

Rose lay in the sweet smelling grass surrounded by her hens as they scratched for worms.

‘There you are,’ her brother called. ‘Mam wants to know why Edna isn’t back from town.’

Rose knew her sister was at a suffragette meeting, but she shrugged and said, ‘Perhaps she’s working late.’ When Rose was older she planned to join Edna and her friends in their fight for the right to vote.

‘Mam’s waiting to serve supper,’ Lawrie said. ‘You’d better come in.’

Rose herded her hens into their coop.

‘Goodnight Trixie and Dolly,’ she murmured. ‘Goodnight Henrietta. Sleep well Ruby and Josephine.’



Mam ladled rabbit stew onto three plates.

‘Any more eggs, Rose?’ she asked.

‘None since this morning.’

As they ate, Lawrie shared news from the Brick Works.

‘Some lads say the problem in the Balkans is becoming dangerous for England.’

‘Why?’ Rose asked.

‘If Russia and Germany take sides, Europe will turn into a right old mess and then old Blighty might have to take a side too.’

‘No more talk of fighting,’ Mam muttered as she warmed an iron on the stove.

Since Father’s accident Rose’s mother had taken in laundry to help make ends meet. Edna was allowed to help with the ironing, but Mam said Rose was too young.

‘If you scorch a collar it’ll cost us a month’s income, Rosie. Perhaps when you’re fourteen ...’

Rose was counting the months until her birthday — not because she wanted to iron, but because Mam had promised that Rose could lower her hems. Most of Rose’s friends already wore long skirts. Some were even allowed to wear their hair up in a twist. Rose tugged at the ribbons tying her plaits as she cleared the table. Then she lit a lamp and began writing in her diary.





THE DAILY MIRROR, Friday, May 22, 1914.

The Militants' March to Buckingham

Palace Fully Illustrated.

# The Daily Mirror

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FRIDAY, MAY 22,

1914

One Halfpenny.

MRS. PANKHURST ARRESTED AT THE GATES OF  
TO PRESENT A PETITION TO

BUCKINGHAM PALACE IN TRYING  
THE KING.

## 14<sup>th</sup> May 1914

Mam was cross that Edna missed supper because of another suffragette meeting. Lawrie says the blue stockings shouldn't be fussing about votes for women when there are more important issues, like workers' rights and the problems in Ireland, but what would he know? Imagine if we really did get the vote. Women in faraway New Zealand and Australia have had it for years.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> May

The suffragettes' leader has been arrested outside Buckingham Palace. The newspaper photographs are shocking. Edna is furious. She says there's no excuse for rough-handling Mrs Pankhurst.

## 14<sup>th</sup> June: Tom's birthday

Lawrie has gone next door to the Coopers' to celebrate Tom's seventeenth birthday. I think it's so romantic that Tom and I have birthdays on the same day of the month, even though he's June and I'm November.

## Later

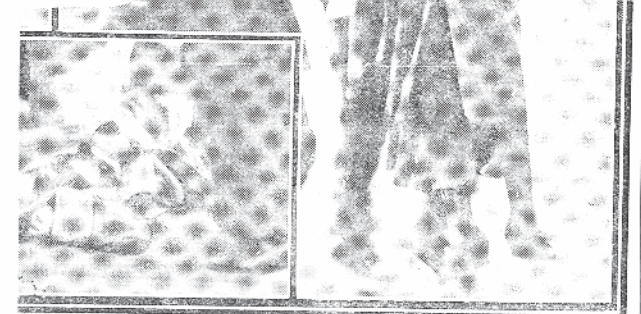
Tom noticed me peeping through the hedge. He smiled, but Lawrie rolled his eyes. My cheeks felt redder than the comb on Henrietta's head.

## 10<sup>th</sup> July

Edna and Lawrie argued during breakfast again. After the suffragettes' attacks on artworks, Lawrie is even more scornful of Edna's friends. He says their window smashing is bad enough, but with our country on the brink of war, damaging national treasures is senseless. Edna told Lawrie that if women were able to vote, then there'd be no war. She'll never admit it, but even Edna must feel that slashing paintings won't help the women's cause.

## 14<sup>th</sup> July

Four months until my birthday. Edna's been teaching me new ways to tie up my hair. I think a low neck bun suits me best.





Before Rose could let down her hems or pin up her hair, Britain was at war with Germany.

Local lads buttoned themselves into uniforms and marched off to military training camps while the women stayed behind and carried on.

Battlelines changed the village of Harefield. The suffragettes called a truce and suffrage prisoners were released. Edna left her typing pool to work in a munitions factory. Lawrie worked extra shifts, while Rose took over her brother's chores.

After milking Daisy she gathered eggs and chopped kindling. Then, while Mam churned their butter, Rose walked into town to deliver eggs, milk and potatoes to the big houses. When she had time, Rose stopped at the village green and swapped news with her best friend. Bessie worked at the Post Office and always knew which lads had or hadn't signed up.





