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**DO**  
**MENTION THE**  
**WAR**

**WILL 1914 MATTER IN 2014?**

British  
Future...



LED BY IWM

# British Future...



British Future is an independent, non-partisan thinktank seeking to involve people in an open conversation, which addresses people's hopes and fears about identity and integration, migration and opportunity, so that we feel confident about Britain's future.

Editor: Jo Tanner  
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# Why history matters

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Grace Jones has reason to remember the first world war. Britain's oldest woman, born in 1899, was 14 when it broke out. Her fiancé, Albert Rees, was killed in the trenches at Arras. She never married. 'I never met anybody as nice as he was,' she says.

There are 11,000 Britons who were alive when war was declared. All but a tiny handful were small children. Several thousands more took their first breath before Armistice Day 1918. They grew up into a world profoundly reshaped by the conflict, but nobody alive in Britain today experienced the trenches directly. The last Tommy, Harry Patch, died five years ago, aged 111.

The first world war has moved from memory to identity. If we believe it is important to have a shared history, we may first need to learn what we want to remember. On the eve of the centenary, British Future's research shows that our understanding of that history is rather shaky.

Most people do know that there was a war in 1914, and four out of five of us that Germany was an enemy then. Most can identify France and America as allies too. Almost everything else is minority knowledge. Beyond images of mud, trenches and barbed wire – and troops playing football during a Christmas truce – the fog of war descends, the first world war getting lost in the second.

'I think it began when an Archduke shot an Ostrich because he was Hungry,' said Private Baldrick in *Blackadder Goes Forth*, now among the most significant sources of public knowledge (or myths) of the Great War. Almost half of us can name the assassinated Archduke, but few can explain how that led to Britain declaring war. Did Germany invade Poland or Belgium? Were the men who went to war in 1914 volunteers or conscripts? Was there rationing in the first world war as well as the second?

*Mostly, we don't know – though we feel that we should*

So a remarkable public appetite for the centenary is bubbling under. That reflects not just a solemn responsibility to commemorate the enormous loss of life three generations ago, but also an appetite to learn more about events which did so much to shape a century, and the country that we were to become.

PHOTO:

*At Christmas 1914, there were a series of unofficial truces in no-man's land. In the British sector soldiers met between the trenches, talked, exchanged souvenirs and even played football. Second Lieutenant Cyril Drummond took this photograph of soldiers from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment talking happily with men from the 134th Saxon Regiment on Boxing Day. © Imperial War Museums*







Most of us don't know what our families were doing in 1914. Many – in schools, the local library and online – will decide to find out.

The British centenary will be a distinctly civic affair, to an extent unlikely to be matched in other countries. There will be great state occasions as the Queen hosts presidents and prime ministers at Glasgow Cathedral.

But while such events will add pomp, the discovery of how the war changed lives will come in a much more personal, even personalised, way. The IWM's (Imperial War Museum's) Centenary Partnership already has over 1,400 organisations exploring every imaginable aspect of the war: how the Accrington Pals band plays on today; what the poetry of Wilfred Owen means to Shropshire; that a quarter of the entire male population of Wales went to fight, or how no fewer than one in 40 of the nine million British and Commonwealth troops came from the single city of Glasgow. British Future's research (*cf page 22*) found strong interest in the Commonwealth contribution: a forgotten, shared history of a multi-ethnic society that more than half of the country is surprised to hear about.

It is because history is so important to identity that wars can change their meanings long after they are fought. Little of how we think about the war was in place by the 1918 armistice. The Cenotaph, war memorials and

memoirs came in the 1920s. The outbreak of war in 1939 gave the first world war a new name, and proved that the 'war to end all wars' had not done so. The post-war peace of 1945 underpinned narratives of how heroes were betrayed in 1918.

A great deal of how we think about the first world war derives from the 50th anniversary, as *Oh What a Lovely War* came to the stage and innovations in media, such as BBC documentaries and the new Sunday colour supplements, popularised a new history in 1964. In 2014, we can ratify those understandings of the war or we can challenge and change them.

The challenge of this centenary should not simply be to brush up on our history, to learn the dates and battlefields by rote or to recycle the activities of the 50th anniversary. We have an opportunity not only to look at the choices and controversies of a century ago, but explore how – or perhaps if – they have defined Britain.

As the sun goes down on the generation that was present, we will remember them, yes, but we will also be empowered to create our own story of our society.

*Matthew Rhodes is director of strategy and relationships and Sunder Katwala is director at British Future*

PHOTO:  
*Prime minister David Lloyd George meeting Indian soldiers on King George's Hill near Fricourt, The Somme, September 1916.*  
 © Imperial War Museums

# Is our history a mystery?

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Despite the popularity of *Downton Abbey*, the early 20th century is a mystery to many of us. As we prepare to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the first world war, how much do we actually know?

For many of us, the real life events that provide the factual scaffold for series like *Downton Abbey* have faded into the background. As we head toward the centenary of the outbreak of war, new polling commissioned by British Future and carried out by YouGov<sup>1</sup> shows that there are clear gaps – and paradoxes – in our knowledge of the first world war and the events surrounding it.

For almost all questions posed “don’t know” was the most popular answer. Men tended to win the battle of the sexes in terms of factual knowledge, out-performing women across the board. However, when looking at empathy rather than hard knowledge, the British Future research groups, (*cf page 22*) which were carried out in parallel to the quantitative research, women surge ahead.

Over half of men – 58% – knew that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand sparked the first world war, but barely a third of women – 39% – gave the correct answer. Bucking a trend seen elsewhere in the polling, 18–24-year-olds did reasonably well on this question, with 52% answering correctly. That said, 4% of this age group believed the assassination of Abraham Lincoln was the trigger for the war.

There was a similar lack of clarity around the other key figures of the war. When asked who was the British prime minister at the war’s start, fewer than one in ten were able to identify Herbert Asquith. Astonishingly, 7% of 18–24-year-olds believed Margaret Thatcher was resident at 10 Downing Street in 1918. Conversely, there was more certainty about the leadership of Germany during the war, with nearly a third recognising Kaiser Wilhelm II.

As British Future’s research groups also discovered, many find it difficult to distinguish between the first and second world wars. A

clear indication of this came when people were asked “the invasion of which territory sparked Britain’s declaration of war?”. While nearly one in five answered Poland, the second most popular answer after “don’t know”, only 13% correctly identified Belgium.

While the conflation of the two wars may excuse some of the answers given, it appears that lack of knowledge is the key factor. This is most telling when respondents were asked whether particular countries were Britain’s allies or enemies during the war, or whether they were neutral. While we may expect people to struggle with countries like Bulgaria or Japan, there is a certain folklore to Britain’s relationship with Germany. Despite this, a mere 81% identified Germany as an enemy during the first world war, falling to three-quarters (75%) of women and just over two-thirds (69%) of 18–24-year-olds.

