



Durham Remembers

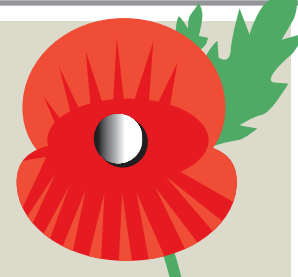


A tribute to the DLI
in association with



Trustees of the
DLI Collections





We will remember

COUNTY Durham has a long and proud history, and for more than 250 years an integral part of that has been the story of the Durham Light Infantry.

From the 68th Regiment of Foot in 1758 grew one of the most magnificent regiments the British Army had ever known – one that would touch the lives of every family in the county.

Now, almost half a century after the DLI laid up its colours, and on the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, we have an opportunity to rejuvenate how we remember and honour all those men and women who did their duty for king, queen, country and county.

The DLI Trustees, Durham County Council and Durham University, with support from Durham Cathedral, are working tirelessly together to develop a wonderful new way of telling the DLI story – a way that makes a strong statement about keeping the regiment right in the centre of our great county and giving it the far greater audience it deserves.

Today, we can finally reveal more details of the many fascinating events and exhibitions planned for 2016 and beyond. Highlights include a free exhibition on the History of the DLI, at Palace Green Library, which will open this autumn and will last at least five years. It will bring the story of the regiment, plus artefacts from the DLI collection, to the heart of the Durham World Heritage Site – a site which attracts 700,000 visitors a year.

Before that, from the end of March, the first in a series of annual exhibitions, the spectacular Somme 1916: From Durham to the Western Front, will explore how men and women from the county played their part in one of the biggest battles in human history.

July will see the premiere of a new suite of hymns at Durham Cathedral, written by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, drawing on the experiences of County Durham people in the war.

The summer also sees the three Butte Crosses placed in front of the DLI Chapel at the cathedral as a focus for reflection.

The Gala Theatre will commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Somme with a new interactive experience reflecting the journey of many DLI men and their families. This is followed by a specially commissioned play and a screening of the painstakingly restored Battle of the Somme film, from 1916, with a accompaniment from the Durham University Symphony Orchestra.

Please rest assured that we are very aware of the importance of the DLI both to the history and people of the county and beyond. Our proposals demonstrate a clear commitment to the collection and will ensure that the DLI story lives on.

Together our efforts will offer a fitting tribute to those who served with the regiment, and they will safeguard the collection for many years to come.

Simon Henig, Durham County Council, James Ramsbotham, Trustees of the DLI Collection, Professor Stuart Corbridge, Vice-Chancellor and Warden, Durham University, Canon David Kennedy, Durham Cathedral, and Peter Barron, The Northern Echo

Community asked to

A major new exhibition will bring the North East's rich Durham Light

HISTORY OF THE DLI

VETERANS, friends and families are to be asked for their input as work continues to create a commemorative exhibition on the history of the Durham Light Infantry.

The free attraction will see items from the DLI Collection on display at Palace Green Library, close to the DLI Chapel at Durham Cathedral and the DLI statue in the marketplace. And curators are keen to tap into the passion and knowledge many members of the public possess.

Dr Keith Bartlett, director of culture at the University of Durham, said: "We appreciate the feeling that the county has for its regiment and we are working with the county council on ways in which we can support that.

"One of the ways we are looking at – and the details are still in discussion – is an exhibition on the history of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI).

"What we would like to do is work with the community to identify the items within the collection that we all love as being the story of the DLI.

"I'm from a DLI family myself, so I have my favourite objects in the collection. We want to make sure that we get everybody's ideas as to how we can tell the story of our county regiment.

"We very much want it to be the gallery based around the community, rather than something we have developed in isolation."

Dr Bartlett said the university sees Palace Green Library as being the ideal location for the new free exhibition.

He added: "It is in very close proximity to the DLI Chapel and the DLI Memorial Garden and it will bring those three together – so when people come to visit one they can visit all three.

"The DLI has had association with the county for more than 200 years, especially during the 20th Century when we had mass recruitment with the two world wars.

