

1916 – 2016

Remembering the Battle of the Somme

Teacher Resource Pack



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Introduction

‘The most gigantic, tenacious, grim, futile and bloody battle ever waged in the history of war.’

The First World War was truly global in nature with nearly 30 countries taking part and fighting stretching from Northern France through to Russia, the Middle East, Africa, China, the Caribbean and South America.

One of the key theatres of war was the Western Front where early inroads into Belgium and Northern France by the German Army were quickly halted by the Allied forces. What began as a war of movement quickly descended into stalemate with both sides digging in to create lines of heavily fortified trenches stretching from the Belgium coast through to Switzerland. By early 1916 after several major battles and heavy casualties caused by nearly two years of attritional warfare, there was still no sign of a breakthrough for either side. This costly war was dragging on for far longer than anyone had anticipated back in the summer of 1914.

Men from every part of Britain and across the British Empire fought as part of the British Army. Both sides committed millions of men and huge quantities of munitions to the struggle.

The Battle of the Somme can be broken down into a series of hard-fought battles remembered for the courage and sacrifice of the battalions and regiments involved. In the timeline you will find some of the battles, such as Beaumont-Hamel or Poziers.

The Battle of the Somme came to an end on the 18th November 1916. In 141 days of fighting the British had lost 420,000 men, the French lost nearly 200,000 men and the Germans around 500,000. The Allied forces had managed to advance a few miles at a huge cost in lives.

Introduction to the pack

This education pack is designed to help teachers introduce aspects of the Battle of the Somme and how it is being remembered a century later. It contains information and resources to help pupils develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the conflict. The materials are designed to be flexible and adaptable in a variety of settings for pupils aged 7-14. They can be used as starting points for individual lessons or activities or form part of a larger cross-curricular project with a partner school overseas.

Starter activity

Ask your pupils what they already know or think they know about the First World War and if they have heard of The Battle of the Somme which took place in 1916. Explain that this was a long battle in which thousands of soldiers lost their lives and share with them some of the photographs and extracts from poems and fiction about the period such as *Warhorse* by Michael Morpurgo.

For older students or those with greater knowledge and understanding of the period ask them to make mind maps showing what they already know and words they associate with the Somme campaign. You could encourage them to add to this in different colours as they learn more during the topic.



Further historical context for teachers

On 21st February 1916 German General Erich von Falkenhayn launched a massive attack on the French town of Verdun and its surrounding forts. He was convinced that this would at last lead to a decisive breakthrough. So began the Battle of Verdun, one of the largest battles of the First World War and one that would last until 18th December 1916. Von Falkenhayn was convinced that the French would throw as many men as necessary into the defence of Verdun which was located on a key part of the Western Front. He realised that this would enable him to inflict the maximum possible casualties and fatally weaken the French.

Although the Germans made territorial gains in the early months of the battle these were gradually halted by repeated French counter attacks organised at the behest of General Pétain. The turning point of the battle came in July when the launch of the Allied offensive on the Somme forced the Germans to divert new troops away from Verdun.

The bitter fighting continued until December when the Germans finally called off their attack. The cost of the battle was enormous with the Germans and the French armies both suffering around 400,000 casualties but at least the French had avoided what would have been a catastrophic defeat.

The Battle of the Somme, in which more than 1,000,000 men were wounded or killed, was one of the bloodiest battles in history. It took place between 1st July and 18th November 1916 in Northern France around the River Somme.

French gunners manning a 105mm gun during an artillery barrage in the Verdun region.
©IWM Q69619



Initially planned as a large-scale joint British and French offensive there were two main aims for the battle. The first was to relieve the pressure on the French Army now under serious attack at Verdun. The second was to try and achieve a breakout. After 18 months of trench stalemate where neither side had looked like winning the war, this was seen as a real chance for the 'big push'. However, many of the generals were aware that this was now a war of attrition and that a series of 'bite and hold' operations designed to kill Germans was more realistic.

On the orders of Sir Douglas Haig, the commander of the British Army, the battle started with a weeklong artillery bombardment of the German lines. Nearly 2 million shells were fired at the Germans with the aim of completely destroying their trenches. In fact, the Germans had built deep dugouts for their men who were therefore able to shelter in relative safety. When the bombardment stopped, the Germans knew that this meant that the British and French armies were about to advance towards them. All they had to do was to climb out of their dugouts and man their machine guns and wait for the enemy soldiers to come over the top.



Battle of the Ancre. British wounded at a Dressing Station.
Aveluy Wood, 13 November 1916.
©IWM Q4506

The first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916, was the most disastrous the British Army has ever suffered. The soldiers advancing slowly over no-man's land in long lines, side by side, were told that the German trenches had been destroyed. Instead they were met with a hail of German machine gun and artillery fire and huge numbers of soldiers were quickly cut down. The surviving attackers dived for cover and advanced slowly from shell-hole to shell-hole.

Nearly all the attacks were defeated and 58,000 British and Empire troops, about half of the force, fell in battle with nearly 20,000 dead. Many of the Pals Battalions were decimated.

The Battle of the Somme continued for the next few months with the Allies making slow progress in pushing back the Germans. By November, as winter set in and with both sides exhausted, the battle ground to a halt. Although the Germans were weakened, the

Allies failed to make a breakthrough and the war was to continue for another two years. By the end of the battle the British had lost 420,000 men, the French lost nearly 200,000 men and the Germans around 500,000. The Allied forces had managed to advance a few miles at a huge cost in lives.

100 years on, the Battle of the Somme continues to loom large in the national memory, not just in the UK but also in those of many Commonwealth countries for whom the sacrifices made had an equally profound effect. Indeed, for some countries, the losses suffered on the Somme and elsewhere became the catalyst for the emergence of a national identity, which led ultimately to independence.

In the UK, large-scale recruitment to the Army and the formation of battalions of volunteer soldiers meant that virtually no part of the country was left unscathed by the events of July to November 1916. For many people the Battle of the Somme, especially the disastrous first day, brought home for the first time the true horrors of warfare in the First World War and was seen as a tragic waste of life. The numerous memorials and military cemeteries that lie across the Picardy countryside continue to serve as a poignant reminder of enormous sacrifices made in the summer and autumn of 1916. Further south, at Verdun, the remains of the French forts, the Douaumont Ossuary, and the voie sacrée keep alive memories of the Western Front's other great battle of 1916.

