



War Story: Afghanistan 2014

23 October – 6 September 2015

PRESS VIEW – 23 October, 9 – 10.30am

This year marks the end of a 13 year period where British troops have been in a combat role in Afghanistan. Through the little known personal stories of those on the ground, IWM London's new display *War Story: Afghanistan 2014* provides a snapshot of this pivotal point in the history of Afghanistan. The voices and experiences of not only the British troops, but also members of the Afghan National Security Forces and UK government and NGO workers will give visitors an insight into the transition at this time in terms of security and development, highlighting how the future of Afghanistan is delicately poised.

The display is made up entirely of new objects, photographs, film and video interviews that have never been seen before, including a beadwork lamp made by Afghan prisoners as part of training workshops to develop their skills for future employment after their release, as well as an Afghan dress and trousers to highlight the traditional embroidery skills of Afghanistan.

All of the new objects were collected by IWM staff on a series of collecting expeditions to Afghanistan between 2012 and 2014. Given unprecedented access by the Ministry of Defence, this is the first time since the First World War that IWM teams have visited an active theatre of conflict.

Visitors will learn about the current role of British forces, from their mentoring and training of the Afghan National Security Forces to their work in reconstruction as well as their reflections on the cost and legacy of the war, which has seen the deaths of over 450 British service personnel. They will also discover the role the British military, UK government and NGOs have in the socio-economic and political development of Afghanistan. Touching on the work they do in areas such as infrastructure, education and the rule of law, the display will highlight how development work is set to continue beyond the withdrawal of British and international combat troops in 2014.

Working with the Ministry of Defence, IWM's *War Story* project started in 2009, offering British personnel an opportunity to record their role and preserve their personal accounts and experiences from Afghanistan in IWM's unrivalled national collections for future generations.

Since the project began, over 1,800 soldiers and family members have registered to share their stories and there are already over 70 interviews in IWM's sound archive and over 1,000 objects, photos and films from the conflict have become part of IWM's collections. Objects on display in IWM London's Atrium (close by to the display) which were collected through the *War Story* project include a Desert Hawk drone displayed opposite a Taliban motorbike to show contrasting surveillance technologies, a suicide bomber's vest and a Harrier GR9.

Diane Lees, Director-General of IWM says "IWM was established almost 100 years ago to collect and record stories of war, and this display shows more than ever how we are continuing to do this today. The dramatic images, first-hand accounts and unique objects collected these last few years will give visitors to IWM London a glimpse into the situation in Afghanistan, in this critical year in its history."

Lord Astor of Hever, the Defence Minister responsible for commemorative and heritage matters says: "The MOD is proud to support the Imperial War Museum's *War Story* project. The exhibitions allow the British military's experiences in Afghanistan to be chronicled and shown to the public in a unique, insightful way. The focus on the human element – the stories of the men and women, both military and civilian, who have been involved in the campaign – provides a lens through which to view Britain's involvement in Afghanistan that doesn't exist anywhere else. These are stories that our children and grandchildren should hear, and the IWM's exhibitions allow that to happen".

Evening Event: Why Soldiers Fight?

Wed 19 November 2014, 7pm – 9.30pm

The British soldier serving in 2014, with their state of the art equipment, looks very different to the volunteer 'Tommy' of the First World War. But are today's soldiers so different from those who served in 1914?

Join Nick Childs, World Affairs Correspondent for BBC News, as he chairs a discussion between IWM Curator Laura Clouting, Professor Anthony King and serving soldier Lieutenant Colonel Alex Turner to explore 'why soldiers fight.'

– Ends –

For further information please contact:

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- Charlotte Sluter, Press Officer on 020 7416 5420 / csluter@iwm.org.uk

Images: Available to download at

- For images go to <http://press.iwm.org.uk>
- Username – warstory
- Password – IWM/press

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Notes to Editors

IWM London

IWM London - IWM's flagship branch - tells the stories of those whose lives have been shaped by war through the depth, breadth and impact of our Galleries, displays and events. Visit our brand new First World War Galleries featuring over 1,300 objects from IWM's collections, explore 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 award-winning [Holocaust Exhibition](#); discover stories of bravery in [The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes](#); see work by some of Britain's most significant 20th Century artists in our [art galleries](#) or take in our latest major temporary exhibitions. Our family learning sessions and events encourage debate and challenge people's perceptions of war.

Open daily from 10am – 6pm (except 24 - 26 December). IWM London, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ.
T: 020 7416 5000 E: mail@iwm.org.uk / 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 attract over 2 million visitors each year. [IWM London](#), our flagship branch, marks the Centenary of the First World War with new permanent First World War Galleries and a new Atrium with iconic large object displays. Our other branches are [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](#).