

Imperial War Museum First World War Centenary Programme

Pre-1914

Date	Event
January 1871	Prussia and the other German states are unified as a single nation. Wilhelm I of Prussia becomes Kaiser (Emperor) of Germany, with Prince Otto von Bismarck as Chancellor .
October 1879	Dual Alliance signed between Germany and Austria-Hungary
May 1882	Italy joins Germany and Austria-Hungary to form the Triple Alliance
June 1887	Known as 'The Reinsurance Treaty', a pact is signed between Germany and Russia agreeing not to attack one another
June 1888	29-year-old Wilhelm II succeeds his father as Kaiser of Germany
March 1890	Bismarck dismissed as Chancellor of Germany by Kaiser Wilhelm II
June 1890	Germany decides not to renew 'The Reinsurance Treaty' with Russia
January 1894	Alliance signed between France and Russia
November 1894	Nicholas II becomes Tsar of Russia
March 1898	Germany passes its first law to build large numbers of warships. This challenge to Britain's long-standing naval supremacy begins an arms race between the two countries. Other laws for the building of more ships follow in later years.
April–August 1898	Spanish-American War. USA defeats Spain, taking control of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and becoming a major player on the world stage.
1899–1901	Uprising in China by the 'Boxers', a nationalist group seeking to end foreign domination of the country
1899–1902	Anglo-Boer War. After a long struggle, Britain re-establishes control over the Boers in South Africa.
January 1901	Queen Victoria dies. Edward VII becomes King of Great Britain and Ireland.
December 1901	Guglielmo Marconi sends the first message across the Atlantic using wireless telegraphy
January 1902	Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed, ending Britain's years of 'splendid isolation'
October 1903	Women's Social and Political Union formed in Manchester under the leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. Begins a militant campaign for women's right to vote.
April 1904	Known as the 'Entente Cordiale', a political understanding is reached between Britain and France ending years of tension and mistrust
June–October 1904	Systematic killing of the Herero and Nama people by the German Army in German South-West Africa, the first recognised genocide of the twentieth century
1904–1905	Russo-Japanese War in Manchuria. Japan defeats Russia.
January 1905	Revolution in Russia is fiercely crushed by government troops, but leads to limited political reforms
December 1905	Liberal Party wins the British general election and forms a government led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman
February 1906	Britain launches a revolutionary new battleship, HMS <i>Dreadnought</i> . Naval rivalry with Germany intensifies.
August 1907	Anglo-Russian Entente announced, demonstrating a new political understanding between Britain and Russia
April 1908	Herbert Henry Asquith replaces Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as British prime minister
October 1908	Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Balkans is formally annexed by Austria-Hungary
July 1909	Frenchman Louis Blériot makes the first successful cross-channel flight in an aeroplane, vindicating the <i>Daily Mail</i> 's claim three years earlier, 'Britain No Longer An Island'
May 1910	King Edward VII dies. George V becomes King of Britain and Ireland.
December 1911	George V crowned Emperor of India at the Delhi Durbar
April 1912	Asquith introduces the Third Home Rule Bill into the British parliament, offering limited self-government to Ireland within the United Kingdom. Nationalist and Unionist tensions slowly grow within the country.
April 1912	SS <i>Titanic</i> sinks after striking an iceberg in the northern Atlantic. Over 1500 people lose their lives.
1912–1913	First Balkan War. Turkey loses most of its remaining European territory.
March 1913	Woodrow Wilson sworn in as the 28th President of the United States
June 1913	Second Balkan War begins. Further outbreak of fighting in the Balkans which lasts until August.
March 1914	Asquith's Home Rule Bill threatened when British officers, serving at the Curragh camp in Ireland, threaten to resign rather than enforce home rule in Ireland

Military events	highlighted in khaki
Naval events	highlighted in green
Aviation events	highlighted in orange
Political events	highlighted in light blue
Social events	highlighted in red