

BRITISH JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too



RICH HISTORY: Paula Kitching, project consultant for
We Were There Too, an exhibition at Hull History Centre

**AN EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF
YORKSHIRE AND THE NORTH EAST
AUGUST 2021 – DECEMBER 2023**



Extracts from our
"Contact Us" emails



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INTRODUCTION

The British Jews in the First World War - *We Were There Too* project began its life in June 2016 as 'London Jews in the First World War': a landmark digital heritage project aiming to record the contribution of London's Jewish community to the First World War.

By November 2018, the website was fully built and populated with Personal Records of over 1,000 individuals, Collections of artefacts and History Windows describing events of particular significance to the Jewish community. Connections and relationships with partners and institutions were also built and the next phase of the project was launched in Manchester and Liverpool. Despite the challenges of the pandemic towards the end of this phase, it was extremely successful, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund granted the project further funding to expand into the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, beginning in November 2021.

This area of the country was important for the project to explore, as during the First World War it contained many large and thriving Jewish communities in places such as Newcastle, Hull and Grimsby. Many of these communities are now either severely depleted (in Grimsby the congregation numbers just 16 – with many travelling from other parts of Lincolnshire to attend) or have completely disappeared. Now is the time to gather these stories, before they are lost for good, and highlight an important part of these towns' and cities' heritage. This focus fulfilled one of the National Lottery Heritage Fund priorities: profile the roles these small communities had at the beginning of the 20th Century.

To achieve this, we had to develop different

approaches. In places like Leeds and Sheffield, which still have substantial Jewish communities, we were able to replicate methods which had proven successful in the two previous phases of the project, with minor adjustments to fit the post-pandemic world. This included community events in the style of 'roadshows' which encourage attendees to share stories, photographs and other ephemera, and delivering sessions in schools. In other places, where Jewish communities are diminishing, we turned to local museums and archives to explore how their collections might help us understand and tell the stories of local Jewish communities during the First World War. We launched several exhibitions in places like Grimsby and Hull to not only share our research but also to hopefully generate local interest and start conversations.

Memorial boards found in synagogues, schools or cemeteries have become another useful source of names for Personal Records. And finally, as is only fitting for a digital heritage project, we expanded our digital output with the launch of a podcast and a YouTube channel in partnership with Discovery Education to reach further audiences. Volunteers played a key role in this work; without them we would not have been able to cover such a large area and gather the number of stories and reach the number of people that we did.

Events during this project reached a wide range of people of all ages, including engaging with the Jewish community in primary schools, secondary schools and retirement homes, and the wider community at archives, museums and veterans' associations. These are evidenced, as always, on our Media Centre at:

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

THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic and its aftermath need no explanation here. The grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was awarded in August 2021, by which time the dislocation of everyday life was subsiding and it looked like aspects of *We Were There Too's* existing model could be restored. While we were developing alternatives to the operating model, it is fair to say we underestimated the resilience of people and their desire to know about their heritage and what part their community and family played in it.

Since spring 2022, the demand for traditional community meetings, gatherings and events has steadily increased to nearing pre-pandemic levels. For example, over 400 people visited our exhibition at the Hull History Centre: their largest post-pandemic exhibition to date.



Leeds Jewish Housing Association, Sheila Saunders Lawn June 2023. The first well attended WWTT Roadshow after the Pandemic

Most gratifyingly, on 14th June 2023, a group of elderly residents in a care home attended an open gathering in a traditional *We Were There Too* format. This produced a rich stream of at-risk heritage material.

NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND TARGETS FOR YORKSHIRE AND THE NORTH EAST

Integral to receiving the grant for the third phase of the *We Were There Too* project were several targets; our performance in respect of those targets is highlighted below, with further details in the review. These targets additionally reflect the requirements of a grant awarded by an international foundation.

Community Events

The target was to deliver a number of events highlighting Jewish life in the First World War era and the contributions made by local communities. The events were to be delivered face to face and online.

Despite a slow start due to the pandemic, *We Were There Too* delivered 17 events between November 2021 and August 2023, with several



Project Historian Paula Kitching delivering the first of 2 sessions in Grimsby Town Hall

still to be held. These attracted close to 1500 people. This number is excluding events to commemorate the centenary of the British Jewry Book of Honour, which are separately discussed below. The audiences for these events totalled approximately 350 people. Highlights from all events can be viewed on our Media Centre at <https://www.jewsfww.uk/media-centre.php>

SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



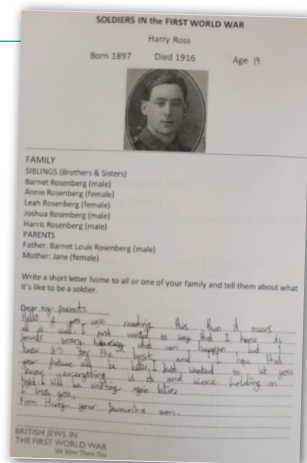
Bury and Whitefield children learn all about the poppy and the Jewish contribution to this country.

Pupils at Bury and Whitefield Jewish Primary School attended a presentation by *We Were There Too* (WWTT) and learned all about the importance of Remembrance, the meaning and symbolism of The Poppy, and The Jewish contribution throughout The First World War. Project manager for the online platform which commemorates and documents Jewish history during the war years, said: "It was wonderful to see just how the Bury and Whitefield children got involved in their presentation. The letters they wrote signifying their appreciation of

the poppy and its meaning, were incredibly moving.

"As we approach Remembrance Day we feel it is important that young people in our community appreciate the sacrifices made by so many. We encourage them to research their own families to see just how much the Jewish community did to support this country throughout those dark days."

The WWTT website, www.jewsfww.uk, contains hundreds of moving and extraordinary individual and family stories and even has a facility to commemorate the yartzeits of those who fell in battle. of those who fell in battle.



WWTT project manager, Rodney Ross explains the importance of Remembrance to Bury and Whitefield children.

Dear Rodney,

We Were There Too helped our UKS2 children understand their Jewish heritage and the role their communities had played on a global stage. The workshops and assemblies engaged our young learners in learning about their past.

Chris Hession
Deputy Headteacher
North Cheshire Jewish
Primary School

Hello Rod,

I just wanted to say what an inspirational day we had with you in school this week. The 'We Were There Too' project was a super insight for our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils and the activities which you provided were just right for the children. The day helped our children to think about the contribution from all parts of society who played their parts and gave their lives in WW1: the wonderful, thoughtful letters from the front that the children wrote on the day were testament to your input on the day.

