SPECIAL COLLECTORS LIMITED EDITION!

GREAT WAR DUNDEE

A SUCCESSOR TO CHARLEY’S WAR AT LAST!

ALSO FEATURING

THE WOMEN’S TOON!

BY HAILEY AUSTIN, ERIN KEEPERS AND ANNA MOROZova

AND CASUALTIES OF WAR

BY CALUM LAIRD & ELLIOT BALSON

UNIVERSE
20th September 2019
No.1

FEATURING

RAGTIME SOLDIER
BY PAT MILLS, GARY WELSH AND PHILLIP VAUGHAN

FREE!
It wasnae easy - what wi'ian being a war resister an' all.

We ken the war was a lie. And clyde's gi'en me the papers to prove it. That's why i'm speaking for scrymgeour.

maybe it's cos I was a resister, you cannae accept she changed her mind about ye. maybe ye think I betrayed ma country? but while ye were visiting him in prison, ye started to admire his… principles? and forgot about your ain? was that it?

och, awa' with ye, mon! I agreed with yer stand! and after los, so did the lads o' the fourth. ask clyde. he'll tell ye.

BUT YOU BETRAYED ME, IAN!

yer bum's oot the windae, ye bampot. maggie wrote 'n telt ye the ba' was on the slates. it was o'er between ye, mon. so then ye could make yer move and marry her…? ehm nae eejit!

Shut yer geggies, or i'll lamp the pair o' ye! This feud Has gone on long Enough!

Maggie's reet. We're brithers, mon. Get it up ye. Ye deserve each other.
"We are Fred Karno's army, the Ragtime infantry. We cannot fight, we cannot shoot. What earthly use are we!

And when we get to Berlin, the Kaiser he will say, 'Hoch, hoch! Mein Gott, what a bloody rotten lot are the Ragtime infantry!"

"British soldiers' World War One trench song."
DUNDEE, NOVEMBER 1922.

OUR RAGTIME SOLDIER WILL BE OUT SOON.
GET READY.

I FOAM AT THE MOUTH LISTENING TO HIS TOMMY ROT ABOUT LOOS.

AYE, HE’S AGAINST EVERYTHING WE FRONTIERSMEN HOLD DEAR.

IF HE SPEAKS AGAIN TOMORROW, THEN MR CHURCHILL WILL LOSE THE ELECTION AND THIS SCOTTISH LENIN, SCRYMGEOUR, WILL WIN.

IT’S THOSE DAMN LETTERS. WE MUST PERSUADE HIM TO PART WITH THEM.

G’WAN, ROBBIE! NO ONE PLAYS RAGTIME LIKE YOU!

WE WANT RAGTIME! WE WANT RAGTIME!

JUST ONE RAG, ROBBIE. EH? TO SHOW THERE’S NA랍 HARD FEELINGS?

JUNK MAN RAG...? RAZZASSA MAZZASSA...? RAG TIME SKEDADDLE...?
I ALWAYS LOVED THE WAY YOU PLAYED RAG BABE...

HOW ABOUT TEMPTATION RAG...? BECAUSE YOU WERE TEMPTED A ‘RICH, WEREN’T YE, MAGGIE?

SO WHILE I WAS FIGHTING IN THE TRENCHES, YE WENT ON YER AIN SKEDADDLE WITH MA BROTHER!

IT WASNAE LIKE THAT, ROBBIE I SWEAR.

SO WHAT WAS IT LIKE, MAGGIE MA ‘DEAR?
It wasnae easy - what wi' Ian being a war resister an' all.

But while ye were visiting him in prison, ye started to admire his... principles? And forgot about your ain? Was that it?

We ken the war was a lie, and Clyde’s gi’en me the papers to prove it. That’s why I’m speaking for Scrymgeour.

But you betrayed me, Ian!

Yer bum’s oot the windae, ye bampot. Maggie wrote ‘n’ telt ye the ba’ was on the slates. It was o’er between ye, mon.

So then ye could make yer move and marry her...? Eh? Nae eejit!

Shut yer geggies, or I’ll lamp the pair o’ ye! This feud has gone on long enough!

Maggie’s reet. We’re brothers, mon.

Maybe it’s cos I was a resister, you cannae accept she changed her mind about ye. Maybe ye think I betrayed ma country?

Och, away with ye, mon! I agreed with yer stand! And after Logis, so did the lads o’ the fourth. Ask Clyde. He’ll tell ye.

Get it up ye. Ye deserve each other.
Aw, no!
Major Pollard and his legion of frontiersmen again!
Ye ken ye've crossed the frontier...? G'wan! Get back tae yer side o' Hadrian's Wall!

Well, well! What would our teetotal Scrymgeour think of his right hand man coming out of a saloon?

Aye, aye! We want those letters, McTaggart.