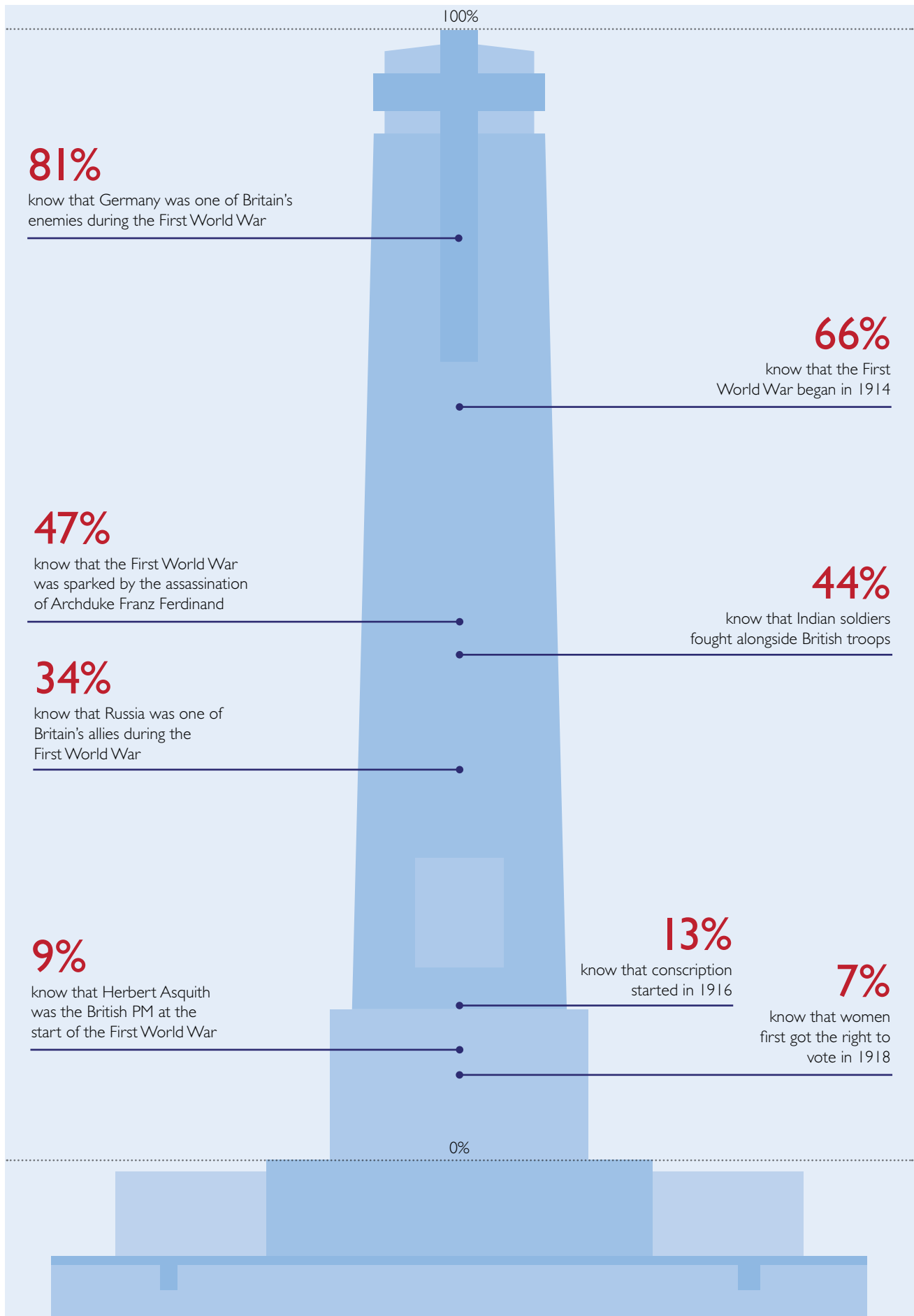
The consequences of the war for the homefront were no clearer for most of those polled. Only 13% correctly identified 1916 as the year conscription was introduced, while fewer than one in 10 – just 7% – knew that women were first entitled to vote in 1918.

Such responses may be fuel to traditionalist anxieties about education, but what they really offer is an opportunity to learn more about our history. The popularity of TV programmes set in our recent past – from *The Village* to *Mr Selfridge* – suggests that there is a willingness, perhaps even a hunger, to find out more, made even more personal and accessible by shows like *Who Do You Think You Are?* and *Find My Past*.

This period of our recent past may be another country, but perhaps this war centenary is our passport to find out more.

*Jo Tanner is director of communications at British Future*

1. Polling was carried out by YouGov on 9 and 10 July 2013 with a representative group of 1,955 adults.



# Commonwealth contributions

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People from around the globe came to fight for King and Empire. Baroness Warsi is determined that we remember them.

The first world war was just that – a world war. As the British Future’s research highlights, it wasn’t just Brits who fought for our King and country in the conflict – our boys weren’t just Tommies, they were Tariqs and Tajinders too. With the centenary of the conflict fast approaching, I hope that’s something we can further bring to light and commemorate.

Between 1914 and 1918, men from around the globe came to serve alongside the Allies. Many came from what are now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – 1.2 million volunteers answering the call ‘Your Empire Needs You’.

Visiting the battlefields of France and Belgium earlier this year really brought home to me the scale of their sacrifice. More than 140,000 troops from undivided India made the journey to these foreign fields, where they took up arms against the Germans. Seeing

photographs of soldiers on the Western Front wearing turbans, and reading their accounts of prayer and fasting on the frontline, was particularly stirring.

What was heartening was to see the graves and memorials of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus lying side by side, just as these men had fought side by side – proving that the fight for freedom truly transcended the boundaries of nationality and faith.

The fact is, one in ten of the men who contributed to the war effort was from undivided India; this was a truly global conflict. Indeed, Britain’s diversity grew from history reflected in Commonwealth and multi-ethnic contribution to both world wars. And, as British Future’s research shows, the majority of people – 80% – agree with this fact today.

PHOTO:  
*Wounded Indian soldiers using a jam jar as a hookah pipe. Brighton, August 1915.*  
© Imperial War Museums







When we come to commemorate the centenary in 2014, people from ethnic minority backgrounds may wonder what it all has to do with them. I can say from experience that it is a powerful thing to learn that your ancestors played a part in British history, even if they weren't from this country. Both my grandfathers fought for Britain in the second world war and when I reflect upon their bravery it makes me proud to know that they were doing their bit for the freedom and liberty of the British Isles, long before my parents migrated here.

**More than 140,000 troops from undivided India made the journey to these foreign fields, where they took up arms against the Germans**

I'm determined that the government does everything it can to ensure the centenary reflects the Commonwealth

contribution in the first world war as we gear up for 2014. We are discussing it in the National Commemoration Advisory Group. We are bringing together key community voices and historians to advise on how the Commonwealth contribution can best be marked. We are looking at programmes that will spread the stories of these brave soldiers through lectures and educational resources. And we are also considering how best to commemorate the hundreds of soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross who came from overseas.

As British Future reveals, 44% of people know about the role that Indians played in the first world war. My mission is that, once the centenary is over, not only will that percentage be much, much higher, but we will have a greater understanding of their contribution too. This generation of brave soldiers deserves to be remembered for generations to come.

*Baroness Warsi is senior minister at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and minister for faith and communities*

IMAGE:  
Soldiers were actively recruited from the Empire. Left: PST 12586 – Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holder. Imperial War Museums welcome any information regarding the copyright of this image. Right: © Imperial War Museums

# “Was that one or was that two?”

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British Future travelled round the country to find out how people feel about the upcoming centenary. Sunder Katwala found that it is gender, not nationality, that made a difference.

Why would we care so much about something we know very little about? Unlocking this apparent paradox helps to explain why people do think the centenary of the first world war will matter.

Why do we care? It is the scale of life lost that demands respect. Commemorating that sacrifice reflects who we are too. This is often articulated personally: that it feels important that our children should know about the lives of their great-grandparents' generation, not least to be able to pass that on, in time, to their own children and grandchildren. This is what it means to have family, to be a society, or to form a nation: that we understand how our past, present and future are linked. This generates anxiety too: the thought that the next generation might break the chain often serves as a euphemism for a fear that we may already have done so ourselves.

British Future undertook a series of research workshops to explore how people think about

the forthcoming centenary, held in Birmingham, Cardiff, High Wycombe and Glasgow. These explored how people think about history; what they know about the first world war; and views about what the purpose of marking its centenary could be. There were separate groups of men and women in each location, broadly reflecting local class and ethnic demographics.

The idea of the centenary as “a chance to learn” has a powerful resonance. People are conscious of this war passing from living memory, yet that it remains close enough to be within our grasp to trace the links back. Several who know their family stories of the second world war saw this as a chance to find out whether that was true of the first too. Women particularly talked about the centenary as an opportunity for families. Engaging with children in museums or TV programmes on what they ought to know was a chance to brush up on the history that you wish you had learnt, or remembered, from school.

PHOTO:  
*These British reservists of the Grenadier Guards are reporting for duty the day after Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Around half of the men who crossed to France with the British Expeditionary Force a week later were retired full-time soldiers who had been called back to serve in the army after the outbreak of war.*  
© Imperial War Museums





## ► How women saw the war differently

There were striking gender differences in the discussion groups. Men know more about the war itself but women often proved more engaged with what the centenary should be about. This reflected a tendency to begin less on the treacherous territory of shaky historical facts, and instead by empathising with the soldiers who went to fight, and what happened to the families and places they left behind, and returned to.

*While in the English groups, the gender difference had been more about tone than content, in Scotland, a wider gender gulf took on a stronger political dimension*

It helped, too, that all of the female groups felt able to admit what they didn't know. "I've put rationing down – but is that the wrong war?" said one female participant in High Wycombe, very early on, sparking a discussion about how easily the two get mixed up. Asking "was that one or was that two?" for Birdsong, War Horse or Blackadder led to an open discussion of how the centenary could be an opportunity for families to learn and understand together.

