

AHRC WW1 Engagement Centres



Introduction

As the centenary commemoration of the First World War continues, now is a good time to reflect on what has been achieved so far in projects and through partnerships supported by the AHRC and to look forward to work yet to come.

Four years into the centenary, it is clear that the nation has a great appetite for learning and understanding more about the conflict, its causes, as well as how it affected every aspect of British life and, indeed, how its influences cascade down the generations to us today.

AHRC's involvement has demonstrated how the arts and humanities can contribute enormously to the study and interpretation of such events by providing a variety of perspectives. The projects undertaken with AHRC funding and support are not only addressing the roots and consequences of the war, they have also revealed many aspects of the war's cultural history and have enabled the widespread engagement of many communities around the country who, for the first time, have been able to relate to this history.

Arts and humanities have repeatedly proven that commemoration can be made more inclusive by recovering voices and perspectives that had been lost, marginalised or overlooked altogether. One such example is how different national and ethnic cultures have been able to respond to the commemoration for the first time.

Working in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), AHRC has funded five WW1 Engagement Centres to support communities running First World War centenary projects. These centres are reaching out to communities and organisations, linking them up with researchers with relevant expertise, and providing advice and training. By encouraging communities to ask deeper questions and confront challenges, the Engagement Centres are helping to broaden perspectives of the war.

In the following pages a range of examples illustrate the breadth of the research that AHRC funding and support has been able to unlock. We have funded researchers to work with BBC broadcast journalists in the regionals and nationals. In addition, we have funded World War One Engagement Centres at five universities which have connected academic and public histories of the First World War involving networks of academic researchers collaborating on projects across the UK.

We have recently announced additional funding of some £2million over the next three years which will enable the work of the Engagement Centres to continue.

Commenting on this additional funding AHRC's interim Chief Executive Professor Andrew Thompson has said:

"I am delighted that the AHRC will be continuing to support the First World War Engagement Centres for the remainder of the centenary and extending its partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Centres have demonstrated that collaboration between communities and academic researchers can generate new insights on the history of the First World War as well as on its heritage and legacy for diverse communities around the UK today.

"I look forward to these collaborations uncovering many more untold histories and stimulating further innovative approaches to commemoration over the next three years."

The Engagement Centres

On the following five pages the directors of each of the five WW1 Engagement Centres reflects on their achievements to date and look forward to ongoing research projects as the centenary commemorations and partnership with HLF continues.

The five WW1 Engagement Centres are:



Voices of War and Peace

University of Birmingham, in collaboration with (amongst others) Universities of Wolverhampton, Worcester, Birmingham City, Cardiff, Manchester Metropolitan, Durham and Newcastle.

Everyday Lives in War

University of Hertfordshire, in collaboration with (amongst others) University of Central Lancashire; Lincoln, Northampton, Exeter and Essex Universities.



Gateways to the First World War

University of Kent, in collaboration with (amongst others) Leeds, Brighton

and Portsmouth Universities.

The Centre for Hidden Histories

Centre for Hidden Histories

University of Nottingham, in collaboration with (amongst others) Oxford Brookes, Manchester Metropolitan, Nottingham Trent, and Derby Universities.



Living Legacies 1914-18

Queen's University Belfast, in collaboration with (amongst others) University of Ulster, Wales; Newcastle University; and Goldsmiths College University of London.

Voices of War and Peace Centre

University of Birmingham
Professor Ian Grosvenor



The Voices of War and Peace First World War Engagement Centre began in January 2014. Based in the Library of Birmingham, the Centre has supported a wide range of community engagement activities, connecting academic and public histories of the First World War as part of the commemoration of the War's centenary.

In addition to exploring themes of Belief and the Great War, Cities at War, Childhood, Conflict and Peace, Commemoration, and Gender and the Home Front, the Centre also covers a broad range of relevant research knowledge that enables it to respond to diverse community interests. This research knowledge ranges from the history of Birmingham, the Black Country and urban and rural Worcestershire to the impact of air power, from the experiences of Belgian refugees to trench warfare, from Quakers and humanitarian relief to battlefield archaeology, and from caring for the casualties of war to the involvement of colonial troops and labour.

The Centre also organised a number of discussion events for community groups in receipt of funding from the HLF's First World War: Then & Now programme.

During 2014-2016 the centre ran a number of outreach events, including a study day on injured soldiers and medical advances made during the First World War; women and war and the contribution of soldiers from Asia and the Caribbean. It also organised a number of discussion events for community groups in receipt of funding from the HLF's First World War: Then and Now programme. The Centre was also involved in an exhibition on display at the Library of Birmingham in 2014. 'Voices of War' showed how WW1 was experienced by people in Birmingham, drawing on the Library's rich collections. The exhibition explored a

number of themes including the experiences of men at the Front, the war's impact on children and families, the contribution of black and Asian soldiers, the role of women on the Home Front, Birmingham's industrial support, and debates around patriotism and pacifism. Many of the events were filmed and can be viewed on the Centre's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDvHowPcSSJUD4WShtypGkg>).

The Voices Centre was also able to offer funding to support members of their research network to work collaboratively with community partners to develop projects related to the centenary of the First World War. 15 projects were funded in total, details of which can be found on the website (www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/voices-projects).

The Centre has now received funding for the second phase from 2017-2019. The Centre will continue to focus on the themes of Gender and the Home Front, Faith in the Great War, Commemoration, and Children at War but will also explore Peace and Conflict more widely by refocusing historical debates on the legacies of the Great War in more contemporary settings. The Centre will be organising in collaboration with the Everyday Lives Centre an exhibition of photographs by Käthe Buchler from the Museum of Photography in Braunschweig. Buchler's photographs, never exhibited in this country before, show the German home front during 1914-1919 (on display at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and the University of Birmingham, Aston Webb Rotunda Gallery from October 2017 to January 2018). In 2017, the Centre will also coordinate a series of showcase events bringing together community groups funded by the HLF, academics and collaborative projects funded by the Centre and, in 2019, a series of festivals held in the four nations which will celebrate and reflect on the work produced during the commemorative period.

Professor Ian Grosvenor is Director of the Voices of War and Peace Centre and professor of Urban Education History, School of Education, University of Birmingham, www.voicesofwarandpeace.org

Gateways to the First World War Centre

University of Kent
Professor Mark Connelly



Gateways to the First World War has been very active since its inception in 2014. We have put on a broad range of activities including study days on particular topics and themes, training sessions, dramatic and musical recitals and concerts. Of particular satisfaction has been the number of community projects and individuals from across the UK we have been able to help with their research.

As a group we have spent most of our academic careers researching the First World War, and so to engage with people equally interested with fascinating ideas of their own has been particularly exciting and rewarding. At the same time, we put on many different types of events and to hear people saying 'I only came along to see the film because I like cinema, but am now hooked on finding out more about the First World War' is an equally wonderful experience, and it is great to know that we are opening up a crucial event in world history many people had never really considered before.

Since 2014, Gateways' five Co-Investigators, in close collaboration with our Community Heritage Researcher Dr Sam Carroll, have supported a broad range of community-based First World War projects, the majority of which were funded by the HLF. Working with HLF colleagues, we have organised First World War Discovery Days, designed to offer inspiration and guidance to projects in the very early stages of development, across our focus localities of Scotland, Yorkshire and Humber, London and the South East. Since then, in partnership with the other First World War Engagement Centres, we have similar events planned for across the UK in 2017.

Gateways has provided varying degrees of support for projects, including thematic academic expertise from across our network and practical support such as archival training or securing speakers for events. We have keenly engaged in Scotland, hosting development events in Edinburgh and Inverness, and a resulting project "Bringing to life the meaning of Conscientious Objection across Scotland" by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) Scotland, were pleased to accept our support in archival training and study events. Emma Hanna at the University of Kent worked with the National Children's Football Alliance on the "Football and Peace project" resulting in a stimulating programme of events designed

for young and older people. Brad Beaven at the University of Portsmouth and Helen Brookes at the University of Kent have partnered the Kings Theatre in Portsmouth on the "Theatre of War: The Kings Theatre Heritage Project" looking at their 'hidden archive'.

This project has involved both primary school children and university students who have produced a film, exhibition and are planning a gala event. Lucy Noakes at the University of Brighton gave research advice and a specialist talk and interview for "Zeppelins over London" by Third Sector Media, documenting raids on the capital to produce a film by secondary school children.

Another new project this year involves working with different Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups in Hull exploring the different ways in which Chinese, Indian and African troops and workers were photographed, drawn and painted during the war. Alison Fell at the University of Leeds, Jenny Macleod from the University of Hull, Pedram Saied from the Iranian community of Hull, and Hull All Nations Alliance, the main community partners, will work with groups from the Chinese, Asian and African communities of Hull to examine these images. Their responses as well as the images will feature in an exhibition as part of the City of Culture activity for 2017.

A major part of our Phase 2 plans is to run more crowd sourcing projects deliberately constructed around ideas we believe will attract wide public attention regardless of whether a person is already interested in the First World War. For example, Dr Helen Brooks is expanding her successful project exploring British theatre in conflict. She has over 100 volunteers across the UK researching theatres and their audiences. Professor Mark Connelly launched his project on battlefield visiting in the 1920s and 1930s. Over 30 volunteers came forward to help explore this topic via the pages of British newspapers, and the research programme included a week of collaborative work for the team at the British Library. We're all very enthused by our plans for Phase 2 and we expect to see a fascinating outpouring of collaborative research as academic expertise and experience merges with public enthusiasm.

Professor Mark Connelly is Director of the Gateways to the First World War and professor of Modern British History, School of History, University of Kent.

Everyday Lives in War

University of Hertfordshire

Professor Sarah Lloyd



Over the past three years we've worked with community groups, heritage professionals, schools and independent researchers to explore everyday life during the First World War. We have challenged dominant narratives regarding local histories of the conflict and questioned our perceptions of what is important in the national story. Centre members have participated in the excitements of discovery and had a privileged insight into stories that fascinate 21st century audiences.

Our focus on food, farming, entertainment and childhood, generates many conversations about the early 20th century, as local researchers piece together specific details and the Centre team contributes a broader context to these themes. Queries have drawn attention to topics previously overlooked. At Centre workshops participants from all walks of life share their stories, consider what the centenary means today, and acquire new skills and sources.

