

SS MENDI

We Die Like Brothers Education Resource Pack

In February 1917, the First World War troopship Mendi sank after a collision in the English Channel. Almost 650 men, many of them black South Africans, perished in the freezing water. This is their story.

This pack compliments the teaching of history at Key Stage 3 (England) and Grades 7-9 (South Africa). It can be used to support a visit to Delville Wood Memorial in France, where the We Die Like Brothers exhibition about the Mendi was opened in summer 2015, or it can be used to explore the First World War in the classroom.

It includes:

Four posters introducing -

The First World War
The South African Native Labour Corps
The Loss of the Mendi
The Aftermath and the Mendi's Legacy

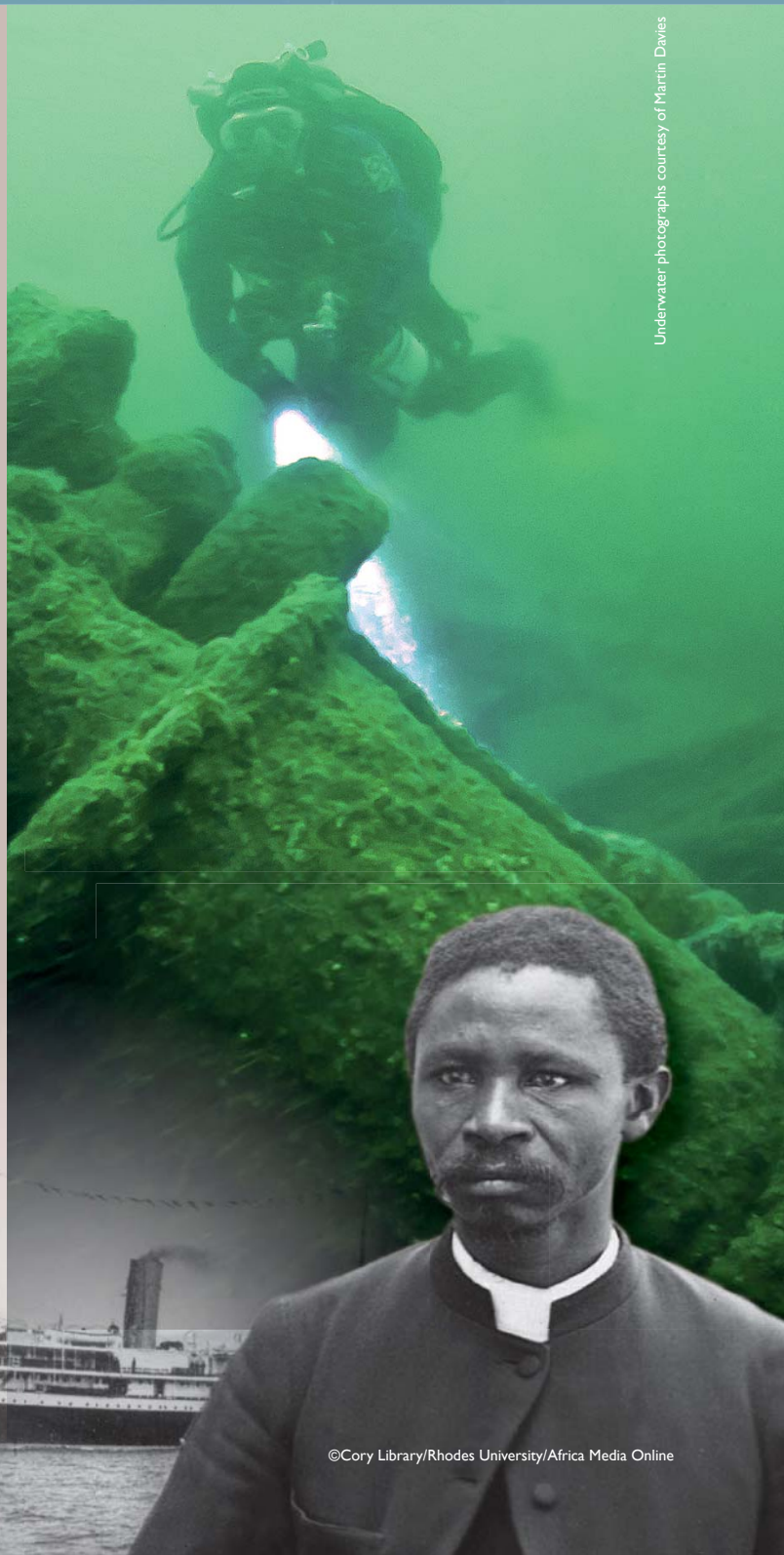
Activities to further explore the Mendi and its legacy -

1. Understanding Chronology
2. Understanding Significance
3. Exploring Inequality
4. The Death Dance
5. Making Links
6. In Memoriam
7. Exploring Archaeology
8. An International Story

Links to further sources of information

Glossary – words in green can be found in the glossary

Underwater photographs courtesy of Martin Davies



Glossary

Apartheid – From 1948 until 1994 South Africa was divided by apartheid. Apartheid was a system of racial segregation, keeping blacks and whites apart.

Artefact – An object made, shaped or used by a person which can teach us about the past.

Bridge – The bridge is the room on a ship from where it is controlled. The Captain, or Officer on Watch mans the bridge.

Chart-room – The room on a ship where the charts, maps and instruments are kept.

Chronology and chronological – The order in which events occurred, beginning with the earliest and ending with the most recent. For example, the First World War comes before the Second World War when they are placed in chronological order.

Geophysical survey – Archaeologists use geophysical survey, or geophys, to create images of what is under the ground, or under the sea. There are lots of different techniques that can be used. At sea, a device towed behind a boat sends signals to the seabed, and into the seabed, and measures how long it takes for them to bounce back. Computer software then creates a picture of what is below the water.

International significance – Things that are important to people or affect people in more than one country.

Keel – The bottom of the ship.

Local significance – Things that are important to people or affect people in a small area, for example, within a town or village.

National significance – Things that are important to people or affect people across a country.

Oral tradition – These are the stories about the past that are passed from person to person that are not written down, or which are written down long after the events they describe.

Port – If you are stood on board a ship, facing towards the front (which is called the 'bow'), port is on your left.

Porthole – The name given to a window on a ship. They are often round and have thick glass.

Primary source – A document, picture or object that was created at the time of the period being studied. Letters written by the men on board the Mendi are primary sources for learning about the First World War, the geophysical survey image of the Mendi is a primary source for learning about how the ship looks today.

'rang Full Speed Astern' – This means that the ship was directed to go backwards at full speed, or to reverse.

Starboard - If you are stood on board a ship, facing towards the front (which is called the 'bow'), starboard is on your right.

Triple Alliance – An alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy formed in 1882.

Triple Entente – An alliance between Russia, France and the United Kingdom formed in 1907.

SS MENDI

Links to other sources for investigating the Mendi

This Education Resource Pack is part of the web presence of the We Die Like Brothers exhibition, which opened at the South African National War Memorial's museum at Delville Wood on the Somme in France in July 2015.

www.delvillewood.com

Dr Shawn Sobers takes an innovative approach to the commemoration of the Mendi. His work can be found here :

<http://www.shawnsobers.com/african-kinship-systems-emotional-science-case-study-2-ss-mendi-tragedy/>

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission produced a learning DVD about the Mendi.

It can be ordered from:

<http://www.cwgc.org/learning-and-resources/primary.aspx>

The National Maritime Museum, the Imperial War Museum and The National Archives have documents and images on the Mendi. Use their catalogue search engines.

Wessex Archaeology has investigated the wreck. Our work can be found here:

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/marine/eh/ssmendi/index.php>

There is a collection of artefacts recovered from the wreck of the Mendi at the Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum, Arreton, Isle of Wight.

Whilst Wessex Archaeology have checked the suitability of third party websites prior to the release of this document, we cannot guarantee that the links are still current, or hold the same content. Wessex Archaeology cannot take responsibility for third party websites.