The male groups were less likely to admit to holes in their knowledge, making these discussions cooler, more formal, and more classroom-like. Were there any moments that should be especially marked? "The start and the end, and probably some of the really big battles", volunteered the male group in Birmingham. "Especially D-Day" chipped in another participant. Nobody else responded. The Cardiff groups had the most historical knowledge; men there drew a sharp distinction between the futility of the first world war and the legacy of the second. Other groups found it much harder to separate the wars.

While in the English groups, the gender difference had been more about tone than content, in Scotland, a wider gender gulf took on a stronger political dimension. Women on both sides of the border were broadly in agreement as to the importance of marking

the centenary. For Scottish men, there was strong suspicion of political agendas, given the timing of the centenary: of the Westminster government, most often, but also of how Alex Salmond might exploit the occasion for those opposed to independence. Women thought Glasgow hosting the August 2014 commemoration was a good thing, and welcomed the Queen. Men wondered what lay behind this choice.

The Glasgow men saw the centenary as British, rather than Scottish, and therefore less relevant to them. However, finding out that some 200,000 men from Glasgow fought, they were simultaneously astonished and deeply respectful. Women wanted this marked symbolically, ideally by lighting 17,695 candles in the city, one for each Glaswegian soldier that lost his life, and were not put off by the British dimension. "The war was fought as Britain, so that's how it should be marked." Cardiff participants were against emphasising a 'Welsh angle' on the conflict, seeing this as too parochial, and instead argued strongly for a European perspective, particularly German participation at major British centenary events, citing Harry Patch's insistence that German and British veterans carry his coffin. This was their crucial test of whether the centenary promoted reconciliation or jingoism.



IMAGE:  
*The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee also produced recruitment posters in Welsh.*  
© Imperial War Museums

► **The Commonwealth and the making of multi-ethnic Britain**

In Cardiff, High Wycombe and, especially, Birmingham, the role of Commonwealth troops was seen as important. This was prioritised by participants from ethnic minority backgrounds – “it shows we didn’t just arrive the day before yesterday” – but often, too, by those white English participants who were most anxious about contemporary tensions.

The Glasgow groups enthused about the Commonwealth Games, placing it well ahead of the independence referendum or any anniversary as the most important event of 2014. But they did not intuitively see any link between the Commonwealth and the first world war. “There wasn’t a multi-ethnic society in 1914. You could save that for London,” said one participant, while Cardiff participants thought this ‘neglected’ aspect of the war more important: “The

Commonwealth idea is about integration. The Welsh angle can seem more about separation,” explained one participant.

British Future research demonstrates there are consensus views of the centenary that just about the entire country can unite around: that the centenary should reflect the value of peace is as important to those who believe it was right for Britain to fight the war; that the debt to those who died is acknowledged by those who believe it should never have been fought; and the sheer scale of the death toll – nine million military deaths, and perhaps sixteen million in total. Recognition of the Commonwealth soldiers, and the shared history of multi-ethnic Britain, has just as broad an appeal as more traditional-sounding commemorations of national sacrifice, across those with different views of how we handle contemporary challenges of race relations, integration or immigration. This is simply now seen as a central part of knowing the history of our country.

PHOTO:  
*A nurse adjusts the blanket of a wounded Indian soldier, as his stretcher is lifted and placed into a motor ambulance somewhere on the Western Front.*  
© Imperial War Museums







► **Agreeing and disagreeing about the Great War**

That we do, almost all, agree on these meanings of the centenary will be important during quiet moments of solemn commemoration: as candles are extinguished in churches at 11pm on 4 August 2014; as we commemorate the great losses on the Somme on 1st July 2016, and mark the centenary of the armistice itself on Remembrance Sunday in 2018.

*Recognition of the Commonwealth soldiers ... is simply now seen as a central part of our country*

However, the last thing to do with the centenary of the first great global conflict in human history is to try to persuade everyone to come to the same view of it. Wars change their meaning long after they are fought –

and our arguments about this should inform contemporary, live issues too: when wars should be fought and when they should not; what different choices about global commitments or continental entanglements tell us about how we might see our place in Europe or the world; and whether the history of the United Kingdom is a reason to maintain it, or to leave it behind, to identify just a few possible centenary arguments.

The first world war has always been among the most controversial of all topics. It is bound to remain so in 2014. We may need to do more to equip ourselves to restart those arguments. To claim we need an official answer about the meaning of the centenary would be a mistake – except, perhaps, to challenge the claim that we have nothing to learn or argue about from those great and terrible events of a century ago.

*Sunder Katwala is director of British Future*

*For more about this research conducted by Britain Thinks, go to [www.britishfuture.org](http://www.britishfuture.org)*

PHOTO:  
*The main British offensive in 1917 was at Ypres against the Passchendaele Ridge, undertaken between July and November. Unusually heavy rain fell. Stretcher bearers, like these Canadians on 14 November, struggled to bring back the wounded. Passchendaele's water filled shell holes and devastated battlefields have become one of the most powerful images of the war. © Imperial War Museums*

# Scotland's centenary

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## 2014 is a momentous year for Scotland – and the Union – but this shouldn't distract from remembrance, explains Alex Massie

The trouble with politics is that it is infectious. When plans to commemorate the centenary of the first world war were announced a minority of Scottish Nationalists, never slow to nurse a grievance, smelt a British plot to put the Scots back in their place. Who 'celebrates' the start of a war, they asked? And isn't the timing of the celebration suspicious or even inappropriate since Scotland's independence referendum will be held just a few weeks after the

centenary of August 1914 is marked? You could almost persuade yourself the entire war had been an exercise in frustrating the flowering of Scottish democracy.

Which, in one sense, it was. At least inadvertently. A bill legislating for Scottish Home Rule had passed its second reading before war intervened. As with its Irish sister, the Kaiser's War derailed the legislative process and for years afterwards folk forgot to even ask the Scottish Question.

PHOTO:  
*The rugby team  
at Gales Camp,  
Scotland, June –  
September 1916.*  
© Imperial War  
Museums

Nevertheless, most Nationalists, perhaps sensing that the public mood was not with them, have since recognised that commemorating the war is not the same as celebrating it. The Scottish government will release funds to help mark the occasion. As, of course, it should.

The scale of the first world war is something still hard to comprehend. Somehow this makes smaller illustrations of its carnage all the more poignant. They become miniatures of the war, each unique yet each the same as several hundred thousand more spread across an entire continent. Each of us, I think, understands or interprets the war through these miniature portraits.



Take my own home town of Selkirk, for instance. Fewer than 6,000 people live in this Border town today and even if more people lived in its outlying valleys and districts a century ago than do now, it has never been a large place. And there are 292 names on Selkirk's memorial to the Great War. Two hundred and ninety two. Many of these men served in the King's Own Scottish Borderers but the memorial also commemorates Selkirk exiles serving in, for example, Canadian regiments. A reminder of imperial sacrifice – and unity – too.

The ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, burned to the ground by English troops in 1544, sit on

the banks of the river Tweed a few miles from Selkirk. Here, alongside Sir Walter Scott, lie the mortal remains of Field Marshal Douglas Haig. His reputation, now in the process of being rehabilitated, had not yet been tarnished when Haig was buried here in 1928. His grave is a simple one, marked only by a standard issue Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

## *A team that, absent the war, might have dominated Scottish football for years, was destroyed*

Or take the story of the 16th Battalion of the Royal Scots, raised in Edinburgh shortly after war was declared. This was the famous 'sporting battalion' in which more than 30 professional footballers served. As it happens, most of them were from Heart of Midlothian, the club I support. Sixteen Hearts players enlisted; seven members of the first team would perish on the fields of France and Flanders. The finest team in Hearts' history – a team that, absent the war, might have dominated Scottish football for years – was destroyed. Today their memorial still stands outside Edinburgh's Haymarket railway station.

1914 changed everything. In *Sunset Song*, sometimes considered the finest twentieth century Scots novel, Lewis Grassie Gibbon writes, with feeling, of a people who "went quiet and brave from the lands they loved, though seldom of that love might they speak, it was not in them to tell in words of the earth that moved and lived and abided, their life and enduring love. And who knows what memories of it were with them, the springs and winters of this land and the sounds and scents of it that had once been theirs, deep, and with a passion of their blood and spirit, those... who die[d] in France? With them we may say there died a thing older than themselves, these were... the last of the Old Scots folk."

