



Reappraising the First World War seminar series programme

The War in British Public Memory

Thursday 9 September 2010

Chair: Dr William Philpott, Department of War Studies, Kings College London

1 Roger Smither, Research Associate, IWM

The First World War in film and television

A brief three-part survey over the past 60 years, covering feature films, television documentaries and TV drama. Although never quite as popular as the Second, the First World War is a subject which evidently strikes a chord with audiences, and so one with which producers and commissioning editors are willing to engage. As reflected in feature film, the First World War has little to do with the practicalities of land warfare, being more typically concerned with fighter pilots, spies and more fantastic participants; trenches feature as the background for psychological and social stories as often as for combat. Television documentary, from BBC2's *The Great War* in 1964 through to the more recent crop of archaeological and family history-based explorations, has made more considered efforts to engage with serious military history, in several series and individual programmes that have also reflected changing fashions within the medium and the evolving possibilities for interpretation offered by new technology. The War is also occasionally represented in TV drama and comedy, but in this genre, perhaps to an even greater extent than feature films, the programmes' view of the war has varied little from the 'blood and futility' stereotype: *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) casts a long shadow.

2 Roger Tolson, Head of Collections, IWM

Artistic responses to the First World War

3 Professor Hew Strachan, Chichele Professor of History of War, Oxford University

The Channel Four series: The First World War

Mourning and commemoration

Thursday 30 September 2010

Chair: Dr William Philpott, Department of War Studies, Kings College London

Summaries of presentations

1 Jane Furlong, Section Head, Exhibits, IWM

Commemoration of the First World War in the UK

The UK has a long tradition of remembrance and commemoration, one that has evolved for over a thousand years. There are an estimated 100,000 war memorials in the UK and of these the most numerous are those for the FWW. This paper will explore how commemoration of the First World War has evolved from the point when the first memorial of the war was erected through to the present day. It is a multi-faceted area of study so I will concentrate on a just a few key areas, namely who is commemorated and how, what informed the commemorative process and where the memorials are located. I will also touch on peace memorials as it is an area that began to gain prominence after the First World War.

2 Phil Dutton, Curator, Exhibits Section, IWM

'The Poet's Brother' or 'a death in the family': the experience of mourning & commemoration in microcosm

This short talk looks at the circumstances of the death of Lieutenant Hamo Sassoon on active service in 1915 and the impact and consequences of this event for his mother Theresa Sassoon and older brother, Siegfried. The paper examines the artistic responses to Hamo's loss in Siegfried Sassoon's subsequent writing, and briefly touches on Mrs Theresa Sassoon's desperate search for meaning and consolation via the agencies of spiritualism.

3 Stuart Halifax, doctoral student at The Queen's College, Oxford writing his thesis on Essex and the Great War

War memorials and local memory of the Great War in Britain

War memorials and commemoration are most Britons' first points of contact with the First World War. Local commemoration is said to be the site for the telling of local histories of the war. I will argue that rather than representing a local story, war memorials reflect only local mourning; they were designed to honour the war dead and tend now to focus attention only on those losses, rather than telling a local history of the war. Looking at how the war is commemorated at the familial, local, and national levels we can see that the war dead occupy a special place of honour in each of them. This focus means that collective personal loss is the prime message of memorials, although many also tell the national meaning of the war in broad terms as a fight for freedom, democracy and justice. These were continuations of the themes emphasised in wartime commemorative efforts in order to keep the war in civilians' minds and steel their resolve against increasing sacrifices at the front and at home. The wartime focus on the sacrifices of servicemen and the war dead aimed to maintain home front morale as they faced growing hardships and anxiety. Transferred into post-war commemoration, this focus saw those home front experiences virtually disappear from public memory. The civilians who lived through the war at home focused again on the war dead when they came to commemorate it, leaving out reference to their own war experiences and often those of the men who returned. This absence means that the local war story is told by memorials in terms loss and mourning, rather than the general wartime experiences of the local population.

The geo-political impact of the First World War

Thursday 4 November 2010

Chair: Dr William Philpott, Department of War Studies, Kings College London

Summaries of presentations

1. Terry Charman, Senior Historian, Imperial War Museum

America and the First World War: an overview

In the preliminary work on the redevelopment of the First World War Galleries, one thing has particularly struck the research team. And that is the almost complete lack of any American involvement during the Crisis of July and August 1914. For the first thirty-two months of the First World War, the United States under President Woodrow Wilson remained neutral. Unlike Franklin D Roosevelt in September 1939, Wilson called on his fellow countrymen to be neutral in thought as well as in deed. A few months later he announced that there was such a thing as being "Too Proud to Fight." But when war was finally declared in April 1917, Wilson now told Americans that their country was "privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured." And, in making "the world safe for democracy", in 200 days of combat, 50,300 "doughboys" died in action, a further 198,059 were wounded. 62,668 American soldiers died of disease, 4,503 died in accidents and nearly a thousand took their own lives. And more than 41,000 of General Pershing's men were victims of shell shock.

The talk will begin by setting the scene in Washington when war broke out and will then go on to outline the period of America's neutrality, examine Wilson's own personality and the still current myth that it was the sinking of the "Lusitania" in May 1915 that brought America into the war. The declaration of war and its effect on the American home front will be featured, and another myth examined and demolished: that American soldiers actually won the First World War. A brief account of Wilson's insistence on America being an "Associate" power rather than a fully-fledged ally and his own views on a putative Special Relationship between America and Britain will conclude the talk. Throughout the talk there will be bibliographical references to published works of scholarship held by the Museum's library.

2. Professor David Stevenson, London School of Economics and Political Science

The European Allies' War Effort and the Geopolitical Impact of the First World War

Professor Stevenson will highlight some of the conclusions from his forthcoming book, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*. This book focuses on the reasons for the Allied-American victory and for the Central Powers' defeat, but it leads into a number of issues bearing on the war's geopolitical impact:

(i) resourcing: how armaments were manufactured, how the populations were fed, and how the war effort was financed. Among the points to emphasise is the extraordinary productivity of industry in Britain, France, and Italy by 1918, despite shortages of labour. Britain and France probably used female labour more intensively than Germany did. But they suffered serious shortages of oil in 1917, of food in the winter of 1917-18, and of coal in the summer of 1918. Finance was less of an issue, though by the end of 1918 the capacity of the US to act as a financial backstop for the Allies was nearing its limit.

(ii) military manpower: among the points here are the very serious shortages in the British and French armies in 1918 and the growing importance of the imperial contribution: India for the British and West Africa for the French.

(iii) transportation and logistics: during 1918, the Italian and French railway networks came under serious

strain. In contrast the Allies' shipping situation improved, despite continuing heavy losses. The key was less new building than much more efficient use of the existing tonnage.

3. Dr Alexander Watson, Cambridge University

The Geopolitical Impact of the First World War: the Central Powers

This presentation will examine the momentous impact of the First World War on the lands of Imperial Germany and the Habsburg Empire. It will illustrate the drastic redrawing of political boundaries which came about in the wake of their defeat, and it will argue that the war initiated a decades-long 'continuum of crisis' in this region. The paper will focus on the social and cultural experience of the war for the peoples of the Central Powers. It will outline their enormous suffering: between 1914-18, the Habsburg and Hohenzollern peoples were subjected to invasions, unimaginable deprivation and horrendous violence. The strain of fighting a 'total war' resulted in the growth of new extreme forms of nationalism, racial profiling and greatly exacerbated ethnic tensions. It also undermined state legitimacy, encouraged the spread of ideologies offering radical alternative modes of government, and, ultimately, led to power vacuums, revolutions and civil wars. The legacy of these wartime experiences was disastrous for Central Europe. The paper will contend that they left not only economic impoverishment but also festering grievances, racial tensions and an enduring lack of political stability that facilitated the rise of authoritarianism in the region and contributed to subsequent decades' wars and genocide.

