

PRESS RELEASE

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RELEASE**

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RECENTLY UNEARTHED WW1 CORRESPONDENCE TO BE FEATURED AT REMEMBRANCE SHOW THIS WEEKEND

Recently discovered correspondence between the War Office, a critically injured soldier, his parents and Field Nursing staff will be shown as part of 'Never Forget – A Remembrance Spectacular' show this weekend.

Chronologically, the missives start with a telegram informing the father of Able Seaman Fred Fielden that he had been critically injured during battle. Able Seaman Fielden was at the time of injury serving in the Drake Battalion as a soldier on the Western Front during the second Battle of the Somme in October 1918.

The correspondence continues over a number of weeks, initially with the stark and official words of the Royal Naval Record Office, saying little more than that the 21 year old Fred was 'dangerously ill' after suffering a gunshot wound and that 'permission to visit him cannot be granted'.

In contrast to such blunt wording, are the letters that follow from a Ward Sister in the 22nd General Field Hospital who offers words of comfort to the anxious parents. Stating that whilst he was 'dangerously ill' they 'have every hope for his recovery and [she] can assure [the parents] that if courage will fuel him through he have a sufficient amount, [he is] very brave and patient..'

Thankfully the correspondence then reveals that the young soldier will survive, again there is a contrast between the expedient words of the Record Office and the warm, human phrasing of Sister English as she describes Fred as being anxious to receive a letter from his parents and to see them back in England but that he was doing very well. Endearingly she says 'we call him the baby of the ward for he is so young, but he has more courage than many an older one I can assure you. He is a dear boy and we shall miss him when he leaves us'.

The next letter reveals 'Able Fielden' to indeed be back in England as it is addressed to him at a Sheffield Hospital. It is written by a young American nurse who updates him on news and tells him that they 'had all realised what a good soldier' he was.

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The letters are to be featured in 'Never Forget' a spectacular remembrance show presented by Tideswell Male Voice Choir which is taking place at the Pomegranate Theatre in Chesterfield on Saturday evening and then again at Buxton Opera House on Sunday evening.

The Choir's Music Director, Dennis Kay explains why he wanted to include them both visually and for parts to be read out during the show.

He said "As is the nature of such correspondence we do not hear from the soldier himself, or indeed his parents, but the Nurses kind letters give us a strong sense of a brave, unassuming young man who, like so many others had experienced the type of horror that our generation can only imagine.

'The telegrams & template letters coming from the Records Office give us an impression of the scale of this type of correspondence. The telegram and following letter offer the soldier's parents little more than that he is 'dangerously ill' and that he can't be visited. The letter has gaps where details referring to this specific case can be filled in by a typist. Such expediency just goes to show the sheer scale of this type of communication when so many thousands were dying or critically injured. However, it doesn't offer anything other than anguish to the distraught families back home.

'This is why I find it so heart warming to read the Nurses' letters, the pressure they were under must have been tremendous and yet they make time to think about the soldier's loved ones so many miles away. These letters show the human side to war, the love and compassion and indeed they show a snapshot story of a young soldier fighting on the Hindenburg line with a happy outcome. He survived. He came home intact.

'The Never Forget Show will explore a lot of sadness as well as fear but also bravery, compassion and hope. The full human emotional spectrum that arises from such large scale combat"

Never Forget will be showing at the Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield on Saturday 8th November at 7.30 and at Buxton Opera House on Sunday 9th November, 7.30.

Tickets are priced at £26 and can be purchased via box office or online for each venue.

Tideswell Male Voice Choir is a Registered Charity No. 1124462

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Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield - Box Office: 01246 34 5 222

Online: <http://www.pomegranatetheatre.co.uk/shows/a-remembrance-spectacular-never-forget>)

Buxton Opera House, Buxton - Box Office: 0845 127 2190

Online: <http://buxtonoperahouse.org.uk/tideswell-male-voice-choir-never-forget>

Notes to Editor:

A full scan of the correspondence is available on request to cathy@madcatmarketing.co.uk.

Established in 1956, Tideswell Male Voice Choir boasts a rich history of traditional singing, however, not until the appointment of its current Director of Music, Dennis Kay, in 2005, did it start to 'break the mould' and embrace a more ambitious and contemporary approach to its choice of music and style of performance.

The choir's membership currently numbers sixty five, with ages ranging from 21 upwards.

A new album, '*One Voice*' was released in April this year. This can be purchased via the choir's website, <http://www.tideswellmvc.co.uk> or by calling 01298 24338. Alternatively it can be downloaded or streamed through many different online platforms including iTunes, Amazon, Google Play & Spotify.

During the past six years the choir has performed in prestigious venues across the U.K. These include Buxton Opera House, The Plaza Theatre, Stockport, Gawsworth Hall, Macclesfield, The Winding Wheel Theatre, Chesterfield, The Hall for Cornwall, The Minack Theatre, The Eden Project and the new Pavilion Arts Centre in Buxton to name just a few. The choir has also travelled extensively across the UK and Southern Ireland.

The well known writer, broadcaster and politician Edwina Currie is President of the Choir.

Tideswell Male Voice Choir is a registered charity and also raises funds in their thousands for other local charities. Beneficiaries for 2014 are Ashgate Hospice & Blythe House Hospice, both in Derbyshire.