

FIRST WORLD WAR

PART 12: UNDERSTANDING HISTORY

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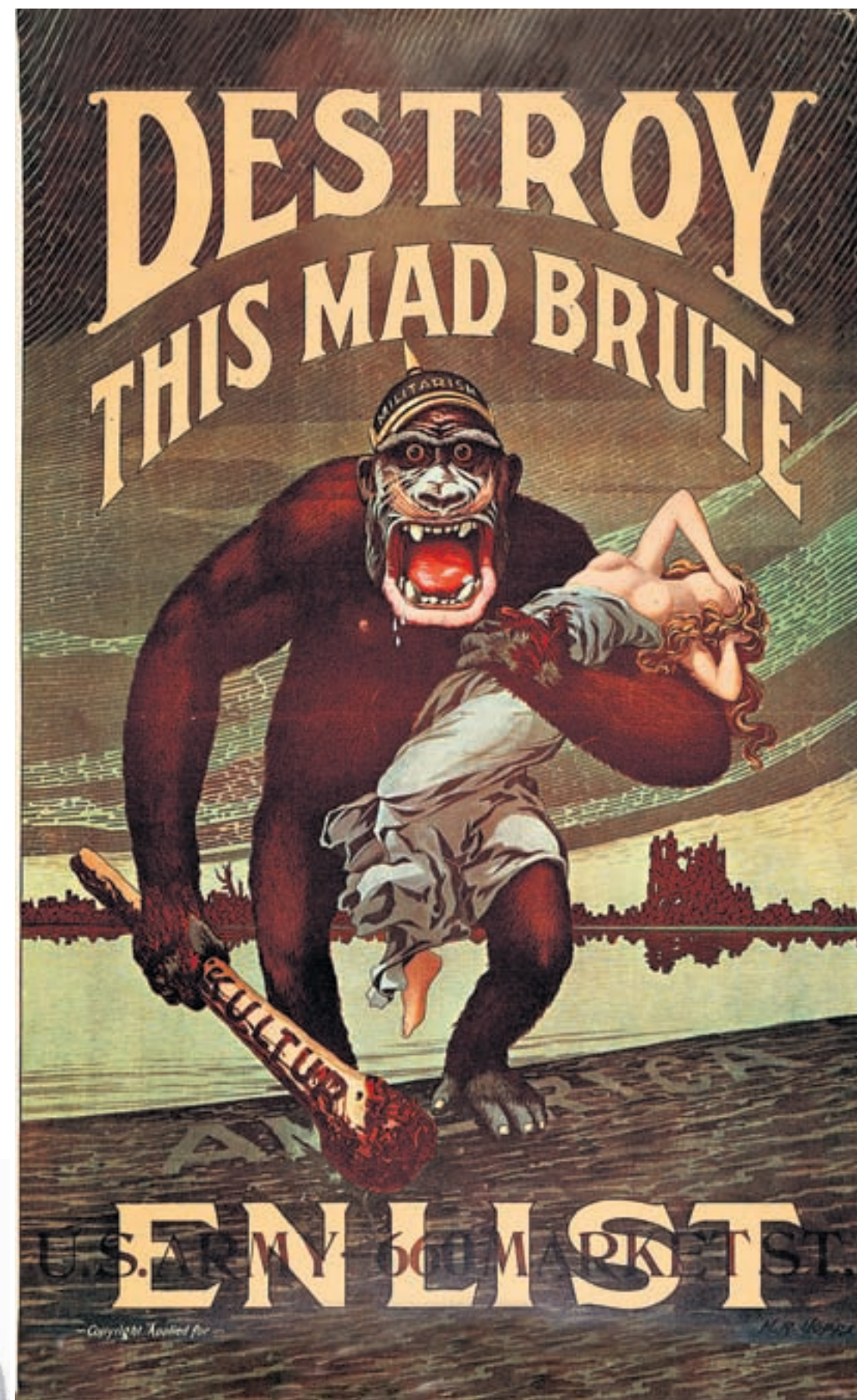
Tomorrow marks the 100th anniversary of the day Britain entered the First World War – four cataclysmic years that left an indelible mark on nations, societies and many individual lives.

In this final issue in the series, we look back not just at what happened but what almost certainly didn't: the myths that pitted good against evil and inspired belief in divine intervention amid atrocities that defied human rationale.

We also look at what came next – at how the conflict redefined power structures across Europe and led to the bloodiest century in history. The social legacy was also powerful, from female emancipation to a new kind of class awareness and a burgeoning remembrance industry.

Our regular features from Imperial War Museums include battlefield art, poetry, letters home and Lord Ashcroft's portrait of a VC hero. There are your moving letters from loved ones who fought on the front line. And while reflecting on the forces that shaped the century, we also consider the role of one disenchanted, opinionated youth who became a decorated First World War veteran. His name? Adolf Hitler.

Zoe Dare Hall
Series editor



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Front cover: The Cenotaph, London; left, US Army recruitment poster, 1917-18

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Inside the First World War, a 12-part series, is sponsored by Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC, an international businessman, philanthropist and military historian. Lord Ashcroft is sponsoring the monthly supplements because he wants to promote a greater understanding of the First World War and

to remember those who gave their lives in the conflict.

Lord Ashcroft has established himself as a champion of bravery, building up the world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses (VCs), Britain and the Commonwealth's most prestigious award for courage in the face of the enemy. He has also written four books on bravery: *Victoria Cross Heroes*, *Special Forces*

Heroes, *George Cross Heroes* and *Heroes of the Skies*. In each of the 12 supplements, Lord Ashcroft tells the incredible stories behind First World War VCs from his collection.

Lord Ashcroft purchased his first VC in 1986 and currently owns more than 180 of the decorations. Three years ago, he began collecting George Crosses (GCs), Britain and the Commonwealth's most

prestigious award for courage not in the face of the enemy. He currently owns 14 GCs. Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collections are on display in a gallery that bears his name at IWM London, along with VCs and GCs in the care of the museum. The gallery, built with a £5 million donation from Lord Ashcroft, was opened by HRH The Princess Royal in 2010. Lord Ashcroft has been a successful entrepreneur

for the past four decades, launching, buying, building and selling companies, both private and public, in Britain and overseas.

He is a former treasurer and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. In September 2012, he was appointed a member of the Privy Council and was made the Government's Special Representative for Veterans' Transition. He is treasurer of the International Democratic

Union (IDU) and one of Britain's leading experts on polling.

Lord Ashcroft has donated several millions of pounds to charities and good causes.

He founded Crimestoppers (then the Community Action Trust) in 1988.

He is the founder of the Ashcroft Technology Academy and Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University. His numerous other charity roles

include being Vice-Patron of the Intelligence Corps Museum, a trustee of Imperial War Museum, an Ambassador for SkillForce and a trustee of the Cleveland Clinic in the US.

For information about the Lord Ashcroft Gallery, visit iwm.org.uk/heroes. For information on Lord Ashcroft, visit lordashcroft.com. Follow him on Twitter: @LordAshcroft

Saved by a ring of shining angels

ANTHONY RICHARDS ON THE MYTHS CREATED BY PROPAGANDISTS AND THE BELIEF THAT GOD WAS ON THE ALLIES' SIDE

We had a terrible time and at last a company of us was hemmed into a large chalk pit. We were quite powerless, and heard the German cavalry approaching. Suddenly I looked up and encircling the top of the pit was a ring of shining angels. As the cavalry rushed up, the horses saw them and there was a general stampede. Our lives were saved and the Germans were put to confusion. Seven soldiers as well as officers saw the angels." So recalled a wounded British soldier from Mons, some time after the initial battle fought by the British Expeditionary Force on August 23, 1914. Or did he?

