'A War Imagined': Postcards and the Maintenance of Long Distance Relationships during the Great War[1]

'The donning of a uniform is assumed to initiate men into a gnostic society, from which women and children are resolutely excised.' Yet, as Joanna Bourke has argued, 'that is not what happens.'[2] During the First World War relationships between soldiers and those they left behind retained huge significance to all involved. This paper sheds light on the communication networks that existed between those fighting in the Great War and those left at home – focussing on the use of postcards and on English soldiers on the Western Front. Its central aims are: firstly, to emphasise the importance of postcards in the Anglophone cultural history of the Great War;[3] secondly, to investigate the role of postcards in the maintenance of long distance relationships between civilians and soldiers. It will highlight the ways in which postcards contributed to a shared imaginary space that existed between the fighting men and those at home. The postcard is an important and often overlooked source through which the personal experience of war can be understood with greater nuance.

Since the 'cultural turn' in military history, it has become increasingly clear that the relationships between soldiers and civilians remained very important despite the separation of war.[4] In years past censorship had been regarded as an indication of the disconnect that existed between the soldier and the civilian. Yet such a conclusion has now been thoroughly debunked.[5] The letters that were penned by combatant and non-combatant alike have provided historians with considerable source material and informed much of their analyses. This has led scholars such as Jessica Meyer and Michael Roper to emphasise how the links between the home and military fronts became a central ingredient in soldiers' military

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[1] This article is awaiting publication with *War in History*. Please be aware that the images used in the final manuscript are not included here.

[2] J. Bourke, 'Gender in Killing Zones', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War Volume 3: Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 153.

[3] There is a limited engagement with postcards in English language publications where most books are aimed at collectors rather than an academic audience. Some notable exceptions include A. Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches: Negotiating the Space between Modernism & the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and P. Filippucci, 'Postcards from the Past: War, Landscape and Place in Argonne, France', in N. Saunders and P. Cornish, *Contest Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 220-236. They are also used briefly in M. Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War,' *The Historical Journal*, 54, 2 (2011) 422-427.

[4] For a micro-history of a French couple in the First World War see M. Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) and 'A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France During World War I', *American Historical Review*, 108, 5 (2003) 1338-1361.

[5] See D. Englander, 'Soldiering and Identity: Reflections on the Great War', *War in History*, 1, 3 (November 1994) 316-317; H. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 7-8, 89-118; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1999), 152; G. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the Era of the First World War* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 72, 151.

resilience.[6] Almost as soon as the war began the communication routes used by the various armies began to creak under the pressure of soldiers' and civilians' correspondence. By 1917 the British Army employed over 4,000 non-combatant postal staff. They handled the 8,926,831 letters and postcards sent home per week and the 2,087 bags of mail received in return.[7] However, on a day-to-day basis, letter writing only occupied a few precious moments for men, its importance as an outlet notwithstanding. For the most part, their war-experience was one shared with their comrades and was difficult to convey with much coherence to those at home. This was particularly true for the large swathe of the population whose literacy levels prohibited well-worded narratives and for others to whom the overt show of emotions was anathema. What is more, the censor's shadow, while less oppressive than previously assumed, still lurked over combatants while they scribed their letters in Belgium and France.

The postcard can help the historian to understand how, in spite of these obstacles, the civilian and the soldier remained emotionally intertwined. Michael Roper has analysed the intricate relationships maintained, despite the distance, between soldiers and their families (in particular their mothers) back home.[8] Home, Roper has argued, has been studied as 'primarily a *political* entity and not, as most veterans probably imagined it, a short-hand for loved ones, bricks and mortar, a garden or a neighbourhood, perhaps a local landscape.'[9] The letters that Roper has studied demonstrate how home remained vivid in the mind's eye of combatants, and how the extensive networks of communication between Home Front and war zone nurtured these images. The war's reality was, to varying degrees, understood by civilians, and relationships between soldiers, their families, and their friends remained strong and sustaining.

The postcard played an important role in this process. As opposed to letters, however, it has tended to be ignored in Anglophone historiography. Roper himself has acknowledged that the increased weight of mail before the Great War was produced mainly by the popularity of 'cards and especially picture postcards, which required only rudimentary writing skills.'[10] French historians have more readily utilised these as an important source.[11] Postcards offered historical actors the opportunity to supplement their correspondence and allowed for short,

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[6] J. Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 45; M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

[7] T. Holt and V. Holt, *Till the Boys Come Home* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 1977, 2014), 10; P. B. Boyden, *Tommy Atkins' Letters: The History of the British Army Postal Service from 1795* (London: National Army Museum, 1990), 5, 28.

[8] Roper, *Secret Battle*, 47-84.

[9] Ibid. 13.

[10] Ibid. 55.

[11] See esp. M. M. Huss, *Carte postale et culture de guerre. Histoire de famille 1914 – 1918* (Paris: Noesis, 2000); C. Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre: Le Tragique et l'ordinaire du lien conjugal* (Lyon : Les Belles Lettres, 2014); J-Y. Le Naour, *La Grande Guerre à travers la carte postale ancienne* (Paris: HC Editions, 2013).

uncomplicated messages to be sent alongside an image. The postcard was a vibrant and
expansive form of late Victorian and Edwardian mass media. Such insights provide further
evidence that far from having 'little idea of time, place or importance,' early twentieth
century communication networks, namely the postcard, meant that First World War
combatants were both aware of and in many ways still integrated within the civilian world.[12]
This article explores the variety of ways in which actors used them during the First World
War and demonstrates that they were not simply the touristic snap-shots that they have
become today.

In France, before the war, 800 million cards were produced annually. In Germany,
production had increased to over a billion per annum. In the United Kingdom, the halfpenny
cards were half the cost of normal postage. Nicholas Beaupré has suggested that the extent of
the industry is incalculable.[13] The postcard achieved an astounding 'multi-functionality.'[14]
There were clubs, exhibitions, special wallets, importers and collectors. They became 'status
symbols' recording travel and were 'windows acting on an exciting world outside the
knowledge of most ordinary people.'[15] They were 'cheap and collectable' and their use
'cross[ed] all social boundaries.'[16] Production firms specialised: either choosing to focus on
'views' (black and white scenes of places or people), 'messages' (fantasy or patriotic scenes
photographed in studios), or 'satire.'[17] Furthermore, new technology meant that
photographers' images – now held as a negative – could be cheaply turned into any number of
postcard photographs.

During the Great War the postcard became 'ubiquitous.'[18] Many of the themes of the
pre-war postcards continued to prove popular. Yet, British (and international) firms – as well
as newspapers, such as *The Daily Mail* – quickly began publishing war-related images. Early
cards were quick to embrace the multi-national nature of the Allied War Effort. While this
article will focus on cards found in British archives, the frequency with which these postcards
were French or multi-lingual is revealing of a product that embraced the pan-European and,
indeed, global nature of the war.[19] Many cards depicted the strength of the Allied nations and
exhibited an exalted and idealistic sense of patriotism. One of the most prevalent forms was

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[12] D. Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 1978, 2014), 3.
[13] N. Beaupré, 'Barbarie(s) en représentations: Le cas Francais (1914-1918)', *Histoire@Politique*, 26, 2 (2015), 8.
[14] Holt and Holt, *Till the Boys Come Home*, 9.
[15] P. Doyle, *British Postcards of the First World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011) 5.
[16] G. Doizy, 'Les cartes postales "de guerre" reflet des imaginaires collectifs?' [Do War Postcards Reflect Collective Imagination?'] (http://centenaire.org/fr/espace-scientifique/arts/les-cartes-postales-de-guerre-reflet-des-imaginaires-collectifs, accessed 20 July 2016).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Holt and Holt, *Till the Boys Come Home* and Doyle, *British Postcards of the First World War*, 8-37.

'flag cards.'[20] Other cards portrayed the belligerents' military might. In Britain, images of the Grand Fleet and its Dreadnoughts were particularly popular, as were images of 'great figures' such as Lord Kitchener. The British penchant for satire, which was directed wholeheartedly at Germany, was also evident and 'the Germans [were depicted] as brutish, stupid and lumpish characters.'[21] Postcards also embraced by the recruitment campaigns.[22] Regimental cards were produced *en masse*, while other postcards documented the war's progress. Some portrayed the trials of military life. Soldiers continued to use photographers around camps to produce postcards of them, their friends, and their unit. It is unclear what censorship deemed inappropriate, though it is evident that anything that could have been perceived as defeatist was avoided in, or omitted from, card designs.

The postcards sent to and from Belgium and France fell into four broad categories. Firstly, the most expensive (and therefore least frequently sent) were those that were produced for soldiers or family members as unique items by photographers in towns or camps. The second, third, and fourth categories were cheaper commercially produced series. They depicted scenes of soldiers' life in and out of the trenches; were sweetheart or 'forget me not' cards; or showed towns, landscapes, or local features. These appear more frequently in the archives and used official photographs; scenes photographed in studios; or cartoons, drawings and paintings.

