A BETA Research Book

Local Wigan Memories of World War One

Wigan Parish Church Commemoration 4th August 2014

The Deal for Armed Forces

Wigan Borough Remembers 1914-18

Wigan Council


Menin Gate, Flanders, Belgium


Just beyond the graves of Tyne Cot is the site of the British Lines. James laying a poppy cross at the grave of an unknown soldier from the Liverpool King'sRegiment

Tyne Cot cemetery photo from the Passchendaele Memorial Museum booklet www.passchendaele2017.org

Local Wigan Memories of World War One

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We would like to thank those local people who gave us information about their family members and allowed us to use personal photographs.

BETA believes in the furtherance of education especially acquisition of local history knowledge for all. These books will be distributed and made available to local schools, community centres, local groups etc.

Formation of the "Pals" and Liverpool Kings Regiment WW1 on You tube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqFloz2af8k

Interviews with WW1 soldiers on You Tube with footage of soldiers joining up and the Battle of the Somme

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEZdlLBiA-A

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World War One Timeline

1914

June 28th Archduke Franz Ferdinand heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire is assassinated by a Serbian Nationalist Gavrilo Princip.

August 4th Britain declares war on Germany

August 23rd German advance is checked by the British at Mons

October 12th The first battle of Ypres begins

December 25th A Christmas Truce. Soldiers from both sides sing "Silent Night".

1915

March 10th 2nd Battle of Ypres. First use of Gas by the Germans.

March 25th Allied troops land at Gallipoli

September Offensives in Champagne and Loos. British use gas for the first time.

December Britain and the allies withdraw from Gallipoli after defeat by the Turks

1916

January British Government votes for conscription

July 1st Battle of the Somme begins, it will last for 5 months

1917

March Germany withdraws to the Siegfried line

April 6th United States declares war on Germany

April 9th Battle of Arras begins, No Allied Breakthrough

July 31st Third Battle of Ypres–Passchendaele begins. Battle of Cambrai opens, the British use tanks en masse, they breakthrough, but Infantry are too exhausted to consolidate. Germany counter attacks and re-takes British gains.

1918

March Russia signs peace pact with Germany

April 1st Royal Flying Corps, Royal Naval Air Service became the RAF

September 26th British and U.S Troops attempt a pincer move at Argonne Ypres

October 4th Germany appeals for Armistice

November 11th Armistice signed, at 11 am the war ends

The Allies - Britain and countries of the British Empire (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, India etc), France, Russia, Greece, Italy and from 1917 the USA. On the German side, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria.

SOME WORLD WAR 1 STATISTICS

8,904,467 Soldiers from Britain and the Commonwealth

908,371 British Soldiers killed

2,090,212 British soldiers injured

191,652 British soldiers missing or taken prisoner

65 million soldiers from all countries fought in WW1 with 60% killed or wounded.

In December 1918 "The Representation of the People Act" was passed in the House of Commons (385 for and 55 against). All men aged 21 years and over had the right to vote in their constituency, women over 30 years who were property owners also had the right to vote. The thinking at the time was that if all women aged 21 years or more had been given the vote then, they would have outnumbered men because of the loss of men due to World War One. In 1928 all women aged 21 years and over were finally given the right to vote.

Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943)

Laurence was too old to enlist and worked in the British Museum and as a volunteer in a hospital for French soldiers.
He wrote this poem after the Retreat from Mons in 1914.

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.

THE BATTLE OF MONS – Belgium/French Border
23rd AUGUST 1914

Mons, in Belgium, was the first battle between British and German Troops on the Western Front. It began on the 23rd August 1914. The British were heavily outnumbered, 70,000 British troops and 160,000 German troops. During the battle the British casualties were just over 1,600 of all ranks, killed or wounded.

Thanks to the British troops and their rapid-fire rifles, they were able to inflict heavy losses on the Germans and stopped them advancing.

The French soldiers retreated to Paris, so the British commanders then ordered the troops to retreat towards Paris.

'Good bye Old Man', a British gunner leaves his dying horse: Battle of Mons on 23rd August 1914 in the First World War:
picture by Fred Matania

THE ANGEL OF MONS

It was during the retreat from Mons that British troops claimed they saw an angel in the sky with a burning sword or burning cross. The troops reported that the angel was guiding them successfully in their retreat and the British troops did survive to fight another day.

John William Knott who was in the Liverpool Kings Regiment said *"I didn't see the angel like others did, but I did see the burning cross in the sky*".

Another eye witness Edward from Wigan became very ill when he was 60. He told his family *"Don't worry about me I saw the Angel at Mons and know I will live to a very old age".* He died at the age of 98 years.

A.J.P. Taylor, the well-known historian, fully believed that an angel had appeared and aided British troops.

The Retreat from Mons was very successful without any casualties which considering that the German forces far out-numbered the British by more than two to one. This could be seen as miraculous, what do you think?

Mons was also where the last shots of WW1 took place on 11th November 1918.

The 1914 Christmas Truce

The Western Front, a series of trenches on both sides, stretched 27 miles along the area of Ypres. Some of the British and German trenches were within shouting distance of each other as can be seen at Vimy Ridge, France.

The British High Command, which led the British troops, did not agree with this truce and warned the soldiers not to go ahead with it. They even suggested that the Germans were planning an attack on Christmas Eve. However, they were ignored and no guns were fired on Christmas Day 1914.

Christmas Carols

The British and German trenches were so close that on Christmas Eve the British troops heard the Germans singing "Still die Nacht" and this was recognised as "Silent Night" and the British joined in singing the Carol. Soldiers then came out of their trenches and met up in "No mans land". The Germans gave sausages to the British and the British gave the Germans chocolate.

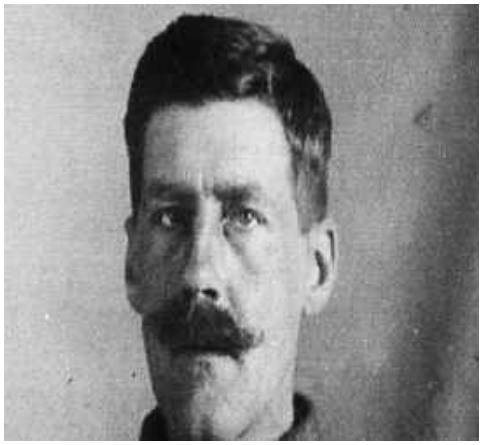
Football Match

A football match was played between German and British troops on the Western Front. This was started by a British soldier kicking a football out of his trench. The Germans then joined in. It was reported that Germany won the match 3-2.

At midnight, in one part of the trenches, a flare was lit to tell soldiers it was time for them to return to fighting.

The truce went on until the New Year in other parts of the Western Front.

Memorial to The Christmas Truce 1914 – this can be seen in St. Luke's Church, Liverpool



David Lindsay, The 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres

This is a photograph of the Lord Crawford of Haigh Hall Wigan. He could have been a Commissioned Officer in World War One and avoided being in the front line, but he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) as a private.

He served on the Western Front at the casualty clearing centre, where surgeons worked under intense pressure in primitive conditions. Before leaving for France, Lord Crawford offered his home, Haigh Hall and The Elms to the Red Cross as auxiliary hospitals. Unlike others he refused payment for the use of his home and houses and paid for equipment and maintenance. He also supplied all fuel to these houses free of charge from the Wigan Coal and Iron Company which he owned.

Lord Crawford volunteered for active service in April 1915 aged 43, he arrived in France just after the battle of Neuve Chapelle, where 13,000 soldiers died to gain a few yards. He spent 15 months working under enormous pressure within five miles of the static trenches, where men were killed or wounded daily. Whilst on this active service he kept a diary.

Lord Crawford was in charge of the operating theatre at a casualty clearing station at Hazebrouck, Northern France. The casualty clearing stations either patched up wounded soldiers and sent them back to the front line or transferred injured men back to hospitals in France or Britain. Lord Crawford kept a diary and wrote:
"I love every corner of this little place. I have painted the windows, whitewashed its walls, scrubbed its floors scores of times."

On July 11 1915, 200 men passed through the small hospital. Many of the patients were plagued by lice. Lord Crawford recommended leaving lousy uniforms out in frost, which seemed to kill the lice off. The bloody uniforms were usually tossed into an incinerator.

Lord Crawford wrote about the wounded in his diary:

"What sights, what horrors, what a continuous nightmare – these convoys of wounded men pouring in. Batches of 15, 20 and 30 weary fellows stumbling down our entrance passage on the verge of collapse, then shown to a stretcher where they subside into complete coma. Then there is the stretcher case – the man who can't walk and has to be carried from the car to the stretcher allotted to him in our ward. One doesn't see tragedy so markedly in these cases – something like a corpse passes – it is anonymous and too passive to make an impact on the imagination. Those who can walk have the wan haggard features of paralysis – a curious stiffness in countenance as though the mobile features of the face, particularly of the mouth, had been frozen, eyes likewise are glazed."

Lord Crawford (Continued)

In August Lord Crawford saw a train-load of replacement troops stopped in their tracks when they saw wounded soldiers waiting to be evacuated. According to newspapers at the time, wounded soldiers couldn't wait to get back and have a crack at the Hun. Lord Crawford said:

"Their real sentiments are quite different. They feel no personal desire for vengeance against Germans. The man who has been at the front, in the trenches for a few months, longs for his release. A wound, even when severe, is the messenger of freedom. I have never met a man, wounded or unwounded, who wants to return to the trenches or indeed even says he does. They loathe the actual fighting except for the moments of exhilarating success and 99 per cent pray they will never see a trench again, but the courage and morale of the troops is superb."

A staff officer who brought a quarter of a ton of personal possessions with him put Lindsay's back up. Lord Crawford said:

"Major Roberts has attracted our notice as being the proprietor of the biggest kit we have ever handled. He is a tyrant yet thinks himself modest. He left us as a stretcher case – but on the railway platform he changed his mind and walked briskly to the ambulance train. Our knowledge of other staff officers is enough to depress."

Lord Crawford was highly critical of those in charge of the war effort. he had a contempt for staff officers and generals alike. Lord Crawford said:

"Soldiers are incomparable – their leaders too often hopeless and irremediable failures." He wrote about the disparity in the treatment of officers and men based on the old theory of one officer being worth 20 men.

Early in 1916, Lord Crawford said high casualty rates were due to incompetent leadership. "Is not the basis of our military troubles to be found in ill-trained leaders, not in the generals alone but in the rank and file of commissioned officers? I have come across hundreds who are utterly incompetent to lead men, to inspire confidence or respect, to enforce discipline, to behave even as gentlemen. This war is going to be won by the NCOs and men, not the commissioned ranks."

Unlike most, he thought the country was in for a long war.

Lord Crawford turned down the job of Viceroy of India to serve at the front. He didn't want to be in the limelight and didn't want special treatment.

In his diary Lord Crawford wrote that he despised the governing Liberals, particularly Winston Churchill. At the time, Winston Churchill was in disgrace because of his campaign planning which resulted in the disastrous failure of the Galipolli campaign. This resulted in losing his job as First Lord of the Admiralty, he then took command of the 6th Battalion Royal Scots.

Lord Crawford (Continued)

Before the war, Lord Crawford had been Tory chief whip in the Commons and resented Churchill's defection to the Liberals. He said:

"Churchill always was a sneak – all his courage, energy and conviction is tempered by this dominating feature of his character. Hasn't he plenty to do looking after the battalion whose command he filched? But he appears to get leave every six weeks. He ought to be kept to his work out here."

Lord Crawford later noted Churchill saying too many men were being employed as grooms or servants. Lord Crawford wrote:

"That this reform should be advocated by Churchill of all people amuses me, he has the reputation of looking after his bodily comforts with care during his brief stay at the front, interspersed with frequent leaves."

On 23rd June 1915, although reluctant to accept, he was promoted to Lance Corporal and in April 1916 promoted to Corporal.

Lord Crawford left France in July 1916 and two days later was made Minister of Agriculture in the coalition government. Given his views on Winston Churchill, it is unlikely they got on well.

His new job was a vital one as Britain's supply lines were being attacked by German U-boats. It was his task to ensure that Britain didn't starve. Lord Crawford's return from France meant he was able to spend more time with his wife Connie and their eight children.

After the war he chaired the commission on broadcasting that resulted in the formation of the BBC. He was offered the chairmanship of the corporation but turned it down.

Lord Crawford died in 1940 aged 68.

Injured soldiers arrive at a Casualty Clearing Station in WW1. RAMC treating soldiers in a Trench in France

The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

Frederick Patrick Garrity

In 1884 Frederick was born in Leigh and worked as a coal miner in Wigan.

In June 1902 at the age of 18 years, Frederick enlisted into the Army, joining the 6th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Before the end of July 1902 he was discharged from the Army as being permanently unfit for service.

When World War One broke out, Frederick was mobilised into the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment as a Special Reservist. He sailed for France to join the lst Battalion in the field on the 27th August 1914.

He was involved in the retreat from Mons and saw action at Givenchy.

On 3rd April 1915 he was found drowned near the canal at Bethune, Northern France.

Frederick's name is on the cenotaph at Wigan Parish Church

Sergeant Laurence Fitzpatrick

Laurence was born in Wigan in late 1883 to James and Ann Fitzpatrick. The family were living at 7 Bighams Yard, Wigan.

Laurence joined the Special Reserve in May 1911 having become "time expired" after 10 years' service in the 3rd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He was 28 years old and working as a metal man in a coal mine.

Laurence was mobilised on 8th August 1914 and married Agnes Gibson in October 1914. He landed in France on 16th March 1915 to join the 1st Battalion in the field.

Laurence was killed in action on 26th March 1915 when a shell exploded in the trenches near Rue de Bois. He is buried in Rue-Des-Berceaux Military Cemetery, Rlichebourg-L'avoue, near Arras, France

Laurence's name is on the cenotaph at Wigan Parish Church

The Second Battle of Ypres, Flanders, Belgium
GERMANS USE GAS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Second Battle of Ypres started on 15th April 1915 on a warm spring afternoon with the trial of a new weapon of war in the Ypres sector. This was a cloud of chlorine gas released by the German Fourth Army, followed by an infantry attack. The gas cloud was blown on a gentle breeze in the north part of the Ypres Salient. The German infantry advance behind the cloud was rapid, the Allied Front Line was broken and the way to Ypres was open by the end of the day.

The battle for the defence of Ypres and the recapture of lost ground included more German gas cloud attacks against the Allied troops.
By July 1915 soldiers were given efficient gas masks and anti-asphyxiation respirators.

John William Knott of the Liverpool King's Regiment (The very first 'Pals' battalion) said:

"*We were in the trench when we could smell **pineapples**, then the clouds came over*". It was Chlorine gas.

The gas arrived at the British front-trenches and soldiers began to complain about pains in their chests and a burning sensation in their throats.

Chlorine gas destroyed the respiratory organs of its victims and this led to a slow death by asphyxiation. 180,597 British and Australian soldiers were injured by gas.

Allied troops were supplied with masks of cotton pads that had to be soaked in urine and were held over the face until the troops escaped the fumes. The ammonia neutralized the chlorine. Sometimes they used handkerchiefs or a sock with a solution of bicarbonate of soda, tied across the mouth and nose until the gas passed over.

Soldiers found it difficult to fight like this and attempts were made to develop a better means of protecting men against gas attacks.

By July 1915 soldiers were given efficient gas masks and anti-asphyxiation respirators.

CHLORINE GAS

On the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 Fritz Haber, the talented chemist, offered his services to the German Army. He began experimenting with chlorine gas to be used in Trench Warfare. His wife, Clara Haber disagreed that he should use his talents in this way. She later committed suicide in protest against his work.

The German Army first used chlorine gas cylinders in April 1915 against the French Army at Ypres. French soldiers reported seeing yellow-green clouds drifting slowly towards the Allied trenches. They also noticed its distinctive smell which was like a mixture of pineapple and pepper. At first the French officers assumed that the German infantry were advancing behind a smoke screen and orders were given to prepare for an armed attack. The gas arrived at the British front-trenches and, like their French allies, soldiers began to complain about pains in the chests and a burning sensation in their throats.

Most soldiers now realised they were being gassed and many ran as fast as they could away from the scene. An hour after the attack had started there was a four-mile gap in the Allied line. As the German soldiers were concerned about what the chlorine gas would do to them, they hesitated about moving forward in large numbers. This delayed attack enabled Canadian and British troops to retake the position before the Germans burst through the gap that the chlorine gas had created.

Chlorine gas destroyed the respiratory organs of its victims and this led to a slow death by asphyxiation. One nurse described the death of one soldier who had been in the trenches during a chlorine gas attack. "*He was sitting on the bed, fighting for breath, his lips plum coloured. He was a magnificent young Canadian past all hope in the asphyxia of chlorine. I shall never forget the look in his eyes as he turned to me and gasped: I can't die! Is it possible that nothing can be done for me?*" It was a horrible death, but as hard as they tried, doctors were unable to find a way of successfully treating chlorine gas poisoning.

John French, the commander of the British Expeditionary Force at Ypres later recalled: "The effect of the gas was so overwhelming that the whole of the positions occupied by the French divisions were rendered incapable of resistance. It was impossible at first to realise what had actually happened. Fumes and smoke were thrown into a stupor and after an hour the whole position had to be abandoned, together with 50 guns."

180,597 British and Australian soldiers were injured by gas

British soldiers who had been blinded by the gas

Machine gun – WW1

Machine guns inflicted appalling casualties on both war fronts in World War One. Men who went over-the-top in trenches stood little chance when the enemy opened up with their machine guns. Machine guns were one of the main killers in the war and accounted for many thousands of deaths.

British Army Rejection

It is hard to understand why the British army dismissed the potential worth of the machine gun in the early 1900s.

Hiram Maxim, who designed the machine gun which bore his name in 1884, first offered use of the machine to Britain. Although rapid-firing weapons, such as the 0.50-inch calibre Gatling Gun (invented in 1862), existed many years prior to Maxim's invention, all required some form of manual intervention, e.g. hand cranking.