Tyneside Irish Brigade advancing near La Boisselle, Battle of the Somme, 1st July 1916.
©IWM Q53

Timeline for the Battle of the Somme 1st July – 18th November 1916

Curriculum links: History, English, Personal, Social and Health Education

Core skills: Communication and collaboration, Critical thinking and problem solving

Learning objectives: To encourage pupils to find out about the events and chronology of the Battle of the Somme, to ask historical questions and use original sources.

Share the following timeline for the Battle of the Somme with your students and encourage them to add any of their own pieces of research or questions about the information or images with sticky notes to explore later.

BATTLE OF THE SOMME COMMENCES: 1ST JULY 1916

This single day is remembered as the worst in British military history. Nearly 20,000 died, including William Smurthwaite from the 18th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry. The Battle of the Somme, however, continued for 141 days during which many more on all sides were injured or died.



Explosion of the mine beneath Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt, the Somme, on 1st July 1916.
© IWM Q754



BATTLE OF BAZENTIN RIDGE: 14TH – 17TH JULY 1916

On the 14th July the British Army carried out a successful attack on the German second line in the area of Bazentin. Most of the objectives were captured but the opportunity to move further on and take High Wood was lost due to communication failures and disorganisation.

BATTLE OF ALBERT: 1ST – 13TH JULY 1916

The Battle of Albert was the first two weeks of the Anglo-French offensive in the Battle of the Somme. One of its key aims was to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun.

Battle of Bazentin Ridge. Joyful British troops in captured German dugouts at Mametz.

©IWM Q3977

20TH JULY The writer Robert Graves was so severely wounded during battle his family was told he had died. Graves survived to write a best selling account of the war *Goodbye to all that*.



**BATTLE OF DELVILLE WOOD:
14TH JULY – 15TH SEPTEMBER 1916**

The old British front line trenches during the Battle of the Somme at Delville Wood, 3 July 1917.

©IWM Q80269

The task of capturing Delville Wood was handed to the South African Brigade of some 3,150 men. Fierce fighting led to huge casualties on both sides. When relieved on the 19th July, the South Africans had lost 2,536 men and it took another month before the wood was finally taken.

24TH – 26TH AUGUST The writer JRR Tolkien reached the trenches at Thiepval Wood. He saw action at the Somme until he reported sick at the end of October.

Australian soldiers load a trench mortar at Pozières Ridge

©IWM Q4092



**BATTLE OF POZIÈRES RIDGE:
23RD – 7TH AUGUST 1916**

This was the first large-scale Australian battle in France. German bombardments and tenacious counter-attacks meant that Allied success in capturing the Pozières Ridge was only achieved at a very high cost with the Australians suffering around 23,000 casualties.

AUGUST

Timeline for the Battle of the Somme 1st July – 18th November 1916

BATTLE OF GINCHY: 9TH SEPTEMBER 1916

The Battle of Ginchy was the main offensive planned for September, namely the Battle of Flers–Courcelette. The village was captured in a single day.



Battle of Ginchy. Supporting infantry walk forward up the slope into the bombardment.
©IWM Q1306

9TH SEPTEMBER Death of Major Cedric Charles Dickens, the grandson of the author Charles Dickens. He died aged 27 and is named on the Thiepval Memorial.

BATTLE OF FLERS-COURCELETTE: 15TH – 22ND SEPTEMBER 1916



A British Tank on the Somme.
©IWM Q2486

BATTLE OF GUILLEMONT: 3RD – 6TH SEPTEMBER 1916

The heavily fortified village of Guillemont, which lies towards the southern end of the British sector of the Somme battlefield, was finally taken on the 6th September.

BATTLE OF MORVAL: 25TH – 28TH SEPTEMBER 1916



The Battle of Morval. Supporting troops scramble out of their trenches.
©IWM Q1309

15TH SEPTEMBER Death of Lieutenant Raymond Asquith the son of the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. He is buried at Guillemont Road Cemetery

The Battle of Flers–Courcelette was the first time that tanks were used in battle though with mixed results due to there being too few in number and mechanically unreliable.

BATTLE OF THIEPVAL RIDGE: 26TH – 28TH SEPTEMBER 1916

The Battle of Thiepval Ridge was the first large offensive mounted in the northern part of the Somme battlefield since early July.

**BATTLE OF LE TRANSLOY RIDGES:
1ST OCTOBER – 11TH NOVEMBER 1916**

The Battle of Le Transloy Ridges took place in increasingly bad weather. The mud and freezing weather led to several pauses in operations and eventually in scaling them down altogether. 'We live in a world of Somme mud. We sleep in it, work in it, wade in it and many of us die in it. We see it, feel it, eat it and curse it, but we can't escape it.' Edward Lynch.



Bad weather, Battle of the Somme 1916.
©IWM Q1495

**BATTLE OF ANCRE HEIGHTS:
1ST OCTOBER – 11TH NOVEMBER 1916**

Now that the village of Thiepval had fallen, the Germans no longer had dominating positions overlooking the valley of the River Ancre nearby. The British attacked this part of the Somme battlefield though fierce German resistance and bad weather slowed their progress.



Column of the 2nd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders
marching to the trenches.
©IWM Q1393



British military policeman brings in a wounded
German prisoner during the Battle of Ancre.
©IWM Q4502

**BATTLE OF ANCRE:
13TH – 18TH NOVEMBER 1916**

The Battle of the Ancre was the last Allied operation on the Somme in 1916. Despite some successes with villages such as Beaumont Hamel, Beaucourt-sur-l'Ancre being captured, heavy casualties and the oncoming winter weather meant that the battle was eventually called off.

**BATTLE OF THE SOMME ENDS:
18TH NOVEMBER 1916**

As freezing conditions set in, the Battle of the Somme came to a close. In 141 days of fighting the British had lost 420,000 men, the French lost nearly 200,000 men and the Germans around 500,000. The Allied forces had managed to advance a few miles at a huge cost in lives. 1,800 people died in France on the last day of the Somme.

NOVEMBER

Activity sheet

Photographs are very evocative and useful sources of evidence about this period of history. Give your students copies of the photographs on the activity sheets and questions to discuss in groups, before reporting their thoughts and observations back to the rest of the class.