The First World War generated a number of widely held beliefs that turned out to be false – and one of the most famous folklore tales is that of the Angels of Mons which, like the most notable myths of the war, emerged early in the conflict.

Such tales were embodied in vivid stories that appeared quickly and developed into popular acceptance with such intensity that, even today, many people remain familiar with them. This was an era when the word of newspapers, journals and books was widely accepted as truth and the ability to confirm the accuracy of a story was far from straightforward. Many tales were promulgated by word of mouth, and what may have started as an innocent comment, observation or joke could sometimes finish as a widespread acceptance of historical truth.

Despite the apparent veracity of the Angels of Mons anecdote, its origins lie in a fictional short story by Arthur Machen called *The Bowmen*. Published on September 29, 1914, this recounted in first-person style how phantom archers from the Battle of Agincourt repelled a German attack during the British retreat from Mons.

The story hit a nerve and variations on the idea of ghostly intervention soon began to appear in print, although this time portrayed as fact. The story of the angels provided a comforting and inspiring message that God was on the side of the Allies, so religious organisations encouraged the spread of the legend.

Linked to this idea of divine intervention was the notion that the Germans were a godless nation and enemies of Christianity. Subsequent myths – such as the belief that German troops were raping nuns, bayoneting babies and perpetrating similar atrocities as they advanced across Belgium – fostered this resentment while serving as useful propaganda to the British authorities.

A small number of atrocities were perhaps inevitable in the chaos of an enemy invasion, but the scale of accusations was out of all proportion. Evidence exists that atrocity stories were created and spread by propagandists from both sides. Many accounts were simply a product of the bitterness and anger fostered by war.

German "frightfulness" was, in the eyes of many, proved in 1915 by the mass use of poison gas at the Second Battle of Ypres in April, the sinking of the civilian passenger liner Lusitania in May and the execution of British nurse Edith Cavell in October of that year. For a British population convinced of the inhumanity of Germany, it took little imagination to add further, fabricated sins to the list. The government saw a useful channel for its propaganda and the officially sanctioned *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*, published in May 1915, was full of sensational stories of atrocities committed by German troops, which research has shown to be at best exaggerated or in many cases fictional.

One particularly unpleasant myth widely circulated was that the Germans had constructed a "corpse factory" secretly behind their lines, the purpose of which was to extract useful body fats from dead soldiers in order to produce soap, fertiliser and animal feed. The extremely unlikely nature of the story did not, however, prevent some from believing it wholeheartedly. As late in the war as October 1918, one diarist noted while marching through Bellincourt: "Passed over the tunnel bridge which contained the Hun Corpse factory. Saw this factory and a lot of naked Hun dead ready for building down into fat."

Perhaps the most famous atrocity story appeared in the British press at the beginning of May 1915. A Canadian soldier had been seen crucified against a barn door by bayonets thrust through his hands and feet, although no eye-witness accounts could subsequently be verified or the body located. The myth mirrored similar allegations from September 1914 that a British officer had been crucified while the story lived on in post-war memoirs by notable authors such as Robert Graves and Vera Brittain.

Recent research has suggested that the incident may in fact have been based on an element of truth, although there remains a distinct lack of certifiable evidence. As the story first appeared days after the sinking of the Lusitania, when public opinion against Germany was at a particularly hostile level, this may well indicate that the crucifixion tale was designed to strengthen anti-German feeling. It certainly reinforced the idea that the Germans were both uncivilised and anti-religious.

One factor behind many myths was the comforting idea that there was an external force, either divine or earthly, which would be on hand to ensure victory despite any initial defeat. This perhaps helps to explain the widely believed tale from August 1914 of how many thousands of Russian troops had landed in

FICTION FACTORY

Clockwise from main picture: the Angels of Mons myth had its origins in a short story; devils complain to Kaiser Wilhelm II that he has left them nothing to do; the executed spy Mata Hari was rumoured to have given secret Allied plans for a giant tank to the Germans; two works depicting German atrocities against women



MARY EVANS, TOP/PHOTO, GETTY



Scotland, having been observed with snow on their boots, and were on their way to the Western Front to bolster the hopelessly outnumbered British Expeditionary Force. This desire for an explanation or solution to something disastrous or unexpected can still be seen regularly today in the conspiracy theories which circulate after the death of famous personalities such as Diana, Princess of Wales or world-shattering events such as 9/11. After the immensely popular figurehead Lord Kitchener was drowned when HMS Hampshire sank in June 1916, some spread the belief that he had survived and was secretly planning for the final Allied victory. Not too far removed, perhaps, from the legend of King Arthur, sleeping but ready to appear in Britain's hour of greatest need.

A supernatural explanation to events can be perceived in the myth of the "Vanishing Norfolks". Several hundred men of the 1/5th Battalion Norfolk Regiment became isolated during an attack at Gallipoli on August 12, 1915, which resulted in extreme losses, with many of the bodies failing to be immediately recovered or identified. A myth grew up after the war which suggested that the men had advanced into a mist and disappeared, never to be seen again.

The popularity of the legend was accentuated by the fact that the 1/5th Battalion included men recruited from the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk. King George V's particular interest in the fate of his estate workers, many of whom he knew personally, kept the story alive and ripe for speculation and later years saw the introduction to the yarn of flying saucers, extra-terrestrial abduction and other bizarre elements. In fact the truth was rather more mundane, as the "missing" Norfolks had already been discovered by a graves registration unit in 1919 and buried in a mass grave at Suvla.

The First World War is often characterised by the invention and widespread adoption of new technology, and the novelty and uncertainty regarding these helped to generate folklore. Zeppelin airships were a particularly fearsome form of warfare as they appeared as an ominous and almost mystical threat in the skies above Britain. Their ability to travel great distances at high altitude suggested that nowhere was safe from the new German menace. Some believed that Zeppelins were landing spies and saboteurs secretly by night, while a more extreme idea suggested that a German airship was operating from a secret base in the Lake District. The myth that airships were dropping poisoned sweets intended to kill innocent but sweet-toothed civilians was one which would become more prominent during the Second World War.

Another technological breakthrough was the tank. Public excitement at the new vehicles, following their first use during the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme in September 1916, led to various outlandish rumours. Some believed that armoured vehicles were being developed which, as large as a house and manned by crews of several hundred men, could travel at high speeds. The truth – that the early tanks were extremely slow, operated by a handful of men and liable to break down on a regular basis – was less exciting.

Following the trial and execution of the exotic dancer Mata Hari in October 1917, who was accused of spying for Germany, the rumour persisted that she had betrayed blueprints for the tank design to the enemy, although there was no evidence that this was the case.

While many of these myths were spread by the British press and those on the home front, there are a good number of stories which appear to have originated from the front line. In an era when the main form of communication with home was by letter or telegram, soldiers on overseas service had to rely on hearsay and rumour in order to discover the latest war news. Many letters and diaries reveal this desire for news and indicate some of the folklore which quickly sprang to life in the absence of any concrete evidence.