Unfortunately for Maxim the British army high command could see no real use for the oil-cooled machine gun he demonstrated to them in 1885; other officers even regarded the weapon as an improper form of warfare. Not so the German army which quickly produced a version of Maxim's invention (the Maschinengewehr 08) in large quantities at a Spandau arsenal; by the time war broke out in August 1914 the Germans had 12,000 at their disposal, a number which eventually ballooned to 100,000.

At the start of the war, senior British army officers were less than sure about the effectiveness of the machine gun. Therefore most battalions were only issued with two. This was a lot less than the Germans who were very sure as to the effectiveness of the machine gun. The Germans placed their machine guns slightly in front of their lines to ensure than the machine gun crews were given a full view of the battlefield. At the Battle of the Somme, their efficiency lead to the deaths of thousands of British troops within minutes of the battle starting.

In 1915 Sir Douglas Haig, Commander in Chief of the British Forces said:
"The machine gun is a much over rated weapon"

He made similar remarks over the use of the tank.

WW1 machine gun and soldiers wearing gas masks

"Meddlesome Millie" – The Duchess of Sutherland

The Duchess of Sutherland, Millicent, born 1867, was a successful society hostess and had been one of the canopy bearers at the Coronation of King Edward VII. Millicent was an advocate for social reform. She campaigned against the use of lead in the pottery industry and this is when the manufacturers gave her the nickname "Meddlesome Millie". She also established a holiday home in Hanchurch where poor children could enjoy an annual holiday in the fresh air.

When World War One started, the Duchess, along with other ladies took a Red Cross ambulance, doctors and nurses to Paris France where they set up Red Cross Hospital No. 9. The British Army were opposed to female nurses, except for the QAIMNS (after heavy casualties in Spring 1915 they reversed this decision). The Duchess, surgeon Oswald Gayer Morgan (he was an advocate of the Carrel Dakin method of treating wounds) and eight British nurses then went to Namur in Belgium where, with the help of the authorities, they set up a hospital in a convent. On 20th August 1914 the Germans heavily bombarded Namur and the Germans occupied Namur. The nurses and nuns cared for the injured. The Duchess wrote "No one can conceive of the untold value of a fully-trained and disciplined British nurse". The Duchess and nurses were trapped under German occupation, but she managed to talk her way out of Namur and back to England via Holland.

In October 1914 The Duchess took a large number of nurses, drivers and surgeons to Dunkirk and set up a 100 bed hospital. In Spring 1915, due to heavy shelling, this was moved inland to Bourbourg, where it became known by the locals as 'the camp in the oat field'

The Duchess of Sutherland with injured soldiers at a Red Cross Hospital in Calais, July 1917

THE ANGELS OF PERVYSE

Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm

Mairi Chisholm and Elsie Knocker were Scottish motorbike fanatics which resulted in them joining the Flying Ambulance Corps in Belgium in 1914. Elsie was 30 years old and Mairi was just 18 years old.

Mairi and Elsie were soon doing vital wartime work, ferrying wounded soldiers to a field hospital in Furnes.

Mairi was also tasked with taking mutilated corpses to the mortuary. They were both discouraged by the number of men they were losing so Mairi and Elsie decided to leave the Flying Ambulance Corps.

They found an abandoned cellar in Pervyse north of Ypres and set up their own illegal dressing station, just 100 yards from the trenches.

With no affiliation to the Belgian Red Cross, they had to find their own supplies and support. Fortunately, Mairi and Elsie managed to be seconded to the Belgian troops stationed nearby. Together, they saved the lives of thousands of men on the Belgian Western Front, men who would have died on their way to the Corps hospital.

Elsie and Mairi rose at dawn and heated hot drinks which they carried in buckets through mud and slush, often up to their waists, to the men on the front line.

They became known as The Angels of Pervyse,

Following a gas attack in 1918, they were forced to return home for treatment.

Elsie was born in 1884 and died in 1978. Mairi was born in 1896 and died in 1981

EDITH CAVELL

Edith Cavell was born on 4th December 1865 in Norfolk.

In April 1896, at the age of 30, Cavell applied to become a nurse probationer at the London Hospital under Matron Eva Luckes, a friend of Florence Nightingale. Edith then worked in various hospitals in England. She was offered a post in Brussels, Belgium and in In 1911 she was a training nurse for three hospitals, 24 schools, and 13 kindergartens in Brussels, Belgium.

In 1914 when WW1 broke out she was at home in Norfolk with her mother, but Edith quickly returned to Brussels where her clinic and nursing school were taken over by the Red Cross.

Edith Cavell treated soldiers, no matter their nationality.
In November 1914 Brussels fell to the Germans, Edith hid wounded British, French and Belgian soldiers and got them out of the country to safety. The soldiers were given fake identification and hidden until they could make it to the Dutch frontier.

In August 1915, Edith was betrayed by a German collaborator Gaston Quien. German soldiers arrested Edith for treason and subjected her to a court-martial. Edith admitted that she had personally harboured about 175 men in her home and helped them to escape. Her actions went directly against German military law.

Despite international pressure for mercy, she was sentenced to death and executed by a 16-man German firing squad on October 12, 1915.
Just before her execution, Edith famously said:
"Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone."

Edith's execution was used as propaganda to encourage men to enlist in the Armed Forces. The following is a poem that was published in a newspaper.
"To think on her name is to thrill and to glow
But weep for her, sigh for her, cry for her? No!
Fight for her, ache for her, wake for her? Yes!
Brothers! This murder is yours to redress!"

DOCTOR JOHN McCRAE

In April 1915, Canadian Doctor John McCrae was in the trenches near Ypres, Belgium, in the area traditionally called Flanders. Some of the heaviest fighting of the First World War took place there during the Second Battle of Ypres.

On April 22, the Germans used deadly chlorine gas against Allied troops in a desperate attempt to break the stalemate. Despite the debilitating effects of the gas, soldiers fought relentlessly and held the line for another 16 days.

In the trenches, John McCrae tended hundreds of wounded soldiers every day. He was surrounded by the dead and the dying. In a letter to his mother, he wrote of the Battle of Ypres.

"The general impression in my mind is of a nightmare. We have been in the most bitter of fights. For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds ..... And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way. "
(Prescott. *In Flanders Fields: The Story of John McCrae*, p. 98)

The day before he wrote his famous poem, one of McCrae's closest friends was killed in the fighting and buried in a makeshift grave with a simple wooden cross. Wild poppies were already beginning to bloom between the crosses marking the many graves. Unable to help his friend or any of the others who had died, John McCrae gave them a voice through his poem.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Written by Brigade Doctor John McCrae, May 1915 whilst
in the ADS(Advanced Field Dressing station) bunker Essex Farm, Ypres

ADS(Advanced Field Dressing station) Essex Farm, Ypres,

Memorial displaying the "In Flanders Fields" poem at Essex Farm Cemetery, Ypres, Flanders, Belgium

Essex Farm Bunkers today

Inside one of the Essex Farm bunkers

The Battle for Gallipoli

In 1915 the ill-fated campaign was fought on the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli. The Allied commanders could see the war in Europe on the Western Front was bogged down with little progress being made so a plan was devised to attack Germany's weaker ally, Turkey. As Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill was a prime mover behind the campaign and in February 1915, 16 British and French ships set sail to bombard the Turkish positions on either side of the Dardanelles. After some initial success, disaster struck when 3 battleships were sunk by mines and 3 other vessels damaged, leading to a withdrawal of the rest of the fleet. It was then decided to land troops on the Gallipoli peninsula – some 78,000 Allied soldiers, including large numbers of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzacs).

The Allies landed on the 25th April in two main assaults: the British at Cape Helles, the Australian and New Zealand troops at "Anzac Cove" on the Aegean side of the peninsula. Both landings were met with such fierce opposition as the Turkish troops had had time to reinforce their positions. Allied troops then had to endure months of terrible conditions with blazing sun, diseases (including enteric fever and chronic dysentry) and a series of counter-attacks by the Turkish forces which led the Allies to be driven back to the beaches.

The doomed Gallipoli campaign was one of the Allies greatest disasters - a combination of poor leadership at the very top, very difficult conditions in which to live and fight and under-estimation of the skilled Turkish troops.

The Allies lost 214,000 men which included 8,000 Australian troops and more than 2,700 New Zealand troops, many of whom were lost on the first day of the landings, 25th April. This day is a national day of remembrance (Anzac Day) in both Australia and New Zealand. 15,000 French troops were also lost out of the 42,000 French men serving in Gallipoli.

The Lancashire Fusiliers played a huge role in the Gallipoli Campaign and on the 25th April 1915 they were chosen to land at a small cove, codename "W Beach" which was very well defended by the Turkish army. During the fierce battle in which 700 men of the regiment were killed or maimed, the "Six Before Breakfast" V.C.'s were won, two by local men – John Grimshaw and William Keneally. Two other Wiganers, Albert Regan and William Talbot who died at Gallipoli, were remembered on a Memorial which was at Wigan Wallgate Railway Station.

British troops at Gallipoli 1915

RALPH HORNE

Ralph Horne was born in Wigan in 1893, the son of greengrocer Ralph Horne and Alice Horne. In 1901 Ralph was living at 3 Hope Street Wigan with his family.

In December 1914 he enlisted in the 6th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He sailed to Gallipoli on 28th August 1915.

After being subjected to heavy enemy bombardment, Ralph was killed in action on 27th November 1915.

WILLIAM McCORMICK

William McCormick was born in 1888 and lived at 9 Kay Street Wigan. He became a miner and enlisted in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment on 25th August 1914.

On 15th June 1915 he sailed as part of the Expeditionary Force Eqypt/Mediterranean. Whilst at Gallipoli he received a thigh wound in August 1915. He was sent back to Britain and saw no more active service. He was demobbed in 1919 and lived in Howard Street Wigan.

Local Lancashire soldiers at Gallipoli

William Keneally, V.C.

William was born in Wexford, Ireland in 1896, his father was a colour sergeant in the Royal Irish Regiment. While travelling to England on S.S. Slavenia, the ship sunk and the family had to be rescued. On arrival in England the family settled in Wigan where William began work in the mines at 13 years old.
William enlisted in the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers and in 1915 left for the Dardenelles. He became the Company runner delivering vital messages between positions under intense enemy fire.

William's Company were sustaining heavy casualties as they were held up behind unbroken barbed wire so he volunteered to crawl through the wire and attempt to cut it. Though unsuccessful due to faulty cutters it was a great act of bravery. For gallantry in the face of the enemy, he was promoted to lance-sergeant.

On 28th June 1915 during the Battle of Gully Ravine, Gallipoli, William was seriously wounded and died the next day from his injuries. His platoon commander called him "The Bravest Soldier in the Lancashire Fusiliers". He is buried in Gallipoli.

He was posthumously invested with his Victoria Cross which was presented to his family by King George V at Buckingham Palace on November 29, 1916. His citation states:

On the 25th April 1915. three Companies and the Headquarters of the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers, in effecting a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula to the West of Cape Helles were met by a very deadly fire from hidden machine guns which caused a great number of casualties. The survivors, however, rushed up to and cut the wire entanglements, notwithstanding the terrific fire from the enemy, and, after overcoming supreme difficulties, the cliffs were gained and the position maintained. Amongst the many very gallant Officers and men engaged in this most hazardous undertaking, William Keneally had been selected by their comrades as having performed the most signal acts of bravery and devotion to duty.

William Keneally's Grave, Lancashire Landings Cemetery, Gallipoli, Turkey

All Victoria Crosses are made of bronze cast from metal melted down from the cannons captured at Sevastopol in the Crimean War.

JOHN ELISHA GRIMSHAW, V.C.

John Grimshaw was born in Abram, Wigan, on 20th January 1893. In 1912 he worked as a carpenter at Cross and Tetley's Collieries in the Wigan coalfield. He enlisted in the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers joining them in India. He became a signaller.

During the Gallipoli Landings on Hill 114, he distinguished himself by working with Captain Wells urging his fellow soldiers on under tremendous fire. John's backpack and water bottle were riddled with bullets and his cap badge was smashed, but he escaped any injury.

On April 25, 1915, during a landing in Gallipoli, Turkey, the 1st Battalion were met by deadly fire from hidden machine guns causing a great number of casualties.

Corporal John Elisha Grimshaw, together with William Keneally, rushed up to and cut the wire entanglements which held up the advance whilst under fire from the enemy. After overcoming extreme difficulties, they reached the upper cliffs, gained a foot hold and the position was maintained.

John was originally awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his part in the battle and this was presented to him - along with a gold watch, but senior officers felt that he deserved a much greater reward for his heroism. After angry protests in the House of Commons, he was belatedly given a VC, which he received from King George V at Buckingham Palace.

Corporal John Grimshaw was evacuated from Gallipoli in November 1915 as he was suffering from frostbite.

In 1916 he was posted to Hull as a rifle instructor and was made a sergeant. He was then sent with his battalion to France where he was commissioned in 1917.

In 1918 he was posted to India and promoted to Lieutenant.
In 1920 John rejoined the Lancashire Fusiliers and retired in 1921.

In 1934 he was appointed the Army's Chief Recruiting Officer in the Northumbrian area and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He was married with two children.

John died on 20th July 1980 in Isleworth, London

JAMES BRADSHAW

James Bradshaw married Honora Gallery in 1912 and lived at 1 Clayton Street, Wigan.

On 4th September 1914 James enlisted into the Army. He joined the 9th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

James sailed to France with the main body of the 9th Battalion on 25th September 1915. On 13th May 1916 James died of wounds received in the trenches near Camblain L'Abbe, Northern France. French Marshal Petain's headquarters were here.

James's name is on the cenotaph at Wigan Parish Church

WILLIAM BELL

William Bell was born and lived at 36 Boyswell Lane, Wigan with his mum and dad Edward and Maud Bell.

When World War One broke out on 28th July 1914, William enlisted into the Army and joined the 8th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

On 25th September 1915 William sailed for France. He then met up with the 8th Battalion who had deployed at the beginning of September.

On 21st May 1916 William Bell was killed in action near Broadmarsh Crater, Vimy Ridge, Somme, France.

William Bell's name is on the cenotaph at Wigan Parish Church

21st May, 1916 – BROADMARSH CRATER

German guns were firing heavily, cutting off communication between the 8th Battalion front-line and their Headquarters. At about 19.30 hrs a mine exploded near the crater and with that the enemy attacked in successive waves.

The Loyal North Lancashire 8th Battalion held their ground admirably during the heavy attack, and were reduced to fighting with bayonets having completely expended their rifle and bomb supply before beginning to fall back. Casualties were high, 3 Officers killed, 5 Officers wounded, 27 Other Ranks killed, 107 wounded and 15 missing.

Battle of the Somme Timeline

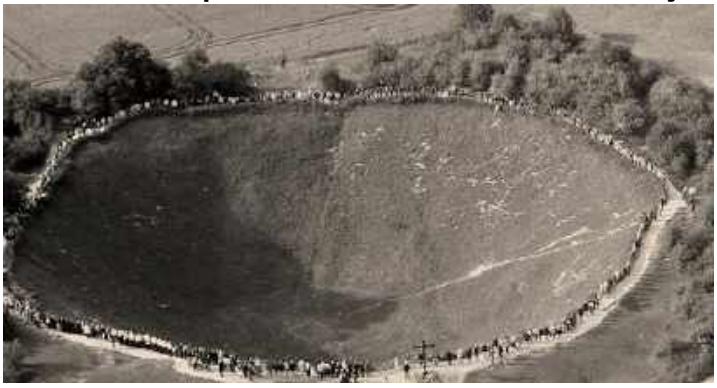
June 24, 1916 - The Allies begin a week-long artillery bombardment of German defensive positions on the Somme River in northern France, in preparation for a major British-led offensive. Over 1.5 million shells are fired along a 15-mile front to pulverize the intricate German trench system and to blow apart rows of barbed wire protecting the trenches. British Commander Douglas Haig believes this will allow an unhindered infantry advance and a rapid breakthrough of the German Front on the first day of battle.

July 1, 1916 - The British Army suffers the worst single-day death toll in its history as 18,800 soldiers are killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The losses come as 13 attacking divisions encounter German defences that are still intact despite the seven-day bombardment designed to knock them out. The British also attack in broad daylight, advancing in lines shoulder-to-shoulder only to be systematically mowed down by German machine-gunners. The Somme offensive quickly becomes a battle of attrition as British and French troops make marginal gains against the Germans but repeatedly fail to break through the entire Front as planned.

September 15, 1916 - The first-ever appearance of tanks on a battlefield occurs as British troops renew the Somme offensive and attack German positions along a five-mile front, advancing 2,000 yards with tank support. The British-developed tanks feature two small side-cannons and four machine-guns, operated by an eight-man crew. As the infantry advances, individual tanks provide support by blasting and rolling over the German barbed wire, piercing the frontline defence, and then roll along the length of the trench, raking the German soldiers with machine-gun fire.

September 25, 1916 - British and French troops renew their attacks in the Somme, capturing several villages north of the Somme River, including Thiepval, where the British successfully use tanks again. Following these successes, however, heavy rain turns the entire battlefield to mud, preventing effective manoeuvres.

November 18, 1916 - The Battle of the Somme ends upon the first snowfall as the British and French decide to cease the offensive. By now, the Germans have been pushed back just a few miles along the entire 15-mile front, but the major breakthrough the Allies had planned never occurred. Both sides each suffered over 600,000 casualties during the five-month battle. Among the injured German soldiers is Corporal Adolf Hitler, wounded by shrapnel.