Other Centre themes depart more explicitly from familiar narratives, challenging us to explain their significance. By speaking of resistance to war, for example, discussion of conscientious objectors extends to social attitudes and the communities from which the men came. In the case of military tribunals, assiduous local researchers have demonstrated that, contrary to common belief, records have frequently

survived: not only are these astonishing findings, but they show in vivid detail the complexities of patriotism, then as now.

The Centre has supported a dozen university-based researchers to collaborate intensively with community organisations, many of which have been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We've seen German and British descendants of First World War soldiers meet to reminisce and share experiences. In Lincolnshire, a collection of German prisoner-of-war cartoons revealed forgotten landscape features. Through partnerships, researchers have re-staged theatre and concert performances; explored the enduring relevance of post-war social reconstruction, and looked 'beyond the war memorial' to the educational experiences of non-combatants.

The ethos of the Engagement Centres, which values the energy, curiosity and expertise found in communities across the UK, continues to shape our activity. With our colleagues in Birmingham, we are touring an exhibition of early 20th-century German photographs to stimulate new conversations about family, public life and the impact of war. Over the next three years we aim to go further in connecting researchers and communities with an interest in the theme of everyday life. This commitment includes a partnership with contemporary basket-makers as they explore the First World War history of their craft and use their basketry skills as a commemorative act. Our emphasis is not the mainstream military focus of official commemoration, but values alternative insights, experiences and narratives.

With our colleagues in Birmingham, we are touring an exhibition of early 20th century German photographs to stimulate new conversations about family, public life and the impact of war.

Professor Sarah Lloyd is Director of Everyday Lives in War, First World War Engagement Centre and chairs the Heritage Hub, School of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire

The Centre for Hidden Histories

University of Nottingham
Professor John Beckett



The Centre for Hidden Histories has spent a successful few years leading outreach and engagement activities to encourage more people, particularly those with little or no experience, to take part in research and commemorative activities that examine the First World War. This has included collaborative research, filmmaking, the writing of plays and hosting of exhibitions. Community partners have been involved at every level of the project and have been encouraged to present their own work and contribute their voices to the centenary discourse.

We have been delighted to contribute to the personal and collective development of people who entered the centenary period as novices but will finish it as experts in their chosen area of investigation. More encouraging still has been their testimony to the effect that working with the Centre, and by extension, universities as a whole, has given them renewed confidence in their skills and abilities.

The Centre made a special effort to work with individuals and communities that had been absent from earlier commemorations and who are under-represented on many UK campuses. These relationships have proven valuable in collective research of the war, and promise the hope of further collaboration on wider historical subjects in the years to come.

Two examples typify this approach.

The Hidden History of the Labour Corps in the First World War: Contributions to the War Effort Made by People with Learning Disabilities.

The Centre was very pleased to support Dr Lee Humber (Ruskin College, Oxford) in a collaborative project with learning disability self-advocacy group, My Life My Choice (MLMC). Humber, a sociologist and learning disability historian is working with a team of researchers with learning disabilities and their supporters in order to investigate what happened to former residents of what were known during the First World War era as 'imbecile asylums' in Oxfordshire and other local regions.

The project seeks to find biographical traces of individuals with learning disabilities who may have left to join the army or who otherwise contributed to the 1914-1918 conflict. The MLMC group have already participated in workshops at Ruskin College and have explored archival materials held at the Oxfordshire History Centre. They are planning further research trips to the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock and the Imperial War Museum, London.

Grassmoor Primary School

The Centre supported 25 students in Year 6 from Grassmoor School in Derbyshire in their HLF-funded project to investigate the impact of the war on their school and village.

The pupils were invited to spend a day at the Nottingham campus learning how to use primary sources, such as census documents in order to build up biographical sketches of soldiers from Grassmoor who fought in World War One.

They also participated in a session at the university's Digital Humanities Centre. Here the students learnt how to scan objects, take digital photographs and use specialist equipment such as book scanners. The pupils were invited to bring along their own First World War era prints and documents from family collections to use as part of the digital technology session.

2017 offers the Centre a great opportunity to build on these experiences and to consolidate the lessons learned in the course of this work. Several reflection activities are planned to capture this information and ensure that our experiences are used to drive further engagement and knowledge exchange. We will also continue to work with local schools, fostering the interest of a new generation and raising their aspirations as we do so. We remain impressed by the level of public enthusiasm for learning the facts of the First World War and for setting commemorative activities in a well-supported historical context.

Professor John Beckett is Director of the Centre for Hidden Histories, Department of History, University of Nottingham.

Living Legacies Engagement Centre

Queen's University Belfast
Professor Keith Lilley



With the centenary of the First World War, the opportunity exists to see how past conflict can form a basis for creating stronger and more resilient communities for the future. This is the challenge that lies at the heart of the AHRC-funded 'Living Legacies 1914-18' Public Engagement Centre. The First World War 'lives on' in contemporary culture in the UK in the 21st century and these 'living' legacies of the war are all around us.

Through artefacts in our personal collections and archives, through the stories we tell about ourselves, our families and the war, and through the landscapes and localities where we live, we encounter these enduring traces of the war. Our focus with Living Legacies is to use these past residues and cultural encounters to explore the complex and sometimes contested ways that the past lives on in the present, right across Britain and Ireland, across the four nations. Drawing on a range of arts and humanities expertise, including digital humanities, creative and performing arts, museums studies, and cultural geography and archaeology, Living Legacies has successfully worked with local communities, museums, archives and libraries, as well as heritage organisations at local, regional and national levels to document and interpret the legacies of the First World War and the contested nature of commemoration itself during the centenary.

Bringing together sometimes competing and conflicting narratives of the war and its legacies, this exhibition has had a significant impact on how 1916—and the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising—is viewed and understood in communities in a divided Northern Ireland.

Right at the heart of the work of Living Legacies is the idea that academic and community researchers have much to gain from collaborating on projects that seek to understand the past and its complex

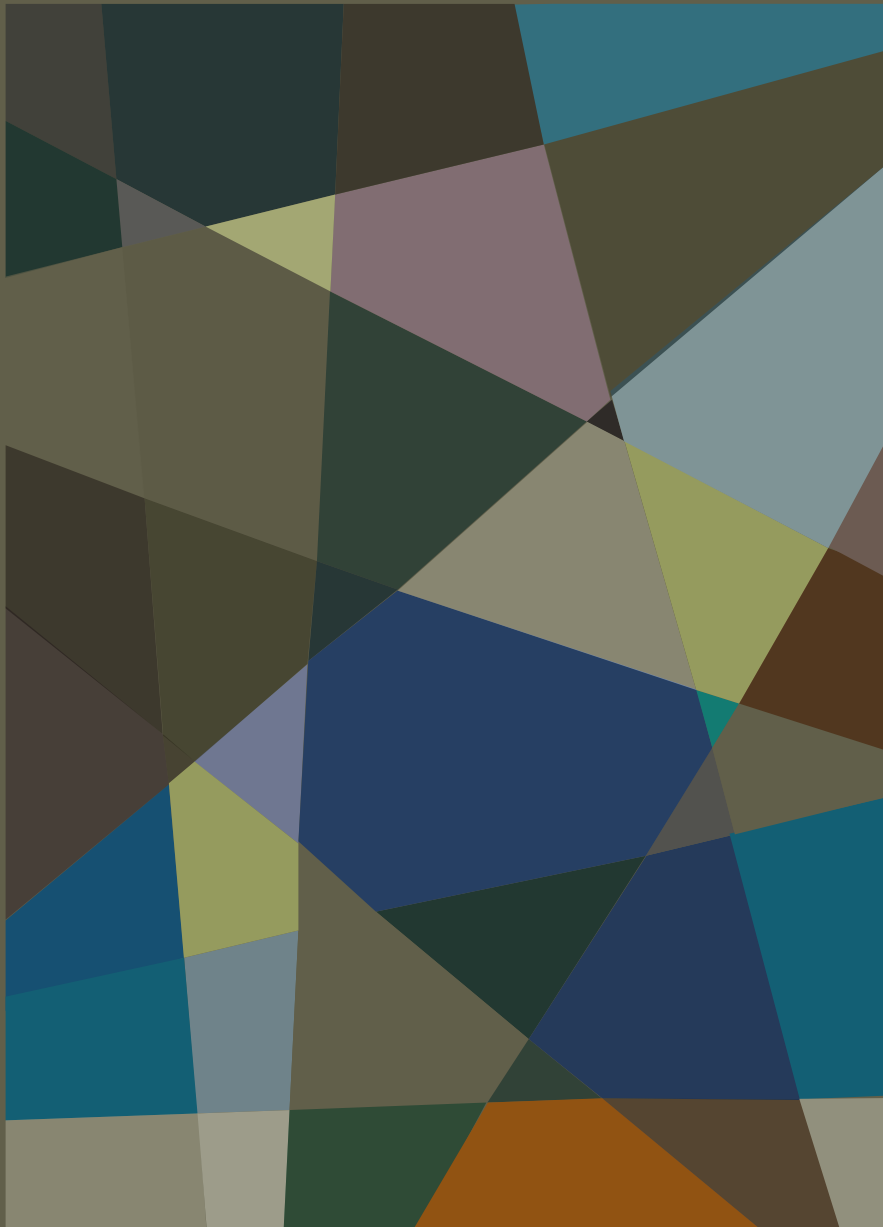
continuing legacies. Living Legacies has been instrumental in co-curating exhibitions, such as the 'Remembering 1916: Your Stories' exhibition held in 2016 and 2017 at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, drawing together the First World War collections of the National Museums of Northern Ireland and presenting them alongside personal and private collections drawn from community engagement in the city led by Living Legacies.

Bringing together sometimes competing and conflicting narratives of the war and its legacies, this exhibition has had a significant impact on how 1916—and the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising—is viewed and understood in communities in a divided Northern Ireland. Working with diverse community groups in Northern Ireland has formed a critical element of Living Legacies engagement during the centenary through projects funded by the Centre. Such projects include the 'Medals All Round Research Initiative' (MARRI), led by creative arts practitioners at Queen's University Belfast, as well as through collaborating with Heritage Lottery Funded cross-community projects, in East and West Belfast, for example, including supporting and developing shared digital resources.

