# Imperial War Museums (London)




The Imperial War Museum was founded in 1917 to record the story of the Great War and the contributions made to it by the peoples of the Empire. An Act of Parliament formally established the Museum and its governing body, the Board of Trustees, in 1920, when the Museum opened in the Crystal Palace. From 1924 to 1935 the Museum was housed in two small galleries adjoining the Imperial Institute. In 1936 it was reopened in the central portion of the former Bethlem Royal Hospital in Lambeth Road, Southwark where it remains to this day.

In 1939 the Trustees' remit was extended to include the Second World War and in 1953 the terms of reference were further expanded to include all military operations in which British or Commonwealth forces have been involved since August 1914. The Imperial War Museum is thus the national museum of twentieth century conflict. It illustrates and records all aspects of modern war, and of the individual's experience of war, whether allied or enemy, service or civilian, military or political, social or cultural. Its role embraces the causes, course and consequences of conflict and it has an essentially educational purpose.

The Imperial War Museum is a multi-branch national museum with five public branches, all of which are integral elements of the Museum:

- IWM London;
- Churchill War Rooms;
- HMS Belfast moored in the Pool of London;
- IWM Duxford, Cambridge, and;
- IWM North, Trafford, Manchester.

Each Branch provides a comprehensive range of permanent and temporary

exhibitions consisting of exhibits from the permanent collections integrated with audiovisual interactive displays. The Imperial War Museum is, in addition to its conventional museum role, a major national art gallery, a major national archive of written and audio-visual records, and a research centre. Its activities include display, education, publishing, research, trading, conferences, as well as the acquisition, documentation, study and conservation of collections.

The IWM is a non–departmental public body (NDPB) overseen by a Board of Trustees and its Chairman. Its sponsor department is the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). The Imperial War Museum plans to lead the national commemoration of the First World War centenary in 2014. In preparation, Imperial War Museum London will undergo extensive work to redisplay its First World War galleries.