

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

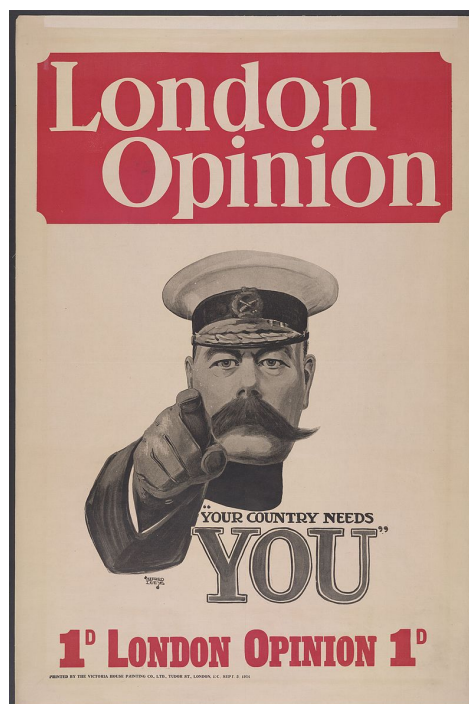
The First World War, which is sometimes called 'The Great War' or World War One, started in Europe in the summer of 1914 and ended on 11th November 1918.

More than 70 million soldiers, sailors and airmen were involved. It is still the largest war in history. Millions of people were killed - soldiers and ordinary people.

How the war started is a complicated story but one of the important events was the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand who was heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His wife Sophie was also killed in the attack. This sad event set in motion a whole series of political decisions that led Britain, France and Russia to declare war on Germany and its allies.

The war, which lasted four years, three months and fourteen days broke nearly a whole century of peace in Europe.

British soldiers and sailors were at first a volunteer force. A campaign to encourage people to join up started in August 1914. Over two and a half million answered the call by Lord Kitchener, 'Your Country Needs You!'



In 1916 a law was passed to make sure that all eligible men would join the army or navy. This applied to all men aged 18-41 (this was extended to men aged up to 51 in 1918).

On the 11th November 1918, Germany agreed to end the war on land, sea and air. This was called 'the Armistice' and this is why every year on that day, we have Remembrance Day and remember those who fought and died. The First World War was described at the time as "The War to End All Wars." Sadly this was not to be – the Second World War started only 21 years after the Armistice.