



**UVHS**  
**Remembrance**  
**Anthology**  
**2018**



We start our Anthology this year in a slightly different way. This poem was written by one of our school's Old Boys. He was not only a talented poet as can be seen below but also an accomplished sportsman in both football and cricket. We were able to pay our respects to him at Haringhe Cemetery near Ypres. This poem was read at his graveside and we left a poppy cross and a message from the school.



#### IN MEMORIUM.

*In memory of the late Capt. Neville F. Smith, killed in action, Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916.*

There's a bustle and stir in the camp tonight,  
And the sounds of bugle and drum;  
For the lads move up the line to-night,-  
The line where honour and glory meet,  
And Death treads quick with reddened feet,  
Deep-dyed in the blood of our sons.

With cheerful steps they swing along,  
Fearless and gay, though they know full well,  
That before tomorrow's evening song,  
Some will go the long, lone trail;  
But the trail that leads to the Holy Grail,  
Nor ever leads to hell.

Harvey S. Werry



## Student Blog Posts:

As well as the writing completed after the trip a variety of students wrote their thoughts and feelings about their experiences while on the trip for the school website. Here are a selection of those blog entries.

### Day 1

Today was a unique day. I never thought that I would be able to visit my great-great granddad. I knew that I was named after him but getting the opportunity to see where he lay and learn about what he would have gone through as well as many others was truly special. I managed to give him a message from me and my family, which was very moving. I found all of today emotional and interesting and I think I'll remember it for years to come.

Jamie 9.8



Today we visited several cemeteries and memorials, but one was particularly special for me as I got to visit my great-great granddad's grave. Private James Rowland Wilson was enrolled in the Durham Light Infantry. I have possession of some of his memorabilia - his marriage ring, the spurs off his horse, a picture of his wife, son and self, a lock of his ginger hair and his marriage certificate - all of which my family and I fondly treasure. He is commemorated in the Bancourt British Cemetery. The Bancourt British Cemetery contains 2480 soldiers who fell in the First World War (1462 of those burials are unidentified).

As we arrived at the remote, peaceful location of the cemetery, I was nervous. With my poppy cross in hand, I approached the pristine cemetery, with jittering butterflies in my stomach. The rows upon rows of white head stones shocked me. Most of those in the cemetery died at a similar period of time (my relative died in the Battle of Le Transloy fighting for the Durham Light Infantry). At his head stone, I laid my poppy cross with a moving message on it at his grave, with a strange feeling. It was unusually weird but liberating that I was stood on top of my great-great granddad. It was very emotional in several different ways and it shook me. It moved me very much to see where the brave soldiers lay in their final resting place.

Laura 9.1



When we visited the battlefields and memorials in France over the Somme area, we were able to go over to Thiepval Memorial to the missing soldiers. There was an exhibition when we were there, for everyday of the war there was a sign and a figure wrapped in white. The sign itself had a date and the amount of deaths on that day. Only from the British Empire; almost 1 million people died over the 4 years. Even after the war there was over 75 000 people dead from post war injuries.

Seeing all the amount of lives lost makes you think how many people suffered; whether it was the men or the families left at home. Most were civilians and volunteers who thought the war would be an adventure or even be over by Christmas.

In one day alone over 60,000 people from Britain and its empire were killed or injured: July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. Seeing that label compared to the others is awful, the amount was staggering. There were 15 pillars in the Thiepval Monument itself many from the Somme, all of them had thousands of names piled on top of each other. Each as proud and strong as the army where they served and gave their lives. None of them were forgotten; it would've brought peace to the families. Even if there isn't a grave, that there is a monument with a name. From a Private to Captain, all missing and dead have the same headstones or engraving, showing all are equal in death.

Seeing the monument was haunting; to know that so many people died in that same field or a few yards away even. Over all it was an amazing opportunity and visit the grounds where wars were fought and freedom was taken and gained.

Frances 9.1

### Passchendaele Museum Visit:

Today, Tuesday 16th October, we visited the Passchendaele museum and spent a couple hours exploring the many features and floors of the site. The museum covered many aspects of the war including: chemical weapons, uniforms, trenches, dug-outs and much more. There was lots of information available in a variety of languages which we spent lots of time reading about. Our favourite parts were the restored trenches which we enjoyed looking around and exploring. We also enjoyed the dug-outs which were, like the trenches, representations of trench warfare during WW1. We thought the museum was very informative and enjoyed learning about lots of different areas of The Great War.

Caitlin 9.1 and Rebecca 9.7



Watching the Menin Gate Last Post ceremony was a very unique experience. Each and every person respected the ceremony by watching each soldier walking up and placing down the poppy wreaths. They were holding them with pride and honour. It gave off a very sad, but honourable aura. The music made it feel like you were connected with each of the soldiers whose names were on the walls that towered above us. Seeing people cry around me made me feel like I had just got the news that a relative had died.

Louis 9.5



## Langemark German Cemetery

Langemark German Cemetery was a sobering experience, as it painted a stark contrast between the British and German cemeteries, and how the soldiers were represented. Up to this point, we had only seen the pristine, well-managed side of cemeteries, the ones that the victors of the First World War were privileged enough to be suited to. There were charities erected to support the cemeteries, and the cemeteries presented civic pride. Flowers were surrounding the white headstones, types that would blossom into vivid flashes of colour in the summertime.

The German Cemetery was in stark contrast. There were black gravestones, and instead of pointing upright, they were held over the floor: hundreds of gravestones. Whereas each gravestone in Tyne Cot, Essex Farm, Lijssenthoek was dedicated to one soldier, these gravestones commemorated anywhere from six to a dozen soldiers. Oak trees, a symbol of spirits being carried up to heaven, were planted around the cemetery, a blanket of leaves carpeted over the cemetery. Langemark also was surrounded by a wall, said to “ensure that the graves were hidden from the eyes of the locals”.

The sombre mood was perpetuated by the sheer number of dead hidden within the cemetery in such a small space, forty-four thousand dead. Tyne Cot was at least an order of magnitude larger, and yet less than a third of the amount of people were buried..

Langemark would also contain a mass grave: an open lawn that turned out to contain twenty-five thousand corpses. Beneath us. None of whom had their own headstone, all contained in a minuscule space. The immediate thought of what came from the graveyards is injustice and a segregation, even in the modern day.



Those who fought in the battles of the First World War, on the British Commonwealth or German Imperial sides, were truly just civilians; civilians dressed in a soldier's uniform, enlisted against the enemy. And yet, the blissful irony was that both sides, their soldiers were alike. They held the same ideals and were truly the same, summoned into the theatre of war by their respective governments, a perfect storm of nationalist ideals and propaganda that resulted in a rain of fire. The only reason that the Commonwealth peoples and German peoples would be so segregated and buried in such contrasting ways are simply because of the Allies' pyrrhic victory and the Central Powers' defeat.

Will 9.5

Today I was lucky enough to put a wreath on Menin Gate. It started off with a quick talk and demonstration of what we had to do then we waited for 7:59.

They started to play the bugles. When it was my turn, I was nervous. I walked down the first set of stairs. I became emotional, I didn't want to cry and it was hard not to. I walked across the road. I was more confident and excited to be representing the school. It was a honour.

I walked up the stairs to place down the school's wreath. I was proud of today. It will remain in my memory for ever and how I felt will too.

It was a honour to do it. I felt proud, excited, nervous and other mixed emotions. I was fortunate to do it.

Jessica 9.2



Today I was given the chance to place a wreath at the World War One memorial to the missing at the Menin Gate. We started off with a quick briefing of what to do and how to conduct ourselves. The music started to play and the army cadets led the ceremony. After, the army cadets, schools, and veterans laid their wreathes. After the wreathes were laid, the band played and the crowd dispersed. The pressure of representing school at such an important event was immense. I was adamant not to look at anyone in case I was put off or I tripped up on the cobbles. I was shocked to see how many people died at the many battles at Ypres as there are over 54,000 names on the memorial. Overall, it was a fascinating experience.

Adam 9.1

Today we visited Wellington Quarry and Vimy Ridge. Although we only had half a day it was still packed with lots of moving memories; some of lost souls and others of man-made destruction.

As we arrived at the Wellington Quarry you could almost wade through the atmosphere, there was so much respect and such a sense of loss in the air. When we walked in to the centre there was a model of the dugouts with miniature figures of soldiers working away to help in the war effort. We were given an audio guide and then to add to the mood of warfare we were given WW1 Tommy helmets. As a group we waited to get in to a lift and go down into a authentic mine shaft.

When we reached the bottom of the shaft, the over all shock of the poor conditions the soldiers had to withstand was horrendous. Luckily for us the floors had been boarded up and it was not damp anymore, although you could still picture the tired men and the steady thud of the picks.

