

**WARRINGTON AT WAR: "Your Country Needs You!"**

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Commissioned by Janice Hayes,  
Principal Museum Manager at Culture Warrington  
To commemorate the 1914 outbreak of World War I.

## **WARRINGTON AT WAR: “Your Country Needs You!”**

### **SCENE 1: OUTBREAK**

*The characters gather in Golden Square, having paraded down the various thoroughfares, with placards, calling out the slogans on their posters.*

NEWSBOY: (Brandishing Warrington Examiner) Read all about it! Warrington at War!

*EDITOR stands on soapbox. People crowd around.*

NARRATOR Editorial, The Warrington Examiner, 5 August 1914.

EDITOR (He reads from the newspaper) There is momentous news today. England has declared war on Germany. Now that the die is cast, there will be no hanging back.

VOICE: Come into the ranks and fight for your King and country!

VOICE: You are wanted at the Front!

VOICES Enlist today!

KITCHENER: Your Country Needs You!

CPT CROSFIELD I, Captain George Crosfield, stand before you in the illustrious Parr Hall, and I ask you, who will serve?

ALL (Hands in the air!) Ay!

NARRATOR And so the men of Warrington flock to the call.

JACK FISH Let's get into this scrum, lads!

NARRATOR And with deft speed and the tricky swerve of a swift winger carrying the ball to a try, Jackie Fish makes an attacking run.

JACK FISH (Makes the soldier's oath) I, Jack Fish, famous wing of the Warrington Wires, swear by Almighty God, that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his Majesty King George the Fifth, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of his Majesty and of the generals and officers set over me, So help me God.

NARRATOR	And he takes the King's Shilling and joins the Kings Royal Rifle Brigade.
ALL	God save the King!
JACK	And so many Loyal Warrington men follow me in, they call it Fish's Regiment.
NARRATOR	The recruits are jolly fellows. And as they wait for trains at Bank Quay, they sing with gusto:
SONG	<p>It's a long way to Tipperary          It's a long way to go          It's long way to Tipperary          To the sweetest girl I know.          Goodbye Piccadilly          Farewell Leicester Square          It's a long, long way to Tipperary          But my heart's still there.</p>

## **SCENE 2: LETTERS**

WILLIAM BIBBY	Dear Mr Whitfield, I received your letter and photo last Thursday.
WHITFIELD	Dear William, How kind of you to write. How are you doing?
WILLIAM	I am getting on well at school, sir, but I have had the cane many times. We only wish we had you back again.
WHITFIELD	I will be back at school as soon as I can be.
WILLIAM	If we had you back again, we would let Mr Hands go. I Thank you for the photo, Mr Whitfield. From your loving monitor, William Bibby.

## **SCENE 3: LUSITANIA**

NARRATOR:	8 May 1915
NEWSBOY	Read all about it! The Lusitania sunk
NARRATOR	And when the torpedo struck, John McStay of Dallam Lane was in the Stokehold.

MCSTAY	Men, women and children were floating in the sea like so many corks. It was horrible to see them struggling for life.
NARRATOR	And in anger, there is rioting in London, Liverpool, and Manchester.
WOMAN:	( <i>Placard</i> ) Men of Britain: will you stand for this? Enlist now!
KITCHENER:	( <i>Placard</i> ) Rally round the Flag: we must have more men!
WOMEN:	( <i>Placard</i> ) Women of Britain say go!
ALL:	Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?
SONG:	Oh, we don't want to lose you but we think you ought to go. For your King and your country both need you so. We shall want you and miss you But with all our might and main We shall cheer you, thank you, bless you When you come home again.

#### **SCENE 4: STALEMATE**

NARRATOR	But on the Western Front, there is stalemate.
PTE TOZER	You asked me to tell you what it is like out here.
WHITFIELD	The best way I can describe it is this.
TOZER	Go into your garden
WHITFIELD	Dig a trench.
TOZER	Fill it half way with water.
WHITFIELD	Get up at two am,
TOZER	put the coal skuttle round your neck
WHITFIELD	and walk round the town for six hours.
TOZER	Then get in the trench and stop there for four days and nights.

