

MAPPING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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The Map Collection of the Imperial War Museums

The Imperial War Museum, or National War Museum, as it was originally named, began to acquire maps and charts as soon as it was founded on 5 March 1917 to record the events still taking place during the Great War. The intention was to collect and display material as a record of civilian and military experiences during that war, and to commemorate the sacrifices of all sections of society.

Maps and charts were acquired by direct contact with the appropriate military and civil departments of government, and also by private donation, both during and after the war. In addition, maps produced and used by the Allies, and also captured maps and other enemy maps, found their way into the archive.

Many of the maps and charts had been used in military, naval and air headquarters in London and in the various active theatres of war. Their condition naturally varies a great deal: some are stained with mud and blood, and scarred by shell-splinter or bullet. None such is shown here, but several bear evidence of their field use in the form of manuscript annotations for enemy positions, intelligence notes, tank routes, etc. One of the most tragic reminders of the human cost of the conflict is the 'body count' map of the Ypres Salient by the Imperial War Graves Commission at the end of the war, which appears at the end of the book.