



## **Curatorial Concerns: how two British scholar curators reacted to German medallic propaganda produced during the First World War**

by Philip Dutton

2017-07-07 14:40:08

In this age of instant digital communication it is hard to believe that barely 100 years ago the staid 'commemorative medal'[\[1\]](#) could have had any immediate and meaningful bearing on what people thought and felt about their roles as observers or participants in the First World War. Nonetheless, in addition to the production and distribution of propaganda through film, photographs, posters and printed matter, the persuasive power of the commemorative medal was also very seriously taken into account by all the major belligerent nations. Indeed, the medal has always been a vitally important medium through which history has been channelled; and the story of medallic art, from its origins in Renaissance Italy, has ever been entwined with the devilish arts of 'propaganda'. The medal by its combination of imagery and mottos ('slogans?', 'texts, or 'legends?') has proved, like coinage, a near perfect medium for durable, hand-held expressions of power and authority, as well as political comment and satire.

### **Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941)**

On 25 June 1916, over three weeks after the apparently indecisive Battle of Jutland, the famous scholar and archaeologist, President of the British Numismatic Society and former Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum[\[2\]](#), Sir Arthur Evans, wrote a letter to his young ward, James Candy, informing him, in the breeziest of tones, that he was organizing a competition for the best model of a medal to celebrate the outcome of that recent and most ambiguous naval conflict:

??I am offering two prizes for design for a medal in honour of the Sea Victory off the Horn Reef ' so that it may be better claimed as a British Victory ' the Germans are sure to strike medals to claim it as theirs! I have had some funny designs sent to me by school-boys ' let me see one of yours.?[\[3\]](#)

### **German commemorative medals**

Sir Arthur's reference to German medal production is important as he had been deeply impressed by a supremely energetic approach taken by medallists in that country, to use the medals to boost home morale (and raise funds for a variety of wartime causes in the process), influence neutral opinion as regards German war aims and conduct, and to create a unique record of the war. Indeed, this creative keenness was observed to a fault in one early instance - the production, during the opening weeks' fighting, of a piece which, based on optimistic expectations (and the historical precedent of 1871) boldly anticipated the German Army's occupation of Paris, an eventuality which did not occur and the medal had to be rapidly suppressed after the Allied victory at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914.[\[4\]](#)

The scale and variety of German medal production during the war was staggering; it has been estimated that near 600 discrete designs had been produced by mid 1917[5]. Production had been immediate following the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914; conventional commemorative pieces celebrated the justice of the German cause and strength and unity of the Central Powers. Medallions, of political personalities, contemporary and historical, and military leaders, proliferated, some rendered in a style of 'heroic realism?', which suited well the monumental features of the 'saviour' Hindenburg, brought out of retirement to defeat the Russians in East Prussia. More controversially, attempts were made to depict Germany as being unfairly encircled and at war with the world ' in which national symbolism was employed ' the German Eagle beset from the east by the Russian Bear, and from the west, by the Gallic Cock and British Lion (or Bulldog, and, more rarely, a Unicorn). The 'war on two fronts' ' an initial and purely temporary state of affairs as postulated by the Schlieffen Plan ' created an opportunity for Germany to exploit its situation as a victim of a deliberately contrived and long-planned Allied encirclement. By the end of 1915, a large and well-established body of German medals existed, which included pieces celebrating German technological prowess, in armaments and the machinery of war, military and naval successes (often minor and obscure ones), the early exploits of Zeppelins, and the first air 'aces'.