I am happy to tell you that this work is being followed up ready for Remembrance Day next month when we shall be displaying the letters alongside some artwork in school.

Kind regards,

Ms Julie Purdy
UKS2 Lead Teacher
Walton Primary Academy, Wakefield

DISCOVERY EDUCATION

Discovery Education has supported *We Were There Too* for the last four years developing top of the range quality video presentations for Remembrance Services for schools and communities. This contribution was incredibly valuable during Covid when we were unable to go into schools and communities to facilitate Remembrance events in November. Being invited by the Museum of Liverpool to represent the Jewish Community in 2021 was a great honour and a privilege and with Discovery's expertise a 3 minute 20 second video was produced and displayed in the main Museum Entrance Atrium for 2 weeks.

We Were There Too is deeply indebted to Discovery Education for their expertise and support during both *We Were There Too* projects in the North west and North East of England.

"*We Were There Too* is a project that genuinely delivers on that rare balance of educating about the past, whilst exhibiting acute relevance for now and the future. Deeply rooted in historical

and current British Jewish communities, it has provided incredible opportunities to study and understand the Jewish response to WW1 on a local level, raising up the sacrifice and commitment found in Jewish communities and representing their answer to the call from their country to defend and fight. For Discovery Education, this relevance together with strong school focus, with such robust and diligent historical enquiry, made supporting the project an easy decision. From building an app, to podcasting and films, it's been a privilege and a joy to support the team along the way as they represent the sacrifices of Jewish communities in WW1, leaving a lasting online testimony and archive that is quite unique."



Phil Birchinall FRSA
Senior Director | Immersive Content
Discovery Education (based in UK)



Museum of Liverpool Remembrance Presentation 2021



Primary Assembly (vimeo.com)

Discovery Education in action The Fusilier Museum, Bury, Exhibition with Bury and Whitefield Jewish Primary School, letting pupils learn about life in the trenches using Virtual Reality technology.



PRODUCE AND DISTRIBUTE NINE NEWSLETTERS IN THE GRANT PERIOD



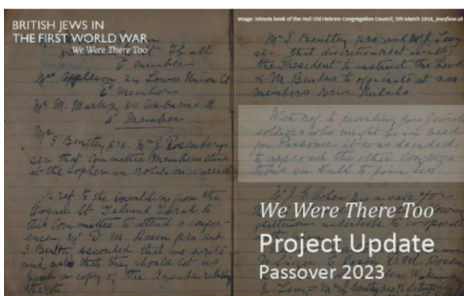
One of the ways in which *We Were There Too* keep in touch with users, funders and wider stakeholders is through a regular eNewsletter.

Typically distributed to mark an anniversary of a historical event or in line with religious festivals, the newsletters feature a wide variety of topics relating to the First World War and Jewish involvement in particular.

Between Summer 2021 and September 2023, we have distributed nine eNewsletters, which also serve as Project Progress Reports, to a list of nearly 3,000 individuals worldwide.



We receive significant response to each newsletter ranging from messages of appreciation to suggestions for further Personal Records.



"With ref. to providing for Jewish soldiers who might be in need for Passover it was decided to approach the other congregations in Hull to join us." 5th March 1916

VIRTUAL ARMISTICE EVENTS FOR NOVEMBER 2021 AND 2022

These events were developed and delivered by *We Were There Too* in response to requests to help deliver armistice commemorations virtually when public gatherings were prohibited, beginning in 2020 and continuing into 2021 and 2022. The programme has gone through several iterations, including the addition of a complete choral music concerto available via Spotify. Our virtual programme can be viewed at www.jewsfww.uk/armisticeday

LAUNCH YOUTUBE CHANNEL AND PODCAST

We Were There Too launched a YouTube channel and podcast in order to reach a wider audience: sharing our most interesting research in short, ten-minute recordings.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8DejdK5tT59c-oWURi6D4w>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/2rJikYWKCrp9mGDwaJwHYI?si=8efc5499d477481c>

DIGITAL INTERNS AND SCHOOL ARCHIVES

Two targets were not delivered – the creation of Digital Intern opportunities and researching school archives. We could not achieve either for broadly the same reason: difficulties in the post-pandemic environment. Creating a new post-Covid working model absorbed a large amount of time. It was not possible to do the thorough work required in setting up an intern programme. Schools were reluctant to engage as they had a very substantial workloads in returning to some normality. On the other side, we were unexpectedly able to play a lead role in commemorating the centenary of the Jewish Book of Honour which was a very satisfying project.

CONTINUE TO UPLOAD PERSONAL RECORDS, COLLECTIONS AND HISTORY WINDOWS, INCREASING MATERIAL FROM YORKSHIRE AND THE NORTH EAST



Despite issues with organising in-person events in the early part of the project, the changes in our approach meant we were able to continue to seek out stories and upload these to our website. The site currently hosts almost 3,500 Personal Records, 66 History Windows and 50 Collections.

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/harry-wood-3925.php>

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/sidney-wood-3926.php>

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/isidore-wood-3928.php>

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/mark-wood-3931.php>



THE METRICS

British Jews in the First World War – *We Were There Too* was launched in July 2016 as part of British Jewry’s commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.

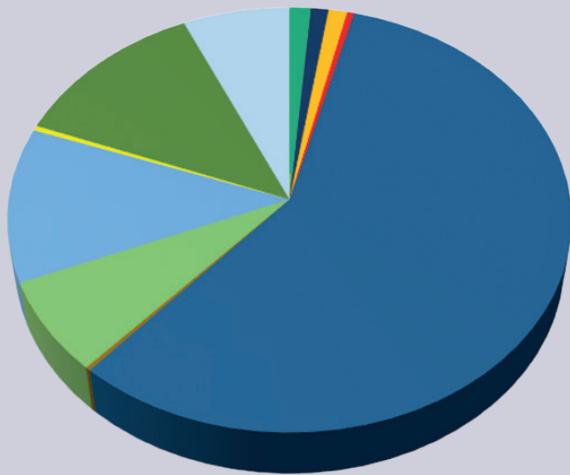
In the seven years from July 2016 to December 2023, the site has had 320,000 visits by 215,000 unique visitors – an average of 3,800 visits a month. 90,500 of the visits took place during the key months of the pandemic, and 112,700 during this phase of the project August 2021 to August 2023.

