

‘I am sending herewith’ – First World War Ephemera at the British Library

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The classification of bodies of material as ephemeral is never an easy one, not least because of the disputed nature of the term.¹ ‘Ephemera’ originates from the Greek *epi* (about) and *hemera* (day), and one of the first attempts to define it in relation to paper items by the collector Maurice Rickards resulted in the phrase ‘transient everyday items of paper – mostly printed – that are manufactured specifically to use and throw away.’² This working definition was later refined and the Ephemera Society (of which Rickards was a co-founder) has taken its description to be ‘minor transient documents of everyday life’, a definition still in common use nearly thirty years after it was written.³ This description has been contested by those produced by librarians and archivists, who prefer to be rather more explicit as to what should be a characteristic of ephemeral items. Perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to describe what ephemera consists of was produced by the ADCEMP (Advisory Committee on Ephemera and Minor Publications) in the late 1970s which produced a definition of ephemera as being ‘material which carries a verbal message and is produced by printing or illustrative processes but which is not published in standard book or periodical form’ which in addition could have several other characteristics, such as being produced for a significant event, being available without charge, or most significantly which ‘does not normally lend itself to standard library processes of acquisition, recording, or storage. It is however classifiable.’⁴ In addition, the Committee defined ‘minor publications’ as separate to ephemera, although they admitted that often the two were held in conjunction and were often treated in a similar manner.⁵ Chris Makepeace, a librarian for the Manchester Local History Library at the time he produced his 1985 work *Ephemera*, instead preferred to write that ephemera is ‘the collective name given to material which carries a verbal or illustrative message and is produced either by printing or illustrative processes, but not in the standard book, pamphlet, or periodical format.’⁶

Partially because of the ambiguity surrounding the term’s precise meaning, the commonplace nature of the documents themselves, and the difficulties posed to a researcher when attempting to find examples of what they are looking for in often partially catalogued ephemeral collections, ephemera as a subject of study has only recently started to gain recognition in scholarly circles. Institutionally, a turning point in the appreciation of ephemera as a valued area of research came in 1968, when material which had previously been known as the ‘Constance Meade Collection of

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¹ The quote in the title is taken from a letter to the ‘Governor’ of the British Museum, BL, Tab.11748.aa.4.(98).

² For the definition see Michael Twyman, ‘The Long-Term Significance of Printed Ephemera’, *RBM a Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, ix (March, 2008), p. 19; Maurice Rickards, *This is Ephemera: Collecting Printed Throwaways* (Newton Abbot, 1978), p. 7.

³ Maurice Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera* (Oxford, 1988), p. 13; see also Twyman, ‘The Long-Term Significance of Printed Ephemera’, p. 19, in which he discusses how Rickards transposed the words ‘minor’ and ‘transient’ in his book *Collecting Printed Ephemera*.

⁴ ADCEMP, *Preliminary Report* (1979) definition of ‘ephemera’ quoted in Chris Makepeace, *Ephemera: A book on its collection, conservation and use* (Aldershot, 1985), pp. 7-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Oxford University Press' was renamed the 'John Johnson Collection' to reflect its late custodian. The 'Constance Meade Collection' had been receiving unwanted ephemera from other departments for years on the basis that it was not literary or artistic enough to be kept. John de Monis Johnson (1882-1956), printer to the University, had recognized the importance of ephemera and kept these precarious pieces of paper, which was formalized by the naming of the 'John Johnson' collection and its absorption into the Bodleian Library proper in the late 1960s.⁷ This growing interest in ephemera was furthered in 1971 by J. E. Pemberton who produced a report entitled 'National Provision of Ephemera in the Social Sciences' for the Social Science and Government Committee of the Social Science Research Council. In this report he explored the current state of ephemera collection in several UK libraries and concluded that a National Documents Library should be established to compile a national register of ephemera collections and facilitate the study of ephemera, a project which did not come to fruition.⁸ The creation of The Ephemera Society in 1975 by the now recognizable names of Maurice Rickards, Michael Twyman, and Asa Briggs, among others, created an intellectual space for those with a popular or collector's interest in the material to discuss its various merits.⁹ During the early 1980s, the British Library in conjunction with the Bodleian produced a report in which Alan Clinton surveyed the general state of British ephemera and, like Pemberton some ten years before, proposed that a National Register of Collections should be formed and held in the Reference Division of the British Library.¹⁰ As before, this did not emerge in any concrete form. There is still no national registry of ephemera to aid interested researchers. While the British Museum Library and later the British Library have clearly had a history of investing in studies of ephemera, perhaps the most notable contribution has been the publication in 2000 of *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, produced in conjunction with the Centre for Ephemera Studies at Reading University; a comprehensive guide to the various forms which ephemera can take and suggestions for further reading for each type.¹¹

