

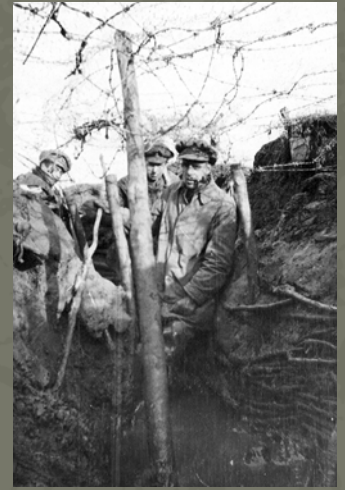
# The Somme

The River Somme was held by the French and British; the Battle of the Somme was fought in the low hills just to the north. From late February 1916 Verdun, in northern Lorraine to the south-east of Arras and the Somme, was attacked relentlessly by the German army. So that French troops could go to help defend Verdun, British troops took over the front line in the Arras and Somme areas. The Battle of the Somme was started on 1st July 1916, to draw some of the German troops away from Verdun.

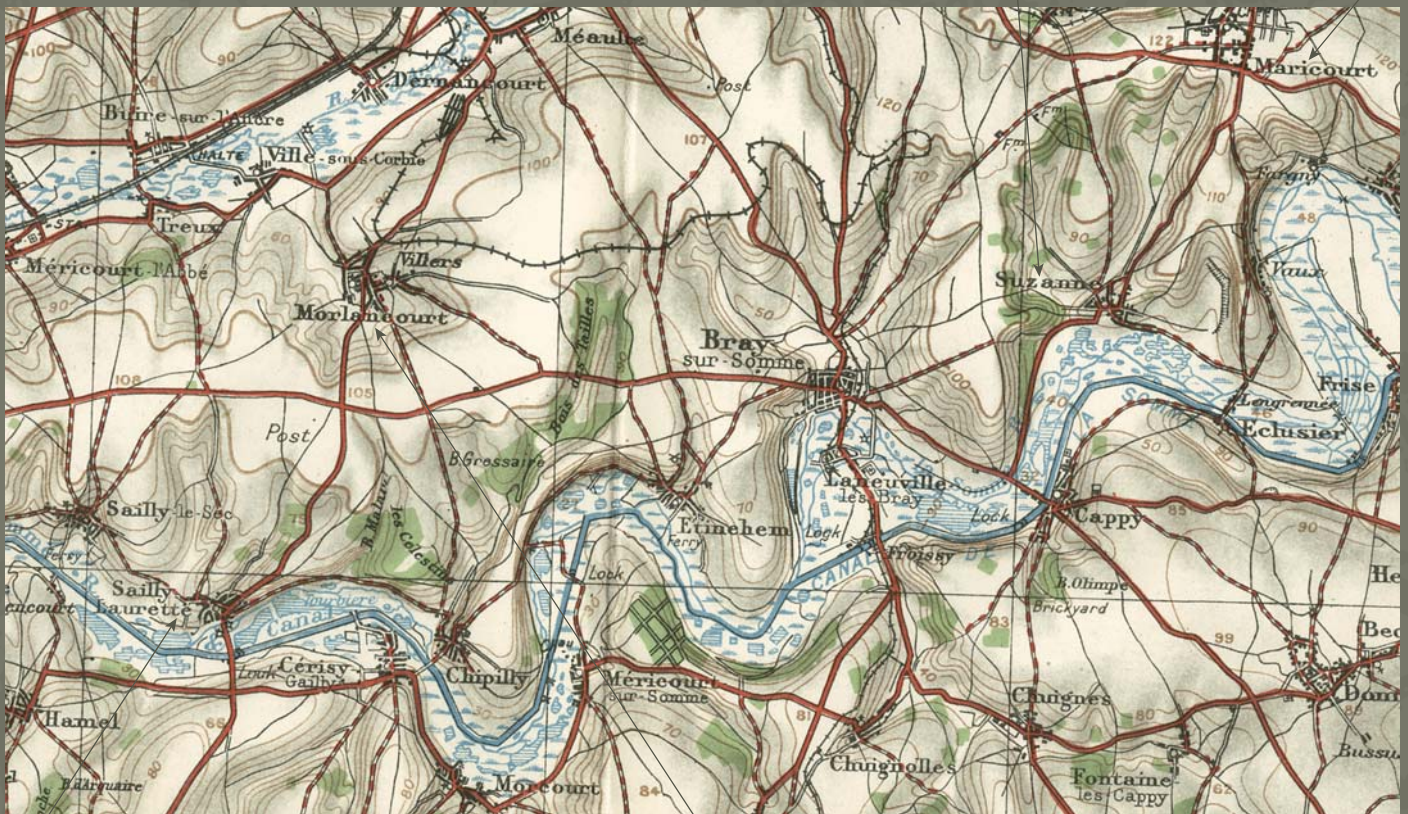
In 1914 the British Army's survey and mapping service (Geographic Section, General Staff; GSGS) provided topographic maps for the British Expeditionary Force, based on the 1:100,000 maps of the Belgian Institut Cartographique Militaire (GSGS 2364) and the 1:80,000 of the French Service Géographique des Armées (GSGS 2526). From 1915 the 1:80,000 GSGS 2526 maps of northern France were superseded by additional 1:100,000 sheets added to the GSGS 2364 of Belgium; the map extracts displayed here are taken from the extended 1:100,000 series.