While the majority of visits originate in Great Britain, a large number of countries are represented: from Australia to Zimbabwe.

During this phase of the project, one of our aims was to introduce SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) positioning. This has increased traffic to the site as visitors search for information on the First World War over a number of topics.

At nearly 1,000 visits a week, *We Were There Too* is providing a solid heritage resource for a variety of audiences.

METRIC VISITS BY COUNTRY



Australia	284	1%
Canada	241	1%
France	254	1%
Germany	93	1%
Great Britain	12,347	57%
Ireland	57	0%
Israel	1,517	7%
Others	2,528	12%
Russian Federation	80	0%
United States	2,668	13%
Unknown	1,444	7%

LAUNCH OF THE NORTH EAST PROJECT IN LEEDS

The North East project became operational in November 2021, however, because of delays due to the pandemic, the formal launch of this phase took place in June 2022 - hosted by The United Synagogue, Leeds. The event was well-attended by members of the community and guests including the High Sheriff of West Yorkshire, AJEX chaplain Anthony Gilbert, and Archivist at West Yorkshire Archives Service Vicky Grindrod. Pupils from Leeds Jewish Free School also participated by reading the stories of local servicemen who served during the First World War.

The launch was successful in spreading the message of our project in the region, and making connections to help us move forward, whether it be in our research or organising exhibitions and roadshows.

Hansard Westminster Hall

Volume 717: debated on Tuesday 28 June 2022

Freedom of Religion or Belief: International Conference

Fabian Hamilton MP

Leeds (North East) (Lab) Extract from his speech.

Finally, I pay tribute to Rodney Ross and Alan Fell for their work in documenting and commemorating the contribution of British Jews during the first world war. Sadly, it is an often forgotten subject and I am delighted that their project will become a permanent record of the lives of the Jewish community in Leeds and throughout the country from 1914 to 1918. I commend their website to anyone interested in the subject.



*Speech by Fabian Hamilton MP at Westminster Hall
28/06/2022*

Whilst local MP Fabian Hamilton was unable to attend the launch in person, he paid tribute to *We Were There Too* and the work that we do in a debate at Westminster Hall, stating that remembering the contribution of British Jews to the First World War, "sadly, is an often forgotten subject and I am delighted that their project will become a permanent record of the lives of the Jewish community in Leeds and throughout the country from 1914 to 1918."

You can listen to the whole speech on the Media Centre on the *We Were There Too* site.

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/files/21081-1-1.pdf>



History in the making ... Project Manager Rodney Ross, Alan Fell, researcher at British Jews in the First World War, Sue Baker, High Sheriff of West Yorkshire, and Vicky Grindrod, of the West Yorkshire Archive Service

UHC plays host to project aimed at preserving the impact of our brave ancestors

The First World War Jews who fought for King and Country

Story and photos by
Alan Benstock

THE UHC was host to the 'We Were There' Project when it visited Leeds as part of its continuing outreach programme.

The project is a unique cross-community project aimed at capturing, recording and preserving the experience, impact and contribution of the country's Jews during World War One.

Those present were given a demonstration of the website by Alan Fell, one of the project's principal researchers.

Interspersed with this were readings by four members of the Leeds Jewish Free School Junior leadership team of extracts from the letters and despatches of some of those who perished during the fighting.

AJEX chaplain Rabbi Anthony Gilbert talked about Maurice



Left: Our story in the Pesach issue of *Scribe*

Isaac Solomon, a Leeds serviceman who survived the war, and who died in 1980.

Leeds Jewish Rep Council President Lisa Baker also spoke.



For details:
www.jewsfirstworldwar.co.uk
or scan QR Code



Above: Leeds Jewish Free School pupils who read letters and despatches from soldiers (from left) Zion Gatewood, Rachel Cohen, Lucy Bootle and Joshua Frampton
Left: Elisabeth Baker giving family details to Alan Fell

Scribe

EXHIBITIONS IN GRIMSBY AND HULL

From Tailors to Trawlers: Grimsby's Jewish Community in the First World War

In June 2022 we hosted an exhibition in collaboration with the North East Lincolnshire Archives at Grimsby Town Hall, attracting a large number of visitors. Working with archivist Adrian Wilkinson, we were able to uncover many insights into Jewish life in Grimsby during the First World War, including where the community was based, the businesses they owned and why and how individuals and families arrived and settled in the area.

Project Historian Paula Kitching hosted several talks during the two-day exhibition, one of which took place at the historic synagogue on Heneage Road. Two of the talks can be viewed on our YouTube channel – created to reach those unable to attend our in-person events.

The North East project also saw us begin to enter the world of podcasting – to find out more about the Jewish community of Grimsby,

you can listen to our podcast on Spotify and YouTube.



Our research had uncovered the stories of the Wood family, four brothers from Grimsby, all of whom served during the war. Their parents, Israel and Annie, were born in Russian Poland, and on arrival in Grimsby Israel set up his own tailoring business. The four brothers, Harry, Sidney, Isidor and Mark, did not follow in their father's footsteps, and instead embraced the traditional industry of Grimsby: by 1914 all four brothers were fish merchants, owning their own trawler business. Harry even lived in his office at the docks and was initially reluctant to leave the business for service in the army.

We know the business must have been doing well because in 1918 Harry was able to invest £10,000 in War Bonds, over £700,000 in today's money. Very few individuals would have been able to invest this much by private means.

Peter Galkoff Grimsby

Dear All - A thank you note from Rodney Ross, also on behalf of the Grimsby Hebrew Congregation and Synagogue Council we would like to record our thanks to all those who attended the Wednesday

Evening Presentation / Launch, and visited the two-day Exhibition at Grimsby Town Hall.

Thank you for your support,
Peter



The Wood Brothers Family who gathered at the Exhibition to view our research

Sidney, Isidore and Mark all enlisted on the same day in December 1915, and all four brothers eventually served together in the Royal Horse Guards as Troopers. Isidore's transfer papers from the Royal Berkshire Regiment specifically state the purpose of transfer was "serving with [his] two elder brothers". Isidore received a gunshot wound to the hand in February 1917, and spent a month in the Scottish General Hospital in Aberdeen, before being invalided out of the army. Mark, just like Isidore, began the war with the Royal Berkshires in France, and in October 1916 extracts from letters written to his father, whilst serving, were published in the Grimsby Mail. In the letters,

he is cheerfully optimistic, with one opening, "I have come through this severe engagement without the slightest scratch." Mark, like his brother, was eventually invalided out of the war in July 1918 due to a gunshot wound to the neck.

