

FIRST WORLD-WAR
EPHEMERA

~ FRAGMENTS ~
AN ANTHOLOGY



Copyright statement

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The illustrations in this anthology are based on or inspired by a variety of digitized archival records, objects and ephemera. These include:

 Next of Kin Memorial Plaque, held at Imperial War Museums, London (EPH 2223):
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30082124>

 Early silk poppy, held at Imperial War Museums, London (EPH 2313):
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/why-we-wear-poppies-on-remembrance-day>

 Bundles of Letters to Prisoners of War mostly addressed to the crew of the Galatea at Rochefort and

forwarded to England, held in The National Archives, Kew (ADM 97/131).



A selection of First World War picture postcards held at The Postal Museum, London:

<https://www.postalmuseum.org/blog/postcards-from-the-first-world-war/>



Digitized soldier diaries featured on Judy Waugh's website, TRENCH ART: <https://www.trench-art.net/ww1-diaries-1>



A variety of digitized letters and documents held by the Imperial War Museum, London; the local history collection at The Word, South Shields (including a letter written by local man John McIntosh to his younger brother at home, and a satirical cartoon by local artist William McIntosh); Bodmin Keep Museum; Brighton & Hove Museums; and London Transport Museum.



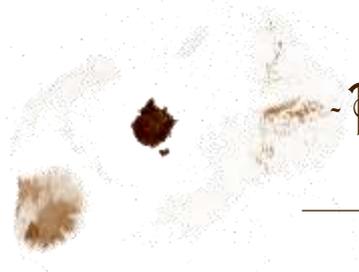
The Mombasa African Memorial

(<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/4007267/mombasa-african-memorial/>) and the Nairobi African Memorial (<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/4005067/nairobi-african-memorial/>), Kenya.

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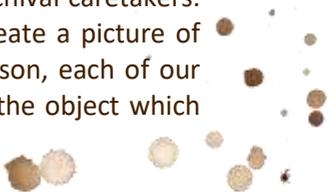
~ FRAGMENTS ~
AN ANTHOLOGY



- P R E F A C E -

War bruises us all (first hand or invisibly and viscerally through family generations). It is an embodied concept, carried within oral traditions, memories, stories, rituals and ephemeral objects. By its violent nature, it creates an emotionally heightened state, at times resulting in an emotionally repressive response for those who experience it directly. Where those latent emotions emerge, as threads carried down by generations, is intriguing. Ephemera, with its fast, temporary, fragmentary, and often 'off the cuff' mode of production, offers submerged or embedded clues. These help to reclaim, recover and attempt to articulate the 'lost' human experience, offering hope of collective healing.

How we collectively assimilate and recontextualise the painful legacy of war into everyday experience is the subject of this anthology. Ephemeral objects offer new, accessible and ongoing opportunities to access displaced memories by current generations. They offer the chance to connect with intangible elements, which aren't written down but which are intrinsically and instinctively present. These might include wear and tear marks, indicating uncaring or overly cherishing custodians. The forensic language indicates value (or lack thereof) communicated by timescales of production, the creators, the owners, and the family and archival caretakers. Close observation of the object helps to create a picture of partial and absent information. For this reason, each of our writers has provided a basic description of the object which they have responded to within their writing.



Our understanding of war is shaped by the histories we receive, and the way we receive them (or not) through public commemorative events, museums, or physical monuments such as graveyards or statues. Then there is the other side. The less spoken about, what David Olusoga calls ‘the Unremembered’ (whether not-as-much remembered or not remembered at all). The less known stories, the less popular tropes and themes that we generally experience within the continuum of war narratives. Inevitably all narratives exist within a hierarchy. The purpose of this anthology is to create a space for all stories, to be presented here on an equal basis.

Often originating from very personal starting points, tangible objects, and gaps filled or entirely absent stories, ephemeral objects provide a rich and fertile soil for our writers. They explore their own family folklore (or lack thereof), stories, memories, embodied through the artefacts which have witnessed conflict as well as inhabiting our own time. Many of our writers have explored how to reconcile that contrast – familiarity and unfamiliarity – through inversion or pastiche, and internal and external conflict.

Our ambition within these pages is to create imaginaries that address the silenced stories arising from historic inequality or the suppression of narratives of non-dominant groups. We have asked the question, ‘how do we re-tell the disconnected fragments of the past as a coherent story’ using form and structure as our tools. How do we listen to the silenced voices of the past? How do we share and honour those stories?

Many of the writers included here have explored the complexity around patriotism, heroism, imperialism, sectarianism. In writing these stories we have created a conceptual space for that absence to exist, utilising creativity

and response to historic ephemeral artefacts to flourish within it. Every person is affected by war in some way. Stories only exist and can realise their full power, when they have listeners. This is your invitation. This project has demonstrated that there are many diverse and silent stories which still need to emerge for us to even begin to comprehend the whole spectrum of war-related experience.

FELICITY TATTERSALL



- CONTENTS -



INTRODUCTION	11
1. PHOTOGRAPH FRAME ~ ANDREA TIGAR	13
2. TIME SLIPS ~ JAMES BALTHAZAR	19
3. THE THINGS WE REMEMBER ~ LOUISE CHARLTON	25
4. STATUES: MOMBASA & NAIROBI ~ ANTHONY SIRYA KALUME	29
5. GHADAR ~ NAVI M.	35
6. KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS ~ MICHAEL GRAHAM.	43
7. ALBERT'S THOUGHTS ~ ANN ALEXANDER	49
8. THE FLIT AND PHIL ~ GRAHAM RANKIN	53
9. IJKE LARKS ~ ABIGAIL OTTLEY	59
10. SNAPSHOT ~ BRENDA COLLINS.	65
11. KITTY KEEPS THE HOME FIRES BURNING ~ JO RENDALL	69
12. CUTTINGS FROM THE CORNED-BEEF CLAPPER ~ S.C. WEBB.	73
THE PROJECT TEAM	79



- INTRODUCTION -



This anthology comes out of a project titled ‘Ephemera and writing about war in Britain, 1914 to the present’, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and run by academics at Northumbria University Newcastle and the University of Exeter. Our project looked at the many ways in which ephemera can help to tell stories about the experience of war outside the mainstream: stories that are either not told at all, or told only within specific groups, whether that be a family, a small town or village, or a particular ethnic or religious community. When we talk about ephemera, we mean all kinds of printed or handwritten items: small, often everyday or mass-produced items, ranging from pictures and postcards to leaflets and magazines, small pieces of jewellery, uniform buttons, bookmarks, and so on.

Our team of researchers included one literary scholar (Ann-Marie Einhaus), two creative writers (May Sumbwanyambe and Tony Williams) and three historians (Ann-Marie Foster, Chris Kempshall and Catriona Pennell). We each approached our topic – how ephemera can feed into diversifying the stories we tell about war – from different angles. But we also wanted to see what would happen if talented writers from different backgrounds took war-related objects as their starting point – and this anthology is the result. While we offered some minimal editorial input, we kept these pieces as close to the original submission as possible.

Between May and September of 2023, we ran several online and in-person creative workshops open to members of the

public. The in-person workshops were led by Ann-Marie Einhaus, May Sumbwanyambe and Tony Williams in The Word in South Shields and in the Literary & Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, two wonderful local cultural institutions. The digital workshops (which we ran online to maximise opportunities for participation) were led by Chris Kempshall and by Felicity Tattersall, a gifted artist, writer and creative practitioner who joined our project team to facilitate these sessions. Felicity also co-edited and illustrated this anthology. At the Northumbria end, our designer Roger Newbrook worked his magic to turn the poems, stories, dramatic monologues and sketches and Felicity's beautiful illustrations into this finished work.

We believe that our anthology reflects the idea that creative writing allows each of us to explore our own histories and meaningful objects on our own terms. Ephemera and everyday objects can be transmitters of obscured or deeply personal histories. They are the props which allow for a discussion and reflection of the past beyond the big, official histories, and with this anthology we wanted to offer a platform for their potential. Our thanks go to our wonderful contributors, whose pieces bring to life such a wide range of experiences and viewpoints.

As readers, we hope you enjoy this anthology. But we also hope its contents might inspire you to turn to meaningful objects in your own life and use them to connect with your own history through creative work.

ANN-MARIE EINHAUS, CHRIS KEMPSHALL AND CATRIONA PENNELL



- 1. PHOTOGRAPH FRAME -

✧ ANDREA TIGAR ✧



I am intimidated by all the people who seem eager to leap into telling stories. Maybe I am about to tell a story? But it's certainly not fiction, it will be a loose kind of essay, I guess. But it kind of feels like MY story, not a story of someone from the First World War era that I'm telling through the object.