Suzanne: "We were lucky enough to be back in Suzanne for Christmas Day in comparatively comfortable billets. Parcels from home had come in freely, together with Christmas puddings from the Lord Mayor of Birmingham's Fund, and we had quite a merry time."



Maricourt: "On the 22nd of December [1915], in the afternoon, the Battalion moved up from Suzanne to Maricourt, about two and a half miles, at intervals of ten minutes per company, and fifty yards between platoons, and we took over a complete sector of the front line..."



GSGS 2364 France sheet 17 (Amiens) 1:100,000, 1915, with minor corrections to 1 Oct 1916.



Sailly Laurette: Gas mask practice. "We spent nine days at Sailly Lorette carrying out inspections and the usual back area training; the only events of any moment being the burning down of a barn occupied by part of "A" Company and the pinching of a succulent joint of roast beef from one of the Officers' Messes while the unfortunate Mess Cook was decoyed out of the way."



Morlancourt: "We remained at Morlancourt in canvas huts for three days..."

Photographs of the 15th Warwickshires (2nd Birmingham Pals) from J.A. Wall's albums of 'Royal Warwickshire Regiment World War 1'. [Misc Photos/Press 7]



Crater: "At 9pm another intense barrage opened on us, and at the same moment, with the vibration of an earthquake, a huge livid flame shot up into the sky in front of me as I faced down the trench... when I went down the line to find out what had happened I found a huge crater, which could have contained a small house..."



Reconstruction: "The centre sector was so demolished that a new trench line had to be dug in front and the three craters, which we named Cuthbert, Clarence, and Claude... had to be put into a state of defence..."



Front line: "...the position at this point was somewhat unique. The enemy trenches were only about twelve yards away and their sentries could easily be heard talking. Owing to this proximity it was a nery place..."



Agnez-les-Duisans rest billets (left and above), west of Arras: "Bathing facilities were also a very welcome and necessary feature of our existence, sheds having been erected under Corps arrangements and fitted with rows of hot water showers... clean underclothing was issued at the same time. The Quartermaster Sergeant brought up a clean pair of socks each night with the rations... we were indebted to the Ladies Committee which was indefatigably knitting for us away back in Birmingham."

## Trench Life



Toilet, Company Headquarters K1 Trench Arras: "what sort of sanitary arrangements, so very essential to health, could be made under conditions such as these? We used large buckets, which were emptied and disinfected every night, the contents being buried out on top by the sanitary squad consisting of two men per company acting under a corporal."



J.A. Wall was a Second Lieutenant. He was wounded in 1916, during the Battle of the Somme.

These photographs, of the 15th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, are from J.A. Wall's albums of 'Royal Warwickshire Regiment World War 1; November 1915 - June 1916. [Misc Photos/Press 7]



C. A. Bill (on the left) was a Captain in 1916.

The quotations are taken from C.A. Bill's book, published in 1932: 'The 15th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (2nd Birmingham Battalion) in the Great War'. [L75.7]



Mont St Eloy: old abbey, from which King George viewed the trenches in July 1916.



Roclincourt HQ: "Our company headquarters at Arras at Roclincourt was a wonderful place. As a living-room we used the cellar of a smashed-in house, the ruins of which were piled high above us, and for sleeping quarters the French had dug yet deeper, and excavated another room immediately beneath the cellar...As safe a spot as one could hope for..."



GSGS 2364 France sheet 11 (Lens) 1:100,000. 1916.



St. Nicolas: "We were in Brigade Reserve trenches at St. Nicolas, a suburb of Arras, which had suffered much more heavily than the town itself, and Battalion Headquarters occupied the ruins of a candle factory there. Owing to this source of supply we were never short of luminants in our dug-outs and shelters."



Arras: "In the event of a bombardment there was ample underground accommodation in the deep and strong cellars of the houses, and in the vaults between the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace; and several miles of sewers had been cleared out and made habitable."

## Arras - Living in Ruins

"At this time Arras had been pretty badly knocked about in places. The Hotel de Ville was a ruin, as also were most of the houses in the Grande Place... all important road junctions were frequently shelled, with resultant damage to neighbouring buildings. Otherwise the town was not much shelled by heavy artillery, but came in for a regular daily dose of lighter shelling."



Arras: Hotel de Ville, June 1916.



Arras: "ruined houses in Grande Place", June 1916. Photos by J.A. Wall. [Misc Photos/Press 7]

# Military Hospitals

Plans for military hospitals in Birmingham were made by the 13th Territorial General Hospital well in advance of war breaking out. Birmingham University was used as the 1st Southern General Hospital, with the first wounded soldiers arriving on 1 September 1914, and 1,000 beds provided by early 1915. As casualties increased many other buildings became hospitals, such as the Poor Law Infirmary on Dudley Road in 1915, the Monyhull Colony in King's Norton in 1916 and school buildings in Kings Heath and Stirchley. Rubery Hill and Hollymoor hospitals were also used.



Ambulance at Highbury. [Misc Photos/Hospitals/Press 7]

Auxiliary hospitals, often staffed by volunteers, were set up in some of Birmingham's larger houses, including Highbury in Moseley, Moor Green Hall, Harborne Hall, The Beeches in Erdington, Uffculme, and Allerton in Sutton Coldfield.

Many activities were organised to keep the wounded and convalescing soldiers occupied. Workshops mended boots and produced surgical appliances, bed frames, supplies for the front. Classes were given in languages, shorthand, book keeping, shorthand, carpentry, tailoring and gardening. Drama companies put on shows and many Birmingham theatres provided free tickets to performances. At Christmas, wards were decorated and traditional celebrations took place.



