



About this pack

We hope that teachers and students will enjoy our production and use this learning resource pack.

It may be used in advance of seeing the performance – to prepare and inform students about the play; and afterwards – to respond to the play and explore in more depth. Teachers may select, from the broad range of material, which is most suitable for their students.

The first section of this document is a detailed companion to our production: plot synopsis, character breakdown and interviews. It reveals the ways in which our company met with the many challenges of bringing ***AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK*** to the stage.

The second section looks at the three main areas of research for this play: The War; The Mill; The Rushcart.

At the end of the second section are exercises and suggestions for study in the subjects of History, English and Drama.

AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK by Deborah McAndrew, is published by Methuen and available to purchase from the Northern Broadsides website.

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INTRODUCTION

The play

AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK has been written to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The play explores impact of the war on a rural community in East Lancashire between August 1914 and October 1915.

The title is inspired by Philip Larkin's poem MCMXIV (1914), first published in *The Whitsun Weddings* in 1964. The poem, a single sentence spread over four stanzas, begins by describing volunteers lining up to enlist, and goes on to reflect on the momentous changes in England that would result from the First World War. The final stanza concludes, 'Never such innocence again'.

The play is conceived for twelve actors: eight men and four women. The women play the music to accompany the men dancing as the traditional team of Northwest Morris men. The dancing serves as an important symbolic motif in the play: representing tradition and courtship; community ties and, finally, remembrance.

AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK begins in the summer of 1914 in an idyllic rural Lancashire. Everyone in the community is excited about Wakes Week - a rest from field and mill and culminating in the Rushbearing Festival with singing, courting, drinking and dancing. The looming war barely registers ... but it will.

Through the lens of traditional rural life, the play follows the stories of the people of the village and witnesses their personal transitions from naïve exuberance, through fear and grief, to courage and dignity.

SECTION ONE

Plot Synopsis

ACT ONE - August 1914

Britain has just declared war with Germany – but it doesn't really feel like it yet. Widower, John Farrar, the passionate Squire of the village Morris Men, is whipping the dancers into shape for the Rushcart Festival at the end of the month. It's not easy. Jim Haworth is too fussy, Dick Shaw is too old, Herbert Tweddle can't see past the end of his nose and Alan Ramsden keeps extemporizing! Flashy Frank Armitage is the best dancer, and he is secretly courting John's daughter, Mary.

The lovers' cause is not helped by a long running stand-off between John Farrar and Frank's mother, Alice, over the damage done by her chickens to his flowers on Coronation Rushcart year. As our play begins, Alice's birds have once more escaped and destroyed the flowers with which John plans to decorate his Squire's hat for Rushcart 1914.

Meanwhile, Herbert Tweddle is making a mess of the banner, and Susie Hughes is making a big play for John's youngest son, Will. All the young men are very aware of the recruitment bands going round the major towns, but it's the poetic imagination of Ted Farrar that is brooding most on the possibility of escape through enlistment.

When John Farrar inevitably finds out about Mary and Frank there's hell to pay, but Ted pours cold water on this fire by announcing that he and Will both plan to sign up.

Rushcart day 1914

[The Rushcart is assembled with military precision – a foreshadowing of what's to come]

As the final preparations are made for the procession, Frank springs a surprise. He has signed up with the Farrar boys and joined the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Maybe now John will find him good enough for his daughter.

Act One ends with the Rushcart dance and celebration. Herbert is jockey, Mary is promised to Frank and Edie gives Ted a piece of heather from the moor to take away with him. There is a sense of optimism and excitement.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO - Christmas 1914

The lads are coming home on 48-hour leave and the village hall is being prepared for a wedding breakfast. Frank will marry Mary, with John's reluctant blessing.

The lads are still training and haven't been posted anywhere yet. Perhaps it'll all be over before they see any action.

That evening, Mary and Frank find an opportunity to be alone together and have their 'wedding night' ahead of the wedding...

Next morning all assemble for a happy occasion. At the breakfast the men don their clogs for a freer, fancier dance in celebration of the wedding.

[At the end of this sequence the dance turns darker, as the sticks are shouldered as rifles in an even starker foreshadowing of future events]

ACT THREE - August 1915

Once again, John Farrar is trying to prepare for the Rushcart Festival with a greatly diminished side: Jim Haworth; Dick Shaw; Alan Ramsden (who has stayed at home to care for his large family) and Herbert Tweddle who couldn't enlist on account of his poor eyesight.

Mary is expecting a baby. She fell pregnant the night before her wedding last Christmas – a fact that fills her father with fury and grudging admiration for Frank Armitage, who hit the target with one shot!

Despite the continuation of the war, village life tries to carry on as normal. We learn that the Lancashire Loyals have been shipped out to somewhere called Gallipoli...

During the painting of the banner – 'RUSHCART 1915' - news arrives of the death of both brothers, Ted and William, killed in action on the same day during the August Offensive on Chunuk Bair.

No news of Frank.

The shock sends Mary into premature labour. A baby boy is born – small, but healthy – Edward William Francis Armitage. At the memorial service for the Farrar brothers Susie Hughes presents Alan Ramsden with a white feather.

As the summer draws to a close John Farrar is a broken man. He'll not work again – which may be just as well, as there are now women doing men's work up at the mill. John and Alice both long now for the days when they fought so furiously over trivialities – and John even accepts a clutch of chicks from Alice as a peace offering.

Alan Ramsden enlists and Susie Hughes isn't as pretty as she was now she's piecing at the mill. She's very afraid of being left on the shelf, but Herbert Tweddle thinks marrying one of the many suddenly single women could count as his war effort. Edie Stapleton is resigned to single life. She'll never replace Ted in her heart, and since the death of her invalid mother will travel to Manchester, looking for work as a teacher – and maybe fight for 'The Cause'.

Then, at last, news of Frank – wounded.

[Frank enters alone and recites text from the contemporary military war diary of the 6th Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment from the August offensive at Gallipoli]

Mary finds Frank convalescing in Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool. He's lost a leg, and more besides – his innocence and his childhood friends. There'll be no more dancing for him.

Mary doesn't know that the war has only just got going. For her, Frank and John it's already over. But her husband has survived, and her son too. Mary alone still holds some hope in a distant future.

Mary sings the Rushcart song as a lullaby to her baby – '*Oh the Rushcart lads are bonnie, bonnie lads; the Rushcart lads are bonnie*' and she and her crippled husband pass like ghosts through the entry procession of 'RUSHCART 2014'

There is no music now. Just a drum and a simple banner - 'We Remember Them' – for the lads and lasses of 2014 to dance a militaristic NW clog as an act of Remembrance.

Characters

In order of appearance

Herbert Tweddle

Herbert's dad was a famous spinner at the local cotton mill, nicknamed Rumblestiltskin due to his genius for spinning and his shortness of stature. Shortsighted and a bit daft, Herbert will never be the man his father was and doesn't like his own nickname of 'Young Rumble'. At the start of the play Herbert has been working on making the Ruschart banner, which should entitle him to be the jockey that year.

Jim Haworth

Jim is a devout Christian and pillar of the local church. He doesn't drink and has a reputation for frugality. One of his duties as Bagman of the Greenmill Morris Men is taking care of the money.

Francis Armitage

Handsome Frank works at the mill and is the best dancer in the Greenmill Morris Men. He's still unmarried and lives with his widowed mother, but he has designs on village girl, Mary Farrar.

Mary Farrar

Secretly courting Frank Armitage, Mary quite enjoys keeping secrets from her domineering father, John. Willful and passionate, Mary knows what she wants and has deep reserves of courage.

Edie Stapleton

Edie divides her time between caring for her invalid mother and teaching the local children. She's well read and thoughtful and interested in politics – in particular the cause for Women's Suffrage. Still unmarried at 23, Edie might be considered an old maid. A perfect match for her would be with Edward Farrar, if only he could see it too.

