

BRITISH JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too



Photograph of Harry Lazarus and a sweetheart postcard he sent to his sister Ray Lazarus.



"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all of you for the most wonderful presentation today. In every way, it 'ticked' our targets and rounded off our study of World War One in a fabulous fashion. The children were thoroughly engaged throughout and the presentation gave them the combined opportunity to revise what they had learnt, whilst looking at a new perspective of life for Jewish soldiers in the war.

We would also like to thank you for your patience, support and guidance in enabling this presentation to take place.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Jewish Day in the future."

Ali Kaye
Jewish Day School Prestwich

"We wanted to say how much we enjoyed the workshop on Wednesday. Paula's talk was brilliant and really made the girls think about the war in a different way. The activities kept the girls absorbed and we know that they will have gained so much from the experience in terms of research skills, as well as knowledge. We will be talking to Julian about it next week when we are back in school. We think that your project is so worthwhile and we are delighted to have been part of it. It was also so nice to meet Charlotte, Nicki and Barbara, so please pass on our best wishes and thanks to them, as well as to Paula, of course."

Mrs Gwen Hobson and Mrs Pam Roberts
School Archivists

Manchester High School for Girls

Introduction

British Jews in the First World War – We Were There Too, a landmark digital heritage project, was launched on 30th June 2016, with an event which became the focal point for the British Jewish Community's commemoration of the commencement of the Battle of the Somme, on 1st July 1916. The first phase of the project, from January to June 2016, concentrated on building the digital platform www.jewswww.uk. In parallel, the team began developing relationships with stakeholders and with Jewish communities in the Greater London area. That work continues; invariably affected by the current Covid-19 restrictions.

In terms of meta statistics, from July 2016 to March 2021, there were 143,000 unique visitors to www.jewswww.uk and a total of 211,000 site visits. This is a monthly average of 3,700 visits (or nearly 1,000 a week) during the first two phases of the project. Independent commentators have mentioned that for a website of this focus and reach, there are very satisfactory outcomes. This is verified by the number and range of queries that the Project Team receives on a regular basis, including from a growing number of people who do not reside in the United Kingdom.

Other outcomes include the growing range of Educational and Informational resources available and that the take-up by schools and community organisations, who are frequently engaging in Digital Heritage for the first time, is rapidly proceeding. Several examples are included in this review.



House of Commons Reception. With Andrew Murrison MP Also attended by Ros Kerslake CEO The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Jeremy Wright MP Culture Secretary.

Showcasing the National Lottery Heritage Fund

As the North West project was getting ready to launch in October 2018, the National Lottery Heritage Fund held an event to showcase just a handful of the many projects they had supported as part of the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. Out of 12 national projects, *We Were There Too* was the only digital heritage project to be featured.

We were very honoured by the nomination and to be present at the House of Lords on 31st October 2018. There was considerable interest in the project from Peers and Members of Parliament.

National and International Partnerships

We Were There Too has always been viewed as a national project. It is being rolled-out on a regional basis to avoid the onerous administrative requirements that a single, national project would likely require.

We Were There Too collaborates, and mutually supports other National Lottery Heritage Fund supported projects. One such project researching the Jewish community in the south coast around the Brighton area in the First World War,

Shalom Sussex, makes use of our material and is the foundation of our South East region on the site. We have thus avoided duplication and accessed a group of volunteers with local knowledge. *We Were There Too* has also made links with other projects and institutions through our participation in the project Hidden Treasures, run by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which brings together a network of organisations with Jewish archives and collections. This has already proved valuable to the North West project in networking for *We Were There Too*'s next planned regional development. The project is also now part of the European Commission funded project Judaica Europeana, which showcases 30 international, cultural, heritage and educational websites.

We Were There Too in the North West

Following many months of preparatory work, the second phase of the project in the North West was launched on 1st January 2019. For ease of project migration to a second region and to maximise the investment made in building the digital platform www.jews4ww.uk, the same website was used without any modification. The successful methodology developed for collecting data was similarly used, with local amendments.

The extensive preparatory work included recruiting an experienced local Project Manager, Rodney Ross, and a two-person team of Charlotte Clare as Researcher, and Nicki Davis as Administrator and Field Event Manager. To ensure continuity,

Paula Kitching continued as Project Historian and content expert, and Alan Fell as Senior Project Consultant. This means that these two people have worked on the project since at least 2014. A project centre was established at the JLGB North West office in North Manchester and a programme was created from here to secure sponsorship and funding. There was a significant investment of time to achieve wide stakeholder engagement. This resulted in the active support and participation in the North West project of:

- Manchester and Liverpool Jewish Representative Councils
- Synagogal bodies
- Community organisations
- Heritage organisations such as The Manchester Jewish Museum
- Manchester and Liverpool Central Libraries, municipal archives, etc
- Jewish Small Communities Network
- The BBC and local media
- The Fusilier Museum, Bury

The Metrics

A total of approximately 1,200 adults and 1,160 young people attended face-to-face events at a variety of venues during the project up until 31st March 2021. A further 545 adults and 1,675 young people attended events hosted virtually.

The digital platform hosts some 2,400 Personal Records, of which over 250 have a North West origin. There are 60 History Windows with 11 added during the North West project. Specifically, there are eight North West originating collections of artefacts.

The Launches

The North West project was launched in Liverpool and Manchester respectively on 26th and 27th of November 2018. In Liverpool, at the magnificent Grade I listed Princes Road Synagogue (renovated with funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund) the launch took place with 65 guests including the Dean of the Cathedral, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside and The Lord Mayor of Liverpool.



North West launches in Manchester and Liverpool



The Liverpool launch at The Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation

The Manchester launch was held in the presence of 115 guests including Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, The High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, The Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Mayors of Trafford, Bury, Salford and Stockport.



The Liverpool launch at The Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation

The launches achieved, and indeed, exceeded their primary objective of consolidating the stakeholder engagement that the project team had been building and securing the widest media coverage possible, including interviews with BBC Radio in Manchester (with a potential audience of 230,000) and also in Oxford (84,000 potential listeners). The launches and the goodwill generated greatly assisted in the delivery of the project, especially in the need to refocus the project due to Covid-19 requirements. The enthusiasm and warmth by which the project was received fully met our expectations.



