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WW1 Jewish stories to be saved online

By jonbauckham, 2 February 2016 - 11:23am

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A new interactive website, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will highlight the contributions made by London's Jewish community during the First World War



Air raid wardens from the Jewish East End Shelter Corps, pictured in 1917. Their hats are labelled in both Yiddish and English (Photo: Getty Images)

Stories of London's Jewish population during the First World War are to be saved thanks to a new project.

The London Jewish Cultural Centre has been awarded a £408,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to co-ordinate 'We Were There Too', an initiative that will see the creation of an interactive website and permanent digital archive.

Split into two halves, one section of the site will describe aspects of Jewish life in London between 1914 and 1918, while the other will enable members of the public to upload details of their own ancestors, alongside photographs and historical records.

It is hoped that the resource will not only preserve stories of those who fought, but ordinary Jewish men, women and children on the Home Front, too.



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“We are immensely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund as the major funder for this project,” said Michael Marx, chairman of London Jewish Cultural Centre Trustees.

“Our community played a very significant part in the First World War, but it is often overshadowed by the Second World War and its terrible events.

“It is now a race against time to collect second-generation stories of this period so the project could not be more timely.”



Jewish members of the Royal Fusiliers (Photo: jewisheastend.com)

Although the [website](#) is still under construction, a team of volunteers is hard at work behind the scenes, helping to plan community events that will promote We Were There Too across the capital.

At the heart of the initiative is the Jewish Lads’ and Girls’ Brigade (JLGB), whose offices in Redbridge will act as the headquarters of the project.

Founded in 1895 to support poor Jewish children in London’s East End, the organisation has a particularly strong connection to the First World War, with 535 of its members killed during the conflict.

Today, the group enables young Jewish people to play an active role in their communities and gain important skills for the future.

John Cooper, JLGB vice-president, said the project would provide a “wonderful” volunteering opportunity for its members and allow them to “use digital technology to promote their heritage”.

Author Melody Amsel-Arieli, who has written several books on Jewish history and genealogy, was also enthusiastic about the initiative.

“Unlike more general resources for military research, We Were There Too will celebrate the roles and contributions of London’s Jews in a very personal way,” she told *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*.

“By involving individuals, groups, schoolchildren and families, participation will also strengthen the London Jewish community today.”

Learn more about the project at jewsfww.london

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