You might also go on to use the photographs as a stimulus for creative writing.

Look closely at the photograph and discuss the following points and questions:

- Describe what you can see in the photograph. List as many details as you can.
- Where do you think it was taken? What evidence do you have to support your views?
- Who do you think is in the photograph? What do you think the people in it are thinking? What might have happened before and after it was taken?
- Discuss who might have taken this photograph and why?
- What questions would you like to ask the people in the photograph?
- What can photographs tell us about the battle that written descriptions cannot?



Column of the 2nd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders
marching to the trenches.
©IWM Q1393

Activity sheet

Look carefully at the picture opposite and answer the following questions

- What can I see?

- What can I infer?

- What other questions can I ask?



Indian bicycle troops at a crossroads on the Fricourt-Mametz Road, Somme, France.
©IWM Q3983

Experiences of the Somme from around the Commonwealth

Fighting alongside the British on the Somme were soldiers from all over the British Empire including Newfoundland, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. These Dominions raised their own armies.

Curriculum links: History, English, Citizenship

Core skills: Communication and collaboration, Digital Literacy, Global citizenship

Learning objectives:

To learn about the role of Commonwealth soldiers in the Somme campaign and its effects on their communities and countries.

Newfoundland

In 1914, Newfoundland – now part of Canada – was a small Dominion within the British Empire and had never had an army. At the start of the First World War a Newfoundland Regiment was raised which took part in the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915.

In July 1916, 801 men of the Newfoundland Regiment were deployed on the first day of the Somme. The Newfoundlanders were sent into No Man's Land at Beaumont Hamel in the second wave of attack, which took place at around 8.45am.

By this time, the experienced German forces opposite were fully prepared for the infantry and had found the most deadly places to aim their machine guns: the gaps between the barbed wire.

The Newfoundland regiment attack lasted less than 30 minutes.

Private James McGrath, who was wounded several times during the attack succeeded in crawling back to the allied trenches. It took him more than 17 hours. Private McGrath told the Newfoundland Quarterly, 'The Germans actually mowed us down like sheep.'

On 2nd July, only 68 of 801 men were fit for duty.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission state that 'On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, no unit suffered heavier losses than the Newfoundland Regiment which had gone into action 801 strong. The roll call the next day revealed that the final figures were 233 killed or dead of wounds, 386 wounded, and 91 missing.'

The impact of these losses was devastating to the town of St John's where hundreds of families received news of their sons, brothers, husbands and friends deaths. Some families received news of the deaths of more than one as several brothers' died together during the attack. It is remembered as the loss of a generation.

The tragedy of the Newfoundland Regiment was marked by Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces letter paying tribute to the courage of the soldiers was published in their local newspaper *The Evening Telegram* on July 21, 1916:

'Newfoundland may well feel proud of her sons. The heroism and devotion to duty they displayed on the first July has never been surpassed. Please convey my deepest sympathy, and that of the whole of our armies in France in the loss of the brave officers and men who have fallen for the Empire, and our admiration of their heroic conduct.'

The people of Newfoundland still remember the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. To this day, 1st July is marked as Memorial Day in Newfoundland.

Read more about the Newfoundland Regiment's experience and find links to further articles: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-of-beaumont-hamel/>



The Caribou Memorial at Beaumont Hamel on the Somme.



Lance Corporal Arthur James Rendell 204. Unit: 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Death: 1st July 1916 Somme Western Front.

©IWM HU124846

Experiences of the Somme from around the Commonwealth

India

The Indian Army had arrived in France very early in the war, in the autumn of 1914 to provide much needed reinforcements to the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.).

The Indian infantry had helped the B.E.F. stem the tide of the German advance toward the channel ports and was withdrawn from the Western Front in late 1915. However, the Indian Cavalry Corps (I.C.C.) remained in France till 1918 and took part in several battles between late 1916 and 1918 including the Somme offensive.

A group of Indian soldiers, possibly soldiers of the 9th Hodson's Horse (wearing just shirts and trousers), stand round the improvised cookhouse at an Indian cavalry camp near Querrieu whilst two seated cooks prepare some food. Indian Cavalry Camp. 29 July 1916.

©IWM Q4072



Group of Indian Cavalry dismounted near Fricourt, July 1916.
©IWM Q1064

The First World War saw the end of the cavalry charge in battle. This was the first industrialised modern war and indeed it was at the Battle of the Somme that the first tank was used.

The men of the Indian Cavalry Corps were primarily engaged in patrolling duties and helped relay invaluable intelligence about the enemy on numerous occasions. They also assisted the infantry in digging and wiring trenches.

There were a few occasions when the mounted cavalry managed to break through on horses but these were mostly small isolated incidents. Of these, the most notable took place on 14 /15 July when 20th Deccan horse and the British 7th Dragoon Guards charged together. The 34th Poona Horse was held in reserve. Indians and British suffered more than 100 casualties and 130 horses were killed.

Indian soldiers initially wore turbans into battle. The 'tin hats' or steel helmets were first introduced to the Indian cavalry in 1916. The Sikhs, however, at once refused to wear them, and continued to wear their turbans throughout the war.

‘The most gigantic, tenacious, grim, futile and bloody battle ever waged in the history of war.’

Research Activities

Encourage your pupils to come up with their own research questions or topics to investigate how their own country or community was affected by the Battle of the Somme. They may decide to try and find out more about the lives of people who lived locally at the time and appear in photographs, newspaper cuttings or on a war memorial. Alternatively, they could investigate aspects of social history such as the role of local women or industries in the war effort.

The next stage of research would involve consulting other sources including books, the Internet and perhaps visiting local museums and libraries with access to local records, diaries, newspaper cuttings and census returns. National Archives in many countries also hold war records and other information that can be accessed online.

The British Prime Minister Lloyd George described the Battle of the Somme as, ‘The most gigantic, tenacious, grim, futile and bloody battle ever waged in the history of war.’ Ask older students to find out why the first day of the battle turned out to be the most disastrous day in the history of the British Army.



The 20th Deccan Horse, Indian Army, in the Carnoy Valley shortly before their unsuccessful attack at High Wood during the Somme offensive, 14 July 1916.

