DUTY AND DEMOCRACY:
PARLIAMENT AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

100
WW1
PARLIAMENT
2014–2018

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Many thanks to the following in assisting with the production and editing of the publication:

Chris Bryant MP, Marietta Crichton-Stuart, Tom Davies, Mark Fisher, James Ford, Oonagh Gay, Emma Gormley, Greg Howard, Dr Matthew Johnson, Matt Keep, Bryn Morgan, Lee Morrow, David Natzler, David Prior, Keith Simpson MP, Professor Sir Hew Strachan, Jenny Sturt, Mari Takayanagi, Melanie Unwin, Lord Wallace of Saltaire, Edward Wood.

FIRST WORLD WAR CENTENARY

LED BY IWM

"It is by this House of Commons that the decision must be taken, and however small a minority we may be who consider that we have abandoned our attitude of neutrality too soon, every effort should still be made to do what we can to maintain our attitude of peace towards the other Powers of Europe…War is a very different thing today from what it has been before. We look forward to it with horror."

Arthur Ponsonby MP – House of Commons, 3 August 1914.

Foreword

Rt. Hon John Bercow MP
Speaker of the House of Commons

No one in the United Kingdom was immune to the horrors of the First World War, whether they were at the front, in a reserved occupation, or an anxious relative beset with worry on behalf of loved ones. Parliament, its Members and staff were no different. 264 MPs served in the First World War, with 22 of these making the ultimate sacrifice. Many more Members' sons and House staff were also killed, now remembered on the war memorial in Westminster Hall.

During this period, important legislation was passed by Parliament that had a fundamental impact on the military strategy of the war and wider social changes taking place at home. This publication explores the influence Parliament had during the war and, just as importantly, the people who helped to ensure democracy played such a central role in decisions and debate.

The horrific losses and suffering of this conflict must never be forgotten in ensuring our freedoms of today, and our children's freedoms in the future.

Foreword

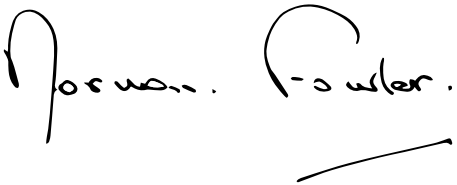
Rt Hon. Lord Fowler
Lord Speaker

The centenary of the First World War is a good moment to reflect on how democracy operated in a time of crisis and how the balance between security and liberties was managed.

It also enables us to reveal the voices and role of women during the war such as 2nd Viscountess Rhondda; a suffragette, daughter of an MP who survived the sinking of the Lusitania and who went on to fight a famous test case in an attempt to take her seat in the House of Lords. There are many more extraordinary characters in this publication such as Private Lord Crawford who shunned ministerial office for a role on the front line.

Of the 323 members of the Lords who served, 24 were killed and the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith (later Earl of Oxford and Asquith) lost his son Raymond at the Battle of the Somme. The war was to affect generations to come but a new sense of rights had emerged leading to votes for women over 30 and an increase in the number of men enfranchised.

The war was to shape Parliament's development and Parliament was to shape the war and this struggle 100 years on should always be remembered.



Contents

Parliament's influence on the War

Just over a century ago, London had enjoyed good weather for the 3 August bank holiday. The tense situation in Ireland, with conflict brewing between unionists and nationalists and the suffragette campaign of direct action had taken the attention of most of the public over the summer. The consequences of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 were of peripheral importance.

The expiry of the British ultimatum to Germany for a free passage for troops through Belgium provoked a sharp change in mood. Both Houses had sat on 3 August to debate the worsening international position. The official Opposition supported the analysis of Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, that the country would have to honour its treaty commitment to Belgium. In concluding his speech Grey commented, "We have disclosed our mind to the House of Commons. We have disclosed the issue, the information which we have, and made clear to the House, I trust, that we are prepared to face that situation, and that should it develop, as probably it may develop, we will face it."[1]

The Times parliamentary correspondent, Michael MacDonagh, noted that the Commons floor and gallery were packed and described the dramatic moment when John Redmond, leader of the Irish nationalists, pledged the support of his party.[2] Only four of the 42 Labour MPs refused to support the war, although its leader Ramsay MacDonald, and its veteran former leader MP, Keir Hardie, both spoke against. MacDonald resigned as leader later in 1914, not resuming leadership until 1922. Hardie died in September 1915, having faced ferocious opposition for his anti-war stance.

Parliament has been characterised as executive-dominated during the war, especially after the formation of the Asquith Coalition Government in 1915 and the Lloyd George Coalition in 1916. However, the real position is more complicated. As the conflict continued, there were lively parliamentary debates and policy decisions which continue to resonate in politics today. Here is a selection:

4 August 1914: The Prime Minister, Ministers and MPs debate the decision for Britain to go to war.

Defence of the Realm Act

The Defence of the Realm Act 1914 (DORA) was passed by both Houses on 7 August 1914, without even a printed text being available. It gave the Government sweeping powers to nationalise key industries, enforce press censorship, introduce British Summer Time and create licensing hours for pubs. The legislation was extended during the war and new measures prevented people from buying binoculars, starting bonfires and feeding wild animals bread. DORA even meant that people could not buy rounds of alcoholic drinks for other people with prosecutions taking place for such an offence. The war greatly extended state intervention into civilian behaviour.

Food rationing began in January 1918, limiting consumption of sugar, margarine and meat. The success of the scheme led to its early adoption in the Second World War.

The Act, which was initially relatively open to interpretation and not without its critics, was revised and extended numerous

"Are these men to be subjected to severe legal penalties for the crimes of cowardice and hypocrisy without any trial before their peers"?

times over the course of the First World War to encompass further precautions. Many of the powers in DORA remained on the statute book in the Emergency Powers Act 1920, which gave the Government powers to declare a state of emergency and to issue regulations.

Conscription and the Military Service Acts 1916

Huge losses among British troops led to the introduction of conscription in 1916. The UK had been the only great power taking part in hostilities without a conscript army. Conscription initially applied to all single men between 18 and 41, but was rapidly extended to married men in late 1916. The Government also thought about introducing conscription to Ireland but were concerned it would provoke unrest, particularly after the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin against the UK Government. The plans were resurrected again in April 1918 but were soon dropped following strikes, rallies and the formation of an Irish Anti-Conscription Committee.

Due to effective lobbying from the No-Conscription Fellowship, formed by Fenner Brockway, there was a provision in the first Military Service Act 1916 to allow for conscientious objectors (COs). Conscription was not popular and in April 1916 over 200,000 demonstrated against it in Trafalgar Square. Of the 16,000 COs in Britain during the First World War, more than one-third went to prison at least once and 1,500 'absolutists' were locked up for the duration of the conflict. Many more COs accepted non-combatant work on various projects of 'national importance'. Herbert Morrison, later Deputy Leader of the Labour Party was one, who undertook farm work. He was to become Minister of Supply in the Coalition Government of 1940-45.

The passions aroused by the position of conscientious objectors are illustrated by the following excerpts from the debate on 29 June 1916, after Prime Minister Asquith made a statement. The previous day, there had been a question on four conscientious objectors, named Hayward, Bishop, Reccord, and Fromow, detained at Shoreham Camp, West Sussex and subsequently taken to France to be court-martialled.

Mr. Glanville asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what was the reason for confining C.H. Norman, a conscientious objector detained at Wandsworth Detention Barracks, in a strait jacket from 24th May onward; and is it usual to so treat men who only passively resist compulsion?

Colonel Yate Will the right hon. Gentleman take steps to deprive these men, whom he has just described as cowards and hypocrites, of their civil rights in the future?

Mr. King Are these men to be subjected to severe legal penalties for the crimes of cowardice and hypocrisy without any trial before their peers?

The Prime Minister On the contrary, the very object of the procedure which I have endeavoured to outline is to prevent the possibility of anything of the kind happening.

Mr. King The right hon. Gentleman does not see my point.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Hedworth Meux May I ask the Prime Minister if there is one single sentence in Holy Writ which justifies the cowards who will not defend their women and children?[3]

Conscientious Objectors doing hard labour, breaking rocks in prison during the First World War.

There was intense dislike of the COs amongst elements of the public and media who viewed them as being unpatriotic and by 209 votes to 171 MPs (on a free vote) deprived them of the franchise for five years in the Representation of the People Bill 1917-18. The Conservative Lord Hugh Cecil made an impressive speech during the debate on 21 November 1917, exposing the complexities of the arguments for disenfranchisement:

"The Military Service Acts have not been extended to Ireland, and yet we are to give votes to all the young men of military age in Ireland, although they have not got this qualification of military service. If the need of the State be so supreme, if the law of its safety be so cogent, will not some people at any rate ask how comes you are exempting twenty or thirty times as many people in Ireland, because they are Irishmen, while you are not exempting merely a few in England because they are religious"?[4]

At the beginning of the Second World War, conscription was again introduced, but the concept of conscientious objection was more widely accepted.

Munitions of War Act 1915 and the employment of women

This legislation gave the newly created Ministry of Munitions power to declare factories controlled establishments and restrict the freedom of workers to leave, through a system of certificates and tribunals. The Ministry was given power to regulate wages and conditions in the industry. Strikes in war industries were made illegal and labour disputes went to compulsory tribunals. In practice, strikes continued in the UK throughout the war.

The concern that lower wages paid to women engaged in munitions work would prejudice the position of skilled men returning from the war

"We have seen violence again in Liverpool last night, and what is the result? The result is that every alien enemy is interned tonight in Liverpool."

is made clear in the response from the Minister, Lloyd George on 21 October 1915:

Mr. Lloyd George It would be a violation of the spirit and the letter of the Munitions Act if the employment of women or unskilled men on munitions work should be utilised for the purpose of lowering the remuneration of men customarily engaged on that class of work.[5]

The proportion of women in employment rose from 24 per cent in July 1914 to 37 per cent by November 1918. Women had proved themselves in the workforce, a factor in earning some women the vote, but after the war employment levels fell back.

Transparency and information

The power of parliamentary privilege (legal immunity under certain circumstances) was used by Harold Cawley (1878-1915), Liberal MP for Heywood, to powerful effect to reveal the disaster of the Gallipoli campaign. As an MP his correspondence was not subject to military censorship and in a letter to his father, Sir Frederick Cawley MP (1850-1937), he gave a stark account of the poor planning and lack of military leadership that was to symbolise the campaign. Four of his school friends from Rugby public school had been killed at Gallipoli in June and Harold was anxious to play his part on the front line. Sadly he took part in the fighting for less than a fortnight before he was killed in September 1915.

Sir Frederick Cawley MP went on to serve on the Dardanelles Commission, established to inquire into the reason for the disaster.

This was set up under the Special Commissions (Dardanelles and Mesopotamia) Act 1916, which was enacted as an alternative to an inquiry by a select committee. The Dardanelles Commission was composed of four MPs, two peers, a general and was chaired by an admiral. It met in secret and heard evidence from serving officers, including from two who were also MPs, Aubrey Herbert and George Lloyd. Both were scathing about the disastrous frontal attacks and shortcomings in transport and medicine.

Tragically, Sir Frederick lost two other sons. Harold's younger brother Oswald, who had become MP for Prestwich when his father was raised to the peerage, was killed in France on 22 August 1918 as his battalion advanced into enemy-held territory. Another brother, Major John S Cawley, was killed on 1 September 1914 in the initial retreat from Mons at the beginning of the conflict.

Aliens Restriction Act 1914

Legislation was passed on 5 August 1914 to require aliens of enemy states to register. This included not only German citizens, but citizens of Austria-Hungary, including Poles and Czechs. Many had lived in the UK for decades. It was estimated that there were 37,500 German males in the country in 1914. Many had married and their wives had taken on German nationality under the Naturalization Act 1870. After the sinking of the passenger ship Lusitania in May 1915 by a German U boat, there were major riots against 'aliens' across the country, as described in the

Crowd of rioters breaking the windows of a German-owned shop in East London, following the sinking of the passenger liner Lusitania on 7 May 1915.

following debate in the Commons on 11 May 1915:

Sir H. DALZIEL Take the position as it stands at this moment. We have seen the Government do little with regard to this question until there has been public violence. There was an internment of aliens when the bakers' shops at Deptford were sacked. I deplored that. We all deplored that; but I also deplore the state of things which enables the Government to take no heed of public opinion outside. Those German bakers may be perfectly innocent, but it is regrettable that violence of that kind is necessary in order to move the Government in a matter of this kind. We have seen violence again in Liverpool last night, and what is the result? The result is that every alien enemy is interned tonight in Liverpool. Surely that is an indication to the people outside that you have only got to break the law, and the Government will listen to you. I think the Government ought to look about, and secure a policy on this question. I do not think they have ever had a policy on it. They have left it to different Departments, and have not had a central authority to deal with it in all its aspects.[6]

The Government announced later in May 1915 that all enemy aliens between the age of 18 and 51 would be interned, partly for their own protection. The Isle of Man housed the majority, but there were also camps at Alexandra Palace and Earls Court in London.

Although the Royal Family changed their name to Windsor from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1917 by royal proclamation, Article 25 A of the Aliens Restriction Order, passed in October 1918, prohibited aliens from doing the same. The Aliens Restriction Act 1919 allowed for the continuing expulsion of enemy aliens resident in the UK, unless exempted by a special committee. The number of German males declined to 8,500 by 1919, indicating the scale of deportation.

PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO SERVED AND DIED IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Total number of serving Parliamentarians

587

FROM THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

264

22 KILLED IN ACTION

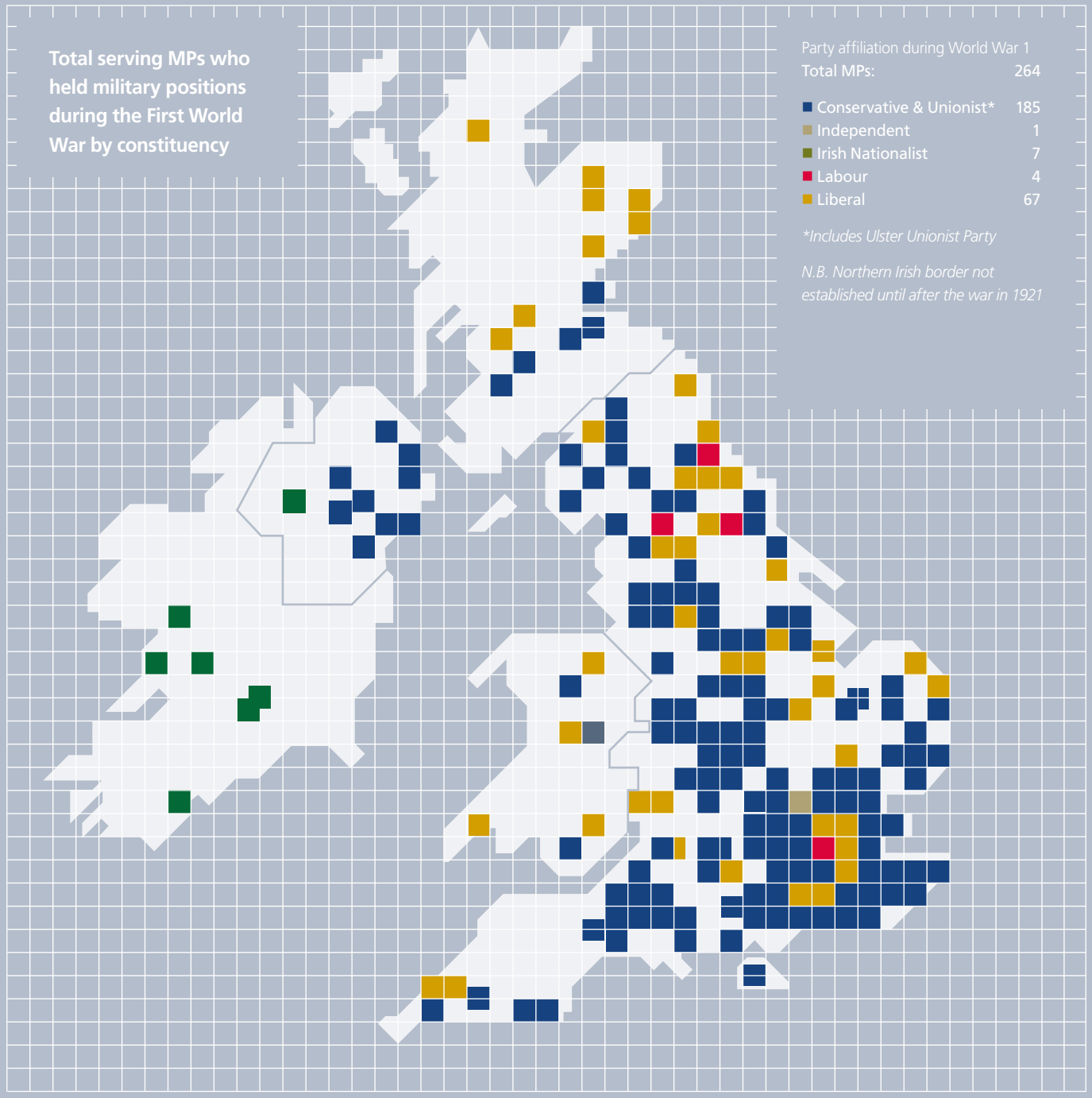
FROM THE HOUSE OF LORDS

323*

24 KILLED IN ACTION

*There were many Lords who held a military rank but did not serve in the First World War

Total serving MPs who held military positions during the First World War by constituency



Party affiliation during World War 1

Total MPs:	264
Conservative & Unionist*	185
Independent	1
Irish Nationalist	7
Labour	4
Liberal	67

**Includes Ulster Unionist Party*

N.B. Northern Irish border not established until after the war in 1921

Daniel Desmond Sheehan MP

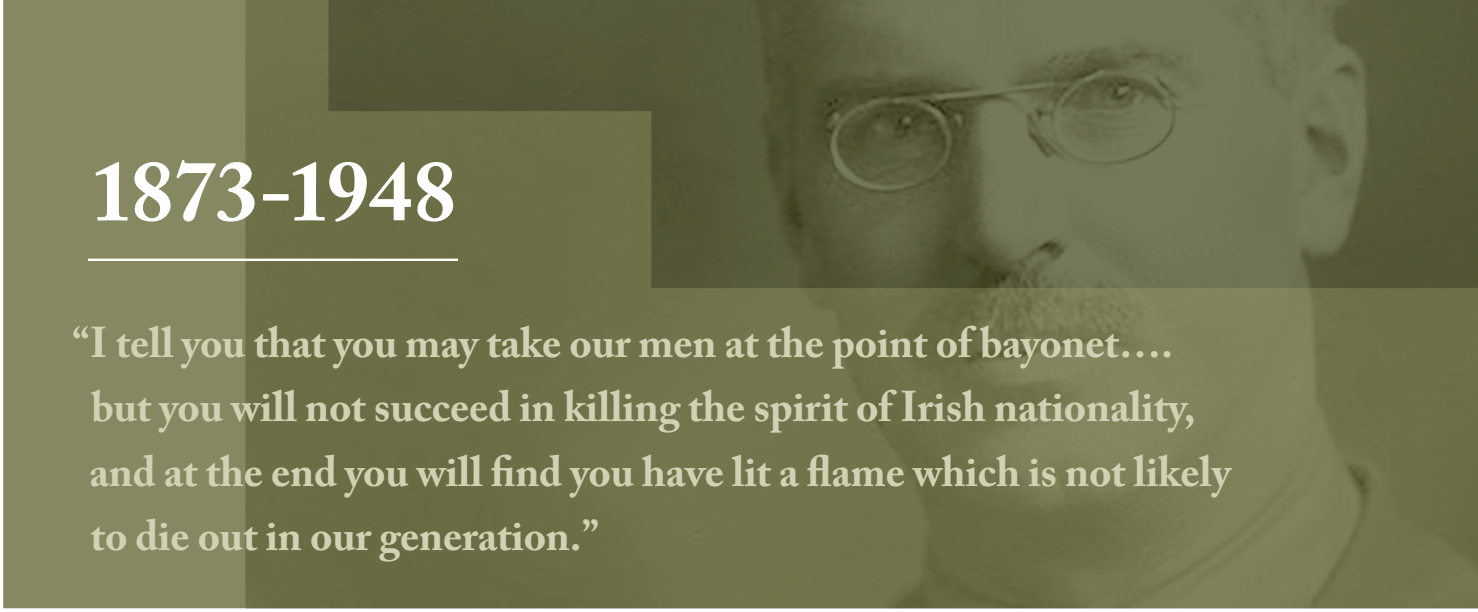
D.D. Sheehan was an Irish Nationalist and founding member of the All-for-Ireland-League Party – a party that aimed to achieve Irish Home Rule through reconciliation and consent of the population.