My family has a picture frame containing baby photos of my aunt and my mother. The frame is made of base metal, perhaps 6 inches tall and 9 inches wide. It's attached to a base and moves back and forth on a hinge, or it did at one time. I don't have this frame – it's in my sister's attic a continent away and I may never actually see it again. I don't need to. It was present somewhere throughout my childhood and well into my adulthood. I know exactly what it looks like, and I know what it feels like (a little dusty), and I know how much it weighs.

The photos are clearly from another era. The clothes are old-fashioned. They aren't sepia, but they aren't quite black and white either. They are not sharp like modern photos. They make you dream a bit, wonder. When we were dividing up my parents' things after their deaths I noticed, for the first time, that it has three flags decorating the top of the mat: British,

French and American. My aunt was born in 1916 and my mother was born in 1918. This is an object from World War I.



I am an American. We are not taught about World War I. I bet there are Americans who aren't even aware that America fought in World War I. We refer to Korea as the 'forgotten war', but that is wrong; our forgotten war is World War I.

But I have been fascinated by World War I since a friend came home from a hiking trip in the Vosges in the mid-1980s and mentioned that he hadn't realised that so much of the fighting in the First World War had taken place there. He said there was still barbed wire all over the place. And that was that. I probably hadn't given World War I a moment's thought before then but I was fascinated and have been ever since.



I think a great deal of the fascination came from the tangible. The barbed wire is still there. In the mid-1980s there were still living memories of that war, but it did seem like history to me. And now it is history, it really is. But I have learned since then that there are many places, especially in the landscapes of France and Flanders, where it is still there. Not just the cemeteries and the memorials, but the war itself. There are physical memories of a sort etched all over the landscapes, such as in Picardy where you can still see the outline of the front in the chalky soil.

The very tangibility of it grips my imagination. It feels just like that veil in the Harry Potter books. In the Department of Mysteries there's a room with a veil that Harry thinks he can hear voices behind – he knows there are people there. They are right there, he can almost hear them, but he cannot understand what they are saying, he cannot reach them. But he knows they are there.

I feel the same way about the World War I stories, that they are still accessible and vibrant. Right there if only I could reach through the veil. But they are also fragmented and elusive. Ephemeral.

So, I have been wanting to write a story about that frame containing my aunt's and mother's pictures and how it links to memory and World War I. I feel I should

be able to. The photographs have that old quality that generates curiosity and imagination and I know my grandparents were in their twenties and that was their lived experience. I know there is a lot that I don't know and will never know, but if I could just spin a yarn...

But all I keep thinking about is my grandmother. I was closer to my grandfather, but my grandmother was such a strong personality she just dominates every time I think about this frame and the memories or stories I hope are somehow there. This is what I think about: How did that frame even come to be in the family? My grandmother was a very pragmatic person. She had a bit of a hard life and by the time I knew her she didn't have a sentimental bone in her body and I kind of doubt she ever did. She would never have bought such a thing.



So, I spin a yarn based on no fact whatsoever, although it does have a kind of period quality. My grandfather was a printer and worked for a newspaper. It's possible he belonged to a union. It's quite possible he took the family to a Labor Day picnic. I like to think it was some kind of prize from a nice day's outing.

But really I have no idea.

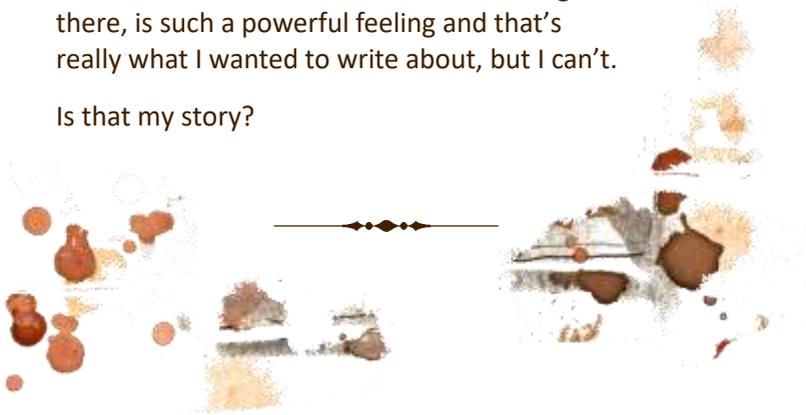
I think about the fact that my grandmother was a fairly recent immigrant. She came to America in 1904, when I think she might have been around ten or twelve. I wonder how she even felt about this war – how she

felt about a war that her brothers and my grandfather had to register for the draft for. I doubt it was any kind of patriotism. And certainly no allegiance to a side that Russia had been on – they fled Russia in the middle of the night. The flags in this frame make it a patriotic object. She would never have bought it.

I have no idea what her story was, and it is her story I now care about. I was so hoping the frame would help. Even just help me imagine something. But there just aren't any memories or stories associated with that frame. I don't even know how it came into the family. It's just a closed door.

I remember how excited I was when I realized we had something connected to World War I in the family. The sense of connection, that it's all still right there, is such a powerful feeling and that's really what I wanted to write about, but I can't.

Is that my story?



This piece is based on a frame containing baby photographs of my aunt (born 1916) and mother (born 1918). The frame's mat is decorated with British, French and American flags and was made during World War I.

* * * * *

ANDREA TIGAR is a recovering Wall Street lawyer, now learning to love small town Connecticut. This is her first foray into writing anything not absolutely required for school or work. She loves historical fiction and murder mysteries and has been reading World War I histories and memoirs for many years. Her favourite ephemera are photographs, but she also loves old postcards and letters, especially from the World War I era.

§

- 2. TIME SLIPS -

✧ JAMES BALTHAZAR ✧



‘What do you mean, you’ve lost it?’ I shout at my son.

‘I dunno,’ he shrugs.

‘It’s a family heirloom!’

‘But Dad, it was perfect for the steampunk fancy-dress party.’

‘You always do this, Richard! You borrow things without asking, and then you lose them or break them.’

‘What is so important about it anyway?’ he whines.

‘For a start, it is silver. And...’ I close my eyes and think about the pocket watch. It has the initials WH etched on it, the H signifying Hudspith, our surname. The watch has been in the family for several generations, passing to me when I turned 18. Although my hands rarely feel its weight, my eyes are accustomed to sweeping over it every night, when checking that the house is in order. Until this week it has lain on my sitting room mantle shelf along with a perpetual calendar, a carriage clock, a thermometer, and a storm glass, in height order. Now it is replaced by a dust-free, vacant patch that upsets the symmetry of the arrangement.

You would think that I was a military man if you saw the way I make my bed and polish my shoes and readjust pictures with a spirit level. In my case, however, a fastidious control over my environment allows me to think with a clear head. My father used to fuss over me – his only child – and he bequeathed to me his anxiety about needing to stay one step ahead of the dangers of this world.

My son Richard though, is wildly, messily care-free. Running deep through his make-up are a defiance of rules and an opposition to hierarchy, borne of an incomprehension of structure. This apparent lack of respect is counterbalanced by his truthfulness, his compassion, and his generosity.

‘Are you crying, Dad?’ Richard puts his hand on my shoulder. ‘It was only a watch. I’ll get you another one.’

‘It’s been in the trenches in the First World War, this watch,’ I say. ‘It’s been to France and back. And now it’s probably lost in a vomit-covered pizza box in a halls of residence rubbish bin.’

‘Sorry.’

‘Is that how you honour our family’s war dead?’ I hear myself thunder.

‘Who died?’ This question, shot from my son’s lips like a sniper’s bullet, stuns me. I don’t know anything about the ancestor who kept this timepiece on his grimy body, in his unwashed uniform, close to his beating heart.

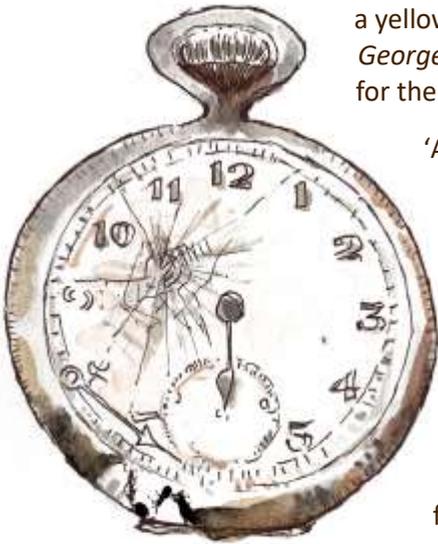
I do have a box of ephemera in my study, though. I look at Richard. 'Right,' I announce. 'Family history time.'