They're forgeries full of dangerous lies. It's your patriotic duty to hand them over.

So that Churchill can win...? The man responsible for the Dardanelles! The Black and Tans! The invasion of Russia?

C'mon then, ye scummers!

You dog, you pig. You drunken sot! It's cursed like you who taint the army with your lies!

We should screw your neck around on the gallows for talking treason!

After him!

When the Black Watch went over the top on Dundee's darkest day!

Got tae bide oot o' sight until the rally. Then I can tell what happened at Loos.
It's madness!
The Jerries will be on full alert noo! They'll ken we're coming for them.

Och, haud yer wheesht. Ye sound just like ma brother. He sees conspiracy everywhere. I'm no listenin' to ye, Clyde.

Och, nae madness, ragtime! It's deliberate. Oor generals dinnae wan to us to win.

It's nae madness, Ragtime! It's deliberate. Oor generals dinnae wan us to win.

Two huge mines blew up the German positions.

Och, haud yer wheesht. Ye sound just like ma brother. He sees conspiracy everywhere. I'm no listenin' to ye, Clyde.

But Ian's richt. The generals are no stupid like everyone thinks. They're doing it to cull us, mon. So we won't be a threat to them after the war.

150 Tons of Chlorine Gas were released from 5,500 cylinders towards the German trenches.

They've even admitted it! General Roberts praised war as a way to get rid o' 'The Great Human Rotteness that is ripe in oor industrial cities.' THAT'S US, MON!

I told ye. I'm no' listenin' tae ye, Clyde. I hae tae believe the ground is firm beneath my feet.

Like in the German trenches, mibbe?

I told ye. I'm no' listenin' tae ye, Clyde. I hae tae believe the ground is firm beneath my feet.

Better have a last look at your loved ones, boys! We go over in ten minutes.

She's my loved one, sir. She's teckle, eh?

Kirchner, eh? First rate. Everyone loves his art-frizes. Poilus, Tommies. We're all crazy about the same bonnie lasses.

Maggie's my girl. She said she'll wait for me, nae matter how lang this lasts.
Ma’s hair ‘n skin’s turned yella’ frae working with the TNT. Tae hell wi’ this war!

If ye’re so again’ it, why did ye enlist?

Because I love Dundee, mon. I cannae let ma mates an’ ma city doon.

What about the Wee Barra ‘Tiger Tim’? Has he got anyone?

He’s an orphan, Sarge, but he’s got winkle an’ binkle an’ chu, chin an’ his chow for company.

Gas! Gas! It’s comin’ back!

Are ye sure it isnae you...? Did ye fart?

I’m no joking, Clyde! Hoods down!

Despite the Gas Company’s warning to H.Q.: ‘Weather dead calm, impossible discharge accessory,’ HQ replied: ‘Accessory to be discharged at all costs’.

It’s done for the lads in the 2nd Battalion!

So there were 2,200 British gas casualties before the attack began.

6.00am, the 4th battalion advanced across no man’s land with a unique Dundee battle cry.

MARMALADE!
AND THESE HOODS ARE USELESS! THAT COULDN'T PROTECT YE FAE A FART!

IT'S THINNING! MASKS OFF!

COME ON, MA' LADS! WE'RE NEARLY THERE!

THE KILTIES!

OILY COTTON WASTE WAS STREWN ALONG THE GERMAN PARAPET AND SET ALIGHT AS A BARRIER TO THE GAS.

WE'LL SOON BE AT THEM!

OILY COTTON WASTE WAS STREWN ALONG THE GERMAN PARAPET AND SET ALIGHT AS A BARRIER TO THE GAS.

WE'LL SOON BE AT THEM!

THE KILTIES!

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WE'LL SOON BE AT THEM!

THE KILTIES!

WE'LL SOON BE AT THEM!

THE KILTIES!
Half a mile ahead, they captured the support trench.

The Jerry bombardment is o'er strong. Oor reinforcements will niver get through!

That'll be oor fault—we advanced o'er far and o'er fast.

BOMBERS!

Form a line! Let's gie 'em oor shots!

The British No 15 ball grenade required lighting the fuse with an external igniter, striking it like a match.

Another dud, Sarge! They dinnae like the damp.

Then they wouldnae like the tenement in Lochée Road! Geez another, ragtime!

The British No 15 ball grenade required lighting the fuse with an external igniter, striking it like a match.

Most were useless. Their weight and size also limited their range.

General Haig blames workers like me maw. He says, 'They hae too many holidays and too much to drink.'

He would ken. He sells them enough whisky!

The German stick grenades were far superior.

Ach awa' an' shuffle to ye ah! I winna' hear a bad word said about his whisky!
Half a mile ahead, they captured the support trench.

You're richt, ragtime. He'll be raising a dram to us in heaven.

