

First World War – Teacher Notes

Starter discussion:

- What do we already know about the First World War?

Pupils can recap ideas that they have already learnt during lessons or things they may know from their own knowledge for example about the trenches and soldiers conditions.

Outbreak of War (Slide 2)

- When did the First World War start?

Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914 (over 100 years ago). Ended 11th November 1918

The most important thing Britain had to do was to make sure they had enough men to fight in the war. First they had a volunteer army (1914-1915). Men needed to be aged 18 to 41, but many lied about their ages and some as young as 14 joined up. Between 1916-1918 conscription was introduced as volunteer numbers were falling (this means that they were forced to join up).

- Have you seen this poster before? Do you know who this man is?

Slide 2 – It's a famous poster used to persuade men to join the army, the man in it is Lord Kitchener. He was Secretary of State for War and already a famous military leader from the Boer War. Kitchener Road and School in Cardiff are named after him. He believed it was going to be a long war and decided to organise a volunteer army.

Some people did not join up due to poor health, doing important work at home or for religious and moral reasons – they were called 'conscientious objectors'.

Life at the Front (Slides 3 – 12)

War was fought all over the world, on land and sea, but most people think of the fighting in France and Belgium.

- What do you think it was like to fight in the First World War?
- How was the war fought?

Trench warfare – soldiers dug trenches or holes in the ground to protect them from gunfire. They lived and slept in these trenches.

Slide 3 - A photograph of a woman from Glamorgan who went to France as a nurse. She is shown standing in a trench. It was muddy and smelly. There were lots of rats and lice and people often got diseases and became ill or even died. Do you think they got much sleep?

Slide 4 - Soldiers were very young and some only 18. Most would never have left their homes or villages before. A lot of men wanted to join to travel or support their country. Many soldiers and sailors had their photos taken before they went away on service so their family had something to remember them by (Cardiff Roll of Honour photos).

- How can we learn about life at the front?

Slide 5 - Through letters and diaries that have survived. Slide 5 shows a diary entry from Mervyn Crawshay. He was born in Llantwit Major, had a career in the army before the war and served in the 5th Dragoon Guards. He was an officer so living in better conditions than those in the trenches, but still tells us about the horror of the war in Belgium. The diary starts in August 1914 and ends on 29 October 1914. He died on 31 October 1914.

Slide 6 - Letters sent home from the front. One letter says 'The glamour of war has worn off me now and if they only let me get home whole they can keep all their honours'

Slide 7 - Embroidered Christmas card sent from front – allied flags on it. Can you name the countries whose flags are on the card? (Belgium, France, Britain, Russia)

- Many families at home received telegrams and letters saying their sons had died. This letter has a black surround. Do you know why?

Slide 8 – Their son has died.

Slide 9 - Many printed memorial cards for loved ones who had died.

Slide 10 - Photograph of Pontypridd Unitarian Church – shows people who returned from fighting in the war, and those who died - they are represented by photographs.

Slides 11 – 12 – The Navy was also involved in fighting. Many local Cardiff ships were torpedoed during the war. This plan of a ship from Cardiff tell us when it was lost at sea; this photograph shows the crew of SS Hopemount who came to Cardiff after their ship was torpedoed by a German U-Boat around 1915.

Local Heroes (Slides 13 – 14)

- Many soldiers were awarded medals for bravery. Do you know the names of any of the medals?

Slides 13 – 14 - The Victoria Cross, the Military Cross. Some local men won them and some visited their old schools to tell the children about their experiences at the

front. Frederick Barter from Cardiff won the Victoria Cross in 1915 and went back to his old school, Crwys Road Boys. With 8 other soldiers he captured 102 Germans. He also cut wires connected to mines which had been laid to blow up British trenches. He was only 24 when he won the medal.

Hospitals (Slides 15 – 22)

- Many soldiers died during the fighting. Many others were wounded and brought home to be treated in hospitals. Do you think there were enough hospitals to treat all the soldiers?

No, they needed extra hospital beds.