Together, we retrieve the dried-up documents and spread them over the dining table. There are letters, certificates and prayer sheets written in a variety of copperplates and typefaces. The papers and inks have browned with age. I check the dates and names mentioned, and I map out a family tree. It is not too complex, since the men in my family do not sire many children.

'Don't spill your coffee on those photos,' I bark.

'Relax Dad, I'm not that clumsy.'

As Richard picks up a love letter and sniggers at its contents, I sift through the rest of these historical records, looking for anything military. I find a yellow-spotted 1917 edition of the *St George's Gazette*, a regimental paper for the Northumberland Fusiliers.



'Aha! This might be it.' I flick through its pages and freeze.

'You OK, Dad?'

Staring up at me is a photograph of William Hudspith. He is the double of Richard. They share not only the Hudspith nose, but also the same prominent forehead, the pouting lips, and

the defiant eyes. They are even the same age – 21.

The death notice explains that he was drowned at Boulogne when he was on the way to join the firing line.

‘Listen to this, Richard. Now I know where you get your impatience and recklessness from!’ I read from the paragraph under the picture:

“He had to wait some three or four hours for his train and went for a stroll. Thinking to take a short cut to reach a bridge, and the night being very dark, he by mischance dropped over a wall into the water 30 feet below. Although a fair swimmer, he was much hampered by the heavy clothes and boots which he was wearing, and unfortunately was drowned, his body being recovered two hours later.”

‘That’s the kind of thing you would do! You wouldn’t sit patiently in the station. You would go off to stretch your legs and then you would lose track of time and try to find a short cut to get back but get lost and trip over a wall and get yourself killed.’

‘Probably,’ pouts Richard.

As I gaze upon the face of our ancestor, I imagine his voice in my head.

‘You wouldn’t like it here,’ he says. ‘No matter how many schedules and rules you impose on soldiers, to support them, they just get killed anyway. I, at least, got to live on my own terms.’

I gulp and look up at my son. My strong, untameable,
autonomy-loving son.



This story was inspired by the photograph of a drowned soldier in an entry dated 29 February 1916 in the St George's Gazette – the monthly regimental journal of the Northumberland Fusiliers. The expression on his face sparked my curiosity about his personality and the circumstances leading up to his death. I changed his name because I didn't want to disrespect the dead.

* * * * *

JAMES BALTHAZAR is Anglo-French, Autistic, and a trauma survivor. Attending writing groups keeps him sane. His interests are writing, psychology and the theatre. He watches documentaries compulsively. He likes reading medical reports and song lyrics. His favourite kind of ephemera are old maps and diaries from when he lived in Paris.

§

-3. THE THINGS WE REMEMBER -

✧ LOUISE CHARLTON ✧



JANUARY 1915

In sepia tone, page No 1

Dated a year before time stopped at the Somme.

First issue forward

Apologies given; not.

The Growler's debut with

Unpretentious humour disregarded,

A sense of empowerment trapped between lines

Connecting future hearts to respectfully remember

Where feet fell.

Through stoic alliteration

Camp Cackle congratulated courage,

But anticipated an extension request
for leave on Saturday night.

* * * * *



MY GREAT GRANDA BILLY

Morning mists cleared as sun warmed the ground;
07:15am.

Billy stood thinking about home, Annie's smile,
and their children,

he took a breath, held it, and on the edge of a trench
in a foreign land closed his eyes

as precious noises of the Tyne began to bleed through
his fear.

Hammers smashing steel on steel, gulls singing
fishermen home,

voices of men, women and children filling the river's
reach with longing, laughter, life;

their skin, bones and hearts holding within them
a river's soul.

The birds stopped singing and the quiet of the morning
pressed down on Billy's heart once more.

I know the story of Great Granda Billy from
the postcard with his picture on,

taken by someone from Elliot's Studios Bedford Street
North Shields, the place he was from,

words on the back, say killed in France, 1.7.1916,
From Alice.

Standing proud with smiling eyes this man who
never got to see his children grow

or hold his Annie in his arms once more,
is forever known to me from the writings of,

Private J. Elliot also of the
20th Northumberland Fusiliers Battalion.

'Down on your bellies', Billy yelled, as first over,
the 20th crawled,

'I've been shot in the arse',
an unnamed bomber exhaled,

'Haven't we all', my Great Granda said.

The birds stopped singing as machine gun fire
cut through flesh,

and Great Granda Billy breathed back his soul
to the Tyne.



'January 1915' was inspired by a page from the January 1915 issue of The Growler, the wartime journal of the 16th Service Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers. 'My Great Granda Billy' is based on a postcard of my own great-grandfather, whose story (and reputation) has been passed down in the family ever since his death in the war.

* * * * *

LOUISE CHARLTON works in the NHS and has been writing poetry and short stories most of her life. Supporting others to achieve is important to her, but she dreams one day, of seeing her work published and on the shelves of her local library. She enjoys walking and exploring the coasts of Northumberland where she finds inspiration for her writing, and Louise's favourite kind of ephemera are lists or recipes, discovered in pre-loved books she buys at Barter Books in Alnwick.

§

- 4. STATUES: MOMBASA & NAIROBI -

✧ ANTHONY SIRYA KALUME ✧



Porter
Fighter
Gun carrier
Combattant
Soldier
Warrior
Hero
Commemorating, remembering, honouring?
Bravery, selfless heroism?
Vital military roles
The feet and
Hands of the
Colonial British army?

Or

A British sculptor
Who didn't know
The experience or
suffering of the
People he carved.
A government, who...
Lost their records
The nameless souls.
For the many
Missing, killed, mistreated

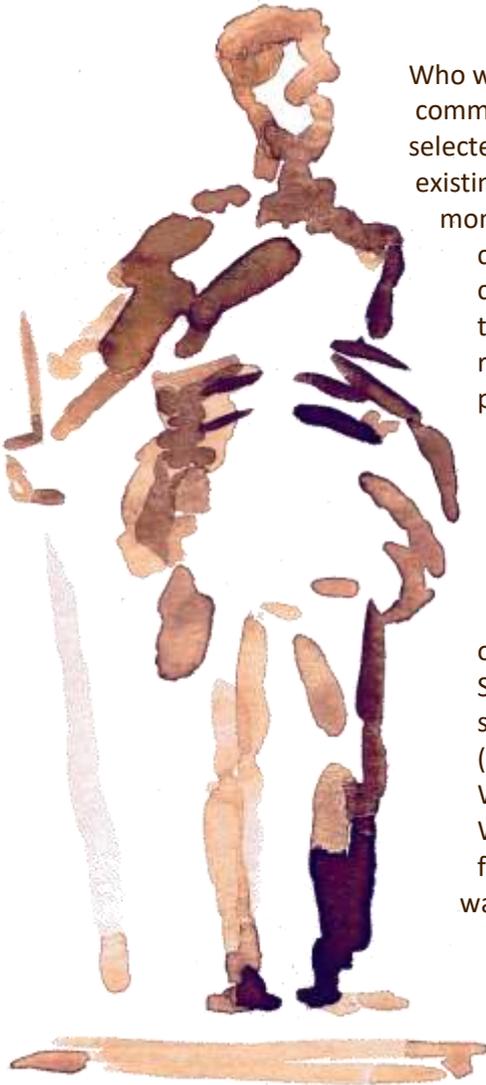


Unnamed, unknown, unrecorded
Ambivalence, absence, inadequacy,
Painful, conflicted, disconnected

What do you think?

The only ephemera
That we have
In our possession
Within our mind
What about the
Ceaseless unanswered questions....
Recorded here:





Who was the artist commissioned? How was he selected? Do they have other existing works? Was this monument erected in other colonies? How much did it cost to produce this? Are there any records or reports documenting the process? Who exactly do the statues depict? Did they use photographs or did specific people pose, and if so, how were they selected?

Where are the names of all of the recruited Servicemen recorded who served in Myanmar (Burma), during both World War One and World War Two? What was the fate of the victims of warfare? Did the dead

soldiers from Africa get honoured with a Commonwealth

War Graveyard like their white

counterparts? Where are the records? Can any Veterans from the commonwealth services provide more information and context? Are there statues

dedicated to women from Africa who contributed to the war effort? What injuries did they suffer?

