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18 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Shuster, Dr. Glyn Pryor, Peter Francis, Joanna Bourke, Jonathan Casey, Chorus, Cara Reichel, Peter Mills, WWI Soldier 1, WWI Soldier 2, WWI Soldier 3, WWI Soldier 4, WWI Soldier 5, WWI Soldier 6, WWI Soldier 7, Brent Burge, Speaker 18)

[0:00:07]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News Episode Number 100. How cool is that? If this was a podcast about dogs maybe not such a big deal but this is a centennial show and this is episode number 100. Just to give you a heads up about the coming weeks, this week and next week is a two-part special where we're focusing on the near-term fallout of the armistice as everyone tries to come to terms and grips with a world suddenly not at war. It's the dawn of a new world order and really tumultuous. Then, for episode number 102, coming out the weekend of December 22, we have a treat for you. An update of our annual period Christmas music that you can enjoy over the holidays. This next part's really fun. The following two episodes we're going to reprise your favorite segments and interviews from 2018. You're invited to participate. Send us a direct message to our Twitter channel @TheWW1Podcast, that's @-T-H-E-W-W-1-podcast, and send us a message about a particular segment, interview, or story that you'd like to have us include in our year-end roundup. Then, starting the second week of January, we'll be getting back to our more regular programming with a 2019 update of World War I Centennial news, a shorter, tighter version of the podcast you've been enjoying. There's a lot to unpack in 2019 as the war that changed the world becomes a world transformed in so many ways. This week on the podcast, Mike Shuster has a great post-armistice overview as the Allies coss over into Germany. Dr. Glyn Pryor and Peter Francis from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission join us. That's the organization from the United Kingdom responsible for dealing with the commonwealth's deceased soldiers. Then, Dr. Joanna Bourke, Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London joins us. She's an expert on the effects of trauma on society. Jonathan Casey, the Director of Archives from the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City is going to tell us about an exhibition he curated called Coming Home. On the media side, we have two great segments for you this week. Hello Girls, the Musical is playing in New York City until December 22. We're joined by Cara Reichel and Peter Mills, the co-creators of the show. We're going to round out the show this week with a segment about director Peter Jackson's astounding film, They Shall Not Grow Old. It's scheduled to have a special US showing on about 1000 screens, both in 2D and 3D, but only for two nights, ticketed through Fathom Events. The documentary is going to be showing on December 17, and again on the 27th, both an afternoon and an evening show. If you don't know about this film and you're listening to this podcast, you're really going to want to go see this. More about that later. So I had a great chat with Brent Burge from New Zealand, the man responsible for recreating the sound for this World War I historic film reconstruction. He not only talks about recording artillery from the receiving end, but also provides some great insight into Peter Jackson's vision in creating this epic and innovative documentary. It's a jam packed week on World War I Centennial News, and I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. We're going to open this week with Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent and the curator for The Great War Project Blog. Mike, your post that actually ran on your blog a week ago is a really great summary for what I can only call post-armistice shock, and a great opening chapter for our new theme, A World Transformed.

[0:04:36]

Mike Shuster: Well, thank you Theo. The headlines read, "First Allied Troops Cross Into Germany," "Americans See Germany for the First Time," "Out of Balkan Minorities, A New Pan-Slav State," "Wilson Sailing for Europe," and this is special to The Great War Project. "On Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, Austria was without an empire and Germany was without an emperor," so writes historian Martin Gilbert assessing the great political changes the war had brought about. Wrote Albert Einstein from Berlin that day, "Militarism and bureaucracy have been thoroughly abolished here, but the chaos of the defeated nations are enormous." Writes historian Martin Gilbert, "Combating the forces of revolution on the left and militarism on the right, reviving war-ravaged economies, maintaining national moral in the face of the stigma of defeat, the growing burden of war guilt. These are enormous tasks to confront." And there's more. A desire to recover the territories that had been ripped away at the last moment, and a search for scapegoats. For the victors, too, the burdens of peace are great, according to Gilbert. Promises of a better life for the soldiers, but their fate is a puzzle. Writes one German general to a friend in Britain on November 11, "I don't know if I am glad or sorry to be alive," he observes as he marched his troops towards the Belgian/German frontier, "I only know that it wasn't my fault that I am alive." On the morning of December 1 writes historian Gilbert, "The first British troops cross the border into Germany, and on that same day, the first American troops cross into Germany. They are amazed," reports Gilbert, "by the contrast between the ruined villages and farms of the battle zones in northern France and the carefully cultivated fields and prosperous villages of Germany. The allied troops themselves are tired and wet. They had marched for two weeks, mostly in the rain, to towns on the Rhine which had known nothing of war, and whose inhabitants resented the arrival of a conqueror who it was increasingly believed had not defeated them in battle, but had secured an armistice as a result of their own leader's failure to avert revolution and republicanism." In

Vienna, hunger quickly became a serious challenge. On the political fronts, several new states emerged, reported historian Martin Gilbert, on the wreckage and fragmentation of the four defeated empires: Germany, Austria, Russia, and Ottoman-Turkey. On the first of December a century ago, on the day when allied troops marched into Germany, the kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slavians was proclaimed in Belgrade. Essentially it was a Pan-Slav state, eventually becoming Yugoslavia, the inheritors of Austria's defeat. All of this is extremely confusing for the ordinary person on the street. Europe is being made over, but just how is impossible to grasp. In the meantime, the process of fashioning a fully fledged peace treaty is now underway in Paris. On December 4, 1918, the American president, Woodrow Wilson, set sail.