WHITFIELD	For the excitement of being under rifle and shellfire,
TOZER	get your next-door neighbour to throw a lump of stone at your head every time you put it over the top of the trench.
ROWDY TROOPS	Oh the Grand Old Duke of York He had ten thousand men He marched 'em out of the frontline trench And he marched them in again.  And when they were stood they had rum And when they were sat they had bread But when they put their heads 'bove the parapets They were dead, they were dead, they were...
	<i>Whistle blows interrupting the song</i>
VOICE	Over the top, boys! Let 'em have it!
NARRATOR	It is June 1915 and the First Attack on Bellewaarde, Hooze, has begun.
FELL	Our boys charged along over the parapet led by the Colonel, right through the German trenches. Oh it was a grand sight to see all the regiments mixed up, dashing along, scattering Germans and capturing them by the score.
MILLER	Our company has lost an awful lot for we were first in our battalion.
FELL	Oh the noise and the bombardment! It was terrible.
MILLER	It was raining shells the whole time, and the German Maxims were spitting out death as hard as they could.
FELL	We lost most of our officers and men by shells, more than by bullets.
MILLER	Many a poor wounded chap, walking back to the dressing station like me, never made it.
FELL	It was pitiful to see your own pals getting blown to pieces by the side of you.
MILLER	I shall never forget the sights I saw on that bloody battlefield.

FELL	Their trenches were filled with dead and wounded.
MILLER	Dear God
FELL	It was Hell let loose.
NEWSBOY	Read all about! Territorials in a Big Engagement! Heavy Losses!
W'TON GUARDIAN	<i>(lifts newspaper with front page pictures of the dead)</i> The toll of life was heavy. Warrington had many darkened homes in the days following.
NARRATOR	The dead lie where they fall.
VAD NURSE	The wounded come back on hospital trains. Our wards are full to overflowing.

*SONG HUM: Long, Long Trail*

### **SCENE 5: WOMEN AT WAR**

NARRATOR	On the Home Front men and women are called to play their part and join the fight.
VOICE M	<i>(Placard)</i> We're both needed to serve the guns. Fill up the ranks. Pile up the munitions.
VOICE F	<i>(Placard)</i> Women, your country needs you.
VOICE F	<i>(Placard)</i> God speed the plough and the woman who drives it.
NARRATOR:	The Primitive Methodist Leader, 21 October 1915
NEWSBOY	Read all about it!
METHODIST:	<i>(Lifts another newspaper)</i> The sphere of women's work enlarges almost every day. We are growing quite accustomed to seeing women conducting trams, collecting railway tickets, collecting and delivering laundry goods.
LUCY B:	We are ready to work beside you, fight beside you, and die beside you...
MARGARET B:	My younger sister, Lucy Broadbent.
LUCY	...Let us vote beside you.

NARRATOR            And she will soon march off to Romania to join the Scottish Women's Hospital, and wins a medal for bravery under fire.

MARGARET:           And I, Margaret Broadbent, will run the Red Cross Raddon Court Military Hospital for the wounded, here in Warrington.

SONG:                 Keep the Home-fires burning,  
While your hearts are yearning,  
Though your lads are far away  
They dream of Home;  
There's a silver lining  
Through the dark cloud shining,  
Turn the dark cloud inside out,  
Till the boys come Home.

### **SCENE 6: NOVEMBER 1915**

NARRATOR            The Warrington Guardian, November 1915

GUARDIAN            (*reads from newspaper*) Men from this district are doing their noble duty in practically all, if not all, the sphere of operations

VOICE                 with the Fleet on the high seas

VOICE                 in Flanders

VOICE                 in Gallipoli

VOICE                 in Egypt

VOICE                 in Africa

VOICE                 And in the Balkans.

SONG:                 There's a long, long trail a-winding  
Into the land of my dreams,  
Where the nightingales are singing  
And a white moon beams:  
There's a long, long night of waiting  
Until my dreams all come true;  
Till the day when I'll be going down  
That long, long trail with you.

## **SCENE 7: REMEMBER THEM**

NARRATOR	By the Armistice in 1918, there had been 956,703 British Armed Forces deaths.
MARGARET	2,272,998 men had been wounded in action. And Raddon Hall Hospital had treated over 1600 soldiers of all nationalities.
NARRATOR	Men and women came home, but some lie out there still in foreign fields.
VOICE	I regret to inform you...
VOICE	It is with sadness that I write to tell you...
VOIE	Killed in action...
VOICE	Listed with the missing...
CAPTAIN	Your son, Sergeant Stephen Percival, was one of our best airmen.
MATRON	Your daughter, May Westall, died a real soldier's death. She has given her life just as truly as any soldier.
CAPTAIN	Your son, Lieutenant Corporal George Whitfield, was killed in action. I know he was a fine teacher in civilian life. He was an equally fine soldier. I enclose his personal effects:
VOICE	A wallet
VOICE	Photos
VOICE	A belt and purse
VOICE	A gold ring
VOICE	Three coins
VOICE	A fountain pen
VOICE	A wrist watch strap.
NARRATOR	And we remember them: the men and women who returned, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.
VOICE:	In Flanders fields the poppies blow Between the crosses, row on row,



That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

SONG:                    They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We shall remember them.

*END*