

did you know?

Troy Lennon, classmate editor

Blast nearly wiped man off planet

VOLCANOES can look impressive as they create mountains, islands and sometimes hectares of new land. But scientists believe the human race was almost wiped out by a volcanic eruption between 71,000 and 74,000 years ago.

So the Mount Eyjafjallajökull eruption in Iceland, which has disrupted European air traffic and caused evacuations, can be seen as a limited tribulation.

The near extinction of humans was when Mount Toba, in what is today Sumatra in Indonesia, exploded expelling 2800 cubic kilometres of ash and molten rock, turning the volcano into a caldera — or a crater — that is now Lake Toba.

The ash went into the atmosphere, where it lingered for as long as six years, reducing world temperatures by between three and 10 degrees and bringing on an ice age. The world's human population is believed to have dwindled to a mere 10,000. The survivors clustered around the warmest areas at the equator, particularly Africa.

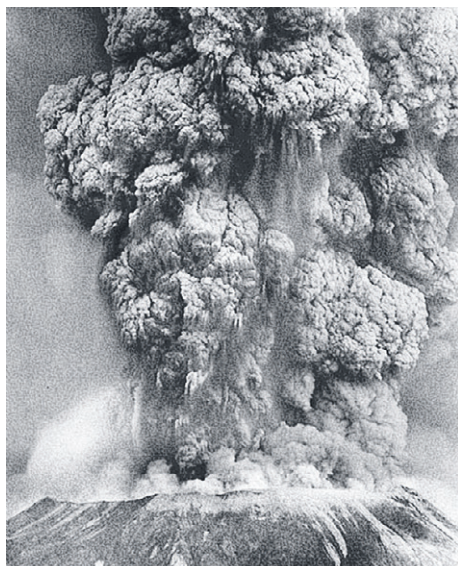
It was once thought that the eruption of a volcano on what is today the Greek archipelago of Santorini about 3500 years ago destroyed the Minoan civilisation, but archaeologists have since found that the impact on Crete might not have been as great as first believed. However, it did destroy an entire island, would have destroyed nearby coastal villages and spread ash as far away as Egypt and Israel. Some have even speculated that it may have been the basis for the legend of the destruction of the civilization of Atlantis and possibly even the biblical legends of the plagues in Egypt mentioned in Exodus.

The eruption of Mount Tambora, in what is today Indonesia, in 1815 is also said to have been one of the biggest in recorded history.

It reduced a 4300m-high mountain to 2800m high. The blast itself, along with the pyroclastic flows — steaming, fast-moving clouds of vaporised rock and hot gases — and tsunami killed about 10,000 people and caused one “year without a summer”. About 80,000 people in the region died as a result of famine but there were also consequences elsewhere in the world.

Charles Dickens' memories of snowy Christmases are said to have been caused by the mini ice age created by the ash.

Mount St Helens in 1980 in the US had a comparatively small eruption (below), yet it killed about 60 people, melted snow and ice that caused streams to become choked with ash and fallen trees and disrupted aircraft and ground transport.

**Forceful women kept the home fires burning**

World War I was a time of unprecedented social and political change for Australian women, writes JACQUELINE DINAN

TO UNDERSTAND the devastating impact of World War I on the Australian population it helps to consider it in today's terms.

About 331,000 Australian men enlisted and served overseas from a country of about 5 million — 6.6 per cent of the overall population.

In today's terms 6.6 per cent of a population of 22 million would see 1.5 million able-bodied men, aged between 18-40 years, go abroad.

Australian women from 1914-19 not only faced the devastation of their men embarking and the irreversible impact of a world war on this country; they also had to adapt their lives and contend with controversial social and political issues at home.

In doing so they harnessed their sorrow, fear, loneliness and anger into a life-force to deal with the loss and deprivation of war and influence the way Australians reacted to their country's involvement in a global affair.

By the time of the war, the suffragist movement was already active in Australia, with women having the vote from federation.

In 1915, suffragists such as Vida Goldstein and Adela Pankhurst founded the Women's Peace Army in Melbourne and expanded it to Brisbane and Sydney.

The Women's Peace Army attracted women beyond the suffragist movement; women regardless of politics, religion and socio-economic status, who were opposed to war.

The Women's Peace Army's motto was “We war against war”. They organised peace demonstrations around Australia and their theme song, *I Didn't Raise My Son To Be A Soldier*, was banned.