Beyond Northern Ireland, too, Living Legacies researchers have been instrumental in engaging community researchers on projects examining the war's lasting impacts through migration histories, memorials and memorialisation, and conflict archaeology, linking with HLF-funded projects in the North-East of England, for example, as well as Wales. Through these community engagements across the four nations, Living Legacies is now a key player in the co-curation and co-production of centenary research across the UK, and perfectly placed to forge stronger and more resilient communities through exploring and understanding the enduring and complex localised legacies of a past conflict of global proportions.

Professor Keith Lilley is Director of 'Living Legacies 1914-18: From Past Conflict to Shared Future' WW1 Public Engagement Centre and professor of Historical Geography, School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast.

Blog posts from each of the five Engagement Centres



Home comforts: the YMCA and the great war

VOICES OF WAR AND PEACE CENTRE BLOG POST

Matt Shinn looks at an extraordinary story of philanthropy and humanity that is being uncovered by Voices of War and Peace, one of the AHRC Engagement Centres, in partnership with the YMCA.

'The average Joe probably just thinks of the song by the Village People,' says Michael Snape, Reader in Religion, War and Society at the University of Birmingham. Few of us now would associate the YMCA with the First World War, or know that the organisation was involved at the time in one of the greatest philanthropic endeavours ever undertaken in British society.

The YMCA was one of several organisations that gave soldiers a small reminder of the civilian world, even in a front-line trench

The support that the YMCA gave to soldiers in the Great War was material, educational and spiritual. It covered everything from providing recreational huts and tents when young men began their training, to supplying pastoral care, writing materials and cups of tea at hundreds of centres, many very close to, and sometimes on, the front line. The YMCA centre at Ypres, for example, was in a dug-out that frequently came under shell fire. The YMCA was one of several organisations that gave soldiers a small reminder of the civilian world, even in a front-line trench.

Then there was what Michael Snape calls the 'amazingly touching' service that the YMCA provided, of taking family members to hospitals in France, to say farewell to soldiers who were dying and who could not be moved. 'I had a great uncle who was fatally wounded at Messines,' he says. 'My great grandfather received the news, and was asked to travel to be with him in his last hours. I puzzled over that for years – how was it possible for a working-class man to get over to France in 1917? The answer was that the YMCA had made it possible.'

Elbow room

The YMCA's work in the Great War was a huge logistical undertaking. And given its range, cost, and the number of people involved, says Michael Snape, 'the fact that it's now so little known shows just how much of the legacy of the First World War has been forgotten.'

The project that is bringing this forgotten history to light has been supported by the Voices of War and Peace Engagement Centre, based at the University of Birmingham but involving other universities and a wide range of organisations. Like other projects supported by the Engagement Centre, it shows how much the role of religion in society has changed in a hundred years, and how important the work of faith-based agencies was at the time of the First World War.

The YMCA's work in the conflict was entirely independent of government: it was carried out by volunteers, and supported by donations totalling £2.5 million over the course of the war – a huge amount at the time. 'The latitude the YMCA was given shows



VOICES OF WAR:

BIRMINGHAM PEOPLE,
1914-19

The First World War touched the lives of every man, woman and child in Birmingham. All aspects of life were affected - from the price of food to children's education at school.

The way people experienced the conflict was coloured by their circumstances - whether they were male or female, their age, social class and nationality. Their religious beliefs or political perspectives could radically determine the choices they made and the paths they followed.

For some the war brought a chance to expand their horizons - to learn new skills or earn higher wages, even if it meant leaving home.



The YMCA's work was carried out by volunteers, and supported by donations totalling £2.5 million over the course of the war – a huge amount at the time

how much Britain was a liberal Christian society, and the care that it took of its soldiers,' says Michael Snape. 'It's in marked contrast to some of the black legends of the Great War, with their clichés of every 16-year-old being tied to a stake and shot for cowardice. The elbow room given to philanthropic organisations shows the real attitude of the army and of the state, and the extent to which British soldiers were looked after. The French and the Germans didn't have anything like it.'

There is a fundamental contrast, in other words, between the work of the YMCA in the trenches, and the image of the army as a callous machine. 'I'm not trying to bang the drum for the generals, but key figures in the military top brass, including Field Marshal Haig, were important in promoting the YMCA's work: Haig's wife even worked for the YMCA in London.'

It was natural that Voices of War and Peace should be involved in this project: the YMCA's main archive is in the Cadbury Research Library at Birmingham University. As Michael Snape

says, it is an 'absolutely astonishing treasure trove of photographs and manuscripts. And this is a very important story to tell. But one of the problems has been that the YMCA is an activist organisation: it tends to be busy with what it's doing in the present, rather than thinking about the past.'

The YMCA Goes to War project has involved running day schools, to teach people who are interested in the conflict about this neglected aspect of it. It also involves encouraging local YMCA branches to work with the organisation's archives, and make use of them. Bradford YMCA, for example, has created a display to catch the attention of passers-by, and show them something of the work that the YMCA did

during the Great War – a deliberate echo of the kinds of awareness-raising that the YMCA went in for during the conflict, including the creation of mock dug-outs, to demonstrate the conditions that the soldiers were fighting in. 'We're telling YMCA people themselves about their history,' says Michael Snape, 'and enabling them to engage with the public in a very direct way, taking stuff out onto the streets.'

An international effort

The YMCA's Head of International Affairs is Ken Montgomery. He points out that many of the YMCA's volunteers in the First World War were women, who often came to understand much more of the reality of the conflict than those who stayed at home. 'Many, indeed, found themselves in harm's way: Betty Stephenson, for example, volunteered at the age of 18, and was given the job of taking relatives to visit the men who were too seriously wounded to be transported back to Britain. She was killed in France in an air raid, at the age of 21.'

It was about providing practical support, and not just praying

And the YMCA's work was an international effort: volunteers came from Canada, India, the US and Australia, as well as Britain. US President Woodrow Wilson said that 90% of pastoral services provided to the American troops during the First World War were provided by the YMCA. The government of South Africa also paid tribute, donating 400 acres on the shores of Lake Windermere, which the YMCA still uses as an outdoor activities centre.

'The YMCA provided services to friend and foe alike,' says Ken Montgomery. 'It was ecumenical, and it didn't proselytise. It was very much about providing practical support, and not just praying. With the professionalisation of services, and the expansion in what the State provides, you probably wouldn't get anything like it today.'



Child Labour In The Great War

GATEWAYS TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR CENTRE BLOG POST

Dr Rebecca Gill (University of Huddersfield) discusses her research with the Workers' Educational Association and Heritage Quay into the campaign against child labour in Yorkshire during the First World War.

Our project 'Adult Education and the Great War in Yorkshire: A Community History Project' drew to a close last Friday with a final workshop 'Child Labour in the Great War – A Local History', held at the University of Leeds and led by W.E.A. family historian Jackie Depelle and historian of childhood Dr Rebecca Gill. The workshop was full and the conversation lively!

Many were employed under the half time system, spending the morning in the mill and the afternoon at school

Over the course of the project, academics at Leeds (Prof Alison Fell) and Huddersfield (Dr Rebecca Gill) have worked with Rob Hindle, Sarah Holland and Jackie Depelle of the W.E.A., as well as David Smith of Heritage Quay at Huddersfield University and Rob Light, our research assistant, to uncover the story of



adult education during the war, covering everything from the Plebs League classes attended by local Conscientious Objectors to the wartime offerings of Huddersfield Technical College. But one story began to stand out: the campaign of the local

Workers' Educational Association in Yorkshire against the continuance – and escalation – of child labour during the war.

This had a particularly local flavour, as many children were employed either legally or illegally during the war in the mills, helping to meet the huge contracts for army cloth, whether khaki for our own soldiers or horizon blue for the French Army. Many were employed under the half time system, spending the morning in the mill and the afternoon at school (reportedly many were asleep at their desks), but in Bradford a bye-law was passed to reduce the school leaving age from 14 to 13 and of those working half time, many were doing many hours of overtime.

Through the Yorkshire District offices of the W.E.A. in Leeds, a campaign was mobilised to revive the legacy of Oastler and ban the practice of half time work. We have discovered some prominent local names connected to this campaign, in particular Arthur Greenwood, who from his role as head of economics at Huddersfield Technical College before the war had been researching the statistical evidence for the effects of work on the physical development of school children. Arthur would continue to lecture on this topic for the Huddersfield and Leeds W.E.A. throughout the war on visits from his new role at the Ministry of Reconstruction.

We were fortunate to be able to bring together current members of the W.E.A. with local historians specialising in the history of textile production in the West Riding to unravel this story ... and hope to turn this pilot project into a more extensive investigation of the extent of child labour in the First World War, and the W.E.A.'s role nationally in its abolition under Fisher's Educational Act in 1918.



Revisiting war-time drama: the case of J.M. Barrie's *A Well-Remembered Voice* (1918)

EVERYDAY LIVES IN WAR CENTRE BLOG POST

In this guest blog post, Dr Andrew Mauger from the University of Hertfordshire and AHRC's WW1 Engagement Centre 'Everyday Lives in War', talks about re-visiting War-Time Dramas and the case of J. M. Barrie.

While plays about the First World War are now a familiar presence – step forward *Oh, What a Lovely War!* and *War Horse* – the playwrights who actually wrote at the time of the conflict have yet to receive much attention. It's not surprising. Revues and musicals such as *Chu Chin Chow* (1916) dominated the theatrical landscape attracting soldiers and civilians in equal measure.

There was a market for drama but there is a long-held perception that First World War drama was all about patriotic plots involving German villainy, secret dispatches and cheerful "Tommies." After the war it very quickly became fashionable to view melodramas like *Seven Days Leave* (1917) or *The Female Hun* (1918) as shallow and meaningless, their 'childish antics' as George Bernard Shaw labelled them in 1919, the work of opportunistic hacks. By the late 1920s, a play like R. C. Sheriff's *Journey's End* (1928) seemed more 'real' and less irresponsible than the plays written during the war itself, particularly in the way it conveyed what the war had been 'like' for those who fought, the 'lost generation' of young men.