After the war, all four brothers returned to Grimsby to continue their successful trawling business out of the docks. Later generations moved away, but our exhibition brought together descendants of the family, who travelled from far and wide to discover more about their relatives' lives in the port town.

Cllr Tom Furneaux Grimsby Council

Evening Rodney

Can I just say what a fantastic exhibition. I certainly learnt a lot that I definitely didn't know. The town definitely needs more like this to showcase the heritage and history of the borough and the people that lived and continue to live within it.

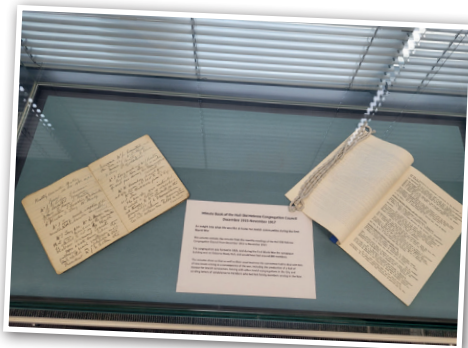
Thank you again
Tom

A MAJOR EXHIBITION IN HULL

We Were There Too's largest exhibition, so far, was hosted over a 3-week period by the Hull History Centre in March 2023. Hull was one of the largest ports of entry for Jewish immigration in the latter years of the 19th and early part of the 20th century. It is therefore a city with strong Jewish connections and, until recent years, had a thriving Jewish community.

Across the 3 weeks the exhibition attracted over 400 visitors as well as extensive coverage in local press. The exhibition was a culmination of the *We Were There Too* team's research into Hull's First World War history, led by volunteer Belinda Black, and we are especially grateful to Martin Taylor and the Hull History Centre team, Dr Nick Evans of Hull University, and community historians David Lewis, Prof. Howard Cuckle and Prof. Philip Sugarman, all of whom have provided much support in the run up to the exhibition.

The exhibition was officially launched by the Lord Mayor and Admiral of the Humber,



Councillor Christine Randall, and was attended by local academics, councillors, and representatives of the Jewish community, along with the general public.

Paula Kitching delivered a talk titled 'Kosher Fish and Chips on the way to the Western Front', which placed local Jewish history in the wider context of the First World War. Visitors could also examine the Minute Book of the Hull Old Hebrew Congregation Council, which was on display for the duration of the exhibition.



FROM HULL CITY ARCHIVIST MARTIN TAYLOR

Hi Rod,

Thanks for getting in touch with me. It was a pleasure and privilege to host the exhibition. I'll certainly pass on your thanks to my team.

How about the following for HLF evaluation?

- Hull History Centre hosted "*We Were There Too: British Jews in the First World War*" for three weeks from 14 to 30 March 2023. The project display was supplemented by a reshewing of Hull History Centre's own Hull Jewish Community exhibition and the exhibition of the Old Hebrew Congregation minute book which has been digitised on the project website.
- Over 400 visitors to the History Centre had the opportunity to engage with the exhibition.
- 30 people attended Dr Paula Kitching's talk 'Kosher Fish and Chips on the way to the Western Front' on Tuesday 14th March. This was the first regular monthly lunchtime talk that the History Centre has been able to host since the pandemic began.
- On Wednesday 15th March the exhibition was launched in the presence of the Lord Mayor, Cllr Christine Randall. In her speech she made the point that:
"One of Paula Kitching's conclusions in her talk yesterday was that service by Jewish people in the British Armed Forces was important in integrating the wider Jewish community into the British nation. That story of integration is another lesson from history which should not be forgotten."
- There was excellent local media coverage including pieces in the Yorkshire Post and on BBC Radio Humberside.



Hull Exhibition Opening with Belinda Black We Were There Too volunteer who researched and help set up the Exhibition

REMEMBRANCE AT THE MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL

In November 2021, *We Were There Too* was invited to mark Remembrance Week at the Museum of Liverpool in a number of different ways. It was a privilege to be invited back to the city, having done a lot of work in Liverpool with the community and in the archives during the North West era of the project: a true endorsement of the impact our work.

This included a pop-up exhibition exploring the story of British Jews in the First World War, a digital display in the atrium of the museum sharing some of the stories of the Merseyside Jewish community, a blog on their website, and an event attended by civic dignitaries, members of the community and pupils from King David High School. All of these activities were extremely well-received, and the BBC's North West Tonight programme featured a piece on the project and events at the museum.

Head of the Museum of Liverpool Kate Johnson said:

"The Museum of Liverpool was delighted to host the British Jews in the First World War - *We Were There Too* event on Wednesday 10th November 2021 as part of our commemorations during Remembrance week. The event attracted 80 people including a school group from King David's High School and was important in terms of marking the contribution and sacrifice of Liverpool's Jewish community.

We were also able to showcase their digital film presentation and pop-up display, both of which proved to be very popular and informative with our visitors. The displays helped enormously to highlight aspects of First World War history not considered previously and enabled the project to reach out to the local Jewish Community based in the Liverpool City region.

We wish the project every success for the future."



BRITISH JEWS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

We Were There Too

Together with the **Museum of Liverpool**, we would like to invite you to commemorate the contribution and sacrifice made by the **Liverpool Jewish Community** during the First World War.



Wednesday November 10th, 2021

2:00pm to 4:00pm

First Floor

On your way in, please take a few minutes to watch our video in the Atrium

RSVP to rodney@jewsffww.uk

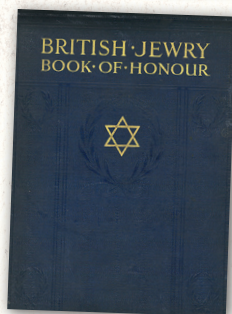


We Were There Too (WWTT), in conjunction with AJEX The JMA, marked the centenary of the publication of a remarkable book, *The British Jewry Book of Honour*.

The two organisations launched a series of events to commemorate the publication of the book commencing at the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum at The Tower of London. Speakers included AJEX National Chairman, Dan Fox, Education and Outreach Officer, Paula Kitching, WWTT Project Director, Alan Fell, Jewish Chaplaincy in the British Armed Forces Author, Jonathan Lewis, Rabbi Major Reuben Livingstone who read the Memorial Prayer and Anthony Rau.

