

# FROM BOER WAR

*to  
Baskervilles*

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND THE  
RESURRECTION OF SHERLOCK HOLMES



**Our Antiquarian Books of Scotland collection dates from 1641 to the 1890s. The collection consists of 14,800 books which were published in Scotland or have a Scottish connection, e.g. through the author, printer or owner. Subjects covered include sport, education, diseases, adventure, occupations, Jacobites, politics and religion. We have so far digitised and made available online 4,000 of these titles. Here, Rare Books Curator Graham Hogg focuses on one of Arthur Conan Doyle's lesser-known works, 'The Great Boer War', which was followed by one of his most famous, 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'.**

**A**s a young man Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) led an action-packed life, but the years 1900–02 would prove to be the most pivotal of his career: he would participate in a war, bring back to life his most successful character, and be awarded a knighthood.

In 1893, Doyle did the unthinkable – he killed off his most successful literary creation, Sherlock Holmes. He had written his first Holmes adventure in 1886, which was published the following year. However, by 1893 he was fed up with the constant demands of the public and his publisher for more Holmes stories. In 'The Final Problem', published in 'The Strand Magazine', Holmes was supposed to have plunged down the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland with his archenemy Professor Moriarty. Doyle was smart enough to leave a loophole in the story to enable him to reactivate Holmes at some point in the future: no one witnessed the final struggle between the two men and their bodies were never recovered.

Doyle never made any secret of the fact that Sherlock Holmes was not one of his favourite literary creations. He was by now wealthy and determined enough not to bow to the considerable public pressure to write more Holmes

stories. He spent the period 1893–1900 writing historical fiction, including a new character, Brigadier Gerard, a French officer in the Napoleonic Wars. He rated these novels more highly than his detective fiction, but, despite critical acclaim, they did not have quite the same impact as Holmes.

The outbreak of the Second Boer War in South Africa in 1899 gave Doyle the opportunity to experience war at first hand. Although now over 40, he considered it his patriotic duty to volunteer to serve in the army that was being recruited to reinforce the troops already in South Africa. The war also presented Doyle with a chance to escape from his ailing, tubercular wife and the demands of his household. Perhaps another underlying motive was the fact that South African mines featured heavily in his share portfolio, so he may have been anxious to protect his investments.

He was rejected by the Imperial Yeomanry, possibly on age grounds and health reasons – he was by now a lumbering 16 stone. However, thanks to his medical qualifications, he was able to secure a position as a supplementary doctor in a volunteer field hospital of 100 beds sponsored by wealthy London businessmen.

In early 1900, Doyle sailed for South Africa with his butler. While he was

not engaged by the newspapers as a war correspondent, he was not going to pass up the opportunity to write his own take on events. He used the long voyage to make a start on 'The Great Boer War', which he hoped would serve as a justification for a war that had already attracted major criticism of the British government, both at home and abroad.

During the voyage, he volunteered to test a newly developed vaccine against typhoid (then more commonly known as 'enteric fever'). As a medical man with a keen interest in military history, he was no doubt aware that disease and poor sanitation, not bullets and shells, had been the main killers of soldiers in large-scale and prolonged wars. He was also a keen supporter of vaccination at a time when many were still against it, having written in support of it back in the 1880s. The severe side effects of the typhoid jab were to make Doyle feel very ill for a few days, but he soon recovered. His willingness to be a guinea pig for the vaccine probably saved his life.

On arrival in South Africa in March 1900, Doyle was sent to Bloemfontein, the capital of the Boer republic of the Orange Free State, which had recently been captured without a fight by British troops. After a four-day journey by train,

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Doyle found himself pitched straight into a nightmarish situation. Not only were the doctors of the Royal Army Medical Corps at full stretch dealing with casualties from the British defeat at the battle of Sanna's Post, they soon found themselves dealing with an outbreak of typhoid in Bloemfontein.

Typhoid was then a regular summer occurrence in South Africa. In normal circumstances, the disease could be kept in check by good sanitation, careful nursing and healthy diet. The British Army proved unable to provide these conditions for their soldiers. During the recently lifted siege of Ladysmith in Natal, nearly 400 soldiers in the British garrison had died due to typhoid. Now in Bloemfontein, something similar was to happen to the 50,000 British and Empire troops who had just arrived in town.

Most of the soldiers were exhausted, ragged, and on half-rations. To make matters worse, the Boers had seized the waterworks supplying Bloemfontein. The troops were only receiving half a water bottle a day and were reduced to drinking contaminated water from old wells, wayside pools and the polluted Modder River. The precaution of boiling the water first was omitted, and the largest army Britain had ever put in the field was brought low by disease.

Doyle covers the situation in Bloemfontein in chapter seven 'The halt at Bloemfontein' in volume two of 'The Great Boer War'. In keeping with the overall patriotic tone of the book, at the start of the chapter he is overwhelmingly positive about the "splendid soldiers" in the army and their commander Lord Roberts.

However, he also acknowledges that the army's stay in the town was the "greatest misfortune of the campaign".

There were nearly 5,000 cases of typhoid and more than 1,000 deaths from April to June 1900 in Bloemfontein. Doyle's quarters were named with gallows humour the 'Café Enterique, Boulevard des Microbes'. The situation was exacerbated by the primitive nature of the official army hospitals. Dying soldiers were housed in tents standing in a swamp of mud and excrement. Men were buried in blankets in shallow graves, without any fanfare. Despite his jingoism, even Doyle could not omit in 'The Great Boer War' some of the more sobering facts, such as 50 men dying in one day at one point during the outbreak.

He concludes his brief account of the typhoid epidemic in Bloemfontein in 'The Great Boer War' by noting that there was no system in place to prevent its outbreak, particularly with regard to the water supply:

"It is heartrending for the medical man who has emerged from a hospital full of water-born pestilence to see a regimental water-cart being filled, without protest, at some polluted wayside pool. With precautions and with inoculation all those lives might have been saved."