©IWM Q823

Recruitment

Conscription to the British army was not introduced until 1916; so British troops at the Battle of the Somme included pre-war regular soldiers, territorials and tens of thousands of volunteers who joined up in response to a powerful recruitment campaign led by Lord Kitchener. The War Propaganda Bureau was created in 1914 to encourage men to enlist and called upon the skills of writers such as Thomas Hardy and H G Wells, along with techniques employed by artists and the newspaper and advertising industries. Popular music hall artists of the time also devoted their skills to the cause. Harry Lauder who was a famous singer and entertainer toured music halls, recruiting

young soldiers on stage in front of the audience, sometimes offering money for the first recruit of the night.

Many of these volunteers joined 'Pals' battalions, which were drawn from local communities, sports clubs and places of work. They formed very close bonds serving alongside relatives, friends and workmates from their local area. They joined up together, trained together and were now to fight together. This initiative was encouraged by politicians such as Lord Derby, who organised one of the most successful recruitment campaigns in Liverpool. Over two days, 1500 Liverpudlians joined the new battalion. Speaking to the men he said: 'This should be a battalion of pals, a battalion in which friends from the same office will fight shoulder to shoulder for the honour of Britain and the credit of Liverpool.'

The White Feather movement was another propaganda campaign to encourage men to enlist. White feathers seen as a symbol of cowardice were given to men not in

uniform by women to shame them into joining the army. However there are many stories of women putting a feather in a man's coat who had been honourably discharged for injuries or who were home on leave or working in important industries .

Activity

Divide the class into small groups and give each group copies of some or all of the recruitment posters on the activity sheets. Ask the students to study the sources carefully and discuss the points and questions on the sheets with their group.

Encourage your students to develop their own questions too and then choose one poster and write a detailed description of what they see. What message and values are portrayed through the image and text? Is it encouraging volunteering through a sense of duty, patriotism, bravery, fear or other emotions? Who is it aimed at? Compare the British recruitment posters with those from France and Germany? What similarities and differences can you see between them?

Curriculum links: History, English, Art and Design

Core skills: Communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, Digital literacy

Learning objectives:

To analyse a range of evidence about how soldiers were recruited in the First World War and learn about the role of the Pals Battalions in the Battle of the Somme.

Activity Sheet: First World War Recruitment Posters from the Imperial War Museum collection



©IWM PST2763

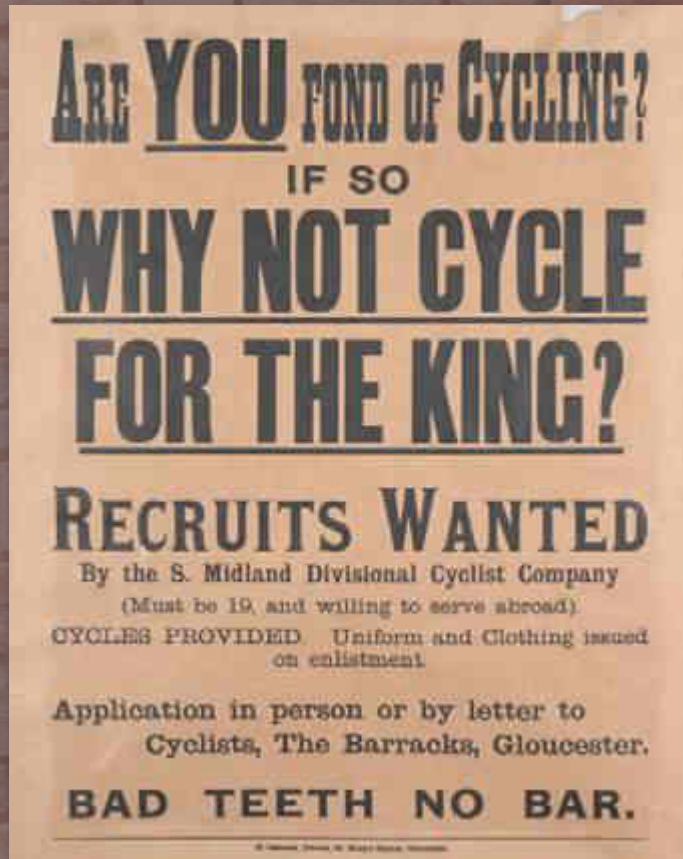
Women and children were frequently depicted in recruitment posters.



©IWM PST2712

This image was designed by Robert Baden Powell who set up the Scouting movement.

Activity Sheet: First World War Recruitment Posters from the Imperial War Museum collection



© IWM PST14893

Many recruits were initially rejected on account of their poor teeth but this was not an issue for the cycling regiment!

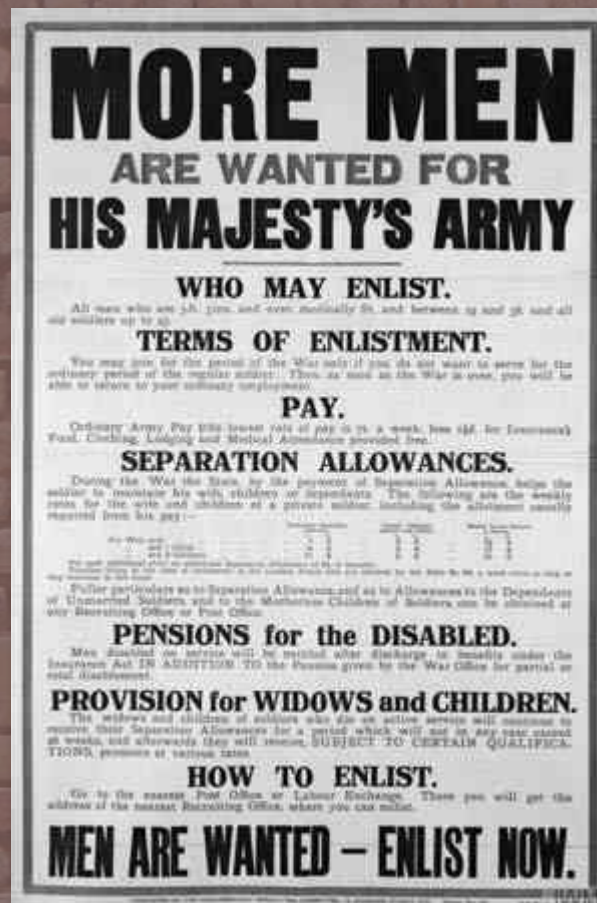


© IWM PST12226

This Australian poster plays on the country's sporting pride and also makes reference to Sir Henry Newbolt's famous patriotic poem Vita Lampada.