The Manchester launch at King David High School

Adult Audiences

The project engages with adult audiences who can provide stories of the First World War generation and may have personal collections of family artefacts. These stories, which are uploaded on the site as Personal Records, are of combatants and non-combatants. It is of especial importance to the project that we identify and collect materials which have a heritage value and/or are at risk of being permanently lost. The project digitally captures these materials and makes them widely accessible.

It is fair to say, as with the Greater London first phase project, significant personal records in the North West were uncovered and valuable, precious collections in private hands were identified. The project does not retain original material; it returns all items to the owners and can facilitate the donation of artefacts to an archive or cultural institution should an owner so wish. In the North West we have put the owners of a First World War diary in touch with the curator at Manchester Jewish Museum to discuss donating the item to their collections.

Adult audiences are engaged at public meetings in care homes, synagogues, community halls, social clubs etc. From November 2018 to February 2020 public events were held in Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool, St Annes, Southport and Stoke to some 825 guests. Presentations were made to Community Leadership groups and at the Fusilier Museum, reviewed below.

Venues	Approximate number of Guests
South Manchester	
Care Homes	91
Synagogues	15
Social Clubs	60
Other	26
North Manchester	
Care homes	73
Synagogues	52
Social Clubs	81
Other	40
Manchester Jewish Representative Council	20
Central Library Public Event/Manchester Archives	57
Greater Manchester Police New Officers training	20
Greater Manchester Police Museum	30
Trafford Armed Forces Partnership	35
Trafford Council	10
Total	610

Venues	Approximate number of Guests
Liverpool Jewish Representative Council	28
Care Homes	40
Social Clubs	62
Total	130
Small Communities	
Stoke	15
Southport	40
St Annes/Blackpool	30
Total	85

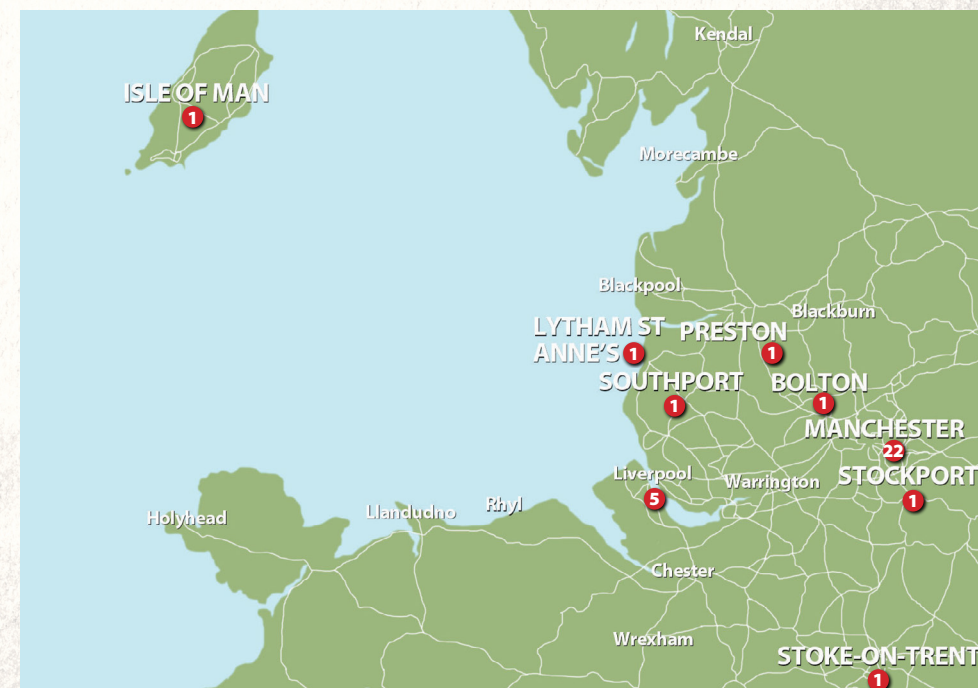


We Were There Too's visits and reach across the region

Further events were planned or in discussion with host organisations for the 12 months from February 2020, before Covid-19 disrupted this mode of working. It's reasonable to assume the project would have met face-to-face with a further +/- 400 people.

“The St Anne’s Hebrew Congregation was pleased to host the team from *We Were There Too*. We recognise the importance of recording the history of British Jews during wartime – those who served and those who kept the wheels of industry turning, went into nursing or simply looked after families during very difficult times. *We Were There Too* keeps these memories alive.”

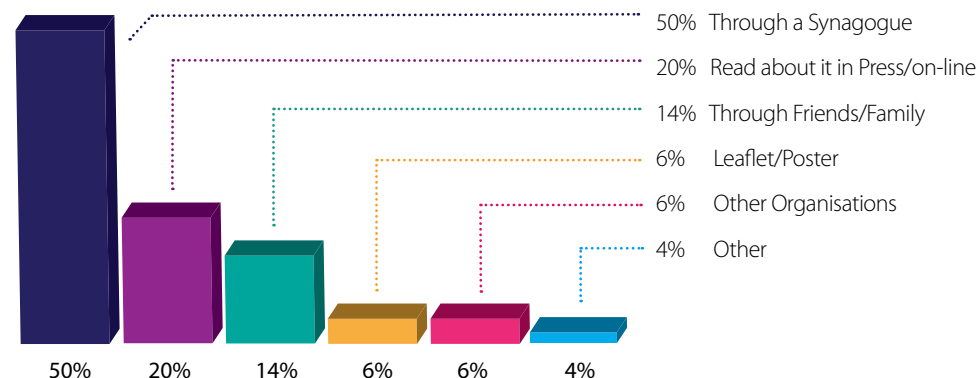
Cllr Michelle Morris. Board Member St Anne’s Hebrew Congregation.



