



The First World War in 100 Objects

By John Hughes-Wilson

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A powerful visual and narrative treatment of the "war to end all wars".

The First World War in 100 Objects draws on the most interesting 100 items that describe the causes, progress and outcome of the First World War. From weapons that created carnage to affectionate letters home, these 100 objects are as extraordinary in their diversity and storytelling power as they are devastating in their poignancy. This is the stuff of war at its most horrible.

Here are a few of these objects:

- military significance -- a Vickers machine gun
- iconic power -- John Singer Sargent's painting, *Gassed*
- personal sentiment -- a German button given to a British Tommy in the Christmas Truce of 1914
- political importance -- President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.

These and the other 96 objects are displayed in brief chapters describing the associated people and events and illustrated with full color. The book is carefully organized into distinctive periods of the war and includes these examples:

- Imperialism, Nationalism and the Road to War (pre-1914): King George's Imperial Crown; Prussian Pickelhaube helmet; map showing Europe's alliances and animosities
- The Shock of the New (1914): "Your Country Needs You" recruitment poster; German jackboots; "Ole Bill," a London double-decker bus used to ferry soldiers to Ypres
- Theaters of War (1915 to 1916): Australian Battalion flag; Lusitania survivor's camisole; airdrop message streamer
- Mud and Blood (1916 to 1917): Postcard from the Eastern Front; trench club; discipline and desertion charge sheet
- From Near-Defeat to Victory (1918): British Mark V tank; "Hang the Kaiser" election sign; Toby jug
- A New European Landscape (from 1919): Gun used by German prisoners to shoot seagulls; sketch of the Whitehall Cenotaph; the old Kaiser crown.

A History of the First World War in 100 Objects is a distinctive and original presentation of the military and human stories of this cataclysmic war that did indeed change the world.

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The First World War in 100 Objects By John Hughes-Wilson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

The Firefly publication stands out for the quality of its images and the depth of knowledge brought to the project by its creators; Colonel Hughes-Wilson is president of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides, and Steel is the Imperial War Museum's principal historian. (Henrietta Verma *Library Journal* 2015-05-15)

(This book) brings something fresh and innovative to the military history genre. It's a retelling of the Great War through objects now housed in London's Imperial War Museum. Moving chronologically, the authors expound on beautifully photographed objects with thorough narratives explaining the greater significance of the objects, as well as shorter pieces that provide intimate information about the object itself... The text packs in an impressive amount of detail... the explanations of facts and events are always clear.... This is a stunning read that is exciting in its depth, scope and personal feel. After seeing and reading about objects touched, used, cherished and hated by those who experienced the war, it will be impossible not to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the struggle that truly... still shapes the world in which we live.

(Publishers Weekly Web Exclusive 2014-08-08)

About the Author

Colonel John Hughes-Wilson, a highly respected First World War historian, is president of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides and a commentator on intelligence and military subjects. He has been a frequent broadcaster on BBC television and radio.

Nigel Steel has been the UK's Imperial War Museum's principal historian since 1999. He is also an honorary research fellow at the University of Birmingham's Centre for War Studies.

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Introduction

Without a doubt the First World War changed everything. The years 1914-18 stand as a Rubicon over which all those who were involved in the war, directly and indirectly, were forced to cross. What seemed a gilded way of life of the late Edwardian era, imbued with wealth and empire and majesty, was lost as irretrievably as if a giant pair of iron gates had slammed shut across it.

Moreover, the seeds of so much discontent were sown in the war's immediate aftermath that they bore poisoned fruit over succeeding decades. The disillusionment that set in during the late 1920s led to appeasement in the face of aggressive dictators in the 1930s, and to yet another world war in the 1940s as - in the view of many - the First World War's unfinished business exploded again. Later, Communist Russia, born in the chaos of 1917, provided one side in a Cold War that framed world events from the 1950s to the 1980s, and which saw proxy "hot" wars in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. In the 1990s and 2000s even renewed worries about Germany's power and the outbreak of Balkan violence returned, so familiar from 1914. In short, so much of what defines us and our world in the early 21st century can be traced back to "The Great War for Civilization".

The story of that war has been told many times, but this book offers a fresh approach. As its starting point it takes the material legacy of the war. Thousands of different objects and artefacts dating back to 1914-18

survive, ranging from the mundane to the extraordinary, from the terrifying to the humorous. Each has its own story to tell. Here, 100 of these micro-stories form a spine around which has been woven a comprehensive narrative relating what happened in the run up to the war, during the war itself and in its immediate aftermath.

As a result, this book offers a multi-track approach. For a straightforward, full narrative, readers can start at the beginning and move forward, following developments on a broadly chronological basis. They can trace events as they played out over several continents - events which led to the demise of our empires (German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman) and casualties in their millions, confirming that it was truly a war like no other ever experienced before.

Alternatively, readers can take a more thematic approach and, via the chapter headings and cross-references, pursue particular strands - for example, the Western Front year by year, or changes in the way of life for civilians back home; the arrival of aerial warfare, or the development of submarine warfare; the advent of poison gas and the tank, or the emergence of modern propaganda.

At the heart of the book lies the fundamental relationship between the "big picture" and the intimate insights offered by the 100 objects, the majority taken from the unparalleled collections of Britain's Imperial War Museum - an institution itself inaugurated in 1917 as a direct response to the war. Looking at history via objects is not a new idea. But rather than 100 purely generic or symbolic objects, those chosen here invariably have particular stories to tell - of their makers, of their user and of how they were discovered or preserved. By appreciating these dimensions, we are brought more starkly face to face with the human angle - the individuals connected with the objects. To really understand the First World War, it is as important to listen to the thoughts of an individual Tommy about his rations, or his wife's disgruntlement at food queues back home, as it is to grasp the grand strategy of battle or the horrifying statistics of casualties.

We live daily with the consequences of the First World War. Truly, it still shapes the world in which we live. Its bloody history sounds out as a warning to us all, and each one of these 100 objects echoes like a bell across the intervening passage of time.

John Hughes-Wilson Nigel Steel

Users Review

From reader reviews:

George Gomez:

Are you kind of active person, only have 10 or even 15 minute in your moment to upgrading your mind ability or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your short time to read it because pretty much everything time you only find reserve that need more time to be learn. The First World War in 100 Objects can be your answer because it can be read by anyone who have those short free time problems.

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