First published in 1922, the comprehensive 1,000 plus page volume contains some 55,000 records of Jews who had served in the armed forces during the conflict between 1914-1918.

The book was the result of meticulous research by the Reverend Michael Adler, the senior Jewish Chaplain of the British Army at the time. Forewords were written by Adler, Monash, and others such as the then Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, and Field Marshall Haig. The book contains fatalities and casualties, military honours, the



Jewish units, and the work of Jewish hospitals as well as other Jewish institutions and agencies.

3,000 copies of the hefty volume were printed. Members of the community who lost loved ones in the conflict were able to remember them and it provided hard evidence of the contribution to the war effort, and the price paid in human terms, at a time

of growing anti-Semitism. The book, which started as a compassionate endeavour, has become an essential genealogy primary source for historians and members of the community researching family histories.

WWTT Project Director, Alan Fell said: "The Book of Honour is nothing short of a treasure trove for families, genealogists and researchers. It is fitting that the centenary commemoration of the Book was held before such distinguished audiences at The Fusiliers Museums in the Tower of London and Bury, Lancashire, reinforcing the bond between the Jewish Community and the illustrious Regiment. It is now digitised, on our site www.jewsfww.uk and is being accessed across the world".



FROM THE COLONEL OF THE REGIMENT

On the 19th of September 2022 the Regimental Headquarters of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and the Fusilier Museum London, within the awe-inspiring backdrop of the Tower of London, hosted The Jewish Military Association (AJEX), who proudly celebrated the centenary of the publication of a remarkable book, *The British Jewry Book of Honour*.

This special evening was a fitting tribute to all those thousands from the Jewish community who served during the First World War and to the production of an exceptional historical book.

The historical links between the Fusiliers and the Jewish community go back over three centuries but were strengthened in the Great War with the creation of specifically Jewish units. In 1917, that vision was fulfilled with the establishment of the 38th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers in the East End of London. Soon afterwards it was followed by a 39th Battalion of Canadian, American and Argentinian Jews;

and a 40th Battalion of Jews from Palestine, including one Pte David Ben-Gurion, later to be the first Prime Minister of Israel. Together, these units formed the Jewish Legion and fought successfully and impressively in Palestine, including key victories over the Ottomans at Megiddo and Jerusalem.



Major General Jon Swift OBE

The association between the Fusiliers and the Jewish community is a proud one and continues to flourish and at last September's event I was delighted to see it was recognised in this commemoration of the British Jewry Book of Honour.

Major General Jon Swift OBE
Colonel of the Regiment
The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers



THE FOUR CORE ASPECTS OF THE WWTT HERITAGE SITE



From its inception in June 2016, the four core heritage portals at *We Were There Too* have been Personal Records, History Windows, Collections and the Media Centre, which provides the evidence base of our work.

PERSONAL RECORDS

The individual stories of members of the Jewish community during the First World War continue to be at the heart of the *We Were There Too* website and project as a whole. There is a wide range of records, from the stories of high-profile people to those who were unknown even to family members. We are proud that their stories, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are now available as a public resource on our site. To date there are almost 3,500 individual Personal Records on the site, with close to 1,000 being added since the beginning of the North East project.

Lizzie Minkin

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/lizzy-minkin-5068.php>

Lizzie Minkin was born in Leeds in 1899 to a large family with six siblings. During the war, she worked at the National Shell Filling Factory at Barnbow, Leeds. The majority of workers at the factory were women, and they became known as 'The Barnbow Lasses'. Women across the country who worked in factories filling shells were known as 'Canary Girls' because of the yellowish tint handling TNT gave to the skin. Lizzie sadly died in 1942 aged just 43 due to the harmful effects of working with the chemicals in the munitions factory.



BASIC INFORMATION

Unique reference:	MIN1625
Other surname:	Lockitch
Gender:	Female

BIRTH

Date of birth:	1899
Place of birth:	Leeds

DEATH

Date of death:	1942
Died in combat?:	No

HISTORY WINDOWS

History Windows add context to the lives of members of the Jewish community during the First World War. There are 66 of these pieces on the site in total, and we have added 3 which are relevant to communities in the North East, including an exploration into anti-Jewish riots which broke out in Leeds in 1917 researched and written by volunteer Lola Fraser:

LEEDS ANTI-JEWISH RIOTS

<https://www.jewsfww.uk/leeds-anti-jewish-riots-june-1917-4956.php>

The night of 3rd- 4th June 1917 saw violence break out in the Leyland district of the city of Leeds, with Jewish businesses vandalised, shops looted, and Jewish people attacked in the streets. The reasons for this event are varied and complicated – creating a ‘perfect storm’ which resulted in anger and frustration turning into violence.

The only person named in any of the reports of the rioting was Mark Rosenbloom who, despite being home on leave from serving in the British army on the Front, was attacked and suffered head injuries after being hit by a stone while he was going to the aid of a woman. Mark, born and raised in Leeds, volunteered to serve in the Royal Field Artillery in May 1915, leaving behind a wife and son. Following the riots, he returned to the Front, where he was sadly killed in action just 12 months later.



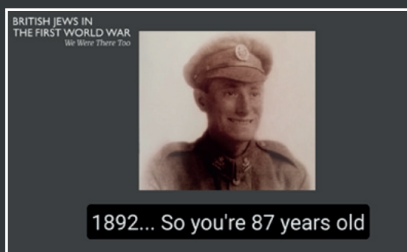
COLLECTIONS



The *We Were There Too* site holds extensive digital collections of photographs, artefacts and documents relevant to the Jewish communities during the First World War era. These range from objects found in museums and archives, to private collections in family hands which we have made available to the public for the first time. There are currently 50 unique collections on the site to explore.

