

At the Going Down of the Sun

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From September 5th through to November 19th 2018, an exhibition at Bristol Cathedral will be the culmination of a 4-year photographic project. This exhibition will mark the lives of people who lost their lives in conflicts over the last 104 years. It will specifically commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War One.

Over the last four years I have photographed Commonwealth, civilian and enemy war graves, war memorials and associated bomb and air crash sites in the Bristol and Bath region.

Inspired by the Laurence Binyon poem "At the Going Down of the Sun", I photographed between the hours of dusk and dawn. By taking this nocturnal approach I was able to show not just the graves but also the subtle indicators of contemporary human existence such as light pollution and car, plane and satellite trails. These acted as a metaphor for our continuing relationship with the people in the graves so that we can ask questions about why and how we remember those taken from us by conflict.

The range of graves photographed is extensive and include a wide range of ages, races and faiths. Of considerable importance was the opportunity to capture female war graves that told the stories of women as acting participants, civilians and widows.

Nine of the images will be accompanied by QR codes. These will provide links to oral histories spoken by people who knew those buried. These voices will speak about the humanity of these individuals' lives.

The Cathedral is an appropriate space for this exhibition. It is a contemplative space. Unlike a whitewall exhibition space it has a particular context for it is itself a graveyard and site of memorialisation. The opportunity to raise memorials to the "ordinary" people of Bristol & Bath within architecture that is dedicated to the "great and good" will be a fitting tribute to their extraordinary sacrifice.

The installation will be the hub of a number of public engagements. Artist guided tours, a book, workshops and integration with the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal are some of the planned ways that the accessibility and legacy of the exhibition can be continued and extended. Throughout September a crowd funded appeal will be held to generate funding for a 50-image book.

As well as the images there will be text about the individuals involved and a foreword by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

I hope as well that the images show the considerable commitment by the CWGC that is required to maintain these graves and keep the memories of these people fresh in our minds.

I have developed partnerships and received considerable support from the following organisations: -

Bristol Cathedral, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Royal British Legion, Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust, Bristol City Council, Clifton Diocese, Bristol Hebrew Congregation, Weston-super-Mare Town Council, Bath and North-East Somerset Council and a number of church parishes.

I have attached below a selection of images from the project.

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