



# HOLDING THE LINE

The Art of the War Years

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

# HOLDING THE LINE

The Art of the War Years  
1914-18 & 1939-45



HOLDING THE LINE  
10th Annual War Art Exhibition

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# A Decade of Discoveries

*The earliest known painted images of women engaged in the war effort is the highlight of a diverse tenth anniversary edition of 'Holding the Line'*

**In this tenth anniversary edition of 'Holding the Line', we reveal a major Great War discovery: a beautiful and touching collection of pictures that are among the first painted images of enlisted women in the Western world - Britain having led the way, with the formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1917.**

In 1918, a pioneering female artist called Mary Duncan produced what is the only known pictorial record of Women's Army Volunteers gathering sphagnum moss for the preparation of wound dressings. In an era before antibiotics, the collection of this absorbent and antiseptic material from peat bogs helped to save hundreds of thousands of lives.

The gathering process was pioneered by an eccentric Presbyterian clergyman and landowner, the Rev

Adam Forman, on his estate at Craigiellands in Dumfriesshire and it is there that Duncan made her rare and charming observations – the only real equivalent in existence of Evelyn Dunbar's work with the Women's Land Army in the Second World War.

Only a tiny handful of idealised depictions of Land Girls and WAACs in the Great War are known to exist: Duncan's detailed and unsparing pastels of Women's Army volunteers at work and play are an entirely new and previously unknown addition to the scholarship of the period and are the only known professionally





produced paintings that describe, in a realistic way, what some of these women actually did and how they lived.

The Duncan collection provides the centrepiece of an impressive collection of Great War pictures this year, which also includes a stunning triptych of paintings describing three phases of an artillery barrage by Robert Allan Barr, who worked them up from sketches he made as a young officer on the Western Front.



The sweep of this year's catalogue is broader and more visually varied than ever. We have one leading American war artist, George Biddle, at the Nuremberg War trials (where, remarkably, his brother, Francis, was the leading US counsel); another, Peter Hurd, peering from the gun turret of a B-17 Flying Fortress Bomber as it flies



over the English countryside, as well as a collection of wonderfully free on-the-spot sketches from the accomplished soldier artist, Ian Eadie – the only serving soldier in WWII to have performed the role of war artist for his own regiment (the 51st Highland Division).

As well as breadth, we have a remarkably high degree of quality in our offering this year. One particularly important and newsworthy picture, entirely fresh to market, having never been on sale in its 77 year life, is Eric Kennington's powerful Stakhanovite portrait of Thomas Adair, a Communist shop steward in the Churchill Tank Factory in Luton, a picture that had been thought to be lost for many years.

Kennington's typically characterful pastel portrait had been missing presumed lost en route to an exhibition in Murmansk but had actually lurked unseen in the possession of Adair's family in Luton. It was produced by Kennington in 1942 as part of his wartime volume *'Tanks & Tank Folk'* and shows the artist at the height of his powers: a magnificent character study set against a factory production line achieved with masterly minimalism.

*“a magnificent character study set against  
a factory production line achieved with  
masterly minimalism”*

We are also proud to include some other tremendously moving examples of wartime portraiture, most notably Philip Alexius De László's tender account of the highly decorated WWI nurse, Gladys Bellville and Sir Oswald Birley's superb portrait of the Dowager Countess of Dudley who, like Bellville, had earned the Royal Red Cross for her services to nursing during the Great War.

We also have Glasgow Boy James Paterson's depiction of the actor, Esmé Percy, then an almost impossibly handsome young soldier, resplendent in his Glencarry



Cap, but who would, in middle age, go on to star in Leslie Howard's *'Pygmalion'* as the hilariously camp linguist Count Aristid who is convinced that Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney flowergirl is, in fact, Magyar royalty.

In marked contrast to the poignant and patriotic content of most of the pictures that comprise our catalogues, we are also delighted to be able to introduce the subtly subversive but deliciously colourful and amusing work of Beresford Egan. Egan was an idiosyncratic artist,

actor and all round Bohemian, who spent those bits of World War Two when he wasn't acting in Powell & Pressburger films, producing an extraordinary set of caricatures and political satires in his Chelsea flat. They are as lusciously attractive in line and colour as their subject matter is politically incorrect (then as now, albeit for very different reasons). They have never been seen in public before and will take you by surprise with their sheer rudeness, vivacity and quality of line.



Churchill by Beresford Egan  
(seen above, far right, in the 1943 film 'The Silver Fleet')



It's not easy to maintain such a varied supply of fresh, first class material, but the considerable momentum which '*Holding the Line*' has gathered over the years is an invaluable help. At public auction, we may have to fight a bit harder for a finite supply, but, mercifully, private clients slimming down their collections, now see us as the best destination for their wartime pictures. These finds, often fresh from attics, help to ensure that our series is still in robust health as it reaches its tenth anniversary.

*Andrew Sim*

**ERIC HENRI KENNINGTON R.A.**  
**(1888-1960)**

**Worker in a Tank Factory**  
**(Thomas ‘Jock’ Adair)**

*Pastel, signed & dated 1942*

**Literature: Tanks & Tank Folk, Eric Kennington**

**Publ: War Office 1943**

**Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and  
The Second World War, Publ Philip Wilson 2011**

**Provenance:** *Family of Sitter*

This magnificently atmospheric portrait of a ‘typical’ worker against the Fritz Lang-like backdrop of the ‘Churchill Tank’ factory in Luton (actually the Vauxhall Motors factory, hastily converted) formed part of Eric Kennington’s wartime government booklet, *‘Tanks & Tank Folk’*, designed to promote the work of the Royal Armoured Corps in 1942. The ‘sitter’ – a very wry and ornery-looking Stakhanovite – was actually one Thomas Adair, a first generation Scottish immigrant, known as ‘Jock’, who had been born on the West Coast of Scotland in a crofting family but came south to Luton for work at the Vauxhall plant in the 1930s. Adair was a card-carrying Communist Party member and shop steward, but was adjudged ‘an excellent worker’ by the powers-that-be (who got on very well with him, despite his staunchly left-wing views, by all accounts) and was chosen by Kennington to represent the strong work ethic of the wartime factory, along with a female colleague. Kennington added in a caption “Thomas Adair has already broadcast a message from the British to the