We Were There Too's reach across the region

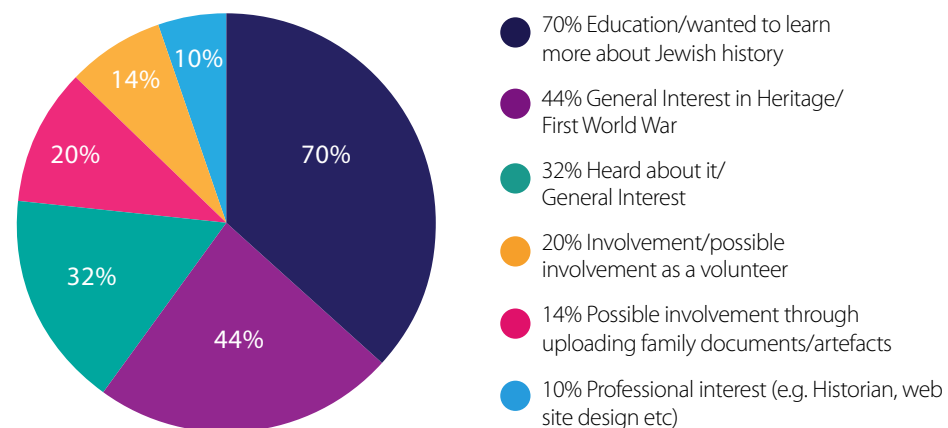
Questionnaires

Respondents had heard about the event through:



70 attendees (of some 558 attendees at events) completed Visitor Questionnaires; 44% were male, 56% female. 96% were either aged 45 – 65, or over 65 years old.

Their reasons for attending an event, included:



There were three 'satisfaction' questions:

"Using the scale shown, can you rate your Satisfaction with today's session in terms of..."	Very Good	Quite Good	Neither Good nor Poor	Quite Poor	Very Poor
Interest	94%	6%			
Enjoyment	88%	12%			
Educational Input	92%	8%			
Providing Information	92%	8%			
Length of Session	86%	6%	6%		
Overall satisfaction	94%	6%			

"Did you get what you hoped for out of the event?"



"What did you most enjoy about the event?"

These were the answers that were chosen the most:

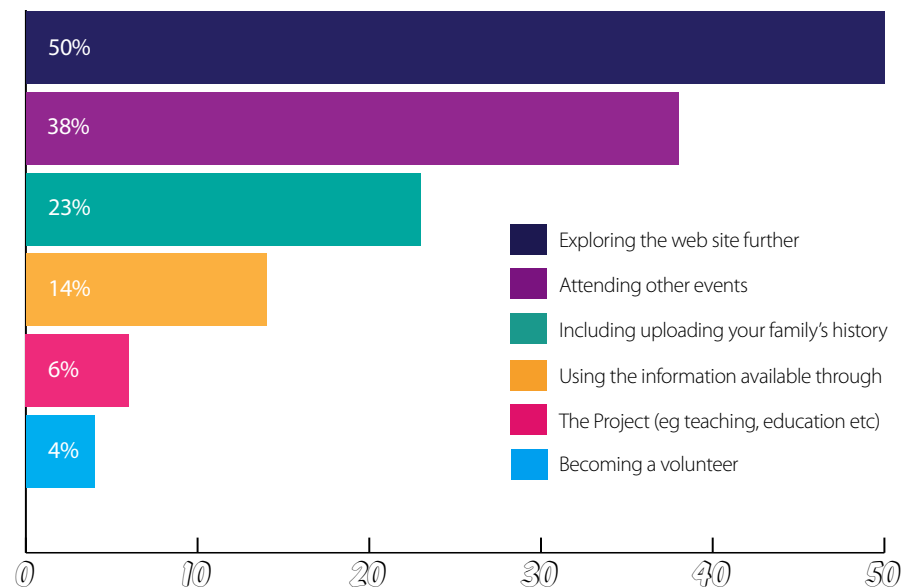
- >> Old footage [videos on www.jewsfww.uk]
- >> Looking at profiles [Personal Records] and seeing how many records the Project completed
- >> Professionalism and knowledge of the presenters
- >> Hearing participants share their family stories and memorabilia

"What would you like to change/how can we improve the event?"

- >> More videos
- >> More profiles [personal records] of those who served or were nurses
- >> Longer presentations
- >> More time for families sharing their stories about family members

Lastly, respondents were asked about potential future involvement

"Are you likely to get involved with any aspect of the Project in the future? If so, in which aspects of the Project?"



Presentation at Stoke-on-Trent

As we experienced in the first phase of the project, attendees were far keener to spend time with interviewers relating their family stories than with interviewers collecting Visitor Questionnaires.

The results were satisfactory and the suggestions (e.g. longer presentations, holding further events etc) would have been addressed in the next round of events, had they not been suspended.



At the same time as the North West events, *We Were There Too* continued to be active in Greater London and elsewhere. 14 physical or virtual lectures were delivered by volunteers Dr Ronnie Fraser and Mrs Lola Fraser or *We Were There Too* staff.

The lectures covered such themes as:

- Jewish Members of Parliament who served Britain in the First World War
- How we entertained ourselves during the First World War
- Jewish airmen in the First World War
- The Armistice in an age without modern communications
- The *We Were There Too* digital heritage project
- 100 years since the burial of the Unknown Warrior

Youth Audiences

We Were There Too has three core objectives: 1 upload personal records of people from the First World War era, 2 collect and digitally preserve artefacts, especially those with a heritage value and at risk of being lost, and make both the artefacts and records easily accessible. The third objective is to inform and educate about the contribution of the Jewish community to the War effort. From January 2019 to February 2020 (the date of its suspension due to Covid-19), the North West educational programme was very positively received in primary and secondary schools, for Jewish pupils and those of other faiths. Excluding the Fusilier Museum exhibition and the commemoration of the Armistice in 2020 (both reviewed separately) some 1,160 pupils (925 primary pupils and 240 secondary pupils) participated in *We Were There Too* school sessions.

We ran face to face events in Manchester, Bury and Liverpool. The events were classroom based or were whole year group assemblies.

Primary Schools - Years 4-6 (ages 8-11)

Our engagement with young people in schools proved to be exceptionally successful. Having delivered either a classroom session or school assembly, schools were very keen to invite us back for more sessions. We used two methods of delivery for schools: classroom sessions and assemblies for Remembrance Day.