[0:07:46]

Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster is the curator for The Great War Project Blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. As we've talked through the history of World War I over the last few years, the casualty figures are staggering. Millions dead, sometimes tens of thousands in a single day of a single battle. Some eight million soldiers died in combat or are missing in action. Now, that's just the combat figures. That doesn't include those who died from disease or accident. For many combatants, their dead lay in a foreign country, posing a particular challenge for England and America, who had bodies of water in between their home-front and their war-front. Now next week, we'll be speaking with a representative from the American Battle Monuments Commission about how America took on this challenge, but first this week. We're going to take a look at how the United Kingdom has dealt with this incredibly important work. For that, we're joined by Peter Francis of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and Dr. Glyn Prysor, their Chief Historian. Gentlemen, thank you for joining us.

[0:08:56]

Dr. Glyn Prysor: It's a pleasure to be here, Theo.

[0:08:57]

Theo Mayer: Let me start with you, Dr. Prysor. When was the commission established, and was there a war time as well as a post war role?

[0:09:05]

Dr. Glyn Prysor: Well, yes there was. In fact what was then called The Imperial War Graves Commission, was formally established by Royal Charter in May 1917. In fact, at one of the darkest moments of the First World War for the British Empire, a time when actually the prospect of victory seemed very far away, but actually it's roots go back until the very beginning of the conflict, and particularly to a man called Fabian Ware who had gone over to the western front in France with a unit of Red Cross personnel. It became clear to him that actually there was no formal organized system for marking and registering the graves of British soldiers who had lost their lives in that early fighting. He put pressure on the military authorities to try and get a system in place, and eventually the military took on his idea, and it became an imperial project. In 1917, the King gave his royal charter to found this organization, which today is known as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It was starting its work during the war itself. Those great battles on the Somme at [inaudible]. At the time, something was just beginning to try to make sure that all of those from across the British Empire who'd served and who'd fought and died in the war would be honored after the end of the fighting.

[0:10:19]

Theo Mayer: Now I understand that Rudyard Kipling was deeply involved in the formation of the commission. What was his role?

[0:10:25]

Dr. Glyn Prysor: As I said, it's really important to think of this as an imperial body. This was about the contributions from people across the British Empire, and Rudyard Kipling at the time was a key figure. In many ways the poet of empire. Well known for books like *The Jungle Book*, *Kim*, and of course the famous poem *If*. Really someone who encapsulated many of the messages, the values of the British Empire at that time, and it was felt that he would be the perfect person to explain what the War Graves Commission was doing, because at the time it was a very new, a very unique endeavor. The idea that people from across the British Empire would be honored equally, regardless of where they came from. That was particularly important of course, for places like India. Many Indian soldiers had come to serve on the western front and many other theaters of war, supporting the British Empire's war effort. So who better to tell this story, to convince people of the importance of this approach than Rudyard Kipling, who was so famous across the world, and he was used by the commission as what was then called a literary advisor. He would write in newspapers, he would write short pamphlets, books to explain to people what was going on, what the plans were for their loved ones who had fallen and died during the war, how they would be honored. But also he would advise on some of the inscriptions. It was he who came up with one of the most famous inscriptions that we have on the graves of those who couldn't be identified. It just says, "A soldier of the Great War, known unto God." That ability to encapsulate something timeless in those few words, I think now ensures those places seem to us as very, very fitting.

Another of course were the words he chose from the Bible, for what we call the Stone of Remembrance, a secular altar, a monument in our larger cemeteries, their name liveth forevermore. I think more than anything else, that really encapsulated what the War Graves Commission was trying to do.

[0:12:15]

Theo Mayer: So, switching over to Peter, both the US and the UK approaches were very egalitarian. Seeking equal treatment of officers, enlisted men, men of different races, and so forth. Could you speak to that?

[0:12:28]

Peter Francis: Yeah, certainly. It's probably difficult for those of us who've grown up with remembrance of the war dead to understand what a revolutionary concept it was in 1917. In the very first minutes of the very first commission meeting, there was this wonderful line that talks about no distinction should be made between officers and men regardless of their military or civil rank, their color, their race, their creed, their religion. At the time, it caused a huge amount of fuss because it had practical considerations for the form of remembrance. It meant that the commission would use a headstone rather than a cross to mark the graves of the war dead, because we were dealing with so many different faiths. But it also meant that the bodies of the dead would not be brought home, they would be buried where they fell, in this comradeship of death, equality of treatment. It was felt only the very wealthy could have afforded to bring their dead home, and that just wouldn't be right. So people got very, very cross that the commission seemed to be imposing, particularly on the people that perhaps had suffered most, the mothers and the widows of the dead themselves, and we have some heartbreaking documents in our archive here in our headquarters in the UK. Letters from grieving mothers who've lost three or perhaps even four sons asking us, "Please allow me sir, to bring my boys home." This forms an essential theme of our new online exhibition which explores this creation of the organization, but through the various stages of grief that people were going through at the end of the conflict.

[0:13:51]

Theo Mayer: This question is to either of you, so we can start with you Peter. What were some of the biggest challenges and dangers frankly, and undertaking of getting your war dead gathered, identified, and honorably interred?

