

# **SOUTH AFRICA**

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# **WORLD WAR ONE**

## **Education Learning Resource**

**Grade 8 and older**



### Did you know ...

World War 1 saw the start of the South African Air Force.  
The South African Air Corps was formed in 1913.

The pilots were being trained in Britain on the outbreak of war and served on the Western Front.

They served in German South-West Africa during 1915 as the South African Air Corps. In 1916, they became 26th Royal Flying Corps (South Africa) and served in East Africa. In East Africa, Dennis Cutler, a pilot in Durban, and his planes were used to track the German cruiser *SS Königsberg* which had sunk the first British merchant ship of the war.

Individuals served in units of the Royal Flying Corps in Europe. South Africa claimed various aces (shot down more than 5 enemy aircraft) but only one ace, William Faulds was born in South Africa.



William Frederick Faulds was born in Cradock and is the only South-African born soldier to be a recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 18 July 1916 at Delville Wood, France. William Faulds' Victoria Cross was stolen in October 1994 off a display in the National Museum of Military History, Johannesburg.



### Did you know ...

Over the course of World War 1, South Africa interned over 3,000 'enemy aliens', many in Fort Napier, Pietermaritzburg.

You can find out more online at [southafricaww1.com](http://southafricaww1.com)

### Acknowledgements

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**Did you know ...**

South Africa obtained its first motorised ambulance in 1916, in Pietermaritzburg.

The Government Veterinary Institute at Onderstepoort supported the war effort by inoculating thousands of horses for service in German South West Africa and East Africa.

One of South Africa's biggest military hospital during World War 1 was in Richmond Park, London. It was started in 1916 and became a pioneer in holistic treatment, rehabilitating men and training them in new skills to be able to work when they returned to South Africa. Within South Africa, there were various hospitals and convalescent homes for recuperating servicemen.

Plastic surgery made huge progress as a result of injuries caused during the war. South Africa's Jack Penn was to develop this further in World War 2 at Brenthurst Red Cross Military Hospital, Johannesburg.



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**Did you know ...**

One of the highlights for visiting troops was a ride on a rickshaw in Durban

A South African transporter with ox-drivers helped the two boats, HMS *Mimi* and *Toutou* get to Lake Tanganyika where, with the Belgians, obtained control of the lake from the Germans. The boats had travelled from England to Cape Town, then by rail to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and finally overland to the lake.

At the start of World War 1, the Royal Naval base at Simonstown was responsible for the safety of the sea between Saint Helena and Zanzibar. They had only 3 ships, all out of date.

2

**Did you know ...**

South Africa had to import all its military equipment at the start of the war. The Union never had weapon manufacturing on the scale Britain did.

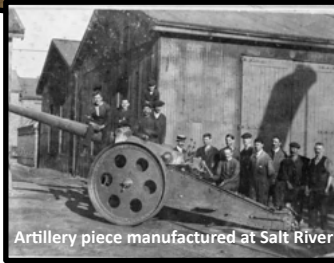
However, South African Railways and Harbours converted their workshop at Salt River to support the war effort making gun carriages etc.

The South African mining industry sent experts in dynamite manufacture to Britain who gave advice in mass production and in safe building design.

Bernard Oppenheimer, brother of Ernest Oppenheimer, started a cast munition factory near Brighton, England, which employed Belgian refugees.



Women munition workers sorting shells during the First World War.



Artillery piece manufactured at Salt River

**Grade 8 CAPS History Requirements (p40)**

Focus: Causes of World War I and aspects of people's experience at home and at war.

**Content and concepts**

- Reasons why World War I broke out, 3 hours
  - Overview of long-term causes: Nationalism, industrial economies, control of seas, colonisation and empires
  - Immediate cause: Assassination of Archduke of Austria at Sarajevo
  - Countries in Europe which fought: Allied Powers vs Central Powers
- Aspects of experiences in World War I, 5 hours
  - Conscription and propaganda in Britain
  - Conscientious objectors
  - Trench warfare on the Western Front
  - Music and poetry
  - World War I and South Africa
    - o Battle of Delville Wood 1916
    - o Sinking of the Mendi 1917
- Women in Britain during World War I, 3 hours
  - Changing roles of women in the workplace in Britain in World War I
  - Emily Pankhurst and the campaign for the vote for women in Britain
- The defeat of Germany and the Treaty of Versailles (to be picked up again in Grade 9), 1 hour

**National Curriculum Statement**

**Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa**

Specific aims and skills of History CAPS for the Intermediate and Senior Phases (2.4.3)

- Finding a variety of kinds of information about the past.
- Selecting relevant information.
- Deciding about whether information can be trusted.
- Seeing something that happened in the past from more than one point of view.
- Explaining why events in the past are often interpreted differently.
- Debating about what happened in the past on the basis of available evidence.
- Writing history in an organised way, with a logical line of argument.
- Understanding the importance of heritage and conservation.



## Introduction

This Learning Resource presents a global theme with a South African focus.

It has developed from the *Minorities and Internment in South Africa during the Great War 1914-1919* project (available as an education resource at [stobscamp.org.uk](http://stobscamp.org.uk)). It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by Aston University, Birmingham, UK. Partners include KwaZulu Natal Museum, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and academics from the Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch. The pack and accompanying Virtual Reality and Heritage trail app together with other information can be found online at [southafricaww1.com](http://southafricaww1.com).

Through the activities young people will gain an insight into aspects of the First World War at both global (empire) and national (South Africa) levels which continue to have relevance to the modern world. Although often regarded as an imperial war, something unconnected with Africa, the First World War of 1914-1918 was to have a major impact on the young Union of South Africa culturally, economically, and politically. Themes touched on in this Learning Resource may prove distressing for some pupils as they deal with discrimination, conflict and death.

Dr Anne Samson (Great War in Africa Association)

Prof Stefan Manz (Aston University, Birmingham UK)

Dumisani Jali (Education Officer, KwaZuluNatal Museums, Pietermaritzburg)

## How to use this resource

This learning resource builds on the Grade 8 CAPS requirements for the topic World War 1 (1914-1918). A quick glance at the requirements shows that their main focus is on Britain. With this pack we have broadened the coverage to be more South Africa specific. Although it is designed for use by pupils in Grade 8, it can be easily adapted for older or younger pupils.

The teaching materials explore a range of themes, including equality and diversity. Historically, different population groups and aspects (theatres) of war have been ignored in the South African World War 1 narrative. This teaching pack aims to show the breadth and diversity of the country's involvement.

A range of original sources of information has been selected to show how:

- prejudice manifested itself during the war years,
- despite different treatment of population groups, reasons for enlisting and experiences of the war were similar,
- war or conflict situations can impact on social and political developments.

In addition, some sources have been selected to stimulate and develop critical thinking skills, there being no right or wrong answer.

The aim is to give pupils an insight into people's responses to a particularly challenging historical situation. Comparative material from the media today can be included at the teacher's discretion to encourage pupils to explore how the media react to perceived threats today.

The appendix provides a list of further reading and links to support the project.

