

Exhibition showcases the lesser-known heroes of World War I

A new exhibition shedding light on some of the lesser known stories of World War I will be unveiled in South Yorkshire on Armistice Day.

'For King and Country' opens on Thursday 11 November at Sheffield's National Emergency Services Museum (NESM). It will explore the role police, fire, ambulance and lifeboat personnel played during the conflict, both on the front line and at home, and reveal the lasting impact the war had on the development of the emergency services.

The exhibition features stories of personal heroism from those that served on the front line, such as South Yorkshire police officer and Victoria Cross recipient George Wyatt, and decorated ambulance driver Muriel Annie Thompson. It also reveals how the war opened up new opportunities for women in the emergency services at home, including the recruitment of the first 'official' female police constable in England, Edith Smith.

Helping to tell these stories is a collection of unique historic objects, many of them on display at NESM for the first time. These include a scrapbook created by World War I nurse Jessie Akehurst, original medical and surgical equipment, a wartime litter, badges, postcards, diaries, personal effects and even a 1916 horse drawn Lingfield veterinary ambulance.

The exhibition is housed in a recreated trench dugout and first aid post, and also includes interactive and hands-on displays to help bring this fascinating aspect of the conflict to life.

Museum curator Holly Gosling said, 'World War II is often thought of as being the first conflict that mobilised the whole country but it was World War I that set the template, and which led to some huge changes in society. The emergency services couldn't escape from that wave of change, either during the war or after it.'

'From the millions of men who left the police or fire service to 'do their bit' as ordinary soldiers, to the women who took the opportunities war presented to prove themselves in a man's world, there are so many stories to be discovered when you delve into the history of the emergency services during World War I. We can't wait to share them with our visitors.'

The exhibition has its official launch on 11 November and will open to the public on Friday 12 November. For more information go to visitnesm.org.uk.