



FACTVM
FOVNDATION

FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION



A Battalion of Cameras

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I was reading Paul Fussell's wonderful and wise *The Great War and Modern Memory* recently – it's like a long, gentle, entirely benign tutorial of the old style. A calm and articulate text intersected frequently and intelligently with lines of verse, contemporary comment, vivid paragraphs, poignant letters, entire poems, bawdy songs, simple couplets, explaining in a literary sense how the Great War (and also the subsequent one) changed a generation and created our world. It was written in 1975 – when the author knew where we had been and where we might be headed. It is built using what was written and then its context is interpreted so that the memorial helps us understand, reveals to us at least part of what makes us what we are.

That is the place that our cultural heritage – both literary and artistic – has in our lives. It is profoundly important and, sadly, often ignored or overlooked.

Here's a section in the early part of the book which lays the ground for the later study of the various aspects of how man can be coerced into horror and what living in and with that horror feels like. The symbolism of ruined architectural elements standing starkly in view from the mud and mire and organised slaughter of the trenches was profound - this was Ypres. "At Ypres it was the famous Cloth hall, once a masterpiece of medieval Flemish civic building. Its gradual destruction by artillery and its pathetic final dissolution were witnessed by hundreds of thousands, who never forgot this eloquent emblem of what happens when war collides with art."

It is our aim at the Foundation to record what we can of our physical heritage – be it a manuscript, surface, form, painting, marks, carving, site - so that the witness it bears may be understood and we and future generations might benefit from the power and objective beauty we can appreciate and the memorial we have been left.

War is a truly terrible thing and we see daily the human devastation and the physical destruction now occurring in, among other places, Syria and Iraq. The Art Newspaper reported recently that the British Ministry of Defence have suggested creating a Monuments Men type group, a specialist cultural protection unit, to preserve what can be preserved in battle zones. We would suggest digitally recording should be a key part of that solution - it can be done by reasonably skilled and well briefed individuals with just a normal DSLR camera, using photogrammetry. The resulting data then needs more technical processing work but that would be done in the safety of our workshops. The Foundation is training people now to do this work in non-conflict zones – extending this to those who need the skills in theatres of war can also be done.

Wherever the object, if it is part of our cultural heritage then we have a duty to record and to preserve it, if we have a chance – and, in many cases, we have that chancewith your support and help.