Convalescence at Highbury. [Misc Photos/Hospitals/Press 7]



Workshop at Highbury. [Misc Photos/Hospitals/Press 7]



Christmas at Highbury. [Misc Photos/Hospitals/Press 7]



Staff at Highbury. [Misc Photos/Hospitals/Press 7]

Highbury opened as an auxiliary hospital in 1915, the money for its equipment being donated by Kynoch's of Witton. It specialised in neurological cases and was staffed by a commandant, a matron, eight sisters and voluntary workers, mostly women. It had 274 beds, an open air ward, and the conservatories and greenhouses were used in emergencies.



Women workers, from W & T Avery. [Misc Photos/Avery WW1/Press 7]

Regular ambulance units could not cope with the numbers and volunteer drivers ferried wounded soldiers to hospitals and delivered medical staff to stations. Volunteers produced medical equipment and also trained as nurses. A Citizen's Committee and Lady Mayoress's Depot, set up in 1914, organised much of the voluntary work in the city. By the end of the war there were over 7,000 beds in Birmingham and by 1919 over 125,000 men had been treated, including Belgian, American, and Serbian soldiers.

*Many skilled workers volunteered to fight at the beginning of the war and later many were conscripted. The shortage of workers in the factories was solved by employing women, who took over jobs such as welding, soldering and munitions work, and they also worked in banks, post offices and as bus conductresses.*

5th Battalion Warwickshire Volunteer Regiment, 'B' Company  
Officer Commanding, CAPTAIN C. S. YATES.  
Headquarters, 588 Coventry Road, (entrance Charles Road).

## INVASION OF ENGLAND

FIELD-MARSHAL LORD FRENCH and other high Military Authorities have recently declared that

**There is a great possibility of an attempted Invasion of England.**

and therefore they have urged upon **EVERY MAN** the duty of preparing himself for such an emergency.

**It is better to be  
PREPARED and not Wanted!  
than to be  
WANTED and Not Prepared.**

**Come and join the SMALL HEATH COMPANY,**

Any Evening from 8 p.m. to 9-30 p.m., at the above address.

N. Dighton, Southsea Printing Works

# Black and Asian Volunteers in World War 1

The outbreak of war brought dramatic changes for black and Asian people in Britain and the Commonwealth. One and a half million volunteers came forward from the Indian subcontinent. Thousands of black soldiers from the West Indies and Africa would also sacrifice their lives.

In Britain, the black and Asian community was transformed by the domestic impact of the war. The rare photographs shown here reveal a 'hidden' story about Birmingham's cultural landscape at the time. Visible in both images is a black volunteer named 'F. Johnson'. On the top picture, he can be found on the back row, fourteenth from left.

As part of the 'Small Heath Defense Corps,' Johnson would have helped guard munitions and form a last line of defense against the threat of a German 'invasion'. Once the war ended, he and many other black and Asian people were often confronted by social prejudice, despite their vital contribution to campaigns.

Royal Warwickshire Regiment Leaflets. [LF75.12]



'B Coy (Small Heath) 5th V.B. Royal Warwickshire Regt. Birmingham, March 16th, 1919'. [LFF71.061 PR TEM Birmingham Scrap Book Vol 2 Part 2, p147]



Small Heath Home Defence Corps, c.1917. [Birmingham Scrap Book Vol 10, 314449, p257]

**The Lady Mayoress's  
Prisoners of War Fund.**

*A Fine Record of Achievement.*



THE function of the Lady Mayoress's Prisoners of War Fund is to provide food for the men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment who are prisoners of war in Germany and other enemy countries. It has, indeed, rendered noble service to our brave fellows. Many must have died but for the timely aid—the absolutely essential aid—rendered by the Fund. Its heavy obligations continue rapidly to increase. The number of prisoners grows; the cost of food advances.

At the present time, the Executive Committee are responsible for sending parcels of food, etc., to over 1,500 men. The cost per week is about £1,300. Towards this, the regular weekly subscriptions amount to about £400 per week. The balance of £900 per week MUST be raised by donations and special efforts. One parcel weighing about 15 lbs. is sent to each man every week at a cost of 17/-.

Of the 1,500 prisoners, those who belong to the City of Birmingham number about 530. Many of the towns and villages in Warwickshire are warmly co-operating in various movements to raise the large sum of money required to maintain the prisoners of war from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

The Lady Mayoress's Depot, of which the Prisoners of War Fund forms part, is registered under the War Charities Act 1916. It has despatched 115,768 parcels to prisoners of war, and the Committee have direct acknowledgment that over ninety per cent. of the parcels have reached the men. The cost of the parcels has reached a sum of £54,000.

To carry on the work for another twelve months, £60,000 will be necessary. The Committee feel confident that this sum will be forthcoming.

Surely, no further words are necessary to commend to your whole-hearted and practical support the splendid work of this fund. It cannot fail strongly to appeal to all patriotic and public-spirited citizens. We MUST feed the men, with parcels, who helped to win the war.

Subscriptions were never more needed. They should be forwarded to Lady Mayoress's Depot, Great Charles Street, Birmingham. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the Hon. Treasurers, Lady Mayoress's Depot.