In our classroom sessions, using input from volunteers with teaching experience,

it was essential that we designed sessions that were engaging for pupils in School Years 4, 5 and 6 (ages 8-11). A typical lesson involved worksheets and word searches. Using the *We Were There Too* website as a focal point we took pupils through a journey examining the poppy and then looking at soldiers and nurses who served in the First World War. Pupils were invited to write down their thoughts about the poppy, and then, after reading biographies of soldiers and nurses using Personal Records taken from the *We Were There Too* website, asked to write letters home. Both these exercises focused the minds of the pupils on two major aspects of the First World War. For the younger pupils, in Year 4, we introduced a word search (a volunteer's idea) to ensure they were fully engaged in the sessions. Feedback from the schools was very positive.



Our school assemblies were delivered to coincide with Remembrance Day in 2019. The staff team believed it important that schools had some ownership of the event. To facilitate this, we invited schools to select children to participate in the assembly by reading poems or biographies of servicemen and nurses who lost their lives in the First World War.

As is tradition in the Jewish faith, at each assembly children lit memorial candles and a member of the school religious department recited a special prayer. As with the classroom sessions the *We Were There Too* website was the focal point for relaying the history.

Secondary Schools - Year 9 (ages 14-15)

Our delivery to secondary schools had a more academic approach. We were able to deliver full morning sessions in two schools. In both cases schools were teaching First World War through the curriculum and at different times in the school calendar, hence the spread of time differences throughout the length of the project. Sessions in other secondary schools were planned, but these were unable to proceed as a result of Covid-19. Our Project Historian, Paula Kitching delivered a 40-minute interactive session to Year 9 pupils at King David High School Liverpool and Manchester High School for Girls (MHSG).

After this the school year group would break into four different classes to look in more detail at specific topics. Each group was facilitated by *We Were There Too* staff and volunteers, with teaching support from each school.

Examples of topics from MHSG were: Women, Empire and Commonwealth, Beyond the Western Front and the Belgian Connection. MHSG was a Belgian Refugee Reception in the First World War, so this session was adapted to reflect the school's history. It was our intention to extend this work with the school and to work with students to create a MHSG History Window. Unfortunately, Covid-19 meant that this could not develop. Over the length of the project, we have built up a superb relationship with MHSG along with the school's archivists who attended and supported all of our events. The project team is currently developing virtual content to enable us to continue with our education programme.



Students from Philips High School, Whitefield.

The Fusilier Museum, Bury

Through an introduction by Colonel Martin Newman, *We Were There Too* mounted our first exhibition at The Fusilier Museum in Bury. We were extremely fortunate as this was one of the last events possible before the first Covid-19 lockdown, and was a highlight of the North West project.

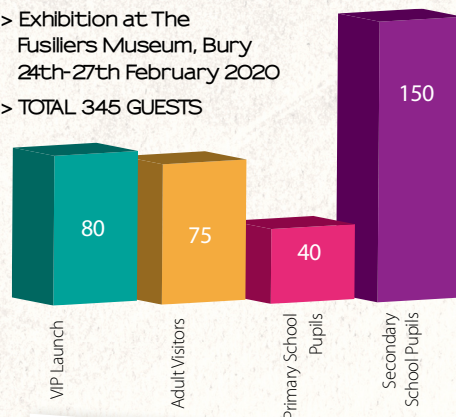
In the First World War, many Jewish combatants served in one of the Fusilier Regiments, notably the 39th and 40th Battalions. It was therefore very appropriate that the first exhibition undertaken was in the Regiments' Museum, displaying as it does their Standards and magnificent collections. Our thanks to Colonel Brian Gorski and the staff for hosting us so well.



Over the five days, several hundred adults from various parts of the country visited the event, which included our VIP launch. Several hundred Jewish and non-Jewish primary and secondary school pupils also visited for a tour of the exhibits and an educational programme, a highlight of which was the opportunity for pupils to experience Virtual Reality in First World War trenches, provided by our strategic partner *Discovery Education*.

>> Exhibition at The Fusiliers Museum, Bury
24th-27th February 2020

>> TOTAL 345 GUESTS



“It is so important to recognise the sacrifice of all the people no matter what religion or race of the soldiers that contributed to the freedom of our country. We were therefore delighted to host the *We Were There Too* presentation and exhibition at the Fusilier Museum in Bury. The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers has strong links with the Jewish Community, through the Royal Fusiliers, which formed three Jewish Battalions during WWI and the Lancashire Fusiliers which was the regiment of choice for many Jews from the areas of North Manchester, Bury and Salford.”

Col Brian Gorski MBE, Chairman
Fusilier Museum Bury.

Personal Records

Louis Looft
Born: 1891
Died: 16 Iyyar 5733 (18 May 1973)

BASIC INFORMATION

Unique reference: LOO4056
Gender: Male
BIRTH
Date of birth: 1891
Place of birth: Riga, Russia
DEATH
Date of death: 16 Iyyar 5733 (18 May 1973)
Died in combat?: No
PLACES
ADDRESSES
105 Regent Street Leeds (1911)
15 Rock Street Oldham (1919)

FAMILY

SPOUSE
Celia (female)
Place of marriage: Leeds
SPOUSE
Hetty Looft (female)
SIBLINGS
Leah Looft (female)
Dorothy Looft (female)
Julius Looft (male)
Henry Looft (male)
Joe Looft (male)
Sarah Looft (female)
PARENTS
Father: Hyman Wolfe Looft (male)
Mother: Rebecca Looft (female)
HOMEFRONT

VIEW PERSONAL JOURNEY MAP

Louis enlisted as a civilian into the Royal Flying Corps in 1916, and was transferred into the RAF in 1917.

He was a successful boxer, and whilst stationed at the Heliopolis Prisoner of War Camp in Cairo, took part in several boxing matches with both local men and fellow servicemen.

According to family legend, Louis married his first wife Celia to avoid conscription in 1916, but this didn't work as that same year he went into the Royal Flying Corps. They divorced when he returned from Egypt, and he married his second wife Hetty in 1921.