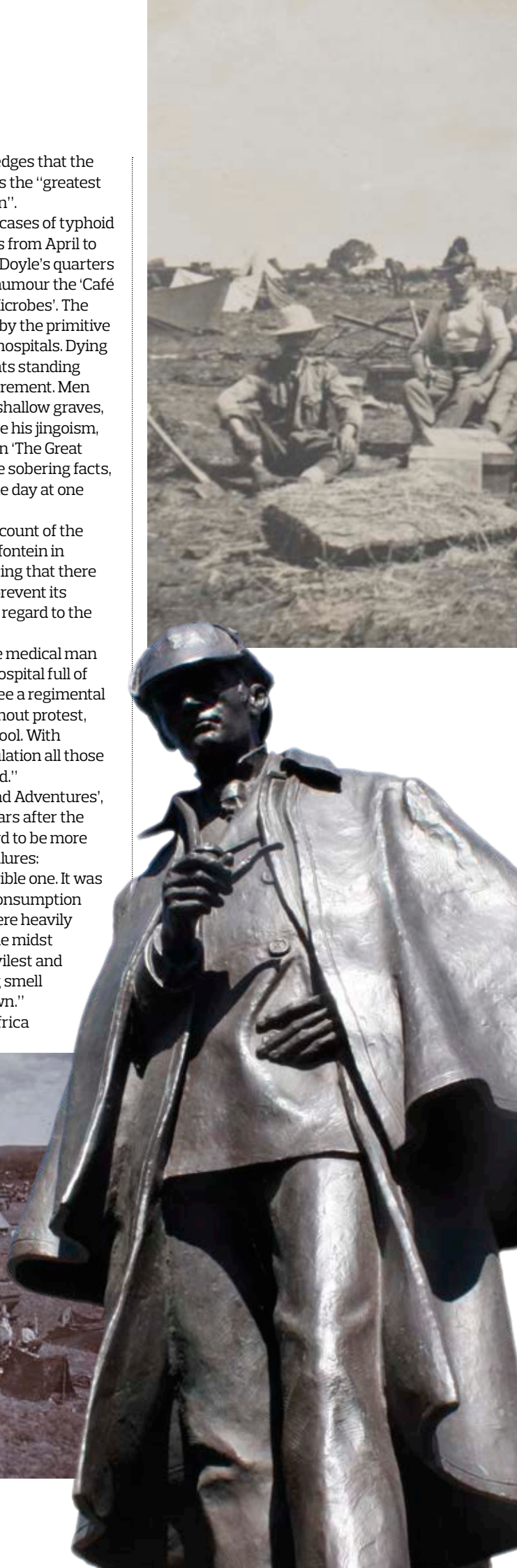
In his work 'Memories and Adventures', published more than 20 years after the Boer War, Doyle could afford to be more candid about the army's failures:

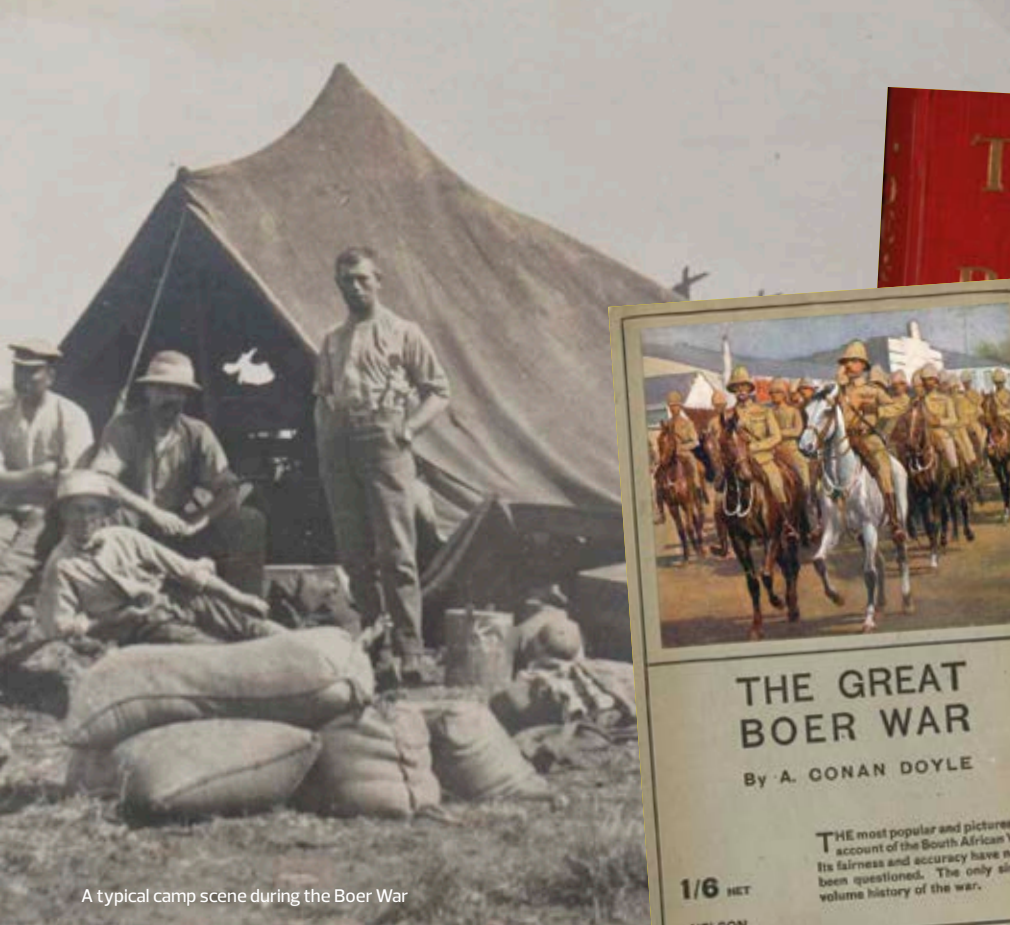
"The outbreak was a terrible one. It was softened down for public consumption and the press messages were heavily censored, but we lived in the midst of death – and death in its vilest and filthiest form ... A sickening smell came from the stricken town."