Clean up yer rifles, boys. At least we can rely on them.

He's got the angel's share noo, sir.

In this sector other Scottish soldiers had fallen. Many cut to pieces on barbed wire meant to have been destroyed by high explosive shells.

Fired on from behind, in front, and on the flanks, at 11.30am, the Germans also counter-attacked.

Clyde!

At 12 noon, 'Dundee's Own' were told to retreat. They had held the German trenches for an incredible five hours.

It's a braw cushy one ye've got, clyde. It's yer ticket for blighty, mon.

Best cross further down the brae, ragtime. It's all quiet over there.

The camerons, Gordon Highlanders, Royal Scots, and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were among the heavy casualties.

The German commander said, 'My machine gunners were so filled with pity, remorse and nausea at the corpse Field of Loos that they refused to fire another shot'.

The generals threw their lives awa' for nothin'. Wiped them out as surely as if they rode out of their mansions and beat their brains oot with their polo mallets.
We've finally run our fox to earth.
The letters, if you please, Mctaggart.

And if I say no to ye, major?

Oh, I do hope you will.

Sling your hook, Pollard, or we'll sling oors.

Ye're no welcome in Dundee.

And neither is yer Mr Churchill. No' efter the Dardanelles.

And opposing votes for women. He said we were 'well represented by oor faithers, brothers and husbands.'

I'll remember you... Ragtime.

Och, I dinnae mind Barlinnie, mon. It was being sent a white feather that really upset me.

Thanks, Maggie. And I never said afore, Ian... I ken how hard it was for ye in prison.

It was a white feather from round a chicken's bum!

Och, I dinnae mind Barlinnie, mon. It was being sent a white feather that really upset me.

C'mon, and I'll treat ye all to hapenny mop-ups.

Last of the Big Spenders, eh? Will I wring fresh cloths oot for ye specially?

That'll be grand. An' I'll play the latest rag from Jelly Roll Morton. It's hot, oor maw will hate it!
...and finally, I'd like to read letters frae' a general in the British army to his German opposite number during the war. They were given to me by, let's just say, a friend on the Clyde.

"...we appreciate your generous offer to provide as many rangefinders and telescopic sights as we require."

As you recommended, we checked the equipment of captured officers and it's first rate.

We need 8,000 to 10,000 each per month of the two types of binoculars, one for infantry officers and one for artillery officers.

Delivery via Switzerland. In return we will supply you with the following bales of rubber..."

They traded arms and supplies throughout the war. They dionae want it to end quickly.

Loos had to fail - same as the Dardanelles. If the allies won, Constantinople would be given to Russia.

So Churchill made sure it failed with a lack o' equipment, soldiers and competent leaders.

Let's make sure this ne'er happens agin.

Anti-war Edwin Scrymgeour won the election and became member of parliament for Dundee in place of Churchill. Today, there is only one commemorative plaque to Churchill in the city.

'Dundee's own' began the attack with 21 officers and 450 men. By next day, only one officer and 210 men were fit for duty. The rest were wounded or dead.

'Big England's sorrow is national; Little Scotland's is personal.' Ian Hay, the First Hundred Thousand (Edinburgh, 1915)

END OF PROLOGUE.
British soldiers called themselves the Ragtime Infantry in World War One.

It means ‘dangerous and a bit crazy’. It comes from Ragtime music, which was the counter-culture music of World War One, something that seems to have been largely ignored by historians. Perhaps they’re not aware of just how important ‘rebellious music’ is to teenagers and young people in their twenties – and that was just as true a century ago as it is today.

In a similar way, just as the music of The Doors, The Animals (‘We Gotta Get Out Of This Place’), and Country Joe & The Fish (‘I Feel Like I’m Fixin To Die Rag’) are associated with the Vietnam War and were loved by American soldiers, so Ragtime – proto-Jazz – was loved by the British troops.

It was like they were calling themselves ‘the Rock and Roll Infantry’.

Ragtime reached British shores long before the Americans brought us Jazz in 1917. I suspect that ports like Dundee and Liverpool would have been the first to receive the Ragtime sheet music from New Orleans in 1912 and 1913. New sheet music was eagerly collected by teenagers, just like vinyl was for later generations and creating playlists is today.

Ragtime often sounds rather dreary today because of scratchy, fading recordings and later versions available on Youtube, but the earliest Ragtime was rather cool. It was seen as ‘dirty’ music, sexy music, black music, and it was hot! For its time, it was revolutionary! The older generation hated this ‘wild’ new sound and the exciting dances that went with it. Inevitably, it was ‘cleaned-up’ with a parents-approved version by the clean-cut, wholesome and white Irene and Vernon Castle. They successfully ‘removed the stigma of vulgarity from close dancing’ (Wikipedia). Dancers were advised: ‘Do not shake the hips. Do not hop.’
Ken Burns describes Ragtime in episode one of his Jazz (2001) documentary TV series. He relates how one fierce critic of the craze that was sweeping America said, ‘Ragtime is syncopation gone mad. And its victims in my opinion can only be treated successfully like a dog with rabies – with a dose of lead. Whether it’s a passing phase of our decadent art culture or an infectious disease come to stay, like leprosy, time alone can tell.’