Tanks & Tank-Folk,  
War Office 1943

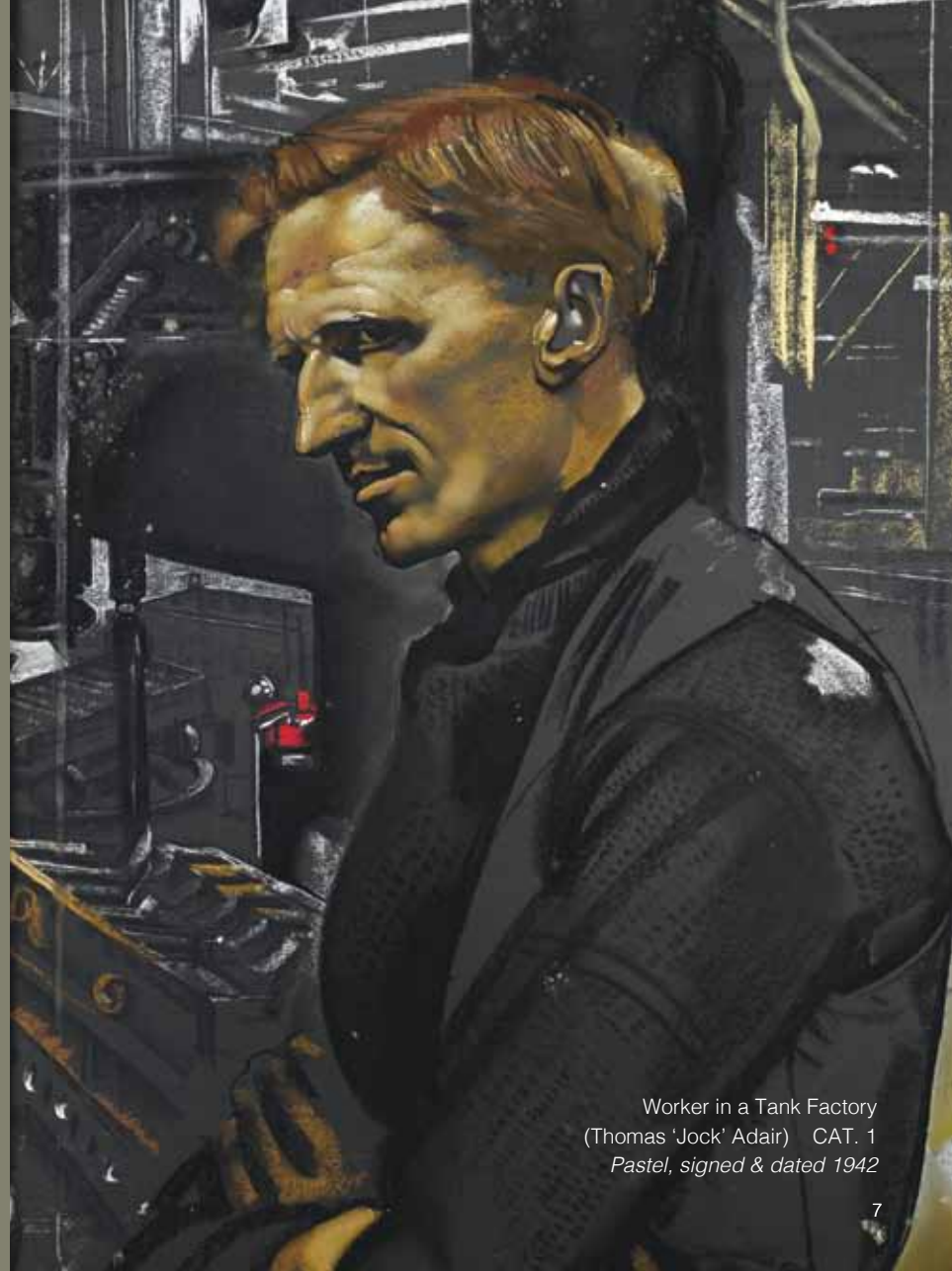




Russian workers. He asked me to print alongside his portrait *'Victory will be forged in the factories'*. According to Adair's grandson, Ken, from whom the portrait was acquired, Adair Snr apparently believed he would be 'first in the firing line' if Hitler ever invaded and kept a handgun at home for protection. A number of the portraits in *'Tanks and Tank Folk'* were later acquired by the Russian Government. For many years, this portrait was believed to be missing en route to Murmansk, until it surfaced last year on an *Antiques Roadshow* broadcast.



Adair with Churchill on the tank that bore his name  
 Courtesy IWM



Worker in a Tank Factory  
 (Thomas 'Jock' Adair) CAT. 1  
 Pastel, signed & dated 1942



# Eye Witness at the Nuremberg Trials

## GEORGE BIDDLE (1885-1973)

There is an intimate twist in the tale of these spine-tingling on-the-spot drawings of the Nuremberg Trials. George Biddle, the war artist who drew them, was also, incredibly, the brother of the US Attorney General, Francis Biddle, America's Chief Judge at the trial. George Biddle was not only a war artist but also the US equivalent of Kenneth Clark, the Chair of the War Artists Advisory Committee. As Chairman of the US War Department's Art Advisory Committee, Biddle was in charge of the recruitment of artists for the nation's various war art schemes. Throughout America's involvement in the war, Biddle recorded the activities of the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division, following them through North Africa, Tunisia and Sicily. But the culmination of his life as a war artist was to record the Nuremberg Trials. In his drawing of the judges, the moustachioed Francis Biddle can be seen fifth from the left, turning round to the (male) interpreter. The figure standing with his arms akimbo in the foreground is Von Ribbentrop's



## The Defendants

Back Row: First Division Guards.

Second Row: Doenitz, Raeder, Von Schirach, Sauckel, Von Papen.

Third Row: Goering, Hess, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Kaltenbrunner, Streicher, Schacht.

Bottom Row: German advocates.

The Defendants CAT. 2  
*Ink*



## The Judges

Top Row: Two Interpreters.

Second Row: General Nikichenko, unidentified, Justice Norman Burkitt, Lord Justice Geoffrey Lawrence (British) **Francis Biddle**, Judge John Parker, Professor Donnedien de Vabres, Magistrat Robert Falco.

Bottom Row: Typist stenographers.

Man Standing: German Advocate Fritz Sauter.

German advocate, Dr Fritz Sauter. It is the drawing of the accused, however, that has perhaps the most macabre appeal, containing as it does, pen portraits of some of the most notorious figures of the Nazi era, including Goering, Hess, Ribbentrop, Streicher, Von Schirach, Keitel and Von Papen.



Francis Biddle, the US Attorney General (left) and his war artist brother, George (right).

**ANGELA CHRISTINA SYKES,  
COUNTESS OF ANTRIM (1911-84)**

**Belsen Mother & Child, 1945**

*Unique Bronze, signed 'A.A (Angela Antrim)'  
and dated 27.7.45*

*Provenance: The Artist's son: The Hon Hector  
Mc Donnell*

Angela, Countess of Antrim, trained as a sculptor at the School of Rome before establishing a studio in Regent's Park in the 1930s. During World War Two, she worked as a nurse and dietician under the auspices of the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and it was in this capacity that she travelled to the German concentration camp Bergen-Belsen in 1945. She later led a mobile hospital unit for rescued concentration camp inmates via the Catholic Women's League, receiving the Papal decoration Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice. Her humanitarian work and what she experienced in Germany formed the inspiration for a unique bronze sculpture, Belsen Mother and Child – exhibited in Belfast in 1950 - depicting the power of maternal love to sustain life in the most appalling of circumstances: the mother wasting away to preserve the life of her child.