23<sup>rd</sup> September 1914

*Today I saw Tom at the village green — and he was in uniform!*

*I can't believe that my boy next door has become a soldier. He looked so handsome in his khaki shirt. I waved, but Tom wouldn't look at me. As if I'd tell the authorities his real age. Tom should know he can trust me.*

2<sup>nd</sup> October

*More and more men are joining up. I wonder if Lawrie will enlist? He's such a dreamer, I can't imagine him in uniform.*

*With men leaving the shops and factories, women are taking their places. Edna's friends are doing their bit, keeping the mill open, and cousin Mildred is working as a mechanic for the Australian family at Harefield House. Ladies are also tutoring children at the Junior School. The world is changing. Edna says women won't give up their new jobs after the war.*

31<sup>st</sup> October

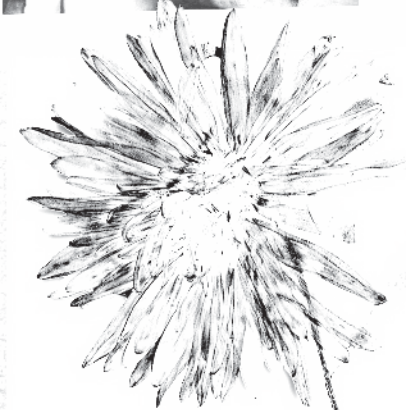
*We've just heard that Reverend Harland's son has been killed in France, struck in the head by a bullet. How terrible. I remember how kind he was, always helping the older members of the congregation. Until now it's felt like the war was far away.*

14<sup>th</sup> November

*I'm fourteen — at last.*

*It wasn't the birthday I'd imagined, but somehow Mam saved enough to buy fabric for a long skirt. She chose a lovely forest green. It's serviceable cotton but Mam softened it with a border of lace. Edna helped me twist my hair into a knot behind my neck and I twirled in front of Mam's mirror before walking into town on Lawrie's arm. I felt so grown-up. I wish Tom had been there to see me.*

*Mrs Cooper says Tom's unit has finished training so they'll head across the channel to France soon. I hope he'll be safe. Thank goodness Lawrie is short. He won't be able to fool the enlistment officers the way Tom did.*







As Christmas approached, storekeepers strung wreaths above the Union Jacks and recruiting posters in their windows, making strange festive displays.

Then one morning, Bess stopped by to share a peculiar rumour. The owners of Harefield House were offering their estate as a convalescent home for wounded servicemen.

'Mam,' Rose called. 'Harefield House is becoming a hospital.'

'I know,' her mother replied, 'for injured Australians. Mr Billyard-Leake is too old to serve, but he wants to do his bit. Once the soldiers arrive, the staff will be needing eggs and other stores. As soon as the ground warms, we'd better plant more potatoes and beans.'



5<sup>th</sup> February 1915

*Another icy morning. The hens have stopped laying so I've spread armfuls of thick straw in their nesting box. It smells of sweet summer meadows and the girls will be snug during even the frostiest nights.*

29<sup>th</sup> March

*Five warm brown eggs this morning.*

*Now that the days are becoming longer, Bessie says Charlotte from the manor house is patrolling the village green, giving white feathers to any fellows who've turned eighteen and aren't in uniform. Bess said some villagers were cheering her on, saying, 'Good show', but I don't think shaming lads is fair. I wouldn't want anyone's death on my conscience.*

13<sup>th</sup> April

*Mam surprised Lawrie with a roast lamb for his birthday. We sang 'Happy Birthday' and 'God Save the King'. Then after dinner Uncle Max took Lawrie to the Cricketers' Arms to shout him a pint.*

