

# **BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELDS:**

Käthe Buchler's Photographs  
of Germany in the Great War

The University of Birmingham  
and the Great War

Rotunda Gallery, Aston Webb Building  
20 October 2017 - 14 January 2018



## Beyond the Battlefields:

### Käthe Buchler's Photographs of Germany in the Great War The University of Birmingham and the Great War

This exhibition focuses on the amateur photographer Käthe Buchler (1876-1930), whose work forms one of the featured collections of the Museum of Photography in Braunschweig, Lower Saxony. Buchler photographed the German home front during the First World War. Buchler's black & white images feature her family and community, wounded soldiers returning from the front line and the nursing staff who treated them.

This is the first time that her work has been displayed outside Germany. The photographs are being shown alongside material relating to the University of Birmingham's role as a military hospital from 1914-1918 and the members of staff who were involved in the conflict. Shown together, these images, documents and objects show that the War had a similar impact on people from both Britain and Germany. Regardless of nationality, people's lives were changed irrevocably by the trauma of global conflict.



*Nurse with patient and Christmas tree in the military hospital, Braunschweig, Käthe Buchler, 1914-1918*

© Estate of Käthe Buchler - Museum für Photographie Braunschweig/  
Deposit Stadtarchive Braunschweig



3.Kl.Plätze Nr.9-16



## Käthe Buchler's Photographs of Germany in the Great War

Käthe Buchler was born in Braunschweig, Germany, in 1876. At age 19 she married Walther Buchler and by 1901 the couple had moved to an affluent area of the town. In 1905 they set up a foundation which awarded local grants in arts and culture. As well as supporting the arts, she also belonged to many women's organisations and to the Red Cross.

Buchler turned her attention to photography in 1901 when she acquired her first camera, a binocular *Voigtländer*, a gift from her husband Walther. While she successfully taught herself to use the camera, she also sought advice from local professionals. She attended classes that were open to female students at the Lette Society in Berlin, an acknowledged school for photography from the mid 19th century. She later developed and produced photographic prints in the attic of her home.

Buchler suffered from a hereditary disease which caused deafness and taking photographs allowed her to explore different ways of communicating. The images on display focus on the hospital in Braunschweig that treated wounded soldiers returning from battlefields on the front line. As well as documenting the town and its experience of the War, Buchler also gave illustrated lectures in order to raise funds for charitable and municipal organisations such as the Red Cross and the Rettungshaus or 'House of Salvation', an institution for underprivileged children. Typically she would give away prints to her sitters, even if they had been strangers to her.

Käthe Buchler died in 1930, aged 54. In 2003 the Buchler family donated their collection of over 1,000 black and white prints and 175 colour autochrome plates to the Museum of Photography in Braunschweig.







## The Buchler Family

The Buchler family portrait and self-portrait were taken a few years after Käthe Buchler first took up photography. Many of her early photographs focus on family members and often her children at play with friends, but she was also interested in the people of Braunschweig and the surrounding areas. In early 1914 on a coach trip with her son, Walther, they came across a group of Sinti and Romani people who had set up camp outside the gates of Braunschweig, stopping to take photographs of them.

These early photographs show an interest in domestic family life and relationships, an area that Buchler would continue to focus on against the backdrop of war.



Käthe Buchler:

*Walter Buchler and a friend playing Cowboys and Indians, c.1911*

*Sinti and Roma family with wagon, 1914*

*The Buchler family (husband Walther, Käthe, son Walther and daughter Ellen) in the garden, c.1902*

*Self-portrait, c.1905*

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Deposit Stadtarchive Braunschweig









Käthe Buchler, 1914-1918:

*Wounded Soldiers taking a rest on the platform, Braunschweig train station*

*Disabled veterans in the cobbler's workshop of the military school hospital on Auguststrasse*