In 1913, the New York Times commented, ‘Can it be said that America is falling prey to the collective soul of the negro through the influence of what is popularly known as Ragtime music. If there is any tendency to such a national disaster, it should definitely be pointed out and extreme measures taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger if it has not already gone too far.’

This then was the ‘dangerous’ music that our forefathers were into when they went to war.

FRED KARNO’S ARMY

Fred Karno was the ‘King of Slapstick Comedy’, responsible for introducing Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel to the world. So when our soldiers called themselves ‘Fred Karno’s Army’, they were really laughing at themselves. They’re showing the same satirical sense of humour that we see in Monty Python and today with shows like South Park, The Simpsons and The Office.

There’s a fascinating Scottish link to Fred Karno’s Army. The Scottish comedian Billie Ritchie also worked for impresario Fred Karno, and Chaplin was actually inspired by Billie’s drunk Scotsman walk to produce his own famous drunken tramp. There’s one silent movie short of Billie – ‘Almost A Scandal’ – on Youtube which is very Chaplinesque. If you can imagine Billie talking with a Scottish accent – and having a Scottish attitude – it might still come over to a modern audience!

LEGION OF FRONTIERSMEN

This was a vigilante organisation dedicated to preserving the British Empire and had strong connections to the Establishment and the British secret service. One leading member, Captain Hugh Pollard, actually triggered the Spanish Civil War by bringing General Franco back from exile in The Canaries. Once Franco had overthrown the government and was in power, Pollard became head of British Intelligence in Spain.

Captain Pollard is a fascinating character – a classic villain I’ve researched carefully for another project. He is the equivalent of George MacDonald Fraser’s Flashman or Captain Snell in Charley’s War. He’s the leader of the Frontiersmen in this story and he is likely to appear in future Ragtime Soldier stories.

MEDIA BLACKOUT

Many of the facts featured in Ragtime Soldier are not widely known today. This is because during the centenary years of World War One, there was a deliberate media blackout on any book, film or TV show that took a strong anti-war position. The reason is obvious, of course: if we question what happened in the past, we may also question what is happening in the world today.

At the end of 2014 I gave a lecture at the University of Liverpool showing numerous examples of this blackout. There’s an audio recording of my lecture available at www.millsverse.com/charleyswarrevisionistspin/ along with a downloadable PDF transcript of my lecture. You can also view the powerpoint presentation, which shows many relevant images from Charley’s War and key characters. I gave this lecture because I was so dismayed by how the truth about World War One was being deliberately suppressed by the Establishment.

Even the brilliant Blackadder Goes Forth was barely shown during the centenary years. Perhaps this is not so surprising, as it is loathed by politicians and revisionist historians who prefer us to believe their Establishment view of the war. Today’s historians have successfully revised the long accepted anti-war view of World War One as a tragic nightmare caused by the Establishment and directed by idiot Generals. They have completely transformed the conflict into a ‘just war’ directed by Generals who adapted to the new era and defeated an ‘evil’ enemy.

Such historians are known as revisionist historians. They have been particularly successful in the last two decades, largely suppressing any alternative voices that challenge their Establishment view of the truth. Thus, the massacres and insane futility of the Battle of the Somme was presented on BBC TV as ‘The Somme: From Defeat to Victory’.

I visited the British Library bookshop, the very heart of the Establishment, in 2014 and found numerous books on the war, but there was not one about conscientious objectors or pacifists.
THE BRITISH RESISTANCE

Thanks to our media, words like ‘conscientious objectors’ and ‘pacifists’ often now have a negative association. As if there’s something weird, or wrong with people who are anti-war. It’s why I now use the term ‘war resisters’ – a term I think is more powerful and appropriate.

Nowhere was the Resistance stronger than in Scotland and particularly in Dundee. Interestingly, many Scottish soldiers had great sympathy and understanding for the Resistance as the story Ragtime Soldier shows.

The heroes of the British Resistance have stories to tell that are easily as exciting as any story of the French Resistance during World War Two, but they will never be told elsewhere, thanks to the blackout. Comics are one of the few places to escape this censorship. There are a few similar voices out there, such as guerrilla campaigns by artists such as Darren Cullen (www.spellingmistakescostlives.com). His Action Man: Battlefield Casualties videos on Youtube are very watchable and brought down the wrath of the media upon him!