Despite this he believed it to be his duty to fight in the War and share the same hardship as other men who were leaving their families behind. Writing in the *Daily Express* in 1916:

"Either it was to the interest of Ireland to identify itself with Empire, or, sulking, in the memories of past wrongs, to remain aloof, or, seeking vengeance for what was done in evil times, actively to associate herself with the aims of the enemy."[1]

Early career

Sheehan began his career as a school teacher and moved on to journalism, writing for a variety of papers including the *Cork Daily Herald* and *Glasgow Observer*. In 1901 he was elected as an MP for Mid Cork as an Irish Land and Labour Association candidate. At 28 he was one of the youngest and certainly most vocal Irish Nationalist members in Parliament.



1873-1948

"I tell you that you may take our men at the point of bayonet…. but you will not succeed in killing the spirit of Irish nationality, and at the end you will find you have lit a flame which is not likely to die out in our generation."

Despite becoming an MP in 1901, D.D. Sheehan was still heavily reliant on journalism to support his family, with MPs not receiving a salary until 1911. Sheehan's stated aim in Parliament was to represent Irish artisans, rural tradesmen, fishermen and agricultural labourers and to improve housing conditions throughout Ireland. He had previously founded the Irish Land and Labour Association. Speaking in a debate on the State of Irish Labourers in 1901, he highlighted the so called 'Age of Progress' in which labourers still lived in conditions that were "breeding grounds of epidemics of the worst and malevolent kind."[2] By 1906 he was instrumental in the passing of the Labourers (Ireland) Act leading to the construction of 40,000 workers' cottages.

Military service with the Royal Munster Fusiliers

When war broke out in 1914, Sheehan was aged 41, married with five sons and five daughters. There was no requirement for him to sign up and he enlisted voluntarily "unless I was forever to stand condemned as a coward before my own conscience".[3] He joined the Royal Munster Fusiliers, which coincided with four other Irish Nationalist MPs enlisting, who were to serve in various regiments.[4] By July 1915 he was a Captain in the regiment fighting in the trenches until 1916, initially on the Loos Front, France.

During the fighting Sheehan suffered ill-health and deafness through shellfire, eventually requiring him to be transferred back toBallincollig Barracks in Cork. By late 1917 he had been discharged from the army. Three of his sons had also enlisted in the war effort and Sheehan was to receive the devastating news that both his eldest (Daniel Joseph) and second son (Martin Joseph) had been killed late in the war. Both are commemorated on the plaque for sons of Members of the House of Commons in Westminster Hall.

Sheehan's return to Parliament

By 1918, Sheehan was back in Parliament voicing his anger and grave concerns over the conscription of Irish men into the British army. Sheehan predicted it would unite all "Irish Nationalists in violent and vehement opposition to you" and reopen "the fundamental hatreds of 700 years."[5] Sheehan's colleagues, William

TIMELINE

12 August 1914

The British Expeditionary Force arrives in France.

A Captain spots for a fellow officer of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, as he fires a machine gun in the trenches at Festubert, 1915.

O'Brien MP and Stephen Michael Healy MP, joined other Irish MPs and trade unionists in forming the Irish Anti-Conscription Committee. The conscription law (Military Services Bill 1918) was passed in Parliament but no one in Ireland was ever successfully drafted into the army. As Sheehan commented:

"I tell you that you may take our men at the point of bayonet – you will not get them in any other way – but you will not succeed in killing the spirit of Irish nationality, and at the end you will find you have lit a flame which is not likely to die out in our generation."[6]

As Sinn Fein grew in political strength and the nature of politics changed in Ireland, Sheehan saw little mileage in contesting his old seat in Cork. He moved with his family to London and was adopted as a Labour Party candidate for the Stepney, Limehouse seat in the East End. His election platform of "Land for fighters", aimed at returning ex-service men, saw him finish second to the incumbent Liberal candidate in December 1918.[7]

Sheehan travelled back to Dublin in 1926 and became the editor of the *Irish Press and Publicity Services* and from 1929 editor of the *Dublin Chronicle*. He was also pro-active in assisting former constituents, having qualified as a barrister in 1911.

Sheehan was to have one last attempt at returning to politics in 1930, standing as a prospective candidate for the Labour Party in the Dublin County Council and Borough elections in the Irish Free State. However, he was not successful in gaining a nomination.

Sheehan died in November 1948 whilst visiting his daughter in London. He is buried alongside his wife in Glasnevin National Cemetery, Dublin.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN NUMBERS

957k
British and Commonwealth soldiers killed

1.4m
French troops killed

1.8m
Russian soldiers killed

2m
German soldiers killed

25%
of the pre-war male population of Austria-Hungary killed or wounded

192k
British soldiers captured as prisoners of war

50%
of British and Empire troops killed have no known grave

300k
British children lost their fathers

50%
chance of a British soldier being wounded, captured or killed on the Western Front

70%
of Britain's dead were aged between 20 and 24

628
Victoria Crosses awarded

1m
men wounded or killed at the Battle of the Somme

10
miles – the distance Allied Forces advanced during the Battle of the Somme

170m
artillery shells fired by the British Military during the First World War

25k
miles of trenches stretching from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border

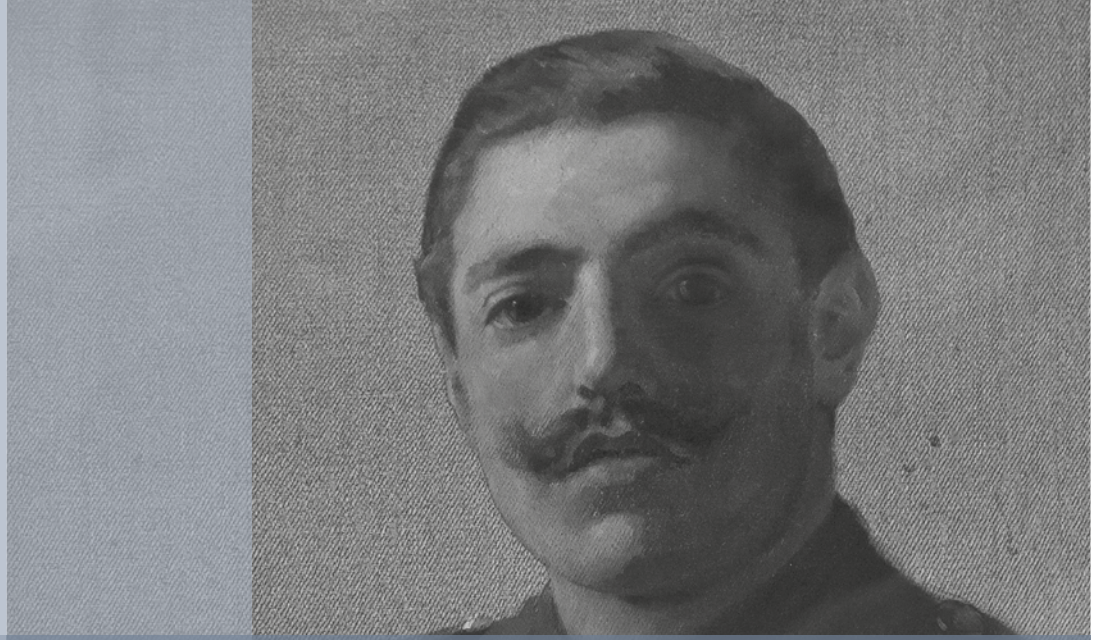
68
the age of the oldest British soldier to die

12
the age of the youngest British soldier to serve

3.1m
letters were delivered to the front every week

100k
homing pigeons used for communications

260k
horses and mules killed during First World War



Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart

TIMELINE

19 October – 22 November 1914
First Battle of Ypres. German troops are prevented from reaching the coastal towns of Calais and Dunkirk.

Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart's statue in Gorsedd Gardens, opposite Cardiff City Hall, is passed by hundreds of people every day, but most are not aware of who he was or of his service in the First World War.

Ninian Crichton-Stuart was the second son of John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquess of Bute, and his wife Gwendolen. After school at Harrow he was interested in pursuing a career in the Diplomatic Service and travelled to Kiev to learn Russian. His father was already unwell, suffering from Bright's Disease and having had several strokes, died while his son was abroad. Bute's heart was buried on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem as was his wish. Ninian was left the Falkland estate in Fife, Scotland.

Ninian went on to study at Christ Church, Oxford, describing the city as "dull as ditchwater." Whilst at Oxford he joined the reserve army and served in the Cameron Highlanders. After graduation he passed the Army Exam and became a Second Lieutenant in the Scots Guards in May 1905.

At his brother's wedding in the summer of 1905 Ninian met his future wife, Ismay Preston; he was the best man and she was one of the bridesmaids. They married a year later and were to have four children of whom their eldest, was named Ninian Patrick but known in the family as Ringan. Ninian served two years in the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards before resigning his commission in 1907 to pursue a career in politics.

1883-1915

"Better death, than shame."
Glamorgan Territorial Battalion motto.

Political campaigns and career

In the late summer of 1907 Ninian was adopted as the Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Conservatives[1] in the Cardiff District of Boroughs seat. He was to nurse the parliamentary seat for three years and his efforts were often portrayed in the local paper, the Western Mail, by the cartoonist JM Staniforth. Ninian's first appearance was as the white knight coming to save a distressed damsel (Cardiff) bound by radicalism. In the January 1910 General Election he fought the Cardiff seat against the Liberal, David Alfred Thomas (later 1st Viscount Rhondda). Thomas had previously been the Member for Merthyr Tydfil, one of two MPs returned, alongside Keir Hardie for Labour. The previous Cardiff Liberal MP had stood down and there had even been talk of bringing in David Lloyd George to fight the seat before DA Thomas was selected.

In a heated campaign, Ninian toured Cardiff meeting workers and residents and delivering numerous speeches and attending rallies. His wife Ismay often accompanied him and even made speeches on his behalf when he lost his voice! The artist JM Staniforth again depicted the mood of the campaign, describing it as 'The Battle of Khar-dif' as Ninian went head to head with all those who challenged him. There was an 87% turnout for the election and despite being the newcomer Ninian only lost by 1,555 votes out of nearly 25,000 cast. His mother described the result for Ninian: "He had lost the seat but won Cardiff." Just weeks after the election Ninian's son, Ringan died aged 2 years 10 months.

Following a hung Parliament a second General Election was called in December 1910. Ninian had continued building up his support locally, including acting as one of the guarantors for Cardiff City Football Club's new ground. The club chose to name the ground Ninian Park in his honour. Their first match was a 2–1 defeat to Aston Villa, but Ninian was to experience greater success in his election campaign.

D.A. Thomas had declined to be re-selected and was at odds with his local party about the Lords' veto of the Liberal government's budget.[2] Meanwhile Ninian was portrayed as the man who knew the local issues and the local area. His election manifesto focused on 'more employment for our workers', 'workshops not workhouses' and 'reform of the poor law.' His Liberal opponent was a former MP and London barrister, Sir Clarendon Hyde.
On 7 December 1910 Ninian was elected Conservative MP for the Cardiff District of Boroughs, winning by a mere 299 votes. One newspaper reported: "not withstanding the rain and wind, the roars and cheering that hailed the

Statue of Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart in Gorsedd Gardens, Cardiff

"30 officers and 812 men, plus 500 horses sailed to France. It was the first Welsh territorial battalion to serve overseas."

return of Lord Ninian were heard as far away as Llanishen." The Liberals were to conduct a post-election analysis of the defeat and came to the conclusion that the Conservatives had a popular man in touch with everybody, whilst the Liberals brought forward a stranger.

Contributions in Parliament

Having served in the Armed Forces, Ninian very much brought this experience and understanding to the Commons Chamber, asking the Secretary of State of War in March 1911 about the high costs incurred by officers in army manoeuvres when billeted on farmers' land.[3] In April 1913 he was also petitioning for improved weapons for the British Cavalry and "whether a new three-edged sword has been issued" and "whether the steel is of British manufacture?"[4]

However, he was prominent in stressing the terrible working conditions and lack of employment rights experienced by many men, women and children. He highlighted the fact that "there are fifty-nine children from two to thirteen years of age in the workhouse under the Kilmallock Board of Guardians"[5] and asked if legislation could be introduced "owing to the long hours and sweating prevalent in the baking trade." In the second reading of the Coal Mines Bill, Ninian, himself the owner of a coal mine in Durham, requested more time to debate the bill as "our responsibility is as great as that of those who represent the working population. For that reason, particularly, I wish to say that from three o'clock to five o'clock is absolutely inadequate."

He also tapped into British patriotism and protectionism of the docks, calling for the "employment of British men on British ships."[6] The arrival of a large number of men and sailors from China was seen as a threat to employment for locals and synonymous with the infamous opium dens.

The Battle of Khard-Dif, 9 December 1909, *Western Mail*

Military Service

In 1912 Ninian was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Welsh Regiment, a Glamorgan territorial battalion, whose motto was "Better death, than shame." At the outbreak of war the battalion was called up. Initially its task was protecting the South Wales docks and Ninian used the opportunity to recruit more soldiers into the ranks.

The majority of the men in the battalion signed up to serve overseas and by late October were preparing for "destination unknown".

On 28 October 1914 the battalion of 30 officers and 812 men, plus 500 horses, sailed to France. It was the first Welsh territorial battalion to serve overseas. Based in Boulogne and later St Omer the battalion was on "lines of communication" handling railway traffic, carrying wounded, burying the dead, escorting prisoners and taking ammunition up to the front lines. They were all anxious to get into the trenches and on one occasion Ninian travelled to Belgium with a colleague to watch British guns shelling German positions.

Following training, during the summer of 1915, the battalion was located in trenches near Ypres. In late September it was on the move to be part of the Reserves for the Battle of Loos. The battle which started on 25 September was to see the first British use of poison gas in the First World War and the introduction of air support from the Royal Flying Corps who attempted to bomb German troops and rail lines.

On 1 October, after many days of marching towards the battlefield, the battalion went into the trenches near Vermelles and was part of an attack on the German held fortification, the Hohenzollern Redoubt. During the fighting men of the 1st and 6th, the Welsh Regiment were cut off in part of a captured trench and supplies of food, water and ammunition could not be got over to them. Ninian instructed that a "sap" trench be dug out towards them. The following day, their ammunition was exhausted, they were under attack from the Germans on three sides and the sap trench was incomplete. The decision was made to evacuate the Welsh from the German trench. Whilst supervising this, Ninian stood on the fire step and looked over the parapet in order to direct the machine-gun fire and to rally his men. He was shot through the head and died instantly. He was 32. Tin hats had not yet been introduced and only became standard issue by the time of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

Sisters In Sorrow, 7 October 1915, *Western Mail*

Numerous tributes were to flow in for Ninian and condolences came from as wide a sphere as Mrs Lloyd George to an organ grinder in Cardiff. Church services and masses were held for him across South Wales and a statue to commemorate him was unveiled in 1919, paid for by public subscription. Fifty years later veterans of the Old Comrades Associationof the 6th Welsh still made an annual pilgrimage to lay wreaths below his statue in Gorsedd Gardens, Cardiff.

Ninian was survived by his wife Ismay and three children, the youngest of whom was just six months old.

Lieutenant Colonel Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart MP is buried in Bethune Town Cemetery in France.

TIMELINE

7 April 1915

First units of Indian Expeditionary Force sail from Egypt for the Dardanelles.

Balkan Troubles

“If there is ever another war in Europe, it will come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans.”

Otto von Bismarck, 1889 (1st Chancellor of Germany)

On the 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by members of the Young Bosnia movement as they toured the capital of the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With tensions already running high amongst European powers, the assassination triggered the descent into war.

The boiling point.