This project has been funded by Historic England

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/news-and-features/first-world-war-home-front/>



Historic England



SS MENDI

The First World War

The First World War, or Great War, raged from 1914 to 1918. Britain entered the war on 4th August 1914.

On one side were the **Triple Alliance** of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. Against them were the **Triple Entente** formed by Britain, France and Russia. These alliances were formed long before 1914 and were supposed to help prevent war. Instead, the distrust each felt for the other contributed to the causes of the First World War. Relationships within the alliances were complicated, and when war was declared in 1914 Italy didn't enter the conflict to support the Triple Alliance. When Italy did enter the war in 1915 it was to support the Triple Entente.

There are many different reasons why the war began and, over 100 years later, historians still can't agree on which the most important were. Some of the possible causes are listed below – do you know what all of the words mean? Can you identify which are long term causes, and which is a short-term cause?

Nationalism

Militarism

Imperialism

Complex alliances

The assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand

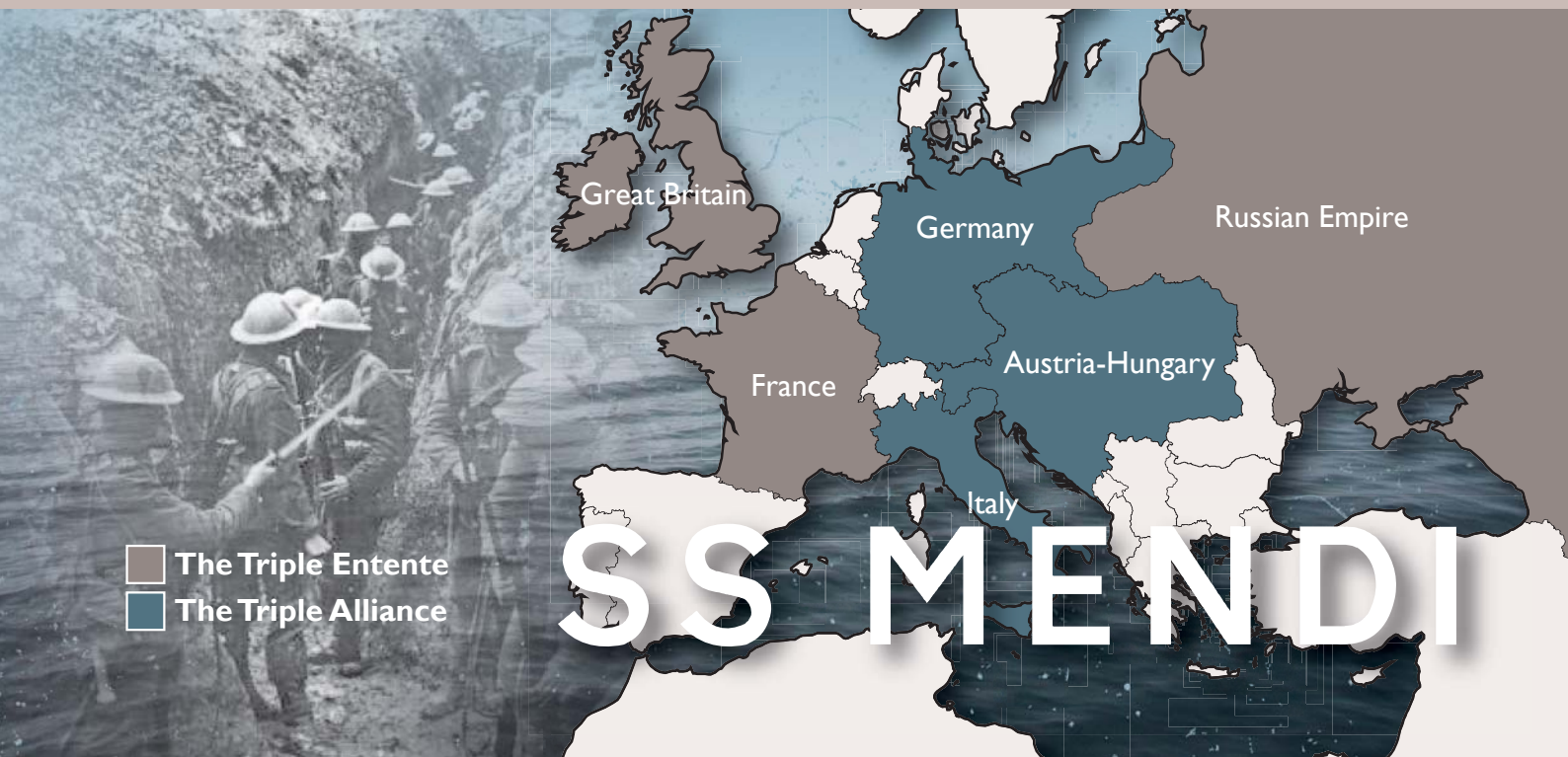
Following the assassination of the Austrian Archduke by a Serbian man in June 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia mobilised troops to support Serbia; Germany invaded Belgium and Luxembourg, and started to progress towards France. Before the war, Britain had signed a treaty obliging it to protect Belgium. Britain therefore declared war on Germany. The First World War had begun.

As the conflict deepened, countries from outside of Europe entered the war. Britain was supported by the British Empire and therefore people from across the globe, including Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, the Caribbean and many parts of Africa became involved.

The Western Front is the name given to the places where the two opposing forces faced each other in France and Belgium. The men on the Front lived, fought and often died in trenches. Conditions were awful. Trench warfare was very difficult and dangerous for the troops.

As well as the Western Front, there was an Eastern Front where huge Russian armies clashed with Germany and its allies. Combat extended to the sea and into the air and battles were fought in Africa, the Middle East and across the globe.

The First World War ended on 11 November 1918. By the end of the conflict over 17 million people were dead.



 The Triple Entente
 The Triple Alliance

The South African Native Labour Corps

The Labour Corps were formed in 1917 to support Britain during the First World War. They were a non-combatant force which means that they were not trained to fight. Their job was to support the British Army by building roads, driving, felling trees and moving materials.

Why didn't they fight?

South Africa was a deeply divided society when war broke out in 1914. The white government had oppressed the native population, taken the majority of the farmland for themselves and left the black population with little option but to work in mines and other heavy industries. The government decided that training and arming the black men whose lifestyles they had subjugated and whose land they had taken would be a bad idea. A secret report written in 1915 said:

'...no proposal for training Natives upon a large scale is likely to be acceptable...as the return, after peace, of a large body of trained and disciplined men would create obvious difficulties and might seriously menace the supremacy of whites.'
Bonar Law, Secretary of Colonies, 1915

The South African Native Labour Corps were not trained to fight because the government of South Africa, which was made up of white men, was concerned that the black troops might use military training to rebel against their oppression at home when the war was over.

Despite this, many South African men signed up. They felt that supporting the British Army would demonstrate loyalty and trustworthiness, and hopefully gain them a voice in decisions when they returned from the war.

The men were paid for their work and whilst the wage was slightly more than the money they might earn at home, it was not as much as that paid to the white men serving the British Army.

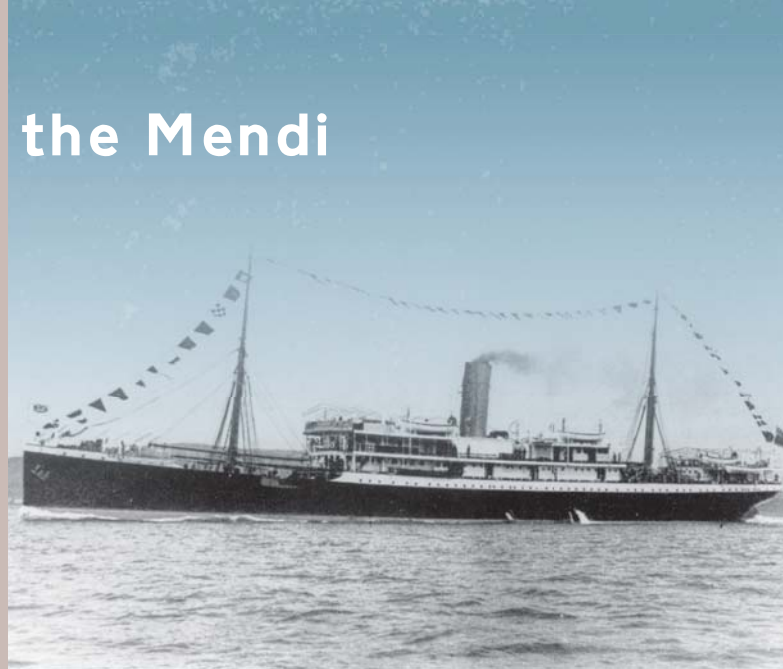
The South African Native Labour Corps was not the only labour corps. India and China were amongst other nations who formed labour corps to aid the war effort. Despite having broken out amongst European countries, the First World War was truly a global war.