Silence

This is all:

‘This is to the memory of the native African troops who fought; to the carriers who were the hands and feet of the army and to all other men who served and died for their king and country in Eastern Africa in the Great War, 1914-1918. If you fight for your country, even if you die, your sons will remember your name.’

Words inscribed on the ‘Askari Monument’ standing on Kenyatta Avenue facing the Bank of India. On the right hand side of the monument is an insignia with the words ‘Myrander SC, 1924’, indicating the pseudonym of the designer, British sculptor James Alexander Stevenson, and the year the monument was made.

Family stories are the lore we all live by. They are everything, even more so in the absence of other information. Passed down by my late Father, who used to take us to the statues and explain their significance and connections with his great Uncle who was never seen again after being recruited by the colonial army and sent



abroad. The attire and the face of one of the depicted figures shows a remarkable resemblance to my great Uncle who my father clearly regarded as the true likely image of him.

The best step forward is to go through the War records of some of the Home Office archives to try and determine the status of recruits from the East African region and get to the archives where further research can be done. Some of the questions that relate to this monument might be easily answered once the relevant authorities are identified.

If they exist?

If they don't –

How do we?

Commemorate, remember, honour?

* * * * *

EDITORIAL NOTE

The quotation from the monument's inscription above is a poem by Rudyard Kipling, who worked with the then Imperial War Graves Commission as an advisor.

The accompanying illustrations are based on two separate monuments, both looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission: The Mombasa African Memorial and the Nairobi African Memorial, Kenya.



This piece is based on a statue erected after the First World War when Kenya was still a protectorate colony of Britain. It was presented to the people as a memory of all the troops that never returned from the war. Here we are questioning on the content and providence of the project that has not been clarified or articulated due to lack of study or research.

* * * * *

*ANTHONY SIRYA KALUME a.k.a BEKUTO WASIRYA has been a lecturer at University of Brighton for over a decade and has a chapter published in *Collaboration in Higher Education*, eds. Sandra Abegglen, Tom Burns and Sandra Sinfield, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Anthony is Chair of Diversity Lewes, a non-Profit entity; Board Member of Neema Project, Kenya; Image Curator for the Obsidian Collection, Chicago; Fellow of the MuseumLab22; and Associate Curator for the Ditchling Museum of Art +Craft.*

§

- 5. GHADAR -

✧ NAVI M. ✧

Finally arriving at the tent, Lieutenant Arthur Campbell then stepped inside, looking for Captain Michael Hamilton. It was a hive of activity; multifarious groups of military personnel were huddled over several tables, talking to their superior officers, pointing at maps, and making notes. One by one, they shot furtive, disquieted glances at Campbell – and the gargantuan sword he was carrying – before slowly getting to their feet and shuffling out. As they moved towards the exit, some of them looked at Campbell questioningly, but he ignored them. His eyes were only focused on the outlier, who had not moved a single muscle; the solitary figure who was standing with his back to Hamilton, staring at a map on the wall.

Campbell approached Hamilton, clearing his throat. “Sir,” he said breathlessly. “Something requires your immediate attention.”

“What is it, lieutenant?” Hamilton asked softly, not turning around. Stroking his beard, the captain was ostensibly still mesmerised by the map in front of him.

“The sepoy regiments are becoming increasingly troublesome. There are problems in the camp, sir.”

“What’s new?” Hamilton snorted, raising and lowering one shoulder. “You ran all the way here, presumably, just to tell me that?”

“They are constantly at loggerheads, sir. Just now, there was another violent altercation,” Campbell explained, scratching behind his ear. “This time, however, it nearly turned deadly.”

Hamilton turned around, walking past Campbell to another table, before picking up another map, and scrutinising it. “As long as they continue to hate each other more than they hate us,” Hamilton replied impatiently, “Everything should be alright.”

“Respectfully, sir, what about if their hate for each other ends up superseding their hate for the enemy?”

Hamilton frowned, suddenly noticing the sword in Campbell’s hands, ignoring the question. “What is that?”

Caught off-guard, Campbell briefly raised his eyebrows, handing over the sword. “This is what they were fighting over, today,” he explained.

“Why?”

“According to the Sikhs, it belonged to one of their great kings. Meanwhile, the Pathans argue that it was stolen from them, by this very same king. Taking this away from all of them, today, nearly caused a riot. They are exceedingly proud of this sword.”

“As they should be,” Hamilton murmured reverently, unsheathing the sword and raising it upwards. The

metal blade gleamed under the light, emanating a resplendent power and menace. He examined the weapon meticulously, caressing the handle, turning it over in his hands, before finally sheathing it and licking his lips. "It is a beautiful sword."

Campbell scoured the military section of the promenade, looking for his adjutant. The sky was spotlessly white, and the enormous palm trees were swaying in the wind. After several minutes, he eventually spotted Hawkins facing the waters, scribbling frantically on his notepad.

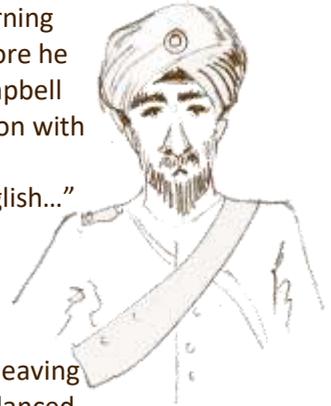
Positively sprinting over to Hawkins, Campbell tapped his adjutant on the back. "Hawkins," he barked. "What on earth are you doing?"

Hawkins looked somewhat abashed, turning slightly red, but he was interrupted before he could speak further. "Never mind," Campbell snapped, dismissing Hawkins's explanation with an airy wave of his hand. "The Sikh representative, the one who speaks English..."

"Sandhawalia, Sikander Singh?"

"Yes. Bring him to me, immediately."

Nodding dutifully, Hawkins hurried off, leaving Campbell alone by the waterfront. He glanced contemptuously at the Stamford Raffles hotel behind him – a conspicuously decadent structure - before turning around and silently watching the waters. Moments later, Hawkins returned, accompanied by a British Indian soldier, sporting a traditional *dastaar* and unshorn beard.



Sandhawaliala stepped forward, saluting, before offering his hand. Taking it, Campbell puffed out his cheeks, observing his surroundings, while Hawkins lingered in the background.

“It is quiet,” Campbell eventually said. “Things are quiet, aren’t they?”

“I heard you speaking to your adjutant, sir, all the way over there,” Sikander replied, grinning, before his smile faded. “Never speak to a Pathan like that, by the way. Otherwise, you might get more than you bargained for.”

“Indeed. I have noticed that Pathans do not respect anyone, nor do they respect anything. Not even their own lives, apparently. That is precisely why they are such fearsome soldiers. Of course, your own people are very similar in that respect,” Campbell added quickly, inclining his head. “Ultimately, with all these martial races standing by our side, the British Indian Army is unquestionably the most formidable fighting force on the planet.”

Sandhawaliala shuffled his feet uncomfortably, staring at the floor and coughing.

“Tomorrow, your regiment will be shipping out,” Campbell continued.

Sandhawaliala raised his eyebrows. “Where to, sir?”

“The Dardanelles.”

Sandhawaliala looked nonplussed. “Where is that? I have never heard of it.”

“Neither have I, until now. Any further questions?”

There were several seconds of silence, before Sandhawalía straightened up, puffing out his chest and standing noticeably more upright. He looked directly into Campbell’s eyes, positively towering over the white man.

“Where is the sword?”

“The sword is no longer your concern,” Campbell said flatly. “It was causing far too much trouble.”

“That sword belonged to my ancestor Maharaja Kharak Singh, and through him, the Lion of the Punjab himself. Maharaja Ranjit Singh,” Sandhawalía said, clenching his fists, his eyes burning with indignation. “It must be returned, at once.”

“I will do my best to ensure its return to your family, and community.”

Unclenching his fists, Sandhawalía nodded deliberately, before wiping beads of glistening sweat from his forehead. “Will there be anything else, sir?”

Campbell shook his head, as Sandhawalía turned to walk away. As if troubled by a sudden thought, however, he called out to the departing sepoy.

“Why are you fighting for us?” he blurted out.

Turning around, Sandhawalía hesitated for a couple of moments, furrowing his brow thoughtfully.



“That is an extremely dangerous question, sir,” he said, eventually. “It would be prudent to take into consideration that some of us have already been asking ourselves this very same question, and not everyone has answers for it, at this moment in time.”

Saying this, the swordless sardar left for good, leaving Campbell alone with his thoughts.



