MEN, MASCULINITY & WAR

Upton Abbey: An Improvised Comedy of English Manors

Researched by,

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INTRODUCTION (OR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR)

Many Americans may not even consider World War I to be a brutal war in terms of severity. However, for the European nations, this war was truly fought in their homes, on their land, turning the places that were their homes into brutal, muddy wastelands. Considering all casualties combined from all countries, 37.5 million men died in the Great War. That is 2% of the world population at the time.

THE SECOND BOER WAR (OR, “THE WHITE MAN’S WAR”)

The Boers were Dutch farmers who settled in South Africa in the late 17th century who had formed a civilization alongside the Afrikaners in the country. Later on, the Boers formed their own individual colony in the Orange Free State which, along with the rest of the South African colony, went to the British Empire in the early 19th century. The Boers, in the late 19th century, discovered a massive stockpile of gold and diamonds in their land which, naturally, the British wanted to get their hands on. The Boer refused and stood their ground, presenting the British with an ultimatum.

The War Itself

- October 11th, 1899
  - Rejection of the Transvaal ultimatum, which had three specific demands
    - All disputes between Boers and British settled
    - British Troops withdraw from borders
    - No further ships sent to South Africa
  - The official beginning of the war
- Major use of concentration camps by the British Empire
  - Civilians of all kinds detained
  - 27 thousand civilians died in detention
- Scorched earth policy left the land a wasteland
- Called the “white man’s war”
- Brutal periods of war lasting over long periods
  - Battle names to know: Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso
  - These battles were part of Britain’s Black Week
  - Exhausting guerilla warfare
  - The Boers would move to assault, Britain would respond
- Casualties
  - 25,000 Afrikaners
○ 22,000 British
○ 12,000 Africans

_The Post-Victorian Generation_

- The sentiment of Victorian men was to hold a “healthy mind and a strong moral character” (Bannerman, 23)
- Men shifted into a highly imperial mentality during this era
- Culture supported the ideal of imperialist men
- The Boer War put this to the test
  - Honorableness failed to work
  - Major defeats in December of 1899 downplayed by press
- Maintaining honor in victory or defeat
- The image of “the soldier” was used as a critical image in advertising
- The men were the pride and joy of the country, regardless of whether or not they were victorious

**THE GREAT WAR**

**THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF THE WAR (OR, FROM ARDENNES TO ZEEBRUGGE)**

_Recruitment_

- Army recruitment begins within the week the war begins (August 3rd - 7th, 1914)
  - Lines outside of recruitment offices were out of control
  - Mounted police sent in to control crowds of volunteers
- Early recruitment was incredibly loose and “off the books”
  - Many people with poor eyesight sent in
  - Neurological disorders went undetected
  - Underage applicants completely passed by, some as young as fifteen
- 500,000 men enlisted in the first six weeks
- First battles of the war were within days of recruitment
- Military Service Act of 1916
  - Made it so that only men 18 to 41 could be drafted
  - Re-examination of men previously deemed unfit
  - New amendment passed during the Ludendorff Offensive that made it 17 to 51
Life as a Soldier

- British officers could go on leave every three months
- Two weeks at a time on the front, then returned back to HQ
- All soldiers had jobs beyond fighting in the trench
  - Officers mostly had to do paperwork and planning
- Communal baths
- Allied forces referred to the meat they were served as “monkey” because of how horrible it tasted
  - Still found ways to get decent food from home
  - Spent wages off of the trench buying wine and beer
  - Lots of pipes and cigarettes on the front
- Letters home were a therapeutic release
  - Two billion letters and one hundred and four (million?) parcels
- Lots of card games played, most popular was ‘Crown and Anchor’
  - Soldiers would even box, race horses or play football
  - The British Tank Corps held tank races
- British army known to get souvenirs from the front
  - Most prized was a spiked German helmet, until they stopped wearing them in 1916
  - Shell fragments and other scrap metal served that purpose
- Trench art became commonplace
- Soldiers participating in sex with women in brothels

THE FIFTH ARMY (OR, WHERE WERE OUR BOYS?)

