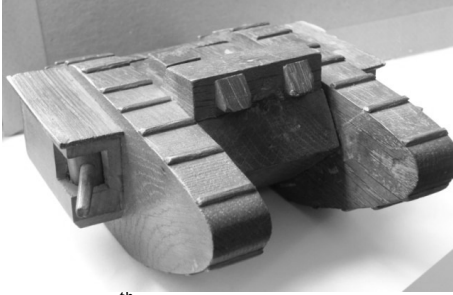


## Memories of a Kindness



On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October a thought-provoking exhibition focussing on children and war was opened at the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. The exhibition looks at boy soldiers, war toys and games, commemoration, innocent victims caught up in war, evacuees and refugees, and children helping with the war effort. All this is examined through the lens of the county of Oxfordshire to tell a most rich and interesting story that links the home front to the battlefield.

### Journey to the Past

I was asked by the organisers to try to find an item for the *Object of the Quarter* case that touched on the wider subject and was not having much success when I was saved at the last moment by Johnny Graham's kind offer to loan a small wooden model tank from the Great War. Little did I realise that research into this simple object would take me on such a fascinating journey into the past. When Corisande, Lady Rodney went to France in 1914, she was struck by the sad condition of the British Soldier, who had no place to go for recreation or to convalesce from the results of wounds

aside from various local cafes and estaminets. She suggested the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) consider building recreation huts in rear areas manned by a Women's Auxiliary. Between the end of December that year and June 1920, 1,870 women volunteered for service entirely at their own expense and under strict war-time rules to make a home for the men. Many of the women had lost fathers, husbands and brothers so shut up their houses leaving friends, relations and children in order to show their gratitude to the soldiers by offering them familiar surroundings and welcome in a country that for most was alien.

### A Model Tank with Meaning

Twenty five year old Miss Rachel Sprot from Scotland and her younger sister, volunteered in rotation to work in the YMCA recreation hut in Rouen between 1915 and 1917. It was whilst Miss Sprot was working in the canteen that she was given the model tank, made from materials found in the trenches, by a grateful soldier returning to the front. She gave the model to her son, Johnny, who has kept it safe all of these years.

If you would like to see the model tank and to think about those men, women and children who were and are caught up in the maelstrom of war, it is currently on display on the first floor of the Museum.

### Tom Shannon

Or visit [www.sofo.org.uk/research-centre/online-exhibition-list](http://www.sofo.org.uk/research-centre/online-exhibition-list)

## Big thanks to John Vickers!

For contributing so nobly to our Christmas issue with his lively sketches on pages 19 and 49. Believe it or not he has a demanding full time job so we are very grateful for his generosity.