Doyle stayed in South Africa

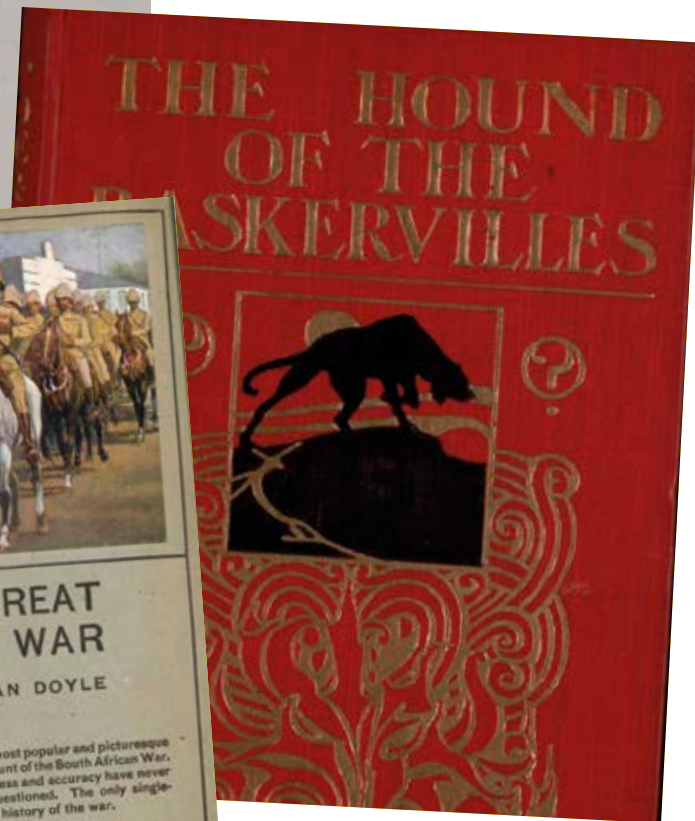
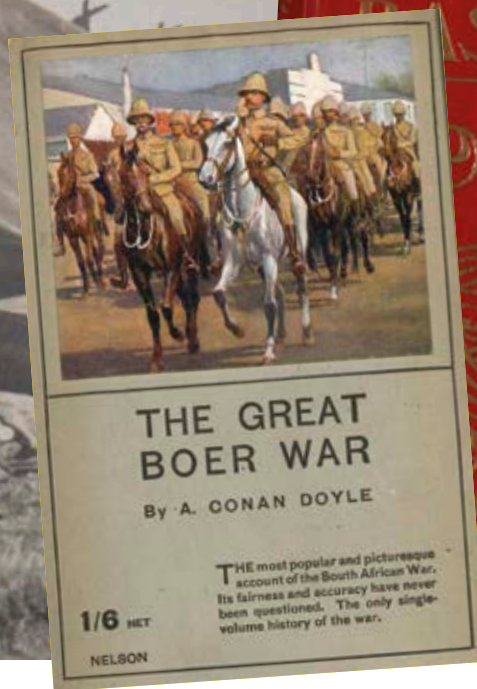


British Army camp during the Boer War. Right, Holmes's statue in Edinburgh





A typical camp scene during the Boer War



until July of that year. By then the epidemic had subsided and the army had moved on from Bloemfontein to engage the Boers elsewhere. He had survived, but he would later say that his digestive system had taken 10 years to recover from his stay in South Africa. 'The Great Boer War' was published later in 1900 to popular acclaim, but it was very much an interim account of events; the war would drag on until a peace treaty was signed in May 1902.

On his return journey from South Africa to Britain on the ship RMS Briton, Doyle met and became friends with a young journalist and editor Bertram Fletcher Robinson. In March 1901, the two men went on a golfing holiday together in Cromer, Norfolk, as part of Doyle's extended recuperation from his labours in the Boer War. During their stay in Cromer, Robinson mentioned an old West Country legend regarding a supernatural hound, and Doyle and Robinson drafted the outlines of what Doyle termed as "a real creeper", 'The Hound of the Baskervilles', during the holiday.

In April 1901, Doyle visited Robinson at his home in Devon and the two men toured Dartmoor to find out more local details for the story. Doyle may have already been planning to resurrect

Sherlock Holmes before hearing Robinson's tale, but at some point, in the period March to April 1901, he must have concluded that the character of Holmes was the best vehicle for telling this story.

The precise nature of Robinson's contribution to 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' is not clear. Doyle always acknowledged his friend's role in the creation of the book but appeared to downplay his role over the years. Robinson would later say he drafted a large part of the first instalment of the novel to be published by 'The Strand Magazine', but he was not named as joint author, and did not appear on the title page when it did appear in book form. Whatever his contribution was, there does not appear to have been any animosity between Doyle and Robinson over the authorship of the story.

'The Hound of the Baskervilles' was serialised from August 1901 to April 1902 in Britain, and then a few months later in New York. It was an immediate and resounding success, appearing in book form later in 1902. Doyle was offered \$45,000 alone from his US publisher for the novel, a huge sum of money for the time. He accepted that he could not free himself of Holmes and would continue to write stories starring the detective until the 1920s.

