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The Battle of Minden 1759: The Miraculous Victory of the Seven Years War

Stuart Reid

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The fighting in Europe during the Seven Years War hung in the balance. After initial successes the Austro-French forces had been driven back across the Rhine. With the opposing sides reinforcing their armies, the campaign of 1759 was going to prove decisive.

Britain and her German allies met the French at Minden in Germany. Due to a misunderstanding of orders the British infantry actually attacked and dispersed the French cavalry. That action is still commemorated on 1 August each year with the wearing of roses by the infantry and artillery regiments whose predecessors picked flowers and put them in their coats as they passed through German gardens on the way to the battle.

By contrast Lord Sackville, who commanded the British cavalry, was accused of ignoring orders to charge the retreating French which could have turned defeat into rout. He was court-martialed and cashiered.

The victory at Minden was just one in a number of British successes that years against French forces and overseas territories across the globe. This led to 1759 being described by the British as the Annus Mirabilis – the year of miracles.

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