SS MENDI

The Loss of the Mendi

Before the war, the Mendi was based in Liverpool and regularly travelled to West Africa carrying cargo and passengers. Because of the shortage of vessels, ships like the Mendi were pressed into service during the war to aid the war effort. In 1916, the Mendi was adapted to become a troop ship. In January 1917 the ship left Cape Town and sailed to Plymouth, before setting sail for Le Havre in France. The Mendi was taking members of the South African Native Labour Corps (SANLC) to France where they would work supporting the war effort, and was escorted by HMS Brisk.



It was almost 5 in the morning on 21st February 1917. Fourth Officer, Trapnell, who was at the starboard end of the bridge, heard another vessel approaching through the fog. He shouted to Second Officer, Raine, and sounded the Mendi's whistle. Raine rang 'Full Speed Astern' and ordered the helmsman 'hard-a-starboard'.

Hearing the commotion, Captain Yardley hurried back to the bridge from the chart-room to see the masthead light and the red port side-light of a much larger vessel looming over them.

Extract from the We Die Like Brothers online exhibition

It was a bitterly cold February morning and the ship was south-east of the Isle of Wight moving slowly through heavy fog when the Darro, a larger steamship travelling from France to England, collided with the Mendi. The Darro was travelling too fast and hadn't seen the Mendi in the fog until it was too late. The damage to the Mendi caused by the collision extended from keel to deck. Water flooded into the hold where many men were sleeping. The ship tipped to one side and the men on board struggled to launch the lifeboats in the dark. Only two lifeboats were successfully launched.

The Mendi sank in just 20 minutes. Most of the men had to jump into the freezing cold water, and though some were rescued by HMS Brisk, over 600 men died. Most were members of the SANLC.

The Darro made no attempt to rescue the men in the water. Later, Henry W. Stump, the Master of the Darro, was found guilty of causing the accident. He was sentenced to having his licence removed for just 12 months. He never explained why he did not try to help.

Copy.	Date...	H.M.S. BRISK	Message.	
Receiving Ship	Transmitting Ship	Time of Despatch or Receipt	Time	Remarks
All ships	S.S. Darro	5.0 am	Q	En clair (F. method) no answer
S.S. Mendi	Brisk	5.4 am	Q	En clair
S.S. Darro	"	5.35 am	Q	En clair
Brisk	S.S. Darro	5.39 am	Q	En clair
All ships	S.S. Darro	5.40 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	5.42 am	Q	SSA.58 (local interference)
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	5.8 a.m.	Q	Vocabulary via Niton 5.19 am
S.S. Darro	Brisk	6.23 am	Q	En clair
S.S. Darro	Brisk	6.25 am	Q	En clair
S.S. Darro	Brisk	6.44 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	6.53 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton at 7.1 am.
Brisk	Capt. D. II	7.0 am	Q	Vocabulary - several calls - no reply
S.S. Darro	Brisk	7.25 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton 7.04 am
Capt. D II	Brisk	7.45 am	Q	En clair
Brisk	S.S. Darro	7.49 am	Q	En clair
S.S. Darro	Brisk	7.51 am	Q	En clair
Brisk	S.S. Darro	8.1 am	Q	En clair
Brisk	S.S. Darro	8.34 am	Q	General Service
S.S. Darro	Brisk	8.55 am	Q	General Service
Capt. D II	Brisk	9.15 am	Q	General Service
S.S. Darro	Brisk	9.18 am	Q	Vocabulary
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	10.48 am	Q	General Service.
Brisk	Capt. D II	10.50 am	Q	Vocabulary
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	11.11 am	Q	Vocabulary
C-in-C Plymouth	Brisk	11.11 am	Q	Vocabulary
Brisk	Capt. D II	11.11 am	Q	Vocabulary
Capt. D II	Brisk	12.5 pm	Q	Vocabulary

Radio log of the Brisk

SS MENDI

The Aftermath and the Mendi's Legacy

The South African Government was told of the tragedy three days after the event by telegram, and the names of those who were saved and those that were presumed to have died followed on 7 March. The South African Prime Minister, General Botha, officially announced the loss of the Mendi on 9 March, and the same day a telegram was sent to local magistrates. They called meetings to share the news with Chiefs and Headmen and to answer questions about the tragedy. Across South Africa memorial services were held for the dead. Huge numbers attended to show their respect with grief and dignified sorrow.

It had taken over two weeks for those communities who had lost sons, husbands, brothers and friends to receive official confirmation of their deaths. The South African Government also decided that black members of the SANLC would not receive medals

for their service during the war. This was a bitter blow to the surviving men, and to the families of those who served.

In war weary Britain, the ship sank with little notice or recognition. In South Africa though, the story has been remembered, passed from generation to generation by spoken word. During the years of **apartheid** the ship became a symbol of unity, and of the injustice faced by black Africans.

Today the ship, which was rediscovered by divers in 1974, and the men that were lost with it have been recognised and commemorated on memorials in South Africa and in Britain. The latest memorial to the ship and those who died, the We Die Like Brothers exhibition, was opened in summer 2015 at Delville Wood Memorial in France.

Diver on the boilers of the Mendi's steam engine

Underwater photographs courtesy of Martin Davies

SS MENDI

We Die Like Brothers

Understanding Chronology

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Posters from the We Die Like Brothers resource pack.

Understanding Chronology sources from the We Die Like Brothers resource pack.

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

Understanding Chronology

Read the posters provided at the beginning of this pack and then carefully consider the sources that accompany this activity. Place them in **chronological** order to tell the story of the troopship Mendi.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will become familiar with the story of the Mendi and through that, the background context of the First World War.

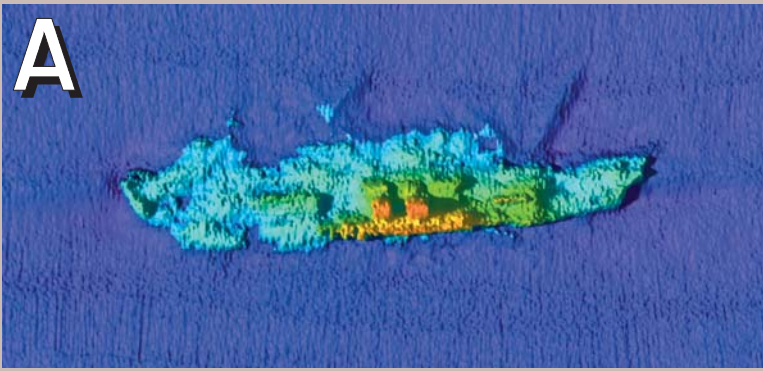
Pupils will reinforce their understanding of chronology.

Pupils will explore a range of historical sources and information from other sources, to build a bigger picture of a significant historical event.

Homework/Extension activities

Read the sources again. Identify which are **primary sources**.

SS MENDI

A

This is a **geophysical** survey image of what the wreck looked like in 2007 when the site was surveyed.

B

"...you can still clearly see the outline of the hull and the area where the Darro hit it, as well as the ship's engine and the huge boilers that supplied them with steam."

Extract from the 2007 geophysical survey report, produced by Wessex Archaeology.

C

NATAL.
Act 49 of 1901.
Act 3 of 1904.