MILITARY RECORD

Military service: Royal Air Force
Military record no.: 35414
Date enlisted/conscribed: 04 July 1916
Date discharged/death: 30 April 1920
Rank at discharge/death: 1st Class Air Mechanic
Assignments
Regiment: Royal Air Force
Campaigns: Shallufa Air Force Station, Egypt

>> At the heart of *We Were There Too* lies the Personal Records of Jewish people living in Britain during the First World War era; captured, uploaded, retained and made accessible to the wider world. This is designed to provide information and education about the Jewish contribution, and of faith-based communities more widely, to the War effort. Descendants' reactions to seeing their relatives' stories researched and professionally captured can be delightful, especially to elderly contributors. We continue to be surprised at the volume of material and artefacts, some of it of significant importance and rarity with heritage value, in private, family hands. We continue to seek out the less well-known stories as well as higher-profile people of the era.

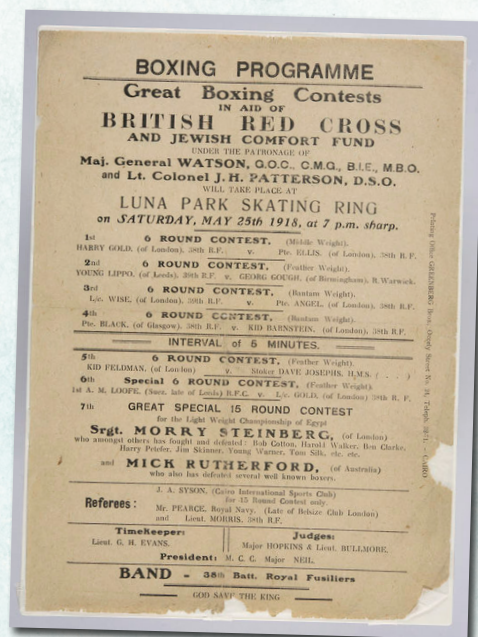
To date, the site hosts 2,500 Personal Records. About 250 records have been uploaded so far by the North West project.

Louis Loofe

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Four generations of the Loofe family



PRIVATE JACK WHITE VC

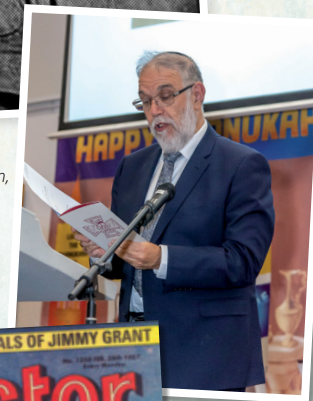
Jack White, who lived in Manchester, was one of five Jewish Victoria Cross winners during FWW. He was born Jacob Weiss on 23rd December 1896 in Leeds, the son of a Russian Jewish immigrant father and British mother. The family subsequently moved to the Hightown district of Manchester. At the outbreak of war he was in Sweden, but returned, enlisted in the 6th (Service) Battalion King's Own and served throughout the war in the Middle East, at Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia (Iraq). He was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry during an attempted crossing of the Dialah River by men of the Battalion, including on the night of 7/8th March 1917. The award was published in the 'London Gazette' of 27th June 1917:

"For most conspicuous bravery and resource. This signaller during an attempt to cross a river saw the two pontoons ahead of him come under heavy machine-gun fire, with disastrous results. When his own pontoon had reached mid-stream, with every man except himself either dead or wounded, finding that he was unable to control the pontoon Private White promptly tied a telephone wire to the pontoon, jumped overboard, and towed it to the shore, thereby saving the Officer's life and bringing to land the rifles and equipment of the other men in the boat, who were either dead or dying."

He returned home to a hero's welcome and started a textile business. A family run clothing company called Private White VC flourishes to this day.



Jack White's grandson, Robert Eden, reads the VC citation at the Manchester launch.



He died on 27th November 1949, aged 54, and was buried with full military honours in Blackley Jewish Cemetery near Manchester.

GIBRALTAR - A FAMILY AT WAR

Our research has led us further afield. It was evident to our researchers that the flourishing Jewish Community of Gibraltar had many links with the Sephardi community in Manchester and through Bevis Marks Synagogue in London. Many served, often with great distinction. The most prominent members of the Jewish community of Gibraltar who served were two brothers, Solomon and Abraham Benzecry. Solomon served with the Gibraltar Volunteer Corps. He volunteered for military service in 17th Bn The Royal Fusiliers and was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in 1915; promoted to Lieutenant a year later. On 30th November 1917, during the Battle of Cambrai, Solomon's company was subject to a German attack while sapping at a forward outpost near Bourlon. Though ordered to retreat to the front line, Solomon and Captain Walter Stone, his superior officer, chose to remain behind with one platoon to allow the remainder of the company to retreat safely. Solomon was wounded in the head, but continued to fight until killed. He was nicknamed the "Hero of Bourlon Wood" and is honoured with a memorial at the Gibraltar Parliament.

At the outbreak of war, Abraham Benzecry was in his final year of education at Polack's House, Clifton College, Bristol. Abraham enlisted in 1916, and so may have volunteered, or may have been enlisted in the first wave of conscription. Abraham received a Military Cross serving with the machine Gun Corps.



The Benzecry Brothers



Collections

The We Were There Too site hosts a wide range of digitalised collections of First World War artefacts. The project is particularly keen to seek out and upload collections or items in private or family hands. These are frequently at risk of being lost. These collections are extensively used in our education programmes.

From January 2019 through to its suspension, the North West project acquired 8 different Collections; three from archive services and five from personal or family collections. In collaboration with Archives+ at Manchester Central Library and Liverpool City Archives, we were able to digitise for the first time much of the Jewish collections from these two cities relating to our time period. This brought to light important aspects of social history in the North West, as well as personal letters and photographs of men who served in the Armed Forces.



The items which came from family collections include the documents belonging to one serviceman kept by his daughter, now very elderly, in the original wallet he would have carried them in during the war. Two diaries were included. One describes a journey home from Palestine in 1920, and the other the experiences of an observer with the Balloon Regiment of the Royal Flying Corps. Both these items are also owned by the daughters of the men who wrote them. They are now in their 70s and 80s, meaning these important stories were at risk of being lost had we not been able to digitise them.