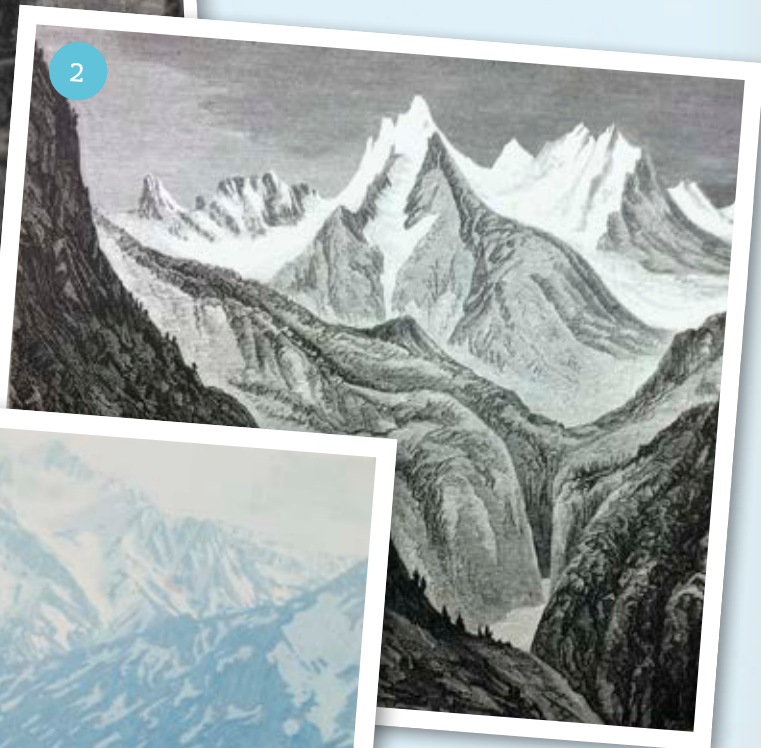
While Baskerville-mania gripped the nation, Doyle was still involved with the Second Boer War. In early 1902, he published 'The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct', a staunch defence of the British conduct of the war in response to growing criticism of the high death toll in the army, and in particular of the death of thousands of South African civilians, black and white, in British concentration camps. The success of this work led to him being offered a knighthood by King Edward VII, which, after some hesitation, he accepted later that year.

'The Hound of the Baskervilles', originally a ghost story concocted during a golfing holiday, remains the most famous Sherlock Holmes story of all. The work has been filmed several times, and in 1939 one of the most best-known versions was released. The English actor Basil "Elementary my dear Watson" Rathbone played the role of Holmes. Rathbone provides one more, less obvious, link between the Boer War and 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'. He was born in South Africa in 1892 and in 1895 he and his family were living in Johannesburg, in one of the autonomous Boer republics, where his father was working as a mining engineer. As a sign of the growing tensions between the Boers and the British, which would eventually lead to war, Rathbone's father was accused by the Boers of being a spy for the British government, and the family was forced to leave the country at short notice.

● We lived in the midst of death – death in its vilest and filthiest form ... a sickening smell came from the stricken town. ●

PICTURE CAPTIONS:

1. Keeping cosy on Crowberry Ridge (1938)
2. Constance Gordon Cumming's sketch 'A Peep into Chinese Tartary'
3. Isabella Bird's illustration of Zard Kuh
4. Una Cameron and her mountain guides
5. Isabella Bird in Manchu dress





**WORDS:**  
Paula Williams,  
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# Finding Petticoats & Pinnacles

**T**here are many wonderful books about the Scottish mountains and mountaineers – vivid descriptions of beautiful landscapes, gripping adventures and guides to routes. There are even books about the mountains before the mountaineers, acknowledging the people who lived and worked in the mountains.

The Library has an outstanding mountaineering collection, based around the personal book collections of Thomas Graham Brown and Robert Wylie Lloyd, with additional, curated acquisitions over more than 60 years. But something is always missing. Where are the women? When I became curator of the Library's Mountaineering & Polar Collections in 2011 I was determined to find them – and out of this initial research grew our forthcoming exhibition 'Petticoats & Pinnacles: Scotland's pioneering mountain women'.

Mentions of women are scarce in those special collections. Books by the most famous female mountaineer of her day Lizzie Le Blond were not collected by these male alpinists, even when their interests overlap, such as snow photography. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Graham Brown and Lloyd agreed with the prevailing opinion of their day.

'Few ladies even in these days are even capable of mountaineering unaccompanied.'

*Alpine Journal, 1929*

There has been a lot of discussion about gaps in library and museum collections, about patriarchy

and exclusion. It is still surprising to find that the voices of half the human population have been at best diminished, at worst actively ignored, and generally left buried for so long. It is a delight to unearth them and let some of them be heard in Petticoats & Pinnacles.

It is not only from Library collections that women are missing. The first artist to exhibit in the Yosemite Valley was Constance Gordon Cumming. She expected to stay there for a few days and ended up staying for three months, painting every day. Despite being one of the most-exhibited artists of her time, it is thought not one of her watercolours is held by the national collections.

Surely women's works are well represented in the Library's legal deposit (the law by which the Library is entitled to claim a copy of anything published in Britain and Ireland) collection? Many of Le Blond's works are there, but I was surprised by the absence of some books I expected to find. Second editions seem not to have been routinely collected even where there is a significant change. An example is Jane Duncan's entertaining book 'A summer ride through Western Tibet'. Duncan, a Glaswegian, was the first European woman to cross the Chang La pass (5360m) in Ladakh. The second, cheap edition was published in 1910, and included a new, short memoir of her life. Was the book not collected because it was a cheap edition? Or because it was a second edition and the differences were not recognised or considered

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important? Or simply because she was a woman? We did not have it. Now we do.

Mountaineering women were very aware of the criticism their behaviour and dress attracted. Some chose to avoid this by writing anonymously as 'A Lady', others by downplaying any hardship or danger. Women adventurers and authors were aware they were not only being unconventional but also taking part in a risk-filled sport, which was, in itself, little understood.

'Some people asked if it was a fascination or a craze, or if people who went in for mountaineering were just completely mad, and it was a difficult question to answer.'

*The Scotsman, April 22, 1937*

As recently as the 1990s, women

willing to take these risks were called 'unnatural' and 'unmotherly'. This is in stark contrast to the heroic image of successful male climbers.

Women, or more precisely 'ladies', were not supposed to over-exert themselves but some turned to the outdoors and exercise to improve their health. Lizzie Le Blond, Isabella Bird and Isobel Wylie Hutchison were all encouraged to travel to improve their mental and physical wellbeing. It is difficult to reconcile the Isabella Bird who climbed Long's Peak (4346m) in Colorado or rode a stallion across Morocco with the languishing invalid she became at home in Edinburgh. Her books, especially 'A lady's life in the Rocky Mountains', are full of the joy of escape.