Belsen Mother & Child CAT. 4  
*Bronze, signed & dated 1945*

# An American War Artist in England

## PETER HURD (1904-84)

Peter Hurd was an American landscape painter – a Rockwell-esque realist, who studied under the influential illustrator N.C Wyeth.

Hurd's sojourn as a war artist was a logical step. He'd attended a military school and was halfway through Westpoint (the American Sandhurst) when he decided that he wanted to be an artist instead. Hurd worked through the war as a war artist for *Life Magazine*, attached mainly to the US Air Force. Hurd had privileged access as a war artist, as shown in these two watercolours of his time with US forces in England in 1942.

One is an airily evocative view from the spherical-shaped gun turret of a B-17 (Flying Fortress) bomber in flight, with the peaceful English countryside spread out like a carpet in front of the viewer. Conditions in the turret were extremely cramped, with room for just one operative - who generally had to be a small man – crouched in a semi-foetal position. It would have to have been vacated to allow Hurd to make such a detailed watercolour. The other is a view taken, presumably, from the rooftop of the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square, showing the effects of bomb damage.



Grosvenor Square in Ruins CAT. 5  
Watercolour



From a Flying Fortress over England CAT. 6  
*Watercolour, signed & dated 1942*





# From Destruction to Abstraction

Artist Designer, Albert Berbank S.G.A. (1896-1961) saw patterns in the destruction of the Blitz



## **ALBERT BERBANK S.G.A (1896-1961)**

Albert Berbank was a Nottingham-born designer and artist, who served in the Great War, prior to training and working as a commercial artist in London, where he kept a studio in the 1920s and 30s. Berbank's house in London was destroyed in the Blitz and he moved back to Nottingham, where he found war work producing technical drawings for tank parts, as well



Bombed Theatre CAT. 7  
*Oil on canvas*



Blitz damage in Cavendish Rd, Leicester CAT. 8  
*Oil on canvas*





Aftermath (the ruins) CAT. 9  
*Oil on canvas*

as recording the Luftwaffe's destruction of the Midlands, as in his almost abstracted record of Blitz damage on a house in Cavendish Road, Leicester in 1940 – the exact address inscribed on the canvas. As well as being a creative and technically gifted artist on many different levels, Berbank was also a keen amateur archaeologist, belonging to the Nottingham Archaeological Society and acted as a member of an advisory group to the Castle Art Gallery. He was also an enthusiastic and gifted sketcher, joining the distinguished London Sketch Club in Chelsea, first as an ordinary member but rising to become its President in 1960.



**PAUL LUCIEN DESSAU (1909-99)**

**'Heroes with Grimy Faces'  
(Firemen of the Blitz)**

*Oil on canvas, signed, dated '42*



'Heroes with Grimy Faces' (Firemen of the Blitz) CAT. 10  
*Oil on canvas, signed & dated '42*



## STELLA SCHMOLLE (1908-75)

### ATS Girls in transit

#### *Watercolour*

Stella Schmolle finished her artistic training at the Central School in 1939 and applied, unsuccessfully, for a job in the Art Department of the Ministry of Information. In 1942, she was conscripted into the ATS, where her talents were recognised and she became an official draughtswoman to a senior ATS Officer. She was granted permission to sketch her activities in the ATS and kept a visual diary throughout the war, in Britain on the Home Front, as well as, after D- Day, in France, Belgium and Germany. Many of her sketches were worked up into watercolour paintings such as this delightful account of ATS Girls leaving camp, under the watchful eye of two officers.

ATS Girls in Transit CAT. 11  
*Watercolour*











**JAMES ARDEN GRANT R.E., P.P.S  
(1887-1973)**

**Wartime portrait**

*Oil on canvas*

The hair snood has become inextricably associated with the war, as so many women were obliged to tie their hair up for work in factories. James Arden Grant's powerful 1945 portrait illustrates how women managed to turn them into elegant fashion statements.

Wartime portrait CAT. 12  
*Oil on canvas*

**JAMES PATERSON R.S.A., P.R.S.W.,  
R.W.S., N.E.A.C. (1854-1932)**

**Esmé Percy in uniform WWI**

*Pastel, signed & dated 1916*

In his youth, the artist James Paterson was one of the leading lights of the Glasgow School – the Glasgow Boys as they were called – becoming known for delicate and ethereal landscape paintings. He was also a sensitive and insightful portraitist, both in watercolour and pastel. The bright-eyed and impossibly innocent-looking sitter in this portrait, is the actor Esmé Percy in the Glengarry cap of a Scottish regiment. Twenty five years later, Percy – who was a well-known stage actor, achieved cinematic immortality for his memorably camp appearance in Leslie Howard's *'Pygmalion'*, playing the Hungarian linguist, Count Aristid, who declares, with absolute confidence, that Eliza Doolittle, the Cockney flower girl, is “certainly of Royal blood”.



A middle-aged Esmé Percy,  
with Leslie Howard in  
*'Pygmalion'*

Esmé Percy in uniform WWI CAT. 13  
*Pastel, signed & dated 1916*



# A Great War Discovery

*The discovery of a set of paintings showing Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) girls gathering peat moss for wound dressings in WWI sheds light on a fascinating medical story as well as providing a unique insight into the pioneering role of women in the Great War*

Last year, a collection of pictures emerged in an obscure provincial sale, apparently showing agricultural workers engaged in a variety of ordinary tasks: tilling fields and carrying the produce gathered. Seemingly, stock images of farming life, easily passed over as standard fare by those scrutinising the sale.

Something about the medium – pastel – and their obvious quality, however, made them worth a second, closer look. Unusually, all of the workers engaged in this hard labour were young women of a similar age. Not a family, with mother and children, but a group of young women, all aged about 20. And crucially, where were the men? A dimly visible date on one of the pictures - '1918' - provided the first clue to



their identity. Could these be land girls or WAACS working on a farm as part of the war effort? Possibly, but they didn't appear to be wearing the uniforms that one associates with land girls.

In the Second World War, we are blessed with Evelyn Dunbar's wonderful painted record of every aspect of the Women's Land Army, but from WWI, there is almost no visual record extant, apart from black and white photographs and some highly stylised depictions of white coated land girls by the artist, Randolph Schwabe.

Visual information about women's involvement in the 1914-18 war effort generally is notably sparse, which is surprising, given that it is during this period that the modern woman's involvement in war really began.





Gathering the Moss CAT. 14  
*Pastel*



Bagged & ready for transport CAT. 15  
*Pastel*

Both the Land Army and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) were formed during WWI – trailblazing organisations that were the first examples in the Western world of uniformed women actively engaged in the war effort.

On closer examination of the four pictures, it slowly became apparent that these images of young women were not only exceptionally rare painted depictions of women engaged in the war effort but that they were recording a specific but mysterious and possibly important process about which I knew nothing. They were clearly a documentary record but of what exactly?

