**The burial of the dead: the British Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918**

As the hundredth anniversaries of the First World War approach, anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have been involved in developing a multidisciplinary analysis of the conflict.[[1]](#footnote-1) This work has ensured that innovative new fields of study have emerged that focus on issues such as gender, identity, religion, violence, and material culture that shaped the experience of the industrialised conflict.[[2]](#footnote-2) In particular, scholars studying the war on the Western Front have used these new areas of inquiry to further the analysis of the ‘war cultures’ which emerged during the war. These ‘cultures’ are considered to be the frameworks through which individuals adjusted, responded, and rationalised the war to endure its privations and understand its devastating impact. A significant aspect of this multidisciplinary agenda is a focus on the materiality and physicality of the war – the memorials, the museum objects, the excavated materials, and the human remains which bear witness to both the history and memory of the Western Front across former combatant nations.[[3]](#footnote-3) It is the human and material remains, unearthed from the battlefields, which has provided the particular impetus for an anthropological and archaeological analysis of the Western Front.[[4]](#footnote-4) As the material evidence of the world’s first global conflagration is gathered, an entirely innovative perspective has been developed on the lives and deaths of the soldiers who fought in the trenches. Whilst archaeological excavations reveal the objects that surrounded the soldiers, the weaponry, medical kits, military accoutrements, souvenirs, and food cans; the most poignant evidence has been the retrieval of ‘the missing’. In a war that subsumed bodies, either by the shifting earth under intense shell bombardments, or through artillery and shrapnel that reduced human bodies to fragments, those soldiers with ‘no known grave’ formed a significant aspect of the war on the Western Front. Indeed, those listed as ‘missing’ in the British Army alone in France and Belgium totalled over 170,000 at the conclusion of the war.[[5]](#footnote-5) As the remains of soldiers are uncovered, they provide a means to reflect on one of the understudied aspects of the front during wartime: death and the burial of the dead.

Over the past two decades archaeologists have excavated numerous individual burials and mass graves of soldiers on the Western Front. In fact, such was the saturation of the dead along the old battlefields that human remains are routinely located during the excavation of old trench systems or dugouts.[[6]](#footnote-6) These archaeological projects, therefore, reveal a war landscape which was routinely occupied by both the dead and the living. The proximity of corpses and the need for the interment of the dead had a significant effect on the soldiers understanding of the war landscape. Soldiers would be well aware of the threat of fatalities in the line and their detachment to burial duties behind the front would entail that the dead and the act of interring would be a familiar process. As such, a distinct aspect of the ‘war cultures’ emerged from this process, as soldiers built associations and values to comprehend their place with regard to death, the dead, and role of burial practices. This set of responses drew upon pre-war experiences of death and burial but it was ultimately shaped by the unique experience of the front. The concept of the ‘war culture’ is highly suited to an anthropological analysis as issues of landscape, sense-perception, material culture, and identity are central to the manner in which British soldiers responded to death and burial on the front.[[7]](#footnote-7) This study details the role of death and burial within the ‘war culture’ of the soldiers of the British Army through a multidisciplinary agenda, utilising recent archaeological reports, and the extensive archives of official documents, regimental histories, alongside soldiers’ letters, diaries, and memoirs at the Liddle Collection (University of Leeds), the Alfred J. Peacock Collection (University of York), and the Imperial War Museum (London).

**The ‘return’ of the missing of the battlefields**

The excavation of the battlefields of the Western Front, particularly in northern France and Flanders, has gathered pace over the last two decades initially as a result of a series of development initiatives in the region. As the foundations of motorways, offices, and new housing estates were laid, excavators encountered the remains of trenches, dugouts, support areas, and the materials of the battlefields.[[8]](#footnote-8) Images of these sites in newspapers and on television programmes provide a haunting remembrance of the conflict as excavated trenches, their wooden and iron supports still visible, recovered items of footwear and clothing retrieved from waterlogged dugouts, and the mud-caked personal possessions of watches, diaries, and souvenirs appears to grant a tangible connection with the war just as the last of the veterans passes away. Much of the focus of this mediated historical gaze has been upon the excavation of the human remains on the Western Front.[[9]](#footnote-9) Excavators working on the former sites of conflict have regularly recovered the skeletal remains of soldiers who fought in the conflict. These soldiers are ‘the missing’; those with no known grave whose names are inscribed onto the monuments and memorials that mark the former fields of conflict. These memorials feature prominently in the itineraries of visitors to the region and events such as the playing of the ‘Last Post’ at the Menin Gate, where over 50,000 names of the missing are listed, is considered an essential part of the ‘battlefields tour’.[[10]](#footnote-10) The ‘missing’ occupy a distinct place in the cultural memory of the war in Britain. Indeed, the ‘absent dead’ would appear to validate the lingering perception of the conflict as a prolonged, unnecessary, and torturous event where soldiers suffered unspeakable horrors at the behest of an indifferent government and General Staff.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The ‘battlefield gothic’ images of human bones, occasionally with helmets and boots still attached, recovered from mass graves or single inhumations, do certainly reveal the violence and the scale of death during the conflict experienced by all combatants. In 1993, excavations at Saint-Rémy-la-Calonne, near Verdun, uncovered a mass grave containing the remains of 21 soldiers of the 288th French Infantry Regiment who were known to have disappeared during an attack in September 1914. All the skeletons exhibited extensive damage from gunshot wounds; strikingly, the bodies had been carefully laid head-to-foot into the grave presumably by their enemies.[[12]](#footnote-12) Conversely, excavations in 1998 at Gavrelle, Pas-de-Calais, unearthed a mass grave of 12 German soldiers who had been buried quickly, thrown into a shell crater, with their possessions removed.[[13]](#footnote-13) A partial attempt at burial was noted in the 2003 excavations at Serre on the Somme, where the remains of a British soldier from the King’s Own (Royal Lancaster) Regiment were recovered. Impact wounds across the skeleton appear to suggest the soldier died from a shell-blast and a screw picket placed by the body may have been used as a grave marker by his comrades to mark the burial.[[14]](#footnote-14) The recent excavation of a mass grave of 250 Australian and British troops at Fromelles reveals not only the scale of death during offensives but how the ‘missing’ still serve as a poignant point of remembrance.[[15]](#footnote-15) The bodies were buried together by what is thought to be German troops cleaning up the area after the intense fighting during the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. The size of this mass grave ensured the construction of the first Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery for over 50 years. The remains were reburied during a service in January 2010 which was covered by the international media and attended by the Prince of Wales with mourners from Australia, Britain and New Zealand.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**The ‘war cultures’**

