Sheffield Hallam University

Asunder

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"...and then all the world began to roar"

ASUNDER

The story of an English town in the First World War

Esther Johnson

Professor of Film and Media Arts
Sheffield Hallam University

asunder1916.uk
@1916asunder

blanchepictures.com

2016 commemorative project for the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, with a particular focus on the North East

Primarily funded by:
14–18 NOW WW1 Centenary Art Commissions across the UK
and
Sunderland Cultural Partnership





'... and then all the world began to roar'

ASUNDER

a film by Esther Johnson

Asunder tells the story of what happened to an English town during the First World War, with almost all of its men fighting abroad and its women and children left behind. The North East was in the front line, thanks to its shipyards and munitions factories.

Using archive and contemporary footage and audio, Asunder collages the stories of people from Tyneside and Wearside to uncover what life was like on the home front, with bombs falling on Britain for the first time, conscientious objectors sentenced to death, and women working as doctors, tram conductors, and footballers. The narrative moves from an Edwardian golden era, in which sport grew in popularity and aircraft and cars pointed to a bright new future, to a war that horrifically reversed this progress. In the Battle of the Somme, British, French and German armies fought one of the most traumatic battles in military history. Over the course of just four months, more than one million soldiers were captured, wounded or killed in a confrontation of unimaginable horror.

directed by **Esther Johnson**
text by **Bob Stanley**
narrated by **Kate Adie** and **Alun Armstrong**
music composed by **Field Music** and **Warm Digits**
performed with **Royal Northern Sinfonia** and **The Cornshed Sisters**
produced by **Esther Johnson** and **Bob Stanley**

www.asunder1916.uk
@1916asunder

Co-commissioned by **Sunderland Cultural Partnership** and **14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions**, supported by The National Lottery through Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Sunderland Business Improvement District, Culture Bridge North East and Sir James Knott Trust.

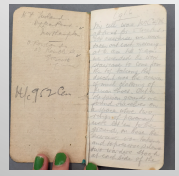
PROJECT AIMS

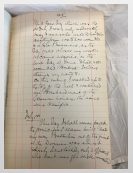
- to uncover **untold stories** of WW1 with a focus on Sunderland and the North East of England
- to experiment with **mixing archive with contemporary footage** shot especially for the film
- to create a **narrative that weaves oral history testimonies, diary entries and memoirs from those that lived through WW1 with newspaper stories** published in 1914–18 editions of the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*
- to **collaborate with musicians from the North East** to create an original soundtrack to be performed live at the premiere

SOUNDSCAPE

NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Diary Entries

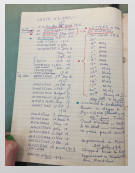




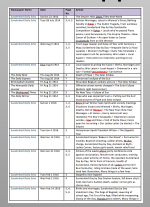
Essays



Memoirs



1914–18 Newspapers




Sunderland Daily Echo

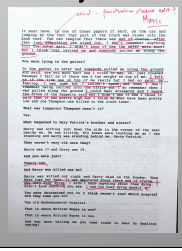

SUNDERLAND DAY BY DAY.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

This is St. Valentine's Day, but very few people seem to have noticed the fact. On inquiry at the Post Office it was ascertained that very few valentines had passed through the post.

DEATH OF AN OLD SERVANT.

Oral History Testimonies



FILM CHARACTERS individuals from the North East

Margaret Holmes



Norman Gaudie



Bella Reay




BELLA WINS THE CUP FOR PALMERS.

Garnet Wolsey Fyfe



Arthur Linfoot



George Thompson



Robert Hope (Hepple)



Plus: Lizzie Holmes and Lisbeth Simm (no found photographs)

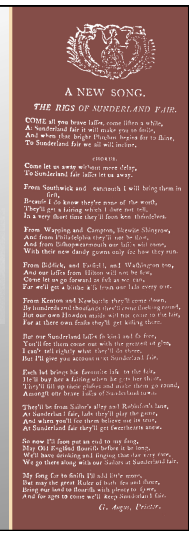
MUSIC

- Orchestral score inspired by early **1900s experiments in music**
- Use of **woodwind** and **celeste** popular in late 1800s/early 1900s. **Decision not to use brass** and traditional notions instrumentation for war.
- Researched **traditional folk songs** – found *The Rigs of Sunderland* about an ideal day at the fair, sung A cappella in the film



- Researched **Music Hall** and early **recorded music technologies** such as wax cylinders
- Score – Orchestral and string quartet version

"One of the things which intrigued me especially about this project was our love of the orchestral music from that period. Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* premiered in 1913, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912. Bela Bartok and Maurice Ravel were composing, as was Claude Debussy, so it was a time of huge change in harmony and composition and we've dipped into that period for inspiration a lot."
– **Peter Brewis** from ***Field Music***


A NEW SONG.