How can you not remember and commemorate that?

*Alex Massie is a freelance journalist and former Washington correspondent for The Scotsman*

IMAGE:  
*Sportsmen, like the Hearts of Midlothian players, were actively encouraged to join up.*  
© Imperial War Museums



# A homefront revolution?

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We commemorate the lives that were lost in the trenches of Northern France, but lives were changed on the home front too.

Unlike the dark days that preceded the second world war, Europe in 1914 was enjoying something of a mild boom. International trade and co-operation was strong, emigration to the Americas and Australasia established new trade and export routes, and the first shoots of future globalisation could be seen. The world was changing.

Britain was changing too. While many see the first world war as the catalyst for social change, in reality it was already fomenting. Membership of women's organisations, particularly trade unions, was on the rise, while, just 14 months before the outbreak of war, the notorious Emily Wilding Davison was killed at the Epsom Derby, trying to pin suffragette colours to the king's horse.

Women in the workplace were far from a novelty in 1914. In areas like the mill towns, for example, women were the main wage earner in around a third of households. Ironically, the number of women employed as war broke out actually went down, particularly among needleworkers and those in domestic service, who were 'let go' by the gentry wishing to free up their staff for the war effort.

As war got underway, though, it became clear that extra workers were required to supply munitions, uniforms and boots for those at the front. Women were more conspicuous on the factory floor, on farms and in offices and, as conscription was introduced, their numbers increased further. Their wages, however, did not, and while there was legislation for equal pay in certain munitions roles, the reality was somewhat different. Some women factory workers even had to hand over a proportion of their earnings to male machine-setters.

While there was much positive propaganda about working women during the war, the government's emphasis changed as the Eastern Front closed in 1917 and demobilisation began. Trade unions too, despite seeing women's membership more than doubling over the course of the war, seemed keen to revert to pre-war practices. As Cambridge historian Dr Deborah Thom puts it, "The effect of war work was to demonstrate that women were capable of many tasks: it did not demonstrate that they should do them."

Just as there was a need to boost the workforce at home, Lord Kitchener, secretary of state for war, was quick to recognise a need to increase the number of soldiers available for the front. Thanks to arguably the most successful marketing campaign ever, brothers, workmates and friends volunteered for the armed forces, eager to fight for king and country. Dubbed 'pals battalions', these groups of men now put on uniforms together, safe in the knowledge that they would be home by Christmas.

The City put together a Stockbrokers' Battalion, while sports clubs established Sportsmen's Battalions. With friends and family fighting – and dying – alongside each other, the impact on local communities was

PHOTO:  
*These women, manufacturing 6-inch (152mm) howitzer shells at the National Shell Filling Factory at Chilwell in Nottinghamshire, were part of a huge wartime increase in female workers employed in the munitions industry. By April 1918, 90% of shells were being made by women and the number of women workers in British industry as a whole was approaching three million.*  
© Imperial War Museums





tough. In almost every town and village there is a memorial to those who served, the ages and the shared surnames a testament to the losses not just of those on the battlefield but those at home too.

Of course, not all men volunteered or were conscripted. Some were deemed too important to the war effort at home – engineers and factory bosses – while others were ruled out on medical grounds, or simply because they were too old.

But there were also those who wanted to play no part in the war, for religious or conscientious reasons. During that first surge of patriotic pride, little attention was paid to the men who didn't put themselves forward to join the 'pals'. However, as the war began to be measured in years rather than months, these men of fighting age became the targets of campaigns by local women, who had seen their own husbands, sons and brothers go off to fight. The practice of handing out buttonholes of chicken feathers became difficult – if not insulting – to men back on leave or who had been wounded, and the government was compelled to produce a special lapel pin denoting their service.

## *The war was felt far beyond the armistice, positively as well as negatively*

Despite the levels of vitriol, actual numbers were relatively few: just 16,000 men are recorded as being conscientious objectors. Many found service in other ways, including those who joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit, set up by the Quakers, ferrying the injured from the battlefield to makeshift hospitals.

Others, though, took a more absolutist view, among them the Richmond Sixteen. These 16 men, having been taken from Richmond Castle in North Yorkshire where the Non-Combatant Corps was based, to an army camp in northern France, refused to unload supplies. They were court-martialled and, as an example to others, sentenced to death by Lord Kitchener. Although they were saved from this fate by the prime minister, Herbert Asquith, following Kitchener's own sudden death, their sentence was commuted



rather than rescinded. However, their true sentence was not 10 years' hard labour, but the social stigma they had to bear for the rest of their lives.

For them, as for many others, the war was felt far beyond the armistice, positively as well as negatively. How the war changed women's lives – the winning of the battle on suffrage, if only for the over 30s, and the relative increase in wages – is easily the aspect of the home front with which people are most familiar. Participants in British Future's research groups on the centenary found other impacts of the war fascinating, including how medical skills and techniques, such as plastic surgery, learned at the front changed – and continue to change – lives. There was more uncertainty in whether the war brought the world of Downton Abbey to a close, or saw it return afterwards.

Four years of war left a generation of young men lost or profoundly damaged by their experiences, a huge financial burden, and a society trying to redefine itself. Its impact was felt in every home, in every town, at every echelon.

While Britain may not have experienced the cataclysmic changes seen in other European nations, four years had wrought their own revolution.

*Jo Tanner is director of communications at British Future*

IMAGE:  
*Francis Dodd An Operation at the Military Hospital, Endell Street: Dr L Garrett, Dr Flora Murray, Dr W Buckley (1920-1921) Oil on canvas, IWM ART 4084 © Imperial War Museums*

# Did they really die for us?

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The forthcoming commemoration of the events of the first world war give us an opportunity to reflect but, argues Dr Daniel Todman, it is also an opportunity to challenge our perceptions.

Discussions of how to commemorate the centenaries of the first world war frequently make the connection between remembrance, learning and national identity. In October 2012, David Cameron, making the initial announcement of funding for a commemorative programme, argued that there were three reasons for marking the anniversaries of the conflict: the need to remember the ‘sacrifice’ made by UK and Commonwealth servicemen, the war’s place in the development of modern Britain, and the emotional pull of a conflict that is ‘a fundamental part of our national consciousness.’ As research carried out for the Imperial War Museum and British Future indicates, such sentiments have a strong public appeal: the latter found that about four in five of those questioned agreed with statements linking the scale of loss in the first world war to the cost of ‘peace and freedom’, highlighting the chance to extend integration by educating children about Britain’s imperial war effort and asserting that the centenaries would be a chance to remember that “we are forever in the debt of those who died to protect the British way of life.”

*Four in five of those questioned agreed with statements linking the scale of loss in the first world war to the cost of ‘peace and freedom’*

But framing commemoration in this way entails significant contradictions. Despite Cameron’s declaration of the war’s fundamental place in national consciousness, what is in fact evident is how little most

people know about a conflict that now seems extremely distant and which is often either supplanted by, or conflated with, the second world war. In the words of some of those interviewed for the Imperial War Museum – notably, drawn largely from those already in a ‘heritage’ setting: “It’s a long long way away. It feels like ‘old’ history like 1066 or Agincourt, as opposed to the Second World War or even Iraq War because veterans are still alive from those.” “Gosh, that’s a big subject. I wasn’t expecting that. Oh crap, I don’t know. It’s very sad, but I’m panicking a bit trying to think of what to say.” “I love stories on the news about Vera Lynn, evacuees, rationing, all that fun stuff. But I don’t mean to be rude, but just I don’t want to hear more about the mud, the trenches, the barbed wire and the massive loss of life.” As the latter comment suggests, those who can call up some ideas about the first world war tend to associate it primarily with the massive loss of life and the horrors of combat on the Western Front – the only possible positive highlight being that women got the vote. But many could not even bring these stereotypes to mind, and of those aged 16–24 surveyed by YouGov for British Future less than half were able to identify 1914 as the start date of the war.

We might contrast this with the period immediately after 1918, when the war was inescapable and there was an almost overwhelming public need to find a meaning in the experience of conflict. Today, it is possible not to know about the conflict and commemoration is a choice, not a necessity. Remembrance will require effort, not least to inform people about what it is they are meant to be commemorating. In line with its liberal democratic traditions, the British state has taken a relatively hands-off approach: governments throughout the UK



are organising official ceremonies and funding local commemoration but are leaving much of the practical detail to the third sector and civil society. Nonetheless, there is a clear expectation that this is about creating ‘national’ moments on the lines of the Jubilee or Olympics, though with a suitably different tone. As the uneven map of royalist festivities in 2012 suggests, ‘national’ may not mean universal if the organising impetus is dependent on local communities.