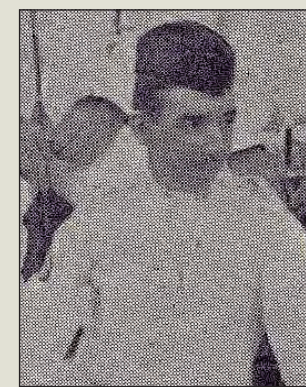
"Every family in Durham pretty much has association with the county regiment. I was brought up believing there was only one regiment in the British Army, so it does have a special place in people's hearts. The university is part of the Durham community and is happy to be able to support this."

During the period of the First World War centenary, further exhibitions are envisaged around the city or the wider county, with details yet to be finalised.

One hundred years ago today, Alfred Gobey wrote home to his family as he prepared to be sent out and was a career soldier, having joined the DLI as a boy bandsman and served 11 years in India and posted to France in May 1916. He would eventually be promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant



Soldier's letter home tells



LETTER HOME: Sergeant Major Alfred Gobey

Sergeant Major A Gobey 9th Battalion Durham Light Infantry Doncaster Yorkshire Tues: 11th Jan: 1916

Dear Alice and Sydney,

I'll endeavour to keep my promise by writing this letter, which I promised to do in my last short missive to you, which I hope you received, also the photo.

Kitty Paige (or Peters) left Vash & went back to her home at Birmingham

yesterday so she is now alone, altho' I can manage to get one or two days leave each month & am thus better off than our comrades at the Front.

Immediately war was declared, my Regt was rushed off to the West Coast, near Newcastle, where the men worked like Turks making trenches in case of invasion – while we were doing this, the remainder of the Army was getting fitted out for War, who came and replaced us, while we got fitted up – that done, we were posted at

several different places along the Coast, moving here & moving there which went on for 14 months, and in the meantime trained & sent out 1,700 men to take the place of our Comrades as they fell – the worry, work, trouble & uncomfotableness of that 14 months I hope never to experience again – it started the grey hairs showing on my head & if it had continued I should have been bald headed altogether – after that we came here in Nov: last – being sent here with several

Cllr Neil Foster, Durham County Council's cabinet member for economic regeneration, arts and culture said: "Necessity is the mother of invention and you've only got to look at the challenges we have now and the continued financial pressures in the years to come to see we have to go out and be innovative.

"At the same time we want to make a strong statement about keeping the DLI in the centre of our great county. "Placing a new, at least five-year exhibition on the DLI at Palace Green, near to both the DLI chapel at Durham Cathedral and DLI memorial statue in the Market Place, will bring this important part of our history to hundreds of thousands more people.

"The free History of the DLI gallery will see a range of items, including medals from the collection, loaned to the

university, with expert curators from Durham University using them to tell the magnificent history of all those Durham men who did their county proud for over 200 years. "Ahead of that opening we will consult families and friends of the DLI, and the public, about the stories and objects they would like to see included."

The chairman of the DLI Trustees, James Ramsbotham,

said the five-year History of the DLI exhibition, alongside the other events and exhibitions planned in 2016 and beyond, would offer an "exciting future" for the collection.

"Though the regiment no longer exists, having become the Light Infantry in 1968, then the Rifles in 2007, the DLI Collection is very highly respected and means so much to so many people, so we must

help commemorate DLI

Infantry history to life – and it's seeking your help. **Gavin Engelbrecht** reports

to war. Born in 1876, Sergeant Major Gobey, from Blaydon, was married to Wilhelmina Vashty Gobey Burma. During the early days of the First World War, he served as an instructor in England before being in 9DLI and survived the war, but 100 years ago was based in Doncaster, training soldiers for war



of 'cold blooded murder'

other Corps owing to the large number of absentees due to them being near to their own homes & also the hard & trying time we were having.

ensure that the DLI story continues to be told. "It is an exciting time as we have an opportunity to look to the next 50 years, and to find a sustainable solution for how we tell what is a county-wide story. However, to continue to engage people with our proud military history we have got to do something more dynamic, that will bring people back again and again.

