The Price of a Mile

About the Battle of the Somme: did you know?

- 60% of British officers involved on the first day were killed
- No. 20 Casualty Clearing Station at Gézaincourt received 11,186 wounded soldiers in the first three days of the battle
- 49 Victoria Crosses were awarded for valour during the battle
- The British bombardment (over 1,700,000 artillery shells) could be heard in London
- Tanks were used for the first time during the Battle on the 15 September 1916

Visit The Price of a Mile exhibition today

The Anaesthesia Heritage Centre, AAGBI Foundation, 21 Portland Place, London W1B 1PY, UK

As featured in BBC History, Visit London, the Telegraph and the British Travel Blog. Find us on TripAdvisor, Facebook and Twitter @AAGBI (#PriceOfaMileExhibition).

The Anaesthesia Heritage Centre is the leading centre dedicated to the history of anaesthesia in the UK. Open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm. Admission is free however visitors are encouraged to book in advance.

- Group visits for up to 20 people can be arranged at a small cost per person.
- For more information please call 020 7631 1650 (option 7) or email heritage@aagbi.org.
- Visit www.aagbi.org/heritage for further information.

Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 293575 and in Scotland no. SC040697.

Honouring the work of doctors who gave anaesthesia and pain relief to the wounded during the Battle of the Somme.
About the Battle of the Somme

On 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme:

- 30,000 soldiers were killed or wounded in the first hour and 50,000 by noon
- By the end of the day 58,000 were dead or wounded

14,000 of the wounded were taken to casualty clearing stations (CCSs), medical units close to the front lines with space for up to 1,000 casualties staffed by nurses and surgical teams. From there, the more seriously wounded could then be transferred to base hospitals on the coast or taken back to the UK.

600,000 soldiers were admitted to CCSs and more than 30,000 operations were performed. CCS surgical teams worked at least 16 hours a day, rotating between four operating tables.

The Battle of the Somme lasted for 141 days. By the final day on 18 November 1916, over one million men from both sides were killed, wounded or missing. During which time the Allied forces had advanced just seven miles.

About The Price of a Mile exhibition

The Price of a Mile is the third in a series of special exhibitions honouring the work of doctors who gave anaesthesia and pain relief to the wounded at the Battle of the Somme and during the First World War.

Front line anaesthetics and care

Ether and chloroform were used for general anaesthesia and were required in such enormous quantities that manufacturers were granted special facilities to meet demand. By 1916, apparatus that could warm ether had been developed and was issued to all CCSs, and led to quicker postoperative recovery and fewer complications.

Surgical teams in CCSs were made up of a surgeon, anaesthetist, sister and an orderly. There were few specialist anaesthetists during the War, and nurses, dentists and chaplains could be called upon to provide anaesthesia during surgery.

Saline infusion
Saline infusions were given to treat shock in the First World War

Chloroform and dropper bottle
Chloroform was standard issue for British Army medical teams

©IWM (Q1217)
Wounded awaiting transportation to base hospitals near Albert, September 1916

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Advanced Dressing Station near Fricourt during the Battle of Pozieres Ridge

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Doctors at Australian aid post Becourt Chateau, July 1916

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