

**'Away from the Western Front'**  
**Islington Museum Project Evaluation**

Quantitative

Category	Sub categories		Numbers
No of staff involved in project			6
No of creative practitioners involved			7
No of volunteers involved in project			7
	Volunteer hours		478 (over a year long period- and continuing as some are still working on the blog)
No of youth workers and social workers involved in project			11
<b>Animation project</b>	No of young people involved in animation project		12
	Age of young people	11	1
		12	3
		13	1
		14	
		15	3
		16	2
		17	1
		22	1
	Gender	Male	5
		Female	7
	Ethnicity	White British	3
		White Irish	1
		Turkish	1
		Black African	1
		Black Somali	1
		Mixed	5
	SEN		4 (2 young people autistic statement, 1 young person in care, 1 young person a young carer)
<b>Family Events</b>	Number of events		6

	adults	Male	31
		Female	95
	children	0-5 years old	65
		6-10 years old	42
		11-15 years old	9
<b>Display visitor numbers</b>			
<b>Outputs</b>	Creative outputs	5	(blog and webpages, 3 animations, museum display)
	Events/ Projects	7	(animation project, 2 family workshops, 3 under 5's events, family private view)
<b>Tweets by IM</b>			24
<b>Blog hits</b>			7,450 views

## Qualitative

### 1. Overall project from the museum's perspective

#### Methods of Evaluation

- The successful creation of the project products: the website pages, blog, museum display and associated projects and events
- Successful cataloguing of archives and transcription of the War Diary
- Interviews with project staff and volunteers

#### Knowledge and Understanding of the Heritage, as well as Management of the Heritage

From Islington Museum's perspective, without this project funding we would not have had the resources or specific impetus to look into this particular history. As a service we had a general understanding of the Finsbury Rifles' campaigns but had never focused on the regiment's campaign in the Middle East. We had therefore never fully read their war diary, searched and catalogued our collections, researched other collections around the Finsbury Rifles or gone out locally to ask if members of the public had specific collections.

This project therefore gave us the motivation to spend a year with dedicated volunteers and staff input researching the campaign.

- **We re-catalogued our existing collections**, looking through archival images, newspapers and cuttings to identify information from the regiment itself and the home front concerning this campaign.
- **We went out to the local community** to ask for any information they had about the Finsbury Rifles' campaign. Through this call-out we received a number of archival images, a recruitment poster, family memories and documents. These were all accessioned or copied and added to our existing collections.
- **We partnered with other London museums** to look at their relevant collections, including the IWM, LMA, National Army Museum and Camden Local History Centre. By researching their archives we were able to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge and collections. In particular the photo archive from the IWM was invaluable in helping us to better understand and visualise the events mentioned in the war diary.
- **We transcribed the war diary** making it fully accessible digitally for the first time for the heritage service, the local community and researchers.
- **We spoke with experts** on the campaign to better understand the aims, landscape and structure of the campaign. This was invaluable in helping us as a Heritage Service to better understand our collections, for example shining light on some of the jargon in the war diary, helping us to understand First World War territorial boundaries in the Middle East and to better understand the context of the manoeuvres the Finsbury Rifles took part in.

All of these stages have meant that we now have a fully accessible collection on the Finsbury Rifles' campaign in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. In addition to the fully accessible resources, we also crucially have the in house expertise to ensure this collection and knowledge is accessible to the wider community.

So far we have made this collection accessible through the project by:

- working with young people to create animation resources for local schools, youth clubs and family venues;
- creating a digital blog containing an annotated transcript of the war diary. This is digitally linked to other collections where relevant;
- designing family and under 5's workshops inspired by the collection to ensure it is accessible to all ages;
- creating a special museum display.

The collection will sit in Islington Heritage's Archive, where it will be fully accessible to researchers and the wider public. It will have a lasting digital presence on our website. We intend to continue to use the collection to increase local knowledge about this heritage. We currently have planned to use the collection in a borough wide exhibition in 2018 for the end of the First World War, which will contain objects from the collection and research compiled as part of this project.