"The regiment's motto was 'Faithful' and that was not just faithful in battle but to the people of the county. "One hundred years ago I don't think there would have been one house that was not involved with the DLI in one way or another, but while looking back to the bravery and sacrifices of the past, we must ensure, like the regiment itself, that we are forward looking. "That is what the History of the DLI exhibition will be a

I think I have now accounted for the time from the outbreak of War on 4th Aug: 1914 to Jan: 1916, and as to the future, I'm at a loss to say or know where we are going to – one day the rumour is that we are for France, another day is we are for Egypt etc. & another day we are for the West Coast again – all our men, the majority having been

training since the outbreak of the War are keen & hot on getting out to the Front – they resent seeing Kitchener's men being sent out, in the majority of cases with only two months service – it's simply cold blooded murder to send men out like that, as it is utterly impossible to teach or train a man to be a soldier in two months.

part of – a refreshing and reinvigorating of the way we tell the DLI story for future generations. "Through that we can continue to celebrate how great we are as a county and ensure that such an important part of the Durham's history – a history that continues to be written through the service of Durham's modern day soldiers – is celebrated in the manner it so richly deserves."

35s 6d a week Separation Allowance & another 12s 6d a week for a small Government job, so, as far as the War goes, we are doing well.

James Ramsbotham, chairman of the DLI Trustees One hundred years ago, I don't think there would have been one house that was not involved with the DLI in one way or another, but while looking back to the bravery and sacrifices of the past, we must ensure, like the regiment itself, we are forward looking. That is what the History of the DLI exhibition will be a part of – reinvigorating of the way we tell the DLI story for future generations

THE DLI MEDALS

THE DLI collection includes more than 4,000 medals, 1,100 uniform related items, 2,600 examples of weapons and ammunition, more than 400 pieces of equipment, and over 400 relics, as well as extensive records and documents. The medal collection, which is currently housed in the DLI Museum, will initially be loaned to Durham University, where it will be stored in state of the art strong rooms at Palace Green Library. The medals will be available for curators to use in both the History of the DLI exhibition, plus the ongoing temporary exhibitions, such as Somme 1916. Medals will also be available for viewing, on request, at the university's Barker Reading Rooms.

THE BUTTE CROSSES

FOLLOWING the retreat of the German army from the Somme battlefield in 1917, three wooden crosses were erected on the white chalk top of the Butte de Warlencourt in the midst of battlefield. They were made in memory of the soldiers of the 6th, 8th and 9th battalions of the Durham Light Infantry who died during the unsuccessful attack on the hill on 5th November 1916. The crosses remained in France until 1926 when they were brought to County Durham and housed in chapels and churches around the county. One resides in the DLI Chapel at the cathedral, one at South Church, Bishop Auckland, and one at the Church of St Mary and St Cuthbert, in Chester le Street. All three crosses will be brought together for only the second time since they left France and placed in front of the DLI Chapel for summer 2016 as a focus for visitors who wish to remember and honour the fallen. They will be in place until after Remembrance Sunday. For full details see www.durhamcathedral.co.uk

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

ONE of the key ways that the collection will be accessible to local people is through awareness and understanding of the DLI story and remarkable men during remarkable times. Using a more dynamic and multi partner approach to education, staff of different organisations will collaborate to develop and deliver joint packages to schools and other groups who so often have limited time or are unable to visit events and exhibitions. Where possible this work will use new technology to enable sessions to be delivered at other venues and to assist in delivering packages to a wider audience. At Sevenhills, in Spennymoor, a new collections access area will also be available to curators, conservators and volunteers to work on the collection, together with a new space for visitors and researchers to access and use the collection for study and education. These will bring new opportunities for researchers to continue their work and gain access to the collection, in a more modern approach within a more accessible space.



Durham soldiers' experience takes centre stage at Gala

Interactive journey takes families to the Western Front

EXPERIENCE

AN INTERACTIVE display is being created to take visitors on an immersive journey with a Durham Light Infantry soldier through the First World War – from recruitment to the trenches and back home again.

Actors will bring to life the story of a DLI soldier at the Battle of the Somme in a spectacle of light and sound at Durham's Gala Theatre.

Robin Byers, Durham County Council's service manager for place and experience, said: "We are collaborating with the Edinburgh-based Studio MB, which specialises in this kind of thing.

"What we are hoping to do is to take all the seats out of the main auditorium to make one big empty space.

"And then we are going to create an interactive exhibition. The idea is that people will enter one of the auditorium doors and then go on a journey throughout the space, stopping along the way at various points.

"The process will involve a number of actors who will engage with visitors.

"We are envisaging something that will be accessible to families, because it does offer something different to the standard exhibition."

