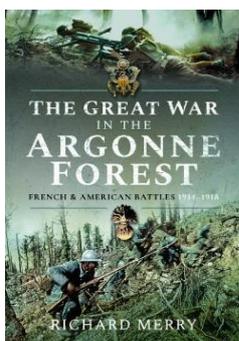


BOOK REVIEW
THE GREAT WAR IN THE ARGONNE FOREST
French and American Battles 1914-1918
Richard Merry
Pen & Sword Military 2021 (hb)
ISBN: 978-1-52679-781-0



Richard Merry the author of this very interesting work has had a lifelong interest in the Great War with a particular interest in the Argonne. As a keen family historian with several deep family connections to the conflict I was envious of the archive that he inherited and how fortunate for us Great War historians that he has traced the stories of the men and women including his great uncle entangled in the battles and struggles in the Argonne Forest and its environs.

My interest was further aroused by the fact that his great uncle, a car salesman for Citroen in Paris being 'too old' for the British Army enlisted in the Legion Étrangère aka The French Foreign Legion! As an experienced motorist and with mechanical skills it was fitting, he be General Gourauds driver and sometime interpreter and liaison officer. Richard Merry has integrated almost seamlessly many varied aspects of the conflict in the Argonne. These aspects include French offensives and the fighting by the Italians – The Garibaldi, two of the Garibaldi brothers of this Italian unit giving their lives in the cause. He covers the Meuse- Argonne Offensive by the Americans including the 'Lost Battalion' and the exploits of Sergeant York but as a counter to the bravery of the American soldier indicative of the times he makes clear the systemic segregation and discrimination of black American troops. He doesn't forget the French local population and the travails they faced both during the war and the reconstruction post war. He tells of the Spanish Flu, the reburial of the dead, in particular the arguments at all levels for and against repatriation of the dead and the replanting of the forest before the Germans invaded again in 1940. The Argonne is an area not much visited compared to the Somme and Ypres perhaps but it is well worth the effort and perhaps one should continue to the Vosges. This very well written and eclectic collection of family and war time history should encourage those with an interest in the Great War to explore the area. This work should be on the bookshelf of the discerning Great War historian and those with a great interest in the conflict.

Martin Willoughby