One war-time playwright who was not a hack but who nonetheless tends to get overlooked was J.M.

Barrie (1860-1937). Once regarded as a key figure in British theatre, Barrie's plays have all but disappeared in the eighty years since his death – the exception being the celebrity-filled productions of *Peter Pan* which still appear at pantomime season. As a tour of one of Barrie's "other" plays, *A Well-Remembered Voice* (unseen since its premiere in 1918), gets underway in autumn 2016. It's worth looking at this neglected writer, not least for his attempts to say something about the trauma of war and its impact on those left behind.

When war broke out in August 1914 Barrie, along with Shaw and John Galsworthy, became one of Britain's leading "serious" dramatists. Plays such as *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) and *What Every Woman Knows* (1908) had lifted him to the top rank. Accordingly, he was one of several writers recruited by the government's War Propaganda Bureau. Others included Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle, all of whom were too old to fight but thought it their duty to write patriotically – whatever their private misgivings about the conflict or the way it was being run.

Barrie set to work dutifully. *Der Tag* (1915), an allegorical two-hander about a bombastic Emperor being taken to task by "the Spirit of Culture" appeared in 1915 at The Coliseum, London's top variety theatre. It was seen by Virginia Woolf who described it as "sheer balderdash of the thinnest kind." On the basis



The problem for war-time dramatists like Barrie was that it was hard to depict what was really happening: how did you represent the horrors of the battlefield and the experience of combat in any meaningful way?

that war-time theatre's role was to be escapist, Barrie followed it up with a revue, *Rosy Rapture* (1915) for the French exotic dancer Gaby Deslys, a figure on whom he seems to have had a bit of a crush. This was a flop. He then returned to writing what critics tended to label "whimsy." *A Kiss for Cinderella*, set in war-time London, premiered in 1916 and a play about second chances, *Dear Brutus* in 1917.

The problem for war-time dramatists like Barrie was that it was hard to depict what was really happening: how did you represent the horrors of the battlefield and the experience of combat in any meaningful way? Barrie's solution was to turn to the "Home Front". His most important war-time legacy is a quartet of one-act plays *The New Word* (1915), *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* (1917) and *A Well-Remembered Voice* (1918). All the plays are powerful miniature studies of pain, loss bereavement and loneliness. They focus on the changing relationships between those who are fighting and those who are left behind.

A Well-Remembered Voice was first produced in June 1918 in aid of a hospital for wounded soldiers in London run by Countess Pamela Lytton (a titled lady who actually did war-work rather than playing at it). The play isn't the usual bit of fluff produced for these occasions and its subsequent neglect is odd. It's a taut, rather moving portrayal about how to mourn the dead – a much-debated question at the time.

A Well-Remembered Voice also deals with one of the most striking developments of wartime life: the growth of spiritualism. Putting one's trust into séances, table rapping, automatic writing, and other communications with spirits was no longer the business of eccentrics – as it had been prior to 1914. The change was summed up by a Catholic bishop, James Wedgwood, who observed in 1919 how "a very marked change had passed over the face of popular thought in relation to spiritualism and psychical research...the appeal of a son cut off in the full flush of life's promise, speaking to his bereaved parents... is naturally great." Denied the chance even to bury their sons (the transport of soldiers' bodies to Britain

for burial having been prohibited), people tried to re-establish contact and say "good-bye" in another way. In *A Well-Remembered Voice*, the appearance, after a séance, of Jack, a young soldier, seems to be Barrie suggesting that such things were possible.

For Barrie's biographers there is, of course, another way in which *A Well-Remembered Voice* has been seen to be revealing. Although Barrie had no children of his own, he was a famously devoted guardian to the orphaned Llewelyn Davies brothers—George, John, Peter, Michael and Nicholas – models for the "lost boys" in *Peter Pan*. Barrie paid for their education at Eton and took them on expensive holidays. In 1914, George Llewelyn Davies (aged 21) was the only brother old enough to enlist. Barrie's response was to worry. "I don't have any iota of desire for you to get military glory", he told him, "but I have the one passionate desire that we be together again once at least." In March 1915, George was shot by a sniper. Barrie received his final letter *after* news of his death. In the letter George wrote that he was looking forward to coming home. While *A Well-Remembered Voice* recounts the experiences of soldiers in the trenches, Barrie also depicts a family's anguish, especially that of the father, a man who, because he is a British gentleman, bottles up his anguish.

As we commemorate the Centenary of World War I, J.M. Barrie's wartime output is worth revisiting. As a piece of war writing *A Well-Remembered Voice* is interesting because Barrie seems unsure whether he wants to be propagandist (i.e. the dead soldiers are happy in the afterlife) or anti-war (what a waste of young life it has been...). At the time, the play fell foul of the Lord Chamberlain's Office because the returning soldier has the temerity to suggest that the Germans are actually quite like us. Soldiers from both sides were living happily in the afterlife away from the meddling politicians.

Since the 1960s it's the testimony of poets like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke which has done much to stamp a particular way of thinking about the war on the modern consciousness but there should be a space for J.M. Barrie too.

Centre for Hidden Histories Exhibition, 'Beyond the Western Front: Oxfordshire in the First World War'

CENTRE FOR HIDDEN HISTORIES CENTRE BLOG POST



Dr Tudor Georgescu's Centre for Hidden Histories exhibition, 'Beyond the Western Front: Oxfordshire in the First World War' was displayed at The Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes from 18th November to 16th December 2016.

The exhibition was an exploration of the First World War involvement of the Oxfordshire and



Buckinghamshire Light Infantry battalion and the Queens Own Oxfordshire in military actions in Ireland, Italy, the Balkans, the Middle East and Russia.

In keeping with the participatory ethos of Connected Communities, the exhibition was the result of research conducted by 14 local people, museum volunteers and Oxford Brookes students. These project participants are: Jeff Clements, Jane Cotter, Louisa Fagan, Jim Grundy, Peter Johnston, Shelia King, Mark McKay, Jean Mills, Kevin Northover, Paul Otter, John Sheldon, Kathleen Tunnicliffe, Steve Warner and Janet Witcomb.

Particularly innovative was the exhibition's use of Stereoscopic pictures from the front line, many of which were published in a 1923 Keystone set. These images can be viewed through 3D glasses, which were made available to visitors of the exhibition.

'Beyond the Western Front' was accompanied by a lively programme of public events. These included an exhibition launch on 18 November, a visit by the Barton Brownie troop on 22nd November and the book launch of *Poppy* (2016), Andrew Lack's exploration of the symbolic meaning of this flower.

Educational events have continued with research seminars by Professor Mark Harrison and Dr Marius

Above: Stereoscopic WWI image (3D anaglyph)

Below: Dr Tudor Georgescu (Oxford Brookes University) and Stephen Baker (The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum)





Left: Dr Tudor Georgescu and Simon Wilson installing the exhibition (photograph by Tom Killick)

Right: The launch of Andrew Lack's book, Poppy

Below: Visitor at the 'Beyond the Western Front' exhibition

Turda as well as a school group visit by 50 pupils and six staff visiting from France as part of a Poetry Centre project.

You can re-live the display by viewing the exhibition catalogue (<http://hiddenhistorieswwwi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/War-Beyond-the-Western-Front-Exhibition-Catalogue.pdf>). 3D specs recommended!

Here are just some of the visitor responses to the exhibition:

"The first-hand accounts and the photography made it seem much more real to me."

"I can feel the experiences of the soldiers, rather than just know they happened."

"Nice to see personal stories, and some info' about foreign soldiers."

"Would have loved to look through the scrapbooks but realise how precious they are."

"It was amazing, fantastic work! Thank you!"



Battle-scars and Dragon's Claws: the legacy of Mametz Wood

LIVING LEGACIES CENTRE BLOG POST



In this guest blog post, Dr Gethin Matthews from the Department of History at the University of Swansea talks about the battle of Mametz Wood, which commenced on 7th July 1916. Dr Matthews is principal investigator on 'Welsh Memorials to the Great War', a project funded by the AHRC Funded Living Legacies 1914-18 World War One Engagement Centre. There are five WW1 Engagement Centres, whose focus is to provide UK-wide support for community engagement activities, commemorating WW1.

Those from outside Wales who are interested in the history of the First World War and its aftermath may be surprised to discover how one relatively minor battle on the Western Front has such resonance in certain Welsh circles. The Battle of Mametz Wood, fought from 7 to 12 July 1916, was part of the early Somme campaign. The losses, of around four thousand killed and wounded on the British side, though heart-rending, are much smaller than the numbers lost on just the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Having been trained for the most part in Wales, these recruits were posted to the Western Front in late 1915 and gained experience of trench warfare in quiet sectors for some months.

Its significance for Wales is that this was the first battle fought by the troops of the 38th (Welsh) Division, also known with some justification as 'Lloyd George's Army'. These were the men who volunteered in droves to be part of the 'Welsh Army Corps' that Lloyd George and his acolytes sought to raise from September 1914 onwards: men who were drawn by Lloyd George's rhetoric about putting the first 'Welsh army in the field' since the days of Owain Glyndŵr. See the blog post (<http://historyclassics.wordpress.com/2014/10/06/a-welsh-army-in-the-field-lloyd-george-and-the-queens-hall-speech-of-19-september-1914>) for a consideration of Lloyd George's



famous speech in London's Queen's Hall on 19 September 1914. The ideal of the 'Welsh Army Corps' became the reality of the 38th (Welsh Division).

Having been trained for the most part in Wales, these recruits were posted to the Western Front in late 1915 and gained experience of trench warfare in quiet sectors for some months. Six days after the opening of the Somme offensive, this division was given the task of clearing Mametz Wood, a dense wood that had been heavily fortified by the Germans who had held it for two years, and was now defended by the elite Lehr regiment of Prussian Guards.

The details of the fighting, and how the Welsh overcame the odds at a tremendous cost can be found in this article by Robin Barlow (www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-history-month-mametz-wood-2047333).

However, after the mission was successfully completed, as Colin Hughes wrote in his 1982 book about the battle, 'neither glory nor distinction was noticeably bestowed' upon the Welsh soldiers, but they were 'bundled unceremoniously away to a quiet sector of the front'. The official response of the upper echelons is summarised in General Haig's comments on the action on 7 July: 'The 38th Welsh Division ... had not advanced with determination to the attack'.