Britain’s Fifth Army started as Britain’s Reserve Army. They changed into the Fifth Army on the October 30th, 1916, and then divided their forces and joined parts of the Fourth Army in April of 1918. They were lead by Lieutenant General Hubert Gough. Under his leadership, the Fifth Army defended Flanders on the border of France and Germany. The following is a list of battles and engagements that the Fifth Army and/or their Corps are involved in, from 1916-1918.\(^1\) These dates and battle names come from E.A. James’ “A Record of the Battles and Engagements of the British

\(^1\) The Cavalries include the following: 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The Battalions include the following: 14th, 18th, 58th, 9th, 16th, 21st, 39th, 20th, 30th, 61st, 8th, 24th, 50th and 60th.
Armies in France and Flanders, 1914-1918.”

1916

- Battle of the Somme (July 1st - November 18th)
  - Battle of Albert (July 1st - July 13th)
  - Battle of Bazentin (July 14th - July 17th)
  - Battle of Pozieres (July 23rd - September 3rd)
  - Battle of Flers-Courcelette (September 15th - September 22nd)
    ■ The first use of tanks by British army
  - Battle of Thiepval (September 26th - September 28th)
  - Battle of Le Transloy (October 1st - October 18th)
  - Battle of Anire Heights (October 1st - November 11th)

1917

- Hindenburg Advance
  - Massive German defensive line that extended from Arras to Laffaux
  - Germans were defending the line, but were pushed back by Allies
  - The Allies advanced from January 11th to March 13th, with minor skirmishes throughout this time (see Figure I)
- Germany’s retreat to the Hindenburg Line (March 14th - April 5th)
- Advancement to Arras (April 11th - June 16th)
- Battles of Ypres
  - Battle of Pilckem (July 31st - August 2nd)
  - Capture of Westhook (August 10th)
  - Battle of Langemarck (August 16th - August 18th)
  - Battle of the Menin Road (September 20th - September 25th)
  - Battle of Polygon Wood (September 26th - October 3rd)
  - Battle of Broodseinde (October 4th)
  - Battle of Poelcappelle (October 9th)
  - First Battle of Passchendaele (October 12th)
  - Second Battle of Passchendaele (October 26th - November 10th)

1918

- Offensive in Picardy (March 21st - April 5th)
- First Battles of the Somme (March 21st - April 5th)\(^2\)
  - Battle of St. Quentin (March 21st - March 23rd)
  - Actions at the Somme Crossing (March 24th - March 25th)
  - First Battle of Bapaume (March 24 - March 25th)

\(^2\) The Ludendorff Offensive begins here and last until mid-July.
Battle of Rosieres (March 26th - March 27th)
- Battle of the Aure (April 4th)
  - Here is the first battle where the Fifth Army separated into multiple different factions.
- Actions of Villers Bretonneux (April 24th - April 25th)
- Offensive in Flanders (April 9th - April 29th)
  - Battle of the Lys (main battle)
- Offensive in Champagne (May 27th - June 6th)
  - Battle of the Aisne (main battle)
- Counter-Attack in Champagne (July 20th - August 2nd)
  - Second Battle of the Marne
- Battle of Amiens (August 8th - August 11th)
- THE FIFTH ARMY REFORMS (August 18th)
- Advance in Flanders (August 18th - September 6th)
- Battle of Epely (September 18th)
- Battle of St. Quentin Canal (September 29th - October 2nd)
- Battle of Cambrai (October 8th - October 9th)
- The Pursuit to the Selle (October 9th - October 12th)
- Final Advance to Artois (October 2 - November 11th)
  - This was the major move in Flanders, with the soldiers of the Fifth Army specifically covering that part of the Western front
- The Armistice
  - The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month (November 11th, 1918)

ESPIONAGE (OR, SECRET AGENT MEN)

Espionage existed for a very long time before World War I, but technical advancements reached an advanced peak during the Great War. Things such as hidden messages, hidden codes and special photographic advancements all began during this war. However, many things were still rudimentary, so many spies were still at risk at all times, making it more critical. There are two main kinds of espionage: network and aerial.