Ghadar is very loosely inspired by the 1915 Singapore Mutiny during the Great War, in addition to the general experiences of Commonwealth soldiers from the Indian subcontinent, during both world wars. Featuring prominently in this piece are themes of imperialism, nationalism, sectarianism, and rebellion. Through the symbolism of a sword, I wanted to depict the diverse martial traditions of the different communities who fought for the British Indian Army, as well as illuminating their conflicts with themselves, and each other. A golden sword with a purple, velvety sheath; one that is decorated with ornamental jewels and patterns. Currently missing.

* * * * *

NAVI M. is an English Literature undergraduate student with a lifelong interest in religion and history, alongside various other trivial pursuits. Currently living on the South Coast with his family, Navi enjoys reading, writing, playing games, and watching films. Navi's favourite kind of ephemera are public transport (train and bus) tickets. This is because they provide – through thoroughly detailing the context (relevant date, time, price, departure point, and destination) - a comprehensive snapshot, of a journey in the past.

§

- 6. KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS -

✕ MICHAEL GRAHAM ✕

SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY, 1953, LONDON:

Now in my dotage, I can look back on a life of achievement. A knighthood for services to archaeology and wartime intelligence work. Yes, I've led an extremely full life. I've known some fascinating people: T.E. Lawrence, Agatha Christie. Few Regrets. Well... apart from one event: the sinking of HMS Zaida.

It was August, 1916. The War was at its height. We were struggling to make an impact with the Turks. I was posted on to a commissioned yacht, the Zaida – much to my annoyance, as it was taking me away from my archaeological plans. My mission: to keep an eye on Turkish fortifications and to drop two spies off.

I knew they were tricky waters there south of Turkey. Always the chance of getting hit by a U-boat torpedo or a Turkish shell from the shore. I never expected a French mine would be our downfall! 'You should let the French know of our movements', the captain had said. 'To Hell with the French', I'd said, 'why should I answer to them'. I was in command and would not be ordered about. Too headstrong for my own good! I suppose I'd been moulded by father.

Before we embarked, I tried to get to know the crew. I always got on with the ordinary man, I like to think. They were a raggle-taggle bunch, but good sailors and strong characters. I remember one, a Tynesider. Dashed if I can remember the man's name. When he spoke I noticed his Tyneside accent. 'Ah, a Geordie?' 'Yes, sir'. I'd met a few of these chaps when I led a dig on Hadrian's Wall. They were a tough breed, but he somehow seemed different. He had refined features and pensive eyes.

'I know your area pretty well. I worked on the Roman wall back in 1909', I told him. What amazed me was his keen interest in this. He told me that he had read quite a lot about the Romans. 'I work in the Wallsend shipyards, sir. They've discovered the very end of the Wall when they cleared some land for the building of the Mauretania. I walk past it every night now on the way home.'

'Yes, I'd heard about that discovery. Could be a fruitful area for a dig.'

We talked just once more during the voyage, on the night before the fateful day. He was on the deck for some quiet away from the others below deck. We talked about history, literature and his family he'd left behind, especially his talented footballing young son. I was amazed at how well-read he was. I've always respected the working man who wanted to improve his lot. Of course, unlike me, he had had no formal education; things chaps like me took for granted. I respected him enormously; it takes courage to struggle against fate. I noticed a sadness in him as if he sensed

what could have been in a different life. I'd said that we must talk more – there'll be plenty of time on this voyage. What WAS his name?

The other seamen were quite different. I found the cook a particularly jovial chap. I'd told him how they stuff a goose with dried peaches and pistachio nuts out here. He said with his hearty laugh, 'Oh I'll be trying that tomorrow, Sir.' Of course, 'tomorrow' was the day the Zaida went down.

It was the morning of August 17th. A loud bang occurred and within seconds the boat was shattered and split in two. All that remained was the roof of the charthouse; those who weren't sent to the depths, clung on to it. One of the fellows tried to climb on top of it. The Captain bellowed at him to get down: 'If we're going to die we'll die together.' We were in trouble, but we maintained a remarkably good-humoured acceptance of our fate. The cook said, 'If only I'd cooked that goose yesterday!' One of the



men piped up ‘I think our goose has blooming well been cooked alright!’. We all laughed.

Thinking back now, none of us mentioned our unfortunate shipmates; there was no time for sadness or recriminations, as we clung on for dear life. But now I’m sometimes haunted by images, particularly of that Tyneside chap trapped in the engine room. I can see it ... the thumping of fists, the desperate kicking against the walls to escape ... to no avail.’

* * * * *

MARY SPENCE AUGUST 22ND 1916

‘I don’t know what we’re going to do without him. Why didn’t he ask to stay at the yards. They’d have let him. He didn’t have to go away. But he could never rest and now he’s... Always had to prove himself to others. Head in the clouds and his nose always in a book. I know... he was a lovely man. Never raised his voice to me or the bairns. Soft as clarts, really! But now he’s left us. Poor Billy’s lost without him.’

Mary stares at the letter on the table, as they listen to Billy kicking his ball frustratedly against the backyard wall.

* * * * *

LETTER FROM SAM, AUGUST 6TH

'Dearest Mary. Just a few lines before I get on board. I hope you, and the bairns are well and coping. I have been told this will be a short, safe trip, so hopefully I will be back with you all soon. The other men seem a decent bunch. The man in charge is a very nice fellow. He's very educated and interesting. He knows Newcastle as he has worked on the Roman Wall. He was really interested in what I had to say and was quite taken aback with my knowledge. I'd love to take you and the bairns out to the Wall when I get back. Please keep your chin up, Mary. Give my love to them all.
Yours, Sam. PS Tell Billy to keep that ball pumped-up for when I get back.'



This piece was inspired by a bookmark commemorating Samuel Spence, which intrigued me from an early age. Sam was my Mam's uncle on her Dad's side. Not a lot was known about him other than the information given on the memorial bookmark. I didn't know his descendants (my Mam's cousins) and they didn't figure much in our family life. For additional research, I used the Imperial War Museum and the Great War Forum records for background and on the crew, including Leonard Woolley.

* * * * *

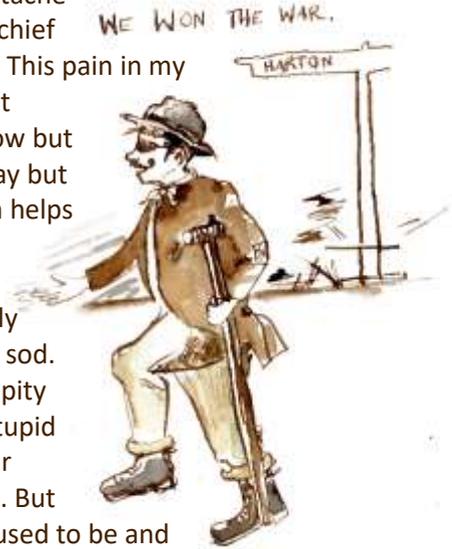
MICHAEL GRAHAM studied history and sociology at university and worked in further education and local government. He is now semi-retired and a carer for his wife and granddaughter. He enjoys researching history and writing poetry, short stories and non-fiction. He likes to play keyboards, writing songs and occasionally performs in a band.

§

- 7. ALBERT'S THOUGHTS -

✧ ANN ALEXANDER ✧

I think the signpost said Harton, with my good eye anyway. It'll be great to see Jenny again at home sweet home. Don't know if she'll be pleased to see her husband again 'cos I'm broken, that's for sure. Half a husband, that's me. I've tried to spruce myself up a bit for Jenny 'cos I've grown the moustache again and I'm wearing the kneckerchief she bought me all those years ago. This pain in my head, it's been there for days and it won't shift. Hope it'll ease tomorrow but that's what I say to myself every day but no joy. Lame left leg but the crutch helps a bit. I wonder about the Hans or Fritz who shot me. I think I got him in the stomach so he's probably worse than me or even dead, poor sod. Why do I say that but the truth is I pity him and didn't mean any harm – stupid isn't it to say that? We won the war after all and he's on the losing side. But really we're both not the men we used to be and I hope there's a job for me in the shipyard office. Don't think I'll be any good for the heavy work now. Can't bear to think about the twins and how we'll manage to bring them up on that measly pension. They're eight



now and kids eat money these days. The women have had jobs when we've been away but I don't know about Jenny 'cos of that letter that got lost in the mud. I've never seen so much stuff I don't like to think about. My mind just keeps going round and round and I can't seem to help thinking. I really must pull myself together. Hope I saw the sign post right – Harton. Yes, we won the war but lost the peace, both Fritz and me.