Amongst the many heroes of the British Resistance are Edwin Scrymgeour, E.D. Morel (both elected as MPs for Dundee, replacing Winston Churchill), John Maclean (Glasgow hero of Red Clydeside fame), John S. Clarke (the lion tamer who became a Glasgow MP), Sylvia Pankhurst and Alice Wheeldon (Framed by the British secret service, she was accused of trying to murder the Prime Minister with a poison dart!).

‘MARMALADE’!

I drew on the Great War Dundee site for my research: www.greatwardundee.com

It proved invaluable. And also contemporary accounts, including this remarkable poem written shortly after the battle. It was heart-breaking to discover that those young Black Watch soldiers from Dundee used ‘Marmalade!’ as their battle cry when they went over the top.

OOR GALLANT FOURTH

Lads o’ valour, lads o’ grit,
Lads wha’s frames are strongly knit,
Lads wha strike hard whom they hit,
Are in the Fourth.

The ‘Great Push’ found them tae the fore,
Like their sires in days of yore.
‘Marmalade!’ Eh, what a roar!
Cam” frae the Fourth.

They cared not for the rifles’ spit,
They were oot tae dae their bit,
They’ve proved that they are lads o’ grit,
Oor gallant Fourth.

‘On the ba’, Dundee’, they cried
They as steel in fire were tried,

Nobly lived and nobly died,
Lads o’ the Fourth.

When o’ wordly cares I’m free,
And I’ve crossed the ’sullen sea’;
Weel tae the fore I ken I’ll see
Lads o’ the Fourth.

The People’s Journal, 16 October 1915

I also talked to a friend from Glasgow who warned me that the Dundee accent was the thickest and hardest to understand in Scotland! I guess I should have known that from my happy years living in Dundee in the 1970s. So, to ensure I got it right, I consulted ‘Dundonian for Beginners’, the Dundee Evening Telegraph and final dialect input from Ian Kennedy! www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/2016/02/29/13-phrases-dundonians-understand-that-confuse-the-rest-of-scotland/

Special thanks to Phil Vaughan and Chris Murray (University of Dundee) who also advised me on the Dundee accent, to Dr Derek J Patrick (University of St Andrews) and especially to Billy Kenefick (University of Dundee). Billy vividly related how war resister Edwin Scrymgeour (the ‘Dundee Lenin’ according to
the local papers), defeated the mighty Winston Churchill himself! It’s a story made even more remarkable by the fact that Scrymgeour was elected as a prohibitionist, who believed in ‘thinking not drinking’.

Thanks to all your efforts, we finally have a successor to Charley’s War. At last! It’s only taken six years and a trail of previous failed attempts! That’s how powerful the media blackout really is in Britain.

It’s no coincidence that Ragtime Soldier was commissioned in Scotland. There is no way it could have happened elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I tried many times. Only in Scotland is such freedom of expression still possible.

THE DUNDEE ELECTION
The story of the 1922 Election, of Scrymgeour versus Churchill, is an explosive one. It’s fortunate that comics can reveal this astonishing story and how, with grim memories of Loos, the Somme and Ypres, Dundee voted against Churchill.

I adapted the comments of J.B. Priestley (‘An Inspector Calls’) for ‘Red’ Clyde to say in the story. It sums up the horror of Loos so much better than I ever could and tells us what must have been in the minds of Dundonians when they went to the polls:

‘The British command specialised in throwing men away for nothing. The tradition of an officer class, defying both imagination and common sense, killed most of my friends as surely as if those cavalry generals had come out of the chateaux with polo mallets and beaten their brains out.’

Also in the election and also elected as MP, was Resistance leader E.D. Morel. He had previously exposed the atrocities of the Belgians in the Congo in ‘Red Rubber’. During the war he courageously exposed how – through secret diplomacy – Britain had manipulated the other nations into war. Reading his book ‘Truth and the War’ (1916), I was struck by how similar it was to how Tony Blair manipulated Britain into the Iraq War in 2003.

Morel’s book was the WikiLeaks of its day. And, like Julian Assange, he would pay for his revelations. He was thrown into prison on a trumped-up charge and they broke his health so that when he emerged, ‘His hair is completely white (there was hardly a tinge of white before) when he first came out, he collapsed completely, physically and mentally, largely as the result of insufficient food. He says one only gets three quarters of an hour reading in the whole day – the rest of the time is spent on prison work, etc.’

I had an interesting exchange of tweets some years back with leading revisionist historian Professor Gary Sheffield about Morel. I pointed out that Morel had shown Britain was responsible for the Great War. He courteously replied that Morel was mistaken in his views, although he didn’t explain to me how.

For a Resistance leader like Morel to be elected, too, shows just how much Dundonians knew about what was really going on in the world. There were cheap anti-Establishment pamphlets (the blogs of their day) available to them and I believe they were actually better informed than we are today.

