers big push of course

[skipman] view from German side?

[bmac] Oh I don't know, one about Gommecourt which mentions the village and the units involved!!!! Aggrieved of Beckenham

[Stephen Garnett] The work that was put into fighting, the complexities it required.

[Desmond7] I reckon you could do a great tie in with the pre-offensive work.

[Stephen Garnett] The hard effort and slog as evidenced by the 1st Lancs Fusiliers. on July 1st.

[Brian Curragh] Something that emphasised the improvement since the previous two years

[Paul Reed] Should it be just about 1st July then?

[Stephen Garnett] From the top of the chain to the bottom.

[Desmond7] How much infrastructure is still buried in the rear lines, the middens where camps used to be .. the unsung heroes who built the offensive.

[egbert] seriously- I would do a Ernst Jünger homage , Wäldchen 125, Puisieux etc

[Brian Curragh] To get away from the "mindless slaughter" view

[Stephen Garnett] Exactly, Brian. I have taken senior managers who have been fascinated by how the war was fought.

[Paul Reed] Junger would be good, Egbert but he is really unknown to a general public, sadly

[egbert] is he unknown in the UK?

[Paul Reed] To the general public, yes

[egbert] He is popular in France though

[Desmond7] You have to be a military history buff to have heard of Jünger in UK

[Stephen Garnett] As evidenced through the Records.

[skipman] A walkthrough from south to north explaining what happened

[Paul Reed] I like that idea

[skipman] commission/

[Paul Reed] TV doesn't pay much, I can assure you

[Paul Reed] Unless you are Jonathon Ross

[Desmond7] What about the myth, the men and the memory - trace families, hear their family legend and work back.

[Desmond7] Is there any money for half decent documentaries about?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Oh Paul, I know about those 6 figure payments and the royalties....

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] I would follow the 29th and 30th Divisions and tie in the existing records, particularly the War Diaries to the landscape.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Des, it's getting harder

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] It's like making money publishing. I am waiting for Hollywood to buy the movie rights and then I will be set.

[[Paul Reed](#)] The production company I work for has had a series commissioned for less than half the budget of last year

[[Paul Reed](#)] And that's with the BBC

[[Desmond7](#)] Love the 29th Division.. There's one for you.. More people than Newfoundlanders fought at Beaumont Hamel. Sell that to Canadian BC.. not

[[Desmond7](#)] Very un-PC but couldn't resist it

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] It seems few producers want to portray the real events, the stories unless it sells and then requires changes so the public has a clue as to what you are talking about.

[[Paul Reed](#)] It depends on the producer and the company, Ralph

[[Paul Reed](#)] Documentaries for commercial TV are very different to those for the BBC

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] You have far more knowledge than I, I bow to experience.

[[egbert](#)] I would say the German side is still a big enigma on the UK side of the house. So a documentary which covers the Germans on equal terms 50:50 could be interesting for you guys

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] You would certainly need some human case studies and follow the story through them.

[[Paul Reed](#)] That would be good, too Egbert

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] But a hard sell from my experiences at a lecture several years back Egbert.

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] How about a study of the way the war was fought at Beaumont Hamel then?

[[skipman](#)] Does it have to be a one off?

[[egbert](#)] Ralph a documentary must accept losses in royalties

[[Desmond7](#)] I firmly believe there is merit in an educated view - with modern technology you could do a very good CD from sector to sector for the enthusiasts. With good script/good expert you could produce cheap for a smaller market. Not much profit but it could be done

[[Paul Reed](#)] Aren't Pen & Sword doing something like that?

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I believe a well produced, accurate show would have more people watching than some of the material produced at times.

[[Desmond7](#)] Don't know but I was begging you to do it the day we were up at Richebourg!!!

[[Paul Reed](#)] The cost of setting it up makes it impossible Des

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I suspect none of us will get rich on our hobby, publishing or TV.

[[Desmond7](#)] TV is a different market from history enthusiasts Ralph.

[[MagicRat](#)] Can I just pop in a plug for this GWF conference thing I've been going on about - I really think it is going to happen next Spring, somewhere in the Midlands, and it would be really great if (forgive me) our more distinguished members could make it....

[[Desmond7](#)] Don't know Paul - I have an AVID editing suite and two good cameras.. We could work it out!

[[Brian Curragh](#)] Anyone seen the P&S Somme DVDs?

[[skipman](#)] Something different like a live show, that would be tough, but damn good to watch, you could get Katie Humble in too

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Des, I have no experience in any of it so it is all a guess from my end.

[[Brian Curragh](#)] The two recent releases which include maps etc

[[Paul Reed](#)] skipman - funny enough, that has been looked into

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] There is plenty of human interest at Beaumont Hamel, particularly if you build up the drama, culminating in July 1st.

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] MagicRat, airfare being offered?

[[MagicRat](#)] if only, Ralph...

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Didn't think so.

[[Desmond7](#)] Your rug is one of the great sleep over Godsendings Ralph!!!