When the pictures arrived and could be closely examined in detail out of their frames, two further clues emerged: firstly, a signature obscured by the frame and secondly, a barely legible inscription on the backboard of one of the pictures, detailing how the pictures had been removed by someone called Nicholas Forman in 1974 from one place to another 'by the request of his grandfather, the Rev Adam Forman CBE'.

The name 'Adam Forman' was the key to uncovering the most extraordinary story of medicinal invention, organisational endeavour and sheer, all round British eccentricity.



A Concert Party CAT. 16  
*Pastel*





The Rev Adam Forman, it turns out, was a Scottish episcopalian clergyman and landowner, with a lifelong obsession with bodily, as well as spiritual, cleanliness. From childhood, he had observed that sphagnum moss from peat bogs was both extremely absorbent and antiseptic, akin to a medically infused cotton wool. With evangelical zeal, he encouraged everyone from his children to his parishioners to use sphagnum moss not only to help them keep themselves clean but also to treat wounds.

The advent of war in 1914 prompted Forman to make contact with the war office to suggest ways in which the harvesting and gathering of peat moss could be facilitated. During the course of the war, Forman achieved renown as one of the most inventive and enthusiastic collectors of sphagnum moss, which became, by 1918, an enormous enterprise, producing literally millions of field dressings.

*“it was back-breaking work”*

One of Forman’s many innovations was the invention of a rail system for transporting the sodden bags of moss to and from the moor, which involved the use of giant two wheeled scooters, which ran on a wooden



Photos © Adam Forman, c/o Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



Rev Forman's Railway CAT. 17  
Pastel

track. Forman was also the organisational prime mover behind the organisation of the labour, which, from 1917, involved girls from the WAACS (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps), who were stationed in temporary tented accommodation close to the source of the moss.

The wooden scooters feature in one of the pictures in the collection: the sou'westered girls pushing what would otherwise have been an unmanageable load to its destination. The other pictures show the girls gathering the moss and lifting the sacks. According to contemporary accounts, it was back-breaking work, made worse by the fact that the best quality sphagnum moss came from the wettest parts of the bog. The resultant bags were immensely sodden and heavy. True to form, Forman had a plan for dealing with this problem. He wrote: "fill the sacks only three quarters full, drag them to the nearest hard ground and dance on them to extract the larger percentage of water".

Understandably, the girls needed some light relief from such labour and, in perhaps the most charming of the pictures, a group of them can be seen enjoying a concert party in their tent.

Forman's dynamism earned him a CBE – and many years later, a film called *'My Life So Far'*, starring Colin



Firth, was made about his eccentric family life, written by his son, the TV executive, Sir Denis Forman.

It is not known when or how Forman came to commission the paintings but they have certainly been in the possession of the Forman family since they were produced in 1918.



## MARY DUNCAN (1854-1932)

Mary Duncan, the artist responsible for this fascinating insight into the social history of the Great War, was a highly unusual and cosmopolitan artist, who lived and ran studios at various times in London, Dublin, Paris, Edinburgh and Cornwall during a long and varied artistic life.

Born in Bromley in Kent, she trained at the Slade and in Paris – her first exhibited picture being ‘Notre Dame de Paris’ exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy – before following a friend of hers from the Slade to live and work in Dublin in 1910. Ireland became Duncan’s adopted spiritual home: she even assumed an Irish version of her surname for exhibiting purposes. The young Englishwoman fell in with a prominent group of Bohemian Dublin artists via a close friend called Estella Solomons. The group had strong sympathies with the romantic side of Irish Nationalism and Duncan herself painted portraits of leading Nationalist figures such as James Stephens.

Throughout the First World War, Duncan also continued to exhibit in London and Glasgow, where she kept an accommodation address at 93 Hope St, Glasgow. It is not known how Duncan came to be commissioned to produce this unique record but it seems entirely appropriate that a woman whose career was a pioneering model of female emancipation, both educationally and professionally, was drawn to the portrayal of another group of pioneering women: the WAACs, who were trailblazers for women in the armed forces.

# WAAC

**The creation of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps in 1917 was the first time a Western nation had employed women in its armed services.**

The start of 1917 saw the creation of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) to release British soldiers from menial tasks and, for the first time, allowed women to be fully fledged, uniformed participants in the war effort. Evidence had been growing as the war continued that some women would happily join organisations structured along military lines, but neither the army, nor the societal gender roles of the time would allow for it. The WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps) was the official attempt to forge a form of compromise. The WAAC was first founded on the 28th March 1917, though it would not be formally instituted until July of the same year. The WAAC became the first example of a Western nation employing women within the armed services.



# Divided Loyalties

*Artist Philip de László was interned during WWI and set out to prove loyalty to his adopted country.*

## **Interned for Giving £1 to a Hungarian Internee**

Philip De László applied successfully to become a British citizen just before the outbreak of the Great War – his sponsors included the former Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, Lord Devonport and Howard Guinness his brother in law. This caused the artist great difficulty in his native Hungary, which had entered the war on the German side and there were problems too at home in Britain where his Hungarian birth caused suspicion in some circles. Things came to a head in 1917 when letters to de László's relatives in Hungary (sent via a neutral country) containing money to support his family, were intercepted. The artist had long been the only means of support for his mother and sisters in Budapest after the death of his father in 1904.

De László was given an official warning by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Charles Matthews. Soon after, a Hungarian internee appeared on the artist's doorstep pleading (illegally) for financial help from a fellow countryman and was given a £1 note. After realising the gravity of his actions, de László reported his actions to the police the next day. He was arrested and imprisoned in Brixton and then interned in Holloway Internment Camp for a year between 1917-18, an outcome he took very hard, prompting a nervous breakdown. After he was cleared in June 1919 he returned to his portrait practice and the patriotically-inspired portrait on the opposite page reflects the gratitude he felt to those who had fought for his adopted country and those nurses who had cared for him at the time of his greatest trial.



De László & family  
Courtesy: De László Foundation

# A Patriotic Portrait

**PHILIP ALEXIUS DE LÁSZLÓ MVO  
(1896-1937)**

**Gladys Bellville**

*Oil on canvas, inscribed lower left: de László / 1920. III*

De László presented this portrait to the sitter, Gladys Bellville, in recognition of her services as a nurse working with the British Committee of the French Red Cross during the First World War. At the onset of war, Mrs Bellville had immediately volunteered as a Red Cross nurse, travelling to France in September. She remained there until May 1915, when she returned to London to serve as Matron of the Darrell Hospital for Officers, at 58 & 59 Queen Anne Street, a post she held until 1919.

*This is a rare depiction of a First World War nurse wearing decorations. On the left is the Royal Red Cross, awarded for exceptional services in military nursing. It was founded by Queen Victoria on 23 April 1883, and Florence Nightingale was its first recipient. Next are the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and then, in the colours of the Tricolour, is the French “Médaille d’honneur pour acte de courage et de dévouement.” It was awarded for courage and devotion. On her uniform can be seen the initials SBM, which stand for “Secours aux Blessés Militaires.”*



Gladys Bellville CAT. 18

Oil on canvas, inscribed lower left: de László / 1920. III.