Two of the young animators at the launch event in November 2017

Not only museum staff but also our project volunteers gained knowledge as part of this project. One volunteer commented in her end of project evaluation:

*'I have a greater understanding of the Egypt and Southern Palestine campaign as a part of WW1; its impact on and relevance to later & current political developments in the Middle East. I've also gained a greater understanding of the Territorial Force; its origins, its officers and men, how it was deployed, what made it distinctive and how this could be observed in the campaign in general and amongst the Finsbury Rifles in particular.'*

### Skills

Islington Museum recruited five new volunteers as part of this project, as well as utilising two existing museum volunteers. When interviewed the project volunteers mentioned they had gained skills in:

- researching museum collections and archives, as well as online resources such as military history forums, school records and church memorial pages;
- using oral archives;
- cataloguing new collections;

- transcribing collections;
- curating exhibitions including researching image rights, writing and editing text, crediting permissions correctly, designing panels, presenting information for different audiences and purposes, and installing exhibitions;
- marketing events;
- designing and facilitating events for young people and families;
- IT, including in writing blogs.

One volunteer who had particularly connected with the project, to the extent that she committed a day a week to the project for a year, mentioned that she especially benefited from:

*'reading about the campaign from a parallel and expanded viewpoint (other battalion, division, military histories) and considering the historiography of the campaign. I also discovered the value of visiting places and exploring their context (Penton St , St Mark's, Clerkenwell, Jock Christie's home and church, Lt-Col Byrne's home, former addresses of Finsbury Rifles etc. )'*

She went on to comment that she found it both challenging and rewarding to then try and apply her historical knowledge when she helped:

*'present and select research in a suitably visual way to be used as a basis for young people to research and create their own animations'*

In addition, museum staff themselves gained new skills around animation through the partnership with Chocolate Films. This was a useful partnership which taught the two learning staff involved new skills in:

- script writing for animation- how to open up our knowledge and collections to animators to then script;
- stop frame animating techniques;
- how best to work with animators to edit resources to ensure they are accessible to the intended audience, creative and historically accurate.

## Challenges

This project did pose challenges to the service. As with any long project, over the duration of the year changing council priorities impacting on the service meant that staff couldn't be as consistently dedicated to the project as they would often have liked. This was particularly the case as though the animation was funded the research and other events were not, meaning that core capacity had to be found to deliver them. This was challenging to sustain for a year.





Examples of archival documents collected as part of the project

## 2. Animation Project

### Methods of Evaluation

- The young people were asked to complete mind maps before the project to gauge their prior knowledge. They then added to these at the end of the project. See 3 examples at end of report.
- The process was documented throughout the project.
- The young people were also videoed talking about their experience of the project.

### Knowledge and Understanding

All the young people said that they had gained new heritage knowledge as part of the project.

At the beginning of the project the young people were asked to write down everything they knew about WWI in Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

They all struggled to think what to write, stating that they had never been taught or heard about the First World War beyond the Western Front. They could anticipate that the soldiers' experiences might have been different in Egypt, Syria and Palestine but were unsure of how. Two students were able to identify that the Allies were fighting the Ottoman Empire. Beyond this knowledge however the other words and phrases used by the young people were generic, more guesses about what the war would have been like drawing on their knowledge of Egypt and the generic First World War. Three young people wrote that they didn't know anything.

Words and phrases included:

- British soldiers were involved
- British Empire ( 3 people)
- Ottoman Empire (2 people)
- Sand (2 people)
- Conflict
- War (2 people)
- Death (3 people)
- Camels (2 people)
- Swords
- Desert (2 people)
- Tents
- Biplanes
- Britain made promises to Israel and Palestine

This was interesting, all of the young people had an interest in history yet none had covered the First World War extensively at school or had discovered information about other fronts



in their personal research and reading. Following up on this in interviews the young people commented that at the start of the project:

*'all I really knew was that there was a war or something between Germany and England and some other places and that was it'*

Participant, aged 13

*'WWI was a lot more global than I thought it was, I thought it was just a European war'*

Participant, aged 16

*'I didn't know WWI was in Egypt, like I knew there were pharaohs and pyramids In Egypt... But I didn't know that WWI continued into Egypt'*

Participant, 15

*'It's my first time to learn about WWI'*

Participant, 22



Young animators being asked for their views after the workshop

Conversely, at the end of the animation project the young people recognised that they had gained new heritage knowledge. They all significantly added to their mind map with facts that showed they had developed both a technical knowledge of the front and the Finsbury Rifles' campaigns as well as an understanding of individual Finsbury Rifles' specific experiences. Their replies showed they were particularly struck by what they had learnt about camels, crossing the Sinai Desert and Jock Christie. Recurring themes included:

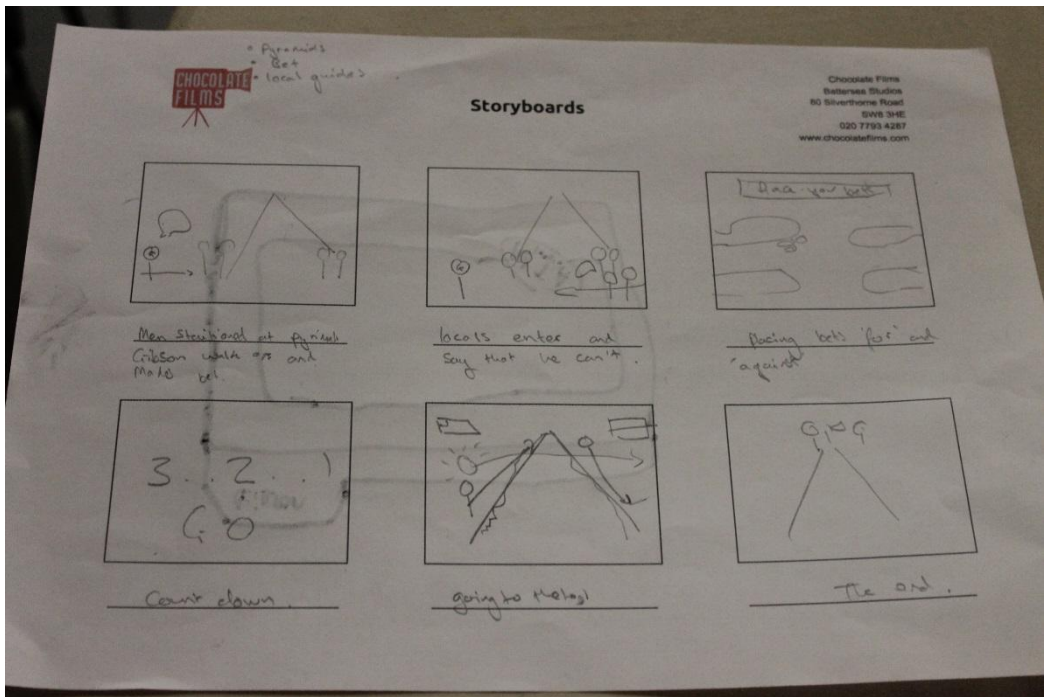


- Ottoman Empire
- Camels, including particular references to using them to carry supplies, concerns about disease, camel bites, camels and mules and the treatment of Egyptian camel handlers
- Delousing and the use of iodine
- Officers travelling on horses
- Battle of Jaffa
- Crossing the Sinai desert- including particular references to the chicken wire, the three weeks it took them to cross the desert and building the train
- Suez Canal
- Jock Christie's VC and citation
- Gibson climbing the pyramids

Interestingly all the facts mentioned referenced particular stories or context the young people had worked on in the animations, suggesting that the process of animating these facts and stories had ensured that they were remembered by the young people. The process of animating the stories ensured that the young people were not only able to talk generally about the First World War in this area, but also talk specifically about the challenges faced by the Finsbury Rifles on campaign and their particular experiences both positive and negative.



Introducing the history of the Finsbury Rifles to the animation group



Project storyboards  
and scripts written  
by the young people

The Camel Transport Corps was set up to organize this. It was made up of army members and Egyptian handlers.

The handlers themselves were paid 6 piastres per day (plus food) and got free blankets, equipment and blue uniforms.

Despite the fact they were told they would work for six months, they often had to stay as long as ten.

— 6 piastres a day (more to) + here.

Camels and mules ~~have~~ do NOT MIX. Mules stampede at the foal smell.

DO NOT crowd camels. Diseases pass very easily.

Dead camels are not fun.

380 soldiers suffered camel bites, with 70 of them losing limbs.

This is ~~William~~ William. He has managed his camel well. If you pay attention to this information, you can be in his position. Well done William.

This is Herbert, the mess camel. Everyone loves Herbert.

The Suez Canal was an artificial waterway opened in 1869. It was a key transport route between Europe and the far east. It was a much quicker way of sailing to British colonies. The German-led Ottoman force tried to raid the British controlled Suez canal, but the attack failed and our allied forces fortified the canal. When they arrived in Egypt they were treated to rid them of lice and other parasitic insects. One of the soldiers, remembers a cold bucket of carbolic soap being chucked over them. Gibson was a ~~finnery~~ rifle and he boasted that he could climb the pyramids faster than the ~~pyramids~~ <sup>camels</sup>. He ended up climbing it in the same time, so he won all the bets.