We are very concerned about the impact of Covid-19 and the suspension of our ability to engage face-to-face with people and tease-out what artefacts they might have and their willingness to allow us to digitise them. Many of our sources of collections are from elderly people, which makes their loss potentially even greater.

History Windows

History Windows are short narratives of historical events of the era. They are written by authoritative writers and therefore can be used with confidence by educators (often Personal Records can be substantially anecdotal). A Window is 1200-1500 words in length, with links to other portals of the site e.g. Collections and Personal Records.



The team examine and record visitors' artifacts.

The North West project is uploading Windows regularly and examples include: [The Rothband Employment Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen](#)
Henry Lesser Rothband

Almost two million men who had served in the First World War returned to Britain injured and permanently disabled. These vast numbers meant that the issues faced by the disabled were suddenly incredibly visible to the public, and the idea that they were a burden on society began to shift.

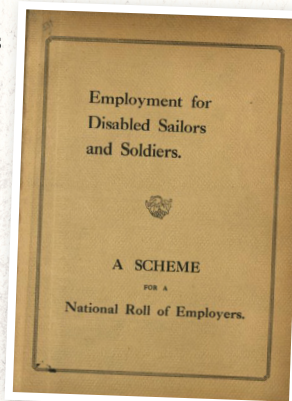
With no welfare state, it was the work of individuals campaigning for the rights of disabled ex-servicemen that led to a

national scheme that would guarantee them employment on their return to civilian life.

One of these individuals was Henry Lesser Rothband, a member of a prominent Jewish military family, born in Austria and lived in Broughton, Salford when he moved to Britain. He was a prominent member of the Manchester Jewish Community as trustee of the Great Synagogue, and member of both the Manchester Reform Club and the Jewish Naturalisation Society.

Henry began campaigning for an employment scheme for disabled ex-servicemen in 1915, issuing pamphlets detailing his proposals for a "royal roll of employers willing to employ one or more disabled men, that is to say, a permanent guarantee of employment embodied in book form and distributed to all employment agencies, and not a mere agency itself." Excerpts from these pamphlets frequently appeared in issues of the Manchester Guardian.

Mr Rothband wrote all of his ideas for the scheme into a book entitled "Employment of Disabled Sailors and Soldiers", published in 1917.



[Ashton-under-Lyne Munitions Works Explosion](#) *Sylvain Dreyfus*

On June 13th 1917, a disaster hit the industrial town of Ashton-under-Lyne in Tameside, just east of Manchester. An explosion at the Hooley Hill Rubber and Chemical Plant, being used to produce TNT for the war effort, caused major damage to the surrounding area, and killed 46 people. One of those killed was co-director Sylvain Dreyfus, who founded the company with Lucien Gaisman in 1914.

Sylvain was born in Alsace, France in 1868. He was the nephew of Charles Dreyfus, a chemist and pillar of the Manchester Jewish community. As an English delegate at the fifth and sixth Zionist Congresses in 1901 and 1903, Charles met with Weizmann, and in later years it is said he offered Weizmann a job at his plant, Clayton Analine. As the manager of Arthur Balfour's election campaign, Charles was responsible for the meeting of Balfour and Weizmann in 1906.



[The First World War and the Manchester Sephardim](#)

How the First World War impacted on Manchester's 1,000-strong Sephardi community was the subject of a book by Basil Jeuda which was published by the Shaare Hayim Synagogue. It focussed on two groups of Sephardim, firstly, those who fought in the Armed Forces and, secondly, those who were classified as aliens by reason of their non-British nationality. Since then, further information on Manchester Sephardim in the First World War has come to light.

One of those killed in the War was Lieutenant Leon David Goldseller of Belfield Road, Didsbury. He was the son of Benjamin and Bertha Goldseller and he was born in 1896; the Goldsellers were amongst a handful of Ashkenazi members of the Withington Sephardi Synagogue, though Leon's grandmother was from a Sephardi (Laredo) family from Gibraltar. At the book launch, the great-niece of one of those who was killed in the War read out an extract from the book covering his short life. She brought with her additional information in the form of a citation which led to the award of the Military Medal to one of the Privates who rescued the dying Leon Goldseller from behind the German lines during the two phases of the Battle of Bullecourt. Others fought too with distinction and have been memorialised on the *We Were There Too* portal.



The Greater London project continues to upload Windows, for example those written by volunteers Lola Fraser, such as Entertainment in Wartime, and Dr Ronnie Fraser, including The Jewish Contribution to the Royal Flying Corps.

History Windows also includes rare moving images, which the project is keen to source. An example is 118 years old and is regarded as one of the first outdoor film 'documentaries' ever made. It is of Petticoat Lane, in London's East End in 1903; it can be viewed at <https://www.jewswww.uk/petticoat-lane-market-68.php>. Attendees at events enjoyed in particular viewing these films.

eNewsletters

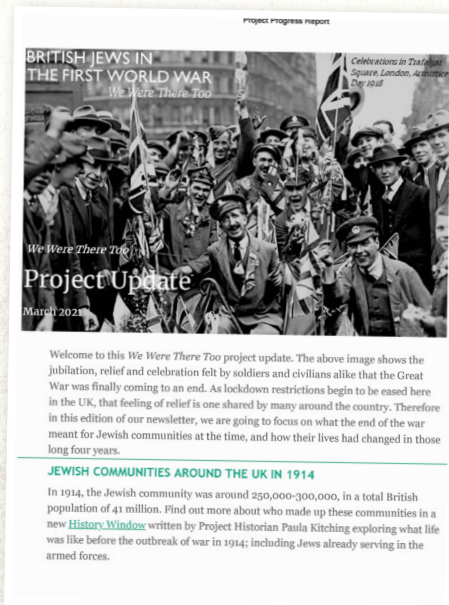
It is important to *We Were There Too* that we keep regularly in touch with users, funders and wider stakeholders. We do this in a number of ways, including regular eNewsletters. The eNewsletters focus on either historical events or religious festivals and feature a wide variety of topics of the First World War era, with Jewish dimensions.