Material culture and battlefield archaeology

Friday 10 December 2010

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of presentations

1. Paul Cornish, Senior Curator, IWM

The Trench Knife as Material Culture

Trench knives and clubs have long held a fascination for students of the First World War, and of trench warfare in particular. Generally their use has been interpreted as a return to more primitive forms of warfare – as an embodiment of the 'horror' of 'The Trenches'.

However, research that Paul Cornish has recently made into the procurement and use of knives and daggers suggests that there is far more to be learned from these weapons of close combat – especially when we view them as pieces of material culture, with which human beings interact.

First, despite the fact that such an investigation must do battle with inconsistencies of evidence, we should attempt to analyse what they can tell us about the requirement, or urge, to engage in hand-to-hand combat.

Secondly, we should be aware that different armies approached the issue and use of knives and daggers in different ways. For example, reactions in Britain to the use of trench knives were very different of those of the French – who became their most enthusiastic users. Furthermore, in the German and Italian armies, knives took on certain symbolic attributes; which not only influenced their wartime role, but which were perpetuated and, indeed, celebrated in the totalitarian regimes which arose in inter-war era.

2. Dr Nick Saunders, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Bristol

Material Culture and Conflict

Over the past ten years, significant advances have been made in the study of the material culture of 20th-Century Conflict, most notably of the First World War. Objects that were previously ignored have, through archaeology and anthropology, begun to tell their stories for the first time in almost a century. As the First World War is no longer a subject investigated only by military historians, other specialists have added new perspectives and understandings by using multidisciplinary approaches that seek to analyze the vast material record left by the world's first global war. The study of trench art (3-D items often made from the recycled debris of war) has shown how people's wartime lives and experiences can be locked up in evocative objects and how these can affect subsequent generations. Modern studies of battlefield landscapes combine computer technology with aerial and satellite images to reveal the extraordinary (and often enduring) effects of industrialized conflict on the natural world. Studies of souvenirs and mementos, postcards, and memorials have joined new ideas about heritage and tourism to revolutionize our understandings of the Great War and its many legacies, along the old Western Front, but also elsewhere, in Italy, Austria, the Middle East and beyond. The powerful combination of archaeology and anthropology is opening up vast new horizons for our understanding of a war which we once thought we knew so well.

3. Alastair Fraser, Durham University

Archaeology and the Great War: an overview and justification

Much of what we see on the old Western Front is not in fact the war; it is the response of the survivors to that war in many and varied forms. The war, if it can be said to still exist in any sense, is under the fields and woods of Northern France and Flanders. The excavation of these remains gives us new evidence that is even more important now in the absence of living witnesses.

Practical justification for the use of archaeology on the battlefields can be defined in four ways which I will discuss briefly; investigation and recording ahead of development; detection and clearance of explosives and chemical weapons; aiding the interpretation, consolidation and recording of publically accessible sites; recovery and identification of human remains.

In a broader sense the archaeology of the Great War can widen national perspectives. There is a tendency amongst Anglophone historians to concentrate on one battle or unit and the use of French or German sources is often peripheral. Archaeological investigation requires the use of evidence from all available sources, regardless of nationality, to be able to tell the story of the site before, during and after the war.

Command on the Western Front

Wednesday 9 February 2011

Chair: Dr William Philpott, Department of War Studies, King's College London

Summaries of presentations

1. Tony Vines, King's College London

Sir Douglas Haig: the military manager?

It is widely accepted by military historians that warfare was revolutionised between 1914 and 1918. The British Army on the Western Front can rightly claim to be one of the principal agents of this change, because it successfully deployed 'three dimensional' warfare – through the combined deployment of artillery, mechanised armour and aircraft – to break the main Germany Army on the Hindenburg Line in 1918. However, what is not known is the role played in this process by Sir Douglas Haig, the Army's Commander-in-Chief between 1916 and 1919. Put simply, did it occur despite Haig, or did it occur because of him? The contention here is that this transformation of warfare, particularly as far as the British Army is concerned, was far more complex than generally recognised. Not only did the Army's conduct of warfare change, but also its conception of warfare and its means of control. In addition, this transformation is in evidence at the political, strategic, operational, tactical and social levels of Army organisation. Within this broader context, captured by a new analytical tool The Dynamic Framework, it will be argued it was Haig's role as a military manager that helped facilitate this process. Furthermore, it will be reasoned that Haig's management contribution can be defined in terms that Henri Fayol, the father of modern management theory, proposed in July 1916.¹ Namely in terms of planning, organisation, command, coordination and control. No thorough and scholarly assessment of Haig's performance as a 'military manager' as opposed to a 'heroic leader' has been made before.² The short discussion today will attempt to briefly introduce these concepts as a way of stimulating debate in the Imperial War Museum's reappraisal of the First World War.

2. Dr Simon Robbins, Senior Archivist, Imperial War Museum

Sir Henry (later General Lord) Horne

Amongst the general public one of the most pervasive myths of the First World War remains that of the Generals as "Butchers and Bunglers" who led their stoic soldiers to disastrous defeat. This image of "Lions led by Donkeys" has been hard to kill off. Henry Horne provides a case study of a successful First World War general:

Horne's rise within the high command was as a protégé of Sir Douglas Haig and Sir William Robertson, who appreciated and employed his various talents, earmarking him for rapid promotion.

Horne was a 'thruster' who got things done and had the managerial skills to help run the enormous organisation of the BEF despite having never been to Staff College. The Battle of the Somme had re-emphasised the need to train the troops. The collapse in tactical expertise is often ignored in assessing the achievements of the British Army during the First World War. Like other senior commanders, Horne spent much of his time supervising training to reverse this trend. One of the major charges levelled at British generals on the Western Front is that they were hostile to innovation and new technology. Horne's career does not support this. Taking part in the first use of gas by the British at Loos (September 1915) and of tanks at Flers on the Somme (September 1916), Horne advocated the use of weapons such as the machine gun. But his greatest contribution as an innovator was in developing the artillery's fire power, notably the creeping barrage, to break down the formidable German defences.

¹ Henri Fayol, *General and Industrial Management*, trans. Constance Storrs (London Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd, 1961).

² Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

By 1917-18 Horne was a master of the set-piece attack employing an effective all-arms doctrine under the umbrella of the artillery's fire-power to break through the German defences in a series of inter-linked steps, which would make possible the next advance. The career of Horne demonstrates that the British high command was able to analyse the extremely complex problems facing them on the Western Front and to adopt the new ideas and techniques required to achieve operational success, and in doing so laid the foundations not only for victory but also for modern warfare.

3. Matthew Brosnan, Historian, Imperial War Museum North

A Command Case Study: 56th (London) Division on 1 July 1916

The term 'command' is synonymous with high-ranking generals controlling grand strategy and directing the military operations of whole armies over battlefields. But command also refers to a chain of generals, officers and commanders running right down to a Lance-Corporal commanding a Section of only five men. Analysis of the attack of the 56th London Division at Gommecourt on 1 July 1916 helps to provide insight into the operational and tactical levels of command in the British Expeditionary Force at a key transitional point in the war on the Western Front.