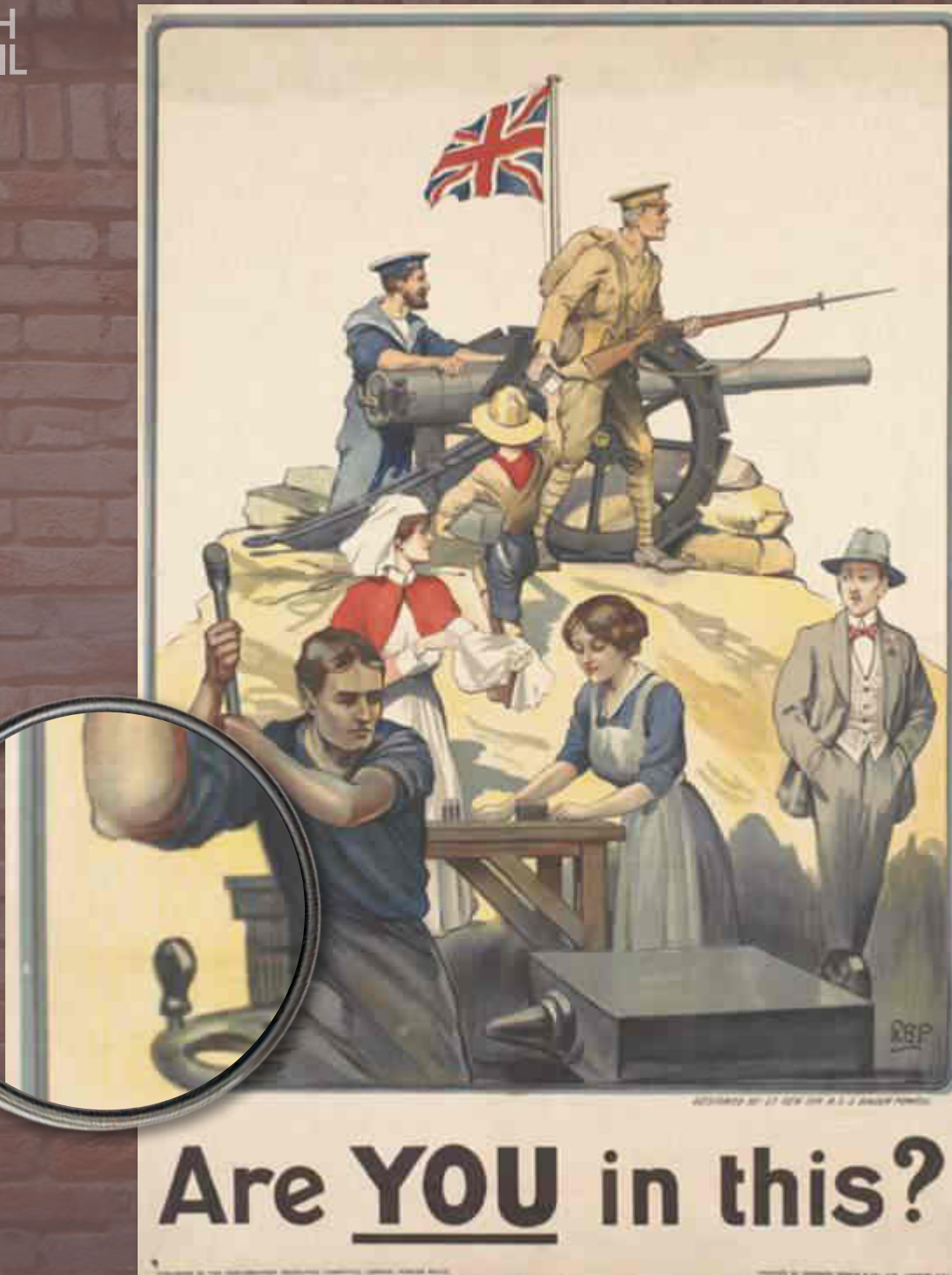
On the morning of 16 December 1914, the German Fleet bombed the ports of Hartlepool, West Hartlepool, Whitby and Scarborough. 137 people lost their lives and 592 people were wounded.



This poster states that all men 5ft 2 inches and over who are medically fit and between the ages of 19-40 are encouraged to join the army. The lowest rate of pay is given as 7 shillings a week with 1 and a half pence deducted for insurance. Food, clothing, lodging and medical attendance provided free.

- Who do you think the posters are aimed at and what message are they conveying?
- Describe the language, layout, and use of images. How do they use these features to appeal to the reader's values and emotions?
- Which do you think is the most persuasive poster? Give your reasons.
- What can you learn about the recruitment campaign from these sources?
- Do you think these posters would still be effective today? State your reasons.

Activity



Look at this recruitment poster from 1915 in detail.

- Describe all the people and what they are doing. Why do you think they are included in the design?
- What do you notice about the colours and the typeface that are used?
- What might be significant about the fact that Robert Baden Powell created it?
- Who do you think it was aimed at and what message was it trying to convey?
- Why do you think the designer has included the Union flag?

Activity



French poster, translation reads: 'For the flag. For the Victory!'



German poster, translation reads: 'This is how it would look in German lands if the French reached the Rhine.'

Look at these recruitment posters from the French and German armies.

- What similarities and differences can you see in the styles and aims of the posters?

The Pals Battalions and the Battle of the Somme

When war broke out in 1914 a number of towns across Britain asked for permission to recruit their own Battalions where men from the same town, the same street and in some cases, the same football team, were able to join together and serve alongside each other. Recruitment to these Pals Battalions was very successful and was a source of local pride. They became part of a local regiment so the men from Accrington and other towns in north and east Lancashire became the 11th Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment. These soldiers were all part of General Kitchener's 'New Army'.

The Battle of the Somme was the first experience of fighting for many of the Pals battalions and they received very heavy casualties. In some instances a town lost most of its military-aged menfolk in a single day. This had a devastating effect on their communities back in Britain. A notable example was the Accrington Pals battalion from Lancashire. Approximately 700 men took part in the attack and suffered devastating losses on the first day of the Battle when 235 men were killed and 350 wounded within the space of twenty minutes.