Slide 15 - Many buildings were taken over to be used as hospitals. Many schools, including Ninian Park School and Albany Road School, became hospitals (log book entry 'This school, Ninian Park, has been requisitioned by the War Office for a Temporary Military Hospital during the war'). Children had to share school buildings with neighbouring schools, some went in the morning and others went in the afternoon.

Slide 16 - Here is a photograph of the hospital.

- What time of year do you think it is?

Christmas as decorations are up.

- What sort of injuries did the soldiers have?

Slide 17 - Many lost limbs and a special limb workshop was set up at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Cardiff to provide soldiers with artificial limbs.

- Many soldiers were gassed and suffered shell shock. Do you know what this is?

Reaction to the trauma of war, couldn't sleep, talk and sometimes walk.

Slide 18 - Here is a photograph of volunteer nurses leaving Cardiff Station off to work at the front. Women were not allowed to fight in the war, but many went to the front to work as nurses.

Slide 19 - Nurses also worked in hospitals in Cardiff as these photos show.

Slides 20 – 22 - Nurse Emily Connell worked as a nursing sister at the 3rd Western Hospital at Howard Gardens School, Cardiff from 1915 to 1918. She kept an autograph book which has been signed by the soldiers that she treated. Some have made funny remarks or written poems, some have drawn cartoons or sketches. Mostly they gave grateful thanks to the nurses. Many have given their army regiments so it may be possible to trace some of them using family history websites. There were lots of soldiers from Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand who were injured in France and Belgium.

Women at Work (Slides 23 – 24)

- What happened when so many men went away to fight? What happened to the jobs they left?

Before the war most women stayed at home and did not have jobs but during the war women took over the jobs that the men would have done. Many of them enjoyed the responsibility and some kept their jobs after the war.

Slide 23 - During the war women had to do important work, on the land and in munitions factories (these made weapons). They also did jobs they had never done before such as bus conductors. These are photos of women from Roath who had jobs during the war, as a land girl and in the RAF.

Slide 24 - Here is a photograph of Dorothy Curtis dressed for work. She was from Cardiff, but worked in munitions factory in Birmingham. She has signed the photograph 'trousers'. Why do you think she did this?

This was probably the first time she had worn trousers as women only wore skirts before the war. It would have been seen as rather daring.

Although the war was horrific, it did allow women many freedoms and opportunities and women started to gain more equal rights with the vote being given to some women for the first time after the war.

Life in School and At Home (Slides 25 – 35)

- In boys schools they were taught by male teachers. What happened to the male teachers in school during the war?

Slide 25 - Many joined up. They were replaced by women teachers (see the log book entry). Women were allowed to teach boys (other than infants) for the first time.

At the time if a women teacher got married she had to leave her job, but during the war they were allowed to remain teaching even after they got married.

Slide 26 - Many teachers had time off school to visit relatives who were wounded. This teacher was allowed time off to visit her husband who was a wounded soldier in hospital in Birmingham.

Slide 27 - Children helped to raise money for the war effort. At Ninian Park School the children were taken to Ninian Park Hospital to entertain the soldiers. They often took presents such as cigarettes or money. This time they took sweets.

Slide 28 - People were encouraged to knit socks and comforts for the soldiers

- Some children from London came to Ninian Park School. Why was this?

Slide 29 - Due to air raids (the log book entry states 'Within the last 3 weeks a number of Jewish children have been admitted; they have left London owing to the frequent air raids'). There were some zeppelin raids over Britain. A zeppelin is a large airship.

Slides 30 - 31 - School children also raised money for Belgian refugees (log book entry). Belgium was invaded by Germany in August 1914 and thousands of Belgians came to Britain to live (around 250,000).

- Ships bringing in food were torpedoed by German submarines so this put a strain on food supplies. Rationing was introduced in 1918. Do you know what this is?

Slides 32 – 33 - Rationing meant that everyone got a fair share of food. Log book entries tell us that children missed days at school as they were sent by their mothers to queue for food such as butter. Children were taught in school to eat less and save bread (log book entry). School dinners were introduced as mothers spent so much time queuing for food they didn't have time to make dinner.