Early in the war, many people believed that there had been a cover-up of particularly disastrous Allied casualty figures. Within days of the declaration of war, thousands of wounded soldiers were believed to have been shipped back to hospital secretly at night to avoid a panic on the home front, while some alleged that there had been a major naval battle off the Netherlands in which the Royal Navy had in effect been destroyed.

One of the most imaginative trench myths was that a band of "wild men" deserters consisting of soldiers from both sides was living in no-man's land, in some cases underground in caves and deserted trench systems. They would regularly emerge to loot the dead and finish off those who were wounded. There was even talk of cannibalism. Such stories may have originated from the occasional cry of wounded men which could be heard from no-man's land, while the looting of bodies was commonplace on both sides.

Modern forms of communication and the wide access to information that we take for granted today mean that myths and legends are unlikely to be believed as extensively as they were in previous ages. However, the First World War remains a fascinating snapshot of how myths can spread, aided by the inevitable uncertainty and confusion caused by conflict.

'Fancy being in the land of Antony and Cleopatra'

From our modern perspective, it is easy to regard the First World War as being an overwhelmingly negative experience for everyone involved. But the evidence of letters written at the time suggests that many servicemen embraced the war, at least initially, as an exciting opportunity to leave home, see new lands and serve their country.

One such man was Michael Lennon, who enlisted in his home town of Nottingham before joining the 3rd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Cork in April 1915. Writing home to his brother on May 1, he had exciting news:

"It appears to me you need not send the socks I asked for, as I may be going to Egypt next week. I don't want to take your breath away, but they took mine away, as I had hardly arrived in Cork when I was informed, by one who knows, that I am for the next draft for the Dardanelles which, as the young lady said after waiting 15 years for her boy to propose, is rather sudden.

"Fancy being in the land of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and the crocodiles. I shall not go bathing in the river Nile. All is excitement around me just now, the fellows buying little flags to stick in the muzzle of their rifle, the men going away tomorrow. Over 400 for France, and over 200 for Egypt."

The ultimate destination for Lennon's draft was Gallipoli, where they arrived on May 30 to replenish the 1st Battalion, which had played such a crucial role in the 29th Division landings the previous month:

"Well Frank, I suppose we are for it tomorrow, if we don't get shelled on the way. I can only hope that we have all the luck to come through the night and if I should get bowled out – well it can't be helped. I shall pack up to the place 'Where falls not rain, nor hail, nor any snow, and where the wind never blows loudly', but as I have said before, I am looking for something better than that and I shall see you again when the job is done."

Two days later, Michael scribbled a hasty message home on the back of a biscuit packet:

"Still in the pink and a bit nearer to the shells that are flying about. Had a stroll to the top of the hill (and I don't mean Derby Road) this morning and could see the shots exchanged between the combatants, while the big guns are going every now and again. This is a wonderful place Frank, like a World's Fair, with all the men of different nationalities... I only hope that I come back to tell little Frankie all about it."

Less than a week later, his sense of exhilaration was still evident:

"Well, I am still very much alive and doing well. Went up to the firing line last Monday, stayed there about 10 hours and then was relieved by another regiment. The return journey was tremendously exciting, as we had to go down a passage which was almost perpendicular and was 70 or 80ft from top to bottom, the shells flying above. One of the chaps who left Cork with us was bowled out, but I am hoping for something better than that."

Sadly it was not to be. Pte Michael Lennon was killed in action on June 28, 1915 – exactly a year after the assassination in Sarajevo which had led to the outbreak of war. He is now commemorated on the Helles memorial, along with other casualties of the Gallipoli campaign.

● *Commentary by Anthony Richards, IWM head of documents*



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Catastrophe with a poisonous legacy



THE WAR PAVED THE WAY FOR STALIN AND HITLER, SAYS **PATRICK BISHOP**

The participants in the war entered the fray to preserve and, with luck, expand their power and possessions. They fought not for new ideas or ways of doing things, but to maintain the existing order. The last thing the kings, generals and politicians of Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Britain wanted was revolutionary change.

The soldiers who marched off so insouciantly had been largely motivated by an old-fashioned patriotism that endorsed the fundamentals of the societies from which they sprang. But when the smoke cleared from the battlefields, the European

political and social landscape was unrecognisable. The great families – the Romanovs, Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs, who had loomed over the history of the continent for centuries – were swept away, the Ottoman empire had collapsed and of the three emperors who ruled at the start of the conflict, only the British sovereign remained on his throne.

Old countries vanished and new ones appeared. Everywhere among the defeated nations there was turmoil, fear and insecurity. The European victors also faced an uncertain future. The one perception clear to all was that the world of 1914 had now vanished irretrievably.

The war had been the greatest in history and its effects were commensurate with its scale. No conflict has created such drastic and far-reaching consequences. If the First World War had not happened, it is likely there would have been no totalitarian communism, no fascism, no Hitler and

no Holocaust. Its effects are still felt today, for example in the Far East where territorial tensions between Japan and China can be traced back to the perceived inequities of the post-war settlement.

The trauma of the war produced wildly differing results. In many it generated a revulsion against militarism, manifested in the pacifist movements of the Twenties and Thirties. Public intellectuals including Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann and Stefan Zweig campaigned against conscription, and women's groups collected nine million signatures for a peace petition in advance of the World Disarmament Conference, which opened in Geneva in 1932.

The conference itself, which ended in failure when Germany pulled out, was the product of a widespread impulse towards global co-operation. This impulse was exemplified by the League of Nations, created to provide a forum to settle international affairs without recourse to war – another doomed enterprise.

The optimistic view that nations were susceptible to reason and that conflicts could be resolved by talk sat oddly with a pervading strain of disenchantment. In Britain, literature, art, fashion and popular culture reflected a scepticism towards the conventions of the pre-war era that had given birth to the catastrophe. Reverence for authority was no longer automatic and reflexive.

Pacific sentiments, though, were patchy. Among the defeated nations, violence seemed to have become embedded in the collective psyche as an intrinsic part of existence, the main means by which men sought to achieve their ends and defeat their

THE AFTERMATH
Clockwise from top left: delegates from an international anti-war youth conference; Mussolini, whose path to power was fuelled by national resentment at the postwar settlement; disabled veterans learn new skills at a London factory; Red Army soldiers confiscate treasures at a Moscow monastery; protesters in Berlin carry the message, 'We shall fight against any illegal seizure of power by Right or Left'

enemies. Russia pulled out of one war only to plunge into another, as the Bolsheviks took on the old guard and imposed communism by force, a struggle that killed seven million people. In the cities of Germany, left- and right-wing gangs, often comprising former soldiers, clashed in the streets.

The break with the past was brutal and emphatic. In Russia, the democratic interim government that replaced the monarchy survived only a few months before being bulldozed by the revolutionaries. In Germany, democracy limped through the Twenties before finally expiring. In the poisonous atmosphere generated by the war, notions of tolerance and heterodoxy withered and died, but authoritarianism and the cult of strong, hard leadership flourished.

The pattern was set not in a defeated nation but in a technical winner. Italy had entered the war opportunistically but gained a disappointingly small share of the spoils. Resentment at the "mutilated victory" – as the Italian nationalist and poet Gabriele d'Annunzio described the aftermath of war for his country – smoothed Mussolini's path to power and the creation of a fascist state. The new outlook and aesthetic would achieve its most malevolent form in Germany, with its murderous racial theories, exultant cruelty and refusal to accept the legitimacy of any interests but its own.