## Reasons Why World War 1 broke out

On 4 August 1914, Germany invaded Belgium and, as a consequence, Britain declared war on Germany. This meant that all the territories in their respective empires were also at war. This included South Africa which was a dominion (self-governing territory) of the British Empire.

The direct cause of the war was the domino effect of countries supporting each other after the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary by Serbian Nationalist Gavrilo Princip. Austria used the opportunity to suppress Serbian nationals, which saw Russia come to Serbia's assistance. France became involved in honour of its treaty with Russia while Germany in turn supported Austria. Britain hesitated about getting involved, but when Germany invaded neutral Belgium to enter France, Britain declared war on Germany.

While South Africa was automatically at war because Britain had declared war, the South African government could determine the extent to which the country became involved. On 7 August 1914, the Union government let Britain know that it would look after its own defence. This allowed the Imperial Garrison troops, stationed in the country after the 1899-1902 South African Anglo-Boer War, to return to Britain. In addition to putting the German wireless stations out of action in German South-West Africa (today's Namibia), South Africa would also look to occupy the territory.

The war provided an opportunity for countries to fulfil long-term ambitions concerning other territories and trade routes.

In 1901, Jan Smuts told his commando: 'The flag of the great Republic would yet float from the Equator to Simonsbay'.

In 1911, Louis Botha 'admitted to [David] Lloyd George [...] that in the event of a German war he intended to invade South-West Africa'.

In 1917, Smuts told the committee determining Britain's war demands, that he considered it 'very important to secure the elimination of Portugal from the southern part of her present East African territory,' because 'that territory had a seaboard of 2000 miles, a great part of which interfered directly with the natural development of the Union of South Africa and of Rhodesia.'



**Activity:** In small groups:

Using the map of the world on the next page, identify which countries South Africa wanted to include in the Union.

Discuss:

- Why do you think South Africa wanted these territories?
- How do you think Britain would react to a subordinate territory wanting to expand?

**Activity:** Discussion

South Africa never achieved its expansion aims, although it was handed substantial administrative ('mandate') power in South-West Africa after World War 1. The territory only became a fully independent country in 1990 as Namibia. Today, both South Africa and Namibia are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). For more on the SADC, see <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/>

- What are the benefits of South Africa being a member of SADC?
- If South Africa had achieved its expansion aims at the end of World War 1, do you think its benefits would be the same today?

**Activity:** Using your geography knowledge, can you name South Africa's neighbours and match their name to what it was in 1914-1918?

**1914/1918**

German South West Africa  
 Union of SA  
 Angola  
 Caprivi Zipfel/Strip  
 Bechuanaland  
 Southern Rhodesia  
 Portuguese East Africa  
 Nyasaland  
 Northern Rhodesia  
 German East Africa

**2020s**

Mozambique  
 Botswana  
 Namibia  
 Republic of SA Region  
 Zambezi  
 Tanzania  
 Angola  
 Zambia  
 Malawi  
 Zimbabwe

Jan Smuts claimed South Africa had to defeat the Germans in East Africa to protect South Africa's borders. Where do you think Jan Smuts saw South Africa's border being?





### Conscription, Propaganda & Conscientious Objectors

In August 1914, there was a rush by many in Britain and the colonies to enlist in the army. They expected that the war would be over by December. However, the war was to last another four years and an ever increasing number of men were required to join the army. Unlike other European countries, Britain did not have conscription at the start of the war, but relied on volunteers. When it became apparent that there were not enough volunteers, steps were taken to introduce conscription in stages. Because so many enlisted who were regarded as essential workers, such as miners and munition workers, some men were not allowed to enlist in the army. However, there were people who did not believe in fighting or armed conflict to resolve differences. They were known as conscientious objectors.

In South Africa, apart from a very short period in 1914 when the National Reserve was called up to deal with the Boer Rebellion against the government, there was no conscription. All South Africans who served in a military capacity outside of the country had to be volunteers according to the Defence Act of 1912. However, for some South Africans there was a fine line between enlisting voluntarily and being told to enlist. The rebellion was soon crushed but the Boers were allowed to keep their weapons after the rebellion because of the 'Black Fear'. The 'Black Fear', or 'Swart Gevaar', was the concern by white South Africans that if black men were allowed to own guns, they would use them against the whites. As a result, when black men were taken into service with the Union Defence Force, they were not allowed to be soldiers. Instead they served in a wide variety of labour roles.

In both Britain and South Africa propaganda was used to convince men to enlist. When the propaganda failed to attract the numbers of people required, conscription was introduced or considered. In South Africa employers made it easier for white men to enlist by protecting their jobs, while the mine owners arranged contracts that allowed their black staff to do war work whether they wanted to or not. In some areas pressure was put on chiefs to supply specific numbers of labourers for the army.

#### Activity: Class Discussion:

What would make you serve in the army?

If you were a chief tasked with supplying 100 men for work, how would you decide who goes and who stays?

Read the statement by Stimela Jason Jingoes on the next page. How do you think the appeal he refers to differs from the other forms of propaganda on the page?

#### Activity:

Pick two items on the following page and consider the following:

- Who is the target audience ?
- What message do you think is being conveyed?
- How successful do you think it was?
- Think of advertising today. How different is it to 100+ years ago?



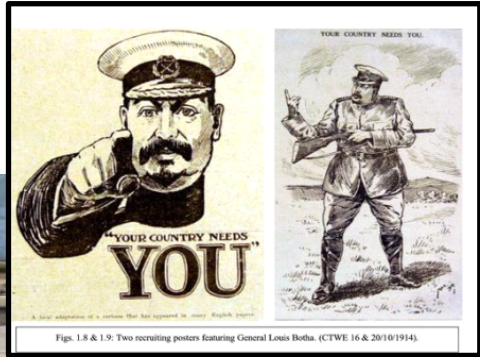
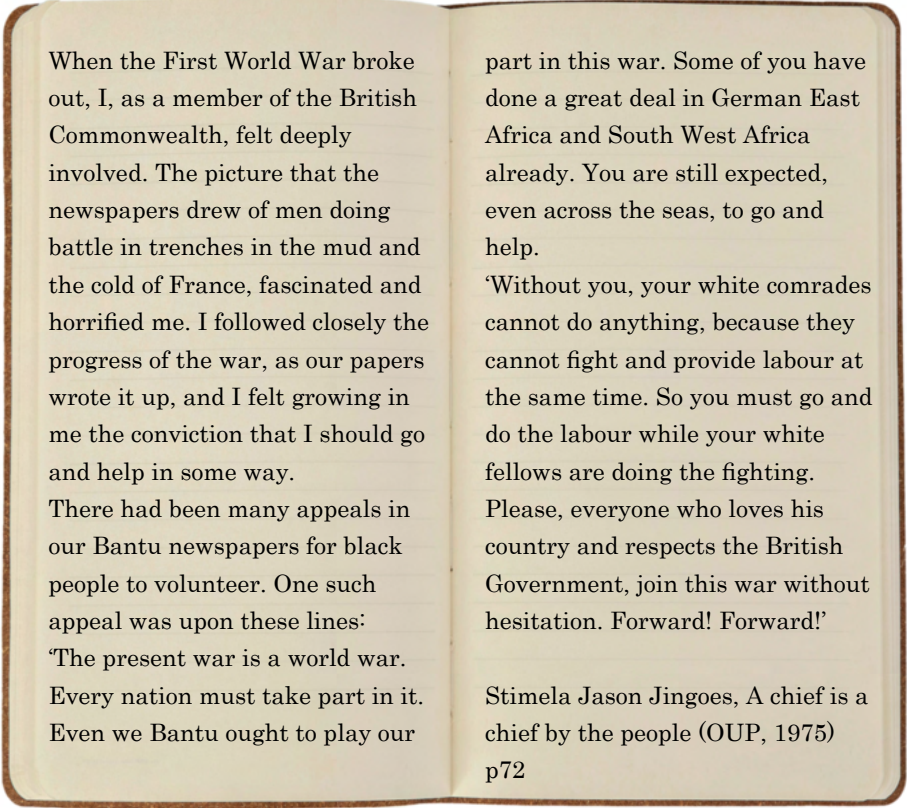