Lochnagar Crater

Lochnagar Crater on the Somme Battlefield. It is 91 metres (300ft) diameter, 21 metres(70ft) deep. The mine was laid by the British at the start of the Somme battle on 1st July 1916. Bodies of British, French and German troops are still buried in the mine crater. This photo is how it looks today.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

1st July 1916 to 18th November 1916
"Death of the Age of Innocence"

Somme Statistics and Facts

- Battle of the Somme – 1st July 1916 to 18th November 1916
- The Somme battle front stretched over 15 miles
- Bombardment of the German lines lasted 8 days prior to the battle
- Over 3,000 Allied guns fired more than 1,600,000 shells more than in the whole first 12 months of the war.
- Many of the British shells were duds and never even exploded
- Lochnager is a huge crater made from a British mine on 1st July
- Little damage was done to the German fortifications as the German trenches were built to last with concrete bunkers, electricity, plumbing, wallpaper and carpets.
- British trenches were cold, dirty and wet as they were very basic.
- The trenches were dug by hand and were in a zig zag shape, not one long line. Trenches were infested with millions of rats, lice and frogs.
- 25,000 miles of trenches were dug by the soldiers in WW1. If these trenches were laid end to end they would go all the way around the circumference of the Earth.
- On the eve of the battle, troops marching to the Front passed huge pits that had been dug ready to bury the dead from the battle as well as large numbers of wooden crosses.
- British and French combined casualties were approx. 630,000.
- German casualties approx. 660,000
- British dead 127,751
- The battle commenced at 7.30 in the morning
- 30 minutes into the attack over 2,000 men were either dead or wounded.
- There were 60,000 British casualties on the first day alone
- British and French only advanced about 5 miles by the end of the battle
- The battle ended on the 18th November 1916 because of heavy snow.
- In December 1916, the President of the USA Woodrow Wilson, offered to mediate peace and asked both sides to state their minimum terms. The Allies and the Germans refused to negotiate.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

The Battle of the Somme (area of the River Somme) in France started on July 1st 1916 and lasted until 18th November 1916. For many people, the Battle of the Somme was the battle that symbolised the horrors of warfare in World War One. This one battle had a marked effect on overall casualty figures and seemed to epitomise the futility of trench warfare. Trench warfare was common during this time. The conditions in the British trenches were cramped, uncomfortable, very basic and the drinking water was sometimes collected from holes made by enemy shells. The German trenches had concrete bunkers with furniture.

The intent of the British was to attack and take control of a 24 km stretch of the River Somme. Most historians today agree that the plan was not well thought out.

For eight days before 1st July, the British fired over 1,600,000 shells non-stop at the German trenches, although many shells did not explode, or missed the targets completely. The Lochnager mine crater was blown along with 16 others at 7.28 on the morning of 1 July 1916 as a two-minute precursor to the start of the offensive. The Lochnagar Crater measured 300ft across and 90ft deep. Debris from the explosion rose some 4,000ft into the air. After the crater was blown, the crater which was in German hands, was charged by the Tynesiders, without success. By the time the attack was made, following the explosion, the Germans had regrouped and repelled the oncoming British. However the Worcesters took the area around the crater two days later on 3 July.

The German soldiers were unaffected by all the shelling as they were able to shelter underground in their trench bunkers.

On the way to battle, soldiers passed hundreds of wooden crosses and large freshly dug pits – mass graves for burying the dead of tomorrow.

At 7.30am on 1st July, thinking that most of the German defence had been destroyed, the British Generals told the British soldiers to get out of their trenches and walk slowly over to the German trenches. The eleven British divisions walked towards the German lines, the German machine guns started and the slaughter began.

Almost 60,000 British soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner on the first day of fighting.

General Haig was not disheartened by the heavy losses on the first day and ordered the continuation of the attacks on the German front-line.

On 13th July, a night attack did achieve a temporary breakthrough, but German reinforcements arrived in time to close the gap. General Haig believed that the Germans were close to the point of exhaustion and so continued to order further attacks, expecting each one to achieve the necessary breakthrough. Small victories like the capture of Pozieres were achieved on the 23rd July, these gains could not be successfully followed up.

The Battle of the Somme Continued.....

The Battle of the Somme saw several different weapons being used, including mines, gas and machine guns. Some larger machine guns needed 12 men to operate them. Tanks were used for the first time during the Battle of the Somme. The first tank, known as Little Willie, was not able to drive across the trenches and could only reach speeds of about 3 km per hour.

When the battle had ended on 18th November, the British and French soldiers had only advanced about 8 kilometres (5 miles). The battle ended partly because heavy rains and snow made fighting too difficult. This hard-won 5 miles was regained by the German Army in the Spring Offensive of March/April 1918.

For many years those who led the British campaign have received a lot of criticism for the way the Battle of the Somme was fought – especially Douglas Haig. This criticism was based on the appalling casualty figures suffered by the British and the French. By the end of the battle, the British Army had suffered 420,000 casualties including nearly 60,000 on the first day alone. The French lost 200,000 men and the Germans nearly 500,000.

British troops climb out of the trench and advance at the battle of the Somme

PALS Battalions and Voices from the Battle of the Somme

Lord Derby had this great concept of the Pals, where men working together in a factory, an office or living in the same street/town/village would enlist together. He had the idea that they would be a rather more cohesive fighting force because there was that bond and sense of camaraderie between them.

The present Lord Derby said "That absolutely did prove to be the case. They did generally gain more ground than other conscripted groups, and were better able to hold it. The tragic consequence of it, of course, is that when things go wrong they're wiping out a whole community, street, office or factory."

142 'Pals' Battalions were raised at the start of WW1 and the Liverpool Pals (Kings Regiment) was the first.

The Accrington Pals were a group of around 700 men from the town of Accrington, Lancashire. On 1st July during the battle of the Somme, 235 of the Accrington Pals were killed and over 350 were wounded in **just 20 minutes.**

Will Marshall was the last known surviving Accrington Pal. He died in 1995, one month short of his 102nd birthday. These are his words:

"They [German machine guns] were just sweeping across, men were falling at either side, all around you. By time I got... there were three of us of my section left, there were only three of us left and by time we'd got to where... we'd only gone about a hundred yards, must have done, to German front line and they'd gone back you know, they weren't there. And there were just them three of my section left. Didn't know where I were for a minute and when I picked myself up, these two were missing. There were only me there. A bit of shrapnel had hit me in th'arm and another piece just across my leg. Well there weren't another soldier within sixty or seventy yards either side of me then."

Will Marshall had to walk for more than 3 miles before finding treatment for his wounds. Following some 9 months hospitalization in Liverpool he was discharged from the Army and then worked as a munitions inspector.

Private AV Pearson, Leeds Pals – 30th June, night before the battle

"As we staggered up to the trenches we passed our divisional commander with some of his staff. His words of cheer to us were "Good luck, men. There is not a German left in their trenches, our guns have blown them all to hell". Then I suppose he got into his car and went home to his HQ to wine and dine, while we poor benighted blighters tottered on our way to glory".

Voices from the Battle of the Somme – Continued.....

Sergeant James Payne – 16th Battalion Manchester Regiment – Battle of the Somme 1st July 1916

"The attack was about to start. I had a boy with me; he'd been out of school for six weeks. I said "What are you doing here?" he said "I've been sent out from England. I've arrived today". I said, "Hang on to me" It was just stupid. The boy couldn't hold a butty knife, never mind a bayonet. He was killed. Shot down next to me.

We were attacking the very last German trench. We were all knocked out. Their machine guns were waiting for us. We didn't get through. None of us. There was a big shell-hole full of dead and dying and blinded. Tall men got it through the jaw, shorter men through the eyes. I was five foot ten and shot through the cheek. I was walking along and a bullet blew all my teeth out. I fell forward and spat all my teeth out. I collapsed and hours later I came round. My left eye was closed, I couldn't talk, I could breathe, that was all. I got my field dressing out and wound it round my face and left eye. I could see through my right eye and I saw one of my corporals who'd been shot through the foot. I took his boot off, bandaged it up, put his boot on again and he used his rifle as a crutch and together we went back. There was nobody around – just the dead.

We saw a man. A shell had come over and hit him, knocked off his left arm and left leg. His left eye was hanging on his cheek and he was calling out 'Annie', I shot him, I had to put him out of his misery. It hurt me. It hurt me."

Corporal George Ashurst – 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers– Ist July

"Our battalion had 500 casualties and I'd lost most of my friends. These were my platoon lads, they'd been boozing with us in the villages, but it was no use bothering, we knew they'd gone".

Once out of the relative safety of their trenches, the attacking troops had been ordered to advance slowly towards the Germans in long lines.

Maurice Symes –

"It was just as if we were at... that almost was like a training exercise, which was really, I suppose, absolutely mad when you come to think of it. We were just in extended order with everything on your back, your rifle and bayonet, your entrenching tool and everything else. We were just walking, straight towards the German lines in extended order. Well, we were sitting ducks all the way. Our earlier training you see for open warfare, run so far then lie down and then run a bit further, but this was just walking, straight into the death trap, hundreds of us. Just hopeless."

Voices from the Battle of the Somme – Continued.....

Private Frank Richards, DCM, 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers 19th July Arras sector of the Somme.

"The enemy now turned a machine gun on the mill, our flag-wagging had attracted their attention. On the right ront of the mill a battalion of Manchesters were in some shallow trenches; they had heavy casualties during the day, a number of shells bursting right among them. One of their captains ran across to us and asked if it was possible to get a message back to his Brigade Headquarters as his men were being blown to pieces. We told him we were very sorry but were under orders to only to deal with our Brigade messages. As we were speaking some large shells exploded on the trench he had left knocking in a big stretch of it. He then rushed back to look after the survivors. He was a very brave and humane man".

Second lieutenant W.J.Brockman 15th Batt. Lancashire Fusiliers

"What was so wrong about it was that even though it was a complete failure, it was reported as being a success by the newspapers. What was worse was that they persisted, knowing perfectly well that they were getting nowhere. It went on, and on, and on, and on."

Captain Charles Hudson took part in the battle, he later wrote:

"It is difficult to see how Haig, as Commander-in-Chief living in the atmosphere he did, so divorced from the fighting troops, could fulfil effectively the tremendous task that was laid upon him. I did not believe then and I do not believe now, that the enormous casualties were justified. Huge bombardments failed again and again yet we persisted in employing the same hopeless method of attack. Many other methods were possible, some were used, but only half-heartedly."

Private James Lovegrove was highly critical of Haig's tactics:

"*The military commanders had no respect for human life. General Douglas Haig..... cared nothing about casualties. Of course, he was carrying out government policy, because after that he was knighted and given a lump sum and a massive life-pension. I blame the public schools who bred these ego maniacs. They should never have been in charge of men. Never."*

Private Alfred Jackson is buried in Tyldesley Cemetery, he died of wounds suffered at the Somme. A letter from Alfred after he was wounded said: *"We got a terrible handling. One of our men came to see me at the dressing station and he told me that our battalion losses were very severe".* Alfred also wrote: *"It shall be a good bit before I am right again. My left thigh is broken and they have not got the old iron out of my leg yet."* He was brought back home, but died on the 19th July 1916 and received a military funeral.

Reverend John Duffield, Chaplain, Lancashire Division

"One night I was on the line – I was helping the medical officer in his job and doing my own at the same time – when two men came in. The first was one of our men and the other was a German, and they were both wounded. Our man said to the doctor, 'Here's a job I made for you doctor, and he made one for me'. What could you do with men like that? They were grand."

Sergeant-Major George Evans – 3rd Manchester Pals

On 30th July, 5 runners had died under fire whilst attempting to take a vital message back from the front to H.Q. Sergeant-Major George Evans of the 3rd Manchester Pals then volunteered to deliver this message despite the fact that he would have to face enemy fire over the whole of the 700 yards of open ground. He was successful in getting the message back to H.Q. though he was wounded and he returned to his regiment once more under heavy machine gun and rifle fire, running from shell-hole to shell-hole till he reached his "pals". Sergeant-Major Evans was then captured and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. He was awarded the Victoria Cross in January 1920 for his outstanding bravery under fire.

Father William Doyle, Padre 16th Division

"The first part of our journey lay through a narrow trench, the floor of which consisted of deep thick mud and the bodies of dead men trodden underfoot. It was horrible beyond description, but there was no help for it, and on the half-rotten corpses of our own brave men we marched in silence, everyone busy with his own thoughts..."

Sgt. Frederick Leslie A. Coulson was killed at the Somme on 8th October and this poem was found in his possessions.

WHO MADE THE LAW?

Who made the Law that men should die in meadows?
Who spake the word that blood should splash in lanes?
Who gave it forth that gardens should be bone-yards?
Who spread the hills with flesh and blood and brains?
Who made the Law?

Who made the Law that Death should stalk the village?
Who spake the word to kill among the sheaves?
Who gave it forth that death should lurk in hedgerows?
Who flung the dead among the fallen leaves?
Who made the Law?

But who made the Law? The Trees shall whisper to him;
'See, see the blood – the splashes on our bark!'
Walking the meadows, he shall hear bones crackle,
And fleshless mouths shall gibber in silent lanes at dark.
Who made the Law?

Who made the Law? At noon upon the hillside
His ears shall hear a moan, his cheeks shall feel a breath,
And all along the valleys, past gardens, croft, and homesteads,
HE who made the Law,
He who made the Law,
He who made the Law shall walk along with Death,
WHO made the Law?

Sgt. John William Streets, 12th York and Lancaster Regiment wrote this poem before he died on the Somme 1st July 1916

Behind that long and lonely trenched line
To which men come and go, where brave men die,
There is a yet unmarked and unknown shrine,
A broken plot, a soldiers' cemetery.
There lie the flower of youth, the men who scorn'd
To live (so died) when languished liberty:
Across their graves flowerless and unadorned
Still scream the shells of each artillery.
When war shall cease this lonely unknown spot
Of many a pilgrimage will be the end,
And flowers will shine in this now barren plot
And fame upon it through the years descend:
But many a heart upon each simple cross
Will hang the grief, the memory of its loss.

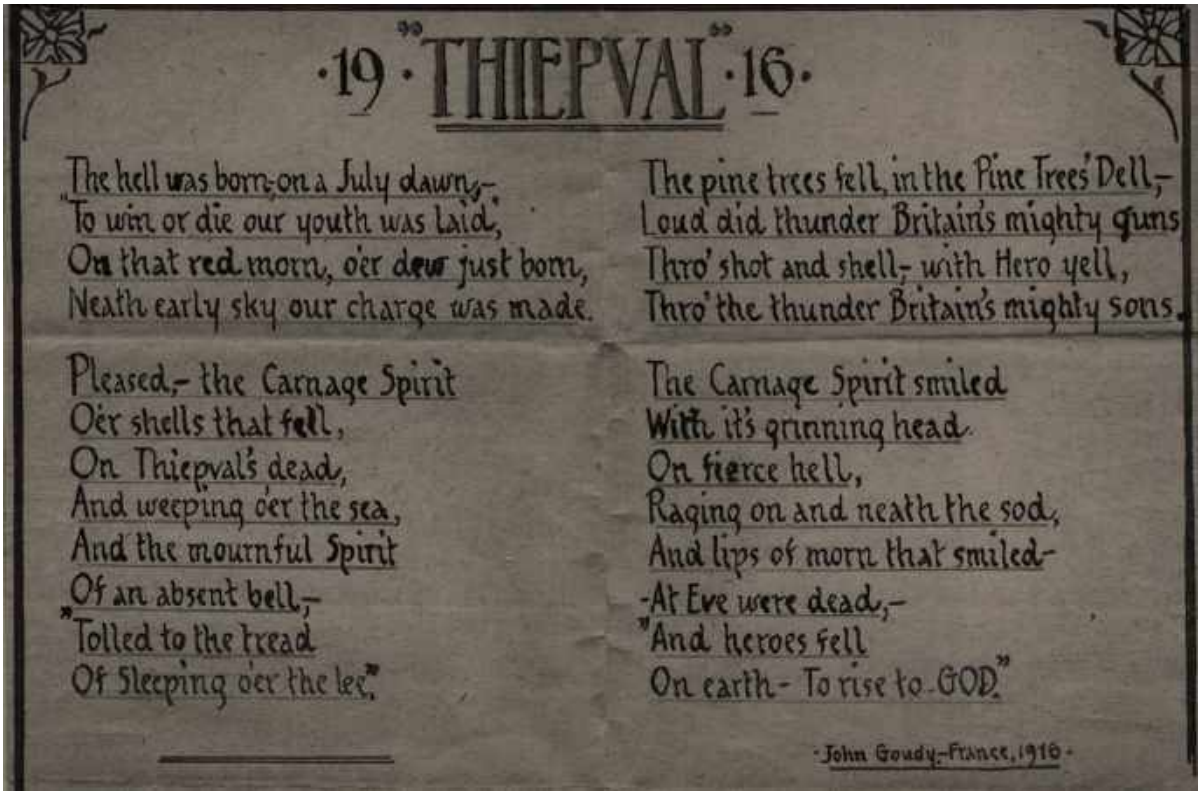
Siegfried Sassoon fought at the battle of the Somme. This is his poem "Aftermath" written after the battle.

Have you forgotten yet?...
For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same--and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?...
Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz--
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?
Do you remember the rats; and the stench
Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench--
And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?
Do you ever stop and ask, 'Is it all going to happen again?'

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack--
And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then
As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?
Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back
With dying eyes and lolling heads--those ashen-grey
Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

The following poem titled 'Thiepval' was written by John Goudy whilst serving on the Somme in 1916.



·19· "THIEPVAL" ·16·

The hell was born on a July dawn,-
"To win or die our youth was laid,
On that red morn, o'er dew just born,
Neath early sky our charge was made.

The pine trees fell, in the Pine Trees' Dell,-
Loud did thunder Britain's mighty guns
Thro' shot and shell,- with Hero yell,
Thro' the thunder Britain's mighty sons.

Pleased,- the Carnage Spirit
O'er shells that fell,
On Thiepval's dead,
And weeping o'er the sea,
And the mournful Spirit
Of an absent bell,-
"Tolled to the tread
Of Sleeping o'er the lee."

The Carnage Spirit smiled
With it's grinning head
On fierce hell,
Raging on and neath the sod,
And lips of morn that smiled-
-At Eve were dead,-
"And heroes fell
On earth- To rise to GOD."

·John Goudy-France, 1916·

Medical Breakthroughs 1916

In 1916 Marie Curie developed portable X-ray machines which were taken directly to where they were needed. Marie Curie helped organise the transformation of ordinary cars into portable X-ray machine carriers. Marie herself drove these to the front lines in 1916 with her 17 year old daughter Irene as assistant.

