

AMBROSE HISTORIANS REMEMBER THE SOMME WITH GREAT DEBATE



Pictured behind bugler Lucas Paterson-Gutierrez are Joe Ronan, Nick Royle, Christopher Carey and Freddie Gent.

St. Ambrose College's young historians honoured the fallen with a great debate on the legacy of General Haig on the anniversary of the first day of the Somme.

The battle saw 20,000 British soldiers die on the first day, 60,000 from all nationalities and was the start of a six month battle of attrition that resulted in one million deaths, yet only a few miles of flanders' fields were captured.

Traditionally regarded as 'lions led by donkeys', General Haig and his generals have been damned by successive generations of historians until now, when some have viewed his tactics as a product of their time and necessary to secure ultimate victory.

Joe Ronan , 17, from Altrincham, argued that case: "He wasn't a butcher. Germany was a tyrannical nation that had invaded Belgium and had designs on the rest of Europe. The tactics might seem brutal to us today, but he was tasked to win the war."

Christopher Carey, 17, from Timperley, said: "It was a time between the end of the cavalry but before nuclear deterrent and no one had foreseen the havoc caused by the development of machine guns and tanks."

Arguing on the other side of the debate, Freddie Gent, 17, from Sale, said: "Haig had been to military school, understood modern warfare, or at least should have, and kept on with the battle of attrition over a few miles of ground in the face of horrifying casualties. It was more ego than expertise."

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The day of remembrance also saw boys listen to St. Ambrose's RADA actor Jonah Rzeskiewicz read some poignant war poetry and young bugler Lucas Paterson-Gutierrez play the last post on a bugle donated for the day by the Burgess family. Luke Burgess, 13, from Sale, whose great grandfather owned the bugle, explained "My great grandfather was the only one of six brothers to come back alive from the Great War; his five brothers were all killed either on the Somme or at Ypres, one of them a bugler died while holding his bugle and I am told as he was shot he fell back into the trenches and his mates saved his bugle for his family."

St. Ambrose College Head of History Geraldine Scott said: "It is important especially at this point in our history to remember another period in history and take account of just what Europeans were capable of doing to each other.. It was a moving day and this generation certainly appreciates the immense sacrifices of a previous generation of young men."