## Skills, Inspiration and Creative Thinking

All of the young people recognised when interviewed that they had gained new skills as part of the project. Those skills they particularly identified centred around animation including:

- Experiencing and experimenting with different animation techniques inc. sand, silhouette and collage
- The process of animation: how you needed to break down the animation into hundreds of individual shots, each carefully constructed
- How to edit animations
- The computer programmes you could use
- How to visualise scripts, focusing on the key information
- Ensuring the animations were historically accurate
- Building props

Interestingly one of the highly autistic young people in the group highlighted when interviewed that he had developed teamwork skills. This was confirmed by his mum, who had initially been uncertain about him participating in the project, as he struggled with group work. Yet, he managed to complete an intensive week and worked as part of a team throughout the work, not using the separate station that had been created for him. This was a testament to his personal development through the week, as well as the developing soft skills of the whole group, who were open and accepting of one another, and supportive of each other's different skills and abilities.

When interviewed the majority of the young people combined talking about the skills they had learnt with how they planned to use them in the future, showing how they had been inspired by the process:

*'I would like to try more different forms of animation, continue to broaden my mindset'*

*'I learnt... 'different forms of animation, something you don't get to know in real life..... (it) makes me want to do more in this direction, try more animation in the future' 'this gives you a nice foundation'*

*'I think I want to be doing a lot more animation in my future'*

*'I enjoyed seeing the stories come to life... I'm now going to try and convince my art teacher for A level to let me do something with animation for my project... I can say I've done it so I know how it do it'*

*'I would do it again, if it was like over the whole summer I would come every day if I could come'*

*'it's inspired me to be more creative... to keep animating'*

From their interviews it seemed by being able to spend a week animating, the young people had recognised they had gained skills, but more importantly had also had gained a passion



for animation which they were keen to develop, whether that meant looking for opportunities to use it at school, look at future courses or experiment at home.



## Attitudes and Values

As mentioned the young people all said they had enjoyed the project and benefited from it. When asked to sum up the project in interview the young people all used positive vocabulary, with *interesting* and *fun* being the most common words used.

Other words used included:

- Messy (in reference to the physical process of making the animations)
- Proud of my work
- Factual
- Worthwhile
- Amazing
- I felt happy
- Useful
- Creative
- Intriguing
- Great



Filming the evaluation interviews

The choice of words highlights that the young people found it a positive experience creatively, and interestingly a process that

made them both happy and gave them a sense of achievement and self-worth. Interestingly though they also within their word choice recognised they had learnt more about history through the process. When questioned about this, the young people focused on areas where their previous perceptions about WWI had been challenged.

Interestingly 3 of the young people referred in their mind map to the Finsbury Rifles as 'our' Finsbury Rifles, showing their sense of connection to the soldiers and their experiences. This was borne out in the interviews where the young people remarked that

*'I didn't really care about WWI before but I know that it means something now... knowing the details, the hardships of the individual stories... like Jock Christie and his act of bravery... it changes how I think about it'*

*'each person did something different, like Jock did something heroic. I want to learn about what people did as a lot of people faced hardships.... (previously) you know people fought, but I hadn't actually thought how it was for them'*

*'my experience learning about WWI in school it was much more serious and focused on the trauma and bad stuff... but what we learnt this week the soldiers that served they did it for their country and there were also good times in the army... like when Gibson climbed the pyramids'*



*'often you think of soldiers as one... but you need to remember that each soldier has his own story and he's not just part of a whole group'*

*'Jock for example, he was really committed to serving in the army, and had been injured twice but still came back to fight... and ended up getting a VC for bravery.'*

From these comments it seems that in particular the young people had been struck by the individual soldiers' stories, their life before the war, their reasons for signing up and their unique experiences on campaign, both the hardships they faced and the things that made the war bearable. The young people felt connected to the soldiers, empathising with their experiences, viewing the war through their personal experiences as opposed to just as a list of facts. For many, they noted how this changed how they related to WWI, seeing it not just as another history but recognising its significance, its human cost and viewing the soldiers as 'real' individuals with personal histories, commemorating their lives, their bravery and their sacrifices.

Interestingly, a number of the young people mentioned that they now thought of WWI as a global war rather than something that happened on the Western Front. One young person though also mentioned that thinking about the global nature of the war had meant she had recognised the colonial nature of the war:

*This week changed how I thought about WWI in terms of the 'officers and how they treated the local Egyptian guides because when you learn about it (WWI) you don't of course think about the British being wrong but then you find out they could be brutal towards the guides'*



### 3. Wider family and community events

#### Methods of Evaluation

- Photographs
- Animations from family workshops
- Comment cards in response to the museum display, animations and workshops

The wider family and community events were not extensively evaluated as these were not the focus of the project. However a range of 'soft touch' tools highlighted some additional insights into the wider community response to the project.