One example of a still-thriving community is Leeds, and it was at one of our events in the city that we met the daughter of Morris Solomon, who had been interviewed by the Jewish Historical Society as part of an oral history project in 1979, shortly before he passed away. His daughter kindly allowed us

to digitise the cassette tape of the interview, and this is now available to listen to (and read along with subtitles) on our site. Morris discusses everything from his childhood in Leeds to serving on the Front Line as a Brigade Runner, one of the most dangerous jobs on the battlefields of the First World War.



www.jewsfww.uk/morris-isaac-solomon-4934.php

Oral History Interview with Morris Isaac Solomon

Conducted by the Jewish Historical Society in 1979, Morris discusses his wartime experience as a Brigade Runner

www.jewsfww.uk/minute-book-of-the-hull-old-hebrew-congregation-council-dec-1915-nov-1917-4840.php

The North East phase of the project saw us rely more heavily on local archives, as the once thriving communities whose members made considerable sacrifices to the war have all but disappeared. One example is Hull, where, thanks to our work with the Hull History Centre, we were able to digitise part of their collection – the Hull Old Hebrew Congregation Minute Books from the years 1915-1917. Analysing this collection has allowed us to add important insights to the social history of the city and its Jewish community during the war.

The minutes show us that as well as the usual business of chasing members for fees, and debates about where the kosher butchers got their chickens from, the committee had to deal with lots of new issues arising as a consequence of the war. For example, in March 1916, the Hull Hebrew Communal Council was formed, after the committee decided to approach the other congregations in the city to help with providing for Jewish soldiers who might be in need for Passover.

Monthly Committee Meeting
28 Jan 1917

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted.

An Application was received from Messrs R. Bogaslovsky and Mr. M. Payerman butchers to this Congregation requesting this Committee to direct the Schochet not to kill chickens for the poultryers, and stating that the Western and Central Synagogues respectively had already taken this step.

Messrs R. Bogaslovsky and M. Payerman also appeared personally before the Committee in furtherance of their written Application.

After considerable discussion it was decided to bring the

whole matter in question before the Hull Hebrew Communal Council in order to deal deliberately and satisfactorily with the difficulties involved in their Application.

Mr J. E. Cohen intimated that he might propose an alliance between the three Hull Congregations in order to control this and all other communal matters. Mr J. Bentley proposed and Mr H. Bergman seconded a vote of thanks to the chair.

In order to keep in touch with our supporters, users and funders, we have continued to send out regular newsletters to an email mailing list of nearly 3,000. These newsletters allow us to share our latest research, highlight fascinating stories, and draw attention to upcoming events. All past newsletters are available to download from the Media Centre on our website.

The Media Centre contains the vast amount of media coverage the project has received since its launch – and this has grown over the course of the North East project, with appearances in local press such as the Yorkshire Post and the Leeds Jewish Telegraph, articles in national magazine Who Do You Think You Are?, and footage of Fabien Hamilton MP's speech at Westminster about the project – and much more.



Jewish contribution to war effort remembered

14 THE YORKSHIRE POST
Friday March 17 2023

Focus | Heritage on



RICH HISTORY: Paula Kitching, project consultant for *We Were There Too*, an exhibition at Hull History Centre.

Jewish contribution to war effort remembered

Alexandra Wood
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

THE wave of patriotism that swept Britain when war was declared in 1914 was felt by the Jewish community as much as anyone else.

Recruitment offices sprang up in synagogues and young men joined up in their thousands.

On its front page the *Jewish Chronicle* declared: "England had been all that she could to the Jews, Jews would be all that they could to England."

A new exhibition at Hull History Centre highlights the contribution and sacrifice of the Jewish community during the First World War.

It's the work of *British Jews in the First World War: We Were There Too*, which has developed a website to act as a permanent record of the lives of Jewish men, women and families from 1914 to 1919.

Project manager Rodney Ross said: "It's really important to unearth these stories now – these photos, these letters – before they are lost forever. It is so important to do it in the smaller Jewish communities like Hull, which has a rich history and heritage."

"In schools children can drop history as a subject. We need to find ways of education young people so the First World War is not forgotten."

Jews had been serving in the British military for over 300 years. Some were

serving when war broke out – like William Stern, a stoker, who was one of the first reported Jewish deaths in 1914 when HMS *Pathfinder* was hit by a torpedo.

From Hull came Edward Myer Gosschalk who signed up in 1914 at the age of 30, joining The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry as a lieutenant. He was wounded and sent home before returning to the front line and dying in August 1916 at Delville Wood during the Battle of the Somme.

Edward came from a distinguished Hull family of solicitors and may have signed up out of patriotism.

Others had more pragmatic reasons – it was a way of getting a salary and regular meals.



The Hull Jewish Community Roll of Honour lists 30 names – they include Private Louis Cuckle, who had been born in Dvinsk, Latvia in 1895.

The tailor's apprentice was another of the one million plus total casualties of the Battle of the Somme.

His grave at Quarry Cemetery, Montauban, was discovered by relatives by chance during a school trip and his relatives now return regularly to say Kaddish – a prayer recited once a year on the anniversary of a loved one's death.

A relative, Prof Howard Cuckle, said it had been a "privilege to reinforce a once broken family link", adding: "Even sparse details can be clothed with empathy and imagination to help appreciate a lost individual."

By 1918, around 50,000 Jews had served from Britain, the Commonwealth and the Empire – five were awarded the Victoria

Cross – the highest military award in the British Army. Of them 2,355 died.

Large numbers also served on the Home Front and in medical and nursing units abroad.

The dead lay in military cemeteries alongside their comrades, indistinguishable apart from the religious symbol carved on the headstone.

But as the exhibition records it was not long before anti-Semitism reared its ugly head again – and Jews were accused of being "foreigners" once more.

Hull's Jewish community dates back to the 1700s when the port attracted increasing numbers of immigrants passing through on the way to the US, Canada, South America and South Africa.

Numbers grew as the port developed in leaps and bounds.

Hull was the home of the largest privately owned shipping company in the world, the Wilson Line, and by the beginning of the 20th century it was the third largest port in the country.

Celebrated as "Britain's cheapest port", it was a short distance from Liverpool, but also had good trading links with the Baltic and Russia.

Organised attacks known as pogroms on Russian Jews saw an estimated 500,000 pass through Hull between 1880 and 1924.

The Jewish population in the city peaked at about 3,500 the start of the 20th century, when there were several synagogues in Hull as well as kosher butchers, bakers and fish shops.

It is thought to number less than 500 now. The free exhibition runs until Thursday March 30 and is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

BRITISH JEWRY BOOK OF HONOUR CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The British Jewry Book of Honour is 1000+ page volume containing some 50,000 records of Jews who served in the armed forces during the 1914-1918 conflict. 3000 copies of the Book were published in 1922, in response to a very human need. Members of the community who lost their loved ones in the conflict were able to remember them and it provided hard evidence of the contribution to the war effort, and the price paid in human terms, by the Jewish community, at a time of growing antisemitism. The Book has played a central part in the work of *We Were There Too*, and with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, we were able for the first time to provide a digital version, meaning visitors to the site can read through the articles, see the many photographs, and search for names of family members.