### *The war can be mobilised to talk about the sort of nation we are today*

It is also hard not to position the different versions of ‘national’ experience and effort referred to by Cameron other than in the context of the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. But it is plain that this is also an occasion on which governments throughout the UK know that they need to be seen to be active and appropriate: doing nothing would be damned politically as disrespectful, but so would commemorations that strike the wrong tone – as evidenced by the mythical status of the spam-fritter tossing contests with which the Major government is supposed to have prepared to mark the

fiftieth anniversary of D-Day. In practice, most people’s sense of the first world war might be pretty vague, but since its strongest element is of the horrific loss of life, it is not surprising that official planning has tended to emphasise commemoration over celebration.

At the same time, the war can also be mobilised to talk about the sort of nation we are today. In his October 2012 speech, Cameron highlighted Britons’ wartime display of ‘the values we hold dear: friendship, loyalty, what the Australians would call ‘mateship’.” But he also set the war as part of the construction of a diverse modern society, emphasising the contribution of the nurse Edith Cavell to “advancing the emancipation of women”, and the fact that “the loss of the troopship SS Mendi ...and the death of the first black British army officer, Walter Tull... are ... seen as marking the beginnings of ethnic minorities getting the recognition, respect and equality they deserve.” Whatever the historical accuracy of his remarks, they aroused little controversy. As British Future’s survey findings (*cf page 22*) suggest, it is not difficult to get the majority of Britons to agree to an apparently uncontroversial set of broad statements about commemorations being a chance to learn about our multi-ethnic past, the cost of freedom, the need to resolve future conflicts and the debt we owe to the dead.

PHOTO:  
*Genuine battle photographs of men under fire are rare. This one shows the men of the 1/10th Battalion, King’s (Liverpool Regiment), known as the Liverpool Scottish, in the middle of an attack at Bellewaarde outside Ypres on 16 June 1915. It was taken by Private Fred Fyfe, a pre-war press photographer as he lay wounded.*  
© Imperial War Museums





Yet these assertions are hardly unproblematic. The war involved a massive mobilisation of effort from the British Empire, but telling this as a happy story of hands across the ocean ignores the oppression, opposition and violence that were also entailed, not least in Ireland, where, from 1916, Britons killed Britons during the war in a fight over the future of imperial rule. Here, as elsewhere, the war resulted in a reduction of freedoms and a challenge to liberal values whilst it was being fought, not least because of the emotional furore created by popular involvement in the conflict. That Britons – like almost every other nation in Europe – became if anything more committed to the fight as the casualties got worse tells us a rather darker story about human societies and how hard it might be to secure peace.

The place that mass death still holds in remembrance of the first world war indicates how shocking the widespread experience of bereavement was at the time. No historian who speaks to the children of that wartime generation can be in much doubt about the lasting emotional impact on a subsequent

generation: they might never have met the dead but they certainly remembered the grief of those left behind. Equally, however, no one who wants to understand the distinctive course of our history in the twentieth century should make reference to the British and imperial casualty list in the first world war without reference to the absolutely and relatively much higher losses suffered by France and Germany.

*Telling this as a happy story of hands across the ocean ignores the oppression, opposition and violence... that were also entailed*

There is, of course, nothing new in the recasting of remembrance to meet the purposes of contemporary politics. Fears of continued violence after 1918 encouraged a heavy emphasis on peace as an essential national characteristic between the wars. But there is a seldom recognised tension between

PHOTO:  
*A party of female workers in a Scottish shipbuilding yard.*  
© Imperial War Museums



the language created to ameliorate the grief of the wartime bereaved – the explicitly Christian equation of sacrifice redeemed by the devotion of those left behind – and the attempt to manufacture identity today in a profoundly different country. ‘Sacrifice’ trips readily off the lips of all those involved in contemporary commemoration: but a century on, how much sense does it make to say they died for us?

Much of how Britain has changed since 1914 – greater democracy, greater equality, greater personal freedom and dramatic improvements in the standard of living – is worthy of celebration. But it is much harder to argue that we owe much if any of it to those who died during the war. Some of them, to be sure, joined up to defend a set of liberal values against what they saw as German militarism, and many hoped for a better world after the war. But many servicemen seem to have regarded gender and racial equality as potentially dangerous side effects of the conflict rather than desirable outcomes. The very significant changes that took place during and after the war that helped

to make life better for lots of its citizens – the dramatic increase in wage rates for the worst paid, the extension of the franchise to millions of working class men as well as older women and the extension of social welfare provision – might have been explained as recognitions of wartime sacrifice, but they owed much more to the persistence of a pre-war progressive tradition, the increased power of organised labour in the wartime economy and fears about the revolutionary potential of the millions of servicemen who returned after 1918. The majority who either did not serve, or who served and survived, played a far more important role in changing Britain for the better than those who died.

*Whatever our backgrounds,  
we had ancestors who were  
affected by the first world war*

Casting commemoration as a parade of facts to demonstrate the national values we’d like to have now would grossly misrepresent

PHOTO:  
*After weeks of attack and withdrawal, towards the end of July 1918 the Allied armies under the overall command of French General Ferdinand Foch, began to hit back. A rolling series of battles began which steadily pushed the Germans into retreat. As they fell back, thousands of German soldiers were taken prisoner and held at depots like this one at Abbeville in France.*  
© Imperial War Museums





PHOTO:  
*The British Expeditionary Force was concentrated in France by mid-August 1914. As agreed before the war, it moved forward into Belgium on the left of the French Army. Here, men of the 4th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers rest in the Grand Place in Mons on 22 August. The following day the Germans attacked at Mons. Fierce fighting began, and the British started to retreat alongside their French allies.*  
© Imperial War Museums

the complexity and unpleasantness of the past. But it also seems unlikely to build a more cohesive society in the present. Tagging on a celebration of imperial participation onto a set of traditional clichés about military sacrifice may offer a more inclusive version of remembrance, but why should we expect to encompass those alienated by current conflicts or continued discrimination. Shedding some collective tears for the dead might bring a quick emotional hit, but it is hard to see how it will create a more engaged or optimistic citizenry. A more difficult but more productive approach might be to explore, rather than to gloss over, the complexities of the past. Significantly, this is a route that is already being determinedly pursued in Ireland, north and south of the border, where the notion that the war's history has different, and potentially dangerous, meanings is much more easily grasped than in England, Scotland and Wales.

The starting point for such a reflection might be the acceptance that whatever our

backgrounds, we had ancestors who were affected by the first world war. They lived in a world that was recognisably related to, but very different from, our own: we should expect to be made to feel uncomfortable by some of the gaps between us. The conflict did not elicit a uniform set of reactions either across societies or over its course. Rather, it was an event which contemporaries found hard to understand, about which they disagreed, and from which they constructed different meanings. Thinking about the variety of their experiences and responses would help us to think about the different versions of the war which are relevant to us today, but also to respect other interpretations. More importantly, it would help us as a nation to develop a suspicion of easy answers and an ability to embrace complexity: the most valuable contribution that a sense of our history can make to helping us meet the challenges of the future.