But the role of the commemorative medal in the overt propaganda war was significantly enhanced earlier that year, in the wake of the Munich-based medallist, Karl Goetz's now notorious '*Lusitania Medal*'. This personal and privately produced response to the sinking of the British liner by a German U-boat on 7 May 1915, condemned the Cunard Company for its decision to allow the liner to carry munitions as well as civilian passengers, after clear German warnings that the vessel would be regarded as a legitimate target. The medal, which first saw light in August 1915, immediately provoked much Allied disapproval.[6] Rough cast in iron and utilising disquieting imagery and satirical text, it set a tone for a series of German medals which were in singular contrast to those of the other warring nations. Responding to the growing casualty figures and appallingly destructive scale of the conflict, a number of German medallists abandoned the conventions of heroic realism and decorous allegory in favour of imagery more relevant to the horrors daily witnessed. This included repurposing the Medieval 'Dance of Death' motif, and the macabre skeletal figure of 'Death' was variously depicted mercilessly laying waste a powerless mankind on land and sea and gloating over his handiwork. Some artists (like Goetz) pleaded the national cause in which crowded imagery and ironic texts were key. Others, viewing the conflict as a universal tragedy, proffered compassionate glimpses of war's consequences - the 'sorrow and the pity' as experienced by soldiers and civilians, employing expressionist imagery the better to convey the intensity of their feelings.[7] Rough cast iron was the chosen medium and ironic texts complemented many designs. As such they were in utter contrast to the refined and exaggerated romanticism displayed by the contemporary die-struck bronze and silver French, Belgian, Austro-Hungarian and British medals.

Sir Arthur Evans' particular interest in German medals, a fascination, fuelled by his seeing a display of these works in mid-June 1916[8], was directly related to his appreciation of its value for propaganda purposes. His Jutland medal competition was inspired in part to influence domestic and world opinion in connection with the momentous naval battle which the Germans called 'Skaggeak' and the British (only after considerable dithering) the Battle of Jutland - with a view to scotching the notion that it was nothing more than a costly draw and redefining it for neutral and as yet unformed opinion, as an outright British victory.[9]

His advocacy of the medal as a propaganda tool (though Britain was in fact to produce far fewer medals than Germany) was to receive indirect support the following year via a scholarly and controversial publication, compiled exactly one hundred years ago, by the foremost expert on coins and medals in the land ' the highly respected Keeper of the Department of Coins and Medals Department at the British Museum, George Francis Hill. Hill, who was eventually appointed Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum in 1931 and

knighted in 1933, had in fact had been the brains behind the display of German medals that had so inspired Sir Arthur in the first place.[\[10\]](#)

### **George Francis Hill (1867-1948)**

Published in 1917, G F Hill's '*The Commemorative Medal in the Service of Germany*' constituted a succinct chronicle of wartime German medallic production, and a highly charged critique of the role of these medals in '*the battle for hearts and minds*'. In it he acknowledged, historically, a clear role for the medal in the propaganda process. But his hearty disapproval of the German '*appeal to the lower passions?*[\[11\]](#) combined with clear pronouncements - based on deeply felt personal convictions about the medallic ideal - on the poor quality of German medal design and finish, represented nothing less than a concerted attempt to subvert and diminish the enemy propaganda campaign. At the same time, it was clear that Hill sought to gain some sort of understanding of the 'perverse' thinking that lay behind it.

By the time of its issue, the 50-year old Hill and his Department had not spared the ravages of war: two former members of staff had been wounded on active service and the day to day curatorial operations were subject to considerable upheaval and wearing inconvenience.[\[12\]](#) Hill was in no mood for dispassionate assessment. His book, part polemic, part catalogue, is riddled with severe and sometimes derisory comments directed at the medals themselves and their originators. Applying his highly developed aesthetic sensibilities and formidable learning, Hill argued the case for German creative impoverishment. He did not admire the German medals: the workmanship was poor, the designs ill-conceived;[\[13\]](#) the messages obscure and untrue. But it was the work of the German satirists[\[14\]](#) - especially Karl Goetz and Walther Eberbach - which was singled out for particular censure. For Hill the great crime was '*the taste for the gruesome?*'; a preference for the grotesque and crudity of expression and finish as a deliberate rejection of the Renaissance ideals of forms and fine modelling. So saying it is just possible to discern within Hill's lively censure the slightest trace of an anxiety that, despite, the German medals' obvious moral, technical and aesthetic inferiority, the anti-Allied messages they bore may still have had the power to turn a neutral head or two.