As the number of studies of the battlefields have increased, a growing sense of a distinct arena of anthropological and archaeological investigation has emerged which addresses the experience of individuals during the war.[[17]](#footnote-17) This movement is closely associated with the recent emergence of a ‘new wave’ within First World War Studies.[[18]](#footnote-18) This has shifted the focus of historical attention to the experiences and perceptions of all of those involved in the conflict as they sought ways to adjust to and to endure the war.[[19]](#footnote-19) A guiding influence within this agenda is a focus on the construction of ‘war cultures’.[[20]](#footnote-20) This term developed within the French historiography of the war from the 1980s as scholars sought ways to analyse the impact of the war on civilian and military populations.[[21]](#footnote-21) A series of ‘war cultures’ were thereby identified which were used to explain the various ways individuals and communities created ‘associations of ideas’ or ‘conceptual frameworks’ in which the effects and affects of the conflict were comprehended.[[22]](#footnote-22) These ‘war cultures’ consisted of pre-war forms of expression which were altered to create new meanings to describe and understand wartime experiences.[[23]](#footnote-23) Analyses have frequently referenced the plural ‘war cultures’ to reflect the local responses by individuals, groups, and communities to the privations and disturbances of the war.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Whilst the notion of ‘war cultures’ has been utilised extensively within French historiography, it has made only a brief incursion within the British historiography of the war. This absence of analysis of the ‘war cultures’ of British troops is perplexing, considering the presence and significance of traditional cultural forms such as sport, writing, theatre, and music to maintain the morale, discipline and comradeship amongst the troops.[[25]](#footnote-25) Perhaps the shadow of Fussell’s[[26]](#footnote-26) influential analysis of the ‘ironic’ culture, which was theorised to have developed during the war, has ensured the reluctance of scholars to engage with the ‘war culture’ of the soldiers of the British Army. Criticism of Fussell has focused on the over-emphasis of the officer-class and the tendency to grant observations by the soldier poets the status of common fact.[[27]](#footnote-27) These criticisms also raise the difficulty of defining ‘war cultures’, as socio-economic background, education, and rank would all shape an individual soldier’s response to the conflict. However, studies of ‘war cultures’ highlight the commonalities drawn from the communicative nature of the specific ‘cultures’; responses to the conflict were social, they were shared amongst groups and communities as a means of expressing identity and common purpose.[[28]](#footnote-28) It is in this manner that the ‘war culture’ of death and burial within the British Army on the Western Front can be assessed.

**Before the war: death and burial in Britain**

The First World War is often remarked as a watershed moment in wider societal responses to death and burial within Britain.[[29]](#footnote-29) The confrontation with mass death within a ‘citizen army’, the collective memorials and the status of ‘the missing’ are considered to have contributed to a decline in the religiosity and ostentation of burial practices of Late Victorian and Edwardian society. However, pre-war attitudes to death, burial, and mourning were socially constructed, complex, and multiform.[[30]](#footnote-30) Indeed, within the upper and middle classes, a growing trend from the middle of the nineteenth century was for a decline in the social significance of extended periods of mourning and a preference for simple burial services.[[31]](#footnote-31) Traditions of mourning and burial practices remained strong within working class communities. The physical presence of the corpse was emphasised in these customs, as the body of the deceased would be washed and laid out within homes for the bereaved to mourn over, whilst ‘proper’ funerals were arranged, with requisite paraphernalia, despite financial hardships, to aid the grieving process by avoiding the emotional trauma and social stigma of a ‘pauper’s funeral’.[[32]](#footnote-32) This focus on the corpse emphasised the individuality of the deceased and the relationships between the dead and the bereaved.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Within the burial service, across the social classes, a great focus was also placed on the body of the deceased and the act of its inhumation as a means of accepting death. The burial service was a moment of catharsis when the dead were committed to the care of God or marked as having passed away from the lives of the bereaved. Religion maintained an influence in this regard, as the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead at the Day of Judgement concentrated attention on the physical body of the dead. Despite increasing access to healthcare and the rise in life expectancy after the turn of the twentieth century, death was a painful but an acceptable part of life in Britain which was associated with the very young and the elderly. Indeed, this acceptance was reflected in the continuing interest in collections of *memento mori*, photographs, locks of hair, and possessions of the dead.[[34]](#footnote-34) In this respect, the lines from Corinthians, used in the service for ‘The Burial of the Dead’ from the *Book of Common Prayer*, was a source of solace and understanding for the bereaved, ‘in the midst of life we are in death’.[[35]](#footnote-35) Through this framework the high levels of infant mortality were comprehended in a religious and secular framework of innocents relived from the sins and injuries of life. Therefore, whilst death, burial, and grief were not the obsessive features of Late Victorian and Edwardian life that Queen Victoria’s extended period of mourning might indicate, they were, nevertheless, significant moments which were met with a particular set of cultural responses. It is these responses which were drawn upon and altered as a means of understanding death and the burial of the dead by the soldiers of the British Army.

**The dead and burial on the Western Front, 1914-1918**

In a film recorded in the autumn of 1917 on the Western Front, soldiers from the Lancashire Fusiliers can be seen carrying out a mass burial not far from the front lines. The corpses, wrapped in blankets and sheets, are brought to the site on stretchers carried by a small group of soldiers, some of whom are visibly distressed by their task. The bodies of the dead are placed carefully, though with difficulty as the weight of the corpses strains the soldiers, into the grave, whilst the Army Chaplain reads a short service. Handfuls of earth are then thrown into the burial whilst a final prayer is read.[[36]](#footnote-36) The film captures an aspect of the highly-structured response within the British Army to mass death and the political and religious requirements, alongside issues of morale, for the burial of the dead. Whilst the burial is overseen by the Army Chaplain, in a manner consistent with pre-war forms of burial in Britain, the sight of the mass grave, of the bodies of comrades wrapped in the army-issued blankets, and the passing of vehicles transporting supplies to the front, would mark the event as distinctive for the troops burying the dead. Throughout the war, the scene of burials such as these, battlefield cemeteries, individual grave sites, the presence of the dead, and the threat of death served as significant points in the experience of soldiers and a specific culture developed around these issues.

