

## Footprints On Monte Cassino

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the six month battle for monte cassino was britain s bitterest and bloodiest encounter with the german army on any front in world war two at the beginning of 1944 italy was the western allies only active front against nazi controlled europe and their only route to the capital was through the liri valley towering over the entrance to the valley was the medieval monastery of monte cassino a seemingly impenetrable fortress high up in the bleak and sinister mountains this was where the german commander kesselring made his stand monte cassino tells the extraordinary story of ordinary soldiers tested to the limits under conditions reminiscent of the bloodbaths of world war one in a battle that became increasingly political symbolic and personal as it progressed more and more men were asked to throw themselves at the virtually impregnable german defences it is a story of incompetence hubris and politics redeemed at dreadful cost by the heroism of the soldiers

the monastery of monte cassino founded by st benedict in the sixth century was the cradle of western monasticism it became one of the vital centers of culture and learning in europe at the height of its influence in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries two of its abbots including desiderius and one of its monks became popes and it controlled a vast network of dependencies churches monasteries villages and farms especially in central and southern italy herbert bloch s study the product of forty years of research takes as its starting point the twelfth century bronze doors of the basilica of the abbey the most significant relic of the medieval structure the panels of these doors are inscribed with a list of more than 180 of the abbey s possessions mr bloch has

supplemented this roster with lists found in papal and imperial privileges and other documents the heart of the book is a detailed investigation of the nearly 700 dependencies of monte cassino from the sixth to the twelfth century and beyond no comparable study of this or any other great medieval institution has ever before been undertaken ironically it was the bombing of 1944 which destroyed the monastery that led to an unexpected revelation the discovery on the reverse side of some panels of the doors of magnificent engraved figures of patriarchs and apostles these proved to be remnants of the church portal ordered from constantinople by desiderius in the eleventh century which marked the beginning of the grandiose reconstruction of the abbey and its church the latter to become a model for many other churches in order to solve the riddle of the doors of monte cassino bloch has investigated other bronze doors of byzantine origin in italy and the doors of the great italian master oderisius of benevento as well as those of s clemente a casauria and of the cathedral of benevento also included is a study of the political and cultural impact of byzantium on monte cassino and a chapter on constantinus africanus saracen turned monk one of the most interesting figures in the history of medieval medicine the text is sumptuously illustrated with 193 plates most of the more than 300 illustrations have never before been published this three volume work with its nine detailed indexes offers a wealth of information for scholars in many different fields

documents the events that culminated in the allied bombing of the abbey of monte cassino in italy citing its location as the only passage to german occupied rome the tragic decision to bomb the abbey and the devastating winter combat that followed reprint 20 000 first printing

this wwii illustrated history examines the 1944 allied attack on italy with archival combat images paired with photos of the terrain

today the battles for monte cassino a vital stronghold on the road to rome encompassed one of the few truly international conflicts of the second world war the fighting lasted four months and cost the lives of more than 14 000 men from eight nations between january and may 1944 forces from britain canada france india new zealand poland and the united states fought a resolute german army in a series of battles in which the advantage swung from one side to the other from firefights in the mountains to tank attacks in the valley from river crossings to street fighting the four battles of cassino encompass a series of individual operations unique in the history of the second world war this richly illustrated volume narrates the campaign through a fascinating series of then and now comparisons juxtaposing combat photos with modern images of the same beaches mountains and streets where the fighting took place

one of the bloodiest european battles of the second world war was that from january to june 1944 for the gustav line anchored on monte cassino famous for its benedictine abbey better known as the battle of cassino the campaign only ended when rome was liberated with general sir harold alexander in overall command the allied army group in italy consisted of fifth us and eighth british armies both were truly multinational with some 20 allies nations involved the book recognizes the contributions of all elements and flags up the inevitable national tensions and rivalries exacerbated by restrictions of terrain and weather allied commanders using ingenuity highly effective artillery and sophisticated close air support finally triumphed over their formidable german adversaries cassino january june 1944 examines the campaign from the political strategic levels to the tactical using official records accounts from commanders and participants including interviews the author has conducted many battlefield studies and written extensively on the war in italy

an in depth account of the daring allied tank attack launched along cavendish road during the third battle at monte cassino in italy in 1944 early morning march 19 1944 tanks manned by new zealanders indians and americans launch a daring attack along a narrow mountain track on german positions north of monte cassino so began one of the most audacious allied attempts to break through the gustav line and advance on rome and it almost succeeded yet the extraordinary story has seldom been told and it has never been told before in the vivid detail jeffrey plowman brings to this new account using operational orders combat reports unit diaries post battle photos from private and public archives and the graphic personal accounts of those who took part he describes the construction of cavendish road and the course of the entire operation that followed the planning for the attack and the men involved are described in a gripping and clear sighted way as is the attack itself its initial rapid success and its ultimate failure eighty years later jeffrey plowman reveals exactly what happened and shows how and why this bold thrust against the german strongpoints at monte cassino which could have turned the course of the battle ended in retreat his book also features a visitor s guide that covers the length of cavendish road from the village of caira to massa albaneta linking each spot with the events described in the narrative

the allied forces actions in and around monte cassino in italy remain some of the most controversial of the second world war adolf hitler described them as the battles that came closest to the bitter struggles on the western front the name cassino has become a touchstone for new zealanders as a result of the crucial role played there by kiwi forces and the controversy surrounding the battles refuses to die down this reappraisal of the battles brings new information about the events at cassino to light the battles of monte cassino is not another campaign narrative but a fresh look at some of the key aspects of the battles the

