

Letter to the Unknown Soldier

As “A new kind of war monument” 14-18NOW decided to ask large numbers of people to write an imaginary letter to a soldier who had died in the First World War. This is the letter I contributed:

www.1418now.org.uk

14-18-NOW WW1 CENTENARY ART COMMISSIONS LETTER TO AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER

John Mullen

HISTORIAN

I remember you well. I remember when you took a second job on the docks in the evenings, so your old parents wouldn't have to go to the workhouse and be separated after so many decades together. The boss your gardener father worked for said he wouldn't help, that it was not his problem.

I remember when your third son died at five years old; if only you'd had the money for the doctors a year before that, he would have grown up. You never said so, but I know he was your favourite.

I remember the strikes a few years before the war. You never gave in, you stayed out till the end of the strike, even though union funds were not enough to feed your family more than one measly meal a day, for weeks on end.

You were my hero at all these times. No one high up thought you were a hero, then.

Then you were called up, went off and killed two Germans before being cut down by machine gun fire. Suddenly they gave you a medal, and here we are a century later being told you were a hero because you died for empire. Empire!

The website is here <https://www.1418now.org.uk/letter/john-mullen/>