Susie Hughes

Susie works at the mill on the carding machines. She's pretty, nifty and not entirely trustworthy. Susie has set her cap at the youngest Farrar boy, William, but he's not sure about her.

Alice Armitage

Frank's mother, Alice, is something of a force of nature. Recently widowed, Alice has already had a tough year. As a result she has forgotten to clip her chickens to prevent them flying away.

John Farrar

The Squire of the Morris Men and an indomitable man of Greenmill, John has lived a widower since his wife died giving birth to his youngest son, William. He's a stickler for tradition and demands absolute loyalty and commitment from the Rushcart lads.

Dick Shaw

The oldest dancer in the side, Dick struggles to keep up. He's Edie's Granddad and John's friend and confidante.

Edward Farrar

Ted is a poet and has dreams that reach far beyond the limits of Greenmill. He doesn't share his father's passion for the Rushcart, but doesn't know how to tell him.

William Farrar

18 year old Will is desperate to be taken seriously and treated as a man. He lives in awe of his clever brother and passionate sister. He enjoys the dancing, but would love to loosen things up with a few more fancy steps.

Alan Ramsden

Father of 4 daughters, Alan, has quite enough on his plate at home. Nevertheless, he's a keen dancer and a little too flamboyant for Squire Farrar's liking.

Characters who are mentioned but do not appear**Arthur Barraclough**

Eldest son of the local Farmer, who joins the Fusiliers.

Mrs Barraclough

Farmer's wife and Arthur's mother.

Mrs Everdale

Elderly lady of the village and former housekeeper of the Farrars.

Uncle Stan

The brother of Ted, Mary and Will's long dead mother. A soldier with the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, he was killed in the Boer Wars.

Lizzie Ramsden

Alan's wife and mother of his four daughters. She is reported to be very unhappy when he finally signs up a year in the summer of 1915.

Edie's Mother

Although never named this is a significant off-stage character. Edie cares for her, as she is an invalid. Also Dick Shaw's daughter, she dies shortly after news arrives about Ted and Will leaving Edie free to move to Manchester at the end of the play.

Also mentioned: **Reverend Semper** and **Ralph Turner** (the spinner who has to take on Susie as a piecer at the end of the play). **The Worsleys** – a wealthy, mill owning family who give part of their large house over to be a field hospital after the loss of one of their sons at Ypres. And from the past, John Farrar's wife, Herbert's famous father, **George Tweddle** (AKA Rumpelstiltskin) and **Wally Entwistle**, who was sick all over the crowd from the top of the Rushcart in the Diamond Jubilee year.



Production

Meet the team...



Back row: Lauryn Redding, Emily Butterfield, Ben Burman, Conrad Nelson (MD), Lis Evans (Designer), Andrew Whitehead, Darren Kuppen

Middle row: Mark Thomas, Elizabeth Eves, Russell Richardson, Sophia Hatfield, Barrie Rutter

Front row: Brett Lee Roberts, Katie Bevan (SM), Jack Quarton

The team is pictured here in the rehearsal space at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-u-Lyme. This is a theatre-in-the-round and the first shows are prepared for this space. As we tour around the performances will adapt to different size and shape of venue. We play virtually every configuration there is: The Round; Traverse (with audience sitting either side); Thrust; Proscenium Arch (a conventional raised stage with concealed wings either side) and even an Elizabethan style theatre.

You can see on this picture where our Stage Manager, Katie Bevan, has marked the floor with tape to indicate things that will only appear once the set and floor are in place.

When writing for this kind of touring, Deborah McAndrew must keep in mind that the show has to be very adaptable, and designer Lis Evans must create a flexible design that is robust enough to stand up to the rigours of the road.

IN DEPTH...

*Interview with playwright **Deborah McAndrew***

When you were commissioned to write this play did you feel you had something to say about World War 1?

Not really, no. What can be said about the First World War that hasn't already been said? The key for 2014 seems to be to bring to vivid life the kind of people who lived this story. Ordinary people. Not soldiers, but clerks and cobblers and cotton spinners.



What was your original brief for the play?

The brief given to me by Barrie Rutter was as follows: a play to commemorate the centenary of World War 1 that involved folk dancing. He also gave me the title from Larkin's poem. That was it. Then it was down to me to deliver a story that connected all the themes in an original, engaging and meaningful way.

So where did you start?

I began with the poem, and decided to focus on the idea of 'August'. This was the month in which war was declared in 1914 and so I set out to find a folk dancing tradition for the same time of year. I did my research and I found what I was looking for. The Rushcart Festival is an August event peculiar to the semi-rural mill towns of Lancashire and the Yorkshire Pennines; communities which at the turn of the 20th Century were still clinging to old traditions, despite the rapid growth of the railways and the seaside leisure industry. In the marching tunes and the basic 'rant' step and precise formations of the Lancashire Clog Morris I was very satisfied to find echoes of the military drill, the fife and drum.

How did you connect the Rushcart to the war?

Again – the answer was in the word 'August'. I knew I wanted to confine my story to the first year of the war. Initially I thought I would make the play span literally from August to August, but in fact the timeline does spill over into the autumn of 1915 in order to fulfill the story.

I was looking for connections, and I did a lot of research at Fulwood Barracks in Preston, where new Battalions of the Lancashire regiments were raised in the early weeks of the war. I was looking for an August battle – my second, ironic, 'Bank Holiday Lark'. I was also keen to tell a less well-known story from the War. I felt that the Western Front in Belgium and France had been covered very effectively in other dramas, so I turned my eyes towards the Eastern Front.

The catastrophic 'August Offensive' of 1915 at Gallipoli, was the last gasp of the short, disastrous campaign to gain control of the Dardanelles. Most famously associated with ANZAC troops, this campaign was also fought by British Tommies, including many battalions raised in Lancashire in August 1914. The experience of these men at Gallipoli – in particular The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment - gave me everything I needed to join my fictional narrative to real world events.

Where did the characters come from?

My brief was to write for a company of 12 actors – a terrific luxury for a playwright today! It's quite a challenge to manage such a large cast for a brand new work, but I was very excited by the opportunities that this presented.

As I started to research the Rushcart I found roles within the Morris Men that suggested characters to me: Squire, Bagman, Jockey... I imagined that there would be good dancers, and not so good dancers: men of different ages with varying attitudes to their narrow, traditional life. These characters would have normal jobs – mainly at the local mill. This also suggested relationships and a pecking order amongst the characters. The fact that the traditional Morris side is 8 men dictated the way that the gender balance would have to go. Once I had the Greenmill Morris men coming alive in my imagination, it wasn't difficult to invent their mothers, wives, sweethearts, sisters... Very quickly I had twelve vivid characters with which to populate my play – and one or two off stage characters too.

Everyone knows that a play about the First World War is going to be sad. As a writer how do you deal with the fact that the audience will bring this kind of knowledge to the play?

It was very important to me to not begin with a tragedy. We all know that a play about WW1 isn't going to end well. It felt important to me to depict normal life with all the character and absurdity that I always see in people. The war happened to folk who were flirting and arguing, dreaming and even dying in the usual way; people for whom a poppy was just another flower you stuck in your hat, and a white feather began life in the backside of a chicken.

Not every man who went to fight was killed in action. I wanted to keep the audience guessing as to who may or may not return. In fact, one character is only just going off to fight at the end of the play and his fate remains unknown.

I was also determined to avoid setting scenes at the front, or using music and symbols that are readily associated with the First World War. I have tried very hard to tell this story for the first time. I was quite sure that the dancers shouldn't wear poppies at the end. Apart from being an emotive (and sometimes controversial) symbol of Remembrance, these flowers are associated with fallen soldiers. It's very important to me that my play is seen to also remember the survivors and their families. Those who lived through the war and rebuilt their shattered lives with great courage when it was over; and those for whom it was never really over.

