

WAR WORK

DAVID
DUNNICO



Art about
memorial
and ritual

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WORK

**Art about
memorial
and ritual**

WAR WORDS:

“SILENCED”

SACRIFICED

GETIT?

The First World War ended on 11th November 1918, after four years of slaughter. Britain and its Allies were the winners, but many wondered what exactly they had won, and everyone knew someone who had been lost.

In the past, Britain’s small professional army had done the country’s imperial dirty work – Lest we forget, this new modern, industrial warfare had needed a conscripted “people’s army” to keep up the supply of casualties, and a civilian population ‘fighting on the home front’ to keep them supplied.

A grand victory parade was planned, but the brass bands and flag waiving that had accompanied the volunteers as they marched off to war, seemed hopelessly out of step with the conscripts who made it back. So, over a few weeks in 1919, the people who started the war invented Remembrance.

Instead of bronze statues of Generals on horseback, the name of every individual man who had been killed would be listed on ‘scrolls of honour’, plaques, memorials and gravestones. In this way their sacrifice would not be forgotten.

In the words carefully chosen by the poet Rudyard Kipling, “Their Name Liveth For Evermore”. (They erected a few Generals on horseback as well).

Loss in the First World War was not just felt individually, it was understood as a national tragedy. The decision was taken early in the war that bodies would not be brought back home. The bereaved would not have the solace that funeral rites and a grave to mourn over might give. Instead, there were monuments such as the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and rituals such as the Two Minute Silence. People took consolation from the belief that what was then called “The Great War” had been the “war to end all wars”. Of course, it wasn’t and it didn’t.

Since then, the trappings of remembrance have become so much part of our culture, we forget their original meaning and purpose. Remembrance has been adapted and co-opted to serve in the commemoration and for the justification of other, different wars. **These are the ideas I was thinking about when I was making the artworks shown in this book.**



WAR THIS WAY

WAR THIS WAY
{2020}

Sign made from shaped PVC board
76 x 25cm

The arrow shape and typeface are borrowed from the opening titles of the 1970s BBC television comedy show *Dad's Army*. The series followed the misadventures of a Home Guard unit, making gentle fun of their amateurishness and what were perceived as the English traits of understatement and pomposity – Characteristics celebrated in films made during wartime, such as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*.

Today, the war seems to be used (by people who were not in it) as a xenophobic metaphor for everything from football to Brexit.

REMEMBER, REMEMBRANCE, FORGET
{2020}

Snapshots and postcards
in frames, each 33 x 24cm



fig.1

Memorials are not the same thing as history. How we remember and memorialise war is not objective. We have our own memories and mementoes *[figs. 1 & 2]*...



fig.2

The story the Nation would have us remember *[fig. 3]*...



fig.3

And things that some would rather we forgot *[fig. 4]*.



fig.4

A WAR IMAGINED {2018}

Nine wall-hung memorial plaques
Laser etched Perspex each 600 x 300 x 5mm

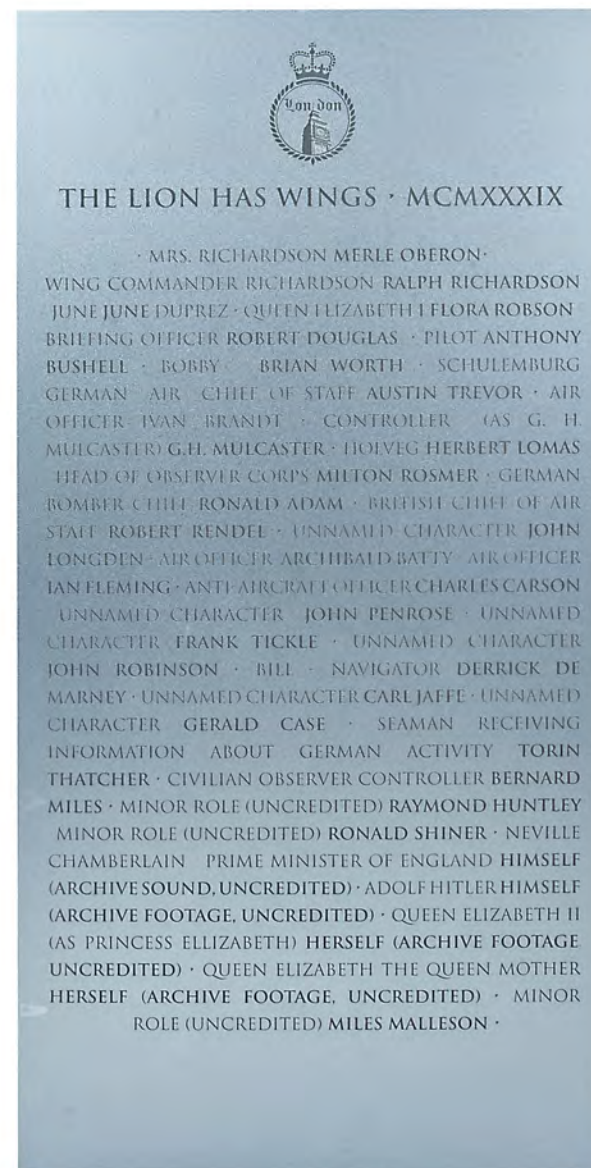
What seem to be granite memorial plaques carved with the names of war dead, on closer viewing turn out to be acrylic sheets, engraved with the cast lists of British films about the Second World War.