Marie Curie in one of her mobile X-ray units 1916

Marie didn't allow her gender to hamper her in a male-dominated world. Instead, she mobilized a small army of women in an effort to reduce human suffering and win World War I. Through her efforts, it is estimated that the total number of wounded soldiers receiving X-ray exams during the war exceeded one million.

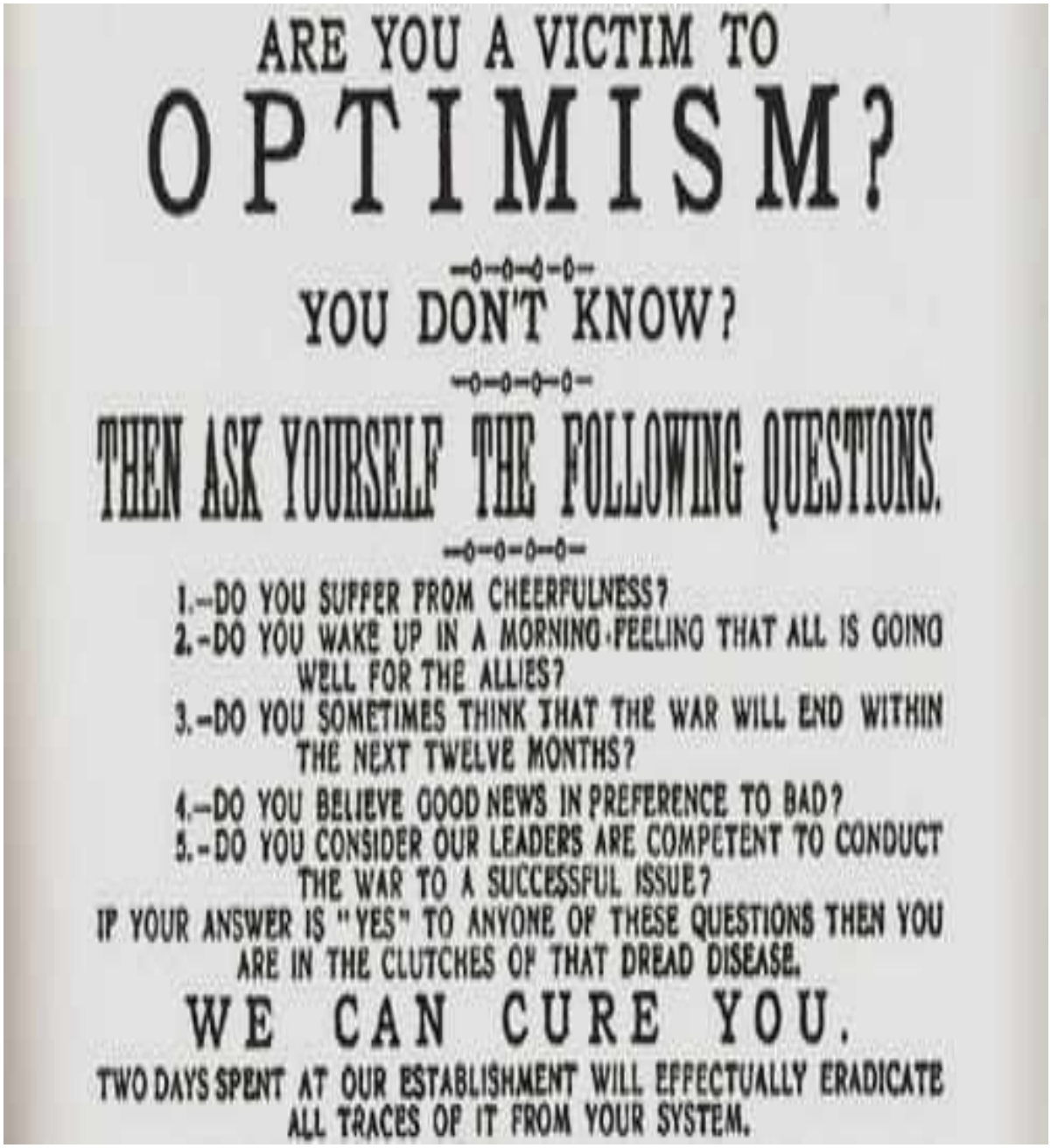
The Thomas splint – named after Welsh surgeon Hugh Owen Thomas – was used to secure a broken leg. At the start of the war, 80% of all soldiers with a broken femur died; by 1916 80% of soldiers with this injury survived.

THE WIPERS TIMES

The *Wipers Times* was a magazine that was published by and for British soldiers fighting in Ypres.

In early 1916, Captain Fred Roberts and some of his men came across a printing press abandoned by the Belgians. A sergeant who had been a printer in peacetime salvaged it and printed a sample page. The paper itself was named The Wipers Times after Tommy slang for Ypres.

The example below shows the irreverent humour that was an integral part of the newspaper. We are sure this went a considerable way to relieve the misery of war and the horrific conditions being experienced.



ARE YOU A VICTIM TO

OPTIMISM?

—o—o—o—o—

YOU DON'T KNOW?

—o—o—o—o—

THEN ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

—o—o—o—o—

1.—DO YOU SUFFER FROM CHEERFULNESS?
2.—DO YOU WAKE UP IN A MORNING FEELING THAT ALL IS GOING WELL FOR THE ALLIES?
3.—DO YOU SOMETIMES THINK THAT THE WAR WILL END WITHIN THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS?
4.—DO YOU BELIEVE GOOD NEWS IN PREFERENCE TO BAD?
5.—DO YOU CONSIDER OUR LEADERS ARE COMPETENT TO CONDUCT THE WAR TO A SUCCESSFUL ISSUE?

IF YOUR ANSWER IS "YES" TO ANYONE OF THESE QUESTIONS THEN YOU ARE IN THE CLUTCHES OF THAT DREAD DISEASE.

WE CAN CURE YOU.

TWO DAYS SPENT AT OUR ESTABLISHMENT WILL EFFECTUALLY ERADICATE ALL TRACES OF IT FROM YOUR SYSTEM.

British soldiers resting in a trench during the Passchendaele battle

British soldiers and the shell holes filled with water

THE BATTLE OF PASSCHENDAELE
31st July 1917 to 6th November 1917

Passchendaele Statistics and Facts

- Battle of Passchendaele – 31st July 1917 to 6th November 1917
- The British bombardment by heavy artillery started on 18th July 1917 prior to the infantry attack on 31st July 1917
- The heavy artillery barrage consisted of 3,000 artillery guns and fired over 4 million shells.
- Battle of Passchendaele was the Third battle of Ypres in Flanders, Belgium, known as "Wipers" to the soldiers
- The 1st Battle of Ypres, Oct/Nov. 1914, 2nd Battle April/May 1915
- Flanders is the North part of Belgium, including Ypres.
- As at the battle of the Somme, Sir Douglas Haig was in overall command.
- Haig's plan was to sweep through Flanders to the coast in order to destroy the German submarine pens.
- Haig believed, incorrectly, that the morale of the German army was low. He believed the Allies would roll through Flanders without too much trouble.
- The Allied attack was launched over an 11 mile front
- Early August the whole battle area was saturated with the heaviest rain for 30 years.
- The resulting mud prevented tanks from moving forward to help the infantry.
- The drainage systems had been destroyed by the bombardment and shell craters filled with water which did not allow the advancing men anywhere to hide.
- Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army led the main assault
- Allies consisted of troops from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France and Belgium.

The Battle of Passchendaele

Officially known as the Third Battle of Ypres, Passchendaele became infamous not only for the scale of casualties, but also for the mud.

On July 18th 1917, a heavy artillery barrage was launched at the German lines. This lasted for ten days. Three thousand artillery guns fired over four million shells. Therefore, the German army in the area fully expected a major Allied attack - so any vague hope of surprise was lost, as was true in any attack that started with a major artillery bombardment.

The infantry attack started on July 31st. The main assault was led by Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army. To their left were units from the French First Army led by General François Paul Anthoine and to Gough's right was the Second Army led by the victor of Messines, Sir Herbert Plumer.

Constant shelling had churned the clay soil and smashed the drainage systems. The left wing of the attack achieved its objectives but the right wing failed completely. Within a few days, the heaviest rain for 30 years had turned the soil into a quagmire, producing thick mud that clogged up rifles and immobilised tanks. It eventually became so deep that men and horses drowned in it.

The Germans, as happened at the Somme, were fully prepared and the Allied attack, launched across an eleven mile front, made only small gains. Tanks sent forward to help the infantry, simply got stuck. Infantry soldiers found movement very difficult. The impact of the artillery bombardment had destroyed the drainage systems of the region which greatly added to the problem.

The shell craters made by the Allied shelling filled with water and did not allow advancing men the opportunity to hide in them. The fields through which men should have gone became impassable.

On 16 August the attack was resumed, to little effect. Stalemate reigned for another month until an improvement in the weather prompted another attack on 20th September. The Battle of Menin Road Ridge, along with the Battle of Polygon Wood on 26th September and the Battle of Broodseinde on 4 October, established British possession of the ridge east of Ypres.

Further attacks in October failed to make much progress. The eventual capture of what little remained of Passchendaele village by British and Canadian forces on 6th November finally gave Haig an excuse to call off the offensive and claim success.
However, the Third Battle of Ypres or Passchendaele had been a very costly battle. For the sake of a few kilometres, the British had lost 310,000 men and the Germans 260,000. Haig was heavily criticised for the attack and for failing to modify his plans as the attack clearly was not going to be a success.

The Battle of Passchendaele Continued...

Haig blamed the lack of progress not on the abnormal weather and the conditions it caused, but on General Sir Hubert de la Poer Gough. Haig moved Gough and his men to a front further north and put Field Marshall Viscount Plumer in charge of the battle. Plumer used different tactics to Gough. He wanted small gains that could be permanently held as opposed to Gough's apparent desire for one major sweeping movement that would bring success. As a result, Plumer fought a series of small battles within Flanders – the Battle of Menin Road Bridge, the Battle of Polygon Wood and the Battle of Broodseinde, were fought between September and October 1917.

These small battles gave British forces the advantage in the territory to the east of Ypres. Haig became convinced that German morale was on the verge of collapsing and ordered that the offensive be continued to Passchendaele Ridge.

Between October 9th and October 12th, two battles were fought – Poelcappelle and the First Battle of Passchendaele. By now, those German soldiers who had been fighting on the Eastern Front had been moved to the Western Front – and they had been specifically moved to Passchendaele Ridge to bolster the German forces there. The Germans used mustard gas to assist them and the attempted Allied breakthrough to Passchendaele Ridge failed to materialise. However, Haig would not concede that the attack had not succeeded. In late October three further Allied attacks were made on Passchendaele Ridge. On November 6th, 1917, Passchendaele village was taken by British and Canadian Forces.

Passchendaele village lay barely five miles beyond the starting point of Haig's offensive. Having prophesied a decisive success, it had taken over three months, 325,000 Allied and 260,000 German casualties to do little more than make the bump of the Ypres Salient somewhat larger.

Yet Haig's decision to continue into November remains deeply controversial and the arguments, like the battle, seem destined to go on and on.

Tank stuck in the mud at Passchendaele

British soldiers standing on top of a dugout at Passchendaele

Allied Canadian soldiers in gas masks on the front line – Passchendaele

PATRICK MALONE
Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

Patrick Malone was born in Wigan in March 1891 to John and Ellen Malone of 9 Lyon Street, Wallgate, Wigan.

Patrick worked as a coal cutter the same job that his mother did, prior to that he worked in the cotton industry.

On 2nd September 1914, Patrick enlisted in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He signed up on a short service engagement for a term of three years. It was made clear to him that If the war was over in less than three years, he would be discharged. He was sent to France with the Regiment.

On 21st May 1916 at Broadmarsh Crater, Vimy, Somme, Patrick sustained gunshot wounds to his left forearm and legs. He was removed from the battlefield by the 17th Field Ambulance and taken to the 30th Casualty Clearing Station. He was then transferred to England on the hospital ship Asturias. He was treated at the 2nd Western Military Hospital in Stockport. Patrick spent 3 weeks in hospital before being given a furlough for home leave.

On 4th September 1916 he was posted into the 3rd Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment at the Regimental depot in Preston.

Patrick sailed from Folkestone to Bolougne on 8th February 1917 and joined the 9th Service Battalion in the field.

On 4th August 1917 Patrick was killed in the Westhoek area of Ypres, Flanders, Belgium. It is not clear how Patrick died, however four other men of the Battalion were also killed. All four men's names are on the Menin Gate memorial Ypres.

Patrick Malone's name is on the cenotaph at Wigan Parish Church

HM Hospital Ship Asturias

On 20th March 1917 the hospital ship Asturias was torpedoed without warning by a German U boat. 35 people were killed. Her hulk was then used as a floating ammunition store in Plymouth. In 1920 she was purchased by the Royal Mail Line and rebuilt as a cruise ship, re-named Arcadian and cruised until she was scrapped in 1933.

THOMAS WOODCOCK V.C.,

Thomas Woodcock VC was born in Wigan, Lancashire, in 1888 to Isabella Twigley and Henry Woodcock.

Thomas married Mary Mitchell in 1909 and lived at their own address, 41 Cambridge Street, Wigan. During World War One, he served as a Private in both France and Belgium.

On 13th September 1917, north of Broenbeek, Belgium, Thomas was part of a post commanded by Lance Sergeant Moyney, which became surrounded by the Germans. The post held out for 96 hours, but after that time was attacked from all sides in overwhelming numbers.

They were forced to retire and Thomas Woodcock covered the retirement with a Lewis gun, he only retired when the enemy had moved round and up to his post and were only a few yards away. Thomas then crossed the river, but hearing cries for help behind him, he returned and waded into the stream amid a shower of bombs from the enemy and rescued another member of the post. He then carried the soldier across the open ground in broad daylight towards the British front line, regardless of machine gun fire that was opened on him."

Thomas was awarded the Victoria Cross on 13th September 1917 and came home on leave to a hero's welcome at his old school, St. Patrick's, Scholes, Wigan. As a V.C. recipient, Thomas could have stayed in England, but he returned to France to be with his comrades.

Thomas was killed in action at Bullecourt, France, on 27 March 1918. He is buried in Douchy-les-Ayette Cemetery, 13 kms. South of Arras.

All Victoria Crosses are made of bronze cast from metal melted down from the cannons captured at Sevastopol in the Crimean War.

HARRY PATCH, THE LAST SURVIVING WW1 TOMMY

When he was 109 years old, Harry Patch returned to Passchendaele with the help of the Mail on Sunday. Harry came to pay a deeply personal farewell to his three closest comrades who had been killed by a German shell. He also wanted to bear witness to the horrors of trench warfare for one last time.

"I can see it in my mind's eye. I remember the cacophony of noise, so loud you couldn't hear the man next to you speaking. Shells were whizzing over us towards the German lines just 750 yards away, and their machine-gun bullets were coming in the opposite direction. But what I remember most was the waiting, the anxiety, the fear.

I have a memory of crossing that stream. It was flooded, with the trees on either side smashed to pieces. We crossed on pontoons because the bridge had been blown up. On the far side of the stream we stopped to await the order to advance. The bombardment to cover us took your breath away. The noise was ferocious. There was apprehension in everyone's eyes and horror in a few. The ground we had to cover was just shell holes.

There were bodies, both our own and German, from the first wave. It was sickening to see your own dead and wounded, some crying for stretcher-bearers, others semi-conscious and others beyond all hope. There were men who had been ripped to pieces – it wasn't just a case of seeing them with a neat bullet-hole in their tunic. Lots of people were crying for help but you couldn't stop - It was hellish. Just one long nightmare from the thunder of the guns as the battle began to the sound of the wounded crying out. You could do nothing to help them. You just had to go forward through all that mud and blood. It was absolutely sickening.

I remember one lad from our regiment in particular – the memory has haunted me all my life. He was in a pool of blood, ripped open from his shoulder to his waist by shrapnel. When we got to him he said, 'Shoot me.' But before we could draw a revolver, he was dead. The final word he uttered was 'Mother', it wasn't a cry of despair, it was a cry of surprise and joy. I think – no, I'm sure – that his mother was in the next world to welcome him and he knew it. I've always remembered that cry and that death is not the end – at least I hope that's how it was with my three mates."

Harry, who had been an apprentice plumber in Bath before conscription, was sent to the front line around his 19th birthday in June 1917. He said: "I didn't want to be there and I never pretended I did. I was conscripted in 1916, by which time the enthusiasm for the war had waned at home. I was nervous but I didn't want to reveal my feelings to the others. It doesn't matter how much training you've had, you can't prepare for the reality – the noise, the filth, the uncertainty, the casualties.

Harry Patch, the last surviving WW1 Tommy Continued....

The conditions were awful while we were waiting for the offensive. It rained and rained. Water flowed along the bottom of the trench. I'd stand on an ammunition box until it sank into the mud, then put another on top and stand on that. There was no sanitation and the place stank. You were filthy.

From landing in France in June until coming out in September, I never had a bath nor clean clothes. I was put in a Lewis gun team with three others. We became very close – it sounds strange, but we had a pact that we wouldn't kill anyone, not if we could help it. We'd fire short, hit them in the legs or fire over their heads, but not kill unless it was them or us. We lay down for cover behind a dead German. I had just changed a magazine when one of them came out of the trench and came straight for us with fixed bayonet. He couldn't have had any ammunition, otherwise he would have shot us. I drew my revolver and shot him in the right shoulder. He dropped his rifle but still came stumbling on. He called out something to me in German – I don't suppose it was complimentary. I had three live rounds left in that revolver and could have killed him with the first.

He was only 15 yards away and I couldn't miss, not with a Webley service revolver, not at that range. I thought, 'What shall I do?' I had four seconds to make up my mind, and I gave him his life. I shot him above the ankle and above the knee and brought him down. He would have been passed back to a PoW camp and rejoined his family after the war. I've often wondered whether he realised I gave him his life. Six weeks later, my three best mates were killed by a German bomb. If that had happened before I met that German, I would have damn well killed him.