[[Paul Reed](#)] The big problem is using original film and photos

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Glad you are using it Des, it was a pain to lug about the airports.

[[Paul Reed](#)] That's what kills a budget

[[egbert](#)] Paul what year? 1914-18?

[[Paul Reed](#)] Yes

[[Paul Reed](#)] IWM charge £50 a second for film and £650 for stills

[[Paul Reed](#)] That's for use in any form of documentary. Plus VAT

[[skipman](#)] Good grief!

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] Paul, just think of using period photos from amateurs like me, all are related to the location and units, all could be very useful in a show. Film is an entirely different matter though.

[[Desmond7](#)] I say take it beyond the norm - use local stuff, no royalties, use local dialects, forum members, shoot modern views. Voice over. Punk does WW1 - seriously, Make it DIFFERENT!

[[skipman](#)] You could do it on internet only

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I have 30+ MB copies of the postcards that could be made poster size in a minute.

[[Paul Reed](#)] Most good directors get round it, but it means that a rich resource like IWM is never properly used

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Lots of accents in the 29th - Lancs, Dubliners, Public School Boys, Newfoundlanders, Essex Boys!

[[Desmond7](#)] I've seen the old WW1 footage a million times, but have you ever seen a very good documentary which does the ground today in an understandable fashion? All you get is big seeping camera shots with little or no explanation.

[[Paul Reed](#)] A low budget 60 min. film made to be sold on DVD would cost in the region of £30K

[[Desmond7](#)] Not forgetting the Skins Stephen!

[[Paul Reed](#)] It would be hard to recoup that amount of money in sales

[[Desmond7](#)] Made with enthusiasts? Willing to work for love of it?

[[Paul Reed](#)] You still need professional camera and sound, and editing otherwise it will be pants

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Nope, I was up at Mary Redan on my last trip.

[[Desmond7](#)] I know I'm Devil's advocate here but...

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I will get my old Super 8 out and we will be all set.

[[Desmond7](#)] I think I first 'met' you on that topic Stephen!

[[bmac](#)] Get a book out with it like Richard Holmes

[[egbert](#)] Ralph you are out of the game with old standards offering

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] If I win the Mega lottery then we will be doing these films, cost will not be an issue.

[[Desmond7](#)] Google Blackadder's Ballymena ... that was done by me and my junior reporter after two days training..We're much better now.

[[Brian Curragh](#)] What about a DVD of the GWF Conference speakers...

[[Ralph J. Whitehead](#)] I know Egbert, I am generally far behind the current technology.

[[Desmond7](#)] They should podcast that

[[Stephen Garnett](#)] Yep, I went up there one evening over Easter. The ground makes very clear why Mary Redan existed.

[[Paul Reed](#)] When is the GWF Conference and where?

[[egbert](#)] GWF dinner in the Midlands is socks

[[Brian Curragh](#)] MagicRat is the expert here

[[egbert](#)] Why not meeting in Flanders or Somme to make continentals possible to join

[[Brian Curragh](#)] Western front is the plan for year 2 (hopefully)

[[MagicRat](#)] Date not fixed yet - in fact nothing fixed yet - but likely the Midlands in late March/early April

[[Brian Curragh](#)] 4 or 5 speakers, buffet lunch & then a beer & some food

[[MagicRat](#)] But it will be whatever we can all make it

[[egbert](#)] In 2 years, then I suggest to discuss it seriously at first dinner, cause reservations for Flanders or Somme are vital

[[MagicRat](#)] Agree, Egbert, one on the Western Front would be great

[[Paul Reed](#)] It would be good to have something 'in the field'

[[MagicRat](#)] But I think probably best to have one in the UK first, just to check there is interest

[[bmac](#)] Agreed

[egbert] Yes i.e. Auchonvillers, Maillet for accommodation and then have a field trip around our beloved Somme battlegrounds

[Paul Reed] That sounds sensible

[MagicRat] Any suggestions on speakers?

[Brian Curragh] Well Charles Messenger has expressed in attending...

[Paul Reed] Charles is very good

[Brian Curragh] So we need 3 or 4 more

[MagicRat] Well, I haven't asked Charles yet!

[Paul Reed] I would also recommend Peter Barton

[skipman] GAC and Hart ☺

[Paul Reed] Peter Hart is also a good speaker, but I have no idea who GAC is

[bmac] And I was all set to come

[MagicRat] Mike! You're very naughty!

[skipman] Sorry guys

[Paul Reed] Geoff Bridger is another good speaker

[Paul Reed] His Great War Handbook has just come out

[MagicRat] Is he on the forum?

[Paul Reed] Yes. But he got short shrift from Chris Baker and hasn't posted in a long while

[Brian Curragh] Really need people who will not charge the earth

[MagicRat] do you know his user name?

[Brian Curragh] Expenses & the chance to sell some books

[Ralph J. Whitehead] Got to run all, it has been nice speaking with you, it has been some time since I have been on chat.

