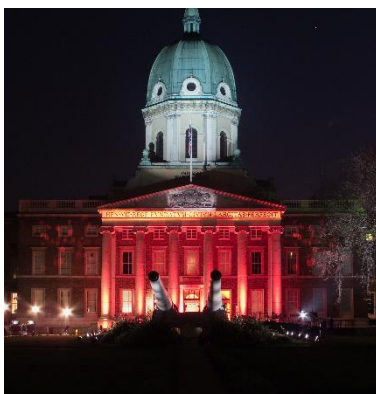




100 YEARS



IWM London Fact Sheet

The Imperial War Museum was established in 1917 as the First World War was still being fought. From the very beginning, its purpose was to record warfare as it was experienced by individuals. Our London museum tells the stories of people's experiences of conflict the First World War to conflicts today. IWM London explores how the history of modern conflict affects us all, from the front line to the home front. Exhibits range from objects of war to photographs and personal letters; they include film and sound recordings and some of the twentieth century's best-known paintings.

Brief history

- On 5 March 1917, the War Cabinet approved a proposal for the creation of a National War Museum to record the events still taking place in the First World War. Interest among the Dominion governments soon led to it being re-named the Imperial War Museum.
- 9 June 1920 the museum is opened at the Crystal Palace by King George V.
- In 1924 the Imperial War Museum moves to a location in South Kensington.
- 7 July 1936 the future King George VI re-opens the museum at its present home on Lambeth Road, South London on the central surviving part of the former Bethlem Royal Hospital site, the lunatic asylum popularly known as Bedlam
- In 1939, IWM begins moving its collections away from London, and closes from 1940 to 1946. Its remit is also expanded to include the Second World War.
- July 2014, IWM London re-opens after a major redevelopment designed to commemorate the Centenary of the First World War
- In 2017, IWM marks its Centenary. Since its establishment, people have entrusted IWM with their stories of war from 1917 to the present day, in the knowledge it will continue to share these stories with future generations. IWM has commemorated its 100 years through a centenary of stories from its rich collections across its five branches.

Did you know?

- Britain's army was so short of equipment after Dunkirk in 1940 that 18 of IWM's artillery pieces were returned to military service.
- The naval guns outside IWM London were fired in action during the Second World War. One is from HMS Ramillies, the other from HMS Resolution.
- Even today, the museum receives the occasional letter or package which has been redirected from the original Kensington office address printed in the ration book that first advertised IWM.
- IWM is also a major national art gallery, a national archive of written and audio visual resources, and a centre for research.
- When the Museum moved to its current home in 1936, it took the curators and a team of soldiers six weeks to move all the objects in.

- IWM has around 10 million objects in its collections, including documents and photos as well as the big things like tanks and aeroplanes. Only 1% of the objects in IWM's collections are on display.

Things to look out for

- Mounted stuffed **pig's head**. 'Tirpitz' the pig was seen swimming in the water after the sinking of the German light cruiser SMS Dresden off the Juan Fernandez Islands on 14 March 1915. A sailor on HMS *Glasgow* jumped overboard to save the animal and Tirpitz subsequently became a mascot on the *Glasgow*.
- Interwar period British 'Remembrance Day' **poppy**. The (Royal) British Legion ordered 9 million hand-made silk poppies and sold them on 11 November 1921. The poppies sold out almost immediately and that first ever 'Poppy Appeal' raised over £106,000; a considerable amount of money at the time. This was used to help war veterans with employment and housing. The following year, the Poppy Factory was set up to employ disabled ex-Servicemen, which produces millions of poppies annually.
- Model of the Royal Navy destroyer **HMS Hercules**, which was displayed by IWM in the Naval Gallery until a German bomb hit the museum on 31 January 1941. The bomb blast shattered the model's glass showcase, and turned the ship's masts and other fittings into a mass of tangled wreckage. The model was crated and consigned to storage. It remained there until 2010, when IWM began developing its new First World War Galleries. The model was painstakingly restored and exhibited to tell the story of Britain's pre-war maritime and naval power.
- The **Battle of the Somme film**, filmed and first released in 1916. Inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register for the preservation of global documentary heritage, the film remains an important early example of propaganda as well as remaining a vital historical record of the early stages of the battle. Footage from the film is now synonymous with the First World War and is frequently used to illustrate documentaries covering the conflict. While small portions of the film feature staged reconstructions, the vast majority is authentic.
- Steve McQueen's **Queen and Country** – a set of 155 sheets of stamps, each commemorating a soldier who lost their life in the Iraq War. It commemorates the individual British service personnel who died during the war, but also questions ideas of sacrifice, community and nationhood. McQueen was frustrated by the limited opportunities to film in Basra, Iraq, and sought alternative means to respond to the conflict. He hoped that the portraits would ultimately be issued as postage stamps.
- Tank crew **anti-splinter face mask**. This medieval looking chain mail and leather mask belonged to Captain J Gordon Hassell and was worn by him when his Tank 'Harrier' went into action during the 1917 fighting at Cambrai. The mask was intended to offer protection to tank crews from the effects of 'splash' - flakes of white hot metal splintering off inside the tank's armour due to rifle and machine-gun fire.

Ends

IWM London

IWM London tells the stories of those whose lives have been shaped by war through the depth, breadth and impact of our Galleries, displays and events. Explore the [First World War Galleries](#) and iconic Atrium; find out what life was like at home during the Second World War in [A Family in Wartime](#); delve into the world of espionage in [Secret War](#); visit our [Holocaust Exhibition](#); discover stories of bravery in [The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes](#) or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions.

Open Daily: 10am – 6pm. Last entry 30 minutes before closing. (Closed 24 - 26 December). Free Admission
IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ.

T: 020 7416 5000

iwm.org.uk / @I_W_M / www.facebook.com/iwm.london

IWM

IWM (Imperial War Museums) tells the story of people who have lived, fought and died in conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth since the First World War.

Our unique Collections, made up of the everyday and the exceptional, reveal stories of people, places, ideas and events. Using these, we tell vivid personal stories and create powerful physical experiences across our five museums that reflect the realities of war as both a destructive and creative force. We challenge people to look at conflict from different perspectives, enriching their understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war and its impact on people's lives.

IWM's five branches which attract over 2 million visitors each year are **IWM London**, IWM's flagship branch that recently transformed with new, permanent and free First World War Galleries alongside new displays across the iconic Atrium to mark the Centenary of the First World War; **IWM North**, housed in an iconic award-winning building designed by Daniel Libeskind; **IWM Duxford**, a world renowned aviation museum and Britain's best preserved wartime airfield; **Churchill War Rooms**, housed in Churchill's secret headquarters below Whitehall; and the Second World War cruiser **HMS Belfast**.

IWM Centenary

2017 marks Imperial War Museums (IWM) centenary. IWM was established while the First World War was still being fought. Since its establishment people have entrusted IWM with their stories of war from 1917 to the present day, in the knowledge it will continue to share these stories with future generations. IWM will commemorate its 100 years through a centenary of stories from its rich collections across its five branches (IWM London, IWM North, IWM Duxford, Churchill War Rooms and HMS Belfast).



100 YEARS

First World War Centenary

2014 - 2018 marks the centenary of the First World War, a landmark anniversary for Britain and the world. IWM is marking the centenary by leading a vibrant, four year programme of cultural activities across the world. For more information visit www.1914.org