Despite this increased recognition within libraries and archives, it is only in recent years that scholars of the First World War have begun to explore this world of the everyday. An early foray into the world of First World War ephemera was presented by Michael Moody, who curated an exhibition of ephemera at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in 1970.¹² This seems to have been something of a false start, as sustained resurgence of interest in Great War ephemera did not emerge until the late 1990s when material culturists, like Nicholas Saunders, brought together those with an interest in both printed ephemera and objects to begin discussions about the use of such items during the war.¹³ In light of this, the field is ripe for study, and the curation of some of the First World War ephemera and its cataloguing could be seen as part the British Library's foray into the new field of the ephemera of war.¹⁴

⁷ Twyman, 'The Long-Term Significance of Printed Ephemera', pp. 20-1. For some basic information about the formation of the collection see the Bodleian Library website: <<http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/about.jsp>>, Accessed 25.11.2016.

⁸ John E. Pemberton, *The National Provision of Printed Ephemera in the Social Sciences* (Warwick, 1971), p. 47; Alan Clinton, *Printed Ephemera: Collection, organisation and access* (London, 1981), p. 7.

⁹ <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-maurice-rickards-1145817.html>>, Accessed 17.08.2016.

¹⁰ Clinton, *Printed Ephemera*, p. 88.

¹¹ The British Library was created in 1973 and combined the collections from the library departments in the British Museum, National Central Library and the National Lending Library for Science and Technology.

¹² For an account of this and images of the items that were on display see: Maurice Rickards & Michael Moody, *The First World War: Ephemera, Mementoes, Documents* (London, 1975). *eBLJ* regularly posts articles about other sets of ephemera held in the Library, for example see: Jaap Harskamp, *Underground London: From Cave Culture Follies to the Avant-Garde* <www.bl.uk/eblj/2009articles/pdf/ebljarticle72009.pdf>, Accessed 20.09.2016.

¹³ Of course there were excellent stand-alone articles produced in the intervening years. For more on the work that began in the late 1990s see Nicholas Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (London, 2004); Nicholas Saunders, Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (London, 2014).

¹⁴ The Library has recently shown some of their ephemeral items in the 2014 exhibition 'Enduring War' and is involved in ongoing work on the collection of First World War posters.

Given this ambiguity surrounding the term, and the relative newness of ‘ephemera studies’, common issues often surround issues of classification (what exactly can be classified as ephemeral?) and of temporality (are all ephemeral documents really transient?). Michael Twyman penned an excellent précis about the complexity of the term in his introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, in which he discusses how the various types of item described there defy the idea that ephemera is purely meant to be thrown away (for instance items such as cigarette cards are designed to be kept). Complicating this status further is the notion that some ephemeral items have shelf-lives of more than a day, but are supposed to be discarded within a month, such as magazines.¹⁵ The collection held by the British Library holds a varied collection of items with a variety of intended lifespans. The guard books contain a mixture of highly transient items (e.g. an envelope) alongside printed documents that were clearly designed to last for a longer period of time (e.g. a certificate).