Ironically, it is precisely the qualities of the German satirical medals that did not impress Hill - their crude vitality, energy, expressiveness, and sometimes extraordinary imagery - that have beguiled subsequent generations. The artist Paul Nash visited the Imperial War Museum in August 1931 to see its collection as research for an article, and they merited inclusion in the IWM's medal display case in 1938. Much later, in the early 1980s, examples of German satirical medals on display in the British Museum inspired the medallist and sculptor Michael Sandle to employ equally disturbing imagery in his '*Belgrano Medal*' (1986).[\[15\]](#) This fiercely angry response to the torpedoing of the Argentinian cruiser in the South Atlantic in May 1982, at the outset of the Falklands Conflict, owes far more to the work of Karl Goetz and Walther Eberbach than to the high ideals of medallic art established by the Renaissance artist Antonio Pisanello (c.1395 - c.1455) so admired by Hill.

It is perhaps time to take another look at these remarkable German 'documents' with a view to, not only appreciating their qualities, but in order to gain a better understanding of their means of production, distribution and overall effectiveness in the propaganda campaigns of the First World War.

#### -----REFERENCES-----

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- '*A Guide to the Exhibition of Historical Medals in the British Museum?*', G C Brooke & G F Hill, British Museum, London, 1924, pp.129-140

- *The Dance of Death. Medallion Art of the First World War?*, Mark Jones, British Museum, London, 1979
- *Behind German Lines?*, Thomas Hockenhull, British Museum Magazine, Spring 2014, pp.32-33
- Web sources:<http://www.1914.org/news/british-museum-looks-at-the-other-side-of-the-medal-in-new-first-world-war-exhibition/>
- Lusitania medal story links :<http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-a-german-medallion-became-a-british-propaganda-tool>  
<http://blog.britishmuseum.org/the-sinking-of-the-lusitania-medals-as-war-propaganda/>

----- NOTES -----

[1] These are 'Hand-held works of art' (*Behind German Lines?*, Thomas Hockenhull, British Museum Magazine, Spring 2014, p.32) and constitute a category quite different to officially produced and awarded military medals awarded for gallantry and service.

[2] He was also, during the war years a Trustee of the British Museum.

[3] Private letter from Sir Arthur Evans to James Candy; held by him and shown to the author in 1987.

[4] See 'EINZUG D. DEUTSCHEN TRUPPEN IN PARIS?', copy held by the IWM, ref EPH 10155.  
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30105231>

[5] *The Commemorative Medal in the Service of Germany?*, G F Hill, British Museum, London, 1917, p.3

[6] It subsequently inspired a sophisticated British anti-German propaganda campaign in which Goetz's medal was presented a distasteful national celebration of the deaths of innocent civilians in a deliberately pre-planned attack. See: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-a-german-medallion-became-a-british-propaganda-tool> and <http://blog.britishmuseum.org/the-sinking-of-the-lusitania-medals-as-war-propaganda>

[7] *Behind German Lines?*, Thomas Hockenhull, British Museum Magazine, Spring 2014, pp 32-33; *The Dance of Death. Medallion Art of the First World War?*, Mark Jones, British Museum, London, 1979. Also: <http://www.1914.org/news/british-museum-looks-at-the-other-side-of-the-medal-in-new-first-world-war-exhibition/>;

[8] At the meeting of the Royal Numismatic Society on 15 June 1916

[9] In addition to his aim of disputing German claims for victory Sir Arthur had a secondary motive for sponsoring the competition, and that was to stimulate a revival in quality medallion workmanship, as the means for creating the very best medium for effectively communicating the Allied cause. *An Enterprise Directed Northward: some medallion tributes to the Battle of Jutland?*, P Dutton, 'The Medal?', No 11, Summer 1987, pp 46-53

[10] In the region of 500 German medals were displayed to members of the Royal Numismatic Society at their meeting on the 15 June 1916.

