



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Imperial War Museums acquires unseen footage and images of family life in the shadow of the Berlin Wall as the world marks 30 years since its fall

Imperial War Museums (IWM) has acquired unseen footage and images showing life in Berlin in the 1960s, just as the city was being divided by the Berlin Wall. As amateur footage, it is unlike anything else in IWM's collection. It shows the construction of the Berlin Wall, famous Berlin landmarks, a visit to Hitler's former residence at The Eagle's Nest and the stark reality of border crossings through the eyes of an American service family living in West Berlin.

The acquisition coincides with the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of the most iconic and defining moments of the 20th century, which falls on Saturday 9th November 2019.

The Berlin Wall divided the city for 28 years. Its fall on 9 November 1989 signalled the end of the Cold War, triggering the reunification of Germany and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR. Europe was reshaped, both in its physical borders and its political and social identity, which continue to evolve today.

Less than two decades after the end of the Second World War, the footage clearly shows a city still recovering from one of the most devastating conflicts in global history. Berlin residents living alongside derelict and damaged buildings and bomb sites watch as the Berlin Wall physically divides their homes and families. The footage also offers a fascinating insight into the history of Bernauer Strasse (Bernauer Street). As the houses themselves formed part of the Wall, with the doors opening onto East Berlin and the back windows onto the West, this street witnessed many famous escapes; through tunnels, out of windows and over barbed wire. It was the site of East German border guard Conrad Schumann's dramatic leap to freedom and it witnessed the destruction of the Reconciliation Church. The footage clearly shows the Wall on Bernauer Strasse, with residents gathering on the platforms that overlook it.

Rebecca Harding, IWM curator, said: "What is particularly special about this acquisition is that, as amateur footage, it reveals normal family life during an intensely abnormal period. While many official organisations including broadcasters documented the Berlin Wall, in particular its momentous fall, footage of this hugely important period in history from unofficial viewpoints is rare.

"The footage sheds light on an American family trying to maintain some semblance of a normal life several thousand miles from home and in the middle of a time of great political turmoil. This struggle for normality during times of crisis and uncertainty will be strikingly familiar to those who lived through the tense decades of the Cold War."

IWM is marking the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall at IWM London and at IWM North. From 5 November until 1 December 2019 a brand new work of art from renowned street artists STIK and Thierry Noir will be displayed for the very first time at IWM London. The artwork, which has been created on original sections of the Berlin Wall, reflects on this pivotal moment in world history and its lasting legacy. It also explores the deep, symbolic connections between the Berlin Wall and street art.

At IWM North, two paintings by IWM-commissioned artist Jock McFadyen will be going on permanent public display. McFadyen travelled to Berlin shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and *Christmas in Berlin* and *Die*

Mauer record life in the immediate aftermath of this historic moment. The artworks have previously only been displayed in temporary exhibitions; they will now be at IWM North permanently for visitors to enjoy from the 8 November.

Ends

For further press information, images and interview requests please contact: Anna Wigley, Communications Manager (Corporate), awigley@iwm.org.uk / [020 7091 3074](tel:02070913074)

Notes to editors

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 2.5 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 and Film

IWM has managed a Film Archive from its very beginnings as an institution, and the film collection now covers all aspects of conflicts in which British, Commonwealth or former Empire countries have been involved since the start of the twentieth century.

Our constantly growing collection now extends to over 23,000 hours of moving images, representing a wide and diverse range of material from public and service information films, documentaries and unedited combat film, through to official newsreels and amateur films. Highlights of the collection include the original 1916 record of *The Battle of the Somme* (now granted UNESCO Memory of the World status), Academy Award-winning documentaries *Target for Tonight* (1941) and *The True Glory* (1945), the former library of NATO, UNTV Zagreb newsreels and library, and most recently, digital born material of operations in Afghanistan. There is also a significant collection of amateur film – much of it in colour – covering wide areas of the former British Empire, the Second World War, India and beyond.