This dramatic monologue was inspired by a pencil drawing by William McIntosh (1895–1978), a talented artist from Hebburn, Tyneside, who served in the First World War and on his return worked as a shipbuilder. The satirical drawing shows a soldier who is presumably returning home after the war. The heading is WE WON THE WAR. The soldier is not in uniform but wears a jacket and trousers and has a crutch under his left arm and an injured left foot with no boot. He has a patch over his left eye, and sports a moustache and knotted scarf round his neck. His right arm is outstretched and there is a sign post behind him pointing to HARTON. His head appears to be bandaged. Our illustration is a re-imagining of the original drawing.

* * * * *

ANN ALEXANDER is happily retired and lives in South Shields. She writes stories, poems, and songs and she also reviews jazz CDs for an online blog. She has sung folk songs for many years in local folk music clubs, and she is thrilled when the audience joins in with the choruses, especially if it's a song that she wrote!

§

- 8. THE FLIT AND PHIL -

✧ GRAHAM RANKIN ✧

How the fluted columns at the entrance there were uneven. I used to run my finger up along an opened seam as I entered the building, that for a time felt also like my home.

Here, the upright joists have the roughly hewn texture of unplanned wood. When you stroke it, splks can stick in your finger ends. Trying to suck them out distracts you from the noise that feels as though it ripples inwards like shockwaves from minor earthquakes, before subsiding inside the strangely emptied cavern where your heart used to belong. Always the noise of shells, the whistling and whizzing and banging and thumping and crashing and exploding - and then the groaning and the screaming. Last breaths convulsed into lovers' names.

The planed and weathered smoothness of the oak exterior doors, defiantly resisting the seasons for generations. Suggestions to the eye of how long it must have taken for a time-served carpenter to form and assemble a joint. The measuring and shaping of angles for a pleasingly accomplished close fit. The differentially worn layers of varnish. The natural grain of the original timber. The careful detailing.

No time or space for detail here. Just reacting, surviving, living in this moment because you might not be living in the next. Just clumps of sodden earth stuck together in front of your face as you force your body onto, and into, the soil.

The stone floor beyond the doorway. The marks on the floor like a mosaic of scratches and wear from the boots of tradesmen and the movement of furniture. The carefully laid mortar between the slabs. The odour of old stone that has imbibed moisture through the ages.

The putrid stench of human waste mixed with mud and rainfall. The waterlogged bootprints of the long since departed, each sodden remnant like a burial at sea.

The grasp of railing underhand as the measured movements of the legs ascend like organic clockwork. The staircase that leads to each day's work ahead.

Misaligned steps cut out of the trenches with blunted shovels. The worn butts of rifles ready for first light.

The statues. Always the statues at the turn of the stairs, with fixed gazes and unclosing eyes. The unchanging history of great lives well lived.

Twisted, rotting bodies next to the barbed wire, mouths open, eyes seeing nothing again and again. And so very cold to the touch.

The sculptured marble tableaux in an ancient style with missing limbs but proud chests and horses' flanks.

Bodies separated like butcher's meat on a grim pastoral counter.

The calm quiet of the reading room with the bowed and earnest heads bobbing slowly from side to side while reading the journals and newspapers following the war. The missing ranks of the young, who are no longer there.



They are here, with me. Waiting for the signal.

The globes of light on decorative black steel columns that light the stairways and recesses in a comfortingly revealing glow.

The absence of lights. The waiting for the flares, for our calling forth.

There, the woman I wrote to. Our plans laid out on the paper in the top drawer of her bedside table. When to marry. Where. The children we could have and what they might be called. The house we would live in. The walks we would take. The Sundays we could spend together laughing and holding hands and walking down lanes in the fresh spring countryside, full of new buds and endless possibilities. Hugging shoulders closely and just looking into the fire in the old grate. The reassuringly musty smell of old ash in the crannies of the companion set.

The flare gun being loaded nearby.

The softness of touch as I caressed her freshly bathed and scented skin. The sharing of love and the sensing of breaths, and the slow kissing, and the exchanging of gifts of bodily affection. Her calling of P h i l i p under a spell of ecstasy.

Vicious lice and embittered scabs and dirt, the dirt under your nails that you have given up ever getting out. The smells that now burn in your nostrils against a righteous indignation.

The enrolment. The marching bands. The concealment of the physical condition that would have exempted me. The commitment I couldn't finally face. The enlisting as my escape. The things I could never say to her. The future plans I knew would never come to pass before we even finished writing them.

The mustering to readiness.

The last finger stroke along the fluted columns of the library entrance on the day I left. Lingering on the

indentations like old friends. The necessary pulling away.

The whoosh of the flares.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES

1. The title is a play on the name of the institution, The Lit And Phil, with the word for a surreptitious escape from an untenable situation, flit, and a popular abbreviation for the narrator's name, Phil.
2. The word spelk is a northern dialect word for splinter.



This piece was inspired by the notebook of a former librarian of the Literary & Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne (short Lit & Phil), which covers the period of the First World War and the enlistment of several library staff members, and by the entrance to the building of the Lit & Phil itself.

* * * * *

GRAHAM RANKIN was an English teacher for decades before at last realising that time for his own writing was running out, and that he had better get on with it. This is his first published piece since a poem about trees written when he was 9! In the meantime he tutors students in the North East of England who, like himself, are refugees from mainstream education.

§

-9. LIKE LARKS -
✧ ABIGAIL OTTLEY ✧

LIKE LARKS

(For Corporal A. Polkinghorne, D Company 2/6 Regiment
in Mesopotamia. Based on a letter to Harry Rich written 1st
January, 1918)

Dear Mr Rich, I'm getting on alright.
I did not see the New Year come but
slept in, snug and dry, and kept as warm as I could get.

Our poor tents have been flooded, see.
A foot of mud we've slept in, nearly. Sometimes
with the water to our knees.

Remember me, please, to all at home.
The Bible class is small these days I guess.

But, if you could see us, if you brought your camera,
you could take some comic views.
All of us, as like as not, quite lagged in mud, soaked
through.

The rain's not like the rain back home.
It comes in bucketfuls.

Oh Mr Rich, make no mistake, out here we do see life.

Our Christmas here was quiet enough,
as it must have been for those at home this year.
When dinner time came, they gave us skilly,
a kind of mixed up stew.

Cook mixed it up with something else. Though
what the something was we never knew.
Still, we all look on the bright side here.
And, well, you should have heard us Christmas Day.

We sat in our tents and sang like larks,
a merry Christmas roundelay.
We Cornish lads, we sang and sang, and
we showed them the way.



LIFE

(For Corporal A. Polkinghorne, D Company 2/6 Regiment.
Based on a letter to Harry Rich, 12th July, 1917)

Dear Mr Rich, I write to say that I am still alright.
I reached Bombay two weeks ago,
then two days journey rattling on a train.
I think, though, that it won't be long
before we're on the road again.

We'll be in Bassara quite soon —
and, from there, up the line to fight.
I tell you, Mr Rich, out here a fellow does see life.

The other day a funeral passed me by.
They have a kind of band that leads the way —
a small bit of a drum, a flat cornet,
a whistle, and a can,
also another instrument whose name I do not know.

The man who had the whistle
he scarce knew what end to blow.
You should have heard the noise they made
as they went on their way.

Behind the band the corpse was brought.
They don't have coffins here.
The chap was tied to two big sticks
and covered by a cloth.
All the time you could see his face –
which seemed to me quite queer.
And the mourners, they threw rice at him
and sometimes stopped to dance.

It was quite by chance I followed them
since they passed close by my door.
I'll say again, this war is strange.
But here we do see life.



These poems are based on letters held by the Cornish History Library in Redruth. They were written by Corporal A. Polkinghorne, who was a member of the Redruth Wesleyan Chapel Young Men's Bible Class, to local dignitary Harry Rich in 1917, who ran this group. Polkinghorne was serving with the Devon Regiment in South Africa at the time. The letters have been digitized and transcribed for Heart of Conflict, a centenary project based in Cornwall: heartofconflict.org.uk/. Reading the letters, I was moved by this young soldier's simple faith and also by his obvious respect and affection for his fellow bandsman and Bible Class master, Harry Rich. I have tried through my writing to capture and give resonance to the voice of this young man who found himself so far from home.

