



Source 5

Extract from an article called 'Lions Led By Donkeys?' by Professor Peter Simkins, 1998
(Courtesy of the BBC)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully and see what it tells you about views on the war at the time it was written. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- Would you say this source presents a balanced view?
- Which of sources 1-4 does it most agree with?
- Which of sources 1-4 does it most disagree with?
- Will you choose this as one of the sources to use in your report?
- Will you choose this as one of the sources to use in your report?



Source 5

As we approach the 80th anniversary of the armistice that brought the fighting in the Great War to an end, public perceptions of that war - particularly in Britain - are still dominated by images of the Somme and Passchendaele, of futile frontal attacks against machine guns in the mud of Flanders, of generals who were little more than "butchers and bunglers", and of brave front-line troops who were sacrificed because of the ill-conceived plans of incompetent staff officers. In short, ordinary British and Dominion Officers were "lions led by donkeys".

The myth of the uncaring general - safely dining and drinking in his chateau while the front-line troops lived and died in squalor - has proved especially durable - and has been reinforced recently by Stephen Fry's portrayal of just such an officer in BBC's *Blackadder Goes Forth*.

What is much less widely known is that 78 British and Dominion officers of the rank of Brigadier General and above died on active service in the First World War while a further 146 were wounded. These figures alone show that, contrary to popular belief, British Generals frequently went close enough to the battle zone to place themselves in considerable danger.

Again, whereas the Somme and Passchendaele remain familiar names, the huge successes of the British and Dominion forces under Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig between 8 August and 11 November 1918 are now largely forgotten by the British public. ...

If we are prepared to criticise Haig and his army commanders for their mistakes in 1916 and 1917, then it is perhaps only fair that, at the same time, they should receive due credit for their decisive, but forgotten victories in 1918.

[To read the full article on the BBC website, go to:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_i/197586.stm]