WHAT CAN A LOST SOLDIER'S DIARY TELL US ABOUT THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

In 1965, a 12-year-old boy found a small green diary in a rubbish dump in Stourbridge, England. The pages had been written in 1918 by Corporal Claude Nuttall, an Australian soldier serving on the Western Front. The diary was damaged, pierced by what looked like a bullet and marked with blood. Its final entry was written on August 10, 1918. For decades, nobody knew what had happened to Nuttall. Colin Reid, a museum curator, spent years investigating the diary, military records and Nuttall's family history. He discovered that Nuttall had rescued wounded soldiers from no man's land, married Violet Palfreyman in England and then returned to France. Military records show that he died only three days after writing his final entry. The diary has now inspired a new book and helped reunite Nuttall's family with photographs and memories of a soldier who might otherwise have been forgotten.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

A diary can make a huge event such as the First World War feel personal and immediate. Nuttall wrote about ordinary things, including his wedding, while living through terrible danger. His story also shows how historians use diaries, photographs, military records and family memories together to rebuild the life of someone who left only a few written clues.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"Why can one soldier's diary be more powerful than a textbook?"

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/this-soldier-kept-a-diary-in-the-trenches-of-world-war-i-a-child-found-it-at-the-dump-decades-later-pierced-by-a-bullet