Network Espionage
- Hidden messages inside of objects began
  - Bread, books, briefcases
- Most common spys were found in the trenches

3 The official end of the Ludendorff Offensive where the Allies pushed back.
Information would be gathered about enemy troop movements, enemy trench locations, battle plans, etc.

Trench spy information was temporary
- By the time the information reached command, things had started to change

Networks amongst civilians allowed for information in advance
- Entering enemy territory that was the enemy’s own country was near impossible
- Entering enemy territory that was in a country that the enemy had occupied was much more realistic and feasible
- Occupied areas of France and Belgium and the civilians inside set up a spy network
  - Over 6,500 civilians

Many spies went over enemy lines to set up networks and gather information
- The UK had almost 200,000 missing persons by the end of the war

Aerial Photography
- Front information still needed to be gathered
- Planes would be sent over the battlefields along the front and take hundreds of photos (see Figure II)
  - In the last year of the war, millions of photos were taken
- Royal Air Force engineers would prepare topographical information about the land before the trenches
- Mosaics were made, compiling many photos into one large image (see Figure III)
  - Military strategists would analyze the mosaics alongside Royal Air Force engineering statistics and compile information about what the enemy was doing and what they would do, then report it back to the army on the front

1918 (OR, THE LAST ACT)

The war had been going on forty-one months when 1918 started. At the time, neither side knew that in just over eleven months, it would be over. However, the past three and a half years of war had exhausted all sources and both sides were ready for things to be over
- The Spring Offensive (a.k.a. The Ludendorff Offensive)
  - Began on March 21st with Germany advancing into France
  - Advanced through the Ardens Forest
This advance brought them within forty odd miles of Paris
- Ended on July 15th
- Americans troops were arriving at the rate of three hundred thousand a month
- Immediately following the Offensive was the Second Battle of the Marne
  - Lasted from July 15th to August 5th
  - Ninety five thousand died from France, one hundred and sixty eight thousand from Germany, thirteen thousand from Britain and twelve thousand from the US
- The Hundred Day Offensive was the final move in the war; accomplished by the Allies
  - Decided to take advantage of the scrambling of the Germans after the Second Battle of the Marne
  - Starting in September, the US sent an army of one to two million new soldiers to cut off the Germans, beginning the offensive
  - Ended on November 11th, 1918, with the Armistice
- The War ended a few months later but 11 November was Germany’s official surrender

**CASUALTIES**
- 65 million men were sent into the war from the countries involved
- 57.5% of those men died; 37.5 million men
  - 76.3% of Russian forces died; 9.2 million
  - 35.8% of British forces died; 3.2 million
  - 73.3% of French forces died; 6.2 million
  - 64.9% of German forces died; 7.1 million
  - 90% of Austria-Hungarian forces died; 7 million
- In comparison to World War II
  - 6.8 million died per year in World War II, with more countries involved over a longer period of time
  - 7.5 million men died per year in World War I, with less countries involved in a shorter period of time
    - Denser casualties, in more gruesome conditions

**VIDEOS**
The Final Scene of “All Quiet on the Western Front”

IMAGES (OR, LOOK!)

Figure I

[Map of the Western Front with a focus on the Hindenberg Line]

This is a general map of the Western front, with particular focus on the Hindenberg Line, which was Germany’s key defense during the 1917 chapter of World War I. It was taken by the Allies and led to a brief period of time where Allies thought they might have a chance toward victory.
Here is an operator actually using an aerial camera inside of a plane. These were used to gather photographs of the battlefield and help the Allies figure out how to strategize their next move.
An example of the photographs in use, with engineers compiling large composite maps made of dozens of photographs and examining the terrain captured on the film.
REFERENCES (OR, WHERE I GOT IT ALL)