The usefulness of postcards as a source rests on a number of the industry's unique characteristics. Postcards were a form of correspondence that transcended class boundaries. Secondly, they straddle the boundary between a literary source and material culture. They were designed but also offered the opportunity for the cost-effective printing of personal photographs. By including an image with varied designs these cards offered the opportunity to transmit and reflect an emotion, idea, or place.[23] As such, they contained 'many layers of meaning.'[24] Thirdly, postcards played an important role in allowing illiterate or semi-literate soldiers to convey emotion and ideas. Lastly, outside of reproductions of official photographs, there seems to have been little censorship of postcards. By purchasing postcards of a certain location, men were able to show their families where they were and what they were seeing. When attempts were made to redact the location shown on the card, it was often still possible to make out the name beneath the scribbled lines or to discern a location from the image used. Furthermore, the embarrassment or fear of sentimentality – when their letters were liable to

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[20] Doyle, *British Postcards of the First World War*. 9.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid. 19.
[23] P. Tomczyszyn, 'A Material Link Between War and Peace: First World War Silk Postcards', in N.J. Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (Abgindon: Routledge, 2004).
[24] B. Rogan, 'An Entangled Object: The Picture Postcard as Souvenir and Collectible, Exchange and Ritual Communication', *Cultural Analysis*, 4 (2005).

be read by their officer – was diminished by the commercial origin of the postcard's printed message. While self-censorship remained an issue, it seems that ideas were more easily conveyed than in letters.

There is an extensive literature on how one can consider and study 'objects' such as letters or parcels. Postcards were an alternative to letters, but shared some common attributes and similar issues arise when analysing them. There is a question as to how much soldiers could say openly in correspondence and some scholars have questioned whether letters can tell us all that much. Illana Bet-El, for example, has suggested that conscripts were unable to convey their military experience in their writing.[25] Others, however, argue that men were able to describe their lives in surprising detail.[26] 'As epistolary historians have established, 'letters are revealing of social codes and are ways that correspondents variously "fashioned" themselves, created "fictions" and maintained versions of the self.'[27] While 'proximity to events does not mean the sentiments expressed in letters or diaries were transparent' – there is much to be learnt.[28] As Michael Roper has argued:

> The real value of letters as psychological sources becomes fully evident once we accept that emotional states are not wholly conscious, and take into account what is hinted at, unspoken, or unspeakable.[29]

The same things can be said of the postcard. Indeed, the use of the postcard goes some way to negating the problem of drawing exclusively from a source that 'draws disproportionately on accounts from the better-off.'[30] In fact, they may be one of the few sources available to historians of this period that were used more regularly by the working classes. Unlike letters, postcards offered the opportunity not only to employ codes of writing but also to personalise the images used. Importantly, these images played on themes that only existed because they were commercially popular. While there may sometimes have been a limited choice of cards, there was always the opportunity to use the images and illustrations for the sender's own purpose. It is possible that interpreting postcards is an even more complicated affair than the analysis of letters, since they frequently offered little or no context. The limited space and prepared messages and images did, though, provide a canvas for ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Postcards rarely had one meaning and their popularity was likely, in part, a product of their

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[25] I.R. Bet-El, *Conscripts: Forgotten Men of the Great War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2009), 135, 137.
[26] Hanna, 'A Republic of Letters', 23-24.
[27] K. Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War: Intimacy and Manliness in the Letters of a Great War Soldier to the Woman He Loved, 1915-1919', *Gender & History*, 25, 2 (August 2013) 339.
[28] Roper, *Secret Battle*, 20-21.
[29] Ibid. 21.
[30] Ibid. 28.

multi-dimensionality. These cards allowed the sender to layer the item with various ideas and the recipient to draw something else entirely from the image or message. While one should not simply take these cards at face value, neither should one ignore the immediate and clearest messages they convey, as these remained important to both the sender and recipient. As Peter Gilderdale has argued, if one accepts that there were many meanings and messages included in postcards then they can provide important insights.[31]

What follows draws on the postcards found in a number of archives around the United Kingdom as well as in the digitised Great War Archive. Family members kept and treasured these objects as the most tangible link they had to their absent sons, husbands, loved ones or friends. The postcards used were found during wider research into English infantrymen's morale in 1914-1918.[32] This research included some 270 soldiers' collections, of which approximately 55 have been used here. The postcards discussed were discovered *in situ* and lay within wider collections. While the cross section of source material collected here is limited, such an approach can, by focussing on an event, place, or group of people, throw light on wider patterns in history.[33] Andrew Popp used a *single* postcard sent in 1904 to discuss Liverpool's cotton industry.[34] Stéphane Audoin Rouzeau demonstrated the merits of such a method in his investigation of patterns of mourning, in which he focussed on only five case studies.[35] Anthony Fletcher has shown how much can be learnt by only focussing on seventeen 'main characters.'[36] Naturally such analyses only provide 'snap shots,' but these help to open a larger window and stimulate further discussion.[37] Of course, they tended to be part of wider written networks and to supplement letters and parcels. Sometimes they offered senders the opportunity to write a quick note to remind the recipient of their existence. More frequently they allowed them to convey an idea with great vibrancy through the images, prepared message, and their personalised notes. They are used here to reveal the multiple applications of the medium in the maintenance of relationships throughout the conflict. The story of the postcard is more than the tale of the object itself.

This paper argues that the postcard allowed for wartime experiences to be shared and offered a vehicle through which relationships were maintained and even nurtured. Their use can shed light not only on the nature of wartime relationships but also offer a broader

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[31] P. Gilderdale, 'Stoic *and* Sentimental: The Emotional Work of the Edwardian Greetings Postcard', *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, 22, (2016) 2-3. Also J. Gillen, 'Writing Edwardian Postcards', *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17, 4 (Sep. 2013), 488-521.

[32] This discussion's focus on English soldiers is a consequence of this.

[33] C. Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', trans. J. Tedeschi and A.C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (Autumn 1993), 10-35.

[34] A. Popp, 'The Broken Cotton Speculator', *History Workshop Journal*, 78, 1 (Oct. 2014), 133-156.

[35] S. Audoin-Rouzeau, *Cinq deuils de guerre 1914-1918* (Paris: Noesis, 2001).

[36] A. Fletcher, *Life, Death and Growing Up on the Western Front* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013) viv.

[37] V. Wilcox, *Morale in the Italian Army during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 17.

perspective on popular culture and on the working class experience of the First World War, which is under-researched.[38] What follows will briefly explicate the role of postcards in long-distance relationships between combatants and civilians. It moves on to consider the ways in which postcards helped to maintain a strong connection between the men at the front and those at home. It does so by focussing on the variety of ways in which postcards were used to convey ideas and emotions, drawing on themes that have been found in epistolary histories. In particular, it looks at the mechanisms for maintaining closeness, asserting domesticity, nurturing sexual attraction, legitimising the war, and maintaining a shared imaginary space.[39]

Postcards: Imagination and 'Long Distance Relationships'

When time or literacy have allowed, soldiers have always written home. Yet in today's digital age it is hard to imagine how people even one hundred years ago could have maintained the strength of their peacetime relationships over long periods of war-induced separation.[40] Here relationships are taken to mean those that were parental, romantic, and friendship. Research has highlighted the importance of modern networks of communication in positive 'relational maintenance,' but has also underlined the continued importance of written networks.[41] This was doubly important given some of the central strains of distance: 'difficulty in assessing the degree and state of the relationship from a distance' and the 'more extreme range of emotions experienced by partners.'[42] However, parties in these relationships tend to develop any number of strategies to overcome the issues of separation. Importantly, new forms of

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[38] For studies of the working class experience of the Great War see A. Reid, 'World War I and the Working Class in Britain', in A. Marwick (ed.), *Total War and Social Change* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 16-24; D. Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2005); I. Gazeley and A. Newell, 'The First World War and Working-Class Food Consumption in Britain', *European Review of Economic History*, 17, 1 (Feb., 2013), 71-94.

[39] See esp. M. Hanna, 'The Couple' in Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War: Volume 3*, 6-28 and M. Pignot, 'Children' in Ibid. 29-45.

[40] For the Roman Empire, A.K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994). For the Napoleonic Wars, A. Forrest, *Napoleon's Men: The Soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2002), 21, 227 or I. Fletcher, *Voices fron the Peninsula: Eyewitness Accounts by Soldiers of Wellington's Army, 1808-1814* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016), 5. For the American Civil War, J.M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11 or G. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 94.

[41] M. Dainton and B. Aylor, 'Patterns of Communication Use in the Maintenance of Long-Distance Relationships', *Communication Research Reports*, 19, 2 (2002), 118-129.

[42] B. Aylor, 'Maintaining Long-Distance Relationships', in D.J. Canary and M. Dainton (eds.), *Maintaining Relationships Through Communication: Relational, Contextual and Cultural Variations* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003, 2014), 129.

communication are developed, which focus on honesty and trust.[43] In the context of the Great War the postcard played a pivotal role in this process.

