

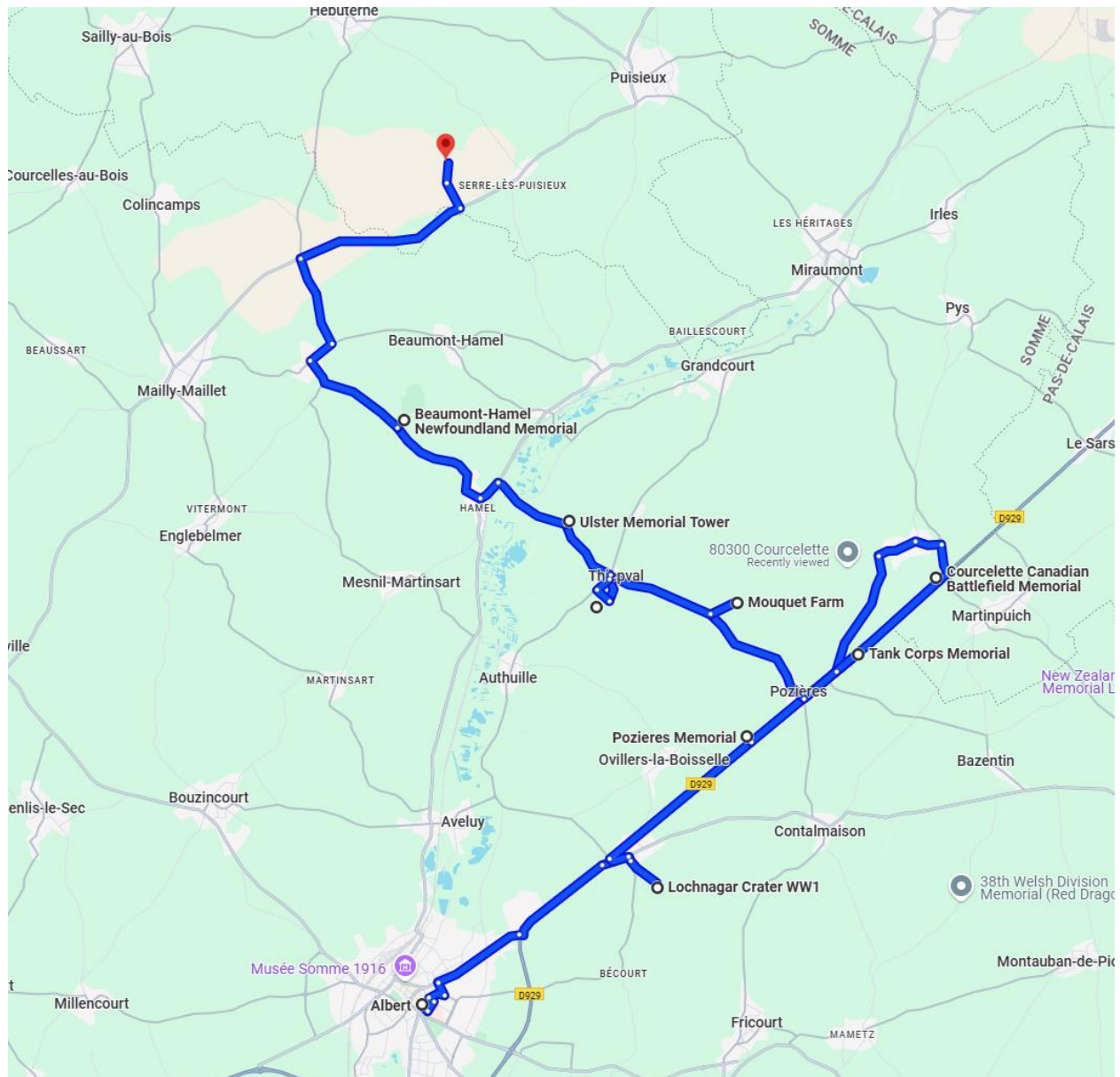
# Albert-Somme Area Tour

This tour hits many of the highlights of the Albert-Somme Region. You can copy the link to your phone for driving directions.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/w7qWWUesDoat3QWe9>

Details of the tour are provided in the blog:

<https://www.paulsbattlefieldtours.com/post/rachel-tours-the-somme>



Highlights are listed below.

- Albert
- Lochnagar Crater
- Pozieres Memorial to the Missing
- Tank Museum/Australian Memorial
- Courcellette Canadian Memorial
- Ulster Tower – Do the tour, need to book Ahead
- Thiepval Memorial to the Missing
- Newfoundland Memorial Park
- Sunken Lane and Hawthorn Crater
- Sheffield Memorial Park.

## Albert

Albert was behind the front lines for most of the war and a great place to start the tour.





## Lochnagar Crater

The first stop was the Lochnagar Crater, the largest mine blown during the first world war. The Crater was 69 feet deep and 330 feet wide and was blown at 0728 on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 01 July 1916.