[11] *The Commemorative Medal in the Service of Germany?*, G F Hill, 1917, p.9  
<https://archive.org/details/cu31924024893806>

[12] *An Autobiographical Fragment: Sir George Hill?*, The Medal, Issue No 12, Spring/February 1988, pp.37-48

[13] There were minor exceptions ' Hill conceded that Karl Goetz's memorial to *'The Three Counts von Spee'* (all lost at the Battle of the Falkland Islands ' December 1914) possessed praiseworthy elements: 'Gtz's (sic) conception of the German Eagle flying over a waste of waters to lay a laurel branch upon their ocean grave?is one with which every citizen of a sea-going nation will sympathise.' *'The Commemorative Medal in the Service of Germany?'*, p.29

[14] Karl Goetz (1875-1950) by reason, of his creative prodigality, is the best known of these. Other important German contributors to the satirical medal tradition in the First World War included: Walther Eberbach (1866-1943), who created his own series of 'Totentanz' (Dance of Death) pieces; Hans Lindl (1885-?); Ludwig Gies (1877-1966) and Arnold Zadikow (1884-1943).

[15] <http://www.bams/org.uk/product/belgrano-medal-a-medal-of-dishonour/>

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## Weapons of Mass Persuasion: The First World War in Posters

by Nina Kruglikova

2016-11-02 10:55:21

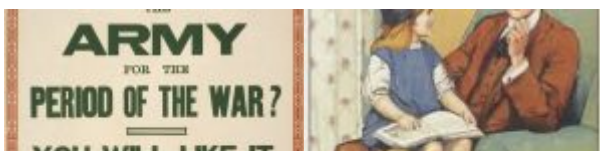
The British poster artist Cyril Kenneth Bird, known as Fougasse, once referred to posters as 'anything stuck on a wall with the objective of persuading the passer-by' (Stanley, 1983: 7). To persuade the passer-by appears to be the main function of the war poster, and it is not surprising that posters became a major medium of mass communication in the 'cityscape' of the UK during the First World War. It could be considered the broadest mobilisation of printed ephemera for political purposes in history, whereby many artists and designers were recruited to harness the power of persuasion both at war and on the home front. With all their efforts, they aimed to prove that whereas battles are won in battlefields, wars are won in the minds and hearts.

The war propaganda poster has been a matter of scholarly studies from a variety of perspectives, including visual arts, history, war and propaganda studies. However, textual representations have been given insufficient attention so far. This blog aims to rectify this neglect by examining several strategies of persuasion widely used in the First World War posters. Before doing so, I will briefly outline the main dominant topics which can be traced in posters produced in the UK during the Great War as well as the driving forces and purposes behind their production.

### Popular Themes

*Recruitment of men to join the army*

While the UK did not have conscription until 1916, the recruitment posters appealed to men's sense of dignity and honour, and women were often given the role encouraging men to enlist and such were addressed to pressurise their men to do their patriotic duty for 'King and Country'. These recurring themes were intrinsically linked with traditional family values where men acted as defenders of their families and homes. It was not uncommon when in the beginning posters sold the war as a matter of a better life choice by offering a deceptive image of war realities, but the initial enthusiasm was quick to give way to mobilisation efforts 'by shame'.







### *Recruitment of women to enter the workforce*

Women were not expected to fight, but were supposed to become engaged in the Women's Land Army, munitions factories and wartime charities in order to release more men to serve in the trenches. Such posters assigned unusual tasks for women thus challenging traditional gender roles.



### *Request for war bonds and war loans*

The necessity of soliciting money provided an important topic for poster designers where money was often portrayed as an active force in military engagement.





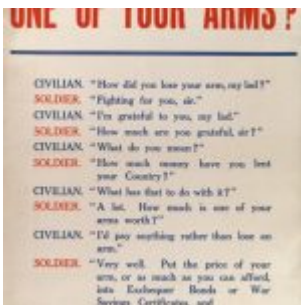
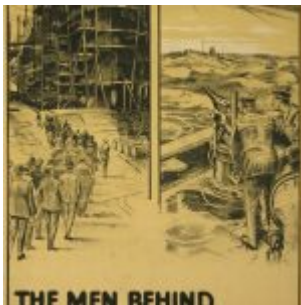
### *Saving resources and reducing consumption*

Posters were explicit in showing that excess consumption could help Germany, and reinforcing peer pressure was part of wider propaganda efforts.