The journey will begin with people being taken through the recruitment and selection phase, including the recreation of a "Pals" battalion.

The exhibition progresses on to the enthusiastic march of soldiers to the battlefield,



FRESH FACES: Just weeks after the start of the First World War, Durham Pals report for duty at Cocken Hall – the new headquarters of the 18th Battalion DLI – near Durham, 1914

Pictures courtesy of Durham Records Office

followed by the harrowing reality they encountered on the battlefield, including taking shelter from enemy shellfire and "going over the top".

Mr Byers said: "Because we have all the light and sound equipment in the theatre, we can create back-projection scenes and make the experience more realistic, including the sounds and smells of battle.

"After the horror of war, the display will depict the soldiers' return home – or not as the case may be."

One scene towards the end will involve the recreation of the delivery of the telegrams the Army sent to families whose loved ones had lost their lives. An actor will portray the character of a postmistress handing over

the letter to a typical Durham family.

At the end, visitors will be able to see a recreation of a photograph taken at the recruitment stage with blank spaces representing the lives claimed by the conflict.

Actors have yet to be recruited, but they will have become fully conversant with the history of the period to be

able to convey the facts of the time.

The exhibition, which runs from mid-July to the end of August, will form a key part

of the commemoration of the Battle of the Somme.

For more information on tickets visit www.durham.gov.uk/durhamremembers



READY FOR ACTION: Four unknown Durham Pals display the new uniforms and equipment issued to the 18th Battalion DLI at Cocken Hall, near Durham, during the winter of 1914-1915



FACING THE ENEMY: 6th Battalion soldiers marching through Ypres, in Belgium, on May 24, 1915. Private Perry, front right, was killed by shellfire an hour after the photo was taken



PROUD RETURN: Durham Soldiers of the 7th Battalion DLI arrive at Sunderland Town Hall, on June 20, 1919, before their final demobilisation and return to civilian life



DUG IN: Private Matthew Perry, left with biscuit, from Consett waits in a trench, near Ypres, in Belgium, for orders with other soldiers of 'D' Company 6th Battalion DLI on May 24, 1915

Unique film from battle to be shown

FILMED in 1916 at the actual battle, The Battle of the Somme remains one of the most successful films ever made.

In 1916 it was seen by more than half of the adult population of the UK and remains the source of many of the most iconic images of the First World War.

The 74-minute documentary has been painstakingly restored frame by frame, and the Imperial War Museum has commissioned an accompanying musical score by UK composer Laura Rossi.

Now, as part of the 100th anniversary, there will be 100 live orchestral

FILM

performances taking place across the world.

Durham's Gala Theatre is working with Durham University to present one of these concerts at the Gala's main theatre, with Durham University Symphony Orchestra performing the score on November 4.

The film, shot by two official cinematographers Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell, portrays the British Army in the preliminaries and early days of the Battle of the Somme.

It depicts trench warfare,



OVER THE TOP: British soldiers begin the assault during a reconstruction of the Somme, months after the infamous 1916 battle

showing marching infantry, artillery firing on German positions, British troops waiting to attack on July 1, 1916, it was reported that some 8,000ft of footage had been shot.

It was recommended that sections should be released as soon as possible, but it was later agreed that it be issued as a feature film.

Much of the footage was cut

from the public version as the War Office wanted the film to contain images that would support the war.

When it was shown before its premiere to top brass commander Lt General H Rawlinson said "some of it is very good, but it cut out many of the horrors in dead and wounded".

The film is thought to have achieved attendance figures

of 20 million on the first six weeks of general release.

On October 22, 2006, after a restoration project, a refined version of the film was screened at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, accompanied by the performance of an original orchestral score by Ms Rossi.

For more information on tickets, visit www.durham.gov.uk/durhamremembers

New play to shine spotlight on impact of the Battle of the Somme

A NEW play has been commissioned to place the spotlight on the impact of the Battle of the Somme on both soldiers on the frontline and those left on the home front.

The production will be staged at Durham's Gala Theatre during September as part of the commemoration of the fateful battle.

Robin Byers, who is responsible for performing and visual arts and festivals for Durham County Council, said: "We have put out a call for a writer to create this story for us and have had a number of responses.

"We are in talks with a one well-known North-East writer who hasn't committed yet because he is still looking at

PLAY

all the source material.