At the outset of war in August 1914, the burial of corpses was considered to be the responsibility of soldiers. The British Expeditionary Force was expected to bury the bodies of their comrades with due care and reverence where they died or within the local French and Belgian village or municipal cemeteries. For example, letters written to the bereaved from soldiers of the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers describe how the ‘brother officers’ of the battalion who were killed at Etreux in late August 1914 were buried with reverence ‘together’.[[37]](#footnote-37) Records of these deaths, including details of burials, were made by Army Chaplains or by the deceased soldier’s Commanding Officer.[[38]](#footnote-38) As the number of deaths increased, the Red Cross Burial Unit was founded by Sir Fabian Ware (1869-1949), to assist the British Army in the location of bodies, the marking of war graves and the construction of war cemeteries where the dead could be buried. The organisation was given official status by the British government in 1915 and Royal recognition in 1916, being renamed as the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) in May 1917.[[39]](#footnote-39) The IWGC organised the areas at the front and behind the lines into seven zones and Graves Registration Units were formed from available soldiers and labourers to retrieve bodies, mark graves, and bury the dead within these areas. Officers, Chaplains, and medical staff were instructed to keep records of each burial in these zones which were to be marked with a cross or another religious symbol where the faith of the deceased was known. These grave markers would record the identity of the deceased, bearing their name, rank, number, and date of death.[[40]](#footnote-40)

The work of the Graves Registration Unit, therefore, ensured the development of a profusion of cemeteries close to the battlefields. The dead were transported from casualty clearing stations or from the front lines to be buried by their comrades or occasionally their friends. The burial of ‘pals’ or ‘mates’ within these cemeteries could be a profoundly disturbing experience for soldiers as they confronted both the loss of a friend and considered their own mortality. Writing after the war, Private Henry Russell, serving in the 10th Worcesters, remarked upon this painful aspect of military life:

‘It was a horrible task, this digging of graves for one-time pals. It filled one with an emotion which was inexpressible’.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Similarly, Captain G.H. Greenwell, writing in his diary in May 1915, reflected on the difficult catharsis that he experienced with the funeral of his close friend in a cemetery which he described as ‘one huge graveyard’.[[42]](#footnote-42) In these circumstances, soldiers placed great emphasis on the cemeteries to which the bodies of their comrades and friends were committed. Private A.C. Cave recorded in his diary of April 1917, the importance of seeing the ‘little, well-cared for cemetery just behind Monchy Wood’, where members of his battalion were interred. [[43]](#footnote-43) Lieutenant S.C. Dumbreck wrote in May 1917 of the comfort drawn from the fact that the body of a fellow officer, who had been killed at the front, was brought back for a funeral service and was buried at the same place as his comrades.[[44]](#footnote-44)

In this manner, the traditional pre-war funeral customs, which emphasised the body of the deceased and the significance of the funeral service in grieving for the deceased, was adapted to the war zone. In a conflict where the bodies of the dead could be lost in their entirety, the significance of a burial for comrades is palpable within soldiers’ accounts. The focus was therefore placed upon the physicality of the dead and witnessing the inhumation of a friend provided a sense of stability within the tumult of war. Ensuring a proper burial was, therefore, ‘the least one can do for a comrade who has gone west’.[[45]](#footnote-45) The Royal Army Chaplains’ Department organised the provision of services for these burials for the various religions and denominations that constituted the Imperial British Army. However, the predominant service would be the Anglican reading of ‘The Burial of the Dead’ from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The service would also act as the default option for unidentified soldiers brought from the battlefields. The role of the British Army Chaplains has been much discussed in relation to the First World War. During the war and in the post-war period, many former Chaplains were enthusiastic in their belief that the war had ensured a closer connection between the troops and a sense of spirituality.[[46]](#footnote-46) However, the ‘war culture’ that developed with regard to death and the burial of the dead was inextricably linked to the soldiers’ immediate physical surroundings rather than an immediate awareness of the divine. In this respect, cemeteries, individual grave markers, the bodies of the dead and the threat of death constituted the ‘war culture’.

**Cemeteries and the presence of the dead**

The cemeteries were highly significant aspects within the war landscape for troops. Their presence behind the lines was often associated with the nature of the war in the region. As the war progressed, in areas which had witnessed heavy fighting, such as around the Somme and Flanders, military cemeteries proliferated in response to the high rates of fatalities. These cemeteries would be significant aspects in the war landscape; they would be physical and psychological markers for soldiers as they moved to and from the front. Thoughts of mortality, the deaths of comrades and the level of ‘hate’ within this particular section of the front were notable reactions. Major Basil Peacock, serving in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, remarked upon the change in his unit’s outlook on the sight of a military cemetery:

‘We soon fell silent and thoughtful, for bordering the lines were acres and acres of graves where tens of thousands of Commonwealth soldiers’. [[47]](#footnote-47)

Similarly, Private H. Cooper described the effect that these sites held on the troops as they marched to the front:

‘All the men stopped their antics at once...not in response to the calls of our NCO they were gazing at a military cemetery which had just come into view’.[[48]](#footnote-48)

The military cemeteries acted as structuring devices in the war landscape, prompting soldiers to reflect on their place within the conflict. Cemeteries evoked thoughts of comrades, the dangers of death, and the presence of the war. The physical presence of graves and cemeteries served to ‘anchor’ the soldiers within the realities of the conflict, providing a haven for the bodies of comrades and a sign of the violence of the war. Whilst the emphasis on the corpse of the deceased and the catharsis of the burial service built upon pre-war traditions, the realities of the war ensured the development of a distinct ‘war culture’ regarding burial, the dead and the presence of death on the Western Front.

The bodies of the dead were central to this war culture. In an adaptation of pre-war funeral practices, the corpses at the front became symbolic, not solely of the resurrection, but of the nature of the war, the chances of survival, and the relationships between comrades. During the conflict, in the front line areas which had witnessed heavy fighting or where the war moved onto previous battlefields, the bodies of the dead became part of the war landscape and the soldiers’ perception of their environment. Private L.E. Eggleton wrote how the area around Bullecourt (Pas-de-Calais, France) was saturated with the dead:

‘The smell of dead around here is something terrible...you come across a man’s legs sticking out cut off the bone – bodies underfoot and so on’. [[49]](#footnote-49)

The bodies of enemies and comrades could litter the battlefields in certain sections of the front line. Construction of trenches or support positions on the battlefields could potentially reveal the dead.[[50]](#footnote-50) Captain R. B. Ross wrote of his horror of encountering corpses at the front:

‘One dared not dig overmuch, because the whole ground was a vast cemetery and every closed-up dug-out a tomb’. [[51]](#footnote-51)