Each film comes from a different decade starting in 1939, and to some extent reflect how the war was viewed at different moments in history.

The Second World War seems central to the English national identity, but people's understanding of it largely comes from half-remembered movie dramas. History is understood literally and figuratively in black and white.

The title is borrowed from the book by Samuel Hynes (Bodley Head, 1990) about the effect the First World War had on English culture between the wars.

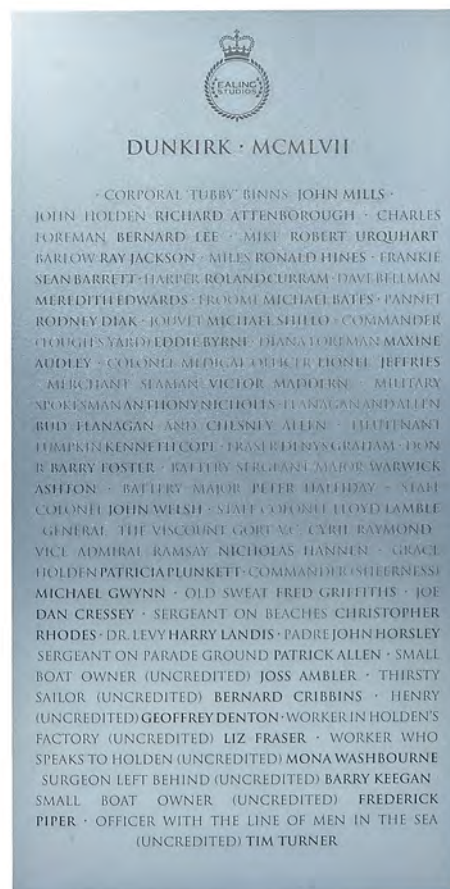
This series is based on an earlier work (now sold) called 'War Memorial For Brexitopia' shown in the 2017 group show 'The Republic of Brexitopia' at the Espacio Gallery, Bethnal Green, London.



'The Lion Has Wings' 1939



'In Which We Serve' 1942



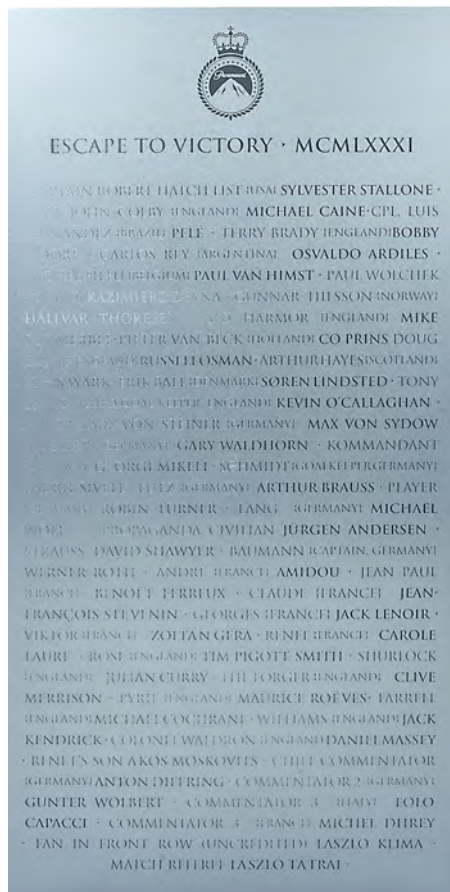
'Dunkirk' 1957



'Battle of Britain' 1969



'A Bridge Too Far' 1977



‘Escape to Victory’ 1981



‘The Land Girls’ 1998



‘Enigma’ 2001



‘Dunkirk’ 2017



BIG £ANG! BOOM + BU\$T {2019}

Two double-sided appliqued flags, 110 x 60cm
Hand made by H.M. The Queen's flag makers
Polycotton, stainless steel flagpoles

The design of the flags is based on a child's pop (art) gun, but they are meant as a comment on historian A.J.P. Taylor's assertion that:

“No matter what political reasons are given for war, the underlying reason is always economic.”

The first flag carries the word “Big” on one side, “Bang” on the other – a reference to the deregulation of the London Stock Exchange in 1986. The second flag has the word “Boom” on one side, “Bust” on the other – a reference to the regular so called Boom and Bust cycles of economic expansion followed by recession, that are a common feature of capitalist systems.

Previously exhibited: 'Flag of Convenience'
Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery, 2019

Also displayed in 2018 with 'Stompie The T-34 Tank'
Mandela Way/Page's Walk, London, SE1 4HD





IF VOTING CHANGED ANYTHING {2018}

Combined ballot box & paper shredder
acrylic, metal, plastic 45 x 30 x 30cm

The title comes from the anachistic phrase “If voting changed anything they’d abolish it”. At the beginning of the First World War, Emmeline Pankhurst the leader of the British suffragettes, halted their militant campaign for the right to vote and became a vocal supporter of the war and encouraged women to work for the war effort and men to go and fight. Ironically at that time there was universal male suffrage in Germany, though it could not be described as a democracy. Here 40% of British men and 100% of women did not even have the vote. Revolutions in Russia and Germany helped end the war and their empires. The British made enough concessions to keep their’s. It was no coincidence that the Centenary of the end of the War was also the Centenary of the Suffragettes winning the vote for women (aged 30 or over) and all men.

