

Panel: “War, Memory, Gender”

Christopher Rozman

Title: “Britain’s Guided Memory: Remembering the Million Dead from the Great War”

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Christopher Rozman is senior at IPFW and will graduate with his bachelor’s in history this spring. He grew up in Ft. Wayne and graduated from Homestead High School in 2009. In the following fall Christopher began attending IPFW and declared a history major shortly after. Upon graduation Christopher will commission into the US Army in the rank of 2nd Lieutenant as an Armor officer. While he will not be pursuing a master’s in the immediate future he hopes to continue his education later in life.

Abstract

The results of World War I include redrawn borders, new superpowers, and massive debt for most parties involved. The cost of the war was not only measurable in dollars and pounds but the number of dead fathers, sons, and brothers. Out of the roughly 10 million military deaths, 1.1 million were soldiers of the British Empire from Great Britain, New Zealand, India, and Australia. While the high cost of the war may be attributed to using old strategies for new wars, the old strategy of handling the war dead would not suffice. The massive numbers were not only a logistical issue for burying those who died, but also had political and social repercussions.

The job of the government in the post war years would be to somehow take the enormous casualties from a dark and depressing thought and turn them into something the families, friends, and future generations could look in a more positive aspect. The first step in the process would be to figuratively and literally bury the past. Hundreds of thousands of bodies needed proper burials in national cemeteries. Commissions and committees were formed in an attempt to make order of all the dead, to help guide the memory of World War I for the British public.

Bibliographical Note

Most of the research done for this presentation consisted of government documents in the National Archives of the United Kingdom. Through their website I found hundreds of cabinet briefs, military updates, and other internal documents that had been once classified. Sifting through these documents took more time than I had originally anticipated, but having original documents that included deliberations of members and personal desires of important figures of the time was invaluable to my project. These documents along with other published sources helped me analyze the process of formation of collective memory of World War I.