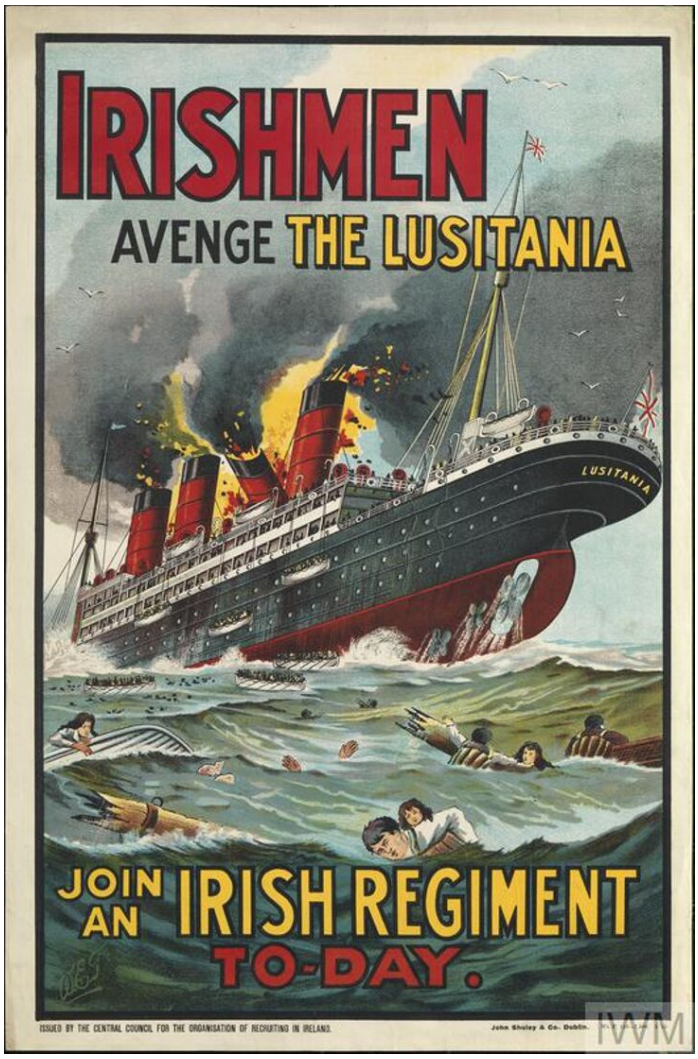
Document Report
‘Irishmen Avenge The Lusitania’ Poster



The following document report examines a poster that played a significant role in World War One propaganda against Germany. Entitled ‘Irishmen Avenge The Lusitania’, it was issued by the Central Council For The Organisation Of Recruiting in Ireland and printed by John Shuley & Company in Dublin during May of 1915, very quickly after the attack and sinking of R.M.S. Lusitania on the 7th of May 1915. The artist’s signature on the poster is W.E.T.; however, this is undefined. The image is a lithograph and measures 763mm by 502mm.[1]

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[1] Imperial War Museum, *Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania* (2024) <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/37105> [accessed 9th April 2024]

The poster displays the tragedy of R.M.S. Lusitania, a British ocean liner that became a casualty of a German torpedo on the 7th of May 1915. It had sailed from New York for Liverpool, England, on the 1st of May; on the afternoon of the 7th, a German torpedo hit and subsequently exploded in the middle of the ship, followed by a more detrimental explosion likely due to the damage inflicted on the steam engines and pipes. It only took eighteen minutes for the ship to sink; out of the 1,962 passengers, crew, and three stowaways on board, 1,198 lost their lives. Out of the 124 children on board, 94 lost their lives; this included 31 out of the 35 infants.[2]

The casualties included 128 Americans; as the news of the tragedy spread, so did the anger and disgust. The sinking garnered extensive coverage in the United States of America as an attack on innocent civilians, which led to an escalation in pro-British and anti-German sentiment.[3] The American population had been conflicted over the question of their involvement in the war; a great deal of Americans did not see why they should involve themselves in something they believed was a European quarrel. American President Woodrow Wilson had proclaimed neutrality on the 4th of August 1914; Wilson and other prominent Americans endeavoured to assist in peace negotiations to terminate the conflict in Europe. However, the murder of Americans on passenger and merchant ships by the Germans was mounting. It became the chief reason behind Woodrow Wilson's decision to enter into World War One.[4] However, it would be two years after the sinking of the Lusitania that the United States would declare war on Germany and her allied countries.