G. O. HOWARD SMITH, | Hon. Treasurers.  
J. WILLIAM TILLEY



Plea for subscriptions, from Theatre Royal programme. [LP28.1]

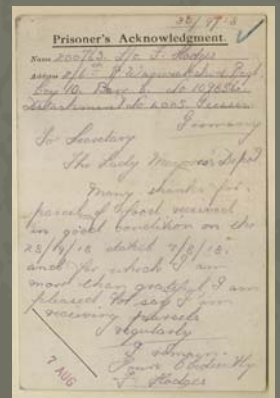
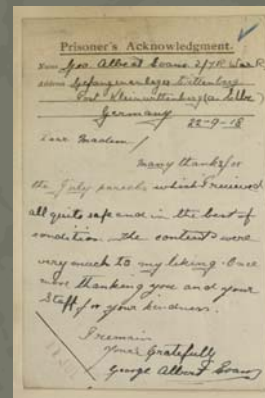
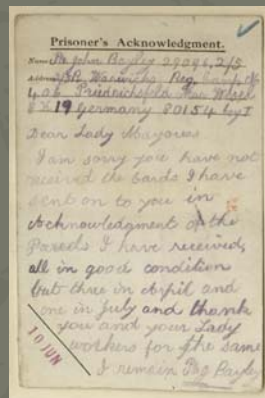
# Lady Mayoress's Prisoners of War Fund

The Lady Mayoress, Mrs Martineau, set up the Lady Mayoress's Depot at a meeting at the Town Hall in August 1914. It operated under the wing of the Citizen's committee and had five main projects:

1. Clothing and comfort parcels for troops on active service
2. Food and comfort parcels for Birmingham prisoners of war
3. Voluntary production of surgical goods for hospitals
4. Recreational activities and work for wounded soldiers
5. Looking after the graves of servicemen who died in Birmingham hospitals

The function of the Prisoners of War Fund was to provide food and other items for members of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment who were prisoners of war in Germany the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Turkey. In October 1918 it was sending weekly parcels to over 1,500 men (530 from Birmingham) at a cost of £1,300 per week. By the end of the war a total of 71,038 parcels had been dispatched.

Their funding came from regular subscriptions and also special fund-raising events such as concerts. This was no mere occupational therapy, for the women worried about their loved ones serving in the trenches or incarcerated as prisoners of war. The acknowledgement cards and letters of thanks demonstrate how these parcels proved to be life-saving as well as morale-boosting.



Samples of the acknowledgement cards. [LF75.7]



Ladies pack up some of the 1,500 weekly parcels for dispatch. [LF75.7]

Extract from a letter written by Pte. Charles A. Macbeth  
15th Warwickshire Regiment, January 1919:

"I hereby take the opportunity of tending you my heartfelt thanks for your taking me under your wing during the time I was in captivity in Germany. I do not think anyone can realize what it means to us prisoners to receive these parcels as we did, for without them I do not think many of us would have returned alive to dear little England..."

Extract from a letter written by Corporal Charles Batchelor  
Royal Warwickshire Regiment:

[When we were first captured I saw] "fellows collapse through hunger and weakness for at that time it was too soon to have parcels come from England and so we had to live on German rations and I honestly think that but for the goodness of you and thousands more, that there is many fellows who would not be alive today. I think they would have died of starvation."



A window display promoting the Lady Mayoress's Prisoners of War Fund. [LF75.7]

# Birmingham Tank Week

## 31 Dec 1917 - 5 Jan 1918

"Your firing line is the works or the office in which you do your bit: the shop or the kitchen in which you spend or save: the bank or the post office in which you buy your bonds."

The National War Savings Committee was ever keen to discover new ways of fundraising for the war effort and they soon latched on to the public desire to see the new charismatic war machines - tanks. In March 1918 a battered tank recovered from the battlefield was put on display in London and drew in huge numbers of visitors to not only witness the machine for themselves but to part with their money and buy their war bonds from the Tank Bank.

The idea was so successful that they extended it nationally and added the extra element of competition between towns and cities to see who could raise the most funds. The Tank Bank set up in Victoria Square at New Year 1918 and the race was on to see if Birmingham could beat its main rivals, Liverpool and Manchester. The daily totals were posted on a giant board on the side of the Town Hall and the newspapers and their advertisers joined in with exhortations to help Birmingham win the race.



Members of the Tank Week Committee on top of the tank. The guard throughout the week was from various battalions of the Warwickshire Volunteer Regiment.

Each day the crowds in the square heard speeches from civic, religious and military leaders and even entertainers all persuading the citizens of Birmingham to invest even more in the war effort. The Bishop of Birmingham added to the challenge of beating Manchester's total of £4.5 million by setting the target at £6 million - the cost of fighting the war for just one day.

The public and large companies all rallied to the challenge and nearly every day saw records being broken. On the final day £2,274,795 was taken, to bring the total to over £6.5 million. Birmingham had won the Tank Bank Race.



Huge crowds gathered daily in Victoria Square to get a glimpse of the Tank and buy war bonds.



The board showing the daily totals in the 'race' against Liverpool and Manchester.

## BIRMINGHAM "TANK" WEEK.

### Prime Minister's Message.

#### "YOUR FIRING LINE."

At the beginning of a New Year the message I should like to send to all at home is an appeal to do their utmost in these later trying days for the cause for which the democracies of the world are now leagued together.