Deeper and deeper in to the quarry we found out more and more about the surprise attack of the German front. We saw cave drawings of the deceased; from sketches of women to carvings of crosses in the limestone walls. Another thing that we learnt is what went wrong with the plan and how the soldiers communicated with their families during the 7 days they were stowed underground.

After visiting the quarry we followed on to visit Vimy Ridge and the Canadian memorial, the visitors' centre was similar to the one at the quarry; remembrance poppies and little statues of the memorial. There was also smaller version of part of the memorial.

We were led outside in groups-then proceeding into the replicated trenches. If you looked out about 10 metres you could see the German trenches opposite the Canadian trenches. It just shook me up a bit to see that they were so close together they could probably talk to each other if they wanted to. As you looked around the no-man's land was covered with indents of the war's history with shell holes everywhere.

Once we left the trenches to get to get back to the coach, I saw the Canadian memorial through the trees. It made me speechless; the sheer glory and size of the posts gleaming in the sunlight. As I advanced up the steps toward the monument I finally appreciated the impact of the war on everyone. The thing that moved me most was the amount of names on the monument. Although I also realise why they chose that spot was because of the amazing view looking over France, it was breathtaking.

Jenny 9.3



Today we went to Vimy Ridge which is where the Canadians and the Germans fought in 1917.

When we went to Vimy Ridge it taught me that we don't realise what our actions will cause before it is too late.

When I saw all the craters left by the shells it made me realise that all our actions have consequences and they might change other people's lives.

Also when we went to the memorial, to see all names on it was really sad because that was only one of the many battles which were caused by World War 1.

Georgina 9.3



**Dear Mom,**

I'm only on day one and it's horrible, it's terrible, it's nothing like they told us. There are free cigarettes, whiskey and a one way ticket to hell. The front line is not for me, never was but I will make it home to you before Christmas. The thing I hate to see are my friends dropping everywhere I look and I cannot handle the intensity and lengths of the ear ringing bombs, But I Will Make It Home!

**Dear Mr & Mrs English,**

We have found this previous letter with your son's body; he had it held close to his heart as he died. But we thought you should still receive this letter, because your son was one our finest specimens until the end. His head got the better of him and we are terribly sorry.

J.Q.English

Age 14

Shot at dawn

With great sorrow,

Senior Officer Thompson



## We're in rank

We're in rank  
Ready to go over  
It's zero hour  
For the men of Dover.

We're in rank  
Walking slowly  
Have no fear  
The plan is clear

We've broken rank  
The machine-guns start  
The rifles fire  
Into cover, dart.

We're in rank  
The fight is over  
Yet we still stand  
This grey battalion.



By Jake 9.3

## The Lost

The bodies of the lost laying limp on the ground,  
Their possessors name never found.  
The widows and children; just families alike,  
Waiting for the dreaded telegraph to arrive.  
Echoes of past gunshots trouble the air,  
Although it's 2018 we still remember they're there.

Dedicated to Joe Robson,32, lost in action-1st July 1916  
“To the uncle we never knew. With our love and prayers.  
May you rest in peace.”-Anne

By Jenny 9.3



## Untitled

Death is rife in the air,  
The sweet scent of dispossession,  
Those around me falling to the floor in transgression,  
A grand hurricane of despair.

Does he know that we bleed the same?  
He holds his rifle and he takes his aim,  
If he bleeds, I'll bleed the same,  
He seems scared, in a wilt of shame.

Blood and viscera skipped against the mud,  
Weak knees and weak legs as he falls to the ground,  
Constant gunshot like a monotonous pound.  
Rocking back and forth, awaiting the oncoming flood.

Drunken, dazed, friend or foe,  
Hold your firearm, whimpering woe,  
And cry your melancholy question;  
Tell me thus,  
Which you dread more—  
The echo or the answer?

Will 9.5



## **Remember**

The nights they fought

The bravery they brought

To all of them who did fight

Unforgettably into the twilight

We will remember them

No one as brave as one who surrendered

Who gave their life to save ours

To the ones who were in pain

But never showed their scars

Who spent their days in fear

Worried what would come next

But standing unto the challenge

We will remember them

**by Maria 9.2**

## The 11th of November

Bullets flew and shells dropped. I stood side by side with my friends and I watched them fall, never to rise again. The ground squelched as I stepped on it, churned by the feet of a thousand dead soldiers. Marching forward toward the dark face of death.

The chattering of machine guns grew closer and my time grew shorter, I focused on the blessings I had been given in my pleasant life. I thought of my child, my wife and my friends. Cries of utter agony rang out beside me and I knew it was my time. I felt an overwhelming urge to shed a tear but I held it back and told myself it would be fine, god would protect me. I put down my rifle and closed my eyes accepting my fate.

At first I felt nothing, but it struck me with a sharp pain in the chest; a wave of pain hit me in the head and as I fell, it went black.

The agony of the last few months, over. I was free.

***Every year on the 11th of November, I am reborn in the memories of the ones I laid down my life for. They are grateful for our sacrifice.***

Oliver 9.8



Together we March

Together, we march.  
Death is near, our chances sparse.  
Our corpses lifeless and alone.  
Intoxicated with fear,  
The fear of our own.

We are all the same:  
all scared, all insane.  
We are all blind,  
Clogged with prejudice,  
Our views are unkind.

But how could we know?  
It is our lives that we owe;  
“Are you a man or a mouse?”  
Propaganda is infectious;  
It empties the beds in each house.

The gift of a life, taken by a shot.  
But every year, no one forgot.  
We still march together,  
Even when death takes us,  
We still march together

Row by row the poppies sway gently in the cold winter breeze  
I wonder between the graves of soldiers that have been brought to their knees  
I am walking here free because of the sacrifice they all made  
A hundred years later I am standing here above their graves

Crosses that stand high watching over those who have died  
I can hear the echoing of mothers and wives that have cried  
Now just names that are carved, only relevant to the few  
I feel a sadness sweep over me for people I never knew

Each soldier represented by a doll made of cotton  
to ensure that each brave soul is never forgotten  
Finally I understand the pain and regret  
Ad why it is so important that "lest we forget."

*-Grace 9.6*



What should we do? they say  
How should we help? they say  
Run they say  
Run they say run for your lives  
Leave no man behind they say  
Injured or not leave no man behind

What should we do? they say once again  
Nothing they say nothing at all  
Why nothing? they say  
Because the Germans have won they say  
But not for long they say not for long  
We have the power they say  
We have got our allies defending us they say  
We will win they say we will win

What should we do they say once again  
Leave no man behind they say  
Leave no man behind

By Charlotte 9.5





**S**houting for help as they were drastically shot.

**L**ives were put on hold to fight for their country.

**A**mazing men fought their today for our tomorrow

**U**nbearable sights were seen as their fellows dropped dead to the floor.

**G**ushing blood splurged at of the men's wounds.

**H**elp, they cried as they collapsed onto the worn out battlefield.

**T**error haunted the soldiers if they were going to live to see the next day.

**E**ver lasting pain in people's hearts for the men that were lost.

**R**age developed out of the dead, heroic soldier's families.

**SLAUGHTER.**

## Reflections on the Battlefields Trip

The main day that stood out for me was on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October when we went to Last Post Ceremony. This stood out for me as it was probably the if not one of the most moving and heart touching days while we were there. Many people were upset and touched when the Last Post was playing as it made us all think about all the soldiers that fought for our country in battle.

There were crowds of people stood silently to watch the soldiers and chosen kids from different schools lay their wreathes.

By Russel 9.6



Dear Martha

Hello Martha, this will be my last letter before the big push. The boys are really excited but I know they're just trying to hide their nerves. The weather has been particularly cold this month. Not much rain; it's just been cold. We'll kick those Germans' behind and hopefully be back home so I can see you again. I promise I'll make it home in one piece. You can make me some more of that lovely soup. It's been so cold and I have missed your soup. The sounds of gunfire ring in my ears sometimes and my hands get shaky. But I don't think I need to worry about that. I can't wait for your next letter; I heard you have some big news and I can't wait to read it.

Lots of love George

Dear George

Hello George I am very concerned about you I think about every minute of every day. Yes I do have big news that I'm very excited to share with you. I went to the doctors and they confirmed my pregnancy. We are going to have a child soon. I hope that if it's a boy he's as brave as his father. We can buy a little house in the Lakes like we always dreamed.

Please make it home in one piece.

Lots of Love Martha

Louis 9.5



## Over 'top, Lads!

There we sat, waiting in the trenches for the whistle, feet soaked from the rain water from the trenches. We wish we didn't have to go over' top. We all know what it means. We have all been there; as soon as we scrambled over 'top the Jerries' machine guns start chattering and start mowing us down.

Our rifles are no match against the Jerrie's machine guns. Boom, boom, boom. They're knocking us out yet our Generals keep sending us up despite knowing what they are putting us through. Our turn is coming closer...