These perverted values were mirrored in the

“**OF THE EMPERORS WHO RULED AT THE START OF THE CONFLICT, ONLY THE BRITISH KING SURVIVED**”

Soviet Union. Though ostensibly deadly ideological enemies, the two systems in fact had much in common. The utopias proposed by Hitler and Stalin were, in the view of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, "something new in human history... a denial of common humanity".

Thus, said Berlin, a "communist true believer did not even attempt to persuade a bourgeois or aristocrat of the truth of communist principles: they were class enemies, to be re-educated or disposed of. Likewise, fascists did not deign to reason with Jews, gypsies or other racial enemies. They were to be extirpated as vermin." These evil affinities would become horribly clear when the two countries joined forces to devour Poland in 1939-41.

The war did produce some benign political and social effects. The participation of women in war work hastened universal suffrage and in Britain women over the age of 30 got the vote in time to take part in the elections of December 1918. This was some compensation for the fact that many had little prospect of marriage and family, now that husbands were in short supply.

Such benevolent social progress was already well under way before the First World War and would have arrived without it. But the tempests of malignity that swept through much of the rest of the century, leaving millions dead in their wake, sprang directly from the conflict, making it the greatest man-made catastrophe in history.

● *Patrick Bishop is the author of The Reckoning: How the Killing of One Man Changed the Fate of*

WILLIAM ORPEN: 'TO THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER IN FRANCE' (1921-28)

In the prestigious Royal Academy summer show of 1923, the celebrated portraitist William Orpen unveiled one of the most contentious images of the First World War. *To the Unknown Soldier in France* was the culmination of an often sentimental regard for the ordinary British soldier and the artist's own bitterness.

In 1919, at the behest of Prime Minister David Lloyd George and under the aegis of the Imperial War Museum, Orpen was sent to the enshrinement of Allied victory, the Paris Peace Conference, and told to deliver a suitable and permanent memento.

Exhausted by war, syphilis and alcoholism, Orpen initially produced two jaundiced group portraits of delegates at the Palace of Versailles. Their petty conniving and self-importance he ridiculed by having them dwarfed by the sumptuous interiors.

To the Unknown Soldier was likewise begun as a group portrait. Early sketches and recent X-rays reveal leading Allied generals and statesmen, including Haig, Foch and Lloyd George posed in the Palace's Hall of Peace ready to enter its Hall of Mirrors. Even in this earliest incarnation there was subversion. For among the living was also the ghostly presence of Britain's war dead. Youthful pilot ace Arthur Rhys Davids was seen alongside bellicose Georges Clemenceau.

Such dissent, however, paled in comparison to the painting unveiled in 1923.

Generals, statesmen and heroes were replaced with a single flag-draped coffin flanked by two nameless, emaciated and semi-nude soldiers. The only tangible result [of the war] is the ragged unemployed soldier and the dead, Orpen offered in summary.

To the Unknown Soldier nevertheless chimed with a reflective British public. With compassion for the stoical Tommy stoked in wartime it was summarily voted picture of the year. Yet the embarrassment caused by this official commission ensured it was only accepted into the Imperial War Museum in 1928 once its most offending features had been painted over.

Richard Slocombe, Senior Art Curator, IWM
 To *The Unknown Soldier in France* features in *IWM's Truth and Memory: First World War Art exhibition*, now open at IWM London. www.iwm.org.uk



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WAR POEM

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn: 'For the Fallen', Laurence Binyon

Laurence Binyon wrote one of the best known and most frequently recited verses of the First World War. Across the world, and particularly the Commonwealth, the central stanza of his poem *For the Fallen* is regularly used to proclaim and affirm the resolve of nations and communities neither to forget nor overlook the effort and sacrifice of the First World War generation, as well as their successors in later wars and conflicts.

Yet few remember who wrote the words. The poem's smooth, rhythmic flow and formal, elegant language, embody the profound sense of respect, admiration and grief that hangs over modern acts of collective remembrance. Yet the poem was not written by a soldier who had seen action but by a

civilian less than a month after the start of the fighting. Born in Lancaster in 1869, Laurence Binyon was keeper of oriental prints and drawings at the British Museum when the First World War began in August 1914. He was an established and well-respected scholar, poet and author.

Aged 45, Binyon was too old to enlist, but in 1915 he volunteered as an orderly with the French hospital services, a task he undertook again the following year as the casualties rolled in from Verdun. After the war, Binyon continued at the British Museum until his retirement in 1933. He was appointed professor of poetry and literature first at Harvard and then Athens and died following an operation in 1943.

For the Fallen was written early in September 1914 as news began to filter through of the fighting at Mons and the retreat that followed. The same news provided a dynamic spur to Lord Kitchener's recruiting drive, with 33,000 men enlisting on September 3 alone. Compared to casualty levels after the Somme, British losses in 1914 were relatively small but still a shock. What is remarkable about Binyon's poem is that it anticipates those much higher, later losses and lays down a consolatory framework for understanding them.

FOR THE FALLEN

WITH PROUD THANKSGIVING, A MOTHER FOR HER CHILDREN,
 ENGLAND MOURNS FOR HER DEAD ACROSS THE SEA.
 FLESH OF HER FLESH THEY WERE, SPIRIT OF HER SPIRIT,
 FALLEN IN THE CAUSE OF THE FREE.

SOLEMN THE DRUMS THRILL: DEATH AUGUST AND ROYAL
 SINGS SORROW UP INTO IMMORTAL SPHERES.
 THERE IS MUSIC IN THE MIDST OF DESOLATION
 AND A GLORY THAT SHINES UPON OUR TEARS.

THEY WENT WITH SONGS TO THE BATTLE, THEY WERE YOUNG,
 STRAIGHT OF LIMB, TRUE OF EYE, STEADY AND AGLOW.
 THEY WERE STAUNCH TO THE END AGAINST ODDS UNCOUNTED,
 THEY FELL WITH THEIR FACES TO THE FOE.

THEY SHALL GROW NOT OLD, AS WE THAT ARE LEFT GROW OLD;
 AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM, NOR THE YEARS CONDEMN.
 AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN AND IN THE MORNING

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM.

THEY MINGLE NOT WITH THEIR LAUGHING COMRADES AGAIN;
 THEY SIT NO MORE AT FAMILIAR TABLES OF HOME;
 THEY HAVE NO LOT IN OUR LABOUR OF THE DAY-TIME;
 THEY SLEEP BEYOND ENGLAND'S FOAM.

BUT WHERE OUR DESIRES ARE AND OUR HOPES PROFOUND,
 FELT AS A WELL-SPRING THAT IS HIDDEN FROM SIGHT,
 TO THE INNERMOST HEART OF THEIR OWN LAND THEY ARE KNOWN
 AS THE STARS ARE KNOWN TO THE NIGHT;

AS THE STARS THAT SHALL BE BRIGHT WHEN WE ARE DUST,
 MOVING IN MARCHES UPON THE HEAVENLY PLAIN,
 AS THE STARS THAT ARE STARRY IN THE TIME OF OUR DARKNESS,
 TO THE END, TO THE END, THEY REMAIN.