In contrast to the dismissive attitude of the Army's High Command, the reaction in Wales was to laud the courage and tenacity of the Welsh troops. Newspapers printed letters carrying first-person accounts of the fighting within eight days of the action, describing in some detail the horrendous difficulties of fighting a well-armed and determined enemy in strongly



defended positions. A 'Soldier from Bargoed' wrote to the *Western Mail* of how 'The Welsh boys fought like very demons through a wood which was well-nigh impregnable'. In conclusion he declared 'The whole of the Welsh boys, however, fought with great bravery and proved themselves to be splendid fighters'.

Even as other battles were being fought, the story of the Welsh at Mametz was being re-told and the narrative shaped into one of a remarkable success against the odds. Numerous examples of poetry (not necessarily, it has to be said, of a very high standard) can be found in both languages in various Welsh newspapers. See, for example, the verses in English by Driver W. H Davies from September 1916 (<http://cymru1914.org/en/view/newspaper/3580283/6/ART63>) or by Sgt J. Jarman from August 1917 (<http://cymru1914.org/en/view/newspaper/4094738/2/ART20>) while a Welsh-language example can be found here courtesy of The National Library of Wales (<http://cymru1914.org/en/view/newspaper/4016702/5/ART44>) from September 1918.

Partially, this movement to commemorate the valour of the Welsh troops at Mametz Wood was driven by the soldiers themselves. The pride in their achievements is clear in the doggerel of Sgt. Jarman ('For the hardest task we went through that morn / That's been done by British sons') and Driver Davies ('My God! What a charge we made / The observers who were behind us / Said 'twas better than being on parade'). There is an interesting report (<http://cymru1914.org/en/view/newspaper/4015748/6/ART75>) of Welsh soldiers serving in France chanting that it was the *Welsh* who cleared the Germans from Mametz Wood.

Further impetus to commemorate this as a Welsh battle came from the top. When Lloyd George visited Welsh recruits in August 1916 training in the enormous camp in Kinmel Park, near Rhyl, he inspired them with a speech which focused on the achievements of their brothers-in-arms.

The local newspaper (<http://cymru1914.org/en/view/newspaper/4243526/2/ART24>) reported on how he declared: 'The attack on Mametz Wood was one of the most difficult enterprises which ever fell to any division. It was left to the Welsh Division, and they swept the enemy out of it (cheers)'.

Indeed, there was a debate in some Welsh newspapers in the spring of 1918 – *before the outcome of the War was decided* – as to which encounter should be commemorated as 'the' Welsh battle of the War: the choice being Mametz Wood or Pilckem Ridge (31 July 1917). In the euphoria that greeted the 'victory' in 1918, there were numerous poems written about Welsh valour in the battlefield, many of which took Mametz Wood as their theme.

A short story about a Welsh miner at Mametz won a prize at the National Eisteddfod in 1923; one of the best memoirs by a Welsh soldier about the war is *Up to Mametz*, published by Llewelyn Wyn Griffith in 1931. The most famous Welsh painting of the War is *The Welsh Division at the Battle of Mametz Wood* by Christopher Williams (<https://museum.wales/cardiff/whatson/8949/Wars-Hell-The-Battle-of-Mametz-Wood-in-Art>).

One of the most astonishing artistic works to come out of the First World War is David Jones' *In Parenthesis* – this was largely inspired by his experiences with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Mametz (see <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/25/in-parenthesis-no-longer-who-was-the-author-of-the-greatest-poem-of-the-first-world-war>).

Thus it is not surprising that as interest in the First World War grew in the 1980s as the number of veterans of the conflict grew fewer, the focus on the



experiences of the Welsh in this one battle became more intense. Following a campaign by the Western Front Association, a challenging and beautiful memorial was raised to the 38th Welsh Division at Mametz. Designed by sculptor/blacksmith David Petersen, the memorial was unveiled in 1987: three documentaries were broadcast on Welsh television to accompany the event.

At a local level, the name of Mametz resonated long in various communities throughout Wales.

For example, a ward at the Cardiff Royal Infirmary was designated the 'Mametz Ward' while The 15th Welsh Regiment (Carmarthenshire Battalion) designated their reunion the 'Mametz Wood dinner'. A wounded soldier in Llanrug also renamed his home 'Mametz Cottage'.

A project I am currently managing, Welsh Memorials to the Great War (<http://war-memorials.swan.ac.uk>) funded by Living Legacies 1914-18 – <http://www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk> – has uncovered further examples of how the name of Mametz remained engrained within some Welsh communities. The project has collected information on well over two hundred WW1 memorials in Wales (with hundreds more to be gathered) and one interesting aspect that comes over in many of them is the geographical range that is incorporated in the local commemorations. The men who are remembered served all over the globe: a large number of Welsh soldiers who served with Canadian or Australian units are commemorated in their home villages.

Many of the memorials to those who died state where the men met their fate, although most of the time the details are non-specific, stating simply 'France', 'Gallipoli' or 'Mesopotamia'. However, a few are more precise. There are 12 names in the memorial at Tregarth church, Caernarfonshire. The last line carved on this memorial – 'Tros ryddid collasant eu gwaed' ['For Freedom they lost their blood'] comes from the Welsh National Anthem. Four died at Ypres

and one at Gaza – both names that appear with tragic regularity on several more Welsh memorials. One, Pte. H R Williams, died at Mametz Wood.

Other memorials in Welsh chapels have an explicit reference to Mametz Wood. Three soldiers are commemorated in the memorial at Capel y Cwm, Pentrechwyth, Swansea: one of them was David Griffith Williams, who was killed in the battle.

The memorial in Hermon chapel, Pembrey, has two names, including Robert Jones, another who was killed at Mametz Wood.

One more chapel memorial deserves particular attention – although the only photograph I have obtained of it is rather poor. The chapel, Berea, Cricieth (Caernarfonshire) closed a few years ago after its membership fell to single figures. The significance of this place of worship is that it was Lloyd George's family's chapel: for many years his highly respected uncle, Richard Lloyd had been its leading light. Two brothers, Hugh and Hywel Williams, who were family friends of Lloyd George's family, died within six weeks of one another in 1916. Both had been active in the recruiting campaign, trying to persuade young Welshmen to answer the call put out by their politician friend. Captain Hywel Williams was killed at Mametz Wood.

*Dr Gethin Matthews, Dept. of History,
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Remembering Elisabethville: The Belgian Refugee “Colony” of Durham

EVERYDAY LIVES IN WAR CENTRE BLOG POST

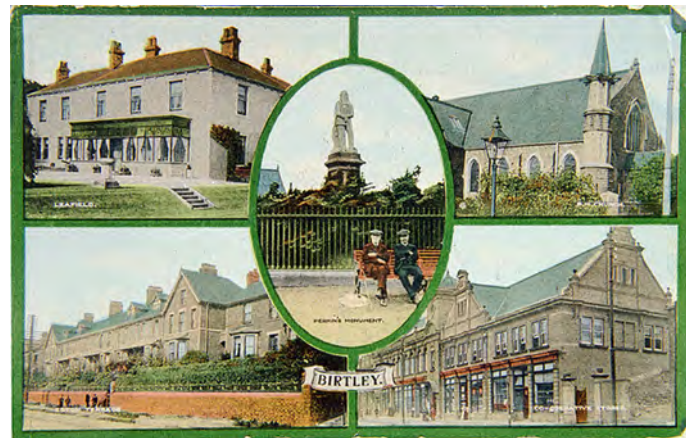
In this guest blog post, Caroline Nielsen relates the surprising history of Birtley and the Belgians.

The World War One at Home project offers communities a chance to reflect on their histories and discover new, and sometimes surprising elements of their shared past. Few have a history as surprising as Birtley, County Durham*. During the First World War, this small industrial village was at the heart of Allied diplomatic relations when it became a central hub for thousands of Belgian soldiers and their families.

Birtley seems an unlikely place to uncover such a fascinating hidden history of wartime international politics. In 1914, Birtley was fairly typical of most North-East industrial communities of the time. Life revolved around the local mines and heavy industries. There were two small cinemas, the Co-Operatives, and a number of small churches and parks. The outbreak of the war in August 1914 changed Birtley for decades to come. Approximately 3,500 men from the local area enlisted into the armed services. Others left the area to work in other parts of industrial Tyneside. More significantly, the residents of Birtley gained over 4,000 new neighbours. Birtley was chosen as the site of two munitions factories, staffed entirely by Belgian soldiers, their families and other refugees. The resulting community was nicknamed “Elisabethville”, after the Belgian queen Elisabeth of Bavaria.

The outbreak of war in 1914 left many Belgians homeless and penniless. The historian Tony Kushner estimates that over one million fled the country, approximately one-sixth of the Belgian population. Of these, he estimates about 200,000 arrived in the UK.

All refugees had to register with their local Police and Committee, and inform them of their personal circumstances and movements.



They were initially cared for by a series of central and local Refugee Committees, set up by well-meaning individuals and churches. All refugees had to register with their local Police and Committee, and inform them of their personal circumstances and movements. They also had to carry identity papers, or face arrest as German “enemy aliens”. Some were abused in public after being mistaken for Germans. Most Belgian refugees settled around London, although other large communities formed in Birmingham, Winchester, and of course, in Birtley. At its height, Elisabethville accommodated between 2-3.75% of the entire Belgian refugee population living in the UK!

Elisabethville was the product of a unique diplomatic collaboration between the British and Belgian governments. The British built the munitions factories and the workers’ accommodation, and then turned the entire site over to the Belgian government, who then provided the workforce. Most of the workers were injured soldiers and their families, although other refugees also worked there. Many had travelled from London, where some had worked in other Belgian-run munitions factories in Twickenham and Erith (Greater London). What made Elisabethville different from these other factories was the intention behind it. In return for the munitions from the factories, the British government allowed a sovereign Belgian “colony” to be temporarily established in Durham.

* Birtley was historically part of County Durham. It is now part of the metropolitan borough of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. Records relating to Elisabethville, its factories and its residents can be found in the National Archives, Tyne and Wear Archives, Beamish Living History Museum, and Durham County Records Office.