*Dr Daniel Todman is senior lecturer in history at Queen Mary, University of London*



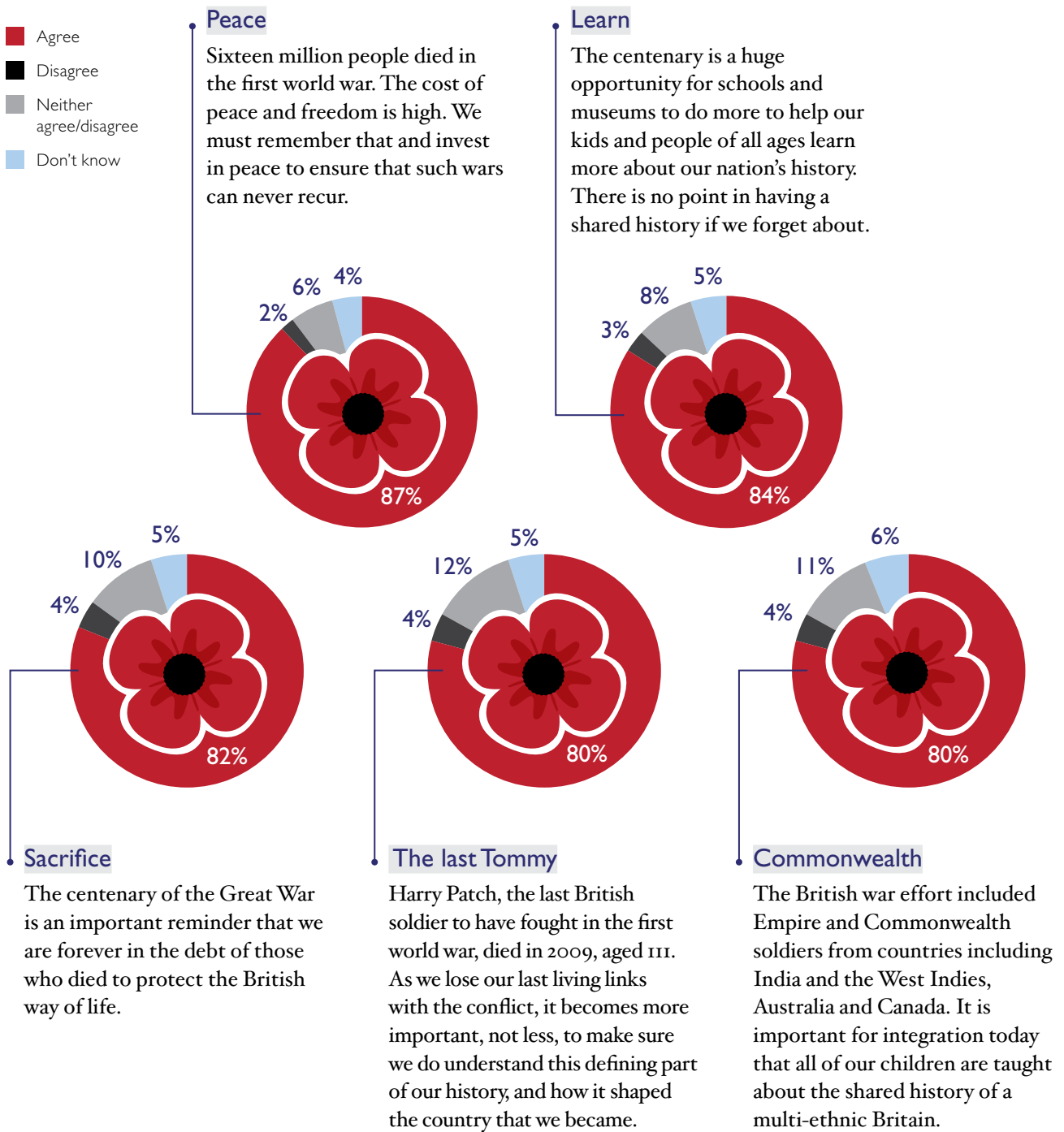
## A WORLD WAR MADE PERSONAL

SERIAL NUMBER	WWI-2013	ORDER NUMBER	2013
<b>1</b>	<b>Fiona Bruce</b> ..... <b>Newsreader</b>	<b>Story</b>	
		<p>Fiona Bruce's great grandfather, Frederick Charles Crouch, was a career soldier enlisting with the Royal Artillery in 1898. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in December 1914, but the fierce action of the battle of the Somme and at Passchendaele took its toll. In January 1917 he was hospitalised with shellshock, finally being declared fit for service again nine months later. Within weeks he was back at the front, where, on 2 November, a shell landed near him. While everyone around him ducked, he didn't and was killed by a shrapnel wound.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Ian Hislop</b> ..... <b>Satiricist</b>		
		<p>David Hislop, grandfather of Ian, lived in Ayr before joining the Highland Light Infantry. In the latter days of the war they advanced on the German line in the Targelle Ravine, but in fog got detached from the rest of the army. Cut-off they had to retreat back to their starting positions, giving up all the land gained and losing 350 men, half the regiment. They liberated Clary, a small French village which remembers the men today with a square called Place des Ecosais (Place of the Scotsmen). He ultimately survived the war and returned to Ayr to become a teacher.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Alan Carr</b> ..... <b>Comedian</b>		
		<p>Alan Carr's great grandfather, Henry Carter, enlisted towards the end of 1915 and joined the Camberwell Artillery, part of the 33rd battalion. However in September that year, before they departed for the Western Front, he deserted the army and fled with his family to Crayford. On the electoral roll he changed his name to Richard Mercer to avoid detection but continued to serve the war effort working at Vickers factory in Crayford making arms and weapons until the end of the war.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Hugh Dennis</b> ..... <b>Comedian</b>		
		<p>Both of Hugh Dennis' grandfathers fought in the first world war. Hubert Ron Dennis enlisted when he was 18 but was soon moved to an officer training camp in Cambridge returning to the front as a platoon commander in October 1918. He led an attack on the village of Futoy, where he was injured by a shell but survived to see the end of the war. Hugh Dennis' maternal grandfather, Godfrey Hinnels, joined up in 1916 and took part in some of the most bloody and famous battles including Arras, Passchendaele and a fierce defence of Wytschaete where over three-quarters of his unit died.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Alex Kingston</b> ..... <b>Actress</b>		
		<p>William Keevil was Alex Kingston's great grandfather and had been working as a portrait photographer before the outbreak of war. In February 1915 he joined the Royal Engineers where he worked as a sound-ranger, using cutting edge technology to record sound waves onto film from which they could analyse the positions of enemy guns. However he was injured while laying microphone wires during the Battle of Passchendaele and died on 7 August 1917.</p>	



# Routes to remembrance

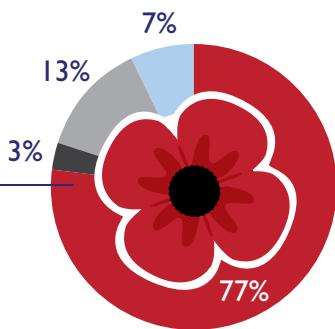
British Future followed up its research workshops by commissioning a nationally representative poll to find out which meanings of the centenary people agree and disagree about.





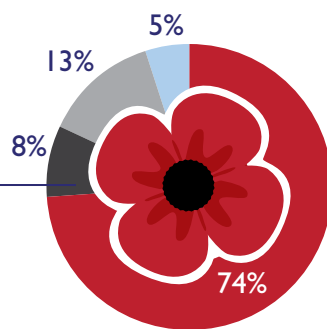
### Reconciliation

The centenary of the Great War is an important moment when former enemies should come together to remember – and value the reconciliation and friendship which helps us to understand each other better, from business links to sport and culture, in our more connected world.



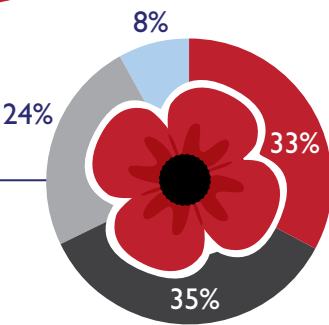
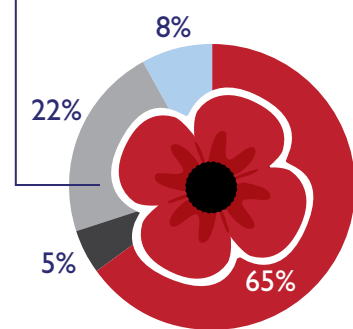
### Europe

Peace in Europe is fragile: we cannot afford to become enemies again and the centenary of the Great War is a reminder of the importance of why we cooperate with other European countries for peace and prosperity.



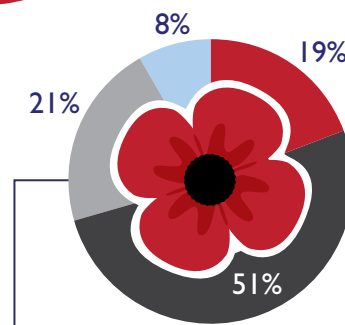
### Poetry

The tragedy of war generated some of the most important poetry and culture in Britain's history. The centenary is an important moment to make sure we know about those Great War poets, such as Rupert Brooke or Siegfried Sassoon, and how they were shaped by their experience of war.



### Victory

Instead of focussing on the pity of war and the loss of life, the central theme of the first world war commemoration should be that this was a just war that was important to Britain to fight and win.