THE RIGS OF SUNDERLAND FAIR.

COME all you brave lads, come listen a while,
A-Sunderland fair is all make you to smile,
And when that bright Phœbus begins for to shine,
To Sunderland fair we all will incline.

CHORUS.

Come let us away without more delay,
To Sunderland fair lads let us away.

From Southwick and eastmouth I will bring them in fish,
Bycatch I do know they're some of the worst,
They'll get a laying when I have not sell,
In a very short time they'll soon keep themselves.

From Warping and Cowpen, likewise Shiprow,
And from Philadelphia they'll not be slow,
And from Bishopswearmouth our lads and sons,
With their new daily guess only to hear they run.

From Biddick, and Fatfield, and Washington too,
And our lasses from Hilton will not be slow,
Come let us go forward in full as we can,
For we'll get a bonfire at it from our lads every one.

From Kenton and Newburn they'll come down,
To buy lads and lasses they'll crowd their ongoing crowd,
But our own Hendon maids will not come to the fair,
For at their own doors they'll get baking there.

For our Sunderland lads fit hard and fit free,
You'll for them cause me with the greatest of glee,
I each tell plainly what they'll do there,
But I'll give you account at Sunderland fair.

Each lad brings his favourite lass to the fair,
He'll buy her a fairing when he's to her there,
They'll fill up some gallon and some them go round,
Amongst our brave lads of Sunderland town.

They'll be from Sisters alley and Rolland's lane,
A-Sunderland fair, lads they'll play the game,
And when you'll for them bring out on your,
At Sunderland fair they'll get sweethearts anew.

So now I'll soon put an end to my song,
May Old England flourish before it be long,
We'll have dancing and singing that day over now,
We go there along with our Sailors at Sunderland fair.

My song I've to finish I'll add little more,
But may the great Ruler of both day and hours,
Bring our land to flourish, each place to grow,
And for ages to come we'll keep Sunderland fair.

G. Angus, Printer.

PERFORMANCES WITH LIVE MUSIC

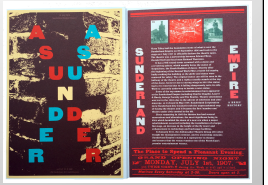
***Asunder* sheet music**



Conductor Hugh Brunt



***Asunder* premiere programme**



Rehearsals and recording at Sage Gateshead





***Asunder* team with Royal Northern Sinfonia**



Performances
with Live Music

PREMIERE – 10.07.16
Sunderland Empire Theatre
Premiere included additional
Asunder inspired arts activities