Binyon's poem was first published in *The Times* on September 21, 1914. Its measured, elegiac tone resonated with increasing power as the war evolved. The closing image of stars sparkling in the infinity of the heavens offered consolation and hope to those whose husbands, sons, brothers and friends were dying in increasing numbers. As a traditional ode, formal and dignified, the whole poem had spiritual depth and meaning. But its central stanza in particular meant, and continues to mean 100 years on, that everyone, through the line that stands at its heart, could together sound aloud their determination that we will remember them.

On his 70th birthday in August 1939, Laurence Binyon explained that the idea for his most famous poem came to him on a clifftop at Polzeath in Cornwall: The stanza 'They Shall Grow Not Old' was written first and dictated the rhythmical movement of the whole poem. The words of these four crucial lines beat sonorously in monosyllables, echoing the solemn, funereal drums of the second stanza. It is this sombre, repetitive rhythm that invests the fourth stanza with such enduring power when read aloud in public.

In his references to youth and not growing old, Binyon anticipates the sentiments evoked only a few weeks later by Rupert Brooke in his famous sonnets and particularly *Peace*. To drive home this point, Binyon also includes a subtle Shakespearean reference. When Enobarbus returns to Rome in *Antony and Cleopatra* he evokes with some excitement Cleopatra's eternal youth and beauty: Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety. The subliminal cadences of Shakespeare add further to the power of Binyon's lines.

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Courage on horseback in the age of the tank



RICHARD WEST RALLIED HIS MEN TO VICTORY, SAYS MICHAEL ASHCROFT

Few men can have contributed more to the last year of the war effort than Acting Lt Col Richard West. His bravery was matched only by his leadership skills and as a result he received no fewer than four gallantry awards in 1918.

As the Great War neared its close in the summer of 1918, there was no doubt that West had more than “done his bit”. By then, he was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and in August 1918 he twice displayed such bravery that he was later rewarded with two further gallantry medals. On top of these formidable achievements, West was mentioned in despatches three times.

So, on the first day of September 1918, as he approached his 40th birthday, West could have been forgiven for displaying the instinct for self-preservation and “coasting” the final weeks and months of the conflict. However, coasting was simply

not part of West’s make-up; he always rose to a challenge even if it meant risking his life yet again.

Richard Annesley West was born in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, on September 26, 1878, but his roots were Irish. His father was Augustus West, from Whitepark, Co Fermanagh, who had served as a lieutenant with the 76th Hindustan Regiment. The regiment got its name from distinguishing itself in Hindustan and was often known affectionately as the “Seven and Sixpennies” from its number.

The youthful Richard West was educated in Britain: first at Channel View School, Clevedon, then in Somerset, and later at nearby Monkton Combe School. After finishing his schooling, West attended Uckfield Agricultural College in Sussex. However, if he had intentions of pursuing a career as a landowner and farmer, they did not last long. It was the time of the Second Boer War (1899–1902) and, like his father before him, West joined the Army.

During the war, West served both in the ranks as a trooper in the Imperial Yeomanry and later as a lieutenant in Kitchener’s Fighting Scouts. He continued his military career in South Africa long after the war was over and it was while serving in the country that he is believed to have met his wife, Maude Cushing. The couple were married in Pretoria,

IN THE SADDLE

Clockwise from main image: British cavalry training in Picardy in 1916; Richard West’s medal group; his grave in Pas-de-Calais; Acting Lt Col Richard West

Transvaal, on July 16, 1909, and had a daughter. Immediately after the outbreak of the Great War, West rejoined the Army through the North Irish Horse, part of the Cavalry Special Reserve. He was promoted to lieutenant on August 11, 1914, and left for France that month. The North Irish Horse arrived in France on August 20 and was soon involved in the thick of the action. As part of the British Expeditionary Force, they were quickly pushed forward, reaching the Franco-Belgian frontier in time to relieve the pressure on the retreating forces. They were involved in much of the fierce fighting that followed as the French and British forces fell back towards Paris.

During the subsequent battles of the Marne and the Aisne, both the North and the South Irish Horse were employed in the woods rounding up parties of German Uhlans, the energetic cavalry units that scouted ahead of the main Imperial Army.

If accounts from the front line were to be believed, the British had the better of these exchanges. Capt Stewart Richardson, of the North Irish Horse, wrote to a friend in Belfast: “They run like scalded cats when they see you and are always in close formation as if afraid to separate. I had a grand hunt after 20 (there were five of us), and we got four dead, picking up two more afterwards. We came on them round the corner of a street, and they went like hunted deer.”

West, who had embarked for France as a lieutenant in C Squadron, served with distinction during the early months of the war: he survived the retreat from Mons and was mentioned in despatches in Sir John French’s first despatch of the Great War. West’s leadership qualities were rewarded when he was promoted to captain on November 18, 1915. Shortly before this promotion, he had been briefly attached to the North Somerset Yeomanry with the temporary rank of major.

Despite serving throughout the war and seeing a lot of action, it was not until the final year of the

conflict that he received the first of four gallantry medals for his actions in 1917. On New Year’s Day 1918, *The London Gazette* announced he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). His citation read: “On April 11, 1917, at Monchy-le-Preux, his squadron was sent forward to reinforce the right flank of the brigade under very heavy shell and machine-gun fire. By his excellent example, rapid grasp of the situation and skilful disposition of his squadron he did much to avert an impending German counter-attack. He had shown great ability in command of a squadron since July 1915.”

West became an acting major in the Tank Corps on January 18, 1918, and acting lieutenant colonel on August 22 of the same year, in command of the 6th Light Tank Battalion. He showed bravery for which he was rewarded with his second decoration, the Military Cross (MC). This was announced in *The London Gazette* on November 7, 1918, when his citation stated: “During the advance on Aug 8 at Guillaucourt, in command of a company of Light Tanks, he displayed magnificent leadership and personal bravery. He was able to point out many targets to his tanks that they would not otherwise have seen. During the day he had two horses shot under him, while he and his orderly between them killed five of the enemy and took seven prisoners. On the 10th he rendered great services to the Cavalry by personally reconnoitring the ground in front of Le Quesnoy, and later in the day, under very heavy machine-gun fire, rallied and organised the crew of tanks that had been ditched, withdrawing them after dark.”

Less than two weeks after the action at Guillaucourt, West earned a bar for his DSO by displaying further courage. This decoration was also announced in *The London Gazette* on November 7, 1918 when his citation read: “For conspicuous gallantry near Courcelles on Aug 21, 1918. In consequence of this action being fought in a thick mist, this officer



“HE RODE UP AND DOWN IN THE FACE OF CERTAIN DEATH, URGING THEM TO PUT UP A GOOD FIGHT

decided to accompany the attack to assist in maintaining direction and cohesion. This he did mounted, until his horse was shot under him, then on foot until the final objective was reached.

“During the advance, in addition to directing his tanks, he rallied and led forward small bodies of infantry lost in the mist, showing throughout a fine example of leadership and a total disregard of personal safety, and materially contributed to the success of the operations. Major West was in command of the battalion most of the time, his commanding officer having been killed early in the action. The consistent gallantry displayed by this officer throughout the operations since Aug 8 has been remarkable.”

However, by the time that both the Bar to his DSO and his MC has been announced, West had eclipsed

both by earning a posthumous Victoria Cross (VC) through his outstanding gallantry on August 21 and again on September 2, when he died on the battlefield. His VC was announced in *The London Gazette* on October 3, 1918, only a month and a day after West had been killed.