We were sitting amid a sea of shell holes, up to our knees in gluey, sticky mud. The stench of rotting bodies was terrible. Right across the battlefield, the bodies of the dead and of the wounded would sink out of sight. This was all mud, mud and more mud, mixed together with blood. We fought for a few yards of soil and that cost the lives of so many, including my three best friends. There was no excuse for such slaughter for so little gain."

He returned to England six weeks after that first assault. The German shell that killed his three best friends had also left Harry with horrific shrapnel wounds that were later operated on without anaesthetic. "Anyone who tells you they weren't scared is a damned liar. You were scared all the time. We lived hour by hour. You saw the sun rise, hopefully you'd see it set. If you saw it set, you hoped you'd see it rise. Some men would, some wouldn't."

Harry said: "I went 80 years and never mentioned the war, not even to my family. The memories were too vivid. I bottled it all up for so long. I never even watched a war film, but the war is something I can now talk about. In 2004 I went back to Flanders for a memorial service and met a German, Charles Kuentz, who had fought against us. We shook hands and agreed on so much about that awful war. A nice old chap, he was. Why he should have been my enemy, I don't know. Charles told me, 'I fought you because I was told to, and you did the same.' It's sad but true. "What the hell we fought for, I now don't know."

(Harry Patch died July 2009 aged 111 years)

JOHN WILLIAM KNOTT

Grandad, Corporal John Knott of the Liverpool Kings Regiment, fought at the Battle of Passchendaele.

Grandad was with his friend Peter Richardson, unfortunately they were both blown up by a shell.

Grandad was found, taken to hospital and eventually recovered, but he never saw his friend again.

He enquired and searched for him in the hospital and from the information given to him, he thought Peter had been killed.

He eventually returned home with this knowledge.

On 17th March 1962 Grandad's youngest daughter was married and her husband's uncle came to the wedding.

Grandad couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the 'uncle' who turned out to be Peter Richardson the friend he thought had been killed at Passchendaele.

Grandad and Peter almost 45 years later at the wedding

Eileen Walsh from Wigan

This poem was written by Dan Lake after he visited his father's grave in Holland, he was killed in WW2. He then visited the Menin Gate in Ypres Belgium and the Tyne Cot cemetery at Passchendaele, Ypres.

On These Fields of Passchendaele

On these fields of Passchendaele, skylarks sing and cattle graze;
in these fields of Flanders lives were spent in far off days.
No hint of what went on here! No sign of blood and bones;
but sixty thousand souls rest here beneath the white headstones;
on these fields of Passchendaele, where roam the silent sheep,
the only sound the wailing winds; those mothers who still weep:

Over fields of Passchendaele.....

On these fields of Passchendaele, men walked against the fire,
while lead and splinters fell like rain, they clung to bloodied wire.
They prayed to God almighty that this day they might get through,
but God's not listening Tommy son, he hasn't time for you
on these fields of Passchendaele; where donkeys planned their war.
Far from the filthy trenches they were spared what lions saw

On these fields of Passchendaele...

On these fields of Passchendaele I stand without a clue
of what you poor men suffered, or what you had to do.
But I can feel your pain as a vice surrounds my heart,
that crushes breath within me till it forces tears to start
for men who died so bloodily, from gas or lead and shell,
who drowned in blood and mud, in this place of utter hell:

On these fields of Passchendaele....

"Lions led by donkeys"

This is a phrase popularly used to describe the British infantry of the First World War and to blame the generals who led them. The contention is that the brave soldiers (lions) were sent to their deaths by incompetent and indifferent leaders (donkeys).

I DIED IN HELL- (THEY CALLED IT PASSCHENDAELE)

MEMORIAL TABLET by Siegfried Sassoon

Squire nagged and bullied till I went to fight,
(Under Lord Derby's Scheme). I died in hell—
(They called it Passchendaele). My wound was slight,
And I was hobbling back; and then a shell
Burst slick upon the duck-boards: so I fell
Into the bottomless mud, and lost the light.
At sermon-time, while Squire is in his pew,
He gives my gilded name a thoughtful stare:
For, though low down upon the list, I'm there;
'In proud and glorious memory' ... that's my due.
Two bleeding years I fought in France, for Squire:
I suffered anguish that he's never guessed.
Once I came home on leave: and then went west...
What greater glory could a man desire?

Siegfried Sassoon was an incredibly brave and effective soldier. He was nicknamed 'Mad Jack' by his men for his courage under fire. On 27th July 1916 he received the Military Cross for gallantry.

On 16th April 1917 he was shot in the back by a sniper from the German trenches. He was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital, Edinburgh, to be treated for shell shock.

Siegfried Sassoon returned to the front line in 1918, but was shot in the head and returned to Britain to recover. Whilst recovering Siegfried was out walking, but not in uniform and a woman came up to to him and gave him a white feather*.

He died in 1967 at the age of 80 years, he has a memorial in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

** The white feather was the sign for cowardice and was given out by some women who resented the fact that able bodied men were walking about and not overseas fighting in the war. There are many cases of men out of uniform receiving the white feather who were in fact service forces personnel.*

Chris de Burgh wrote the following song about the battle of Passchendaele and is now available to hear from:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td-KoBuych8

This Song For You

Hello darling, this is the army, I've just got the time to write,
Today we attack, there's no turning back,
the boys they're all ready for the fight.

Yes, I'm well but this place is like hell, they call it Passchendaele,
In nineteen seventeen the war must be ending,
the General said this attack will not fail;

So I'm writing down this little melody When you play it my love, think of me...
We'll be together in this song for you,
And it goes Lalala...sing it darling...Lalala...

They got old Bill and the Sergeant is still out there Wounded in some shellhole,
They say this war will end all wars, Oh God I really hope it will,

Oh how's old England, are they still singing those songs that we loved to sing,
When all this is over, we'll go sailing in Dover,
catching fish like we used to with a string,

Oh I miss you, I miss you, I miss you so, If they get me my love you will know...
We'll always be together in this song for you...

And it goes Lalala...I have to go now...
take care of yourself my love

Tyne Cot cemetery photo from the Passchendaele Memorial Museum Booklet

THREE BROTHERS – World War One

told to BETA by Dave's son John

Three brothers – Harry Whitehead and his step-brothers Frank Edwards and David Patrick Edwards all joined the Liverpool Kings Regiment and fought in World War One.

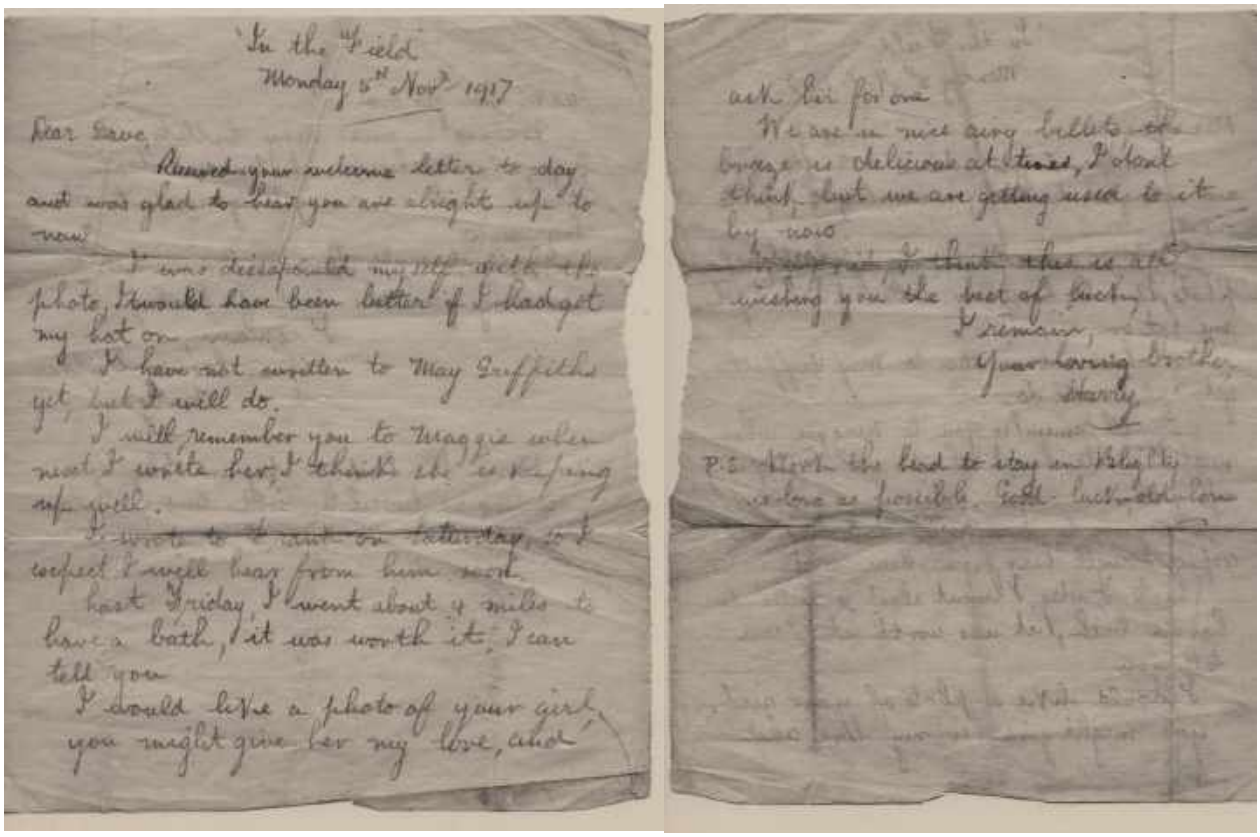
On 5th November 1917, Harry wrote to his brother David from "In the Field", somewhere in France. He told him to stay in Blighty (England) as long as possible.

Dave Edwards was buried twice in the trenches and this photograph shows him at the hospital with other patients, doctors and nurses. He is in uniform on the back row.

After this Dave became a cook. During Christmas 1917, A French farmer was looking for his pig, but Dave knew the officers had eaten it. Dave found out that the soldiers should have been half a loaf each, but they were only given a quarter as the officers had taken the rest. Dave complained and the soldiers got their half a loaf ration.

This is Frank Edwards, he is 6th on the back row, on the back it says "from Frank to Dave"

Letter from Harry Whitehead Liverpool King; Regiment 1917



Translation of letter from Harry Whitehead, The Liverpool Kings Regiment, to his brother David Edwards, (kindly given to Eileen and Eileen by David's son John)

"In the Field"
Monday 5th November 1917

Dear Dave,
Received your welcome letter to-day and was glad to hear you are alright up to now.
I was disappointed myself with the photo, it would have been better if I had got my hat on.
I have not written to May Griffiths yet, but I will do.
I will remember you to Maggie when next I write her, I think she is keeping up well.
I wrote to Frank on Saturday so I expect I will hear from him next.
Last Friday, I went about 4 miles to have a bath, it was worth it, I can tell you.
I would like a photo of your girl, you might give her my love, and ask her for one.

We are in nice airy billets, the breeze is delicious at times, I don't think, but we are getting used to it by now.

Well lad, I think this is all, wishing you the best of luck.
I remain,
Your loving brother,
Harry.
P.S. Work the head to stay in Blighty as long as possible. Good luck, old love.

THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

On 20 November 1917 the British Army launched the first large tank attack in history to commence the Battle of Cambrai.

At 6.20am on 20 November 1917 the British Army launched a surprise attack using tanks that created a major break in the German lines.

In the vanguard of the assault, over 400 tanks rolled forward on ideal ground towards the French town of Cambrai. This was the first large tank attack in history and it was devastatingly effective.

The Manchester Regiment at the Battle of Cambrai 1918

British tank being welcomed by the people of Belgium.

Photo from Harry Whitehead, Liverpool Kings Regiment

John William Coutts

My Great Uncle, John William Coutts, was called up with the 1st Class Army Reserve Royal Field Artillery – August 1914.

John sailed from Dublin on September 1914 to Le Havre, France.

John came home on a 7 day pass in October 1915.

John was at the battle of Mons on Retreat to the Marne (1914), Cambrai, Ypres, La Bassee, Douai and Bethune.

In April 1918, during the German Spring Offensive against the British on the Lys, Northern France, Bethune town centre was totally destroyed. Even so the German offensive failed.

William Davies

Billy was born on 22 Jul 1896 in Leigh, Lancashire to James Davies and Jane nee Pemberton. His birth year was recorded as 1897 on the admission documents to Langensalza Prisoner Of War camp.

Billy left full-time education at 11 years old and went to school part time till he was 14 years of age. His father James had a cab and funeral service business and he had three brothers and one sister.

On 24th June 1916 he enlisted in the 16th Manchester Regiment. In December 1916 he was sent to France.

On 21st March 1918 Billy was taken prisoner at the Battle of Manchester Hill. He suffered injuries to his chest and right leg (recorded on German admission POW records). He was sent to Langensalza camp. His left eye was removed by German doctors. Thanks to the International Red Cross, Billy was transferred to an internment camp at Chateau D'oex in Switzerland on 30th August 1918.

Billy with his fellow soldiers at Altcar Training Camp, Lancashire. He is on the front row, second from right.

On 26th Feb 1919 Billy, aged 22 years, was discharged unfit with Silver War Badge. This Silver War Badge was given to service personnel who were honourably discharged due to wounds from military service in World War One.

William Davies

On 4th June 1919 Billy married Elsie Atherton at Leigh Parish Church.

"My Grandfather, who was born in Leigh, went on to run a very successful coach, taxi and funeral undertaking (pardon the pun) in Leigh with his brothers and he finally passed away in 1961."

Photographs and information given to BETA by Gill Hamilton and Bill Horton, Billy's grandchildren

Langensalza Camp, Germany.

This was a German Prisoner of War camp set up in September 1914 to house Allied prisoners of war. At any one time it held 10,000 prisoners from Britain, France, Belgium and Russia.

Private Robert Heaps of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was imprisoned here and he described the food as 'unfit for pigs' and set at starvation rations. Later he was put among a working party in a salt mine, and here the treatment was harsh in the extreme. Two men had 25 waggons a day to fill and if there were 3 men they had to fill 50 waggons. There were 64 Englishmen employed there. It was considered the worst camp in Germany. There were reports of shooting of the prisoners by the German guards.

British, French, Belgian and Russian Doctors at Langensalza Camp.

Billy Davies, bottom left, at Langensalza Prisoner of War Camp

Battle of Manchester Hill, 21st March 1918

Manchester Hill, in Northern France, overlooked the town of St.Quentin which was held by the Germans. It was captured because of its strategic position in April 1917 by the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, thus giving the hill its name. One member of the 2nd Battalion was the war poet, Wilfred Owen.

March 1918 was the start of the German Spring Offensive, a concentrated effort to win back territory captured by the British and French armies. On 21st March 1918, Manchester Hill came under fierce attack from the German Army. Despite being outnumbered and less well-equipped, the 16th Manchesters defended the hill heroically led by their inspirational leader Lieutenant Colonel Wilfrith Elstob, Of the 168 men who fought so courageously, only 17 returned to the British lines. 79 men were killed including Elstob, - all the rest were wounded or taken prisoner.

Lieutenant-Colonel Elstob was awarded the Victoria Cross, having previously won the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order.

16th Manchester Battalion at the Battle of Manchester Hill, Northern France

Lance Corporal Fred Latham

Jim Latham at his grandfather Fred's grave at Roclincourt Valley Cemetery, Arras, Pas de Calais, France

In the middle, Fred Latham's wife Emily with Jim's mother in 1975.

FREDERICK HERBERT LATHAM
1st Battalion King's Own, Royal Lancaster Regiment

Fred Latham was born in Garswood, Wigan in 1889. Fred married Emily Walker in 1910 and they lived at 66 Princess Road Ashton in Makerfield. They had three children, Walter born on 14th June 1911, followed by Fred and Patricia.

On 21st September 1915, Fred joined the First Battalion, King's Own, Royal Lancaster Regiment. He served in France and Flanders. Fred was promoted to Lance Corporal, Service Number 28361.

On 28th March 1918, Fred and the 1st Battalion were involved in the Defence of Arras, the battle of the River Scarpe. The city of Arras was the northern hinge of the offensive and the Germans attacked here as part of their Operation Mars.

Fred was killed at this battle on 28th March 1918 and is buried at Roclincourt Valley Cemetery, he was 28 years old.

In 1984 Jim (Fred's grandson) took his dad, Walter, to Paris for a holiday and thought it was their chance to visit Fred's grave. They took the train to Arras and then a taxi to the Roclincourt Valley Cemetery.

Fred's son Walter in 1984 at his dad's grave in Roclincourt Valley Cemetery, Arras, France.

Fred Latham's name is on the St. Thomas church memorial, Ashton in Makerfield.

Information on Fred Latham given to BETA by his grandson Jim Latham of Wigan.

ALFRED ROBERT WILKINSON V.C.

Alfred was born in Leigh, Lancashire. He enlisted in the 1/5th Manchester Regiment on 12 December 1914 and went out to France in July 1916. He took part in The Battle of the Somme. He then went to Arras, and later took part in the Battle of Passchendaele in July 1917.

During the Battle of the Selle in October 1918, the British were advancing, but owing to heavy losses they could not advance any further and were in danger where they were. The Company Commander asked for a volunteer to go back for reinforcements. One Yorkshireman volunteered, but was shot dead while crossing the 600 yards level field that lay between the Company's position and the main reserve body of the British troops. There was no cover only a few bushes and all this open part was being continually swept by a great German barrage of shells, machine-gun and sniper fire. Three other volunteers were also shot dead in turn – it looked absolute death for anyone else to go – but Private Alfred Wilkinson volunteered.