*Red Cross nurses looking after wounded soldiers*

*Soldiers in the military hospital, Braunschweig*

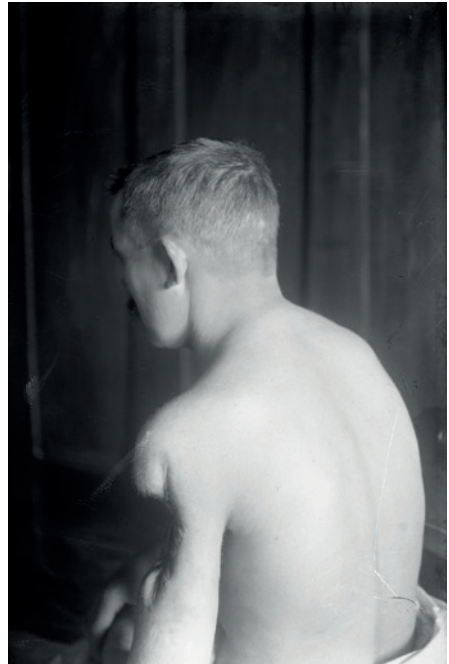
*Portrait of a nurse*

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## Braunschweig

During the Great War Buchler took many photographs of Braunschweig's social and charitable institutions. These included images of volunteers receiving injured soldiers who had arrived at the station, neatly dressed nurses in clean wards, and the wounded in their hospital beds. These images reveal a sense of intimacy and compassion, as nurses are shown reading to the injured, soldiers are pictured in their sickbeds against a backdrop of postcards from loved ones or, as in one image, a Christmas tree.

Buchler did not shy away from the horrors of war: facial injuries were common on both sides, and there is a quiet dignity to the image of a soldier with a serious arm wound, his face turned away from the camera, the subtlety and quietness of the image making unequivocal the trauma and pain of such an injury. Buchler's carefully composed photographs of recuperating soldiers and their carers epitomise the calm quiet necessary for their recovery, far away from the brutal devastation of the front line.





Käthe Buchler, 1914-1918:

*Double portrait of two wounded men  
Wounded soldier (Obersteiger)  
with Iron Cross at Herzogliches  
Krankenhaus, January 1915*

*Study of a heavily wounded soldier  
Wounded English and French  
soldiers with Red Cross nurses in  
the Holsts Garten military hospital,  
c.1915*

*Gathering around the Christmas tree  
Wounded soldiers and nurses  
reading newspaper 'Braunschweiger  
Anzeiger'*

© Estate of Käthe Buchler - Museum  
für Photographie Braunschweig/  
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## The University of Birmingham and the Great War

The scale and reach of the First World War was unprecedented and it had a devastating impact on those at home and on the front line. In Britain, preparations for a possible conflict with Germany had begun in the years leading up to the War. Plans had been drawn up in 1908 for the University of Birmingham's newly built Aston Webb building to be used as a hospital in the event of war. On 4 August 1914, after Germany invaded Belgium and Britain declared war, the University became the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital.

When the order to mobilise was given, ten buildings were quickly adapted and tents were erected on the grounds outside the Great Hall. The first convoy of patients arrived on 1 September and by the end of the year 800 beds had been installed and 3,892 patients had been received. The initial convoys of wounded soldiers arrived at Moor Street Station in the city centre but later arrangements were made for the use of Selly Oak Goods Station, located nearer to the campus. 21 convoys were received in 1914, two of which carried wounded Belgian soldiers.

Over that four year period, more than 125,000 men were treated in Birmingham, including soldiers from Belgium, Serbia and America, and from across the Empire. German soldiers were also treated here and those who died were laid to rest at Lodge Hill cemetery (the remains were removed in the 1960s and reinterred at Cannock Chase cemetery).

*Photo of Lt Young, beside the Clock Tower, Library of Birmingham*

## Hospital Provision Across Birmingham

The Southern General was used largely as a clearing hospital with many patients being transferred to smaller hospitals with particular specialisms or to convalescent homes across the city. An additional Southern General was established at Dudley Road Infirmary in May 1915. In one month alone 2,449 patients were admitted. Local mental hospitals were also turned over to the war effort. Rubery Hill, known later as the 1<sup>st</sup> Birmingham War Hospital, opened in summer 1915, and Hollymoor became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Birmingham War Hospital. More beds were needed as the War progressed and many large private houses were lent or donated by their owners, including Moor Green Hall in Moseley (November 1914), Highbury in Moseley (May 1915), The Beeches in Bournville (December 1915), Uffculme in Moseley (November 1916) and Farcroft in Handsworth (June 1917). Civilian hospitals were also used. 100 beds at the General Hospital were placed at the disposal of the military in early 1914 and the Queen's Hospital in Bath Row treated wounded Belgian soldiers from October 1914. Local schools across the city were also given up to the war effort, including Colmore Road in Kings Heath, Raddlebarn Council School in Selly Park and Highfield Road in Saltley. By January 1918 the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General and its other sections consisted of over 6,000 beds.