56th Division's attack at Gommecourt was part of an operation to divert German resources from the British attack at Serre, a few miles to the south. It was executed with determination, with 56th Division managing to break into the formidable German system. But after the attackers became increasingly isolated and sustained numerous casualties, the survivors were forced back. The attack at Serre also failed.

This tragic incident demonstrated the bravery, fighting ability and low level leadership of 56th Division's infantry, but also the inexperience evident throughout the BEF. The prosecution of a diversionary operation against a formidable position was a highly questionable command decision. British artillery was unable to neutralise German artillery fire, partly as a result of inexperience. 56th Division performed admirably in a near impossible situation, but learnt harsh lessons that it was to put into practice in subsequent attacks. This was largely true of the BEF as a whole.

Germany and the First World War

Wednesday 16 March 2011

Chair: Dr William Philpott, Department of War Studies, King's College London

Summaries of presentations

1. Tony Cowan, University of Liverpool

Dynamic Equilibrium: the Introduction of New German Defensive Tactics as a Case Study of Change on the Western Front

The Western Front is commonly perceived as largely static, and it is true that for most of the war there was little movement. However modern research shows that much technological, organisational and tactical change was going on behind the scenes. The combined effect of this change has been described as the 'dynamic equilibrium' of the Western Front.

This talk looks at the introduction of new German tactics in spring 1917 as a case study of the dynamic equilibrium. Current historiography suggests that there was a culture of institutionalised innovation in the German army, which enabled it to develop and introduce the new tactics without much difficulty; that the tactics played a major role in defeating the Entente offensive of spring 1917; and that all this took place within the framework of superior German command techniques.

This paper re-examines this interpretation. It concludes that although the German army defeated the Allied offensive, introducing the new tactics was more difficult than the historiography suggests, and that Allied reaction to them – the dynamic equilibrium – caused the Germans increasing tactical problems later in 1917.

2. Dr Jonathan Boff, King's College London

The Battlefield Defeat of the German Army in 1918.

Germany suffered total defeat in 1918. One important aspect of this was the downfall of her army on the battlefields of the Western Front. What brought this about remains debated. This paper will review previous explanations which focus on Allied superiority in manpower or *matériel*, on the collapse of German morale, or on improvements in Allied tactical and/or operational method. Working from both British and German sources, it will present the view from 'both sides of the wire' and argue that the importance of some of these have been exaggerated and that none alone explains how the German army was brought to its knees. A more holistic approach is required. The roots of German battlefield defeat lie in a complex interaction of many factors. In particular, although it is true that British combat performance had improved, that of the Germans had also significantly deteriorated. This was partly the result of the attrition of earlier campaigns, but also reveals inherent weaknesses in the German military.

3. Dr Heather Jones, The London School of Economics and Political Science

The changing function of blockade 1918-1919.

The blockade of Germany is usually seen as instrumental in bringing the First World War to a close. However, the public perception of the blockade in Britain and Germany remains an under-researched aspect of the question, with most existing studies focusing upon the social and economic impact of the blockade upon food supplies and food distribution or upon the naval planning for the blockade, rather than upon how it was popularly understood at the time and the impact which its depiction had upon morale. This paper will consider the blockade's impact in terms of the propaganda wars of 1918 and 1919 and argue that the propaganda image of the blockade played a major role in both breaking the will of the German public to continue the conflict in 1918, and in changing British attitudes towards Germany in the wake of the Armistice in spring 1919.

Colonial Identities before, during and after the First World War

Wednesday 27 April 2011

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of presentations

1. Dr Santanu Das, Queen Mary, University of London

The Singing Sepoy: India, Empire and the First World War

Around 1.5 million Indians were involved in the First World War, including 900,000 combatants and 600,000 non-combatants. Coming largely from the peasant-warrior classes of North India, these men served in places as far-flung as France, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, East Africa, Egypt and the Far East. Yet, fighting for the empire at a time of nationalist uprisings, these soldiers have been doubly marginalized: they are often forgotten in the nationalist-elitist historiography in India as well as in the modern memory of the war which has remained largely Eurocentric.

Starting with fresh material from various archives in Europe and India – censored letters, original sound-recordings, photographs and diaries – as well as newspaper accounts, paintings, and literary representations by both British and Indian writers, I shall explore two lines of enquiry. First, how were these Indian *sepoys* remembered and represented in the British imagination of the time, what fantasies and anxieties did they generate, and how did their service interlock with the discourses around empire, race and war at the time? Second, how can we reconstruct the emotional history of the Indian *sepoy* as he encounters Europe, particularly Great Britain and the ‘Tommies’ for the first time, as well as the trauma of industrial warfare? This will be an interdisciplinary paper, recovering and analysing the Indian sepoy experience through a dialogue between historical, visual and literary material.

2. Nigel Steel, Principal Historian, Imperial War Museum

'In your hands, Australians': Australian national identity and the Australian War Memorial

Beginning with the Battle of the Cornflakes Packets, Nigel Steel will look first at the differences between Australian and British perceptions of national identity, and the reflection of these in the Australian War Memorial and Imperial War Museum. In Australia a sense of nationhood can be traced directly back to the history and experiences of the First World War. At Gallipoli and on the Western Front, Australian soldiers showed that they were world class warriors. They put Australia on the map. The Australian official historian, C E W Bean, saw this and became determined to incorporate the soldiers' effort and sacrifice on behalf of Australia into a 'war memorial museum'. Bean believed the unique characteristics of the Australian Imperial Force reflected the values of the pioneers who tamed the harsh landscape of Australia. The soldiers' skills formed part of the foundation of their nation. In the Australian War Memorial his visionary 'memorial museum' continues to make this link and show visitors how the roots of their Australian national identity lie in the events of 1914–18.

3. Lieutenant Colonel (retd) Christopher Pugsley, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

Gallipoli and New Zealand Identity

The commitment of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to New Zealand created a mythology that distracts us today from the more mundane but important issues that beset the New Zealand Government at the time. Casualty reporting, the treatment of wounded and public disquiet over their treatment, issues and manpower and reinforcement reminded the New Zealand authorities that war is a political act and that public perceptions would be reflected in the Ballot box. Congratulations by the King for the landings reinforced New Zealand's sense of being an effective junior partner in Empire, but this positive could be overturned by public perceptions that the boys they had sent to war were not being given the administrative support that the people expected. The Government realised that a national force, even when detached to be used in tactical and operational terms as the Empire thought fit, remained their responsibility. National administration went hand-in-hand with national identity, even if there was as yet not tactical responsibility. The implications of this underpin New

Zealand's contribution and performance in the First World War and saw the New Zealand Government expect a say in the political conduct of the war.

France at War

Wednesday 6 April 2011

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of presentations

1. Dr Jonathan Krause, King's College London

Mastering the tactics of the trenches

Trench warfare remains the single most defining characteristic of the First World War. As such, we should not be surprised to find that a significant amount of the historical research that has been done on the First World War focuses on describing and understanding this particular phenomenon and how the armies on the Western Front came to grips with it. While the British and, to a lesser extent, the German adaptations to trench warfare have received a great deal of scholarly attention (most notably within the 'learning curve' debate) there is very little in the way of comparable research on the French army. This paper will help to fill that gap by examining the origins of effective trench doctrine in the French army in 1915, thus setting the scene for the later developments of 1916 and onwards. Such developments, while heretofore ignored by the scholarly community, are crucial to understanding the development of tactics on the Western Front and help to re-write our current interpretation thereof.

2. Dr William Philpott, King's College London

The French High Command: A Genius for Modern War?