### Futility

We should worry about the rush to commemorate the first world war as this may encourage war and nationalism, when this was a futile war of unimaginable slaughter.

This research was carried out by YouGov on 9 and 10 July 2013 with a representative group of 1,955 adults.

# Lamps go on all over the country

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It is often said that hindsight is 20:20, yet our perceptions of the first world war are often far-removed from the reality. Samantha Heywood explains how Imperial War Museums aim to shed unexpected light on the past – and the people who lived, and died, through it.

The image of Lord Kitchener, re-produced on the front cover of this publication, pointing directly at the viewer, exhorting him with his steadfast gaze, to join the fight, is perhaps the most iconic and recognisable poster of the first world war. It fits today's common perceptions of the war being one of huge and meaningless loss of life, one where millions of young men were commanded to join up, fight or be damned, by elderly, be-whiskered, and perhaps incompetent generals. Yet such hectoring posters were both rare and ineffective. Far better at enticing new recruits were the posters which featured images of young, cheery soldiers beckoning their civilian contemporaries to join them. Interestingly, Kitchener himself was reluctant for his image, which started out as a cover illustration by the cartoonist Alfred Leete for the magazine

London Opinion, to be used for recruitment purposes since he felt men should be joining up for the King.

So this iconic poster turns out not to have been a poster to begin with, nor iconic nor even as ubiquitous at the time as it is today. This may seem like a point of obscure detail. Yet it is the exploration and uncovering of such detail that can shed unexpected light on the past. Getting under the skin of the detail leads to more questions and serves to clarify meaning and widen perspectives. This expansion of perspectives is what we at Imperial War Museums (IWM) aim to achieve for the centenary of the first world war.

The Imperial War Museum was established during the war itself in 1917, not, "as a monument of military glory, but rather as a record of toil and sacrifice: as a place of



PHOTO:  
*Albert Baker  
(standing, right)  
with his parents  
George and  
Margaret and his  
siblings, Margaret  
Annie, Winifred,  
Constance and  
Eric, in 1914 in  
the garden of their  
home in Norbury,  
South London  
© Imperial War  
Museums*



study". From the outset our founders were determined to collect material that could illustrate the common experience of the war, and they did this by collecting items that recorded the individual experiences of the millions of men, women and children who took part in the war effort.

And so our collections began with the generosity of others in donating their precious personal possessions – letters, diaries, mementos, photographs – to the museum, each one representing something of great meaning to them and their family. They entrusted them in the hope that such modest yet unique items would engage future generations with the war. They do this by bringing us face-to-face with people not hugely different to ourselves, yet also somewhat unfamiliar too, the recognisable yet distant ancestors described earlier in this publication by Daniel Todman. We encounter their patriotism or confusion, their boredom and frustration, or their terror and courage. We come across their letters, pining for home, for their family or their lover, or boasting of their exploits and new-found independence, or complaining about their working conditions. We listen to descriptions of sharing tinned food with a comrade in a freezing, wet, shell hole, or of weeping over hands too chapped and painful to carry any more bedpans, or sharing a bedroll with a Cossack in the Galician snow.

This is the full variety of life and death during the first world war – a Babel of voices. But each one offers a way in to understanding the meaning of the war. By knowing the experience of one person it becomes more possible to contemplate and understand this war of unprecedented participation and industrialised killing and wounding of millions. It helps us to imagine the impact of the war on bodies and souls, on the physical and moral landscape, and so, perhaps, to find our way to an understanding of how it changed attitudes and feelings about all war. Where war had been an acceptable, if last, resort for states to achieve or defend their political aims, the impact of the first world war began to challenge the legitimacy of war as the continuation of politics by other means.

There are still many more first world war stories out there to be re-discovered and shared. Whether they are commonplace or



rare, each one has the potential to connect someone today with someone then. With effort and ingenuity, stories of hitherto marginalised experiences can be brought back into our cumulative consciousness. The Whose Remembrance? project, led by IWM in 2012, has already gone some way in mapping such histories through the dedicated research of academic and community historians alike. As during and after the war itself, voices of opposition and dissent should also play a part in the centenary. British Future's findings demonstrate that there is an appetite to understand why our ancestors urged with such conviction that their war be remembered but not repeated.

This is what the centenary offers us. It offers us the opportunity to find, explore and share the experiences of these people for ourselves, to find meaning in them that makes sense to us today, living in the early twenty-first century. Stating the obvious, this is the first major anniversary of the first world war to take place without any living veterans or eyewitnesses. They are no longer here to offer us new insights into their memories and personal reflections. So what can we offer to their memory? It is only the people who are alive today who can make the centenary into an anniversary with meaning. And it is only us who can decide if we think the anniversary is something to celebrate, mourn, dismiss or commemorate.

*Samantha Heywood is director of public programmes at IWM (Imperial War Museums)*

PHOTO:  
*Lottie Meade who died of TNT poisoning contracted on duty. Lottie's husband, Frederick, responded to an appeal from the Imperial War Museum to send in photographs of men and women who had served during the war. The Museum had established a Women's War Work Committee in 1917 to collect items showing the contribution of women to the war effort.*  
© Imperial War Museums

# Out of the trenches: Getting close to the first world war

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IWM is playing a leading role in the centenary through the following initiatives and projects.

## ► First World War Centenary Partnership

The First World War Centenary Partnership, established and led by IWM since 2010, will present a programme of cultural events and activities to commemorate the centenary of the first world war. These events and activities are being organised by not-for-profit cultural and educational groups, large and small, to mark the centenary in a way that is meaningful to them. This collective international programme, in addition to the large-scale national events, will enable millions of people to discover and commemorate the first world war.

The Partnership is a growing network of over 1,400 local, regional, national and international members from across 28 countries including the UK, Australia, America, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Serbia, South Africa, Slovenia, Turkey and many others.

A survey of the First World War Partnership conducted by IWM in May 2013 showed that out of the 37% of members who responded, 78% are planning an event or events for the centenary, 64% of respondents are planning events with all ages in mind and 15% of those who responded are planning specifically for schools, further and higher education.

In autumn this year, IWM will launch the Partnership's programme with an online centenary cultural events calendar on 1914.org. This website will become the central hub for all the Partnership's centenary activities showcasing how people can get involved and mark the centenary.

Cultural and educational not-for-profit organisations developing activities and events for the centenary are eligible for membership.

*For more information about the First World War Centenary Partnership visit [www.1914.org](http://www.1914.org)*

PHOTO:  
*IWM North  
in Salford Quays*  
© Imperial War  
Museums





### ► Lives of the First World War

This innovative digital platform will launch in early 2014 and will enable people to find, explore and build the life stories of the millions of men and women who served in uniform and worked on the home front. By encouraging individuals and communities world-wide to link together existing records from museums, libraries and archives and to add family stories, Lives of the First World War will grow over the course of the Centenary into the definitive digital memorial to more than 8 million men and women from across Britain and the Commonwealth – a significant digital legacy for future generations.

*For more information and to get involved visit [www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org](http://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org)*

### ► Galleries and Exhibitions

IWM will open new ground-breaking First World War Galleries at IWM London in summer 2014, as part of a transformed museum. These immersive and interactive galleries will draw upon the latest historical analysis of

the war, enable IWM to display more of the exceptional collections and tell the stories of those who lived, died, fought and survived.

IWM North will open the largest exhibition ever created to explore the region's role in the First World War, in April 2014. This exhibition will reveal extraordinary and surprising personal stories and objects that have never been on public display before.

### ► Whose Remembrance?

Whose Remembrance? was IWM's first Arts and Humanities Research Council-supported research project. Funded under the Connected Communities scheme, this scoping study sought to establish the current level of research into the role and experience of colonial troops in the two world wars, and how far there is an awareness today of that story, especially among the communities for whom it is part of their heritage. To date a report has been made and several databases compiled – all of which can be seen on the IWM Research pages at [iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk). In addition a short film – also called Whose Remembrance? – was produced and this will be available from autumn 2013.

PHOTO:  
IWM London  
© Imperial War  
Museums



# First world war bookshelf



The general reader can choose from thousands of books published on the war. Perhaps the first question for 2014 is why the world went to war in 1914. Cambridge professor Christopher Clark's *The Sleepwalkers* plots a pacy path through the enormous complexity of Balkan tensions, imperial chess games and personal rivalries across the capitals of Europe.

