

# DERBYSHIRE LIVES THROUGH THE FIRST WORLD WAR

This exhibition is the culmination of the Heritage Lottery funded project, Derbyshire Lives Through the First World War.

The project has aimed to help Derbyshire communities to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in 2014 and to recognise the ongoing contribution of Derbyshire people throughout the War.

The exhibition looks at what life was on the Front Line, the Home Front and also stories of individuals from Derbyshire during the War. Derbyshire Lives Through the First World War will tour the county throughout 2017 and 2018.



Eley family, Heanor.  
Courtesy of Mrs A Townsend and  
[www.picturethepast.org.uk](http://www.picturethepast.org.uk)

# WAR TO END ALL WARS



Crowds listen in Berlin as the Kaiser's order of mobilisation is read out.  
Copyright Imperial War Museum.

Few events in history have had a more profound impact upon the world than the First World War. It shaped the twentieth century, with its effects still being felt today.

The Ottoman Empire, one of the largest and longest lasting, collapsed, as did the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The German Kaiser was removed from power after the War and the German Empire in East Africa and its other colonies was dissolved. Russia became a communist state with the Tsar abdicating in 1917.

The map of the Middle East was re-drawn by Britain and France and the world began to change from coal power to oil. Advances in technology and medicine made during the conflict began to change society. The modern world and modern warfare had begun.

# THE GREAT WAR OR THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

Some people say 'First World War' and some 'The Great War'. It is very often said that Great War was used first and is more correct.

However, two days before Britain entered the War, the Pittsburg Press used both phrases on its front page.

## THE PITTSBURG PRESS

SUNDAY MORNING AUGUST 2 1914

### ENGLAND HAS THROWN LOT WITH FRANCE IN WORLD WAR

**"The Great War is on. Germany took the initiative  
and formally declared hostilities..."**

In September 1914 German philosopher Ernst Haeckel stated: "there is no doubt that the course and character of the feared 'European War'... will become the first world war in the full sense of the word."

In October 1914, Canadian magazine, Maclean's said: "Some wars name themselves. This is the Great War."

'Great War' was also used many years previously to describe the Napoleonic wars in the early 1800s.

If you are looking to investigate your own community's heritage, the Derbyshire Record Office holds a wide variety of First World War archives, these include official documents, personal letters, diaries and photographs.

All are available to research at the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock.





# Derbyshire Lives

The main focus of this exhibition is the impact that the First World War had upon Derbyshire and its people. Like all parts of Great Britain, the county was hugely effected by the conflicted.

The stories of Derbyshire people during the First World War are recorded in the many diaries and letters from the time held by archives, libraries and museums in the county. They were written not only by the men who were away fighting but also by those at home. These documents offer a personal account of what life was like at the time and give an insight into the changes that were taking place.

The years 1914 – 1918 were a period of change and very few people were not touched by the conflict in some way. No two stories are the same and the people of Derbyshire experienced the War in different ways. Some found adventure, others opportunity. For many it was a time to endure, suffering great sadness, sorrow and pain along the way.



# Front Line

The exhibition also tells the story of the front line – the tales of those who fought and risked their lives for their country and the hardships they faced.

Of course, when we think of the First World War our minds often turn to the Western Front. Countless books have been written and films made of life in the muddy trenches of Belgium and France. These may have popularised the view that this was the only place where fighting took place - and many millions did fight and die here - but it is important to remember that this was a world war.

The Middle East and Turkey saw much fighting as the British and Ottoman Empires wrestled for control of the region. A devastating war was also fought in East Africa as the German and British armies conscripted local soldiers to make safe their colonies in the region.

Thousands of Derbyshire people set sail for these different theatres of war. For many it would have been the first time they had left Britain for foreign shores. Many would never return to Derbyshire and their loved ones. For those that did make it home the memories of the First World War would last a lifetime.



# Home Front

The First World War was a 'total war' meaning everyone across the was involved or effected in some way. This exhibition also looks at what changed for those at home and the ways in which Derbyshire people helped with the war effort and sometimes tried to hinder it.

Being a rural county, Derbyshire agriculture expanded during the First World War to meet the increased demand for food and farm animals were taken. Towns across the region changed, with women filling the jobs vacated by men leaving to serve, and charitable efforts organised to raise money for the war effort and help injured returning soldiers.

Industry in Derbyshire also changed to meet the demands of the War. Chesterfield Pottery made rum ration jars for soldiers. In Wirksworth there was a fuse factory that was essential for the production of ammunition and a Derby foundry refilled used shells.

The War may have been hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of miles away from this area but there can be no doubt it had a huge influence on the people and communities of Derbyshire.