Previously exhibited: ‘Represent!’

People’s History Museum, Manchester, 2018

‘Take Back Control’ Crypt Gallery, London, 2019



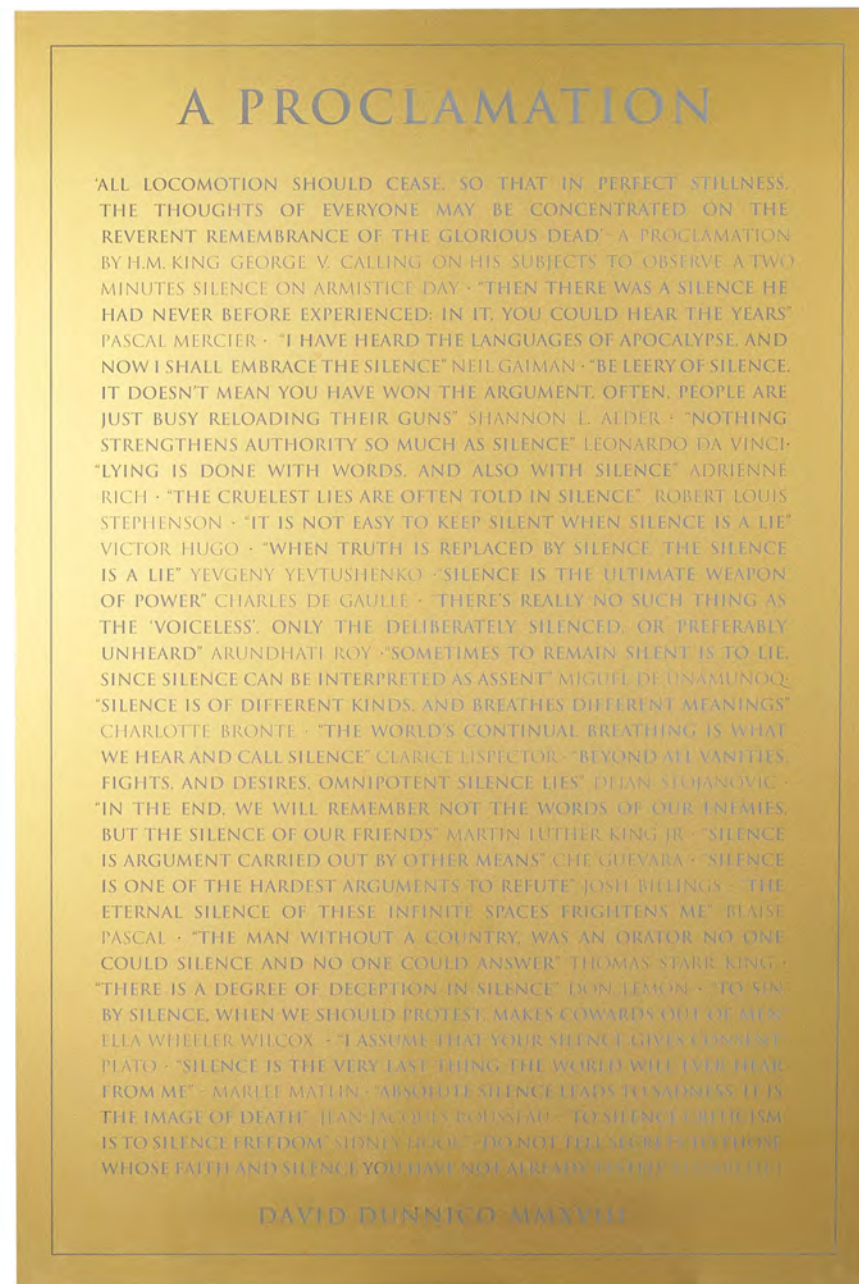
A PROCLAMATION: SILENCED {2018}

Laser-etched Perspex 90 x 60cm

This plaque follows the form of the slab on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey (interred in 1920) and numerous brass memorials erected to record the names of those killed fighting in the First World War.

The plaque quotes King George V's proclamation of 1919, which called for two minutes of silence to be observed. But it continues with a number of quotes about other possible meanings of silence. It was suggested at the time by The Daily Herald newspaper (now The Sun) that this ritual silenced criticism of those in power who were responsible for the scale of the carnage.