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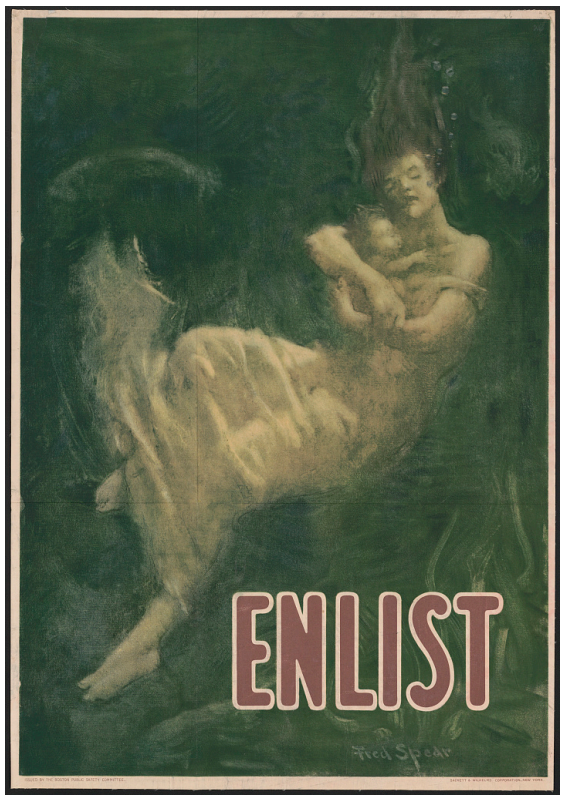
[2] Peter Engberg-Klarström, Mike Poirier, and Hildo Thiel, *The Lusitania Resource* (2024) <https://www.rmslusitania.info/people/statistics/#:~:text=124%20children%20on%20board%2C%2094,this%20site)%20includes%20the%20stowaways.> [accessed 9th April 2024]

[3] Library Of Congress, *Echos of the Great War* (2024) <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/arguing-over-war/for-or-against-war/sinking-of-the-lusitania/> [accessed 9th April 2024]

[4] United States Department of State, *U.S. Entry into World War I, 1917* (2016) <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/wwi#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20later%20declared,Hungary%20on%20December%207%2C%201917.&text=Germany's%20resumption%20of%20submarine%20attacks,States%20into%20World%20War%20I.> [accessed 9th April 2024]

The tragedy of Lusitania was used in a number of propaganda posters to persuade and make men feel guilty to enlist. This image depicts adults and children struggling for survival in the cold ocean, trying to clutch to debris to try to stay afloat for survival while their future is uncertain. One can see hands stretched above the water but no visible sign of the individual they belonged to, emphasising the raw and true horror of the situation. There are still people left aboard, and the lifeboats containing people are being lowered down the ship and yet to be released into the ocean. This image shows the human cost of war.

Similarly, Another poster by Fred Spear titled 'Enlist', from June 1915, featured an evocative image of a woman sinking deeper and deeper into the ocean, cradling her infant child into her chest. The image was based upon accounts of recovered bodies from the ocean; The Omaha Daily Bee reported that: 'Most of the bodies there are women… At the Cunard Wharf lies a mother still clasping in her arms the body of her 3-month-old baby.' [5] It not only became a propaganda tool to persuade men to enlist but also to increase anti-German sentiment, an argument in which to call Germans barbarians that need to be stopped no matter what.



However, the Germans justified their aggression by professing that the Lusitania was carrying armaments and thus fair game. As they carried on with shifting fault, British propaganda against Germany amplified, and anti-German riots commenced in London. The Guardian reported that 'Until the disturbances late last night and this morning, there has been singularly little anti-German passion in London. The Lusitania

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[5] Library Of Congress, *Echos of the Great War* (2024) <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/arguing-over-war/for-or-against-war/enlist/> [accessed 9th April 2024]

has made all the difference.'[6] Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the British Admiralty, notably commented: 'The poor babies who perished in the ocean struck a blow at German power more deadly than could have been achieved by the sacrifice of 100,000 men.'[7]

The poster was part of a large propaganda campaign in Ireland. Although conscription was first introduced throughout Britain in January of 1916, it did not apply to men in Ireland as there were fears that it would upset nationalist feelings. Recruitment in Ireland had been slow-moving, and the exploitation of the sinking and the loss of life increased the number of men enlisting in Ireland.[8] Using the tragedy of Lusitania was especially effective, as the ship was sunk roughly 11 miles off the Old Head of Kinsale. Brave Irishmen had boarded small boats immediately after the sinking to rescue survivors endangering their own lives; had they not, the death toll would have been higher. The aftermath saw hundreds of bodies and debris washed ashore for weeks.