# DIARY OF A RED CROSS ARTIST



## WALTER PERCIVAL STARMER (1877-1961)

Walter Percival Starmar travelled to the Western Front as an Official War Artist to record the work of the Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). He also did pioneering artistic work in field hospitals, where he advocated the use of pictures to help distract the minds of the sick and wounded. Throughout his time with the Red Cross, he kept a visual diary and these fresh watercolour studies reflect the variety of his experience.



Typical Village on the Somme CAT. 19  
*Watercolour, signed & inscribed*



Abbeville, 1915 CAT. 20  
*Watercolour, signed & inscribed*



The Road to Mons, 1918 CAT. 21  
*Watercolour, signed & inscribed*





The Albert - Arras Road, 1916 CAT. 22  
*Watercolour, signed & inscribed*

**SIR OSWALD BIRLEY  
MC; R.A (1880-1929)**

**Georgina Countess of Dudley RRC  
(1846-1929)**

*Oil on canvas, signed, dated & inscribed  
Provenance: Family of sitter*

The still hauntingly beautiful Georgina, Countess of Dudley, had been one of the most celebrated beauties of the Victorian period, and remained very much an archetype of aristocratic refinement even in old age. At the age of 17, she married the Earl of Dudley, who was 31 years her senior and whom she outlived by 45 years. After losing her youngest son in the early days of the Great War, the Countess devoted herself tirelessly to the nursing of wounded officers in Mayfair in a convalescent home she had helped to establish during the Boer War – for which she was awarded the Royal Red Cross. Birley's poignant depiction of the mother of one of his closest friends - and CO in the Great War - is a testament both to the sensitivity of his portraiture but also to his ability to capture the style and essence of an epoch and a class with a few subtle touches and a mastery of atmosphere. In the Countess's distant High Victorian youth, she had been painted - in full crinoline - by the society portraitist, Richard Buckner.



Georgina, Countess of Dudley RRC CAT. 23  
*Oil on canvas, signed, dated & inscribed*



**JOHN HODGSON LOBLEY R.B.A. (1878-1954)**

**RFC Aircraft in flight over ruined churchyard**

*Oil on board, signed & dated*

Lobley was the Official War Artist for the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) during WWI and produced some of the most poignant and memorable images of the conflict: paintings not of war but of its consequences, of the wounded and their treatment. Only very rarely did Lobley turn his attention toward the front line and even then, the atmosphere is anything but warlike. In this subtly beautiful painting of a bleak war-torn landscape somewhere behind the lines in a wintry Northern France, the real subject only becomes apparent on closer inspection. Above the leafless trees marking the outline of a churchyard, a squadron of incredibly flimsy-looking bi-planes fly in formation towards the front, like so many mayflies.



RFC Aircraft in flight over ruined churchyard CAT. 24  
*Oil on board, signed & dated*



# A Great War Triptych

**ROBERT ALLAN BARR (1890-1959)**

## **The Artillery Barrage**

*Oils on canvas (3)*

Robert Allan Barr's budding career as an artist was rudely interrupted, like so many of his generation, by General Haig's clarion call to arms in 1914.

Barr was born in Chiswick in 1890 and studied at the London School of Art and the Regent Street Polytechnic. He'd had some early success, with pictures accepted at the Paris Salon as well as the Royal Academy, but patriotism intervened and, along with his two brothers, he volunteered, serving first as a cadet with the Artists' Rifles. He was quickly singled out as officer material and received a commission with the Monmouthshire Regiment. Within weeks, he had been sent to the Western Front, where he saw action at Poperinghe near Ypres, including a gas attack.

Barr couldn't entirely suppress his artistic instincts, however, and kept a sketchbook throughout the war. This talent for recording was duly noted and Barr was selected to make a detailed map of the enemy trenches. In later life, he recalled one incident that summed up the grim humour of



life in the trenches. His surreptitious map-making was observed by the German guns, who began a personal barrage, he believed, intended just for him. Barr recalled "They clearly indicated that they wished me to desist and vacate. So I did with despatch. I tore down a road as barren of





The Artillery Barrage 1 CAT. 25  
*Oil*

shady trees as the Sahara and I travelled faster than any human before or since. “But the Germans were neat pacers. Every few yards when my feet did touch the ground there was a shell landing right behind me. I knew I could never make it. Every minute was my last. They could

have hit me a dozen times but they always landed a little behind and when I finally dove into a hole at the end of this forced marathon and got my wind, I realized that the German sense of humour had asserted itself on my behalf. They had obviously let me off because they had so



The Artillery Barrage 2 CAT. 26

*Oil*

much fun chasing me”.

The article where these recollections were published twelve years after the event came from *The Star Weekly* in Toronto, Canada, where Barr had emigrated after the war, settling down as a portrait painter.

This highly detailed triptych of oils dates from this period and has clearly been worked up from closely observed sketching. An artillery battery is shown in three stages of a battle. In the first, an array of 18 Pounder guns, the bread and butter of WWI artillery, are shown in the thin light





The Artillery Barrage 3 CAT. 27  
*Oil*

of dawn as the firing starts, with gleaming arrays of ammunition clearly visible. They are then shown later in the day as the barrage is subsiding and finally, there is a depiction of a battery that has been completely destroyed, with the remains of the guns strewn across the foreground -

the tragic corpses of the horses used to transport the guns lying beside them in death. It is unsparing and genuinely shocking.

# WAAF

## **DOROTHY COLLES (1917-2003)**

### **RAF Officer, Tangmere 1940**

#### *Pastel*

Dorothy Colles was born in Egypt, then still under British occupation, where her father was an academic scientist. He eventually retired to England and Dorothy was able to train as an artist in London. By the time war broke out, she was a post-grad at St Martin's School of Art. Colles was keen to join the war effort and volunteered for the WAAF, serving first at the famous RAF Tangmere base, where Douglas Bader and the famous ace, Johnnie Johnson, were both stationed in 1941. Colles applied for and was granted permission to sketch activities at the base, as well as produce portraits of individual officers such as the present picture. Later in the war, she served at Medmenham, where she analysed reconnaissance photographs before being sent to the Middle East. In later life, Colles finished her training as an artist and became a well-known portraitist, specialising in sensitive portraits of children.



RAF Officer, Tangmere 1940 CAT. 28  
*Pastel*

## ANNE ELIZABETH WATSON (1921-2013)

### WAAFs and pilots in flying gear

#### *Etching*

Anne Watson joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) as an 18 year old, where she worked in the Meteorology Department. For one so young, this is a remarkably effective and considered piece of work, elegantly and adroitly capturing the spirit of an RAF base during the Blitz. After the war, Watson became art mistress at Blackheath High School in South East London and specialised in depictions of the Thames.