Previously exhibited: 'Didsbury Arts Festival' 2018





"ALL LOCATIONS SHOULD CEASE, SO THAT IN PERFECT STILLNESS, THE THOUGHTS OF EVERYONE MAY BE CONCENTRATED ON THE REVERENT REMEMBRANCE OF THE GLORIOUS DEAD" A PROCLAMATION MADE BY KING GEORGE V. CALLING HIS SUBJECTS TO OBSERVE A TWO MINUTES SILENCE ON ARMISTICE DAY · "THEN THERE WAS A SILENCE HE HAD NEVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED: IN IT, YOU COULD HEAR THE YEARS" PASCAL MERCIER · "I HAVE HEARD THE LANGUAGES OF APOCALYPSE, AND NOW I SHALL EMBRACE THE SILENCE" NEIL GAIMAN · "BE LEERY OF SILENCE. IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE WON THE ARGUMENT. OFTEN, PEOPLE ARE JUST BUSY RELOADING THEIR GUNS" SHANNON L. ALDER · "NOTHING STRENGTHENS AUTHORITY SO MUCH AS SILENCE" LEONARDO DA VINCI · "LYING IS DONE WITH WORDS, AND ALSO WITH SILENCE" ADRIENNE RICH · "THE CRUELEST LIES ARE OFTEN TOLD IN SILENCE" ROBERT LOUIS STEPHENSON · "IT IS NOT EASY TO KEEP SILENT WHEN SILENCE IS A LIE" VICTOR HUGO · "WHEN TRUTH IS REPLACED BY SILENCE, THE SILENCE IS A LIE" YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO · "SILENCE IS THE ULTIMATE WEAPON OF POWER" CHARLES DE GAULLE · "THERE'S REALLY NO SUCH THING AS THE 'VOICELESS'. ONLY THE DELIBERATELY SILENCED, OR PREFERABLY UNHEARD" ARUNDHATI ROY · "SOMETIMES TO REMAIN SILENT IS TO LIE, SINCE SILENCE CAN BE INTERPRETED AS ASSENT" MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO · "SILENCE IS OF DIFFERENT KINDS, AND BREATHES DIFFERENT MEANINGS" CHARLOTTE BRONTE · "THE WORLD'S CONTINUAL BREATHING IS WHAT WE HEAR AND CALL SILENCE" CLARICE LISPECTOR · "BEYOND ALL VANITIES, FIGHTS, AND DESIRES, OMNIPOTENT SILENCE LIES" DEJAN STOJANOVIC · "IN THE END, WE WILL REMEMBER NOT THE WORDS OF OUR ENEMIES, BUT THE SILENCE OF OUR FRIENDS" MARTIN LUTHER KING JR · "SILENCE IS ARGUMENT CARRIED OUT BY OTHER MEANS" CHE GUEVARA · "SILENCE IS ONE OF THE HARDEST ARGUMENTS TO REFUTE" JOSH BILLINGS · "THE ETERNAL SILENCE OF THESE INFINITE SPACES FRIGHTENS ME" BLAISE PASCAL · "THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY, WAS AN ORATOR NO ONE COULD SILENCE AND NO ONE COULD ANSWER" THOMAS STARR KING · "THERE IS A DEGREE OF DECEPTION IN SILENCE" DON LEMON · "TO SIN BY SILENCE, WHEN WE SHOULD PROTEST, MAKES COWARDS OUT OF MEN" ELLA WHEELER WILCOX · "I ASSUME THAT YOUR SILENCE GIVES CONSENT" PLATO · "SILENCE IS THE VERY LAST THING THE WORLD WILL EVER HEAR FROM ME" - MARLEE MATLIN · "ABSOLUTE SILENCE LEADS TO SADNESS. IT IS THE IMAGE OF DEATH" JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU · "TO SILENCE CRITICISM IS TO SILENCE FREEDOM" SIDNEY HOOK · "DO NOT TELL SECRETS TO THOSE WHOSE FAITH AND SILENCE YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY TESTED" ELIZABETH I

ALL QUIET (2018)

Video with sound
7 minutes 30 seconds duration

This video was filmed at 11am on Sunday 11th November 2018, when the annual Two Minute Silence began exactly 100 years after the Armistice that ended the First World War.

The gun that signals the start of the silence sets off car alarms, there is never total silence in a city.

Watch online at: <https://vimeo.com/daviddunnico/allquiet>



LOST (2017)

Video with sound
3 minutes 45 seconds duration

The fall of the Berlin Wall that divided Germany into communist East and capitalist West in 1989, was the beginning of the end of The Cold War. But when it ended so did many of the certainties of the era. In the former East Germany some felt a loss of identity, giving rise to ‘Ostalgie’ – a nostalgia for the East.

When the USSR dissolved itself in 1991, the times were described as “the end of history”, but instead it proved to be the start of our uncertain times.

Sections of the Berlin Wall have been kept as historical reminders and as memorials to the people who were killed trying to get over it. The pieces of the Wall in the video had been collected as a souvenir.