It was not only social expectation but also the availability of equipment that conspired against female climbers. They rapidly found ways of getting around the

constraints of long skirts and petticoats by rigging them up to be shorter, or more usually by resorting to breeches when out of view.

'Suitable nailed boots were not to be had in this country, and boys' tweed suits were the only available outfit for women. When I appeared in my boys' suit (made by Forsyth), and wearing my big hobnailers, my own mother could not endure the spectacle and cried, "Oh what a fright you look!"'

*Jane Inglis Clark. Pictures and Memories, 1938*

Stories of achievement and overcoming adversity are enthralling. But not every woman is a 'tigeress', rock athlete, or focused on 'summitting'. Simply spending time in the mountains can be revitalising and enhance wellbeing. Even reading about the outdoors can provide a welcome escape,



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## It is hard to understand why they were ignored and discounted by contemporaries

challenge but loved the "thrilling vegetation, strange animals, different peoples, unexpected weather and vivid colours". Una was an artist and sculptor, as well as avid climber, and became president of the Ladies' Alpine Club. The Library holds her archive.

Jane Inglis Clark climbed with her husband William and friends Harold and Ruth Raeburn, including new routes on Buachaille Etive Mòr and Ben Nevis. Harold and William were early members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Although she wrote articles for its journal, as a woman Jane could not join. Instead, she established The Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club in 1908.

Barred from male-only societies and clubs, women often wrote about their mountaineering experiences in popular magazines such as 'The Strand' or 'The National Geographic'. Whereas scientific and society journals would be collected and kept, these more ephemeral publications are less likely to survive in libraries. Articles in these magazines would be taken less seriously than peer-reviewed and presented papers,

are rarely indexed or cited, and women's achievements were under-reported and underrated as a result.

Finding such inspiring women and stories, it is hard to understand why they were ignored and discounted by contemporaries, why their works were not better collected for the national collections and why we have left them in the dark for so long. Look out for some of them in *Petticoats & Pinnacles*.

*Due to Covid-19, the Petticoats & Pinnacles exhibition at George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, has been rescheduled to March 2021. Entry will be free, but booking is likely to be essential. Visit our website for more details nearer the time. The exhibition is complemented by the digital learning resource Aiming High, where teachers and pupils can learn more about these women and more. Visit the Learning Zone on our website. The Petticoats & Pinnacles exhibition is generously sponsored by Baillie Gifford.*

### PICTURE CAPTIONS

1. Scaling Salisbury Crags (1908)
2. Crossing the Mar de Glace
3. Una Cameron's sketched map of one of her journeys
4. Another precarious crossing on the Mar de Glace
5. Portrait of Jane Inglis Clark
6. Jane Duncan, unsuitably attired for the mountains in this portrait
7. Eka Gordon Cumming was also a lover of the mountains
8. Jane Inglis Clark climbs Achallader in winter
9. Inglis Clark held a New Year meet with other female mountaineers in 1909

as many of us found during lockdown. There are many fascinating, funny, and interesting stories written by and about Scotland's women in the mountains.

Travelling by boat to Africa, Sheila Macdonald struck up a conversation with a man intending to climb Kilimanjaro. As her father was president of the Alpine Club she had recognised his club tie. By the time she docked, Macdonald had acquired almost all the equipment she would need to make the expedition, gifted by other passengers. She became the first European woman to reach the summit of Kilimanjaro (5895m) where she drank a bottle of champagne to celebrate.

Una Cameron was the first European woman to climb the Batian peak of Mount Kenya (5199m). She also climbed Mount Speke and other peaks in the Ruwenzori. Having climbed Mont Blanc five times, she did not find them a



# KEEPING A NOTE

Tracking down our musical scores will be easier in future.

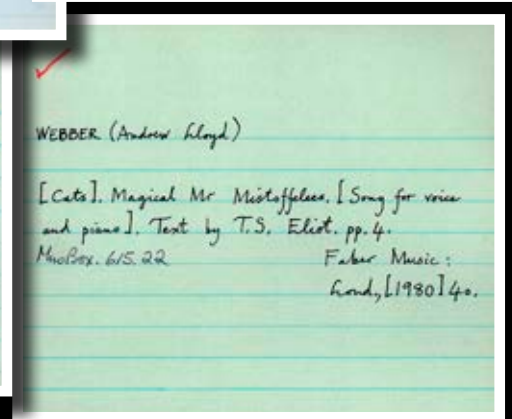
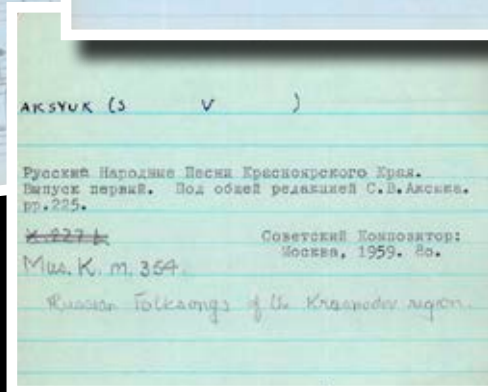
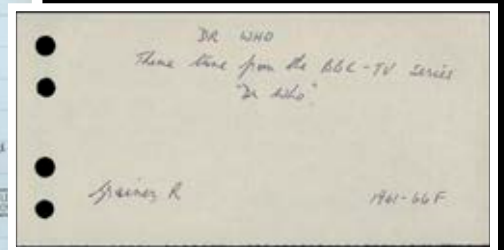
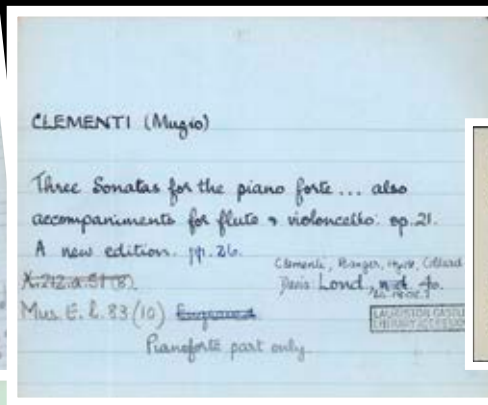
**Andrew Collier** speaks to Music Curator Almut Boehme about her team's tough task, involving 340,000 library cards dating back 200 years

**S**toring and preserving an item in the vast collections of the National Library of Scotland is one thing; locating it within the labyrinth of shelves is quite another. That's why having an accessible and easy-to-use cataloguing system is so important.