The question of command is one that preoccupies historians of the First World War. Examination of British command and commanders has not been paralleled by study of allied commanders. However both individually and collectively, close study of French high command suggest strong professional engagement with the challenges presented by the industrial battlefield and the need to adapt armies and doctrine to fighting an attritional war of liberation against Germany. This paper will introduce some of France's key commanders – Joffre, Foch, Pétain and Fayolle – and explain their role in developing appropriate operational methods for engaging in and winning modern war.

3. Dr Pierre Purseigle, University of Birmingham – unable to attend

Historians in the heat of the battle. Politics and controversy in the French historiography of the Great War

The French experience of the First World War has aroused significant interest within and outside academic circles since the 1990s. A heated controversy over the role and significance of the 1914–1918 'war culture' has, in the last ten years, pitted two schools of interpretation, emphasizing 'consent' on the one hand and 'coercion' on the other. This paper will first present the interpretations propounded by each group of historians and place this controversy into its cultural, intellectual and political contexts. It will then suggest how such a toxic fusion of academic and memorial politics has not only animated but hampered the progress of the historiography. It will suggest some of the ways in which historians of the French experience of the Great War

might move on and away from this controversy to renew our understanding of front-line and home-front politics in WWI France.

Britain, the First World War and sea power

Thursday 2 June 2011

Chair: Roderick Suddaby, Research Associate, Imperial War Museum

Summaries of presentations

1. Dr Matthew Seligmann, University of Northampton

The Anglo-German Naval Race: From Reality to Myth and Back Again

The naval competition that took place between Britain and Germany in the run up to the First World War has been subject to considerable scrutiny. For contemporaries, it was a source both of fascination and alarm. It inspired endless commentaries in the newspapers and periodicals of the period as well as a whole genre of invasion scare literature. After the war, as the archetypal modern armaments race, it attracted renewed attention for the supposed lessons that could be learnt from it. Equally, numerous historians, drawn by the many larger-than-life characters that played a part in it – e.g. Fisher, Tirpitz, Churchill, Kaiser Wilhelm II – have sought to narrate its course and explain its origins and development.

Despite or perhaps because of this extensive examination, there is remarkably little concurrence on this topic. Numerous details have been contested. For example, what part, if any, did battleships play in British naval calculations? Did Britain actually withdraw its forces from overseas to concentrate against a threat in home waters? If so, then against whom was this aimed? Was Germany Britain's main enemy or did France and Russia remain key factors in Admiralty planning?

If the details have been questioned, so, too, has the reality of the naval race itself. The competition caused by German shipbuilding, which had once seemed the self-evident leitmotiv of the Anglo-German antagonism, was reinterpreted by revisionist historians as a menace deliberately exaggerated by the Admiralty for political and budgetary advantage. The real aim of the naval leadership was not to counter Germany but to build a navy capable of confronting all comers anywhere across the globe. This is contested by a new cohort of naval historians. Interested in intelligence history, trade defence and strategic culture, they have given a new substance to the naval race.

This maze of interpretation, revisionism and re-evaluation will be the subject of this talk.

2. Professor Andrew Lambert, King's College London

The Second Battle of the Heligoland Bight: 17 November 1917

The last capital ship action in the North Sea has long been overlooked by historians. The tendency to focus on the U-boat war and the Western Front tends to under-play the offensive options open to the Grand Fleet after Jutland, and the vital role of heavy surface forces in degrading the performance of the U-boats before they could reach the Atlantic and the Western Approaches. This inconclusive action was designed to support a major offensive mine-laying campaign against the U-boats. In 1917 and 1918 German losses in minesweepers and U-boats were striking, subjecting those forces to a level of attrition that put them on a par with their army

colleagues in the trenches. The failure of the British plan led to a major shake up of staff work, and the next surface offensive operation was conducted by an aircraft carrier.

3. Dr Malcolm Llewellyn Jones, Naval Historical Branch

Sailors and Scientists against the U-boat, 1917-1918

This paper will open with a short account of a convoy action in which a U-boat was sunk. It will then briefly discuss the methods used by both U-boats and anti-submarine escort vessels and aircraft in locating and attacking U-boats together with value of convoy and the role of scientists in formulating the tactical methods of detecting and attacking submarines. It will conclude with an account of the asdic (now sonar) work done towards the end of WWI, which led into developments during the inter-war period.

Italy and the Balkans

Thursday 7 July 2011

Chair: Roderick Suddaby, Research Associate, Imperial War Museum

Summaries of presentations

1. Dr Marvin Benjamin Fried, LSE

The Final Stab at Glory: Austro-Hungarian Power Projection in the Balkans, 1914-1918

Despite renewed scholarly interest in war aims during the First World War, those of Austria-Hungary have so far been neglected. This presentation examines the efforts of the Monarchy's elite decision-makers to establish and achieve their war aims in the Balkans. It covers the decisive period of war aims formation (1914-1917) and focuses particularly on the leadership of Foreign Minister István Burián (1915-1916) and the forces which affected his decision-making.

The presentation will demonstrate that Austria-Hungary's most vital political, economic, and military interests principally lay in the Balkans, where the Monarchy's war aims were most aggressive and expansionist. Despite facing enormous pressure for radicalization from the annexationist General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf and the mostly non-annexationist Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza, the Foreign Ministry retained overarching decision-making authority in the war aims question. This stands in stark contrast to Germany, where military influence became predominant. Burián pursued coherent and consistent war aims aimed at expanding Austro-Hungarian power, prestige, influence, and territory in the Balkans. By emphasizing Austria-Hungary's pre-eminence there, its leaders incurred serious German and Bulgarian opposition.

Despite facing grave military setbacks and the risk of slipping into vassalage to Germany, until May 1917 the Monarchy's highest echelons refused to seriously entertain peace options until its Balkan war aims were met. Continued involvement in the First World War thus served a political purpose, and this will demonstrate that Austro-Hungarian war aims in the Balkans were among the underlying factors prolonging the world conflagration. The presentation will conclude by demonstrating a continued Austro-Hungarian interest in Balkan expansion right up to the closing stages of the war.

The presentation addresses one of the most significant gaps in the literature on Austria-Hungary. It does so by using formerly secret Austrian and Hungarian materials in Budapest, in addition to employing national and military archives in Austria, Hungary, Germany, the UK, and the United States.

2. Alan Wakefield, Section Head, Photograph Archive, Imperial War Museum

A Most Cosmopolitan Front: Defining features of the Salonika Campaign 1915-1918

The Salonika or Macedonian Campaign opened with the landing of British and French troops at the Greek port of Salonika in early 1915. At this time few Allied military or political leaders believed they were about to open a new front that would quickly involve 500,000 men. By late 1916, British, French, Italian, Russian, Serbian and Greek Nationalist forces faced troops from all four members of the Central Powers along a front stretching from the Adriatic coast of Albania to the mouth of the River Struma flowing into the Aegean. This paper outlines why the Allied commitment to the Balkans continued and grew after the limited aim of preventing Bulgaria from invading Serbia had failed. Also covered are a number of factors that can be said to have defined the way in which military operations were conducted during the Salonika Campaign.