Elisabethville was a planned community for the munitions workers, similar to the community built for the "munitionettes" of Gretna. The workers and their families lived in purpose-built accommodation adjacent to the factories. Single men lived in hostels while married men and families lived in small prefabricated houses. More buildings were gradually added to Elisabethville, including an infants' school, shops, church, and other amusements. It had its own official newspaper, "the Birtley Echo" written in English, French and Flemish. The Belgian authorities also brought over an independent police force and the camp was run according to Belgian law.

Despite their new homes having all the mod-cons (like flushing indoor toilets), life in Elisabethville was neither idyllic nor quiet. Munitions work was dangerous and many were seriously injured or killed in industrial accidents. Political divisions also caused problems. There were tensions between the French- and Flemish-speaking workers, and between the workers and the Belgian authorities. The Belgian authorities were paranoid about the so-called persuasive influence of British trade unionism in their factories. Paradoxically, British trade unions were openly hostile towards the Belgians, accusing them of accepting lower wages and more brutal working conditions. Camp tensions reached breaking point in April 1916 and a riot broke out after one political activist was arrested by the Elisabethville police. The arrest and subsequent removal of the prisoner alarmed the British authorities so much that it caused a minor diplomatic incident. Contact with the locals was discouraged, although it is clear that many local residents developed close



THE CHEERFUL AND HAPPY MEN OF ELIZABETHVILLE AND THEIR HANDIWORK

ties to their new neighbours. Some married into their new community.

The Belgian government was adamant that all of Elisabethville's residents had to return to Belgium at the end of the war. By December 1918, the majority of the workers had been repatriated back to Belgium. The locals moved into the Belgian accommodation blocks. Demolition of the site began in 1938. Now two anonymous buildings are all that remain of this once large and diverse community.

Commemorating Elisabethville allows us to consider the remarkable moment in British history when part of County Durham became temporarily Belgian.

The history of Elisabethville and the Birtley Belgians was covered by BBC Newcastle as part of its ongoing "World War One at Home" series.



THE BRIGHT FACES IN THE PLAYGROUND OF THE GIRLS' SCHOOL TELL THEIR OWN STORY

The Other War Dead: Asylum Patients during the First World War

EVERYDAY LIVES IN WAR CENTRE BLOG POST

In this guest blog post, Caroline Nielsen describes how vulnerable patients were displaced from hospitals to make way for the casualties of war.

In a recent post for this blog, Dr Jessica Meyer discussed how wounded and sick soldiers were evacuated from the front lines to large specialised hospitals in Britain. Images of these war hospitals and their military patients have appeared in publications as part of the centenary commemorations. These institutions have even been the subject of popular TV dramas, such as *Downton Abbey*, *The Wipers Times*, and *The Crimson Fields*. But the creation of these life-saving institutions had a hidden cost: the forced displacement of around 12,000 of the most vulnerable people in British society. This was because 24 of Britain's largest war hospitals were requisitioned asylums for the mentally ill and those with learning disabilities.

Asylums and the War

The British military authorities were under considerable pressure in late 1914. There were simply not enough hospital beds in Britain to accommodate the ever-growing number of allied war casualties. Numerous patriotic individuals and organisations voluntarily opened their doors to soldier-patients, donating their time, money, and property to the war effort. But it was simply not enough. A drastic and ambitious scheme was developed to ensure that the nation remained fighting fit. Recovering soldiers needed beds but they also needed spacious grounds, recreational areas and sports fields to aid their recovery. Only a small number of institutions had all of these facilities already in place: residential schools, workhouses and the largest of them all, lunatic asylums. There were only two problems: the pre-existing large population of vulnerable patients and the stigma attached to them.

Every county in England and Wales had a lunatic asylum. Run by local committees overseen by the government's centralised Board of Control, these institutions offered residential care to a large population of men, women and children. There were over 102 psychiatric asylums in England and Wales

in 1914. Over 108,000 men, women and children lived permanently in these institutions. This meant that each county and borough asylum cared for an average of 1000 patients at any one time (Sarah Rutherford, *The Victorian Asylum*, 2011).

Asylum patients had a wide range of conditions, many of which would not fit with modern understandings of mental illness. As well as caring for those with depression, anxiety and delusions, asylums nursed those with long-term or degenerative conditions like epilepsy, tuberculosis, liver disease, alcoholism, and syphilis. A significant proportion of patients were elderly and frail, moved from out of their homes when they started to experience the disorientating symptoms of dementia. It was not uncommon to find those with learning disabilities living permanently in asylums (for example those with Down's syndrome or who would now be placed on the autistic spectrum). It is important to stress that the majority of those with learning disabilities in the early twentieth century continued to live with their extended families. While some patients were sent by their families to these institutions, others were referred there by social welfare authorities: by doctors, charity workers, the Board of Education, or by the Guardians of the Poor who oversaw workhouses. Going into a workhouse or insane asylum carried a huge social stigma. But for the most impoverished, sick and desperate, they offered the only chance of free medical care.

The Asylum War Hospital Scheme, 1915-1919

Faced with mounting casualties, the British War Authorities approached the Board of Control for permission to empty a small number of asylums. Patients were either to return to their families or be transferred into different institutions. Nine asylums were initially selected, with others gradually added into the scheme whenever more beds were needed. All selected asylums were swiftly renamed as "war hospitals" so that soldier casualties would not be tainted with the stigma of receiving treatment in a lunatic asylum.

The most incredible aspect of the scheme was the speed with which it was carried out. Within five weeks of the scheme being confirmed, the selected asylums had been emptied of all but a few of their patients. The official estimate was about 12,000. Only the "gravely ill" [dying] and a few "quiet useful insane" men were allowed to stay on. The "useful" patients were to work as gardeners. (Board of Control, Official History of the War Asylum Hospitals, 1920). The insane were not even given the reassurance of familiar staff. Asylum nursing staff were requisitioned for the war effort along with the furniture.

Unsurprisingly, the immediate effect on the patients was severe. The official report of the Medical Officer of Norfolk County Asylum (later Norfolk War Hospital) is so shocking that it is worth quoting at length;

The scenes on departure aroused varying emotions in myself, my medical colleagues and the nurses. It was all interesting, some of it most amusing and much sadly pathetic. To not a few the asylum had been their home for many years, some for over fifty years, some since childhood; many even had never been in a railway train ... so it will be readily believed that the whole gamut of emotion was exhibited by the patients on leaving, ranging from acute distress and misery, through gay indifference, to maniacal fury and indignation.

Casualties of War

That the Asylum War Hospitals Scheme saved lives is beyond dispute. By 1920, the hospitals had offered specialist care, pioneering treatment and friendship to over 440,000 men from all over the world.

Approximately over 38,000 (9%) of these men were psychiatric cases; those suffering from shell-shock, nervous breakdowns, delusions, and sheer terror.

But the War Hospitals came at a terrible cost to the mentally ill and their families. Within one year of the first transfers, the Board of Control noticed that patients were dying at a higher rate than usual. Overcrowding had resulted in some of the remaining asylums facilitating the spread of influenza,



pneumonia and tuberculosis. The asylum patients were also subject to rationing and food shortages, weakening an already sickly population. A series of cold wartime winters and a shortage of psychiatric medical professionals only exacerbated the problem.

In its official 1920 inquiry on the War Hospital's Scheme, the government reported that the transferred insane should be viewed as quasi casualties of war. Their suffering during the war was immediately and irrefutably comparable to that of "normal" military casualties. The insane deserved respect and sympathy irrespective of the stigma attached to their condition.

This was never to be. In spite of the report writer's best efforts, the wartime experiences of the civilian insane were almost immediately forgotten by their communities. The stigma surrounding mental illness and disability meant that discussing their experiences became taboo. No war memorials were raised in the name of these men, women and children. But as the centenary passes, they too should be remembered.

The AHRC and BBC 'World War One at Home' project will explore the asylum transfers further in the autumn. Detailed descriptions of the individual asylums can be found in the Board of Control's official report, entitled 'History of the Asylum War Hospitals in England and Wales', 1920. Regional asylum death statistics can be in Lewis Krammer's article 'The Extraordinary Deaths of Asylum Patients, 1914-18' in the journal *Medical History* (1992).

Aircraft built in Lincoln – the home of the tank

BLOG POST BY DAN ELLIN



In this guest blog post, Dan Ellin considers the places and people behind aircraft of the First World War which were built in a city better known for producing tanks.

In the history of warfare and the Great War, the city of Lincoln has become synonymous with the tank. In 1915 William Tritton, the managing director of William Foster & Co and Major Walter Wilson first began drawing designs of what was to become the tank in a room in a local hotel. After unsuccessful trials of 'Little Willie', 'Mother' the prototype of the Mark 1 tank was tested at Burton Park on the outskirts of Lincoln in January 1916. Shortly afterwards the first 100 tanks were ordered, and were first used on the Western front in September 1916. Tanks were built in William Foster & Co's Tritton works in Lincoln, but the city's other engineering firms also played important parts in the war effort. Ruston, Proctor & Co., Robey & Co. and Clayton and Shuttleworth were all involved in aircraft production, with one in fourteen British aircraft being made in Lincoln during the war. The city was one of the top five aircraft manufacturing centres of the Great War with over 5,000 aircraft being constructed in the city's factories which employed around 6,000 men and women on aircraft work.

Ruston Proctor & Co. LTD.

First contracted to build B.E.2c aircraft in 1915, Ruston Proctor & Co. built over 2,000 aircraft and more than 3,000 engines in purpose built factory buildings in the Boultham area of the city. The firm was the country's largest supplier of engines which employed more than 3,000 men and women in aircraft production.

Towards the end of 1915 the company began building the far superior 'Sopwith 1 ½ strutter' aircraft, and in 1917, the famous 'Sopwith Camel'. The Camel was the highest scoring fighter of the war and it took its name from the hump over the two machine guns in front of the pilot. Rustons built the majority of the 5,500 Camels manufactured during the war; by November 1918 the Lincoln firm had completed 1,600. The thousandth model off the assembly line was painted in an Egyptian winged sun theme and used for publicity.



Robey & Co. LTD.

