

Remembering British WWI Soldiers

A2+



When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, many British people thought, “It will be over by Christmas.”

The tension between European nations was not new. On 3 August, when Germany invaded neutral Belgium to go to war against France, the United Kingdom honoured a treaty to protect “Brave little Belgium”. Lord Kitchener the British war minister, immediately asked for volunteers for the military. Britain’s army was professional but small: only 700,000 to oppose Germany’s 3.7 million. More than a million men volunteered. So many that the government didn’t have sufficient guns or uniforms for them.

Why Volunteer?

At the beginning of World War One, men thought it would be a short adventure. Many had monotonous jobs and lived in the same village or town their entire lives. Many boys under 18 signed up too – over 250,000 from 1914 to 1916, when conscription was introduced.

But very soon they began to see the reality of modern, industrial war with devastating artillery. The British

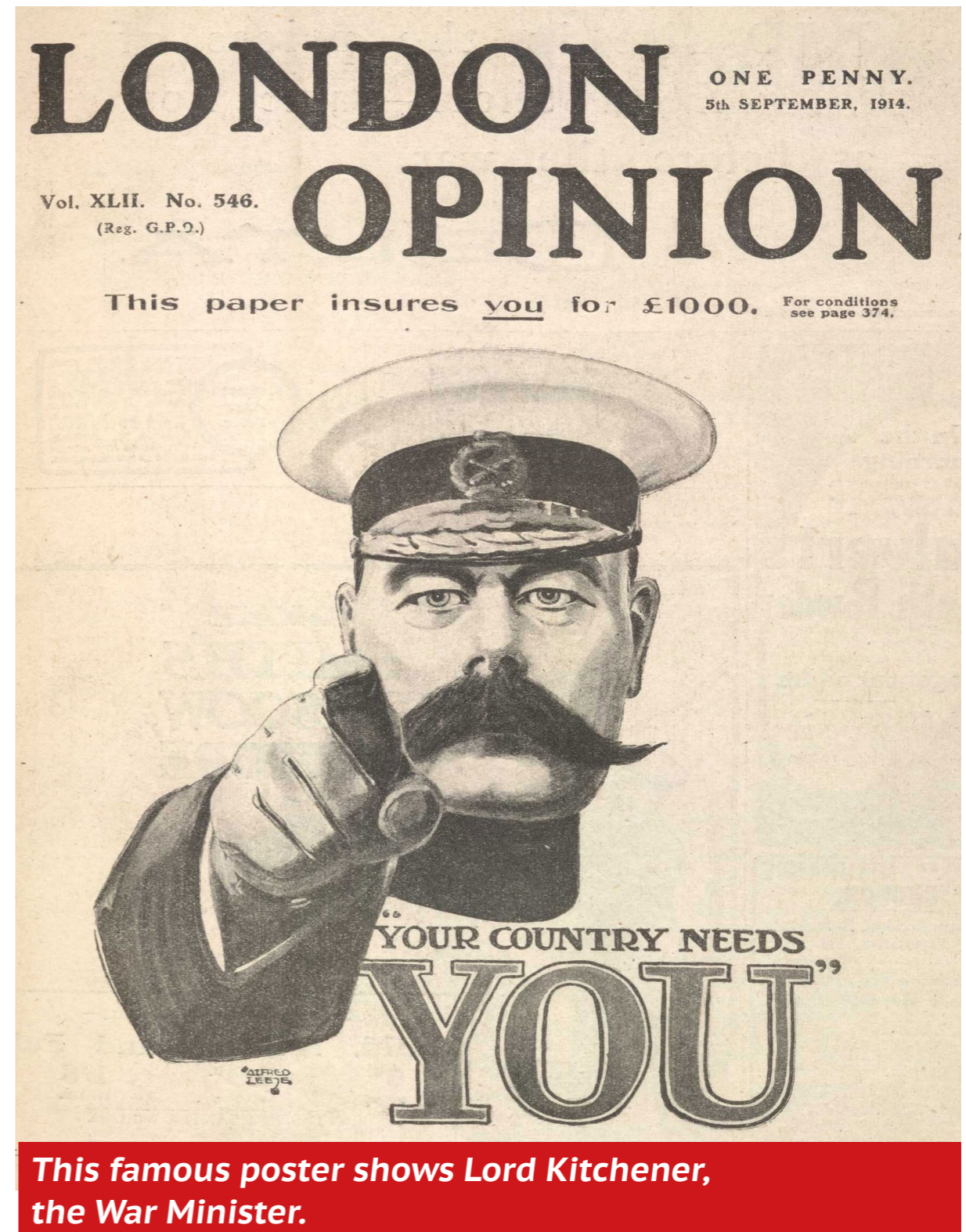
Help

be over (exp) be finished

treaty (n) an official document where countries make promises

sign up (v) volunteer to be in the military

conscription (n) when all men legally had to join the military



forces lost almost 60,000 men in the Battle of Ypres in October 1914 and soon lines of trenches were established across Belgium and northern France. Life in the trenches was cold and wet. The constant sound of bombs was terrible. But if it was bad in the trenches, it was worse when there was an attack. Men were ordered “over the top” – they left the trench and went into No Man’s Land, with the enemy firing directly at them. It was terrifying, but the men had no choice. If they didn’t go over the top, a British officer was ready with his revolver.

The war certainly wasn’t over by Christmas. It continued for four long years, leaving more than 8 million dead and 20 million wounded in total. When it was finally over, people promised “never again”. But a generation later, Europe saw the even more devastating World War Two.



Propaganda posters pushed men to volunteer or be considered cowards.

Help

almost (adv) nearly, approximately

trench (n) long narrow tunnel, open to the sky where soldiers used to be during WWI

fire (v) to use a gun or a cannon to try to hit a person or a place

coward (n) person who is not courageous



Poppy Day

Why do people in English-speaking countries wear artificial red flowers called poppies in November?

What?

Poppies symbolise remembrance: remembering people who died in wars.

Why?

During World War I (WWI), soldiers saw poppies growing near the trenches in Belgium and France. In the horror of war, they were signs of life, but their red colour also resembled blood. A Canadian Major, John McCrae, wrote about the poppies in a poem, "In Flanders Field". After the war, two women, Moina Michael in the U.S.A. and Anna Guerin in France, promoted the idea of using artificial poppies to symbolise remembrance.