The presence of unearthed or unburied bodies would disgust and disturb soldiers and this visceral reaction is notable in letters, diaries, and memoirs. Lieutenant C.W. Walker[[52]](#footnote-52), recorded in his notebook in early 1918 that corpses ‘leave a horrible impressions on all who pass’. Sergeant Major R. Shephard[[53]](#footnote-53) described Hill 60, near Ypres, as a ‘terrible sight’ as the mutilated bodies of the dead lay around the trenches. Lieutenant J.A. Johnson[[54]](#footnote-54) stated that his unit had seen so many shattered bodies on the Somme that they dreaded the thought that they ‘might go out that way’. The bodies of the dead could indicate to troops the effect of weaponry upon the human body and perhaps their own fate as they endured the maelstrom of artillery bombardments. Shrapnel and shell bursts could cause incredible damage upon human bodies, severing limbs, piercing internal organs resulting in soldiers bleeding to death, or reducing the body to unrecognisable pieces. Sidney Rogerson, serving as an Officer in the 2nd Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, noted the debilitating affect of the sight of dead soldiers:

‘Men do not easily or soon throw off the shock of seeing all that could be found of their comrades carried down for burial in one ground sheet’. [[55]](#footnote-55)

Artillery bombardments could arrive suddenly, wreaking death upon the troops. This sudden appearance of death contributed to a wider perception of the war landscape as an unstable place. In this environment death could literally ‘drop from the dark’.[[56]](#footnote-56) Death and the dead thereby became part of the soldiers’ ‘war culture’. The presence of the dead and the threat of death created a series of meanings and values within the warzone that shaped soldiers’ understanding of the conflict.

**Songs, names, and gambling – aspects of the war culture of death and burial**

Attitudes towards death and the dead were expressed and communicated amongst the troops as they responded to the presence of the dead and the threat of sudden, violent death. This was articulated in various forms but most notably in songs, language, gambling, and perceptions. With regard to the dead and the presence of the dead, soldiers constructed a cultural response that incorporated death and the threat of fatalities into the world around them. For instance, marching songs amongst the troops of the British Army frequently referred to death and the chances of death on the front. Through ballads such as *Hanging on the old Barbed Wire* and *The Bells of Hell go Ting-a-Ling-a-Ling*,sung whilst behind the lines or marching to the front, the threat to life and the presence of the dead was incorporated and understood as an everyday occurrence:

‘If you want to find the old battalion, I know where they are,

They’re hanging on the old barbed wire...’[[57]](#footnote-57)

Soldiers in their contemporary accounts and memoirs would recount the experiences of singing ‘ribald’ and ‘cheerful’ songs which contained direct and oblique references to death and the dead.[[58]](#footnote-58) For example, the song *Far, far from Ypres* referred to the threat of German snipers and concluded with the lines ‘waiting for whizz-bangs, to send me to sleep’.[[59]](#footnote-59)

These allusions were also replicated in the way soldiers attributed names and values to areas of the front line trenches in northern France and Belgium.[[60]](#footnote-60) Troops responded to the scenes of corpses in the front line and the threat of fatalities by providing monikers for the trenches and areas of the battlefields that served to warn future inhabitants or mark events in the field.[[61]](#footnote-61) Although the British General Staff provided titles for the trench systems, these were supplanted by titles which carried specific meanings for the soldiers. These monikers could allude to home, the immediate environment and the wider perception of the war landscape. In this manner, these names served as indicators of the presence of both death and burial in the front lines. In December 1916, Private H. Juggins described in a letter home how the names of places were attributed to reflect the status of an area:

‘Marched to a place called Delville Wood and nicknamed Devil’s Wood, where the fighting was very severe a few months ago’. [[62]](#footnote-62)

Areas of heavy fighting, where casualties and fatalities had been sustained were provided with names that reflected their status amongst the troops. Names which corresponded to the soldiers’ experiences, such as ‘Catch ‘em Corner’, ‘Suicide Corner’, ‘Cemetery Alley’, and ‘Hell Fire Corner’, could be found across the Western Front. One particularly common appellation was ‘Death Valley’ which was used by soldiers to designate an area where the enemy were aggressive, where the threat of fatalities was high, and where the bodies of the dead were visible. For example, Murray recorded in his memoir this name in use for his unit’s position near Vimy:

‘The sector seems very quiet but a little to the right Vimy Ridge is always lively. Our positions are in Souchez Valley. We refer to it as Death Valley’.[[63]](#footnote-63)

In this manner, the dead and threat of death were written into their surroundings, enabling a ‘reading’ of the war landscape which emphasised how fatalities were brought into a wider comprehension. As soldiers witnessed death and the dead at the front, they responded by normalising these scenes through practices of renaming. In effect, ‘domesticating’ and incorporating the trauma of the war into their perception of their environment.[[64]](#footnote-64)

This process of ‘normalisation’ of death and the dead mimicked the pre-war customs that addressed the prevalence of infant mortality within society – that death alleviated individuals from the pains of the world. In this manner, Captain D. Sutherland described the trauma caused by the death of a popular comrade:

‘Now he rests in his last long sleep among his men in a little cemetery in Orival Wood’. [[65]](#footnote-65)

Another noticeable aspect of soldiers’ responses to death and the dead which developed from pre-war concepts was a definite belief in fatalism. Rather than being derived from religious notions of predestination, this fatalism grew from one of the significant pastimes within the British Army: gambling. Despite being officially disapproved[[66]](#footnote-66), gambling became a common feature within the ranks of the British Army. Soldiers of all ranks would participate in a variety of card games, board games, and betting games. Games of chance such as ‘Crown and Anchor’ and ‘Housey Housey’ were popular amongst the ordinary ranks and were played often with the tacit permission of commanding officers.[[67]](#footnote-67) ‘Housey Housey’ originated in the barrack rooms of the army and was a basic form of the game ‘bingo’ with players given numbered cards to mark off as numbers were called. ‘Crown and Anchor’ was a dice game where players rolled three character dice to obtain two or three matching characters.[[68]](#footnote-68) These games relied on soldiers taking chances and accepting the fate of the hand dealt to them or the role of the die. These qualities would be recognised by the soldiers as paramount in their lives at the front as the ‘fall’ of the artillery shell or sweep of the machine gun appeared to kill and maim by chance. Lieutenant D. Allen[[69]](#footnote-69) remarked upon this aspect of life in October 1915 that ‘if it is fate one will get killed wherever one is’. In these situations, gambling provided a ‘safe’ means of experimenting with life on the front:

‘Cards were produced and a game of “brag” commenced, and it was developed from halfpennies to pounds and pounds, which the players did not possess and hold no hope of ever possessing’.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Through gambling and gaming soldiers acquired and practiced the ‘rules’ of the trenches; the luck that was presumed to structure their time in the line and the fatalism that would determine their deaths. Private T. Corkin wrote in November 1916 of this attitude:

‘Death is a frequent occurrence in France and men are often killed only feet away. One comments on the death and then forgets it, as it might be your turn next’. [[71]](#footnote-71)