"He will be scouring all our archives in the County Record Office and the DLI Museum to give him all the researching background that he needs to create the play."

Mr Byers added: "We will

recruit a director to create that production alongside the writer. It will be a full professional production which will run at Gala Theatre for ten performances in September 2016.

"We have a brief, but we are keen to not confine the author in any way and want to give him that amount of freedom.

"It is a project that we will

develop in collaboration with him."

The author in mind is expected to confirm his involvement in the project by mid-January.

Mr Byers said: "We have done a lot of our own productions at the Gala and for various reasons that tailed off. We still produce a pantomime which is hugely successful.

"So it is exciting to be involved

in this project and building that production side back up again.

"Producing our own work, gives us more of an identity than being just a receiving house where we just take touring performances.

"And I think this is a really positive thing to be doing."

For more information on tickets, visit www.durham.gov.uk/durhamremembers



IN TALKS: Robin Byers, service manager for place and experience at Durham County Council

100 years on, exhibition tells

By Tony Kearney
Staff Reporter

tony.kearney@nne.co.uk

THE first day of the Battle of the Somme was the bloodiest in British military history, leaving more than 19,000 dead and 38,000 wounded.

For nearly five months, the battle raged through the mud of the trenches and resulted in more than a million casualties on both sides and only limited gains for the Allied forces.

One hundred years later, a major commemorative exhibition will explore the reality of the battle through the eyes of the people from County Durham who were there.

Somme 1916: From Durham To The Western Front opens at Palace Green Library in Durham on March 25 and runs to October 2, from 10am to 5pm each day.

A century after the battle, the popular view of the offensive remains of brave young soldiers and callous generals, doomed attacks and senseless slaughter. But is this view mistaken and what really happened in 1916?

Somme 1916: From Durham to the Western Front tells the stories of the people from County Durham caught up in the battle: the men who fought and died; the women who nursed the wounded and comforted the dying; and the workers who toiled in factories, mines and shipyards across the county to support the war effort.

Durham University is working in partnership with Durham County Council on this exhibition, which will showcase items from the Durham Light Infantry Museum and Archive collections.

County Durham has been twinned with the Somme region in France for 30 years.

Dr Keith Bartlett, director of culture at the University of Durham, said: "The Somme is synonymous in everyone's eyes with the heaviest casualties of the British Army in history. The idea was to break the stalemate and support France, and a lot of Durham men were involved – not just in the fighting, but also in preparing and making armaments and supporting the troops out in France.

"And so it seemed the obvious thing that we would do was to focus our 2016 exhibition on the Somme.

"It follows on the back of the successful Magna Carta exhibition last year and the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition in 2013. We suspect that people will want to see it because it's all about Durham and its road to the Somme."

Details of how to buy tickets will be announced soon. For more information, contact pg.library@durham.ac.uk or 0191-334-2932.



COLD FRONT: A photograph taken on November 1, 1916, of British soldiers negotiating a shell-cratered landscape along the River Somme after the Allied offensive

Picture: PA Wire

A PRIVATE'S TALE Michael Lowery

THOUSANDS of eager young men enlisted as a wave of patriotic fervour swept Durham in the early years of the First World War.

Among them was recently-married miner Michael Joseph Lowery, who volunteered early in 1915 to do his bit for King and Country.

Born in Sligo, Ireland, in 1893, Mick Lowery's family worked at mines around the Durham coalfield, before finally moving to the newly-built village of Bowburn where he worked in the pit.

He met and married local girl Eliza McKeown and they moved in with her family in Clarence Street, but their married life was to be short-lived.

Later that year, Michael Lowery together with brother-in-law James McKeown and next-door

neighbour Jackie Hunter joined the Northumberland Fusiliers "Tyneside Irish" battalion and left the village for basic training.

Eliza was expecting their first child when Michael left for France. On May 8, 1916, Michael wrote home to his sister Sarah: "You think I will get a surprise when I come home and see that little son of ours. Eliza tells me he is the picture of health but it's to be hoped it won't be long now before I get home to see him and you all. It will be a big day when we all get home for good. I wish the time was here now and I'll bet you are all wishing the same. But we will wait till it is God's will to end this war."

He added: "I wish I could get leave to see him, but I don't think we will be long now before we are in the trenches. We are just a short

distance behind the firing line and you can hear the guns going off and I can tell you that it isn't very pleasant to hear them."

