

# FORGET ME NOT

## GIOSUÈ BORSI

### DIANA PATTERSON'S GREAT UNCLE



My ancestor, who fought and died in the First World War, was called Giosuè Borsi. (His name translates as Joshua in English) He was my grandfather's elder brother. He is still celebrated among Italians as one of the poets of the era who died too young. Most towns in Tuscany have a street named after him.

He was born in Livorno (Leghorn), Italy on the 10th June, 1888 and died 10th November, 1915 in the Fourth Battle of the Isonzo. From his earliest years he manifested literary ability. A poem written to his mother at the age of thirteen has been termed a classic. At fifteen and seventeen he published volumes of poetry, while at twenty he was recognized as a foremost commentator of Dante. At twenty-two he succeeded his father as editor of "Il Nuovo Giornale" of Florence. (My great grandfather owned several Italian national newspapers)

Enlisting at once when Italy entered the war in 1915, in the 125<sup>o</sup> Infantry Regiment "Spezia" as a Second Lieutenant, Giosuè was sent to the Isonzo front on the 6th October 1915, where he fell, mortally wounded, on the 10th November, while leading his platoon to attack. His body was never recovered.

#### The Italian Front in the First World War

The Italian Front was a series of battles at the border between the then Austro-Hungarian Empire and Italy, fought between 1915 and 1918. Italy had entered the war in order to annex the Trieste peninsula and northern Dalmatia, and the territories of present-day Trentino and South Tyrol. Although Italy had hoped to gain the territories with a surprise offensive, the front soon bogged down into trench warfare, similar to the Western Front fought in France, but at high altitudes and with very cold winters. The front caused the civil population to resettle and several thousands of them died in Italian and Austrian refugee camps of malnutrition and illness. The Italian victory at Vittorio Veneto ended the military operations on the 6 November 1918. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire ensued.

#### Statistics of the Isonzo Front, 23rd May 1915 – 6th November 1918

Location: Eastern Alps and Venetian Plain

PARTICIPANTS	
Italy 1915 – up to 58 Divisions	Austria-Hungary 1915 – up to 61 Divisions
British Empire 1917 – 3 Divisions	German Empire 1917 – 5 Divisions
France 1918 – 2 Divisions	
Czechoslovak legions 1918 – 5 Regiments	
United States 1918 – 1 Regiment	
STRENGTH	
5,000,000	8,000,000
CASUALTIES AND LOSSES	
651,000 killed	404,000 killed
953,886 wounded	1,207,000 wounded



# ERNEST SMITH

## MARY FOISTER'S FATHER

I was born into a family whose roots for generations were firmly planted in rural Buckinghamshire. At the time of the First World War my father was aged fifteen and at school in High Wycombe at Haddows School.

My Grandfather had died unexpectedly in the previous year, leaving Julia, his widow, and their six children, including Benjamin, as yet unborn. The extended family rallied round to manage and work the family farm and the other business interests. My uncle helped out, and his two younger brothers, enabling my father to take his Civil Engineering qualifications.

Whilst the horrors of the war casualties were mounting, the growing scarcity of food in England had to be addressed and substantial farms had to continue to provide food efficiently. This kept the men of the family working there for the duration of the war.