Before computers flooded our houses and workplaces, librarians described their collections on small cards stored in drawers, i.e. traditional card catalogues. The cards contained the most important information to identify collection items and where to find them on library shelves. This information included, for example, author or composer, title, publisher, shelfmark, and so on. It was either handwritten or typed, creating thousands of various types of library cards.

While cataloguing books is difficult enough, music presents even greater challenges. The Library's Music Curator, Almut Boehme, said: "Its universal nature means that editions are published in many countries, and non-speakers of a particular language can still access them as the notation is nonverbal and used internationally.

"This means that title pages appear in different languages, so searching for symphonies requires a standardised form of searching titles in order to retrieve all of the relevant editions with one search



despite the term appearing in different languages and spellings."

Like similar institutions, the Library has gradually been moving its card catalogues online, making the searching process faster and easier to use. However, converting old cards into a modern online catalogue is laborious and time-consuming, and compromises had to be made to complete the project quickly.

Over the last two centuries, a multitude of catalogues and other manual finding aids have been compiled, following ever-changing cataloguing rules. The task is a mammoth one as some 340,000 catalogue cards are involved.

It's a complex challenge, but the work is progressing well and, when completed, it will be of real benefit to people who can then find out what music the Library holds from home.

The work was done in three main phases. First, the existing catalogues and finding aids had to be converted into digital form, which had to be done externally.

"We really didn't want to let these go too far from the Library for this process in case of a loss of the cards – it's data you would never be able to get back again. So we used a local company and sent the physical cards out in small batches to be digitised."

After digitisation, the data on the cards

had to be converted to readable text. This was done manually as the data was too diverse to scan by using optical character recognition (OCR).

Almut takes up the story again. "We did this by using a company in India that has experience in bibliographic data and it has all worked very well. The transcription work is now more than three-quarters finished and should be completed soon."

The third and last phase of the project involves editing and checking. Editors Alex Cuadrado and Kirsty Morgan are working on this and preparing the data for ingest into the online catalogue.

"We have to describe a lot more of the material we deal with than you would for a book because people need different types of data," Almut explains.

"For instance, some people want to know if something is a vocal score, a study score or a full score.

"With modern publications, you may also have a sound recording

attached. Also, some of our finding aids go back centuries and the cataloguing rules have changed quite a lot in that time. All of this impinges on trying to map the information onto a modern, standardised system."

Alex, who has been a music librarian for more than 15 years, says he is loving the work. "It's a great environment and the project is so interesting. We're working to a very tight timescale.

"I feel very proud to be part of it and providing this sort of useful information for the general public is hugely rewarding."

His colleague Kirsty feels much the same. "It's my first job after studying librarianship and I'm really enjoying it. It's fascinating seeing all the different music catalogues and finding aids that have been used in the Library. Getting to see how a project like this is managed is a great experience for me."

You can read articles by the music team on the Library blog.





**WORDS:**

Dr Patrick Hart, Dr Valerie Kennedy  
and Dora Petherbridge

# Plague, Princes and Political Embarras



Liston's letter  
showing  
fumigation  
puncture

## A CONSTANTINOPLÉ LETTER FROM HENRIETTA LISTON

Dora Petherbridge is the Library's Curator of US and Commonwealth Collections. Together with Dr Patrick Hart and Dr Valerie Kennedy, she is co-editor of 'Henrietta Liston's Travels: The Turkish Journals, 1812-1820', a scholarly edition of a virtually unknown work of women's travel writing.

**I**n 1812, Henrietta Liston, botanist and diarist, travelled to the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Her husband, the venerable Scottish diplomat Robert Liston, had been called out of retirement and reappointed British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte at Constantinople. Over almost eight years' residency there, Robert would spend his time preserving peace between Turkey and Russia and "patching and palliating, and endeavouring to prevent mischief", while Henrietta, as diplomat's consort, kept up "a friendly intercourse with all mankind".

Henrietta also kept travel journals and wrote letters which, preserved in the Liston Papers at the National Library of Scotland, offer a unique vision

of Constantinople (Ottoman Istanbul) in the early 19th century. This extract of Henrietta's writing is from one of her most fascinating surviving letters. The letter, sent from the British Embassy Palace to Edinburgh, was to Dick Ramage, the Listons' nephew, who cared for their home, Millburn Tower, while they were away. Henrietta, who had privileged access to the Ottoman elite and diplomatic corps, writes to Dick of the plague in Istanbul, of diplomatic society, and of the latest developments in international politics and the Napoleonic Wars.

The letter itself has been pierced by several slits, possibly in order to 'lock' it against unauthorised readers but more probably to fumigate or 'perfuse' it against the plague.

Henrietta Liston by Gilbert Stuart, 1800 (Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)



**PERA OF CONSTANTINOPLE  
6TH MARCH 1813**

My dear Dick,

Your letter of July, which reached me I think in September or October, found us prisoners within our garden walls and in all the horrors of apprehension, the plague having by that time completely surrounded us. Our back gate opened into a burying ground in which the graves were so numerous and so fresh that it resembled a new ploughed field: by the bye, in time of health, these burying grounds are extremely interesting, but become serious evils during the plague.

