

Hello, my name is Martin Barry.

I am a PhD student from the University of Bristol researching 'The Materiality, Memories and Material Culture of Princess Mary's 1914 Christmas Gift to Soldiers and Sailors during the First World War'.

These little embossed brass boxes were only given to those 'wearing the King's uniform on Christmas Day 1914' and in all around 2.6 million were issued.

They were packed individually into a cardboard box along with accompanying 'comforts' such as smoking pipes, tobacco, cigarettes, sweets for non-smokers and chocolate for nurses. Nothing was placed inside the brass box except either a flint and tinder cigarette lighter or a pencil made from a rifle bullet.

This object is a powerful example of the material culture of the First World War and carries with it many significant biographies. Biographies that include memory, remembrance and commemoration. Some are empty reminders of a much-loved father or grandfather, now gone but not forgotten. Some are the legacy of an ancestor not personally known by the current custodian of the Gift but still being commemorated today.

Many of these 'Gift's from a Princess' were kept and sent home. A significant number remain with the soldier's descendants and it is these people I am seeking to contact.

My goal is to interview people who still have these brass boxes to investigate these 'memory processes' and to see how we link those people from over a hundred years ago to today through these simple objects.

Can you help me?

Before the Covid- 19 crisis I would interview face-to-face but am now going to do it either virtually or over the telephone.

All interviews will be recorded (audio only) but ALL results will be made anonymous.

If you would like to take part in my research or would like more detailed information, please email me at;

mb12582@bristol.ac.uk

Thank you for your help.