The second part of his citation, relating to the action in which he had been killed, read: “On a subsequent occasion, it was intended that a battalion of Light Tanks, under the command of this officer, should exploit the initial Infantry and Heavy Tank attack. He therefore went forward in order to keep in touch with the progress of the battle, and arrived at the front line when the enemy were in process of delivering a local counter-attack.

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HEROIC STORIES

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is a Conservative peer, businessman, philanthropist and author. The story of West’s life appears in his book *Victoria Cross Heroes*. For more information, visit victoriacrossheroes.com Lord Ashcroft’s VC and GC collection is on public display at IWM London. For more information, visit iwm.org.uk/heroes For details about his VC collection, visit lordashcroftmedals.com For more information on Lord Ashcroft’s work, visit lordashcroft.com Follow him on Twitter @LordAshcroft



GETTY ALAMY; MEDALS COURTESY OF THE LORD ASHCROFT COLLECTION / © IWM

“The Infantry Battalion had suffered heavy officer casualties, and its flanks were exposed. Realising that there was a danger of this battalion giving way, he at once rode out in front of them under extremely heavy machine-gun and rifle fire and rallied the men. In spite of the fact that the enemy were close upon him, he took charge of the situation and detailed non-commissioned officers to replace officer casualties. He then rode up and down in front of them in face of certain death, encouraging the men and calling to them: ‘Stick it, men; show them fight, and for God’s sake put up a good fight.’

“He fell riddled by machine-gun bullets. The magnificent bravery of this very gallant officer at the critical moment inspired the infantry to redoubled efforts, and the hostile attack was defeated.”

By any standards, West’s contribution to the British war effort had been phenomenal. Yet, like so many of his young comrades, he failed to survive the conflict: of some six million men from Britain who served in the Armed Forces more than 800,000 perished.

The Daily Mirror welcomed the news of West’s VC with the headline: “Splendidly won VC”, which was above two photographs, one of West and the other of his widow. West’s widow received his posthumous VC from King George V in an investiture at Buckingham Palace on February 15, 1919. Today West’s grave bears an image of the VC and his gravestone is inscribed with words from the Book of John: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

I purchased West’s medal group privately in 2002, 16 years after I first started to build my medal collection. Such was the quality of his medal group, in general, and West’s VC, in particular, that I paid significantly higher than the record auction price at that time. Today, West’s medal group is on show at Imperial War Museums London, as part of the largest display of VCs in the world.

Sense of loss as brave new world is born



IRELAND, THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CLASS ATTITUDES WERE TRANSFORMED AS MILLIONS MOURNED, SAYS **NIGEL JONES**

In December 1918, a month after the end of the war, Britain and Ireland went to the polls in a general election. The aristocratic Irish revolutionary Countess Constance Markiewicz made history as the first woman to be elected to Westminster – except she was unable to take her seat because she was in a British prison for organising Irish resistance to military conscription.

Not that the Countess would have taken her seat if she had been free. Along with the 72 Sinn Fein male comrades elected with her, she refused to recognise London's right to rule Ireland, and as a proud veteran of the 1916 Easter Rising against British rule, as soon as she was released she helped set up Dail Eireann, Ireland's own Parliament in Dublin.

The granting of the female franchise and Ireland's eventually successful armed struggle for its independence from Britain were two of the most important legacies of the First World War, and both events were directly attributable to the conflict itself. Before the war the suffragettes – including the Countess – had struggled in vain in a campaign characterised by increasingly desperate acts of violence to convince the male political establishment that women were worthy of the vote.

But it took the war, when women quit domestic drudgery to replace absent men in offices, factories and as farm workers, to impress the political class with the moral, as well as the political, imperative to grant those who had saved their country in its hour of need the power to choose who ruled them. It helped, of course, that the suffragette leaders Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst had instantly called off their campaign and switched their formidable energies to speak and work in the national cause as soon as war was declared.

Similarly, it was the war that transformed the Irish struggle. The moderate Irish nationalists, keen, like the suffragettes, to impress the ruling elite with their patriotism, joined the Army in droves to fight in France for the rights of small nations such as Belgium – and Ireland. Their departure left the field in Ireland clear for the extreme Irish republicans, for whom “England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity”. These militants set about organising the Easter Rising, and Britain's decision to execute its leaders transformed them into martyrs and led to widespread popular support for armed struggle that had been absent in 1914.

In Britain itself, the enormous effort that had won

the war had seen the state assume a more intrusive role than free-born Britons had ever known. In the last two years of the war, millions had been conscripted to fight and die for their country after the supply of volunteers dried up. Millions more were directed into war work, and unheard-of impositions that would last for the rest of the century limited pub opening times (because war workers were thought to spend too much time drinking) and introduced British Summer Time to squeeze more work into the hours of daylight.

State intervention in people's lives, and the mobilisation of its resources for military and industrial purposes, had a knock-on effect politically – as did the camaraderie of the trenches, where officers and other ranks had met and mingled in conditions of enforced, life-threatening intimacy. Deference and the unthinking acceptance of God-given class divisions and social rank had less power when you had seen your betters defecating into a mess tin, screaming their lives out with their entrails caught on barbed wire, or had your own life saved by a man you might have patronised with a meagre tip before the war.

One political consequence of this was a post-war

NEW SOCIETY

Main images from left, Irish revolutionary Countess Constance Markiewicz; a woman votes for the first time in 1918; the Chelsea Arts Ball in 1926. Below, a Labour poster for the 1924 election



wave of strikes in 1921, and the continued rise of the Labour Party to a point where it formed its first government in 1924. The General Strike of 1926, though disappointing to those who hoped Britain might emulate the Russian Revolution of 1917, gave notice that the organised working class was a force that could no longer be ignored.

This was a lesson taken especially to heart by the moderate-minded Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who, though an industrialist himself, had protested that the post-war Parliament had been dominated by profiteers: “Hard-faced men who looked as though they had done well out of the war”. Baldwin also said he had thought the miners' union leaders, whose militancy had triggered the General Strike, were the most stupid men in the country – until he met the mine owners.

The war cast a long and dark shadow across the Britain of the Twenties and Thirties. Each town and every village raised a memorial to the sons and fathers who would not return. One of the war's anonymous unknown soldiers, “known unto God” in the phrase coined by Rudyard Kipling (whose only son, John, was one of their number), was brought home to rest among kings in Westminster Abbey.

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And the “Glorious Dead” were reverentially remembered each November around the Cenotaph in Whitehall. The determination that the conflict would truly be, as another writer, HG Wells, called it “the war to end all war”, fuelled the rise of pacifism, a tenderness towards defeated Germany and a national reluctance to admit that another, still greater war, was coming.

Meanwhile, young people who had missed the war and who could afford to, were determined to have a good time. The antics of this spoilt, self-indulgent “Brideshead generation” who, bored by the war that their elder brethren had fought, fornicated their way around London's new nightclubs through the jazz age, fuelled by cocaine and cocktails, were savagely satirised by Evelyn Waugh in his novel *Vile Bodies* (1930). Waugh, whose own elder brother Alec became a prisoner of war after being captured in 1918, little knew that within a decade, he too would be putting his life on the line for his country.