NO 57662 A

1/-

IDENTIFICATION PASS.

Magisterial Division of RICHMOND

Registered Number 670 Date of Original Issue 30-8-1904

Name and Surname (isibongo) of Native to whom this Pass is granted
SIKANISO MTOLO

Name of Father NGENANGANI

Name of Kraal Head GANE

Name of Chief MATOPALA

* Place of Residence Private Lands (W. P. Payne)

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION:
Sex MALE Apparent Age 30 YRS. Height 5-7
Build MEDIUM Complexion DARK BROWN

Marks (if any) (Scar Newcastle)

Date 16-10-1916

Pass Officer J. A. Stead

* Here state, in addition to the Locality, whether it is on Location, Mission Reserve, Crown, or Private Lands. In the case of Private Lands, the name of the Owner to be inserted.

Endorsement (if any) under Section 4 of Act No. 3, 1904:

Private Sikaniso Mtolo's Identification Pass. This pass was found with Private Mtolo's body which washed up on the coast of Zaandvoort, in Holland, on 29 April 1917.

Image courtesy of Noord-Hollands Archief

D

The loss of life was caused by the collision, by the Mendi taking a heavy list to **starboard** and foundering so quickly, by the lack of assistance from the Darro after the collision, and the low temperature in the water.

The loss of life at the moment of impact was due to the Darro striking the Mendi on the starboard side, in the vicinity of the fore troop deck, where a considerable number of the native labour battalion were quartered.

J. G. Hay Halkett, Judge, Board of Trade Inquiry. The formal investigation into the sinking took place between 24 July and 8 August 1917.

We Die Like Brothers
Understanding Chronology



E

"Instantly I could see from the fittings that it was a good quality merchant ship. I then found a little saucer with a crest, B&ASNC, British and African Steam Navigation Company."

Quote from Martin Woodward, diver, who identified the wreck in 1974.

F

"...to pause and pay tribute to all members in uniform who have taken it upon themselves to serve the people of South Africa and defend the Constitution of the country with their lives".

President Jacob Zuma's words when announcing that February 21 would be South Africa's Armed Forces Day. This was first commemorated in South Africa in 1994.

G

The Mendi was built by Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd, Glasgow, for British & African Steam Navigation Co Ltd. and registered in 1905 in Liverpool.



H

"There was great panic and confusion, and on the deck we were told to get onto lifeboats and leave the ship, as it was sinking. Below there was a sea of darkness, but the men plunged into the rough, cold water, singing, praying and crying".

Private Mathumetse, 16 years old

**We Die Like Brothers
Understanding Chronology**

"I am sure it was when the ship sank, that many men lost their lives, because as it sank it made a great hollow and many men were not far from it. So by the time the water covered that empty space many had gone down into it"

Private Jacob KoosMatli, C Company

J

"The Mendi is now a 'protected place' under the Protection of Military Remains Act. Although divers can still visit it, it is now an offence to damage it or remove artefacts from it."

Mark Dunkley,
Historic England, 2015.

K

Date... 21st February 1917. H.M.S. "BRISK" Message.

Receiving Ship	Transmitting Ship	Time of Despatch or Receipt	Time	Remarks	Message
All ships	s.s. Darro	5.0 am	Q	En clair (F. method)	S.O.S. s.s. Darro in collision ten miles South of St. Catherine's. Is there any assistance required, can you proceed and at what speed?
s.s. Mendi	Brisk	5.4 am	Q	no answer	What is extent of damage?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	5.55 am	Q	En clair	Will find out.
s.s. Darro	Brisk	5.59 am	Q	En clair	S.O.S. s.s. Darro sinking twelve South of St. Catherine's.
All ships	s.s. Darro	5.59 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0650. Convoy Mendi in collision, damage unknown.
Capt. A. } Plymouth } Bournemouth }	Brisk	5.42 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0600. Mendi sunk picking up survivors. Darro reports sinking.
C-in-C } Plymouth } Bournemouth }	Brisk	5.8 a.m.	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	Do you want any assistance? How are you getting on?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	5.23 am	Q	En clair	All O.K. so far.
s.s. Darro	Brisk	5.26 am	Q	En clair	Have you anything to communicate?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	5.44 am	Q	Commercial - made several times - no reply	0645 Steamer Darro reports: all O.K. so far.
C-in-C } Plymouth } Bournemouth }	Brisk	6.55 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0656 Indicate Mendi's position at time of sinking.
Capt. D. II	Brisk	7.25 am	Q	Commercial - several calls - no reply	Have you anything to communicate?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	7.35 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	0750 Reply 0651. 10 miles South of St. Catherine's. Captain of MENDI onboard.
Capt. D. II	Brisk	7.35 am	Q	Vocabulary via Niton	O.K. here up to present.
s.s. Darro	Brisk	7.45 am	Q	En clair	What is the extent of damage?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	7.49 am	Q	En clair	Still waiting instructions from bridge.
Brisk	s.s. Darro	7.51 am	Q	En clair	I have sent to bridge for instructions.
Brisk	s.s. Darro	8.0 am	Q	General Service	DARRO collided with MENDI 8 miles South of St. Catherine's Point. Trying to make Southampton for preventing accidents.
Brisk	s.s. Darro	8.34 am	Q	General Service	What is your magnetic surge and speed? When I do you leave scene of collision?
s.s. Darro	Brisk	8.55 am	Q	General Service	0900 Have picked up DARRO according bar to St. Helena at slow speed.
Capt. D. II	Brisk	9.15 am	Q	General Service	What that deal also just leaving scene defended port. After returning to base.
C-in-C } Plymouth } Bournemouth }	Brisk	9.20 am	Q	Vocabulary	1040 Your 0910. To the most convenient defended port.
s.s. Darro	Brisk	10.12 am	Q	General Service	1050 Am proceeding to St. Helena Board with survivors of MENDI: Captain, 4 officers, 11 white ratings, 1 military officer, 3 sergeants, many coloured men saved.
Brisk	Capt. D. II	10.42 am	Q	Vocabulary	1100 Weather permitting expect arrive 12.45 pm. 70 natives saved, 10 dead on board.
C-in-C } Plymouth } Bournemouth }	Brisk	10.56 am	Q	Vocabulary	1106 Report what base you are proceeding to utilize local patrol boats for landing survivors if possible.
Capt. D. II	Brisk	11.15 am	Q	Vocabulary	1200 Proceeding to St. Helena arrive at 1 p.m.
Capt. D. II	Brisk	11.40 am	Q	Vocabulary	
Capt. D. II	Brisk	12.5 pm	Q	Vocabulary	

Log of radio messages sent and received by HMS Brisk which was in the vicinity of the Mendi when it sank.

L

Just a line while still waiting to leave to again wish you goodbye. When I got the chance yesterday after all the excitement I looked in your direction. Had rather a restless night so far. This is a fine boat and nicely fitted up, two in each cabin. Suppose shall get used to my new surroundings in a day or two. Ta ta fondest love, Bob

Letter dated 16th January 1917 from Sergeant MacTavish to his wife written on the day the ship departed from Table Bay, Cape Town.



HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

Colour/Serjt. Robert Alexander MacTavish
S. African N. Lab. Cont.

Scroll commemorating Sergeant MacTavish

We Die Like Brothers
Understanding Chronology

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Posters from the We Die Like Brothers resource pack.

Reverend Dyobha's speech from the Death Dance.

Understanding Significance worksheet

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

We Die Like Brothers

Understanding Significance

Understanding Significance

Read the posters at the start of this pack again, and the speech made by Reverend Dyobha which can be found in The Death Dance.

They contain a lot of information about the ship and its story. The worksheet below has some statements about the story of the Mendi.

Determine which have:

Local significance

National significance

International significance

Learning outcomes

Pupils will gain an understanding of how events in one country can have significance and influence in others.

Pupils will gain historical perspective by understanding the terms local, national and international in relation to historical significance.

Homework/Extension activities

Research what is meant by the following terms – cultural history, economic history, military history, political history, religious history and social history.

Can any of these terms be used to describe the story of the Mendi?