First World War ephemera held by the British Library

The collection held by the British Library contains a wonderful breadth of material, and when viewed as a whole provides a potted overview of the war, containing material on a number of themes including recreation, propaganda, and the home front, spanning from 1914 into the early 1920s. This article focuses on two volumes (Tab.11748.aa.4) of general material, originally described in a collection-level entry in the British Library’s online catalogue as ‘a collection of miscellaneous leaflets, programmes, etc. relating to the European War.’ Reference to this collection can be found in the 1922 *Subject Index of the Books Relating to the European War, 1914-18, Acquired by the British Museum, 1914-1920*, a compilation of ‘all the books and printed documents relating to the Great War acquired by the British Museum from the beginning of August 1914 to the close of 1920.’¹⁶ There are four more collections of ephemeral material housed at the Library with the shelfmark prefix Tab.11748.aa. relating to the First World War. The first (Tab.11748.aa.1.) is comprised of caricatures and propaganda material. The second (Tab.11748.aa.2.) focuses on hymns and memorialization. The third (Tab.11748.aa.3.) contains poetry and finally Tab.11748.aa.5. is principally a collection of Christmas Cards. The collections at Tab.11748.aa.1-5. primarily contain ephemeral items, however what could be classed as ‘minor publications’ and even some manuscript material is included within the guard books.¹⁷

Tab.11748.aa.4: ‘A collection of miscellaneous leaflets, programmes, etc.’

In Tab.11748.aa.4. the majority of items that are stamped with a date (denoting entry into the Museum) entered the Museum in 1914, although the vast majority of items in the collection were stamped with an undated British Museum ownership stamp. Of the 221 items in the collection, 172 bear no date stamp. The information for the remainder of items is contained

¹⁵ Michael Twyman, ‘Editor’s Introduction’ in M. Twyman (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera* by Maurice Rickards (London, 2000), p. v.

¹⁶ British Museum, *Subject Index of the Books Relating to the European War, 1914-18, Acquired by the British Museum, 1914-1920* (London, 1922), p. 176; preface.

¹⁷ ‘Minor publications’ have been described as ‘material in book, pamphlet, newspaper, news-sheet or other multipage form, produced by printing, duplication or illustrative processes, sometimes being an isolated publication, sometimes an occasional publication, sometimes a periodical publication’ which are either produced ‘uncommercially’, produced for members of a society or other organization, or produced within a limited area. For a more detailed discussion of the differences between ‘minor publications’ and ‘ephemera’ see Makepeace, *Ephemera*, pp. 10-17.

in the table below. Stamps suggest that the material was donated or acquired via legal deposit. None of the ephemera held at shelfmark Tab.11748.aa.4. seems to have been purchased.

Year	Number of items stamped with date	Year	Number of items stamped with date
1914	12	1920	2
1915	8	1921	5
1916	6	1925	1
1917	8	1929	1
1918	2	1940	1
1919	3		

Most of the items can be roughly dated at least by year, from printing information, or from their content. Overwhelmingly, and somewhat surprisingly given that the Imperial War Museum (then the National War Museum) began collecting the same year, this highest density of material in Tab.11748.aa.4. dates from 1917, although the collection contains a representative spread of items dating from 1914 to 1921. The figures for items where a date is either stamped on the paper or can be approximated are as follows:

Year	Number of items originating during said year	Year	Number of items originating during said year
1913	1	1925	3
1914	18	1940	1
1915	17	Between 1914-1918	3
1916	15	Between 1915-1918	1
1917	75	Between 1916-1917	3
1918	34	191u	1
1919	12	After 1914	1
1920	33	After 1918	3

The type of ephemera contained within the collection is highly varied. Broadly speaking, Volume 1 of Tab.11748.aa.4. contains musical and amateur dramatic programmes and other assorted ephemera relating to entertainment. Volume 2 contains political and economic pamphlets, and a collection of German ephemera. Items are as mundane as a label for a roll of posters, and as unusual as a political pamphlet created by a group of political émigrés calling for the independence of Ukraine. The term 'ephemera' understood as 'print only' material is challenged by the inclusion of hand-drawn items, such as a beautiful programme for a 'medley of song & story' by 'The Jolly Boys' in 1917.¹⁸ The artist, P. Duffy, drew two *pierrots* perched on stools on a stage, and hand-coloured the programme in purple hues. Other items, such as the Old Cheltonian dinner menu, produced for a dinner of alumni from Cheltenham College, were printed en masse and used College colours for the border.¹⁹ Yet another set, produced for the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (R.A.O.C.) feature blueprint illustrations of soldiers leading horses, heavy artillery, aeroplanes, and crests (of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and the R.A.O.C.).²⁰ There is a beautifully decorated programme for *Le Théâtre aux armées*

¹⁸ The Jolly Boys seem to have been a performance troupe formed by members of the Ordnance Survey Corps. BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(42).

