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13/03/2012

## World War One 1914-1918 Digitising pictures, letters and memories for the 100th anniversary - Crowds flock to 'biggest ever' WW1 roadshow



**WW1 memorabilia from Prisoner of War sketches, to locks of hair and photographs of families and soldiers were revealed at the most successful roadshow event ever to get people to share their memories on the web.**

More than 200 people poured into the Museum of Lancashire in Preston at the weekend to have their loved-one's precious items digitised for the virtual archive [www.europeana1914-1918.eu/](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/)

Queuing began an hour before doors opened on Saturday (10.03.12) – and the crowds continued to stream in until they closed nine hours later. Many people had travelled from as far afield as Leeds, Manchester, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Warrington just to be there.

More than 2,300 images were taken of a wide variety of items, including: letters, diaries, medals, birth and death certificates, nurses' autograph books, cartoons, pictures and trench art – everyday objects made from anything the soldiers found, such as shell casings and spent ammunition.

The Preston roadshow is the latest in a series that is being rolled-out across 10 countries in Europe this year to create a unique pan-European account of WW1 that is available to everyone.

Europeana 1914-1918 brings together a partnership of libraries, museums, academic and cultural institutions, which in the UK includes the British Library, Oxford University, JISC and Lancashire County Council.

Jon Purday, senior communications advisor at Europeana1914-1918, the organisation behind the project, said: "The Preston event has been our best so far - we've never had so many people through the doors. It just goes to show the extraordinary level of interest in WW1 and how much importance people attach to having their personal histories recorded in time for the 100th anniversary of the war.

"We had 111 contributors arriving with family and friends, so we had about 220 people eager to share their loved-ones' memories."

Thomas Langdale, who brought in a German school exercise book filled with diary entries and sketches by Prisoners of War from England, Australia, Canada and France, said: "Without events like these, we will lose the thoughts and feelings of our ancestors who went through so much.

"Now those memories can be saved for future generations, which will hopefully help us understand the sacrifices that were made in the war," added Mr Langdale, of Darwen, near Blackburn.

Alun Edwards, project manager at Oxford University, which has been involved in running 17 roadshows across Europe, said: "These events are a fantastic way of engaging people with history through the internet.

"At Preston we had one woman who brought in a notebook relating to her grandfather, which included a lock of hair from her mother as a little girl in 1918. Her grandfather had kept this link

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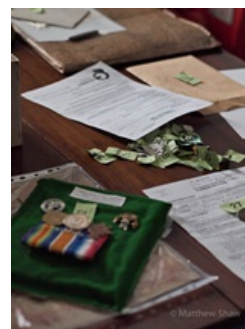
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to his daughter during his time away from the family. While this was not a unique story from the war, the artefact had been saved and it was memorable to those of us who were given the opportunity to photograph it.”

Stephen Bull, curator of military history and archaeology at the Museum of Lancashire, said: “Many of the items people brought with them have never been seen outside the family until now – yet they add valuable new information about what life was like for soldiers in the trenches and for those left behind on the home front.”

The WW1 roadshow, which began in Germany last year, has already visited Luxembourg and is en route to Dublin on March 21, followed by Slovenia, Denmark and Banbury, Oxfordshire, in the coming weeks.

Anyone who can't make the events, but would like to add their WW1 memories, can do so by uploading their images via the website [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu)

## Notes to Editors:

For further information or photographs from the Preston roadshow, please contact:

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Europeana is Europe's digital library, archive and museum. It launched its 1914-1918 family history project in Germany in 2011 to collect memorabilia and family stories from combat and the home front. Nine family history roadshows were held in major cities across the country and 25,000 digital images were recorded in Germany alone. The project is being rolled out across 10 countries in Europe to create a unique pan-European virtual archive of WW1. [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu)

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Oxford University began the initiative when it ran a pilot project in Britain in 2008 to bring family letters, photographs and keepsakes from the war to be digitised. The success of the idea - which became the Great War Archive - encouraged Europeana 1914-1918 to take the scheme to Germany in 2011, and across Luxembourg, the UK, Ireland, Slovenia, Denmark and Belgium in 2012. Oxford University continues to lead the project in terms of digital training and cataloguing expertise during roadshow events across Europe. <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa>

The British Library is a lead player in a sister project, Europeana Collections 1914-1918 – a three year programme to digitise more than 400,000 items from national libraries in eight countries across Europe that found themselves on different sides of the conflict. The Library's curatorial and cataloguing staff worked alongside Oxford University colleagues in Preston. <http://www.europeana-collections-1914-1918.eu/>

The Museum of Lancashire, which boasts a WW1 trench and a treasure trove of military history memorabilia, was reopened in November, last year, following a £1.7m refurbishment. Admission is free for the first 12 months.

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/acs/sites/museums/venues/mol/index.asp?siteid=3860&pageid=16500&e=e>

JISC inspires UK colleges and universities in the innovative use of digital technologies, helping to maintain the UK's position as a global leader in education. JISC's work for the commemoration is focused on giving students, teachers and researchers in higher and further education access to a wealth of unique and authoritative digital resources that can be used and re-used to inspire research and teaching. This event will potentially unlock resources of huge educational potential which have previously been kept in the nation's attics and drawers, so that we can increase our insight around the war and its legacy. <http://jiscww1.jiscinvolve.org/wp/>

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