A play that involves Morris dancing will inevitably have moments of great joy and life – but the dancing in the play had to have a dramatic function and not just be tagged onto the story. By turns the dance is about tradition, community and courtship; celebration and affirmation; military foreshadowing; and finally, an act of Remembrance.

If you could sum up your play in a few words, how would you describe it?

AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK focuses in detail on one small community and the, often overlooked, British involvement on the Eastern Front. Countless Lancashire lads exchanged the soft Pennine drizzle for the searing Turkish sun and gave their lives at Gallipoli. The play never leaves the village of Greenmill, but remembers the fallen and wounded – and those for whom the War was far away, foreign, and over long before the guns were finally silenced.

Thanks Deb

You're welcome.



RUSHCART CHALLENGE

*Interview with Designer **Lis Evans***

I first started talking to Barrie Rutter (director) about two years ago when we were working on Love's Labour's Lost together. He said 'I've got this idea to do a show about a Rushcart but it has to be massive... MASSIVE! How could we do that?'

And I said, 'what's a rushcart?'

So I googled it.

It's a principle like a wooden step ladder that you hoik up – and I thought, oh that's fairly straightforward - and then I forgot all about it until we started talking about it again, perhaps a year ago.

All I knew about the play was that it involved a Rushcart – and then I saw the script and I thought, 'this is a really nice story.' It's not all about a Rushcart, though it is an important 'character'.

I researched the structure of the cart in depth at Sowerby Bridge, where it's built on a wooden frame and then clad with rushes. Our Rushcart had to be practical enough to be physically feasible for a bunch of actors to build as part of the show, so we've built a wooden structure with kind of gates that hook onto it with the rushes clad on top of that.

We've got the actual rushes from Sowerby Bridge. As they were dismantling the cart after the parade and I sort of said, 'what are you doing with them? Can we have them?'

I didn't know if they'd survive long enough but we had them all in bags in the props store. I looked into buying them, but there's nothing out there that looks like those rushes. I looked at various grasses, and the foliage that comes with fake bulrushes isn't bad, but they're like £3.99 for a tiny, tiny bunch so it would have cost us thousands to do a whole cart, and it would never really have looked the part.

Luckily the bagged up rushes survived, so we've re-sprayed and fireproofed them, put them into bunches and attached them onto boards that hang from an A-frame structure. Because the show is touring until June it's going to have quite a hammering so we're making spare bundles of rushes to replace anything that gets too battered - and hope for the best.



They've had the worst handling they're ever going to have because they've been put into clumps and tied on and now all they do is they hang on the storage rack, or they sit on the rushcart, so hopefully they'll all survive.

The finished product looks quite similar to Rushcarts that are still going in parts of Lancashire, but obviously it's a theatrical representation.

The top edge of a Rushcart is almost like a thatch, with rushes clumped tightly together, and I thought, 'that's going to be too heavy and too awkward to get up high during a performance'. Saddleworth have also got two little Rowan trees front and back, and the Sowerby Bridge have got a distinctive white, painted triangle. Everyone seems to have a little motif so I've decided that the Greenmill thing will be (my little touch) a long, hessian sausage with heather all through it. I've got some very good fake heather, so I bought loads of it. It has the right feel without putting a great big thatch on the top.

We've also opted for the saddle on the cart option. Some of the jockeys just sit amongst the rushes, and some of them sit on a little wooden seat, but we've got a really nice old wooden saddle. I have to think about health and safety (which I don't think the real Rushcarters do particularly) Mark Thomas, who plays Herbert Tweddle, is quite daring. He doesn't think, 'is this safe?' But we're going to fix the saddle with a handle for him to hold onto. Because it is quite high.



Originally we were going to have two different heights of Rushcart for different venues, so that we had a taller one in the taller venues, but actually the shorter height is still pretty massive so we've stuck with one, and Mark always knows that's the height he's going to be at. We had the cart constructed quite early in the rehearsal process, but there's only one part of the rehearsal room that fits it with Mark on top.

Of course, the Rushcart is only part of the design. It was important to get the costumes spot on too. I wanted people to look real.

I've seen runs of the show now and I genuinely care about those people. It's beautifully written so you have those little details about people's lives. I didn't want to trivialise any of that so I've been very careful and diligent enough to make people look like they're not wearing costumes - they're wearing real clothes that real people would have worn.

I've done quite a lot of research into 1914 costume. You've always got that thing with theatre that these are people that live in Lancashire in a small town in 1914 and so they wouldn't be wearing the same fashions as people in London. So I try to dilute it a little bit so that people look real, but at the same time we need to convey to the audience that it is 1914. You've got to do quite a subtle job.



We've done quite a few shows in this period, so we've used some stock: nice old boots that have a nice worn quality, high waisted skirts, and some long drapy knitwear to give that lovely silhouette of the period because it's right on the cusp. We had some beautiful old blouses that looked perfect, but I thought, 'they're never going to stand up to the run.' So we've remade quite a few garments out of sympathetic but strong fabric. It's all soft cottons and silks. They're not modern fabrics but they are washable. In fact, it's the sort of show where it might look nicer a few weeks in...

Women are still wearing corsets, even the mill workers, and are just beginning to start doing jobs that were men's jobs. Skirts are a little bit shorter; it's a really interesting period.

We've finished with Victorian style and it's suddenly looks really modern.

Liz Eves, who's playing Alice, is 40 but she's a young attractive 40 and I wanted her to look older, so her clothes are of a slightly earlier period. She's got fuller puffs in her sleeves and darker colours that make her look a bit older and drabber.

We've done a little bit of cheating so there isn't a lot of dressing of hats during the show, using doubles. The picture has to be that they wear their hat on an ordinary summer's day but then we have another version of the same hat, which we're trimming up for Rushcart Saturday. That way it looks like they've just trimmed up their ordinary hat.

I've tried to be as authentic and subtle and real as we can - obviously taking into consideration that the show is opening in February and touring til June, so things have got to be hard wearing and practical as well.

We've got a nice muted palette of textiles and colours apart from the flowers. Lots of the photographs of women working in mills show them wearing corsets, so we've done corsets. We've been as authentic and accurate as we can, without it becoming high fashion and couture

I've given all the men a basic outfit of high waisted trousers, braces and working shirts with detached collars and waistcoats and jackets – so they've each got a little capsule wardrobe to wear. On Rushcart Saturday everyone has a clean white shirt.

For the mill clothes we've used images from the museum at Helmsshore. We've copied some trousers that look like a very thick white canvassy cotton and cotton, collarless shirts because I assume it's so hot in there. For the woman in the mill we've actually found a vintage overall in the store. Now I've got to break them all down so they actually look like they've been 'through the mill'. We've measured the actual height off the floor for everybody for the oily line on their clothes where they've leant on the machinery. So it's the same number of centimetres off the floor, because we've got tall actors and short actors, but they've all leant on the same machinery so that line is in the same place.

Andrew Whitehead, who plays Jim Haworth, has done another show about mill workers and someone in the audience pointed out that they would have had bits of fluff in their hair - cotton dust. So I need to locate the right sort of fluff!



Then there's a wedding dress, and the uniforms (we've hired those) - at this point it's still an on-going process. We have to make the new stuff look older and worn – a process called 'breaking down'. I haven't got round to this yet. When you're breaking down you've got to think about what happened to the garment. Whatever you do to it must be permanent, so it can be washed. I might do a general spray with slightly grubby dye, and then we'll provide costume with a dusty dye, little bit of car spray - the right sort of dirt.

There's still quite a bit to do but we're getting there. There are so many hats to be decorated, I've decided we're going to have a hat decorating competition in the costume department.

We need to make sure everything survives so that people who are paying to see it in June get just as good a show as they see in Feb.

IN REHEARSAL

Sophia Hatfield [*Edie*] reveals her personal connections to the play and the war.

“When I found out I got the part of Edie I had a chat with my grandma and she said that her father (my great-granddad), Percy Chaster Brearley, actually fought in the First World War. He was with the ANZAC troops because my Gran’s family were Australian.

