

In the autumn of 1914 the original British Expeditionary Force faced a heavily reinforced German drive. Field Marshal Sir John French, the British Commander-in-Chief, had sent his men north in an attempt to take the fight into Flanders, so they could fight across open ground. History tells us that this was not to be the case. David Lomas chronicles the first of the trench-warfare battles, where lines that would remain almost static for the rest of the war were established. Although the Germans failed to reach the channel ports, the death knell had rung for the BEF, which was virtually wiped out in this brave defense. In the autumn of 1914 the original British Expeditionary Force, aided by French troops under Foch, stood against a heavily reinforced German drive. Field Marshal Sir John French, the British Commander-in-Chief had sent his men north in an attempt to take the fight into open ground in Flanders, so his men could fight across open ground as they had been trained to do. History tells us that this was not to be the case. David Lomas excellent book covers the first of the trench-warfare battles, where lines that would remain almost static for the rest of the war were established. Although the Germans would fail to reach the channel ports, the death knell had rung for the BEF. It was virtually wiped out in this brave defense, to be replaced later by Kitcheners mass of volunteers. However, in spite of its loss of 58,155 killed, wounded and missing it and its French allies did manage to inflict at least 134,315 casualties on the Germans and halt their offensive: on 17th November Falkenhayn decided to cut his losses and abandon his attack. With the battles end went the last chance, for four years, for a war of movement. Static trench warfare now became the reality on the Western Front and the towns of La Bassee, Armentieres, Messines and Ypres would remain prominent in the fighting until the end of the war.

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