Sir Philip Sassoon MP

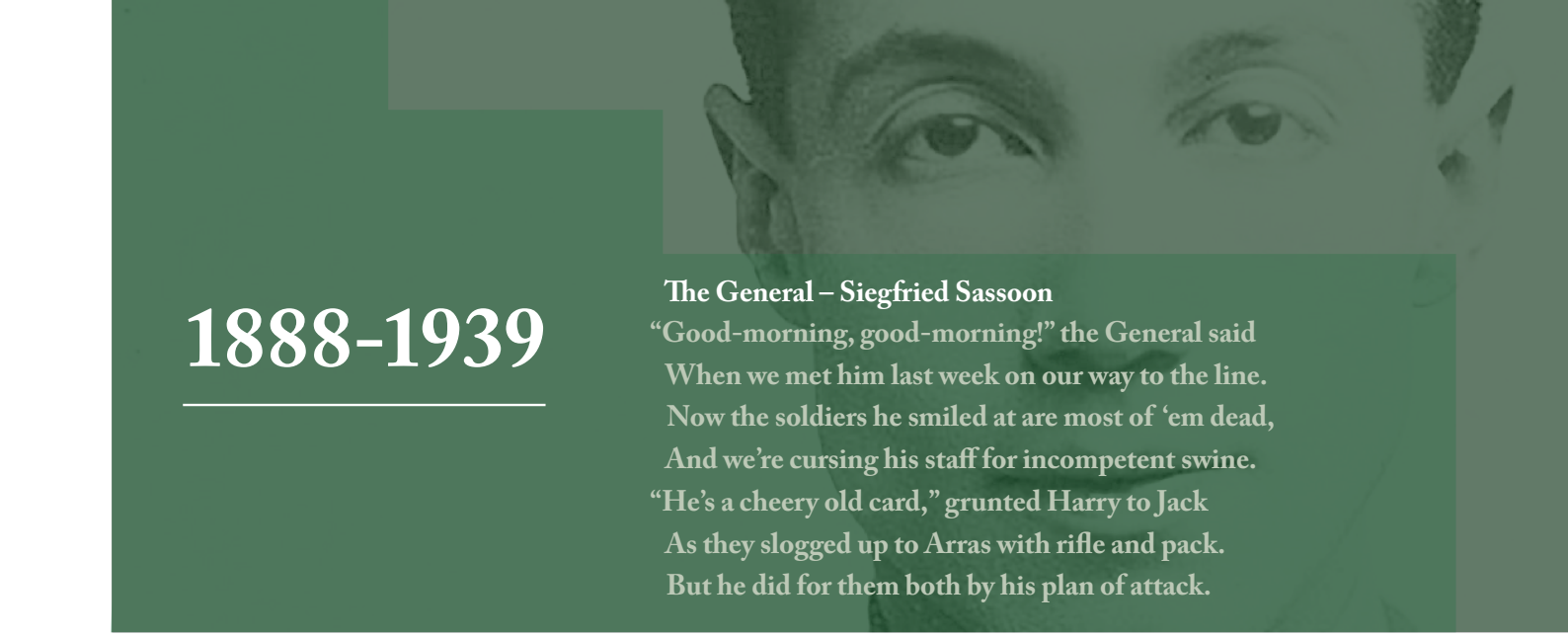
Philip Sassoon, MP for Hythe and a second lieutenant in the East Kent Yeomanry, spent most of the war working as a secretary and general fixer for Field Marshal Haig, who was Commander in Chief of the British forces in France and Flanders. Today, we might recognise his role as a special adviser. One of his main roles was to liaise with powerful newspaper proprietors, particularly Lord Northcliffe who was critical of the conduct of the war and used *The Times* and *Daily Mail* to set out his opinions.

Appointed aged just 27 in December 1915, Sassoon spent much of the war in Haig's headquarters in Montreuil, Pas-de-Calais, as he was a fluent French speaker. He liaised with French military command, organised Haig's diary and corresponded extensively with newspaper proprietors.

Philip's second cousin, Siegfried Sassoon, has become known as one of the defining voices of the conflict with his searing poetry of the waste of human life involved in trench warfare. Yet in the 1920s and 1930s Philip was much more prominent than Siegfried in public life. It was not until later in the 20th century that Field Marshal Haig came under criticism for the huge casualty rate.

Philip did not meet his cousin until after the end of the war and seems to have had little sympathy with Siegfried's decision to protest publicly against the carnage in July 1917. As a staff officer, Philip would have been unlikely to have appreciated Siegfried's poem, *The General*, written in April 1917.

Philip Sassoon was talented in combining deep knowledge and appreciation of art with impressive political skills.



1888-1939

The General – Siegfried Sassoon

"Good-morning, good-morning!" the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.
But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

From a prominent and rich Jewish family, he lost a number of friends from his immediate social circle who were more directly engaged in the fighting, including Prime Minister Asquith's son Raymond. His friends William Orpen and John Singer Sargent became war artists, and Sargent's work illustrating the political and military leaders during the First World War hangs today in the National Portrait Gallery.

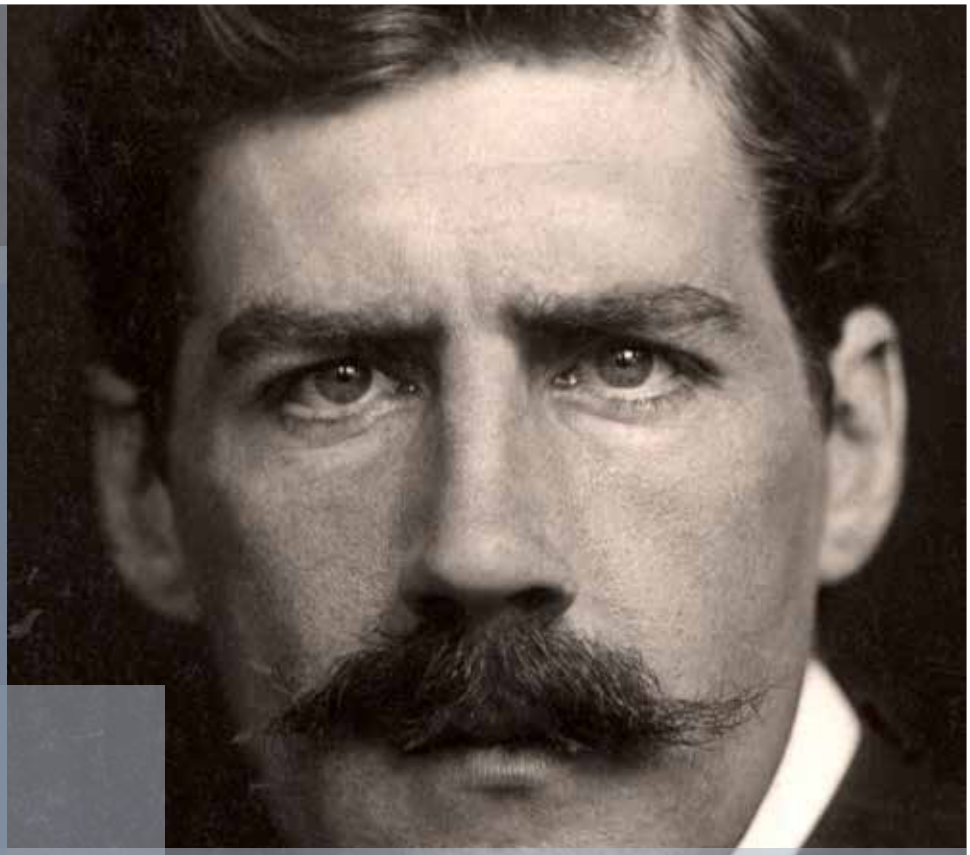
Sassoon was involved in negotiating the terms of a pension and an earldom for Field Marshal Haig from the Prime Minister Lloyd George in August 1919. The role of the private secretary was to undertake discreet discussions to prevent the need for Haig to submit direct correspondence. Lloyd George was so impressed with Sassoon that he went on to offer him a position as his own parliamentary private secretary in 1920. Haig went on to unite all the ex-servicemen's charities into the British Legion in the 1920s, ensuring that both officers and other ranks were represented in the same organisation. This action symbolised the lessening class divide characteristic of post-war society. After his death in 1928 Haig was given a state funeral and an estimated one million people watched his coffin process from Westminster Abbey through the streets of London.

Philip was first elected as a Conservative MP for Hythe in 1912 and was initially the youngest MP in the Commons. His father had been one of nine Jewish MPs in the House when elected in 1899, also for Hythe. After the war, Philip held ministerial posts until his untimely death in 1939. He had a reputation for being one of the greatest hosts in Britain. He entertained members of the Royal Family, including the future Edward VIII, at his lavishly decorated properties, one of which was Trent Park in Enfield, north of London.

As Commissioner of Works, Sassoon was responsible in 1937 for the erection of a statue of Haig in Whitehall, close to the Cenotaph. An enthusiastic aviator, he built an airfield next to his Trent Park house and when he died in 1939, aged 50, of complications from flu, his ashes were scattered by plane over the airfield.

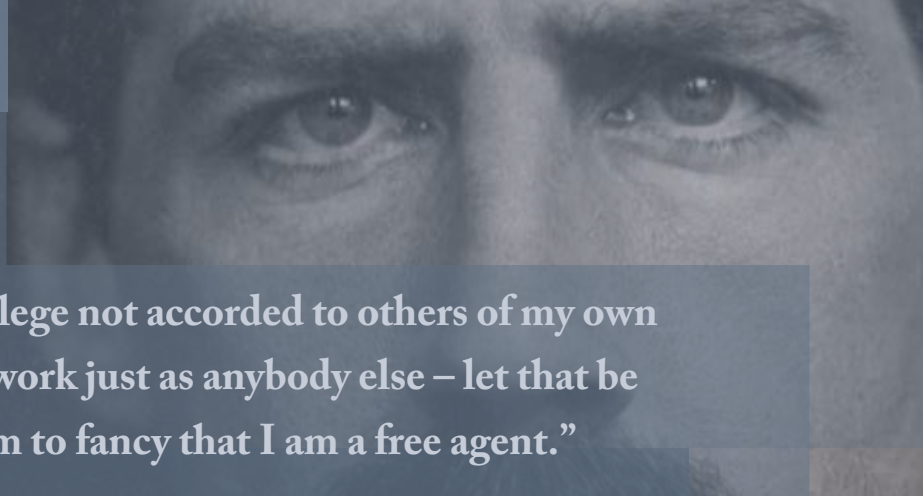
TIMELINE

22 April 1915
The Second Battle of Ypres. First use of poison gas attack on the Western Front by the German military.



27th Earl of Crawford

10th Earl of Balcarres



1871-1940

"Far from it, I enjoy no privilege not accorded to others of my own rank, and take my share of work just as anybody else – let that be recorded for those who seem to fancy that I am a free agent."

Lord Crawford had every opportunity not to see front line duty during the First World War. He was 43, father to 7 (soon to be 8) young children and ran a substantial business[1], contributing greatly to the local economy and employing thousands of workers. He became the only Cabinet Minister to serve in the ranks in the war. Soon after enlisting, in 1915, he was summoned to London and offered a ministerial post which, to Arthur Balfour's amazement, he declined and was even canvassed as a potential Viceroy of India. However, as stated in his war diaries: "Supposing I went home, what could I do? Awaken the public? I have no histrionic devices, the House of Lords has been eviscerated and I am disqualified from sitting in the Commons. I am able-bodied with twelve months behind me in France. I don't quite see where my sphere would lie."[2]

Joining the ranks of the Medical Corps

By April 1915, despite his influence and contacts in the political sphere, he had volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC)[3]. He was to be at the front line for the next 15 months working in the casualty clearing stations dealing with endless operations and soldiers injured in battle. His day-to-day duties included assessing the wounded, recording their details, treating them if possible and scrubbing and cleaning the operating theatres. He could attend up to 11 operations in a day and even found himself treating soldiers on Christmas Day and dealing with one soldier aged 60.

His diaries throughout his time in the RAMC echoed many of the tensions and concerns of front line soldiers. For the 15 months that he penned his diary in the RAMC a particular theme of frustration and anger emerges towards the Officer Class. He pulled no punches and by January 1916 was clear as to why the British forces were struggling and losing so many men:

"I have come across scores, I might say hundreds, who are utterly incompetent to lead men, to inspire confidence or respect, to enforce discipline, to behave even as gentlemen. This war is going to be won by the NCOs and men, not by the commissioned ranks."[4]

Criticism of military leadership and strategy

However, his most scathing attack was aimed at Military High Command, who he believed were ill-prepared and failed to capitalise on technological and military changes as had the

TIMELINE

25 April 1915

Gallipoli Campaign begins as British, French and Imperial troops face the Turkish army.

"What we want are generals with the faces of tigers or vultures or alligators – something that can fight."

TIMELINE

23 May 1915
Italian Government mobilises its army and declares war against Austria-Hungary.

Germans. He noted that there had been no interest in the emergence of aviation as a military weapon and one British General even described it as a fad. Similarly he felt the German military were far quicker to introduce and utilise machine guns, leading to an inevitable slaughter of British troops attacking German positions. He also detailed how the advent of the tank was given little consideration. Overall he believed it was the complete lack of both political and military leadership that meant supplies, strategy and military tactics led British soldiers into a bloody and costly stalemate:

"What we want are generals with the faces of tigers or vultures or alligators – something that can fight."

The nurses he worked alongside were also not saved from his strident views and he saw them as uncooperative, making it unnecessarily difficult for the medics to carry out their work. Upon a new batch of nurses arriving he commented with dismay that, "Among their luggage were vermilion parasols and tennis racquets. What do they expect to find here?"[5] More importantly though he felt they risked the safety of patients and cleanliness of medical facilities:

"Nurses rather overpowering – they ate chocolate all over the operating table and dropped cherry stones on the floor. I always thought it an unpardonable offence to bring food into a theatre. The place is a club room, a cloak room, a serving room and now an estaminet!"[6]

Medical advances and dealing with the casualties

Lord Crawford was in a prime position to witness first-hand the advances in medical equipment and knowledge during the conflict. The big advancements came in the operating theatre with the introduction of effective sterilisation methods and antiseptics to increase the survival rate of troops wounded in action. Shrapnel wounds to the abdominal area were frequent and such advances increased the chances of successful operations and ultimately survival rates.

However, the horrendous conditions in the trenches and demands on the medics meant that there was only so much that they could offer to the soldiers.[7] The cold and resulting frost bite were a permanent feature during the winter months, as was trench foot. Trench fever was also prominent, a product of the water, mud and prevalence of body lice that led to soldiers suffering severe headaches, pain on moving their eyes and extreme soreness of leg and back muscles. Other noticeable effects were shell shock or as termed at the time GOK (God Only Knows). The long-term mental effects of fighting at the front would only be understood decades later. Today it would be diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder but at this time army high command and medics dismissed the effects (often a cause of desertion)[8] as cowardice or malingering. Lord Crawford's understanding[9] and sympathy were also very much lacking:

"Among other things in this routine order sheet of April 13 is the news that three men have been tried by Field General Court martial

on the charge of 'when, on active service, deserting HM service.' In each case the sentences were carried out on the March 20 and 26. It is harsh, but necessary and just to inflict the supreme penalty, and I doubt not the offenders received careful and sympathetic trial."[10]

Service Members in Parliament

What is interesting during the final months of his time at the front is his critical view of politicians flitting between Parliament and the battlefield. In Crawford's opinion you were either a soldier or a Parliamentarian but could not be both:[11]

"How does it come about that these frauds are allowed to retain their commissions? They must be drawing salaries and costing the country money, but their military value is nil."[12]

It was also his strong opinion that many Members had received elevated roles in the Armed Forces due to their political connections and standing. His list cited Lieutenant-Colonel Churchill, Brigadier-General J.E.B Seely, Lieutenant-Colonel John Ward and Hamar Greenwood as having made best use of their influence to achieve senior positions.[13]

Running in parallel was his constant belief that the German army had embraced military innovation far quicker than his British

Lord Crawford and other staff from the Royal Army Medical Corps would have been confronted with such a scene on a daily basis. Soldiers had to be quickly assessed and treated if possible. This picture is taken in Albert on 12 September 1916 during the Battle of the Somme.

GASSED AND WOUNDED – ERIC HENRI KENNINGTON

The introduction of poison gas was but another menace for soldiers and medics to deal with. Its impact was as much psychological as physical with disputes over its actual military effectiveness. In the later stages of the war the use of mustard gas proved more deadly, blistering the lungs and throat of those who inhaled it. Even soldiers with gas masks were not immune to the danger, with the poison soaking into their uniforms, producing severe blisters all over the body.

counterparts, especially in the field of aerial combat. He noted with concern and fascination in February 1916 the accuracy of German bombing raids and "imperturbability" of the German aircraft.

"They are so much prettier than our aircraft, these *Taubes*, though why they should be called after doves I know not. They closely resemble kestrel hawks. We imagine that they were out hunting for our 12in howitzers which passed through the town today."

Crawford in fact began to foresee that this new industrial mechanised warfare was going to mean that future conflicts were likely to result in even greater destruction, casualties and deaths[14]. His comparison to the Boer War, and developments since then, led him to conclude:

"Today is the anniversary of the day when I realised the terrific failure of Neuve Chapelle and the inevitable prolongation of the war… I shall never forget the horror of that week – there was a similar time early in the South African war, when we had a casualty list about the scale of one hour at Neuve Chapelle. How the standard of slaughter has mounted since the winter of 1900, how the engines of destruction have been developed, and a spring offensive, which last year caused us a casualty list of 35,000, may in 1916 entail the loss of 200,000 killed and wounded."

Lord Crawford's posting in the RAMC finally came to an end in July 1916, having treated hundreds of casualties and saved the lives of soldiers involved in the Battles of Ypres, Frezenberg, Festubert and Loos-Artois. He briefly took up a role in the Army Intelligence Corps, which meant he witnessed first-hand the slaughter and destruction of the Battle of the Somme.

"What a scene of desolation is this area of battle. One stumbles across a corpse distended by gangrene, half ridden by luxuriant flowers, and then a few yards further on a patch of land from which every vestige of vegetation has been

completely burned. What is marked on the map as a wood is in reality a seared row of skeleton trees. This is the most violent and wasteful of all the invasions of nature which a bombardment involves."

He stayed in the role for but a few days before responding to an urgent appeal from the Conservative leader Bonar Law to return to politics by joining the Asquith coalition government as Minister of Agriculture; it was a time when Britain faced the risk of starvation because of German submarine activity cutting off food imports.

Achievements in Government

Lord Crawford's involvement and experience in the First World War greatly affected his thinking, decision making and ultimately his policies as a politician. Having been appointed Minister of Agriculture in July 1916, he was given the extra responsibility of chairing the Royal Commission on Wheat Supplies and it was his experience of the First World War that led him to push for the creation of a 'standard loaf of bread', high in nutritional content for workers and families. Crawford was also very much aware of Britain's dependency on wheat production to feed the army. During the First World War, the loss of merchant ships and agricultural workers fighting at the front had placed enormous strain on these supplies. Under his chairmanship he was to expand the Commision's role into the largest wheat and cereal importing body in the world, which coordinated all buying and selling in Europe.

Other notable achievements in the political sphere included chairing the Broadcasting Inquiry that led to the creation and establishment of the BBC. Throughout his life, Lord Crawford was heavily involved and passionate about the arts and believed in their wider cultural and social benefits.