When I say burying grounds, I talk of every empty space in the towns and their neighbourhoods. [...] At each grave of any distinction, a stone is placed – on end – crowned with a turban which, from its form, denotes the rank of the deceased. The remainder is filled with inscription, generally passages from the Koran, and all is painted and gilded in the gayest manner. At the back of each stone there is a cypress, of a magnificence to astonish. These cypresses form beautiful groves which are, in summer, filled with turtle doves whose constant melancholy note accords so sweetly with the cypresses, while the scene is so singularly enlivened by the painting and gilding of the turbans and inscriptions. [...] During the plague all this beauty, for the time, disappears: the bodies – and they often died a thousand a day – are usually placed very little below the surface of the ground, and often without coffins. Sometimes the dogs (which form one of the nuisances of the country) dig them up, and at all times the heat occasions a smell worse than disagreeable, for it carries death along with it.

From this shocking scene we retired late in October to the village of Belgrade<sup>1</sup>, [...] the Elysian fields of Lady Wortley Montagu. It is, allowing for her high colouring, a very charming Greek village, in the midst of an immense forest, beautifully diversified with

green meadows, lakes, streams and fountains, and surrounded with wooded hills. [...]

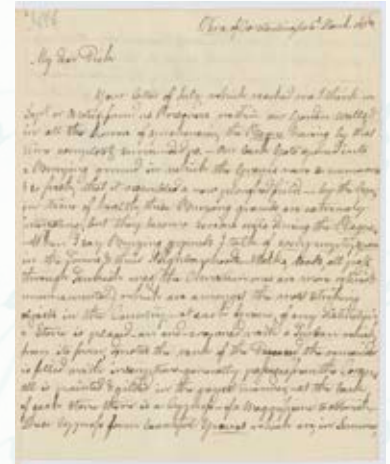
This country certainly is the most beautiful in the world, but with a thousand inconveniences and at least an equal number of uglinesses. [...] We walk when the weather allows it, and then often make calls, for we pay no other visits, except in summer to Buyukderé to the Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Sicilian ministers; from all the rest of the diplomatic corps and their friends the war excludes us.<sup>2</sup> Our house is large and charming, our garden extensive, and we begin to dress it up. The view from the top of our house, even from the windows of our drawing rooms, is well worthy the pencil of an artist. We are out of your world it is true; but we are in the Oriental one. The posts from Persia, from Baghdad, from Smyrna<sup>3</sup>, vessels from the Greek and the Mediterranean islands, all less or more interest us (we are now eating honey from Athens, the produce of Mount Hymettus – but alas! no butter) to say nothing of that from Vienna, which gives very early news from Paris.

But the circumstance which has most interested and occupied us is the war betwixt Russia and France.

[...] Bonaparte's being fairly beat off the field, half his army having perished in their retreat from cold and hunger, he must now, it is probable, yield to the wish of the Emperor of Austria<sup>4</sup>, whose advice is a general peace, and who stands in a position to enforce it.

We are not without our political *embarras* here<sup>5</sup>. The Turks, besides their general contempt of all Christian powers, particularly hate the Russians, and fear the French. England and Austria are the only governments they at all confide in. Andréossy arrived as Ambassador Extraordinary soon after us. Andréossy's first orders were to prevent the peace. For that he was as much too late as Mr Liston had been to make it<sup>6</sup>. His most important step was to renew the war, and the Turks having in truth made a very disadvantageous

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The first page of Henrietta's letter

The British Embassy in Constantinople, now Istanbul, as it was in the Listons' time



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peace it required some address to counteract him.<sup>7</sup> Thus the summer was passed, in discontent, irritation, and ill humour. This was wound up by two most atrocious executions, of the Greek princes Mourousis, of all which I hope the French Ambassador's conscience is clear, but I would not exchange consciences with him.<sup>8</sup> Yet it must be confessed that this savage and despotic nation make less account of men's heads than of anything else in their kingdom.

The late wonderful successes of the Russians against the French, aided by Italinski<sup>9</sup> and Mr Liston, begin to open the eyes of the Turkish government, and the ensuing summer must, I think, decide the fate of the world. If the French continue the war and conquer Russia, Turkey must fall of course (and this the Sultan knows perfectly), the favourite point of Bonaparte's ambition being, to be crowned Emperor



of the East on the throne of the great Constantine. It is likewise known, that he has sworn revenge against the Ottoman Porte for the *malapropos*<sup>10</sup> peace they made, and against Austria for the weak assistance she gave.

[...]


Write soon and fully.

Yours most affectionately  
Henrietta Liston

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the Listons' final departure from Turkey. This year also sees Bilkent

University, Ankara, and the Library's collaborative venture 'Henrietta Liston: Approaching Constantinople' make Henrietta's significant, yet never-before-published, writings on Turkey available for the first time in print.

Published by Edinburgh University Press, 'Henrietta Liston's Travels: The Turkish Journals 1812–1820' is accompanied by the Library's online resource offering a digitised collection of Liston's manuscript journals. The resource also features a series of long reads by authors such as Sara Sheridan, Ece Temelkuran and Maureen Freely which reflect on Liston's time in the Ottoman Empire.

 Watch our video 'Henrietta Liston: Approaching Constantinople, 1812–1820' on YouTube

Read Henrietta Liston's journals online at: <https://digital.nls.uk/travels-of-henrietta-liston/>



1 Belgrade Forest, to the north-west of Istanbul. 2 Büyükdere is on the European side of the Bosphorus. 3 Now Izmir, on the Aegean coast of Turkey. 4 Francis I and II, Emperor of Austria (1804–1835) and Holy Roman Emperor (1792–1806). 5 Embarrassment: a borrowing from French, now rare (OED). 6 Count Antoine-François Andréossy, French Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte from 1812 to 1814. The Russo-Turkish War (1806–1812) was brought to an end by the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest. The objects of Robert Liston's embassy were to foster good relations between Turkey and Russia and frustrate any prospect of an alliance between Turkey and France. 7 As Liston says, the Treaty of Bucharest was unfavourable to the Ottomans because Russia retained possession of the eastern Black Sea coast and offered protection (as Russia saw it) to Serbs in Ottoman territory. 8 Liston's account of the circumstances surrounding the executions of the Mourousi princes can be found in 'Henrietta Liston's Travels' and in Liston's digitised journals in the Library's digital gallery. 9 Andrei Italinski, Russian Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1802 to 1816. 10 Inopportune or inappropriate: another of Liston's borrowings from French.