Postcards offered new opportunities and helped to combat the stresses of homesickness and anxiety. French historians Brouland and Doizy have shown that by facilitating the easy transmission of complex emotions they also offered the opportunity for people to share an imaginary universe.[44] This paper extends their analysis to the British case and will provide novel insights into the role these cards played in the networks of communication between Britain and the Western Front. Imagination is both an 'image-based schematic' through which we order and make sense of experiences *and* 'a faculty for fantasy and creativity.'[45] Psychologists have found that there are common patterns in how humans use imagination to change unusual events to make them more normal.'[46] It is, therefore, unsurprising that dreaming and internalised images were an important psychological tool for men on the Western Front – and those left at home – by which they were able to briefly escape their presents and broaden their horizons. The lived experience of the war played out in the minds of its participants – its course and fall-out were internalised, worked and then re-worked in the imaginations of historical actors.[47] While these might not actually reflect the *objective* truth of events, they were a *subjective* truth – projected and crafted by those involved, and one that facilitated continued emotional connection. Postcards – particularly the images depicted on them – allowed people to share and re-create similar ideas and events in their mind's-eye. As was the case with letters, postcards allowed the sender to project 'multiple' selves. They reveal 'aspirations, their future versions of themselves and their relationships' and, fundamentally, a desire 'to maintain emotional proximity.'[48]

Photographic Postcards: Encapsulating the Self and Others

In the absence of cameras on the Front Lines photographic-postcards, produced by photographers in and around areas in which soldiers were billeted, were the men's best tool for providing their families with an image that captured both their portrait and their new

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[43] M. Rohlfing, '"Doesn't Anybody Stay in the Same Place Anymore?" An Exploration of the Under-studied Phenomenon of Long-Distance Relationships', in J. Wood and S. Duck (eds.), *Under-Studied Relationships: Off the Beaten Track* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 173-196.
[44] Brouland and Doizy, *La Grande Guerre des Cartes Postales*, 10-12.
[45] M. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 1990), xiv, xx and xxviii-xxix.
[46] Ibid. 5.
[47] For a similar discussion of 'imaginative realms' see Roper, *Secret Battle*, 68-72. In the context of the Second World War and POWs, see C. Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: The Familial Ties of British Prisoners of War held in Europe during the Second World War', *Historical Research*, 86, 231 (February 2013).
[48] Hunter, 'More than an Archive of War,' 339.

reality.[49] Photographic postcards were capable of engaging the subconscious. They could become 'analogous to diverse kinds of memories, fantasies, or dreams.'[50] They offered soldiers the chance to immortalise themselves. These postcards were an opportunity for vanity and solace: they could show off and if the worst were to occur their families would have something to remember them by. What is more, in the midst of a homogenous military institution that asserted uniformity, it allowed for the reassertion of uniqueness and selfhood. These photographic postcards ranged from portraits to group photographs. Such postcards became the popular equivalent of a portrait. The photographs were entirely about the men themselves: the war was removed from the image. There was little celebration of the war and men's portraits were frequently close-ups that brought out their features with great clarity.[51] While in France, Private William Harrop had his picture taken against a scenic background; surely a conscious attempt to provide a contrast with the destruction across the frontlines.[52] D.G. May sat for another showing a minor wound on his left arm. His injured arm, held in a sling, provided physical evidence of duty-done for those at home.[53] The photographic postcards were also used to nurture relationships. Private W.M. McMillan, for example, used a photographic postcard showing himself in uniform to express his fondness and love for his wife: the object was a gift, a memento of her husband, while the written message was a well-worded love note from a distant partner.[54] A soldier might have decided to take a photograph for any number of reasons, but in all circumstances it was ultimately so that he could share an image of himself with home.

Image 1: An Example of an Individual Portrait Postcard – Unknown British Soldier, undated (Author's Own Collection).

Postcards also became the medium through which many of the soldiers collected and shared images of – and stories about – their comrades and new friends.[55] One officer, W.S. Ferrie, sent his family a number of picture postcards of his unit from France. He used the opportunity to introduce his companions to those at home. These were characters that he referenced regularly in his letters home. Photographic postcards added detail to his stories from the war

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[49] Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) 98/28/1: Pte F.G. Senyard, Letter to Wife 17 December 1916.

[50] M. Bergstein, *Mirrors of Memory: Freud, Photography, and the History of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 15.

[51] Manchester Regiment Archive (hereafter MR) 3/17/129: CSM H. Merrick, Photographic Postcard of Self.

[52] Liddle Collection (hereafter Liddle) WW1/GS/0716: Pte William Harrop, Photographic Postcard of Self.

[53] Liddle/WW1/GS/0946: D.G. Le May, Photographic Postcard of Self [Injured Arm].

[54] Great War Archive (hereafter GWA) (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/5925, accessed 6 October 2016): Postcard from Pte. W.M. McMillan to Wife [Images 16 and 17].

[55] Liddle/WW1/GS/0758: Capt E.L. Higgins, Photographic Postcards of Officers in Large Group, of Four Officers and of 'Perry,' 'The Stuffer' and 'Self.'

zone. One card showed his company's officers and sergeants. While his captain was simply referred to as 'good,' the biographies of the others went into much more detail. For example, indicating the man behind the Sergeant Major, he recorded that he 'is a Cambridge Mathematical Scholar and is a very poor sergeant.' In another, he confided that 2nd Lieutenant Shearer 'has held a commission longer than any of us but has not had the fortune to be promoted yet.'[56] Cards such as these were sometimes for personal consumption – a memorial of the community of soldiers. While these were often sent home, the absence of message and inclusion of many names suggests it was for safekeeping. Nonetheless these would have given greater detail of the soldiers' world to those at home. J.L. Hampson posted a large number of portrait postcards of himself and close companions, often having them sign the backs. A close friend, Joe Diamond, appeared in many of the images. Indeed, one of these was sent to Hampson by Diamond himself and was addressed to 'his dearest friend.' Other figures, including Belgian and French civilians, recurred in the photographs.[57] There is also a photo-postcard of 'Mlle Elisa Audenaert' of 9 rue de Cassell, Bailleul, with whom he was billeted on one occasion.[58] Patrick Kennedy had one of himself and his friends – two other stretcher-bearers in the Manchester Regiment – and another of a local girl, Marie Souise, who may have briefly been the object of his affections during his time on the Western front.[59] Sometimes, even postcards that had no picture were used to remember a person or persons. Frances Mahany cherished a postcard given to him by an injured French soldier, keeping it for many years.[60] Photographic postcards offered men the best opportunity to commemorate and share new relationships more vividly and with less effort than in letters or diaries.

Image 2: An Example of Group Photographs in Postcards – Unknown British Soldiers in a Camp on the Western Front, undated (Author's Own Collection).

Men also received an important source of emotional sustenance in the form of picture postcards of their children, wives, and wider family. John Edwin Mawer, upon requesting another image of his 'wife & kiddies,' confided to his wife that he looked at another of their postcard-photographs every day, 'often' showing it to 'the French people.'[61] The objects and correspondence they received from home were of the utmost importance to combatants – as

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[56] IWM 03/19/1: Capt W.S. Ferrie, Photographic Postcards, File 6; Pte William Harrop, Photographic Postcard of Electrical Staff 15 Comp. Depot Trouville 1917; Liddle/WW1/GS/0833: Pte H.S. Innes, Photographic Postcards of Sergeants and of Group of Soldiers in Camp.

[57] Liddle/WW1/GS/0699: J.L. Hampson, Photograph Postcards [1: Joe Diamond, R.S.M., L/Cpl Anderson, Sgt Ferrar, American . and J.L. Hampson, 2: Joe Diamond and J.L. Hampson] Box 2.

[58] Ibid. Photograph Postcard of 'Mlle Elisa Audenaert.'

[59] MR2/17/53: Patrick Joseph Kennedy, Postcard of Himself, Nicholson (George), and Parrott (Edgar ("Polly") and Postcards from Marie Souise.[Young Woman's Photograph].

[60] National Army Museum, (hereafter NAM) 2001-06-113: Francis George Edward Mahany, Postcard 'La caresse charmeuse, a laquelle je reve, / D'une nouvelle ardeur chaque jour, me souleve!'

[61] Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum Archive (hereafter SOfO) Box 16 Item 35 3/4/C/2: 'Letters of Pte Mawer', Undated Letter to Wife c. November 1914 [Doc.24].

evidenced in their diaries and letters, which included regular pleas for new or replacement images.[62] Private S. Smith's surviving belongings illustrated this. Two postcards were found on his corpse. On one, a note from his daughter states: 'taken out of Dad's pocket on the battlefield.' There were two photographs. The first was a picture of his wife and two young children taken in a studio, which had been sent alongside the simple message 'with love to father.' The other was an image showing just his boy and girl and read: 'with love to father. From Ethel and Stephen Smith.' In both cases the script was written in his wife's hand – but this last card had four kisses in children's scribble.[63] Another tragic example was Percy Watson, whose family was sent, among other belongings on his person when he died, a postcard to 'Daddy' from his 'loving daughter,' which also included a 'big kiss' and many 'xs.'[64] When Albert Reed was found dead an image of his sister and his nephews was still on his person.[65] Young children grow and change rapidly, so in a world of infrequent leave such photographs, in which men's families smiled back at them, were cherished reminders of loved ones, which both embodied the pain caused by men's absence and allowed them to remain part of the domestic world.[66]

Image 3: A Photographic Postcard of Pte. S. Smith's Wife and Children. MR 3/17/145.