It took Alfred one and a half hours to get across 600 yards, running, but sometimes crawling on hands and knees. Shells and machine-gun bullets fell all around him, but by extraordinary luck none touched him. Alfred delivered the message but the Commander of the reserves told him it was impossible to relieve his colleagues owing to the heavy machine-gun fire. Alfred returned to his comrades and got through safely. Under cover of British machine-gun fire Alfred and his Company then retreated to the reserve lines, losing a considerable number of men. Private Alfred Wilkinson again crossed the danger zone without a wound. In the afternoon, having been reinforced, Alfred and his comrades, took the German position and drove the enemy back 1000 yards. It was for this wonderful brave act that Alfred Wilkinson was awarded the V.C., invested on him at Buckingham Palace by His Majesty the King. Alfred was promoted to Lance Corporal.

Later Alfred was asked by an interviewer if he did not think that he was going to certain death, Alfred said: "I did not think anything! I knew that somebody had to get back, and I thought that it was to me to get back, I did not think of the consequences or anything else".

Alfred was employed as a tester at Bickershaw Colliery. On 23 October 1940 Alfred was found dead, he had been testing the samples of air taken from different areas of the mine to determine the amount of gas present in order to monitor the amount of ventilation required in any part of the mine. He died from carbon monoxide poisoning and a subsequent investigation found that a ventilation pipe had been blocked by a dead bird. He was buried with full military honours in Leigh Borough cemetery.

JOHN WILLIAM KNOTT

My granddad, John William Knott, known as Jack, enlisted immediately when war was announced on 4th August 1914, he was 15 years old. Grandad joined The Liverpool King's Regiment, which was the first of the 'Pals Battalions'.

Grandad never spoke of his time in World War One, but one day when I was twelve, he gave me the above photograph of himself.

Grandad was at the Battle of Passchendaele (31st July–6th November 1917). Passchendaele was a small village in Ypres (the soldiers called it Wipers). At this battle Grandad was with his friend Peter Richardson, unfortunately as they advanced on the German line, they were both blown up by a German shell.

Grandad was taken to hospital and eventually recovered, but he never saw his friend again and couldn't find him in the hospital and so thought he had been killed. In 1962 his youngest daughter, Jacqueline, got married and her husband's uncle came to the wedding. Grandad couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the 'uncle' who turned out to be Peter Richardson the friend he thought had been killed at Passchendaele.

In 1919 Grandad met Elizabeth Nickson and they were married in 1920. They had 9 children, the first boy, Jack, born in 1921, then Albert, (1922), Daniel (1924) followed by Lorna(1925), Lily (1926), Kitty(1927)(her twin Frances died), Raymond (1930) and Patrick(1933), Elizabeth died in 1938 aged 37 years.

Grandad in 1931 with Jack, Albert and Daniel

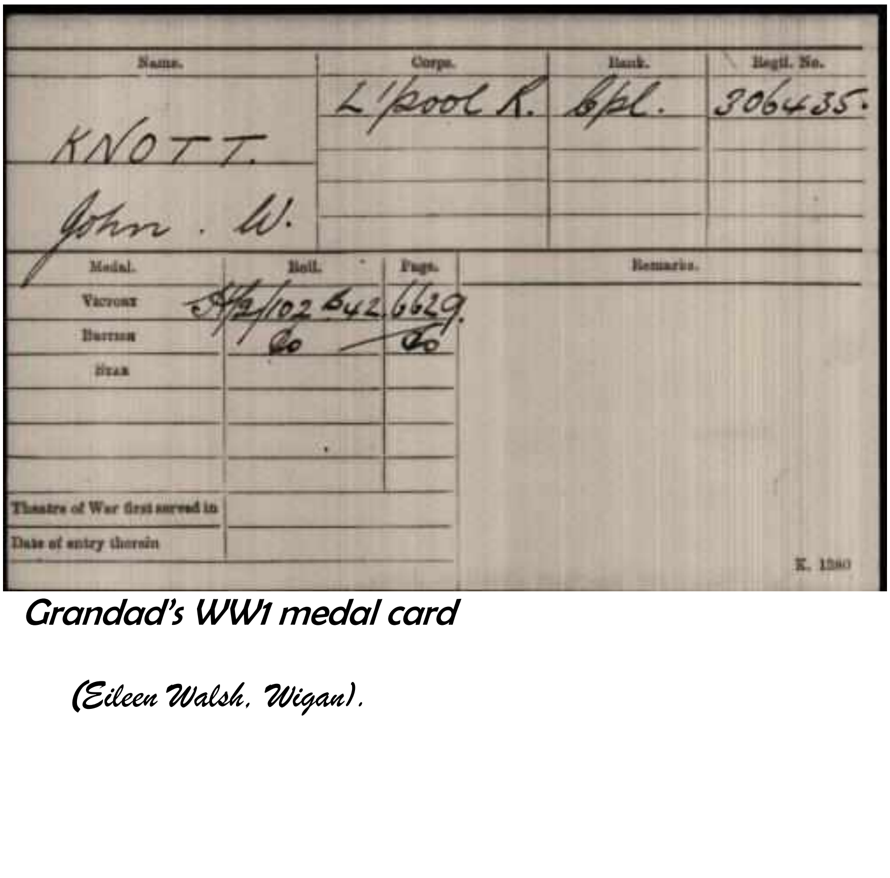
Grandad re-married in 1940 and had two more daughters, Anne and Jacqueline. Grandad became a train driver and drove the Liverpool to London steam train until his retirement in 1963.

John William Knott Continued…….

One of the most upsetting times for Grandad was in September 1939 when World War Two started. His son Jack joined The Liverpool Kings Regiment and was sent to Burma as part of the Chindits and a year later his son Albert joined No.3 Commando, Daniel joined the Merchant Navy and later Kitty joined the Women's Land Army.

Grandad died aged 81 years.

Grandad with his steam train in Lime Street Station Liverpool.



Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
KNOTT. John . W.	L'pool R.	Cpl.	306435.

Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
Victory	F/2/102 B42	6629	
British	do	do	
Star			

Theatre of War first served in

Date of entry therein

K. 1380

Grandad's WW1 medal card

(Eileen Walsh, Wigan).

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

On 1st April 1918, The Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service merged to become the Royal Air Force. This was authorised by King George V.

How the war was fought had been changed by the use of air power. Firstly in the role of reconnaissance in pinpointing enemy positions thus bringing back invaluable information to help plan battles, secondly in creating "fighter" planes by attaching machine guns to the aircraft. The German planes had the advantage in that they were the first to use the synchronised machine guns, firing through the propeller, but the British soon developed the same.

British Aircraft	German Aircraft
Bristol Type 22	Focker Eindecker
Sopwith Camel	Siemens-Schuckert
Handley Page 0/400 – Long range bomber	Gotha G.V. – Long Range bomber

British Flying Aces who all received the Victoria Cross

Edward Mannock born in 1887. In 1916, Edward joined the Royal Flying Corps. "He wasn't a natural flyer, he was scared and admitted it. Edward was older, working class, and a strongly minded socialist.

He rationally sat down and worked out a series of rules of how to fight. This could be taught and as his successes grew, he became more popular, even idolised.

On 26 July 1918, he broke one of his own rules and circled a plane he had shot down. Within seconds his own plane was struck by ground fire, burst into flames and crashed. **Edward Mannock VC: Aged 31; 61 official victories**

James McCudden. Born in 1895. James' attitude to flying was the same to everything he did. His rule was: 'If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing well'.

"To rise through the ranks from air mechanic to major in under five years was remarkable in those very class conscious days." Flying back to France on 9 July 1918, McCudden landed his brand new plane at a small aerodrome called Auxi-le-Chateau to check his location. On leaving, his plane struggled, swerved and crashed into a wood, leaving him fatally injured.

James McCudden VC: Aged 23; 57 official victories

Albert Ball

Born in 1896, his well-off businessman father made sure he attended a good public school. He arrived in France in February 1916 and immediately began to gain victories. While lacking the methodical wisdom of Mannock and McCudden, he had his own strengths.

"He was a mix of extraordinary bravery and boyish naivety. He became known for charging straight into enemy formations yet was embarrassed by public attention. On 7 May 1917, near Douai, Albert became involved in a swirling dogfight. Albert pursued an opponent into low cloud but moments later his plane reappeared, upside down. It crashed behind German lines and Albert was killed. **Albert Ball VC: Aged 21; 44 official victories**

A flying ace was defined as a military aviator credited with shooting down five or more enemy aircraft during aerial combat

Sopwith Camel introduced on the Western Front in 1917. Camel pilots have been credited with the shooting down of 1,294 enemy aircraft, more than any other Allied fighter of the conflict.

The Bristol Type 22 was fitted with a Foster mounted Lewis machine gun.
The plane was first used in combat on 5th April 1917.

Handley Page O/400 Entered Service 1918. Between the 14-15 September 1918, forty O/400s attacked targets in the Saar region of Germany. They carried 748kg (1,650lb) bombs, the heaviest used by British services during the First World War.

A WW1 British Aerial Photographer

WORLD WAR ONE AT SEA

World War One was largely fought and won on land but this could not have taken place without the movement of ships. Command of the sea enabled the Allies to bring in the vital supplies required.

The British fleet had two main roles in the war:

- Transporting troops and supplies across the Channel to France.
- Defending British shores.

The Battle of Jutland - 31 May - 1 June 1916 was the only major sea battle and both Britain and Germany claimed victory.

- Germany's claim: Britain lost 14 ships compared to Germany's 11.
- Britain's claim: Germany retreated and did not venture from its ports for the duration of the war, leaving Britain's fleet in control of the seas.

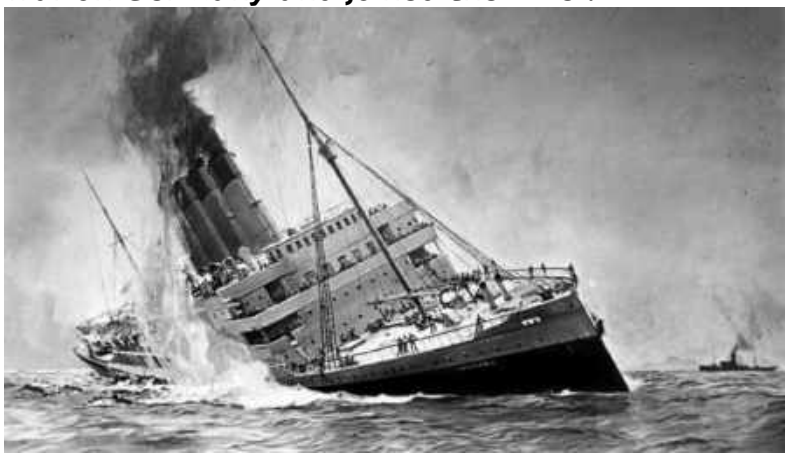
Submarine Warfare

In February 1915, Germany had developed a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. This meant that any British ship was an enemy. U-boats (submarines) were new, and unlike other ships which gave warnings before attacking, the nature of U-boats were underwater, surprise attacks.

On 7th May 1915 a U-boat sank the British passenger liner Lusitania just off the south coast of Ireland. 1,198 people died, 128 were American and this led to a big outcry in the USA, they threatened to enter the war if Germany did not call off unrestricted warfare, and so Germany was forced to submit.

In 1917 Germany acquired many more U-boats and changed to unrestricted warfare again. The British lost merchant ships bringing supplies, 386,000 tonnes in January to 881,000 tonnes by April. The British Navy had to take action or Britain would be starved into submission. All British merchant ships travelled in groups with Royal Navy convoys armed with depth charges. Q-ships - warships disguised as merchant ships - were sent out to confuse the Germans. Mines and submarine nets were placed down in the Dover Straits, meaning Germany had to waste time and fuel by travelling around Scotland. As the U-boats were destroyed, Britain received important supplies, including food, from the USA. In 1918 Britain brought in food rationing and food levels never fell to critical levels again.

British ships eventually blockaded Germany. On 6th April 1917 the USA declared war on Germany and joined the Allies.



An exhibition on the sinking of the Lusitania can be seen at the Liverpool Maritime museum.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN WORLD WAR ONE

Music was used to strengthen morale for the troops, especially when marching to and from the trenches. Music also helped to alleviate boredom when waiting in the trenches for battle to commence.

On the home front music played an important part both within the home and in the music hall. Many homes had pianos as did the pubs and people would gather to sing the popular songs:

1. It's a Long Way to Tipperary
2. Good-by-ee
3. Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty
4. Pack Up your Troubles in your old kit bag
5. Mademoiselle from Armentieres
6. If you Were the only Girl in the World
7. Keep the Home Fires Burning (Till the Boys come Home)

Classical Music

Gustav Holst's "The Planet Suite" was composed 1914-1916 and "Mars" especially reflected the horrors of war. Other composers were deeply affected by what was happening at the Front - Elgar, Vaughan Williams; Bliss (his piano quartet composed during the Battle of the Somme). Jupiter – the Bringer of Jollity, confirmed the work's identity with WWI as its melody became the hymn "I Vow to Thee, My Country". The words, written by diplomat Cecil Spring Rice, were reworked in 1918 to reflect British losses: "The love that never falters, the love that pays the price/ the love that makes undaunted, the final sacrifice."

Recruitment songs were written for Music Hall's female stars to get men to join the armed forces.

Vesta Tilley, 40 years a star, sang "Your King and Country Want You" with its morally pressurising lines:

"*Oh, we don't want to lose you but we think you ought to go.*
For your King and your country both need you so."

During Tilley's performances young men were invited on stage and asked to join up. Anyone who refused was given a white feather, the symbol of cowardice, by a prompted child.

SHELLSHOCK

By the end of World War One, 80,000 men were diagnosed with shell shock. The term "shell shock" was first used by Charles Myers, medical officer, in 1915 in The Lancet. It was at first thought to be as a result of the men suffering from the shock waves of shells bursting close by.

So many officers and men suffered from shell shock that 19 military hospitals were given over to treating cases and even 10 years after the war, 65,000 war veterans in Britain were still receiving treatment. It was realised that there were deeper causes to the symptoms suffered by so many – war neuroses.

Siegfried Sassoon returned to the front line in 1918, but was shot in the head and was suffering from shellshock and returned to Britain to recover. Whilst recovering Siegfried was out walking, but not in uniform and a woman came up to him and gave him a white feather*. (*see page 47)

At the time there was little sympathy for shell shock victims. Shell shock was generally seen as a sign of emotional weakness or cowardice. Many soldiers suffering from the condition were charged with desertion, cowardice, or insubordination. The unlucky ones were subjected to a trial, charged and convicted. Some shell shocked soldiers were shot dead by their own side after being charged with cowardice. All 306 soldiers who were executed for desertion and cowardice received pardons.

In May 1918 Army Major Arthur Hurst swept aside opposition to establish himself at a new military hospital Seale Hayne, Devon to treat shellshock victims. His miracle treatments meant that he was able to cure 90% of shell shocked soldiers in just one session.

Hurst's technique was to take the men to the peace and quiet of the rolling Devon countryside. It was thought to be a place where the men could get over their hysteria through labouring on the land. The men toiled on the farm, and were encouraged to use their creative energies.

Hurst also directed a reconstruction of the battlefields of Flanders on Dartmoor to help the men relive their experiences. The men were encouraged to write and to produce a magazine with a gossip column called Ward Whispers.

Major Arthur Hurst

Soldiers working on the farm

ON THE HOMEFRONT

Red Cross hospitals in Wigan during World War One

There were three Red Cross Hospitals in Wigan during World War One and they were known as The Woodfield Hospitals.

"The Elms" was placed at the disposal of the British Red Cross Society by the Right Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. The Earl also held himself responsible for the equipment and maintenance.

The average cost of maintenance in the three hospitals has been approximately £2. 2 shillings and 9 pence per bed per day (£2 and 15 new pence). For Woodlands 2 and 3 the costs were paid by the War Office Capitation Grant and from the funds of the Division so generously subscribed to by the public. For Woodlands No. 1, no Government grant was received as the whole of the costs were met by Earl Crawford.

Lord Crawford wrote to the Wigan Chairman of the British Red Cross Society on 12th August 1914 (World War One started on August 4th 1914). He wrote from Haigh Hall:

> *"My wife and I have been considering how best we can help the Red Cross Society over which you preside. I think it will be serviceable if we place Woodlands at your disposal. The house is near lines of communication, convenient to the Infirmary, which is the pivot of medical science in our neighbourhood, and compared with this house is central, accessible, and easily supervised. I shall be glad to be responsible for its equipment. As I know you have other hospitals to equip I trust this may relieve you in one direction, and I feel confident that the people of Wigan and district will, by their donations and the loan of necessary items, enable you to meet your obligations to the full.*
>
> *Believe me, Yours sincerely, (Signed) Crawford and Balcarres."*

Various entertainments have been given in the hospitals by the residents of Wigan and District and by the artists appearing at the local places of amusement. Also the spacious grounds surrounding the Woodlands hospitals have provided ample facilities for the soldiers' outdoor recreation.

The Woodlands Hospitals

No. 1 - The Elms, Wigan Lane, Wigan

"The Elms" was placed at the disposal of the British Red Cross Society by the Right Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres. The Earl also held himself responsible for the equipment and maintenance.

The equipment provided by Lord Crawford was arranged by members of Voluntary Aid Detachment E.L./90, with the help of some members of the Standish Works Fire Brigade. The hospital was complete in every detail for the reception of patients after only 4 days.

The Elms, Woodlands Hospital number one, was the very first Red Cross Hospital of the East Lancashire Branch, it was opened on 6th October 1914.

The hospital comprised of four wards having 20 beds. It also had an Assistant County Director's room, Lady Superintendent's room, Quartermaster's room, day room, pack store, kitchens etc.

Plaque in Wigan Parish Church

Red Cross nurses outside the Elms, Woodlands No. 1 Hospital

Woodlands No.2, Mariebonne House, Marlybone Place, Wigan

This photograph was sent to us by The British Red Cross Society and shows Mariebonne House with the Red Cross flag flying outside during World War One.

Mariebonne House was the Dower House of Haigh Hall, but the Dowager Countess (mother of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres), did not wish to live in this. Sir Richard Ffarington lived here and it was Mrs. Ffarington who offered Mariebonne House as an auxiliary hospital. As the house belonged to Lord Crawford, he must have given permission to use this as a hospital. This was opened as a Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital on 9th November 1914 and consisted of four wards with 12 beds. There was also a Lady Superintendent's room. Mariebonne House is now a private home.