PROLONGING THE WAR
The case that the war was deliberately extended is made in Prolonging the Agony: How The Anglo-American Establishment Deliberately Extended WWI by Three-and-a-Half Years, by Scottish authors Jim Macgregor and Gerry Docherty (2018). See also their blog, which includes excerpts: www ww1 hiddenhistory co uk/.

To my knowledge, no revisionist historian has ever answered their serious charges. Namely, that millions of young men died for no reason other than the Establishment’s pursuit of power.
and for commercial gain. I draw on their material in Ragtime Soldier.

Jim Macgregor told me that their previous book Hidden History: The Secret Origins of the First World War (2013) was also ignored. No mainstream newspaper has reviewed it. There’s that media blackout again. Yet through quotes, hard facts, and impressive research, they prove their case beyond reasonable doubt.

Jim and Gerry are far from alone in their views that the war was deliberately prolonged. The great poet Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon wrote an open letter of protest in 1917:

‘I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that the war upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest.’

By comparison, it’s often claimed that the generals and politicians were stupid and incompetent and ‘sleepwalked into war.’ It’s a useful excuse, sometimes suggested by historians to get the Establishment off the hook, but it’s actually nonsense. Whilst personal stupidity certainly played a role, as J. B. Priestley comments above, the terrible conflict was actually calculated, deliberate and horribly clever – as Jim and Gerry show in their books. Just like the way modern wars are created. No one ever ‘sleepwalks into war.’

I refer in the story to the possibility that the war was also motivated by a desire to cull the population, because they were striking for better working conditions and were seen as a threat to the Establishment. I quote General Roberts, who praised war as, ‘a way to get rid of the great human rottenness that is rife in our industrial cities.’ Cities like Dundee, perhaps? It’s rare for Establishment figures to talk so openly, usually they know how to keep their mouths shut. But sometimes they just can’t help themselves and their masks slip.

General Haig was certainly indifferent to the huge losses. ‘We lament too much over death. We should regard it as a change to another room… Three years of war and the loss of one-tenth of the manhood of the nation is not too great a price to pay in so great a cause.’

TRADING WITH THE ENEMY

Adam Hochschild’s powerful To End All Wars (2011) inspired Robbie’s letter revealing trading with the enemy during the conflict. On Page 161, Hochschild quotes similar correspondence between the British and German armies. The binoculars used by the British at the Battle of Loos were actually supplied by the German enemy in exchange for rubber!

This cannot be explained away as an isolated incident, a single error of judgement. It was going on all the time. There are numerous other sources that show Britain, Germany and France were all regularly trading arms materials and doing deals with each other during the war: High explosives, poison gas, guns, aluminium for Zeppelins, barbed wire, Zeiss sniper lenses. And more.

For example, ‘French bauxite also entered Switzerland freely during the war, was there manufactured into aluminium, and then shipped into Germany for the construction of submarines.’ Merchants of Death by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen (1934).

‘Vickers had been supplying the Turkish artillery with shells which were fired into the Australian, New Zealand and British troops as they were scrambling up Anzac Cove… their weapons mashed up into bloody pulp… the flower of Anzac, the youth of Australia and New Zealand, yes, and of the youth of our own country.’ Iron, Blood and Profits by George Seldes (1934).

Trading with the enemy is, of course, treason. This is noticeably not a subject covered by today’s historians because it would destroy their claim that World War One was a just war.
THE NEXT RAGTIME SOLDIER STORY?

You must have wondered, as I have, how soldiers could face going over the top to almost certain death. How is that possible? It seems insane. It’s heroism far above and beyond the call of duty.

In many cases, like at Loos, I’m sure it was youthful optimism, fighting spirit, comradeship, not wanting to let their mates down, pride in their city, their regiment, their King and Country that motivated them.

But there are darker aspects to the war that I didn’t know about when I wrote Charley’s War, that I’d like to return to in future stories about the Ragtime Soldier and his comrades in the aftermath of war.

One of them is the widespread military supply of cocaine to the troops – ‘Forced March’ – issued to British, French and German soldiers via a factory in neutral Holland. See:

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xdvn3/dolland-was-the-worlds-biggest-cocaine-manufacturer

Here’s what researcher Connie Braam said:

‘Forced March packed more punch: it contained both caffeine and cocaine. And that combination really gets you going. I checked it with pharmacologists, and they told me this stuff made you crazy. These pills were really heavy. And millions were made. Which was handy for usage, because taking cocaine in powder form isn’t very practical in the trenches... And perhaps a lot of soldiers wouldn’t take the stuff voluntarily. So I suspect that in a lot of cases it was mixed with rum.