"Right, men! Your time has come! Ladders! Wait for the whistle! Wait for it!"

'Pheep! Pheep! Pheep!

"Go, go, go!"

Here we are! Over 'top! At long last! It is time to die...

Dulce et decorum est.

Ben 9.4



## The Dilemma

I am sitting here in this cramped trench with about 29 other people from my Squadron. Six of them all crawling to the nurse to get healed. All the other 23 of us cold, shivering, shaking and we can't feel our feet. We are currently in a dilemma because the Germans have two machine guns on their front line, and we are trying to figure out a plan to take the machine guns out. So that when we go over the top some of us will have a chance of surviving.

We have been over the top and I and three others survived the attack. We are currently inside of the German trench that we have just taken over. I have been wounded (shot in the leg). But luckily one of the other 3 that survived the attack is a trained medic.

William 9.6

We're in the trench,  
All of us drenched,  
With all our might we try to fight,  
And we beat the enemy after all,

They poisoned the air,  
Taking out half of our men,  
But we stood for ourselves,  
Shells exploding all around,  
Booming as they demolished the ground,

Grenades exploding,  
As we were reloading,  
All around the battle of Somme,

In our head you will never be dead because we will  
remember you all.

Morgan 9.6



## Tyne Cot Cemetery and Menin Gate

I didn't expect Tyne Cot cemetery to be so big. We had only seen a few cemeteries which were relatively small and well kept. There was a big memorial statue in the middle where some people had laid their poppy crosses. I walked around trying to decide which grave to put mine down on. The place was so huge and it was crazy how many people have fought for us. We might not be here without them. I decided to pick a grave of a soldier who they did not know a lot about and he had no poppies on his grave. It really made me think a lot about how many people actually died and how scary it must have been letting family members go to war.

We also went to the Last Post ceremony at Menin Gate. It was very beautiful all lit up and very emotional. There was lots of people there which I wasn't expecting and it was in silence to show your respect.

Mia 9.4



## Dust

The whistles blew, the men shouted.  
Up and off to a bloody death they marched.  
The shouts turned to screams,  
The whistles turned to dust.

The line of stretchers formed in the mud,  
A pile of dead arose from the swamp.  
The screams weakened,  
And the dust settled.

The flowers grow, the mice come out,  
Now death is no more,  
Screams are no more,  
And dust has blown away.

By Peter 9.4



Dear Mother

Life here in Wellington Quarry is good. The New Zealand miners are nice enough. They named the pillars and rooms after the home town of the designers. We may be sleeping on just wood slats but after eight days you sort of get used to it and it is helped a lot by the fact that you know everyone else in the cave. Also we must deal with it.

My good friend Oliver's is dead his body was found outside with a round through his head. Oliver is from our town he went to the same church as us. He was delivering letters to the post office and must have been seen by a central power infantryman and got shot so I don't know if my last letter reached you or not.

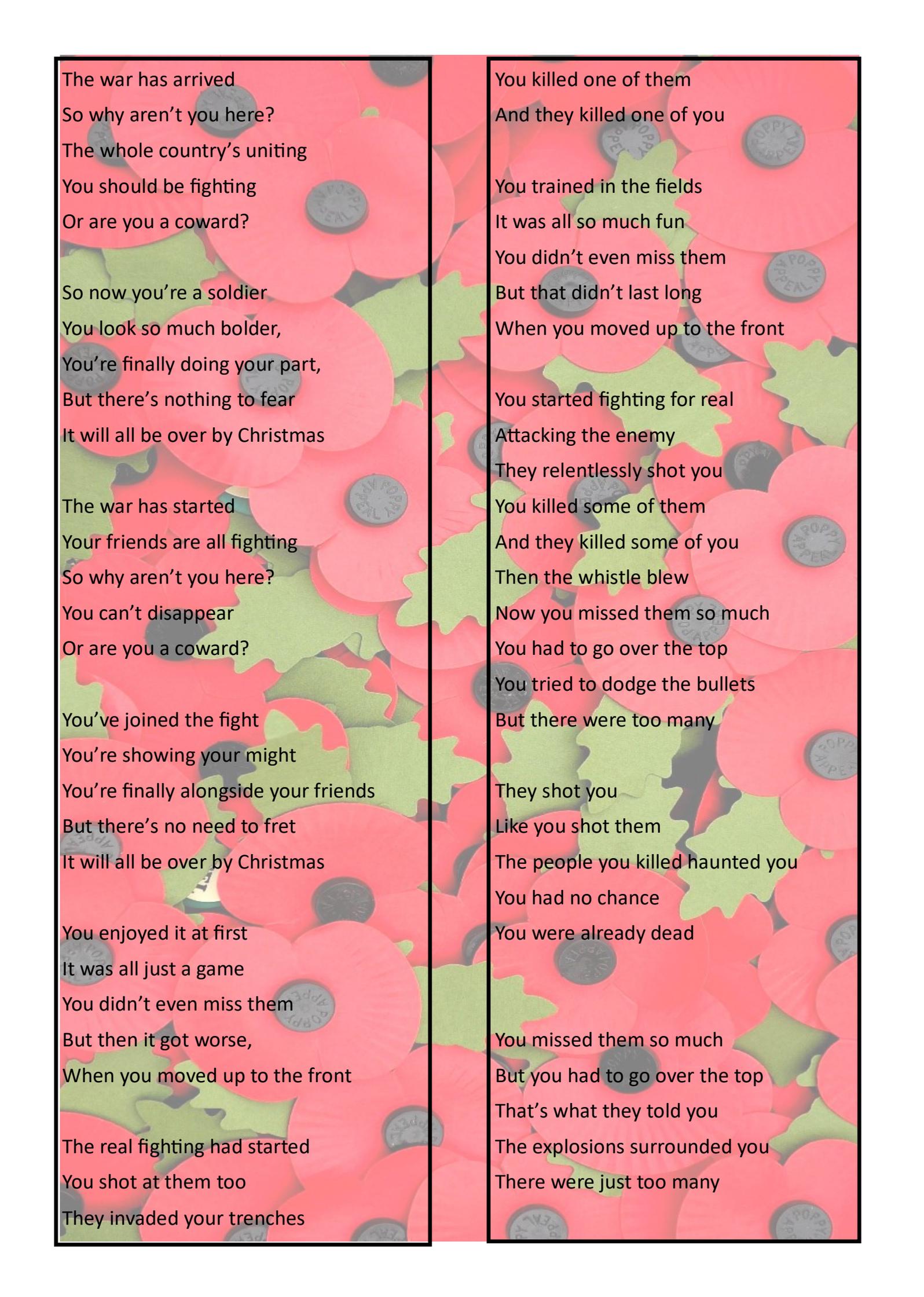
Tomorrow we must charge the land of the central forces, I hope it doesn't end up like the Battle of the Somme and I will make it home alive. I don't know much about the Battle of the Somme, but I have heard stories from survivors of the battle, but they are few and thin so all I can tell is that it was a bloodbath of intense proportion because the generals refusal to change battle plans.

I am writing this the day before the charge we just had a church service for many us who are Christians. It was held using one of the pillars as an altar. We said some prayers and sung some religious songs and it really lifted our spirits.

Love, Private James

By Andy 9.6





The war has arrived  
So why aren't you here?  
The whole country's uniting  
You should be fighting  
Or are you a coward?

So now you're a soldier  
You look so much bolder,  
You're finally doing your part,  
But there's nothing to fear  
It will all be over by Christmas

The war has started  
Your friends are all fighting  
So why aren't you here?  
You can't disappear  
Or are you a coward?