Early life and political career

David Lindsay was born in 1871, son of the 26th Earl of Crawford and 9th Earl of Balcarres. The Lindsays' heritage and roots were in Fife, Scotland, and they were among a group of barons and landowners who signed the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) asking the Pope to support them in their bid for Scottish independence. Educated at Eton College, he went on to read History at Magdalen College, Oxford. After university he became involved in social work in Bethnal Green, East London.

In 1895, following his family's history of involvement in politics, he was elected Conservative MP in Chorley, Lancashire. It was a fairly safe seat, especially as his father controlled the neighbouring Wigan Coal and Iron Company, employing 10,000 workers. He held the seat until 1913, when his father died; he inherited the title of 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres and was elevated to the Lords. Crawford married Constance Pelly and had two sons and six daughters. He noted in his diary that it was the short periods of leave with his family that enabled him to keep going through the dark days of the war.

With the fall of Lloyd George and the Coalition Government in 1922, he effectively retired from front line politics. He focused his remaining life on his family and passion for art and museums. In 1939, as another World War approached, Crawford's view on Churchill had very much changed. Describing him in March 1916 as a man who was "always a sneak" and "whose diplomacy is Teutonic in clumsiness and ineptitude"[15], he had now come to the firm opinion that Churchill was the only man who could save Britain from the Nazi menace.

Lord Crawford died at his family home, Haigh Hall, on 8 March 1940. He was survived by 7 of his children.

TIMELINE

21 February 1916

Battle of Verdun begins, a total of 300,000 German and French troops killed in battle.

The first victims of war

On 4 August 1914, Germany invaded neutral Belgium. The first victims were the civilian population. German troops were to commit numerous atrocities and there was widespread damage to property in Belgium. The cities and towns that suffered the most included Aaarschot, Andenne, Tamines on the Meuse, Dinant and Leuven where the university library of priceless manuscripts was burnt to the ground. In all 6,000 Belgians died in the killing spree with approximately 1.5 million residents (20% of the population) fleeing the invading army. The image of barbarous, bloodthirsty German troops was used as powerful propaganda throughout the war. The subsequent posters and newspaper reports allowed Allied forces to reinforce the case for intervention and to persuade neutral countries such as the USA to enter the war.

The triumph of "culture."

Thomas Edmund Harvey MP

1875-1955

"We are prepared, if need be, I believe, to lay down life itself in the cause of our fellow countrymen, but we cannot take life, even at the call of the State"

For five years before the war, Thomas Edmund Harvey had been the warden of Toynbee Hall, the social reform centre in east London and from 1910 he was the Liberal MP for West Leeds. He came to prominence, however, during the war as the Member of Parliament who was largely responsible for ensuring that the so-called 'conscience clause' was enacted in the Military Service Act 1916.

Involvement in the Quaker Movement

He was 41 and married when the Act was initially passed and so it did not apply to him directly – but his own personal safety was not his primary motivation. Even more than a politician 'TEH', as he was known, was a Quaker first and foremost. From a prominent Leeds Quaker family, he was an avowed pacifist and on the eve of Britain's entry into war, 3 August 1914, he pleaded with Asquith in the House:

"I am convinced that this war, for the great masses of the countries of Europe, and not for our own country alone, is no people's war. It is a war that has been made – I am not referring to our leaders here – by men in high places, by diplomatists working in secret, by bureaucrats who are out of touch with the peoples of the world, who are the remnant of an older evil civilisation which is disappearing by gradual and peaceful methods. I want to make an appeal on behalf of the people, who are voiceless except in this House, that there should be a supreme effort made to save this terrible wreckage of human life"

But war came and the Quakers, or to give them their correct name, the Society of Friends, were swift to act. They formed an emergency committee in that first week and the Friends' Ambulance Unit three weeks later. Then, just a few days after that, the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee was set up.

Assisting refugees fleeing the conflict

TEH was to play a significant role on the Committee and was president of its French Mission. Still a Member of Parliament, he was part of the Friends' first expedition which left England in November 1914 to provide relief to the thousands of refugees who flooded northern France:

"Those who have not seen for themselves the destruction caused by bombardment and fire, when all other considerations have been subordinated to military necessity, or the determination to inflict signal punishment on the population of a hostile nation, can have only a dim idea of the condition of scores of villages

TIMELINE

2 March 1916
Conscription comes into force in Britain.

and little towns in north-eastern France today"

Their immediate task was to build huts for the local inhabitants as their homes had been destroyed in the fighting at Sommeilles. His wife would later speak of their immersion in the relief work: "Mr Harvey and myself could drive nails and saw off pieces of planks". Their next task was to help them feed themselves. And this was not a small task. In his reports back to the Quakers, TEH described the total war he had witnessed:

"We have seen the charred bones of sheep and oxen lying in the stalls of the farmyard which had been burnt over them. All the harvest, which had just been garnered in, was burnt in village after village".

He was to continue with this work well into 1920, but at the same time, another aspect of the war was to begin dominating his life. The 1915 'shell crisis' (when it became clear that not enough munitions were being produced) was not the only resourcing problem to face the Asquith government. Even with restrictions on the press under the Defence of the Realm Act, news of the scale of casualties on the Western Front could not be suppressed and fighting men were in increasingly short supply. This led the government to move reluctantly towards conscription as the only way of guaranteeing sufficient numbers of soldiers.

The introduction of conscription

When Asquith made his appeal to unmarried men to enlist in December 1915, Harvey spoke passionately in the Commons about the fact that the Prime Minister's words made:

"no exception for religious conviction, for conscientious conviction, however profound, and I do appeal to the Prime Minister that he will make clear his position to the country as a whole on this point without delay. It is of the very greatest importance . . . I believe that it is possible for citizens to serve the State without transgressing the higher claims in which they believe conscientiously. When religion and conscience tell a man that he must not take human life I believe the State ought to recognise that and ought to allow him freedom to find other forms of service which may be of the truest value to the community"

TEH's Quaker pacifism meant that he could not sit back and allow other men who shared his convictions to be forced to fight. Alongside other Quaker colleagues (such as Arnold Rowntree, Joseph Rowntree's nephew) TEH lobbied for 'conscientious objection' to be explicitly recognised in the 1916 Military Service Act as a condition for exemption from military service.

There was considerable resistance to this in the House during the Second Reading of the Bill in January 1916. The Conservative MP George Lane-Fox commented:

"If we were all conscientious objectors, if as a nation we were conscientious objectors, it would only be a matter of time in the ordinary play of the forces of the world when that nation would be exterminated. These men are entirely wrong-headed. I respect their consciences, though I do not respect their heads so much".

However, by the end of January, the Bill was passed along with the 'conscience clause' intact – one of only four grounds of exemption.

Under the Act, men could be exempted on grounds of conscience if a Military Service Tribunal found in their favour, in which case they had to take up work of 'national importance' either in the Non-Combatant Corps or, for instance, in munitions factories. If they were refused exemption they could appeal all the way up to the Central Tribunal in London, but if a conscientious objector's appeals were rejected, he could end up in a cycle of arrest, military court-martial and imprisonment.

TEH would later call the Act "clumsy, ill-conceived and harshly administered" but he would also accept that the mere act of recognising conscience was an important breakthrough.

Treatment of conscientious objectors

With millions of men conscripted into the military over the next two and a half years, the number of conscientious objectors was relatively small – around 16,000. But some of them were to face enormous hardship on account of their beliefs. A personal statement from a Seventh Day Adventist who was court-martialled in France for refusing to work on his Sabbath was published by the Conscientious Objectors Information Bureau in November 1917:

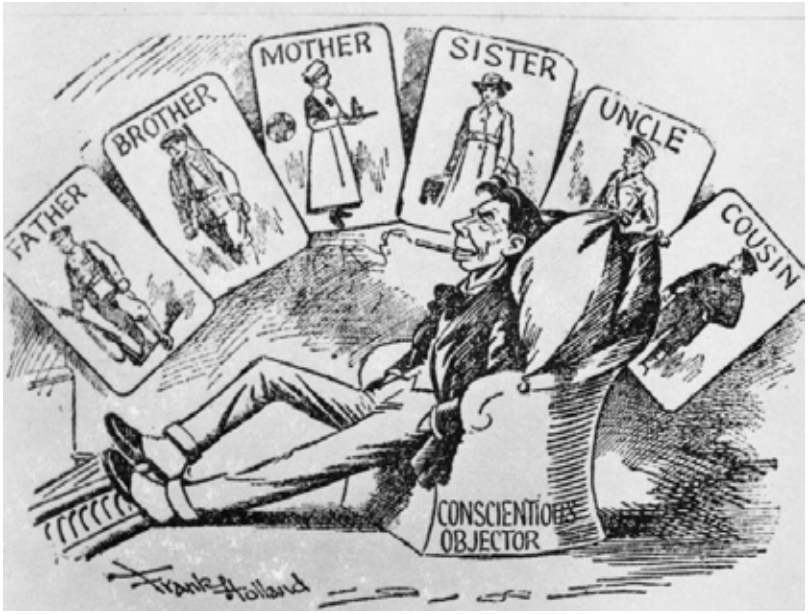
"I was taken out of my cell and two cement blocks weighing about 35 lbs each were roped round my neck, one hanging upon my chest, the other upon my back. With my wrists still in irons behind my back I was made to pace the passage at a quick march. At last, from exhaustion, I sank beneath the strain and remained in a fit about an hour"

Another letter in TEH's papers talks of the case of one James Brightmore in June 1917:

"This is the most brutal and inhuman of the whole lot. After serving two sentences in prison, one of five and another of three months, he was sent back to his unit at Cleethorpes. For refusing to obey military orders he was sentenced to 28 days solitary confinement – to be given raw rations to cook himself. The solitary confinement was in a hole dug in the earth – 3ft by 2ft and 10ft deep – containing 2ft of water, a strip of wood was given him to stand upon. He was in this hole 11 days and nights"

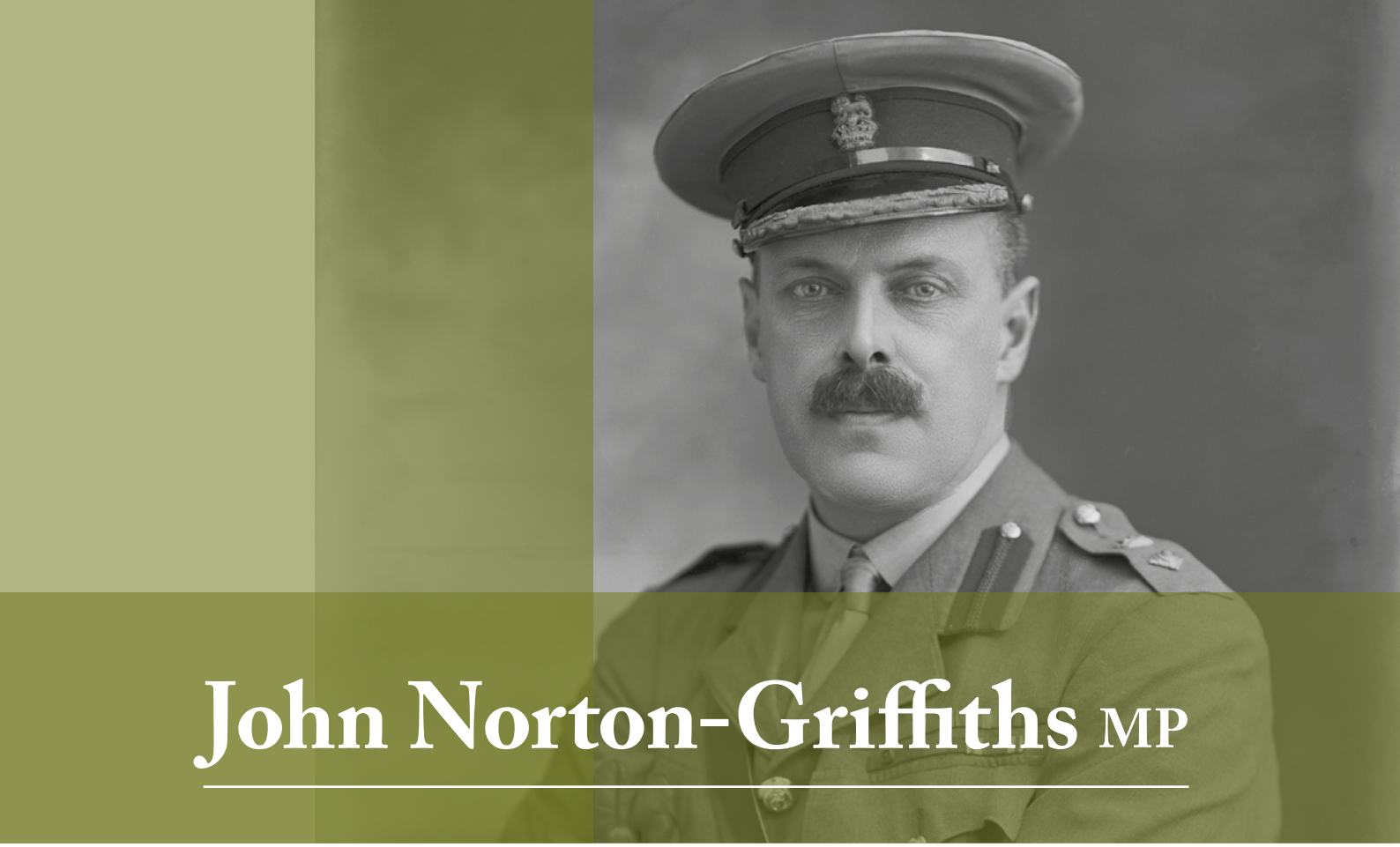
When news of Brightmore's ordeal was published in the *Manchester Guardian*, questions were asked in Parliament about his treatment, with a War Minister declaring, "There is no intention of sending Brightmore to France". Stephen Gwynn, one of six Irish nationalist MPs who enlisted in the army, asked in frustration, "Could the hon. Gentleman explain how on earth it is impossible for him to ascertain whether a specific punishment was inflicted upon a specific man in a known camp after at least a week has elapsed since his attention was first drawn to it?"

TEH would work diligently to ensure that conscientious objectors were treated more humanely than Brightmore, and served on the Pelham Committee which oversaw the work of 'national importance', which most COs undertook. He stood down from Parliament in the 1918 general election, but was back five years later, even presenting a petition to Parliament in 1924 signed by nearly 20,000 people which urged the abolition of the death penalty. In 1937 he was elected for the Combined English Universities seat as an Independent Progressive candidate. He continued to serve in this seat throughout the Second World War and died peacefully at his home in Leeds in 1955.



AN OBJECT LESSON

"This Little Pig stayed at Home". COs were depicted in the media as lazy, unpatriotic and happy for others to serve the war effort. The cartoon was published in the weekly nationalist newspaper *John Bull* owned by the controversial figure Horatio Bottomley MP. At its height during the First World War the paper had a circulation in excess of two million.



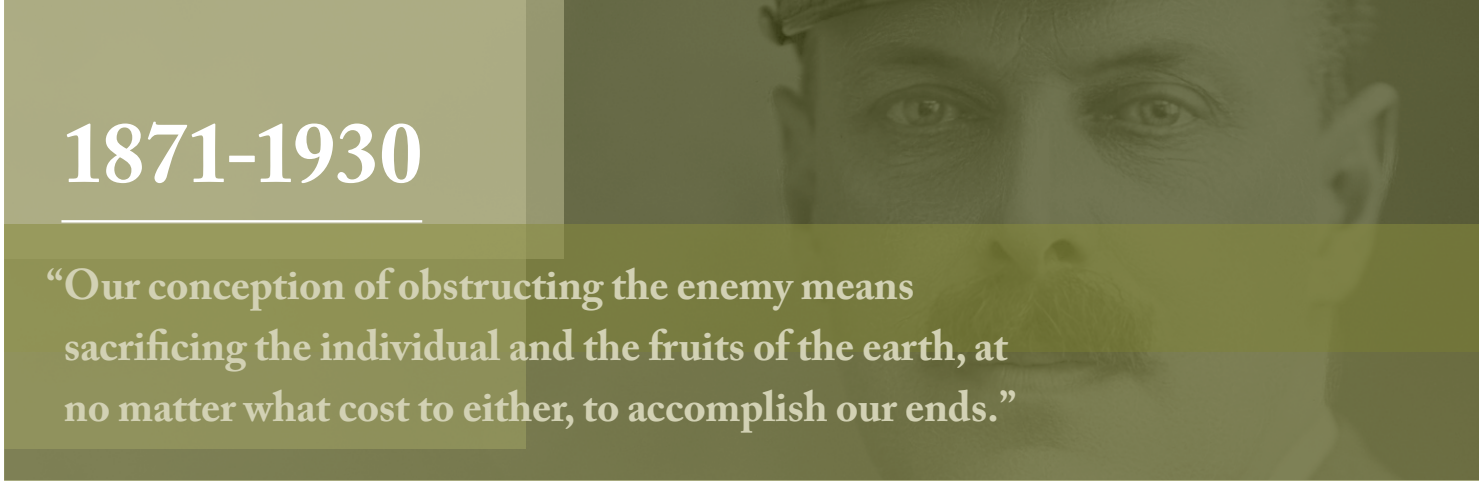
John Norton-Griffiths MP

The First World War has traditionally been depicted as one of trench warfare, producing a war of attrition and stalemate. The image of countless troops being sent over the top to their death is synonymous with the conflict. Whilst undoubtedly this is a fair reflection of the war, there was a more tactical battle taking place beneath the ground; one aimed at avoiding mass British casualties during attacks and eliminating the enemy by stealth and surprise.

John Norton-Griffiths MP was the spearhead behind such efforts and his drive to implement the tactics of tunnel warfare led to the recruitment of 20,000 miners and engineers. Norton-Griffiths had a meteoric rise as a mining entrepreneur seeking to capitalise on the opportunities emanating from the British Empire. In 1889 he gained his first experience working in the gold mines of Johannesburg, learning about the use of tunnelling and dynamite for the extraction process. He quickly became a deputy manager at one of the gold mines and was involved and arrested in the botched Jameson Raid (1895-96) in the Transvaal.

Mining magnate and political career

His first big mining operation came in 1902, excavating the terrain of the Ivory Coast for



1871-1930

"Our conception of obstructing the enemy means sacrificing the individual and the fruits of the earth, at no matter what cost to either, to accomplish our ends."

its gold reserves. From 1905-08 he led on the construction of the Benguela railway in what is now Angola. With the backing of financiers, he had formed his own company in 1909 and won a multitude of contracts that included Yarmouth and Weston-Super-Mare piers, Southsea promenade, parts of the London Underground and work as far afield as Canada and Azerbaijan.