The losses were very hard on the community back in Lancashire where nearly everyone had a relative or friend who was killed or wounded. This was explored in a play by Peter Whelan in 1981 called *The Accrington Pals* which contrasts life at the front in 1916 with that of the women left at home adjusting to life without their fathers, husbands, brothers and friends.

Activity

Ask your students to find out more about the Pals Battalions in your area and life on the home front for women in your country during this period. You could ask your local museum for more information. You can find out about the life of one particular soldier, William Smurthwaite, in the 18th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry by going to the online resources at: <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/list/somme-1916-2016>



Private Robert Jackson 17972. Unit: X Company, 11th Battalion (Accrington Pals), East Lancashire Regiment. Death: 1st July 1916 Western Front.
©IWM HU116260

Conscription

The Battle of the Somme marked a turning point in the Pals battalions. Many were disbanded or amalgamated after 1916. Others kept their names until the end of the war but relied on conscripted men rather than those with local links.

The Military Service Act of 1916 introduced compulsory conscription to Great Britain for the first time after the heavy losses of the Battle of the Somme. The Act specified that men from 18 to 41 years old were to be called up for service in the army unless they were married, widowed with children, serving in the Royal Navy, a minister of religion, or working in a reserved occupation.

Those men who refused to fight and were not prepared to take up arms whatever the penalty were called conscientious objectors. Most of these men were pacifists or of a religious faith who believed that even during wartime it was wrong to kill another person.

The usual procedure for a Conscientious Objector was to apply to his local tribunal for exemption from military service. They were treated harshly and often sent for court

FRIENDS AMBULANCE UNIT (1914 - 1919) PERSONNEL CARDS SERIES 2

Name <i>FAWCETT Frederick</i>		Married - Single <i>1</i> / <i>113</i>	
Address <i>Greenland School House South Moor, Bunkley, Durham.</i>			
Normal Occupation <i>Bricklayer</i>			
Connection with Friends <i>Wesleyan Methodist.</i>			
Next of Kin - Name <i>Robt F Fawcett.</i>		Date of Birth <i>19th March 1890.</i>	
Address <i>as above.</i>			
Date of joining F.A.U. <i>June 8. 1916.</i>		For Amb. General Service - Adm.	
TRANSFERS		PRESENT SERVICE	
Date	Service	Date	Unit
		<i>1916</i>	<i>London</i>
		<i>1917</i>	<i>1st Bn. Durham</i>
		<i>1917</i>	<i>1st Bn. Durham</i>
		<i>1918</i>	<i>1st Bn. Durham</i>
Date of leaving F.A.U.		Cause	
		Exemption <i>E.C. only. Discharged L.T. Released from Prison by W.O. authority June 15. 1918 subject to joining F.A.U.</i>	

Image courtesy of Beamish, The Living Museum of the North and Friends Ambulance Unit Records

martial and imprisonment under sentence of hard labour. About 7,000 pacifists agreed to perform non-combat service. This usually involved working as stretcher-bearers in the front-line of battle for organisations such as the Friends Ambulance Unit. There was a very high casualty rate and many men were killed while demonstrating considerable courage under fire.

Fred Fawcett was a conscientious objector from County Durham. He was a Methodist and was jailed after his Tribunal. He was later released from prison to join the Friends Ambulance Unit.

Activity

You can see a copy of his personnel card above. Ask your students to find out what they can about him from this card and then carry out further research about the role of stretcher-bearers at the Battle of the Somme. What other information would they like to know about Fred and why he became a member of the Friends Ambulance Unit?

British soldiers advance during a smoke attack.
©IWM Q69586

Remembrance

Missing casualties

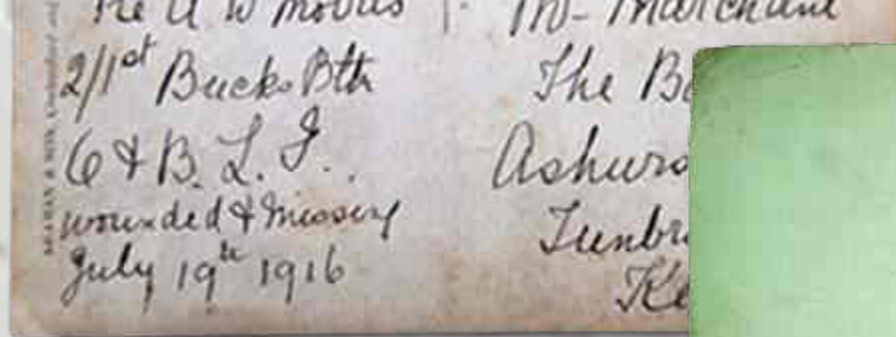
Those who died during the Battle of the Somme are commemorated or buried in hundreds of cemeteries and memorials in the region. There are some 150 specially constructed Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries with other burials at 250 additional locations, such as town cemeteries or graveyards.

The bodies of many soldiers who died during the battle were never recovered. This is often the case in the chaos of war, but the numbers of missing during the First World War were far greater than had been seen before.

There are several reasons why soldiers went missing. It could be that they were killed in a large explosion and were buried by the upheaval of earth, or that the force of the shell might have destroyed their bodies.

First World War soldiers wore identity tags so that they could be identified if they were killed or indeed wounded. The tag might become lost. During weeks of battle, temporary cemeteries near the frontline could be overrun by the enemy, or perhaps shelled so that the bodies of soldiers who had been buried were subsequently lost.

Many thousands of Somme soldiers were declared missing. When a soldier's body is lost, their loss is commemorated on a memorial on which their name is carved. For example, the names of those from the Newfoundlanders Regiment who have no known grave are listed on the Beaumont Hamel Memorial. This memorial also commemorates other Newfoundlanders lost in the First World War. More than 800 missing men are named.



Curriculum links: History, English, Personal Social and Health Education, Citizenship, Design and Technology.

Core skills: Communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, Student leadership, Global citizenship and civic responsibility

Learning objectives:

To carry out investigations into local casualties from the Battle of the Somme and carry out remembrance and commemoration activities.



First World War identity tags – made out of asbestos.
©IWM UNI12250

Thiepval Memorial



Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme centres on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Thiepval Memorial. The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave.

