

PWY YDW I'N MEDDWL  
OEDDWN I?

1914

WHO DO  
I THINK I WAS?

1918

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**Alan Dee,** Dowlais Visual Art Group

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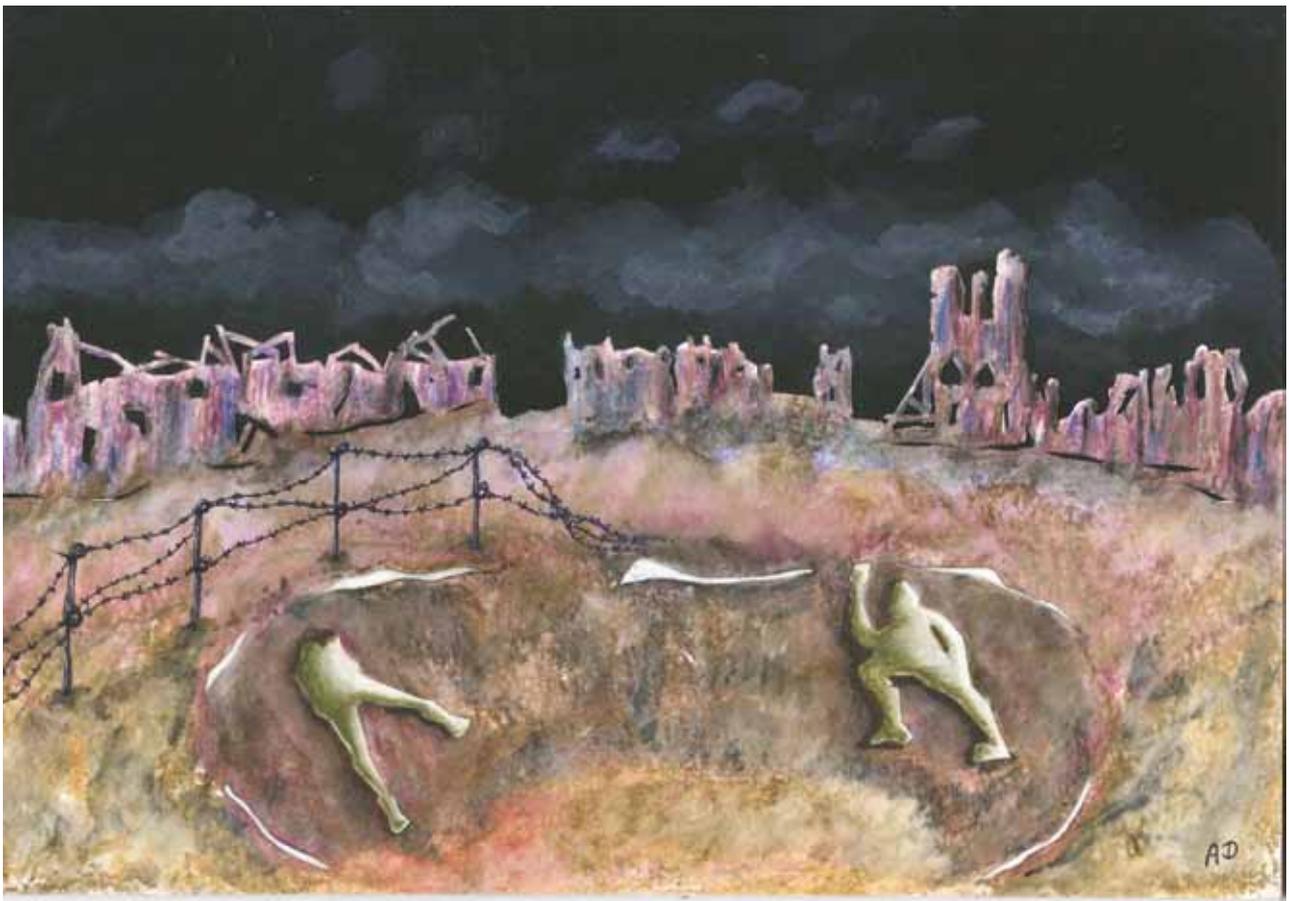
## **A Tale From the Front**

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How many battlefronts had I fought on? Their names mingle in my memories of war.

David Llewellyn is my name. Feeling so far from my home as I sit in this trench waiting for the hour, soon to come, when the whistle signals the push toward the enemy lines.

Henry James, a good-hearted lad of seventeen from Cardiff stands beside me, nervously fingering the bolt on his rifle. The noise of the barrage pounding the enemy positions suddenly stop; it will not be long now.



The shrill rasping sound of a whistle cuts through the early morning air. The first wave over the top barely clears the trenches before murderous machine gun fire cuts them down. The sound of the whistle signals the second wave. The lucky ones reach no man's land. Then it is Harry and advancing before the enemy positions. All around men suddenly stumble and fall

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as enemy fire cuts them down. "Advance, forward men!" shout the officers. A shell explodes nearby and I am lifted into the air. Then blackness comes and I feel no more.

I do not know how long I lay there but as my senses returned, I became aware that it was no longer daylight. My head pounded, my body ached and coldness gripped my lungs. There was a distant rumble of what seemed like thunder and then silence.

I appeared to be in a shell crater; nearby lay the dead body of Henry James, there was just enough of his face left to recognise him. Opposite me was another body lying face down in the mud, I wondered whom the poor wretch was.

As the coldness threatened to envelope me I fancied I could hear voices. Were they those of the enemy? I strained to listen as the whispering came nearer. These were no enemy they were British Tommy's; stretcher bearers ridiculed by the rank and file as the cowards, conscientious objectors, pacifists. Not cowards, only a brave man would venture out into no-man's land armed with only a stretcher. Soon they would come to me. They checked each body for signs of life.

This cold keeps creeping through my bones, I raise my arm to signal to them, why do they not see me? It takes them but a glance to see that Henry is beyond help and then they reach the poor wretch opposite me obscuring him from view with their bodies as they turn him face up. "Dead", I hear one of the say. Then they are upon me.

"Help me", I plead. They do not hear me. They must have heard me. Why then do they not help? Through the dim light I look across in horror at the face of the dead man opposite. It is me, it is my face, below which is a large gaping hole where my chest once was. I feel a hand upon my shoulder. I turn and look up, there before me is Henry James, his face complete once more, and the blackness slowly envelopes me.