You've joined the fight  
You're showing your might  
You're finally alongside your friends  
But there's no need to fret  
It will all be over by Christmas

You enjoyed it at first  
It was all just a game  
You didn't even miss them  
But then it got worse,  
When you moved up to the front

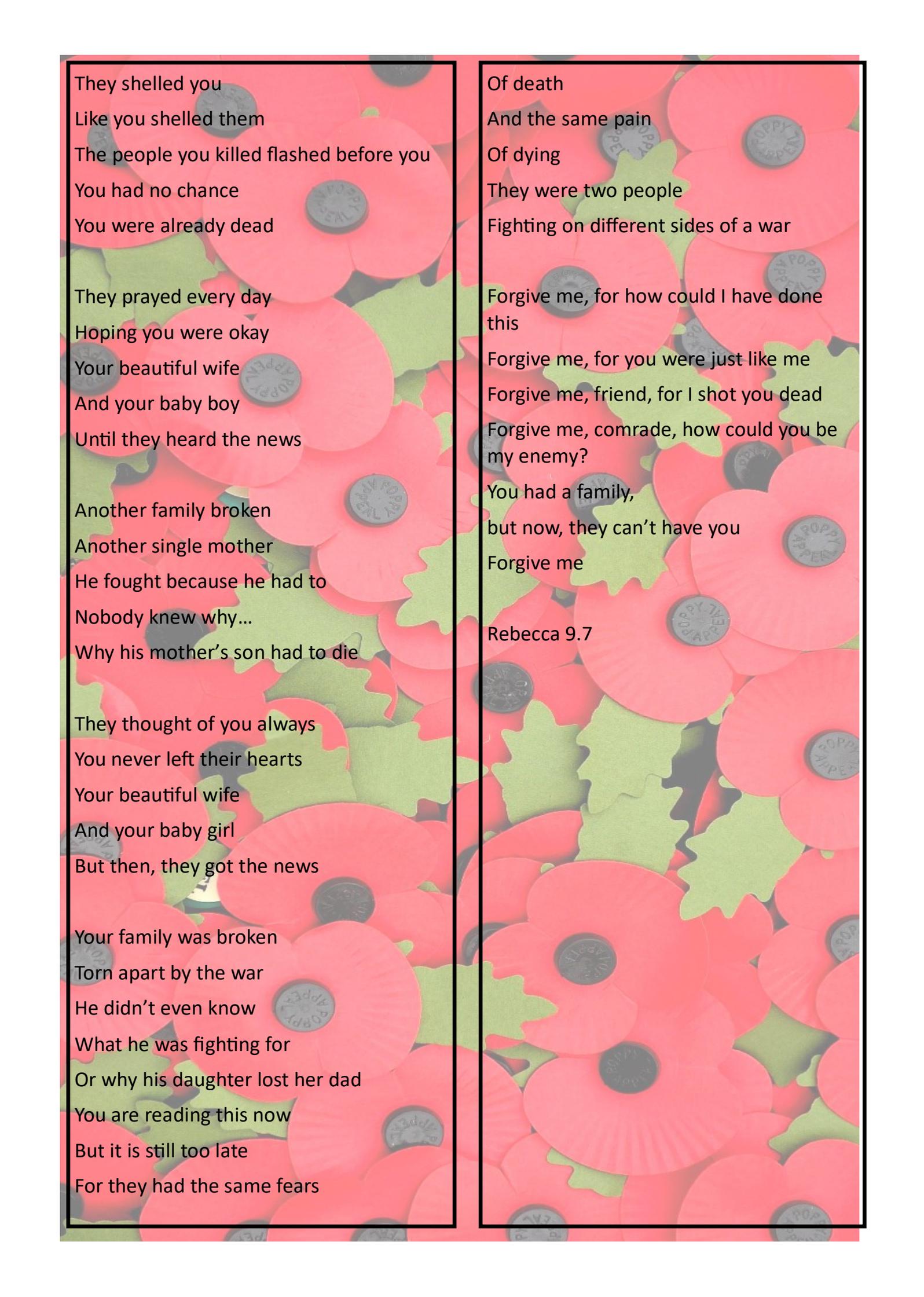
The real fighting had started  
You shot at them too  
They invaded your trenches

You killed one of them  
And they killed one of you  
You trained in the fields  
It was all so much fun  
You didn't even miss them  
But that didn't last long  
When you moved up to the front

You started fighting for real  
Attacking the enemy  
They relentlessly shot you  
You killed some of them  
And they killed some of you  
Then the whistle blew  
Now you missed them so much  
You had to go over the top  
You tried to dodge the bullets  
But there were too many

They shot you  
Like you shot them  
The people you killed haunted you  
You had no chance  
You were already dead

You missed them so much  
But you had to go over the top  
That's what they told you  
The explosions surrounded you  
There were just too many



They shelled you  
Like you shelled them  
The people you killed flashed before you  
You had no chance  
You were already dead

They prayed every day  
Hoping you were okay  
Your beautiful wife  
And your baby boy  
Until they heard the news

Another family broken  
Another single mother  
He fought because he had to  
Nobody knew why...  
Why his mother's son had to die

They thought of you always  
You never left their hearts  
Your beautiful wife  
And your baby girl  
But then, they got the news

Your family was broken  
Torn apart by the war  
He didn't even know  
What he was fighting for  
Or why his daughter lost her dad  
You are reading this now  
But it is still too late  
For they had the same fears

Of death  
And the same pain  
Of dying  
They were two people  
Fighting on different sides of a war

Forgive me, for how could I have done this  
Forgive me, for you were just like me  
Forgive me, friend, for I shot you dead  
Forgive me, comrade, how could you be my enemy?

You had a family,  
but now, they can't have you  
Forgive me

Rebecca 9.7

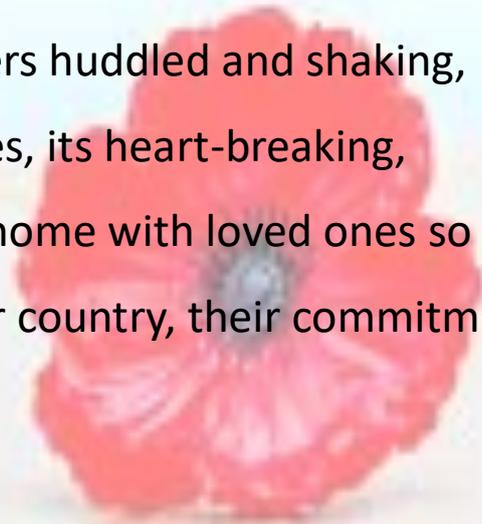
# *Soldiers lie*

In Flanders Field the soldiers lie,  
The sound of rifles echoing in the sky,  
The air is filled with blood and smoke,  
Bodies lay in trenches, limbs broke.

The sounds of bombs ringing in their ears,  
They all cry full of fear,  
Gun shells whistling over land,  
Sergeants hysterically shouting commands.

Shell-shocked soldiers huddled and shaking,  
Missing their families, its heart-breaking,  
Wishing they were home with loved ones so dear,  
But fighting for their country, their commitment is clear.