[0:14:02]

Peter Francis: Perhaps the biggest challenge was that nobody had ever done anything quite like this before, so there was no budget, there was no template from which to work. So even, for example the decision that, "What do you do if you can find or identify the body of an individual?" Well again, to us it seems common sense. You put their name on a memorial to the missing. Yet that really was a decision that vexed the commission. There was talk about producing fake, for want of a better word, headstones in the military cemeteries, but Fabian Ware felt that would mislead people. So it's their practicalities of remembrance had to be worked through. Also, of course the sheer scale, the British Empire was dealing with something in the region of 1.1 million war dead. Some of the challenges in some of those places, there was still unrest. Turkey for example in the Middle East, and in France and Belgium of course, this was a devastated landscape. We have some fascinating items in our archive, again from the very early stuff, of the commission talking just how hard it was to live and work amongst those conditions. We have some other strange accents of the commission today, people who married into local communities and considered themselves Brits, but now have strong French or Belgian accents when they work for us. So it's an interesting thing that we managed to overcome. Of the building of the program itself, to quote Rudyard Kipling was, "The biggest single work since the pharaohs, and they only worked in their own country." The last memorial wasn't finished until 1938, and then of course we had to do it all over again just one year later.

[0:15:26]

Theo Mayer: The commission has cemeteries all over the world, including in areas of upheaval like Syria. How do you maintain all of those graves and markers, especially considering the ravages of time, changing geopolitics, new conflicts, and so forth?

[0:15:40]

Dr. Glyn Pryor: I think it's important to remember that this work has been going on for 100 years. We had a centenary in 2017, and the commission's charter talks about perpetuity, that we will care for these places forever, and that makes it a very long game. As conflicts and wars, changing environmental conditions, changing personnel, and of course the disruption of the Second World War, another challenge of marking and maintaining graves in many different areas from the first one. From the remote jungles of Burma through to northern Russia, South America, you name it. We have cemeteries and memorials in 23000 different places in over 150 different countries and territories. But the fact that the commission has the ability to look and plan for the long term is the critical thing. If there is a war, even if it takes 10 years to resolve, the commission was always able then to come back in slowly, diplomatically, start to reconfigure and maintain those places. We're just starting at the moment to be able to go back into places like Iraq.

No grave is too far for our teams, and it's really important to us that nobody is forgotten, no matter whether they have a single grave on a remote island, or whether they're in one of the big cemeteries on the western front.

[0:16:53]

Theo Mayer: Are you now repatriating the bodies, or are they still being buried where they fell?

[0:16:58]

Dr. Glyn Pryor: Well, our remit ended at the end of Second World War. So our remit is to do with the war dead of both world wars. The policies of the British Ministry of Defense in particular, have changed. The same is true of many of our commonwealth partners. But for those war graves, even in remote places, our first priority is to try to maintain them as best we can, regardless of the difficulties. We have some fantastic teams all over the world doing that work. Some of them work for us on a contractual basis. Many of them are part of our family, and they have been for generations. It's a family business, and many of them feel it's a vocation, it's a personal duty to care for those cemeteries. For us, that makes it a very, very special bond. So when we bear that long game in mind, we won't be forgetting these places, and when the time is right and we can get people in safely, that's what we'll do.

[0:17:44]

Theo Mayer: Well gentlemen, thank you very much for coming in. That's a wonderful program.

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Dr. Glyn Pryor: Thank you, absolute pleasure.

[0:17:50]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Glyn Pryor and Peter Francis are with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Learn more about the commission and their work at the links in the podcast notes. Because of the sheer number of individuals that served in the war effort, it's not surprising that the war had widespread and lingering effects of the psychological health of individuals and nations alike in the years following the end. Millions served in World War I. Large segments of entire generations, and it's now evermore broadly accepted that nearly all combatants in war, even if they're not physically wounded, suffer trauma from the experience. To help us unpack the lasting marks of war, wounds, pain, and fear, we're joined by Joanna Bourke, Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London, and the author of several books including: *Dismembering the Male, Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*, and also *Deep Violence: Military Violence, War Play, and the Social History of Weapons*. Joanna, welcome to the podcast.

[0:18:59]

Joanna Bourke: Hi, it's really great being here, Theo.

[0:19:01]

Theo Mayer: So Joanna, one of your books is titled: *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War*. That's pretty intriguing. Can you briefly outline that context for us?

[0:19:11]

Joanna Bourke: It is actually a book about literal dismemberment as well as figurative and psychological dismemberment. So what I want to do in that book was to actually ask: How did British and American men and women actually experience war? So I was interested in the effect of witnessing acts of extreme cruelty, which of course left [inaudible] scars, but also of inflicting cruelty on other people. Every day of the war, 5600 men were killed. In Britain, there's major problems with physical dismemberment. 41000 men had their limbs amputated during the war, 272000 had other injuries to their legs and arms, 61000 head wounds to their head or to their eyes. So it really changed the landscape of disabled people in Britain. But of course I'm also interested in psychological trauma. I know millions are being driven insane, and the best estimate is about 20% of casualties were psychiatric casualties, so I was really interested in what happened when those people came back and women, their mothers, their sister, their daughters also had this sort of grenade lobbed into their life as a result of the war when their menfolk came home, and they had to provide that emotional labor in trying to help them, trying to provide sustenance for these people.

[0:20:32]

Theo Mayer: And heading to the psychological impact, and given that your focus is from a historian's perspective, not a medical practitioner, addressing what was called then shell shock and now known as PTSD, post traumatic stress disorder, how was shell shock viewed socially in context, medically?