Could more than one term be used?

SS MENDI

1. The role of the SANLC has significance because the men were South African, serving the British Army and were to be based in France.

2. The wreck of the ship has significance because it lies in British waters, but tells the story of South African men, on their way to France.

3. The Reverend Dyobha's words spoken onboard the deck of the sinking ship have (1) , (2) and (3) significance. They have (1) significance because he speaks of tribal groups, (2) significance because those groups form the nation of South Africa and (3) significance because they encourage unity and equality amongst all people.

4. Across South Africa memorial services were held with huge numbers attending, accompanied by an outpouring of grief and dignified sorrow. This has significance because these events were held nationally in South Africa.

5. The Mendi was built in Glasgow in 1905. Glasgow had a thriving shipbuilding industry that had significance to the people of that city. At the time, Glasgow was the greatest shipbuilding centre in the world and therefore also had significance.

6. Before the war, the Mendi carried cargo and passengers between Liverpool and West Africa. The international trade of goods, and international movement of people, had significance.

We Die Like Brothers
Understanding Significance

We Die Like Brothers

Exploring Inequality

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Exploring Inequality sources.

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

Exploring Inequality

On the next page are extracts from an exhibition about the Mendi that is installed at Delville Wood Memorial. Read the sources carefully. What differences do you notice between the pay and conditions for black and white men on board the ship?

Record your findings on the worksheet.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will begin to explore difficult concepts of inequality, racism, colonialism and empire.

Homework/Extension activities

These differences in treatment are borne out of colonial rule and the British Empire. Research the background to the Empire to answer the following questions:

What was the British Empire?

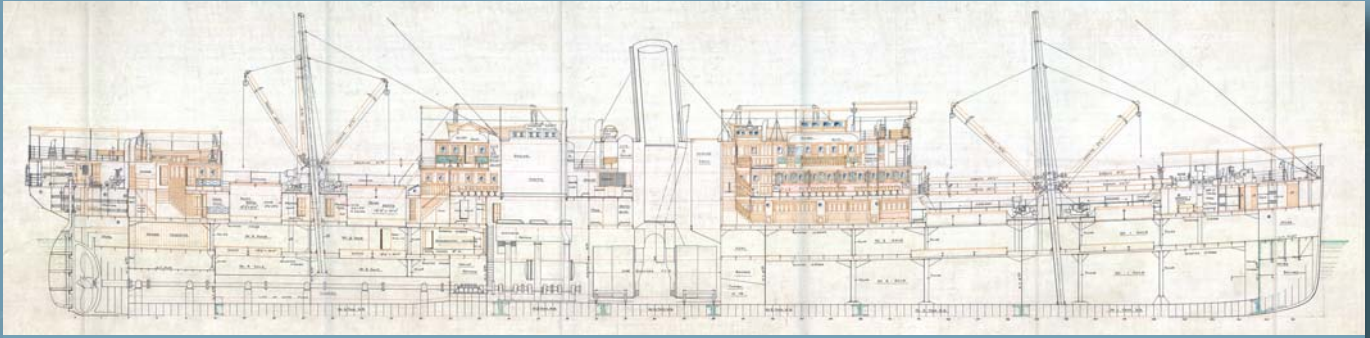
When did the Empire begin to expand and when did it contract?

What did British Colonial rule mean in South Africa?

What changes did the British introduce?

Were these changes good for South Africans?

SS MENDI



©National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

Once underway, life on board settled into a routine. The men spent the daytime on open deck as far as possible. They cleaned the decks and laid their kit out for inspection. In the later stage of the voyage many acted as lookouts.

For the whites, there were deck games and bridge when not on duty. Captain Yardley was the Commanding Officer's regular bridge companion. Lieutenant Richardson played the piano in the saloon.

For the blacks, there were boxing matches and night-classes (run by Captain Hertslet). Services were held by the Chaplain, Reverend Wauchope, on Sundays. Boat-drills and fire-drills were practised regularly.



©Cory Library/Rhodes University/Africa Media Online

Isaac and his family

Isaac Wauchope Dyobha

Born in Doornhoek near Uitenhage in 1852, Isaac was the eldest of 10 children. A Xhosa of the Chisana clan, he was educated in the Lovedale Mission. Originally recruited to the SANLC as a clerk interpreter; he was 65 years old when he became the Battalion's chaplain. His monthly pay was £6.

The Reverend was a prominent member of a group of East Cape African intellectuals, who encouraged their compatriots to join the Labour Corps in the hope that the black population would benefit politically from this show of loyalty.

We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Inequality



As part of their marketing and publicity, shipping companies had a wide range of tableware marked with their livery and crests. The coffee can bears the African Steam Navigation Company Elder Dempster crest, the dishes the British & African Steam Navigation Company Elder Dempster crest. Decorated in the very popular Key Festoon pattern, it was manufactured by Mintons of Stoke-on-Trent, England. Different tableware was used on different parts of the ship. Decorated ceramics would probably have been reserved for the white officers of the Labour Corps.

Image courtesy of Mark Sijmians



Sikaniso Mtolo was from Richmond, Natal. He was 30 or 31 years old when he died. His monthly pay was £3. Private Mtolo's identity pass is a remarkable survival. It was washed up with his body on the coast at Zandvoort (North Holland) on 29 April 1917. The Natal Native Locations Acts (1901, 1904, 1916) required Africans within South Africa to obtain

identification passes, to carry with them at all times and produce on demand. These controls were early steps towards the system of **Apartheid**. They were designed to control the movement of black and indigenous South Africans and to secure the supply of labour for the mines and growing heavy industry.



The black victims were more likely to share a headstone or plot than their white compatriots. All are now honoured by headstones maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Many of the men on board had not seen the sea before. Private Stimela Jason Jingoos, who sailed to France with the Labour Corps on another ship, recalled the reaction of his comrades:

“It was the first time most of us had seen the sea, and we all spent hours talking about it and repeating, “So this is the sea!” The thing that amazed me about it was how the sun came up out of it every morning”.

**We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Inequality**

Differences between the treatment of
black and white men in the story of the Mendi

Black

White

We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Inequality

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

We Die Like Brothers The Death Dance

The Death Dance

Read aloud the words spoken by Reverend Wauchope Dyobha on the deck of the damaged Mendi. **Oral tradition** records that the men took off their boots and stamped the death dance on the sinking ship.

Read the passage carefully and look at the words the Reverend uses. Then answer the questions below the passage in your workbooks.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will be reminded of the human story behind the history that they learn.

British pupils will gain an understanding of South African tribal culture and affiliation, something not prevalent in UK societies.

Pupils will explore unity in the face of adversity.

Homework/Extension activities

Here are some other speeches about unity:

"The bell of man's inhumanity to man does not toll for any one man. It tolls for you, for me, for all of us." Martin Luther King Jr

"Pit race against race, religion against religion, prejudice against prejudice. Divide and conquer! We must not let that happen here." Eleanor Roosevelt

"When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you." Winston S. Churchill

"The perfect state is one where men weep and rejoice over the same things." Plato

"Sixty years ago, the people of South Africa proclaimed that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people." Jacob Zuma

"I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to see realised. But, my Lord, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die" Nelson Mandela

Consider carefully what each person is saying, and the words that they are using. Write your own short speech to promote unity. It may help to think of a challenging situation that you or your classmates face, and to consider how working together could help.

SS MENDI

Read aloud the words spoken by Reverend Wauchope Dyobha on the deck of the Mendi. **Oral tradition** records that the men took off their boots and stamped the death dance as the ship sank.

Read the passage carefully and look at the words the Reverend uses.