However, more significantly, he had been tasked with constructing the Battersea to Deptford drainage system and also in 1913 was contracted to lay the sewage system in Manchester. It was this ready pool of workers with a knowledge of tunnelling that allowed him to form a regiment aimed at changing the dynamics of the First World War.

In January 1910 he was elected as a Conservative MP[1] for Wednesbury, standing on a platform to protect British trade and extolling the virtues of the British Empire. Some of his earliest contributions in the Commons included asking for reform of the House of Lords, albeit by allowing territories that were part of the British Empire to have representation.[2] In 1913 he also asked Ministers to provide relief to the families and children of workers striking in the Midlands.[3]

As Whitehall prepared for war at the end of July 1914, Norton-Griffiths was like many enthused by the prospect of a decisive and quick victory against the Germans. Advertising in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he encouraged former soldiers in the Boer War to enlist, leading to the formation of the 2nd King Edward's Horse regiment.[4] By January 1915 fighting had resulted in deadlock and there were already signs that the German military were adapting to the new conditions. In December 1914, Indian troops situated close to Festubert were killed when a vertical blast from below ripped through their trench, followed by scores of German infantry attacking over the top.

The recruitment of miners

Similar attacks were replicated and Norton-Griffiths believed that his experience in tunnelling and engineering could counter anything the Germans had at their disposal. His ideas filtered up the military chain and Lord Kitchener ordered 10,000 'clay kickers' to be recruited. Drawing on men from his own projects and tapping into mining regions, he recruited over 200 men in the first week.[5] They had the unique distinction of being in a military unit yet with no actual military training or experience.

Nine tunnelling companies[6] were quickly created that fell under the remit of the Royal Engineers. As no formal military command existed for the miners, Norton-Griffiths instructed the men to use their skills for defensive purposes in order to detect German tunnels approaching British positions.

TIMELINE

24-29 April – 1916
Easter Rising in Dublin led by Irish Nationalists.

Norton-Griffiths introduced a range of innovations to assist with the tunnelling, in what was an incredibly dangerous[7] and arduous process:

"The tunneller lay on his back, at 45 degrees to the floor of the tunnel, and facing the work-face, supported by a wooden back-rest shaped like a crucifix. He dug away at the wall into clay before him, using a special long-bladed light spade between his feet. The clay was hauled out by the digger's mate, who worked behind him with another man who helped him load it into sacks to be dragged to the rear. A second team lined the tunnel with wooden props to prevent it from collapsing."[8]

The development of tunnel warfare

One of the keys to British success lay in detecting enemy tunnels before their efforts alerted German miners. Norton-Griffiths equipped miners with the geo-phone, having seen demonstrations at the University of Paris. The device was essentially an adapted stethoscope but was incredibly effective when used. Miners could monitor German progress from a distance of 100ft in clay and 260ft in chalk tunnels.

The British had experienced some success in April 1915 at the Second Battle of Ypres. Having detected a German tunnel close by they managed to detonate it with explosives before the Germans could. However, it did mean that British tunnellers were constantly reacting to the tactics of German mining without offering a more targeted strategy.

Norton-Griffiths felt a more aggressive approach was needed and he facilitated a number of measures to aid this. Firstly was the introduction of ammonal, an explosive far more powerful than TNT that would lead to some of the biggest detonations of the First World War. The issue of pay was also a major source of friction for the miners and almost led to strike action. Norton-Griffiths acted as the negotiator between military command and the miners, managing to introduce an escalating pay scale based on experience and skills. Finally, Norton-Griffiths was a keen

An intense scene of sappers from a Canadian Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers constructing a tunnel. The men are digging, moving earth and using pulleys and levers to erect support timbers within the interior.

The painting depicts the tunnel at St Eloi which was 1,650 feet long and 125 feet deep. It was used to explode the largest mine of the war. This was one of 19 mines exploded at the launch of the Messines offensive in June 1917.

proponent of deeper tunnels, which led to digging some 70-125ft beneath no man's land and ultimately under enemy lines.[9]

The blasts get bigger

Two infamous operations were to define the operations of the miners and the frightening destruction that was now possible. The first happened on 1 July 1916, at the start of the Battle of the Somme. Two separate tunnels had been painstakingly dug in the Picardy region with 900 men working on each one. Packed with 40,000 lbs of explosives in one and 60,000 in the other, the blast was to rip through the ground with a crater 450ft wide at La Boiselle. However, German soldiers had detected the tunnelling just 24 hours before and retreated to safer ground. The blast was so powerful that German soldiers were still killed but as British infantry troops flowed over the top they were massacred by well positioned German machine guns. 11,000 soldiers were killed just along this section and by the end of the day's fighting there were over 57,000 British casualties.

Subsequently, in 1917, a co-ordinated attack created a blast so powerful, it could allegedly be heard in London. Tunnelling began in mid-1915 and it would take until June 1917 to reach their intended target, the Messines Ridge in West Flanders, Belgium. 22 tunnels were finally completed, with nearly one million lbs of explosives laid. The resulting blast vaporised all life in its path and the strategy first devised by Norton-Griffiths had proved to be as ruthless as it was destructive. It is hard to gauge the impact of the detonation but estimates have predicted that 10,000 German soldiers were killed and thousands more captured in a state of shell-shock.

Tunnelling as an offensive form of attack was to have its limitations as the nature of warfare changed. After 1917, troops were moving faster than the tunnellers could dig and specialised infantry units were now attacking key logistical posts and weaker sections along the flanks. Most tunnellers were now switched to constructing dugouts, dressing stations, hospitals and even subterranean coffee stalls.

Destroying the oil fields

By 1917 Norton-Griffiths' involvement in the tunnelling process had to come an end. His trail of destruction seemed to follow him and the Military Intelligence Department called him up for one final yet hugely significant mission. He was asked to destroy the oil fields of Romania before they fell into German hands.

Romania had entered the war in August 1916 but soon suffered a series of defeats by German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian troops. As German troops closed in on the oil fields, Norton-Griffiths arrived just in time to carry out a trail of devastation and damage with the aid of British engineers.

Going from town to town with his team of engineers he managed to wipe out the entire infrastructure of the oil fields.[10] The Romanian government and oil producers were promised compensation but eventually received nothing as it was offset against their war debt to Britain.

In 1918 Norton-Griffiths stood down from his seat in Wednesbury and was elected to Wandsworth (1918-24). He also helped to form the 'Great War Association', a forerunner of the Royal British Legion.

His extraordinary life was to take one final twist. Visiting Alexandria, Egypt, in September 1930 he took a rowing boat out to sea. About an hour later his body was seen floating in the water. When the search party arrived he was found with a bullet through his temple but with no sign of the gun. The coroner's conclusion was suicide and his body was eventually brought back to rest in Mickleham, Surrey.

TIMELINE

31 July 1917

Third Battle of Ypres begins leading to three months of fighting ending with the the Battle of Passchendaele. In all there were 310,000 British and 260,000 German casualties.

Trench Warfare

By Christmas 1914 British, French and German armies were locked into the murderous stalemate that defined the war. Gains made by either side were quickly reversed by counter-attacks. A range of measures were introduced in an attempt to break the deadlock. These included the use of poison gas, tunnel warfare and the introduction of new military vehicles such as the tank.

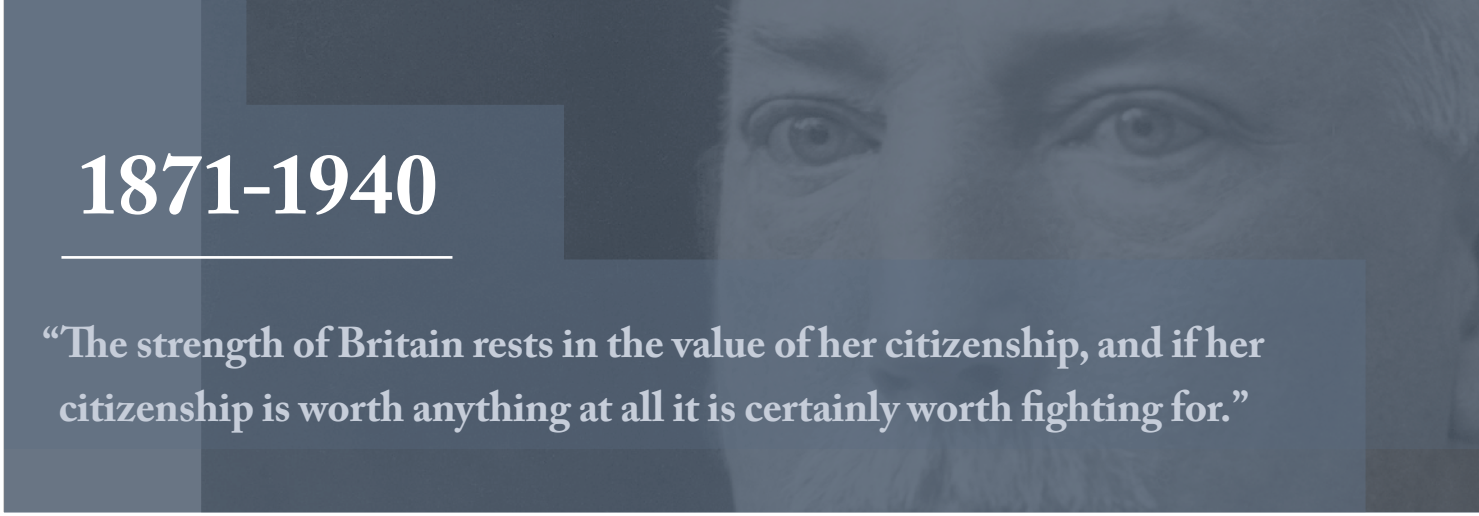
Tommy (ready to go "over the top"). "I suppose we shall be making history in a few minutes, Sergeant?"
Sergeant. "History be blowed! What you've got to make is geography."

James Craig MP

James Craig was a leading Unionist figure of his time. He became the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and served in that capacity for nearly 20 years. He was elected as the MP for East Down and later North Down before becoming a member of the Northern Ireland Parliament. Craig played a key role in organising resistance to the Home Rule Bill on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, was a supporter of partition, and was pivotal in the decision for the 6 counties to form the basis of Northern Ireland. He was instrumental in establishing the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) that was to form the 36th Ulster Division during the First World War.

Involvement in the Boer War

Craig came from a solidly middle-class background, his father owning a successful whiskey distillery business in Belfast. Craig initially pursued a career in the financial sector, establishing his own stockbroking firm, Craigs & Co. However, he sought greater adventure and enlisted in the army during the Boer War. He joined the Royal Irish Rifles in 1900 and was later seconded to the Imperial Yeomanry. During the conflict Craig was taken prisoner by the Boers but was later released due to injuries sustained in battle. The war itself was to have echoes of the First World War, both with the belief in a quick victory by Christmas and



1871-1940

"The strength of Britain rests in the value of her citizenship, and if her citizenship is worth anything at all it is certainly worth fighting for."

the unforeseen cost in casualties and capital.

The experience and service in South Africa had made Craig far more politically aware and "the war had given him a heightened awareness of the Empire and a pride in Ulster's place in it."[1] His interest in politics became more pronounced when his brother Charles was elected Unionist MP for South Antrim (February 1903). Craig was prominent in his campaign and gained his first experience of political battle.

On the political campaign trail

In March 1903 Craig was keen to continue his involvement with the Irish Unionist Party and was given the opportunity to contest the Fermanagh North seat. Standing on a staunchly Unionist platform he rallied behind local farmers and labourers who he felt were pivotal in sustaining Ulster and its heavy industry. Despite being an unknown candidate weeks before, he was only narrowly defeated by the Russellite[2] Unionist candidate, Edward Mitchell. Craig's efforts were not unnoticed and he was selected for the seat of East Down, which he won in the 1906 General Election.

Craig's political career came to the fore during the Home Rule crisis. He was vehemently opposed to the third attempt by the Government to pass a Home Rule Bill. The bill would have seen powers devolved to a Dublin Government that would have jurisdiction over the Protestant community in Northern Ireland.

Along with Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, Craig made detailed preparations and plans to defend the North against what he termed the repeal of Protestant civil and religious liberties. James Craig decided a written oath was needed to formally declare Ulster's resistance to Home Rule. The Ulster Covenant commissioned by Craig was formally signed on Saturday, 28 September 1912 and following rallies across the provinces nearly half a million people were to sign it.

Formation of the UVF

By 1912 Craig had also begun the process of organising and forming a private army in the form of the UVF. Working with an intermediary, Craig manage to procure a large quantity of arms from Germany. By April 1914 the UVF was 100,000 strong and smuggled in approximately 35,000 rifles and 3 million rounds of ammunition.[3] If the Home Rule legislation had been enacted it would have put Craig in a perilous position, defying the law and Crown and constitution, which its party had pledged to support.

TIMELINE

5 December 1916

Herbert Asquith's wartime government collapses for a second time leading to David Lloyd George becoming Prime Minister.

As Craig's troops went into battle "side by side with them, on the other flank, was the Fourth Division, containing two battalions of the Dublin Fusiliers"

However, events in the summer of 1914 took a turn that postponed any decision and implementation of the Home Rule Bill. The Ulster Unionists and Craig saw the war as a perfect opportunity to show their support for the Crown and Empire by offering the services of the UVF as a fighting formation. Craig managed to persuade Lord Kitchener to remould the UVF into the 36th Ulster Division. On hearing the agreement, Craig personally visited Moss Brothers to arrange uniforms for the troops.[4] Craig was given the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the division and three of his four brothers joined the division, the fourth signing up to the Royal Flying Corps.

In August 1915, the Ulster Division was posted abroad. It would have to wait another year before seeing front-line action with the colossal mobilisation of men and arms for the Battle of the Somme. On 1 July 1916, 9,000 soldiers from the Ulster Division went into battle; by the end of the second day only 2,500 remained. In all, 210,000 Irishmen were to serve, with 35,000 killed over the course of the war.

Members of the Ulster Volunteer Force march through Belfast, rifles on shoulders, shortly before the First World War.

16th Irish and 36th Ulster Division

Just as telling and significant were that Protestants and Catholics fought in unison, breaking down old religious and sectarian differences for a shared experience on the front. The 16th Irish Division had been formed from the Irish Volunteer Force spurred on by the recruiting efforts of the Irish Nationalist leader, John Redmond MP.[5] As Craig's troops went into battle "side by side with them, on the other flank, was the Fourth Division, containing two battalions of the Dublin Fusiliers, in one of which John Redmond's son commanded a company; so that he and the Ulstermen went over shoulder to shoulder."[6] The Irish Nationalist MP Tom Kettle also served in the Dublin Fusiliers, subsequently being killed at Ginchy in September 1916 during an Irish assault on German positions.

Poor health had prevented Craig directly serving on the front line[7] and by the end of 1916 he had resigned his commission to take up a ministerial post. He received a baronetcy in 1918. The Irish soldiers and war effort were never far from his mind, though. In November 1917 he intervened and resolved a dispute with striking workers at munition factories in Belfast. Likewise in February 1918 he visited GHQ, at the same time as Winston Churchill was inspecting trenches on the front line.[8] He also spoke up in favour of conscripting Irishmen into the army in 1918 as the Government looked to extend the Military Services Act.

First Prime Minister of Northern Ireland

The next 24 years would be devoted to the establishment of a Northern Irish Parliament and Government. Craig was pivotal in the negotiations and dealings around the Government of Ireland Act 1920. It was his decision to propose the six Ulster counties that would eventually form Northern Ireland. Many of his colleagues were angered that he left out the three other Ulster counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan. In Craig's opinion the six counties would create a more robust unit, both in terms of its political and religious makeup and in securing the borders. It was in discussions with the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, that Craig initiated the establishment of the Ulster Special Constabulary and later Royal Ulster Constabulary to police and defend the provinces.

Craig's key role in brokering a deal with the Government led him to be a natural choice as the new Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and his formal approval came from the Ulster Unionist Council in January 1921. As Prime Minister of Northern Ireland he was faced with the daunting task of creating an entirely new government apparatus, maintaining both internal security and ensuring the British Government did not backtrack on their agreement following their continued negotiations with Sinn Fein.

Craig's attentions were split three ways with domestic matters in Northern Ireland and the interwoven relationships of London and Dublin. The Government of Ireland Act 1920, allowed for devolved Parliaments in northern and southern Ireland and on 6 December 1921 the Irish Free State was officially established by the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Craig met Irish republicans, Éamon de Valera and Michael Collins, in an attempt to foster more cordial relations and stem the rising tide of violence.

Craig's lasting legacy was also facilitating the construction of the Stormont buildings to provide a permanent home for the Northern Ireland Parliament. His eye for detail and involvement meant that his "longest and most passionate letters to the Cabinet Secretariat related to the design of concrete fencing posts on the Stormont estate!"[9]

In 1927, he was created Viscount Craigavon of Stormont in the County of Down and his subsequent election victories enabled him to serve as Prime Minister up until the Second World War. Throughout his years as Prime Minister he staunchly defended the Unionist position and was continually involved in protracted negotiations on the financial settlement that Northern Ireland should receive from Westminster. He was again involved in the recruitment of Ulstermen to the war effort in 1939, proposing that conscription to the army should also apply to Northern Ireland.

James Craig, 1st Viscount Craigavon died in November 1940 and was buried in the grounds of the Stormont Parliament building. He was survived by his wife Cecil and three children.

Village of Wytschaete captured during the Battle of Messines on 7 June 1917 by the 16th Irish and 36th Ulster divisions.

TIMELINE

15 March 1917
Nicholas II, Tsar of Russia, abdicates leading to Russia's eventual withdrawal from the war.

Margaret Haig Thomas

Margaret Haig Thomas, suffragette and egalitarian feminist, daughter of an MP, survived the sinking of the *Lusitania*, promoted women's work during the war and was a successful businesswoman and magazine proprietor. She became a hereditary woman peer in her own right and fought a famous test case in an unsuccessful attempt to take her seat in the House of Lords in the 1920s.

Margaret was the daughter of Liberal MP and Welsh businessman David Alfred Thomas (D.A.) and Sybil Margaret Thomas (née Haig), distantly related to Field Marshal Douglas Haig who was commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France 1915-1918).[1] Born in 1883, Margaret was educated first by governesses and then at a girls' school, before spending two terms at Somerville College, Oxford. She married Captain Humphrey Mackworth in 1908, but they divorced in 1922 and had no children. Margaret later wrote of their marriage, "Humphrey held that no one should ever read in a room where anyone else wanted to talk. I... held, on the contrary, that no one should ever talk in a room where anyone else wanted to read."[2]

2nd Viscountess Rhondda (1883-1958)

"Nothing in the whole conduct of the War has been more striking than the readiness and the ability of the women in nearly all the belligerent nations to render invaluable service to their respective countries".