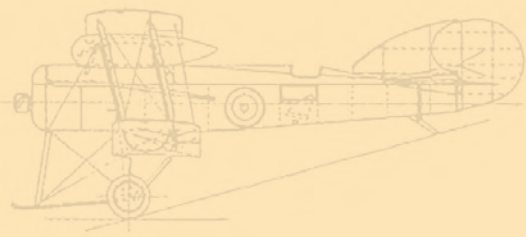
Between 1915 and 1919 Robey & Co. built aircraft for the Admiralty, but were unusual in that they also designed, built and flew prototypes of their own aircraft. The firm began with sub-contracted orders to build the 'Sopwith Gunbus', a pusher biplane with the engine to the rear of the aircraft, and later 'Short 184 Seaplanes'. At peak production they produced one seaplane a day.

The first aircraft Robey designed and built was a single seater scout biplane. The prototype was sent to Hendon, but was never tested as the Gnome rotary engine the designer had hoped to use was not delivered. The company's most successful prototype, the 'Robey Peters Fighting Machine' also never went into production, but two were built and tested. It was intended that the aircraft would be used by the Navy for anti Zeppelin and U-boat patrols. It was a single engine aircraft with a crew of three; the pilot, and two gunners. The gunners were to sit in separate plywood nacelles in the wings. The port nacelle was to be armed with a Lewis gun and thirty rounds of ammunition, while the starboard nacelle was fitted with a seven foot long recoilless Davis gun and ten rounds of 2lb ammunition. The second prototype was intended to be armed with two Davis guns.

The first prototype flew from Bracebridge Heath near Lincoln in September 1916. Its first flight, a circuit of the airfield was successful, but it overturned on its second flight. On its third test three days later, the engine overheated, the plane caught fire and crashed causing £50 damage to a hospital building. In April 1917 the second prototype stalled on takeoff and crashed on the edge of the airfield.

Clayton & Shuttleworth LTD.

The company built aircraft on its 100 acre site on the East side of the city. They first built parts for Admiralty airships, but in 1916 they received orders to build the 'Sopwith Triplane' and in 1917 'Sopwith Camels'. Lincoln's long association with bomber aircraft arguably began in 1916 when Clayton and

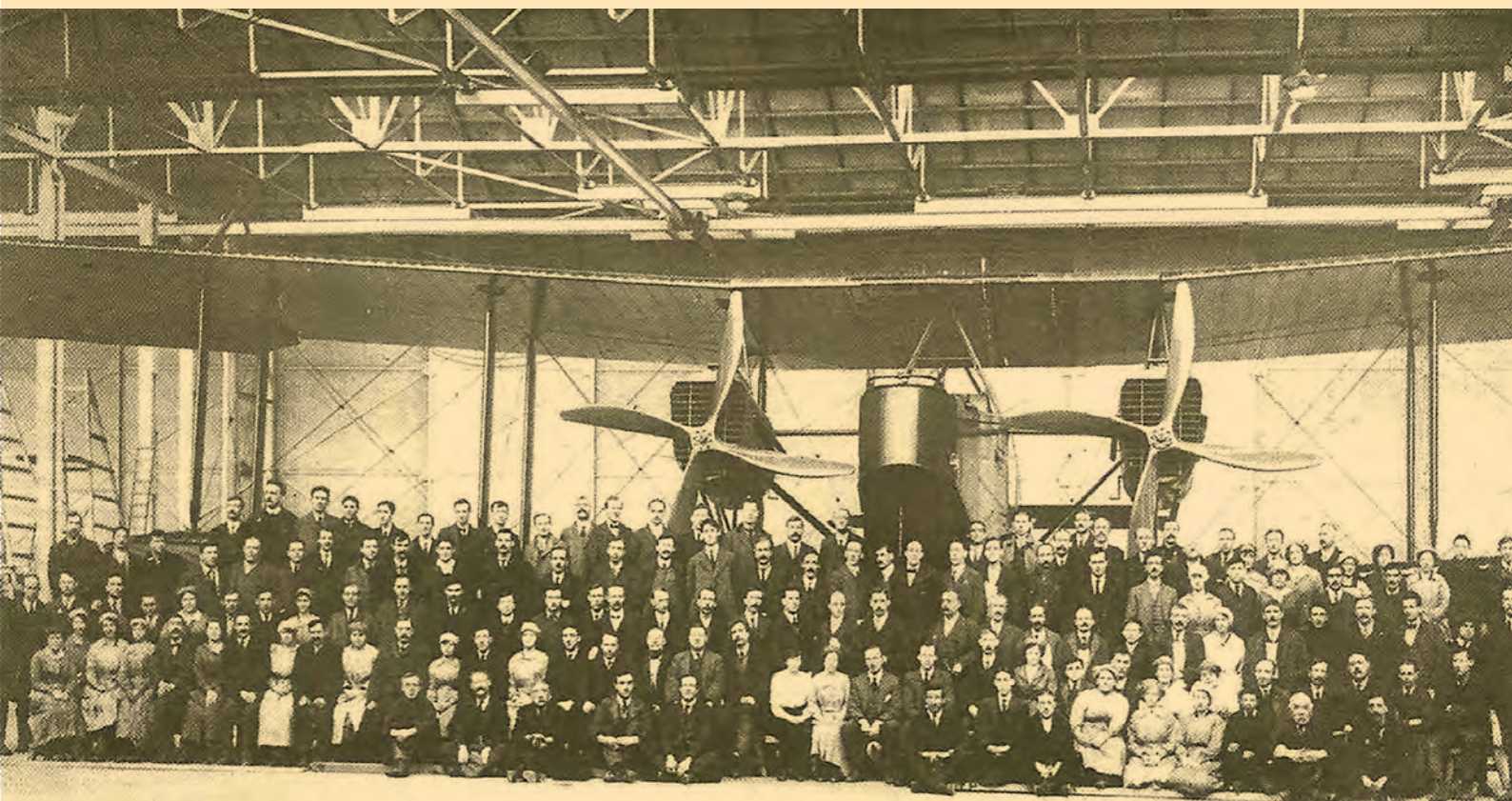


Shuttleworth were given an order to produce 'Handley Page O/400' bombers. Prisoners of war were used to build new aircraft shops in which the aircraft were assembled three abreast. The Handley Page O/400 could carry the 1,650lb (748kg) bomb, the heaviest bomb used by the British during the war and they were so large they had to be flown directly from the factory's 'Handley Page field.' In September 1918 a force of 40 Handley Page O/400s bombed targets in the Saar region of Germany. An order for 'Vickers Vimy' bombers was cancelled after the armistice when only three machines had been completed.

Aircraft built in the city were delivered to 'No.4 Aircraft Acceptance Park' on Lincoln's West Common.

The landing ground, impractically built on the hillside, overlooked the William Foster's Tritton works where the first tanks were manufactured, and was only a mile south of the tanks testing ground. William Tritton has been commemorated by 'Tritton road' built in the 1970s. Although some industry remains in Lincoln, the Robeys works is now a builders' merchant and there is an out of town shopping centre along Tritton road where much of Rustons aircraft industry was located. Much of Lincoln's aircraft manufacturing industry has been forgotten.

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The front-line funnies: cartoons and comic strips in the First World War

EVERYDAY LIVES IN WAR CENTRE BLOG POST

In this blog post, Matt Shinn looks into a major research project by Jane Chapman that is telling the story of the two World Wars through an unlikely, but important, and up to now, largely overlooked medium.

Two bristle-haired Tommies are sitting in a shell hole, while explosions fill the sky above them. We don't know exactly what has just passed between them, but one turns to the other and says 'Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it.'

The cartoon, featuring the anti-hero Old Bill, was by the British humourist Bruce Bairnsfather. It was to become the most famous cartoon of the First World War. And work of its kind can give us an at-a-glance appreciation of what people at the time of the Great War were thinking. If it's a comic strip that will also provide a sense of story that is a valuable record, according to Jane Chapman, Professor of Communications at Lincoln University, who is an expert on WW1 cartoons and trench publications.

The AHRC-supported project that Jane Chapman has been working on, 'Comics and World Wars: a Cultural Record', began with the idea that comics were an important piece of popular culture that had been overlooked by historians. 'Many academics have been interested in the mainstream press only,' she says. 'And within newspapers, they've tended to overlook the apparently marginal things – the cartoons and the adverts, both of which can tell you a lot.' The project is intended to bring back into public understanding the heritage of comics and cartoons produced at the time of the First World War, and to shed light on the attitudes that they demonstrate. And in some cases, to recuperate much of this material that has been forgotten, which is mouldering away in collections and has not usually been written about.

Vulgar caricatures

The graphic art produced during the First World War is of many different kinds. An exhibition at the Cartoon Museum, which the AHRC has supported as part of the Comics and World Wars project, brings together over 300 images, many on loan from the Cambridge University Library War Reserve collection, the biggest store of war-related ephemera in the world. They range from humorous cartoons from newspapers

“The project is intended to bring back into public understanding the heritage of comics and cartoons produced at the time of the First World War.”

and magazines, to cigarette cards and cartoon maps, and colourful comic postcards by the likes of William Heath Robinson and Donald McGill (who would go on to become the 'king of the saucy seaside postcard').

Then there are the trench publications that were produced by serving soldiers for their own entertainment, some of which featured cartoons. The 'Comics and the World Wars' research project has found 800 editions, with some 200-odd examples of multi-panel cartoons. Bruce Bairnsfather himself started out drawing cartoons for soldiers' publications, and his jokey style was copied by others as the grumbling but steadfast Old Bill became the face of the long-suffering Tommy in the trenches, and hugely popular among the men at the front. Bairnsfather's work was criticised in Parliament as 'vulgar caricatures of our heroes', but the Old Bill cartoons were reproduced on plates and cards, and even inspired stage shows and films.

The work in the Cartoon Museum exhibition – *Never Again! World War I in Cartoon and Comic Art* – also covers a huge range of subjects, with depictions of life in the trenches, themes from popular songs, and air raids. Women's war work, suffragettes and conscientious objectors all featured frequently in cartoons and comic strips of the time. And as Jane Chapman says, around the time of the First World War, cartoons and comic strips weren't always conservative in their underlying message: political organisations – including trade unions and suffrage groups – also used them to try to bring about change. 'The Labour movement for example used the cartoon image of the gullible worker, forever being taken in by the system, and a victim of capitalism and recruitment propaganda.'