By Tyler 9.6



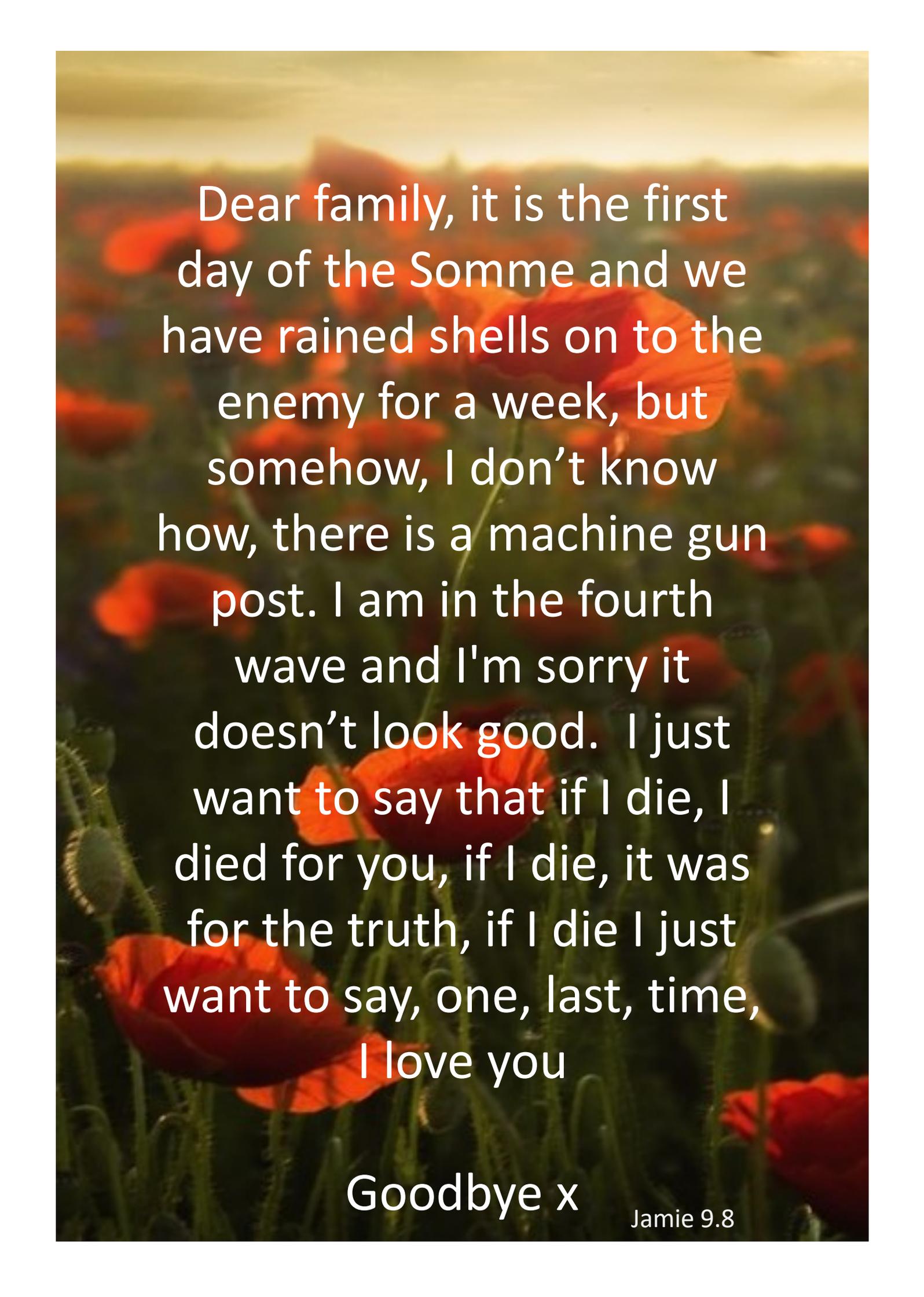
Dear Diary,

It's awful out here. Bodies lie everywhere, lifeless. The survivors only just manage to find the strength to call for help. I never thought I'd be so close to death or see it on this scale. I want to tell someone how I feel, what it's really like. I want to scream. I want a shoulder to cry on but I have to keep on going. I have nothing. When will it end? They said it would be over by the first Christmas. It has been going for way longer. Years? Months? I have no idea, no idea of time at all. They lied about the time. How can I ever trust anyone again? A lie like that destroys you; the amount dead even more. It messes with my mind, with how I think. They're calling the other men weak for showing emotion, some are shot for it. How am I meant to go on like this without breaking, without falling apart? I thought it would be a bit of fun- fighting for my country, fighting for my king. How wrong I was. Now I'm living with nowhere to run to and nowhere to hide. Rats and other vermin scuttle around the trenches, dead trees stand tall in no-man's land, one sign of what was lost, along with shell holes and now derelict buildings. I have so many questions to answer but no answers to find.

Sometimes we gather together- chatting, preparing for a battle, finding food or trying to rid ourselves of trench-foot. Sometimes we keep ourselves to ourselves. I listen to other troops whimpering, snuffling, scratching. I think of my warm bed back home; the roof I used to have above my head. I miss everything back in England, even the magpie that woke me up before sunrise and the Chesh- the horse that always kicked me. I've never been outside Britain before this. I grew up on a farm before this so I'm used to hard work and used to mud. But I'm not used to seeing death on this scale, not used to having 3 warm meals a day and not used to everything else. I want to write to Mum, to Dad, to my 5 other siblings. Okay maybe not my dad because he always said I was mentally weak for a boy and writing to him would prove him right. Cor I even miss that. I wish wish wish I was back there mucking out, feeding, collecting produce from the animals and riding my horse, Colonel, through the moors and hills. My dad wanted to come and fight too but was turned down- he was too old and had to keep working on the farm. Ha. At least I won something over him. Mum says he loves me really, only he has his own way of showing it. Well I've to go now and try to not get my head blown off. I wonder if I'll ever write again...

By Caitlin 9.1



A field of red poppies is shown at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. The poppies are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a poignant atmosphere.

Dear family, it is the first day of the Somme and we have rained shells on to the enemy for a week, but somehow, I don't know how, there is a machine gun post. I am in the fourth wave and I'm sorry it doesn't look good. I just want to say that if I die, I died for you, if I die, it was for the truth, if I die I just want to say, one, last, time, I love you

Goodbye x

Jamie 9.8

**In northern France**

**Across the hill**

**Men to advance**

**Fight for the kill**

**Climbing out of the trenches**

**Onward bound**

**Moving in inches**

**Some were never found**

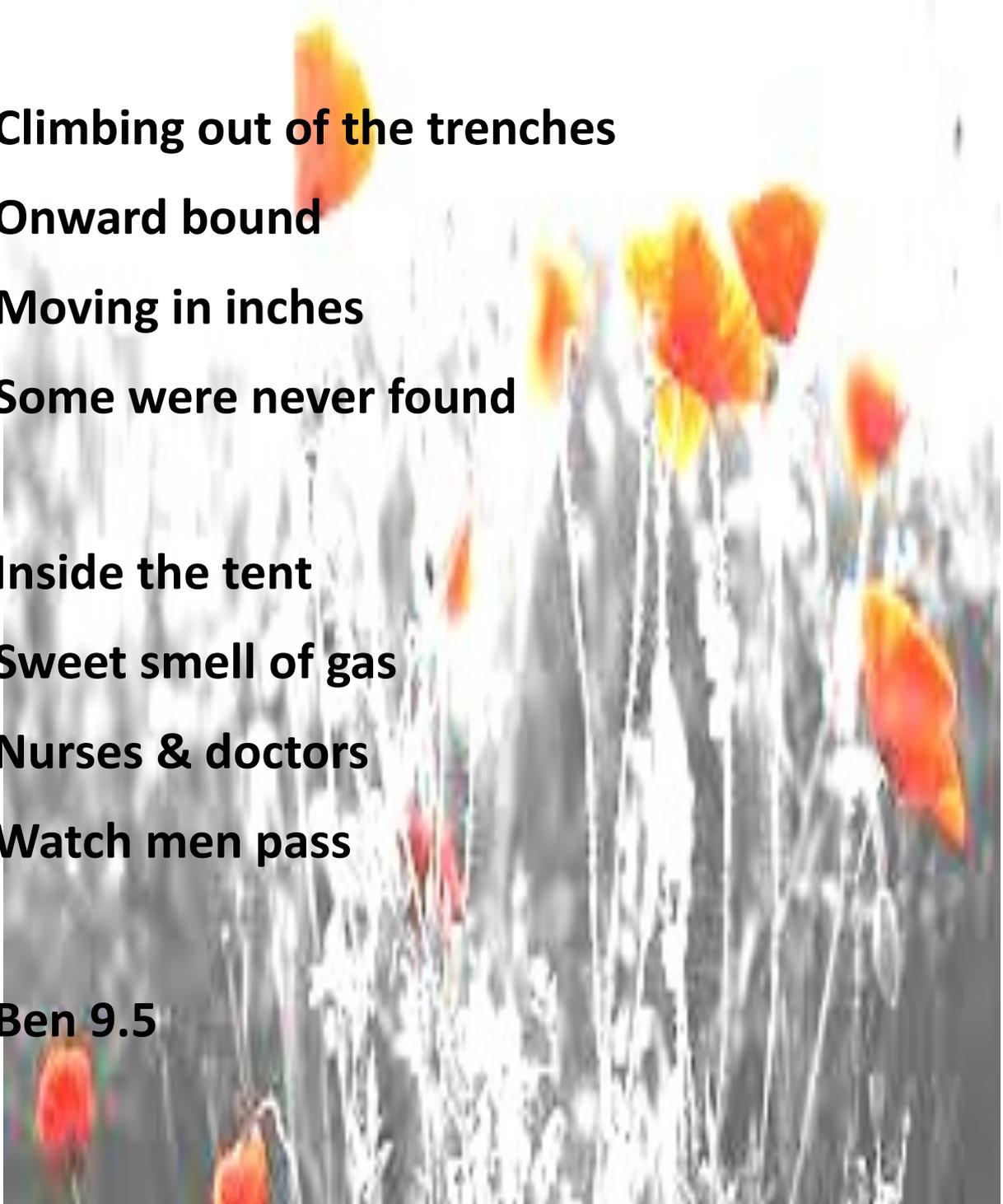
**Inside the tent**

**Sweet smell of gas**

**Nurses & doctors**

**Watch men pass**

**Ben 9.5**



I was the brother who didn't come home,  
I was the name chiselled into the stone,  
I was the one of the millions dead,  
I was the one who simply bled.

I was not the one who saw our sons grow,  
I was not the one who lasted 'till snow,  
I was not the who was missing sight,  
I was not the who walked off that night.

I am the one "known unto God",  
I am the one who became flawed,  
I am the one buried in the Somme,  
I am the one who is at last calm.

I was the one with a grave,  
I was not the one who was forgot,  
I am the one who was brave,  
We are the ones who lived then shot.

Frances 9.1



Belgium/France was an amazing experience we fit a lot of stuff into two days. It was very emotional and at times fun (the chocolate shop!) My favourite time was probably the Vimy Ridge, as it is an amazing structure and the view is outstanding looking over the vast fields of Belgium and France.

By Tom 9.7



Dear my dearest,

I'm sitting in my trench, starving and shivering. I think of you and home all time. I miss you so much but don't worry, I will be home at Christmas and it will all be over, I'll be able to see your beautiful face again and I'll be able to hold you in my arms. I'm sorry I have to tell you this like this but, it's your brother, he got shot today...

I did everything I could for him, but it was too late, he was going pale and he was slowly fading. I waited with him until his last breath.

Amongst many others he died as a courageous, heroic soldier fighting for our country. Just remember, he was so proud of you and he loved you so much. I'll be home soon, I love you.