controversial bombing of the benedictine monastery the effectiveness of the commanders involved on both sides the consequences of the anzio beachhead the performance of the germans and why four agonising battles were needed to defeat the germans at cassino

footprints on monte cassino describes the challenge a 73 year old man faced as he walked solo following the trails on the battlefield for the monte cassino massive where his polish father and thousands of others walked fought died survived share with the author his thoughts his history his vision as he relieves the mental anguish the inhumanity and the glory of this battlefield you will find here 20 photographs 12 of which are from the time of the battle the book also gives gps coordinates for walking the inferno track the big and small bowls and the location of monuments use this book as a travel guide with a difference to experience this episode in the history of ww2 or on the 70th anniversary of this battle take up the author s challenge to the young and not so young to walk the trails for themselves

includes pictures includes accounts of the fighting by soldiers and generals on both sides includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading includes a table of contents the seemingly unending succession of mountain ranges ravines and rivers of the italian terrain demanded the soldierly qualities of fighting valor and endurance in a measure unsurpassed in any other theater of war general sir harold alexander wars should be fought in a better country than this major general john p lucas germany s north african defeat opened up the possibility of taking the war in the west to the european continent for the first time since france s lightning conquest by the wehrmacht in 1940 the british and americans debated the merits of landing in france directly in 1943 but they ultimately opted against it the soviets railed at the westerners as bastards of allies conveniently

forgetting that they aided and abetted Hitler's violent expansionism in eastern Europe for over a year starting in 1939 but a 1943 day style landing in France might have proven a strategic and logistical impossibility anyway thus in 1943 the theater of allied operations shifted from North Africa to Europe Operation Husky a mixed victory wresting control of Sicily from the Axis the action also caused Benito Mussolini's downfall his imprisonment and subsequent dramatic rescue by the scar-faced Otto Skorzeny removing significant portions of Italy from the fascist camp but nevertheless failing to prevent a long Italian campaign in fact the lackluster allied showing on Sicily and the escape of most of the island's garrison encouraged Hitler to alter his plans and defend Italy vigorously with its rugged mountain ridges deep valleys and numerous rivers Italy contained tens of thousands of natural defensive positions the Wehrmacht exploited these to the full during the ensuing campaign bogging down the Anglo-American armies in an endless series of costly time-consuming engagements even the rank and file German soldiers showed a clear awareness of the Italy's strategic significance the Tommies will have to chew their way through us inch by inch a German paratrooper wrote in an unfinished letter found on his corpse at Salerno and we will surely make hard chewing for them Hastings 2011 408 indeed it was a tough slog and few places were tougher on the allies than Monte Cassino which witnessed a series of allied attacks along the German line that aimed to create a breakthrough to Rome ultimately the attacks would force the Germans into retreat but not before they had inflicted over 50 000 casualties at a cost of about 20 000 of their own the battle is perhaps best remembered today for the destruction of a historic abbey that dated back to the 6th century and the controversial decision to bomb it is still widely debated today but regardless Monte Cassino and other operations around Anzio made it possible for the allies to take Rome on June 4 1944 2 days later the allies would land at Normandy the battle of Monte Cassino the history of the battle for Rome during World War II chronicles the crucial 1944 battle along with pictures of important people places and events

you will learn about monte cassino like never before in no time at all

this second volume by graham loud focuses on two key centres of the south italian church in the central middle ages the first section concentrates on the golden age of the abbey of montecassino during the 11th and 12th centuries when it was at the height of its influence and three of its monks became popes the studies seek to place the abbey in its context examining its relations with the papacy byzantium and the local nobility the second part deals with benevento and the abbey of st sophia and looks at its development and administration as well as the tensions that arose from its position as a papal enclave within the kingdom of sicily based on extensive archival research the volume as a whole presents a fresh and original insight into the society of southern italy from the coming of the normans to its conquest by charles of anjou

the most horrific battles of world war ii ring in the popular memory stalingrad the bulge iwo jima to name a few monte cassino should stand among them waged deep in the italian mountains beneath a medieval monastery it was an astonishingly brutal encounter grinding up ten armies in conditions as bad as the eastern front at its worst with scholarly care insightful analysis and narrative verve caddick adams has crafted a monumental account of one of world war ii s bloodiest battles

this book is highly recommended to anyone with an interest in the italian campaign of the second world war and the use of armor in that war british military history the battles fought between the allied armies and the german wehrmacht at monte cassino in 1944 were key episodes in the protracted italian campaign and the eventual allied victory was a decisive step in the wider war to liberate europe from german occupation much has been written about cassino but few books have chosen to tell the story



through photographs to give a visual insight into the fighting and the forces involved the conditions in which they fought and the landscape around the monte cassino abbey which became a battlefield that is why jeffrey plowman s photographic history is of such value using almost 200 wartime images many of which have not been published before he gives a graphic impression of the realities of the fighting as it was experienced by the troops on the ground he focuses on the tanks the array of armored vehicles deployed by both sides which played a critical role this aspect of cassino has rarely been covered in such detail and in such a vivid way the book will be of special interest to modelers and historians of armored warfare but it will also appeal to readers who have a more general interest in the italian campaign the amount of information provided for each photograph is exceptional i commend the author for building such a comprehensive portfolio of fascinating images walking the battlefields

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