Woodlands No. 3 The Beeches, School Lane, Standish

The Beeches was kindly loaned to the Red Cross by Mrs. J. B. Almond of Standish Hall. Woodlands No. 3 was opened as a Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital on 9th November 1914 and consisted of three wards with 12 beds.

This plaque is in St. Wilfred's church, Standish

The Douglas Suite, Haigh Hall as it is today, 100 years later

Outside Haigh Hall, The Douglas suite is on the First Floor

Family Schoolroom Haigh Hall

Countess Crawford's bedroom, next to Douglas Suite

Haigh Hall, Haigh, Wigan

The photograph shows the hospital ward during World War One with hospital beds in Haigh Hall in what is now the Douglas Suite.

Letter sent by Lord Crawford from Haigh Hall, to the Wigan Red Cross on 12th August 1914:

"We desire to place Haigh Hall at your disposal. For the reasons which make Woodlands suitable as a hospital for urgent and serious cases, Haigh being distant and inconveniently situated is open to objections; but as a Convalescent Home it is admirably adapted, being large, airy, and quiet. It stands high, and appears to be precisely what is needed for patients as they recover and require a change. I imagine we could provide accommodation for any number of patients the Wigan Red Cross Hospitals may require to send. I should, of course, meet the cost, though I doubt not your Society would help in collecting and preparing the equipment, as my wife is fully occupied with her naval hospital at Balcarres, and I fear may be unable to be in Lancashire as much and as often as she would wish.

Believe me, Yours sincerely, (Signed) Crawford and Balcarres."

Lord Crawford met all the costs associated with Haigh Hall and Woodlands No.1, The Elms.

The Countess' bedroom was next to the ward (Douglas suite) and she moved her bedroom further away for the duration of the war. Her bedroom was then used for recreation by the patients.

Red Cross Nurses at Wigan Wallgate Railway Station

This photograph shows Red Cross Nurses at Wigan Wallgate railway station. They are next to an ambulance train.

The nurses have Red Cross collecting boxes, so it looks as if they were not collecting patients from the ambulance train.

The flags flying from the railway train are the Union flag and the Australian flag. The Union flag was then the official flag of Australia, but the other flag was the people's flag of Australia.

Wigan Munition Workers—World War One

These two photographs show Munition workers having their photograph taken in Mesnes Park, Wigan during World War One. The photograph includes shells that must have been made in their factory. The photographs seem to be of two different groups of workers. In the first photograph one of the men on the left side seems to be without his left arm.

Munition workers were mainly women who had been employed to take the places of men who had joined the armed forces. They were known as Munitionettes.

Wigan Munition Workers (Continued)

Munition work was very hard and dangerous, but the workers were quite well paid relatively, especially compared with Domestic Service which had been the usual women's occupation. Women were paid about £5 per week for 12 hour shifts, which was about half what men were paid for working in the Munitions factory.

The BBC web-article states:
"In World War One, when a serviceman's basic wage was one shilling a day (5 new pence), soldiers found it unfair that women war workers in munitions factories earned much more on piecework than they did and could afford to take them out for a drink, rather than the other way around".

Workers in a Wigan Gunpowder factory

These World War One munition workers formed a football team. They called themselves The Vulcan Shell girls. The photograph was taken on 17th February 1917.

Wigan Munition Workers in World War One

Unlike the other photographs, this photo was taken in a Photographer's studio.

In Britain, by Armistice Day (11th November 1918), 950,000 women were employed in Munitions factories.

Munitionettes made artillery shells and filled them with TNT explosive

Munitionettes produced 80% of the weapons and shells used by the British Army.

Munition workers risked their lives daily, working with poisonous substances without adequate protective clothing or the required safety measures. The Munition workers were also called "Canaries" because the TNT explosive made their skin go yellow.

Women did die from poisoning attributable to their munitions work. The following three women from Wigan died as a result of poisoning caused by working with munitions:

Margaret Roscoe, 85 Ladies Lane, Hindley Nr. Wigan

Margaret Silcock, 1 Wright's Yard, Wigan

Bertha McIntosh, 30 Stonecross Lane, Lowton, Wigan.

Women working at Wagon Works

Women making tyres at Macintosh Manchester

Women working in Manchester Glucose factory

Baking Army biscuits in Lancashire

Stacking Oil Cakes, Manchester Oil & Cake Mills

Working at St. Helens Glass Factory

WOMEN AND WORLD WAR ONE

During World War One over a million women took on men's roles, the percentage of women employed increased from 24% to 27%.

After World War One, life changed for so many people, women especially. During the war women had taken on jobs previously undertaken by the men now serving at the Front. They had developed new skills and self-confidence, but as the men returned from The Front, the women had to relinquish their jobs and return to their work in the home.

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 mad it illegal to exclude women from jobs because of their gender, but few women could stay or move into employment. Only one woman was elected to Parliament in the General Election of December 1918.

So many men had died in WW1 that women now outnumbered men. In the 1921 UK Census there were 19,803,022 Women and 18,082,220 men. In England and Wales there were 1,209 single women aged 25 to 29 for every 1,000 men and by 1931, 50% of the women were still single.

Some of the traditional men's jobs women did in World War One:

Emily Walker First Police woman In Manchester

Women working on the railways

Women Firefighters

Wigan Pit Brow Lasses

Repairing trains and buses

Clearing rubble

Repairing roads

Female bricklayers, Lancashire

Land Army Girls Atherton

SUFFRAGETTES

'Suffrage' means the right to vote in political elections.

Millicent Fawcett set up the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies(NUWSS) in 1897. They wanted 'the vote' for middle class property-owning women and believed in using peaceful demonstrations.

Emmeline Pankhurst from Manchester became impatient with the NUWSS and in 1903 set up the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Emmeline was joined by her daughters Christable and Sylvia. Emmeline believed that working class women should also be given the vote. The motto was 'Deeds not Words' and WSPU became more militant and started using aggressive tactics to get people to listen. They included handcuffing themselves to railings, breaking windows, planting bombs and if arrested, going on hunger strike. They did not believe in anyone getting hurt through their protests although in 1913 Emily Davison threw herself at the King's horse during the Derby race.

Many suffragettes were imprisoned, Emmeline herself 11 times, and went on hunger strike as a protest. Whilst in in prison they were roughly force-fed by prison staff and Emmeline wrote of hearing women's screams as they were force-fed. Parliament passed 'The Cat and Mouse Act' which meant the hunger strikers were released from prison to allow them to recover their health then re-arrested and put in prison again.

In a spirit of National unity, during World War One both Emmeline Pankhurst and Millicent Fawcett and their organisations stopped campaigning and instead encouraged women to join the war effort.

Suffragette chained to Buckingham Palace railings

Millicent Fawcett Statue

Emmeline, Christabel and Sylvia in 1911

Zeppelins Ow'er Our House - By Mrs Patricia Mary Rigg

"Eh up" said our Mam "What's that whirry noise going overhead? I got such a freet, I jumped reet out of bed"
I was laid up in me bed with our Sam He's hard asleep and don't care a damn
Two seconds later there's a terrible crash Me Mam and Dad in their nighties, out of bed made a dash
"What the heck is it" said our Dad, in some freet Two seconds later a great light lit in the neet
There's pandemonium outside as an explosive rips the air There's crying and shouting and lots of despair
I geet out of bed and had a long stare The row of houses are gone up into thin air
There's now't left but rubble and smoke, fire and stuff My best mate Jamie's house opposite, has gone up in a puff
Mam says he was lucky and managed to scramble out I was glad to see him and gave a great shout
"I'm glad you are alive, if sooty and black I'd have no one to play with, if you hadn't come back"
Mam and Dad have gone out to help, if they can There's lots of helpers and a big van
Dad says "Lad, t'was a Zeppelin, a great jerry airship to boot
Those bloody Germans are 'Cocking a snoot'"
They was trying for Kirkless Steel works, which was a fair do
But they must have got lost and hit Cecil Street on their way through
The bobby said Harper Street was very bad, Mum started to cry, and I said "why you're so sad"
Mr and Mrs Tomlinson were blown reet out of their beds. There's a lot of chaos and when found were quite dead.
Well what an exciting neet, with people all ow't street. Some in their night cloths with now't on their feet
Dad said if those Germans had come back with the Zeppelin. There'd have been lots more damage and more folks to teck in.
Well I have never seen a Zeppelin but one flew over our roof I wish I had seen it and gathered some proof.
At school next day the whole school was excited Asking lots of questions and asked was I frighted.
I said "No" but I was really 'cause, it could have been our house and I might have been dead and quiet as a mouse.
I hope they don't come back dropping some more. Were all going to air raid shelters, keeping safe that's for sure.
But I must admit, t'was a most exciting neet. It gave Mam and Dad a horrible freet.
So now I kneel down each night and say a nice prayer and say 'Thank you' to god. 'Cos me families still there.
Some families weren't so lucky and are gone now forever I bet those darned Germans think they are so clever.
But I heard that our army took exception to that and went and attacked Messines, its now just quite flat.
So don't mess with our Country, leave us well alone or we'll come and get you; we've our King on the throne.
Those Jerrys won't win cos we'll knock them for six and those bloody Germans will get a good kick. We've got the best navy and soldiers and army. We've got to win or my Dad will go barmy.
He says Lord Kitchener will sort out those Hun and back to Germany, the Jerrys will run.
He's our local hero, and a leader of men, My Dad says he gives him ten out of ten.
He's got it sorted and we really must win He'll defend England and we'll take it on't chin!
So hurrah for Lord Kitchener we'll win if we try. So mop up your tears Mam, there's no need to cry!

Bomb Damage in Wigan

Bomb Damage, Cecil Street, Scholes, Wigan

After a First World War Zeppelin raid on Wigan - 12 March 1918 at 11pm. Seven people were killed by the bombs which were dropped on Wigan, Ince and Aspull. Wigan Council sent a letter to the Secretary of State complaining about the lack of warning and defence systems.

From Wigan Leisure Trust Magazine "Past Forward":

> "On Friday 12th April 1918, just before midnight, Wigan was bombed and several people killed. During the air raid, Inspector Tom Pey who lived in Darlington Street, Wigan, was awakened by a woman screaming. Pausing only to put on a vest and trousers, he ran in bare feet over the glass strewn yard to rescue a Mrs. Moore who was trapped by her head in the bedroom window of one of the wrecked cottages whose yard adjoined those of the house in which Mr. Pey lived. The Inspector climbed onto the roof of the wash-house, extricated Mrs. Moore and handed her down to two of his neighbours who took her to safety. Returning to the bedroom he freed her two children who were in a bed twisted out of shape by the blast. Shortly after restoring the children to their parents, the roof fell in. Inspector Pey also helped a Mrs. Unsworth, her child and a Miss Hunt who were pinned down by the fallen roof in one of the adjoining houses.
>
> His meritorious conduct was brought to the notice of the Carnegie Trust whose motto is "He serves God best who most nobly served Humanity." Tom Pey received £20 from the Trust and his neighbours £10 each. The Watch Committee recommended that Mr. Pey be awarded the King's Police and Fire Brigade Medal, the highest award that could be given to a serving officer. Although the award was not made, Inspector Pey's standing in the town was considerably enhanced".

WAGES IN WORLD WAR ONE

In 1914 a Private in a line regiment of the British Army was paid 1s (one shilling) a day. A Boy soldier got 8d. Deductions for a wife and children were not voluntary. 6d (6 pennies) a day was deducted for the wife and 1d (one penny) a day for each child up to a maximum of 3. A man could agree to a bigger deduction. The money was sent straight to his wife.
A General in the British Army was paid £3,300 a year if lodging was not provided.
A British Private got 1 shilling a day, but there were a few stoppages for 'amenities and amusements'. A subaltern got 5s 3d a day (£95.81 a year), raised in 1915 to 7s 6d (£138.7 a year), PLUS a field allowance of 2s 6d a day and a mess allowance of 9d a day 'to drink the king's health' By 1918 a lieutenant was getting 19s.6d a day.

If you got venereal disease (STD), you lost pay. Ordinary soldiers had to pay 7d a day (out of the 1s a day wage) to be in the hospital, and officers had to pay 2s 6d a day AND lost their 2s 6d a day field allowance (plus you lost all leave for a year). Liability for income tax only began at an annual income of £160, most soldiers (who - at 1s a day - earned only £18 5s a year) would not have paid income tax at all. At the rates above, however, a lieutenant would have been liable for income tax at 9d in the pound over £160 (i.e. he would have paid £7.31 tax a year).

Information from The Long Long Trail Website – British Army 1914 to 1918

	1918	1914
Sergeant-Major	5s 2d	5s 0d
Quartermaster-Sergeant	4s 2d	4s 0d
Company Sergeant-Major	4s 2d	4s 0d
Company Quartermaster-Sergeant	3s 8d	3s 6d
Colour-Sergeant	3s 8d	3s 6d
Sergeant	2s 6d	2s 4d
Corporal	1s 9d	1s 8d
Private	1s 1d	1s 0d

Infantry	
Lieutenant-Colonel	28s 0d
Major	16s 0d
Captain	12s 6d
Lieutenant	8s 6d
Second Lieutenant	7s 6d
Quartermaster	10s 0d

2½d = 1p 1s(shilling or 12d) = 5p £1 = 20 shillings 240d = £1

COST OF FOOD IN WORLD WAR ONE

The daily rations for a British soldier or 'Tommy' at the Front included 20 oz [ounces] of bread or 4 oz of oatmeal, 3 oz of cheese, 4 oz of jam, ⅝ oz of tea, 8 oz of fresh vegetables and 4 oz of butter. Soldiers were issued with ½ gill of rum and they might get ⅓ oz of chocolate, if they were lucky.

In 1914 a pint of beer cost 2½d - two pence-halfpenny (one new penny), and dinner at the Savoy was seven shillings and sixpence (37½ new pence). The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, was paid a salary of £5,000.

These are prices from	**1914**	**1916**	**1918/1919**
1 1b Meat	4d	1 lb meat - 1s 0d	
2 lb Sugar	6d	2lb Sugar - 1s	1s 4d
1- lb Bacon (average)	8d	1lb Bacon 1s 2d	1s 11d
1-lb Cheese	8d	1 lb Cheese 1s 2d	1s 8d
2 pints(1 quart) of milk	2½d	2 pints milk 6d	1s. 0d
1-lb Butter	1s.6d		
1lb Margarine	10d		

4 lbs of BREAD(2 large loaves) - August 1914(5½d); December 1914(6½d); January 1915 7p–7½d April 1915 to November 1916 (8½d); December 1916 (10d); March 1917 (1 shilling).

The average food bill for a family of four rose from less than £1 a week in 1914 to over £2 in 1918.

Some Interesting Statistics Comparing 1914 and today (2018)

Great Britain and Northern Ireland		1914	2018
Population		43 million	66.5 million
Life Expectancy	Males	51.5 years	79.4 years
	Females	55.4 years	83.1 years
Food as a proportion of average wages		60%	15%
Cars licensed		300,000	24,851,000
Price of a car (average)		£750	£6,995

NOTES: 2½d = 1p 1s(shilling or 12d) = 5p £1 = 20 shillings 240d = £1
450grams = 1 pound 18 grams = 1 ounce (oz.)

What you could buy for £6 in 1914/15
would cost you £214.33 today in 2018

FOOD in WORLD WAR ONE

In August 1914 the Government considered legislating to tackle food shortages and the high cost of food. The new Ministry of Food found that there had been many cases of unreasonable holding of food stuffs by suppliers and people buying to hoard food around the country and this had resulted in great hardship especially amongst the poor.

Bread and flour were the hardest to buy, by 1916 bread was being made from ground-up turnips. The Ministry of Food put out a leaflet with ideas for making pastry, cakes and buns from potatoes. A recipe from WW1 was for 'potted cheese' – leftover crumbs of cheese mixed with mustard and margarine, baked in the oven and served with biscuits or toast. Rice and breadcrumbs mixed with fish for sausages. Fresh fruit, vegetables and meat were very hard to find and there were stories of butchers selling dead cats.

In April, May and June 1917 over 2 million tons of Allied shipping was lost to U boats, resulting in even higher food prices and great civil unrest. It was estimated by the Board of Trade that food prices had more than doubled.

In May 1917 National kitchens were set up, many members of the working class saw them as soup kitchens. Sample menus were half a pint of soup 1d; side vegetables 1d; portion of meat 4d or 6d; Scones ½d; puddings and cakes 1d.

In 1918 the Government introduced compulsory rationing. Everyone was given a ration book for sugar, meat, flour, butter, margarine, milk and rice. New foods were introduced such as custard and dried soup powder which only needed the addition of boiling water.

National Kitchen – people brought their own crockery

WORLD WAR ONE POETS

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Sassoon born on 8th September 1886 in Kent. He then lived the life of a country gentleman, hunting and playing cricket while also publishing small volumes of poetry.

In May 1915, Sassoon was commissioned into the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and went to France. He was called 'Mad Jack' for his near-suicidal exploits. He was decorated twice. His brother Hamo was killed in November 1915 at Gallipoli. In summer 1916 he was sent to England to recover from fever. He returned to the front, but was wounded in April 1917. He was growing disillusioned with the war and wrote in The Times saying that the war was being deliberately and unnecessarily prolonged by the government. It was only his friend and fellow poet, Robert Graves, who prevented him from being court-martialled, convincing the authorities that Sassoon had shell-shock. Sassoon met Wilfred Owen in hospital. Both returned to the front where Owen was killed in 1918. Sassoon was posted to Palestine and then returned to France, where he was again wounded. This poem, Aftermath, was written after the Armistice

Have you forgotten yet?...
For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you're a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same--and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?...
Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz--
The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?
Do you remember the rats; and the stench
Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench--
And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?
Do you ever stop and ask, 'Is it all going to happen again?'