Then there are the 'hate cartoons' that demonise the Germans, often making great play of the German





“A hundred years after the First World War, cartoons can also provide a means of reaching out to a more general audience, and interesting them in the history of the conflict.”

“Women’s war work, suffragettes and conscientious objectors all featured frequently in cartoons and comic strips of the time.”

spiked helmet, and showing the Hun as a spider, gorilla or monster. The Kaiser was always a popular subject – ‘how ugly, incompetent, feeble or Satanic do you want to make him?’ But there were still boundaries – one Australian cartoon of a bayoneted Kaiser was turned down for publication. And there are other depictions of the enemy, by the likes of Heath Robinson and Haselden, that acknowledge the humanity that was shared by both sides. ‘The soldiers themselves often portrayed the Germans with a degree of empathy,’ says Jane Chapman, ‘seeing them as just doing their job, as the allies were. The further from home a soldier was, and the longer they had been away, the more mellow their attitude in writing became towards the enemy.’

The serious business of the comic

The First World War marks an important point in the evolution of the comic strip. There had been strips before the war, but they were aimed at children: it was in the Great War that adults began to take an interest in the strip format. And cartoons became a hugely important publication medium during the

conflict, as they weren’t subjected to the same kinds of censorship as print. At the same time, the adult market for cartoons was developing because of the need for propaganda, and simple forms of communication and entertainment. The recognisable idiom of the comic strip, including many of its conventions (such as speech bubbles), was being formed.

The cartoons from the First World War also give visual form to important aspects of the conflict. Among soldiers themselves, for example, the figure of the anti-hero was very popular, but this could contrast sharply with depictions in the British press of soldiers as heroes, further reinforcing the belief among many at the front that people at home didn’t understand the reality of the war.

Finally, a hundred years after the First World War, cartoons can also provide a means of reaching out to a more general audience, and interesting them in the history of the conflict. As Cartoon Museum curator Anita O’Brien puts it, ‘cartoons and comic strips give us a different way of approaching the war, and the feelings that people had about it. We’re like a bridge between the knowledge that academics have and a public who may not be easy to reach: many of the people who come to the Cartoon Museum would not go to other museums. Cartoons and comic strips are a marginal artform – they’re never seen as high art – but they have tendrils that reach out to a lot of aspects of the period. They can introduce subjects visually that people might not initially want to read about: they’re a great way in.’

You can find out further information from the University of Lincoln.

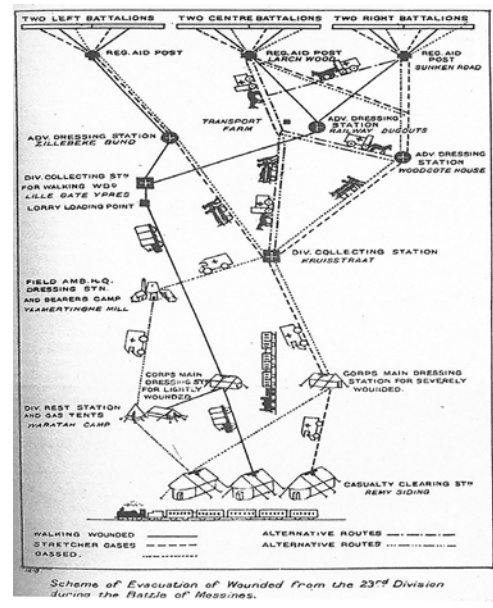
The long trip home: medical evacuations from the front

GATEWAYS TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR CENTRE
BLOG POST

The BBC's drama *The Crimson Field* provided viewers with a portrait of life in a fictional field hospital during the First World War. In this guest blog post, Dr Jessica Meyer (University of Leeds and Gateways to the First World War) discusses how the sick and wounded made it to such hospitals and beyond, revealing the many caregivers they would have encountered on the road, rail and sea.

Medicine and those who administered it were central to a soldier's experiences of the First World War. On enlistment or conscription, men went through a medical examination. While in the field they would regularly encounter their Regimental Medical Officer and sanitary squads. Although such medical care was very much a part of everyday life for the British soldier, the most important aspect of the work of the Army Medical Services (AMS) was the evacuation of the sick and wounded from the battlefield.

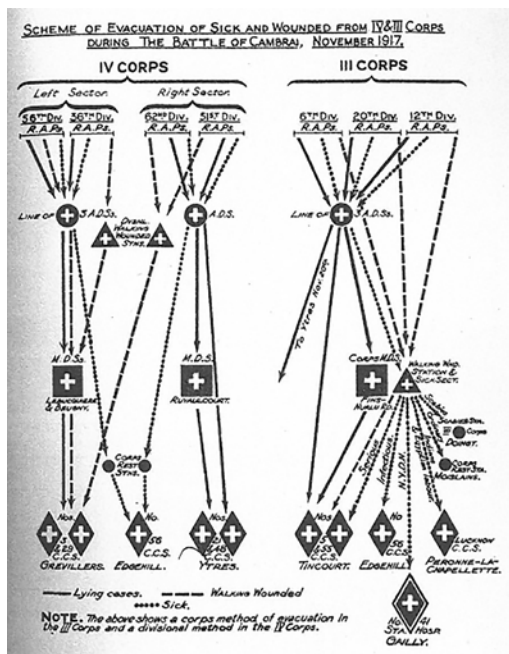
Clearing battlefields promptly allowed both military actions to continue unhindered, and manpower to be conserved by ensuring that the wounded were treated quickly. Locating medical establishments along the lines of communication in places that offered both access to transport and sufficient shelter was key to battle planning. Diagrams such as these (all taken from W.G. McPherson, *Medical Services of the War: General Services*, Vol. II, HMSO: 1923) were a standard aspect of



Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) battle preparation and illustrate the routes that a wounded man might take from Regimental Aid Post (RAP) through Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) to Base Hospital and beyond.

So what happened to the many men wounded in battle? If he was able, he would probably apply a first aid dressing, with which all men were issued. If he could still walk he would go to a collecting station. If not, he would be carried to an aid post by volunteer regimental stretcher bearers. At the RAP he would have his details taken and an initial assessment would be made. The first aid dressing would be changed for a more secure dressing, and he might get a drink and a cigarette. These posts were, however, usually extremely hectic places, located near the front lines with comparatively little shelter, so most care was superficial.

From the RAP the wounded man was then taken by stretcher bearers to a dressing station run by a field ambulance. The distance between an aid post and a dressing station could be some miles, often over ground dug up by shellfire. Bearers worked in relays in order to maximise the speed of transport. If they were lucky, they might have wheeled stretchers or even trolleys, but the ground was usually far too uneven for anything other than stretcher transportation.





About 50% of men who arrived at a base hospital would go on to be evacuated by hospital ship to Britain for further treatment or convalescence.

The dressing stations were located near roads, often in abandoned buildings. Here again men had their details recorded, their dressings changed and their condition assessed before they were loaded into the vehicles of the Motor Ambulance Corps for transportation by road. In the early days of the war, horse-drawn waggons were used, but after they were overwhelmed by the number of casualties they were required to cope with at the Battle of Mons, motorised ambulances were increasingly brought into service. Many were adapted from donated private cars, but even when specialised vehicles were produced, the poor condition of the roads meant that the journey was extremely uncomfortable and could be fatal.

The wounded man's next port of call, the CCS, was one of the most flexible and important establishments in the evacuation process. Originally mobile, by 1916 CCSs had become, due to the static nature of trench warfare, semi-permanent fixtures, located near railway termini or major road junctions. This meant they were able to grow in size to accommodate up to 1000 patients. Their staff also grew, mainly to include female nurses, the closest that such women were allowed to the front line. The number of operations carried out also increased, as the importance of forward treatment became clear. As a result, CCSs became increasingly specialised, with units and their staff specialising in everything from skin diseases or gas to particular types of wounds.

The CCS could treat those with less serious injuries and return them to their units via convalescent camps. It could also retain those with wounds so serious that they could not be moved further – one reason for the large cemeteries at former sites. If necessary, cases could be evacuated further down the line to base hospitals. These evacuations were generally carried out by train, although some were carried out by

hospital barges. Hospital trains were staffed primarily by volunteers, including the St John's Ambulance Brigade and the Friends' Ambulance Unit, working under the aegis of the British Red Cross. A number of base hospitals were also run by voluntary units.

These large hospitals were based at the principle army bases, giving access to both railheads and ports.

About 50% of men who arrived at a base hospital would go on to be evacuated by hospital ship to Britain for further treatment or convalescence. For the remaining 50%, survival rates if they made it this far were good, and most would go on to camps for six weeks of rehabilitation before returning to their unit or being reassigned to alternative duty if their wound or illness affected their medical rating.

For those with a 'Blighty' wound, evacuation to a Home hospital meant they would be taken to a hospital run by the RAMC with support from the British Red Cross. Here men with conditions requiring longer-term specialist care received the sort of complex treatment unavailable overseas. Over the course of the war many of these hospitals developed regional specialisms, such as the orthopaedic specialist designation of No. 2 Northern General Hospital (Beckett's Park, Leeds) after 1917. Following their treatment, men would be sent to Auxiliary hospital for convalescence, the destination of some of those evacuated from Base hospitals as well. Many were located in donated country houses, with the lady of house acting as commandant, although an RAMC officer held a supervisory position as medical officer and the nursing was overseen by a professional matron. These hospitals were designed to ease the pressures on space elsewhere.

From their convalescence, men were discharged either to return to duty with their units or for reassignment for those no longer deemed fit enough for front line duty. On their journey from the trenches, a wounded soldier would have been cared for by a huge variety of caregivers, not just doctors and nurses, but bearers, orderlies, General Service volunteers, radiographers, anaesthetists, dentists and chaplains. Their varied and important roles continue to be the subject of academic enquiry.



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Published by Arts and Humanities Research Council
Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1FL
www.ahrc.ac.uk

© Arts and Humanities Research Council 2017
Published August 2017

Printed by JRS on paper containing 80 percent post consumer waste

ISBN 978-0-9571108-5-4