WAAFS and pilots in flying gear CAT. 29  
*Etching*



# LONDON UNDER SIEGE...

*...from Mayfair to Islington*

**ALFONS PURTSCHER (1885-1962)**

**Half Moon St, Mayfair, in the Blitz**

*Oil on board, signed & dated*

*Exhibited: Civil Defence Exhibition,  
Manchester 1942*

Alfons Purtscher is an unusual name for a wartime British artist but the Bavarian-born painter had become a British citizen in 1933, along with his aristocratic, literary wife, the Countess Nora Wydenbruck, who was the first person to translate T.S. Eliot into German. Presumably, Purtscher was a Civil Defence Volunteer because this painting of Half Moon Street in Mayfair during the Blitz was exhibited at a Civil Defence Artists Exhibition in 1942. Records show that a high explosive bomb had indeed been dropped on Half Moon Street during the Blitz and this view – from Green Park, looking up the street to the Third Church of Christ Scientist in Curzon Street – shows the scale of the clear up operation.

Half Moon St, Mayfair, in the Blitz CAT. 30  
*Oil on board, signed & dated*





Yamulborough Studio - Kingston 1941





## OLGA LEHMANN (1912-2001)

### Gainsborough Studios, Islington

*Pen and wash, signed & dated '41*

Lehmann was a Chilean-born artist, who trained at the Slade, specialising in theatrical design. The war was a particularly eventful time for Lehmann. Her studio in Hampstead was destroyed in the Blitz but, undaunted, she set about getting permission from the War Artists Advisory Committee to record the war's impact on London, also producing a mural for the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) HQ.

The following year, she embarked on what would be a long and fruitful career in film design and illustration. Her first film, the George Formby vehicle '*Much Too Shy*', saw her artwork feature at the core of the film, in which George plays a hapless poster artist who accidentally gets into hot water for including real women from his home town in his posters (which then have naked bodies attached by another artist). This film, like so many in the war, was produced at Gainsborough's Islington Studios, which is depicted here, complete with barrage balloons.



# HOME

# GUARD

**BARBARA SHIFFNER (1896-1982)**

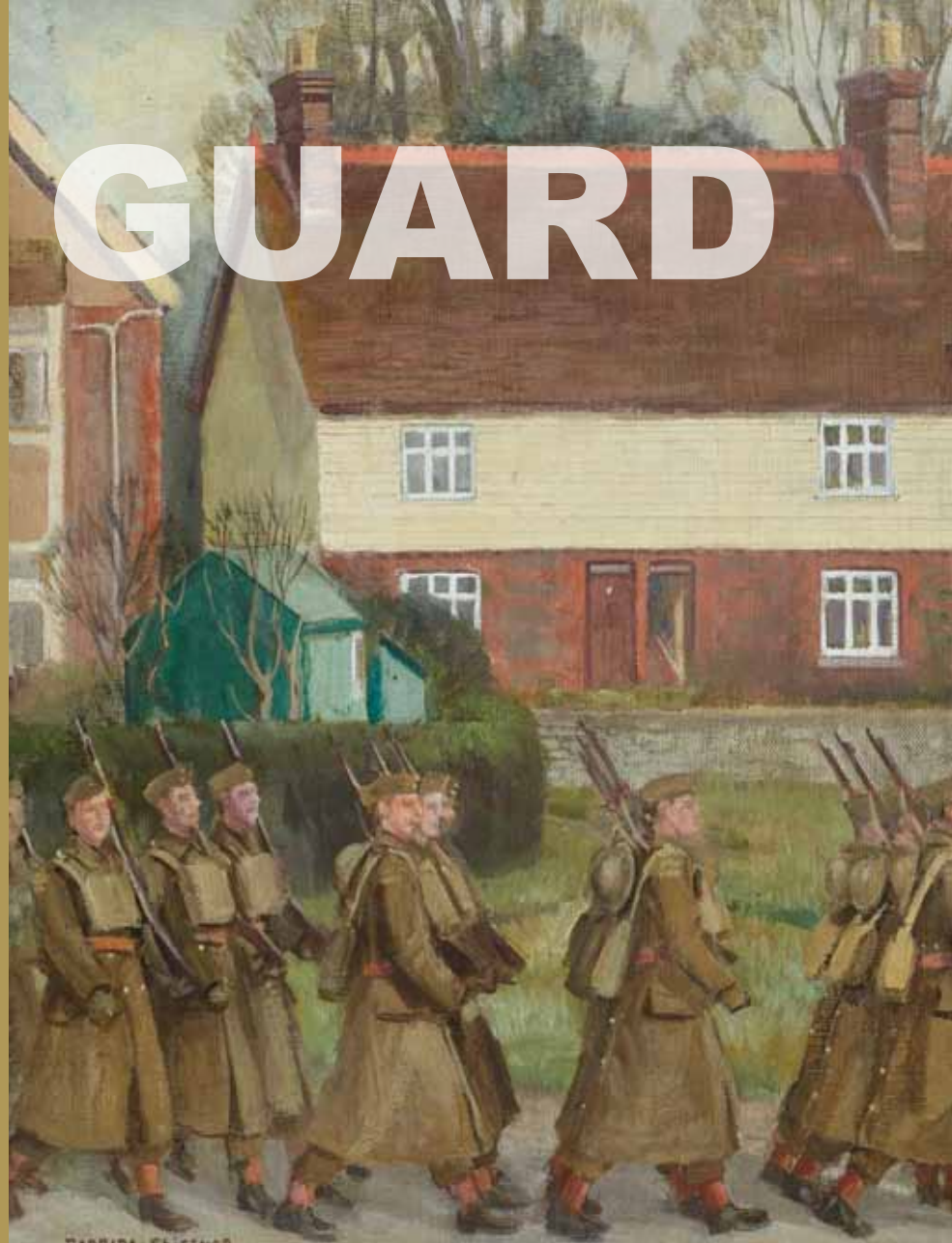
## **Home Guard on Parade**

*Oil on canvas, inscribed extensively  
& dated 1942 verso*

A platoon of Home Guard march in impressive order past the War Memorial in Ringmer, East Sussex. It is winter 1942. We know this because the artist, Barbara Shiffner, has helpfully inscribed it on the back as follows: "Painted by Barbara Shiffner for Ringmer Warship Week, March 1942". Such events were intended to raise funds - and morale - by encouraging citizens to contribute towards the purchase of a specific piece of military hardware, in this case a warship. Shiffner contributed this picture to the war effort, donating it as a prize in a competition. Locals were asked to "Guess how many Hours and Minutes it took to Paint": a challenge that is conveniently recorded on the back of the canvas. The answer is, sadly, unknown.

Home Guard on Parade CAT. 32

*Oil on canvas, inscribed extensively & dated 1942 verso*







## FRANCIS HELPS R.B.A; N.P.S (1890-1972)

### Home Guard (x2)

#### *Graphite*

Helps was a Slade-trained artist who had served in the Artists Rifles himself in WWI. Later, he accompanied Mallory's Everest expedition as official artist. In WWII, Helps taught at the Royal College of Art, which had relocated to the Lake District for the duration of the war. The fact that the sitter has a distinctly bohemian beard (highly unusual for the period) suggests that he could well have been a student or teacher at the RCA.