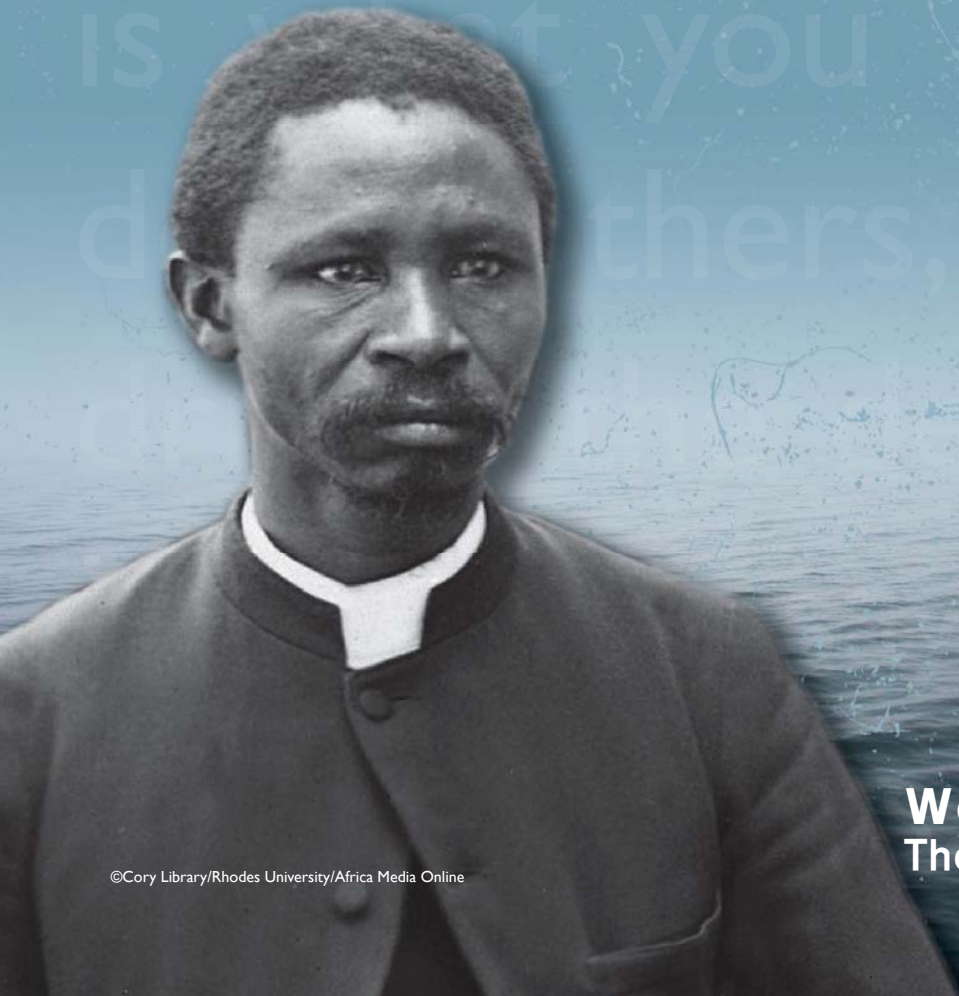
“Be quiet and calm, my countrymen, for what is taking place is exactly what you came to do. You are going to die...but that is what you came to do. Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers. Swazis, Pondos, Basutos, we die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais in the kraal, our voices are left with our bodies”.

Answer the following questions:

Are there any words that you don't understand? See if you can find out what they mean – either by asking someone who might recognise them (see Making Links) or by using the computer.

What words does the Reverend use to promote unity amongst the men on the ship?
How do the words he spoke make you feel?

How would they make you feel if you were on board the sinking ship in 1917?



**We Die Like Brothers
The Death Dance**

We Die Like Brothers

Making Links

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History - Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

Making Links

The story of the Mendi brings together South African and British people, but the wreck has different prominence in each country. Explore this by contacting a school at the opposite end of the Atlantic Ocean, and work together to understand the perspective of the other nation. Further information on how to do this is included on the next page.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will explore the history of the Mendi from another perspective.

Pupils will develop a global understanding of the events and their significance.

Pupils will work together to answer questions, promoting unity and collaboration.

Homework/Extension activities

Why is it important that the ship is remembered? Discuss this as a class, and link it to the next activity, which explores the ship as a memorial.

SS MENDI

The story of the Mendi brings together South African and British people, but the wreck has different prominence in each country. Explore this by contacting a school at the opposite end of the Atlantic Ocean, and work together to understand the perspective of the other nation.

Teachers:

For this activity you will need to contact an English Secondary school, if you are teaching in South Africa, or a South African one if you are teaching in England.

For Teachers in South Africa:

You can find a list of English Secondary Schools via this website: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/> (Remit will be 'School' and Provider will be 'Secondary') or here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_schools_in_England Address your correspondence to the **Head of Department for KS3 History**

For Teachers in England:

You can find information on South African Schools here: <http://saschools.co.za/directory.php> or here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_high_schools_in_South_Africa You will need to contact a secondary school, and address your correspondence to the **Head of Social Sciences for grades 7-9.**

Students:

English and South African schools need to work together for this activity. Through your teacher, contact a school in the other country. They might not be studying the Mendi, but they may help you to explore it by sharing their knowledge.

Develop a questionnaire about the Mendi, starting with:

Have you heard of the Mendi?

The rest of the questions are up to you but might include questions exploring survey participants' knowledge of the First World War or the roles of the labour corps. When your class has finished designing the questionnaire, collect results by asking the questions to friends and family, or with your teacher and parents' consent, to members of your community (for example in town or on the High Street).



Ask the school you are partnering with to do the same.

Students in England are not likely to identify many people that have heard of the Mendi. How many of the South African people participating in the survey have heard of the ship?

Use graphs to show the results of your questionnaire, and those of your chosen partner school.

Discuss as a class, and discuss with your partner school (for example using letters, email or Skype), why the results are different. Use your graphs and discussion to create a poster about what you have learnt.

**We Die Like Brothers
Making Links**

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

We Die Like Brothers In Memoriam

In Memoriam

The wreck of the Mendi is disintegrating through natural processes that affect many materials over time. Eventually it will degrade altogether and very little will remain on the seabed. Even though the ship will disappear, its story must not.

The Mendi is a war memorial and is protected as the grave of many of the men who died.

As a class, look at different types of war memorial, including Delville Wood and a local example.

Discuss as a class why memorials are important. Include ideas of remembrance, education and the resonance of memorials with people today.

Research the various memorials to the Mendi – where are they located? Include artist Dr Shawn-Naphtali Sobers' work commemorating the Mendi (available online) in your exploration of memorials. Dr Sobers' work represents a new approach to commemoration that links the present and the past. Discuss this approach – do your pupils like it? Ask them to discuss their reasons.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will understand that memorials not only commemorate the dead, but also educate people about events in the past.

Pupils will gain perspective into how valuable memorials are for communities that visit them or are represented by them.

Pupils will understand how memorials can be used to reinforce a sense of national, local or community identity.

Homework/Extension activities

Having understood why memorials are important, think about what aspects of the story of the Mendi are most poignant to you. Design your own Mendi memorial to convey this. Words and poems can be memorials, as well as paintings, films and statues.

SS MENDI

We Die Like Brothers

Exploring Archaeology

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History - Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

Exploring Archaeology

Archaeologists have been studying the Mendi. We can learn about the story of the Mendi from the wreck, and from artefacts that have been found on the site. Without these, we would not have been able to identify the wreck.

Study the artefacts and geophysical survey images on the next page and answer the questions about them. If you are visiting the exhibition you could undertake this activity whilst you are there.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will explore different sources of information to continue their exploration of the Mendi.

Pupils will become aware of how archaeology can contribute to historical narrative.

Homework/Extension activities

Once the ship had been identified, it was surveyed using geophysics. Compare the survey results with the ship's plan – both are on the worksheet included in this pack. Can you see any of the features on the plan on the geophysics image? Label them.

SS MENDI

We can understand much about the story of the ship from the **artefacts** that have been found at the site by archaeologists.