3. Professor John Gooch, formerly University of Leeds

'Hypnotised by post-war political goals': Italy and Albania 1914-1918

In July 1914, Albania was on Italy's list of areas of potential imperial expansion. Economically it was believed to have great potential; strategically the port of Valona commanded the Straits of Otranto and the mouth of the Adriatic; and politically Italian ambitions stood to be thwarted by Austro-Hungarian, French and Greek advances. Against the continued opposition of the Italian chief of general staff, Luigi Cadorna, to any distraction from the main front, Italian forces occupied Valona on 27 December 1914. The Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia 8-10 October 1915 encouraged the politicians to occupy Durazzo in support of Serbia, but the weakness of the Italian military positions was exposed when Austria-Hungary attacked Montenegro in January 1916, forcing the Italians to evacuate Durazzo on 26 February. Until July 1918, Italian military action was limited, inhibited by local hostility, difficult terrain and malaria. Politics became increasingly prominent: to outbid France and Austria-Hungary, the Italian Declaration of Agirocastro (3 June 1917) promised a unitary independent Albania under Italy's aegis and protection. Military and political tensions with the French increased. Only when the threat on the Piave was surmounted, resources were at last available, and the Austro-German-Bulgarian forces were collapsing were Italian troops able to take Durazzo, Tirana and Scutari in October 1918.

Home fronts and fighting fronts

Thursday 20 October 2011

Chair: Dan Todman

Summaries of presentations:

1. Professor Michael Roper (University of Essex)

Reading between the lines: letters home and emotional survival in the Great War

Letters home are one of the most widely used sources for studying the personal experience of the First World War, and they constitute an obvious point of reference in an analysis of relationships between the home and

fighting fronts. Yet such correspondence arouses contrary views among historians. Some assert that the extraordinary wartime traffic in post demonstrates the continued vitality of soldiers' ties to their homes, whilst others argue that soldiers became alienated from pre-war civilian relationships, or that letters home have little historical value because of the constraints of censorship. Drawing on examples from the IWM's collection, Michael Roper will argue that while such correspondence can give us close insight into the subjective experience of soldiers, it does not provide an unvarnished view of trench warfare. The emotional registers of letters home were often ambiguous and conflicted. Writers let slip more than they intended. Domestic references brought the soldier's loved ones to mind, but also conveyed a pointed contrast with life in trenches. Letters home were not soliloquies, but addressed mothers, fathers, siblings, wives, sons, and daughters. So we need to ask: who is being addressed, and to what end or purpose? What were the sub-texts in such communication, the things that give us glimpses of emotional experiences beyond formulaic statements that the writer is 'getting on well'? We require, that is, a better developed sense of the emotional and psychological functions of letter-writing. In the final section of the paper, Michael Roper will consider, in the light of his book *The Secret Battle* (2009), some of the problems that surround this kind of analysis, such as the representativeness of surviving collections and the relative absence of correspondence from home to the fighting fronts.

2. Cressida Finch (IWM)

Motivations for serving with St John Ambulance and the Red Cross in the First World War: a glance into the Imperial War Museum Sound archive

This talk will look at the work of St John Ambulance and the Red Cross in the First World War, focussing on the motivations of individuals to decide give their time for these two organisations. It will look particularly at five individuals recorded by the Imperial War Museum Sound Archives. These men and women served with different sections of the Red Cross and St John, at home and overseas, and reveal different motivations behind their decisions to join. Cressida Finch compares these oral history memories with contemporary responses, especially in the annual reports of the organisations and in their own journal, *First Aid*.

3. Rachel Duffett (University of Essex)

The Taste of Army Life

This paper investigates the importance of food to the rank and file soldier. While its physical criticality is self-evident, food has a wider significance - something indicated by the soldiers' repeated references to it in their personal accounts of the war which suggest a far more complex role than a concentration on calorific intake alone might reveal. The army was precise in its definition of the men's energy requirements, and the figure of c 4,200 calories per day is close to that of today's army. The plentiful calories were considerably more than many of the men would have obtained in their civilian lives, but despite this they did not necessarily translate into satisfaction with the rations. Eating carries with it a range of social and emotional responses that have little to do with ingestion itself. The dirt of the mess halls, the rough behaviour of their new dining companions and the alien foods were an unhappy contrast with more convivial pre-war meals. Food became a focus for the hardships and injustices of their new military existence and, especially in their memoirs, a way of communicating their disappointment to a wider audience. It was also a medium through which more positive experiences could be enacted: the lovingly prepared parcels from families were shared between groups of pals, sustaining ties to those waiting at home and helping to forge new bonds of comradeship in the front line.

Music and cinema going on the Home Front

Tuesday 15 November 2011

Chair: Dr Bill Philpott, King's College London

Summaries of presentations:

1 Roger Smither (IWM)

The Battle of the Somme and its audiences

It has been calculated that as many as 20 million cinema admissions for the 1916 film *The Battle of the Somme* would have been sold in the first six weeks of its release, meaning that almost half of the population of the United Kingdom could have seen this first-hand report from the battlefield while the campaign it documented was still continuing across the Channel. This remarkable statistic prompts a number of questions about those who made up that audience: Were the people who went to see *Somme* the same as those who constituted the regular cinema-going audience, or did the film attract people who would not normally have been found at the cinema? What exactly is it that audiences felt they would get from the film that made it such a draw, and did it satisfy those expectations? Did the achievement of such a box-office success have any lasting effect on film-making or cinema-going in Britain?

2 Dr Toby Haggith (IWM)

Musical accompaniments played to cinema audiences

The films of the First World War era, held in the Imperial War Museum's collection, have provided a vivid and influential record of the war for succeeding generations. In particular, the footage from the key official films recording the Somme campaign, have been endlessly re-used in numerous feature films and historical documentaries (from Sally in Our Alley to the BBC Great War series) whenever filmmakers wanted to succinctly and powerfully represent the nature of trench warfare. However, in this re-purposing, the manner in which these films were originally screened and received by audiences has been forgotten – with feature length examinations of campaigns reduced to clips, these clips shown at the wrong speed and format and a wide range of inappropriate music used to accompany the historical footage. Concentrating on the musical aspect of this anachronistic presentation of the nation's historical film record, I will describe the Museum's work to revive the musical medleys originally played to accompany screenings of the Battle of the Somme and the Battle of the Ancre, and how this music has contributed to a revision of our understanding of the role of the films and their possible impact on First World War audiences.

3 Dr John Mullen (Université Paris-Est Créteil)

Wartime music hall: myths and realities

Victorian music hall has been much studied, Edwardian music hall much less, and there is no comprehensive study of music hall during the First World War, which is why we chose to work on this subject. Mentioned in passing by many writers at the time and historians since, music hall has been presented as proof of universal war fever taking over the civilian population, far from the realities of massacre in the trenches. Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon denounced aspects of the music hall, while the 1960s musical play and film *Oh What A*

Lovely War presents music hall discourse as jingoistic and deranged, to be contrasted with soldier songs, interpreted as anti-war protest from those who really knew.

As part of our book project on wartime music hall, we have collected a corpus of over a thousand songs. By examining these, we will attempt to answer the questions –

Was wartime music hall typically or exceptionally jingoistic?

Were anti-war songs or social protest songs possible on the music hall stage?

Who decided on what was sung and how?

What can wartime music hall tell us about popular attitudes of the time?

The Impact of the First World War on social change in Britain

Thursday 8 December 2011

Chair: Dan Todman

Summaries of presentations:

1 Professor Keith Grieves (Kingston)

'Land for the Landless': returning soldiers, open spaces and the English countryside

A generalising 'Country worth fighting for' was a ubiquitous feature of propagandist imagery for military recruitment in 1914-15. But it was also, in C.F.G. Masterman's words, a 'landlords' country' where territorial magnates paternalistically raised battalions to defend imperilled home districts. In France and Flanders, amid the terrible topographies of war, citizen soldiers and nurses came to know *their* antidotal home landscapes as much loved corners of England. Their recollections of 'Blighty' from afar were variegated and richly-textured. At home the flow of visitors to places of natural beauty, debates on 'finest views' and local resistance to remorseless timber extraction heightened an appreciation of beauty suggestive of a country 'worth living for'. Local activism confronted the warfare state in the name of the returning soldier, whose place-related identity assumed that the land from which they had departed remained largely intact.