From Autumn 2016 to March 2021, we have produced 20 eNewsletters, which also serve as Project Progress Reports, to a mailing list which now exceeds 3,000 people in several countries. 11 eNewsletters were produced during the North West project. Each eNewsletter has generated positive responses in terms of general interest and either potential new Personal Records or amendments to existing Records.

Volunteers

Volunteering has featured strongly over the project's entire existence. Around 60 volunteers were involved with the Greater London phase (including invaluable expertise in establishing the project in the first place), running some 40 community events, researching Records and History Windows and more. Several of the volunteers are involved in the on-going London project today.

At the time we were able to run community events and face-to-face school programmes, the North West project involved six volunteers. This would have increased further had the lockdowns not dramatically altered our ways of working. A core group of volunteers continue to work with us, operating virtually on areas such as research, publicity and stakeholder engagement.



Obviously, the cancellation of events has seen a decrease in volunteering opportunities and volunteers. The project's extension into other regions, for example into the North, has led us to redefine volunteering in light of the Covid-19 reality.

Discovery Education

Through our strategic partnership with the London Grid for Learning, *We Were There Too* was introduced to a company based in Manchester. This company developed digital applications for education including in Augmented and Virtual Reality. The rapport between our two organisations became readily evident. Shortly after we met, the company was acquired by Discovery Education, part of the giant Discovery Channel in the United States. We are thrilled and delighted that the relationship is not only continuing but developing. We are immensely grateful for the pro bono time donated by Discovery Education to *We Were There Too*.

Employing their technical expertise and production values, our collaboration to date has included building prototype Augmented Reality models from several of our Personal Records, Discovery's involvement at the Fusilier Museum exhibition and working with visiting school groups, and constructing for us our Covid-19 response to Remembrance Day in November 2020, when face-to-face events, marches etc became prohibited. Hopefully, the Covid-19 limitations will reduce further in the coming months, but Discovery and *We Were There Too* are

committed to developing digital products to deliver our activities. The relationship and collaboration will deepen, giving our project access to world-class expertise.

'Virtual' Armistice November 2020

The marking of the Armistice of November 1918 and the cessation of hostilities has been part of Britain's tradition since 1919. Covid-19 and its prohibitions caused the cancellation of many commemorative activities in 2020 that would usually take place each year. Nevertheless, the desire to continue to mark the Armistice with Remembrance events remained strong amongst schools and communities more widely. We were fortunate to receive additional Heritage Lottery Emergency Funding to enable us to respond. With Discovery Education, *We Were There Too* focused on virtual alternatives. Products were developed with variations for primary and secondary schools and for community organisations. The feedback we received was very encouraging and we will make this virtual material available annually. The experience reinforced our view that digital responses when produced very professionally with high production values, have a significant part to play in promoting heritage interest.

One of the presentations can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/471887666/f1394907bf>



The Memorial Wall

Attendance at virtual Armistice 2020 events

	Approximate number of Primary School pupils at Events
Manchester	565
London	240
Leeds	100
Liverpool	260
	Approximate number of Secondary School pupils at Events
Scotland	80
Leeds	120
London	180
Manchester	130
Total	1675
	Approximate number of Adults at Community Events
Manchester	170
London & Sussex	120
Scotland	255
Total Understated Total as more than one person on a Zoom call	545

In comparison to reaching 2,220 people virtually through 2020, 540 people attended face-to-face events in 2019. *We Were There Too's* Project Historian Paula Kitching delivered a lecture for Armistice Day titled "The Unknown Warrior: 100 years of being part of something".

Funding

We Were There Too is an ambitious project: to capture, record and preserve the stories and contributions of British Jews at the time of the First World War. It is designed to operate 'bottom up'; that is to engage with the descendants of this group wherever possible and secure for the future their narratives and digital images of materials they hold. It is very much an oral family history project.

The major and large capital cost, creating the platform www.jewsfirstworldwar.org.uk, was funded in the first phase Greater London project. We remain eternally grateful to those funders. The North West project – and subsequent regions – leverages that investment. The core cost of a digital project does not need to be repeated as it is rolled-out.

The North West project could not have been undertaken without the support of:

- >> Heritage Lottery Fund
- >> Pears Foundation
- >> An Anonymous Benefactor
- >> AJEX

In addition, we received significant in-kind support from Discovery Education,

The London Grid for Learning, The Fusiliers Museum, Jewish Small Communities Network, Manchester Jewish Museum, Synagogues and other venues across the region and JLGB.

Covid-19 and its serious impact for *We Were There Too*

With the exception of the 4-month furlough period, the project has been delivered throughout by the team and volunteers.

We are developing alternative ways of working to the original model. Although these changes will be a permanent feature of how we work in the future, we hope many aspects of the original ways of working – not least face-to-face contact with people with stories to tell – will resume. The real impact of Covid-19 for the project is what we feared most: It has accelerated the loss of descendants we desperately wanted to talk with. Covid-19 has made the potential loss of heritage even more acute. It is imperative that we continue and speed up our work.

**BRITISH JEWS IN
THE FIRST WORLD WAR**
We Were There Too

Now is the time to join us and create a permanent digital record of British Jewish lives during the First World War

www.jewsfirstworldwar.org.uk
[t](#) [f](#) [@jewsfirstworldwar](#)

Ethel (Esther) Hassan was born in 1892, and lived on Wilmslow Road in Withington with parents Clemer and Diamantina, both from Benghazi and her three siblings.

In November 1914, she became part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), an organisation formed by the British Red Cross and Order of St John to provide nursing services in Field Hospitals abroad and in the UK. Ethel volunteered for house, kitchen and nursing duties at Fairview Auxiliary Hospital in Fallowfield, South Manchester until the end of the war.

Ethel's younger sister Luly also volunteered for duties at a military hospital: Lawn Hurst in Didsbury, carrying out pantry and ward work, as well as night duty.

The North West team has ensured that local media interest in the project has been added to the centre, most recently in March this year. To see all Media Coverage for the project go to <https://www.jewsforuk/media-centre.php>



**HELP US UNCOVER THE STORIES OF THE MANCHESTER
JEWISH COMMUNITY**

We Were There Too is a unique cross-community project, led by JLCG in partnership with AJFEX, that is creating a permanent digital archive and interactive website to record the experiences and contribution of the North West's Jewish community during the First World War. A century on, first-hand knowledge has disappeared, and family stories are at risk of being lost forever. The website helps you to create Personal Record pages to preserve the stories of individual members of your family, alongside scans of photos, letters, and even 3D artefacts.