Watch online at:
<https://vimeo.com/daviddunnico/lostberlinwall>



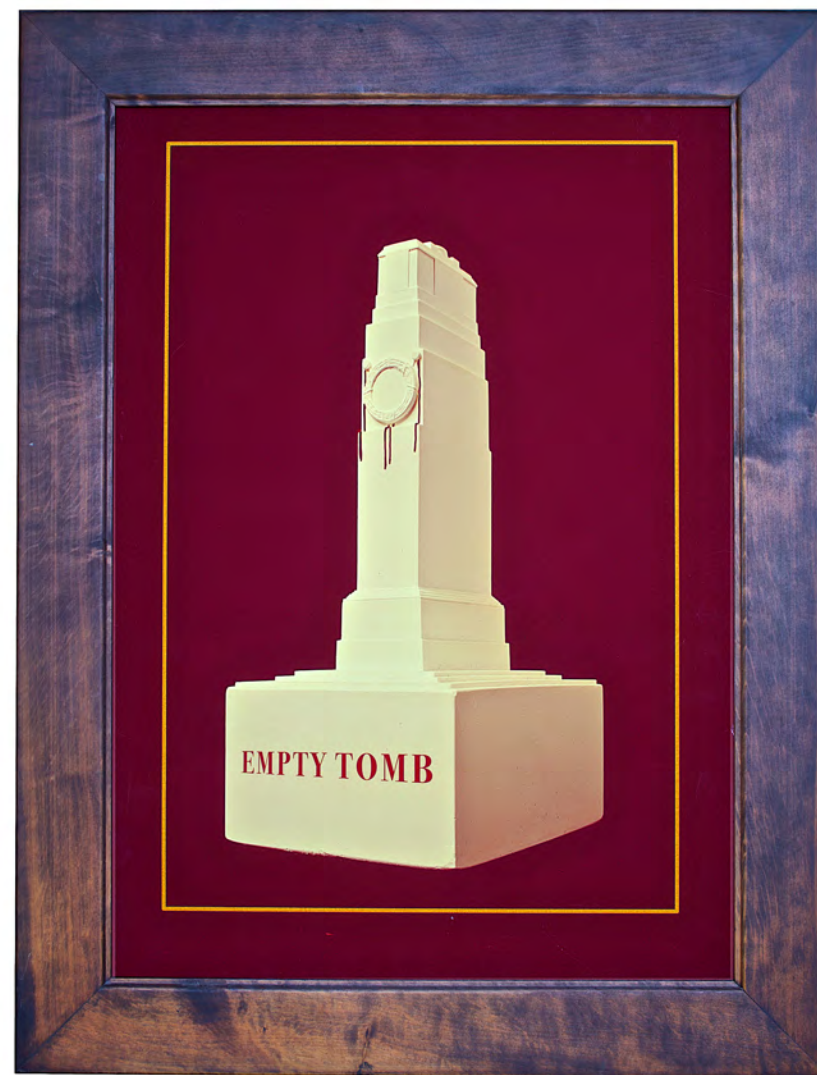
EMPTY TOMB {2018}

Giclée print 70 x 50cm
in wood frame

The Cenotaph in London's Whitehall was originally made of wood and plaster and only intended to be in place for a few weeks in 1919. However, it immediately became the focus for the Nation's mourning and was replaced in 1920 with the present permanent Portland Stone structure.

Designed by architect Edwin Lutyens, its deceptive simplicity was so fitting that many other war memorials follow its form. 'Cenotaph' translates as 'empty tomb'. In this print, the Cenotaph is reduced to its basic shape and the literal translation of its name given. The ribbons that decorated the original, temporary structure take on the look of streams of blood, reminding people that this is not a symbol of victory (although originally commissioned for the Allied victory parade) but to act as a grave marker for all the British war dead.

Previously exhibited: 'Open Exhibition'
Salford Museum and Art Gallery, 2017



THERE ARE OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND
WAR MEMORIALS IN BRITAIN
{2019}

Framed photograph and installation of
75 Crested Ware pottery models of the Cenotaph.
Each 8 to 14cm tall, arranged into the shape of Britain

There are an estimated 100,000 war memorials in the UK. These range from the Cenotaph in Whitehall to any number of plaques on the walls of civic buildings. This vast number reflects the scale of loss and the importance that was given to acknowledging people's sacrifices.

In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, there was a craze for collecting 'Crested Ware' – small, white porcelain ornaments, decorated with the heraldic crest of a town or city. These were made in simple shapes of familiar objects. During the First World War designs included tanks, battleships and artillery, after the War, the Cenotaph was a popular subject. The different towns and cities displayed on these mementos reflects the fact that there was barely anywhere in the country that was not mourning local people who had been killed or injured in the war.



LOLLY POPPIES {2019}

Six poppy markers, 21x 15 cm
Wood, metal, fabric, paper, acrylic paint
mounted on AstroTurf

During the First World War, the number of British soldiers being killed was so great the government decided their bodies would be buried in the places where they fell and not brought back home.

At first, grave markers were made from wood or whatever was available. But after the War ended, magnificent military cemeteries were built in France and Belgium and wherever else the British had fought and died. The land the cemeteries were built on was gifted in perpetuity to Britain, becoming in Rupert Brooke's poem, 'The Soldier: "...some corner of a foreign field that is forever England..."

The foreign location made it difficult for relatives to visit graves and the wreaths laid on monuments such as the Cenotaph were not meant for individuals.



So, the Royal British Legion which raises funds through donations for poppies, began offering individual wooden markers that could be planted in remembrance of particular people. Originally, these were in the form of a Christian Cross carrying a paper poppy. Now there are other markers representing the Sikh Khanda, Jewish Star of David, Hindu Om, Muslim Crescent Moon, and one for Humanist or secular combatants, reflecting the diversity of beliefs of those who fought.

In this piece, the bare wood of the originals (similar to the kind used to make lollipop sticks) has been painted black, the traditional colour of mourning and a Chaplain's or other insignia mounted. Each is displayed on a small piece of AstroTurf – not real grass – a reference to how foreign fields are not really part of England.