At the end of the war the land question was redefined to reflect the assumption that soldiers would settle in the counties they knew and for which they fought. Fiscal retrenchment forestalled an extensive back to the land movement and few soldiers would dig their own trenches in new agricultural communities. But access to open air social centres, now devoid of notices to trespassers, to draw solace from the consoling hand of nature marked one ameliorative social change in the countryside. In a war worn world the protection of footpaths, common land and open spaces near metropolitan areas was intimately associated with war experience, taking the form of a sensuous love of specifically known hills and vales. They should not be 'disfigured' by modernity in the form of the bungalow, the petrol station, the telegraph pole and the charabanc operator.

A residual 'patriotism in things of beauty' (Lord Farrar) ensured that meadows, village greens, hillsides and, especially, panoramic vistas were often rededicated in memory of the fallen after 1918. Access to recreational space, once covered by military installations, began to make public the private haunts of ancient beauty. Amid those panoramas with their shelters and instructional viewpoints, some sense might be made of years of sacrifice, endurance and discomfort in a war which had banished beauty and despoiled landscapes.

2 Professor Richard Grayson (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Sources and Society: New methods of analysing the social composition of infantry battalions – a case study of West Belfast

In the past decade there has been a revolution in the availability of online sources available to genealogists. However, historians have been slow to appreciate their value for academic history, perhaps because of a long-standing divide between what historians consider to be rigorous 'history' and the type of work carried out by genealogists (which is often undervalued).

In his book *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (Continuum, 2009) Richard Grayson sought to bridge that divide, using sources such as newspapers and online service records to construct a database of over 8,500 men from West Belfast who served in the British military in WWI, and he is now applying the same methods, adapted and expanded, to a study of Dublin between 1912 and 1923.

Because the data is rich in information about the social and economic circumstances of recruits, it offers great potential for social historians as well as military historians, both in terms of studying the social composition of units, and the impact of the war on social change. Richard Grayson will discuss the nature of key sources and what they can reveal, highlighting their value to historians of social change.

3 Dr Krisztina Robert (Roehampton University)

Making Place for Women in the Army: Constructions of Wartime Space and Women's Military Employment in First World War Britain

Between 1914 and 1919 about 100,000 British women served in paramilitary units at home and abroad, releasing servicemen for active duty by replacing them in the auxiliary positions of the armed forces. The question of what facilitated women's military employment is significant, given the characteristics of this development. Among the female populations of combatant countries, British women were the first to be deployed in martial roles on a mass scale and the only ones to obtain symbolic military status. More importantly, they achieved these distinctions despite considerable public and official opposition. Previous studies have failed to explain how women overcame objections to their martial employment. My project adopts a spatial approach to explore this question, drawing on research on the connections between definitions of space and gendered work roles. Using visual representations, including posters, postcards and press illustrations, I examine competing constructions of wartime space, such as 'home' and 'front', and discuss how members of the paramilitary female corps manipulated these definitions to create martial female areas where their military work would be acceptable to their opponents.

Official War Art schemes

Thursday 9 February 2012

Chair: Professor Bill Philpott, King's College London

Summaries of Presentations:

1 Ulrike Smalley, Imperial War Museum

'We are Making a New World': Recording and Memorialising the Great War

The war art schemes developed by the British government during the First World War were an unprecedented act of government sponsorship of the arts. In parallel to the official government schemes, the IWM also commissioned and collected art from its inception in 1917. The two strands merged when the government collection was transferred to the IWM at the end of the war. The resulting collection explores every aspect of conflict, from the violence of industrial warfare to hastened social and industrial change at home. The talk will give an overview of the development of the official and IWM war art schemes and the resulting 'new generation' of war art.

2 Kathleen Palmer, Imperial War Museum

Official war art by women in the First World War

The interaction of women artists with the main British Ministry of Information War Artists scheme was less than happy, with very few commissions offered and some completed works rejected. The main source of British official commissions for women artists was in fact the Imperial War Museum's Women's Work Sub-committee. This shaped the nature and scope of the commissions offered giving a unique context which is key in understanding the work. Two or three case studies will show the range of subjects and themes.

For the most part the women artists commissioned by the Museum enjoyed a high level of success and standing at the time, and so their subsequent lack of recognition needs to be unpicked in the light of changing artistic trends and notions of progression and narrative in art history.

3 Dr Sue Malvern, University of Reading

The reception of British official art after 1918

The primary focus of this paper will be a series of large scale paintings commissioned from British artists by the government during the First World War. Dr Malvern will discuss the critical reception of these works at their first and only major public exhibition, *The Nation's War Paintings*, held at the Royal Academy 1919-1920. Her paper will then consider the installation of these works at the Imperial War Museum in the 20s and 30s, focusing on shifts in the public reception of war art in the years leading to the Second World War. Dr Malvern will conclude with some considerations of the reception of these works after 1945.

Artistic Responses in France and Germany

Tuesday 13 March 2012, 4pm-5.30pm

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of Presentations:

1 Richard Slocombe (IWM)

'Imagined Communities': Exploring the cult of nationhood in German and French posters of the First World War

For Europe's ruling classes attempting exert power and influence over the socio-political milieu of early 20th century the poster represented an uncomfortable reality of the modern age. Perceived as promoting selfish materialism among the restless metropolitan classes and eroding civic values, 'bill-posters' were to these elites an insidious blot on the urban landscape and the portent of social unrest.

'Imagined Communities' examines the poster's subsequent 'rehabilitation' and state utilisation during the First World War by focussing on Germany and France, two deeply fragmented societies prior to war. It will explore how each in a climate of 'total war' applied the medium to present an idea of nationhood, which it was hoped would foster solidarity and collective action.

2 Dr Claudia Siebrecht (University of Sussex)

The Aesthetics of Loss: German Women's Art of the First World War

This paper presents a cultural history of women's artistic responses to the First World War in Germany that locates their rich visual testimony in the context of the civilian experience of war and wartime loss. This paper argues that historical codes of wartime behaviour and traditional public rites of mourning led women to re-imagine the role of the female mourner in wartime society and question the existing notion of proud bereavement through art. Wartime sacrifice often engendered acute personal conflict as women faced the challenge of reconciling their emotional pain with their loyalty to the soldier and their own commitment to the national cause. The personal moral economy of the war, just like its public conventions, caused tensions, stress and ambivalent feelings that compounded women's bereavement. This paper argues that art became a tool that female artists used to re-imagine their wartime identities, to adapt and re-invent mourning rituals, and to attempt to endow the enormous cost of the war with meaning.

3 Professor Debra Kelly (University of Westminster)

The First World War and French Artistic and Cultural Representations: readings from the Group for War and Culture Studies

The Group for War and Culture Studies is an international research network of scholars, established in 1995. Its focus is broadly the analysis of the ways in which the experience of war and its aftermath is represented in cultural production. France was the Group's first 'site' of investigation and it provides a particularly complex and fascinating case-study for an investigation of the impact of war on modern and contemporary cultural production and cultural history, having been at war for almost fifty years of the twentieth century. The trauma of the First World War remains particularly acute in French memory given not only the psychological and social consequences which were shared by all the nations involved, but also the physical memory of the conflict on the devastated body of France where a large part of the war was fought.

