

Unimagined changes

THE FIRST DECADES of the twentieth century witnessed changes that would have been inconceivable to those living only a few years earlier. Queen Victoria had died in 1901, marking the end of the Victorian era and many of the values which that adjective represented. The Wright Brothers had engineered the first powered flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1903, ushering in the world of aviation. Suffragettes clashed with police at the House of Commons, where the Channel Tunnel Bill was defeated in the same year. That did not stop Louis Blériot making the first cross-channel flight in 1909. Amundsen beat Captain Scott to the South Pole in 1911.

In June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife were assassinated. This incident was the spark that ignited the Great War (1914–1918). European countries declared war on each other, prompting Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey to comment *‘The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.’*

Following widespread action by the suffrage movement throughout Britain, women over the age of 30 gained the right to vote in 1918. Women in the United Kingdom achieved suffrage on the same terms as men in 1928.



Orville Wright's first flight at Kitty Hawk covered just 39 m. Later that day, his brother, Wilbur, flew 279 m in 59 seconds.



The Great War left millions dead and shaped the modern world. The Mark I tank was introduced to break the stalemate of trench warfare along the Western Front, a network of opposing manned trenches running from the North Sea to Switzerland. Fighting also took place on and under the sea and in the air. More than nine million soldiers died on the various battlefields, and millions more civilians suffered.



Their campaigns of civil disobedience resulted in many suffragettes being arrested and imprisoned during their struggle to win the vote.



The death of close relatives or friends reminded contemporaries that the occupation of land had become more important than life. Rupert Brooke's Soldier lamented *‘If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England.’*

Death, injury and misery continued until Germany surrendered in November 1918. On 11 November each year at 11.00 hours we still remember those who gave their lives. Hostilities were officially ended in 1919, when Germany formally signed the Treaty of Versailles, which established the League of Nations. Other developments occurred during wartime. In 1916, Irish rebels staged the Easter Rising against British rule. The battleship *Aurora* – still moored in St Petersburg – fired the shot that signalled the start of the Russian Revolution in 1917, bringing Lenin and the Bolsheviks to the attention of the world and the demise of the Tsarist regime.

During 1918 and 1919, nearly 22 million people died, worldwide, of influenza. Known as the ‘Spanish Flu’ or ‘La Grippe’, this most devastating pandemic killed more people than those who had died in the hostilities of the Great War.

In 1912, Nancy Astor allegedly said to Winston Churchill *‘If I were your wife I would put poison in your coffee’*, to which the reply was *‘If I were your husband, I would drink it.’* This exchange did not discourage Lady Astor from becoming the first woman to take her seat as a Member of Parliament in 1919; one year after women over the age of 30 had obtained the right to vote.

No one knew then that the next decade would see flappers, the Charleston, art deco and the Great Depression.



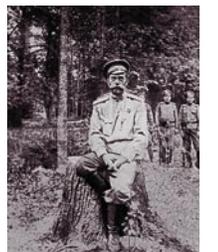
Nancy Astor was the first female elected to the House of Commons actually to take up her seat, as MP for Plymouth. In the Commons she frequently clashed with Winston Churchill, who told her a woman being in Parliament was like one intruding on him in the bathroom, to which she retorted, *‘You're not handsome enough to have such fears’*.



Arriving at the South Pole in January 1912, Scott found that Amundsen had been there a month earlier. Scott's party perished on the return journey. Scott's final diary entry read *‘We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker of course and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more. For God's sake, look after our people.’* R. Scott.



The overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia was followed by the October Revolution in which the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, gained power. Taken from Moscow to Ekaterinburg, Nicholas II and his family were murdered on 17 July 1918. After the collapse of the USSR, their remains were found in 1991 and, following a state funeral, were reburied by the Russian government.





14 companies and 38 individuals represent the founding members in 1907

After one year, membership rises to 1,537

IIL growth has to contend with the Great War

LONDON HAD BEEN the centre of world commercial insurance for over 200 years when, in 1886, the first attempt was made to form an insurance institute in London. It was a logical development. Most of the great insurance innovations enabling economic growth and developments in technology had originated in London. However, it took over twenty years for that dream to become a reality, for it was not until 1907 that the actual formation of the IIL, destined to become the largest 'local' institute of the CII, took place.