¹⁹ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(87).

²⁰ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(29)-(30).

de la République produced in 1917 by Guy Arnoux, an illustrator famed for his *image d'Épinal*.²¹ Intermixed with these are oddities, such as cinema posters, typescript regimental histories, and sheets relating to prophecies about the war.

One such 'prophecy sheet' discusses the links between the 1914 war and 'the present war' (the Second World War) and refers us to *The Great Law* for further information.²² *The Great Law* (a tract written in the style of a play in which characters try and 'square the circle' while discussing various biblical issues) was penned by Hamish MacHuisdean over several years, and, aside from discussing complicated mathematics in relation to biblical prophecies, reveals that he was in the 17th Battalion Highland Light Infantry.²³ Within the text he claimed that he was the originator of the yearly silence (associated with Armistice Day).²⁴ Another spiritual item contained within the collection discusses the prophecies of Sir Thomas Overbury – most famous for his death in 1613; rumoured to be at the hands of Francis Howard and Robert Carr – in relation to the First World War.²⁵ What is interesting about both of these sheets are that they do not correspond to the standard narrative of spiritualism during the aftermath of the war – one of its most famous believers being Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – and thus have the potential to complicate notions about how people accessed this more ethereal world.

Bound a mere page away from the first of the two prophetic pieces is a small, nondescript, typescript pamphlet, referred to above, entitled 'To the Public Opinion of Europe', dated 25 August 1914 (see figs 1 and 2).²⁶ It is signed by a group of six political émigrés who were officially known as the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine (*Soiuz vyzvolennia Ukrainy*). The Union was formed on 4 August 1914 in Lviv, Galicia, and was initially jointly funded by Vienna and Berlin.²⁷ The Union, alongside working with Ukrainian Prisoners of War, conducted extensive propaganda within neutral countries towards the creation of an independent Ukrainian state.²⁸ The pamphlet held in the British Library is referred to in *The New York Times Current History of the War*, in a reprint of an article from November 1914, which states:

The Ruthenian inhabitants of Galicia, one-half the population of the country, founded a League for the Release of Ukraine and flooded Europe from the 25th of August with notifications and descriptions hostile to Russia. The founders did not withhold their names. They are D. Donzow, W. Doroschenko, M. Melenewsky, A. Skoropyss-Joltuchowsky, N. Zalizniak and A. Zuk.²⁹

The pamphlet referred to in the article is the one housed within the collection at the Library. It was the second publication released by the Union, but was the first aimed at the West – their first was published in Lviv in early August 1914 entitled 'To the Ukrainian People of Russia' – and was the beginning of an extensive network of literature relayed to the West about the politics of Eastern Europe.³⁰

²¹ BL Tab. 11748.aa.4.(35).

²² BL Tab.11748.11.4.(18).

²³ Hamish MacHuisdean, *The Great Law: Told Simply in Seven Visits* (Erlestone, 1937), p. 168.

²⁴ The poem 'To Silence' that he claims predicted this post-war phenomenon can be found in *The Outpost*, iii (1 Sept. 1916), p. 164.

²⁵ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(165). For general information on Sir Thomas Overbury see: <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20966?docPos=1>, Accessed 06.09.2016.

²⁶ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(15).

²⁷ Oleh S. Fedyshyn, 'The Germans and the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine, 1914-1917' in Taras Hunczak (ed.), *The Ukraine, 1917-1921: A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), pp. 310-11.

²⁸ D. Doroshenko, *History of the Ukraine* (Edmonton, 1939), p. 617.

²⁹ Georg Brandes, 'Fate of the Jews in Poland' (From *The Day*, 29 Nov. 1914) in *The New York Times Current History: the European War, February, 1915*. <www.gutenberg.org/files/18880/18880-h/18880-h.htm>, Accessed 02.09.2016.

