

Further Reading 3: British Colonies in World War I

TASK: Draw the rough shape of the different countries that helped fight for Britain during World War I. Write a sentence inside the shape to summarise how that country was involved in World War I.

Rally Round the Flag

In 1914 the British Empire occupied a quarter of the known surface of the globe. The Empire was ruled by King George V and included countries like India, Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as large parts of Africa, the West Indies and the Far East. The outbreak of the First World War saw a great response from the Empire. A total of nearly 8,586,000 men were raised for military and naval service. 20% of volunteers were from Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean, with the vast majority coming from India.



Wounded Indian soldiers

In 1914 the Indian Army was the largest volunteer army in the world. Four Indian divisions landed in France in 1914 and helped contain the German advance through Belgium during the early stages of the war whilst volunteer units from Britain were still in training. Here are a group of wounded soldiers in a French village. Some 113,743 Indians were reported dead, wounded or missing at the end of the war. Indian personnel won 12,445 British and 463 Allied medals and decorations for bravery, including 12 Victoria Cross awards, the highest award for bravery.



South African soldiers

The South African Brigade was comprised of white soldiers only. Black South African citizens were not allowed to fight and went to France as the South African Native Labour Contingent. These South African soldiers are enjoying a cigarette on the Somme during December 1916.



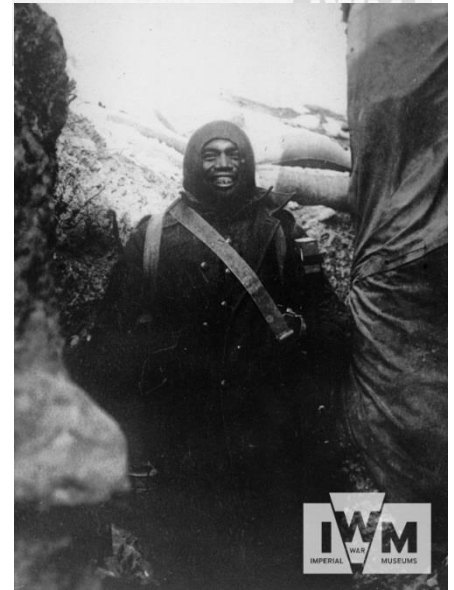
R H Broome

In August 1914, Australia had a population of under 5 million, including 200,000 native Australians, known then as Aborigines. From that population, 412,953 Australians, (including 400 Aborigines), volunteered for military service, including R H Broome who joined the Royal Australian Navy.



Maori soldier at Gallipoli

When war broke out in August 1914 New Zealand's population was just over 1.1 million, including 50,000 Maoris and 250,000 British-born citizens. 128,525 New Zealanders, including 2,688 Maoris, volunteered or were conscripted during the course of the war, including this soldier who was photographed at Gallipoli.



The Newfoundland Regiment (1917)

Newfoundland was a British colony in Canada with a population of 250,000. The Royal Newfoundland Regiment suffered very heavy casualties on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. July 1 is now marked as memorial day in Newfoundland and the regiment is commemorated at the Newfoundland Memorial site near Beaumont-Hamel.

