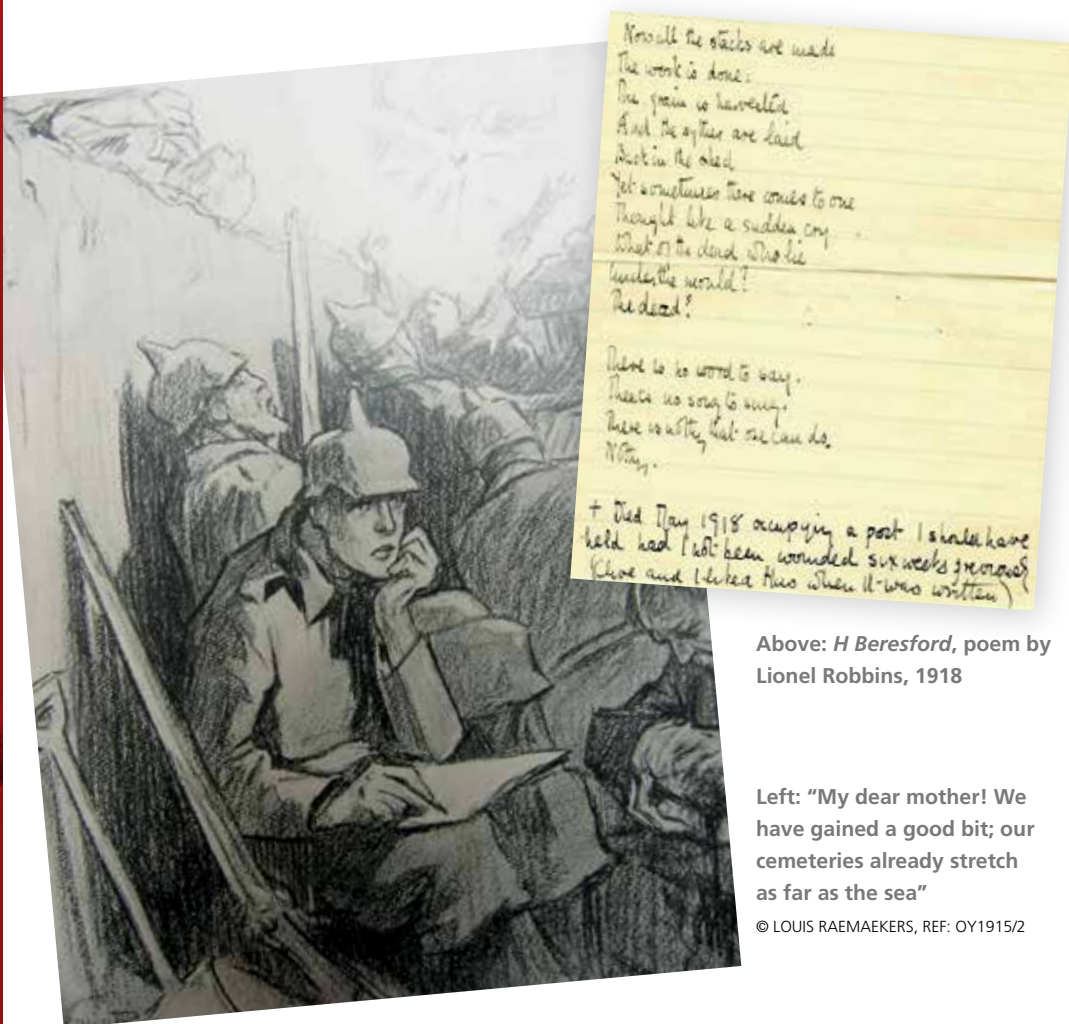


*"There is no word to say, There is no song to sing, There is nothing that one can do. Nothing."*



Above: *H Beresford*, poem by Lionel Robbins, 1918

Left: "My dear mother! We have gained a good bit; our cemeteries already stretch as far as the sea"

© LOUIS RAEMAEEKERS, REF: OY1915/2

LSE Library has begun to explore material held by the School relating to the first world war, in preparation for a series of events planned at LSE during 2014 to mark the centenary of the conflict, writes **Peter Carrol**.

The Library's first world war project will investigate the role that LSE staff and students played during the conflict, and the range of material held on the outbreak of war, its political consequences and the civil movements that arose in the following years. It will culminate in a new online digital exhibition, due to launch in spring 2014.

Ellie Robinson, an assistant archivist responsible for digital archives, has identified two significant areas of interest from the collection: a card register containing the personal records of the military careers of LSE alumni, and poignant personal reflections of soldiers engaged in military service.

Ellie says the personal records offer "moving insights of the lives of young men as the conflict lengthened and casualties grew".

"As an archivist, it is fascinating to track individual journeys over the four years of battle. For example, a soldier may have enlisted and then been promoted a year into the conflict. Some of the records describe the injuries sustained in battle; others describe imprisonment in war camps."

As the lives of some of the more famous figures from LSE history have already been extensively documented, Ellie believes that attention should now be turned to the records of the "more obscure"

alumni, which could hold surprises, giving real insight into an average person's experiences of the conflict.

Other materials from the collections that stand out include some of the reflective ruminations on war by soldiers, including pencil sketches and poetry from men as they entered the battlefields. Ellie describes some of the work as "evocative and powerful, the type of items which are hidden away on shelves for years and concealed from public view".

Paul Horsler, Academic Support Librarian for International History at the Library, is investigating the printed records of the war. He says that he has already uncovered "great material in the pamphlet collection relating to the origins and outbreak of the war, the different political movements that began to ferment in the years preceding 1914. The discoveries will add to the extensive catalogues of literature on the morality of the war held by LSE, and build on our normal strengths in economics and international history."

Ellie and Paul agree that the project is an important step in protecting LSE's heritage, but they also believe that, beyond the School, it will add another voice to the national debate on the legacy of the first world war.

Ellie says: "The war is now passing out of living memory, so it behoves the Library and the School to keep alive the memory of the sacrifices made by so many. It's a big responsibility to have this collection documented, so the war isn't forgotten and the mistakes repeated."

The Library's first world war project will integrate the work and subsequent digital exhibition with the range of public events planned by LSE throughout 2014 to mark the centenary. These events include the LSE Space for Thought Literary Festival 2014, *Reflections*, which will take place from 25 February to 1 March 2014, exploring the distinctive qualities of both the social sciences' and literature's understanding of the world around us, including reflections on war and peace.

Among other events planned, a series of public lectures from the Department of International History will reflect on every aspect of the war and its aftermath.

Full details of the Library's first world war project can be found on the website: [lse.ac.uk/Library](http://lse.ac.uk/Library). Information on the public event schedule for 2014 will be available from [lse.ac.uk/publicevents](http://lse.ac.uk/publicevents) ■



**Peter Carrol** is Communications Officer, LSE Library.