³⁰ Oleh S. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1971), p. 31.

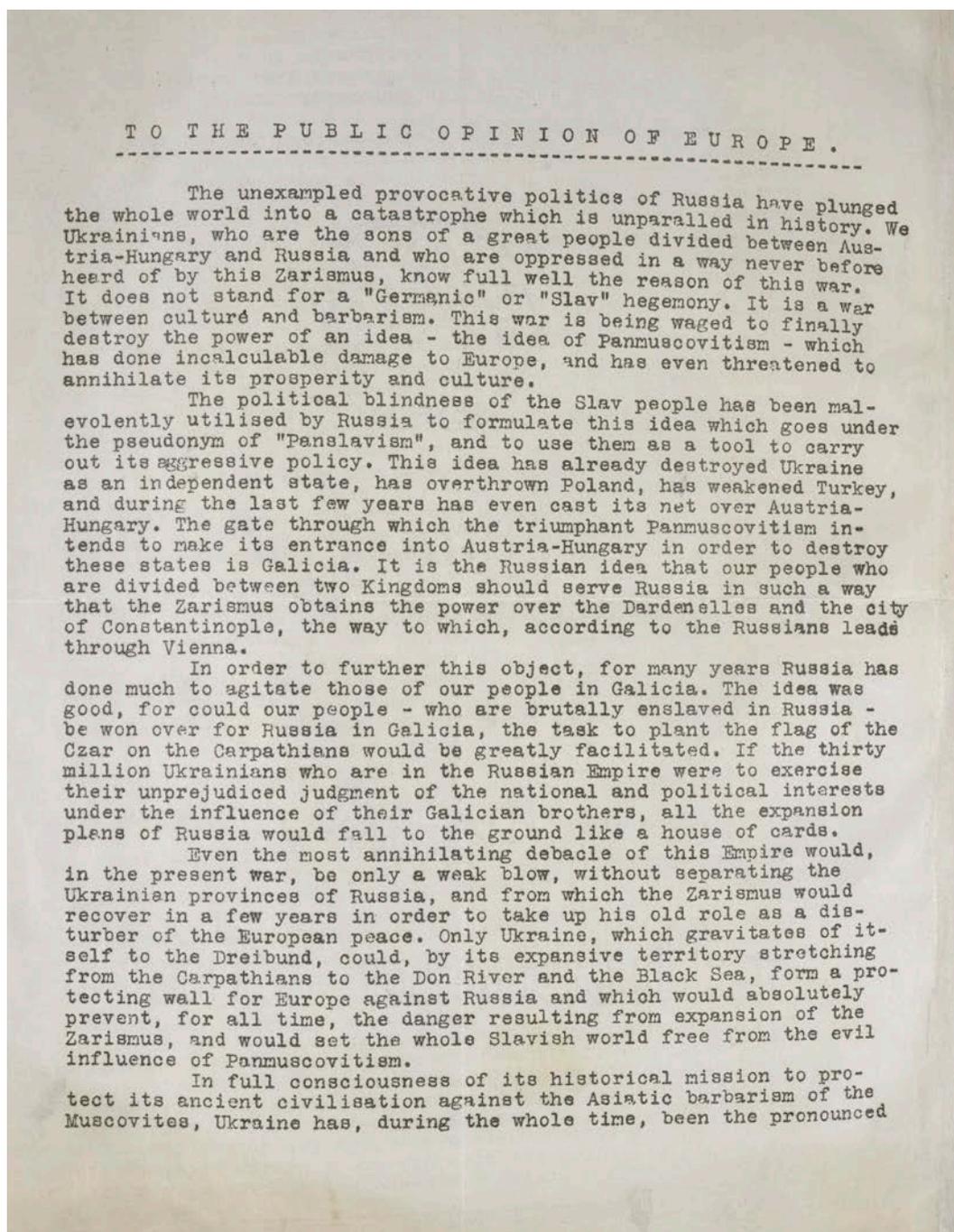


Fig. 1. To the Public Opinion of Europe, BL, Tab.11748.aa.4.(15).