*Increase in productivity and collective efforts*

Many posters were concerned with efforts to encourage industrial activity and increased productivity through collective effort. Skilled civilians were called upon to join the war efforts on the Home Front.



The persuasive power of these posters is expressed through various strategies of persuasion which include the following among others: dialogism, a them/us divide, locality/temporality and national symbolism. Below you

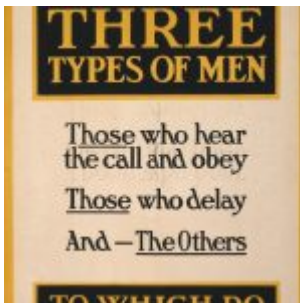


can see examples of how such strategies are fleshed out in textual representations.

## Strategies of Persuasion

### *Dialogism*

The effect of dialogue was created by the use of direct addresses to specific groups (footballers) and ethnicities (Jews), introduction of quotations ('Every player who represented England in rugby international matches last year has joined the colours' - extract from the Times) and the prolific use of personal and possessive pronouns ('you?', 'yours?') as well as the imperatives ('Join the special Jewish unit?'). The posters put the questions into the mind of the viewer ('There are three types of men' 'To which do you belong??') to engender a response, and colloquial words ('Good bye, my lad?') and contracted forms ('can't?'; 'there's?') added a touch of lively conversation. Single men were usual targets, since under the Derby Scheme, married men were given the assurance that single men would be called upon first.



### *Them/Us Divide*

The war image of the enemy was demonised and remained of stylised simplicity ('German barbarians?'), whereas the British side invoked God's help and protection. The depiction of atrocities performed by Germans had to instil hatred and provoke action ('How the Hun hates!' 'British Soldiers! Look! Read! And Remember!'), and references to God ('God help me?') helped to justify actions of the Allies.



### *Locality and Temporality*

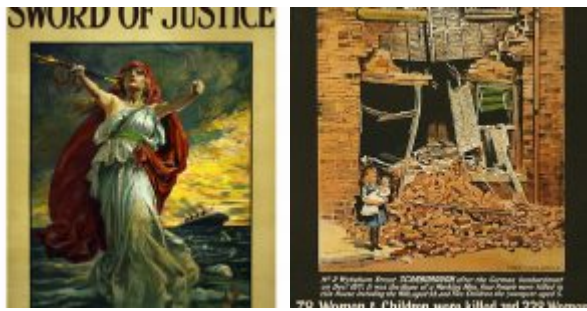
For the First World War posters, as for any other piece of war persuasive propaganda, it was important to anchor the moment in space and time by calling for action right here, right now. The posters made extensive use of temporal markers ('now?', 'to-day?', 'at once?') and referred to different periods in the past (1805; Nelson's words 'England expects?'), present ('It is far better to face the bullets?Join the Army at once?') and future ('It will be too late to fight?') to reinforce the message. The geographical locations ('Free trip to Europe?') were supposed to give a sense of direction and purpose to fight for Britain and neighbouring countries.



### *Emotional Appeals*

In addition to vivid imagery, emotionally loaded words had the objective of embedding a broad spectrum of feelings ranging from happiness and courage to fear and guilt. The employment of comparative and superlative adjectives ('it is far better?', 'the grimmest menace?') alongside the inverted order of words ('together we win?')

made the message more emphatic and channelled emotions in a particular direction for urging action. The imperative addresses ('Men of Britain!') with metaphors ('sword of justice?') and allusions to war-related (the sinking of Lusitania) served the same purpose.



### *National Symbolism*

The posters were abundant in national symbols and allegorical figures, such as John Bull as a personification of Britain and Tommy Atkins as an archetypal figure for the British soldier. The artists relied on symbolism to illustrate their points of nationhood, such as in posters below presenting Britain as the Old Lion with the young lions as the Empire nations, and England as St George fighting the dragon.



