

Contents

List of Illustrations	v
List of Maps	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
1. The Context	1
2. ‘Absolutely Astonishing’: The War Committee and the Military	12
3. Decision-making, January–February	15
4. Decision-making, March–June	25
5. ‘Grasping at the Shadow’: Planning for the Somme, February–June	35
6. ‘Favourable Results Are Not Anticipated’: Preparations for Battle, June	57
7. ‘A Short Life’: VII and VIII Corps on 1 July	71
8. ‘The Enemy’s Fire Was So Intense’: X Corps on 1 July	83
9. ‘Wave after Wave Were Mown Down’: III Corps on 1 July	91
10. ‘Cowering Men in Field Grey’: XV and XIII Corps on 1 July	101
11. Reflections on 1 July	112
12. ‘Ill-Considered Attacks on a Small Front’, 2–13 July	119
13. ‘Cavalry Sharpening Their Swords’, 14 July	131
14. ‘We Are a Bit Stuck’, 15–31 July	141
15. ‘Something Wanting in the Methods Employed’, 1 August–12 September	157
16. ‘A Hell of a Time’: Pozières and Mouquet Farm, July–August	173
17. Summary, 15 July–12 September	186

iv Contents

18. The Politicians and the Somme Campaign, July–August	191
19. One Division’s Somme: The First Division, July–September	203
20. ‘An Operation Planned on Bolder Lines’: Tanks and the 15 September Plan	216
21. Lumbering Tanks: The Battle of 15 September	229
22. 25 September	239
23. ‘The Tragic Hill of Thiepval’, 26–30 September	249
24. ‘A Severe Trial of Body and Spirit’: The Somme, October	261
25. ‘We Must Keep Going!’: The Politicians and the Somme Campaign, September–October	279
26. The Political Battle: Beaumont Hamel, 13–19 November	289
27. Reflections on the British at the Somme	300
28. Epilogue: The End of It All, November 1916	310
Notes	316
Bibliography	343
Index	352