* * * * *

*ABIGAIL OTTLEY lives in Penzance, Cornwall. Her work has appeared in more than two hundred publications including *The High Window*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Fragmented Voices*, and *The Selkie*. She contributed to *Invisible Borders: New Women's Writing From Cornwall* (2020), *Morvoren: the poetry of sea-swimming*, and *Duff (Dragon Yaffle, 2022)*. In 2023, she was placed third and Highly Commended in the *Frosted Fire Pamphlet Award* with two separate pamphlets. In June, 2023, she won the *Wildfire Flash Fiction Competition*.*

§

-10. SNAPSHOT -

✧ BRENDA COLLINS ✧

The contraption loomed towards us,
One few had seen before.

To capture all our images,
Reflecting one aspect of war.

Yes! Our uniforms are crumpled,
Often patched and worn.

Our pride suffocating hatred,
For an enemy we scorn.

Armed with metal ticket machines,
We fulfil our role in war.

We hang onto distant memories,
A life that went before.

Although not on the front line,
Women witness war at home.





Our vehicles weave amongst the ruins,
Bombed out streets of monochrome.

Our likeness will soon be captured,
Our bodies shown weary and lean.

No smiles upon our faces,
Hiding nightmares, unforeseen.

They say we are much weaker,
Than the brave men holding guns.

Yet where would our country be,
Without loyal sisters, daughters and mums?

So capture our weary faces,
Our faith now faded and worn.

But you will never take the sadness,
Of lost lives we are left to mourn.



This poem was inspired by an image of a group of female tram drivers in Newcastle during the First World War, photographed in uniform for the Newcastle Chronicle at their depot.

* * * * *

BRENDA COLLINS is now retired. She spends many happy hours, working on her life journal, and dabbling in short story writing. Her love of poetry, reading and composing, has been passed down a generation from her late mother. She enjoys many hobbies, to keep busy, as well as having a keen interest in the world of the forensic investigator. One of her greatest pleasures is spending time with her grandchildren.

§

- II. KITTY KEEPS THE HOME FIRES BURNING -

✧ JO RENDALL ✧

KITTY:

Wrapped up in a scrap of old petticoat and tucked away under the sagging mattress I've always shared with my sisters, forgotten about for the time being. We're too busy keeping the home fires burning now to bother with all that. I've three brothers in France. The pubs are quiet and only frequented by old gadgies like my dad propping up the bar with their boring stories. Meanwhile, my mam prays and prays and kisses her rosary beads again and again for the boys to come home safe and we all dread the knock on the door and the arrival of a black rimmed telegram like the ones that have befallen some unfortunate houses down our street.

It's made a gap though, the lads being away, and who are we to ignore what old Lord Kitchener commands of us. After all, our country needs us now. No more slaving over other folk's mucky washing for me. For the first time in my life a proper job and a proper wage: half for my mam and half for me, saving for the future. Who knows what that will bring. It's not as much as the fellas get of course but we can't ask for everything. The work is rough, dirty and, no doubt, dangerous but I try

not to think about that, with the crack being so amazing and the feeling deep in my heart and soul that at last I'm doing something real. I'm vague about telling my mam what it is I do. She'd fret too much. And I can't be doing with that. You as well. It's been a while since I heard the clickety clack of your great beast of a typewriter, and we sat together folding papers as we put the world to right, back in the old days. I'd like to see you again, of course, but it's hard to forgive you for what you did. Treating me like an idiot. And I can just hear what you'd say: 'Kitty, you do understand that you are manufacturing instruments of death that will end thousands of innocent lives. The Germans may speak a different language from us, but they are just the same in reality: ordinary people trying to get by and stay safe and keep their families safe. The

hausfrau has no more influence over the Kaiser than we have over Asquith's

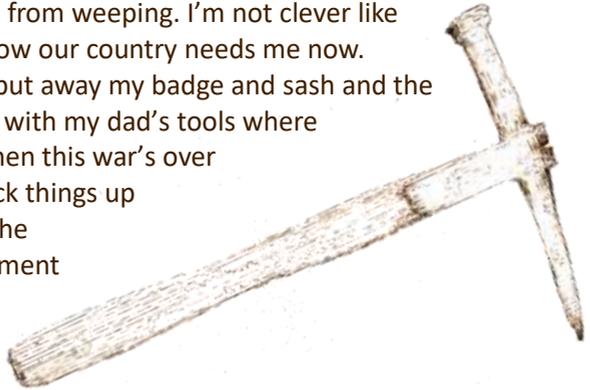
government.' You'll be opposed to the war just like you were opposed to what I did for the cause. We never could see eye to eye about that.

No green, purple or white for you, no 'deeds not words', peaceful protest within the law was the only way to



go as far as you were concerned. No shifting those damn principles you cared so much about And you just couldn't see how impatient I was and others like me, just tired of waiting and asking nicely. Sometimes you have to rage. Sometimes you have to fight!

I'm fighting a different fight now: a fight to bring my brothers and all their pals home, a fight to stop the Huns winning (even if they are just like us), to stop the lasses I went to school with being young widows with babbies to bring up alone, and to stop my mam and all the other mams from weeping. I'm not clever like you are but I know our country needs me now. That's why I've put away my badge and sash and the hammer is back with my dad's tools where I got it from. When this war's over we'll maybes pick things up again. That's if the damned government doesn't see sense first. Which to be fair they should do, if they'd only sit up and notice, what with all of us doing our bit to 'keep the home fires burning.'



This dramatic monologue is linked to a play I am writing about the women's suffrage movement and was inspired by the badges sported by suffragettes. At the outbreak of the Great War the Women's Social and Political Union ceased their political activities in favour of supporting the war effort. The WSPU were led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and adopted radical tactics including window smashing, arson and hunger strikes. Their motto was 'deeds not words' and their colours purple, green and white. Examples can be seen online.

* * * * *

JO RENDALL has loved theatre since childhood. She is a former drama teacher and has acted and directed for community groups. Recently, she has also tried her hand at writing scripts. Jo's play about the suffrage movement is inspired by an online course she completed during lockdown and a fascination with the people involved and the conflicts that must have existed between them. She has been involved in the organisation of the Weardale Wordfest 2023 and she is a founding member of North Pennines Playwrights.

§

-12. CUTTINGS FROM 'THE CORNED-BEEF CLAPPER' -

✧ S.C. WEBB ✧

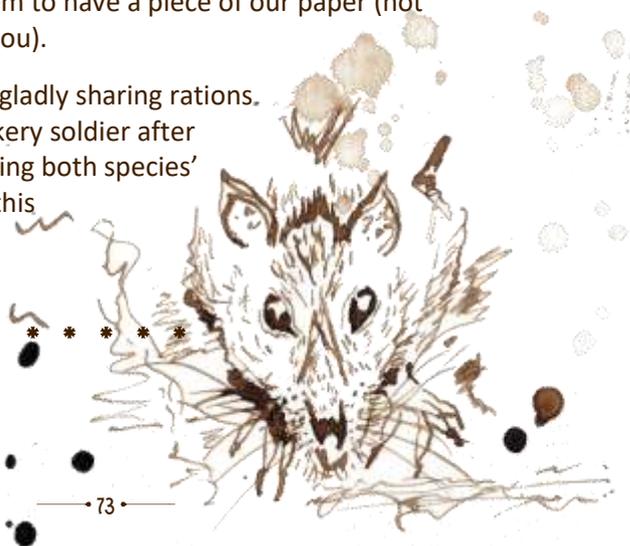
AN EDITORIAL NOTE

Pearl Chaps

Please give this riveting section your attention before throwing it at the Jerries. We have made a slight change to this issue, due to the administration of ***** wanting higher morale amongst our ranks.

This week follows Major-General ScabTail and his ferocious army of rats! Those furry lads would like to try their paws at publishing, and we have been petitioned by the rodent war – happening beneath our very feet! – for them to have a piece of our paper (not to eat, we assure you).

We hope you'll be gladly sharing rations. with a fellow whiskery soldier after reading this, boosting both species' morale as we win this war together!