The North West team, consisting of Rodney Ross, Project Manager, together with Nick Davis and Charlotte Clare as Project Administrator and Researcher, is based next door to the North West South Centre.

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Heritage Lottery Fund.

At launch ceremonies at King David High School in Manchester and Princess Road Synagogue in Liverpool, attended by many civic, military and religious leaders

moving act of remembrance led by reserve Army Rabbi Arzel Abel. The relating to the VC award to Private Jack White was by Jewish and soldiers during

Conclusion

The relationship with Discovery Education gave us access to levels of professional support in digital technologies we could not have imagined. An emergency grant from the National Lottery provided additional financial support. We were able to develop digital community and educational offerings to commemorate Armistice 2020 and to lay

100 years on.
Remembering the Jewish contribution
to the Great War.

De you have any family memorabilia, records or stories about your family during the First World War. If there is an organisation that is interested in including them in a digital archive which is becoming a permanent record of the lives of Jewish men, women and families, 1914-1918, with details of their military and Home Front activities that has been launched in Manchester and Liverpool.

The project, called We Were There Too, was introduced in London in 2016 and has been extended into the North West region thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

At launch ceremonies at King David High School in Manchester and Princess Royal Synagogue in Liverpool, attended by many civic, military and religious leaders

"We are now asking people to volunteer to help us maintain this important and valuable asset. Whether you are an expert in the knowledge of the First World War, research experience or understanding of computers, if you think you have a family member who lived in Britain during the war, or are interested to research a name in the British Jewish Book of Honor, on the Synagogue Memorial Board, a survivor or a host of other accreditation activities, Neil Martin, ILGB chair executive said: "We believe that it is important that young people are aware of the sacrifices made by former generations of Jews in the defence of Great Britain and we encourage them to start the journey of awareness by researching their own families."

"Huge numbers of members of the ten Jewish Lads Brigade associations the call to arms over 700 officers and men were killed in action."

Volunteers are offered training.

We hope to see the return of several of our successful ways of working; but it cannot be a return to 'business as usual'. We pride ourselves in the levels of inclusion we have achieved across a wide range of audiences but we need to do more. Our heritage project needs to play its part in the social and economic recovery the country is facing. We have no doubt that we can make that contribution. The increased levels of public interest we are experiencing during 'lockdown' reconfirms the strength of interest in our work.

We are grateful to our supportive funders, the professional team and not least to our volunteers including Lola Fraser, Ronnie Fraser, Colonel Martin Newman, Barbara Paul, Merton Paul, Belinda Black and Barbara Ross.



WE WERE THERE TOO

Rosemary Collins finds out more about a project uncovering the stories of Britain's Jewish community in the First World War

Since 2014, various organisations and communities around Britain have been uncovering and commemorating the stories of the millions who fought in the First World War. One project is dedicated to an often-overlooked participant in the war – Britain's Jewish community. We Were There Too ([jewsh.uk](http://www.jewsh.uk)) is a National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported digital archive and interactive website gathering the stories of Jews in the First World War. Senior project consultant Alan Fell explains how the project took

Some of the Jews who served in the military during the First World War came from countries in the Commonwealth

impressions of the war. A synagogue had kept them under lock and key for over 100 years. They were in pristine condition – all 400 pages of them.

WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF JEWISH PEOPLE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

This was a relatively new community, having largely arrived in the UK during the previous century. There was an enormous surge of loyalty to king and country – a desire to give something back. We estimate some 50,000 Jews served in military

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A digital archive which is the first of its kind in the world, is a permanent record of the lives of Jewish men, women and families, 1914-19. The details of their wartime Home Front activities are launched in March at Liverpool. The project 'Men: Their Too, now I' was launched in London in 2006 and

At launch ceremonies King David High School in Manchester and Prince Road Synagogue in Ipswich attended by The Mayor Barry, many civic, religious leaders and members of the local community. A senior consultant, who introduced the display. He explained how it was that the stories of Jewish children who were

families, are embedded in history for future generations.

Alan Pelt explained how the project works. He said: "Volunteers from Jewish and non-Jewish schools, and informal education groups, will work with, and be trained alongside adult volunteers to develop the digital project and collect the materials that will be housed on the site. The re-

A series of emotive readings by young people and members of the communities include poems by Jewish war poets Isaac Rosenberg and Siegfried Sassoon, was followed by a moving act of remembrance led by reserve Army Chaplain Rabbi Aviel Abut. The choir



At launch ceremonies at King David High School in Manchester and Princess Road Synagogue in Liverpool attended by many civic, military and religious leaders.

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Huge numbers of members of the then Jewish Lad's Brigade answered the call to serve and over 500 officers and men were killed in action."

remembrance and education and we are delighted to support it. With increasing levels of anti-Semitism it is even more important that we demonstrate the price paid by British Jewry for the defence of our country."

Children from the school recited a selection of poems and letters to Jewish soldiers. Following the poems and reflection, Rabbi Feldman led the children in a prayer.

...of Great Britain and
...for saving so many
...ool then read from a
...tters sent home by local
...g a minute's silence
...dman recited memorial
...is important that the
...unity understand the
...so they can enjoy the

Sarah Norton, director of commented: "Our students they want to be when they finish. While a number have a clear path they want to take, other up a world of possibilities and that the girls understand both mentoring scheme is there right choices for them."

sixth form studies, are often asked what British university. The idea about the arts is still weighing in and it's important that they are just fine! The help them make the

Holocaust Survivor Who

BRITISH JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too

Get in Touch

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Online copy of this Evaluation Document can be found in our Media Centre at:

<https://www.jewsffw.uk/media-centre.php>

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JLGB is a Registered Company Limited By Guarantee: 01713997 Charity Commission Number: 286950

Produced for *We Were There Too* by Martin Newman Public Relations 07717 717981.

Design and print by Lance Print 01536 334222.