Lots of love,

George. X

Rebecca 9.8



## My experience at the Tyne Cot memorial

When we first arrived at the cemetery my eyes were instantly drawn to the enormous cross sat on top of an old German Machine gun post. As I walked towards it, I looked around at the headstones and graves of the poor people who lost their lives during the First World War. When I reached the post I climbed to the top and looked out at the rest of the cemetery. The amounts of headstones were staggering.

Before we entered, we were all given a wooden cross with a small poppy on it. We were told to place it on either the grave of a family member who fought in the war or just another soldier to show our respect so I, having no family members buried at Tyne cot, placed mine on the grave of a soldier who was unidentified to show that, even though we didn't know who they were, we still remembered them.

They may have been a countless amount of headstones but that didn't compare to the number of names chiselled in to the walls. These were the names of the soldiers whose bodies were never discovered. It was horrible to think that out of all the people whose names at Tyne Cot, most of them were never found.

Finley 9.8



## It will be over by Christmas

I will be over by Christmas  
The war has been going for a few days  
They want volunteers  
It will be over by Christmas

It will be over by Christmas  
There was propaganda everywhere  
Join the war and fight for your country

It will be over by Christmas

It will be over by Christmas  
Are you a hero or a coward?  
Are you a lion or a mouse?

It will be over by Christmas

It will be over by Christmas  
Give your age and height

Do the medical test and get your clothes

It will be over by Christmas

It will be over by Christmas

That's what they said

It was all lies

It will not be over by Christmas

Jessica 9.2

## The Menin gate ceremony

The Menin Gate service was such a special and impacting experience. Each person either in dedication or there to remember, all came together. The feeling of true thankfulness and sadness coated the Menin gate and created a sense of union between everyone. Memories and the unthinkable flooded your mind of the treacherous experiences these men encountered for us. All of us.

You felt so connected and felt like everyone became a force to honour and commemorate those who bravely served our country. Honorary music was played effortlessly but had such a moving impact. Each different sound had its own story, the story of a death, or a so called “victory”. Anger seemed to overpower all my emotions.

The thankfulness, true astonishment and pride all made you feel so special and so grateful for the unimaginable actions that they faced. But the acts of man’s inhumanity to man is what lingered in my head. The feeling of uselessness towards the situation and how so, so many fought and died, offered their tomorrow for our today but gave their tomorrow through such horrific situations.

The anger of how so many died, so many participated ,so many left fighting hopelessly to save family but waking up to dreadful letters confirming deaths or injuries must have been truly unimaginable. The endless walls of our heroes names made it almost feel real, the amount of loss and the how they put their lives on the line it almost felt like a hit in the chest. It literally took your breath away. Every single name had a special and relevant story that sadly ended fighting for the victory and superiority of future generations.

Callie 9.5



## Battlefields Writing

On Monday the 15<sup>th</sup> of October we visited the Thiepval Memorial in Authuille, France. This place we visited I found quite emotional, first we went to see many dolls lined up rows and rows of each day, each month and each year of how many soldiers died each day. The numbers were incredible on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1914, 2436 soldiers died. This number is very high and very upsetting. Ww1 went on for 4 years and 3 months which is a very long time to be fighting every day. In total 16 million people died during ww1 and 40 million casualties in military and civilian.

After we visited the dolls, we walked over to the Thiepval memorial there were thousands of names on 12 tower blocks. when we visited it, I felt sad because all these men gave up their lives for us today. Many people died, and we must remember all of these people. No war should have ever happened.

Emily

9.1



Dear Family and Friends back in England

Many thanks for all the photos and joyful letters I have received, it is so lovely to hear from you all. I have attached some photos of me and friends in Arras. The photo that's attached may be the last you see of me and I hope you look after it dearly.

Tomorrow, we move down into the Wellington Quarry (Them Kiwis are quite funny you know). We move down with my Platoon ( The 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Reserves). The smell of the Frontlines has reached us here in Arras and the stench of impending doom and death has finally approached us from over the hill. Unfortunately, if you listen carefully then you can hear the screams of the wounded and the screeches of the machine gun fire as our soldiers must climb out into no man's land and try to rescue wounded and take the Germans' frontline. It gets worse every day, but we fight on and we will be just fine. We have had little spare time since we have been training here. Having been through company drills mixed with patrol marches, physical drills, knot tying and long jumping etc.

But don't worry not everything is bad; we have had some jolly good football games while we wait for the whistle and the humdrum of artillery fire. Some of our men were able to go to town on some Saturdays but I mostly stayed back enjoying my life to its fullest (Sneak some cider sometimes). We are now fully equipped to take the Jerries' frontline and take down these Huns. Already we have lost so many lives. I don't know what I want to do, I was planning on having my finger cut off but for the glory of our country and the honour of our family I shall fight on until these Krauts draw their final breath and I shall fight until I draw my final lungful of air and as long as there is blood in my veins I shall not stop fighting. For the King I shall fight and I shall protect my family and my great nation.

Love from Toby

Toby 9.1



We will remember those who fought for  
our country,  
Let them lie in peace,  
Lay poppies,  
Lay wreaths,  
To remember,  
Two minutes of silence,  
All to remember,  
Write poems,  
Visit memorials,  
This is all to remember...

Millie 9.2



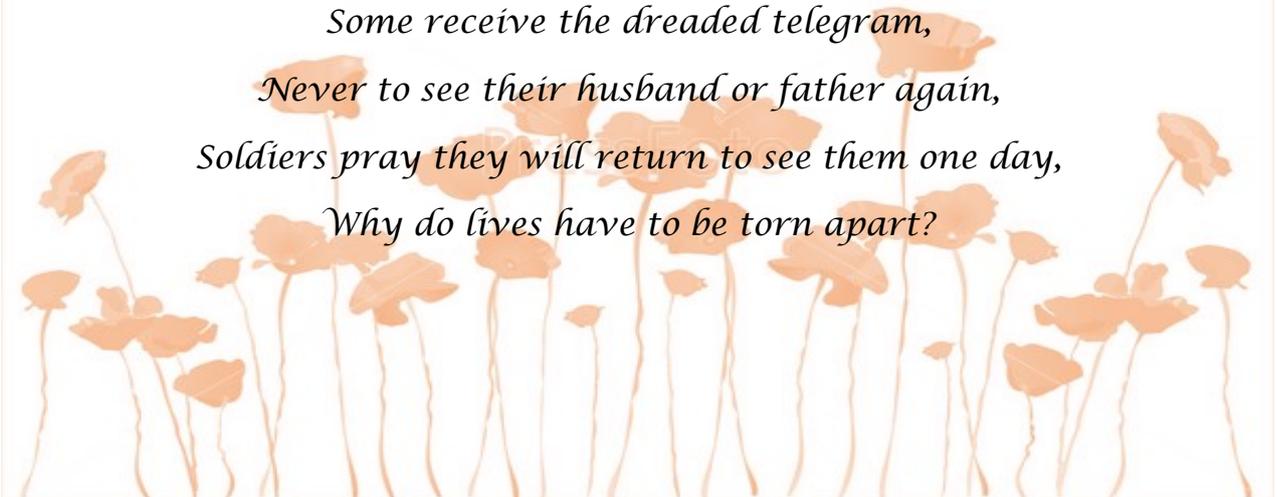
*Lest we forget*

*The shells, the gun fire,  
The screams of sheer terror,  
The bodies that scatter the lonely fields,  
Men taking their last agonising breath,  
Why did I have to come?*

*The deafening whistle sounded its shrill war cry,  
Men scramble over the top,  
Some roll back down to the supposed safety of the trench,  
Lifeless bodies slumping into the water filled mire,  
Why did I have to fight for king and country?*

*Guns echo their violent melody in the air,  
Brave soldiers collapse into the mud,  
Staggering, willing their friends to go on,  
Reluctantly they move forward drowning in sorrow,  
Why do so many have to fall, never to be seen again?*

*Families worry where their loved ones are,  
Some receive the dreaded telegram,  
Never to see their husband or father again,  
Soldiers pray they will return to see them one day,  
Why do lives have to be torn apart?*



*Digging the graves of those fallen,  
Tears roll down the hard-faced men,  
Praying, the same fate will not come to them,  
Burying men, friends, regimental family, the toll never ends,  
In living or dying -why do so many innocents have to suffer?*

*The trenches don't conceal us,  
From the ridges the opposition can see everything,  
We are not safe, nobody is,  
No one can survive when they are watching every move we make,  
Why do we have to fall?*

*The men who sit in offices,  
The men who started the war,  
They don't know what it's like to be a soldier,  
They will never understand the suffering we have to withstand,  
Why is there a war?*

*We hope our sons will be saved by our sacrifices,  
We pray our daughters never live the same fear  
Of loved ones eternally to disappear  
Perhaps this carnage will bring safety and freedom  
If not, why leave us here?*

*In a hundred years' time,  
Will people visit rows of nameless graves?  
Will they tread on the same ground?  
Still sound, peaceful fields, concealing hidden horrors below*

*Will we be remembered?*

*Let the lone bugle play on,  
The tattered flags fly  
Bright red poppies flutter  
Honouring heroism and sacrifice,  
Lest we be forgotten.*

*Laura 9.1*



Lice and disease roam free.