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Joanna Bourke: At the time of the war, the idea of trauma itself was actually really relatively unknown in the general public. With the First World War, shell shock became something that everyone understood and everyone knew about. It was actually invented in 1915 by a physician called Charles Myers, because he believed that the infliction, people

breaking down in combat, was the result of literally a shell exploding nearby causing shock waves that literally severed men's nerves. Other at the same time, believed that men and indeed women, who broke down in war, actually had a predisposition to emotional instability. From the middle of the war, people started to observe, and indeed Charles Myers himself observed, that men were suffering from shell shock who had never been anywhere near the front lines. The ideas started to change that in fact shell shock was a psychological problem, an emotional problem rather than a physiological one. So they began to look for emotional reasons why this might happen. Now of course British society was a very high [inaudible] society, so there were distinctions made between different kinds of people who were suffering from shell shock. Lowly privates were generally thought to be suffering from hysteria, a woman-ish disorder, it was a form of cowardice. In contrast, when men of the officer class broke down in warfare, they were more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder such as neurasthenia. If you were diagnosed as suffering from neurasthenia, an anxiety disorder, you could lie on the couch. If you were diagnosed as suffering from hysteria or something, you could even be shot at dawn. So these were really important changes that happened in the course of the war.

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Theo Mayer: There's a lot of talk about the men and the suffering of cowardice, and they literally shot men for cowardice. What about the women who served?

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Joanna Bourke: It's really been relatively recently that people have started to look at the experience of women in or near the front lines. In some aspects of war, actually more women were killed than men. You do have cases of women who were serving as competence. I'm thinking here of a famous British woman called Flora Sandes, and has written very eloquently at the time about the fact that as a woman, she had to prove her self precisely because she was a woman. If we look at the Russian army, over half a million Soviet women served in the Red Army. Another 300 thousand served in anti-aircraft and other forms of combat. This is not an insignificant number of women. But more typically, of course women were serving as nurses. They were cooks, they did supply services, they drove cart trucks, looked after aircraft. Of course after the war, their contributions were largely neglected. Indeed, even though 8% of the Soviet forces were women, and even though those women actually had a higher death rate than men, they were explicitly excluded from the victory celebrations. Typically, they were just simply forgotten or neglected, and that's only changed in very recent years.

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Theo Mayer: What was such a large segment of the population having served in the conflict, this trauma becomes a socio-cultural issue. How did it affect Great Britain at large?

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Joanna Bourke: It had a huge effect on Great Britain. So many men came back disabled, a huge portion of women lost their husbands. You actually get surprisingly, women marrying men who are younger than themselves for the first time. Prior to the First World War, at least in the elite class, you knew who was going to take over. But of course so many of those men were actually killed, so you get a change in social nobility. This is particularly clear in the case of women's lives, because of course during the First World War, they were able to enter forms of employment that had previously been closed to them, so you get a real shift of women for example, into the civil service, into post office, into factory labor. You get massive increase in trade unionism of women. Something like 160% increase. You get women having a much greater sense of personal freedom as a result of the war, and of course we have the suffrage movement, and a certain proportion of women actually getting the vote by the end of the war. So [inaudible] of the president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society made a famous declaration. She said something along the lines of, "The war revolutionized the industrial position of women. It found them serfs and set them free."

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Theo Mayer: There's a closing question. From your perspective and study, what would you say the single most important lesson as humans that we can learn from the legacy of pain and fear that World War I represented?

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Joanna Bourke: I think if we really just bear witness to the trauma of those years. I think we need actually to continue to be shocked by the shells that our factories still produce. A few years ago, I wrote a book called Deep Violence, and that book looks at the extent to which military practices, technologies, military symbols continue to invade all of our everyday lives. We need to pay more attention to the fact that we are still producing those shells. We have a duty to future generations to ensure that we don't have another major world war, which is in fact not implausible.

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Theo Mayer: Joanna, thank you very much.

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Joanna Bourke: It's been great talking to you.

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Theo Mayer: Joanna Bourke is a Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London, an author of many books and papers. Learn more about her and her work at the link in the podcast notes. When the guns stopped firing on the western front on November 11, the dough boys were probably really, really ready to pack up and head for home. But it wasn't going to be quite that simple as walking away, hopping on a ship, and heading back to their own beds. So to tell us about the process of returning home is Jonathan Casey, Director of the Archives and Edward Jones Research Center at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. We're going to talk to him about that and an exhibit that he curated simply called Coming Home. Jonathan, welcome.

[0:27:17]

Jonathan Casey: Thank you for having me on.

[0:27:19]

Theo Mayer: So Jonathan, the war ends and millions of American boys, men, and women are far from home. How long does it take for them to get home, and who gets to come home first, and who last?

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Jonathan Casey: There are about 2 million who are overseas, and they were released by divisions, and a division was about 27000. The ones who were there the longest would go first.

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Theo Mayer: Okay. So once they arrived back on American soil, the soldiers don't just get to get off the boats and head home. What's the process like and how long would it take for an average dough boy to get from the ship to his own bed again?

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Jonathan Casey: Well, they came back through and then they had to be processed at a central processing station, and most of them were done also in the New York area. There were a couple camps that were on Long Island. They had to process them through the centers that were just to check them over, and they checked them over physically and ask them a lot of questions and things, and so that could take some time. From my understanding, a lot of the soldiers just wanted to get out so fast, that even if there were some type of medical issue that they had, they wouldn't necessarily be honest about it, and just say, "No, I feel okay," and want to get out, and I don't know really how thorough the physical examinations were, but they were given a clean set of clothes so that they could wear them home. So they did have a uniform to wear home. Then they were shipped back to other camps in their geographic area where they're from to be discharged, and then they were sent home from there, and they're given money to pay for their travel back to their home town. They were encouraged to wear the uniform actually, for let's say six month or so, and just to tell everyone that they had served. On the uniform there was an insignia of a red chevron that was a discharge chevron. It meant that the person was honorably discharged. So that's how they transitioned back into civilian life.