Involvement in the suffragette movement

Margaret's mother Sybil had always been an active, law-abiding supporter of women's suffrage. Margaret, however, joined the militant Women's Social & Political Union (WSPU) and Sybil came to support the WSPU too. Margaret was involved in many suffragette activities, especially in the Newport area. Most famously she went to prison for setting fire to a post box, where she went on hunger strike. She was released after six days under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' (1913) so weakened by hunger she was at risk of death. Margaret described the suffragette movement as, "the very salt of life... a draught of fresh air into our padded, stilted lives... It gave us hope of freedom and power and opportunity."[3]

Surviving the sinking of the Lusitania

Margaret was employed by her father, at the suggestion of her mother, in his business empire, a large conglomerate of coal, shipping and publishing interests. She was a cross between "a highly confidential secretary and a right-hand man,[4] who should have the status of a business associate." When he went abroad he gave her power of attorney with complete control.

Both were involved extensively with war work during the First World War. In May 1915, returning with her father from a US business trip, she was aboard the *Lusitania* when it was torpedoed off the Irish coast. After hours in freezing water she was rescued. She later reflected:

"What it did do was to alter my opinion of myself. I had lacked self-confidence… and here I had got through this test without disgracing myself. I had found that when the moment came I could control my fear."[5]

The recruitment and treatment of female workers

In 1917 Margaret became the Commissioner of Women's National Service for Wales and Monmouthshire, charged with recruiting volunteer women to work in agriculture. She appealed:

"The State has something to say to each of her daughters to-day and it is this: – I have

TIMELINE

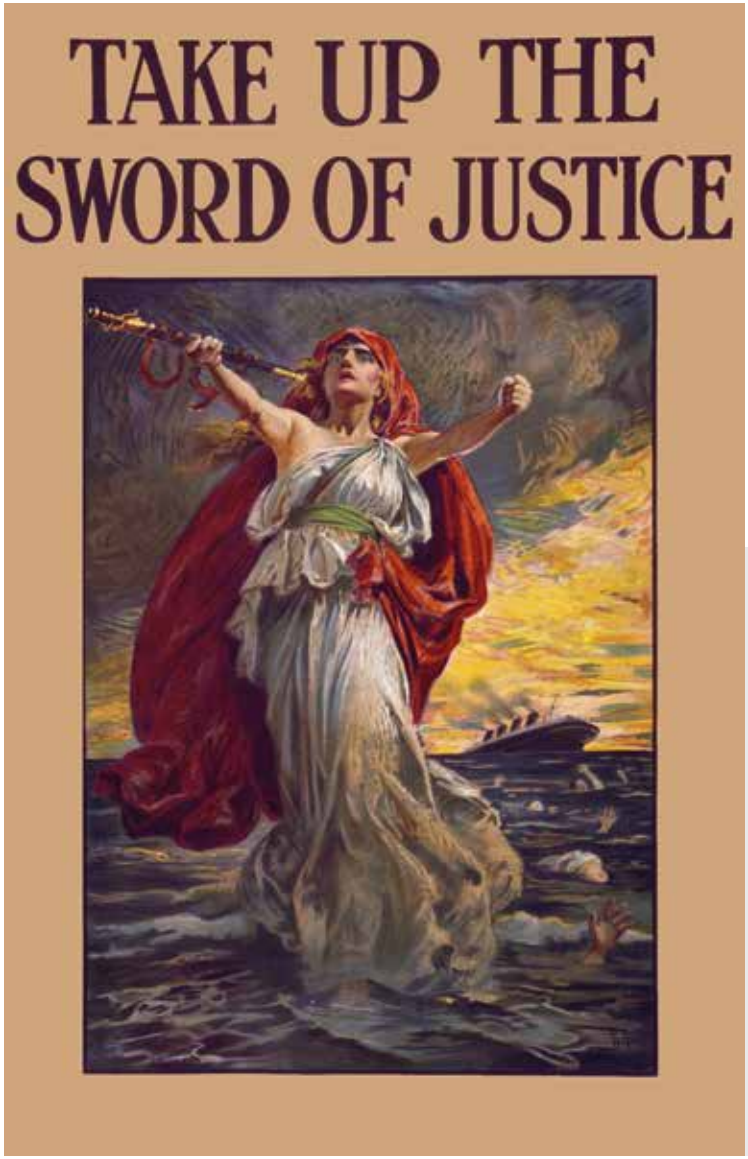
6 April 1917

United States of America declares war on Germany.

new work in which I badly need your help. Is the service which you are already giving me of greater urgency to me than that which I need you to do now? If so, stay where you are; if not, come into the new work."[6]

She also organised selection boards in Wales to recruit clerical workers and domestic workers for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) to serve in France. This was to release male soldiers for fighting; four women clerks were seen as the equivalent of three soldier clerks. Margaret appealed to the "parents of South Wales to realise their great responsibilities and allow their daughters to go."[7] She continued to recruit for the WAAC (later QMAAC, the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps) during 1917 and 1918.

In February 1918 she took up a major new role in London, as Chief Controller of women's recruitment in the Ministry of National Service. An article published in her name and titled 'The Women of Great Britain' declared:



A British propaganda poster encouraging soldiers to enlist and exact justice for German crimes. In the background the four funnelled ocean liner, RMS Lusitania, sinks with drowning passengers visible.

On 1 May 1915 the British passenger liner RMS *Lusitania* set sail from New York to Liverpool, carrying over 1,900 passengers. Six days later it was spotted and torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. In all, 1,200 passengers were killed, including children and 128 Americans. The incident caused outrage in both Britain and the USA and hardened support for America to enter the war.

"Nothing in the whole conduct of the War has been more striking than the readiness and the ability of the women in nearly all the belligerent nations to render invaluable service to their respective countries and nothing has been stranger than the slowness of various Governments to realise the vast capacity of the resources upon which they might draw."[8]

The comment about the slowness of Government reflected some of the frustrations and obstructions she found throughout her war work. In 1918 she was the only woman member of the Staff Investigation Committee, set up to examine administrative staffing in the Ministry of Munitions. Women made up virtually all the clerical staff in the Ministry, as well as carrying out chemical and mathematical research, statistics and accountancy.

Margaret was also concerned with the discharge of women war workers from government departments after the war, in favour of returning servicemen; she sat on the Women's Advisory Committee at the Ministry of Reconstruction from its formation in 1917 and formed the Women's Political and Industrial League in 1919 to lobby for equal employment opportunities.

Her battle with the Lords

In 1918, in recognition of his war service, her father D.A. Thomas was created Viscount Rhondda. He died in July 1918 and Margaret inherited his title, but hereditary women peers in their own right were not entitled to sit and vote in the House of Lords. In a famous test case, she petitioned in 1920 for the right to receive a writ of summons to Parliament, basing her claim on the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 which stated that 'A woman shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function.'[9]

Her petition was considered by the House of Lords Committee for Privileges, which initially found in her favour. For a brief period of time it appeared that women would be able to sit in the Lords and she received a letter of congratulation from John St Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*. Margaret was cautious, however, replying:

"I am not in the House of Lords yet, in spite of the Committee of Privileges, and I am afraid the Lord Chancellor is going to move against me".[10]

She was quite correct. Lord Birkenhead (F. E. Smith), the Lord Chancellor, opposed the admission of women to the Lords and re-constituted an enlarged committee. His arguments carried the committee, which reversed its original decision in May 1922. The case set a precedent which lasted until 1958, when women were first allowed to sit in the House of Lords as life peers, following the Life Peerages Act 1958. Hereditary women peers were allowed to sit in the House of Lords in their own right by the Peerage Act 1963.

Between the wars, Lady Rhondda was one of Britain's leading feminists, a proponent of the equal-rights tradition of feminism. In 1920 she set up the feminist weekly journal *Time and Tide*, covering politics, economics, social issues, literature and the arts. In 1921 she launched the Six Point Group, which campaigned on six key issues for women (including equal pay and equal opportunities). In 1926, with others, she set up the Open Door Council to campaign against 'protective' legislation for women. She lived to see the passage of the Life Peerages Act on 30 April 1958, but died on 20 July, before the first women took their seats as life peers in the Lords in October.

In 1917 Margaret said in an interview:

"I think the war, awful as it has been, did a wonderful thing for women. It brought about a revolution for them which one may well imagine centuries might have otherwise been needed to encompass. But now women have seen what they can do; they have learned to have confidence in themselves to undertake the most amazing and difficult tasks."[11]

TIMELINE

18 July 1918

Hundred Days Offensive begins, the last major Allied assault on the Western Front.

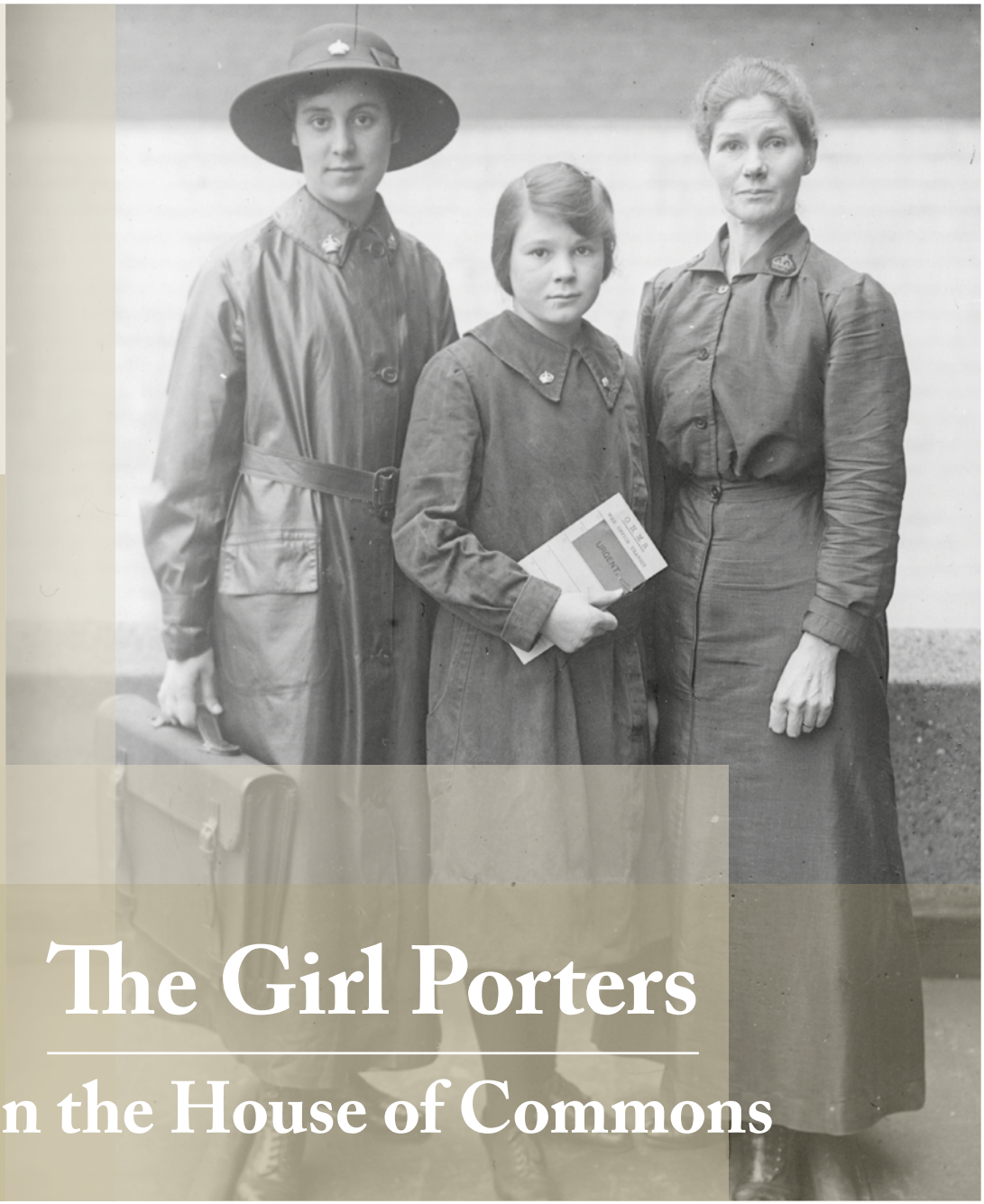
Role of women and suffrage campaign during the war

With millions of men fighting at the front, women were to enter the workplace in unprecedented numbers. In July 1914, before the war broke out, there were 3.2 million women in employment; by January 1918 this had risen to 5 million.

It was not just the increase in number of women in the workforce but also the types of roles they were now performing. This included jobs in the munitions industry, transport, agriculture, nursing, government departments and policing. The significant contribution of women on the home front is one of the reasons some women were given the vote in the Representation of the People Act 1918. The bill allowed certain women over the age of 30 to vote and by November 1918, 8.4 million women were granted the vote for the first time.

Eminent Woman Surgeon, who is also an ardent Suffragist (to wounded guardsman). "**Do you know, your face is singularly familiar to me. I've been trying to remember where we've met before.**"

Guardsman. "**Well Mum, bygones be bygones. I was a police constable.**"



The Girl Porters in the House of Commons

The Girl Porters, or Girl Messengers, were employed in the House of Commons by the Serjeant-at-Arms Department to deliver mail between offices during labour shortages in the First World War. Their names were Elsie and Mabel Clark (aged 16 & 14), Dorothy Hart (age 18) and Vera Goldsmith (age 16). They were the first women employed by the House of Commons who were neither cleaning nor kitchen staff, and an excellent example of women substituting for men in wartime.

The Assistant Serjeant at Arms, Walter H Erskine, was responsible for their employment at the House of Commons from April 1917. He described their work: 'Their duties would be to deliver letters etc from the various Offices in the House of Commons, and their hours of duty would be from 10 am to 6 pm on week days, except Saturdays, with a reasonable time off for meals. The wages would be 9/s per week for a girl of 14-16 years of age, and 12/s per week for one of 16-18, with 1/s per week War Bonus in addition in both cases, and these would be paid during the Session and adjournment of Parliament but not during such time as it is prorogued. Uniform would also be supplied'.[1]

Two of the Girl Porters he employed were sisters with a family connection to Parliament, as 'Nieces of Porter Clark'.[2] **Elsie Rose Clark** and **Mabel Edith Clark** were daughters of John, a police constable, and Olive Clark, who had seven children. Their uncle Samuel, younger brother of John, was employed by the Serjeant from 1898 and promoted to Porter in 1912. He volunteered for war service but was told to return home because he was a widower with a child. The other two Girl Porters came to Parliament from the War Office. **Dorothy Gladys Hart** was the daughter of a munitions worker, and **Veronica (known as Vera) Agnes Goldsmith** the daughter of a gas fitter.[3] Both worked in dressmaking before coming to work as girl messengers at the War Office in 1916, and were then recommended for work in the House of Commons.

Before the Girl Porters were due to start work, Erskine clearly had very serious reservations about employing them, and was doubtful about how well they would be able to carry out their work. He wrote to the Speaker, James Lowther, to warn him, 'As it is an innovation.'[4] But by the end of their employment, Erskine's doubts and fears had been completely allayed. Sadly, Mabel Clark died on 19 November 1918 from influenza and double pneumonia, aged just 15, but the other three girls continued in post until male staff began to return from the armed forces to their previous posts in 1919, and Erskine had to dispense with their services. He gave them excellent references, and wrote to the War Office: 'It is impossible for me to speak too highly of the way these 3 girls have done their work while at the House of Commons, and their conduct has been exemplary throughout.'[5]

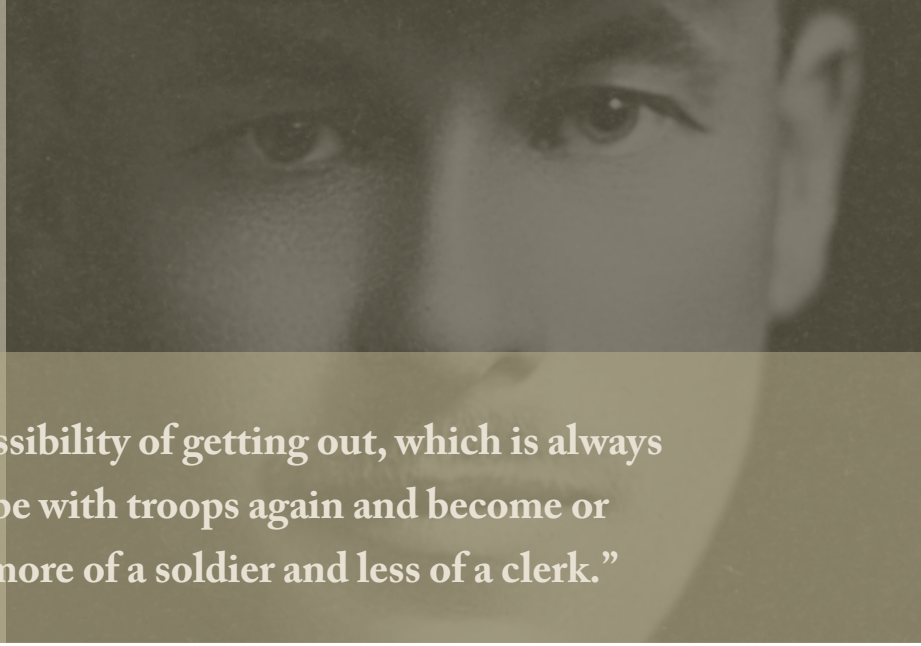
Elsie Clark, Dorothy Hart and Vera Goldsmith did go to work at the War Office for a short period immediately afterwards, but then sought work elsewhere. It is not known what happened to Elsie Clark, although her Uncle Samuel continued to work for the Serjeant for the rest of his career. Dorothy Hart returned to dressmaking, then had a family, and lived to the ripe old age of 82. Vera Goldsmith pursued office work, and Erskine wrote a reference for the Food Control Office in Croydon in August 1919, saying she was 'Quick, intelligent, gave complete satisfaction.'[6] She died aged 49, described on her death certificate as a 'Butcher's Cashier'.

TIMELINE

9 November 1918

Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany abdicates.

William Leveson-Gower



1883-1918

"Apart from the increased possibility of getting out, which is always inspiring, it is a great joy to be with troops again and become or have a chance of becoming more of a soldier and less of a clerk."