Depicting Soldiers' Lives: Experiences, Sights, and the Passage of Time

Mass produced photographic postcards of landscapes and scenes provided a window onto another world. Rather than simply describing the world around them, postcards allowed men to *show* their loved ones what they encountered and saw in Belgium and France. Men familiarised themselves with Belgium and France as soldier-tourists. War, for all its horrors, was also as an opportunity for travel and discovery. The existence of English-French

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[62] *The Snapper: The Monthly Journal of the East Yorkshire Regt. (The Duke of York's Own)* IX.10 (Oct 1, 1914) 160; IWM 07/41/1: J.M. Nichols, Diary 18, 22, 23, 25, 26 December 1916; IWM 96/24/1: Pte William Anderson, Diary 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 28 October and 2, 13, 16 November and 6, 14, 16 December 1916; IWM 02/43/1: R.E.P. Stevens, Diary 5 November and 1, 5, 6, 7, 28 December 1916; Royal Fusiliers Museum Archive (hereafter RFM) RFM.ARC.3032: L/Cpl C. White, 3, 11, 16, 17 January and 12 February 1917; IWM 87/56/1: Lt L.W.B. Medlicott, Diary 12 October 1916; IWM 12/36/1: F. Hubard, Letters to Mr and Mrs Underhill 8 December 1917 and 8 April 1918; Liddle/WW1/GS/0583: 2nd Lt Sydney Frankenburg, Letter to Charis Burnett 16 January 1918; Pte F.G. Senyard, Letter 16 June and 12 September 1918; MR3/17/126: Pte John Peat, Letter 11 October 1917.
[63] MR3/17/145: Pte S. Smith, Photograph Postcards of his Wife and Children.
[64] GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/5885, accessed 6 October 2016): Papers of Percy Watson, Postcard from Daughter (Marjorie) [Image No. 11].
[65] GWA (http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/document/9367, accessed 5 October 2016): Photograph of Sister and Nephews Carried by Albert Reed.
[66] R. Kennedy, *The Children's War: Britain, 1914-18* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) ch. 2 and M. Roper, 'Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience,' 435-436. For the increasing power and strength of domesticity in pre-war Britain see J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

dictionaries in soldiers' small books and the publication of stand-alone English-French phrase books demonstrate a desire to engage with their new physical environment and its population.[67] Maj. G.H. Greenwell wrote home: 'Should I ever have seen Arras and Ypres, Albert and Péronne under such interesting conditions if there had been no war?'[68] Lt. D. Henrick Jones hoped to see Rouen's 'cathedral and other famous places.'[69] After cameras were forbidden in 1914 a few intrepid men continued to photograph the frontlines – charting their experience and focussing on the destruction.[70] However, the law was ever more forcibly enforced, and men were cowed by the threat of court martial.[71] While photography studios continued to operate in camps and towns, and official photographers were still granted access to the frontlines, men wanted to reproduce the sights they had personally encountered. In lieu of cameras, postcards played an important part in recording soldiers' travels. They charted the sights and the passage of time.[72]

The desire to share experiences was often undermined by the restrictions imposed by censorship regulations. Yet postcards offered some men the opportunity to bypass some of these problems. The greater connectivity fostered by this was important and the soldiers' families' retention of these cards indicates the importance of this link. Private Cleasby sent his aunt other cards from the *Daily Mail* Official Photograph series. She seemed to have been receptive to these and on one he wrote 'another card: your kind.'[73] This card depicted a 'wiring party going to the trenches.' It lacks Cleasby's commentary but shows the muddy conditions and the debris in the front lines. Another card – showing a Church of England service near the line – included a very simple message: 'Here is a pretty card for you: Service quite in the open: near the line.'[74] He suggests that the scene was familiar to him. Many men collected and used cards from French series. R.G. Hyett bought a collection of postcards that charted the battle of the Somme – showing both its destruction and German prisoners.[75] D.G. Le May sent home two cards of Vermelles from the French La Grande Guerre series '1914-1915' and '1914-1915-1916.' These series, released annually, showed how landscapes and

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[67] NAM 1998-10-306: *The Soldier's Word + Phrase Book French and German: Compiled by a Committee of Well-Known Teachers from Actual Experience of Soldiers' Needs* (London: George G. Harrop + Company [Undated]).

[68] IWM 66/117/1: Maj. G.H. Greenwell, Letter 17 November 1917.

[69] IWM 08/66/1: 2nd Lt. D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Wife 14 October 1914.

[70] LIDLLE/WW1/GS/0758: Capt. E.L. Higgins, Photographs of Shelled Farmhouse, Barbed Wire Defences, Men Digging Trenches, Ruined Villages, and Dug-Outs.

[71] H. Roberts, 'Photography', in E. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones, J. Keene, A. Kramer, and B. Nasson (eds.), *1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopaedia of the First World War* (Berlin, 2014): 10.15463/ie1418.10142.

[72] J.L. Hampson, Postcards of 'Grande Boucherie Tournaisienne – Spécialité de Moutons' and 'Bailleul (Nord) – Rue de Cassel – Cassel Street.'

[73] MR 3/17/124: Pte Edgard Cleasby, Postcard *Daily Mail* Official Photograph Series 17 No. 135.

[74] Ibid. Postcard *Daily Mail* Official Photograph Series 10 No. 74.

[75] GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/6262, accessed 5 October 2016): G.R. Hyett, 'Postcard Booklet Campagne 1914-1917: Bataille de la Somme [Campaign 1914-1917: The Battle of the Somme].'

townscapes changed and were defaced over the course of the war. Another was of the La Basseé canal. These highlighted an Allied military success but importantly showed in detail an area that was fought over. They displayed the terrain and topography of war to those on the Home Front.[76] Patrick Kennedy used postcards to chart his movements and the sights he encountered. On one card, showing the ruins of Maricourt, he noted that this had been his unit's objective on 1 July 1916, which they had succeeded in taking.[77] Others were also used to give detail to his experience of the British retreat after 21 March 1918.[78]

The use of postcards by soldiers-tourists allowed men to show their friends and families the towns behind the lines – locations that were redacted in letters. These not only showed undamaged townscapes. French postcard series, which often charted the damage year-on-year, allowed combatants to provide civilians with more details about their lives. Men were desperate to share this information with their families, a number of soldiers developing a code through which information was more freely communicated.[79] Various phrases, numbers, or distinctive greetings were agreed upon, which would indicate the town or region in which the soldier had been billeted or posted. These postcards also allowed men to signal where they had been and what it looked – or used to look – like. While much, if not most of the war, was a combination of drudgery and horror, it also represented the first opportunity many of these men had to travel overseas. Some were unlikely to have left their town, city, or county before. At least at first, their visions of France and Belgium were novelties and the places they visited and people they met were things of interest. H.O. Hendry wrote on the back of one card sent home: 'This is another building close by the church dear, I think it has been a school.'[80] Here, he looked to share his place and what he saw. Yet, he went on: 'I could not get any decent cards love, this is a poor village, I wanted to get some ruins.'[81]

Image 4: Soldier Tourists – The 'Ruins of Ypres.' MR 3/17/126: Pte. John Peat, Postcard: 'Visé Paris No. 45. 45. La Grande Guerre – Ypres en ruines – Ruins of Ypres – LL.'

These cards offered civilians the opportunity to picture the geography and landscape their loved one now inhabited. Sydney Gill purchased a postcard produced by the YMCA and sent it to his wife in London. It included a painting of a 'typical country road + village, such as can

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[76] D.G. Le May, Postcards 'Vermelles – La Grande Guerre 1914-1915-1916', 'Ruines de Vermelles – La Grande Guerre 1914-1915' and 'La Grande Guerre le Nord.'

[77] Patrick Joseph Kennedy, Postcard of Maricourt.

[78] Ibid. Postcard of Chauny [after the German withdrawal to the Hindeburg Line] and Postcard of the Ruins of Combles.

[79] IWM Con Shelf: Lt F.B. Anstruther, Letter to Father 25 February 1915; IWM 09/6/1: R.C.A. Frost, Letter from Mother 3 January 1918 and Letter from Father; IWM Misc. 210 Item 3079: 'Secret Code Used to Bypass the Censors'.

[80] Liddle/WW1/GS/0746: H.O. Hendry, Postcard 'Mazingarbe (P.-de-C) – Ecole Communale de Garcons.'