My great granddad signed up in 1915 and travelled over to Europe and was in the battle of Messines (1917). He was promoted a couple of times and survived the war and went home again. Gran showed me lots of pictures and documents and it made it hit home that someone connected to me was there.

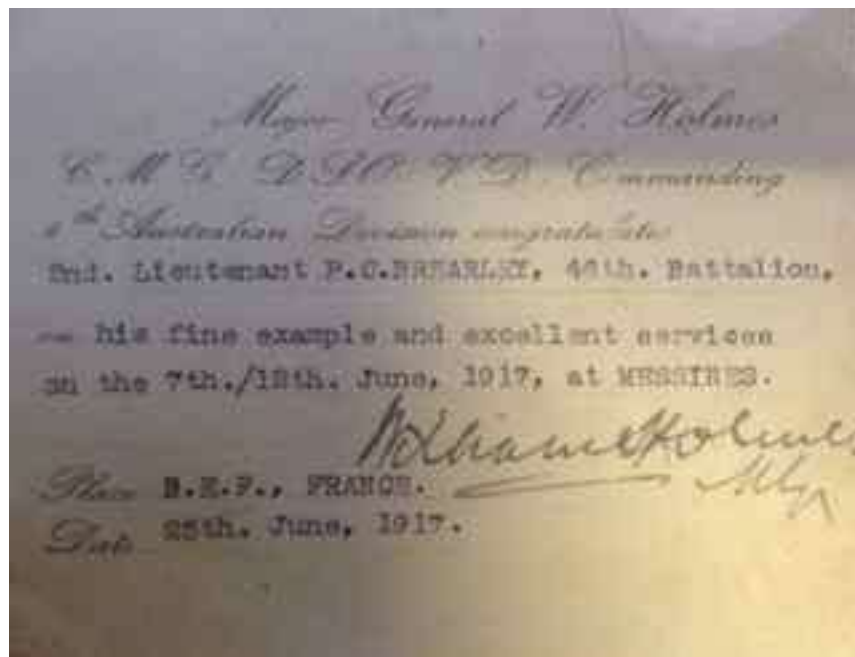
After the war he and his family came over to Britain, then they moved to New York. I think that option to travel like that was opened up to them by the fact that he’d joined the forces. He and my great-grandma ended up going back to Australia after the Second World War.



My grandma said her father used to have lots of pictures that he took while he was in the trenches at Messines, which he didn’t bring when they left New York. Gran said that he just didn’t speak about the war at all and she really regrets not keeping the pictures, but he didn’t want to - so they were just chucked away.

I did ask her what the pictures were like and she said it looked very muddy and not very nice at all, and that there were ponies and traps trying to pull things through the mud. I think when you see footage of the war you see lots of tanks and machinery, but actually people were trying to exist there in any way they could.

My grandma lives in Skipton – she’s 93 now. She met my Yorkshire granddad in New York during the Second World War and they came to live in Leeds. I grew up in Bingley in Yorkshire and I almost feel like if my Australian granddad hadn’t fought in the war, bizarrely, I wouldn’t be here. They wouldn’t have been able to travel and my grandma wouldn’t have met my granddad. The war really did change the world in quite a big way.”



2nd. Lieutenant Percy Chaster Brearley was mentioned in a Despatch from Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, dated 7th November 1917, for gallant and distinguished services in the Field.

“Percy Chaster Brearley was on my Dad’s side of the family, but on my Mum’s side I discovered a very different attitude to the Great War. My mum’s great-great-granddad was a cousin of the writer George Bernard Shaw. He was very opposed to the war and his plays stopped being printed and performed because he was openly opposed to it. It really changed public opinion of him. None of his essays on it were published in the newspapers because he objected to the patriotism and he felt like it was exploiting the working classes.

My mum also had a great-great-aunt who reminds me very much of Edie – my character in the play. She was a young woman at the time of the war, and never married. She was educated and very philanthropic. She was a teacher and set up a school in Liverpool for poor children. My mum said she used to buy them shoes and when she died her funeral sort of stopped Liverpool and the streets were closed. There was something about that which really reminds me of Edie because she has that generous quality and she’d always put the education of children above herself.

I see two sides to Edie. I see the side to her that’s put upon; that cares and is domestic and quite overlooked by people for lots of different reasons. She does a lot for people and doesn’t seem to get much thanks for it. But at the same time there’s a spirit in her that’s pioneering - that wants to get out, see the world, wants to change things. I think she’s enabled to do that by the war. It forces Edie to think about the wider world and not just her small community.

During rehearsals me and Russell Richardson (who play’s Edie’s granddad) had a little chat about the fact that both our characters think education is so important, and where Edie would have been schooled - where she would have learned to read. I

also had a nice conversation with Lis (designer) when we were choosing costumes, and we did try and make me look like a suffragette with my hat and my beautiful long coat.

Edie has a genuine friendship with Mary Farrar (played by Emily Butterfield), but I found her relationship with Susie more difficult because I couldn't see Edie hating or disliking anyone, but she struggles with Susie. She's six years younger and not as educated, and she doesn't have the responsibility that Edie has on her shoulders of caring for an invalid mother. Being dubbed an old maid by Susie is very hurtful.

I think Ted Farrar (played by Jack Quarton) and Edie understand each other. She admires his poetic nature and his intelligence and they're really true friends. She is romantically interested in him, but I think for some reason it's not 100% reciprocated. This means she's not quite sure of herself, and the most she can do is give him a piece of heather to take away with him. She keeps a respectful distance from him and doesn't speak openly about her emotions at all.

I love how bold she gets towards the end of the play. She's very practical, and it is practical when she decides to go to Manchester – but I like that there's that little spark that's ignited in her that maybe she could contribute towards getting votes for women, that she could teach in a school...."



LORD OF THE DANCE



*Choreographer and Musical Director,
Conrad Nelson, takes us through the steps*

DENSHAW

Denshaw is a dance created by the Saddleworth Morris Men, and no other Morris side perform this particular dance. They kindly taught it to me and gave permission for us to use it in the production. I have shortened it slightly, to make it the right length for our purposes, but all the steps are still there.

The actual dance steps in North West Morris are very few, but the patterns – that is the formations made using crosses, turns, sidesteps and reels - are what make the dances complicated and enjoyable to do, and interesting to watch.

The fact that the North West Morris Men wear clogs means that accuracy on the footwork is very important to create a crisp, percussive sound.

THE STEPS

The Rant - This is the basic step of North West Morris dancing. It's a hop on one foot, while the other taps the toe in front, and then repeated on the other side. This step is performed on the spot and on the move.

The Skip - Used when moving quickly in formation.

The March - Forwards AND backwards!

The Kick - Sounds self explanatory, but these do vary - sometimes performed with a hop, and sometimes not. Kicks can be low, or high, and with bent or straight knee.

THE PATTERNS - Traditionally there are 8 men in a North West Morris side, though dances can be done with multiples of 8 – up to as many as 32 dancers on special occasions. An almost infinite number of moving patterns can be made using this number of people, but these are just the ones that are in our main dance, Denshaw.

Lines - Dances usually begin with two lines of 4. Within this basic configuration dancers can be facing all one way, or facing inward, towards each other, or outwards. During Denshaw all these crop up at some point, and a single line of 8 men in a row is also formed.

Boxes - Made when the 8 splits into two 4s, facing each other.



Reels and turns - When dancers link arms, or join their sticks in 2s or 4s and turn like a wheel. Sometimes this results in dancers moving to a different position.

Crosses - Straight, diagonal or corner to corner. Crosses may be done by everyone at once, or two at a time. Crosses are often used as part of more complex formations, in which dancers change position and then, through further moves the manoeuvre resolves with everyone back in their original places.

Combinations

Combinations of steps and moves are often called after the person who invented that particular pattern. In Denshaw there's a series of moves called 'The Ronnies' – after the bloke who invented it.