Slides 34 - 35 - Everyone had to be vigilant. There was a threat of invasion around the coast so people had to watch the coastline (the letter on slide 34 tells us of two people on guard on the beach at Monknash, armed with rifles). Slide 35 shows Llanishen Guides went on holiday to Bournemouth and helped capture a German spy!

End of the War (Slides 36 – 42)

- When did the war end?

11 November 1918.

- What is the special name for the end of the war?

Slide 36 - Armistice. On Armistice Day, people in Cardiff were alerted to the end of the war by the ringing of church bells and sounding of factory hooters. Once news came through, the children were given the day off (log book entry).

- How do we remember those who died in the war?

Slide 37 - Two minutes silence on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th Month. This way of remembering happened as early as 1919. The log book entry for 1919 says 'At 11 o'clock all bowed their heads in silent prayer for 2 minutes'

- What symbol do we have for Remembrance Day?

Slide 38 - The poppy. This symbol was first used in 1920 and inspired by the poem 'In Flanders Field'.

Slide 39 – There are more permanent reminders called war memorials. This is a photo of Bridgend war memorial covered in poppy wreaths. War memorials are sometimes a statue, or can be a plaque in a church or a memorial hall. Every year you will see these covered in poppy wreaths to remember local people who died. They have the names of local people who died on them.

Slides 40 – 41 - Many people died between October - November 1918 of Spanish flu. This illness killed many people around the world. The log book entries for Ninian Park show teachers and pupils both off school with flu. The school was closed to stop spread of infection. One little girl died. It was a bad time as people were still recovering from the hardship of war. One third of the world's population were infected and millions of people died, more than had died in the war.

Slide 42 - Homes for Heroes. Many people who had joined up had poor health and lived in poor housing. After the war the government promised to provide them with houses 'fit for heroes'. This led to Housing Act of 1919. Slums in the middle of Cardiff were demolished and the first council houses were built in Ely in the 1920s (Slide 42 shows building plans for Ely estate).

Plenary ideas:

- What have you learnt that you found really interesting?
- What do you think are the three most important words from this activity?
- What would you like to learn more about?

Possible activities based on this workshop:

- Write a letter imagining you are fighting or working as a nurse on the front line.

What would you write home? Would you be honest and say what conditions were like or would you not tell them the truth so that your family would not worry too much?

- Research your local war memorial

Where is it? What does it look like? How many names does it have on it?

- Design your own war memorial

How would you remember all the people that died? Maybe a statue, a park or building?

Online search for soldiers from Cardiff / South Wales

One way we can remember the soldiers of the First World War is to trace our family who fought in the war by using websites like Find My Past and Ancestry – ask your

parents and grandparents if they know of any family members who served in the war.

Search for Fred Keenor's First World War service record on Ancestry

Fred Keenor played for Cardiff City FC and a statue of him can be seen outside the stadium.

- Which regiment was he in?

Football Battalion, Middlesex Regiment

- What was his job before enlisting?

Professional footballer

- What happened to him in the war?

He suffered a gunshot wound and was taken to a military hospital in Dublin

- What happened when he tried to join up for the Second World War?

He was refused by the army because he had diabetes

Search for Fred Keenor in the 1911 census

- Where was he living?

16 Theodora Street, Roath, Cardiff

- How old was he?

17

- How many brothers and sisters did he have?

8

- What was his job in 1911?

Milkman

Search for Mervyn Crawshay on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website

The graves of the soldiers are carefully tended. You can use the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website to find out where people are buried.

- When did Mervyn Crawshay die?

31 October 1914

- Where is he buried?

Cement House Cemetery, Langemarck

- When was he buried there?

1970

- Who is he buried with?

An unknown soldier

- When was his body identified?

1992

- When was his new headstone erected?

1993

- Where else is Mervyn Crawshay commemorated?

On the Menin Gate

- Why was he commemorated here?

Soldiers whose bodies were never found are commemorated on the Menin Gate. Because Mervyn Crawshay's body was not found until 1970 he is also recorded on the gate.