**Rand Daily Mail, 15 May 1917**  
**EAST RAND**  
**LEAVE FOR ACTIVE SERVICE**

The following special clause which was adopted by the Germiston Municipal Council, having been open for inspection for the period as required by the Ordinance, will be submitted for adoption at this evening's meeting of the Germiston Town Council. "During the period of the present war and for a period of six months thereafter special leave may be granted by the Council to employees proceeding on military service against the German Empire and its Allies for such periods and upon such terms and conditions as the Council may by resolution determine. The special clause shall be taken to be operative from the 5th day of August 1914."

**Activity:**  
 Divide the pupils into two groups:  
 Group 1 is to consider the benefits of conscription  
 Group 2 is to consider the disadvantages of conscription

During Apartheid after 1948, South Africa introduced conscription, but it did not feel the need to do so in either of the two World Wars.  
 Why do you think this was?



Figs. 1.8 & 1.9: Two recruiting posters featuring General Louis Botha. (CTWE 16 & 20/10/1914).

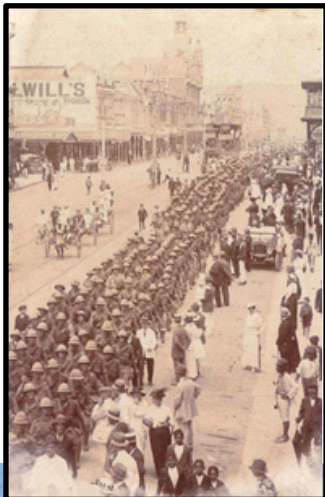
### Where South Africans served: Europe

The main theatre of war for Britain was in continental Europe, in Belgium and France, along what became known as the Western Front. While some South Africans paid their own passage to Britain to enlist in British regiments, others stayed behind to first fight in German South-West Africa and then enlisted for service in Europe or East Africa. In 1917, South Africans who were no longer needed in East Africa went to Palestine or the Middle East to fight.

The force which went to Europe was under the command of Henry Timson Lukin. Before they arrived on the Western Front, they first had to fight the Senusi in Egypt. After their success they arrived on the Western Front, soon after the Battle for the Somme began. They were assigned to Delville Wood where between 7 and 21 July 1916, the South Africans made a heroic stand, losing many men.

In 1927 South Africa arranged for a memorial to be erected at Delville Wood across the road from the cemetery. Today, the Delville Wood Memorial recognises all South Africans who participated in the various theatres of World War 1.

South Africans served in various theatres of war:



Embarking at Durban

Population / Gender Group	Number served	Number died	Comments
All groups	254,344	11,589	All theatres, forces (land, air, sea)
Black Males	82,769	1,729	Support roles including drivers for artillery, animal transport units, scouts and to fill local labour needs in GSWA, Europe, East Africa; includes men from Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland
Coloured Males	25,000	217	Support roles in GSWA, Europe, East Africa and
Indian Males	350	450	7,000 Cape Corps in East Africa and Palestine
White Males	145,897	17	Stretcher Bearers in East Africa
White Females	145,897	8,551	All theatres
	328	14	Nurses in GSWA, EA, Europe



### THE BATTLE OF DELVILLE WOOD 1916

See the KZN Museum panel for more information



**Activity:** Using the information above (and from elsewhere if you want), create a poster showing the diversity of South Africa's involvement in the First World War.

## Sinking of the *Mendi* and Other Deaths at Sea

Travelling to the conflict zones had its own perils. Some ships such as the *Galway Castle* were sunk by German torpedo en route. Others such as the SS *Mendi*, a troop carrier taking the South African Native Labour Corps, or SANLC, to the Western Front were accidentally rammed by their own side. Both ships were carrying large numbers of South Africans when they went down. The *Galway Castle*, which was sunk in September 1918, was mostly carrying white passengers while the SS *Mendi* had mostly black passengers. Both sinkings were covered extensively in the South African press, although the news of the SS *Mendi* was only reported a month after the incident on 19 February 1917. As a result of the loss of life on the SS *Mendi*, and a high number of deaths on the SS *Aragon* of men travelling back to the Union from East Africa, further recruitment for the Labour Corps was ended in 1917.

When the *Mendi* sank, over 630 lost their lives. When the *Galway Castle* was torpedoed, 150 lives were lost. Amongst those who survived the sinking of the *Galway Castle* were mining magnate Ernest Oppenheimer and South African Minister of Finance, Henry Burton. 316 SANLC are buried in France, mostly at Arques-La-Bataille British Cemetery. A total of 209 South African Labour Corps (mostly black with some white officers) are buried in Tanzania.

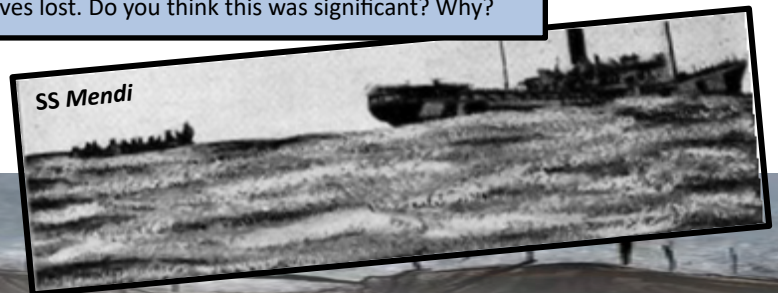
The first article on the sinking of the *Mendi* in the *Rand Daily Mail* was 10 March 1917