For *An August Bank Holiday Lark* we have also drawn on other English dance traditions. In the wedding scene we use an adapted version of a traditional folk dance 'Strip The Willow'.

One of the old tunes I have incorporated into the music is called 'Haste to the Wedding'. I have also choreographed quite a bit of step clog, or 'fancy dancing' as it is called in the play.

As the narrative changes from the wedding to the soldiers leaving for duty, the dance changes from step clog to a section of a Cotswold Morris Dance called 'Beaux of London City'. It's a dance about grouse shooting where sticks are presented like guns, but when men in uniform dance this it turns into something else and tells the story very well.

The dancing in this play isn't a time out from the narrative – it always part of the action.

Q & A with **Eddie Worrall** of **The Saddleworth Morris Men**



Who are the Saddleworth Morris Men and what do they do?

The Saddleworth Morris Men are a Morris dance team (also called a 'side') based in the area known as Saddleworth. This is a collection of villages in the Pennines near Oldham. We dance traditional Morris dances collected from our area, which were danced locally until around the First World War. We perform our dances in Saddleworth as well as around the UK at festivals and weekends of dance with other Morris sides. We also organise the Saddleworth Rushcart each August.

What's your role?

I am a dancer with the side and also play Melodeon (a type of accordion) as part of the Morris band. I am also the 'Rushcart Secretary' for the morris side which means I am the main organiser for the Rushcart weekend.

Talk us through your outfit.

Saddleworth Morris Men dance a style of Morris dancing that comes from the North West of England. Other parts of the UK have their own styles of dancing that is very different.

As with most North West Morris sides, our outfit (known as a Morris 'kit') is very colourful and distinctive. We wear black breeches, white socks and shirts and red and blue sashes across our chests. We wear black wooden soled clogs rather than shoes, which are a traditional type of footwear for our area. These are individually made for each dancer and have clog irons on the bottom to prevent the wooden sole wearing out.

Saddleworth wear a special striped waistcoat that is unique to our side with the cloth woven for us in a local Mill. We also wear black bowler hats which are dressed with fresh flowers, leaves and feathers each time we dance. Each man competes to make the best!

What kind of music do you play?

Saddleworth Morris's music is traditional English music that was popular at the time the dances were being performed around 100 years ago. These are common tunes in the North West Morris tradition and we use variations recorded locally. Many were popular songs at that time, or Military marching tunes.

What are the dances called, and how do they differ from other types of Morris dancing?

Our dances are named after villages in Saddleworth:- Greenfield, Uppermill, Dobcross, Delph, Diggle and Denshaw. These are all based on dances collected from local people when the Morris side was started in the early 1970's. These dances are unique to us and are not danced by any other Morris side.

However, they are similar to other Morris dances from the North West of England as they are danced by a set of 8 dancers and are quite long and complex.

There are some other types of Morris dancing from other parts of England:

Cotswold (Oxfordshire & Gloucestershire) - Danced in sets of 6 men, often using handkerchiefs or sticks and mainly white kit

Longsword (Yorkshire) - Danced using metal 'swords' with the dancers holding the handle of one sword and the tip of another to make an unbroken chain. This chain then remains unbroken through out the dance with the dancers weaving in and out of one another throughout the dance

Rapper (Durham and Northumberland) - Similar to Longsword but the 'Rapper' sword is much shorter and very flexible. The style is often danced very fast and involves dancers somersaulting over the swords during the dance

Border (Herefordshire/Worcestershire - the border with Wales) - This style is similar to Cotswold but less complex. Border sides usually wear very elaborate costumes.

Molly (Cambridgeshire/Essex) - Simliar to Border dancing

What's so special about the Rushcart?

The Rushcart is the biggest event of our year and we have around 20 Morris sides from around the UK and abroad who join us each year. The Rushcart is about 15 feet tall when built and one of our side rides on it for the weekend as it is pulled around Saddleworth over the weekend. It is a real honour to ride the Rushcart as 'jockey' and each member of the side only gets to do it once. The Jockey makes that year's banner and name that year's Rushcart. It was my turn to be Jockey in 2011, that year's Rushcart was called 'West Riding of Yorkshire', the county that Saddleworth is part of.

However, the Rushcart has a much older purpose. In Saddleworth and other parts of the Pennine area, the Rushcart was built each year in August to take fresh rushes to the local parish Church. These rushes were spread on the floor to make a new floor covering for the winter. As



Churches had stone floors installed, rushes were no longer needed. However local villages still built them at the same time of year, during the annual holidays from the local Mills (known as 'wakes' week).

What do you enjoy most about being a Morris Man?

Being a Morris dancer is about being part of a living tradition of English folk dancing and others customs. These are all important parts of what makes us what we are today and I have been proud to take Saddleworth's dance traditions to events around the country and abroad. These traditions are an important way to help us understand both our past and present.

However, the best part is having fun as part of a group of like minded people!



SECTION TWO

The War *The first year*

The action of AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK begins in August 1914. War was declared on 4th August following a long period of political brinkmanship on the part of the major European powers. The assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Ferdinand, by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo on 28th June led to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia.

The strong political alliances in Europe at that time meant that inevitably the war would not just be between two countries. Austria-Hungary was allied with Germany; Serbia with Russia. Russia was, in turn, allied with France and Britain. Whilst other countries, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Bulgaria and Italy declared neutrality - Germany, Russia, France and Britain were inexorably drawn into war.

At 2300 hours on 4th August 1914 Britain officially declared war on Germany and her allies.

Britain was the only major power in Europe that did not have some form of conscription at this time – that is when young men are obliged by law to serve for a period of time in the armed forces.

The existing British army – the Regulars – was made of entirely of men who had volunteered to join. This army was smaller than its European counterparts, but probably better due to the high level of skill and professional training undertaken by infantrymen.

The army that went from Britain to France in August 1914 was called the British Expeditionary Force, and consisted initially of about 100,000 men. Despite the famous skills of the British rifles, the artillery power was soon found to be inadequate compared to the might of Germany's trench-busting artillery and over 10,000 machine guns, compared to Britain's 120.

On 8th August the British secretary of war, Field Marshal Sir Herbert Kitchener, called for 100,000 volunteers to join the British Army. Within a week 174,000 men had enlisted.



MONS

During the week in which our play is set the first major engagement of the war for British troops is happening in the Belgian town of Mons. In this, the final battle in an encounter known as 'Battle of the Frontiers', the British Expeditionary Force met the German First Army. Despite being outnumbered, the British inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans, but were forced to retreat. German advance through Belgium to France was delayed, but not stopped.

YPRES

Despite the widely held belief that the war would be 'all over by Christmas' the signs soon started to point to a much longer, and more protracted conflict. Fighting began in mid October around the British held Belgian municipality of Ypres, in the Flemish province of West Flanders. German forces advanced to try and capture key Channel ports, but with the opening of canal and sea-defence sluice gates they were effectively cut off and fighting brought to a standstill.

On September 19th British troops launched a counterattack on the Germans from Ypres. However, this failed due to the heavy rains that had turned the fields of Flanders into a quagmire. The Germans put up a stubborn defence and the French and British suffered heavy losses in this preliminary round what became known as the First Battle of Ypres.

The Germans spent the next few weeks building up strength to attack and on 31st October came very close to breaking through the southeast of Ypres. Desperate fighting by the French and British stemmed the tide, but in early November the Germans renewed their attack. They took Dixmunde to the north on the 11th but the British held on and, despite several more German pushes in the following days, the worst of the fighting was over.

This First Battle of Ypres is a success then for the British and French troops, but at a heavy cost. Half of the British Expeditionary Force are casualties. All sides now start digging in to create the infamous trenches that stretched from the North Sea to the Swiss border.

For the time-line of our play Second Battle of Ypres will also be known to our characters, as it took place during April and May of 1915.

