

JEWIS IN ARMED FORCES LOST THEIR IDENTITIES AS MIGRANTS

BY SIMON YAFFE

SOME 55,000 Jewish men and women served in the British armed forces during the First World War, according to historian Paula Kitching.

She told a Manchester audience on Wednesday: "It meant the moulding together of Jewish and British histories."

"Many of them were second or even first generation immigrants, but their identities as migrants were no longer as their stories became part of Anglo-Jewish history."

"It is an important story to tell, as their contribution is part of the history of the First World War."

Ms Kitching, whose book *Britain's Jews in the First World War* (Amberley, £14.99), will be published next week, is also heavily involved with the We Were There Too project, which organised her talk at Manchester's Nicky Alliance Centre.

We Were There Too is a unique cross community project created to capture, record and preserve the impact, experience and contribution of Britain's Jewish communities during the First World War era.

And, at the centre of the project, is a digital archive and interactive website, which will become a permanent record of the lives of Jewish men, women and families, from 1914 to 1919, with details of their military and Home Front activities.

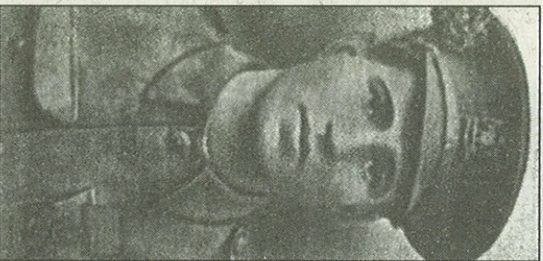
The project originated in London four-and-a-half years ago and is now being run in the north-west under project manager Rodney Ross.

Ms Kitching said: "Part of the project is to get people's stories recognised."

"We are beginning to gather more names to try and collect the stories of these men and women."

"One of the biggest problems we have is collecting female stories, because women marry and tend to change their surnames, so it makes it much more difficult."

"At the moment, we



ISSY Smith, of the Manchester Regiment

War heroes became part of UK history



PROJECT TALK: AJEX national chairman Colonel Martin Newman, Paula Kitching and We Were There Too north-west project manager Rodney Ross

only have around 10,000 names altogether."

She explained that 50,000 names are recorded in the British Jewish Book of Honour, which was published in 1922.

But they do not contain the family and life details which We Were There Too is collecting.

"We are remembering those who have gone before us, but also reminding everybody that British Jews' contribution was a significant and important one," Ms Kitching added.

She told guests of examples from the database, including Lance Corporal Harold Levy and nurses Florence Greenberg and Emily Hartman.

Lance Corporal Levy served in the Devonshire Regiment and was killed on the Somme, where he is buried in the Devonshire Cemetery.

His is the only headstone engraved with a Magen David.

Ms Kitching said: "Back then, there were a far greater number of Jews living in different parts of the UK than we see now."

"The Devonshire Regiment didn't have a high number of Jews and Harold Levy was from North London."

"What probably happened was that he had gone to sign up, enlisted and wanted to join a London regiment, but was told to serve with the Devonshires."

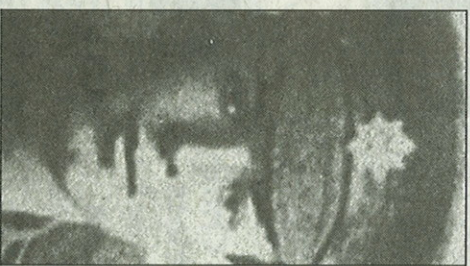
"He was killed on

July 1, 1916, on the first day of the Somme, where there were 58,000 casualties, which resulted in 19,000 deaths."

Mrs Greenberg (nee Openheimer), who later became a noted cookery writer, served in the Queen Alexandra Nursing Services Reserve, which was known as the elite of the military nursing service.

"She spent the summer on a hospital ship off the coast of Egypt, and served as a nurse in the Gallipoli campaign," Ms Kitching said.

"Florence went back to Britain as part of the nursing corps, but found it boring, so she returned to Egypt to help with the Sinai, Palestine and Mesopotamia campaigns."



PRIVATE Isaac Levy, from Leeds, who served with the Royal Munster Fusiliers

"She kept a diary of her wartime experiences, which are today kept at the Jewish Museum, in London."

Stationed at the Bermondsey Military Hospital, in London, she died in October, 1918, at the age of just 23, a victim of that year's influenza pandemic, and is buried at Sheffield's Ecclesfield Jewish Cemetery.

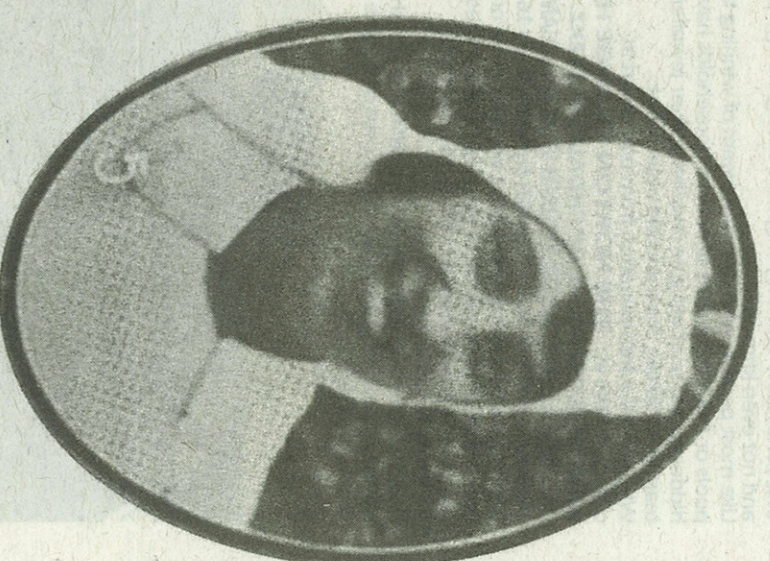
"Emily was a casualty of war, too, and a Jewish heroine," Ms Kitching continued.

"She would not have been working at that hospital had the war not been going on."

Ms Kitching also explained that, prior to the First World War, there were rabbis attached to the British armed services, but they were not allowed to be deployed on overseas duty.

"By 1918 they were deployed and there were rabbis working across the theatres of war, serving both Jewish and non-Jewish troops," she said.

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SHEFFIELD-raised nurse Emily Hartman

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