The crater was one of 19 blown on the first day of the Somme, and the best-preserved example of a mine crater.

## Pozieres Memorial to the Missing

Our next stop was the Pozieres Memorial to the Missing. The Memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21 March to 7 August 1918.



In addition, there are now 2,758 Commonwealth servicemen buried in this cemetery. 1,380 of the burials are unidentified. The majority of the soldiers are from the latter phases of the 1916 Somme Conflict, but a few are from 1918.



## Tank Museum/Australian Memorial

We made a stop at the Tank Memorial just up the road. The memorial commemorates the first use of tanks at the battle of Flers-Courcelette.



A total of 6 tanks went forward with the Canadian assault. Only one tank made it to the German lines, but this secret weapon had a psychological effect on the Germans and provided the debut of an entirely new class of weapons.

Across the road is the Australian memorial commemorating Australian losses on the Somme.

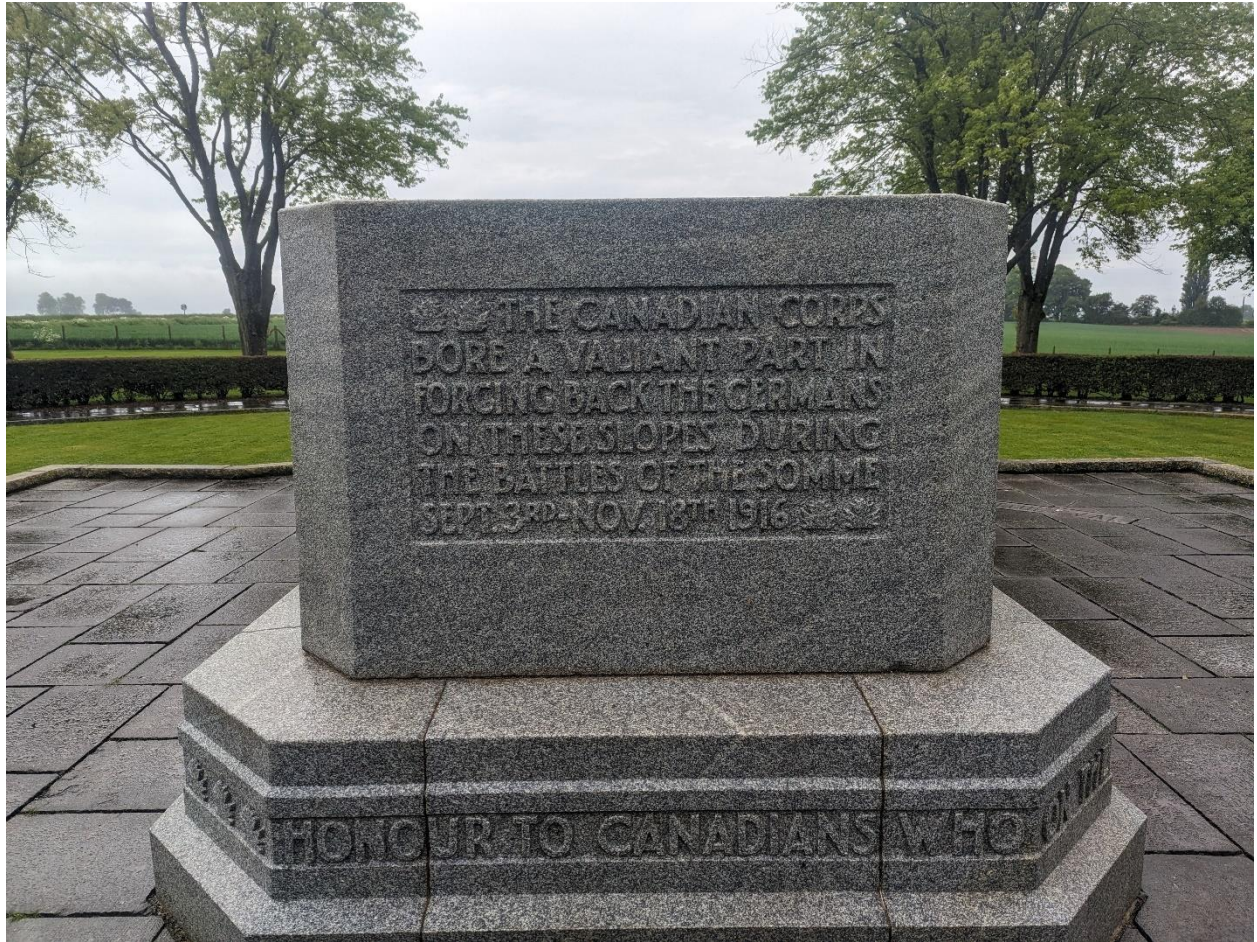


The major contribution of Australian troops to the Somme offensive was in the fighting around Pozières between 23 July and 3 September. The 1st, 2nd and 4th Australian Divisions suffered more than 24,000 casualties at Pozières, including 6,741 dead. Official war correspondent C.E.W. Bean described the small village as “more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth”.



