Battle of the Somme
July 1, 1916 – November 18, 1916
Allied Offensive at the Somme

- **purpose:** to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun by diverting German resources
- British and French armies near the Somme River
- British General Douglas Haig ordered a bombardment of the German lines over 100,000 shells fired each day
- 30 mile front
Haig and Joffre
Plan Continued

- use of “creeping barrage” – bombardment followed by infantry that would advance to the German front lines
- bombardment could not destroy the German front line, barbed wires, or the concrete bunkers
- much of the artillery turned out to be duds
Heard across the Channel
Picture taken of Crater in 1989
Result

- lack of surprise by the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF)

- The British were forced back into the trenches.

- The French were more successful at the Southern end of the line. The Germans did not expect that they would attack because of heavy losses at Verdun.

- The first day of the Somme was the worst day in British military history with 20,000 killed and over 40,000 wounded.
Both the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) and the Germans were convinced that the enemy was exhausted and the offensive continued throughout the summer of 1916.

did not change the front lines

able to defeat German morale and relieve some of the pressure at Verdun, but the two sides remained entrenched in the countryside
Thiepval Memorial