How?

The poppies help people remember and they also help war veterans and their families. Disabled veterans can have jobs making the poppies. And the money received for more than 18 million poppies a year helps veteran projects.



British Legion

Where?

Poppy Day exists in Britain, the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

When?

In Britain, Canada and Australia, people wear the poppies for Remembrance Day, on 11 November. It originally commemorated the end of the World War I, but now it is for victims of all wars. The U.S.A. has poppies on Memorial Day, the last Monday of May. And in New Zealand it is on ANZAC day, 25 April. ANZAC Day commemorates the Australian and New Zealand soldiers who died in the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign in Turkey in WWI.

Help

blood (n, pron. *bludd*) red liquid in your veins

disabled (adj) correct term for handicapped

Turkey (n) country, capital Istanbul

They Shall Not Grow Old

A new documentary film brings the soldiers in the First World War to life.

The First World War was the first major conflict after the invention of film cameras. So it was the first time civilians saw the reality of war.

The War ended on 11 November 1918. To mark the 100th anniversary, Britain's Imperial War Museum asked *Lord of the Rings* director Peter Jackson to create a new film about the War. Jackson didn't film any scenes. He used the original archive film, and archive interviews with soldiers who served in the War. With modern techniques, Jackson's team transformed the old, black-and-white silent films. They are now in colour, and have sound. Actors read extracts from the soldiers' interviews. Jackson also asked people who can lip-read to try to understand what the soldiers in the films were saying. These words were added too. And a 3D version of the film was also created.

The result is amazing. The soldiers appear incredibly real. You have the impression you could touch them and talk to them. As Jackson says, "They didn't see the war in black and white. They saw the war in colour." And now we can too.



The new version of the image... and the original.

Help

civilian (n) opposite of *military*

lip-read (v) understand what a person says by looking at their mouth (if you can't hear what they say)

WingNut films/IWM



WingNut films/IWM

Poem

The film's title is from a poem, "For the Fallen" which is often recited at Remembrance ceremonies on 11 November.

The poem was written by a British man, Laurence Binyon. In 1915, he was 45, too old to be a soldier, but he volunteered to help in the hospitals on the front in France.

This is the most famous part of the poem:

*They shall grow not old, as we
that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor
the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

Help

shall (modal) used similarly to will (literary)

weary (v) make them tired, sleepy