The Third Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele) is the most widely known and the most costly in human suffering. This notorious encounter of the war saw nearly half a million casualties to all sides, while only a few miles of ground were gained by the British, French, Canadian and Anzac allies. The town of Ypres itself was almost obliterated by artillery fire.

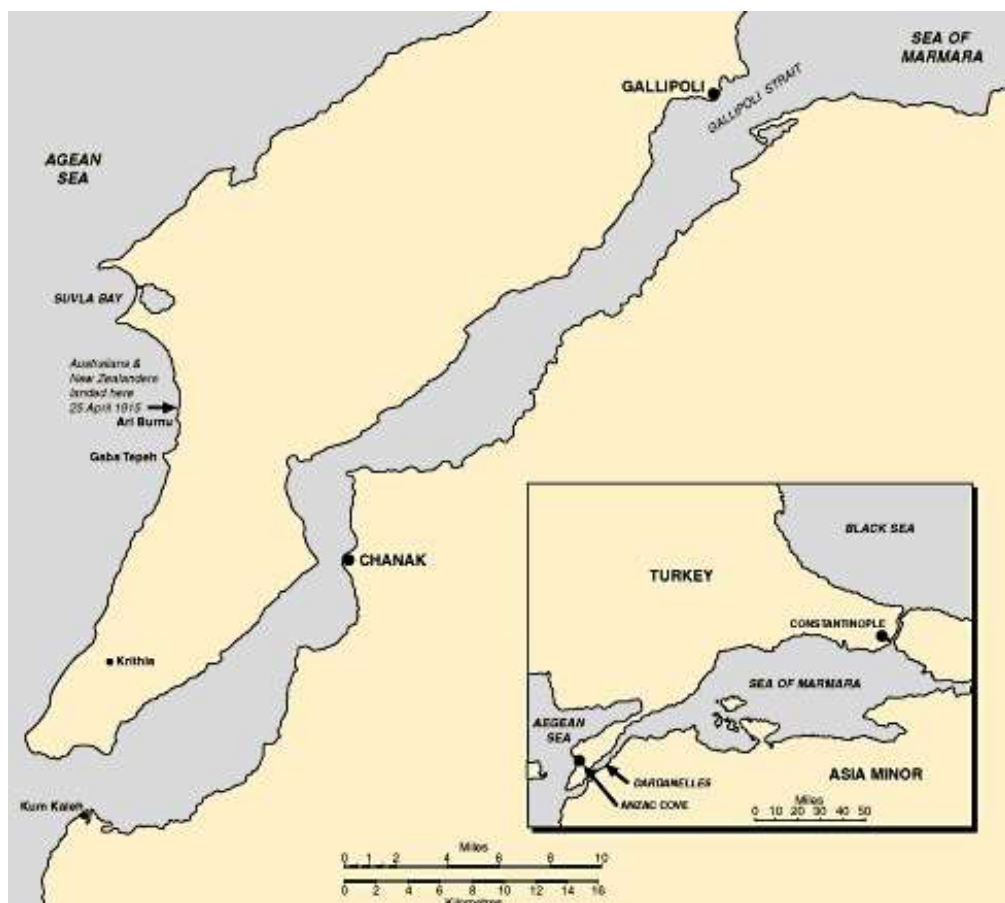


Royal Field Artillery ammunition limbers moving up the Ypres-Menin Road on 26 September 1917.
© IWM (Q 2905)

GALLIPOLI

The Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli was strategically important to the Allies, as it forms the north bank of the Dardanelles – a stretch of water linking the Aegean Sea with the Black Sea. Control of these waters would have provided a safe passage and supply and communication route to and from allied Russia.

Turkey (centre of what was then known as the Ottoman Empire) was closely affiliated with Germany and by early November 1914 it had entered the war. This meant that Britain and her allies had to invade and seize this territory in order to gain control of the vital strategic passage through the Dardanelles.



Naval bombardments began in February 1915, but the failure of the main attack begun on 18th March convinced the British commanders and Allies that Gallipoli would have to be taken by ground forces.

The British Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, appointed General Sir Ian Hamilton to command the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force that was to carry out this mission. These troops included the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (also known as the ANZACS) and the Regular British 29th Division – of which the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers was a part.

The landings

Several factors delayed the landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This gave the Turks (Ottomans) more time to prepare. The British seriously underestimated the courage and organisation of the enemy and the allied forces paid a heavy price.

On 25th April 1915 landings were made on several beaches on the peninsula. Notably, the British landed at Helles at the tip, while the ANZACS came ashore at a small cove to the north on the Aegean coast.

Whilst the Turks were too few to prevent the landings they inflicted heavy casualties. The ANZAC forces suffered very heavy losses and today the 25th April is commemorated in Australia and New Zealand as ANZAC day with as much solemnity and significance as Remembrance Day here in Britain. The little cove where the ANZAC troops landed became known as ANZAC cove.

At Helles the story was similar. The Turks couldn't prevent the landing, but they kept the invasion close to the shore and losses were very heavy. The 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers managed to overwhelm the Turkish defenses despite over half of the battalion killed, wounded or missing and were awarded six Victoria Crosses – the famous 'six VCs before breakfast'. The spot where they came ashore became known as Lancashire Landing. At the end of the campaign the Lancashire Fusiliers left 1,816 men behind - lost on Gallipoli.



The Loyals

Now called The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) - until 1921 known as The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment - was an infantry regiment of the line in the British Army from 1881 to 1970. The Regiment raised a number of extra war service battalions during The Great War.

6th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was raised at Fulwood Barracks, Preston in August 1914, as part of the "Kitchener Army"'s first wave, and immediately posted to Tidworth – a garrison town in Wiltshire – for training on Salisbury plain. In February 1915 they went to Blackdown, near Aldershot, and then in the spring of 1915 prepared for embarkation to Gallipoli.

17th June 1915 Battalion set sail for Malta, Alexandria, Mudros – and finally landed at Cape Helles (Gallipoli) on the night of the 6th of July. Almost immediately the Battalion was sent forward to the front line, relieving troops that had suffered much in the landing operations.

While up the line in July the battalion suffered its first casualties of the war – Captain and six other ranks killed or dying of wounds – and men 'missing'.

On the last day of July the 13th division was sent temporarily to Mudros.

6th Battalion returned on 4th Aug and occupied bivouacs in Victoria Gully where on the 6th, as the result of enemy shelling, two men were killed and officers wounded.

On the morning of the 7th August the 6th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire was sent forward to a point known as the Apex, as a reinforcement to Brigadier-General Johnston's NZ Brigade. Fighting here had been very severe in the attempt to complete the conquest of an important strategic ridge called Chunuk Bair.

At 8.00 pm on 9 August the New Zealanders finally left Chunuk Bair. In their place stood soldiers of the British 6th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and the 5th Battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment. Beyond the British trenches, the Turks were massing for a great attack.

The Turks shelled vigorously at dawn on the 10th and then attacked. The Wiltshires, caught in an exposed trench, were almost annihilated, while the 6th Battalion was simply overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers.

It is in this real-life engagement that our fictional characters, Ted and Will Farrar are killed, and Frank Armitage wounded.

In General Hamilton's dispatch he wrote: *There was no flinching. They died in the ranks where they stood.*

January 1916: 6th Battalion evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt and then to Mesopotamia.



In *An August Bank Holiday Lark* the character of Frank Armitage recites actual text from the War Diary of the 6th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

Frank: Extracts from the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force – War Diary 1915. 6th Battalion, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment

August 9th - Battalion, who had been unable to claim water ration, were ordered to relieve the garrison at CHUNUK BAIR.

At about 12 noon one company was set to reinforce 1st line. Owing to open country, and exposure to hostile machine guns and artillery fire, only half the company were able to reach the trenches, the second line of trenches taken over by Captain Mather's Company from the Auckland Battalion New Zealand Brigade. Relief completed by 10pm.