A LETTER HOME

My darling Mousalita,

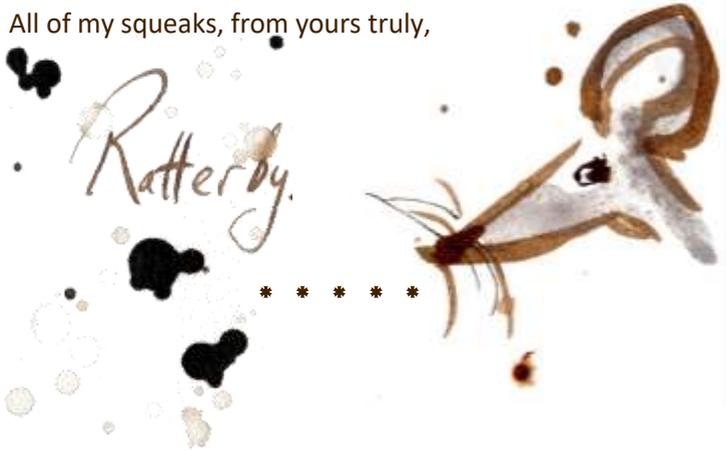
After successful reconnaissance to gather supplies, I now have enough toilet paper to write to you. It has been difficult to carry out missions as the lovely fireworks have proved rather distracting for the walking apes. They scramble about in such a chaotic fashion that it is almost impossible for us to scurry by and avoid a hasty squashing underfoot! I cannot tell you my exact location, yet I can say that the company has moved under the orders of _____ to a place near _____. Be not alarmed, for I am better fed here, and have included a generous portion of biscuit for you with my letter. I promise to try and filch a tinned strawberry the next time we form battle plans for a food forage at the enemy's den!

I do believe I have made somewhat of *a friend* amongst the walking apes. They are, sadly, a difficult bunch to communicate with; using loud grunts and physical gestures, none of which we can fathom. They always act surprised to see us, especially when we attempt to deliver a notice of enemy activity on the other side of the great Mud City. The ape that is my friend was injured when he foolishly, stood transfixed under a large *whizz-bang*. He is now missing a bottom claw and

to comfort him, I decided to show him my missing toe, in the hopes of lifting his spirits. He allows me to sit by his side, and we occasionally split a stale biscuit between us. I chatter to him of you, my beautiful wife, and our sweet hole-home in the countryside. I do not think he understands me, but he nods and smiles all the same. He no longer waves his arms or shouts unintelligibly when I approach, and I believe we are making progress. Perhaps I should suggest to Captain _____ that we form a specific linguistics team, to enhance communications with our ape allies....

I must go now, for the ranks are to be inspected, and I expect to see the furry boys having a jolly time!

All of my squeaks, from yours truly,



'BREAK OF DAY', BY PRIVATE WHISKERY

The light pours in.

It is the same time as always,
Only a demented thing brushes my side
It is a loud abrasive human,
As I cut the weekly biscuit ration
To stick in my cheek pouch.



Now you have touched my paw
So hurriedly trying to snatch up your rifle
You forget your own biscuit portion, which I kindly
left for you.

It seems you inwardly grimace as you pass
Blinking eyes, long limbs, most certainly not an athlete
I wonder how you chanced your life
Sprawled across the floor,
And in the mud puddle across the field.

What do you see in our eyes,
At the delight of silver tins
Hurled across the room at us in a fury?

What noise – why are you aghast?

Food roots in a rat's veins
Dropped scraps, ever dropping on our heads
A gift from you to us –
But please, try to not harm us, as we share your lunch
Before you breach the mud puddle across the field.



These extracts are contributions to a fictional trench journal – The Corned-Beef Clapper – originally part of a university assignment. It was inspired by studying First World War trench newspapers and the poem ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’ by Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918). After analysing various real trench ephemera, the above is an imagined and humorous rodent version of these magazines written and published by and for soldiers.

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S.C. WEBB (a pen-name) is a lover of reading books and writing fiction, with help and inspiration from her two cats. This is her second publication since graduating from university with a joint-honours degree in English Literature and Creative Writing. Her favourite kind of ephemera are personal hand-made items such as trench literature, illustrations, and carved boxes, to be gently pondered many decades later by others.

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- THE PROJECT TEAM -



ANN-MARIE EINHAUS is Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature at Northumbria University Newcastle. She is the author of *The Short Story and the First World War* (2013) and editor of *The Edinburgh Companion to the First World War and the Arts* (2017) among others. Her research interests and publications cover the early twentieth-century short story, writing about the First World War from 1914 to the present day, the reception of foreign literature in Britain during the inter-war period, and British wartime and inter-war magazines. Ann-Marie's research for the War Ephemera project looks at literary writing about the First World War and how authors use ephemera as fictional devices to tell new stories about the war. She has been writing about contemporary authors working through links between war and empire, such as Kamila Shamsie, Abdulrazak Gurnah and Andrea Levy.



ANN-MARIE FOSTER is a public historian, with a particular focus on the First World War and its ephemera. They are the author of the book *Family Mourning after War and Disaster in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2024). Their research interrogates how and why ephemera is crucial to understanding how we remember the past. It asks why people keep the things that they do, and why they donate

items to museums and archives. Ann-Marie is a Chancellor’s Fellow at Robert Gordon University and also holds an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Early Career Fellowship in Cultural and Heritage Institutions based at Imperial War Museums (2024-2026). As part of their IWM fellowship, they are investigating how to increase access to digital heritage collections.

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CHRIS KEMPSHALL is a historian of allied relations in the First World War as well as popular representations of history and warfare in modern media, particularly computer games and the Star Wars franchise. He is the author of numerous academic works including two books, *The First World War in Computer Games* (2015) and *British, French and American Relations on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (2018). He has also served as a consultant for various First World War computer games. As part of the War Ephemera project, Chris has been identifying and recovering marginalised narratives and war time experiences held by community groups and individuals belonging to Black and ethnic minority groups. This anthology is an outcome of the work undertaken so far.

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ROGER NEWBROOK is an artist/designer based in North Shields, near Newcastle upon Tyne, in the North East of England. Before starting work on this project he had an interest in art and

design of the time including historical ephemera. He has also worked as a volunteer archivist for The Hatton Gallery and Tyne and Wear Museums. Roger's inspiration for the designs and layouts used in this project came from a number of different sources. He looked at posters, adverts and department store catalogues from the 1910s to inform his design decisions as well as shop signage, project contemporary fonts and other graphics and printed artefacts. He wanted the documents produced for the project to be sympathetic with designs from the early 1900s without trying to slavishly replicate them.

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CATRIONA PENNELL is Professor of Modern History and Memory Studies at the University of Exeter. She specialises in the history of 19th and 20th century Britain and Ireland with a particular focus on the relationship between war, empire, experience, and memory. She has published on various aspects of the experience of the First World War and understandings of cultural historical approaches to the study of modern conflict more generally. She is now working on a volume on the British Empire and the First World War as part of OUP's 'Greater War' series. Catriona's current research explores the relationship between youth, education, and the transmission of cultural memory. She acted as a consultant on a number of initiatives during the centenary with organisations including the British Council, the BBC, and the Department for Education. She has also led or co-led a number of externally funded projects including the AHRC-funded 'Teaching and Learning War Research Network' (2017-2021)

and the 'Reflections on the Centenary of the First World War: Learning and Legacies of the Future' (2017-2021).

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MAY SUMBWANYAMBE is Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Northumbria University and a multi-award-winning librettist, radio dramatist and playwright. He is the author of the stage plays *After Independence* (2016) and *Enough of Him* (2022) as well as several radio plays, an opera libretto and scripts for television. As part of the War Ephemera project, May is writing a new stage play about the impact of the First World War on Black and working-class people in Britain, focusing in particular on one family in Glasgow over three generations.

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FELICITY TATTERSALL is a writer and illustrator and former museum cataloguer. She is an emerging playwright, often responding to historic or unrepresented stories uncovered in museums and archives. Her first children's book, 'Cornish Mice and the Treasure Garden,' which she wrote and illustrated was published by TorMark in 2021. She was based in Cornwall for twelve years and has recently relocated to Oxford. She leads creative community workshops, creates bespoke illustrations for cultural and nature organisations and offers copywriting services. Her clients include the National Trust, the Royal Cornwall Museum, Perranzabuloe Museum, Falmouth Art Gallery, North Lincolnshire Museum, Devizes Museum, the

Writers' Block, Newlyn Art Gallery, the Re:voice project and the Wildfowl Wetlands Trust. She is currently working as the Creative Writing Practitioner for the War Ephemera project, and has co-designed and co-delivered a series of creative writing workshops for project participants, designed to engage with ephemeral objects and their stories in a variety of creative ways. Many of the participants who attended the workshops have developed their writing and form part of the submissions for this anthology.

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TONY WILLIAMS is Professor of Creative Writing at Northumbria University. His research encompasses poetry and prose and he is also interested in the ways that writers think and talk about writing. He has published several collections of poems and short stories and two novels, *Nutcase* (2017) and *Cole the Magnificent* (2023). For the War Ephemera project, Tony is working on a novel that uses the fantastic mode to approach submerged, traumatic and/or repressed aspects of war experience.

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