To conclude, anti-German propaganda thrived in Britain, and the tragic sinking of R.M.S. Lusitania and the murder of 1,198 civilians turned the tide regarding opposition to Germany in Britain and America. The sinking was used by numerous artists in Britain for propaganda purposes to arouse anger and to compel men to seek vengeance. The 'Irishmen Avenge the Lusitania' poster was one of the foremost examples. It displays one of the most tragic events of World War One, where the civilian death toll was unimaginable for many Britons and a reminder that no one was safe from the ravages of war.

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[6] The Guardian, *From the archive, 13 May 1915: Anti-German riots spread* (2015) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/13/anti-german-riots-lusitania-1915-first-world-war> [accessed 9th April 2024]

[7] Margaret Brecknell, *The Archive* (2022) <https://explorethearchive.com/sinking-of-lusitania> [accessed 9th April 2024]

[8] Ronan McGreevy, *The Irish Times* (2015) <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/the-sinking-of-the-lusitania-1.2197219> [accessed 9th April 2024]

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s%20resumption%20of%20submarine%20attacks,States%20into%20World%20War%20I.> [accessed the 9th of April 2024]

Book Review
The Great War: The People's Story

This review is a chapter analysis of chapter one from the book 'The Great War: The People's Story' entitled 'A Call To Arms' but will be contextualised in the book's entirety.

Author

The Great War: The People's Story was written by Isobel Charman and published by Random House Books on the 31st of July 2014. Consisting of 528 pages. Price £21.50.

Isobel Charman graduated from Bristol University in 2003 with a first-class degree and the George Hare Leonard Prize in history. She is an award-winning writer, producer and researcher specialising in TV and film, creating and developing documentaries in Europe and America. This enabled her to write two books based on her research for the documentaries: the Great War and The Zoo: The Wild and Wonderful Tale of the Founding of London Zoo (2016). Her documentaries include The Queen (2009), Inside the Tower of London (2018), and The Great War: The People's Story.[9]

The Overall Book

The Great War: The Peoples Story was written as a companion to an ITV documentary by the same name. In the introduction, she states:

> 'The accounts featured in this book were uncovered during the many months of research I did for the TV series. In archives, libraries and living rooms up and down the country I read hundreds of letters and diaries written by ordinary Britons during the extraordinary years of the First World War.'[10]

The book and TV documentary series were created as a part of the centenary celebrations for World War One in 2014. The Culture Secretary at the time, Maria Miller, devised a 4-year plan, which included national acts of remembrance, a scheme for schools to take children on tours of battlefields, and a substantial nationwide cultural programme. Along with various events, numerous television shows and

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[9] Isobel Charman, *Izzy Charman* (2022) <https://www.izzycharman.com/about> [accessed 22 April 2024]

[10] Isobel Charman, *The Great War: The People's Story* (London: Random House Books, 2014)

documentaries were aired in Britain; these included Our World War, the BBC's version of The Great War, The Passing Bells, The Crimson Field, Long Shadow, 14 Diaries of the Great War and 37 Days.

The book starts in March of 1914 with the University Boat Race, which would be the last race for five years and finishes on the 19th of July 1919 with 'Peace Day', the official day of celebration following the Treaty of Versailles and the Allied victory. The book concludes with an emotive epilogue informing the reader of the future of the individuals included. These included financial ruin, physical war wounds that would never heal, and a life of grieving for their fallen.

Chapter 1: The Call To Arms
tells the story of World War One through a handful of people who lived and fought through it. The review will cover the book's first chapter, which starts in March of 1914 with the University Boat Race on the 28th of March and ends with Christmas of 1914.

The author cleverly intertwines the lives of these individuals from very different aspects of society, from the upper echelons such as Helen Franklin and Alan Lloyd, and the celebrity world of Hallie Miles and Eustace Miles to the middle-class rural life of Andrew Clarke, and the working class world of Reg and Frances Evans.

The ten individuals featured in this chapter do not share a single commonality; they differ in age, location, social class, education, family life, experiences in war, political views, and attitudes towards the war; however, they all lost loved ones, feared for their lives, hoped for a quick resolution and contributed to the war effort; either by fighting on the western front, creating a special constabulary to protect the home front, and working in clothes workshops. They are all indefinitely changed and shaped by their war experience.