[81] Ibid.

be seen all over France.'[82] He began by emphasising that the image was not that of any particular place – perhaps because his postcards usually were – but stated explicitly that he wanted to 'illustrate' the scenes he was encountering. Postcards, unlike letters, <u>could</u> illustrate in this way. Indeed, the collection of cards could become a commemorative act. Among the most prevalent postcards were French productions showing the towns in the area of British operations. In earlier years these had been entirely in French, but as the conflict dragged on they included English translations. Showing townscapes, many of these actually displayed the systematic destruction. S. Smith had postcards showing the increasingly symbolic basilica of Albert. In one, a pre-war tourist card, the magnificent church remains intact, its famous virgin standing proud at its front. The next card shows its destruction after a German bombardment – the building now a ruin and the virgin hanging precariously.[83] Similarly Capt. Maurice Asprey sent a number of cards charting the damage done to Albert entitled '*avant et après.*'[84] Ypres lay at the heart of many soldiers' war experience. Private John Peat sent home a collection of cards showing the badly damaged buildings of the city such as the Cloth Hall. Another card included the image of an artillery duel, providing evidence of what caused this destruction.[85] J.L. Hampson even sent a postcard that included a map of the Doyenne de Dohem in the Pas de Calais. Other postcards showed photographs of locations and streets in which he had been billeted. One was of the *Grande Boucherie Tournaisienne*, where he had stayed in October 1918. Another, showing the semi-dilapidated and bomb damaged streets of Bailleul's Rue de Cassel, highlighted one of the few buildings left standing, which had also previously accommodated him.[86] H.O. Hendry also sent a large number of postcards reflecting his experiences. These ranged from an *Ecole Communale* in Mazingarbe to a *Château de l'Administration*.[87] Likewise, Captain E.L. Higgins collected cards to chart his movements on the Western Front. A number showed Doullens before it was damaged by the war.[88]

Commercial postcards allowed combatants to vividly depict their lives and experiences both in and behind the lines. In late 1917 a young officer, Henry Lawson, wrote to his mother telling her how he wished he had brought a camera to war so that he could send photos home 'to show that we are happy and do have amusing times.'[89] This was a desire that

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[82] Sydney Gill, YMCA Postcard.
[83] Pte S. Smith, Postcards 3 (Albert) Somme and Guerre 1914-1916 No. 80 Albert (Somme).
[84] NAM 2005-02-6: Captain Maurice Asprey: Postcards of Albert '*avant et après*' the German Bombardments.
[85] Pte. John Peat, Visé Paris La Grande Guerre.
[86] J.L. Hampson, Postcards of 'Grande Boucherie Tournaisienne – Spécialité de Moutons' and 'Bailleul (Nord) – Rue de Cassel – Cassel Street.'
[87] H.O. Hendry, Postcards of Ecole Communale and Chateau de l'Administration.
[88] Capt E.L. Higgins, Postcards of Doullens ['Vue sur l'Authie', 'No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 Guerre 1914-1915-1916' and 'Guerre 1914-1916'].'
[89] Liddle/WW1/GS/0933: Henry Lawson, Letter to his Mother 16 September 1917.

obsessed nearly every soldier in France – their letters were filled to the brim with assurances
that they were 'A1' or 'in the pink.' Yet, descriptions could only do so much. Postcards
provided an important source of comfort and, whether true or not, physical evidence of good
health and a bright smile. Other cards sought to play down the dangers faced at war. Some
included cartoons that depicted the Germans as babies or children, running away from the
fight.[90] Others looked to portray the violence as a joke; by approaching these issues satirically
they seemed less serious.[91] Soldiers adapted other cards to tell a particular story. Edgard
Cleasby sent his aunt a *Daily Mail* card in June 1918, which showed 'an attack: waiting the
signal' and shows men in a shallow trench. He used this photograph as an opportunity to
explain the utility of their helmets, briefly explaining how shrapnel was released by exploding
shells while emphasising how 'this hat saved the head.' The introduction of helmets did
significantly reduce the incidence of head wounds. They, however, by no means an assurance
against any wound. Yet Cleasby's remarks could certainly have been read in this way and
provided reassurance to his worried family.[92]

Some cards showed scenes from leisure pursuits, including sing-alongs and sports
events such as inter-unit football. They reflected the continued relevance of popular culture.[93]
M.F. Gower bought a postcard displaying his division's singing group, 'The Follies,' and
used the writing space to describe how the group 'depicted' were 'singers taken from the
various regiments in the IV Divisions mostly pros. They entertained us here last night.'[94] John
Peat collected the series *Sketches of Tommy's Life* ('Out on Rest'). Each of these depicted
different scenes from life on the Western Front. One showed two men resting in an *estaminet*,
an old lady preparing them the British soldier's staple of coffee and fried eggs. Another
highlighted the dangers of work behind the lines, where shells could still fall. Others indicated
how soldiers 'washed' in the trenches and in rest areas. More still revealed the forms of billet
they might expect and the archetypal characters that existed in many units – such as cooks,
comedians, musicians, or 'scroungers.'[95] Such postcards and their annotations had the
capacity to portray and depict events and places in such a way that allowed the sender and
recipient to occupy the same imaginary space.

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[90] SOfO Box 16 Item 61: 'A Selection of 15 Patriotic Postcards 1914-1918 Vintage', 'Safety First!! La sécurité avant tout!!'.
[91] Pte John Peat, Postcard *Sketches of Tommy's Life* – Out on Rest No. 3.
[92] RFM.ARC.2495: Sydney Gill, Postcard *Daily Mail* Official Photograph Series 22 No. 169.
[93] 'A Selection of 15 Patriotic Postcards 1914-1918 Vintage', 'Our Sing Along: "Let Me Like a Soldier Fall".' For a broader history of life behind the lines see J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[94] IWM 88/25/2: M.F. Gower, Postcard 10 June 1915.
[95] Pte. John Peat, Postcards *Sketches of Tommy's Life*: Out on Rest No. 1, No. 3, No. 4, No. 5, No. 6, No. 7, No. 8 and No. 10.

Sharing an Idea: Displaying Care, Consolation and Comfort

Separation bred anxieties, but postcards also offered the sender the opportunity to console, comfort, and display care for the recipient. Women and men feared what was happening on the other side of the Channel. Postcards helped the soldiers to assure loved-ones that they still occupied their thoughts. Many of the more intricate fabric cards, which were sewn rather than printed, were sent as presents. They highlighted, sometimes explicitly, that the soldier was 'thinking of you.'[96] These embroidered postcards were often produced 'somewhere in villages behind the battlefront, French women and girls began to embroider flags and flowers and attach them to card' and were 'popular with the soldiers billeted in towns.'[97] These were occasionally sprayed with perfume. The impregnation of such cards with a familiar and pleasant scent offered the opportunity for a deeper connection between sender and recipient as they shared the same sensory space.[98] A postcard sent by H.O. Hendry, showing stitched British and French flags, which were 'united for liberty,' was exactly the kind of card that might have been scented in this way.[99] These were sent as special and meaningful gifts, which signalled the care and love soldiers' continued to feel for those at home. One soldier sent the embroidered card pictured below to his wife 'Ada' and his young daughter. The flags of France, Russia, and the United Kingdom might suggest that a sense of purpose and resolve lay behind his choice of card. Either way, he explained that it was '70 centimes... so you will see they are dear.' He requested that this and subsequent cards were framed. The card was both a meaningful gift and a relic of the war.[100]

Image 5a: An Example of an Embroidered Silk Card from a Father to his Daughter (Author's Own Collection).

Image 5b: An Example of an Embroidered Silk Card from a Father to his Daughter (Author's Own Collection).

Many commercial postcards explicitly referenced men's continued connection with home. Wives, sweethearts, and mothers were particularly popular symbols on other card designs. The photographs or paintings, which were often in colour, frequently depicted men sitting, sleeping, or writing in re-created trench scenes with the floating image of a woman appearing

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[96] GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/5963): Various Postcards sent by Edward Kelly, Postcard to Miss Kelly [Images No. 1 and No. 2] and Postcard to Samuel [Images No. 3 and No. 4].
[97] Tomczyszyn, 'A Material Link Between War and Peace,' 123.
[98] Ibid. 123-133.
[99] H.O. Hendry, Embroidered Postcards 'United for Liberty', 'Campagne 1915-16 – Le Roi Héros Albert 1er de Belgique' and 'L'Union Fait la Force.'
[100] Author's Own Collection: An Example of an Embroidered Silk Card from a Father to his Daughter.

as an apparition or thought. These were usually located in a traditional 'feminine' setting: outside the cottage or in the kitchen, parlour, or laundry room.[101] Tellingly, the postcards found in the research for this piece never show women engaging in industrial work or taking part in traditionally male-dominated pursuits. The imagery reflected wartime understandings of the divisions of gender roles and what men were fighting for. Wives, lovers, children, and parents were waiting at home for their solider hero to return from 'work' in an idealised domestic environment. The man – even when away at war – remained both the family's provider and protector in these images. The contrast between the soldiers' physical and imaginary worlds lay at the heart of these cards. Their popularity is reflected in their existence in so many of the veterans' archival donations. Many included printed descriptions, such as 'night and a pause for a much needed rest. Bringing sweet memories of all that's loved best.'[102] Another, a soldier's cartoon, saw a man sitting in candlelight, writing a letter that conjured an image of the recipient in his mind's-eye.[103]

Image 6: 'Dreams' of England in Postcards - 'Dreams of Home.' MR2/17/65: John Douglas Powell.

The cards emphasised the resilience of the relationship between soldiers and their families. Their imagery and printed messages highlighted the prevalence of images of home and loved ones in the imaginations of the men. Their diaries and letters confirm that a central focus of their imagination and daydreams was the home and those within it. The cards accurately recreate the soldiers' own descriptions of daydreams and fantasies of home.[104] These cards insisted that those on the Home Front were always on the minds of the soldiers and that, even if separated, their souls remained entwined. Christmas postcards contained similar messages and were always 'from the heart', providing reassurance that the sender had not forgotten the recipient.[105] One included an assurance to the recipient that the men's absence was, in part, 'to bring you happiness.' It provided the consolation that if one kept 'your face towards the sunshine' the 'shadows will fall behind you.'[106] Another, reproducing the words of an M. Byron, confided that the 'glow' of Christmas was the brightest of the 'many sweetnesses that

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[101] SOfO Box 16 Item 61: Collection of 15 Patriotic Cards 1914-1918, Postcard: 'La Reve'; H.O. Hendry, Postcard: 'I'm Thinking of You [No. 504].'