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Theo Mayer: How long did all that take, from the time that they might take off from France to the time they actually got to their own beds?

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Jonathan Casey: That might take about a month. Some of the units did parades. If they were involved in some type of a ceremony like that, would delay it for a few days. But if you were overseas, and then came back on a ship, and then back through this central demobilization center, and then back to where you came from, the training camp in the area where you started from, I would say a month, roughly.

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Theo Mayer: What was the reception like when they actually got back to their home towns?

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Jonathan Casey: It was all positive. Like say here in Kansas City, they had a pretty big parade. You can imagine like New York and Chicago had these really big parades. As part of this exhibition they did coming home, had some photographs from a little parade, little town of Westin, Missouri, which is about an hour, I'd say north of Kansas City. They did usually a victory arch, so that's what they would march through in the town. Then Westin, Missouri they put

it up over one of the main streets there. In Kansas City they did this big arch over Grand Avenue, so that would be a common thing to see. So you're getting parading like that, and people happy that their relatives are back, their sons, and their brothers, and everybody returning home.

[0:30:21]

Theo Mayer: Let's talk about the exhibit for a moment. So you curated an exhibit called Coming Home. Tell us about that a little.

[0:30:27]

Jonathan Casey: It was an exhibit that I did some time ago here at the museum in a building called Memory Hall. The idea is about how the war effected the soldiers and how they readjusted back into society. We used different kind of materials, mostly two dimensional, so I'm the Director of the Archives, and so a lot of posters and certificates. The certificates would be naming someone for his or her service from a particular state. So we had somebody was from Massachusetts, and somebody was from Missouri. We had a series of small posters that were talking about ideas for how they could readjust back into civilian society and make a positive impact on society. That to me was one of the principle themes of it, anyway. They were done by an army officer named Gordon Grant. We also addressed in the exhibition those who were disabled and needed vocational rehabilitation. Again, illustrated through posters, and this is all from our collection. It somewhat addressed PTSD, about soldiers just not feeling quite right and not feeling the same, so in a way that would be an example of having that disorder. There was a shift in the thinking about how to help veterans and if they had their special needs. The exhibition addressed that as well, and we talked about also the American Legion, which was created in World War I, and then what the Legion did for veterans, and it was advocating for benefits and for this bonus that came about for having served. The Legion has a connection to our museum, which was at the time was created out of World War I in those early years and was called the Liberty Memorial Museum when it opened in 1926.

[0:32:04]

Theo Mayer: I know the exhibition ran a while ago, but are some of those materials still available online?

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Jonathan Casey: The exhibition was some years ago, and right now I'm actually working on a re-imagining of that exhibition on a smaller scale, because it will be in a different space here at the museum, but want to keep definitely the themes I was talking about, soldiers readjusting to society and being a role model for their communities and helping out in their communities. You can go to our website, which is TheWorldWar.org, under explore tab, and then past exhibitions. So it's archived on our website.

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Theo Mayer: And we have a link to it in the podcast notes as well. Well terrific, Jonathan. I thank you very much for coming and telling us about it.

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Jonathan Casey: Sure, you're very welcome. Thank you for having me.

[0:32:48]

Theo Mayer: Jonathan Casey is the Director of the Archives and Edward Jones Research Center at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. Learn about the museum, the exhibit, and more at the links in the podcast notes. Well the story of the hello girls has really resonated during the centennial period. There is Elizabeth Cobb's book, Jim Theres' documentary, which by the way has just been announced as a winner for the PBS 2018 About Women and Girls Film Festival. Now, the hello girls is also an exciting new stage musical running in New York City.

[0:33:39]

Chorus: [singing]

[0:33:47]

Theo Mayer: It's another wonderful telling about these intrepid young women who served in the signal corps and were instrumental in the establishment of quick, effective communications across the fighting front. With us are the musical's co-creators Cara Reichel and Peter Mills. Welcome to both of you.

[0:34:14]

Cara Reichel: Hi, thanks for having us.

[0:34:16]

Peter Mills: Great to be here.

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Theo Mayer: So Cara, the hello girls story seems to have struck a nerve. How did you come across it and what motivated you to take the story onto the stage as a musical?

[0:34:27]

Cara Reichel: Well, you know I first heard the story in 2014. I was watching a documentary called *Unsung Heroes*, which was a history of women across various fields of the military, and the hello girls were a brief two minute segment of that, and of course as someone who works in the field of musical theater in New York, a documentary called *Unsung Heroes* didn't take much for me to make that leap and go, "Well, maybe someone should sing about these remarkable women." About a year later, we sent it off to the NEA as part of a grant proposal. Unfortunately the university residency didn't pan out, but the NEA did give us a grant to do some further research. We found out we got that funding back in the summer of 2017, and that pretty much boosted this project up to the front of our company's development process here in New York. So it's been an intensive journey of about a year and a half. We spent about six months digging into additional research. Luckily Elizabeth Cobb's book came out shortly after we found out about this grant, and it's just been a real thrill to see how many people are responding to this story and we are getting standing ovations every night at the theater. It's really touching a cord in people's hearts, and I think it's proof that this is an important story that needs to be shared and it's also just a lot of fun. Pete's written some really wonderful songs. He and I collaborated on the book of the musical, which is basically the script, and the outline, and the structure, and he's written all the music and lyrics, and then I'm also the director of the piece.