The Women's Peace Army was also active in the

conscription debate although not all women supported the group. Women who supported the introduction of compulsory service campaigned vigorously and blatantly handed out white feathers to men still at home.

Many Australians believed the country's initial commitment of 20,000 troops when Britain declared war was adequate. Voluntary enlistments followed that, notably those who signed up after the devastation at Gallipoli, despite knowing the reality. These were known as “the fair-dinkums”.

The call from the motherland for more men underpinned the debate. In 1916, Britain urged all countries throughout its Commonwealth to introduce conscription. Britain had suffered devastating losses on the

Somme — 50,000 by noon on the first day alone.

Feisty Australian prime minister Billy Hughes split from the ALP to fight for compulsory service and amended the Defence Act to suppress the surge of propaganda material.

On the other side of the argument and along with the trade unions, Catholic archbishop Daniel Mannix argued that Australia should not call up its sons for “cannon fodder”.

The government, under the existing Defence Act, had the power to conscript men, but only for service in Australia. In a 1916 referendum 52 per cent of the nation voted against conscription. In the 1917 referendum those against increased to 54 per cent.

The Defence Department



Jacqueline Dinan is the co-author of *A Woman's War* which depicts the changing role of women in World War I through the eyes of a working-class family; \$27.95, Harta Publishers

did not allow women to enlist but throughout the war women contributed in many other ways. They formed the Women's Auxiliary Army, which assisted with recruiting and caring for the children of soldiers and 2700 Australian women joined British or Australian nursing units, most of which served overseas.

The voluntary efforts of women on the home front also saw them become more active in public life, with 82,000 providing the vital services of the Red Cross such as nursing soldiers, packaging comfort parcels and raising funds. To help Australian soldiers survive the bitter winter of 1916 in northern France, thousands of socks, scarves, gloves and balaclavas were knitted and sent to the front.

Many women, already burdened with raising children alone and running family businesses or farms, suffered further hardship because of the 1915-16 drought which, coupled with the war, increased prices of food and goods. When two in three men who served were captured, missing, wounded or killed, many had to continue these efforts after the war.

Away from home, women entered the workforce for the first time, which advanced them economically and enhanced their independence. They were essential in keeping production of essential goods going in ammunition, boot and uniform factories.

At the outbreak of the war, women comprised 24 per cent of workers. By the conclusion of the war, this figure had risen to 37 per cent but the increase was not just in quantity.

Despite union protests, women also moved into traditionally male-dominated areas, such as clerical and banking work. Employers were hesitant to pay women wages equal to those of men and working conditions were often undesirable but improved, as did wages as a result of the labour movement and women's rights activists.



Care: Parcels for the Red Cross in 1916 Picture courtesy: Australian War Memorial

on this day**1653**

Oliver Cromwell uses musketeers to dissolve the Rump Parliament, the remains of the Long Parliament, which rebelled against King Charles I during England's civil war.

1908

Forty-four people die when one train crashes into the back of another at Sunshine in Melbourne. Both were full of holiday crowds.

1908

The first NSW rugby league club premiers competition kicks off. Balmain defeat Wests 24-0 but South Sydney will win the competition.

1914

Stunt pilot Maurice Guillaux flies the first loop-the-loop in Australia, in a Blériot

monoplane over Victoria Park Racecourse, Zetland, Sydney.

1954

Police disarm two Soviet guards at Darwin airport and rescue Evdokia Petrov, the drugged wife of defector Vladimir. She accepts asylum in Australia at the last minute.

1976

Dulcie Markham dies as Dulcie Rooney, aged 63. She was called the Angel of Death because eight of her lovers died by the gun or knife. As she smoked in bed at her Bondi home, her mattress caught fire.

1978

Soviet fighter planes fire on an off-course South Korean Boeing 707 airliner, killing two passengers and forcing it to land on a frozen lake in Soviet territory near the Arctic Circle.

Cook sights land

Zachary Hicks, lieutenant of English explorer James Cook, first sights Australia at 6am. Hicks sees its southeast tip near Cape Everard. Captain Cook names the spot Point Hicks and writes modestly in his journal (pictured) that he does so “because Lieut Hicks was the first who discovered this land”. Cook thinks the day is the 19th as he has not adjusted for having crossed the International Date Line.

1770**2006**

The president of the Bandidos' Sydney chapter, Rodney Monk, 31, is shot dead in East Sydney in front of restaurant patrons after the killer kisses and embraces him. The murderer, fellow biker Russell Oldham, later shoots himself.