As many men die.

Many men leave their wives.

Only never to return.

So many are widows.

Many die in battle.

Leaving their brothers behind.

For them to mourn.

Adam 9.1



Dear mother,

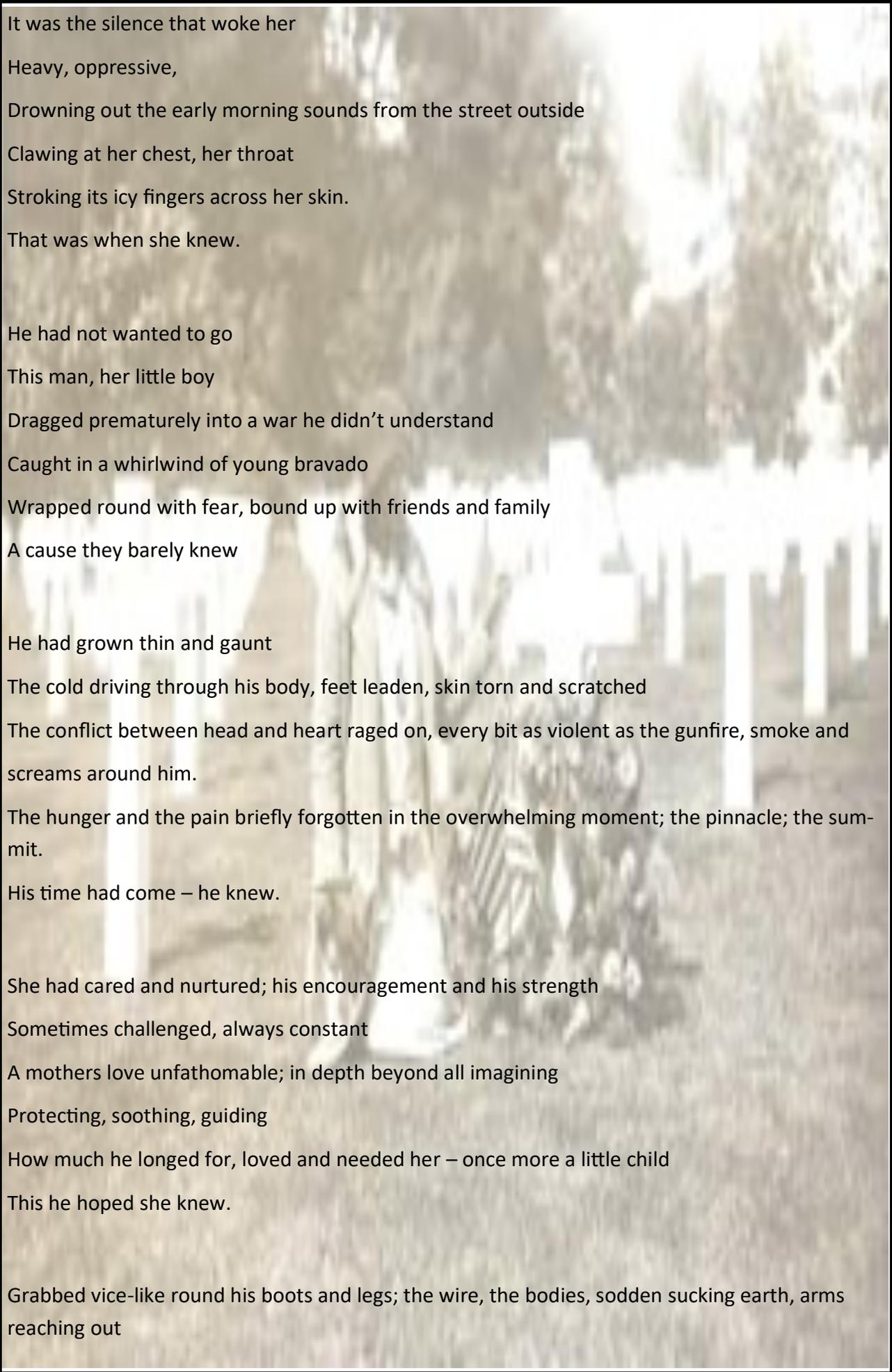
I am writing to you from the front line. When you go out into no man's land it is terrifying because you don't know if you are going to come back.

We have made progress. We have taken over Ypres from the Germans thanks to our tanks. I hope to see you soon,

Sergeant Richard Flank.

By Georgina 9.3





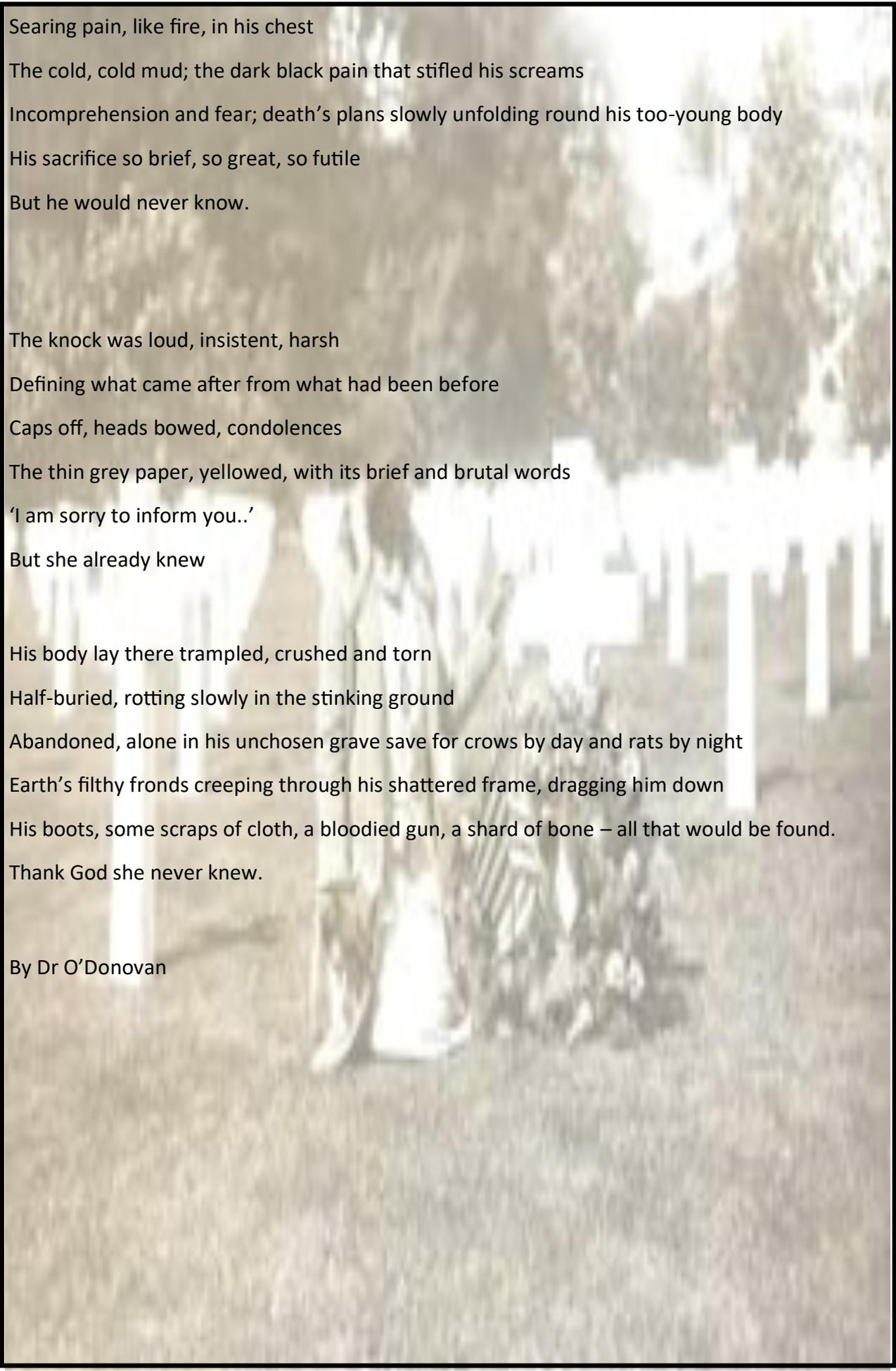
It was the silence that woke her  
Heavy, oppressive,  
Drowning out the early morning sounds from the street outside  
Clawing at her chest, her throat  
Stroking its icy fingers across her skin.  
That was when she knew.