Michael Lowery would never meet his son. On July 1, 1916, he found himself – along with James McKeown and Jackie Hunter – in formation along the Albert to Bapaume road on the battlefield of the Somme.

All three were in reserve with a panoramic view over the battlefield when the ranks of the Grimby Chums went over the top and were massacred before their eyes. Then it was the turn of Michael, James and Jackie.

Their bodies were never found and there is no account of their final moments – they were just three of the 19,240 British soldiers killed on that one day.

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LETTERS HOME: Private Michael Lowery

AN OFFICER'S TALE Roland Boys Bradford



QUESTIONS: Parts of the Somme offensive 'were of doubtful value', according to Roland Bradford VC

Picture courtesy of Durham Records Office

ONE of the enduring impressions of the First World War is that the ordinary soldiers in the trenches were "lions led by donkeys", brave young soldiers sent to senseless slaughter in doomed attacks planned by callous officers.

But visitors to the Somme 1916 exhibition will discover that in the Durham Light Infantry, the truth is far less simple than the stereotype.

Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bradford, born in the village of Witton Park near Bishop Auckland, was among those officers who questioned some of the actions which cost scores of North-East men their lives.

The commander of the 9th Battalion DLI, Lt Col Bradford led a force of men from Bishop Auckland, Crook, Chester-le-Street, Durham, Gateshead and Birtley sent to take an ancient burial mound, the Butte de Warlencourt, in the final weeks of the Battle of the Somme.

"Looking back at that attack it seems that the results which would have been gained in the event of success were of doubtful value and would hardly have been worth the loss which we would suffer," he wrote.

"It seems that the attack was one of those tempting, local operations which are so costly and which are rarely

worthwhile."

Lt Col Bradford was awarded the Victoria Cross for "conspicuous bravery and good leadership" under immense fire at the Somme, and became the youngest British Army brigadier general of modern times.

He died just 10 days after his promotion, aged just 25, at the Battle of Cambrai in 1917.

Along with his brothers, his is a tale of extraordinary military service, with the quartet collectively receiving two Victoria Crosses, a Distinguished Service Order and two Military Crosses. But three of them paid for their heroism with their lives.

the real story of the Somme

A CHAPLAIN'S TALE Robert Featherstone Wearmouth

AT first glance, Robert Wearmouth seems an unlikely candidate to be a chaplain.

Like others in Oxhill, near Stanley, he was 12 years old when he started down the mine and in 1901, aged 19, ran away from home to join the Northumberland Fusiliers who were recruiting soldiers to fight in the Boer War.

But after leaving the Army he joined the Primitive Methodist Church in his home village and decided to educate himself, working down the mine by day and studying at night.

Eventually, he became a minister in Grimsby and volunteered to become a chaplain at the outbreak of war.

He embarked for France in July 1915, the only United Board chaplain to minister to 22,000 men. He served alongside them in the trenches, providing a listening ear, arranging services wherever possible at the front, even playing his concertina to entertain the troops.

After the war, he published *Pages From A Padre's Diary*, an account of his time in France.

In it, he wrote the following account of life as a chaplain: "For the most part the Padre's job was diverse, difficult and dangerous.

"On occasion he had to run the Officers' Mess, superintend the men's canteen, sell the cakes, the tea, the Woodbines at five a penny, accompany the troops on their long marches, footslog it on the cobbled roads, be exposed to the sweltering sun or the pouring rain, grope his way through the intense darkness, live with the lads in the narrow trenches, the flimsy shelters, the battered houses, the destroyed villages, the shelter of the ridges.



THE ART OF WAR: Chaplain Cyril Lomax's sketch of the mud-infested Army camp

Picture courtesy of Durham Records Office

"Although unarmed he sometimes went with them over the top, into the fury of the battle, not to fight, but to rescue the fallen, attend the wounded, minister to the dying, reverently bury the dead, write to their loved ones, break the sad news about wounds or death, and to com-

fort all who suffered or who were in distress."

The lot of the Army chaplain was vividly expressed by DLI Chaplain Cyril Lomax, who sketched the training grounds and battlefields as the regiment made its way through France.

But, as he explained, he re-

fused to depict the full horrors of war.