For the war as a whole, Hew Strachan's *The First World War* offers an admirably concise narrative, particularly capturing how the fast-moving drama of the early months of the war contrasts with the familiar trench stalemate to follow, while Niall Ferguson's collection of fascinating essays, *The Pity of War*, concludes that the war was a tragic blunder. Gary Sheffield's *Forgotten Victory* puts the case that it was right for Britain to fight in 1914, and seeks to debunk the idea of 'lions led by donkeys'. *To End all Wars* by Adam Hochschild offers compelling personal stories, for example how the Pankhurst family was split by disagreements over the war, but also how Sir John French, commander of the British Expeditionary Force, maintained a close personal relationship with his pacifist sister.

Daniel Todman's *The Great War: Myth and Memory* interrogates how the war's

meaning has been contested over the decades since it was fought. One example is how Vera Brittain's *Testament to Youth*, first published in 1933, sold 120,000 with its description of how the Great War changed a generation. Its pacifist viewpoint fell out of fashion after the second world war, but it was revived as a feminist classic in the 1970s and 1980s, with a major film being released in 2014.

*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) maintains a popular status as the first Great War classic, supplemented much more recently by Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong* (1994) and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy. Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful* (2004) enables younger readers to debate themes of courage, cowardice and pacifism. On the stage, RC Sherriff's classic *Journeys End* endures, though its plot and characters have now become staples of wartime fiction since. Can novelists find new aspects to illuminate during the centenary? Granta's *Best of Young British Novelists 2013* collection included an extract from Kamila Shamsie on the experience of Indian troops convalescing in the Brighton Pavilion. Her novel *A God in Every Stone* will be published by Bloomsbury in April 2014.

*Which books have you learnt most from? Share your recommendations at #WW1books*

# Polling data

Correct answers in red

## Whose assassination sparked the first world war?

	%
Franz Ferdinand	48
Don't know	34
Leopold Wilhelm	5
Wilhelm II	4
Lord Kitchener	3
Nicholas II	3
Abraham Lincoln	2
Kaiser Chiefs	1

## Ally or enemy?

	BRITAIN'S ALLY	BRITAIN'S ENEMY	NEITHER AN ENEMY NOR AN ALLY	DON'T KNOW
	%			
Austria-Hungary	15	42	9	33
Belgium	53	4	12	31
Bulgaria	7	13	20	60
France	71	4	6	19
Germany	3	81	2	14
Italy	21	30	13	36
Japan	10	29	27	34
Romania	9	11	20	61
Russia	34	21	11	33
Serbia	12	17	17	54
Turkey	10	27	16	47
USA	70	2	12	16

## Britain declared war on Germany in 1914 because of German troops entering which territory?

	%
Don't know	35
Poland	19
Belgium	13
France	10
Austria	8
The Rhineland	5
Czechoslovakia	4
Serbia	4
Russia	2

## Who was Prime Minister of Britain during the first world war?

BEGAN		ENDED	
	%		%
Don't know	38	Don't know	46
David Lloyd George	18	David Lloyd George	17
Neville Chamberlin	12	Neville Chamberlin	6
Herbert Asquith	9	Herbert Asquith	4
Winston Churchill	9	Winston Churchill	13
Clement Attlee	5	Clement Attlee	6
Stanley Baldwin	4	Stanley Baldwin	4
Herbert Gladstone	4	Herbert Gladstone	2
George Bernard Shaw	1	George Bernard Shaw	1
Margaret Thatcher	1	Margaret Thatcher	1

## Who was the leader of Germany during the first world war?

	%
Don't know	33
Kaiser Wilhelm II	32
Kaiser Wilhelm I	15
Adolf Hitler	11
Otto Von Bismarck	4
General Hindenburg	3
Franz Beckenbauer	1
Helmut Kohl	1
Angela Merkel	0

The first world war broke out in August 1914. Thinking about those men who took part during the first year of the war, do you think they were mainly volunteers or conscripts (compulsorily enlisted in the army)?

	%
The British men who went to war during 1914 were mostly volunteers	39
The British men who went to war during 1914 were mostly conscripts	27
A roughly equal number of volunteers and conscripts went to war in 1914	17
Don't know	16



During the first world war, when was conscription (compulsory enlistment in the army) introduced?

	%
Don't know	48
There was no conscription in the first world war	4
1913	3
1914	10
1915	19
1916	13
1917	2
1918	1
1919	0

At the beginning of the twentieth century, few people were allowed to vote. In what year do you think women were first entitled to vote in the UK?

	%
Incorrect answers	71
1918	7
Don't know	21

At what point during the first world war, if at all, do you think rationing was introduced in Britain?

	%
Don't know	43
There was no rationing in the first world war	25
1914	6
1915	11
1916	9
1917	4
1918	2
1919	1

### What year did the first world war start?

	%
Before 1910	1
1910	0
1911	1
1912	2
1913	1
1914	66
1915	1
1916	0
1917	1
1918	1
1919	1
1920	0
Later than 1920	4
Don't know	21

### What year did the first world war end?

	%
Before 1910	0
1910	0
1911	0
1912	0
1913	0
1914	1
1915	1
1916	1
1917	1
1918	56
1919	4
1920	0
Later than 1920	5
Don't know	31

### Which of the following battle took place during the first world war? Please tick all that apply

	%
Passchendaele	44
The Bulge	16
Bosworth Field	5
Waterloo	5
Bannockburn	1
None of the above	4
Don't know	32

## Roughly how many British and Commonwealth military personnel died during the first world war?

	%
Under 10,000	6
10,000–249,999	3
250,000–999,999	4
1,000,000–9,999,999	18
10,000,000 and Over	3
Don't know	66

## Have you ever visited your local war memorial?

	%
Yes, I have	59
No, I have not	30
Not applicable – I do not know where my local war memorial is	11

## Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

	%
My relatives fought in the first world war and I know exactly what they did	14
My relatives fought in the first world war but I'm unsure what they did	33
My relatives did not fight in the first world war	17
I'm not sure if my relatives fought in the first world war	37

## From which of the following countries do you think more than 1,000 troops came to fight for Britain and her allies during the first world war?

### Australia

	%
More than 1,000 troops did come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	47
More than 1,000 troops did NOT come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	4
Don't know	49

### Canada

	%
More than 1,000 troops did come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	44
More than 1,000 troops did NOT come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	4
Don't know	52

### India

	%
More than 1,000 troops did come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	44
More than 1,000 troops did NOT come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	4
Don't know	52



## Kenya

	%
More than 1,000 troops did come from this county to fight for Britain during the first world war	22
More than 1,000 troops did NOT come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	10
Don't know	68

## Turkey

	%
More than 1,000 troops did come from this county to fight for Britain during the first world war	9
More than 1,000 troops did NOT come from this country to fight for Britain during the first world war	19
Don't know	72

Polling was carried out by YouGov on 9 and 10 July 2013 and between 26–30 October 2012, with a representative sample of 1,955 and 2,998 UK adults respectively.

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Will 1914 matter in 2014? Nobody who experienced the war is still alive. Most of us struggle to recall more than the most basic facts about what happened and why. Yet, the first great global conflict remains a pivotal cultural reference point for understanding the last century and how it shaped the country we have become today.

Do Mention The War reports British Future's original research into what the public know and don't know about the first world war, and why they think next year's centenary will matter, and what they want it to be about. Drawing on public workshops in England, Scotland and Wales, and new national polling, the report reveals why most people think we should seize this chance to learn, and explores which meanings of the centenary people agree on and which ones we will need to argue out.

Samantha Heywood highlights Imperial War Museums' forthcoming projects around the first world war, including the Centenary Partnership of which British Future is a member, while

Baroness Warsi looks at the contribution made by soldiers from the Commonwealth and writes of her determination that it not be forgotten as we commemorate the 2014 centenary.

As Scotland votes for its future in 2014, Alex Massie asks how that impacts on its ability to reflect on its past, and Jo Tanner explores how the war changed the lives of those who stayed behind

Sunder Katwala discovers that men and women think about the centenary differently, and asks whether 2014 will challenge the dominant view of the war offered by the War Poets and Blackadder.

Meanwhile, the University of London's Dr Daniel Todman suggests that it is healthy for us to challenge the widely-held perceptions of the war and even to disagree about the routes into our understanding of this period.

With a year to go until the commemorations begin, Do Mention The War explores how ready we are.

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