Home Guard I CAT. 33  
*Graphite*



Home Guard II CAT. 34  
*Graphite*





**THOMAS HENNELL R.W.S., N.E.A.C.  
(1903-45)**

**The Mole at Zeebrugge**

*Watercolour, signed & dated*

This spectacular and expressive watercolour shows Hennell at the very peak of his powers as a war artist: his particular artistic achievement in Normandy and the Low Countries after D-Day was in capturing the transformation of the landscape and its buildings, which he achieved with honours in some of the most memorable work he ever produced. Hennell's depiction of the Mole at Zeebrugge in the aftermath of battle, is a wonderful example of his late watercolour style: he presents a dramatic and vivid panorama, teeming with human activity and bearing the tremendous scars and chaos produced by the recent cataclysm. The prevailing atmosphere, however, is transcendent: of a new world about to be born out of the ruins.

Zeebrugge was the last bastion of Nazi resistance in Belgium and had been taken at great cost. Hennell places the ruins of a huge Nazi fortification at the forefront of his picture.



The Mole at Zeebrugge CAT. 35  
*Watercolour, signed & dated*



J. Hennell

# THE SOLDIER ARTIST

## IAN EADIE (1913-73)

Soldier artists – as distinct from strictly non-combatant war artists – were an exceptionally rare breed in the Second World War. Many soldiers sketched in quiet moments but very few were given licence to develop their work into something more substantial.

Ian Eadie was one such rarity. Aged 26 at the outbreak of war, Eadie was already an established artist and teacher, having graduated from Dundee College of Art four years previously. He was called up to join his local regiment, the Gordon Highlanders and served with the 51st (Highland Division), one of the most active regiments in the British Army, which saw action in France, North Africa, Sicily and Normandy.

Eadie's talents as an artist were quickly recognised and he was semi-officially appointed as a divisional war artist, whose role was to record the 51st's progress through the war. This he did, developing a great facility for producing quick, free sketches that, uniquely, capture the flavour of a combat unit at war. Unlike the Official War Artists, who were deliberately kept well away from the frontline by the War Artists Advisory Committee and were rarely attached for any length of time to any particular unit, Eadie was an ordinary soldier, right in the thick of the action, drawing his mates at the difficult, chaotic and often traumatic business of soldiery.



Eadie's work was thoroughly appreciated by his superiors, who later commissioned him to produce oil paintings of major incidents, such as his painting of the assembled officers of the 51st gathered together before El Alamein studying a sandpit model of the battlefield.

The three watercolour sketches gathered together here show Eadie's talents as a sketcher of people and places: from the airy, atmospheric but also highly detailed depiction of the Normandy landings to the cramped and fly-blown horrors of a first aid camp in the North African desert.

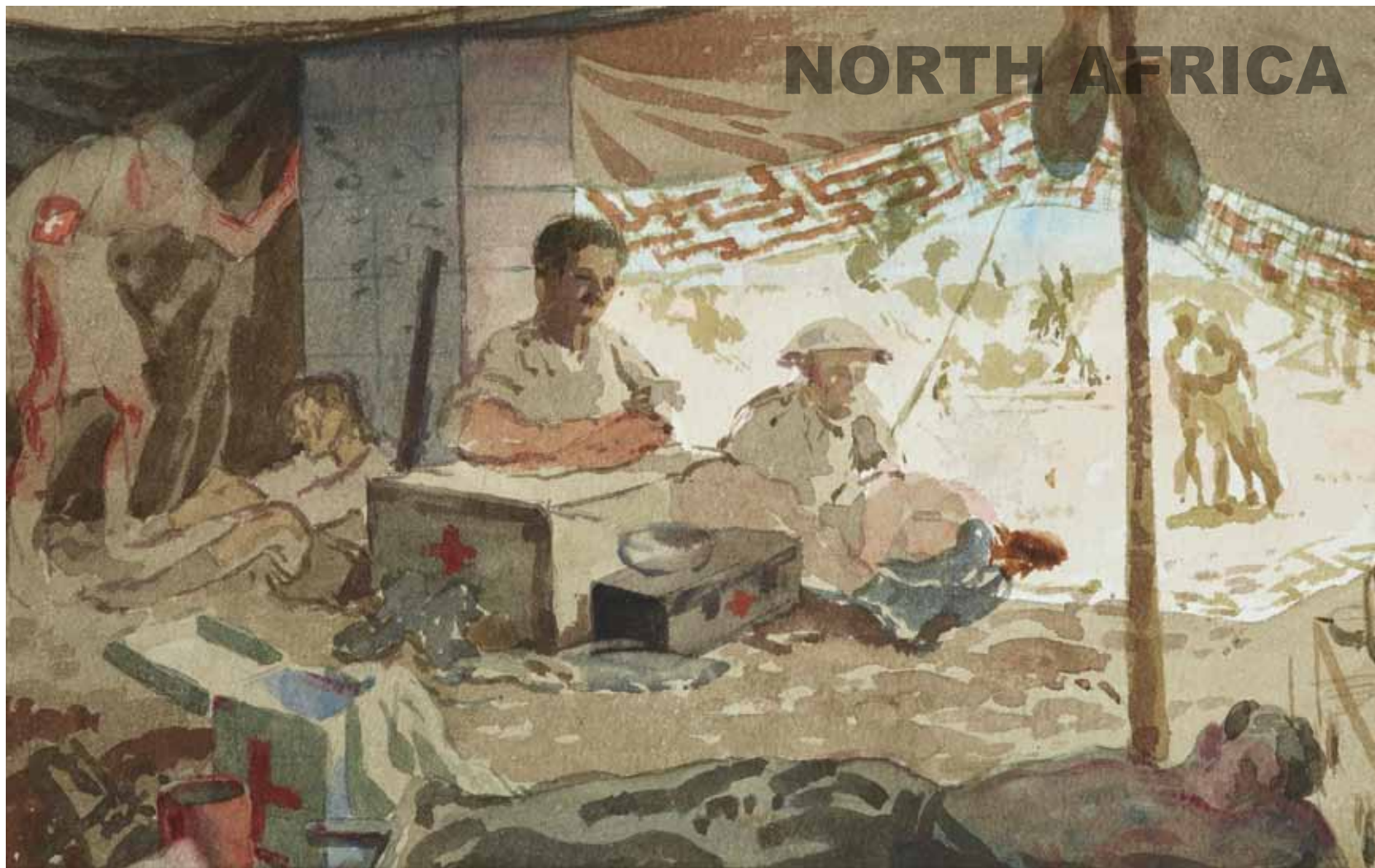
Eadie's work, although never classified as 'Official' war art, was highly thought of by the War Artists Advisory Committee and his work was bought by the Imperial War Museum and many public galleries in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow.