The sacrifices which the men—and the women also—are making at the front we all know. Despite all that they have gone through they are still facing frost and mud, privation and suffering, wounds and death, with undaunted courage that mankind may be freed from the tyranny of militarism and rejoice in lasting freedom and peace. No sacrifice that we who stay at home are called to make can equal or faintly approach what is daily and hourly demanded of them. So long as they are called upon to endure these things let us see to it that we do not take our ease at the price of their sacrifice.

There is nobody too old or too young or too feeble to play a part. If we cannot fight in person, we can fight by the vigour and goodwill by which we do our work, the wisdom of our economy, the generosity with which we meet the nation's financial needs. At the moment lending and saving are specially important. Money is essential to victory and economy is the condition of financial power.

#### SAVE AND LEND

It is therefore the duty of all to save what they can and to lend what they can to the community at this time. Every man, woman, and child ought to make it a point of honour to increase their holding of National War Bonds as the year goes by—bonds which have behind them the whole strength and credit and resources of Britain itself.

To every civilian, therefore, I would say:

**"Your firing line is the works or the office in which you do your bit; the shop or the kitchen in which you spend or save; the bank or the post office in which you buy your bonds."**

To reach that firing line and to become an active combatant yourself there are no communication trenches to grope along, no barrage to face, no horrors, no wounds. The road of duty and patriotism is clear before you; follow it and it will lead ere long to safety for our people and victory for our cause.

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

**BRING YOUR MONEY TO THE  
Tank Bank, Victoria Square  
AND  
Put Birmingham at the Top**

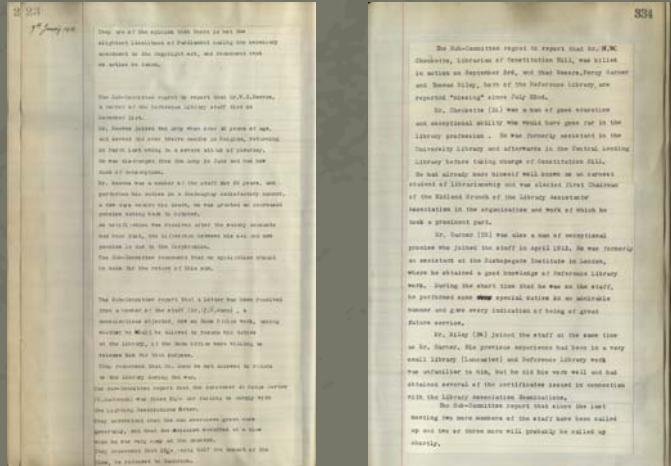
Flyer and photographs from 'Birmingham Tank Week'. [LF75.7]

# Birmingham Libraries and World War 1

The names and faces of Birmingham Libraries staff who served in World War 1 are commemorated in a photograph album from the archives of the Birmingham Libraries. 36 men served of whom 6 were killed in or just after the war.



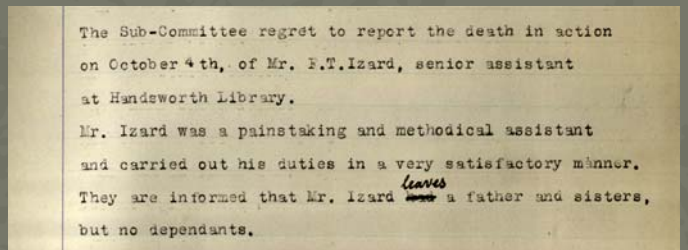
Sutton Park, about May 1915. The huts formed part of the accommodation of the 'City Battalions'. The members of the Libraries staff are wearing the blue uniform due to the scarcity of khaki cloth in the early days of the war. From left to right: Standing; W.W. Howe; F.T. Izard (killed); Kneeling; T. Riley (killed); F.J. Patrick. Sitting; G.H. Dyer; H.W. Checketts (killed); P.A. Garner (killed).



There were also conscientious objectors amongst the library staff. Library Minutes record that one member of staff would not be permitted to return to work for the duration of the war because of the stance he had taken. [BCC/Libraries Committee Minutes/Vols 11-12]

Percy Garner and Thomas Riley were both killed on 22nd July 1916 during the Battle of the Somme at the attack on Delville Wood. They were both serving in the 14th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment (1st B'ham City Battalion). Garner was 24 and Riley 25 years old when they died.

Henry Checketts was also in the 1st Birmingham City Battalion and survived the battle in which his comrades Garner and Riley were killed. He was promoted to Corporal and then Acting Sergeant. However Checketts died on 3rd September 1916 during the attack on Falfemont Farm along with 800 other Birmingham Pals. He was 30 years old.



Report of the death of Frank Izard, 1917. [BCC/ Libraries Committee Minutes/Vol 11]

Two members of staff also died after the conflict as a result of the injuries they sustained: William Reeves and Charles Wells. They served with the Army Service Corps and the Worcester Regiment respectively. They were both in their 40s when they died.



Herbert Maurice Cashmore (City Librarian, 1928-47).



