

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

AMBULANCE TRAINS: TREATMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

TALKING



Ages

11-14
14-16

Topics

WORLD WAR ONE • HISTORY

Skills used

OBSERVATION • DISCUSSION

TREATMENT

About Ambulance Trains

Explore the realm of First World War ambulance trains with our image bank for Key Stage 3 pupils. Discover the significance of the railway industry and ambulance trains during the 1914-1918 conflict, and learn about the life-changing journeys of wounded soldiers.

Using images in your classroom

Our galleries in the Science Museum Group are full of amazing objects which are all examples of how science and technology has changed and improved our everyday lives.

You can use images:

- To hook students' interest at the start of a lesson or to introduce a new topic.
- As part of a discussion to explore the stories of the people who have shaped the world we live in through their passion and creativity.
- As mystery objects and get your students using their science and history skills such as observation, using prior knowledge and asking questions.
- To create a display of applications of science in your classroom, connecting past, present and future examples of technology.
- In a pre-visit activity to familiarise students with some of the objects and themes they will find in any of our museums.

Treatment: Background information

During the First World War there were new advances in technology and warfare. This resulted in new types of injuries which required different treatment processes.

Ambulance trains were key in the fast treatment and evacuation of the wounded away from the front. Only casualties that were fit to travel were loaded onto ambulance trains. If a soldier had life threatening injuries they would not board the trains and would continue to receive treatment nearer enemy lines.

The aim of these resources is to help your students to explore how the wounded were treated in the First World War. The resources offer an observation into the people and treatment post battle.

Teachers' notes

Use them as discussion points for learning about how wounded soldiers were treated on ambulance trains and back at home during the First World War

Encourage your students to explore and interpret the resources

Make comparisons to the way battlefield treatment works today

Talking points

- What is the content of the pictures/letters?
- Why might these moments need to be captured?
- What do these resources tell you about how wounded soldiers were treated?
- How do you think these conditions would affect the recovery of the troops?
- What do these photographs not tell us?
- How do we deal with battlefield casualties today?
- What questions do you need to ask about these resources?
- What other types of sources of information do you think you need to look at to find out the answers to these questions?

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Image: Courtesy of
Imperial War Museum

Tending the wounded

Soldiers were treated and assessed at Advanced Dressing Stations. Soldiers needing further treatment were then taken by ambulance train.

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Treatment bay inside a carriage

This train was on display in several stations in Lancashire and Yorkshire before being taken to the Western Front.

'The War Office state that this has been particularly noticeable at certain stations where passengers are charged for admission to the platforms, assuming that having paid for admission they have the right to use the platform.

'The Executive Committee will be glad if you will give an instruction that everything possible is to be done to keep the stations quiet when any ambulance trains are standing at them.

'If possible, nobody should be admitted to the platforms, except those persons who are with the Red Cross detachments on duty or have other work to perform in connection with the trains.'

From the Acting Chairman,
Railway Executive Committee

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Letter courtesy of the
National Archives

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Arrival on British platforms

A transcript of an instruction from the acting chairman of the Railway Executive Committee on how the public should behave when ambulance trains arrived at the stations.

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

Mental Health: Background information

Soldiers suffered from all kinds of trauma and injuries. What we now refer to as 'shell shock' and 'post-traumatic stress disorder' were new terms not recognised during the First World War due to a lack of understanding, fear and confusion. Large numbers of casualties were affected by mental health illnesses during the war and better treatment and research into understanding it began.

Ambulance trains were a secure and safe place away from the trenches where soldiers could start to recuperate or come to terms with the effects of war.

The aim of these resources is to help your students to explore the impact and treatment of mental health in the First World War.

Teachers' notes

Use them as discussion points for learning about how soldiers suffering from mental health issues were treated on ambulance trains during the First World War

Encourage your students to explore and interpret the resources

Discuss new treatments and therapies for today's mental health patients

Compare methods of treatment today to that of soldiers in the First World War

Talking points:

Why do you think these photographs might

have been taken?