[0:36:00]

Theo Mayer: So to both of you, you just explained how you built part of the show. Did you have to fictionalize some of it in order to make the story come together, or are you just going historically accurate?

[0:36:10]

Peter Mills: No, we've definitely taken some liberties in the interest of making the story as dramatically satisfying as possible and engaging for audiences, and yet at the same time we're really trying to be true to the big picture of what these women did. So early on we had decided that Grace Banker would be our main character and I would say that we are largely faithful to Grace Banker's story and the details of it that we know. In looking at the other characters, we have in some cases somewhat fictionalized the details of those characters. One of the characters we include is a woman named Louise LeBreton who was among the women who served with Grace Banker, but was not among those who actually went to the front with Grace Banker. In our telling of the story, because we love Louise's character and there was a lot about her that we liked, we have included her in the group that goes to the front. There's another character named Helen Hill who was among those who went to the front with Grace Banker, but we've taken certain details from other hello girls: Ann Atkinson, Cornelia [inaudible], we've made Helen into a-

[0:37:21]

Cara Reichel: A hybrid. But Helen Hill originally was from Connecticut, but we've taken some of her story and combined it with the story of-

[0:37:29]

Peter Mills: A small town.

[0:37:30]

Cara Reichel: A small town farm girl from Idaho.

[0:37:31]

Peter Mills: In some cases we combined things and conflated things in order to get it all into the show.

[0:37:37]

Cara Reichel: I think the other big area in which we've really fictionalized is the men. We were focusing on trying to get in as many of these interesting true life stories of the women as possible, so General Pershing does make a appearance in our show. He also plays the upright bass, all of the actors in our show pretty much play musical instruments as well. There's a fun joke about Pershing having to get back to the bass. The main male character, Lt. Joseph Reither is mentioned in Grace Banker's diary and in Elizabeth Cobb's book, but we really have very little information on him, and so we've made him a primarily fictional character who covers a lot of the different attitudes that they encountered. Then all the other men in the show play multiple different characters who appear briefly in one or two scenes, but we did a lot more fictionalizing in terms of the male characters in the show.

[0:38:28]

Theo Mayer: Now the show's getting really good reviews, and I had an interview with Jim on the documentary. I asked him the same question. Tell us about the audience. Who are they and how are they reacting?

[0:38:39]

Cara Reichel: We're performing in a slightly under 200 seat theater on the upper east side of Manhattan, it's called 59E59 Theaters, and they have a really strong audience based of members who come to see who come to see a lot of their shows, and many of them have said this is the favorite thing they've seen in many years there at the theater, but their membership base tends to be a little older patrons, and they've really been loving it, and I feel like they have a great appreciation for the history and our audience base is really ... I would say a much younger demographic. A lot of people, artists who are in their 20s and 30s and their networks, and we've also been getting a good percentage of them in to see the show, and they've been loving it as well. So I think younger audiences are really responding to the women's empowerment angle of the story. It's just a great story about some intrepid, amazing women who face some pretty significant odds. Of course then there's the coda of how these women were treated by the government when they got home and the continuing fight that they had to engage in to have their service recognized on an equal basis with the men. So I think that story is very relevant and empowering and is something that everyone has been remarking on, and great responses from all different types of folks walking through the door of the theater.

[0:39:55]

Theo Mayer: A really important question for our listeners. How long are you going to be performing the show, and where can people see it? And any plans for the future, as well?

[0:40:03]

Peter Mills: Well the show is running through December 22 at 59E59 Theaters on Manhattan's upper east side.

[0:40:11]

Cara Reichel: They can go to 59E59.org or ProspectTheater.org, and it's theater with an E-R, the American version. Yeah, so we have about 20 more performances, we're a little over halfway through our run. A lot of people have been asking us about if we're going to be able to make a cast recording, which we would love to do if we can figure out how to raise the funds for that. But yeah, we hope that we will be able to continue telling this story in some way, shape, or form on stages here in New York or around the country. A lot of people have also said, "You should really get this licensed so that colleges and schools around the country can also do it and have a artistic way of engaging with this important history and content." So we really hope that it's a story that will keep going from this premier and be seen by many, many more audiences over the upcoming years.

[0:41:01]

Theo Mayer: So a last question, and a one sentence answer. What would each of you say your own personal best lesson from this project has been? Let me start with you, Peter.

[0:41:11]

Peter Mills: What I learned from this show is to put story above everything, and let that be your guide. This was just such a wonderful story to tell. It came easily.

[0:41:20]

Theo Mayer: And Cara, what about yourself?

[0:41:23]

Cara Reichel: You know, I think one of the things that we haven't mentioned enough is the incredible cast who are bringing this show to life. As I mentioned before, they are also the musicians. These women and in fact, all of those soldiers in World War I, by really trusting each other and working together, they were able to accomplish something very powerful and extraordinary, and I think the value of an ensemble and a team working together to achieve a goal, their work is just something that you shouldn't miss. So if you're in the New York City area, please come check us out.

[0:41:57]

Theo Mayer: Thank you guys.

[0:41:58]

Cara Reichel: Thanks so much.