William Reeves (second row from front, fifth from left). Photographs from Birmingham Libraries World War 1 Staff Album. [BCC]





Henry Lionel Field (1894-1916)  
 Born: 2 May 1894  
 Educated - Marlborough: May 1908  
 Educated - Birmingham School of Art: September 1913  
 Gazetted - 6th Battalion Royal Warks. Regiment: Sept 1914  
 Killed in Action: 1 July 1916

## Henry Lionel Field

The poems in the book 'Poems and Drawings' by H.L. Field were written between 1912 and 1916, when Harry was aged between 18 and 22. In the introduction to the book, "RF" writes that Harry thought very little of his poetry, but in his service life they became very important to him. In a letter to his sister he wrote:



Sketch from 'Poems and Drawings' by H.L. Field, 1916. [L07.3 COR]

X1X, from 'Poems' by H.L. Field

*The wind blows cold to-day, my lass,  
 And a few small drops of rain;  
 Then take your cloak around you, lass,  
 And we're off on the road again.*

*We two have tramped for many a mile,  
 Through wintry wind and weather;  
 But if there's a road to be travelled yet,  
 We'll travel that road together.*

*We've rested well by the hard road side,  
 Two hearts with one desire;  
 And Love and the Road is enough for both,  
 By the side of our own camp fire.*



Sketch from 'Poems and Drawings' by H.L. Field, 1916. [L07.3 COR]

XXV1, from 'Poems' by H.L. Field  
 I.C.F. FRANCE, April 1916

*Sweet are the plains of France where the  
 Lent lilies blow,  
 Yet sweeter far the woods and fields I know.  
 Fair is the land where the lark sings at dawn,  
 Yet fairer far the land where I was born.*

*No nightingale can sing a lovelier lay  
 Than the sparrows chirp in my roof tree,  
 French suns can never paint a brighter day  
 Than my fog-bound coasts can offer me.*

"Fancy me writing poetry! Always before I used to laugh at the idea and say, 'Never, never would I be such a fool!' But it's like this, when you can't draw you must write, when you can't write you must sing, when you can't sing you must act. And when you can't do any of these you must fall in love! ...so you see I can't help myself."

'Peace' by T.E. Mitton  
 September 1914

*Far beyond the reeking battle,  
 Where all human factions cease,  
 Her bright eyes bedimmed with weeping  
 Stands the gentle form of Peace.*

*And she calls to toiling mortals  
 Children see ye grieve me sore,  
 Drive me from your happy homesteads  
 Stain your hands with lusts of War.*

*To the weeping maid they answer,  
 Lady, hear us when we plead,  
 For we turn from thee with sorrow  
 Turn to break a tyrant's greed.*

*And we vow that good shall follow  
 From our strife and warfare vile,  
 And thy reign shall be the fairer  
 Though we leave thee for awhile.*

'The Dardanelles' by T.E. Mitton  
 March 1915

*'Twixt two Continent's dominions  
 Hellespont's blue waters flow,  
 There, men say, an ancient empire  
 Perished centuries ago.*

*...  
 Thither Britain's fleet in silence  
 Gathered, there the cannons roar,  
 Chanting forth an Empire's death Knell  
 For the tyrant's reign is o'er.*

## Thomas Ewart Mitton

Thomas Ewart Mitton (1897-1917)  
 Born: 26 April 1897  
 Educated: Wintersloe, Moseley; King Edward's School  
 Enlisted: 10 February 1916  
 (a year training in England,  
 9 months of active service in France and 3 weeks in Belgium)  
 Died: 24 December 1917  
 (whilst erecting telegraph wires across a railway track)

## War Poetry



T.E. Mitton, from 'Poems'. [L52.21]

## Clifford Flower

Originally rejected from the army as he was ½ inch short of the required height, Flower wrote an appeal to Lord Kitchener and was then enlisted. Three weeks after joining he was offered a stripe if he joined the clerical staff, but he preferred to remain with the ordinary 'Tommies'. In 1915 Flower received a shrapnel wound to his arm but remained on duty. Of a cheerful and optimistic nature, in his letters home Flower never spoke against the army or the conditions that the soldiers had to contend with.

Clifford Flower (1891-1917)

Born: 17 November 1891

Worked - Messrs Stewarts & Lloyds (Iron & Steel Mfrs),

Leeds; 1905 (transferring to their Birmingham HQ in 1909)

Enlisted - 2nd Battalion Warwickshire Regiment: 1914

Killed: 25 April 1917 (by a shell piercing his dug-out)

### MEMOIR AND POEMS OF A SOLDIER



Frontispiece of Flower's book. [War Poetry Collection/FLO]



Clifford Flower, from 'Memoir and Poems,' by C. Flower. [War Poetry Collection/FLO]

## War Poetry

### Evaline Crutchley

'An Administrator Grouses'  
by Evaline Crutchley, Q.M.A.A.C.

Oh my! Oh me!

Oh! Who would be

A much-tried Q.M.A.A.C.

Administrator?

I'm sure, beginning with my clerks,

Who never work but just have larks

When I'm away, and when I'm there

Just drive me to a dull despair.



Evaline Crutchley, from her typescript book 'Kewmac Comments'. [War Poetry Collection/CRU]

'The Day'  
by Clifford Flower

Let me wake some future morning,  
When the birds are singing;  
Let me wake with pleasant yawning  
When the bells are ringing  
With the news that Peace has come,  
Clash of cymbals, beat of drum,  
Let me see the golden dawning  
Of the day of Peace.

...

Let me settle in a cottage,  
I would hie me to the land,  
With my birthright and my pottage  
Fresh and sweet and still uncanned;  
Take my ease and live again  
The days of War and Mud, and then  
Meander into anecdotage  
Through the days of Peace.

## The War Poetry Collection



Turner, The Somme. Photo by J.A. Wall. [Misc Photos/Press 7]

The original War Poetry Collection was presented to the Central Library in 1921 in memory of Private William John Billington of the 2/24 Regiment, who was killed in action in Palestine in March 1918. The donor, William John Cross of Rubery, had assembled an unrivalled collection. It contained 1,233 printed books in English, French, Italian, and other languages of the British and Allied Nations, consisting mainly of First World War poetry, by both soldier poets and civilians.