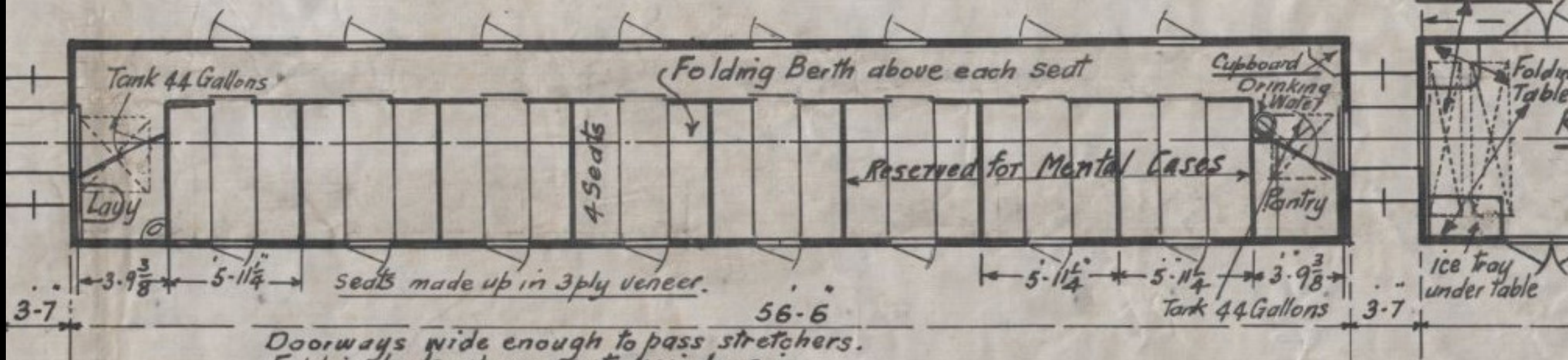
What do these resources tell you about how soldiers suffering from mental health problems were treated?

Think about the staff that had to manage these casualties. Describe their thoughts?

If you were a soldier suffering with 'shell shock', how would you feel coming to terms with this unknown illness?

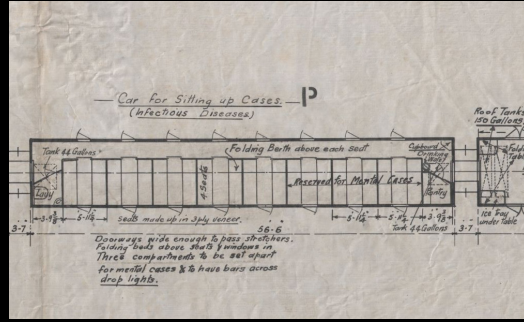
Why were these wards created and do you think they were beneficial?

— Car for Sitting up Cases. — P (Infectious Diseases.)



Doorways wide enough to pass stretchers.
Folding beds above seats & windows in
Three compartments to be set apart
for mental cases & to have bars across
drop lights.

Stone's system of electric lighting throughout
Steam Heated throughout & in addition Cars G + R
to be separately heated on Dargue & Griffith's system.



Preparing for mental strain

This is a blue print design of a continental ambulance train. Ward Car P, has 'reserved' spaces for 'mental cases' assigned.

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Padded rooms in the ambulance carriage

Soldiers suffered from all kinds of injuries including of the mind. These rooms kept patients, staff and other passengers safe from harm.

‘Sometimes a mental patient would be handed into our care and this entailed the orderly sitting with him in a closed compartment to see that he didn’t harm himself or attempt to jump off the train’

'Sometimes a mental patient would be handed into our care and this entailed the orderly sitting with him in a closed compartment to see that the patient didn't harm himself or attempt to jump off the train'

Quote: Courtesy
of the Dunning family

Hubert Dunning's thoughts

Many orderlies kept diaries that documented their journeys on the ambulance train. Many reported on the conditions of soldiers