William Leveson-Gower was a clerk in the House of Lords Journal Office and upon the outbreak of war was commissioned with the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps, a regiment he had joined in 1907. He went on to serve with the Eastern Command, 67th Division of the Southern Army and finally with the Coldstream Guards.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Leveson-Gower experienced travel from an early age as his father was in the Diplomatic Service. His father's postings took him to Switzerland, Serbia and Greece before returning to England, having won a scholarship to Eton (1895) and subsequently he obtained a place at Christ Church, Oxford University (1901). In 1907 he came top out of eight candidates in the Civil Service Commission test, allowing him to secure employment as a Clerk in the Lords.

The prelude to war

Working in Parliament, Leveson-Gower had a unique insight into the political developments unfolding in the years up to the First World War.

"There was a scene last night in the House and things look worse than ever for our distracted country. It seems almost inevitable that within a few weeks we shall some of us have to reach momentous decisions and choose between alternatives every of which involves consequences of unthinkable horror."

This diary entry was made on 21 May but the might of the German Army and Belgium neutrality could not be further from the minds of British politicians. Home Rule for Ireland dominated affairs, causing confusion and intense debate in Parliament as the relevant bill neared its completion. On 3 July, in a letter to a friend working at the Royal United Services Institute he commented:

"It is difficult to realize the gravity of the situation in Parliament. For the last few months, as it seems to me, our statesmanship, especially among the Opposition has been only wise after the event. The Lords waited until they were attacked and then only did they produce schemes of much-needed reform. Then we were overwhelmed with talk of

TIMELINE

11 November 1918
Armistice concluded between the Allied powers and Germany.

"But to the East of us everything is desolation and outer darkness, trenches, and heaps of stone where there used to be villages…"

referendum. And the rest of it. But it was too late. Now at the eleventh hour of the Irish crisis moderate men of both parties produce scheme after scheme; Federalism, Devolution, Exclusions of various brands, Conventions and Conferences are all talked of. But to what purpose at this time of day?"

Outbreak of War

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was to change all of this and its significance as a catalyst for war would take weeks to filter through to politicians and the public alike. Writing on 31 July 1914, Leveson-Gower realised the situation had changed:

"News as bad as can be. Stock Exchange closed. Spent some time buying equipment, packed kit and then home."

By August, British troops had been mobilised as part of the British Expeditionary Force and in scenes across the country men prepared themselves for the great 'adventure' of war.

"I completed the purchase of a revolver and various other articles of kit at Wilkinsons Sword company: the place was crowded by subalterns choosing weapons and showing them to their sisters and mothers."

Life in the army

Leveson-Gower was initially tasked with training troops in Canterbury but by late 1916 had been transferred to a staff job in Brentwood, Essex. The position was very much a 9 to 5 role, dealing with paperwork and administrative duties. These years spent in England seem to have sheltered him from the hardship and realities of life at the front. Writing to a friend on 3 May 1917, he detailed his conditions:

"We couldn't have a pleasanter staff and our quarters are comfortable to the verge of luxury.

I came back from a glorious week's holiday – I joined my people at Bath, spent three days and then three days at Wells."

However, throughout his diaries and letters from 1916 he expressed a strong urge to travel abroad and see combat duty. In October 1916 he wrote, "Staff work is very different and is one thing after another and it requires an effort both to keep human and to keep fit…I often wonder also whether I oughtn't to make a move and get back to regimental life and get abroad, before I become the complete civilian clerk". In the same month he attempted to join a detachment of the Indian Cavalry but was unsuccessful.

Front line action

In early 1918, Leveson-Gower got his wish, transferring to the Coldstream Guards and preparing for action in France at Tidworth Barracks, Hampshire. By now news had reached him of the death of his friend Robert Bailey, a clerk in the Commons, which understandably affected him badly.

"I suppose you heard of Robert Bailey's death and that you feel like me about it: it has left a great blank in which nothing can fill: we had seen so much of each other at the House and in Camp and

he was always the same and it always did one good to be with him".[1]

On 10 September 1918 he travelled to France to join the 1st Battalion. He was quickly appointed a Company Commander, "an ambition beyond his wildest dreams." On arrival life was very civilised and there was even a band to entertain troops before dinner. In a letter to his father on 17 September he stated that "We had the most delightful four days here; nothing to do but to enjoy the good things in life." He was even dreaming of the final victory over the Germans, "What fun it would be to get to Berlin some day…That may even happen yet."

Leveson-Gower's skills were put to good use in censoring soldiers' home-bound letters. More than 12 million letters were sent home each week to friends and family and there were strict rules on what could and could not be included. The main fear for military command was revealing operational details that the enemy could benefit from. Other prohibited information included criticism of superiors, troop numbers and even the weather as this could indicate the conditions soldiers were experiencing.

Leveson-Gower seem to be well informed about events back home though, with the availability of newspapers at camp:

"I also got a sight of the Morning Post and read about the railway strike, a topic which is carefully excluded from the Paris Daily Mail. It makes one furious….What is the use of our victories in every theatre of war, if we are going to be done down by these selfish brutes? It would be perfectly justifiable to assume them to be in the German pay and shoot the ring leaders unless they can prove the contrary."[2]

As Leveson-Gower's company drew closer to the enemy, the destruction caused by artillery bombardment and trench warfare could not be more apparent.

"What fun it would be to get to Berlin some day… That may even happen yet."

Troops of the Coldstream Guards with captured German machine guns at Noreuil, September 1918.

"But to the East of us everything is desolation and outer darkness, trenches, and heaps of stone where there used to be villages…"[3]

On 9 October as his troops approached German trenches an enemy shell hit, killing William Leveson-Gower. Colonel Brand of the Coldstream Guards went on to describe the loss:

"While he was talking to an officer of his Battalion a chance shell burst within a few yards and killed him instantaneously."

Condolences flooded in and there were over two volumes of tributes to his life. Captain H. Meriman of his regiment conveyed the strength of emotion felt by his colleagues: "he has done the finest thing in the world, given his life for others."

Striking British workers

Arms production was vital if Britain was to maintain its war effort. By 1915 the issue of a lack of shells reaching the front had become apparent and the Government introduced the Munitions Bill 1915. The subsequent Act gave the Ministry of Munitions sweeping powers requiring all private companies who supplied the military to fall under its control. The new powers enabled them to control wages, hours and employment conditions. It was now an offence for a worker to leave his current job without the consent of his employer.

Despite this there were still industrial disputes, most notably at the Clydeside shipyards in Scotland (1915). Industrial unrest peaked in 1917-18 with 68% of all days lost occurring in these years. A combination of real wages shrinking in relation to inflation and longer working hours contributed to war weariness by the end of the war.

For services rendered

A GERMAN DECORATION FOR BRITISH STRIKERS

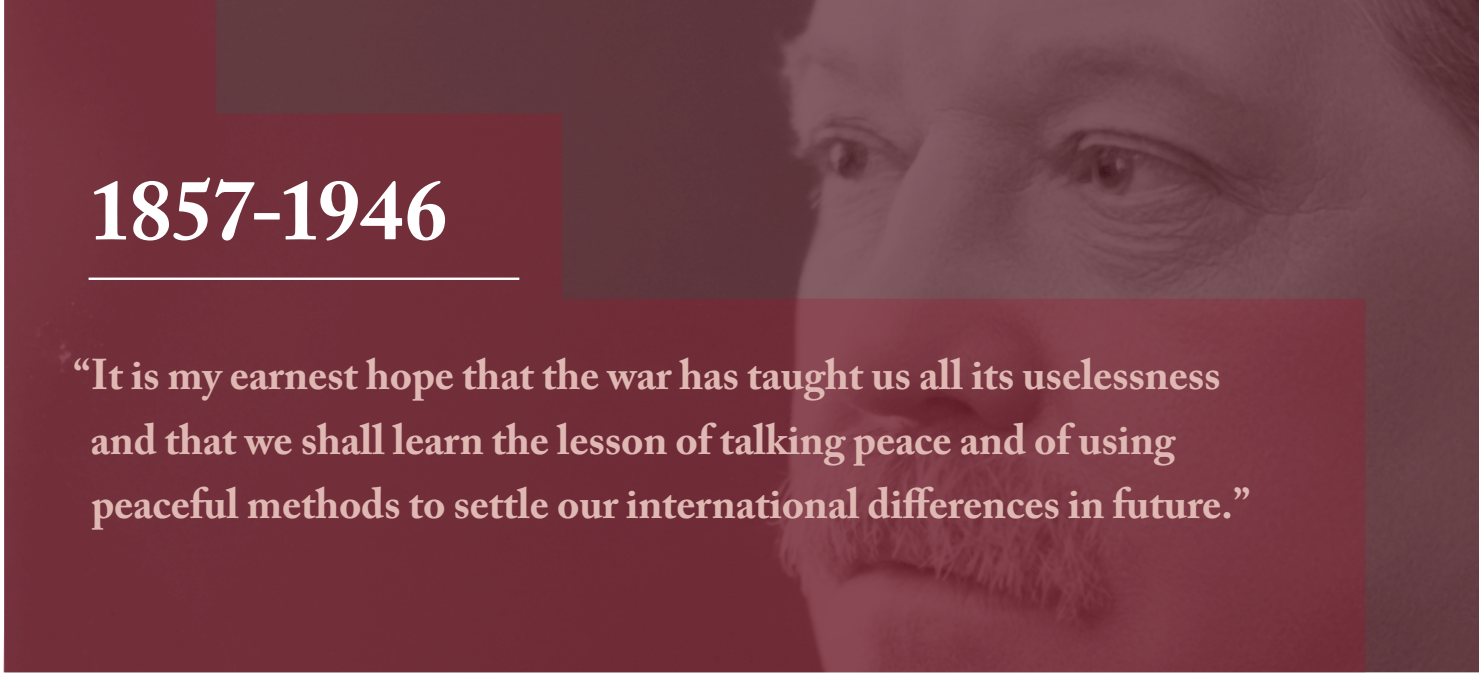
Will Thorne MP

Will Thorne was one of the leading trade union figures of the 19th and 20th centuries and established the largest union of its time, the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers. He was a founding member of the Labour Party and achieved major reforms and improvements for workers in industrial Britain. He was elected as MP and Mayor for West Ham and served in the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Essex Regiment during the First World War.

Early political activity

In 1881 Will moved to London and formally became active in politics, joining the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), the first organised socialist political party in Britain, led by H.M. Hyndman. Members were to include William Morris, George Lansbury, Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl) and George Bernard Shaw.

Thorne took up a leading role in organising campaigns and propaganda in the West Ham area and was later to become the Secretary of the SDF.



1857-1946

"It is my earnest hope that the war has taught us all its uselessness and that we shall learn the lesson of talking peace and of using peaceful methods to settle our international differences in future."

Thorne's strategy was to organise large rallies in key locations around London, targeting the docks and factories. He was pivotal in organising two massive demonstrations at West India Docks (Sept. 1885) and Trafalgar Square (Feb. 1886).

Uniting the workers

Thorne was to fight his campaign for workers' rights on two fronts, both with the creation of a strong union and setting his sights on Parliamentary representation for the working class. As he stated:

"Something could be done by Parliament I thought, but not as it was then constituted, with every interest except labour adequately represented."[1]

The introduction of new technology and machinery in factories was to cause even greater tensions on the shop floor leading to fewer workers being employed and a reduction in weekly wages.

It was very much a cross-roads for the workers and Thorne led and organised a mass meeting at Canning Town Hall. This resulted in the creation of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers on 31 March 1889.

It was to become one of the biggest unions of its time in the world. Its slogan was "One Man, One Ticket, and every man with a Ticket."

Within six months union numbers had swelled to over 20,000. Will Thorne was elected to the position of General Secretary and he was also aided by many others such as John Burns, who would go on to be a MP and the first Cabinet Minister from a working class background.

Political career and negotiator during the First World War

Will Thorne was elected as MP for West Ham, South (1906) and he held the seat (later renamed West Ham, Plaistow) until 1945. He had previously failed to win the seat in 1900 but was spurred on by memories of Keir Hardie's significant victory in the same seat in 1892:

"After his election I rode with Keir Hardie to the Houses of Parliament in a waggonette, followed by a band and a procession of his supporters. He wore a cloth cap, and his entrance to the chamber in his unconventional headgear

was regarded by many old and dignified members as an impertinence and slight on the House."[2]

Upon the outbreak of war, Thorne enlisted in the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Essex Regiment and was appointed a lieutenant-colonel. Aged 57, Thorne was not posted for front-line duties but was to play a role in the Shells Crisis of 1915. As the General Secretary of a powerful union, he was in regular contact with other union leaders who resented the far-reaching and significant restriction of workers' rights during the First World War. Thorne was to meet with Lord Kitchener several times at the War Office and in the House of Commons to discuss the Shells Crisis.

The Munitions of War Act (July 1915) was passed as a result of the lack of armaments and supplies reaching the front line. The Act required all private companies who supplied the military to fall under the control of the new Ministry of Munitions. The ministry had the power to control wages, hours and employment conditions. It was now an offence for a worker to leave his current job without the consent of his employer.

The interior view of a munitions factory showing the production of 15 inch shells by women factory workers at the Singer Manufacturing Company, Clydebank, Scotland, 1918.

This is one of four commissioned paintings by Anna Airey, depicting munitions production at a crucial stage in the First World War when the tactical use of heavy artillery had become central to the success of the Allied forces.

This understandably caused great unrest in industrial areas, most notably in Glasgow with the establishment of the Clyde Workers Committee (CWC) led by Willie Gallacher and John Muir. The CWC sought to rally against the Act and despite David Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson the Labour Party Leader, personally meeting both figures, they were unwilling to relent. In 1916 both Gallacher and Muir were subsequently jailed for an article in *The Worker* criticising the war, an offence under the Defence of the Realm Act of 1914. Both were later elected to Parliament, Muir standing for the Labour Party (Glasgow Maryhill) and Gallacher for the Communist Party (West Fife).

Visit to Russia

In 1917 Thorne was asked by the Coalition Government to visit Russia in order to outline British support for the Russian military effort and ultimately convince them to stay in the war against Germany. Thorne arrived in the midst of turmoil in the country. The February 1917 revolution in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) had just occured in which industrial workers went on strike over factory conditions and a lack of basic food provisions to feed their families. Lenin had also just published his *April Theses* outlining the directives for the workers' councils to take power.

The journey to Russia was itself a dangerous voyage as German U-boats patrolled the North Sea, sinking numerous merchant and civilian ships. Upon Thorne arriving in Petrograd (accosted by

Russian secret agents), he visited the Workers' and Soldiers' Council and then troops at the Petrograd military barracks who had mutinied and refused to fire on rioting crowds. This event ultimately led to the abdication and arrest of Tsar Nicholas II. During the visit he also met Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador, and they discussed the possibility of the Tsar and his family seeking refuge in Britain. Thorne warned Buchanan that if this were to happen the consequences could be serious and used as a rallying point for workers and revolutionaries back home. In a letter to the British government, Buchanan advised that it "would be preferable the Emperor should go to France" [3] Despite the Tsar being King George V's cousin, the monarch personally intervened, heeding Buchanan's advice and Nicholas was refused asylum.

Having travelled to Minsk he then returned to Petrograd and was to witness first hand Lenin stirring up the crowds with his oratory skills. The Bolshevik leader had just returned from exile in Switzerland and in October 1917 his party seized power in the capital.

Tragedy at the front

Upon returning to London, Thorne was to receive the devastating news that his eldest son Will had been killed in battle at Ypres whilst fighting with the Essex Regiment. Despite such loss, Thorne was throughout this period behind the war effort and commented that "as soon as the war broke out I wanted to take my share in the work that had to be done."[4] This position caused considerable tensions and disquiet amongst other leading socialist figures including Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and Bertrand Russell. All three individuals were to play a leading role in the Leeds Convention of June 1917, which saw well over a thousand anti-war socialists and pacifists gather, many from the Independent Labour Party. They convened to lobby the Government for a negotiated peace settlement in order to prevent further slaughter at the front.

Ultimately, however, Thorne's assessment after the war was to be a damning one:

"The horrors of war, its futility and waste, were driven home to me both in my military life and everyday life. Though we won the war we are still paying very dearly for our victory. Poverty, unemployment and misery among large masses of people are still as rampant as ever, and if anything worse than before our victory."[5]

Support for social change and workers' rights

From 1918 legislation was passed, leading to significant social and political changes. The Representation of the People Act 1918 allowed certain women over the age of 30 to vote. A separate Act allowed women over the age of 21 to stand as an MP. Nancy Astor was to become the first female MP to take her seat in 1919 but was not entirely welcome in the Commons chamber. This included games from figures such as William Joynson-Hicks (later Home Secretary) refusing to make space for Astor to sit in the chamber. Will Thorne along with other Labour colleagues ensured there was room on the benches for her.

Thorne was to continue his Union and political activity for the next 30 years and was prominent in raising issues ranging from child labour, unemployment benefits and Mussolini invading Abyssinia to the rearmament of Germany under Hitler. As General Secretary of a large union, Thorne was often a representative at international conferences, discussing and campaigning for better conditions for workers across the world.

Thorne died of a heart attack at his home in his constituency and home at 1 Lawrence Road, Plaistow, West Ham, on 2nd January 1946. He was buried in the East London Cemetery and survived by his fourth wife and 12 children.

TIMELINE

28 June 1919
Treaty of Versailles signed between the Allied powers and Germany.

A global conflict

Although in its infancy the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) played an active role in the conflict, including photo reconnaissance, artillery observation and later on aerial bombardment.

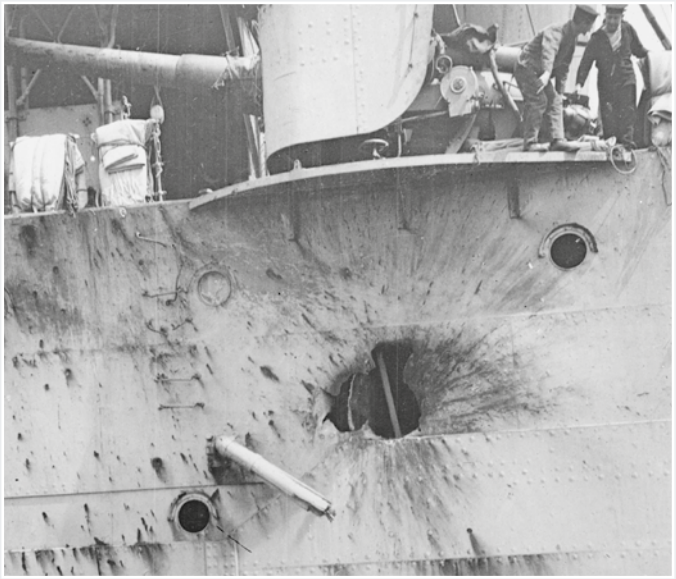
The RFC saw action on the Western Front, in the Balkans and in the Middle East. In 1918 the RFC was merged with the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force.