The above illustrated linguistic repertoire for strategic persuasion in posters is extensive but definitely not exhaustive. However, as can be seen even from this concise overview, posters were designed with the purpose of being an essential weapon in the national arsenal of warfare. The public was constantly bombarded with war-related messages of such posters which served as a mirror of life ' both reflecting and distorting the reality. Given that the poster was one of the most popular types of mass media, it seems only natural to suggest that the First World War gave rise to the *Great War of Words and Images*. Although the role of the poster is now obviously limited due to today's vibrant 'media-scape?', strategies of persuasive communication are just as much a part of our contemporary world with its information wars as they used to be in those days.

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[Original version](#)

## **The First World War and women's fashion: what to wear in an air-raid!**

**by Lucy Adlington**

**2016-09-16 09:30:44**

Small details give a human touch to our understanding of what happened in London's first Blitz. For example, the typist whose life was saved because she dashed back to her desk for her handbag during a raid, and so missed the worst of a bomb blast. A mother whose celluloid hair comb caught fire and whose clothes were then set alight. An East End pupil from a wrecked junior school only identified by the unusual shirt button stitched on his cuff just the night before.

During the First World War clothes offer abundant evidence of the changes in class structures and women's roles. They also weave together anxieties about the upheaval caused by the literal impact of war on British soil through naval bombardments, Zeppelin raids, and the new terror of airplane bombings.

As a result of wartime austerity, the official attitude to clothes was initially one of thrift and economy. Clothes shopping, beyond the essentials, was considered 'bad form.' Increasingly, women swapped civilian fashions for uniforms and even trousers.



During the 1914 naval shelling of English coastal towns in the North East people had to forget etiquette and decency: they ran for their lives in a dishevelled array of hastily-donned garments. From 1915 zeppelins and airplanes raided the country. The impact was devastating and clothes told the story.

As well as a collapse of physical structures, there was a collapse of social order at times. This ranged from the mild alarm at seeing women dressing in the shelter of London tube stations, to serious scenes of looting and xenophobic mob violence. An imposition of structure was essential to avoid a serious, widespread breakdown in morale. Women in uniform played their part.





Fashion also provided a protection of sorts, by defying war and chaos. Some writers at the time sought to offer tips on what to wear in an air raid. One fashion editor raved about her new black silk pyjamas. She confessed, 'I do want a little Zep scare, so that I can wear them. Of course I don't want anyone to be killed.?'

On a more practical note, the first *onesie* was invented in WW1. It was called a 'slumber suit' and it was the forerunner of the famous Siren Suit of the next World War.

Extra defiance came from new mid-war fashions for shorter, fuller skirts supported by petticoats or hoops. Rayon or silk dance dresses were also popular for young party-goers wanting to live in the moment.

In a further twist in fashion's tale, many women doing war work were now earning decent wages and they wanted to flaunt their disposable income, even as upper class women gradually wore plainer and shabbier clothes.

In a world where traditional values and roles were in a state of upheaval, people clung to the concept of clothes as a sign of civilisation. This was in stark contrast to reports of bodies found in bomb raid aftermaths, with their clothes blasted from their bodies.

When the last bombs fell on London in May 1918, fashion had settled into a calm and simple style ' a rather shapeless shift dress that slipped over the head with minimal fuss and fastenings.

London dressmaker Elspeth Phelps, writing in 1916, predicted the freedom of future fashions in her thought-provoking statement:

*?war is making women think, and I have an idea that when it is over people will cling to the simple lines and more practical models, and that for many years we shall see what influence war has had on fashion.?*

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# WWI Memorials of the British Empire: Identity and Memory on the Western Front

by **Hanna Smyth**

**2016-04-13 10:12:15**

The Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) took on a monumental task in the 1920s-30s: identifying, burying, and commemorating thousands upon thousands of WWI soldiers. This involved erecting stone commemoration (cemeteries and memorials) that would acknowledge the dead both individually and collectively. As implied by the name 'Imperial?', the IWGC wasn't just responsible for British soldiers: it was responsible for commemorating all the fallen combatants of the British Empire.