Later

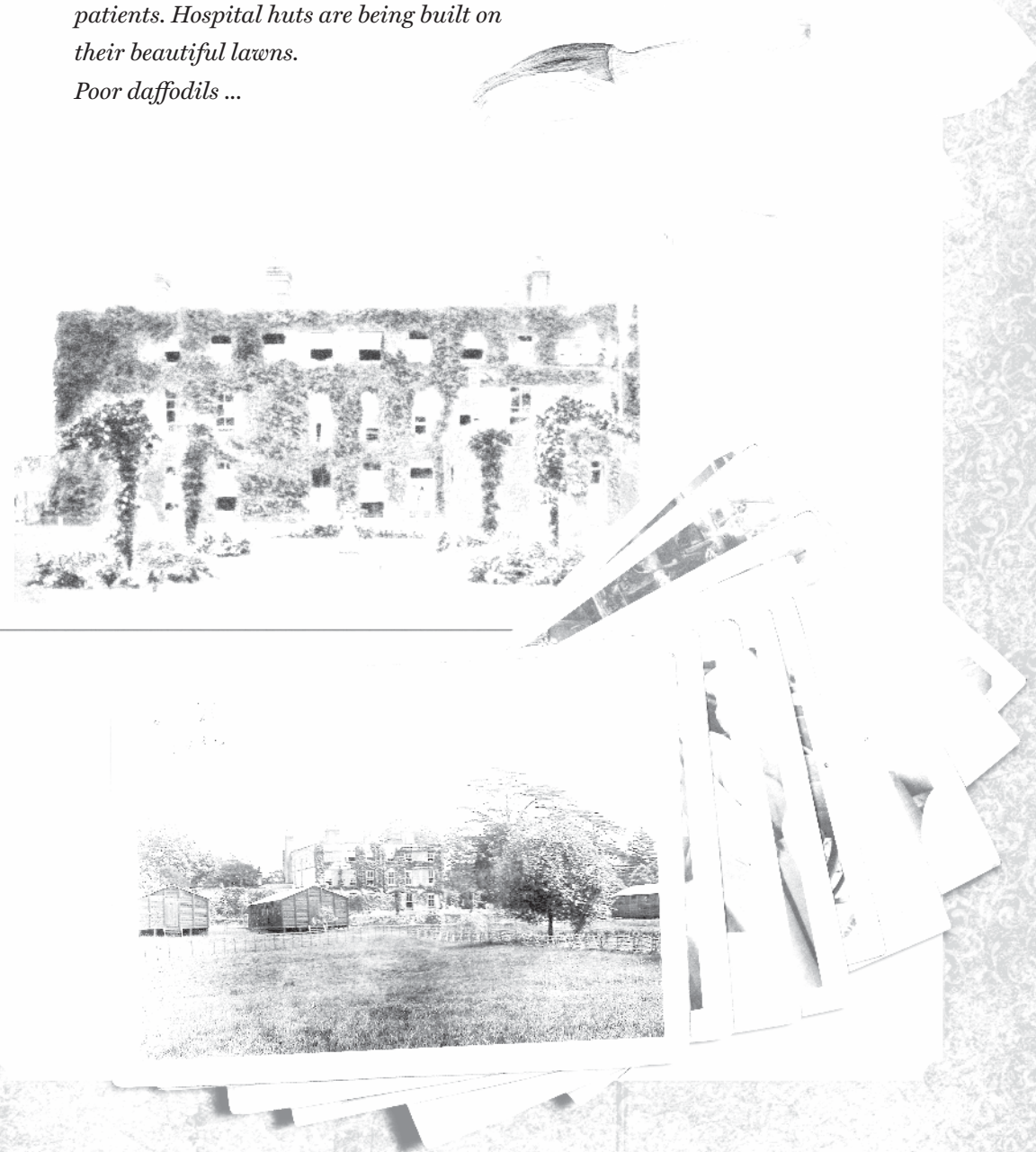
*Lawrie came home with a white feather. He says he'll sign up tomorrow. Mam's in tears. I hate Charlotte.*

18<sup>th</sup> April

*Edna is knitting warm socks for Lawrie while I'm darning his under-leggings. Lawrie smiled bravely as he hugged us goodbye, but I couldn't help shivering when he marched away.*

2<sup>nd</sup> May 1915

*The Billyard-Leakes have moved out of Harefield House to make way for the Australian patients. Hospital huts are being built on their beautiful lawns. Poor daffodils ...*





8<sup>th</sup> May 1915

*Terrible news, a German submarine has sunk the passenger liner, 'Lusitania'. She was hit yesterday, just off the Irish coast. Hundreds are lost, many of them women and children.*

12<sup>th</sup> May

*The Australian nurses have arrived. Bessie and I saw a lorry turn into Harefield House. We watched them unload their trunks. There are four nurses with their matron, a small lady with glasses and a determined step. How courageous of them to sail across the world to help us. One nurse is even shorter than me.*

13<sup>th</sup> May

*I love the Australian nurses' uniforms. Their jaunty red capes are certain to lift the spirits of the convalescents. Casualty numbers in France are shocking and my thoughts are always with Lawrie. The enemy used poisonous gas at a place called Ypres. How could anyone be so inhumane?*

14<sup>th</sup> May

*Bessie says the nurses have set to work at Harefield House, scrubbing floors, dragging beds and mattresses upstairs, unpacking bed linen and stamping it with their hospital mark.*



*The nurses are asking local women to read to the Australian soldiers. I wonder if I dare. Bessie says she'll read to them if I will ...*

17<sup>th</sup> May

*Everything is changing.*

*Edna has moved to Silvertown to work in a larger munitions factory with one of her suffragette friends. Mam is beside herself with worry at Edna being away from home, but I think she's terribly brave. The newspapers are calling the munitionettes 'canaries' because the chemicals turn their skin yellow.*

1<sup>st</sup> June

*Another air raid, this time on London.*

*We heard explosions throughout the night and when I peered through our curtains, I saw anti-aircraft guns blasting the darkness. Bessie said two zeppelins have come down at Uxbridge. Less than five miles from Harefield! But Mam said that's not true. I don't know who to believe. I'm worried for Lawrie. It's three weeks since his last letter.*

15<sup>th</sup> June

*We've heard from Lawrie at last. The mail was delayed and we received three letters at once — delivered by a woman!*

*'Now I've seen everything,' Mam said.*

*Lawrie reports that he's safe in France, but can't tell us where.*

