



## Public Schools Battalion in the Great War

*Steve Hurst*

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Founded in August 1914 with the principle that recruiting would be restricted to public school 'old boys', the volunteers gathered at Hurst Park racecourse in a spirit of youthful enthusiasm. A more somber mood soon set in. Despite many of the original volunteers leaving to take commissions in other regiments the battalion, now officially the 7th Middlesex, remained an elite until its disbandment in 1917.

The climax of the Battalion's war came on 1 July 1916. Close to the Hawthorn Redoubt Crater are two cemeteries sited on either side of the Auchonvilliers – Beaumont Hamel road. They contain row upon row of stones marking the graves of members of the Public Schools Battalion.

The author, shocked by this discovery, has spent ten years researching the history of the Battalion and the events of that fateful day as they affected it. The result is a fascinating and moving record of a very uniquely British battalion.

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