At this time the British dominions and India were in a complicated position, falling somewhere between colony status and independence. These distinct and very different countries were subsumed under the umbrella of the IWGC in creating their material culture of remembrance on the battlefields, yet almost all had a national memorial constructed on the Western Front with which they were heavily involved.

The result was five memorials which became symbols of national identity for these countries:

- Villers-Bretonneux (Australia)
- Vimy Ridge (Canada)
- Delville Wood (South Africa)
- Neuve Chapelle (India)
- Beaumont-Hamel (Newfoundland)

These are usually understood as national monuments representing unified experiences of loss and achievement, erected on battlefield sites that held special significance for each country. The centenary of WWI has prompted increased engagement with these memorials, including as epicentres of national mythologies; however, the centenary should also prompt us to critically re-examine these monuments.

While unquestionably serving to represent- and construct- national identity for Canada, Australia, South Africa, Newfoundland, and India, there is much more to the story. These memorials are hybrid sites: they each reflect, reinforce, or elide many aspects of identity, rather than a single cohesive narrative.

Often, they represented Britishness as an integral part of their newly constructed 'national' identities, rather than as an opposing force to react against. National unity did not negate loyalty to empire, but rather reduced the degree of subordination in the relationship. As such, India's Neuve Chapelle memorial is topped by both the imperial British Crown and the Star of India; South Africa's Delville Wood memorial represents 'all the people of South Africa' with a statue of twins symbolizing the two 'white races' of South Africa, one of which was the British; and Canada's Vimy memorial is covered in allegorical sculptures (i.e. 'Hope?', 'Faith?', 'Justice?') which allude to Canada's shared identity with Britain based on universal values and shared experiences.

The memorials also walk a fine line between representing individual and collective identity: they are both intensely personal yet defined by their representation of a collective. Most of the memorials include the names of their countries' thousands of missing soldiers: Villers-Bretonneux, for example, is inscribed with the names of 10,738 missing Australians. However, Delville Wood has no names at all. Instead, the South African missing are listed on the British memorials, most famously at Thiepval. Each of these monuments are located alongside battlefield cemeteries, where known burials for each nationality receive individual headstones and thus the opportunity for a personalised epitaph from their family. Yet, the soldiers listed on the memorials had to be summed up in just one inscription for each memorial as a whole: at Neuve Chapelle, for example, the phrase chosen was 'God Is One, His Is the Victory' in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Gurmukhi.

There were also no single 'national' identities for these memorials to represent, because during the war and its aftermath each country was in the throes of extensive societal divisions and inequalities. Shared battle experiences, even ones that later became enshrined in national mythologies like Vimy and Gallipoli, could not nullify internal divisions. A set of examples will indicate the scale of this phenomenon:

- Japanese Canadians were only reluctantly admitted into the armed forces in small numbers, and after serving in the war returned home to a country that denied them the right to vote for another 13 years.
- During the war, 9,000 Canadians were sent to internment camps, because they had previously immigrated to Canada from the Central Power countries.
- English and French Canada were sharply divided, which particularly came to a boiling point over the issue of conscription.
- 4,000 Canadian soldiers were of Aboriginal descent and faced continuing discrimination in the postwar period, including lack of access to some services afforded to white veterans.
- The 70,000 Black South Africans of the Native Labour Corps did not receive the British War Medal, while their white officers did.
- In South Africa tensions arose over domestic commemoration, highlighting ongoing difficulties between Afrikaner and Anglo- South Africans.
- India remained composed of highly stratified societies, some under the British Raj and some part of Princely States, which were segregated according to the caste system. 'India' was not a heterogeneous country, but rather included people practicing at least six different faiths, speaking many different languages, and representing a wide variety of ethnicities.

All of these factors coalesced to produce memorials that represent a more complicated narrative than might be assumed at first glance. Memorials are an important source to help us understand the lives of those who died and those who missed them. By examining the forms they took and the historical contexts that shaped them, we can better understand: which aspects of identity were represented and reinforced in these monuments; who decided and why; and how this continues to influence contemporary conceptions of these sites and the identities they embody. One IWGC epitaph in France states, "Time passes but love and remembrance live forever?"; colonial memorials provide a fascinating demonstration both of the truth of this statement and of how not just love, but other motives and omissions, went into these perpetual sites of remembrance.