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack--
And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you then
As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?
Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back
With dying eyes and lolling heads--those ashen-grey
Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

Have you forgotten yet?...
Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.

Rupert Brooke

Rupert Brooke was born 3rd August 1887. He was commissioned into the Royal Naval Division and took part in the disastrous Antwerp expedition in October 1914. In February 1915, he set sail for the Dardanelles, Gallipoli. On board ship he developed septicaemia from a mosquito bite. He died on 23 April 1915 on a hospital ship off the Greek island of Skyros and was buried in an olive grove on the island.

Rupert Brooke caught the optimism of the opening months of the war with his wartime poems, published after his death, which expressed an idealism about war that contrasts strongly with poetry published later in the conflict. This is one of his poems:

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

May Herschel-Clark, (1850 – 1950) wrote the following in 1917 after reading "The Soldier",

The Mother

If you should die, think only this of me
In that still quietness where is space for thought,
Where parting, loss and bloodshed shall not be,
And men may rest themselves and dream of nought:
That in some place a mystic mile away
One whom you loved has drained the bitter cup
Till there is nought to drink; has faced the day
Once more, and now, has raised the standard up.

And think, my son, with eyes grown clear and dry
She lives as though for ever in your sight,
Loving the things you loved, with heart aglow
For country, honour, truth, traditions high.
=Proud that you paid their price. (And if some night
Her heart should break – well, lad, you will not know.)

Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Edward Salter Owen born 18 March 1893 in Oswestry, Shropshire. After school he became a teaching assistant and in 1913 went to France for two years to work as a language tutor. He began writing poetry as a teenager. In 1915 he returned to England to enlist in the army and was commissioned into the Manchester Regiment. After training he went to the western front early in January 1917. After experiencing heavy fighting, he was diagnosed with shellshock. He was hospitalised in England where he met Siegfried Sassoon.

Wilfred returned to France August 1918 serving with the 3nd Battalion, Manchesters. On 1 October 1918, Owen led units of it to storm a number of enemy strong points near the village of Joncourt. For his courage and leadership in the Joncourt action, he was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. On 4 November 1918 he was killed while attempting to lead his men across the Sambre canal at Ors. The news of his death reached his parents on 11th November, Armistice Day. Here is one of his poems:

Dulce Et Decorum Est (It is sweet to die for your country)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned out backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.-
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,-
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

MEDICAL ADVANCES

Some of the more positive outcomes of WW1 lie within the field of medicine and surgery. New surgical techniques and medical technologies developed to cope with the terrible wounds suffered by the millions of soldiers. Many of these techniques in one form or another are still in use today.

The Thomas splint – named after Welsh surgeon Hugh Owen Thomas – was used to secure a broken leg. At the start of the war, 80% of all soldiers with a broken femur died; by 1916 80% of soldiers with this injury survived.

Antiseptics - WW1 also saw experimentation with antiseptics. The Carrel-Dakin technique delivered Sodium Hypochlorite directly to damaged tissue in deep wounds. A version of Dakin's Solution (EUSOL) continued to be used to treat wounds until the late 20th century. Containment of infection and more hygenic practices were adapted as the War progressed.

Reading Bacillus - Leonard Joyce, a surgeon from Reading, pioneered a new way of healing wounds when he discovered the Reading Bacillus. This allowed wounds to heal naturally. By 1918, Joyce was an experienced surgeon developing his skills in all areas through treating injured soldiers (he later became famous for amputating the legs of Douglas Bader).

The first Blood Bank was established on the Western Front in 1917 and the British Army began the routine use of blood transfusions in treating the wounded; blood was transferred directly from one person to another. By moving Field Hospitals closer to the front lines meant that injured soldiers could be treated within an hour instead of having to be transported great distances when the possibility of deterioration of the soldiers' condition or death would often occur.

X rays - Another breakthrough came in X-ray technology when portable X-ray machines were developed and taken directly to where they were needed. Marie Curie helped organise the transformation of ordinary cars into portable X-ray machine carriers. Many of today's medical and surgical techniques have developed from treating so many soldiers terribly wounded in war – plastic surgery, reconstruction, prosthetics, to name but a few.

AFTER WORLD WAR ONE ENDED

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 1918

In February 1918 "The Representation of the People Act" was passed in the House of Commons (385 votes for and 55 votes against).
All men aged 21 years and over had the right to vote in their constituency, returning soldiers 19 years old and above could also vote.

Women were given the vote if:

- over the age of 30 years
- those were property owners
- those who were a member or married to a member of the Local Government Register
- those who were graduates in a university constituency

The thinking at the time was that if all women aged 21 years or more had been given the vote then they would have outnumbered men because of the loss of men due to World War One. Married women would most probably vote for the same party as their husbands. 8.5 million women met the criteria, but only represented 40 per cent of the total population of women in the UK.

Equal Franchise Act 1928

It was not until the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 that women over 21 were able to vote and women finally achieved the same voting rights as men. This act increased the number of women eligible to vote to 15 million.

Wigan's General Election result of 1910:

Reginald Neville	Conservative Party	4,673 votes	53.2% of those able to vote
Henry Twist	Labour Party	4,110 votes	46.8%
	Registered Electors 8,784		

Wigan's General Election result of 14th December 1918:

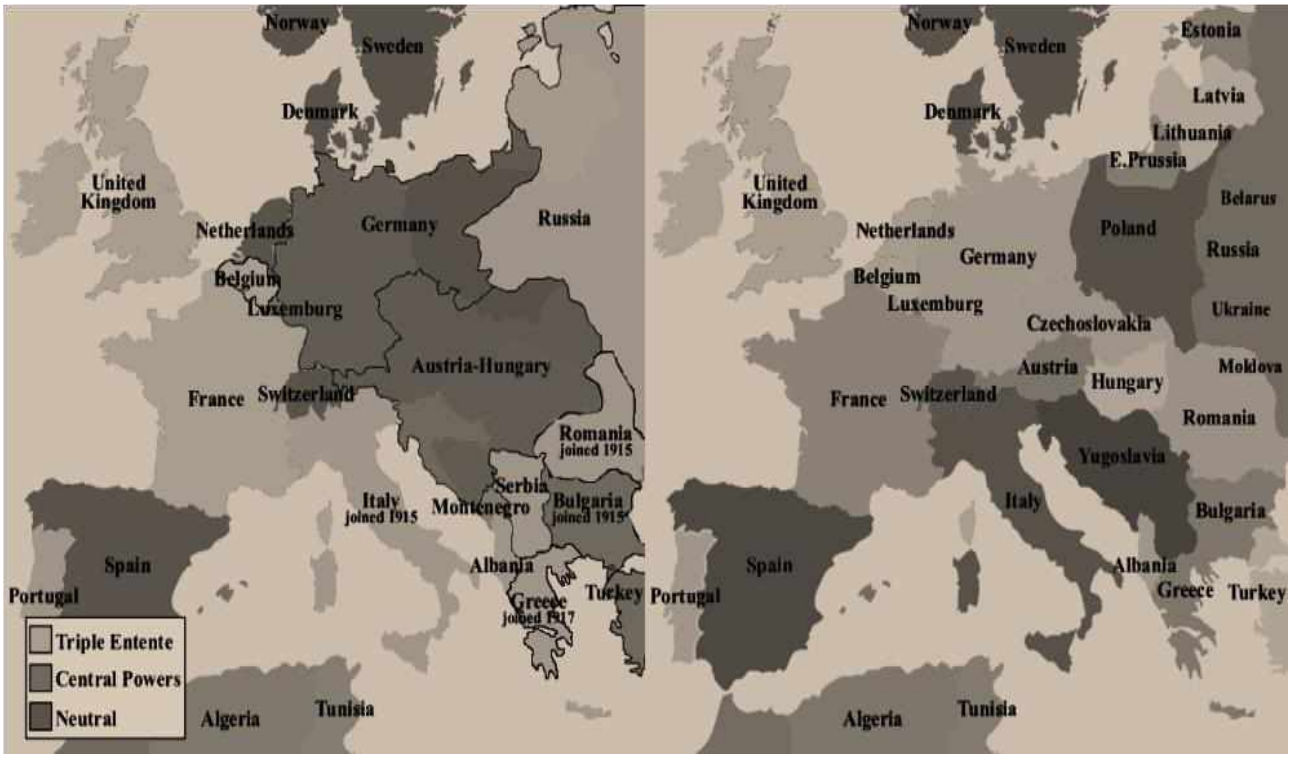
John Parkinson	Labour Party	12,914 votes	48% of those able to vote
Reginald Neville	Unionist Party	11,584 votes	43% of those able to vote
Robert Alstead	Liberal Party	2,434 votes	9% of those able to vote
	Registered Electors 38,811		

Wigan's General Election result of 1929:

John Parkinson	Labour Party	27,462 votes	58.5% of those able to vote
Ernest Barlow	Unionist Party	18,144 votes	38.7% of those able to vote
Frank Bright	Communist Party	1,307 votes	2.8% of those able to vote
	Registered Electors 54,008		

THE END OF WORLD WAR ONE 11th November 1918

EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR ONE



Before World War One After The Treaty of Versailles 1919

Much of Europe also changed as an outcome of WW1 – there was the Russian Revolution of 1917, the break-up of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires leading to Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania becoming independent countries. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia also rose from the ashes of these now defunct former Empires. Germany forfeited 13% of its European territory and all of the colonies overseas.

The Treaty of Versailles (June 1919) blamed Germany for the war and ordered the payment of reparations for war damage to the Allies. Inflation spiralled out of control within Germany and led to poverty and discontent within the country. It is thought by many that all that happened following Germany's defeat in 1918 led eventually to the rise of Hitler, the Third Reich and World War Two.

REMEMBRANCE

At 11a.m. on the 11th November every year in countries all over the world we stand for two minutes silence in remembrance of those who died in wars, usually at the local cenotaph. In Wigan the cenotaph is at Wigan Parish Church. Cenotaph means empty tomb. Cenotaphs were built in many countries, cities, towns and villages and become a focal point of the annual Remembrance Day.

Originally at 11 a.m. on 11th November everything stopped for two minutes, traffic, industry etc., but now we hold Remembrance on the nearest Sunday to the 11th November. There are still a few people who go to the local cenotaph at 11 am on the 11th November for two minutes silence. Over BETA's 27 years we have always attended Wigan cenotaph for two minutes silence at 11 a.m. on the 11th November. Until a few years ago people used to walk past us few at the cenotaph, but now schools are represented and many more people stand in silence.

Why two minutes?

The first minute is to give thanks for those who returned, the second minute is to remember those who have given their lives in the wars.

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the start of World War One, Midnight, 4th August 2014 at Wigan Parish Church and cenotaph.

The Wigan cenotaph was designed by Sir Gilbert Scott who was an architect for The Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and designed the red telephone boxes.

This is a reconstructed Allied trench at Vimy Ridge, Somme battlefield, showing how near the German trenches were. (Just where the group of people are standing)

Somme Battlefield today

Lochnagar Crater on the Somme Battlefield. It is 91 metres (300ft) diameter, 21 metres (70ft) deep. The mine was laid by the British at the start of the Somme battle on 1st July 1916. Bodies of British, French and German troops are still buried in the mine crater.

The Thiepval memorial to the missing from the Battle of the Somme, France, is on the high ground overlooking the Somme River and is over 45 metres in height, dominating the landscape for miles around. It is the largest Commonwealth memorial to the missing in the world

This commemorates more than 72,000 men from the British and South African forces who were reported missing in the Somme before 20 March 1918. The remains of approximately 50% of the Missing were recovered but could not be identified, the remainder have never been recovered. Nearly 90% of the men commemorated on the memorial were killed during the Battle of the Somme; 12,000 were lost on the first day alone.

Looking down from the Thiepval Memorial to the cemetery where those who died on the Somme are buried, most of whom are unidentified.

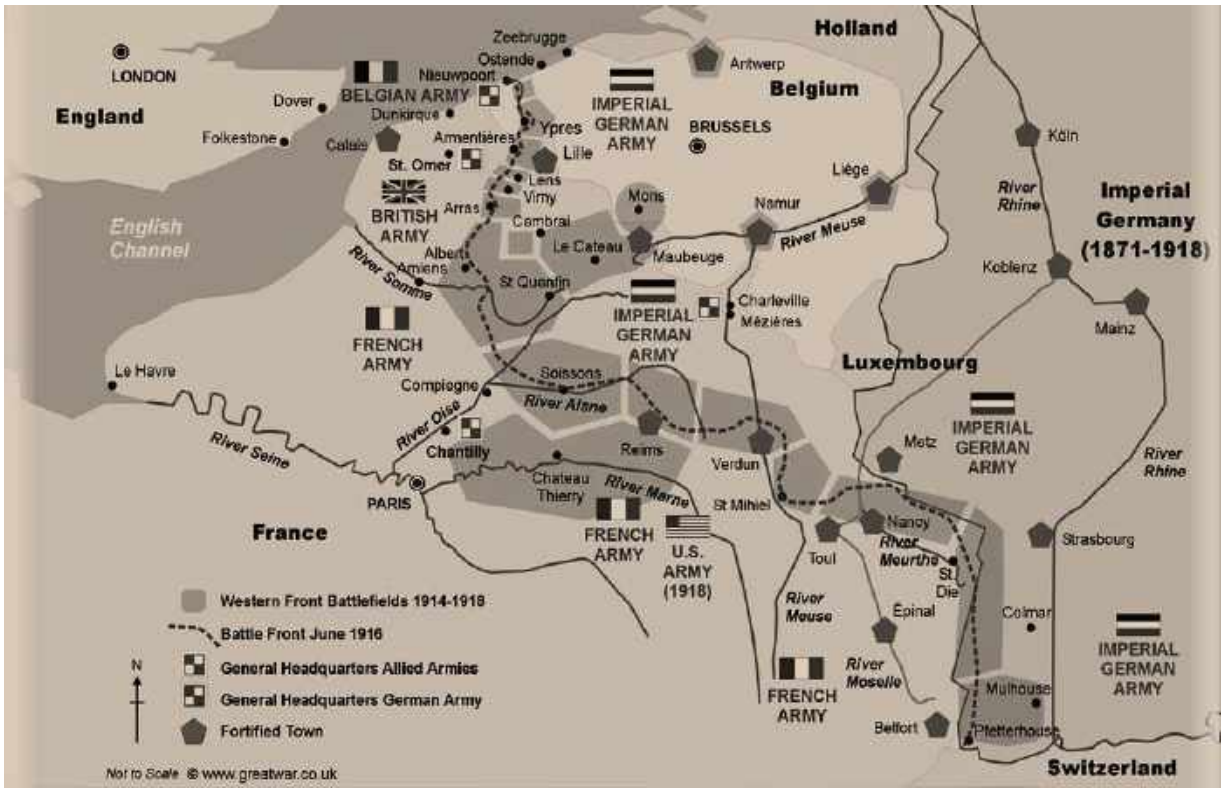
Tyne Cot cemetery on the site of the battle of Passchendaele. Four German pillboxes were on the site, one was covered, at the suggestion of King George V, by the Cross of Remembrance. 11,961 graves, 8,366 or nearly 70% are of unknown soldiers. This is testament to the intense fighting and the nature of the ground/mud during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The British/Allied lines were just beyond the graves.

German bunkers on the site of the Battle of Passchendaele which withstood many efforts to be destroyed. German machine guns were installed in the bunkers and soldiers were just mown down as they advanced.

The Memorial window in Passchendaele church. Dedicated to soldiers from Lancashire including Wigan and Leigh. Passchendaele church was totally destroyed by shellfire in 1917. However, it has since been reconstructed and now dominates the village square. Within the church are memorial windows.

Memorial to the Gallipoli Battle, Turkey

War Memorial, Wigan Parish Church



Map of World War One battle lines

THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

On 7th November 1920 the unknown warrior's body was chosen from a number of unknown British servicemen exhumed from four battle areas - the Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres. The soldiers could have been from any rank or any of the battlefields. All those whose relative had been killed in the war and didn't have a known burial place could think it was their loved one.

Without any information on the bodies, Brig. Gen L. J. Wyatt and Col. Gen chose one body, which they placed in a plain coffin and sealed it. The other bodies were re-buried. The next day the dead soldier was placed inside another coffin, made of oak from Hampton Court and sent over from England. Its plate bore the inscription: "A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country" and had a 16th Century sword, taken from King George V's private collection, fixed on top.

On the morning of 11 November 1920, the body of the unknown warrior was drawn in a procession through London to the Cenotaph. This new war memorial on Whitehall was then unveiled by George V. At 1100 there was a two-minute silence, and the body was then taken to nearby Westminster Abbey where it was buried, passing through a guard of honour of 100 holders of the Victoria Cross. The grave was filled with earth from the main French battlefields, and the black marble stone was Belgian.

An estimated 1,250,000 people visited the Abbey to see the grave in the first week.

Beneath this stone rests the body
Of a British warrior
Unknown by name or rank
Brought from France to lie among
The most illustrious of the land
And buried here on Armistice Day
11 Nov: 1920, in the presence of
His Majesty King George V
His Ministers of State
The Chiefs of his forces
And a vast concourse of the nation

Thus are commemorated the many
Multitudes who during the Great
War of 1914 – 1918 gave the most that
Man can give life itself
For God
For King and country
For loved ones home and empire
For the sacred cause of justice and
The freedom of the world

They buried him among the kings
because he
Had done good toward God and
toward His house

Following Royal Tradition, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex' wedding bouquet is placed on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. 19th May 2018

This is a reconstructed Allied trench at Vimy Ridge, Somme battlefield showing how near the German trenches were. (Just where the group of people are standing)

Part of the Somme battlefield as it is today

Thiepval Memorial

Gallipoli Battle Memorial, Turkey

The Memorial window in Passchendaele church, dedicated to soldiers from Lancashire including Wigan and Leigh.
Passchendaele church was totally destroyed by shellfire in 1917. However, it has since been reconstructed and now dominates the village square. Within the church are the memorial windows.

The Deal for Armed Forces

100 Wigan Borough Remembers 1914-18

Wigan Council

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