Over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916. The memorial also serves as an Anglo-French Battle Memorial in recognition of the joint nature of the 1916 offensive and a small cemetery containing equal numbers of Commonwealth and French graves lies at the foot of the memorial. The memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was built between 1928 and 1932.

Although the Battle of the Somme took place a century ago, the bodies of soldiers are still being recovered from the battlefields. In some cases they can be identified. Occasionally names are removed from the Thiepval Memorial when a soldier who was missing is buried and has their own headstone.

In 2014, the local press in Newcastle reported on the 'Search for relatives of First World War Soldier'. The remains of Sergeant David Harkness Blakey from Felling in Gateshead were discovered when a road in Thiepval was widened. He had been reported missing on the 1st July 1916 and was posthumously awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field in December 1916.



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Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone

The practice of non-repatriation of the dead which was established during the First World War meant that Commonwealth servicemen and women who died on active service abroad, were buried abroad.

The Commission is founded on principles of equality, respect and honour and believes that everyone who lost their lives should be remembered equally regardless of race, rank or creed. Sir Frederic Kenyon wrote in 1918, 'what was done for one should be done for all, and that all, whatever their military rank or position in civil life, should have equal treatment in their graves.' Therefore all CWGC headstones are identical in terms of their style and there is no distinction made for rank, race or creed. However, there are interesting differences which you can learn about here.

National Emblem or Regimental Badge

Many graves feature a design which represents a national emblem or regimental badge. Originally the headstones were carved by hand, now all headstones are made by computer aided machinery in the CWGC workshop in France.

Details of the individual

Headstones will normally include military number, name, rank, military awards, regiment, date and age of death.

Personal inscription

Graves were made more individual through a personal inscription. With a limit of 66 letters the words chosen were often lines from a prayer or a simple message to a loved one.



Living Memory – 141 days of the Somme

A century on, the movement to remember the sacrifice made by so many is being led by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) through the Living Memory Project.

Wherever you are in the world you can search for your nearest First World War or Second World War graves or memorials managed by CWGC by downloading the free CWGC App or by visiting the CWGC website www.cwgc.org.

Religious emblem

Most CWGC headstones include a religious icon. On joining the military services, recruits would state their religion. The religious faith would then be represented on the headstone. In addition, where possible those of the Muslim faith were buried facing Mecca. Hindu soldiers were cremated and in special circumstances buried.



No faith



Islamic



Sikh



Jewish



Hindu



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Living Memory Remembrance Activities

Choose someone to remember

Remembering all those buried in CWGC war graves is a fitting way to mark the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme. There are 300,000 CWGC war graves and memorials in the UK. Many lie in hidden corners of cemeteries and local communities are often unaware of their existence. If you visit one of the war graves you could choose an individual grave to focus your remembrance activity on.

You may make your selection because you are struck by the age of the soldier or perhaps you are surprised by what you find. For example, there are some war graves for women who served in the First World War. For help with finding a date that connects your local community to the Battle of the Somme email livingmemory@cwgc.org

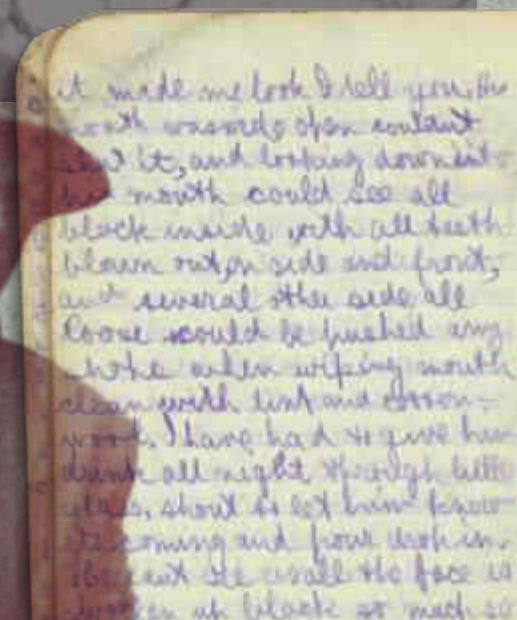
Many soldiers injured at the Somme were brought back to the British Isles to be treated in hospitals. Some then died of their wounds and are either buried in cemeteries used by the hospitals or were returned for family burials. You may find that Somme casualties are buried in your local cemetery but you'll need to do some investigating.

Visiting Cemeteries

1. Some locations can be very large and finding particular graves can be more challenging. In the UK, CWGC headstones are often grouped together and can be found more easily although graves are sometimes scattered.
2. Some are buried in family graves and will not have the distinctive CWGC headstone so may be harder to locate.
3. You will need to consider that the war graves may well be in a cemetery that is still operational with regular activity including funerals. Out of respect for others visiting the cemetery and those buried there, please observe appropriate behaviour.

4. When visiting in a large group it is best to let the local cemetery manager know that you are visiting.
5. Cemeteries can be quiet places with few visitors on any one day so it is advisable to visit in a group.
6. Keep to the paths. Caution should always be taken as the ground around graves can be uneven and old gravestones can sometimes be unsteady.
7. Whilst cemeteries are a place for remembrance they are also a space for discovery and exploration so please have a go at one of the Living Memory activities.

Digital archives and detective work can lead to photographs and newspaper stories, even diaries and letters, building to a powerful and moving remembrance of an individual. For others, however, there is very little known.



Living Memory Activities

Living Memory Activity One: **Find the graves**

Once you have found a local cemetery visit the CWGC website and download the full list of First World War casualties buried there. You could then divide up the list and give students the task of each finding a soldier's grave.

Ask students to note down the dates of birth and death of those they have discovered, to work out their ages. As a group calculate the average age of the war casualties in your cemetery. If you need help finding your nearest cemetery email livingmemory@cwgc.org

Living Memory Activity Two: **Make rubbings of the headstones**

Take some large sheets of paper to the cemetery and use thick wax crayons to carefully take a rubbing of the headstone. Take time to note the different markings and symbols on the headstone.

**Please take care not to mark the headstones. Before you start make sure the headstones are secure. Do not lean too heavily on the headstones.*

On your return, you could display these on the walls to remember the cemetery in your venue and share your experience with others that weren't able to join you.



some things if you say what
is then ~~that~~ ~~will~~ or ~~have~~
he'll stand as long as I live
I feel almost like
heaps of other pretty things
born with bullets in the
very quiet not a sound
from him would not be
surprised to walk over
find him dead. Man in
bullet in lungs seems to
be in world & I think he
me he can feel the bullet
nearly coming there but
also told me that about this
time of the year every year



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Living Memory Activities

Living Memory Activity Three: **Lay Flowers**

Grow your own flowers to lay at your local war graves.