<p><b>SAILORS' DAY</b></p> <p><b>GENEROUS HELP EXPECTED TO-DAY</b></p> <p>The following procession which is to form the great attraction in today's afternoon for the children of the Strand men who have lost their lives at sea during the great war, will start this afternoon from the Watermen's ground at S.M. It will then proceed by way of Hancock Street, Levey Street, Waterman Street, into King George Street. The head of the procession will halt at Pretoria Bridge and be marshalled into line, and then proceed along the Yilliers Street, along Elsie Street, then round the south-west corner of the Cullinan Hotel, along Commissioner Street, Besser Street and Prinsloo Street. The head of the procession will halt at the junction of Elsie Street with Prinsloo Street for 10 minutes. It will then pass down Van Wallegh Street, Commissioner Street, Elsie Street, Prinsloo Street, Elsie Street, Pine Street, and finish at the Union Ground.</p> <p>The police wish all owners of motor cars and other vehicles to note that they should be ganged, and cabs, carts, etc. should be placed in side streets off the line of route of the procession. Any vehicle along the line of route might</p>	<p><b>SINKING OF A TRANSPORT</b></p> <p><b>OVER 600 DROWNED</b></p> <p><b>TEN WHITES ALSO PERISH</b></p> <p><b>A DISASTER IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL</b></p> <p>All South Africa will hear with the deepest regret the news that a transport carrying South African native labourers from England to France has been sunk in the English Channel with very considerable loss of life. General Buller's announcement below shows that the disaster was due to a collision in a fog and that ten Europeans and over six hundred natives were drowned. Efforts to transport thousands of natives labourers from this country across the sea has not been attended by the slightest mishap, and the present disaster was due in any way to the failure of the British Navy to protect the ships en-</p>
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### Activity: Discussion

When the SS *Mendi* sank, it took nearly a month before the news was reported in the papers? Why do you think this was?

Parliament heard of the incident the day after the sinking and stood for a moment's silence, the first and only time a white only government stood in remembrance of black lives lost. Do you think this was significant? Why?



*Imvo Zabantsundu* of 13 March 1917 has the first mentions of the *Mendi* sinking. The poor quality print below appeared on p4 and the one alongside on p6.

**Umkhosi Wabasebenzi Abantsundu.**  
**Ose France.**  
**Ukutshona Kwenqanawa.**  
**Kuqutywa Yenye.**  
**Ilahleko Enkulu Yobom.**  
**Ingxelo e Palamente.**  
 - Ngojwesi Hlanu oludlalileyo e Palamente, e Kapa. Ibandla litu-  
 swe ngu—  
**Jen. BOTHA** ngompanga obu-  
 hlungu wembubho ngenozisi yombuto Womkosi Wabasebenzi Abantsundu belilungu lase England elikhethwe ngo 21 February. Abantsundu beli-  
 lase Yerepu. Kusi-  
 ye Yerepu no 191 Abantsundu ye [kutshona] 9 kwinkosi zabantsundu. Kwabant-  
 abantsundu kuko no Capt. [let (ogqira)]. Kwabant-  
 ngu Capt. John W. Maclean, E. H. Richardson, Samuel Eng-  
 T. A. Ford, R. Knaggs, R. A. M. Tavish, C. H. Botha, T. K. Turner, A. Cockrell, A. B. Botes, wobu-  
 sqira.

**ISHOHELA SE MENDI.**  
 UYITSHONA kwenqanawa j Mendi kwelama Britani inama 6 5 abantsundu no 9 labambhlope binkhosi wabasebenzi yinto esho umzi wazinkamamunge. Kopolile ukula esihlwele sitsho ne ngenozisi yinkungu, enkam-  
 nenzawo yingazi efana nenozisi zonke. ebingalindelwe. Siya-  
 w ikungu umzi wo Mzantsi Afrika. Uzi upela use maxilweni oku-  
 ba amagama abenzakeliso eme-  
 ka papushwa ngamahe kwawa-  
 ba abhlope abambalwa ke bona.  
 Siyavelana kakulu babahleke-  
 lizana.

**Activity:** There are various memorials to the men who lost their lives on the *SS Mendi*, but nothing to those who drowned when the *Galway Castle* was sunk. Why do you think that is?  
 Why do you think *Imvo Zabantsundu* published the news in both Xhosa and English?  
 We don't know how many people from South Africa were lost at sea during the war because many who served in the Royal Navy or Mercantile Marine did not specify they were South African. At Delville Wood there is a tomb for the 'unknown soldier'.

**Activity:** Design a memorial to the 'unknown person' lost at sea.



Above: photo of Reverend Isaac Wauchope and his family. Isaac was drowned when the *SS Mendi* sank.  
 Right: The *SS Mendi* memorial in Cape Town.

## Where South Africans Served: German South-West Africa

The outbreak of the Boer rebellion split the attack on German South-West Africa. After the rebellion was suppressed in December 1914, the South African Union Defence Force continued its attack on the Germans in South-West Africa, today's Namibia. The Germans surrendered on 9 July 1915 in what was heralded as the 'First Allied Victory' of the war. In fact it was the second of the war. The first allied victory, fought by British and French forces, was against Togoland on 24 August 1915. Unlike the South African and German forces which served in South West Africa, the forces in Togoland were mainly black with white officers.



The following article is one of the pieces under the heading 'Intlekele ye Mfazwe' or 'The Tragedy of the War' in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 20 July 1915.

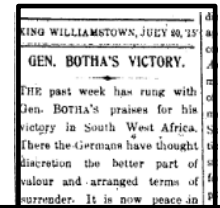
*ingxelo yase Pretoria iti u General Botha uwamkele amalamani ekuzenkeleni kwawo qemikhosi yawanonke e GSWA. imfazwe upelile kweli ilizwe. imikhosi vonke izakubusiselwa omakava ngapapalle kwahambalwa bokugema elozwe nabatinjwa.*  
Report from Pretoria. General Botha welcomes Germans to the founding of the GSWA civil society. The war has ended in this country. All ceremonies will be held at the pavilion by the papal pilgrimage.

From a European perspective, the South African service on the Western Front dominates. However, South Africa's first and main campaign was that against neighbouring German South West Africa. The decision to launch the campaign was significant because it resulted in the Boer Rebellion when a group of Boers who opposed being controlled by Britain took up arms against the government. Parliament had to agree to South Africans serving outside the borders of the Union which later allowed them to serve in Europe, East Africa, Palestine and elsewhere.

The campaign in German South West Africa and the rebellion allowed the new Union Defence Force (UDF) a chance to organise itself. The UDF had only been formed in 1912, bringing together the armed forces of the four colonies which had united in 1910 to form the Union. Expansion was rapid and the chaos of these early months is evidenced in the poor records kept, especially of the labour units.

The South African forces suffered a major defeat on 26 September 1914 at Sandfontein where white soldiers and black guides, scouts, and labourers (horse grooms and drivers) were taken prisoner by the Germans.

It is said that in this campaign, of the six months in the field, only 26 days were spent fighting. The rest was taken up with moving food, water and military equipment across the desert to keep the forces alive.