[102] MR2/17/65: Papers of J.D. Powell, Postcard: 'Dreams of Home [No. 8].'

[103] Pte. John Peat, Postcard: 'Sketches of Tommy's Life. Out on Rest – No. 9.'

[104] IWM PP/MCR/169: Lt F.A. Brettell, Letter from Peggy 8 May 1916; L/Cpl. C. White, Diary 12 February 1917; Pte William Anderson, Letter to Wife 14 November 1916; IWM 08/66/1: 2nd Lt D. Henrick Jones, Letter to Fiancée/Wife 16 October 1916 and 25-26 December 1916; IWM Con Shelf: A.P. Burke, Letter to Tot 29 December 1916. Also, 'Brazier Pictures', *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 2, Vol. 1 (1916) 3 and *Cambridgeshire Territorial Gazette*, No. 4 (October 1916) 88.

[105] MR3/17/137: Pte. Norman Walker, Christmas Postcards 'Happy Christmas' with Floral Design and 'Christmas Greetings: I Don't Forget You.'

[106] Ibid. Christmas Postcard 'To Bring You Happiness.'

make our life worth living', going on to promise the recipient that 'Christmas and Friendship… are coupled in our thoughts of you to-day.'[107] In the card pictured below, the emotive note 'Here are Kisses for you' accompanies the image of a solider kissing the cheek of a young woman. In contrast, the written message – which contains a request to write 'to a lonely soldier,' his hopes that 'you are well,' and an appeal to 'remember me to all your brothers' – is much more restrained. Since censorship sometimes inhibited men's willingness to express sentiments such as these, the cards were simultaneously an outlet and a comfort as men repurposed pre-packaged sentiment.

Image 7a: Pre-packaged Sentiment in Postcards (Author's Own Collection)

Image 7b: Pre-packaged Sentiment in Postcards (Author's Own Collection)

The majority of the cards found here were secular, but for some they also offered some religious consolation. Private H. Oldfield seems to have received two such cards at the end of 1917. These played on much older religious imagery in European art. The first, entitled 'The Divine Comforter' showed Jesus holding the arm of an injured or dying British soldier. Included on this card was a quotation from the book of 'Isaias [sic]' which asserted 'Fear not, for I am with thee; / turn not aside, for I am thy God.' The other, in a similar vein, included an illustration that showed two soldiers who were accompanied by a glowing figure of Christ. Alongside this was the annotation 'Lo, I am with you alway [sic].'[108] Similarly one soldier's niece sent a card that read 'God be with you 'till we meet again' and consoled him that she 'daily pray[ed] that God will keep my hero in His care' and 'bring him safely back again.'[109] E. Grantham kept a postcard entitled 'faith' in his wallet for the duration of the war. This card exhorted its reader to have faith that a 'brighter' future would come.[110] By no means were all English soldiers particularly religious, but Adrian Gregory has proposed that a widespread, albeit internalised, religiosity existed in Britain during this period.[111] As such, these small tokens could provide consolation and reminders of their religiosity to men whose exposure to ecclesiastical services was often limited to Sundays.

Soldiers' duty, obligations, and sacrifice was recognised as civilians chose to send cards that emphasised the combatants' role as Britain's and the family's protectors. J.D. Powell, for example, received a postcard from his family entitled 'A Message to My Hero.'

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[107] Ibid.

[108] MR3/17/110: Pte H. Oldfield, Postcards 'The Divine Comforter' and 'The White Comforter.'

[109] MR3/17/139: H. Bridge, Postcard from Niece.

[110] GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/5896, accessed 6 October 2016): Postcard Kept Throughout the War by Sapper E. Grantham.

[111] A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152-186.

This card reassured him that 'though others may win to a wider fame… there is one of the brave that I need not name' and that 'I cherish the thought that the day will come that will bring him across the sea' since the sender was 'longing to welcome home my hero.' Clearly enshrined was his role as defender of England and home. The notation included read: 'For King and Country. Not Once or Twice in Our Fair Island's Story. The Path of Duty was the Way to Glory.'[112] Harry Bridge's family also sent him cards that praised and portrayed him in a semi-hagiographic way. One, from his sister, included the comforting message that 'I'm thinking of You [capitalised], dear, all the time.' Those from his mother reassured Harry that she was 'longing for Our Dear Absent Soldier.'[113] It included the assurance that those at home 'only stand and wait and we are waiting, longing for you dear. And praying that your coming be not late.'[114] Men's role in the household was disrupted by the war. Women took on new roles, particularly in industry, due to the exodus of working age males.[115] The stresses of separation fuelled anxieties over relationships. Postcards, again, were an opportunity to allay, at least partially, men's doubts in this respect and had the capacity to assuage fears by conveying the ideas above. These series were mass-produced and were popular precisely because they played this role.

Celebrating Success: Postcards as Trophies and War Souvenirs

Postcards were also used as evidence of martial success. Soldiers actively sought out souvenirs and trophies from battle. These were sent back home as keepsakes and physical evidence of personal triumphs.[116] From German shoulder-straps and medals, through pieces of shrapnel, to vials of soil from the frontlines, men actively grasped material evidence of their service. Enemy postcards and photographs became a part of this phenomenon. These were often taken from captured or dead German soldiers. In one collection, German combatants were shown in their social groups, posing in front of machinery, in captured settlements, and in bombed out cathedrals.[117] Rifling enemy corpses and baggage is a practice as old as time. While sometimes objects of value were taken for profit, postcards cannot be

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[112] J.D. Powell, Postcard 'A Message to My Hero.'
[113] H. Bridge, Postcard from Sister.
[114] Ibid. Postcard from Mother.
[115] S. Grayzel, *Women's War Work: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) esp. 1-10 and chapters 3 and 6; G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1981, 2013); A. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1994); J.K. Watson, 'Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters: Gender and Class in First World War Britain', *The International History Review*, 19, 1 (1997), 32-51.
[116] 'Advert: DO NOT READ THIS!!! Unless You Have a Girl at Home', *The B.E.F. Times*, No. 5, Vol. 2. (1917).
[117] Capt E.L. Higgins, Postcards [Germans in Front of Train, Germans Next to Cross and German Officers in Bombed Church].

categorised as such. Men were looking to remember and memorialise a feat of arms, or the defeat of their foe.[118] Elsewhere, Cecil Littlewood sent one of his children a card that he seems to have picked up near Hazebrouck, which was in the frontlines. This had originally belonged to a local, who had earlier fled the warzone – evidenced in the French writing and address. Yet it was taken by Littlewood and sent home as a souvenir.[119]

Card designs also celebrated Allied unity and victories. Tommy Macartney sent a newer silk-embroidered postcard that showed the various flags of the Allies and read 'Gloire des Allies [Allied Glory],' with no message on the back.[120] It would seem that the card's intended purpose satisfied its sender. Some units produced their own unique series of cards, particularly around Christmas and other festivals, which catalogued that year's victories. An example is that produced by the 14th (Light) Division for Christmas 1916. Festooned with each regiment in the division's acronyms, it celebrated their capture of the 'N.E. Corner of Delville Wood.' Illustrated with an image of the broken stumps of 'Devil Wood,' it aestheticized the destruction that met the men. It also has the divisional flag emblazoned across the image and, surely, reflected upon this as a battle honour. Private J.C. Hold, the soldier who sent this card, wrote – very simply – 'Wishing you all a Merry Xmas – J. Hold.' The neutrality of this sentiment might have undercut the semi-triumphalism of the card's message. Yet by choosing this as the vehicle for his Christmas greetings it also conveyed the divisional success to the Home Front.[121]

Demonising the Enemy: Postcards and German Barbarism

Postcards also helped English infantrymen to justify the war by demonising their enemy. While some enemy postcards were acquired as simple mementos and souvenirs, others played an important role in the diffusion of anti-German sentiment. Some postcards provided a personal reminder of the justice of the Allied cause and the brutality of their enemy. While death was a topic touched on mainly through euphemism and humour in British cards, the files of Patrick Joseph Kennedy contain gruesome examples of German postcards taken as souvenirs.[122] On one card he included the brief explanation that it had been 'picked up on the

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[118] Francis George Edward Mahany, German Postcard of Solider and Civilian Woman: 'Leb wohl mein Lieb! Hört Gott mein Flehn, / Schenkt er uns rohes Wiedersehn.'
[119] GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/6193, accessed 5 October 2016): Postcard sent by Cecil Littlewood.
[120] GWA (http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/document/9533, accessed 5 October 2016): Postcards from John Inch Low and Tommy Macartney, Embroidered Postcard from T. Macartney to his family [Images No. 17 and 18].
[121] Liddle/WW1/GS/0781: Pte J.C. Hold, Postcard '14th Light Division: Merry Christmas'.
[122] See 'Images of Death' in N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914-1918* (London, 1998) 352 and images no. 13-18.

battlefield' from a 'German lad.'[123] The cards showed piles of Allied dead. In two cards huge numbers of unidentifiable British corpses are scattered across some woodland, seemingly stripped of their equipment and dumped unceremoniously face-first on the ground. In another card, a number of German soldiers, some smiling triumphantly, surveyed the bloodied corpse of a British soldier lying next to a shell-hole.[124] Another showed a further corpse – rigor mortis had caused its limbs to extend in odd, unnatural angles. In three others Highland casualties are clearly shown – their kilts had unceremoniously ridden up to reveal their bare legs. Again, they lay face down. The last two cards showed charred corpses outside two immobilised tanks. These cards were numbered, suggesting they were part of a series. It seems unlikely that Kennedy would have failed to be moved by these and his retention of them suggests that he looked to remember exactly the kind of foe he fought. Indeed, if these were sent home, they were also a reminder to his relatives of the nature of war being fought across the Channel.