## Courcelette Canadian Memorial

We continued up the Albert-Baupame Road to the Courcelette Canadian Memorial. This memorial celebrates the Canadian action on the Somme, particularly the capture of the village of Courcelette. Canadians suffered over 24,000 casualties between 15 September and 18 November in the Battle of the Somme.



From the back of the memorial, the spire of the Church at Courcelette is visible, and the Courcelette British Cemetery is behind the trees in the middle distance.



## Ulster Tower

Next we went to the Ulster Memorial, raised in memory of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division who fought on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The Ulster tower is a replica of Helen's tower in County Down, Ireland where many of the Ulstermen trained before heading to France. The Ulster tower was raised in 1921 and was the first memorial on the Western Front.



The tower is staffed by Ulster personnel who come to the Somme for extended periods to do maintenance of the grounds and offer tours of Thiepval Woods where the 36<sup>th</sup> Division was dug in on the first day of the Somme.

I have done the tour a few times, and highly recommend anyone in the area take the tour. The Irish are excellent story tellers, and the association has conducted archaeological digs in the woods and recreated trenches and bunkers. The combination of factual and personal stories really helps put you in the trenches with the troops. Thiepval Wood is open for guided tours only Tuesday to Sunday. Tours are at 11am and 3pm by prior arrangement.

## Book Tour of Thiepval Woods

Book a tour by emailing: [ulstertower@sommeassociation.com](mailto:ulstertower@sommeassociation.com) There is no charge but a donation to the upkeep is appreciated.





# Thiepval Memorial

The next stop was the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. The Thiepval Memorial commemorates the more than 72,000 British and South African soldiers who died on the Somme battlefields from August 1915 to 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. The monument stands 140 feet high and is visible from a distance in several different directions.



Next to the memorial is Thiepval Anglo-French Cemetery which contains equal numbers of British and French casualties (300 each), cementing the links between the British and French Military forged on the Somme battlefield.

## Newfoundland Memorial Park

Next, we moved on to Newfoundland Park at Beaumont Hamel. Newfoundland Park is also one of the largest unreclaimed battle sites on the Western Front and the entire battlefield is visible.

Canadian Students can provide a walking tour.

A map of the park is available [here](#).



At the base of the Caribou is the plaque listing the 820 Newfoundlanders with no known grave.



# Sunken Lane and Hawthorn Crater

After Beaumont Hamel, we made our way to the Sunken Lane and Hawthorn Crater. The Sunken Lane is famous as the attack of the Lancashire Fusiliers was filmed from this location. The silent movie called the Battle of the Somme (1916) was recorded on the day, and widely played in the UK. The film is available on You Tube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQ\\_OZfaiUlc&t=76s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQ_OZfaiUlc&t=76s)



The view from the bottom shows the imposing rise up Hawthorn Ridge. The Hawthorn mine was blown at 0720 on 01 July, 10 minutes before the attack. The idea was to give the British time to capture the crater, but really just provided a warning for the Germans of the impending attack. The trees in the middle of the picture are in the Hawthorn Crater.





The view from the Crater's edge makes it clear the advantage the Germans had. The British had to attack up a steep hill over open ground, facing machine gun and artillery fire. The sunken lane is in the row of trees just to the right of the memorial in the centre. The Beaumont Hamel Cemetery on the right is about as far as most of the British troops made it.



## Sheffield Memorial Park

Our final stop of the day is the Sheffield Park Memorial, site of another First Day of the Battle of the Somme Disaster. This park is yet another uphill, exposed attack that the British attempted on 01 July. The Park is in the clump of trees in the centre of the photo. Originally there were four separate Copses of trees named Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but the trees have grown together over the years. The trench lines were in the trees. Although it is not visible Railway Hollow Cemetery is at the bottom of the hill.





The view from the British Trench Line up the hill. Although the rise is only a few metres, the Germans had the dominant position, and were able to fire at the troops as soon as they exited their trenches. The battle was over in less than 30 minutes with each battalion losing between 300 and 600 men.



The line of cemeteries defines the British Front line. From Serre Road we can see Queens Cemetery in the middle distance, and the Cross of Sacrifice from Luke Copse Cemetery, down the hill and to the left of Queens Cemetery.



One of the things that really struck Rachel was how close together everything was and the number of cemeteries. There are 150,000 Commonwealth Casualties buried at almost 350 sites on the Somme. When you first go there, you feel you want to stop and visit every cemetery. That feeling is tempered by reality as often there are cemeteries on either side of the road, and a third one visible.

The First Day of the Battle of the Somme was the bloodiest day in British Military history. They suffered 60,000 casualties, most of them in the first few hours of the attack, including nearly 20,000 killed. The British were convinced their weeklong barrage will destroy all the barbed wire and kill most of the Germans, but the Germans held almost all of the high ground and the British paid dearly for their assumptions.