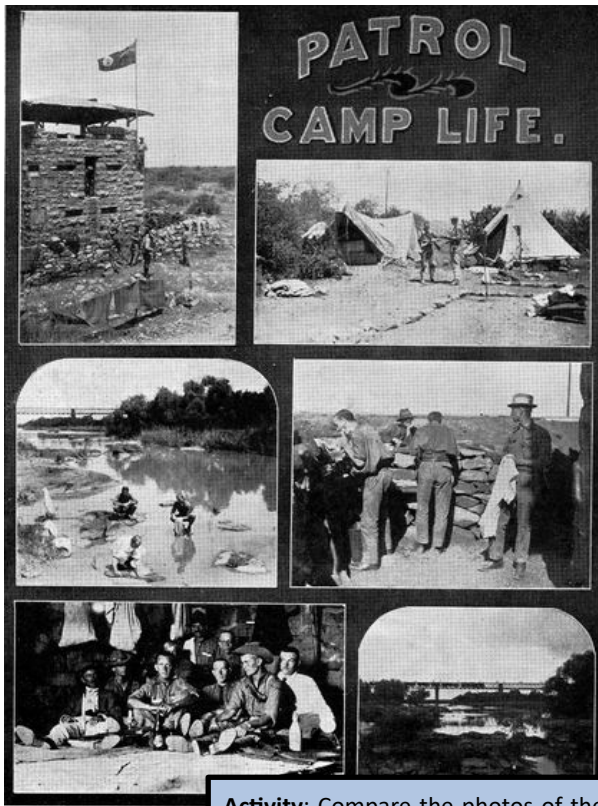


King Williamstown, July 20, 1915  
GEN. BOTHA'S VICTORY

The past week has rung with Gen. Botha's victory in South West Africa. There the Germans have thought discretion the better part of valour. It is now peace in that distracted corner of Africa, and we are thankful. [...]

This is the most gratifying feature of the South African's campaign in respect of its two chapters, viz. that of the quelling of the BEYERS DE WET Rebellion, and now of the war with the Germans in South West. For this he [Louis Botha] is being acclaimed a great general as well as a great statesman throughout the world. He well deserves all that is being said of him, and now that he has done this much for South Africa, it is hoped he will feel free to address himself to the equally great task of hastening much longed-for peace in the storm centre of Europe.



**Activity:**

In groups of about 5 pupils, consider yourself part of the newspaper editorial team. You are replying to an irate reader who has recently discovered there was no reporting of the Togoland victory. You are to write a response.

- 1 Why did you overlook the Allied victory in Togoland?
- 2 Why promote South Africa's victory over South-West Africa as the first Allied victory?

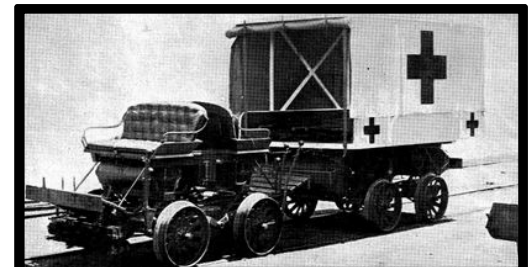
A major feature of the GSWA campaign was railway building. Here a group of men, including black labourers, are working at night. Construction had to be rapid to enable the soldiers to cover vast water-less distances quickly. Very few photos of the time show the diversity of South African men at work.



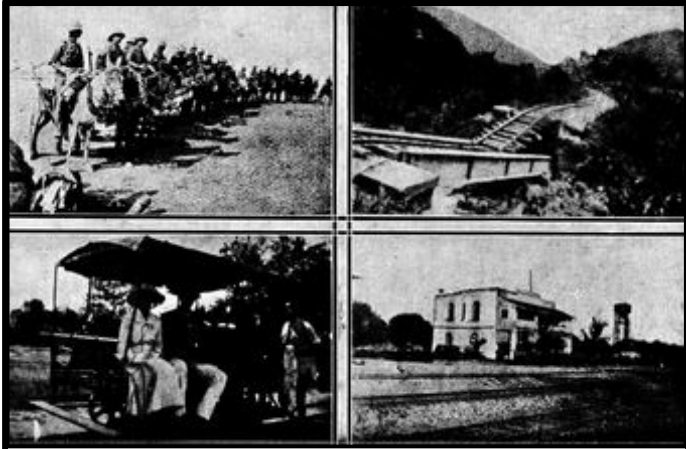
**Activity:** Compare the photos of the Western Front with these of German South West Africa. If you were a soldier, which theatre would you prefer? Why? Write a letter home or to a friend telling them about your life in the army – what you like and don't like and the challenges.

Many men writing home did not write about the horror of war because they did not want to upset those at home. Look back at your letter, would you change it to keep people from worrying about you?

Censors also impacted on what went into letters. No military secrets such as place names and dates could appear as this information could help the enemy if they got the letter. Look at your letter again, is there anything a censor might cut out?



Motor trolley ambulance used in the GSWA campaign. There were very few motorised vehicles in Africa at the time. Most wounded and ill were carried on a stretcher or wagon pulled by oxen or horses, or had to walk to the nearest military medical centre. Pietermaritzburg got its first motorised ambulance in 1918.



The campaign in East Africa was very different to that in Europe. There were no major battles, but rather skirmishes. As a result, photographs tend to be of people, buildings and scenery the soldiers encountered. There were no war photographers as there were in Europe to record the destruction or after battle scenes.



This hospital in Nairobi, British East Africa (Kenya) was specially built for South Africans serving in German East Africa during the war from 1916-1917. It was known as 1 South African Stationary Hospital. The doctors were from the South African Medical Corps and the nurses from the South African Military Nursing Corps and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

The nature of the war in German East Africa meant that most people were admitted to hospital with diseases such as malaria, dysentery and typhoid. Very few casualties (10%) were the result of actual fighting.

### Where South Africans served: German East Africa and Palestine

The war in East Africa began in August 1914. In 1915, some South Africans were sent to support the forces in Nyasaland (Malawi) in their defence against the Germans in East Africa. However, it was only after the campaign in German South West Africa was over that a large South African force was sent to British East Africa (Kenya). It was commanded by South Africa's Jan Smuts and then, from May 1917 to 25 November 1918, by another South African, Jacobus (Jaap) van Deventer. The force was paid for by Britain but was regarded as South African. White and Coloured South Africans served as soldiers, black and coloured South Africans served in various labour capacities, and the Indian community supplied a Stretcher Bearer Corps.

By the end of 1916, the German force under Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck had been pushed to the south of the colony. Smuts believed the war was nearly over and said so when he left in January 1917. However, the campaign was far from over and lasted another 18 months. Because of Smuts' statement, equipment and personnel were withdrawn from the theatre of war. Troops were withdrawn including the Cape (Coloured) Corps. To finish the war, the British forces recruited and trained new units of the King's African Rifles, which meant that the new commander, Jaap van Deventer led a force of mainly black armed soldiers.

The Cape Corps was sent to Palestine, where they served with distinction at the battle for Square Hill. There are very few photographs or even accounts of the South Africans serving in Palestine. The Cape Corps was also to serve in Egypt and was the last South African unit to be returned home at the end of the war.

While in Europe, the battle of Delville Wood saw many South Africans lose their life, in East Africa it was the battle of Salaita Hill in February 1916, and in Palestine it was the battle for Square Hill in September 1918.



## Where South Africans served: Home Front

**Activity:** Class discussion

Some historians talk about the East Africa campaign of World War One being the 'Forgotten Front'.

From what you have seen in this book, do you agree with them? Why or why not?