[Paul Reed] I think it was G Bridger or maybe Geoff Bridger - not sure

[egbert] Chester the famous messenger dog will speak for free

[MagicRat] Ok, I'm sure I can find him

[MagicRat] woof! How is Chester?

[bmac] Have you considered workshops rather than just plenary sessions?

[Paul Reed] None of the people I've mentioned while charge you much, if anything

[egbert] He is on pension now

[Paul Reed] Workshop is a good idea

[skipman] Is Lyn MacDonald still with us, she would be good

[bmac] ... and back to Martin Middlebrook!

[Paul Reed] She is, but she doesn't do talks, and is retired and lives in France

[egbert] Workshop is out, syndicate work is in

[skipman] Thanks Paul

[MagicRat] Everything is up for grabs; I really am making this up as I go along

[skipman] Mr War Walks?

[Brian Curragh] Hopefully a go-er - 50+ expressions of interest so far

[Paul Reed] RH is quite expensive, sadly

[MagicRat] Well over 50 - nearer 70-80

[Brian Curragh] RH costs £500 min I believe. And that's for the WFA

[MagicRat] I may try a cheeky email to see if he would do it for a bit less

[skipman] Maybe if he knew calibre of audience he would drop the rate

[Desmond7] I could talk him to death for nowt

[Paul Reed] I don't think he can due to the arrangement he has with the University

[MagicRat] fair enough

[skipman] Dan Snow then

[bmac] there must be a few WWI historians with some books to sell

[Paul Reed] Dan Snow would probably do it, but again his agent might want a lot of money

[MagicRat] Oh yes, I am sure - many on the forum

[Desmond7] Thank Gawd - it could have been worse.

[Brian Curragh] Go on then Bill - how about it!

[bmac] Erm

[Brian Curragh] At least bring some books

[egbert] bmac talks about the Gommecourt labyrinth

[bmac] Now that I can do!

[John Garnett] Has Dan Snow ever demonstrated substance over style?

[Paul Reed] He isn't a WW1 historian to be honest

[MagicRat] Just think - 100 or so GWF members with bulging wallets - think of the book sales!

[bmac] When's his book about the 7 Years War due? That'll tell us more about him

[skipman] How about all the forum big guns do a stint 20 minutes or so, and answer questions?

[Paul Reed] I think something like that would be welcomed

[bmac] Does the event want a theme or is it a bit of everything?

[Brian Curragh] "My life as a TV WW1 presenter"

[Paul Reed] I used to run some seminars for the Sussex WFA many moons ago, and we did that, it was well received

[Stephen Garnett] I agree skipman. It would be great to listen to them, rather than following them through their posts.

[MagicRat] At the moment, Bill, the event is in my head! Another pal suggested it and I foolishly picked it up and ran with it!

[John Garnett] Is there a committee organising this?

[Brian Curragh] That'll be Alan

[MagicRat] Once a date is sorted (and that really means me picking one) then a venue, planning can start in earnest

[bmac] Well then try a call for volunteers for main and group sessions and see who throws their hat in the ring

[MagicRat] good plan

[John Garnett] I'm in the Midlands and can help.

[skipman] Or a debate, with CB and Paul versus???? on a given topic

[Brian Curragh] A debate would be interesting - along Bill's workshop theme

[bmac] Maybe ask for subjects people would like to hear about and see how it matches up with known members and others

[MagicRat] Thanks John - the venue will be the main thing - then collecting pal's deposits to pay the venue deposit

[bmac] Might you contact the Centre for WW1 Studies at Birmingham University?

[MagicRat] Yes, Brian suggested that. Could be a good choice

[Brian Curragh] I'm there in Sept for the MA so could broach the subject

[bmac] I may attend a thing hosted by the WWII Studies Dept this July so they seem happy to get involved with third parties

[Paul Reed] What's that Bill?

[bmac] BCMH Summer Conference

[skipman] Have to go guys, many thanks; it's been very interesting, and nice to chat with you all
Cheers Mike

[Stephen Garnett] Enjoy the trip!

[egbert] I am off; its 23:21 here and still have to correct the bachelor thesis of my son's urg in English language

[Paul Reed] You could also try contacting Pen & Sword for some sponsorship and let them sell some books there maybe?

[John Garnett] MagicRat - let me know if you need help. I'm in Stafford.

[MagicRat] Will do John – thanks. Good idea Paul - hadn't thought of that

[Paul Reed] They have someone who does shows for them now. I suspect they would send him with a good stock

[Brian Curragh] Maybe one of their authors to talk?

[Paul Reed] Mike Stedman is an excellent speaker, can recommend him

[bmac] Well gents a pleasure to chat, Wife's just got in and I've just finished transcribing the 54th Brigade's report on the attack on 1st July so a good night's work all round! Better go and have a word with management. Night!

[MagicRat] It's been very enjoyable - goodnight all

[Paul Reed] Yes, good chat. Night all - see you soon

[John Garnett] I'm off too. Enjoyed the debate.

[Brian Curragh] Night all