**Project on World War 1 (1914 – 1918) James Byrne P7**

During the early 1900’s the main countries in Europe had become suspicious of one another. By 1914 two major camps had formed:

**The Triple Entente**: Great Britain, France and Russia. They were known as **The Allies.**

**The Triple Alliance**: Germany, Austria-Hungary and its allies.

The members of each group promised to help one another if they were attacked by a country belonging to the other alliance.

The event that started the war was the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in Bosnia in June 1914.

Because its leader had been shot, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. As a result:

1. **Russia** got involved because Russia had an alliance with Serbia.
2. **Germany** then declared war on Russia because Germany had an alliance with Austria-Hungary.
3. **Britain** declared war on Germany because of its invasion of neutral Belgium. Britain had agreements to protect both Belgium and France.

**It became known as The Great War because so many countries were involved including America which entered the war in 1917.**

**Timeline of main events of WW1:**

June 28th 1914 – Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated

July 28th 1914 – Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia – WW1 has started

August 1914 – Germany supports Austria and begins invading countries in Europe.

September 1914 – Allied forces stop German forces taking over France.

February 1915 – Germany begins naval blockade of Britain.

February 1916 – Germany begins attack on Verdun in France.

July 1916 – Allied attack begins the Battle of the Somme. Tanks first used in battle

December 1916 – Battle of Verdun ends – 550,000 French soldiers dead & 450,000 German soldiers dead.

February 1917 – Germany increases submarine attacks on Allied shipping after the sinking of the Lusitania.

April 1917 – The USA declares war on Germany.

June 1917 - American soldiers arrive in France.

July 1917 – Britain make a disastrous attempt to break through German lines at Passchendaele in Belgium: 250 000 men are killed and they only gained 800 metre of land.

January 1918 – US president draws up his 14 points required for peace.

March 1918 – Russia makes peace with Germany and withdraws from the war.

March 1918 – Germany begins its last offensive of the war. Many German soldiers die & the Allies stop them just outside Paris.

September 1918 – The US begins the final offensive of the war.

November 11th 1918 – The German leader The Kaiser flees form Germany & Germany signs the Armistice, the war is over

Jan 1919 – Peace Conference begins in Paris

June 1919 – The Treaty of Versailles is signed.

**In my project I will look at 3 different things:**

1. What life was like for soldiers in the trenches.
2. The new weapons used in WW1.
3. The importance of animals in the battlefield.

**The Trenches**

On the Western Front the war was fought by soldiers in trenches. Trenches were long narrow ditches dug into the ground where the soldiers lived. They were very muddy and filled with water and were uncomfortable and the toilets overflowed. Because they were living in these conditions for so long, very cold and very wet, many of the soldiers developed a condition known as trench foot – their feet and legs rotted. The bodies of the soldiers who were killed lay in the trenches and were eaten by rats – the rats also chewed away at the rotten feet of the living soldiers! Some of the soldiers kept diaries of what it was like in the trenches and they described the rats as being as big as cats!

The land separating the Allied soldiers on one side and the German soldiers on the other side was known as “No Man’s Land”. Both sides protected their trenches with rows of barbed wire. Soldiers only got to sleep in the afternoon during daylight and at night for an hour at a time. During rests time they wrote letters to send home to their families and played card games.

Soldiers carried a lot of equipment. This included a gas mask, weapons & ammunition, protective clothes like boots and a helmet, a shovel and “webbing equipment” – personal items like shaving kits and water bottles.

On Christmas Eve 1914 something very different happened in some parts of the Western Front. Soldiers from both sides put down their weapons (called a Truce) and met in “No Man’s Land”. They sang carols like “Silent Night” (Stille Nacht) in German. Men from both sides gave gifts to each other. The Germans gave sausages to the British and the British gave the Germans chocolates. On Christmas Day a British soldier kicked a football out of his trench and the Germans joined in. It was reported that the Germans won the match 3-2. The British High Command did not agree with the truce. They even suggested that the Germans were planning an attack. They were ignored and no guns were fired on Christmas Day 1914. The truce lasted until the New Year in some parts of the Western Front. But it wasn’t long before soldiers on both sides returned to life in the trenches and the killing started again.

**New weapons used in WW1**

New weapons and machines were being developed all the time to cope with the difficult conditions of battle. These developments changed the way war was fought forever. The war was fought on the land, at sea and in the air.

**On the land:**

**Tanks** were built for travel across battlefields. They could travel across the rough and muddy ground. They also stopped soldiers being caught in barbed wire and they helped protect them from gunfire. The first ever tank designed held a crew of two and had four gunners. It was the first completed tank in history but it wasn’t powerful enough to be sent to war. A better and bigger British tank was designed and it was used in September 1916. It held 10 men and could go as fast as 4 miles an hour.

**In the air:**



Before 1914 there were not many aeroplanes and they weren’t very strong. During the war planes were made stronger and quicker and they became weapons. They could be used to **spy on the enemy** and **bombs** could be dropped on enemies from the air. In the first planes the pilot or co-pilot dropped a bomb over the side of the plane. Then the Germans developed the **Zeppelin** airships which carried around 2000 kilograms of bombs and carried out raids on England. However they were slow and eventually the British realised they could be shot down and set on fire. The Germans then developed the **Gotha** bomber which was as long as two buses. It could fly for 500 miles and carried 500 kilograms of bombs to drop on Britain. A system was developed whereby while flying planes could fire a lot of bullets at an enemy plane in the sky and bring it down.

**At sea:**

 Britain had the largest navy in the world but enemy submarines called **U-boats** were sinking British ships. So **microfilm** was invented by Britain. It was used under water to listen for any German U-boats nearby. **Warships** were ships with guns for fighting sea battles. **Battleships** were the largest warships and had very big guns. A **Destroyer** was a small, fast warship which fired guns and torpedoes. **Submarines** were smaller but could destroy powerful warships.

**How did animals help in WW1?**

**Horses**

Before 1914 wars had mainly been fought by cavalries (soldiers on horseback). But both sides in WW1 soon realised that the muddy ground, barbed wire and machine guns made it too difficult to use horses for fighting. Instead millions of horses were used to carry people and supplies. Horses had to be strong. They carried wounded soldiers or weaponry. Around 8 million horses from both sides died during the war.

**Dogs**

 Dogs were used in many different ways during the war. **Sentry** dogs stayed with one soldier and guarded the trenches. They were taught to give a warning sound such as growling or barking if they sensed a stranger close to camp. Many Dobermans were used as sentry dogs. **Scout** dogs were used to find the enemy. They were trained not to bark as this would draw attention. Instead they would give a signal, like raising their tail. **Casualty** dogs were trained to find wounded or dying soldiers. They carried medical equipment so a wounded soldier could treat himself. They stayed beside a dying soldier to keep him company.

**Pigeons**

Carrier pigeons were used as messengers during the war. Pigeons always flew home when they were released, so troops made sure the pigeons’ nests were in places they needed to send messages to. They were known as homing pigeons and were very important during the war.

 **Elephants** were used to pull heavy artillery.