A lot of soldiers were given a mug of rum before they went over the top and out of the trenches. And sometimes it would be rum with coke. Mixing alcohol with cocaine doubles the effects of the stuff. But that’s not something that’s reflected in the movies or in general knowledge about the Great War.

Hundreds of thousands heavily addicted soldiers were walking around through Europe after the war. I found articles about that in The Times. One article reported about hundreds of addicted veterans roaming the British streets to rob pharmacists.’

It’s known that troops were sometimes given the tablets to help them complete long marches, but this is something altogether different, and it would explain the huge number of tablets produced in Holland and sold to the different combatants. So I can see my next story where our Ragtime Soldier finds an addicted and crazy comrade breaking into a chemist’s during the aftermath. Robbie learns the shocking truth about why his friend is an addict – after he regularly took his ‘rum’ ration before ‘Going over the top’ during the Battle of the Somme. Influenced by Scrymgeour, and having taken the Pledge to please his mum, Robbie was teetotal at the time and thus he was not affected by ‘Forced March’.

Revealing the darker side of war doesn’t take away from soldiers’ courage: it can only add to our understanding of what happened to them. And make us value these heroes all the more as we appreciate just how badly they were treated.

Today, anything that might challenge the Establishment view of the Great War as a tragic, terrible, yet noble and righteous war for freedom simply never happened.

Yet the politicians, generals and arms manufacturers who deliberately started and prolonged the war, ‘sacrificing’ an entire generation of Ragtime Soldiers for their power and profit, clearly should have faced a Nuremburg-style War Crimes Tribunal after the conflict. Instead, they got away with their crimes. Scot-free.
CASUALTIES OF WAR

IN 1914 YOUNG BRITISH MEN FLOCK TO THE FLAG. THEY JOIN UP, ALL MATES TOGETHER, ANXIOUS TO BE IN "BERLIN BY CHRISTMAS".

THEY MARCH AWAY FULL OF CONFIDENCE.

CONFIDENCE QUESTIONED A LITTLE AS THE FRONT LINE DRAWS NEAR.
AND EATEN AWAY FURTHER AS THEY WAIT FOR THE ORDER...

OVER THE TOP!

URRGH!

MY GOD, I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS!
IN NO-MAN'S-LAND COME THE CASUALTIES.

MORE COME IN THE ENEMY TRENCHES.

BUT STILL THERE IS KINDNESS FOR A FALLEN COMRADE.

DON'T WORRY, FRED, I'LL GET THESE TO YOUR FOLKS SO THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED.

ANOTHER DAY BRINGS ANOTHER ATTACK.
SOON THOUGH THIS IS NOT ENOUGH.

YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THAT IRON CROSS ANYMORE, FRITZ. YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FAMILY SNAPS, THOUGH.

URRGH. HELP ME.

EH? AIN'T YOU DEAD?

YOU ARE NOW, CHUM.
BEHIND THE LINES, SUDDENLY ALONE... OR NOT?

WHO'S THERE?

AHEAD, STOCK STILL A GHOSTLY FIGURE STANDS.

BUT... YOU'RE DEAD. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

DO YOU WANT YOUR STUFF BACK? HERE, TAKE IT. TAKE IT ALL.

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

SHELL-SHOCK CASE, EH?
THERE IS NO REMORSE AS THE SOLDIER SINKS INTO THE MUD.

FLAMIN’ LOONIES, OH HO, WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

NOW, MISTER HUN. THAT FEELS LIKE A NICE FAT WALLET.

WHAT THE...?

CLICK

THAT NIGHT A LIFE IS SNUFFED OUT BY A BOOBY-TRAP.

IN TRUTH, THOUGH, HE HAD DIED A LONG TIME BEFORE, HIS HUMANITY OBLITERATED – ANOTHER OF THE CASUALTIES OF WAR...

THE END
In 1915, Dundee was an incredibly divided town...

...understanding how the war began is important, children...

Dundee had one of the highest rates per capita of men contributing to the great war effort.

...because people fear what they don’t understand and fear is the true cause of war.

But it also had one of the highest numbers of pacifists and war resisters.

And how do we fight fear?

Peace!!

Very good, class.

Before the war, women made up half of the workforce in Dundee, earning it the nickname, the

There you are, Elma! Sorry, Dottie!

How do you always manage to make us late? The WSPU* meeting won’t wait for us.

And those war lovers have no idea what’s coming their way!

*I don’t imagine it will be an exciting protest, Miss Munitionette.

But still! I can’t believe they stopped fighting for the vote and jumped in bed with the war effort!
The WSPU isn’t like it was before. I’d like to’ve chucked a goatie at Old Churchill!

She’d hand me the E&G her own self if we could spare the rations.

You’re lucky I don’t tell your mother you’re talking like that.