D-DAY

Normandy Landings, Inscribed 'Mike Red' section CAT. 36  
*Watercolour, signed & dated 14th June 1944*



First Aid Camp, North Africa CAT. 37  
*Watercolour 1943*



# SICILY

Messina, Sicily CAT. 38

*Watercolour signed & dated 30.8.43*





# A BOHEMIAN OUTSIDER

## Beresford Egan in wartime

*Artist, actor, novelist and Bohemian Dandy, Beresford Egan risked arrest by producing some of the most daringly risqué images of the Second World War from his eyrie in Chelsea*

### **BERESFORD EGAN (1905-84)**

Although Beresford Egan was briefly called up for the Royal Corps of Signals, from which he was discharged after less than a year in mysterious circumstances, he spent most of the war in a state of Bohemian detachment from its prevailing attitudes, wryly observing its absurdities.

In 1939, before his call up, Egan had a burst of creativity, contributing cartoons and illustrations for the Pacifist magazine *'Peace News'*. At the same time, presumably for his own benefit because they don't seem to have been published, he produced a collection of colourful and, to modern eyes, decidedly politically incorrect watercolours satirising wartime recruitment propaganda, as well as leading political figures, such as Churchill (shown as a dummy-sucking baby) and Chamberlain (as a Dodo).





Neville Chamberlain as a Dodo, laying an Egg (Munich) CAT. 39  
Chalk pastel, signed & dated '39



Winston Churchill as a Baby CAT. 40  
Chalk pastel, signed & dated '39



Yours for the Duration, Geraldine CAT. 41  
*Pen and wash, signed & dated '39*



In the Lounge CAT. 42  
*Pastel, signed & dated verso 1940*





Sorry, Gentlemen only! CAT. 43  
Watercolour, signed & dated 1940



Flirtation with War CAT. 44  
Watercolour



Doing her bit for England CAT. 45  
Watercolour 1940



Land Girl CAT. 46  
Gouache, signed & dated '39



But could anyone make a Woman of you? CAT. 47  
Pen and wash, signed & dated '39

Egan was not entirely divorced from wartime propaganda himself, however. The artist cut a striking figure: six feet plus tall with a lean, athletic physique and an oddly theatrical taste in clothes. While striding around London like a refugee from the *fin de siècle*, Egan was scouted by a film director called Vernon Sewell who persuaded him to take a screen test. Although not a first class actor, it was generally agreed that Egan cut a dash and looked particularly good in uniform, so he was recruited for some of Powell & Pressburger's famous wartime films, such as *A Canterbury Tale* and *The Life & Death of Colonel Blimp*. He even played a plausibly evil Nazi called Krampf (see right) in the Dutch Resistance film '*The Silver Fleet*', alongside Ralph Richardson.



Demobbed - Junction CAT. 48  
Pen and ink, signed & dated '46



# VE DAY AND AFTER...

**ERNEST G. WEBB**  
(1876-1951)

**VE Day party with  
Hitler effigy**

*Watercolour 1945*

The Royal Dockyards at Devonport made Plymouth a particular target of the Luftwaffe, who bombed the City to devastating effect, killing over 1,000 people and forcing the evacuation of its children.

Ernest Webb had been born, raised and taught to paint in the City and there is a decided edge to this watercolour of a VE street party in 1945, with an effigy of Hitler on a scaffold being enthusiastically attacked by local children.



VE Day party with Hitler effigy CAT. 49  
*Watercolour 1945*

## GRACE GOLDEN ARCA (1904-93)

### Baker Street in 1945

#### *Watercolour*

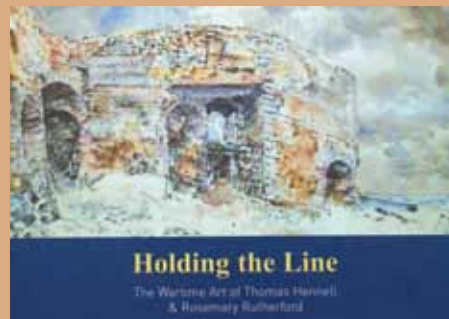
Grace Golden was a clever and talented working class girl, born and bred in Southwark, who won successive scholarships to the City Of London Girls School, Chelsea College of Art and the RCA before embarking on a long and successful career as an artist illustrator. Her fantastically detailed watercolours teem with an activity that is minutely observed and very satisfyingly believable as a result: the panoramas are built up from hundreds of detailed sketches gleaned from the sketchbooks she carried with her everywhere (and are now deposited at the Museum of London). During the war, Golden was given licence to sketch by the War Artists Advisory Committee - and she took full advantage. One of her preferred positions was a high vantage point, looking down at a crowded street – or two, as in this watercolour of the junction of Baker Street and the Marylebone Road, looking east. An inscription on the back states that it was given as a present in July 1945 and it was probably made somewhere between that date and VE day a couple of months earlier.

Baker Street in 1945 CAT. 50  
*Watercolour*

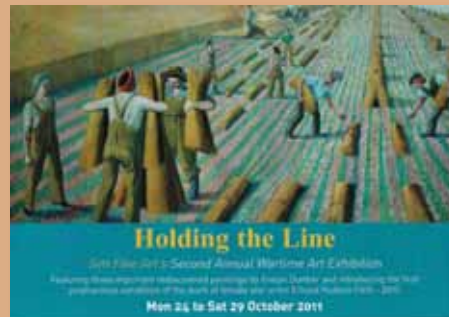




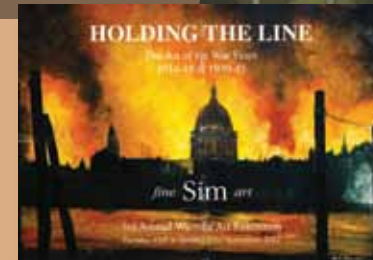
# 10 Years of HOLDING THE LINE



Holding the Line 2010



Holding the Line October 2011



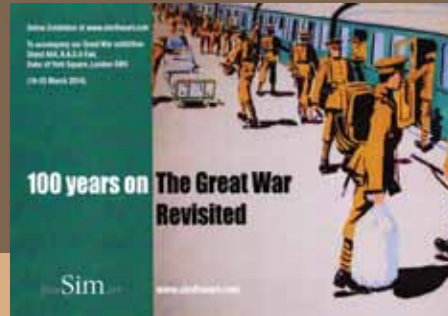
Holding the Line September 2012



Holding the Line November 2013

fine Sim art





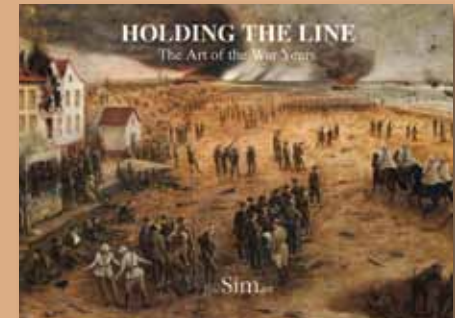
On-line Exhibition 2014



Holding the Line September 2017



Holding the Line November 2015



Holding the Line September 2018



Holding the Line September 2014



Holding the Line November 2016



Holding the Line September 2019



Walter Percival Starmar - Typical Village on the Somme  
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