During the early hours of the 10th the enemy had crept up close to the right of our line, men occupying the observation posts were immediately sniped.

At 3.45am the enemy commenced throwing bombs into our trenches to which we replied; this continued until daylight when the trenches were shelled by hostile artillery, one of our own shells also dropping into the trenches.

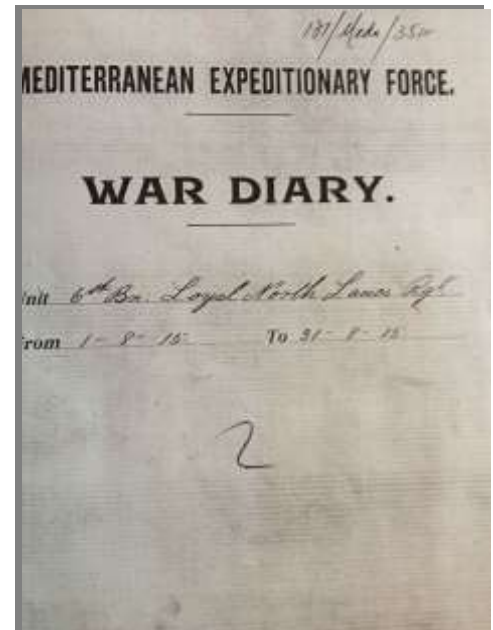
Communication in the trenches was practically impossible as the trenches were traversed but not recessed.

At about 4.45am the enemy attacked in force. It was impossible to form an idea of the numbers attacking owing to the bad siting of the trenches... and no provision for lookout posts. Turks attacked in four lines, the first two lines were mown down by our fire, the third line reached our trenches, where hand to hand fighting took place.

Although our losses were very heavy the enemy's must have been greater.

Those who were able to retire in any sort of order formed in with Capt Mather's company in the second line when another stubborn resistance was made, but the enemy were too strong, and although losing heavily they soon overcame the second line by sheer force of numbers. The battalion made a gallant resistance... and charged three times with the bayonet until overcome.

The battalion did everything possible to repel the hostile attack.
The position was an impossible one from the start
The following names have been brought to notice:
Captain J.W Mather, 2nd Lieutenant H W Mann, 8387 Sgt Hinton.
Casualties – Officers missing 10
Other ranks killed 3
Wounded 30
Missing 445



The Mill *Helmshore – a model*

Writer, Deborah McAndrew, used Helmshore Mills Textile Museums as a model for the play. Situated on the River Ogden in Helmshore, Lancashire the museum consists of two Mills – Whitaker Mill and Higher Mill, the earlier of the two dating back to 1796.



Throughout its working life Helmshore processed wool and cotton alternately, according to demand and profitability, but Deborah focused on cotton processing in her research for the ‘Greenmill Spinners’

The world of the mill provided detail and depth for the world of the play, a ‘pecking order’ for the characters, and some wonderful language too. You hear a lot of these industrial words in the play.

Spinner – the top manual job in the production process. The Spinners commanded huge machines, known as a ‘mule’. His job (and it was a man’s job) was to work and maintain the machine as it converted soft cotton ‘rovings’ into fine strong thread, suitable for weaving into cloth. *The character of John Farrar is a Spinner.*

Mule – the spinning machine itself – a kind of frame, which draws out multiple threads evenly to a length of about 1.5 metres, before twisting it and winding it onto spindles covered by a lacquered paper sleeve called a cop. The twist is what gives the thread its strength. In the 18th and 19th century, children were employed to clean up the floors under the mules. This was very dangerous work and there were many bad accidents. These children were called **scavengers**. Successive legislation gradually improved conditions for the scavengers, but it wasn’t until the Education Act of 1918 that children under 14 were prevented from working in factories. *The character of Ted Farrar describes scavenging on the spinning floor as a child.*



Piecer – assistants of the Spinner, the Piecer’s job was to mend the threads, which often broke as they were drawn out and before the twist could be added. The fix was easy – just join the two broken ends together and rub between finger and thumb. From this process we get the term ‘cottoning on’. *The character of Susie Hughes becomes a Piecer*

during the war – a job traditionally done by men.

Carder – the process of combing the cotton so that the fibres all ran in one direction was called ‘carding’. Originally this had to be done by hand, but by the time of our play there are large machines that perform this task, operated by girls and women, who wore their hair tied tightly back. If hair got caught in the machine it was torn from the head and many girls were ‘scalped’ by the carding machines. **Carder’s Cough** was an industrial disease associated with this work. *The character of Edie Stapleton cares for her invalid mother who has suffered all her life from ‘Carder’s Cough’.*

Doffer – the job of removing full cops from the machines and replacing them with empty ones. It was usually the work of boys, requiring speed rather than strength or skill. *The character of Herbert Tweddle is a doffer at the start of the play.*

Part Timers – at the time of our play children went to school for half the day and worked half a day in the mill. *The character of Edie Stapleton is a teacher of the ‘Part Timers’*

Rochdale Rope – also known as ‘rovings’ or ‘sliver’, these are the long, soft lengths of combed cotton that are then wound onto large bobbins for transfer to the spinning mules.



Links to Helmshore Mills Textile Museums can be found at the end of this document.

The Rushcart



The context for the story of
AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY

LARK is the northern tradition of Wakes Week – a holiday in which the mills were closed for maintenance and most of the workers had time off.

In many of the rural mill towns the Rushcart festival was the climactic event of this holiday week. Rushbearing is the ancient tradition of bringing harvested rushes to church to cover the floor for winter. This was a very practical thing, as the floors were just bare earth and the rushes helped to keep the church warm and dry. In the hillier places a cart was used to transport the rushes, and evolved into an elaborate construction, pulled by teams of Morris dancers.

The Rushcarts eventually died out in the early 20th century but have been revived in parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire and once again are popular community events.

In our play the situation in Greenmill is typical of the real mill villages just before the outbreak of war. With increasing ease and affordability of travel, working people found they were able to go to the popular seaside resorts such as Blackpool during the Wakes Week. This meant that the big community events at home, such as the Rushcart, were in decline. By 1914 you could indeed, as John Farrar says in the play, get a direct train from Delph to Aberystwyth.

The Rochdale Rushcart

The character of Dick Shaw tells a story about a Rushcart in Rochdale being pulled by women. This is also based on fact. Early references to rushbearing refer to women carrying the rushes to church. In the King James's *'Book of Sports'* (1618) there is the statement: *May games, Whitsun ales, Morris dances and the setting up of Maypoles and other sports, ... so that the game may be had in due and convenient time without impediment or neglect of divine service, and that the women shall have leave to carry rushes to church for the decorating of it.*

However by the 1800s rushcarts had supplanted the women's role. Men generally built up the rushcarts, and men usually pulled the carts - with one or two notable exceptions...

In 1859 the Smallbridge Rushcart sent ripples of shock through the respectable community. The Rochdale Observer reported that the Smallbridge cart was "...partly manned by women and girls..."