This paper aims to offer an overview of a selection of the research presented at GWACS's seminars and conferences, and published in the Journal of War and Culture Studies and in other publications in order to give a broad picture of some of the issues addressed in a range of French cultural responses to the First World War. It concludes by attempting to formulate some general hypotheses on the contributions that this varied research has made to war and culture studies and to understanding the place of the First World War in French cultural history.

First World War literature

Thursday 12th April 2012, 4pm-5.30pm

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of Presentations:

1 Dr Hope Wolf (King's College London)

Mediating War: Hot Diaries, Liquid Letters and Cowardly Anecdotes

Introductions to anthologies of war stories often allude to the 'immediacy' of their contents. My paper will consider what implications the privileging of unmediated experience might have for the ways in which the First World War is remembered. The enquiry will be conducted alongside readings of an Imperial War Museum archive of epistolary responses, written between 1963-4, to a BBC call for 'vivid' remembrances of 1914-18; these would be used to produce an ambitious documentary series, *The Great War* (1964). The paper will also touch on the Museum's archive of interviews the BBC conducted with selected letter writers ('immediacy' is also frequently associated with spoken, as opposed to written, remembrances). Complicating neat distinctions between the reminiscences of so-called 'ordinary' people and more obviously 'literary' accounts, an exploration of how dreams of immediacy shaped responses to the BBC call will draw attention to the stylistic means and metaphors by which experiential proximity was performed. Concluding with a discussion of examples that resisted the request for 'vivid' memories, the paper will raise the question of whether assumptions about the virtues of immediacy risk discouraging the production of sustained critical reflection – from both anthologists and anthologised.

2 Jane Rosen (IWM)

"Thou Shalt Teach Revolution." The Proletarian Press in Britain and Its Children's Publications During the First World War

During the First World War much of the literature, both books and magazines, produced for children was pro war and jingoistic in nature. However, there was a minority of publications that opposed this view and the presentation will consider some of these works. The paper will specifically look at the proletarian press involved in the education of children for class struggle and revolution. It will examine the reactions of this press to the war.

To do this I will evaluate journals such as *The Young Socialist*, which was founded in 1901 by the Socialist Sunday School Movement and *Revolution*, published by the Socialist School in Glasgow from 1917. There will also be an examination of other publications produced by these organisations. The presentation will begin with an appraisal of these movements, their aims, courses of education and participants. There will be a discussion of the foundation of the periodicals, their contributors and readership. The paper will then analyse the reaction of the publications to the events of the First World War, examining the editorials and articles for their coverage of the war and their call for peace. An assessment of the journals' attitude to Germany, conscription and conscientious objection will be provided. This will also look at the publications' responses to the Easter Uprising in Dublin and the Russian Revolutions of 1917.

The paper will hope to illustrate that there was an opposition view to the chauvinism expressed in much of the children's literature of the First World War produced in Britain.

3 Dr Sara Haslam (Open University)

'One War picture in my mind': War and the Senses

In a recent chapter published in the *Edinburgh Companion to British and American War Literature* I explore the proposition that the creative energies of modernism are inextricably bound to experience of the First World War. Writers fought, or thought about war, and used it in their work in ways that often refine and challenge our understanding of modernism. Narratives of the war and of modernism can indeed sometimes sound interchangeable. Modernism is called, in Adam Phillips' notable paraphrase of David Trotter, 'cumulative trauma' – the trauma of loss, of narrative instability, of madness. A well-known example of such trauma, which has more than a whiff of Futurism about it, comes in this cataclysmal extract from Frederic Manning's war novel *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (1929):

The Hun searched for them scrupulously; the air was alive with the rush and flutter of wings; it was ripped by screaming shells, hissing like tons of molten metal plunging suddenly into water, there was the blast and concussion of their explosion, men smashed, obliterated in sudden eruptions of earth, rent and strewn in bloody fragments, shells that were like hell-cats humped and spitting, little sounds, unpleasantly close, like the plucking of tense strings . . .

Manning describes a sensory trauma in the face of war's extreme force; trauma of the eye and yet more intensively of the ear. And so in that recent essay I take issue with David Trotter's chief indicator of war's trauma on those who experienced war and wrote about it – what he calls the 'proximity' sense of smell. It is the overwhelming experience of sound that in another major collection on the literature of war Mary R. Habeck argues was most commented on by soldiers, particularly novices, as they entered the front. In this paper I move away from the concept of trauma, however, while retaining a focus on an important aspect of these critical responses to war. What I did become interested in, and am currently working on as today's paper outlines, is this idea of a sense hierarchy – or a privileging of certain senses in particular writing of the war. I'm constructing an explanatory framework for why and how such a practice might have come about. I focus on three writers today: Ford Madox Ford, Edward Thomas, and Pte Basil Purdie, whose papers are in the archive here at the IWM.

The First World War and the shaping of the Middle East

Tuesday 15 May 2012, 4-5.30pm

Chair: Suzanne Bardgett (Department of Research, IWM)

Summaries of Presentations:

1 Alan Wakefield (Imperial War Museums)

From Basra to Baghdad and beyond: the changing nature of warfare in Mesopotamia 1914-1918

Arriving in the Turkish province of Mesopotamia in November 1914 to safeguard oil supplies, Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' became involved in a major military operation that lasted until November 1918. This paper looks at the changing nature of Anglo-Indian military field operations during the campaign. Charting the change from improvisation to innovation, which led to victory over a hard fighting enemy and harsh local conditions.

2 Dr Catriona Pennell (University of Exeter)

No Way Out: Reverend Harold Spooner and Non-Combatant Experience of the Siege of Kut-Al-Amara, 1915 – 1916

On 29th April 1916, after a siege of 147 days, the Indian Army 6th Infantry Division, under the command of Major General Charles Townshend, surrendered to the Ottoman forces who had encircled them on the banks of the Tigris at Kut-Al-Amara, Mesopotamia. Nearly 3,000 British and Indian soldiers had perished in the siege, mainly from disease and starvation, whilst over 26,000 men had been killed in various relief attempts. The survivors, including Townshend, were forcibly marched 1,200 miles across desert and mountains into captivity.

Amongst the prisoners was Reverend Harold Spooner, the only Church of England padre in Kut during the siege, who had been in service with the division since December 1915. He not only survived the siege, but the death march and captivity too, leaving behind, amongst other artefacts, a fascinating and detailed day-by-day diary of his experiences in Kut, now housed in the Imperial War Museum's document collections. Spooner is an excellent example of a non-combatant witness to one of the most controversial and little-studied episodes of the First World War. Yet, thus far, his experiences have been side-lined in operational histories that merely footnote him as one of the siege's various 'characters'.

Spooner's diary offers a unique insight into the siege, on the front-lines and from the inside out. Following the theme of reappraisal, this paper will examine Spooner's experiences in Kut to establish what he saw and how he responded as the siege unfolded. How did he reconcile the violence and waste that surrounded him with his Christian beliefs? Did he question the rationale of the siege and the military leadership that had led them there? Were his private views very different from his public role as padre? What language and resources did he employ to help the men in his charge survive the terrible conditions of the siege? How did he view the Ottoman enemy? Did Spooner's opinion evolve over the 147 days? Did he support the decision to surrender in April? And was siege warfare in the harsh climate of Mesopotamia the ultimate test for a non-combatant man of faith in war? As a result, this paper will seek to refocus attention on the long campaign in Mesopotamia between the Ottoman and British armies that has, thus far, remained largely ignored in the vast literature of the First World War.