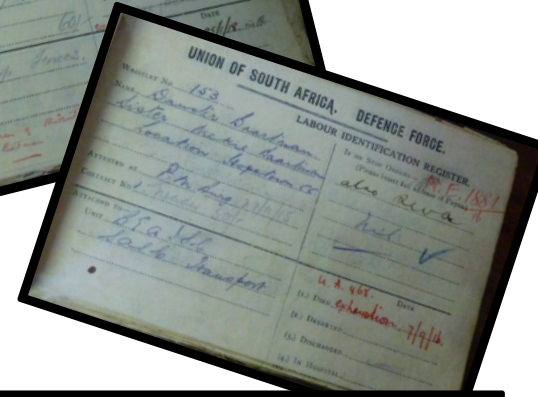
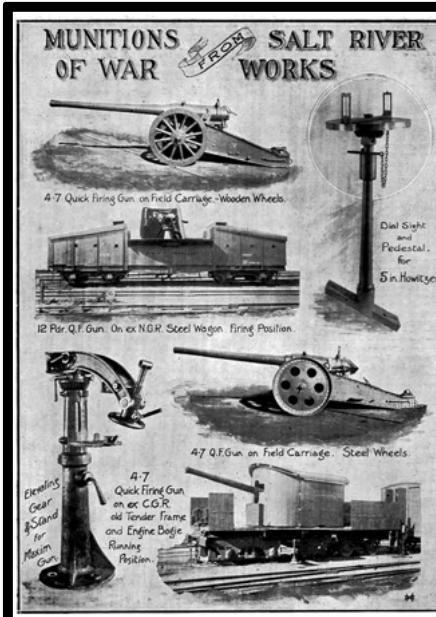
Investigation activity:

Ask ten people of different ages, genders and population groups what they know of World War 1. Make a note of their answers.

Which theatre of war do you think is the most 'forgotten' or ignored?

What do you think should/can be done about it?

Write a group letter to your local newspaper.

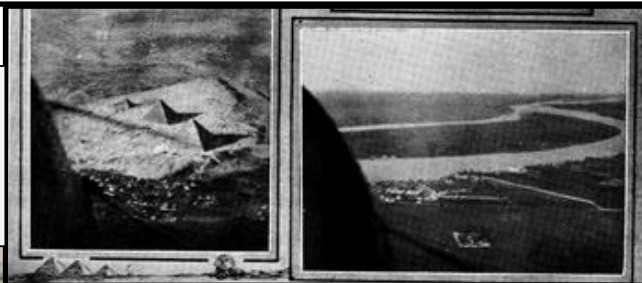


A PICTURE FROM PALESTINE : TURKISH ANIMAL TRANSPORT ON THE MOVE.



On the Western Front, it was easy for soldiers to write home, paper and pens or pencils being available in canteens and clubs. This was not the case in East Africa. As a result, the men improvised, some making Christmas cards out of pieces of uniform they could no longer wear.

Photos of Egypt by a South African airman. Photos of the land helped locate enemy troops and enabled officers to plan attacks better. The First World War was the first war where aerial photography was used.



### Women During World War 1: Changing Roles

The Home Front, both in Britain and South Africa, played an important role in keeping the fighting theatres operational. Industry was adapted to manufacture war material such as at the railways workshop at Salt River, Cape Town. The war provided an opportunity for South Africa to become more independent because imported supplies were restricted. This gave women an opportunity they had not previously had.

The war was to see a transformation in the role of women, particularly in Britain where they started to do work generally regarded as men's work. Their fashions also changed with skirts becoming shorter and trousers or long pants becoming acceptable. Although there was a similar move in South Africa, it was not to the same extent as there was a large untapped labour force, the black population, who were preferred because they could be paid less than white women. No photographs of South African women in pants have been found for the war years 1914-1918.



Planting and looking after gum trees at Empangeni, KZN. Once planted along the railway line, the trees would help protect the sugarcane plantations from catching fire when trains passed. This work had previously been done by men.



Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Hospice,  
Durban

**Activity:** Using the information on these four pages (14-17), and your own knowledge (other research), prepare a 5 minute presentation on the diversity of involvement in the First World War.

Investigation activity: Not all population groups are mentioned. Which groups are missing? Why do you think this is? What do you think the women of these groups were doing during the war? You might have to do some wider research to answer these questions. Some of the resources mentioned on the inside back cover will be of use.



Braamfontein Ladies' (Soldiers' Comforts) Committee, 1914



### Lady Railway Clerks at Bloemfontein.

The accompanying text reads:

One of the indirect results of the war has been the introduction of lady railway clerks, in South Africa as well as overseas, and at Bloemfontein all the departments – with the exception of Stores – have a certain number of feminine clerical assistants. One wonders what will be the eventual outcome of this flooding of the railway world with the opposite sex; but the thought at present that lies uppermost among those here who have the best interest of the Empire at heart is that, in looking at the photograph, they are reminded that for every two lady clerks shown, one, and in some cases, two, able-bodied and willing volunteers have been released for service either overseas or in East Africa.



### Women During World War 1: The Vote

While British women used their support of the war to push for getting the vote, the Suffragettes and Suffragists used the opportunity to show they were responsible citizens and deserved to have a say in how the country was run. This was similar to the approach taken by the South African National Native Congress (now the ANC). The SANNC leadership believed that if black people showed their loyalty to Britain, unlike the rebellious Boers, they would be given the vote. Women in Britain who were over the age of 30 were given the vote in 1918, white women in South Africa were given the vote in 1932 while black men and women were allowed to vote for the first time in 1994.

While women such as Millicent Fawcett, Emily Hobhouse, Fanny Parker and others are remembered for their activism in helping women get the vote, the women in South Africa have generally been glossed over. Here are some who were active during the 1914-1918 war years. Millicent Fawcett and Emily Hobhouse had been in South Africa during the 1899-1902 South African Anglo-Boer war campaigning for better conditions in the camps where the Boers were interned.



Dame **Millicent Garrett Fawcett** GBE (nee Garrett) (11 June 1847 – 5 August 1929) was an English politician, writer and feminist. From 1897-1919 she led Britain's largest women's rights association, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).

This statue of her was unveiled on Britain's Parliament Square in 2018. South Africa's Jan Smuts and Nelson Mandela also have statues on the Square.

### Women in Britain



**Emily Hobhouse** (9 April 1860 – 8 June 1926) was a welfare campaigner, anti-war activist. Her ashes are scattered in Bloemfontein.



**Frances Mary "Fanny" Parker** OBE (24 December 1875 – 19 January 1924) was a suffragette who became prominent in Scotland and was repeatedly imprisoned for her actions. She was the niece of Lord Kitchener who had led the British forces in the 1899-1902 war in South Africa. Lord Kitchener is the man in the poster – Your Country Needs You.



**Olive Schreiner** (24 March 1855 – 11 December 1920) was a South African author, anti-war campaigner and intellectual. She advocated for the rights of all South African groups excluded from power.

## Women in South Africa



**Mary Fitzgerald (Pickhandle Mary)** (4 August 1883 – 26 September 1960) was an Irish-born South African political activist. She is considered to have been the first female trade unionist in the country and stood for local election in 1915.