In the autumn of 2022, we celebrated the centenary of the Book's publication with a national programme of events to enable people to learn of the Book's remarkable story. This began with a launch event in collaboration with AJEX (The Jewish Military Association) at the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum at the Tower of London, and was followed by a number of different events around the country: including a mixture of in person and



The Fusilier Museum, Bury, 8/12/2022



WWTT Volunteer Louis Levine welcoming guests to the Manchester Jewish Museum Book of Honour Event

online talks for the National Library of Israel, Willesden Jewish Cemetery, and Bentley Priory, and exhibitions and drop-in sessions at Manchester Jewish Museum, Liverpool Central Library, Scottish Jewish Archives and the Fusilier Museum, Bury.

"Manchester Jewish Museum has been working with the *We Were There Too* project since it began its focus on Northern Jewish Communities. The work of the project preserves the stories of Manchester Jewish Communities' experiences of World War One and compliments and celebrates our own collections here at the museum, some of which are highlighted on the website. The teams in both organisations support each other in terms of research and collection enquiries. In November last year, the

museum and the project worked together on a event to mark the centenary of the publication of the British Jewry Book of Honour. This event which included a talk, handling session and family workshop, was a celebration of the remarkable publication and an opportunity for the museum and the project to highlight the unknown stories of Jewish Mancunians and their wartime lives."

– Alex Cropper, Curator at Manchester Jewish Museum

British Jewry Book of Honour Events

Location	Event	Dates	Numbers
Tower of London	Launch	Oct 2022	90
Manchester Jewish Museum	WWTT Talk & Book of Honour	Nov 2022	35
Liverpool Library	Open House to public	Nov 2022	30
Bury Fusiliers	Book of Honour	Dec 2022	30
Nicky Alliance	Book of Honour	Jan 2023	25
Scottish Jewish Archive Centre Glasgow	Book of Honour	Nov 2022	35
Total			245

Talks by Volunteers in Greater London

Sussex Jewish Historical Society England JHSE	In person	Oct 2022	
JHSE	In person	Oct 2022	
Willesden Cemetery	In person	Oct 2022	
Jewish Care Presents	Zoom	Oct 2022	
Bentley Priory	In person	Nov 2022	
National Library of Israel	Zoom	Nov 2022	
Immanuel College	In person	Dec 2022	
Barnet Library	In person	Jan 2023	
Bushey Syn. SAGE	In person	May 2023	
Total Approx.			450

All talks in Greater London delivered by volunteers Ronnie and Lola Fraser
Numbers Approximated 40 at each event in London
Events delivered via Zoom 80+

DEVELOP AND LAUNCH A DIGITAL HERITAGE RESOURCE:

The National Register of Jewish Memorial Boards

Originating from an idea of a volunteer, and in response to the difficulty accessing audiences and resources across such a large region, this was a successful route to potential Personal Records.



Liverpool Princes Road Synagogue

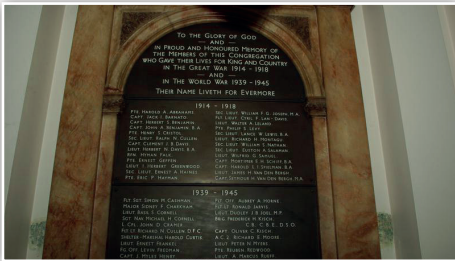


Higher Broughton Synagogue Salford

The *We Were There Too* website was modified to host this unique heritage resource, and so far 36 memorial boards have been added.



Rainsough Jewish Cemetery Manchester



New West End Synagogue, London



Pictured right:
Stoke-on-Trent
Synagogue



Pictured left:
Gildersome
Cemetery, Leeds. Now
at Shadwell
Lane
Synagogue

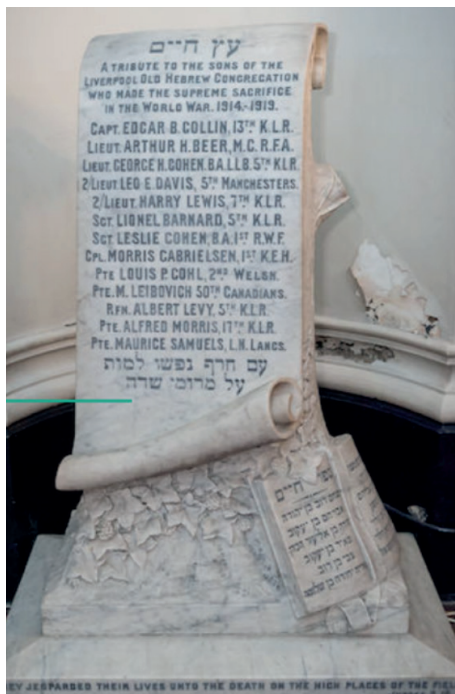
NATIONAL REGISTER OF JEWISH MEMORIAL BOARDS

<https://www.jewsfirstworldwar.com/memorial-boards.php>



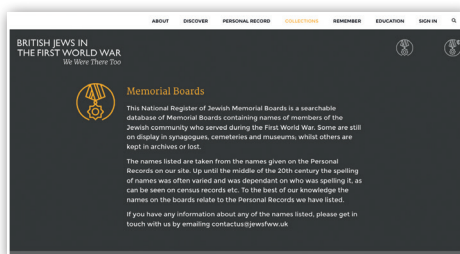
The National Register of Jewish Memorial Boards is a searchable database of Memorial Boards containing names of members of the Jewish community who served during the First World War.

Originating from an idea suggested by *We Were There Too* volunteer Lola Fraser, this register is a searchable database of First World War memorial boards containing the names of members of the Jewish community. The boards were originally mounted in synagogues, cemeteries, community halls etc. Several are



still in their original setting, but many today are inaccessible and often in a poor state of repair.

This will be a valuable resource for historians, genealogists, heritage researchers and families as they search for the place their family was buried.



VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers have always been a vital part of the *We Were There Too* project from the very beginning. During the North East project, they have been invaluable in all areas of the project: from research, to assisting at events, and hosting their own talks. Therefore, it was fitting when our volunteers were awarded the Jewish Volunteer Network's Volunteer Team of the Year Award 2022. This award is a recognition of the hard work, dedication and commitment shown by all of our volunteers, and we are incredibly proud of all they have achieved, and very grateful to have every single one of them involved in the project.