Chaplain Lomax wrote: "If I wanted to make you creep I might have put a realistic foreground of dead Bosch and our own, fallen in every sort of attitude; some half buried by shell, others in the open. But the reality is too ghastly.

There is none of the dignity of death – flies and rats see to that. The impression left upon one is one of waste. Indeed the whole Country would admirably do as a picture of the material conditions of Hell.

"All that is pleasant and comely and decent and comfortable has been rent and

turned away: all that is sordid, and ghastly and terrible remains.

"Of course not for one moment am I speaking of the quiet heroism of our average unassuming chaps who stick it all so stolidly; I am speaking of the physical conditions of life."

A NURSE'S TALE Kate Maxey



DEDICATED: Sister Kate Maxey pictured with a medical orderly in France during the First World War

STORIES of horror and heroism involving the men who fought on the Western Front are commonplace.

But less well-known are the stories of thousands of women who were called up to treat the casualties from the trenches: women like Kate Maxey, the County Durham nurse who won the Military Medal for her heroism under fire.

Kate Maxey was born in Spennymoor in 1876, youngest daughter of a shopkeeper.

She trained at Leeds General Infirmary and was working in a nursing home in the city when war was declared.

Known even to her friends as Maxey, she was called up into the Territorial Force

Nursing Service and was sent to France within the first few months of the war, moving around the hospitals and casualty clearing stations behind the front.

Over the next four years, Nurse Maxey tirelessly tended to the soldiers returning from the trenches with terrible wounds caused by bullets, bombs, shrapnel and gas.

Mentioned in despatches by Sir Douglas Haig for gallant and distinguished service, she was promoted to Sister in 1916 and eventually posted to Lillers, a small town behind the Ypres front where she was appointed Sister-in-Charge of one of the town's Casualty Clearing Stations.

On March 21, 1918, the German air force carried

out a bombing raid on Lillers railway station and hit an ammunition train near the hospital.

Sister Maxey suffered horrific injuries in the explosion, with wounds to her head, neck, arm and legs, as well as a spinal injury and burst eardrum.

But despite her painful wounds, she carried on running the station, trying to save the life of one of her nurses fatally wounded in the explosion.

Sister Maxey was awarded the Military Medal and Royal Red Cross medal for "gallantry and conspicuous devotion to duty" during the bombing raid.

Lt Col Martin, commanding officer of the 58th Casualty Clearing Station, noted in his official

report: "Miss Maxey's tact, zeal for work, and influence for good are of the highest."

He added: "When lying wounded, she still directed nurses, orderlies and stretcher bearers and refused aid until others were seen to first.

"I have the greatest pleasure in giving this testimony to one of the finest Nursing Sisters I have ever met".

The Northern Echo of June 8, 1918 reported: "Although severely wounded herself, she went to the aid of another Sister, who was fatally wounded, and did all she could for her. Later, although suffering severe pain, she showed an example of pluck and endurance which was inspiring to all."



Durham Remembers AT A GLANCE

History of the DLI exhibition

Where: Palace Green Library, Durham

When: Autumn 2016

What: A free, at least five-year exhibition about the history of the Durham Light Infantry, featuring items from the DLI Collection.

Somme 1916: From Durham to the Western Front

Where: Palace Green Library, Durham

When: 25 March 2016 to 2 October 2016

What: A commemorative exhibition exploring the reality of the Battle of the Somme through the eyes of the people from County Durham who were there and items from the DLI Collection.

Durham Hymns

Where: World premiere at Durham Cathedral, then touring.

When: 16 July 2016 to April 2017

What: Choral performance, by local brass bands and choirs, of new hymns crafted by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and composed by Orlando Gough and Jessica Curry, that draw on the personal experiences of Durham people during the First World War.

World War One Experience

Where: Gala Theatre, Durham

When: 18 July to 27 August, 2016

What: An interactive theatre-led retelling of the Somme story through the eyes of a soldier joining the DLI.

World War One play

Where: Gala Theatre, Durham County Council

When: September 2016

What: A brand new professional play exploring the First World War from a County Durham perspective, both at home and on the frontline.

Butte Crosses

Where: Durham Cathedral

When: From July 2016

What: For only the second time since they left France, crosses in memory of DLI soldiers who died on the Butte de Warlencourt will be brought together, in front of the DLI Chapel.