Image 8: A German Postcard Showing Dead British Soldiers – German Postcard No. 294. MR2/17/53: Joseph Patrick Kennedy.

There is little evidence of the British producing similar postcards. The most 'extreme' cards produced for that market included dead horses or – in rare cases – bones.[125] While more macabre cards have not appeared in British series, it does not mean they did not exist. Yet, in Britain, while the dead appeared in the 1916 film *Battle of the Somme* or paintings such as William Orpen's *Dead Germans in a Trench* (1918), these were deliberating shocking. Such images were used precisely because they were not the norm and were anything but celebratory. When collecting battlefield trophies, the English soldiers studied here tended to choose *materiel* to symbolise their success and heroism rather than such overt evidence of death.[126] These omitted the horrific reality of battle and helped to nurture the image of a sanitised soldier hero. When faced by these awful German photo-postcards soldiers must have been struck by what appeared to be very different 'moral norms' underpinning their and their

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[123] Patrick Joseph Kennedy, German Postcards [Nos. 126, 138, 164, 282, 283, 284, 294 and 440]; GWA (http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/items/show/6050, accessed 5 October 2016): German Postcard and Photograph Souvenired by George Powell.

[124] For 'trophy' photographs and images of bodies in war more generally see S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2003).

[125] *Postcards from the Trenches*, (Oxford, 2008) 73 and G. Reddiex, *Just to Let You Know I'm Still Alive: Postcards from New Zealanders during the First World War* (Wellington: Grantham House, 2015) 61-62. Otherwise there is no evidence of cards of a similar nature in any of the popular survey texts that chart the British postcard industry in 1914-1918.

[126] IWM 08/131/1: C. Dwyer, Diary 11 September 1914; RFM.ARC.2495: Sgt. S. Gill, Diary [Book 7] 6 October 1916 and [Book 8] 8-9 December 1916. See also P. Cornish, ' "Just a Boyish Habit"…? British and Commonwealth War Trophies in the First World War', in Saunders and Cornish, *Contest Objects*, 11-26.

enemy's approach to the war. These postcards may well have been taken as confirmation of German barbarity and their military atrocities.[127]

This, perhaps, reflects that there is some truth in the hypothesis of scholars such as George Mosse, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, that the Great War saw the brutalisation of some European cultures and societies.[128] John Horne and Robert Gerwath have nuanced and built upon the 'brutalisation thesis' and have emphasised the role of the nation in 'organising and endorsing the mass deployment of violence' during this period. [129] Yet the nation was more than purely a political force. The changes brought about by the war meant that society's cultural output also played a role. However, most countries supressed violent images and it is more likely that these cards were exceptional even for German soldiers. George Mosse has suggested that while postcards played a role in the 'trivialisation' of war 'there is no picture of the dead or wounded as they must have appeared in the trenches.'[130] The German postcard industry contained, in the main, very similar messages to those found in the British archives.[131]

It is unclear who took these photographs, or who printed and produced the cards. However, the photographs were not taken covertly, they were numbered, and at least one other soldier took the same series of cards from a German corpse. This indicates that they were taken with the authority of *at least* local commanders and suggests that they were part of a commercial series.[132] In this case, the German postcard industry did produce cards that celebrated violence and death. While the 'culture of defeat' played an important part in perpetuating post-war violence, might it also be that the experience of the conflict had already seen some populations become more open to violence?[133] Alan Kramer has convincingly investigated the way in which a 'culture of destruction' had come to mean, among other things, 'the acceptance of the destruction, consumption, and exploitation of whatever it took to wage the war.'[134] Postcards, as an example of the imagery in the First World War, might offer new perspectives on this topic. While it is likely these cards were atypical, they

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[127] J. Horne, 'Atrocities and War Crimes', in J. Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War. Volume 1: Global War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 566-567.

[128] For the 'brutalisation thesis' see G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and S. Audoin-Rouzeau and A. Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War*, trans. C. Temerson (London: Hill & Wang, 2003), 69.

[129] R. Gerwath and J. Horne, 'Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917-1923', *The Journal of Modern History*, 83, 3 (Sep. 2011), 491.

[130] G. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers,* 129.

[131] Ibid. 126-140.

[132] IWM Q 102968 – Q 102972: Photographs of Maj Frederick Hardman, Photographic Postcards of Various Dead British Soldiers.

[133] For the 'culture of defeat' see W. Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (New York: Picador, 2003) and R. Gerwath, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London: Penguin, 2016).

[134] A. Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 68.

provided individual English soldiers with vivid and shocking evidence of their enemy's character.

Other cards were designed by companies in France and the United Kingdom to portray the enemy negatively.[135] H.T. Madders, for example, sent his nephew a complete postcard booklet named 'Arras et ses Ruines: Conflit Européen Vues Détachables.' This collection demonstrated the Germans' destructiveness: Arras' rubble-strewn streets and dilapidated grandeur were evidence of enemy barbarity.[136] Others painted an even more extreme picture of the enemy. S.A. Newman sent home postcards that also depicted the city's destruction. The printed message on one highlighted how 'the Houses of the Square show the Huns' passion for destruction.' Another reflected on damage to 'The Belfry' and the 'systematical [sic] devastation of the vampires (the germans [sic; no capitalisation]).' One included a simple printed message explaining how 'The Grand Viziers street gives an example of the destruction of our cities by the Huns.' Others showed a 'Panorama of the ruins near the Guild-Hall (Deed of the Hun vandalism).'[137] Such aggressive anti-German sentiment influenced the soldiers and the rhetoric used on these postcards percolated into some letters home.[138] Distance and time can and do dent motivation, particularly during times of war, but it would have been hard to misread the sentiment of these postcards, which would have provided an important reminder of Germany's 'true' nature to civilians and soldiers alike.

What motivated soldiers to fight was a complex phenomenon, with myriad factors affecting it. Yet, in Britain (and elsewhere) many people supported the war in the confidence of the justice of their cause, which was underwritten by a belief that the war was defensive.[139] A key ingredient in this perception was an appropriately destructive and demonic enemy. Other postcards played a more overt role in the branding of Germans as war-mongering and despotic. Stephane Audoin Rouzeau and Annette Becker have argued that to understand the propaganda of the Great War – and, more broadly, the culture of 1914-1918 – one must conceive of the transmission of propaganda as a 'horizontal' as well as 'vertical' process.[140] Horizontal propaganda is 'made within the masses… letting individuals condition… each

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[135] N. Wouters and L. van Ypersele, 'Nations, Identities and the First World War: Introduction,' in N. Wouters and L. van Ypersele, *Nations, Identities and the First World War: Shifting Loyalties to the Fatherland* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2018) 3-4.

[136] IWM 01/21/1: H.T. Madders, Postcard Collection to Arthur.

[137] IWM 77/83/1: S.A. Newman, Postcards of Arras. Also Pte S. Smith, Postcards 3 (Albert) Somme and Guerre 1914-1916 No. 80 Albert (Somme).

[138] RFM.ARC.2012.958: Sgt S. Gill, Diary 20 December 1916.

[139] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 44-45, 49; C. Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Ch. 4.

[140] Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *1914-1918*, 102-103.

other.'[141] Even after a number of years of intense, tiring, and increasingly demoralising service, many men retained a sense that Germans – or more simply 'Jerry' or the 'Hun' – were a foe that needed to be defeated.

The Purpose of Postcards: Multiple Meanings and Nuanced Messages

Postcards were used in a myriad of ways. Soldiers found that they were the easiest way to maintain contact with home amid their busy and tiring daily routines. More practically, they fitted easily into soldiers' tunic pockets.[142] Importantly, in a world of censorship, postcards also offered men the opportunity to hide, nuance, and repurpose their intended messages. Sometimes there was a dissonance between images and message. Yet, as Peter Gilderdale has argued, this was often the purpose of a postcard. In the setting of the Great War, it allowed men to maintain their stoicism via the written message while 'the pre-packaged visual vocabulary' offered them the opportunity to exhibit 'strong' emotions.[143]

A postcard took much less time to write and did not require an envelope – this proved to be a distinct advantage for the tired men of 1914-1918. The British Army introduced Field Service Postcards – officially 'Army Form A2042' – primarily to ease the pressures of censorship. Yet they became soldiers' best and cheapest tool to quickly and simply update their families and friends about their wellbeing. Lt. L.W.C. Ireland used the Field Service Postcard as a bridge between his longer, more detailed, letters.[144] Seemingly these offered little: basic information about health; whether they were being transferred to base; a reference to correspondence; and their signature. However, one should not underestimate the meaning that was embedded in these simple objects: they were evidence that the soldier was alive and thinking of those at home.[145] The familiar handwriting provided physical and familiar evidence of a loved-one.[146] For others, the Field Service Postcards offered other opportunities. H.C. Brockwood used them to admonish his wife. His diary shows that he sent a Field Service Postcard only when he had not received any correspondence from home, or he felt that it was insufficient. The lack of detail was a punishment.[147]

Image 9: A Field Service Postcard (Author's Own Collection)

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[141] R. Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002, 2003), 38.