He had not wanted to go  
This man, her little boy  
Dragged prematurely into a war he didn't understand  
Caught in a whirlwind of young bravado  
Wrapped round with fear, bound up with friends and family  
A cause they barely knew

He had grown thin and gaunt  
The cold driving through his body, feet leaden, skin torn and scratched  
The conflict between head and heart raged on, every bit as violent as the gunfire, smoke and  
screams around him.  
The hunger and the pain briefly forgotten in the overwhelming moment; the pinnacle; the summit.  
His time had come – he knew.

She had cared and nurtured; his encouragement and his strength  
Sometimes challenged, always constant  
A mother's love unfathomable; in depth beyond all imagining  
Protecting, soothing, guiding  
How much he longed for, loved and needed her – once more a little child  
This he hoped she knew.

Grabbed vice-like round his boots and legs; the wire, the bodies, sodden sucking earth, arms  
reaching out

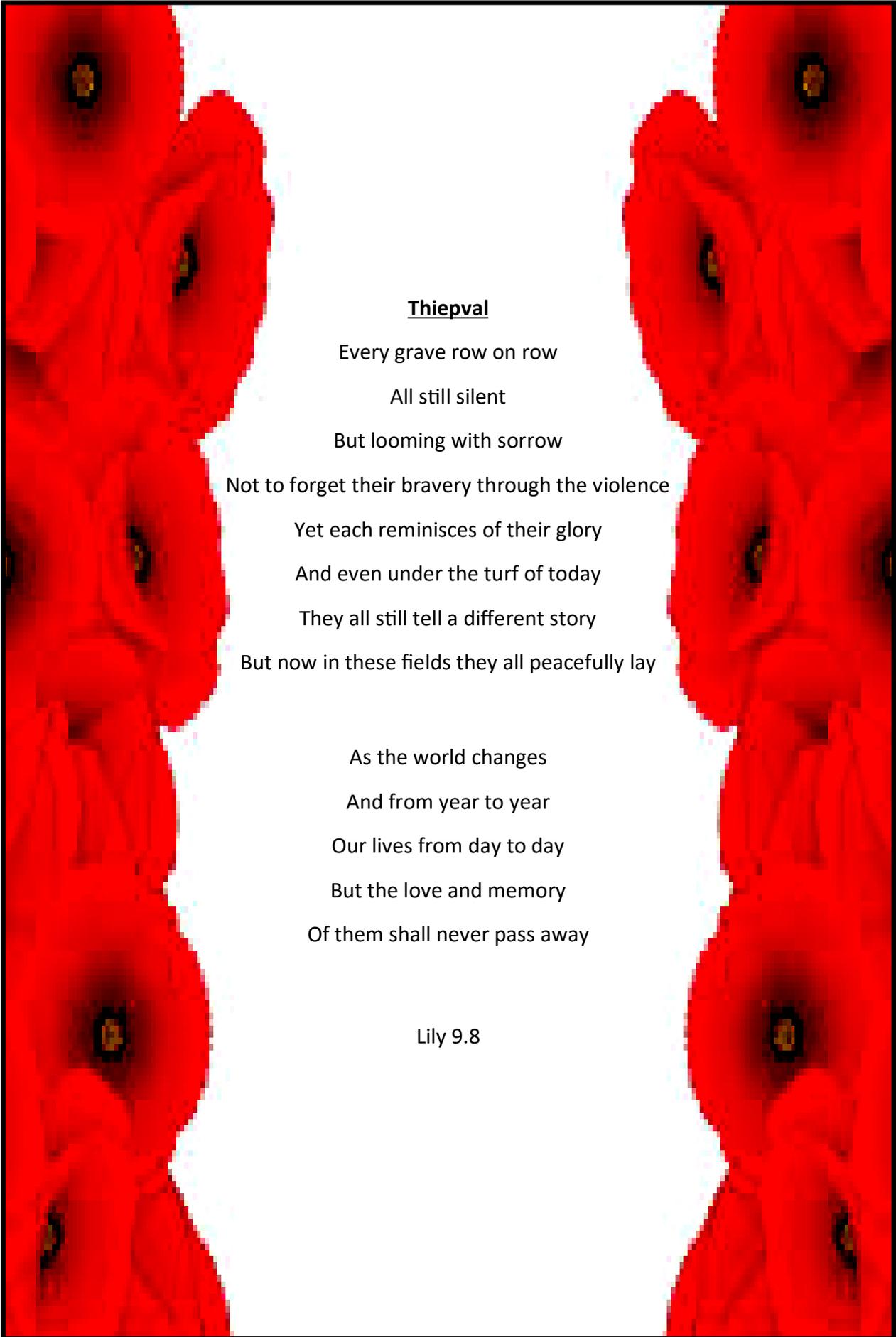


Searing pain, like fire, in his chest  
The cold, cold mud; the dark black pain that stifled his screams  
Incomprehension and fear; death's plans slowly unfolding round his too-young body  
His sacrifice so brief, so great, so futile  
But he would never know.

The knock was loud, insistent, harsh  
Defining what came after from what had been before  
Caps off, heads bowed, condolences  
The thin grey paper, yellowed, with its brief and brutal words  
'I am sorry to inform you..'  
But she already knew

His body lay there trampled, crushed and torn  
Half-buried, rotting slowly in the stinking ground  
Abandoned, alone in his unchosen grave save for crows by day and rats by night  
Earth's filthy fronds creeping through his shattered frame, dragging him down  
His boots, some scraps of cloth, a bloodied gun, a shard of bone – all that would be found.  
Thank God she never knew.

By Dr O'Donovan



**Thiepval**

Every grave row on row

All still silent

But looming with sorrow

Not to forget their bravery through the violence

Yet each reminisces of their glory

And even under the turf of today

They all still tell a different story

But now in these fields they all peacefully lay

As the world changes

And from year to year

Our lives from day to day

But the love and memory

Of them shall never pass away

Lily 9.8



Bombs shells dropping all around us,  
All my friends laying in no man's land,  
They will not be forgotten,  
Their memories will live on in me,  
Little did we know that the Germans knew our plans,  
Eventually, a battalion reached the German trench.

Finally the seven days underground were over,  
I could come out from down below,  
England's troops approached us,  
Little did they know we knew their plans,  
Doomed souls approached are machine guns.  
Shots peppering the young lads, leaving bodies scattered left, right and centre.

They sent my boy away last week,  
Ready to fight, he left with his friends and colleagues,  
I did not know what was in store for him,  
Part of me died when I received the telegram.

Emily 9.7

# Battlefields Anthology: Diary entry.

Dear diary

Today was the surprise attack; we were in Wellington quarry, near Arras on the Western Front. We needed to break through the German lines. It worked at first but then it was a horrible, horrible botch. We had to mine. Mine until our backs broke in half. The beds didn't help either, they were wood. No luxuries or mattress. It made my back worse. The quarry was dark, dank, and dangerous. Every now and then, boulders would give way, occasionally crushing some of our men.

We heard the German trenches; footfalls, men shouting, loading their rifles. When we heard this, we were told to run for the exits. We were ordered, when we heard the whistle, to march out to the frontline. Then we heard it; the sound of death cutting the air.

The battlefield was muddy and sloshy. The sun, clouded in fog and rain. Some of the Willies (or Tanks) were right behind us, their tracks crawling forward into a ditch.

Gunfire hailed out from every angle, branding itself into my mind. We managed to secure a strategic fort, but not for long. Our surprise managed to scare some of the Germans for a few hours, but they came back. In the form of a shell finding its mark right next to me and my friend...

My friend died. He died while I lay in an advanced dressing station. Hip-down I was mutilated, beyond repair, and I mean far beyond repair. The pain. Oh the pain, it was horrifying, it gripped me in a crushing hug. Bright lights flashed in my blurred vision. My life, rushing right through by blood soaked head. The bed was covered in my blood. I now pleaded for death to take me. Anything was better than this.

By Jasper 9.2

## *Men in the trench*

All the men in the trench fighting for their lives,  
All the men in the trench screaming for medical attention,  
All the men in the trench shouting “we’re going to die”,  
All the men in the trench posing in their firing stance,

As the men in the trench pop up their heads and hear the whistling bullets fly  
by their heads,

As the men fire their gun their ears ring like a fire alarm,  
All the men in the trench scream “we’re taking this, it’s ours!”  
As the men in the trench witness their comrade’s die,  
Then all the men in the trench suddenly want revenge.

Tyler 9.6



Thank you for taking the time to read our Anthology. All this writing has come out of the experiences our students had between 14th-17th Oct while visiting sites in Belgium and Northern France. As you can see, the trip had a definite impact on all who were there.



Thanks from Mrs Simpson, Miss Thompson,  
Dr O'Donovan, Mr Reid  
and all the students on the trip.