There is also a fascinating collection of German ephemera that throws light on the home front in Germany.³¹ The items are mostly numbered between Tab.11748.aa.4.(208)-(220) and the section begins with an supplement from the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* newspaper announcing the invasion of Belgium.³² There are printed sheets from the *Spende für Deutsche Soldatenheim*, whose honorary President was Gertrud von Hindenburg, wife of the General whose portrait and facsimile signature adorn one side of the printed appeals for donations to help Germany’s fighting men.³³ Also contained within this subsection are political pamphlets published in the aftermath of war by both the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (German National People’s Party).³⁴ Some of the material simply conveys the practicalities of everyday life, for example a poster produced after the war by the Reichsverwertungsamt which asks those who looted army supplies of oil (and vehicles!) to return them, offering 5 per cent of the value of the returned items as an incentive.³⁵

While the majority of items are printed in English, the volumes contain ephemera originating in other countries and languages. Within the guard books there is ephemera printed in German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Swedish, Dutch, Danish and Esperanto. Some are translations of speeches or published letters. One such is a pamphlet, printed in Danish, entitled ‘Den Britiske soldats overlegenhed.’³⁷ It is a translation of a letter (‘Supremacy of the British Soldier’) written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and printed in the *Daily Chronicle* in April 1917.³⁷ Other documents include dual language registration forms, ‘for use in hotels, inns, lodging-houses, etc.’ and a collection of what appear to be bookmarks printed in both Italian and French.³⁸

The last items to be discussed here which highlight the collection’s diversity are a series of documents relating to two vegetable shows held at the British Expeditionary Force Number 1 Base Camp, Le Havre, first in 1917 and again the following year. The research potential of these documents is, as yet, untapped. Major Browne, promoted from Staff Captain in between the shows, sent the British Museum comprehensive documentation about both shows which is now held in Tab.11748.aa.4.(88)-(117).³⁹ The shows were held to ‘encourage the cultivation of as much land as possible in or around the various Camps at this Base.’⁴⁰ An idea of the type of troops stationed at the Base can be gleaned from the lists of prize-winners: a few picked at random include rest camps, infantry base depots, labour companies and prisoners of war.⁴¹ Music for the 1918 show was provided by the Royal Garrison Artillery (Portsmouth Division) Band, the First Australian Con. Depot Band, and the Army Service Corps Base Depot Band.⁴² Not only were latent musical talents utilized, but the illustration for the 1917 certificate was produced by a man who in civilian life was a clerk at a gas company (see fig. 3).⁴³ The shows proved popular and the money raised in both years was split between the Red Cross and the Oeuvres de Guerre.⁴⁴ During the 1917 show, 9,000 people came to visit the grounds, which grew to 11,000 visitors in 1918.⁴⁵ An external

³¹ Many thanks to Susan Reed, Lead Curator Germanic Studies at the British Library, for her help with the translation of these items.

³² Tab.11748.aa.4.(208).

³³ Tab.11748.aa.4.(210);(211).

³⁴ Tab.11748.aa.4.(212);(214);(215);(217).

³⁵ Tab.11748.aa.4.(218).

³⁶ Tab.11748.aa.4.(152).

³⁷ A pamphlet containing the same speech in English can be found at Tab.11748.aa.4.(172).

³⁸ Tab.11748.aa.4.(22);(188).

³⁹ Barring the medals held at the IWM (discussed below).

⁴⁰ Tab.11748.aa.4.(114).

⁴¹ Tab.11748.aa.4.(113).

⁴² Tab.11748.aa.4.(116).

⁴³ Tab.11748.aa.4.(89);(97).

⁴⁴ Tab.11748.aa.4.(95);(98).

⁴⁵ A letter, BL, Tab.11748.aa.4.(99), states that the 1917 show was held on a French National Holiday, which may have somewhat inflated the number of visitors. BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(98);(110).



