

BRITISH JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too

Project Update, Lockdown Edition Part 3



The story of Major Reginald Marix, hailed a hero for destroying a Zeppelin workshop in Dusseldorf, told in Victor comic in the 1970s

A POIGNANT MOMENT

We featured in [our last newsletter](#) the art work of [Barney Grew](#), drawn on 29 April 1916. Some 60 days after that, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, he was killed. If proof were needed of the futile loss of life in the First World War, this is a poignant example.

OUR ANNIVERSARY!

Four years ago this month we launched *British Jews in the First World War We Were There Too*. It was launched to also serve as Anglo Jewry's commemoration of the commencement of The Battle of the Somme, on the 1st of July 1916. We knew from the research we had done that it was vital and very urgent that this piece of history and heritage be preserved. We very seriously underestimated the interest and impact the project would have.

We are receiving an average of 1,000 visits a week to the site. There are large numbers of queries from third and fourth generation descendants. Collections in family hands and at risk of being permanently lost have been identified, digitalised and uploaded. We have formed new partnerships which include taking us into Augmented Reality and exciting ways of teaching about the Jewish contribution to these historic events. Amateur genealogists and researchers are regularly in touch.

At key moments, such as the annual Remembrance Sunday, we are providing resources to community groups, schools, communal leaders and so on.

Hundreds of people have and are giving their time and expertise to the project. Thousands of adults and school students have attended events. Many funders came forward to make the whole enterprise possible. We feel sure you are as proud as we are of what we have achieved in the first four years. Thank you.



Just some of the highlights of the last four years - visit the Media Centre section of the website to see many more at www.jewsfww.uk/media-centre.php

IN THE AIR, SPACE AND CYBERSPACE

This edition of our Project Update features the formation of the Royal Flying Corps, the precursor to the RAF. We are grateful to Dr Ronnie Fraser for his marvellous overview which you can read below.

We Were There Too invited Air Commodore Philip Lester to set the context:

"The existence of the RFC and the Battle of Britain, two themes highlighted in this newsletter, are key elements in our British Air Power history. Each was critical to the eventual outcome of a world war and therefore to how British air and now air and space power, have evolved and will continue to do so into the future.

Air power has always been a technological endeavour but technology is only as effective as the people who operate it. In the RFC and during the Battle of Britain, we **were** there too: Jews fighting in the air, on the ground and at sea to protect our country.

The legacy of Jewish service in the First and Second World Wars is a vibrant serving military Jewish community today. We are here now - in the air, on the ground and at sea. Over the coming years will also be increasingly involved in both space and cyberspace. Whatever the

threat, the Jewish community will continue to serve so that our country is protected and our people are safe.

If you don't know where you have come from, how do you know where you are going? The *We Were There Too* project has provided the first part in that jigsaw puzzle. I am therefore extremely grateful for the excellent work that project has done in highlighting the Jewish contribution during World War One."

THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS

This edition of the newsletter highlights some of the stories of the 2000 Jews who served in the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War. Everyone who served had their own story; some were tales of heroism and bravery; some were tales of survival while others of sadness and tragedy, but each one is different and special. You can read just some of their stories, as told by WWTT volunteer Dr Ronnie Fraser, [here](#).



A plane of the Royal Naval Air Service in East Africa during the First World War with Lionel Cohen as observer: West Sussex Record Office, Chichester, Lionel Cohen Papers, AM 1169/2.

Royal Naval Air Service plane during the First World War

FIRST WORLD WAR AIRCRAFT TO THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

This year is the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, one of the most important battles for the British during the Second World War. Discover how the First World War and the advances in aircraft technology it saw are linked to this huge victory in 1940 in a new [History Window](#) by historian Paula Kitching.



First World War aircraft taken by Gordon Hyams D.F.C. (left) Blenheim Mk IF L1426 'RX-M' in flight in 1940, IWM (right)

A FURTHER REGION ADDED TO THE SITE

As a result of collaboration between *We Were There Too* and a Heritage Lottery funded project [Shalom Sussex](#) – run by community interest group *Strike a Light* – which researched the heritage and community in Sussex in the First World War, our site will host their work and form the cornerstone of our new South East Region. This means that the outcomes of their project will be permanently accessible as their project ends. Visit the new Region [here](#).

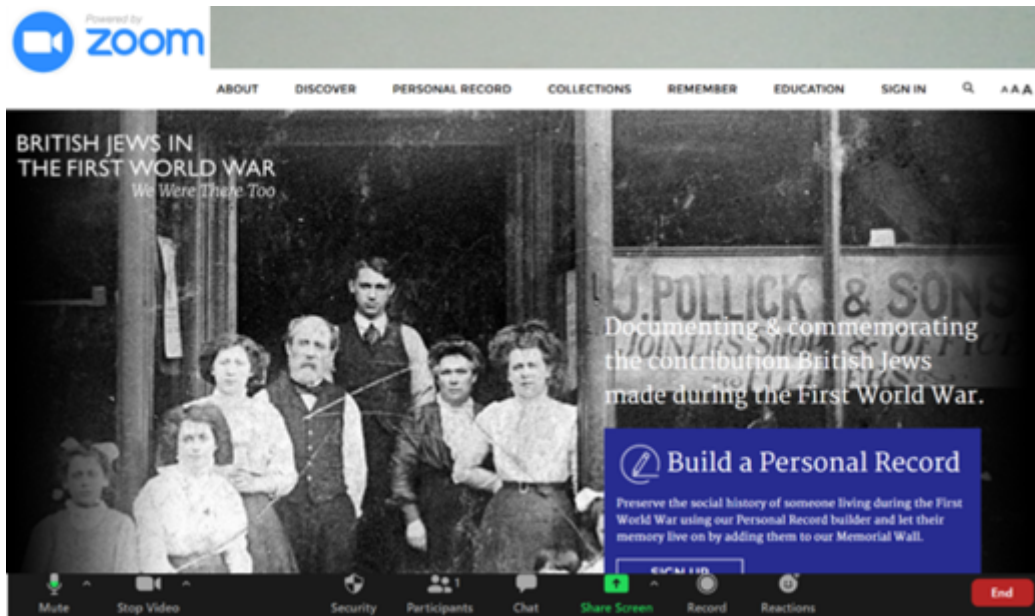


Staff at Balcombe VAD hospital in 1918, where Maud Messel (seated left) was Commandant

OUR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We also Zoom!

Not to be left out, we too are “zooming”. We presented the project to the British Friends of the Hebrew University, will present in October to Muswell Hill Synagogue in London; volunteers Ronnie and Lola Fraser are speaking to groups including AJR and synagogues, and historian Paula Kitching spoke at the Northern Jewish Book Week. Do contact us if you would like us to ‘zoom-for-you’.



A tour of the website via Zoom

Thanks for reading, we hope you enjoyed! Make sure to visit the website jewsffw.uk to upload your family stories, and to learn more about our project.

To get in touch, email PD@jewsffw.uk or contactus@jewsffw.uk or you can find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @jewsffw

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