Top Row:
 Secular marker, Christian Cross,
 Jewish Star of David



Bottom Row:
 Hindu Om, Muslim Crescent,
 Sikh Khandar



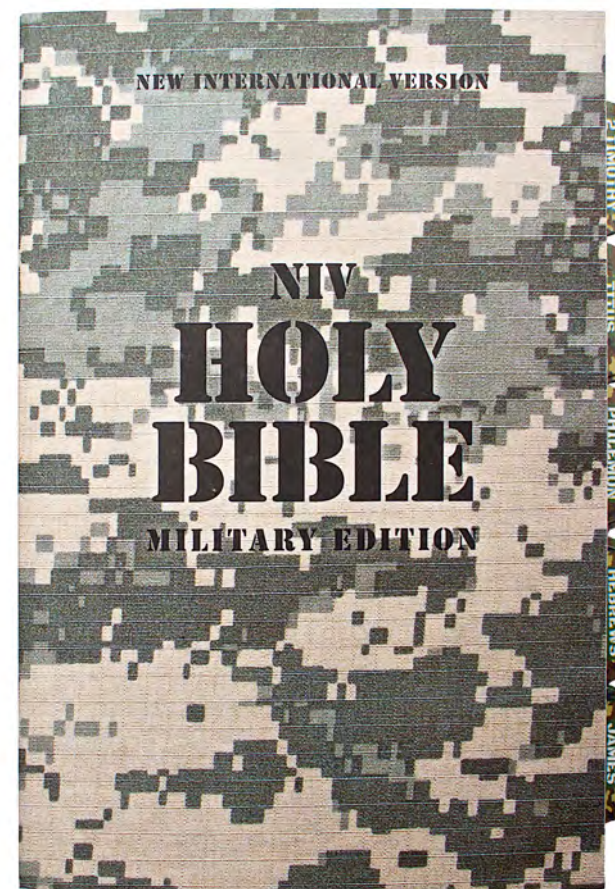
ON ABOUT CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS {2019}

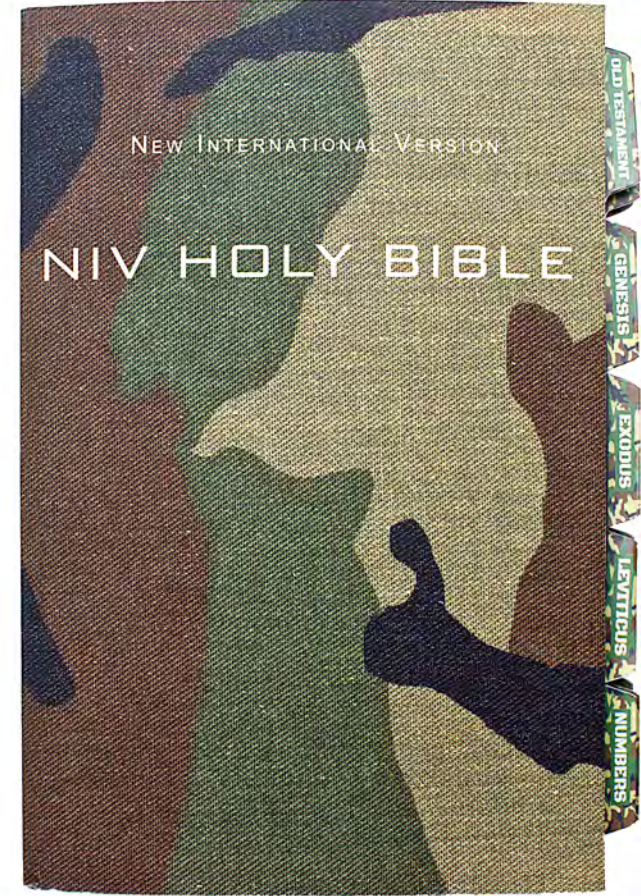
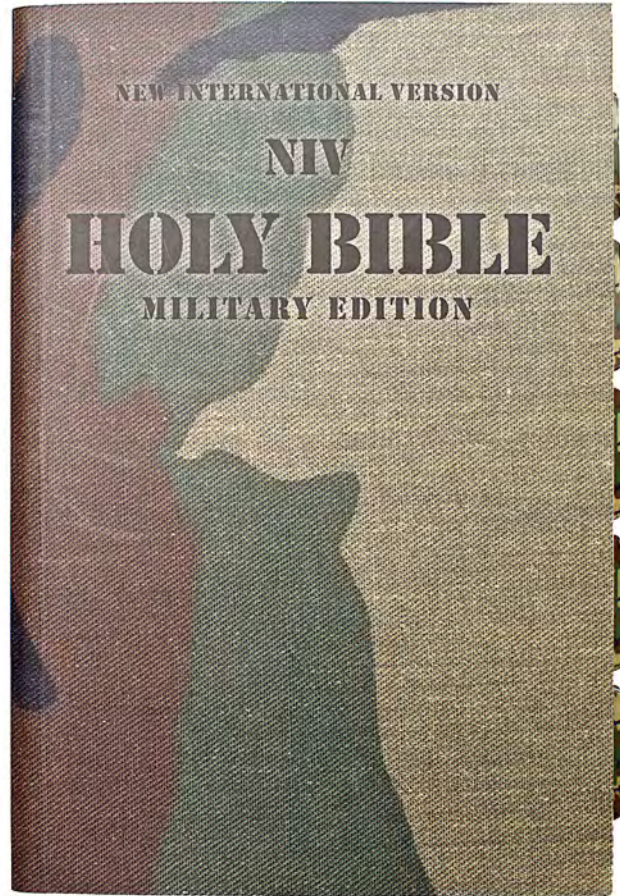
Three paperback bibles with camouflage covers
155 x 100 x 30 mm

These were printed in the USA and intended to be carried in the field by military personnel.