**Charlotte Makgomo (née Manny) Maxeke** (7 April 1871 – 16 October 1939) was a religious leader, social and political activist. She was the first black woman to graduate with a university degree in South Africa and was to lead a protest against women carrying passes from 1913-1918. She is the founder of the Bantu Women's League which is today the ANC Women's League.

**Louisa Mvemve**, born Port Alfred region at the end of the 19th century. She was a healer, midwife, herbalist and innovator of cures. She was a successful businesswoman, packaging and selling her own herbal medicines. Her extensive correspondence with colonial authorities shows her important role in raising the profile of indigenous medicine. Her activities span the period from 1914 to the 1930s. Unfortunately, there is no photograph of Mvemve.

### The Defeat of Germany and the Treaty of Versailles

The war came to an end in Europe on 11 November 1918 when the armistice was agreed. The fighting in Africa only ended on 25 November 1918 with the Germans laying down of arms in East Africa.

The end of the war brought an expectation of better things to come. At the time, it was regarded as the war to end all wars.

**Activity:** Discussion – why do you think people thought World War One was the war to end all wars? Were they right? Were they wrong?

### Mandates and League of Nations

From January 1919, the leaders of the countries which had fought in the war all met at the Palace of Versailles in France to discuss the peace terms.

One of these was the Mandate system which allocated all Germany's colonies to other countries for a period of time. In this way, South Africa came to control South-West Africa (Namibia) until 1990. After the Second World War (1939-1945) the League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations Organisation with the same aim to maintain international peace.

The Mandate territories were overseen by the League of Nations which was formed to help keep international peace. South Africa's Jan Smuts wrote the pre-ambule (introduction) to the League of Nations and the United Nations, and was also instrumental in designing the Mandate System.

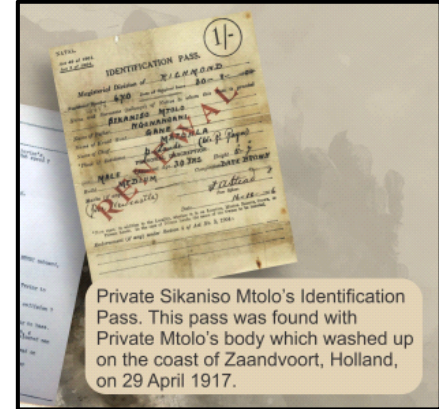
**Activity:** Do you think the mandate system (giving territory to other countries) was the right way to punish Germany at the end of the war? In your group, prepare a news report explaining your views. Present this to the rest of the class.



## Rights of Small Nations: Rise of Nationalism

The President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, had announced that the war was fought to preserve the rights of small nations. This statement was to echo with South Africa which was still part of the British Empire. It encouraged groups within South Africa to send delegations to Europe: the Nationalists wanted independence from Britain while the SANNC (later ANC) wanted a political voice and a say in how Black people were treated. Neither group succeeded because they were not elected representatives of South Africa. The result was the rise of nationalist movements in South Africa but also in other countries, such as those in Eastern Europe who wanted their independence.

Many groups and individuals struggled for recognition because of discrimination. This was one of the causes on nationalism. In 1961, the National Party was to achieve its aim of independence from Britain when the Republic of South Africa came into being, while it took until 1994 for all peoples in South Africa to have their political voice recognised when the ANC under Nelson Mandela gained power.



**Activity:** Discussion topic: What kinds of discrimination are there?

Using the images on this page, and in this book, why do you think people were discriminated against?

What are the consequences of people or groups being discriminated against?

How can we prevent future discrimination?

**Activity:** It is most often the soldiers or fighting men who are remembered and discussed when war is a topic. Similarly a lot of attention is given to those who died or were killed in service of their country.

However, a lot of other people were involved in keeping the soldiers on the front line. In your group, using the information in this book and your own knowledge, compile a list of all the jobs you can think of which enabled the soldiers to fight.

Which job or role do you think was most important? Why? Rank the others in order of importance.

Stimela Jason Jingoos (see quote p7) says "Without you, your white comrades cannot do anything, because they cannot fight and provide labour at the same time. So you must go and do the labour while your white fellows are doing the fighting."

Of the list of jobs you made, which do you think were for specific population groups? Why do you think this was? Consider the order you ranked the roles in earlier. What conclusions can you come to?

How do your findings compare with what history tells us about the war?

Compile a list of guidelines for future historians to help them maintain a better balance in remembering the war and to avoid discriminating against specific groups.

## Remembrance

While the war is remembered in many ways by some people, a large number especially in Africa do not see the war as relevant to their lives because it took place under the colonial period. Despite these views, it is important to remember the war, not only because of the sacrifice of many, but because it helps us to understand the world we live in today.

At 11 a.m. on 11 November 1919, the first Remembrance services were held across what was to become the Commonwealth of Nations and other countries which had participated in the war. As part of the service, a two-minute silence was held. This way of remembering had been suggested by South African Percy Fitzpatrick to King George V who declared it a good idea. Today, this silence is used in many places to remember those who have died. The idea is that one can remember anything without being judged.

## WHY DO WE REMEMBER THEM?

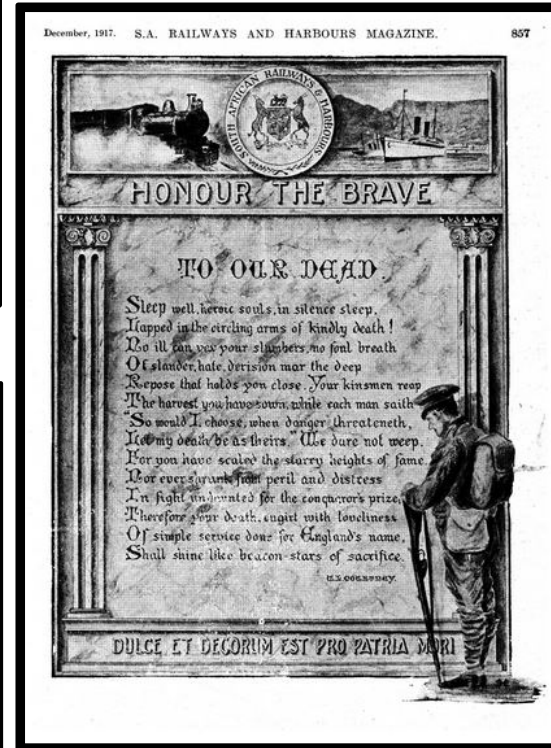
Those who had died were not just names on memorial plaques gathering dust – they were fathers, husbands, lovers, sons, uncles, friends and brothers. The tragedy of such loss can echo through a family for generations.

When the armistice finally came at 11 o'clock on 11 November 1918, the guns fell silent. Every year, on Remembrance Day, the Sunday closest to 11th November, people wear poppies and stop for a moment of reflection to remember those who died in the war. Poppies grew on the barren fields of World War I and today paper poppies are sold for charity and worn by millions of people in honour of those who died. Poppies are normally worn during the 11 days leading up to Remembrance Day on the left side, close to the heart.