*1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Military Hospital, Arthur J. Leeson, 1914:  
Physics block used as barracks  
Medical staff and patients in the  
Great Hall*

*Exterior view showing nurses sitting  
and standing on steps leading up to  
nurses' quarters*

*Interior view of Ward B1, formerly  
the Mechanical Engineering  
Department*

*Exterior view showing medical staff  
in front of the main entrance to the  
University*

Library of Birmingham



*Men with jaw injuries, Library of Birmingham*

## **Revolutionary Bone Grafting and Facial Repair**

The use of new types of weapons, such as the machine gun, caused injuries that surgeons had not seen before, presenting many challenges and ultimately the development of modern types of treatment and surgery. While trenches could provide protection to the soldiers' bodies, their heads were left vulnerable, the lower part of their faces unprotected from gunfire by their helmets.

In 1902, William Billington (1876-1932) was appointed surgeon at Queen's Hospital in Birmingham. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Billington joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital and was put in charge of the centre for jaw and facial injuries, working closely with dentist Harold Round (one of the first to graduate from the Birmingham Dental School) and A. H. Parrott. These men were charged with treating horrific and complex injuries and used the methods devised by Harold Gillies, who famously treated soldiers with facial injuries at a specially-designed unit at Sidcup. This work can only be described as revolutionary and was attempted at very few other clinics at this time.





*Drawing room, University House, Arthur J. Leeson, 1914, Library of Birmingham*

## Nursing

The original staffing at the Southern General consisted of sisters and staff nurses from the Territorial Force Nursing Service, however, in May 1915 Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses were also appointed. By the end of 1916 the staff at the Southern General numbered 578. This included a principal matron, five matrons, two assistant matrons, 95 sisters, 206 staff nurses and 269 VADs.

One of the nursing staff was Eveline Wauchope, who was educated in Belfast before moving to Birmingham. By 1912 Eveline was nursing at the General Hospital and in 1914 she moved to the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General, where she held the position of nursing sister. This photograph shows Eveline working as a nurse and is part of an album that includes informal images and illustrations by staff and patients at the hospital.

*Eveline with Alice Tinker and Emma Chambers, Eveline Wauchope Album, Cadbury Research Library*





*Matron Kathleen Lloyd*  
Cadbury Research Library

## Matron Kathleen Lloyd

The convalescing soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital were under the care of Matron Kathleen Grace Lloyd (1877-1976). She was born in Birmingham and trained as a nurse at the General Hospital, where she became Assistant Matron. Lloyd was subsequently appointed Matron at the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General.

For her work during the War, Lloyd was awarded the highest nursing decoration, the Royal Red Cross, and also La Médaille de la Reine Élisabeth avec croix rouge by the King of Belgium. This earned her the nickname 'Birmingham's own Lady with the Lamp', alluding to Florence Nightingale who received the Royal Red Cross during the Crimean War.

Lloyd suggested that the soldiers do needlework as a form of therapeutic care. The men created a cloth which they presented to Lloyd in 1918 to show their gratitude towards her. The cream-coloured cloth is made up of nine embroidered panels. The central panel is dedicated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Hospital and features the badge of the Royal Army Medical Corps - the rod and serpent of Aesculapius, the Greek God of medicine - and the words *Arduis Fidelis* (Steadfast in Adversity).

The other panels represent the different regiments and groups of servicemen in Lloyd's care who undertook the task of designing and producing the cloth. The regimental panels include: the Machine Gun Corps; Royal Warwickshire and North Staffs Regiment; Worcestershire Regiment; Air Force; New Zealand Regiment; Australian Servicemen, Tanks, and Canadian Servicemen.

The cloth was donated to the University of Birmingham by Matron Lloyd's nephew John Lloyd in 1997.