Letters to the newspaper that followed this event bordered on the hysterical. John Ashworth, founder of the Chapel for the Destitute, wrote: ***"Those persons labouring for the redemption of mankind must be sick at heart. Never could they have conceived that young girls would be seen drawing Rushcarts."***

The Armistice Rushcart

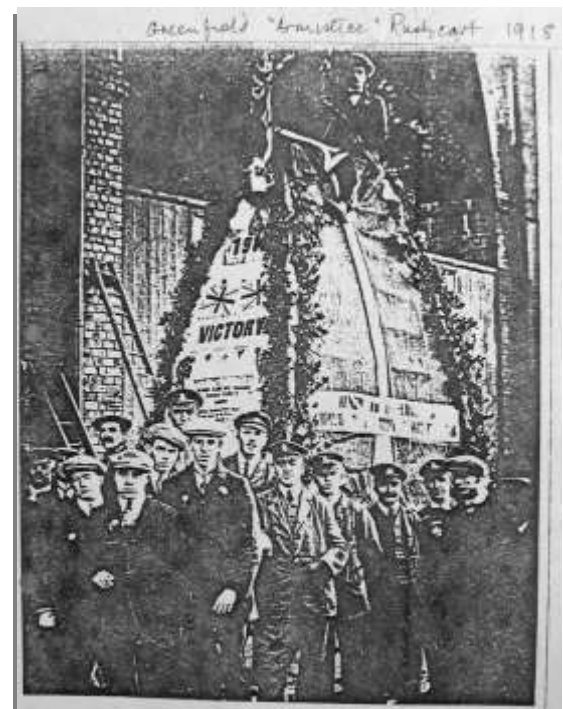
When the Saddleworth Rushcart was revived in 1974 the Morris men also resurrected an old song, sung by their predecessors. To the traditional tune of 'Brighton Camp' the Rushcarters sing the following words, taken directly from the banner of the Greenfield village 'Armistice Cart' of 1918:

***Oh the Rushcart lads are bonny bonny lads
The Rushcart lads are bonny
Oh they dance round 'cart and whistle like a lark
And that's as good as ony
They shoulder t'gun to fight the hun
Fight as good as ony
Oh the Rushcart lads are bonny bonny lads
The Rushcart lads are bonny***

With the kind permission of the Saddleworth Morris Men, Deborah has used this song in the play, just altering the words slightly for the first Act when the young men have not yet gone to fight. On Rushcart Day the song is woven with another song, composed for this production by the great folk singer Mike Waterson just before he died.

Director Barrie Rutter commissioned his friend, Mike, to write the song knowing that he was dying and would never see it performed. Our MD Conrad Nelson has arranged the two songs to accompany the joyful Rushcart sequence that concludes the first half of the play.

Following the wedding scene in Act Two, when Ted, Will and Frank leave for the front line, they finally sing the complete words from that historic cart.



SECTION THREE

Study



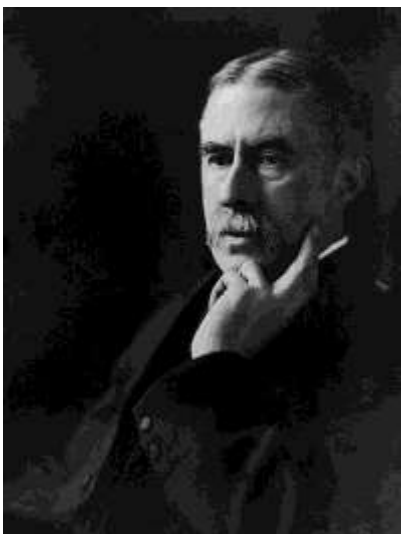
English – Poets and War

The title of our play AN AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY LARK comes from a line in the poem MCMXIV (1914) by Philip Larkin.

Larkin was born after the 1st World War in 1922, and published this poem in 1964 in a collection called *The Whitsun Weddings*. It has the benefit of hindsight, and behind the portrayal of innocence the reader can sense the looming tragedy. In 1914, of course, there was no such awareness of the scale of loss and change that was to come.

Many great poets experienced and eloquently recorded the events of the First World War – and many of them died. In the character of Ted Farrar our play remembers them, and all the ‘would-be’ poets, whose early deaths meant that their literary talent was never realised.

Poetry was widely read and the most popular book in the British Tommy’s kitbag was a cycle of poems called *A Shropshire Lad* by AE Housman.



Self published in 1896, after several publishers turned it down, the sales of *A Shropshire Lad* were slow at first, but the Second Boer War of 1899 – 1902 saw it’s popularity rise and since then it has never been out of print. It was very popular with soldiers and Housman insisted on keeping the price low to accommodate them.

Despite Larkin’s retrospective sense of innocence, the popularity of *A Shropshire Lad* – and the recent experiences of the Boer Wars – suggest that the world wasn’t entirely naïve. It’s certainly true that Housman’s cycle of 63 poems depict nostalgic scenes of rural life, but he also reflects on the tragic early deaths of young men in war.

In the play, Ted Farrar quotes the first stanza of this poem from *A Shropshire Lad*

XXXV. On the idle hill of summer

ON the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;
None that go return again.

Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
Woman bore me, I will rise.

Creative Writing exercise

Sadly, conflicts are happening still all over the world. There are stories in the news every day about wars and terrorism. British soldiers are deployed in Afghanistan.

The WW1 poets gave first hand accounts in their work, but Philip Larkin takes a more distant perspective – and so could you.

Look at the news today and read the articles covering wars, wherever they are. Inspired by the details of these events, write a poem in response.

- **Some general pointers**
 - *Who is in the story?*
 - *Where are they?*
 - *What is their role in the conflict? (Soldier, civilian, journalist...?)*
 - *What are the 'feelings' in the story?*
- **Some poetic pointers**
 - *You might want to use rhyme, but it isn't essential*
 - *Rhythm is important. Housman's rhythm is very steady, suggesting the military drum*
 - *Use alliteration (fields forgotten... Bleach the bones... Lovely lads...)*
 - *Use metaphor and simile*



History – *The Dardanelles*

Time Detective

Born in 1874 and pictured here c1900, you may be surprised to discover that this famous world leader was one of the chief architects of the Gallipoli campaign.



Can you identify him?

What government post did he hold at the outbreak of war?

What was his role in planning and executing the Gallipoli Campaign?

What happened to him in the wake of the failure of this offensive?

How responsible was he for the disaster in the Dardanelles?

What happened to him in his later career?



Drama - *The Home Front*

Character Creation *Inventing a new character for the play*

Deborah McAndrew has created a set of fictional characters whose lives correspond with real world events. Can you invent a new character? Work in groups to improvise and test your character out, with others playing characters from the play, such **Mary, Ted, Will, Frank, Susie, Edie and Herbert.**

Things to think about: The character could be one that is mentioned in the play, but whom we never meet – such as **Arthur Barraclough**, **Mrs Barraclough**, **Edie’s mother**, **Lizzie Ramsden** or old **Mrs Everdale**.

There’s also **Ralph Turner**, the spinner who is obliged to take on Susie as a piecer towards the end of the play, or the **Reverend Semper**.

It could even be characters mentioned from the past like the Farrars’ **Uncle Stan**, Herbert’s father, **George Tweddle** – also known as Rumpelstiltskin; or **Wally Entwistle** who was sick all over the crowd from the top of the Rushcart on the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It could be a composite, functional character like such as a pub landlord – the landlord of The Duck and Bucket, perhaps. Or a whole new family, such as the **Worsleys** – the wealthy mill owners who give up part their large home as a field hospital after the loss of one of their sons at Ypres.

Improvisation

Offstage scenes

The action of **An August Bank Holiday Lark** all takes place in and around the village of Greenmill, but there are a number of ‘off stage’ events. If you’ve seen the play you will have met some of the characters, but others you will have to imagine for yourselves. Here are some suggestions for you to try:

- Ted and Will having tea down at the Barraclough’s farm and hearing all about Arthur signing up with the Lancashire Fusiliers.
- Will, Ted and Frank enlisting.
- Mary persuading her father, John to let her marry Frank – with the help of Dick (this might be a separate scene in the Duck and Bucket)
- The night before the wedding when William gets very drunk in the pub.
- Alan Ramsden’s decision to enlist and telling his wife, Lizzie.



Credits and links

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Other photos sourced at:

Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk>

<http://anzac.govt.nz/gallipoliguide/>

<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au>

<http://www.cottontimes.co.uk/wheelgateo.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

With special thanks to:

The Saddleworth Morris Men <http://www.morrismen.saddleworth.org.uk>

Lancashire Infantry Museum, Fulwood Barracks, Preston

<http://www.lancashireinfantrymuseum.org.uk/fulwoodbarracks/>

Helmshore Mills Textile Museum <http://friendsofhelmshore.co.uk>

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