

# The Unbreakable Bond: British Soldiers and the Untamed Nature of The Great War



War, a grim reminder of humanity's darkest facets, often strips away the comforts and familiarity of everyday life, exposing soldiers to the raw reality of the world.

Now imagine the British soldiers, clad in their uniforms, stepping foot into the treacherous landscapes of The Great War; weighed down by the oppressive burden of conflict, yet finding solace within the untamed embrace of nature.

## **Where Poppies Blow: The British Soldier, Nature, the Great War** by John Lewis-Stempel(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 4.7 out of 5

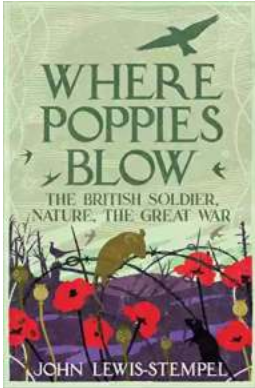
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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled



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Print length : 384 pages



## **In the Trenches: Surviving amidst Chaos**

The trenches, the infamous battlegrounds that witnessed the horrors of World War I, became the second home of British soldiers. These men, amidst the relentless violence and turmoil, discovered solace in the rare moments of tranquility nature offered. They were able to find temporary respite, witnessing nature's resilience even in the face of relentless destruction.

A patch of wildflowers defiantly blooming in the barrenness of no man's land, the sweet melodies of birds piercing the suffocating silence of the trenches - such instances reminded the soldiers of a world that existed beyond the monotonous cycle of war.

## **Picturesque Beauty: Escaping the Nightmare**

Many soldiers found solace in nature's idyllic charm as a way to momentarily escape the nightmarish reality of battle.

During brief respites from the front lines, soldiers would venture into nearby woods, finding refuge amidst the stretching canopies and dappled sunlight. The

gentle whispers of leaves in the wind and the serenity of bubbling brooks enabled the soldiers to reconnect with tranquility, even if only for a fleeting moment.

These respites were crucial for their mental well-being, as the soldiers battled not only the physicality of war but also the toll it took on their minds.

### **Survival Instincts: Nature as an Ally**

Amidst the chaos, soldiers turned to nature for survival.

The soldiers learned to read the signs and sounds of nature, leveraging them to their advantage. The chirping of birds could indicate the presence of gas, while the behavior of animals could unveil imminent danger. Additionally, the soldiers relied on natural resources for sustenance, utilizing berries, fruits, and even foraged herbs to supplement their meager rations.

### **Epiphany of Unity: Soldiers and Wildlife**

Soldiers spent months entrenched in nature, forming a unique bond with the wildlife they encountered.

The soldiers observed the struggle for survival in animals and saw a reflection of themselves in the untamed creatures. Both soldiers and wildlife were thrust into a world of violence they did not create, yet had to adapt to in order to survive.

These encounters with wildlife, whether it was sharing a moment with a deer or witnessing a bird caring for its offspring, served as a poignant reminder of the underlying forces that connect all living beings - an affirmation that, even in the darkest of times, nature continues its cycle.

### **The Aftermath: Memories of Nature Resilient**

The Great War unleashed devastation upon the landscapes, forever altering the once-lush environments these soldiers had come to appreciate and depend on.

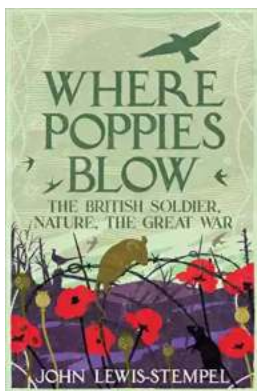
However, the memories of their encounters with nature persisted. Long after they returned home, the soldiers carried with them the images of fields turned into battlegrounds, forests torn by artillery, and skies filled not only with birds but with the incessant noise of war.

These memories served as a perpetual reminder of the unbreakable bond between the British soldiers and the indomitable spirit of nature - an unwavering testament to the strength and resilience in times of chaos.

The British soldiers who fought in The Great War were confronted by the unforgiving nature of battle, yet they also found solace, unity, and hope within the arms of nature.

Their experiences serve as a reminder that even in the harshest of circumstances, the bond between humans and nature endures.

The untold stories of the British soldiers and their intertwined relationship with nature during The Great War should never be forgotten, for their memories speak both to the indomitable human spirit and the eternal resilience embedded within the heart of nature.



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Winner of the 2017 Wainwright Golden Beer Book Prize for nature writing  
The natural history of the Western Front during the First World War  
'If it weren't for the birds, what a hell it would be.'

During the Great War, soldiers lived inside the ground, closer to nature than many humans had lived for centuries. Animals provided comfort and interest to fill the blank hours in the trenches - bird-watching, for instance, was probably the single most popular hobby among officers. Soldiers went fishing in flooded shell holes, shot hares in no-man's land for the pot, and planted gardens in their trenches and billets. Nature was also sometimes a curse - rats, spiders and lice abounded, and disease could be biblical.

But above all, nature healed, and, despite the bullets and blood, it inspired men to endure. Where Poppies Blow is the unique story of how nature gave the British soldiers of the Great War a reason to fight, and the will to go on.



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