During a march past of Indian troops, a woman pins flowers on to the tunic of one of the soldiers. 1.5 million Indian soldiers served alongside British soldiers, with 140,000 fighting on the Western Front. Troops from the four dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa also served in addition to soldiers from Britain's numerous colonies. This included 15,000 troops from the West Indies and another 55,000 men from Africa.

Regularly overlooked are the 140,000 Chinese men who served in the Labour Battalions behind the front line. The men carried out essential work for the Allies repairing roads and railways, digging trenches and unloading ships.

– Air, Land and Sea

Australian soldiers of the Imperial Camel Corps near Jaffa, Palestine, 1918. Over 412,000 Australian men enlisted during the war with more than 58,000 killed in conflict. Their service in the Middle East included the defence of the Suez Canal, and the British push into Palestine that captured Gaza and Jerusalem. By 1918 their efforts led to control over Lebanon and Syria. Australian troops (and New Zealanders) were also involved in the Gallipoli campaign and were to suffer even greater losses on the Western Front.



Sailors point to a shell-hole in the side of HMS Chester after the Battle of Jutland, 31 May 1916.
The Battle of Jutland was the only major naval battle of the First World War. Fought off the coast of Denmark's Jutland Peninsula (31 May–1 June 1916), Admiral John Jellicoe pitted his wits against Vice-Admiral Reinhard Scheer of the German Navy. Both sides were to claim victory, with the British losing 6,094 servicemen and the Germans 2,551.

Terror in the skies

“What we do is repugnant but necessary, very necessary. Today there is no such thing as a non-combatant. Modern warfare is total warfare.”

Peter Strasser, Chief Commander of German Imperial Navy Zeppelins

The aerial campaign by the German military is often a forgotten aspect of the conflict. Zeppelin airships made over 50 bombing raids on Britain during the war, killing 557 civilians and injuring another 1,358. More than 5,000 bombs were dropped on towns across Britain causing huge material damage. Later on in the war Gotha bomber planes carried out similar raids, resulting in 835 civilian deaths and 1,972 casualties.

With the emergence of Zeppelin raids in 1916 a decision was taken to silence Big Ben and cease the illumination of the clock faces at night. This policy continued until the end of the war with the fear that German aircraft could use the chimes and light of the clock tower to locate central London. Parliament was in fact forced to suspend sittings due to German air raids over Westminster on the evening of 18 December 1917.

The Airship Menace.

The War's impact on Parliament

The life of the Parliament elected in December 1910 was extended by special legislation during the war, but as the loss of life intensified, the question of enfranchising those fighting on the Western Front and elsewhere moved up the political agenda.

The franchise at the time was confined to male householders who had been registered on the electoral register for a year or more before an election. Leaving aside the question of female suffrage, action was necessary, or serving soldiers would not be registered and so could not vote. This issue came to a head during debates on the Special Register Bill in 1916, when the Prime Minister Asquith suggested a Speaker's Conference as a way of achieving consensus. The Conference was composed of 5 Members of the House of Lords and 27 Members of the House of Commons, selected by Mr Speaker Lowther. The role and willingness of the Speaker to build consensus was crucial in achieving a breakthrough in franchise reform. As the electoral specialist Sir David Butler remarks, "the Speaker's Conference, by judicious management, obtained a measure of agreement so extraordinarily wide that substantial sacrifices must have been made on all sides."[1] The innovation of a Speaker's Conference designed to achieve consensus on electoral matters was repeated several times in the twentieth century.

The Conference reported in January 1917, when it submitted to the House agreed resolutions for Parliamentary consideration. The recommendations were embodied in the Representation of the People Act 1918 which implemented the most sweeping electoral reforms since 1832. The Act provided for the enfranchisement of qualifying women aged 30 and over and the introduction of a franchise based on residence or the occupation of business premises amongst other measures.

The Conference was not prepared to recommend suffrage on equal terms, due to concerns that women would form the majority of the electorate. The compromise agreed upon was women over 30 who were graduates or who had a property qualification and therefore qualified as a local government elector. On this basis 385 MPs expressed their support for the relevant clause in the Representation of the People Bill on 19 June 1917 with 55 against.[2]

Although 8.5 million women met these criteria, they only represented 40 per cent of the total population of women in the UK. It did not enfranchise the millions of women who had worked in the munitions factories. Younger women had to wait until the Equal Franchise Act 1928 before they gained the vote.

Ramsay MacDonald set out the essential argument for the enfranchisement of women workers during the debate on the clause on 19 June.[3]

Bertram Mackennal's Parliamentary War Memorial

The memorial is dedicated to 145 individuals who 'consummated with their lives the tradition of public service in the cause of Right and Liberty'

Its eight stone panels list 22 MPs and 20 Peers,[5] as well as 9 senior staff members known as 'Officers' of both Houses, and 94 sons of Members and Officers of the House of Commons.

"What is happening to-day is that the whole of the nations of Europe engaged in this War – men, women, and children; factory, workshop, and Army – are organised in one complete unity of social resistance, to defend themselves both by offence and ordinary defence. When my hon. Friend talks about the force that is being exercised in Flanders now, what is that force? The force of shells made by women in British factories hundreds of miles away from the scene of battle. When he talks about force which is used to bring victory, what does he mean? The force of public opinion, the power of the public, united as a whole and feeling its unity, to go through all sacrifices, to face all dangers, and to accept common burdens, not until the Army prevails, but until the national will prevails, either by political or by military means."[4]

A notable feature of the Speaker's Conference recommendations was a form of proportional representation, but this element of the Bill was controversial and was removed following disagreements between both Houses. However, the Conference proposals for a more efficient registration system and a much more equitable redistribution of seats were accepted. The importance of a new parliamentary process should be given credit. The skill of Speaker Lowther and the willingness of Members to cooperate was instrumental in achieving these breakthroughs.

The 1918 Act abolished property and other restrictions for men, and extended the vote to all men over the age of 21.

Service Members

There was a co-ordinated effort by returning service MPs to champion the cause of soldiers, sailors and airmen. A new concept of political citizenship arose with "the idea that the parliamentary vote should be tied, not to property rights or a term of residency, but to the idea of service to the nation, and specifically, military

service to the state."[6] As a result men serving in the armed forces could vote from the age of 19. However, women serving in the armed forces had to be 30.

Conscientious objectors were disenfranchised for five years. The electorate increased from eight to 21 million, but there was still huge inequality between women and men.

Women standing for election

As an afterthought, the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918 allowed women to stand as candidates. In the first general election held after the First World War, which took place in December 1918, only one woman, Countess Markievicz, was elected, for Dublin South, and she did not take her seat, in accordance with Sinn Fein's policy of abstention from Westminster.

Daily life in Parliament

Members elected in December 1910 served until December 1918, as the Parliament was prolonged through special legislation. During the period of the war there was an electoral truce, under which parties agreed not to contest seats that fell vacant. This led to a number of independent candidates standing in seats to challenge the incumbent party. Two noteable examples were Charles Stanton who won Keir Hardie's old seat against Labour in 1915. Noel Pemberton Billing was also successful as an independent, winning the Hertford by-election against the Conservatives in 1916.

In addition, it was not unusual for serving Army officers to stand in by-elections whilst on the front. General Hunter-Weston for example was commanding troops at the Battle of the Somme when elected at the North Ayrshire by-election in October 1916.

There were intense disputes between the so-called die-hard MPs who favoured the war by any means, as well as those who wished to debate and negotiate the conflict, leading to the formation of the two war-time coalitions in 1915 and 1916.[7]

Backbench MPs were to play a prominent role as tensions emerged about the direction and strategy of the war. New groups were established, such as the Business Unionist Committee, the Unionist War Committee (UWC) and the Liberal War Committee (LWC), all aimed at exerting greater political influence on the government. The UWC and LWC both ran campaigns on the issue of conscription and played a crucial role in pressurising the government to extend the measure to married men (May 1916).

As Dr Matthew Johnson has shown in his research, MPs in uniform regularly intervened in the debates about the strategy of the war[8], sometimes to the disquiet of their commanding officers. The Army Council made a direct complaint to Lloyd George, arguing that it undermined service discipline. For example, during the debate on the Military Services Bill of 1916, 100 serving Members were to leave the front in order to discuss and vote on the issue of conscription.

A British woman voting for the first time in the General Election 1918 following the Representation of the People Act.

Then as now, individual Members determined how they served in Parliament, although party organisation and whips would also have to be taken into account. However, the short extract from *Politicians at War: July 1914 to May 1915*, following William Wedgwood Benn's appointment as a replacement for Percy Illingworth as the Liberal Party Chief Whip, shows parliamentary life was also affected by the War:

"In June 1914, Benn would have been delighted with the appointment [of Chief Whip]. But, after five months of war the pert, energetic, ex-Junior Whip had other plans. He had put on the uniform of a cavalry officer. 'The task of organizing conflicting Parties in Parliament seemed ridiculous and distasteful,' he wrote many years afterwards. It seemed all the more ridiculous when lengthy prorogations and the suspension of party warfare left 'practically nothing to do on the floor of the House'."[9]

A number of individuals wrote memoirs or autobiographies which would include accounts of wartime service, and they provide some information on how they fulfilled their parliamentary and military duties. Johnson relates one exceptional story:

In December 1915, Captain Stanley Wilson, the Unionist MP for Holderness, was carrying military despatches from the Eastern Mediterranean to London when the Greek steamer on which he was travelling was intercepted by an Austrian submarine. Wilson was interned in an Austrian prisoner-of-war camp, and the electors of Holderness remained effectively unrepresented at Westminster until their MP was released in August 1917.

Sittings in both Houses of Parliament were suspended on the evening of 18 December 1917 due to the threat of German air raids. The then Chairman of Committees, Mr Whitley, suspended the sitting in the Commons at 7pm, but an indignant backbencher Mr Billing raised a point of order when the Commons returned after 9pm stating: "are we to understand that if another warning be given this House will proceed to the cellars again?". Press censorship prevented the evacuation being made public. There were a number of secret sessions during the war which were not recorded in Hansard. Under DORA, the Government made a regulation banning the reporting of any secret session.

St Stephen's House near Westminster Bridge (now demolished) housed both the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (a cross-party organisation which used the party infrastructure in parliamentary constituencies to support recruitment) and the Society of Friends' War Emergency Committee, which helped the families of destitute 'aliens' who had been interned in a variety of locations. The Committee was responsible for many of the powerful propaganda and recruitment posters during the war.

As well as MPs, staff in both Houses served in the war, including waiters, lift attendants, clerks and the Assistant Librarian. The shortage of men led to the employment of women in a number of positions, including as messengers. More information on these can be found in the parliamentary profiles section.

Bertram Mackennal's Parliamentary War Memorial

After the war, a memorial was unveiled by the Prince of Wales in 1922 and now stands in St Stephen's Porch at the south end of Westminster Hall.

A memorial for members of the House of Lords can be found in the Royal Gallery in the Palace of Westminster and there is also one dedicated to other Parliamentary staff in Chancellor's Court.

A full list of Parliament's war memorials can be found at **www.parliament.uk/memorials**.

“This peace rests on certain high principles which have never been attempted to be introduced into an international settlement, and these principles have to be watched and safeguarded. If we think we have done our work by putting them in the treaty and enshrining them in print, we are making a great mistake.”

Earl Curzon of Kedleston – House of Lords, 3 July 1919.

Notes

Parliament's Influence on the War

1. HC Deb 03 August 1914 vol 65 cc1809-32
2. Michael MacDonagh, In London During the Great War: The Diary of a Journalist, (Eyre and Spottiswoode) 1935
3. HC Deb 29 June 1916 vol 83 cc1016-17
4. HC Deb 21 November 1917 vol 99 cc1219-20
5. HC Deb 21 October 1915 vol 74 cc1980
6. HC Deb 11 May 1915 vol 71 c1606

Daniel Desmond Sheehan MP

1. Why I Joined the Army, *London Daily Express*, 1 February 1916
2. On the State of Irish Labourers, Civil Estimates Debate, HC Deb 08 August 1901 vol 99 c94
3. Why I Joined the Army, *London Daily Express*, 1 February 1916
4. William Kearney Redmond, Stephen Lucius Gwynn, William Archer Redmond and Arthur Alfred Lynch were the others to enlist.
5. Military Service Bill, HC Deb 12 April 1918 vol 104 c1945
6. Military Service Bill, HC Deb 12 April 1918 vol 104 c1946
7. John Dillon, DD Sheehan, BL, MP, His Life and Times, (Foilsiúcháin Éireann Nua) 2013, p. 36

Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart

1. Many newspapers and reference books found that it was so difficult to distinguish between Conservative and Liberal Unionists that they adopted the label of 'Unionist' for all these candidates. In 1912 they formally merged to become the Conservative and Unionist Party.
2. The Parliament Act 1911 was introduced as result, curtailing the power of the House of Lords. Amongst the measures the Lords were no longer able to reject money bills.
3. HC Deb 01 March 1911 vol 22 c381
4. HC Deb 23 April 1913 vol 52 c373W
5. HC Deb 06 January 1913 vol 46 cc834-5W
6. HC Deb 06 April 1914 vol 60 c1599

27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres

1. Wigan Coal & Iron Company
2. Private Lord Crawford's War Diaries, From Medical Orderly to Cabinet Minister, edited by Christopher Arnander (Pen & Sword Military) 2013, p.165
3. Established in 1898 it was to deal with 5.5 million casualties on the Western Front
4. Private Lord Crawford's War Diaries, From Medical Orderly to Cabinet Minister, edited by Christopher Arnander (Pen & Sword Military) 2013, p.116
5. Ibid, p.18
6. French for a small café, bar or bistro, especially a shabby one
7. Crawford talked about the constant cycle of operations without relief. On 7 June 1916, he cited the fact that during that week they had lost two admirals, three generals and 5,000-6,000 men.
8. 10% of British soldiers who deserted were shot by the military.
9. He also attributed some of the cases to nicotine poisoning, Private Lord Crawford's War Diaries, From Medical Orderly to Cabinet Minister, edited by Christopher Arnander (Pen & Sword Military) 2013, p.133
10. Ibid, p.159
11. He later cited Winston Churchill as an example of this, Ibid, pp.140, 141
12. Private Lord Crawford's War Diaries, From Medical Orderly to Cabinet Minister, edited by Christopher Arnander (Pen & Sword Military) 2013 p.104,
13. Ibid, p.141
14. He was still to witness the devastation and casualties at the Battle of the Somme.
15. 10 March 1916, Private Lord Crawford's War Diaries, From Medical Orderly to Cabinet Minister, edited by Christopher Arnander (Pen & Sword Military), 2013, pp.140,141

John Norton-Griffiths MP

1. Michael Bloch, Jeremy Thorpe, (Little, Brown) 2014 p.15. Many newspapers and reference books found that it was so difficult to distinguish between Conservative and Liberal Unionists that they adopted the label of 'Unionist' for all these candidates.
2. HC Deb 19 December 1912 vol 45 cc1672-3
3. HC Deb 09 June 1913 vol 53 cc1242-3
4. 31 July 1914, Pall Mall Gazette
5. Over the next eighteen months a further 13 British units were formed, followed by three Canadian, three Australian and one New Zealand company.
6. Tunnel Companies No. 170-178

Notes

7. Many miners were killed by collapsing tunnels or from carbon monoxide
8. Tony Bridgland & Anne Morgan, Tunnel-Master and Arsonist of the Great War, (Leo Cooper) 2003, pp.116-117
9. A mechanised tunnelling machine was introduced in 1916 but it proved ineffective and unreliable.
10. Within six days 200 square miles of oilfields had been set on fire causing damage valued at £50 million. Hundreds of thousands of tons of grain were also destroyed.

James Craig MP

1. Patrick Buckland, James Craig, (Gill and Macmillan), 1980, p.8
2. Named after their leader Sir Thomas Wallace Russell (1841–1920). MP for South Tyrone (1886-1910) and North Tyrone (1911-18)
3. Figures vary due to the nature of obtaining the weapons. For more detail see The Ulster Crisis: resistance to Home Rule, 1912-14, A.T.Q. Stewart (Faber and Faber Limited) 1979, pp.244-249
4. Cyril Falls, The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division, Naval & Military Press, (June 2006), p.4
5. His younger brother Willie was later to be killed at Messines in June 1917
6. His brother, Charles, MP for South Antrim, was to serve. He was wounded and taken prisoner fighting at the Somme in July 1916.
7. Craigavon Ulsterman, St. John Ervine, p.325
8. Ibid, p.355-356
9. James Craig, Patrick Buckland, (Gill and Macmillan) 1980, p.98

Margaret Haig Thomas MP, 2nd Viscountess Rhondda (1883 – 1958)

1. Deirdre Beddoe, 'Thomas, Sybil Margaret, Viscountess Rhondda (1857–1941)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edition accessed 4 Oct 2016
2. Rhondda, Viscountess This Was My World, (Macmillan) 1933, p.108
3. Ibid, p.120
4. Ibid, p.118
5. Ibid, p.259
6. Angela V. John, Turning the Tide: The Life of Lady Rhondda (Parthian) 2013, pp.147-8
7. Ibid, p.150
8. Ibid, p.165
9. Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/DC/CP/4/153
10. Parliamentary Archives, STR/19/4/8d.
11. Angela V. John, Turning the Tide: The Life of Lady Rhondda (Parthian) 2013, p.211

The Girl Porters

1. Parliamentary Archives HC/SA/SJ/9/13/15, item 2
2. Ibid, item 24.
3. Family history information from Parliamentary Archives HC/SA/SJ/9/13/15, plus census, probate, birth, marriage & death records.
4. Parliamentary Archives HC/SA/SJ/9/13/15, item 10
5. Ibid, item 36
6. Ibid, item 41

William Leveson-Gower

1. Letter to friend about death of Robert Bailey, Jan 1918
2. Letter to his father, 28 September 1918
3. Letter to friend, 28 September 1918

Will Thorne MP

1. Will Thorne MP, My Life's Battles, (George Newnes Ltd) 1998, p.63
2. Ibid, p.202
3. Letter from Sir George Buchanan to the British Foreign Office
4. Will Thorne MP, My Life's Battles,(George Newnes Ltd) 1998, p.197
5. Ibid, p.199

The War's impact on Parliament

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5. 22 MPs and 24 Peers were killed in total
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