As soldiers comprehended the nature of a war where death could occur rapidly and without warning soldiers would attempt to find some means of understanding and controlling this situation through the framework provided by gambling and gaming. In the letters and diaries of the troops, customarily it was the concepts of ‘luck’, ‘providence’ and ‘chance’ that structured the understanding of the nature of death and survival in the conflict. To be thought of as possessing ‘good fortune’ entailed a degree of admiration and envy within the ranks. Common expressions in the trenches with regard to survival were ‘luck in’ or ‘luck out’ as soldiers created ways to understand the seemingly arbitrary consequences of enemy attacks.[[72]](#footnote-72) This perception of the war landscape can be observed in the common expression, drawn from the games of chance, that ‘if your number’s on a shell or bullet you will cop it whatever you do’.[[73]](#footnote-73) Similarly, Hodges[[74]](#footnote-74) also suggested that the frequently asserted sentiment in the army was ‘if your number is on it, you’ll get it wherever you are’. Lieutenant J.W.B. Russell[[75]](#footnote-75) wrote in August 1915 of his belief that ‘if the bullet is going to get you it will turn a corner to do so’.

A belief in chance and fatalism also partly drove the soldiers’ obsession with souvenirs from the war – as mundane objects or the material of the war whose original purpose was to cause death were refashioned as ‘charms’, ‘icons’ or ‘talismans’. The artefacts of war which had been associated with near misses or ‘close calls’ were significant parts of the soldiers’ ‘war culture’. Shell cases, bullets and military equipment were recycled into rings, pendants and cigarette lighters which served to defuse their previous function in the warzone and offer soldiers a means of ‘possessing’ or ‘controlling’ these violent objects. In July 1917, Private F.C. Shuter[[76]](#footnote-76) wrote home to describe how a cigarette box that had stopped a bullet from seriously wounding him in the leg had become his most cherished item. In a letter to his parents in March 1916, C.M. Slack[[77]](#footnote-77) also wrote how he had kept the pieces of shrapnel which had nearly killed him. Lieutenant E.G. Bates, managed to send souvenirs back home, including a worked German shell-case from the warzone, and proudly exclaimed in a letter home in June 1917 that:

‘The little bit with the figurines on is off the time-fuse of a Bosche 5.9 shell – the worst form of crump!’[[78]](#footnote-78)

The war objects and refashioned war materials formed a particular type of *memento mori* for soldiers. Their association with death imbued these objects with values and associations which connected soldiers to the threats they experienced in the trenches. In a reworking of the Late Victorian tradition of *memento mori*, soldiers used objects to place themselves in a war landscape where death appeared to be common and the dead were to be found amongst the living.

**Burials at the front**

As the conflict progressed, the dead became an increasing factor in the lives of the soldiers of the British Army. Whilst corpses were sent to areas behind the lines for burial in the military cemeteries, at the front, during periods of military engagement, where it was impractical or dangerous to transport the bodies of the dead, the British Army required burials to be made in the field of conflict. These burials were inevitably undertaken in trying circumstances; these nature of these burials were shaped by a variety of factors, the conditions at the front, the availability of men, the materials to hand and the time required for the burial. However, one of the most significant factors was the relation between the deceased and those carrying out burial duties. This extended the focus on the body of the dead within the ‘war culture’ of death and burial, as comrades attempted to ensure a burial for a ‘pal’ rather than witness their friend become one of those listed as ‘missing’.

Burials in the front line would be carried out by Graves Registration Units, by soldiers detailed by their commanding officer to bury the dead and by comrades who were with the deceased when they were killed. Troops assigned to the Graves Registration Unit or those ordered to carry out burial duties largely responded to their task with revulsion. It is these burials at the front that produced the most profound reactions for the soldiers – as they witnessed the effect of the force of the war and contemplated their own lives and their own burial should they also fall at the front. The retrieval of corpses from the front lines placed individuals in direct contact with the remains of the dead and the disturbing image of the torn and shattered bodies which littered the front. For example, in his letter of October 1915, Lieutenant S.H. Burt[[79]](#footnote-79) described his disgust as he recounted how his team had to cut sections of their puttees to place over their mouths to keep the smell away as they buried the remains of six to eight soldiers in a large grave. It is the sense of revulsion in handling the corpses which was most marked by troops. Soldiers described these unpleasant tasks of retrieving and reburying the dead as some of the worst aspects of their life in the front lines. For example, whilst working on reburial duties, the smell of decomposing bodies was one of the most frequently noted aspects of these responsibilities.[[80]](#footnote-80) In his memoirs, Private H. Cooper labelled the rising stench of bloated corpses as indescribable and related how it appeared to infest all aspects of his life:

‘The awful stench of the dead, seemed to be right inside me. Everything I ate, drank or touched seemed permeated with that nauseous odour for the rest of the day’. [[81]](#footnote-81)

A division was made by many soldiers between the retrieval of corpses of enemies and fellow soldiers and that of known friends or ‘pals’. The former was a gruesome task whilst the latter was a ‘duty’. Lieutenant Colonel A.T.A. Brown responded with disgust and detachment when ordered to retrieve bodies from a direct artillery bombardment on a dugout:

‘We managed to piece together two bodies and parts of the third, but whether the parts belonged to the right man, we never knew. I suppose the stretcher bearers solved this problem at the burial place’.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Conversely, Murray responded to the task of handling the remains of dead comrades after a shell bombardment in September 1916 with a mixture of trauma and emotion:

‘We who are left will have a lot of cleaning to do, gathering up the remains of the lads you have come to know so well, it is a sickening fatigue that nobody ever gets used to’.[[83]](#footnote-83)

Once the bodies or these soldiers had been collected they would be wrapped in the sandbags, groundsheets or blankets which surrounded or accompanied the troops in the line. The remains of the dead would then be interred in hastily dug graves, old trenches or the shell holes that dotted the war landscape. Army Chaplains, serving at the front, would lead a shortened version of the burial service whilst soldiers would commit the body to the grave. Army Chaplains, and in the event of their absence Commanding Officers, would also be required to register these grave sites with the Graves Registration Unit, to enable the future exhumation and reburial of remains in military cemeteries. These records were required to detail the names of the deceased, location and the presence of any grave markers. The burial records kept by the Reverend M.S. Evers[[84]](#footnote-84) indicate the burial and the grave markers received by many soldiers who received front line burials on the Western Front. In the entry for July 1917, six soldiers of the 13th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment were buried around Zillebeke, near Ypres, in an old shell hole, ‘immediately behind a concrete dugout’; their graves were marked with ‘rough crosses’ (Figure 1).

