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Other Side of the Wire Volume 1: With the German XIV Reserve Corps on the Somme, September 1914-June 1916

Ralph J. Whitehead

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The Other Side of the Wire' brings to life a period long forgotten in the decades that have passed since the Great War ended in 1918. Until recently most books written on the Battle of the Somme concentrated almost exclusively on the British effort with only a brief mention of the period before 1 July 1916 and the German experience in the battle. Most simply ignore the nearly two years of warfare that preceded the momentous offensive. By focusing on one of the principal German formations involved in the Somme fighting, author Ralph Whitehead brings to life this little-known period, from the initial German advance on the Somme in September 1914 through the formation of the front that became so well known almost two years later.

The book covers the early fighting around villages that took on such notoriety in 1916: Serre, Beaumont-Hamel, Thiepval, Ovillers, La Boisselle and Fricourt among others. The events that took place on the Somme between September 1914 and June 1916 would slowly but surely turn the once rolling farmland into a veritable fortress. The author brings a sense of humanity to the story of the war using the words of the men who fought on the Somme, many of them from previously unpublished diaries and Feldpost letters.

The book takes the reader from the initial German invasion of the Somme through to the end of June 1916, the eve of the Somme Offensive. The reader can experience the start of trench warfare, French attacks in 1914 and 1915 and the implementation of trench raids and how they developed over time. The start of mine warfare, artillery tactics, life in the rear areas and the arrival of the British are covered in detail. The book relates the experiences and daily activities of the men from the XIV Reserve Corps as each chapter brings the reader closer to the Somme Offensive in 1916, an attack that was long anticipated by the men of the XIV Reserve Corps. The reader will have a better understanding of the events that took place on 1 July 1916, and some of the reasons for the successes and failures on both sides of the wire on that momentous day.

The author also provides details of the discovery and identification by the Great War Archaeological Group 'No Man's Land' of two German soldiers, both of who lost their lives in June 1915 while fighting near Serre. An account of their final moments is provided based upon the historic records and the archaeological finds.

A detailed casualty list is included for seven regiments of infantry and artillery for the period September 1914 through June 1916 in an effort to give some scale to the losses suffered by the Germans on the Somme during this period.

One unique aspect of the book is the hundreds of photographs of the men who actually fought in the XIV Reserve Corps, many never published before and taken from the author's personal collection. Overall, the book features nearly 350 photographs, many previously unpublished, giving a unique insight into the German forces on the Somme 1914-16.

This superb Great War title is being published in a strictly limited edition hardback run of 750 copies, each copy individually numbered and signed by the author.

REVIEWS

…first hand accounts from soldiers diaries and letters to and from home… very interesting, informative and revealing… for anyone interested in World War I…”
War Games Recon (UK)08/2010

“… a work of remarkable detail and readability … [The author] is able, through his effective and compelling writing, to provide the reader with a detailed picture of the operating environment of the German soldier. He then adds further depth by incorporating anecdotal stories that run the gambit from the shocking to the ridiculous from the soldiers and the units themselves. This shift is done flawlessly and, when combined with the numerous photographs that correspond to the individuals in the narrative, provides a degree of intimacy rarely found in historical works … An outstanding book” Canadian Army Journal

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