Since 1921 there have been many additions, notably in 1938 when a fine collection of over 40 albums of news-cuttings of poetry and verse from the 1914-1918 period was acquired.

The cuttings represent an unusual conspectus of the social attitudes of war and display the moods of the British people from patriotic jingoism to disillusionment and concern.

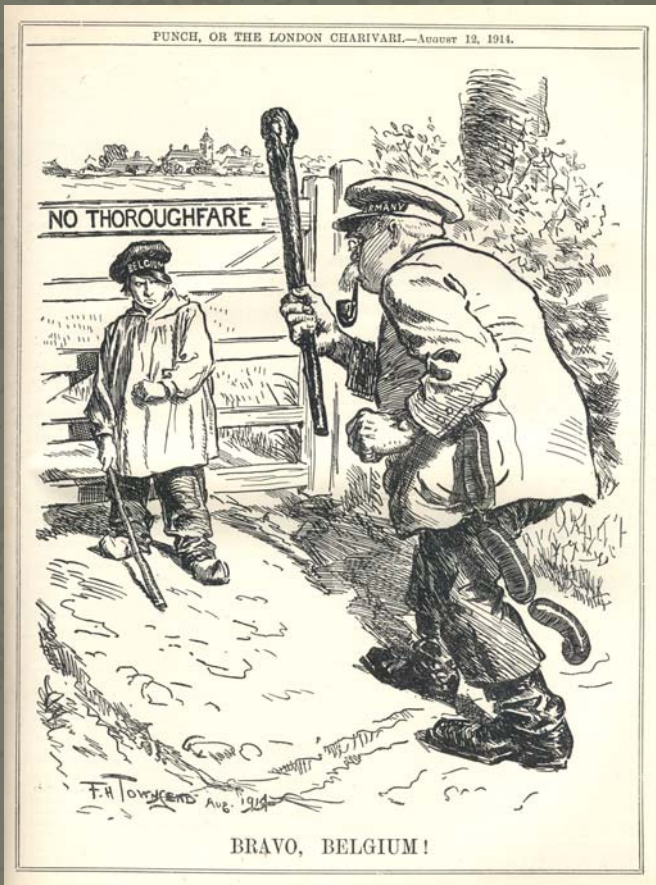
In 1971 it was decided to widen the scope of the collection and to include war poetry of all times. As well as poems from both World Wars, there is poetry from the American Civil War, Boer War, Spanish Civil War and the Vietnam War. An attempt has also been made to add poetry from the German side of the 1914-1918 war.

The War Poetry Collection can be accessed through 'Arts, Languages and Literature' in Central Library.

# Refugees from Belgium

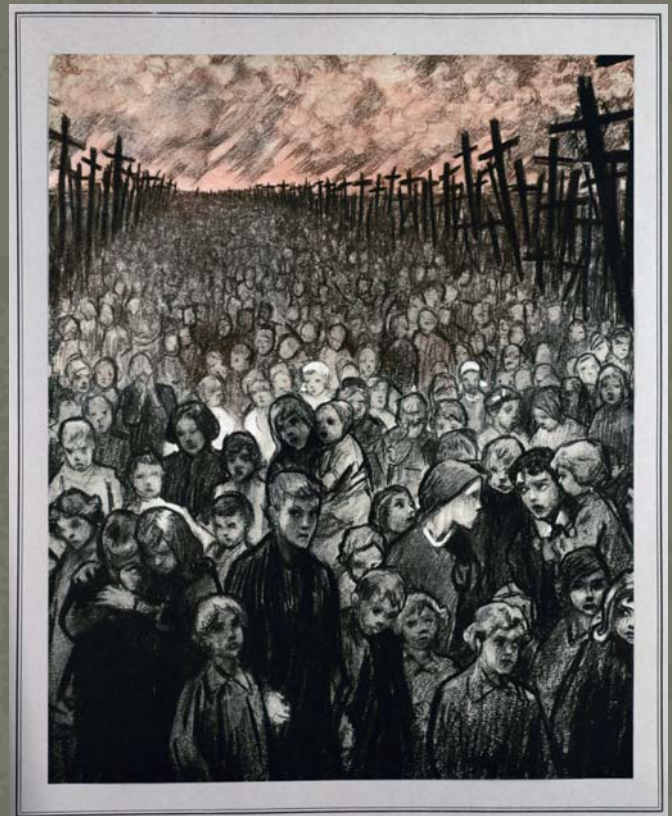
A treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium had been signed by Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia in 1831; and reconfirmed in 1872. On August 4th 1914 Germany invaded Belgium, the Chancellor saying to the Reichstag: 'We are now in a position of necessity: and necessity knows no law.' Britain declared war on Germany and its allies at the end of the day.

After King Albert of Belgium ordered the Belgians to defend their country, German soldiers received an order to shoot every male Belgian. The cartoon below shows a multitude of women lamenting their dead. The caption is a parody of the German national anthem; Deutschland, Deutschland ueber alles. Kreuzland means land of crosses.



Cartoon in Punch showing the German Kaiser Wilhelm attacking Belgium, 1914. [Q052]

The artist Louis Raemaekers lived in Haarlem, Holland, at the start of the war. His cartoons were first published in De Telegraaf of Amsterdam. The Germans put a high price on his head, so he moved to England and continued his work there.