## THE SQUARE ON THE CORNER OF CHURCH & CHIEF ALBERT LUTHULI STREETS


The square commemorates a number of military campaigns. The War Memorial Arch commemorates those who fell in WWI and WWII. The Arch was dedicated in 1922 and again in 1947.







In 2022, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) received approval to have a new memorial erected in Cape Town for men whose names had not been recorded on a war memorial, their names having been 'lost' nearly 100 years ago, but recently found in an archive. The winning design is included below.

**Activity:** Consider the new design alongside the traditional CWGC memorials and the main South African memorials. How would your design look? Design a war memorial either as a drawing or a small model. Who would you remember on it?





### NATAL CARBINEERS

The Natal Carbineers is one of the oldest Regiments in KZN and campaigned during WW1 in South West Africa (SWA). It is still an active regiment and at the headquarters in Coenro Struys in Pietermaritzburg there are a number of historical items and information on display.



Amongst the interesting memorabilia are the Gibson Field Guns captured in SWA by South African forces in 1915. These German guns were captured during the Battle of Glanzen.







### FORT NAPIER



Fort Napier was established on the 31st August 1863 to house the British garrison in Natal after the area was annexed by Britain and became the Colony of Natal. The fort was an extremely important base for the British during the Anglo Zulu War of 1879 and during the two Anglo Boer Wars.


Among the old site plans still surviving in the complex are a basic water tower, a recreation hall and a second and even garrison officers' mess. Security considerations and concerns for the privacy of the patients mean that Fort Napier is not generally open to the public.

The treatment of internees in the camp was, relatively speaking, the anomaly of the war very compatible to mental health. A range of activities helped the internees cope with the situation they experienced.

In the 1920s the fort became known as the Fort Napier "Psychiatric Hospital". Today it continues to serve the same function under a new name, Fort Napier Hospital.





Above: proposed memorial for Cape Town Company Gardens (Dean Jay Architects)  
 Right: CWGC Cemetery Maitland, Cape  
 Below left: Delville Wood, France  
 Below right: Union Buildings, Pretoria



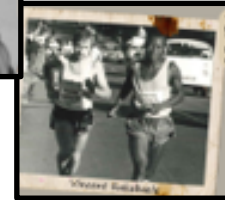
### Legacy in Britain and South Africa

Apart from memorials, the war is remembered in different ways. Poetry remains very popular, especially by British poets who served on the Western Front. These include Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves amongst others. South Africa also had its poets, and a few authors have written novels about the war.

The South African Comrades Marathon was started in remembrance of friends Vic Clapham had lost in the East Africa campaign. See the outside back cover for other forms of remembrance.



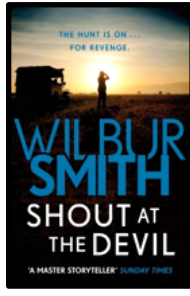
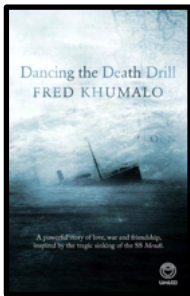
**COMRADES MARATHON**



**Activity:** Group discussion:

One hundred years have passed since the end of the First World War. Is it right that we should still remember the event? Why?

Write a short poem, story, or using some other form of expression, convey your thoughts about remembering the First World War.



### South African authors on World War 1

**Samuel Edward Krune Loliwe Mqhayi** (1 December 1875 – July 1925) Between 1914 and 1918, Mqhayi was teaching at Mpongo school.

Recruitment poem by Mqhayi: A Call to Arms (1916)

### Veterans' organisations



**M.O.T.H = Men of the Old Tin Hats**

Hambani ke, bafondini, niy' eFransi!  
Nikhumbul' indlala eniyishiy' emakhaya.  
Izihendo zOngendawo ze nizoyise,  
Kuba nilapho npe lesizwe sikaNtu.  
Hambani, mathol' eemaz' ezimabele made;  
Hambani, kuba le not thina sesiyibonile.  
UThixo wakowethu seleyijikele ngaphambili.  
Hambani ngemilenz' engenamkhinkqi;  
Hambani ngeentlizi' ezingenadyudu;  
Ngomzimb' okhaphu-khaphu, ngomzimb'  
ongenantaka,  
Nithi gxanya, gxanya, gzanya!  
Nthi ngxi-ngxi, ngxi-ngxi!  
Nithi ngxi-ngxi-ngxi-ngxilili!

So go then, fellows, to France!  
Remove the hunger you leave behind,  
Resist the temptations of Satan the Shiftless:  
You're there today as an offering,  
We've made you the blacks' oblation.  
Go, calves of long-uddered cows;  
Go, calves of cows lean from sharing;  
Go, for we've long seen this coming.  
God is already in front.  
Go with legs free of trembling;  
Go with hearts free of thumping;  
With bodies lithe, with bodies firm,  
Left, right, left right!  
Halt! Halt!  
Halt! And stop there!

**Activity:**

Study the images and newspaper articles in this booklet, then design a poster to recruitment for service in one of the theatres of war, or on the Home Front.

Or if you feel 'rebellious', you could design one calling a section of the population to rebel or to stop the war, join the conscientious objectors, etc.

**Further Information, Images and Sources**

southafricaww1.com

**Literature**

Albert Grundlingh, *Fighting their own war: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Raven, 1987)

Albert Grundlingh, *War and Society: Participation and Remembrance* (Sun Press, 2014)

Bill Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War 1914-1918* (Penguin, 2007)

Bill Nasson, *WW1 and the People of South Africa* (Tafelberg, 2014)

*Official History – The Union of South Africa: The Great War 1914-1918* (IWM, reprint)

Anne Samson, *Britain, South Africa and the East Africa Campaign 1914-1918: The Union Comes of Age* (IB Tauris, 2005, GWAA reprint 2020)

**The sites below contain additional articles and sources**

Great War in Africa Association – <https://gweaa.com>

Scientia Militaria - <https://scientiamilitaria.journals.ac.za/pub>

South African Military History Society – <https://samilitaryhistory.org>

**Follow up activity:**

- Do your own research on one of the themes addressed in the book. What new information have you discovered which is not commonly known? Share it on one of the online forums.
- Find out whether one of your ancestors was involved in the war and investigate their experience. How does this add to your knowledge of World War One?
- On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. When the war started, there was some speculation that this could become another world war. With what you know about World War One, why do you think there was fear of the Russian invasion of Ukraine becoming a world war? Are there lessons we can learn to help prevent future wars?
- There are a number of long-running conflicts in Africa – Mali (2012), Sudan (2013), Democratic Republic of Congo (2013) and Mozambique (2017). How do these conflicts differ from the World Wars and the Russia/Ukraine war? What role has the South African military played in these conflicts? Why do you think this is?
- The League of Nations and the United Nations Organisation, along with the Hague Conventions, aimed to prevent war or to reduce its impact. The numerous conflicts since World War 1 have shown that continued peace is almost impossible. Why do you think people feel they have to fight or bully others? How do you think we can overcome this in future?

# SOUTH AFRICA WORLD WAR ONE

This education resource is available online  
at:  
[southafricaww1.com](http://southafricaww1.com)