Ronnie Fraser speaking at Bentley Priory



Lola and Ronnie Fraser. Lola and Ronnie were instrumental in arranging the majority of talks in Greater London.

Thank you

A special thanks also to our volunteers Belinda Black for her research which formed the basis of our exhibitions in Grimsby and Hull and to Belinda and Peter Black for giving up their time to come along to both Exhibitions to meet and greet local dignitaries on the opening days.

Thank you also to Louis Levine for his research and support at the Manchester Jewish Museum and to Col Martin Newman for his professional Media support.

Social Impact of *We Were There Too*

The *We Were There Too* project and events have had a significant impact on the communities we have worked with, which makes our work especially rewarding.

Those who experienced the First World War first-hand are no longer here to tell their stories, but we often speak to the second and third generations: those who grew up with memories of the war unspoken but nevertheless looming over them. Many have become custodians of family archives, including records and photographs of relatives who died in the war and who were often not discussed as this was too painful. As a result, the information they have is typically only fragmentary. Increasingly, we meet people who have had to dispose of such archives when downsizing, as the passage of time and lack of information makes it difficult to convey the importance of maintaining them to the younger generation. In this sense, *We*

“The act of remembering is achieved not just through preserving information and making it accessible, but also through facilitating conversations and remembering through community work”

We Were There Too fulfils a very practical need to seek out stories and preserve them before they are permanently lost.

People who come to our events are often surprised that we are interested in hearing their stories, however fragmentary. During a recent follow-up session at Leeds Jewish Housing Association several people arrived with Personal Profiles printed from our website and offered additional information. Presenting our research, including a list of soldiers from Leeds and the streets on which they lived, elicited a strong response from the audience. In a group conversation that followed we learnt that one person's father was also another person's uncle, cousin or neighbour. The Jewish community might no longer exist as it did during the First World War, but there are still those who remember it and are eager to share their stories.



During a recent follow-up session at Leeds Jewish Housing Association several people arrived with Personal Profiles printed from our website and offered additional information

The act of remembering is achieved not just through preserving information and making it accessible, but also through facilitating conversations and remembering through community work.

We Were There Too in the Wider Community

As a result of our close links with the Fusilier Museum of Bury we have showcased *We Were There Too* to Veterans Association in Lancashire.

Quote from Ron Flowers Volunteer with The Fusilier Museum Bury

It has long been a goal of mine to try and encourage our communities to be aware of the service that our various communities have served the nation in times of conflict.

I have, with the help of both Rodney Ross and Colonel Martin Newman, who I have known and worked with since his days in the Jewish Lads Brigade, been able to arrange a number of talks to members of the Veterans in Communities groups in East Lancashire with the hope of educating our members, all of who are former Service Personnel

The feedback from our groups has always been very positive.

As service personnel we have an understanding of the sacrifice that being a member of the armed



Veterans in Communities, Haslingden 18/7/2022

services has on a community irrespective of how long ago it was or what religion we are. We are all brothers and sisters in arms.

The talks have gone down very well and we hope to organise further talks with our other groups in the future.

*In spite of the constraints of the Pandemic, we were pleased that during the grant period, the project met with new audiences, especially the veteran's community. We were delighted by the responses from these new and wider audiences to the *We Were There Too* stories.*



Veterans in Communities, Clitheroe 4/7/2023

PUBLIC EVENTS

Location	Event	Date	Numbers
Museum of Liverpool	WWTT Remembrance Event	Nov 2021	80 + 250 foot traffic
Leeds 4 events	WWTT Launch & 3 Roadshows	March 2022-June 2023	120
Grimsby Town Hall	Talks & 4-day Exhibition	July 2022	245
Hull History Centre	Talks & 4-week Exhibition	March 2023	440
Veterans in Communities 2 events	WWTT Talks	July 2022 & July 2023	40

SCHOOLS

Leeds Jewish Free School	WWTT Presentation	March 2022	90
Wakefield Academy	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2022	80
Liverpool King David Juniors	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2022	60
Manchester King David Primary	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2022	90
North Cheshire Jewish Primary School	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2022	60
Leeds Brodetsky	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2022	35
Bury & Whitefield Jewish Primary	WWTT Presentation	Sept 2023	30
Manchester King David Primary	WWTT Remembrance	Nov 2023	80

We Were There Too Next Step

The success of *We Were There Too* from the commencement of the first project in July 2016 to the end of the project in December 2023 is self-evident and can be viewed in our media section <https://www.jewsfww.uk/media-centre.php> where previous evaluations can be found.

Discussions are currently in hand for the next stage of the project. This will focus on the extraordinary lives of men and women who survived the Great War and contributed significantly to our society and to the Jewish Community, as well as those who returned to their private lives and a future for themselves.

We are talking with new partners to launch this next project in Spring 2024. The *We Were There Too* mission to remember the First World War and the Jewish Communities contribution will continue as a lasting legacy to the Jewish and wider communities as a whole.



THANK YOU

We are extremely grateful to all our funders, donors' organisations, schools and our wonderful volunteers, all of whom have contributed to the success of The Jewish Communities of Yorkshire and the North East and the continuation of *We Were There Too* nationally.

1. Manchester Jewish Museum
2. The Fusilier Museum Bury
3. The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum at The Tower of London
4. The Museum of Liverpool
5. Liverpool Central Library
6. Hull History Centre
7. North East Lincolnshire Archives
8. West Yorkshire Archive Service Leeds
9. Leeds Jewish Housing Association
10. The Nicky Alliance Day Centre
11. Scottish Jewish Archives Centre
12. Discovery Education
13. Veterans in Communities East Lancashire
14. Association of Jewish Ex Servicemen and Women
15. Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade
16. JSCN Jewish Small Communities Network
17. Jewish Care
18. The Bentley Priory
19. Swansea University

Schools

King David Primary School Manchester
King David Junior School Liverpool
North Cheshire Jewish Primary School
Brodetsky Primary School Leeds
Leeds Jewish Free School
Bury & Whitefield Jewish Primary School
Walton Primary Academy Wakefield
Moriah Jewish Primary School
Immanuel College Bushey



Thank You

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.jewswww.uk/media-centre.php>

www.jewswww.uk



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