Barbican London
12.02.17





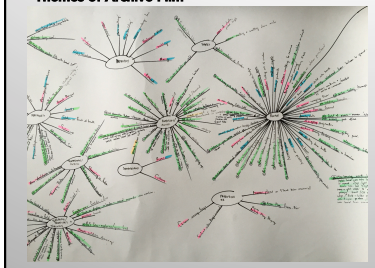
IMAGERY

ARCHIVE RESEARCH

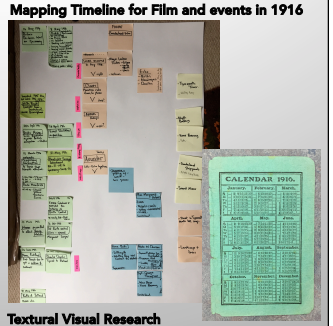


STUDIO RESEARCH

Themes of Archive Film



Mapping Timeline for Film and events in 1916



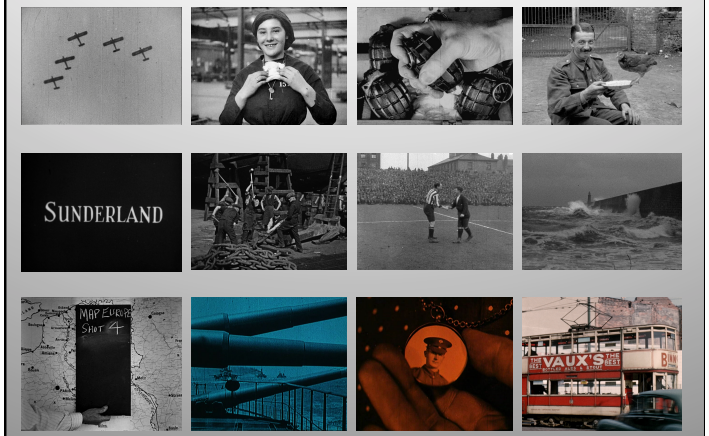
Search for Ghost Signs



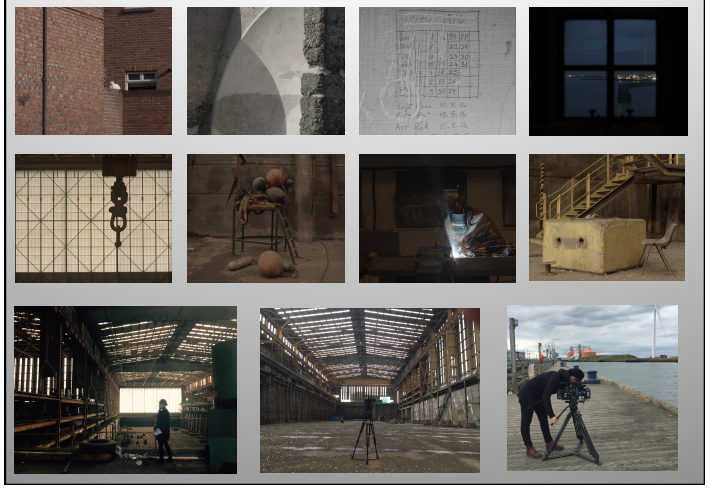
Textural Visual Research



ARCHIVE FILM 90+ archive films used from 4 film archives



CONTEMPORARY FILM locations in the North East as they are now

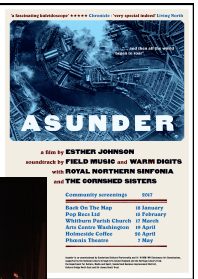




COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

Screenings taking place in locations in which the film characters once lived and knew:

e.g. Sunderland; Roker; Hendon; Blyth; South Tyneside; Gateshead; Durham



CINEMA SCREENINGS

– Special screenings for schools
– Screenings with Q&As



Filmhouse Edinburgh 10.09.17
Sheffield Doc/Fest Date tbc
QUAD Derby 21.06.17
Tyneside Cinema Newcastle 21.05.17
Regent Street Cinema London 18.04.17
HOME Manchester 22.02.17



http://asunder1916.uk/events

2018 – Future performances include Sage Gatehead, plus TV Broadcast and DVD release

PREMIERE AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

"In the plethora of events marking the centenary of the First World War and especially the Somme, *Asunder* really stood out for me: its highly imaginative concept, brilliant storytelling, geographical and cultural specificity, above all its power to move and connect with the reality of events 100 years ago. A fantastic piece of work." – Michael Chaplin, Writer

"The film was meticulously researched and put together to evoke so many emotions, what a tribute... I think the resounding set of applause at the end of the show said it all!" – Vicky Willis, Sir James Knott Trust

"*Asunder* was phenomenal!"
– Brenda Graham, Sunderland Heritage Forum

"I thought it was amazing and loved every minute. The stories were so lovely and left you wanting to find out more – faultless."
– Louise Clamp, Sunderland Vibrancy Group

"The show was incredibly moving and powerful, I was very emotional at points."
– Lynne Patience, Sunderland resident

REVIEWS

"a fascinating kaleidoscope"
★★★★★ *Chronicle*

"very special indeed"
Living North

"*Asunder* casts its spell"
Sunderland Echo

AWARDS

Nominated for Focal International 2017
Best Use of Footage in a Factual Production

Nominated for Journal Culture 2017
Best Event of the Year

Shortlisted for Living North 2016
Performance of the Year

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