During the First World War, the Church of England actively supported the war, proclaiming “God was on our side”. The Germans also said God was on their side. It is not recorded whose side God said she was on.

After the war, the Church of England wanted the Cenotaph to have a big cross on top. Such overtly Christian symbolism was rejected, in part to reflect the contribution to the British war effort made by non-Christians. The Church got its own way in 1920 when the Unknown Warrior was entombed inside Westminster Abbey in a Christian ceremony. Being Unknown, it is not known for sure if the man buried in the Tomb was a Christian.





BLOOD MONEY {2018}

Metal Medallion, wood crosses, PVC board, acrylic paint
33 x 24 cm

Shortly after the end of the First World War, Memorial Plaques were issued to the next-of-kin of all British and Empire service personnel who had been killed. The plaque soon became known as a “Dead Man’s Penny”. They came with a scroll of condolence from the King. Some families would add these to other items of memorabilia, such as medals and photographs and display them in their home as a kind of shrine.

There was a questioning of faith, by some of the bereaved who found little comfort in organised religion. The number of lives cut short by the War led to a growth in Spiritualism, as some, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sought to contact the dead through Mediums.

This piece uses a replica Memorial Plaque. Actual plaques can be found on eBay, many for less than £100.



FRIENDLY FIRE {2020}

Three mechanical typewriters, scrolls of
typewritten red poppy paper,
1 metre, 3 metres and 25 metres long

During the First World War, the British Army sentenced over 3,000 of its own men to death for military crimes including desertion, cowardice, and sleeping, and criminal offences such as murder and rape. Army courts also convicted and executed civilians for crimes such as spying, or notably ‘rebellion’ in Ireland.

Most of those sentenced to death had their sentences commuted to periods of imprisonment, but over 300 were executed. They were usually “Shot at Dawn” by a firing squad made up of men from the condemned’s own unit. The names of the executed were not usually listed on war memorials.

The executions were controversial. Some of the men may have been suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. In 2006, most of those executed for military crimes were granted a posthumous pardon.



However, after the war, their body’s, like those of any other soldier, were moved to the military cemeteries built by the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. Their grave was marked in the same way as every other with a uniform grave stone.

In this piece, each typewriter carries a list typed on a scroll of red poppy paper. The first scroll is 1 metre long and lists the numbers of men executed for each offence.

The second scroll is 3 metres long and carries the names, offence charged with, date of execution and age at death of all the 300+ British Army soldiers executed.

The third scroll is 25 metres long and carries an alphabetical list of all 3,000 men sentenced to death, the charge against them and the sentence actually carried out.



'Cowardice' Typewriter 25 metre scroll
3000 name list of men given death sentences



LIST OF DEATH SENTENCES PASSED BY BRITISH ARMY COURTS (ALPHABETICAL)

Name:	Charge:	Final Sentence:
Abdallah Mohamed Bin	Espionage	18 years orision
Abdi Hussein O	Rebellion	2 years hard labour
Abdul Bahim	Martial Law	Executed
Abinall, John Henry	Desertion	Executed
Abuury, Abdulla	Esnionace	Penal Servitude Life
Ackhurst, S	Disobedience	5 years Penal Servitude
Akreledies, Panadist Harier		10 years Hard Labour
Akma, H	Desertion	10 years Penal Servitude



'Desertion' Typewriter 3 metre scroll
300 name list of men executed



'Murder' Typewriter 1 metre scroll
Numbers executed listed by offence

WAR GAMES {2020}

Six laser cut coloured Perspex roundels \varnothing 40cm mounted on spray painted PVC board, 50x50cm with children's toy arrows

These roundels are based on the national identification markings painted on to allied aircraft during the First World War. There is some irony in the graphic device used to identify war planes resembling a shooting target. The British target symbol became a staple image of Pop Art.

At first, the War was portrayed as an adventure, or like a game. Children become acclimatised to war through play. Today, the military use video games as a recruiting aid.



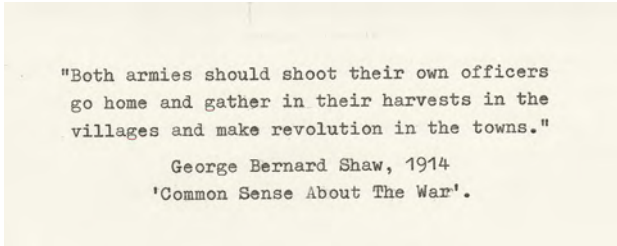
Top Row: Great Britain, Italy, Belgium
Bottom Row: France, USA, Russia



END OF EMPIRES

The following are 'collections' of pieces put together in response to the historian AJP Taylor's assertion that:

"In 1917 European history, in the old sense, came to an end. World history began. It was the year of Lenin and Woodrow Wilson, both of whom repudiated the traditional standards of political behaviour. Both preached Utopia, Heaven on Earth. It was the moment of birth for our contemporary world."