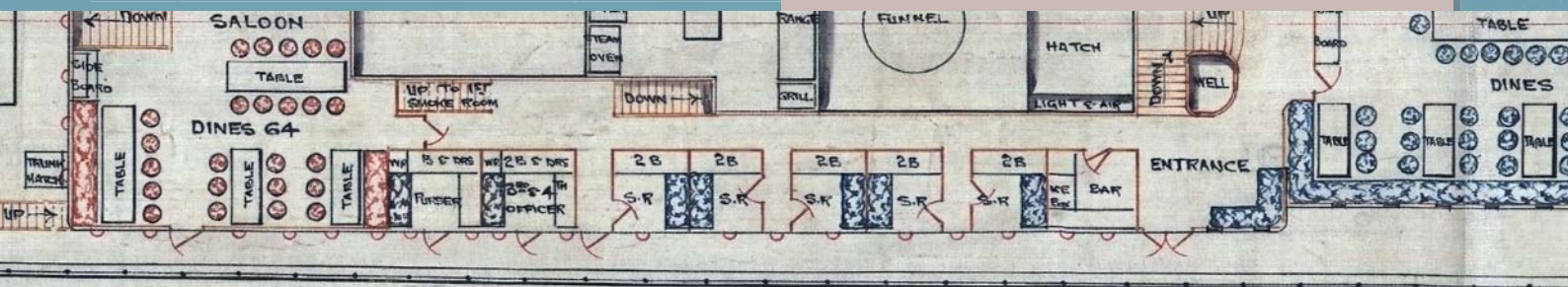
This porthole has bars across it. There are several reasons to put bars on a window, including for safety (if the porthole was low in the water) or for security (to keep someone or something out, or to keep someone or something from getting out).

Archaeologists have identified this as the porthole from the purser's cabin.

What was a purser?

And why did his window have bars?

Look at the ship's plan – can you find the Purser's cabin?



This plate allowed divers to confirm that this ship is the Mendi.

Can you read the writing on it?

What does it say?

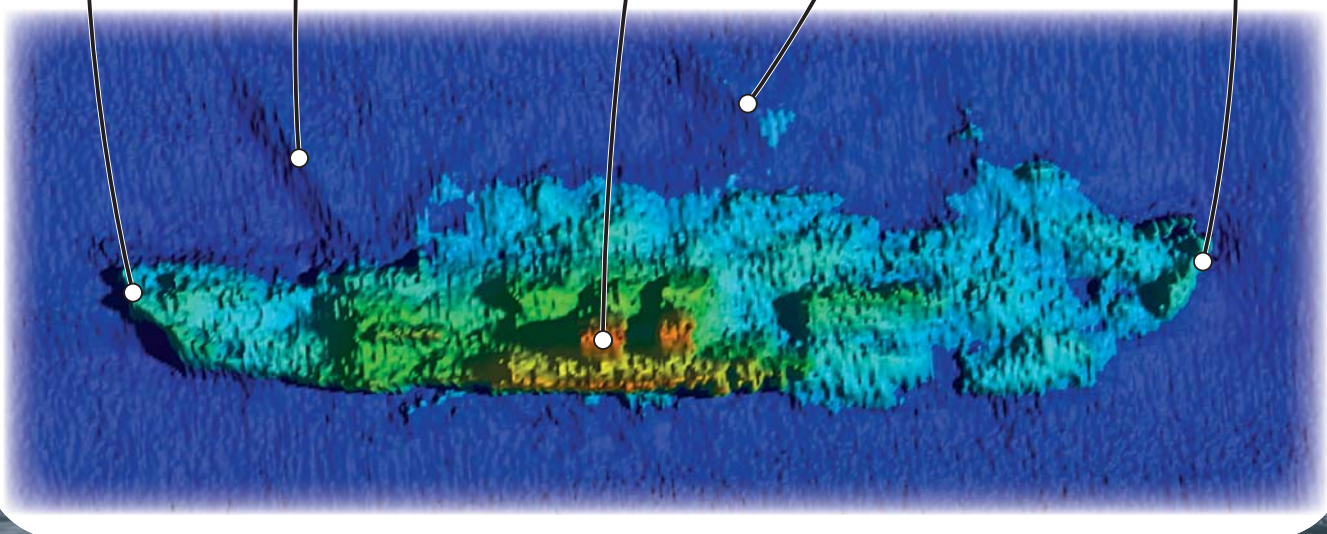
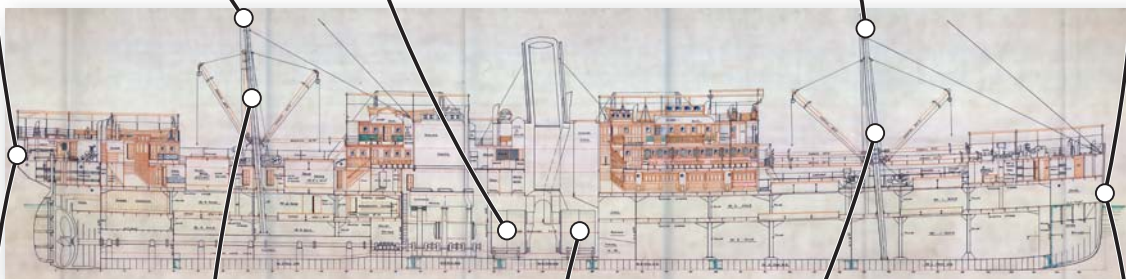
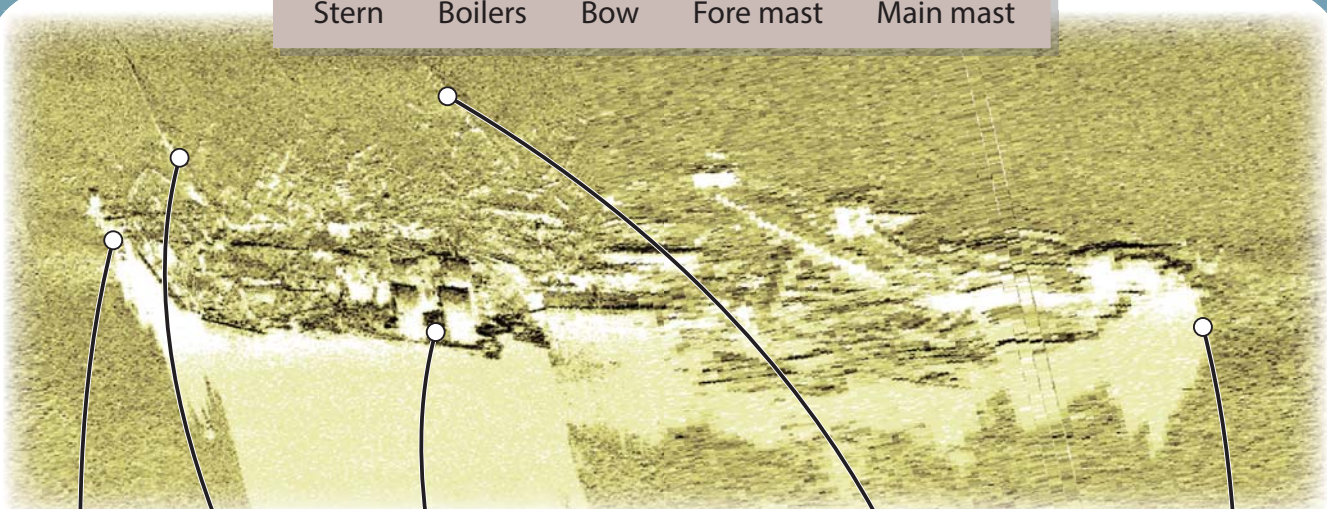
How might it help us to identify the ship?