Jews rally to serve country that gave them sanctuary

CON COUGHLIN ON HOW THE COMMUNITY LAUNCHED A RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

The outbreak of the First World War provided a unique opportunity for Britain's disparate Jewish community to demonstrate its loyalty to king and country. British Jewry had been slowly re-establishing its position in British society since the 17th century, when Oliver Cromwell welcomed the Jews back following their expulsion during the Middle Ages. By 1914, Britain's Jewish community had grown to around 300,000, their numbers boosted by East European immigrants fleeing persecution during the 1850s.

Before the outbreak of hostilities with Germany, many Jews had never been given the opportunity to repay their debt to the country that had provided them with sanctuary in their hour of need. According

to Roz Currie, curator of the impressive exhibition *For King and Country?*, which runs at the Jewish Museum London until August 10, the war gave British Jews “an opportunity to repay their loyalty to Britain by serving in the Armed Forces”.

To start with, many within the Jewish community, particularly those who had fled the anti-Semitic pogroms in Tsarist Russia, were reluctant to fight in a conflict in which Britain and Russia were allies. But as the war progressed and conscription was introduced, there was a sharp uptake in the number of Jews in military service, so that by the end of the war around 41,000 British Jews had been in action.

Much of this was due to the peer pressure that had been brought to bear by the “settled community”: Jewish families who had lived in Britain for a century or more. To persuade their reluctant co-religionists to do their duty for the country, posters appeared in Jewish neighbourhoods of major cities such as London, Manchester and Leeds bearing the slogan: “England has been all she could be to the Jews; the Jews will be all they can be to England”.

Another poster was even more explicit: “Since the days of Oliver Cromwell, Great Britain has meted out the fairest treatment politically, socially and in every way to Jews. Now is the time for Jews to reciprocate and show the old spirit of the Maccabees is not dead. Every able-bodied unmarried Jew between 19 and 45 should join the British Army.”

Some of those who opted to fight joined Jewish units such as the Zion Mule Corps, a labour battalion of Jewish refugees that helped to supply the front lines at Gallipoli, or one of the three battalions of the newly-formed Jewish Legion, which recruited Jewish soldiers from America and Britain to help defeat the Ottoman empire in Palestine, thereby clearing the way for the creation of a Jewish homeland as outlined by the 1917 Balfour Declaration.

But the majority served in conventional British military units, with a number of Jews distinguishing themselves by winning honours, including a clutch of Victoria Crosses. The first Jewish Victoria Cross was awarded to Lt Frank de Pass for his actions on November 24, 1914, on the Western Front near



UNITED FRONT

Jewish Legionaries on camels at Giza in Egypt



ENGLAND HAS BEEN ALL SHE COULD BE TO THE JEWS; THE JEWS WILL BE ALL THEY CAN BE TO ENGLAND

Festubert in France. Born in Kensington in 1887 and educated at Rugby School, de Pass was from a Sephardic Jewish background, and his father was prominent at the Bevis Marks Synagogue in London's East End, the oldest Sephardic synagogue in Britain. After training at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, de Pass was stationed in India with the 34th Prince Albert Victor's Own Poona Horse.

Like many Indian regiments, the Poona Horse sailed for France at the outbreak of war, and it was during a campaign at Festubert that de Pass lost his life. The citation for his award describes what happened: “In entering a German sap and destroying a traverse in the face of the enemy's bombs and for subsequently rescuing, under heavy fire, a wounded man who was lying exposed in the open”. De Pass died the following day from the injuries he sustained during his act of heroism.

Other Jewish winners of the VC included Pte Jack White (Weiss) from Leeds who, serving with the 6th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, masterminded a daring rescue operation for a pontoon that was stranded in mid-stream and coming under heavy German machine-gun fire. Capt Robert Gee, of the 2nd Battalion The Royal Fusiliers, won both the Victoria Cross and the Military Cross for various acts of heroism, including escaping from captivity at

Cambrai by overwhelming his German captors and then capturing all their nearby defensive positions.

Nor was it only in the realms of gallantry that British Jews made a distinctive contribution to the war. One of the more vivid descriptions of life in the trenches was provided by Marcus Segal, a 2nd Lieutenant in the 16th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment, who joined the British Expeditionary Force in September 1916.

In numerous letters home, he chronicled the everyday activities of soldiers on the front. “I have had a fine game of football and, apart from a few kicks on the ankle, I had a glorious game,” he writes in one letter. In another he refers to the camaraderie among the frontline soldiers. “I have met men galore I know out here and it makes matters very much jollier.” But like so many of his comrades, Segal did not survive the conflict, being killed by a shell at Arras in June 1917.

These are just a few examples of the exhibits that have been on display at the Jewish Museum London's excellent tribute to the contribution of British Jews to the war effort, demonstrating how so many repaid their debt to their adopted homeland.

Con Coughlin is The Daily Telegraph's Defence Editor

POST BOX

We have received a magnificent postbag and inbox of letters and documents in response to our request for readers' First World War family memories, for which we give our sincere thanks. Here are just a few of the many fascinating stories we would like to share with you.

EMBROIDERED SOUVENIRS OF WAR

Ronald Davey from Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, encloses a series of embroidered postcards sent to his father's Aunt Fan (Mrs F Ling) from a Royal Engineers soldier, Ern Hamblin, based in sunny France.

The cards are striking in their upbeat tone and scarcely mention the war. Dear Mrs Ling, you will gather from this that I am somewhere near civilisation at last. A very nice country district and splendid weather too. The periodicals arrived quite alright, thanks very much. Hope you are well. In the pink myself. Yours sinc. EH.

reads one from July 11, 1917. Another sent from Somewhere in France, 4/2/16, reads: Dear Mrs Ling... Thank you so much for the pudding. It was top hole... I see the hounders have been over your way again with their Zepps. Let's hope we shall be giving em something to occupy their time over here before long. Glad to say I am quite well... Ern.



A FINAL LOVE LETTER HOME

Bernice De Smet from St Albans, Hertfordshire, encloses a letter sent by her grandfather, Pte John James Hoyle of the First East Lancashire Regiment, to his wife Nell the day before he was killed in action in France on June 23, 1917, aged 31.

Yes, my dear, I can believe you when you say that nature is so very beautiful at present [in] the dear homeland. It is so in some parts of France, but where we are just now you do not hear much of the singing of the birds but rather the constant roar of the artillery, the hurtling shells flying through the air on their mission of death,

the crack, crack, crack of the machine guns; the trees, mostly only half standing, the ground full of shell holes and here and there little crosses telling you that underneath there, there lies those who have fallen [in] the conflict...

Your reference to the setting sun I was most charmed with dear. Yes, it is the same sun which you see in our garden, which I see here on the battlefield, and what is better still, as you say, it is the same God that has us in his keeping. I do not know that I have anything further to mention dear just now, but I am glad you are keeping well and I am the same. Kiss my little pet [his six-year-old son Fred] for me. God bless you all dears, John

The next day, says Mrs De Smet, he was carrying rations up to the men in the front line when a shell burst just over his head and killed him instantly. He suffered no pain and wouldn't have had time to realise that he was hit.

