IWM to mark International Women’s Day
#100yearsofwomen

This year, Imperial War Museums will mark International Women’s Day (8 March) through a wide-range of events, initiatives and exhibition content from across IWM including From Street to Trench at IWM North, Historic Duxford at IWM Duxford, Fashion on a Ration at IWM London, and the changing roles of women in post-war Afghanistan in IWM London’s display War Story: Afghanistan 2014.

IWM will also be encouraging the public to upload their stories of women who served in the First World War to its permanent digital memorial Lives of the First World War and to discover photographs and memories of the women of the US Army Air Forces held on the American Air Museum website.

Diane Lees, Director–General of Imperial War Museums said “IWM was established almost 100 years ago while the First World War was being fought and ever since we have collected stories of the men and women whose lives were affected by conflict; whether they served, supported, objected or were civilians who were impacted by war. International Women’s Day is a great opportunity to solely focus on some of the stories of these women in particular, to talk about the role they played and how their responses may have shaped our understanding of war – whether that is the recollections of a Grandparent, the painting of a war artist or the diary or the letters of a women on the front line.”

From 1–15 March, IWM will run #100yearsofwomen across social media channels (@I_W_M), highlighting the stories of women held in the museums’ collections. Stories will include Elsie Maud Inglis who set up her own hospital organisation during the First World War, Mabel Dymond Peel an Intelligence Officer during the First World War and Virginia Irwin a US journalist who entered Berlin on the day of liberation during the Second World War.

IWM will be encouraging the public to join this campaign, remembering inspirational women from the First World War to present day on social media using the hash tag #100yearsofwomen.

Events and Exhibitions

- **A Closer Look Tour: International Women’s Day at IWM North**
  Daily between Monday 2 and Friday 31 March at 3.30pm (ideal for ages 14+)

  Discover the personal stories of inspirational women who played ground-breaking roles in times of conflict. Learn of the Suffragettes’ response to the outbreak of the First World War, led by Manchester’s famous Pankhurst family. Find out how women took on new roles, including the fearless nurses Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm, who set up an emergency treatment station just 50 yards from the front line. Part of Manchester’s Wonder Women 2015, a city wide project that brings together the work of the city’s cultural organisations.

- **Truth and Memory: British Art of the First World War at IWM London**
  Closes 8 March 2015

  International Women’s Day is the final day to visit IWMs major First World War exhibition Truth and Memory. In the exhibition view paintings by the women who captured life on the home front or in hospitals during the conflict. Artworks on display depict the danger of the working conditions such as Shop for Machining 15-inch Shells: Singer Manufacturing Company, Clydebank, Glasgow, 1918 by Anna Airy and in Fiona Lion’s Women’s Canteen at Phoenix Works, Bradford 1918 see the new confidence and poise some women found during the First World War.
In March 2015, IWM London opens *Fashion on the Ration*, a major new exhibition exploring how fashion survived and even flourished under the strict rules of rationing during the Second World War, often in new and unexpected ways. Women of Britain found new ways to dress, from adopting more casual styles to demonstrating amazing ingenuity in renovating, recycling and creating their own clothes.

*Fashion on the Ration* will display fashion, uniforms and textiles from wartime Britain to look at the impact of the war on women’s lives – on what they wore, their sense of identity, and how they coped with the demands and deprivations of shortages and austerity. This is an exhibition not about the end of fashion but about creativity, coping in adversity and women making their own style.

**From Street to Trench: A World War that Shaped a Region at IWM North**
Until 31 May 2015

IWM North’s major First World War exhibition explores the dramatic changes to life in the North West during the conflict. From the division of the Suffragette movement; to the outstanding contributions from individuals, such as 17 year old voluntary nurse Kathleen Duckworth who clocked up almost 2,000 hours caring for wounded soldiers at her local Red Cross hospital.

For the first time, women were able to take on specialist roles in diverse industries to contribute to the war effort - demonstrating their ability to work in a wealth of occupations previously reserved for men. As an industrial hub, many of the region's factories switched to producing vast quantities of much-needed weapons and munitions. The work done by women such as Gladys Quirk, who became a munitions worker, was crucial in keeping the country going during a war which was lasting longer than anyone could have anticipated.

**War Story: Afghanistan 2014 at IWM London**
Until 6 September 2015

Visitors can 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.

In the display Captain Danielle Huggins Australian Defence Force Female Platoon Commander Mentor at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy tells of her female student’s eagerness to learn. Whereas Christine Edwards Senior Police Advisor for the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) reflects on the culture of Afghanistan and impact on her employees lives, she states “...their families still don’t know they’re in the Police Force. We had a female who has been in 27 years and her family still doesn’t know that that’s what she does. She just goes out in civilian clothing in the morning.”

**Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes at IWM London**
Permanent Exhibition

The Lord Ashcroft Gallery at IWM London displays personal objects and artefacts belonging to those awarded Victoria and George Crosses, revealing the people behind the medals and the stories of their lives and their extraordinary deeds.

Here learn more about Joan Daphne Mary Pearson, the first woman to be decorated for gallantry in the Second World War after rescuing a pilot from his burning aircraft and Odette Samson, a French/British spy who worked as an SOE operative in occupied France who was captured by the Gestapo.
**Historic Duxford at IWM Duxford**

*Permanent Exhibition*

Historic Duxford tells stories of those who lived and served at RAF Duxford during both World Wars. One of the many items on display is a propeller belonging to **Muriel Vera Derby**, a typist clerk for Women's Royal Air Force at Duxford during the First World War. The propeller was given to Muriel by an admirer and treasured by her for many years after service.

**Digital Projects**

- **Lives of the First World War**

45,000 records for women serving in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) will be added to *Lives of the First World War*, IWM’s permanent digital memorial to the men and women who served at home and on the fighting front during the First World War.

From these records discover more about **Dame Katharine Furse**, Director of the Women's Royal Navy Service during the First World War, **Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell** the only women to work alongside Lawrence of Arabia and who played a major role in establishing and modern Iraq, and **Mary O'Connell Bianconi** who was awarded the Military Medal in July 1918 for "conspicuous devotion to duty during an hostile air raid".

IWM needs the public to help complete the 8 million life stories on the website by clicking to ‘remember’ someone, uploading photos and attaching records to each individual’s life story page.

- **American Air Museum**

The American Air Museum website is a digital record of the memories and stories of the men and women of the US Army Air Forces who served from somewhere in England during the Second World War as well as the memories of the British people who met and befriended them.

One of those stories centres on **US journalist Virginia Irwin**. Irwin joined the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1932. Her request to be sent abroad to cover the war was denied, but in 1943 she volunteered to work for the Red Cross in the UK, still sending stories back to her paper while she did so. Just before D-Day, Irwin’s paper changed its mind. Conveniently close to the action, she was accredited as an official war correspondent and followed the US Army through 1944 and 1945 as it pushed east towards Germany. The scoop of her career came when she and another journalist drove through Russian lines to Berlin, arriving on 27 April 1945. It was four days before Hitler's suicide and the city was in chaos.

Virginia’s story, and many more, can be explored at [www.americanairmuseum.com](http://www.americanairmuseum.com).

Find out more about women during conflict on the IWM website hub [www.iwm.org.uk/history/women-in-wartime](http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/women-in-wartime)

**Additional links**

**First World War:**
- Podcast about Women’s War Services
- 5 inspirational stories of women in the First World War
- 12 things you didn't know about women in the First World War
- British women photographers of the First World War
- A day in the life of a Munitions Worker
- The women’s land army in pictures

**Second World War:**
- Womens Auxiliary Services during the Second World War
- What to wear to a wartime wedding
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 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.