- **Suitability of teaching young children about the First World War**

At Islington Museum we have an extensive under 5's programme where we teach various heritage themes through interactive sensory storytelling and messy play. Initially parents and carers were reticent about participating in workshops about the First World War, voicing concerns around '*whether it's suitable for my children*', '*whether they can understand it*' and '*what benefit there is about learning about WWI with my children.*'

However, the families that participated in the workshops were intrigued to discover both that the First World War could be taught in a way accessible to their children and that they themselves had their perceptions around what happened during the First World War challenged through a children's workshop.

Interactive role play around travelling to Egypt with the Finsbury Rifles, delousing, camel riding, climbing the pyramids, digging trenches and bathing parades all encouraged the parents/ carers to think of the soldiers' experiences beyond the battlefield. The majority of parents commented that they did not know about the Egyptian Campaign or about soldiers' daily lives. Yet the process of exploring these in sensory play with their children seems to have encouraged them to think about the First World War from the personal perspective of the soldiers, discussing as a family what they would have experienced, both the hardships and the new, often intriguing experiences that made up so much of the Finsbury Rifles daily life.

*'I didn't know about the Finsbury Rifles, or that they would have served in Egypt.'*

*'my daughter enjoyed the bugs, we had fun delousing one another, it must have been horrible.'*

*'we climbed to the top of the pyramid like Gibson, my son thought it must have been hard work'*

*'we rode camels, we know camels so we could talk about them and how bumpy it must have been'*

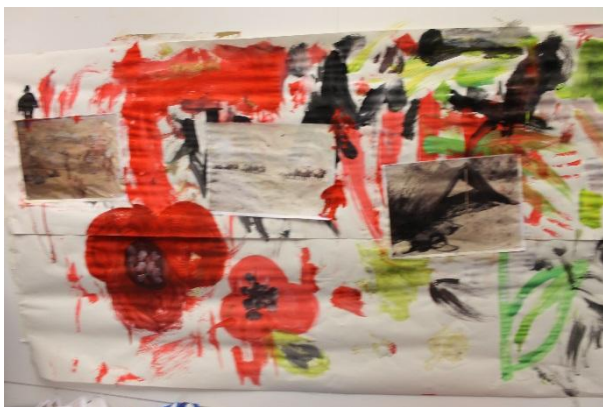
*'we learnt that camels don't need to drink for 5 days!'*

*'I learnt how to bring the stories of WWI to life for my little ones'*



*'I learn about the Finsbury Rifles, soldiers from my area!'*

The parents/carers noted that they had learnt new information through the sessions, however their comments suggest that more broadly that this they had experienced new creative experiences with their children, which allowed them both to empathise with the soldiers and discuss the hardships of the campaign in a historically accurate manner without needed to focus on developmentally inappropriate references to battle or death.







## **2. Value of animation as a learning tool**

We held two family animation workshops with disadvantaged local families referred to the workshops through children's social services. The families heard stories about the Finsbury Rifles' Campaign in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, before choosing a story to animate.

Although the finished animations were short they show how the families, even in a short two hour workshop, had expanded their understanding of the First World War, while at the same time gaining creative skills. At the start of the workshop none of the families knew about either the Finsbury Rifles or their campaign in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Yet by the end of the workshop they had worked as a family unit to select historical sources and animated these to tell a particular story from the Rifles' campaign that they had found interesting. Unsurprisingly, most of the families chose to focus on the camels, yet the level of detail in the animations shows that they had grasped the significance of camels to the campaign for carrying supplies across the desert, and the challenges the Rifles faced in managing their Camel Corps.

None of the families had animated before. However, the detail in the animation, the combination of collage materials and detailed drawings, shows how the families had grasped the basic skills of animation. This included selecting and visualising a short story, creating props, moving props and adding sound.

The families were fully engaged in the process, showing how animation as a tool could make a challenging historical topic accessible and fun to an audience unused to visiting museums or doing creative activities as a family.

- **Connecting new audiences to local heritage**

We encouraged visitors to complete comment forms about the museum display and animations. The majority of people noted that they did not know about the Finsbury Rifles before the display, or if they did, they were not aware that they had served anywhere other than the Western Front.