(INSERT FIGURE 1 NEAR HERE)

Marking the grave was an essential part of these front line burials. These grave markers could be constructed with any immediately available pieces of equipment, from upturned broken enemy rifles, airplane propellers and wooden ration boxes.[[85]](#footnote-85) In a letter of March 1915, Lieutenant D. Allen[[86]](#footnote-86) remarked that there were a number of graves in the Ypres sector where a cross had been made with a ‘Huntley and Palmer biscuit tin’ listing the dead soldier’s name, rank and the date of his death. However, these memorials could be highly personal, constructed by soldiers for friends who had been killed in action. Sapper J. Davey[[87]](#footnote-87) recorded in his diary that he had ensured a ‘proper’ grave for a dead comrade, kept his personal possessions safe, carefully sewed the body into a blanket and personally made a cross to mark the grave site. In this manner soldiers accorded burials with a measure of sombreness depending on the relation of the dead to the living. Carrington[[88]](#footnote-88) described how after a battle, comrades took priority and were provided with a grave and a wooden cross, unknown British soldiers followed and the bodies of the enemy were buried if time permitted. However, the reality of the situation would often result in the bodies of the enemy being buried shallowly or dumped into available shell holes.[[89]](#footnote-89) The bodies of the dead, therefore, became important parts of the war culture, with the bodies of comrades accorded a significant status in the soldiers’ understanding of the war environment and the bodies of their enemy reduced to a burdensome task.

**Death and burial on the battlefield**

For British soldiers who died in the field during periods of high activity, who were not known to their immediate comrades, grave markers were hurriedly put together. Henry Russell recounted his experiences of these circumstances in his posting on the Somme, where he was told the fate of a quickly buried comrade:

‘He’ll have an unknown soldier’s cross for certainty. You see, it’s like this in some parts of the line, bodies are carried out and buried in proper cemeteries, but here, on the Somme, you either have to leave ‘em lying out or bury ‘em the best way you can’.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Soldiers were also instructed to assist the retrieval and identification of corpses by including details of the soldiers name and regiment within the grave. Troops burying corpses were required to note details on a piece of paper, placing it in the neck of an upturned bottle or similar protective vessel which could be placed in the grave. This practice became so ingrained amongst the troops, that some would describe it as a ‘tradition’. Indeed, in his diary, D.J.B. Wilson[[91]](#footnote-91) stated that ‘according to custom’ a field postcard with name and particulars was placed in a bottle and left on the site of the burial. In his memoirs, Fraser-Tytler[[92]](#footnote-92) described seeing a row of whiskey bottles containing the details of the dead soldiers lined up to mark their graves.

However, where time permitted, burials were to be conducted with a degree of reverence and Commanding Officers were required to take the role of Army Chaplains in leading the burial service. Instructions were provided in the War Office’s note, *Burials in Battle Area – Notes for Officers (SS 456)* (Figure 2).[[93]](#footnote-93) Officers were advised to record all details of the deceased before burying the body, including Regiment, Regimental number, name, rank and initials, date of burial and map references. A number of short services were also offered for these burials ranging from a section from the *Book of Common Prayer*, a full recitation of the Lord’s Prayer to the closing lines of the Lord’s Prayer. Whilst this burial service provided relief and support for soldiers who had lost comrades, the wider significance of a ‘decent’ burial for a ‘pal’ appeared to be more significant for the troops.[[94]](#footnote-94) Ensuring that the body of the deceased was provided for was paramount, whilst the inclusion of a prayer or a short service at the front would also be dictated by the friends of the deceased, as soldiers with strong connections to the dead would often take the lead role in burial duties. Carrington[[95]](#footnote-95) described how his unit, on leaving Ovillers on the Somme, addressed the issue of their dead:

‘Before we left, we buried our dead men in a shell-hole, in front of the trench. We made rough wooden crosses to mark the graves, but no one seemed inclined to say a prayer...the burial was carried out by the friends of the dead men’.

(INSERT FIGURE 2 NEAR HERE)

This use of the burial service as part of ensuring a ‘proper’ burial for a comrade, rather than a particularly ‘Christian’ burial is most tellingly expressed in the poem of Studdert Kennedy[[96]](#footnote-96), the Army Chaplain known most famously as ‘Woodbine Willy’:

And that night I’d been in trenches,

Seeking out the sodden dead

And just dropping them in shell holes

With a service swiftly said.

Then there spoke a dripping sergeant

When the time was growing late,

‘Would you please to bury this one,

‘Cause he used to be my mate?’

There are many kinds of sorrow,

In this world of love and hate

But there is no sterner sorrow

Than a soldier’s for his mate.

Therefore, a ‘decent burial’ or a ‘proper grave’ in the harsh environment at the front was an act accorded to known comrades and friends. The bodies of the dead were accorded significance in this respect, as opposed to the ‘gruesome mass’ of unknown soldiers and the bodies of the enemy, as it represented a point of reflection for the living. The burial of friends, or known comrades from the same battalion in the front lines, offered a moment when the soldier’s attachment to the world in the trenches, which was formed through routine and practice, was threatened. In these circumstances, the burial of comrades provides a powerful insight into the ‘war culture’ of the troops.

The war diary of the 7th Battalion Queens Own Cameron Highlanders recorded the significance of this aspect of the war culture with a mass burial that took place in April 1917 of over 60 soldiers near Guemappe, northern France. Whilst a short service was read by the commanding officer, the significance of the burial was that the soldiers were buried side by side, one arm over the next:

‘From the top of the trench one could imagine that the men were sleeping, embraced in each other’s arms...altogether it was a most moving scene’.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Burials of comrades in this situation created a distinct sense of ‘place’ – the location was fixed for the troops, both physically and mentally. The excavation in 2001 of 20 British soldiers of the 10th Lincolnshire Regiment at Le Point du Jour, near Arras, northern France, indicates these efforts undertaken by comrades to ensure dead friends were buried ‘properly’ (Figure 3).[[98]](#footnote-98) The bodies of the British soldiers were carefully laid out, presumably by those who had served with them, with the bodies placed as if they were linking arms. Nineteen of the soldiers appeared to have been buried simultaneously. Only one of the bodies was buried differently, placed approximately 40cm away from the main burial group. Two bodies were represented only by fragments of leg bones and pieces of rib cage, suggesting that the soldiers had carefully gathered up the remains of the dead before positioning them, in correct anatomical place, alongside their dead comrades. At each end of the grave, of a base of shell had been buried vertically, indicating perhaps that the site of the grave was signalled on the surface by a stake or cross planted in the shell case, or that the shell cases were used to protect now decomposed paper records of the identities of the soldiers. All the soldiers were found to have had their personal effects removed and together with the grave markers it would suggest that their comrades intended this burial to be found later on by a reburying party.[[99]](#footnote-99)

