

## Does your family have a First World War story to tell?

Over 40,000 Jews served in Britain's armed forces in the First World War. Thousands more were involved in war work and support roles near to the battlefields and on the Home Front.

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A century on, first-hand knowledge has disappeared. However, personal recollections of the years of conflict can still be captured through family stories and anecdotes, along with letters, diaries and memorabilia that have survived in attics and old photograph albums. But time is against us as lofts get cleared and the accuracy of family history fades.

*We Were There Too* is a unique cross-community project that will create a permanent digital archive and interactive website to preserve the surviving evidence of Jewish experiences of the First World War for future generations.

Through a series of **History Windows**, the site will provide a unique insight into the experience of living through the First World War as a minority group – a religious and cultural community that many people in Britain at the time regarded as being 'outsider' or 'alien'. The site will also offer user-friendly access to a number of First World War archives, including the newly-digitised British Jewry Book of Honour, materials from the Jewish Military Museum, social histories, local directories of the period, and rare private collections.

The most important element of the project is the capture and preservation of individual stories in **Personal Records**. If your ancestor fought in the war, raised a family, kept a business going, served as a nurse or factory worker, cared for a wounded son or husband, or experienced a wartime childhood, you will be able to upload their story and ensure that their contribution to Britain's war effort is not forgotten. Photographs, letters, diaries and even 3D scans of medals and other items can be added. And if you don't know much about your ancestor beyond a faded photograph, the site will provide guidance on how to research their story further. A *yahrzeit* facility will honour their memory each year.

Community engagement is a vital part of the project, and we will be holding events across London over the next two years. Volunteers are welcomed to assist with all aspects of the project, from research and IT to helping older people upload their stories.

Jewish schools, cheders and youth organisations will help children to investigate and record their own family stories, if they have them, or to choose and research a Jewish soldier: perhaps one who shares their surname or is listed on their synagogue's memorial board. Young people will be able to take part in project linked Duke of Edinburgh Award and Open College Network accreditation activities organised through JLGB.

*We Were There Too* is a London Jewish Cultural Centre initiative, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, partnered by JLGB and supported by a host of communal organisations – the Jewish Museum, Jewish Military Museum, Jewish Chronicle, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, AJEX, Jewish Historical Society, Jewish Chaplaincy and many more.

**Now is the time to record and celebrate the proud contribution of London's Jews – and your family – during the First World War.**