Interestingly the fact that the display focused upon the campaign in Egypt, Syria and Palestine meant that it caught the attention of visitors who would not normally be interested in the First World War. Many of the comments were from visitors who had come to Islington from Africa and the Middle East. They were fascinated to learn that Islington's local regiment had actually visited their countries of origin. For them, what they had seen as a European war suddenly became of interest, connected to their personal histories and identities.

Visitors particularly commented on recognising locations, buildings, animals and objects in archival photographs and maps, using these to talk about their own experiences, comparing the landscapes and experiences of the Finsbury Rifles with what remains today.

As one EAL teacher commented



*'My students don't really have an understanding of history, as their country's histories are often very recent. So the concept of 100 years ago is difficult for them to understand. Yet they recognise things in the photographs and want to know more about why this museum has photographs, postcards etc from their countries. They are intrigued to find out local people went to their country so long ago, it makes them feel more connected to Islington and to people who have lived here in the past.... They are interested in the soldiers' experiences and want to talk about the war.'*

Therefore, by focusing on a history of the First World War beyond the Western Front many of our local community, who previously would have felt disconnected from the centenary commemorations, have been engaged in this local heritage, feeling connected to those who previously lived in Islington yet temporarily experienced life within a completely different cultural context.

Email from the Lead Social Worker about the impact of the Family animation workshops on her families.

**From:** Haslam, Terry

**Sent:** 21 November 2017 14:06

**To:** Campbell-Gay, Rebecca <Rebecca.Campbell-Gay@islington.gov.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Tonight's event

Hi Rebecca.

**What your families and staff learnt in the workshop about the First World War:**

Talking to the children it was interesting to listen to them talk about animals being used in the war. One particular group were fascinated about the fact that camels were used to move food to feed the troops. One comment was it must have been 'smelly and hot' for the camels with such large loads. One of the children wondered if the food went off.

**How you think the workshop benefited your families?**

One family in particular has a mum with mental health issues. This mum is working with us to get her children out and about in the local community as we know that parental mental health impacts the ability to integrate or feel part of 'what's going on'.

Although mum turned up late and left early, it was wonderful to see her attend. This mum commented to me that she did not know that the Heritage Library existed and how much she liked it. I observed the children to be overjoyed around the fact they were attending an event. The children were observed to be really taking part and they made a short film in the time they were at the museum.

What our families benefited from by attending the Heritage Library event:

- Social integration
- Learning and doing new activities
- Thinking outside of the box
- Gaining confidence to try new things
- New places to go

On another note, we find here at Families First that our families, due to budget restraints, are finding it harder to find free things to do with their children. We are starting to realise that planned events in the holidays gives our families something to look forward to and we have already observed that our families are starting to get to know each other at these events. This prevents social isolation which in turn stops parents' mental health suffering as a result.

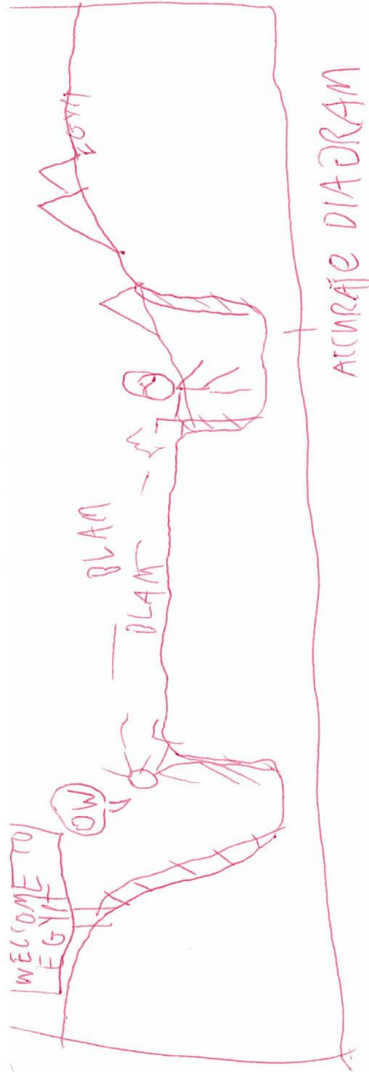
Regards

**Terry Haslam**

Deputy Team Manager

Highbury and Hornsey Families First Team





The Finns bury kills, our local regiment fought there

WWI in Egypt, Syria and Palestine

England vs the Ottomans

There was a war

EGYPT

is a desert

They crossed the desert, setting chicken wire out ahead of them to walk better

Jack Christie won a Victoria cross grenading a woman in trenches

Have beef with males

~~They~~ took all their supplies for them

CAMELS