Fig. 3. 1917 Vegetable Show Certificate, BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(89).

reference to these shows can be found in the memoirs of Jessie Wilson, a YMCA Volunteer who was stationed at Le Havre, which indicates the fierce rivalry which took part between contestants. She was permitted to create a vegetable garden for the YMCA hut, and remembered that one of the men had a particular liking for marrows: 'one of enormous size we all hoped would have taken a prize at the Camp's Vegetable Show, but alas some ill-meaning person stole it and, some held, exhibited it as his own.'⁴⁶

Collection policy, the British Museum, and the War

Having briefly discussed some of the collection, it seems necessary to explain how the items came to be in the Library. During the latter part of the War there was a general sense (especially in London) that items relating to the War should be collected. Canadian and Australian officers collected material for the purpose of forming national museums. The Canadian War Records Office, founded in 1916 and based in London, collected regimental war accounts as well as ephemeral material; film, paintings, photographs and memorabilia.⁴⁷ Francis Jenkinson, the University Librarian at Cambridge, attempted to collect ephemeral material for future historians to examine.⁴⁸ The IWM (Imperial War Museum) was created in 1917 and regularly requested donations from the public for its galleries. Provision was made for the collection of war posters, originally by the British Museum but latterly by the IWM, and foreign newspapers collected by the War Office were transferred to the Museum.⁴⁹ The *Subject Index of the Books Relating to the European War, 1914-1918, acquired by the British Museum, 1914-1920* gives an indication of the range of the British Museum's collection of all material connected to the war during this time and provides a convenient point of access to items collected at the time, serving as a useful supplement to the online catalogue. As part of this wide ranging collection policy the British Museum acquired its ephemera.⁵⁰

The items contained within the guard book Tab.11748.aa.4. seem to have been predominantly donated by the troops themselves. The Army Regulations mention depositing army documents for posterity in 1914. A letter sent alongside donations to the Museum makes reference to the King's Orders, stating 'the enclosed historical record [...] is forwarded to you in accordance with paras 1931-1933, King's Regulations, for the Royal Air Force.'⁵¹ Article 1933 of the King's Regulations states 'C.Os. [*sic*] are invited to send copies of all historical records and regimental magazines and newspapers which may be privately printed, to the principal librarian of the British Museum.'⁵² This was amended in 1919 to state that copies should be made to both the Museum and to the Librarian at the War Office.⁵³ In addition to the King's Regulations, during the summer of 1917 the War Office also issued a General Routine Order to

⁴⁶ Joan E. Duncan (ed.), *Aunt J. Jessie Millar Wilson MBE: Wartime Memories of a Lady YMCA Volunteer in France 1915-1918* (Ilkley, 1999), p. 49.

⁴⁷ Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London, 1994), pp.120-1.

⁴⁸ John Pegum, 'British Army Trench Journals and a Geography of Identity' in M. Hammond & S. Towheed (eds.), *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 132.

⁴⁹ *Subject Index of the Books Relating to the European War, 1914-18*, preface.

⁵⁰ For an indication of how another collection was formed and how difficult it can sometimes be to trace this, see Morna Daniels, *French Newspapers and Ephemera from the 1848 Revolution*, p. 3. <www.bl.uk/ebj/1998articles/pdf/article14.pdf>, Accessed 20.09.2016.

⁵¹ BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(121).

⁵² Marginal note: 'National collection in British Museum.' *The King's regulations and order for the army. 1912. Re-printed with amendments published in Army Orders up to 1st August, 1914* (London, 1914), p. 399.

⁵³ *Various Amendments and reprints of amendments to the King's Regulations published between 1916 and 1921* (London, 1920), p. 26. There is no reference made to any discussions relating to the collection of wartime ephemera in the Correspondence, Trustees' Minutes and Reports of the Keepers of Printed Books, 1865-1973 for 1914 to 1921 (DH2/78-DH2/86) so it is unclear precisely when the British Museum decided to collect this material.

all units requesting that ephemeral material be sent to the British Museum.⁵⁴ It is likely that the donation of a Christmas concert programme, dated 1915 but donated in November 1917, was prompted by this request: an accompanying letter refers to a 'footnote in G.R.O.s requesting copies of programmes of sports & concerts carried out in France.'⁵⁵ Other letters accompanying donated material do not include as much detail about where donors heard of the request for ephemera. The letter that accompanied the donation of whist cards simply stated 'it has been brought to notice that the Trustees of the British Museum are desirous of obtaining specimens of programmes etc. of entertainments held "in the field."'⁵⁶

