



Skilfully welding new technologies like multi-channel telephony with time-honoured communications like pigeon post, the staff of GHQ scoured the world to source everything.

2,000 London buses were impressed for uses as varied as ambulances and pigeon lofts..... and there were still half a million horses and mules to be tended.

Every day, food equipment and ammunition were rushed to the front in the first mass development of "just-in-time" delivery. Troops were brought in, whilst their exhausted comrades were withdrawn to huge purpose-built rest camps along the coast. It was an amazing operation set up in a matter of weeks.



"The little walled town of Montreuil was the focus of a spider's web of wires, at one end of which were the soldiers in their trenches, at the other workers of the world at their benches." Without the 'source and supply' skills of the British Expeditionary Force GHQ at Montreuil-sur-Mer, the allies would have lost the Great War.



great war ghq heritage centre

Client: Expeditionary Trust
 Value: £10,000 to £1.5 million
 Completion: Ongoing various projects
 Role: Architectural design adviser

We are working with The Expeditionary Trust to create an Interpretation Centre which records the critical significance of the work of the GHQ on the outcome of the Great War and on the way business and communications were to run after the war. Whilst the project is conceived as a permanent exhibition, it will also be designed to easily tour France and the UK.

The display will bring together the most traditional and innovative methods of scenography, exploiting interactive technologies to engage young and old alike. The rich vein of public and private archives as well as diverse historic artefacts will bring the display to life.

an evolving 4-year project

The exhibition will grow in scope and scale each year, reflecting the growth of the GHQ and its technological innovations.

2015: St Omer during the occupation of the British GHQ. Subjects illustrated will include the GHQ; how the town was occupied; VIP visitors during the occupation; the theatre of operations for the logistics effort.

2016: Franco-British cooperation during the Great War. Military and diplomatic relationships and how they helped the war effort; expansion of the logistics network by 1916; relocation to Montreuil sur Mer prior to the Somme; relationships between military personnel and local civilians; long term socio-cultural impacts; impact of the british presence in Nord Pas-de-Calais long after the war.

2017: Evolution and Innovation in Logistics. The huge scale of the supply chain networks by 1917; transport and infrastructure from horses to trains and buses; hospitals, medical supplies, and moving the injured; transit and training camps; the great ports and shipping bases; innovations in communications; forestry and international expertise to support construction; depots and distribution; women and their role in the army and the war effort; manual labour forces - an international collaboration.

2018: St Omer and the birth of the Royal Air Force. The first General Quarters of the Royal Flying Corps; aerodromes of the British western front; General Trenchard; the aces of British aviation; reconnaissance, fighters and bombers; aeronautical innovation and technologies; the birth of the Royal Air Force and its continuing legacy in St Omer.

The first exhibition will comprise printed interpretive panels, brought to life by a range of archive displays and actual film footage.

The centre piece of future displays will be an interactive digital information "table" through which visitors can explore the massive scale and speed of growth of the GHQ, which in modern terms grew to deliver a supply chain larger than McDonalds in less than 2 years.



la motte castrale, St Omer - plan perimeter



la motte castrale, St Omer



la motte castrale, St Omer - potential new home



2015 - simple but atmospheric interpretive display