



Oh What a Lovely War?

The hardships of war are well documented throughout history, with the First and Second World Wars accounting for a devastating loss of life. Many of the soldiers who lived to see the end of these wars survived having seen their friends and comrades being injured or mortally wounded next to them. The resulting trauma meant that a lot of soldiers would never talk about their war with their loved ones.

Before the First World War many soldiers were keen to sign up and serve their country, and propaganda from the time hints at the honour and camaraderie that could be gained from joining the army. Once tales from the Front Line of the true nature of the war began to emerge, fewer men signed up to the army, so the Military Service Act was introduced in 1916 to conscript men aged 16-40 to the British Army.

As the war went on, the government realised that support from home was key to raising a soldiers' morale, and by the start of the Second World War there were several government run initiatives put in place to entertain the troops. Back on the home front, families were encouraged to Dig for Victory and Make Do and Mend to reserve essential supplies for the army.

Despite the horror and loss during these times of conflict, soldiers and their loved ones back at home came to rely on this encouragement to get them through. For some people, the difficulties of life on the Front Line and in wartime Britain could be slightly improved through good humour and entertainment. Shared experiences of war served to bring together unlikely communities and friends, and for some soldiers using their creativity became a way of coping with their experiences.

The objects and stories collected from this time communicate the resilience of human nature, and are a testament to those who created something positive in the worst of circumstances.