(INSERT FIGURE 3 NEAR HERE)

**Conclusions**

The development of ‘war cultures’ as a mode of analysis has ensured the advancement of an innovative field of enquiry within First World War studies. It provides for a detailed description of the means by which individuals, groups and wider societies came to endure and understand the presence of the war in their lives. The way in which the conflict came to inhabit and intertwine with the everyday experiences of civilians and soldiers has been an important area of analysis within the European historiography of the conflict. To date, this assessment in Britain has been largely confined to the responses of civilians to the effects and affects of the war. The ‘war cultures’ that were created and experienced by British troops at the front have been somewhat neglected – perhaps partly as a response to the foundations provided by Fussell.[[100]](#footnote-100) However, the ways of experiencing and enduring the war as well as the manner in which the conflict formed a constituent of everyday life presents a rich area of analysis. This is especially relevant with regard to issues of death and burial for the soldiers. As their lives at the front would circulate around these factors they formed an important part of the ‘war culture’ amongst the British troops. Analysing the various means by which the presence of the dead and death were incorporated into the lives of individuals serves to highlight how the war was experiences and endured. British soldiers drew the threat of fatality and the proximity of the dead into a wider conception of the battlefields which were rich in meaning and association. In this way soldiers incorporated and normalised the disturbing scenes of death and burial in their lives at the front.[[101]](#footnote-101)

The recent excavations of human remains on the old front lines in France and Belgium offer a means of glimpsing the violent, unpredictable war landscape of the Western Front. Images of human remains from a conflict now beyond ‘living memory’ illustrate the values and associations that individuals held towards comrades, enemies and the wider conflict. The excavation of the old battlefields continues apace; each year new discoveries of soldiers, trenches, dugouts and material are unearthed. In the case of the dead of the British Army, the policy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is to attempt to identify the remains and rebury the individual within the nearest cemetery. When identification of the remains can be made, any living relative is informed and the soldier’s name is removed from the memorial as one of the ‘missing’. This continues the process of commemorating the dead which has been set in place since the construction of the memorial landscape immediately after the Armistice. However, whilst the soldiers are laid to rest in a marked grave beside their comrades it obscures the fact that this is, for some of the remains, the second time that they have been carefully buried by those who honour their memory.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the Editors of War & Society and the two anonymous reviewers for the comments which have enhanced this work. My appreciation is also due to Dr Kevin Walsh, Professor Richard Bessel and Dr Laurajane Smith for their work in supervising my earlier studies from which this research stems from.