'Kreuzland, Kreuzland ueber alles. Where are our fathers?' from The Great War, A Neutral's Indictment, Louis Raemaekers. [AF 940.49 RAE]

King Albert ordered Belgian troops to withdraw to Antwerp on the 16th August 1914. British troops were sent to help resist the German attack. The city was under heavy bombardment; it was evacuated on 7th October, and surrendered to the Germans on 10th October. Belgian refugees fled to Holland, a neutral country, and to Britain.

## BERTELS, G. (1915-16, y)

Aug. 1917 joined Belgian Army, Infantry Centre; Nov., Artillery Centre; Jan. to Sept. 1918 2/III 16 Artillery, 6<sup>th</sup> battery, at the front; Sept. 1918 to Jan. 1919 Centre Instruction Sous-Lieut., Auxillaire Artillerie.

G. Bertels, a Belgian refugee, became a pupil at King Edward's School Birmingham after the fall of Antwerp. This extract from the Service Record shows that he later joined the Belgian Army to fight for his country's freedom.

Service Record of King Edward's School, 1914-19 compiled by C. H. Heath. [L48.111]



'Our Lady of Antwerp', The Great War, A Neutral's Indictment, Louis Raemaekers. [AF 940.49 RAE]

# Belgium to Birmingham



Refugees in Belgium. *Why the Nations are at War - the Causes and Issues of the Great Conflict*, C. Morris & L.H. Dawson. [L07.3COM]

The first Belgian refugees arrived in Birmingham on 4th September 1914. A reception centre and office was opened on Broad Street. Many refugees had no money, and only the clothes they stood up in; appeals were made and the centre received continuous donations of food, furnishing, and clothes over the next few months. Some Belgians shared large houses which had been turned into hostels for the duration of the war, some were accommodated in private homes.

Leaflets were produced for the refugees in both of Belgium's languages, French and Flemish. This mentioned food - and drink, warning that beer in England had a higher alcohol content. A report from the centre explained the need for this: '...the Belgians are "treated" and become inebriated. It is desirable that everyone in Birmingham should recognise that the Belgians are used to drinking only a very light beer.'

When the refugees arrived they completed a form giving their name, age, home address and profession. English classes were set up in several places, including the university. Training was arranged for the men who wished to work in munitions factories. Some children were sent to Birmingham schools, but eventually a primary school was opened for Belgian refugee children on 14th February 1916. The school followed the Belgian syllabus, and parents could choose whether their children were taught in French or in Flemish.

There was a farewell party for the Belgians when the war was over, and they returned to Belgium in 1919. The programme of music and speeches was followed by dancing. The title of the verse on the programme, in French and Flemish, is 'Memories'. It says: 'Happy New Year to our dear friends from Belgium. At the time of your departure the City of Birmingham wishes you all the best for the future. The long years of exile and suffering are past. May the years to come be full of joy and happiness. Long live Belgium!'

## War Refugee Committee

President:  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM.



Ecole Belge, Birmingham, 1918.

The Belgian School, in a house in Old Square. War Refugee Committee. [LF21.86]

*Programme of Music*

★

MR. APPLEBY MATTHEW'S  
ORCHESTRA at 7 p.m.

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" - *Nicolai*

Variations Symphoniques - - *L. Bøllman*  
(for Violoncello and Orchestra) Soloist - - - - - *JOAN WILLIS*

"Bourrée and Gigue" - *Edward German*

"Carillons" - "Chantons Belges" - *Elgar*  
Poem by *EMIL CAMMAERTS*  
(to be recited by the Author)

*Speeches*

★

PRESENTATION OF BOUQUETS  
TO  
THE LADY MAYORESS  
and  
MRS. GEORGE CADBURY.

★

MRS. GEORGE CADBURY, O.B.E.  
(Chairman of the War Refugees Committee).

M. JULES FAGARD.

THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR  
(Ald. SIR DAVID BROOKS, G.B.E.).

PROF. LEO KRYN.

MRS. SHAKESPEARE.  
(Joint Hon. Sec. War Refugees Committee).

THE REV. ARNOLD PINCHARD  
(Vice-Chairman and Hon. Sec. War Refugees  
Committee).

★

GOD SAVE THE KING.

★

BELGIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM



**Belgian Farewell Fete**

★

The Birmingham War Refugees  
Committee.

★

<p><b>SOUVENIR</b></p> <p>Bonne année à nos chers amis Belges.</p> <p>Au moment de votre départ la ville de Birmingham vous adresse un salut cordial.</p> <p>Les longues années d'exil et de souffrance sont passées.</p> <p>Puisse les années à venir être pleines de joie et de félicité.</p>	<p><b>GEDENKEMS</b></p> <p>Gelukkig nieuwjaar aan onze dierbare Belgische vrienden.</p> <p>De stad Birmingham stuart u by uw naderend vertrek aan hartelyk vaarvel toe.</p> <p>Langs jaren van ballingschap en lyden zyn voorby.</p> <p>Moge de toekomst vol geluk en vreugde wezen.</p>
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*Vive la Belgique!*      *Leve België!*

City of  Birmingham

1919.

Birmingham Printers, Ltd., 41, Hill Street.

The end of the war. Three pages from the Belgian Farewell Fete programme. War Refugee Committee (Birmingham Branch) Miscellaneous leaflets. [LF21.86]