3 Dr Eugene Rogan (St Antony's College, Oxford)

Neutral Diplomacy: The US Consular Service in Baghdad and Basra during WW1.

As a neutral power, the United States preserved its network of consulates across the Ottoman Empire until April 1917 when it entered the First World War on the side of the Entente Powers. For most of the first three years of the Great War, American officials represented the interests of belligerent states before the Ottoman authorities. Consular records thus preserve valuable insights on the Ottoman war effort, as well as social and economic conditions in Baghdad and Basra under wartime conditions. This paper will examine the impact of the Mesopotamia Campaigns on Baghdad, the treatment of British and Indian prisoners of war after the siege of Kut al-Amara in 1916, and the British occupation of Baghdad in March 1917, as reported by American officials serving on the Ottoman side of the conflict.

The Dardanelles Campaign

Thursday, 21 June 2012, 4pm-5.30pm

Chair: Professor Bill Philpott, King's College London

Summaries of Presentations

1 Daniel Whittingham

Charles E. Callwell and the planning, execution and aftermath of the Dardanelles campaign

The Dardanelles campaign (February 1915 to January 1916) remains one of the most controversial in British military history. The product of an attempt to break the deadlock on the Western Front by knocking the Ottoman Empire out of the war, the result of nearly a year's fighting was a significant Allied defeat at a cost of some 46,000 dead. One important feature of much that has been written about the battle has been the attempt to apportion blame for the disaster.

One man who was deeply involved in the planning and execution of the campaign was Sir Charles Callwell, the Director of Military Operations. Callwell, an important figure in the history of British military thought, has been unjustly neglected by historians. He had been uneasy about the operation from the very start. This paper will discuss his feelings in light of his earlier works on the conduct of amphibious operations, and his considerations of the possibility of forcing the Straits while a member of the General Staff in 1906. It will make clear his objections, as put forward at the time, and then subsequently in his book *The Dardanelles* (1919), a classic study of what went wrong.

2 Phillip Dutton, IWM

Moving pictures from a sideshow: the origins and evolution of Ellis Ashmead Bartlett's 1915 Gallipoli film 'With the Dardanelles Expedition'

Ashmead-Bartlett's original film has over time experienced subtle changes in its message and structure. We owe its survival to the Australian War Memorial (AWM), as the version best known today was acquired by the Australian War Records Section in 1919. This print was edited by the official historian of the AIF, C E W Bean and his carefully crafted captions offered an influential endorsement of the heroic Anzac legend. Despite its powerful message the film was for many years virtually neglected though selective scenes were incorporated into the BBC 'Great War' TV series in 1964. In more recent years there has been a marked revival of interest in the film. In the late 1990s George Imashev of the AWM and Dr Nicholas Hiley in the UK added significantly to our understanding of it and the commemorations associated with the 90th anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign stimulated a fresh examination of what is believed to be the only moving picture record of military operations on the Peninsula. The historic importance of the film was acknowledged by the decision to make a digital restoration of the film for the AWM by Peter Jackson's Weta Workshops, which was completed in time for Anzac day 2005. Further, the discovery in 2007 by the AWM of two 'new' Gallipoli film sequences, both of which are believed to have been taken by Ashmead-Bartlett, has stimulated further research, notably by Chris Pugsley, on the nature and extent of Ashmead-Bartlett's original filming and Michael Kosmider (Film Preservation Officer at the AWM) who has begun an examination of the possibility of the existence of other genuine examples of Gallipoli footage held in other archives.

3 Professor Carl Bridge, King's College London

Australia and the Dardanelles Commission

In nearly all Australian accounts the deliberations of the Dardanelles Commission have been regarded as something of a whitewash, with little of interest occurring. However, a close reading shows that this was certainly not the case. Australian High Commissioner (and erstwhile Prime Minister at the time of the Gallipoli landings) Andrew Fisher, was a member of the Commission and played a notable role. In the end, he refused to sign the final report pleading that he had been unable to attend the hearings of the commission as regularly as he would have liked. Nevertheless, Fisher made his presence felt when the Australian journalist Keith Murdoch was giving evidence. In the context of his receiving a severe grilling from the other members of the commission, Fisher came to Murdoch's aid and asked him leading questions. These had the effect of vindicating both Fisher's and Murdoch's positions and actions during the famous, or infamous, Ashmead Bartlett letter affair. We contend that careful attention to the Fisher-Murdoch connection and to the fraught Australian political situation of 1916-17 explains Fisher's behaviour.

Followed by a brief presentation from Mark Whitmore, Director of Collections, IWM on the Australian War Memorial/IWM Battlefield Study Tour to Gallipoli, which took place earlier this month.

The First World War in Africa

Tuesday 10 July 2012, 4 - 5.30pm

Chair: Dr Dan Todman, Queen Mary, University of London

Summaries of Presentations:

1 Professor David Killingray

What impact did the Great War have on the peoples of Africa?

A major European war between imperial powers inevitably involved Africans. In addition to the burdens of colonialism, Africa was further exploited for men and resources to help wage war. This paper will look at the whole of Africa. The military campaigns will briefly be assessed, first to emphasise the role and experience of civilians, and second to place the conflict in the context of recent and on-going wars of conquest and 'pacification'. However, the major focus will be on the conflict's impact on the socio-economic, religious and political lives of Africans, particularly in east and central Africa, where people suffered most harshly from labour exactions, starvation, and disease. Sustained war also resulted in economic and social change and new political demands. The Great War helped to stir up political expectations among the educated elites, gave a new voice to organised black labour, and also provoked white working class reactionary rebellion on South Africa's Rand. Two further questions: to what extent can Mosse's 'brutalisation' thesis be applied to Africa, and to what extent did the war change the European colonial victors' views of their extended Empires in Africa.

2 Dr Jan-Georg Deutsch

The impact of the First World War on South Africa: a reassessment

The First World War has been written up in the secondary literature as an armed struggle between European nation states. Each of them mobilised substantial resources, both material and human, in their respective colonial Empires to overcome their adversaries. In the case of Britain and her Empire this is well documented. After the war several volumes were published by the War Office to show the contributions the Dominions had made to the Imperial cause, including the Union of South Africa. However, internally South Africa was not a homogenous entity in any meaningful economic, political or social sense at the beginning of the war. It had

become a 'Union' only four years earlier, in 1910, following the protracted and bitter war (1899-1902) between the British Empire (Cape Colony and the Colony of Natal) and the Boer Republics (South African Republic and the Orange Free State). The paper aims to re-assess the impact of the First World War in the light of the deep divisions that existed within the Union of South Africa at the time.

3 Dr Anne Samson

A century of remembering the Great War in East Africa

Since 1915, at least 275 books, including novels, have been published on the East Africa campaign. In addition, four films, battlefield tours, websites, discussion fora, numerous articles and an association have appeared. This paper will provide an overview of the publications, from the first which was a novel in 1915 to the most recent academic text in 2012. The overview, which includes eight languages and at least sixteen countries, will provide a basis to identify trends and gaps in the memory or recording of the campaign, whilst the work of Jay Winter and Antoin Prost (2005) will provide a comparative and theoretical context. In the process, national and communal differences will be explored, using South Africa as a case study, as will the relationship between academic and non-academic historians including genealogist, military specialist, adventurer and fiction-writer. Additional themes which feature will include identity and the role of the historian (activist and recorder of information) in the creation of memory.