Marine, Life and Fire insurance were already well established in the United Kingdom by the middle of the nineteenth century. Social insurance in Victorian England had already raised consciousness of the need to protect employees. The 1897 Workmen's Compensation Act had been the first of a series of social reforms throughout this period up to the time of the Great War. It recognised that compensation should be paid by employers to employees suffering accidents at work. The Act related mainly to the manufacturing industry and did not cover sickness or pensions, which were dealt with by the subsequent reforms:

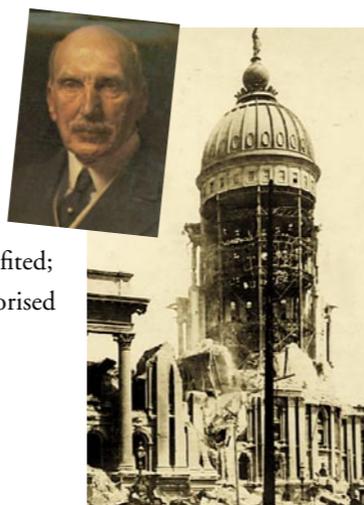
- 1905 Unemployed Workmen's Act
- 1906–7 Extensions to the 1897 Act in Employers' Liability Act, Domestic Servants Insurance Act, New Compensation Act
- 1908 Old Age Pensions Act
- 1911 National Insurance Act

Many of the liabilities created by these Acts were insured, giving insurers a new source of income to add to that generated by Property, Marine and the much more recent Motor insurance. In 1906, the Marine Insurance Act was passed – still influential legislation today, but it would be another decade or so before rudimentary aviation insurance policies were underwritten.

In 1906, central San Francisco was razed to the ground by a huge earthquake (7.9 on the Richter Scale) and the fire that followed; several US insurers collapsed, British insurers paid an estimated US\$40 – 45 million in claims – at today's relative values, based on Gross Domestic Product, these figures equate to approximately US\$15.6–17.5 billion – with such speed that London's reputation benefited; especially after Cuthbert Heath, the eminent Lloyd's underwriter, authorised payment under all property policies irrespective of proximate cause.



In the Edwardian era, local institutes represented the hearts and minds of those interested in developing professional qualifications and education in insurance. The IIL became affiliated with the Federation of Insurance Institutes in 1907. In 1908 the Federation changed its name to the Insurance Institute of Great Britain and Ireland and again to the Chartered Insurance Institute in 1912, when it was granted its charter and moved its headquarters from Manchester to London.



San Francisco's City Hall was rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake and its retro-fitted dome is still a notable landmark.



Titanic was intended to be the largest, most luxurious ship ever to operate and was thought by *The Ship-builder* magazine to be 'practically unsinkable'. On its maiden voyage, the ship struck a large iceberg. Of a total of 2,223 people on board, only 706 survived. Lifeboat 'D' was the last to be launched from Titanic and, relatively heavily laden with passengers, was picked up by RMS Carpathia.

News of the Titanic as recorded in Lloyd's Loss Book.

The White Star liner *Titanic* sank in the North Atlantic in 1912. The total loss cost for hull and machinery amounted to £1 million, paid by subscribing Lloyd's underwriters.

This era also saw the formation of the British Insurance Association, in June 1917, which ultimately evolved into the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

The IIL's Council habitually dealt with such matters as suitable papers for the ordinary meetings ('limited to 30 minutes'), prizes to be awarded to Members for examination successes and the use of the library by Members, extending to a record of books issued.

The thousands of lectures delivered on behalf of the IIL over the past 100 years have been eclectic to say the least, and the early days were no exception. In March 1908, Mr J. Robertson, of the Northern, spoke on 'The Manipulation and Manufacture of Tobacco from an Insurance Point of View'.

Not surprisingly, attendance at IIL functions began to wane with the onset of the Great War, although not all needed to be in Flanders to experience the hostilities. Hand-written notes of proceedings in 1915 recorded the fact that a letter had been received from 'Miss Lee asking the Committee to favourably consider the advisability of closing the Library earlier on account of the possibility of further Zeppelin Raids.'

Sensibilities were very different to those of today, and, perhaps understandably, the tone of the Christmas card sent from the Royal London Insurance Office, in December 1918, indicates a sense of optimism and nationalism that is not so evident today. In congratulating those to whom the card was sent 'upon the successful conclusion of your heroic efforts on behalf of King and Homeland' the card contains lines from William Ernest Henley's poem *England my England*.



London Assurance put on a spectacular display to celebrate the coronation of King George V in 1911.

Ever the faith endures,
England, my own!
Life is good, and joy runs high,
Between English earth and sky.