"Both armies should shoot their own officers
go home and gather in their harvests in the
villages and make revolution in the towns."

George Bernard Shaw, 1914
'Common Sense About The War'.

The end of the First World War was also the end of the old Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and their Royal families, the British Empire took some of the spoils.

It was not until the end of the Second World War, that the British realised the game was up, and the Cold War would be between the two Super Powers of the USA and USSR and their proxies.

EMPIRE OF LIBERTY {2020}

Print Digital collage of vintage Uncle Sam postcards



END OF THE EMPERORS {2020}

Flag made up of the independent flags of former
Soviet Republics: 160 x 100cm
Print of crumbling bust of Lenin: 75 x 50cm
Spray painted marble bust of Tsar Nicholas II: 24cm

The Revolutions of 1917 ended Russian involvement in the First World War. The Romanov Royal Family were held prisoner. The Tsar appealed to his British Cousin George V for exile, who refused, fearing it would fuel anti-royal feelings in Britain. The Tsar and his family were executed after Lenin took power.

In 1991, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, collapse of communist governments in Eastern Europe, and unrest in the USSR itself, the USSR dissolved itself. What had been Soviet republics became independent states. The Russian Federation was the most powerful. Russia had come full circle.



THE KAISER'S ARMS
{2019}

Hanging pub sign, wood, 40x30cm

The fictional pub “The Kaiser’s Arms” was suggested by the legend (mainly attributed to German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II himself) that his beloved Grandmother Queen Victoria, died in his arms. He did help put her coffin and made sure he was next to the soon-to-be King Edward VII at the funeral photo-op.

The title is also a pun on The Kaiser's disability (a withered arm) which was caused by a difficult birth and compounded by the incompetence of the English Doctor who delivered him. It is thought that this contributed to Wilhelm’s dislike of the English.

Licensing laws were introduced during the First World War making pubs close at 3pm to stop workers who were making arm(aments) getting drunk during their lunch break. After the War the Kaiser was forced to abdicate and exiled to Holland, where he died during the Second World War.



A FAMILY AT WAR {2019}

Various postcards, prints and patches presented in plastic frames

The First World War was something of a family squabble. The British, German and Russian Empires were ruled by King George V, Kaiser Wilhelm II and Tsar Nicholas II respectively. George was Wilhelm's first cousin, Wilhelm was Nicholas's third cousin and Nicholas was also George's first cousin.

The British Royal family bore the Teutonic sounding family name of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Anti-German feeling was running high and Cousin Wilhelm made things worse by naming the big bombers he was sending over Blighty 'Gothas'.

George responded in 1917, by changing the family name to the much less Germanic 'Windsor'. The Kaiser joked that when he got to London he was, "Very much looking forward to seeing Shakespeare's play 'The Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha'."



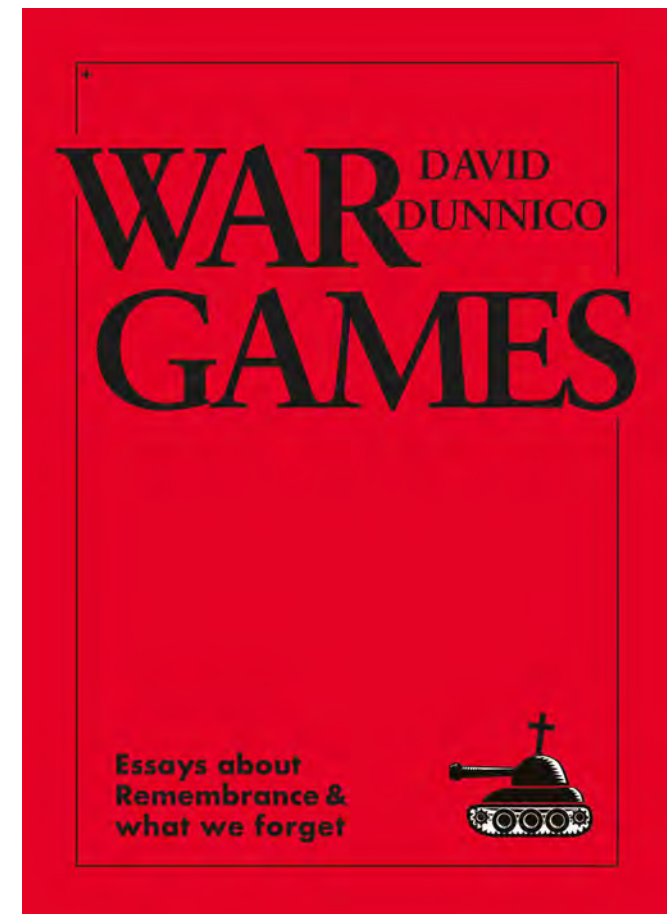
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Arranged in cenotaphic order of height)



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Companion to this volume. Acerbic essays about the remembrance of war.
With 60 colour photographs. A5 (210x148mm) softback, 104 pages



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