# Henrietta Liston's Travels

## The Turkish Journals, 1812–1820

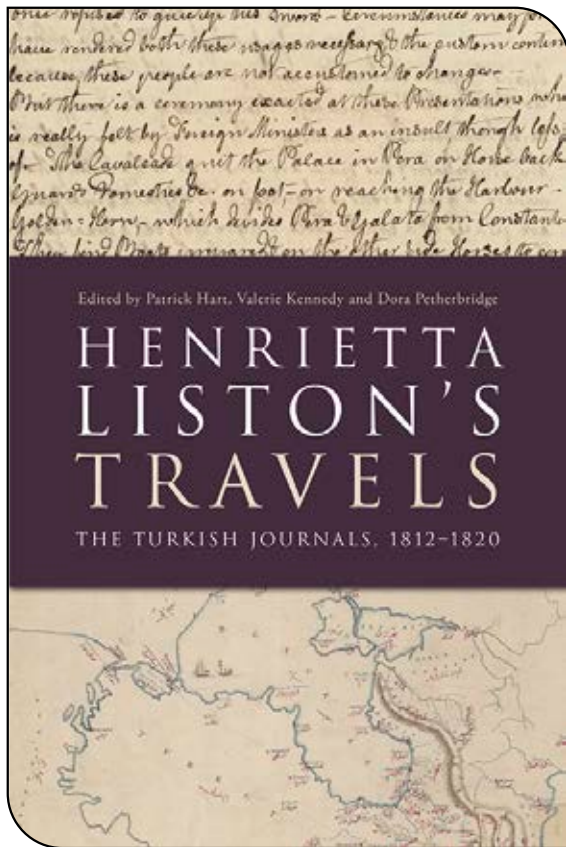
Edited by Patrick Hart, Valerie Kennedy & Dora Petherbridge  
Associate Editor: F. Özden Mercan

'Mrs Liston has a lovely way with words, and a lovely way of greeting each new city, each new island and wind, as she and her husband sail to Constantinople, and then through it. No one could ask for a better travel companion: she is always more interested in the world around her than she is in herself. Together with the editors of this fine edition, she takes us back to the imperial city as she found it in 1812, restoring it to vibrant life.'

– Professor Maureen Freely FRSL, University of Warwick

'From the diplomatic salons and ceremonies of Constantinople to the villages and gardens along the Bosphorus, Liston's fascinating accounts powerfully evoke a world long gone.'

– Gerald MacLean, University of Exeter



As the wife of the British Ambassador to the Porte, Henrietta Liston had privileged access to parts of the Sultan's entourage and the Ottoman elite. *Henrietta Liston's Travels* features Liston's journal alongside a selection of her other, shorter writings from Turkey. In them, she describes her journey by sea from England to Istanbul, the stops the diplomatic mission made in the Mediterranean at the time of the Napoleonic wars, key diplomatic incidents and her own day-to-day experiences.

Liston's writing gives us two perspectives. On one hand, she reflects on the political situation of Europe, focusing in particular on the British and the Ottoman Empires. And on the other, we hear her share personal experiences as a British woman travelling through Turkey: her depictions of a plague-ridden Constantinople, a visit to the harem of the Kaimakam, excursions to Belgrade Village, the presentation of ambassadors in the Seraglio, and the departure of pilgrims on the *hajj*.

Paperback • £16.99

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Discover the world of Henrietta Liston in the accompanying online resource:  
[digital.nls.uk/travels-of-henrietta-liston](http://digital.nls.uk/travels-of-henrietta-liston)

EDINBURGH  
University Press

# A royal gift

In 1908, a book published for the Christmas market gave the public a rare chance to see informal photographs of the British and other European royal families. Over the next few pages, we take a look through Queen Alexandra's Christmas Gift Book... and a beautifully presented festive favourite.

**I**t was a most intriguing Christmas gift – a unique insight into the private lives of the royals in photographs taken by the ultimate royal insider, Queen Alexandra, the wife of reigning monarch King Edward VII.

'Queen Alexandra's Christmas gift book: photographs from my camera' is presented like an actual photo album. Alexandra's photographs are attached to blank pages, with each photo given a brief caption.

Alexandra was the daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark. She married Queen Victoria's eldest son Albert Edward on 10 March 1863 and quickly became very popular with the British public. Alexandra was a keen photographer and owned several Kodak cameras. She showed her photographs at exhibitions organised by Kodak in the early years of the 20th century.

In 1908, it was decided to publish a selection of her photographs as a book to raise money for charity. The photos include images of Edward with family and friends relaxing at Balmoral.

Between 5 and 14 June 1908, Edward and Alexandra visited the king's nephew Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and his family in the Baltic. Alexandra took photographs of the Russian royal family with her No.4 Kodak camera which are included in the book. The most striking of these is perhaps a portrait of the Tsar's four-year-old son Alexei on the Imperial yacht Standart with his sailor nanny Andrei.

Alexei was the Tsar's only son and the heir apparent to the throne of the Russian Empire. He was born with haemophilia and his parents recruited faith healer Grigori Rasputin in 1906 in the hope that he could treat Alexei.

On the night of 16–17 July 1918, Alexei, then aged 13, would be executed alongside his parents and four sisters by



Above, an austere cover holds a glimpse behind the scenes of royal life. Left, Tsar Nicholas II's son Alexei with his sailor "nanny". Below, King Edward VII and fellow royals enjoy a Highland getaway. Right, a portrait of Queen Alexandra.



communist revolutionaries. Those who received the book for Christmas 1908 could not know that the photographs captured a world that was soon to be utterly changed.

Edward died less than two years later on 6 May 1910. Alexandra died on 20 November 1925 at the age 80, by which time a world war and other



changes in the international political landscape had made the seemingly idyllic world of the European royal families captured in the photographs seem like it belonged to a long distant era.

**These books, like all items featured in this magazine, are available to view at our reading rooms.**