We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Archaeology

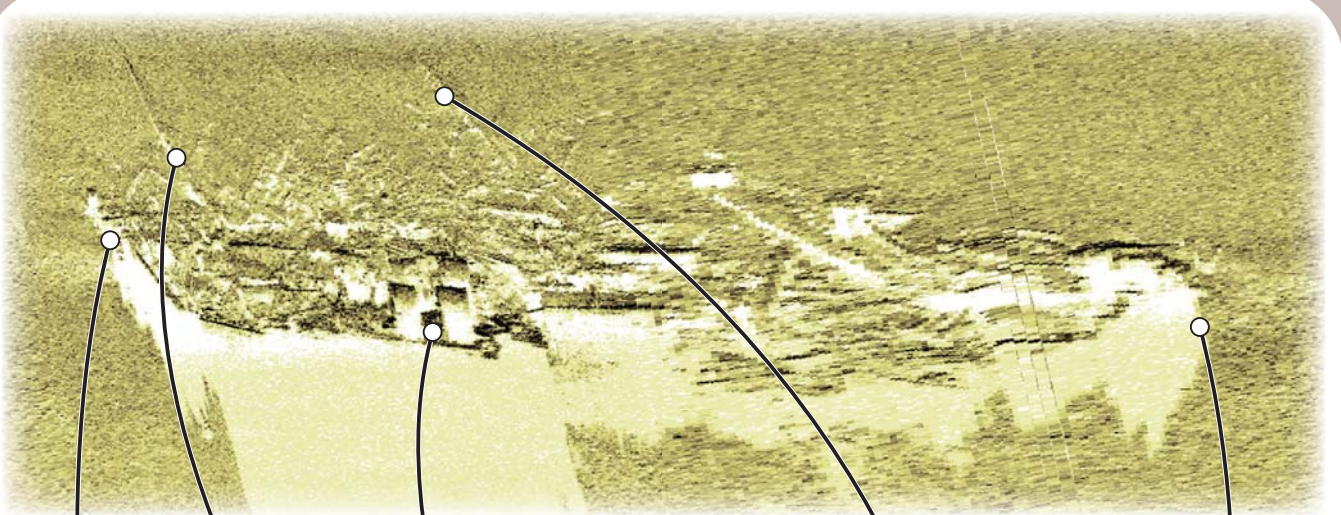
Once the ship had been identified, it was surveyed using **geophysical survey**. Compare the survey results with the ship's plan. Can you see any of the features on the plan on the geophysics image? Label them.

Stern Boilers Bow Fore mast Main mast

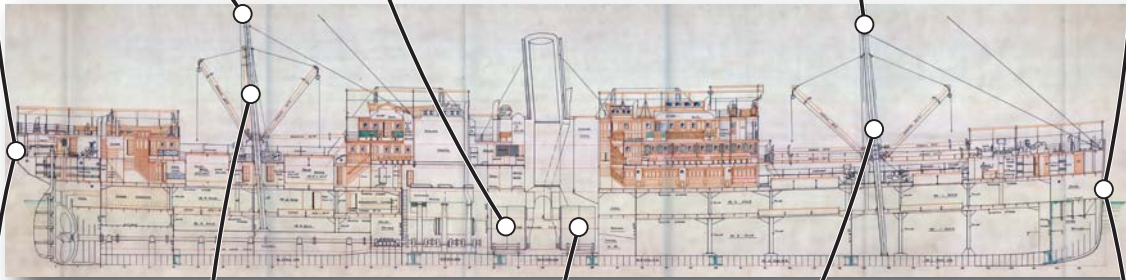


We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Archaeology

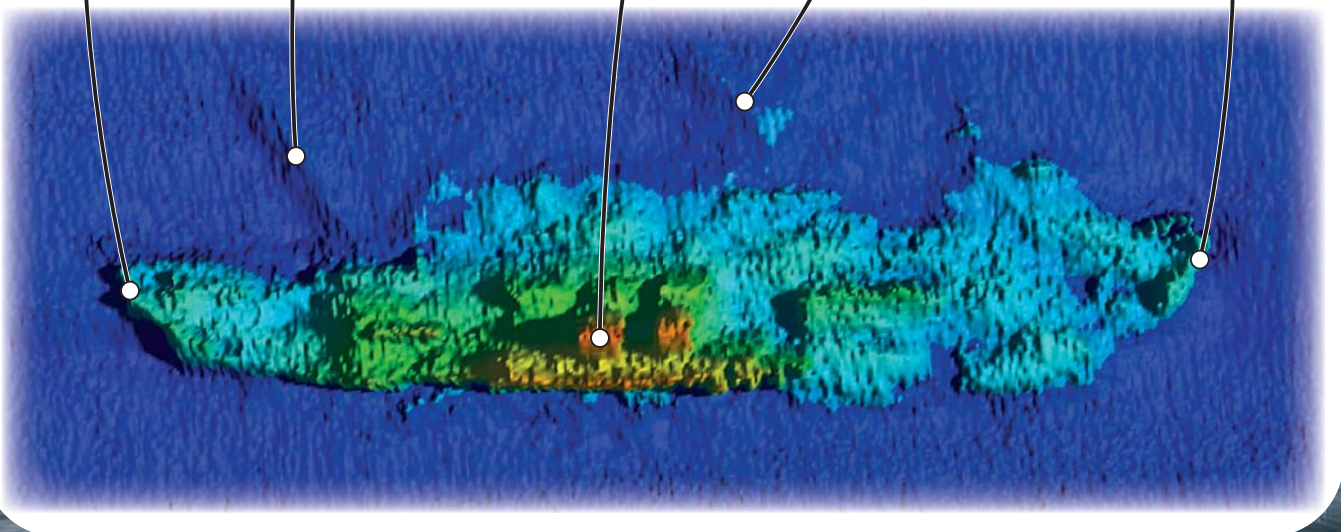
Once the ship had been identified, it was surveyed using **geophysical survey**. Compare the survey results with the ship's plan. Can you see any of the features on the plan on the geophysics image? Label them.



Stern Main mast Boilers Fore mast Bow



Stern Main mast Boilers Fore mast Bow



We Die Like Brothers
Exploring Archaeology

We Die Like Brothers

An International Story

This is a history learning resource for the teaching of the First World War at KS3 (England) or Grades 7-9 (South Africa).

It supports the English National Curriculum for KS3 History -Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day - the First World War and the Peace Settlement. For pupils in Hampshire, it could also form part of a local history study.

It supports the South African National Curriculum Statement for Senior Grades 7-9 in Social Sciences 2.4.2, 2.4.3 and 2.4.4.

Activities within this pack could also form a stimulus for literacy, art and design.

Equipment:

An International Story worksheet.

Posters from the We Die Like Brothers resource pack.

Understanding Chronology sources from the We Die Like Brothers resource pack.

Workbooks and writing materials.

Words highlighted in **green** can be found in the glossary at the back of the resource pack.

An International Story

This activity combines history and geography and explores places that are important to the Mendi's story. It is outlined on the following page.

Learning outcomes

Pupils will place the story of the Mendi, and subsequently the First World War, in a global context.


Pupils will be engaged in a cross-discipline activity which also reinforces their understanding of geography.

Homework/Extension activities

Read the worksheet called 'Belonging'. Answer the questions about landmarks.

Contact the school you partnered with for Making Links. Discuss with them their local landmarks. How do they differ from your own?

SS MENDI



Research the following places – they are all important to the story of the Mendi and are all included in the information in this resource pack. Find out where they are and add them to the map.

The Western Front

The site of the wreck

Delville Wood

Zaandvort, Holland

Glasgow

Le Havre

Cape Town

Plymouth

Liverpool

We Die Like Brothers
An International Story



Belonging

Homelands are important to all people of the world. Sergeant MacTavish, who died on the Mendi, wrote to his wife:

'It was a very welcome sight to see the Eddystone Lighthouse standing out in the open sea miles from anywhere and then the view of Lands End, the Lizard and Cornish coast...'

What landmarks are important to you?

What things do you recognise when returning from a trip that remind you that you are home?

These could be national landmarks (the White Cliffs of Dover are iconic in Britain), or local landmarks, like a church, street or park.

Members of the South African Native Labour Corps travelled a long way from their homes in order to support the British Army. Look again at the sources from Exploring Inequality. Which source confirms this?

The Natives Land Act was passed in South Africa in 1913. This gave 90% of the land in the country to white people, even though only 20% of the population were white. This was one of the reasons that South Africans joined the South African Native Labour Corps. They wanted to support Britain during the First World War as they hoped that by doing this, they would earn respect and be allowed to be involved in making political decisions. Sadly this did not happen and during the 20th century South Africa was divided by **apartheid**.

We Die Like Brothers
An International Story