A MOTHER'S STOICISM

Betty Rennid from Oakington, near Cambridge, writes: During the First World War, my mother, Mrs Lillian Standen, was a forewoman at Woolwich Arsenal. At the time, she was engaged to my father and they were married on one of his annual seven days leave in 1917. Workers at the Woolwich Arsenal were screened on arrival at work to ensure that they weren't carrying any metal objects. On one occasion, a girl was found to have her keys in her pocket. She was reprimanded, but because mum was the forewoman and responsible for the girls, she was the one who was punished.

Her punishment was to be sent to another munitions factory near Bristol for a number of months. Each weekend she would travel back to London to her widowed mother (mum's brother was killed at the battle of the Somme) and return to Bristol on Sunday evening.

Not one for wasting time on train journeys, mum managed to crochet her curtains and table covers, some of which I still have. On her return to London, the Zeppelin raids had begun, but this didn't stop her cycling to the



factory each day. After the war, my father came home severely shell-shocked which lasted until he died in 1970. Mum nursed him back to health and went on to have four children. My

three brothers fought in the Second World War, but I was an evacuee.

We weren't a wealthy family, but we were taught honesty and respect and brought up to know that

you got out of life what you put into it. I'm sure mum was no different to lots of other young women in the First World War, but she passed on to us a sense of loyalty and stoicism.



GETTY ALAMY

THE LASTING DAMAGE

Bruce Margrett from Polegate, East Sussex, writes about the psychological damage his father Archibald Margrett, known as Jimmy, suffered after serving in the war.

Jimmy gave himself without restraint to the conflict in France and carried the scars for the rest of his life. In December 1916, he was posted to France with the 8th Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment, who were in the Festubert area. After serving for only a few weeks, he was promoted to lieutenant and, aged 20,

leading what would normally be 60 men in four platoons. They manned the front line in Loos, retiring to Rebruvette behind Arras for training. On March 25, 1917, he

received flesh wounds during bombing (hand-grenade) training.

In Arras, his battalion was twice engaged in support as the front line was pushed beyond the German Brown line. He was given a 10-day leave ticket to return to England. The leave ticket records the reason as shell-shock. Before the end of June, he was back with his Battalion in France, moving to Wyschaete near Ypres.

On November 11, 1917, he was found to be suffering from debility and trench fever. And on June 24, 1918, he was brought in field (on the battlefield) before a court martial to face charges of desertion, disobedience and miscellaneous offences. The register is marked acquitted, insane at the time of commission of offence, evidence that he

was again suffering shell-shock. The only anecdotal explanation of this event was that he issued a week or more of the rum ration to the men before they went over the top.

Today, some argue we are failing in the support of our soldiers who return emotionally damaged from war, when we have better understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder and the science of nervous diseases.

Recovery for First World War soldiers was a matter of years of self-help. And on some occasions, a damaged personality can relapse. During the Second World War, Jimmy served in the Home Guard as well as working in a bank. When the family were evacuated, they heard of him digging a trench in the garden at home and standing guard overnight.

FROM THE FRONT

Left, a series of embroidered postcards sent home from sunny France by Ern Hamblin, who was serving with the Royal Engineers; below left, a cross at Lochnagar mine crater on the Somme battlefield, and female munitions workers at Woolwich Arsenal, where Lillian Standen worked

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR?

Something to fight for: how Germany's defeat inspired Hitler's rise to power

The assassination by a Serb of the Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand was the red rag needed to spur one particular bull called Adolf Hitler into action. A dislike of foreigners, particularly Slavs, had already taken root in the mind of this disenchanted, orphaned 25-year-old painter. Now he had something to fight for.

Rejected by the Austrian army as unfit for service, he applied to join the Bavarian army in August 1914, despite not being a German citizen, and within two months of starting training saw combat near Ypres against the British and Belgians.

Hitler was primarily a message runner, a relatively safe post, based at regimental headquarters several miles from the Western Front, although he witnessed various landmark battles at Ypres, Somme, Arras and Passchendaele. In the Battle of Ypres in October 1914 – which became known in Germany as the “Massacre of the Innocents” – nearly half of the 20 infantry divisions were killed in 20 days, and Hitler's company was reduced from 250 to 42 by December.

He was decorated twice for bravery, with the Iron Cross, Second Class in 1914 and the Iron Cross, First Class in 1918 – the latter honour rarely bestowed upon a lance corporal. Hit in the thigh by an exploding shell in his dugout at the Battle of the Somme in October 1916, Hitler was sent to Munich but he demanded to return to his comrades at the Front.

In October 1918, he was wounded again, temporarily blinded in a mustard gas attack. While recovering from his wounds, he learnt of Germany's defeat and subsequent loss of territory resulting from the Treaty of Versailles. At that moment, he said,



– leader and supreme commander of every Nazi paramilitary organisation. By 1939, he had promoted himself to “First Soldier of the Reich”, in command of Germany's armed forces and intent on world domination. The First World War changed the lives of all who served in it. For Adolf Hitler, it proved to be the seedbed for his patriotism, xenophobia and lust for power that would also change the world in the 20th century.

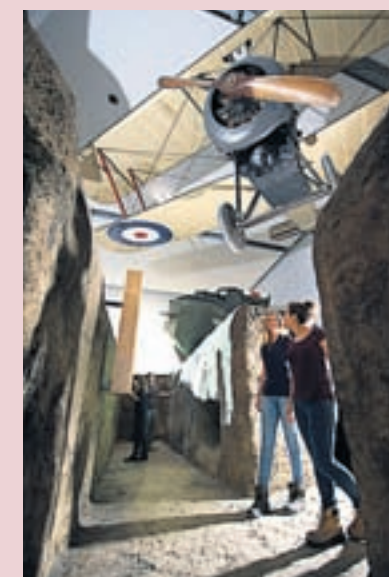
Zoe Dare Hall

DISCOVER THE STORY OF THE CONFLICT AT IWM'S NEW FIRST WORLD WAR GALLERIES

To mark the start of the Centenary of the First World War, IWM London has opened new, permanent First World War Galleries. Visitors can discover the story of the war through the eyes of people in Britain and its empire, both on the home front and the fighting fronts. They will see how the war started, why it continued, how the Allies won and its global impact.

Drawing on IWM's First World War collections, the richest and most comprehensive in the world, visitors will see more than 1,300 objects on display, many of which have never been seen before. They range from weapons, uniforms and equipment to diaries and letters, keepsakes and trinkets, photographs, film and art.

Each of the objects on display gives a voice to the people who created them, used them or cared for them and reveal stories not only of destruction, suffering



and loss, but also of endurance and innovation, duty and devotion, comradeship and love. Visitors see what life was like at the front, and experience the sights and sounds of a recreated “trench”, with the Sopwith Camel fighter plane and Mark V tank looming above them. They can learn of the terrible strain the war placed on people and communities and will be able to consider some of the questions and choices, ordinary and extraordinary, that people of Britain and its former empire had to face in this first “total war”.

The ground-breaking new First World War Galleries are part of the wider transformation of IWM London, which includes a newly configured atrium with iconic large-object displays and a number of new exhibitions, public spaces, shops and cafés.

Find out more at iwm.org.uk

THE LORD ASHCROFT GALLERY



WILLIAM LEEFE ROBINSON Victoria Cross

Witnessed by thousands of Londoners, Lieutenant Robinson shot down the first German airship over Britain during the First World War. When it exploded, he was so close, he could feel the heat of the flames as it fell to the earth.



EXTRAORDINARY HEROES

DISCOVER THE STORIES BEHIND THE
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