[0:41:58]

Peter Mills: Thank you.

[0:42:00]

Theo Mayer: Cara Reichel and Peter Mills are the co-creators of the new musical, The Hello Girls. Learn more about the production and where you might be able to see it by following the links in the podcast notes. Peter Jackson. One of the most innovative film directors working today had an idea. Using his craft and his genius, he wanted to create a time machine to transport those young men and boys from what we think of as a choppy, crude, black and white silent world from 100 years ago into the present. Of course, the world really wasn't black and white and silent. It was as three dimensional and vibrant as your world is right now. So Peter Jackson led a team of artists, technologists, creators, and they took the hundred year old clunky, silent film footage and brought it to life. The movie is called They Shall Not Grow Old, and you've never seen anything like it.

[0:43:03]

WWI Soldier 1: I was 16 years old, and my father allowed me to go.

[0:43:08]

WWI Soldier 2: I was just turned 17 at the time.

[0:43:08]

WWI Soldier 3: I was 16.

[0:43:10]

WWI Soldier 4: I was 15 years.

[0:43:14]

WWI Soldier 5: When they came to us, we were frightened children and had to made into soldiers.

[0:43:19]

WWI Soldier 6: All right boys, here it comes. We're in the pictures.

[0:43:26]

WWI Soldier 7: I gave every part of my youth to do a job.

[0:43:32]

Theo Mayer: This remarkable work launches a new category of media I've been calling Historical Reconstruction, or maybe it should be called The Age for Virtual History. Anyway, it's going to be playing on 1000 screens over the holidays, but only on the 17th of December and the 27th. There's an afternoon and an evening show on each of those days, in 2D and 3D. Now I would say that every single listener to this podcast do whatever you have to. Drive for two hours, make a road trip out of it, but go see this 90 minute documentary. You will be blown away. You'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll never forget when you first saw this. Tickets are available through Fathom Events, the guys that screen stage shows, and special events, and operas, and entertainment into movie theaters. You've seen their previews. To find it, Google Fathom. F-A-T-H-O-M, or use the link in the podcast notes, but book your tickets now. I had a special treat earlier this week when the project's supervising sound editor Brent Burge and I spoke. Now he's in New Zealand and I was in LA. Brent's been working with director Peter Jackson on a lot of his projects, including all The Lord of the Ring movies, and he had some great insight into the director's vision of this special film. Here's our conversation.

[0:45:00]

Brent Burge: I've had a long history with Peter, going back to his first film in fact, back in 1987, Bad Taste. Peter originally had a discussion with us back in 2015 about the show. He got us to come into the cutting room and have a bit of a chat, because it was a new show he was looking at. It was an interesting discussion he had about the show at that point, actually, because the interesting thing that I remember him talking about as he showed us the material was just how everybody looked really happy when they were going to war. The propaganda machine was fully on, the cameras were out with all the men heading off to face the war, and there was just a stark contrast to the way they returned. It was like they were no longer aware of the camera, they didn't care about the camera at that point. It was much more grim in a way. Was a really interesting contrast that he pointed out at that point, when he was obviously reviewing the footage. But of course we thought we were going to start straight away on the show at that point, but that literally ended up taking another two or three years for him to push his way through it.

[0:46:02]

Theo Mayer: You were starting with essentially a blank page as a sound editor for the project. You literally had to invent the entire audioscape for the scenes. It was all silent footage, right?

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Brent Burge: There was absolutely nothing on the tapes in terms of sound for us at all. We did have this library from the UK of some original material, original tapes and so forth, but in terms of this footage, no. Absolutely nothing.

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Theo Mayer: One of the things I think is really interesting is that you had to reconstruct what everybody was saying. How did that work?

[0:46:34]

Brent Burge: Peter had already identified the idea of how detailed he wanted this to be, and it was really about authenticity and about the whole going back into sounds which would have been sounds from the time, and that included the dialogue. There was a number of things about the dialogue that he really had identified, even at that point, of wanting to know what they were saying, so he really was very serious, even back in 2015 to get lip readers in to check out what was being said. Not only did we have the shots that Peter had selected that had to be fully replaced with sounds, foley, dialogue, crowds, the whole thing. Then one step back from that was pretty much the backgrounds of the whole show. Then also you have a voiceover. Hundreds of hours of the stories that the young boys spoke about were distilled down into this project, which was originally only going run 30 minutes, but obviously Peter had in the back of his mind, "No, okay. Yeah, I'm just going to give you boys this footage, but you're just going to keep working your way in the [inaudible] because I've got so much and think I can actually make feature out of this." And though we didn't know that for a long time. Peter would then hand over the material again, and the foley would be okay, but then at the same time, Peter was also re-cutting the voiceover. So we had a tracking issue between having to track the picture changes that Peter made, and as well as that we then had to track all the voiceover changes that Peter made, because the interviews were of completely varying quality and also had a noise flaw, which was substantial. A lot of cleanup happened on the actual interviews themselves, which we didn't want to lose every time Peter handed the material back over to us. The picture and the voiceover were quite separate in the way Peter wanted to portray what was being talked about.

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Theo Mayer: What's interesting is in a lot of standard dialogue replacement, you have one or two people, but you were dealing with a lot of crowds.

