

Bury Times

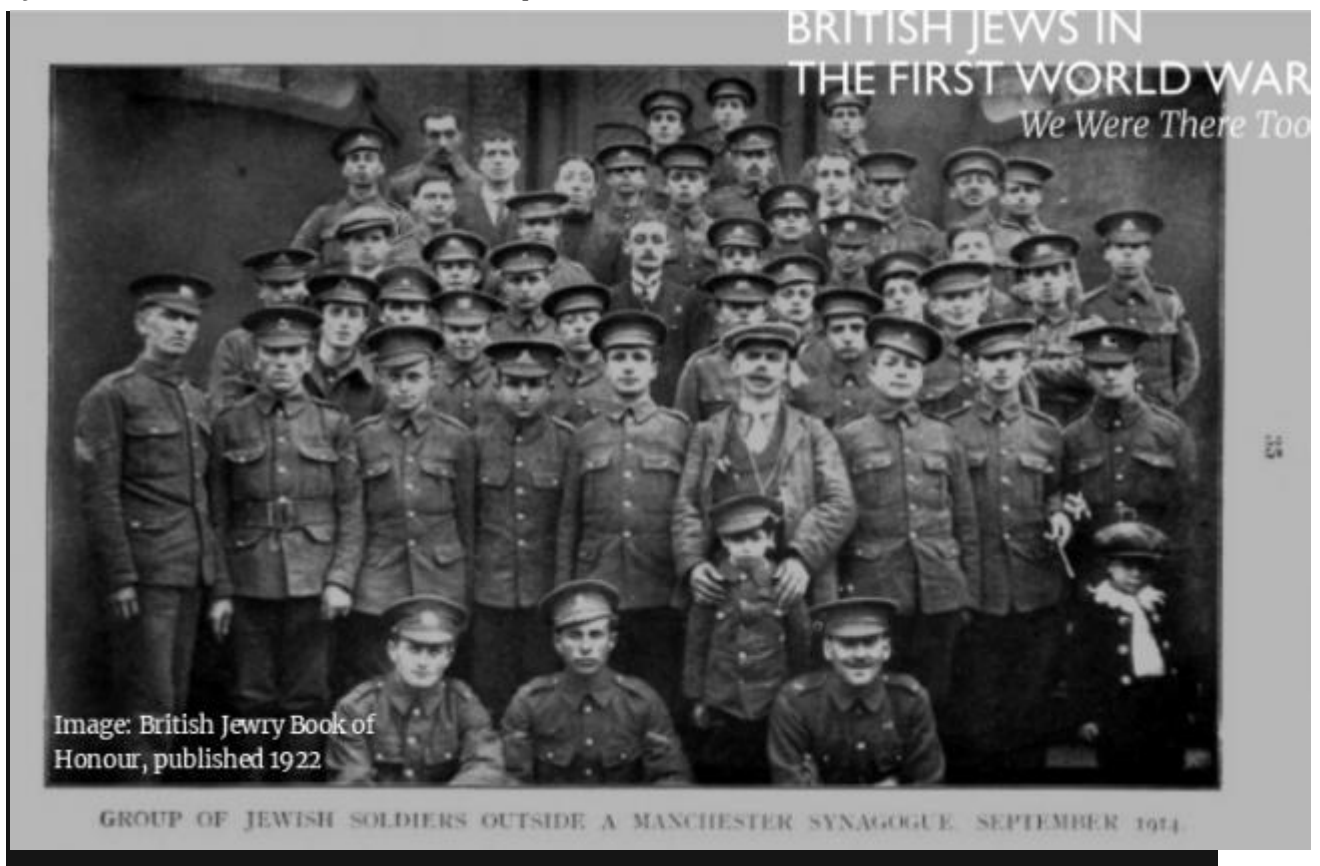
- **News**

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Jewish history We Were There Too exhibition coming to Fusilier Museum



By **Brad Marshall** @bradmarshBTNews Reporter



AT the outbreak of the First World War tens of thousands of members of Britain's Jewish community signed up to fight for King and Country.

Now their stories of incredible heroism, bravery and sacrifice have been brought to life at new temporary exhibition at The Fusilier Museum in Bury.

Featuring painstakingly collected photographs, records, accounts and other contemporary artefacts the We Were There Too exhibition explores the lives and experiences of soldiers and civilians — with a particular focus on those with connections both to the Fusiliers and wider Bury borough.



Rodney Ross, from British Jews in the First World War, the community project behind the exhibition, said “Over 40,000 British Jews served in the British Forces during the First World War and thousands more were involved in the war effort.

“Over time first-hand knowledge has disappeared so the project is a unique way of preserving individual stories and creating a legacy for many years to come. We’re delighted to be able to bring the roadshow to The Fusilier Museum in Bury and we hope to see many people over the few days.”

Historically, a strong relationship between the Fusilier’s and the Jewish community has endured.

During the First and Second World Wars both the Lancashire and Royal Fusiliers became the regiments of choice for many Jewish families due to their recruiting areas.

Between 1914 and 1918 the Royal Fusiliers formed three Jewish battalions and two Jewish **training** battalions — known as The Judeans.



Among those to sign up and serve side by side were comrades Harris 'Harry' Cohen and Harold Rawsthorne Heys who both joined the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers.

Despite their disparate backstories both men would go on to share the same tragic fate.

Harris was born and raised in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, to a Jewish family in 1891; while Harold was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire, to a non-Jewish family in 1896.

In March 1918 the two men were both engaged in the trenches of the Somme when they were killed just one day apart from one another.

Another incredible story among the collection is that of Marks Simonovitch.

Born in Strangeways on June 9, 1894, Marks joined the Royal Engineers in February 1917 and was immediately sent to the Western Front.

Three weeks into the bloody battle of Arras, amid the Artois mud, and just three months after he enlisted, Marks was struck by a bullet to shoulder and seriously wounded.

His injuries led to him being rescued from the battlefield and sent to St Thomas Military Hospital in London.

Following the war he settled in Prestwich where he married his love Rachel Levy and had two children Alex and Doreen, later changing his surname to Simons.



Sarah Stevenson at the Fusilier Museum said, "It's a great honour to be a host venue for the We Were There Too exhibition and we look forward to sharing the stories of several, local soldiers who fought in the First World War.

"It's also a great opportunity for the general public to get involved with the project and ensure their family stories are recorded and preserved."

Over the last few months the We Were There Too exhibition has been travelling around the country as part of roadshow.

Recently it paid a visit to the Heathlands Village care home in Prestwich where it was attended by the three generations of the family of First World War serviceman Louis Loofe.

Born in Riga in the Russian Empire in 1891 Louis moved to Britain and in 1916 enlisted as a civilian into the Royal Flying Corps.

In 1917 he was transferred to what would become the Royal Air Force and saw action in Egypt.

Louis was also a successful boxer and while stationed at the Heliopolis Prisoner of War Camp in Cairo took part in several boxing matches with local men and fellow servicemen.

After surviving the war Louis lived in Leeds and Oldham and died in May 1973.

The We Were There Too exhibition runs at the Fusilier Museum between February 24 and 28.

Members of the public are also invited to bring along relevant letters, photographs, diaries, memorabilia, and personal stories and anecdotes which can be recorded and preserved for future generations.