



BEHIND THE LINES – PROGRESS UPDATE

In November we interviewed Kate Maxey's two great nieces (Maureen & Elizabeth) about Kate. This interview will be used to tell the story of a family discovering the incredible service of their Aunt – medals, letters and documents were discovered after her death that shone a light on an aspect of her life that she never spoke of (at least not to the family).



Elizabeth (left) and Maureen also spoke of their memories of how Kate was in her final years, a formidable, chain smoking, lady who was a force to be reckoned with – constantly playing cards.

We also travelled to Wakefield to interview Professor Christine Hallett, an expert in the field of First World War Nursing and someone very familiar with the story of Kate Maxey.



Professor Hallett spoke in depth on camera about the history of nursing services prior to 1914 and of how they evolved during the war to meet the demands of 'mechanised warfare'.

This interview will become the 'technical' backbone of the film. As we talk about infrastructure, Ambulance Trains, types of casualty and day to day challenges, Prof Hallett will be the voice of clear explanation and description. It was a wonderful interview and a real asset to the project.

After the Christmas Break we interviewed John Banham at Spennymoor Town Hall about the history of the town and its situation prior to, during and after the Great War. These aspects of the interview will be used to remind the viewer that this is a Tudhoe and Spennymoor story and to relate how the area was 100 years ago. John also spoke about Kate Maxey and three other individuals who will appear in the narrative – Samuel Bott and Joseph Willis were both local miners who found themselves in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the war. In the interview we speculated that as first aid (ambulance) services associated with collieries were building in quality prior to the war, this could have led to some miners, such as Bott and Willis, being chosen for roles in the RAMC.



Both Bott and Willis were awarded the Military Medal for actions in rescuing and tending to the wounded on the battlefield, this demonstrates that incredibly brave actions were not solely the remit of 'fighting men' but also those who put their lives on the line armed with only a medical bag.

Lastly John spoke about local teacher John Irving Leckie. As a registered 'Conscientious Objector' Leckie's story is interesting in that he did not volunteer and join the queues at the recruiting offices in 1914 but instead carried on teaching as many of his colleges left for war. After conscription began in early 1916 he joined the 'Friends Ambulance Unit', an organisation run by Quakers to support the Red Cross in their activities abroad. This aspect of our narrative is fascinating as it shines a light on a very different aspect of the war and those that served. It poses many questions that we may never know the answer to:-

- How was Leckie treated by his friends and colleagues when he did not volunteer as many had in 1914?
- Did teaching children whose fathers and brothers had gone to war cause any animosity?

What evidence there is suggests that Leckie was a well-respected member of the community and that his service was not only recognised, but also applauded, as he was included along with all the teachers who served in a welcome home event in 1919.

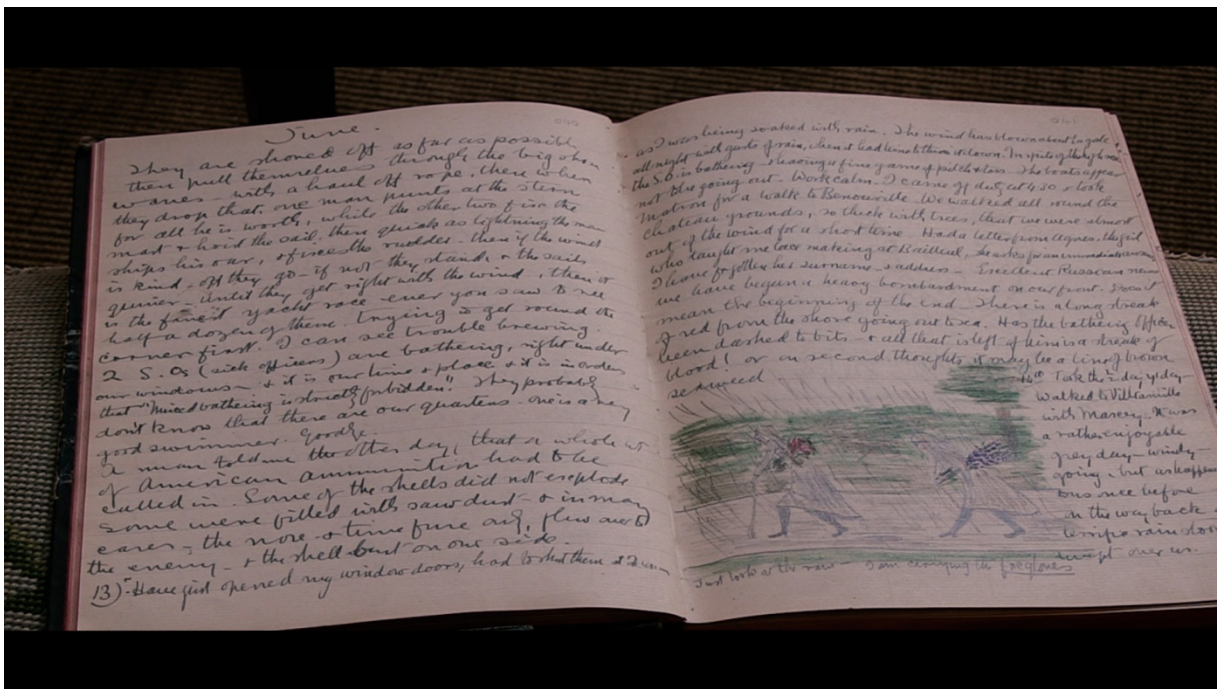
Two interviews supporting John's narrative about Samuel Bott, Joseph Willis and John Leckie have also been done. We interviewed Marian Morrison of Lanchester Local History Society at Durham Mining Museum (also at Spennymoor Town Hall) about medical services in County Durham before the War and the development of first aid training for collieries. This covered the St John's Ambulance branch founded in Spennymoor around 1916.



Towards the end of January at Birmingham University we interviewed Dr Rebecca Wynter about the Friends Ambulance Service to gain great insight into how it operated and how someone like John Leckie (a non-Quaker) came to be working with them.



As part of this trip we went to London where we were able to interview Dick Robinson a relative of First World War nurse, Edith Appleton. Edith (Edie) was a friend of Kate Maxey when they served together during the war. Edie's diary has been published by Dick and the interview will be used to further explore the day to day activities of a Great War Nurse. Dick's wife, Lisa, provided some very accomplished readings from Edie's diary.



DIGITAL IMAGES

In addition to using the contemporary photographs copied from Kate Maxey's album and other photographs collected by local historians, Bob Abley and Tony Coia, we have been working on a number of digital image compositions that will be used in the final film to give the feel of a Casualty Clearing Station, trenches, an ambulance train and of the local area during the war. This work will continue as the project progresses.



MUSIC

In January, we had a very productive meeting with Hugh Stephenson and Fiona Casewell of Spennymoor Town Band about providing some of the music that will be used in the final production. The Town Band has a specially commissioned piece of music written to commemorate Kate Maxey's Great War service. This is four minutes long entitled *The Gallant Sister* and has been composed by Jonathan Bates. We hope that this music along with other suitable brass band music will be recorded by the Town Band and used as the soundtrack for the film.



As part of the discussion with the Town Band, we agreed to investigate organising a first showing of the film at Spennymoor Town Hall. The Town Council have now kindly agreed to this as part of their support for events to mark the centenary of the 1918 Armistice and further discussions on arrangements are planned as the film making progresses.

NEXT STEPS

We are looking to have the narration script based on the interviews ready in March and then film other scenes associated with the narrative. The aim is to complete the film in the summer.

14 February 2018