[142] M.F. Gower, Postcard 10 March 1915; IWM 01/21/1: N.R. Russell, Letter to Mother 28 July 1916.

[143] Gilderdale, 'Stoic *and* Sentimental', 2-18.

[144] IWM 78/36/1: Lt. L.W.C. Ireland, Diary January-May 1916.

[145] IWM 76/27/3: Col. Hardman, Field Service Postcard to Parents 31 March 1918.

[146] Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre*, and Roper, *Secret Battle*, 93-101.

[147] The Keep Museum (hereafter TKM) Item 95/160/24: Sapper H.C. Brockwood, Diaries 1916 and 1918.

For many others, the images on the more detailed commercial postcards were at the heart of the thoughts they wished to convey. Capt. Maurice Asprey sent a card to his mother showing Ypres' cattle market. The image, which portrayed a bustling and attractive pre-war scene, was used to convey his dismay at the 'damage' and 'awful waste' wrought upon such a 'decent town.' Yet, this was also used to underline his fear for his brother. Philip had been sent to an area of 'pretty nasty fighting.' This was followed by a description of his flooded dugout. The postcard's image was the perfect conduit for these notes.[148] Sgt. Henry Selly used postcards collected on a trip to the Museé du Luxembourg in a very different way. These might have been simple mementos of his leave in Paris. However he chose to send images of Venus, 'the most beautiful woman in the world,' to his 'dearest and lovely Alice.' Another – of Serge's *Amor and Psyche* – depicted a muscular angel being embraced by a naked woman. On this he discussed the angel self-referentially. He included some descriptions of the statues. He made deeply allusions to Venus being the goddess of love and to beauty, desire, sex, fertility, prosperity, and victory. These pieces of art were used to make reference, sometimes unsubtly, to his and Alice's dormant sexual relationship.[149] Other soldiers also included messages that played on the themes included on the card. Edgar Cleasby sent his daughter a *Daily Mail* postcard on 12 October 1918. The card contained an image of a Labour Battalion toiling away at a new road. After congratulating her on successfully caring for her mother, he noted that 'the news is good' and mentioned a recent 'big bombardment.' This was sent when soldiers in the British Expeditionary Force could sense the end of the war, as the Allies made wholesale advances across the Western Front. The card's message becomes more significant in this context and, perhaps, the industrious Labour Battalion, forging a new path, was also meant to be symbolic.[150]

Image 10: 'Daily Mail Official Photograph' Postcard 130 – A British Labour Battalion at Work. MR 3/17/124: Edgar Cleasby.

In other circumstances, though, soldiers wrote notes that were either of no relevance to the card's message or intentionally subverted the meaning, often using satire.[151] For example, H.E. Trevor ignored the original content of the postcards he sent home during September 1914. The images of Belgium had nothing to do with his descriptions of the heavy fighting, casualties, and the state of himself and his men. Another bore no relation to his account of the

[148] Capt. M. Asprey, Postcard: Campagne de 1914-1915: *Ypres. – Marche au betail – Cattle Market.* [Sent 5 November 1915].
[149] NAM 2000-09-153 51: Postcards of Sgt. Henry Selley, Various Postcards of Venus from the Museé du Luxembourg [9-13].
[150] Pte. Edgar Cleasby, Postcard to Cilla ['A British Labour Battalion at Work'].
[151] Brouland and Doizy, *La Grande Guerre des Cartes Postales*, 40-45.

wet weather in the trenches, the men's resilience, nor his assertion that the Germans' supplies were running low and that their prisoners were 'fed up to the teeth.'[152] Yet they provided the perfect conduit to rapidly disseminate his feelings. September 1914 was a particularly stressful period of the war, which offered little time to write letters, and it seems that Trevor bought cards as and when they became available. As such, for his recipients, these became a narrative of his movement across France and Belgium – reflecting the places he had been – and an insight into his reactions to the war. A similarly disjointed postcard was sent by John Edwin Mawer who, again, seems to have chosen any card to record a simple message to his daughter: 'I thought you would perhaps like a card from me. Well I am glad to hear you goes [sic] to school & also a good girl… just look after Mac until I reach home.'[153] Yet, Mawer still made a choice when purchasing the card, apparently on its aesthetic value. Once more, the card allowed a father to exhibit some hint of a parent's concern while providing his young daughter with physical evidence of her father's existence.

The core attraction of postcards was their ability to convey different meanings, sometimes to different people. Some scholars have noted that postcards frequently included no message or only some brief notations. While the postcards studied here tended to contain more detailed comments, it is also true that 'there is something automatic and ritualistic' about the inscriptions.[154] Depending on the sender, the image and postcard's pre-prepared content may or may not have had any significance. As such, it might well be that some of these postcards simply served as a point of contact. Nevertheless, even if they contained limited information, a postcard continued to have 'strong expressive value.'[155]

Conclusion

Here one can see just how two narratives – that of the postcard and those of people at war – can coalesce and fuse in a way that throws light on the culture of 1914-18, and the nature of long-distance relationships during the Great War. By focusing on the use of postcards the strength, resilience, and continued importance of relationships between combatants and civilians becomes even clearer. The postcard, as the primary multi-media platform of its day, played an integral role in this. Indeed, the multi-functionality of postcards means that it is unlikely that a paper of this length would do full justice to their role in the Great War. This paper highlights how subjective their use was: no one soldier would have utilised the variety of cards on offer for all of the reasons above. Their diversity and variety of uses underlines

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[152] IWM P 229: H.E. Trevor, Postcards to Evelyn Parker 20 and 22 September 1914.
[153] 'Letters of Pte Mawer', Postcard to Midge [Doc.28] [see also Postcard to Wife [Doc.26]].
[154] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 15.
[155] Ibid.

the importance of human creativity in military history. However, the pictures and messages included on postcards meant they were, as Brouland and Doizy have argued, unique among the mass media and cultural outputs of belligerents. While playing a part in the propagation of 'war culture' and horizontal propaganda, they were simultaneously 'a message from one individual to another, within the framework of a personal – if not intimate – relationship.'[156] Indeed, they contend that the forms of exchange and interaction made possible by the postcard industry are comparable to those offered by social networking in the twenty-first century.[157] While photographic cards of the frontlines were sometimes censored, it was often possible for patriotic, sentimental or satirical postcards – through their exaggeration, geographical placement, idealisation, and metaphor – to bypass these restrictions and symbolise nearly anything. The cards found in the archives used here, while a relatively small sample, certainly reflect the postcard's importance to the maintenance of relationships. Most importantly, they presented men with lower standards of education with a medium that allowed them to transmit emotions, ideas, and messages with greater ease.

The research here confirms Bjarne Rogan's hypothesis that postcards were rarely used in 'linear' communication. They were not purchased and sent with the intention of providing detailed information for another person or group. Postcards were, in the main, used as a form of 'circular' correspondence between people who already had close social relationships. Rogan contends that 'the purpose of such communication acts' was 'to *confirm* or mobilize an already existing social relationship' and that these were 'activity orientated.'[158] Sometimes, of course, postcards were used when time was at a premium but the sender still wanted to touch base with someone close to them. Even here, however, a short message was capable of conveying a sense of place, the weather, and a brief description of daily routines.[159] In this way, postcards provided a bridge between soldiers, their family, and close friends. People took the opportunity to embrace the medium for their own purposes. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of the examples found here come from the years after the British Army in France had become a force comprised of volunteers and conscripts. It might be that the use of the postcard in such large numbers is reflective of the continuation of civil culture, and the increasing significance of writing and literacy – regulars being, in general, less literate than their New Army comrades. Without doubt this was reflective of many men's desire to maintain the semblance of civilian life.

Finally, postcards help to explain the remarkable resilience of relationships between soldiers and civilians back home. The cards allowed people to share experiences, images, and

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[156] Brouland and Doizy, *La Grande Guerre des Cartes Postales*, 11.
[157] Ibid. 12.
[158] Rogan, 'An Entangled Object', 16.
[159] Capt. M. Asprey, Postcard: 37. OORLOG 1914-1916: Poperignhe – Engelsche troepen op de markt / Poperinghe – Troupes anglaises sur la Grand-Place. British Troops.

even sensations despite separation. This was particularly important in the context of the Western Front, where free time was limited. The postcard was invaluable for those who were uncomfortable writing and this – as well as their cost – made them a particularly useful instrument for the rank and file. For all – both rich and poor - they fed people's imaginary worlds – a place to which they could retreat in the loneliness of a home lacking its soldier, or the horror of a dilapidated trench. What is more, they were most frequently positive in their message – containing assurances about welfare and the future and a morale boost. The 'interchange of information' between England and the Western Front, which is evidenced in the postcard, sustained an acknowledgement of sacrifice, facilitated mutual understanding, and 'fostered a common perspective.'[160] These factors would have helped the overall British war effort by sustaining unity and morale. They are also evidence of the extent to which 'war culture' percolated through society with an intensity that top-down studies of the period may overlook. Their messages, images, and the ways in which these were used and manipulated means that postcards are a relatively unused source that hold immense opportunity.

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[160] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, 117.