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Brent Burge: Martin Kwok was the dialogue super on it, and he was the one who had to actually literally drill into working out the whole plan of action around how do we approach the crowd. You have what is called walla, and you have broad effects crowds, where sure, you can get a sense of a crowd in a particular scene, and each of those different layers from the general effects crowd, which is more a base layer, through to the walla, through to more discernible dialogue, which is where loop groups come in. All of them were absolutely key to get right, because the authenticity would only come alive once you looked at it and were just completely at ease with the sound that was coming off the screen as paired with the scene. The effects crowd took some time to find, because [inaudible] and when he heard about the show, the absolute thing he said to us, "You have got to get the accents right. Just absolutely no way that you can put this on the page for anybody who knows those people on screen, or can recognize where those people are from on screen through their uniforms or however it was, and you're putting some New Zealand look-grouper trying to imitate an accent from some region in the UK."

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Theo Mayer: Well, talk to me a little about the machine sounds, the explosions, the guns, the tanks.

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Brent Burge: Peter is an avid collector. He's got a passion for the First World War, which you can hear in the show, so he had some artillery guns himself. We had an opportunity to record all the shells being loaded, he's got empty shells. We had opportunity to record a lot of the foley background, the guns. As well as that, he has some contact from the army as well here, so occasionally they'll just invite Peter to come up to Uluru, and [inaudible] do a particular exercise that we might be interested in recording, which would be things like shooting off artillery shells in the middle of the desert. We have mountains in the middle of New Zealand where the road goes up onto the plateau, and the army is based around these couple of mountains, and they do a lot of exercises there, and we had an opportunity to go record it. That's how you get to really sense the way a gun sounds. When we arrived, the army guys say, "Okay, we'll go out and scout the terrain about where we're going to be doing this. The guns will be shooting from here, and they will be shooting over those foothills over there, about nine kilometers away to a blast site on the other side. And just by the way, we're aiming for a rock." It took us 40 minutes to drive to the blast site where these shells were going to land. So we had about four people recording sound for it. Two people at the blast site, which included a bunker. The army person that was in charge of the operation was managing it from the blast site, so he could give them instructions about how far to adjust their registration of the gun. Then that was relayed to the gun sites where me and Justin Webster again were positioned, and we just laid out a bunch of microphones. They started shooting before we

had finished running the microphones mind you, so I think I had something in my pants at that point, because I was literally just down in front of the guns trying to set up some mics and they started, without warning, they just started firing them off. Obviously had instruction to start firing. So it was one of the most adrenaline filled days, but we still managed to get some great sounds. The guns sounded fantastic.

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Theo Mayer: I'm incredibly excited by what you all and Peter have done. When you go back and you think about this project in five years, in ten years, what's the one thing you're going to remember the most?

[0:52:09]

Brent Burge: I think the thing I'm going to remember the most is the absolute vision that Peter had of how he was going to put this project together. It was such a personal project for him. I just think you can see Peter all the way through it. He knew exactly how it was going to work. All about what Peter put on the page for us to respond to, and we responded to it, and I think audiences are responding to it as well, because it is such a personal thing for him I think, and passionate thing for him.

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Theo Mayer: I think that the methods that you are developing here are going to be used for all sorts of things, and the only thing I can say is thank you.

[0:52:46]

Brent Burge: We really do appreciate it down here, it seems like one of a kind, that's for sure. That was the thing back in 2015 that Peter said. He said, "I'm getting you guys to have a look at this, because I'm going to put something together for us. It's going to be colorized, it's going to be 3D, and it's going to be in IMAX because I don't want people to feel they can just watch it on the History Channel. I really want people to get out of their houses and come and see it." That's an inspirational thing that often comes up, about just taking things out of the ordinary if you like, and just making them extraordinary for the person to watch.

[0:53:20]

Theo Mayer: Brent Burge is the Supervising Sound Editor for the new Peter Jackson film *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Google Fathom Events or follow the link in the podcast notes to get your ticket for the 17th or the 27th of December. This is a genuine holiday treat. And that wraps up our episode number 100, a fittingly great show. We want to thank our guests: Mike Shuster, curator for The Great War Project Blog; Dr. Glyn Pryor and Peter Francis, from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; Joanna Bourke, Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London; Jonathan Casey, from the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City; Cara Reiche and Peter Mills, co-creators of the musical version of *The Hello Girls*; and Brent Burge, Supervising Sound Editor for the new Peter Jackson film, *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Many thanks to Katherine Akey, my co-conspirator and the show's line producer. To Mack Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing team. To JL Michaud for his great research. This week we sadly say goodbye to Rachel Hurt, our fall intern who really did a great job. Thank you Rachel, back to school with you. And I'm Theo Mayer, the show's producer and your host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate, and educate about World War I. For the past five years, we have inspired a national conversation and awareness about World War I. We've brought the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators in their classrooms. Now we've helped to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country, and now with the armistice behind us, we'll be putting all of our focus and attention on one more key goal. With your help, we're going to be building America's National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC. Go see WW1CC.org/memorial for more details. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and also the Starr Foundation for their support. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at WW1CC.org/cn for centennial news. You'll find World War I Centennial News in all the places you get your podcasts, and even using your smart speaker by saying, "Play WW1 Centennial News podcast." The podcast Twitter handle is @TheWW1Podcast. The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @WW1CC, and we're on Facebook @WW1Centennial. Thank you for joining us, and don't forget: You can keep the story of World War I alive in America by helping us build the memorial in Washington, DC. Just text the letters WWI to the phone number 91999 and you'll see how.

[0:56:34]

Speaker 18: [singing]

[0:56:41]

Theo Mayer: So long.

[0:56:55]