

# Autumn 2014 Directive

## Part 1: The First World War

***2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War and as we get closer to Remembrance Day, the War is being featured strongly in the media. This Directive is about how the War is remembered and what impression it has left on your life.***

To start your Directive, please jot down ten separate words or phrases that conjure up the First World War for you.

Please start each part of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number, sex, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember *not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply. It is best to use initials instead of real names.*

### Remembering

Do stories about the First World War feature in your family? If so, who tells them? Are these of the Home Front or/and the battlefield? Could you describe some of these for us?

Does your family have any mementos or souvenirs of the First World War? What are these? Where are they kept? Are they important to your family?

Do you, or does your family, observe Remembrance Day? Please tell us about how you do this. Do you associate Remembrance Day with the First World War or with other wars?

Are there any gaps between your family's memories from the First World War and what's covered in the media or featured in commemorative activity?

### Traces of the First World War

Have you ever visited any of the First World War battlefields? If so, were there any aspects of the visit that especially affected you? Why did you go on this sort of trip and how was it organised?

Have you visited any memorial sites or museums in Britain connected with the First World War, for example, the Imperial War Museum, the National Memorial Arboretum, local and community memorials and museums? Or have you visited places with surviving features from the First World War, such as archaeological sites, including airfields, training camps, military installations, in the UK? Please tell us about your experiences.

Have you come across any other traces of the First World War that we have not mentioned in the Directive? We welcome any accounts about this.

Are you aware of any stories that seem uncomfortable today or which people you know are reluctant to talk about or remember?

## Media

What new stories about the First World War have you discovered through the media this year? Are you aware of any topics that are not covered?

Have you seen any of the films or television programmes that focus on the First World War (both documentary and fictional)? Examples could include *Black Adder Goes Forth*, *Birdsong*, *The Village*, (TV) and *Regeneration* (film).

If so, what areas of the war do you think these focus on? Do you think the way that the War is represented in the media reflects your feelings about it?

## Books and Poetry

Autobiographical books, novels and particularly poetry, have been key ways that the First World War has been remembered and represented in British culture. For example, autobiographies include Vera Brittan's *Testament of Youth* and Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man*. Well known novels include Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy and Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong*. Well known poets include Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden.

Have you read any of these, or any other sources we haven't mentioned here? Did you read them for pleasure, or as part of your education? What impression of the War did reading them give you?

## The Battle of Fromelles

The Battle of Fromelles was a Western Front battle of 1916 in which approximately 1,500 British soldiers and just over 5,500 Australian soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. In 2007, mass graves of British and Australian soldiers were identified near the battle site. Some of the bodies found in these graves have been exhumed, identified through DNA testing and subsequently buried in a new Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. The cemetery is the first CWGC to be built in 50 years, and was officially dedicated by HRH Prince Charles in July 2010.

Did you have any awareness of the Battle of Fromelles before reading this Directive? Do you remember the ceremony? If so, please could you tell us what you recollect about it?

The majority of the dead who have been identified at Fromelles are Australian, and there have been debates in Australia about how much money should be spent on identifying the human remains found at Fromelles. Is it important that the dead should be identified when possible, or has too much time passed now that this is unimportant?

## Task. Day Diary - Remembrance Sunday 2014

If you can, please keep a diary on Remembrance Sunday. Write about what you do, who you meet and talk to, where you go and what you see. Also, where possible, include observations of those wearing poppies, is this the majority of people or just a few or minority? As always, we are interested in your thoughts and opinions on this day.

## Part 2: Working families

***Today, more women who are mothers are in paid work than ever before and many women now occupy positions that were once exclusively held by men.***

***We would like to know about how this subject has affected you, as well as your reflections on the benefits and the challenges of working mothers on families and society as a whole. As ever, your commentaries, stories and illustrations will form an important resource for those researching this area.***

Please start part 2 of your directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your MO number and a brief biography.

Remember *not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply. It is best to use initials instead of real names.*

***There is a section in this Directive aimed at those of you who have had children. If you do not have children and wish to comment on this section, please do so.***

### Progress...?

***The situation for women in employment has improved, but hasn't improved rapidly enough.***  
Please share your thoughts about this statement.

### Your memories of growing up

No matter what age you are now, please think back to when you were growing up. Who were the main domestic carers, and income earners in your household? Was everyone content in their role? When you were younger, did you do anything to contribute to the running of your household (either domestically or financially)?

Regardless of whether your mother was in paid employment or not, please say what sort of impact (both positive and negative) her role had on you and your family. We welcome any memories about other families you knew while you were growing up.

### If you have children

We would like to hear your experiences of being a guardian.

Do you, or did you, work outside the home while your children were young? Please describe the circumstances around this, and how you felt about it.

How easy was it to find paid work that offered the kind of flexibility that you needed for the family? What was helpful and what was unhelpful? Did you make compromises in the kind of work that you could do, or where you could do it?

If you have/had a partner, in what ways did they support you? In what ways didn't they? What are/were their feelings about your work?

How have/did you manage the duties involved in caring for children, organising childcare and household chores (shopping, cooking, cleaning etc)?

Do you feel the way you run your home has been influenced by the way you grew up? If so how? What other factors have contributed?

### **Grandparents**

Do you have any grandchildren? Are you involved in their child care? Please share any thoughts about how they are cared for.

### **For everyone**

Do you help care for a child who's parents work? E.g.: babysitting; child-minding, work in a nursery. Please tell us about this.

Many jobs require more than the standard 9-5 working hours. Have you ever worked longer hours than 9-5? Do you know someone who works/worked long hours? What do you see as the beneficial impacts on family life, and the drawbacks of working like this?

Is there an 'ideal' family unit? What does it look like?

Is there an 'ideal' way for fathers and mothers to work outside the home when children are young? What is it like? Does it change as they get older?

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Please post your response to: **Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP** Or by email to: [moa@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:moa@sussex.ac.uk)  
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