In some ways it is remarkable that any of the ephemera sent to the Museum has survived. Between 1914 and 1916 the Museum was open to the public, but from 1916 onwards only the smaller temporary exhibitions were available for public view (although the Reading Room, Newspaper Room, and Manuscripts Student Room remained open throughout).⁵⁷ In 1934 Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, Director of the British Museum between 1909 and 1930, delivered a lecture which detailed the Museum's tribulations throughout the war. In his brief overview of wartime activities he described how the Museum protected its collections; the Elgin marbles were sheltered by sandbags; the National Library of Wales (in Aberystwyth) received printed books, manuscripts, prints and drawings for safe keeping; a private collector offered his safe, and priceless manuscripts were sent to be stored at his home in Malvern; and antiques were stored in a section of underground railway belonging to the West Central Post Office in Holborn.⁵⁸ The Museum was used for war work; the Prisoners of War Bureau, Medical Research Committee and the Registry of Friendly Societies all occupied the building at various points throughout the war.⁵⁹ Staff numbers reduced as men went to war and eleven of those who left from the British Museum did not return.⁶⁰ Having managed to arrive at the museum the ephemera collection had to contend with the IWM attempting to siphon off the Museum's war collections. However the majority of ephemera sent to the British Museum seems to have stayed within the Library's collections.⁶¹ A notable exception is a medal set, produced for the 1918 vegetable show in Le Havre and donated alongside the collection of documentation, which appear to have been transferred to the IWM.⁶²

A rather varied collection

Among the upheaval, removals, and threat of destruction, ephemera survived the war. Items were sent, they were marked as British Museum property, and they were kept. A quantity of

⁵⁴ Pegum, 'British Army Trench Journals and a Geography of Identity', p. 131.

⁵⁵ BL, Tab.11748.aa.4.(76).

⁵⁶ BL, Tab.11748.aa.4.(68).

⁵⁷ British Museum, *A Short Guide to the Temporary War-Time Exhibition in the British Museum* (London, 1918); see also P. R. Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library 1753-1973* (London, 1998), pp. 460-1.

⁵⁸ Frederic G. Kenyon, *The British Museum in War Time* (Glasgow, 1934), pp. 15-30; Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library*, pp. 460-1; Antony Griffiths and Reginald Williams, *The Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: User's Guide* (London, 1987), p. 4. Within the ephemera collection there are posters relating to the armistice processions in Aberystwyth, which may have come back with the material housed at the National Library of Wales at the end of the war.

⁵⁹ Kenyon, *The British Museum in War Time*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library*, p. 465. Kenyon (p.10) states that 18 men in total did not return, 10 from the Bloomsbury site, 8 from South Kensington, but 11 are listed as having fallen on the Bloomsbury memorial.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 132.

⁶² I have been unable to determine when the items moved. There is a pencil annotation on the letter sent by Major Browne informing the Museum of the collection of items he sent noting the medals were 'retained by Dept of Coins' which may explain their journey. BL Tab.11748.aa.4.(114). Images of the medals can be found at: <www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30083096>, Accessed 01.09.2016.

them were chosen to be sent by officers, reflecting a certain pride in their men’s activities, and creating a lasting legacy of ephemeral entertainment records that would otherwise have been lost. With new initiatives surrounding the centenary, and a renewed interest in everyday lives during the war, ephemera is ripe for further study.⁶³ The items in Tab.11748.aa.4. ‘a collection of miscellaneous leaflets, programmes, etc. relating to the European War’ offer a research avenue into the complexities of war, of printing, production, and collection. Some items are somewhat prosaic, others rather more interesting, but all help create a mosaic of life during a time of war that is otherwise nearly impossible to recover.

⁶³ There is now, for example, an Everyday Lives in War Centre based at the University of Hertfordshire, one of the AHRC’s five World War One Engagement Centres.