Charman uses the lives of these ten individuals to portray the start of the lead-up to the war and the first five months through letters, diaries and memoirs. These individuals include rich, handsome world traveller Alan Lloyd and his young, beautiful wife, Dorothy Lloyd, who waited for him to return from his travels to marry and sadly spent the war as separated newlyweds. Working class carpenter Reg Evans was raised in an orphanage, received a traditional Victorian education and continued the imperialistic and traditional views that were first fostered there and joined the part-time 1st Battalion, Hertfordshire Regiment of

the Territorial Force the previous year and his mother, Frances Evans. Independent suffrage organiser Kate Parry Frye and her devoted boyfriend of 11 years, John Collins, a former Boer War soldier, were among the first to be called up. Hallie Miles, a middle-class writer, married tennis champion Eustace Miles and were business partners in a popular vegetarian restaurant and health shops. A middle-aged vicar of rural great Leighs, Andrew Clark was a keen local historian who wrote extensive diaries. The Daughter of a wealthy Jewish banking family, Helen Franklin, was unusually well educated for a woman of her generation and, by the time the war started, was looking for a husband, which she found in Norman Brentwich, a successful lawyer residing in Egypt.[11]

The chapter uses individuals who are very different and lived very different lives before and during the war. They come from all facets of society and all ages, which is vital to how they experience war. Alan Lloyd, Reg Evans and John Collins were young enough to fight; however, they went into the war with different mindsets and experiences. Alan Lloyd went into the army as a lieutenant as he was an upper-class man. Reg Evans had enlisted part-time in 1913, so was a Private and John Collins, a former soldier with fighting experience, was given the position of Captain. The lives of the women featured in the book dramatically changed during the war; whilst they did not go to the Western Front, life at the home front became more difficult.

The chapter gives an insight into the views and opinions of everyday people in the lead-up to the Great War. It provides an interesting observation from the letters and diary entries that people did not see the war was imminent or acknowledge that the tensions in Europe were as big an issue as they were. Kate Parry Frye, who had a keen interest in politics, was more preoccupied with the tensions in Ireland than with what was taking place in Europe, as the Liberal government had ultimately achieved the passing of the extremely contentious Home Rule Bill, which granted self-government for Ireland. One thought that if anything were going to tear Britain apart, it would surely be the conflict in Ireland rather than the death of an Austrian Archduke, even if he was an heir-presumptive.

The chapter displays how men at the front lied and downplayed the danger they were in and the harsh conditions; this is demonstrated in

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[11] Isobel Charman, The Great War: The People's Story (London: Random House Books, 2014)

the letters sent from Reg Evans to his mother. Following his second stretch in the trenches, Reg, exhausted and frostbitten, along with his regiment, were supposed to be resting in a farmhouse, but they were ambushed by German shell fire, and three men were badly wounded. However, Reg downplays the grave danger that they were facing, instead saying:

> 'I am in fine condition, the only inconvenience being the damp and cold from the trenches and dugouts…it is not nearly so exciting as you might imagine out here as we have not seen any Germans (only dead ones)'.[12]

Target Audience

Charman is not an academic writer but a writer for television and film. The book was written for the general public and was categorised as popular history. The subject matter was even more popular at the time due to the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. The book followed Charman's extensive research of intimate World War One life experiences. The book accompanies the television documentary series and targets the audience who watched the documentary and wished to know more about the lives of the people included. In the last few years, family genealogy has soared in popularity; there are websites that provide the tools to research and build one's family tree, television shows that trace the family history of celebrities and archival records to allow you to search records. Today, many people are researching and delving into the past to discover their ancestors' involvement in the two world wars; this book targets those readers to give an example regarding how to do it, what you might find and gives examples of where to look.

Analysis

I think this chapter has improved my knowledge of a part of the First World War that is not often covered in books and documentaries: the lead-up to one of the most deadly conflicts ever to happen, perceived through the viewpoint of people who were there. It is evident from the first chapter that while tensions were rising, the declaration of war was a surprise to many people; conversations of war were much closer to home, with many believing and anticipating civil war with Ireland, as a war in Ireland seemed inevitable, a ticking time bomb, surrounding tensions with Home Rule.

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[12] Isobel Charman, *The Great War: The People's Story* (London: Random House Books, 2014)

Conclusion

The book takes a unique approach to an extensively documented subject. By selecting excerpts from the diaries of individuals involved directly and indirectly in World War One, the writer demonstrates the war's military and social advancement, which can be seen in the first chapter. Letters and diaries offer an intimate view of the war and the hardships it put on relationships and displays the fear felt by the soldiers on the Western Front and their loved ones waiting for them at home. The book is meticulously researched and engagingly written to offer the reader a good insight into the personalities of the individuals in the chapter, who were chronicling living through such a turbulent and violent time, arguably one of the most unstable and violent periods of modern Britain.

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