There is a long tradition of laying flowers on graves as a tribute and act of remembrance. In the UK we are used to floral wreaths and the poppy wreaths which are laid at Remembrance time but this project encourages you to grow flowering plants from seeds and lay simple floral tributes. If you don't have time to grow flowers you can otherwise buy them.

The Commissions' cemeteries are planted with mostly perennial plants, which are left in place, and cared for rather than using plants, which are grown from seed. However, when the cemeteries were first created, soldiers collected and sowed seeds in the burial places before they were formally laid out and therefore sowing seeds for flowering plants has a very strong connection to the battlefields of the Great War. The Commission is famous for its beautiful horticulture around the world.

You can grow flowers outdoors in a planter or flowerbed. Annuals are a good type to go for, as they will flower throughout the summer and autumn. This includes flowers such as pot marigolds (widely used in India for garlands) love-in-a-mist, cornflowers (French remembrance flower because they are known as 'bluets' for the blue soldiers' uniforms) & godeti. They can be grown from seed without any special skill.

The flowers that are most associated with the battlefields in Britain are the corn poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) as well as other varieties of poppies, which can be easily grown in a wide range of colours although they wilt quickly when picked. The poppy became a flower of remembrance because of Canadian doctor John McRae's haunting poem, *In Flanders Fields*. Poppies like to grow in disturbed earth and so the new cemeteries were filled.

Remembrance flowers

Forget-me-not in Germany, cornflowers in France and poppies in Britain.



Living Memory Activity Four: **Public Speaking**

Whilst visiting some of your local war graves you could take the opportunity to say a few words to acknowledge your visit. You could read a poem, read a letter, or encourage members of your group to share their thoughts and messages of remembrance at the graveside. Ask your pupils to choose a poem from a selection you could look at before your visit.



Living Memory Activities

Living Memory Activity Five: **Designing a war memorial**

Look at images of different types of war memorials from a variety of countries and conflicts. Discuss why memorials and events such as Remembrance Day are important.

If you have a war memorial close to your school, try and arrange a visit to study it in detail. Examine the names and the dates of those who are remembered on it from The Battle of the Somme.

Children at one London Primary School visited and examined a variety of war memorials in the city before designing and making their own. One pair chose to make a commemorative sculpture in the shape of a telescope. They wrote, 'Our sculpture represents the future and peace. It is in the shape of a telescope because it is all about looking for peace in the future. We chose the design because we thought it would be a great sculpture. Our colours are red and light blue because we wanted to make it eye catching. When people see it we want them to feel hopeful about the future.'



**War Memorial, Newtownards,
Co. Down, N. Ireland.**



Living Memory Activity Six: **Hold an assembly or public presentation**

Share some of your research alongside images, drawings, headstone rubbings and poems from your visit to your local cemetery. Make a digital presentation to share some of your key findings and tell others how they too can find and visit war graves nearby. If you have a partner school you can exchange your research and follow-up work with them.



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Living Memory Activities

Living Memory Case Study – **Kingsweston School, Bristol**

Kingsweston School is a specialist centre for young people with autism in Bristol. Students and staff visited their local graves in Shirehampton in November 2015 and followed the steps to search for First World War casualties using the CWGC database.

The students then used large sheets of paper to make headstone rubbings, which were displayed, throughout the corridors of their school on Armistice Day. The students were also encouraged to make short speeches at the graves to develop their public speaking skills. Several of the children asked to go back and leave a message at the grave of their soldier, just like they would with a relative. *'Can we go back when it's his birthday?' or 'Can we go back on the date of his death?'* They also created a remembrance tree on a school corridor wall, which contained small leaves for students to write their thoughts and comments after their visit to Shirehampton Cemetery.



Living Memory Case Study – **Manchester Academy**

Students from Manchester Academy visited some of the 1200 war graves in Manchester Southern Cemetery and spent several hours making rubbings of the markings on the headstones, and drawing and taking pictures of the cemetery and headstones. On their return to school they then turned these images into prints, which were displayed, around the school on digital displays to mark Armistice Day.



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Become a Commonwealth War Graves Champion

We hope you will have discovered more about your local war graves, the men and women buried there, and are able to share this with friends, family and others where you live. Your actions mean that they will not be forgotten.

Schools and communities are being asked to champion these war graves; lay flowers, tell friends and families, tell other local schools and community groups.

Be part of re-connecting your community to these men and women.

To mark your commitment, we are awarding Commonwealth War Graves Champion certificates to participants. To request your e-certificate email livingmemory@cwgc.org

Find Out More

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission www.cwgc.org
- First World War Centenary Battlefields Tour <http://www.centenarybattlefieldtours.org>
- Imperial War Museum First World War Centenary <http://www.iwm.org.uk/centenary>
- Lives of the First World War <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org>
- BBC Schools: World War One <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/>
- BBC History: World War One <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww1>
- War Memorials Trust www.war memorials.org
- *The Accrington Pals* is a 1981 play by Peter Whelan. Other fiction about the period includes *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo, *Line of Fire: Diary of an Unknown Soldier (August – September 1914)* A graphic novel by Barroux and *The Great War: stories inspired by objects from the First World War 1914-1918* published by Walker

- **The Living Memory project** provides more information on visiting war graves and finding Somme casualties in the UK. In 2016 CWGC are offering funding and support to schools and community groups across the UK to mark the 141-day period of the Somme Centenary from the 1st July – 18th November 2016. www.cwgc.org email livingmemory@cwgc.org
- If you are interested in visiting the Somme battlefield sites and are a state funded secondary school why not sign up for your free places on the award winning DfE/ DCLG funded First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme. Visit www.centenarybattlefieldtours.org/ to find out more
- Use our **British Council Schools Online** partner finding tool to link up with schools in France and around the World <http://bit.ly/1TnkJaG>
- A good source for **First World War poetry** is *In Time of War* edited by Anne Harvey Puffin Teenage Poetry



Enquiries

vicky.gough@britishcouncil.org

www.britishcouncil.org/schoolsonline

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