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## **The National Egg Collection for Wounded Soldiers and Sailors 1914-1918**

**by David Thomas**

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The National Egg Collection was launched in November 1914 following proposals put forward by Frederick Carl, the editor of *Poultry World*. The aim initially was to provide 20,000 newly-laid eggs a week to the wounded in hospital in Boulogne. However, very soon the organisation began to aim even higher, endeavouring to collect or purchase 200,000 eggs a week: a target that was reached at Easter 1915. In the following August, partly to celebrate the fact that Queen Alexandra had become the patron of the scheme, the War Office decided to see if the number could be increased to one million eggs a week. 1,030,380 eggs were received during the week 16-23 August, not including those sent directly to local hospitals, a practice which *Poultry World* discouraged. Special boxes and labels were supplied (there were over 2000 depots run by local groups and churches) and free transport was provided by the railways. A central collection point was established in London in a warehouse initially provided free of charge by Harrods.

The National Egg Collection was one of a range of initiatives appealing to all classes and to all ages but especially to children. A variety of posters were issued, one depicting a hen wearing a red sash, a sort of honorary soldier 'enlisted for duration of the war?', thus echoing the sentiment expressed by *Poultry World* that

'every British hen should be on active service'.

Postcards, too, were produced, one of appeal to children showing a little chick looking up at her mother and saying: 'Ma! Teach me how to lay an Egg ' I want to do my bit for the wounded!' The famous graphic artist, Donald McGill, produced a card aimed at a more mature audience. Egg services were being held in a number of churches and McGill's card depicted a clergyman pronouncing from the pulpit: 'It would greatly assist the collectors of eggs for the wounded soldiers if, upon coming to Church, each lady would lay an egg in the Font!?

Cardboard or silk lapel pins and badges were sold on flag days and advertisements employing a mixture of patriotic idealism and emotional blackmail placed in the newspapers. 'Do your duty by the wounded men. You cannot eat eggs and feel that the wounded are going without.' Those not participating were deemed to be not worthy of the name 'Britisher'.

Donors were encouraged to write their name and address on the eggs with a message for the wounded (*Poultry World* called them 'eggograms?') and often the grateful recipient of an egg would write to thank the sender. Such letters record the reception given to the arrival of fresh eggs in the hospitals. 'I wish you could see the joy on the poor fellows' faces when they get the eggs; it would fully repay you for all your trouble' is a typical observation. Indeed, the morale-boosting aspect of the receipt of a fresh egg cannot be over-emphasised. It was estimated that an egg was placed in front of a wounded serviceman, even in France, within three days of being laid.

As the war dragged on, the collection of eggs continued apace, though urgent representations were constantly being made for the number of gifts not to be decreased. Germany's 'devilish practice of sinking Hospital Ships' meant that 'thousands of wounded men cannot be brought home. In consequence the 'National Egg Collection' must send at least 250,000 eggs weekly across the Channel. There is no substitute for eggs in maintaining a man's vitality, hastening his convalescence or even in preserving life.' In October 1917 the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, wrote to the Collection what they called 'a most encouraging and appreciative letter'. Meanwhile, on 21 October 1918 *The Times* published in facsimile a letter from Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, expressing the gratitude of the Base hospitals in France for the eggs sent from home. A week later the letter was printed again, this time with the added enticement for donors of eggs during what the paper dubbed 'Autograph Egg Week' of receiving a copy of the letter 'reproduced in facsimile upon paper suitable for framing'. What a stampede there must have been!

The Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918 and the National Egg Collection effort was gradually wound down, drawing to a close on the last day of March 1919. Many collectors were issued with Certificates of Honour. Over 41 million eggs had been collected, of which no fewer than 32 million had been despatched to the Base hospitals in France and Belgium. Its work finally over, the National Egg Collection was able to send a cheque for the cash balance of 5,865 to the War Office. One hopes that they spent it wisely.

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