Battle of the Somme film

Where: Gala Theatre, Durham

When: 4 November 2016

What: Filmed in 1916 at the battle, the Battle of the Somme film remains one of the most successful movies ever made. In 1916 it was seen by over half the adult population of the UK, and it remains the source of many of the most iconic images of the war. Now restored by the Imperial War Museum, and with a new score, the screening will be accompanied by live music from Durham University Symphony Orchestra.

WIN! Tickets to a year of fabulous events

As well as organising a year of exciting exhibitions and events we have 25 pairs of tickets to give away to lucky readers. That includes five pairs of tickets for the Battle of the Somme exhibition at Palace Green Library, five pairs of tickets for the world premiere of Durham Hymns at Durham Cathedral, five pairs of tickets for the World War One experience at Gala, five pairs of tickets for the World War One play and five pairs of tickets for the screening of the Somme film. To be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets log on to www.durham.gov.uk/durhamremembers and sign up for the latest news and information. Full terms & conditions are available at www.durham.gov.uk/comptandcs.



SURREAL EXISTENCE: A trench mortar team in the British trenches during the Battle of the Somme

Voices from the trenches

THE DURHAM HYMNS

A SUITE of new hymns drawing on the experiences of County Durham people during the First World War will be premiered on the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

Inspired by personal letters, diaries, news reports and memoirs, the lyrics of The Durham Hymns are being written by Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy, with music by leading contemporary composers Orlando Gough and Jessica Curry.

The world premiere will be held at Durham Cathedral on Saturday, July 16, with the hymns performed by a choir made up of semi-professional and amateur singers and a brass band assembling the

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Staff Reporter

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cream of the region's brass players.

The hymns will then go on to tour venues across the historic boundaries of County Durham from November through until April 2017.

Durham County Council community cultural development co-ordinator Colin Robson is leading the project in collaboration with project manager Alison Lister, of the Northern Regional Brass Band Trust.

Mr Robson said: "We wanted to do something that would engage with people, where they could connect with it on an emotional level. We asked ourselves how to make it feel specific to County Durham – to give it a sense of place and who we are.

"A lot of people in the county participate in arts through brass bands and choirs. They are part of our indigenous grassroots culture, so as to speak.

"We were also wondering how it could be specific to the county in terms of content. I got chatting with Gill Parkes, principal archivist at Durham County Record Office, who had been doing a Durham at War project.

"I thought, wow this is the material. If you are going to write hymns, this is the



SPECIAL PROJECT: Poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy

material to base them on – all these personal letters, memoirs diary entries, news reports court reports.

"It is the kind of material is about the people of County Durham as they experienced war at the time or reflected about it afterwards."

Mr Robson added: "What Carol Ann Duffy is doing is setting the hymns and spoken word narratives between the hymns, using this material."

One of the hymns, entitled Oranges, is based on a letter by Major John English to his wife. He writes as he hears the guns going off in the background: "My darling

lassie, it is 11.30am on a lovely hot morning and I am lying on a blanket in a beautiful green grass field all clothed with dandelion and a herd of cows grazing all around.

"I am sitting with the shade of a tree and chocolate to eat, papers to read and nothing to do. Now, just at this moment, a man and his wife have come into the field shouting Oranges. "What luck and what yells of delight. I must resume after having eaten four."

A piece called Soldier's Hymn is based on the memoir of DLI Sergeant George Thompson, which is reminiscent of the Hollywood film War Horse, because it tells of his relationship with his own horse in the trenches.

The hymn Lovely Manhood draws on the memories of Adeline Hodges, of Seaham, written towards the end of her life in 1979.

Organisers have also commissioned the younger composer Jonathan Bates to write a prelude piece for the brass band based on George Butterworth's The Banks of Green Willow.

Butterworth served in the DLI during the First World War and was killed in action during the Somme offensive in 1916.

Project manager Ms Lister said: "We are getting wonderful lyrics from Carol Ann and the composers are working at putting them to music at the moment.

"We are getting quite excited about it and things will really start happening at the end of this month when rehearsals start."

Colin Robson, Durham County Council

We wanted to do something that would engage with people, where they could connect with it on an emotional level. We asked ourselves how to make it feel specific to County Durham – to give it a sense of place and who we are