1. See Ross Wilson, ‘Strange Hells: A New Approach on the Western Front’, *Historical Research* 81(211), 150-166. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pierre Purseigle and Jenny Macleod, ‘Introduction: Perspectives in First World War Studies’, in *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. By Pierre Purseigle and Jenny Macleod (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp.1-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Nicholas Saunders, ‘Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War, 1914-2003, in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, ed. By N.J. Saunders (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 5-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Combattre: Une anthropologie de la guerre moderne (XIXe-XXIe siècle) (Paris: Seuil, 2009); Nicholas Saunders, *Killing Time: the archaeology of the First World War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), p.238. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Andrew Robertshaw and David Kenyon, *Digging the Trenches: The Archaeology of the Western Front* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: places, paths and monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994); Christopher Gosden, *Social Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Julian Thomas, *Time, Culture and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Nicholas Saunders, ‘Excavating memories: archaeology and the Great War, 1914-2001’, *Antiquity*,76 (2002), 101-108 (p.101). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Martin Brown, ‘The Fallen, the Front and the Finding: Archaeology, Human Remains and the Great War’, Archaeological Review from Cambridge, 22(2) (2007), 53-68 (p.53-54). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ted Spagnoly and Timothy Smith, *Salient Points: Cameos of the Western Front Ypres Sector 1914-1918* (Barnsley, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Frederic Adam, *Alain-Fournier et ses compagnons d'arme: Une archéologie de la Grande-Guerre, la dernière journée* (Paris: Seuil, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Pierre Yves Desfossés, Alain Jacques and Gilles Prilaux, ‘La Grande Guerre Dans Le Nord-Pás-de-Calais’, *L’archéologie du XXé siéle* (2001), 32-38; Pierre Yves Desfossés, Alain Jacques and Gilles Prilaux, *L'archéologie de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Ouest-France, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Martin Brown, ‘Journey Back to Hell: Excavations at Serre on the Somme’, *Current World Archaeology* 10(2005), 25-33 (30). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Jon Price, ‘The Devonshires hold this trench, they hold it still: cultural landscapes of sacrifice and the problem of the sacred ground of the Great War, 1914-1918’, in *Landscapes of Clearance: Anthropological and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. By Angele Smith and Amy Gazin-Schwartz (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008), pp.180-189 (p.184). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Julie Summers (ed.) *Remembering Fromelles: a new cemetery for a new century* (London: CWGC Publishing, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Marc Dewilde and Nicholas Saunders, ‘Archaeology of the Great War: The Flemish Experience’, in *Contested Objects: Material memories of the Great War*, ed. By Nicholas Saunders and Marc Dewilde (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.251-265 (p.252). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. P. Purseigle, ‘Introduction: Warfare and Belligerence: Approaches to the First World War’, *Warfare and Belligerence: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. By P. Purseigle (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), pp.1-37 (1-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Heather Jones, Jennifer O’Brien and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian, *Introduction: Untold War*, in *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. By Heather Jones, Jennifer O’Brien and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008) pp.1-22 (1-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jay Winter, ‘Catastrophe and culture: recent trends in the historiography of the First World War’, *Journal of Modern History*,64(3) (1992), 525-532 (528). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Leonard V. Smith, ‘The “Culture de guerre” and French Historiography of the Great War of 1914–1918’, *History Compass*, 5(6) (2007), 1967-1979 (1967-1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Pierre Purseigle, ‘Introduction: warfare and belligerence: approaches to the First World War’, *Warfare and belligerence: Perspectives in the First World War Studies*, ed. By P. Purseigle (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), pp.1-37 (18); Heather Jones, ‘Encountering the “enemy”: prisoner of war transport and the development of war cultures in 1914’, *Warfare and belligerence: Perspectives in the First World War Studies*, ed. By P. Purseigle (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), pp.133-162 (133-135). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, trans. Catherine Temerson, *14-18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002); Annette Becker, trans. by Heather McPhail, *War and Faith: the religious imagination in France, 1914-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War: national sentiment and trench journalism in France during the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1992). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Helen McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. John Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Leonard Smith, ‘Paul Fussell’s “The Great War and Modern Memory” twenty-five years later’, *History and Theory*, 40(2) (2001), 241-260 (241-243). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Peter Hoffenberg, ‘Landscape, Memory and the Australian War Experience 1915-1918’, *Journal of Contemporary History*,36(1) (2001), 111-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. David Cannadine, ‘War and death, grief and mourning in modern Britain’ in *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*, ed. By Joachim Whalley (London: Europa, 1981), pp.187-242; Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Pat Jalland, ‘Victorian Death and its decline, 1850-1918’, in *Death in England: an illustrated history*, ed. By Clare Gittings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 230-255. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Julie-Marie Strange, ‘Only a pauper whom nobody owns*:* reassessing the pauper grave*,* c*.*1880-1914’, *Past and Present* 178(1) (2003): 148-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Sarah Tarlow, ‘The aesthetic corpse in nineteenth century Britain’, in *Thinking* *through the body: archaeologies of corporeality*, ed. By Yannis Hamilakis, Mark Pluciennik and Sarah Tarlow (New York: Plenam, 2002), pp. 85-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Julie-Marie Strange, ‘“Tho’ lost to sight, to memory dear”: pragmatism, sentimentality and working-class attitudes towards the grave, c.1875-1914’, *Mortality* 8(2) (2003), 144-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The United Church of England and Ireland, *The Book of Common Prayer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1868), 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Mass Burial by Soldiers of the British Army on the Western Front, IWM 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Mrs Victor Rickard, *The Story of the Munsters at Etreux, Festubert, Rue du Bois and Hulloch* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p.69-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. James Edmonds, *History of the Great War: Military Operations – France and Belgium 1916* (London: Macmillan, 1932), p.149. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Fabian Ware, *The Registration and Care of Graves* (London: HMSO, 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Edmonds, p.150. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Henry Russell, *Slaves of the War Lords* (London: Hutchinson, 1928), p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Graham Greenwell, *An Infant in Arms: War letters of a company officer 1914-1918* (London: Penguin, 1972), p.18. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. A.C. Cave, (Private) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0276. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. S.B. Dumbreck, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0476. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. S.H. Burt, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0248. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Phillip Byard Clayton, *Tales of Talbot House* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1919). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Basil Peacock, *Tinker’s Mufti: memoirs of a part-time soldier* (London: Seeley, 1974), p.48. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. H. Cooper, (Private) Liddle Collection – Western Front Recollections, C14. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. L.E. Eggleton, (Private) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0508. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. P.G. Bales, *The History of the 1/4th Battalion. Duke of Wellington’s (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919* (Halifax and London: Edward Mortimer, 1926), p.79. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Robert B. Ross, *The Fifty-first in France* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p.183. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. C.W. Walker, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 1672. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ernest Shephard, *A Sergeant-Major’s War: from Hill 60 to the Somme* (Ramsbury: The Crowood Press, 1987), p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. J.A. Johnston, (Lieutenant) Imperial War Museum, IWM 02/09/02. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Sidney Rogerson, *Twelve Days* (London: A. Baker, 1933), p.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Issac Rosenberg, *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), p.80. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *Songs and Slang of the British Soldier, 1914-1918* (London: The Scholatis Press, 1930), p.54. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Charles Edmonds, *A Subaltern’s War* (London: Peter Davis, 1929), 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Brophy and Partridge, p.69. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Peter Chasseaud, *Rat’s Alley: British Trench Names of the Western Front, 1914-1918* (London: Spellmount, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ross J. Wilson, ‘Tommifying the Western Front, 1914-1918’, *Journal of Historical Geography* (2011), doi:10.1016/j.jhg.2011.01.001 <<http://kkccyu.cjb.net/science/article/pii/S030574881100003X>> [accessed 25 February 2011]. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. H. Juggins, (Private) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0874. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Joseph Murray, *Call to Arms: From Gallipoli to the Western Front* (London: William Kimber, 1980), p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the memory of the World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.126. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Donald Sutherland, *War Diary of the Fifth Seaforth Highlanders (51st Highland Division)* (London: J. Lane, 1920), p.144. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. War Office, *Manual of Military Law* (London: HMSO, 1914), p.438. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Stephen Graham, *A Private in the Guards* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p.180. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Arthur Empey, *From the fire step: The experiences of an American soldier in the British Army* (London and New York: G.P. Putnam, 1917), p.147. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. D. Allen, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0024. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Russell, p.86. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See S. Sanderson, Liddle Collection – Domestic Front, DF 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Victor Eberle, *My Sapper Venture* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1973), p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Peacock, p.52-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Frederick Hodges, *Men of 18 in 1918* (Ilfracombe: Stockwell, 1988), p.103. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. J.W.B. Russell, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0145. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. F.C. Shuter, (Private) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 1466. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Cecil Slack, *Grandfather’s Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918* (Ilfracombe: Stockwell, 1977), p.55. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. E.G. Bates, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0098. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. S.H. Burt, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0248. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Wilfred Saint-Mande, *War, Wine and Women* (London: Cassell, 1931), p.291. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. H. Cooper, (Private) Liddle Collection – Western Front Recollections, C14. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. A.T.A. Brown, (Lieutenant Colonel) Liddle Collection – Western Front Recollections, B37. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Murray, p. 81 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. M.S. Evers, (Reverend) Liddle Collection – General Section GS 0531. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. John Glubb, *Into Battle: A soldier’s diary of the Great War* (London: Book Club Associates, 1978), p.80. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. D. Allen, (Lieutenant) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0024. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. J. Davey, (Sapper) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS 0420. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Charles Carrington, *Soldier from the wars returning* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), p.127-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. H. Lawson, *Vignettes of the Western Front: Reflections of an Infantry Subaltern in France and Belgium, 1917-1918* (Oxford, 1979), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Russell, p.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. D.J.B. Wilson, (Private) Liddle Collection – General Section, GS1761. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. N Fraser-Tytler, *Field Guns in France* (London: Hutchinson, 1929), p.31. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. War Office, *Burials in the Battle Area – Notes for Officers (SS 456)* (London: HMSO, 1917). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the era of the Two World Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p.119. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Carrington, p.105. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p.69-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. James Sandilands and Norman MacLeod, *The History of the 7th Battalion Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders* (Stirling: E. Mackay), p.83. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Pierr Yves Desfossés, Alain Jacques and Gilles Prilaux, ‘Arras “Actiparc” les oubiliés du “Point du Jour”’, *Sucellus*,54 (2003), 84-91 (p.86). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Pascal Bura, ‘Étude anthropologique de la sépulture multiple’, *Sucellus*, 54 (2003), 92-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Fussell, p.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Mosse, p.126. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)