I would think your work at the factory would keep you too busy for such thoughts. How’s it going?

Och, you know, same old, not enough iron, too much time.

But they’ve been taking down all the iron fences in Dundee! How do you not have enough iron to make munitions?

Oh no! Mary’s at it again!

Young man! You should be abroad protecting us, not in the city centre shirking your duty to the nation! Shame on you!

Join the war effort!

Because women are efficient! There wouldn’t have been a munitions shortage if they let us work last year!

I know the army promised the WSPU women’s suffrage if they recruit. But I don’t know why Mary believed them!

It’s a crying shame. She’s just sending wee boys to their deaths all day and blaming us for no helpin’ her.

Ah, ladies. Finally come to contribute to our effort? It’s not just men who have a duty to their country!

That mouthy cow! Why I otta-

Easy, Elma! Come on...
...she's not worth getting battered by the police!

Ahm no gonnae make it today. Got more important contributions to make.

Hiya, Muggie. Heading to the protest?

Mary, when I'm finished tar and feathering you!

Muggie Shaw, the current leader of the Dundee women's war relief committee...

...had been one of the most active suffragette disruptors before the war.

When the war started, the suffragette movement announced that they would stop disrupting and focus on the war effort. That never sat right with Muggie.

Get it right up ya, Mary!

Hid off, Muggie! At least I'm still doing my part for the vote. Giving money to widows isn't going to help us win the war.

See? What did ah say?

You'll look great in those feathers, Mary. When I'm finished tar and feathering you!
FINALLY, SOME ACTION!

THAT’S IT! MUGGIE SHAW, YER BARRED!

DIDN’T WANNA DRINK HERE ANYHOW.

ME MEANNIL BAR

URGH!

CHEERS, LADIES!

?! HAAHAA!

WHERE THE WAR ENDED THE MEN CAME HOME OR WERE IMMORTALISED IN THE WAR MEMORIAL, WOMEN GOT THE VOTE, BUT LOST THEIR JOBS. AFTER THE WAR, DUNDEE WAS A WOMEN’S TOON NO MORE...

THE END.
PAT MILLS is the creator and first editor of 2000AD. He developed Judge Dredd and is the writer-creator of many of 2000AD’s most popular stories. He also created Action and co-created Battle Picture Weekly and Misty. He was the key writer on Crisis, with its political thriller about transnational food corporations, Third World War.

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IAN KENNEDY joined DC Thomson’s in 1949. During the 1950’s Kennedy mainly illustrated war comics. From the 1970s onward, Kennedy began to specialise in science fiction comics, regularly producing work for 2000AD and Stan Lee. He has also worked for Warlord, Starblazer, Battle, Eagle and continues to work for Commando to this day.

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Image: Letty Wilson

ERIN KEEPERS has been active in the comics field since 2014 when she graduated from the University of Dundee with a Masters in Comic Book Studies. Most of her comics are about outer space and/or feminism. Find her work at www.ErinKeepers.com or on Twitter and Instagram @ErinKeepers.

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CALUM LAIRD is Dundee born and raised. He started working at DC Thomson in 1979 and was editor of Commando from 2007 to 2015. He has recently become a Doctor of Comics with a PhD from the University of Dundee. You can contact Calum via: SergeantJock@BTinternet.com

ELLIO BALSON is a Dundee Studies in Comics graduate, and now works as a freelance artist, working on various University projects, Comichaus and self-published work such as Untethered. Search for ‘Ell Balson Art’ on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

https://www.artstation.com/ellbalson
Robbie McTaggart is a talented player of Ragtime music, the rebellious new music loved by teenagers; hence why the troops called themselves ‘The Ragtime Infantry’. It was the hot music of its day and therefore was hated by parents and the older generation.

Robbie is also a member of Dundee’s legendary Black Watch – the Fighting Fourth – who went over the top to the battle cry of ‘Marmalade’!

‘Ragtime Soldier’ is a story with a twist because it also deals with an incredible event after the war when a member of the War Resistance movement sensationally beat Winston Churchill in the Dundee election and became Member of Parliament.

Also featured in this publication is ‘The Women’s Toon’, a story about the Suffragette movement in Dundee, and ‘Casualties of War’, which is a tale from the World War One trenches.

“Joe’s an incredibly hard act to follow, but Gary and Phil have cracked it. Today, Charley’s War is selling more strongly than ever, which proves there is a huge audience for anti-war stories, particularly among younger readers. Despite this commercial success, the genre is still sadly neglected in favour of escapist fantasy. I guess because of editors’ and publishers’ personal preference, even if their audience feels differently. I hope Ragtime Soldier goes some way to changing things and encouraging others to produce stories about the genuine, real life heroes who were our forefathers. There are so many more stories about the truth of WWI waiting to be told...”

Pat Mills