*Matron Kathleen Lloyd Quilt, 1914-1918, Research and Cultural Collections*

ST SOUTHERN  
GENERAL HOSPITAL



EDGBASTON

1914

—

1918



## Entertainment and Recuperation

Activities were organised to keep wounded soldiers occupied. In Birmingham, workshops and classes were offered, including at the city's School of Art and at Highbury hospital in Moseley, where soldiers could undertake therapeutic workshops such as carpentry, gardening and boot making. Some of Käthe Buchler's images show that similar methods were being used in Germany.

Drama companies would also put on shows and theatres would provide soldiers with free tickets to performances. At the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern General, entertainment included performances by actors from the Birmingham Repertory Theatre or, for those more able, playing games in the surrounding grounds.

Soldiers could also amuse themselves by reading or contributing to *The "Southern" Cross* magazine, first published in January 1916. Patients could submit articles and poems, or anecdotes and illustrations. The content often made fun of the strict regime under which they were expected to live and revealed the soldiers' awareness that the primary aim of medical staff was to redeploy them to the front line as quickly as possible.

*'What the MO looks like in a surgical ward', The "Southern" Cross,*  
H. Gardner, April 1917  
Cadbury Research Library

*'A Medical Board', The "Southern" Cross,*  
W. L. Sherwood, October 1917,  
Cadbury Research Library

*1<sup>st</sup> Southern General Military Hospital,*  
Bernard Moore, c.1916:

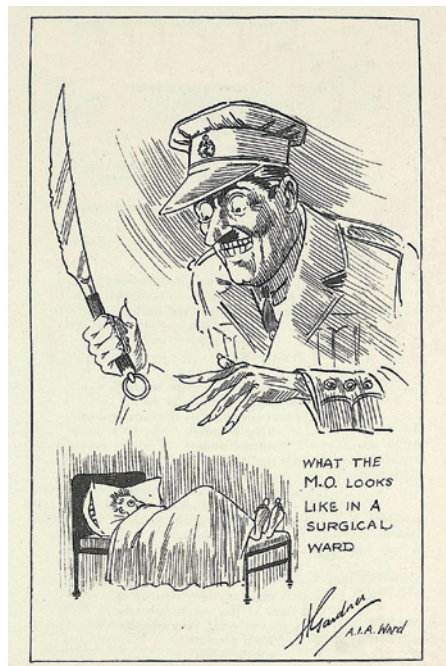
*Patients eating a suspended bun*  
*during a sports contest for patients*

*Sports for patients*

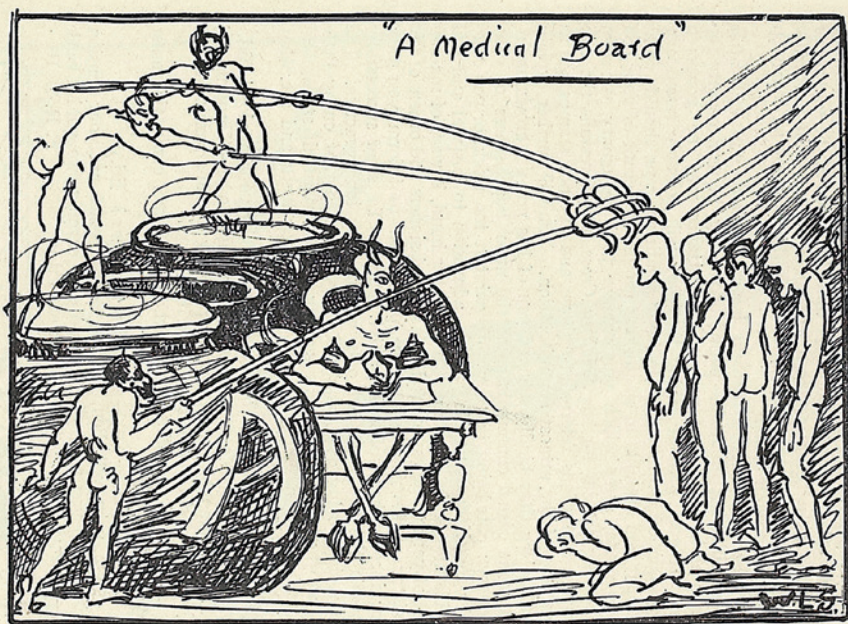
*Outpatients watching Shakespeare's*  
*'Twelfth Night' by the Birmingham*  
*Repertory Company*

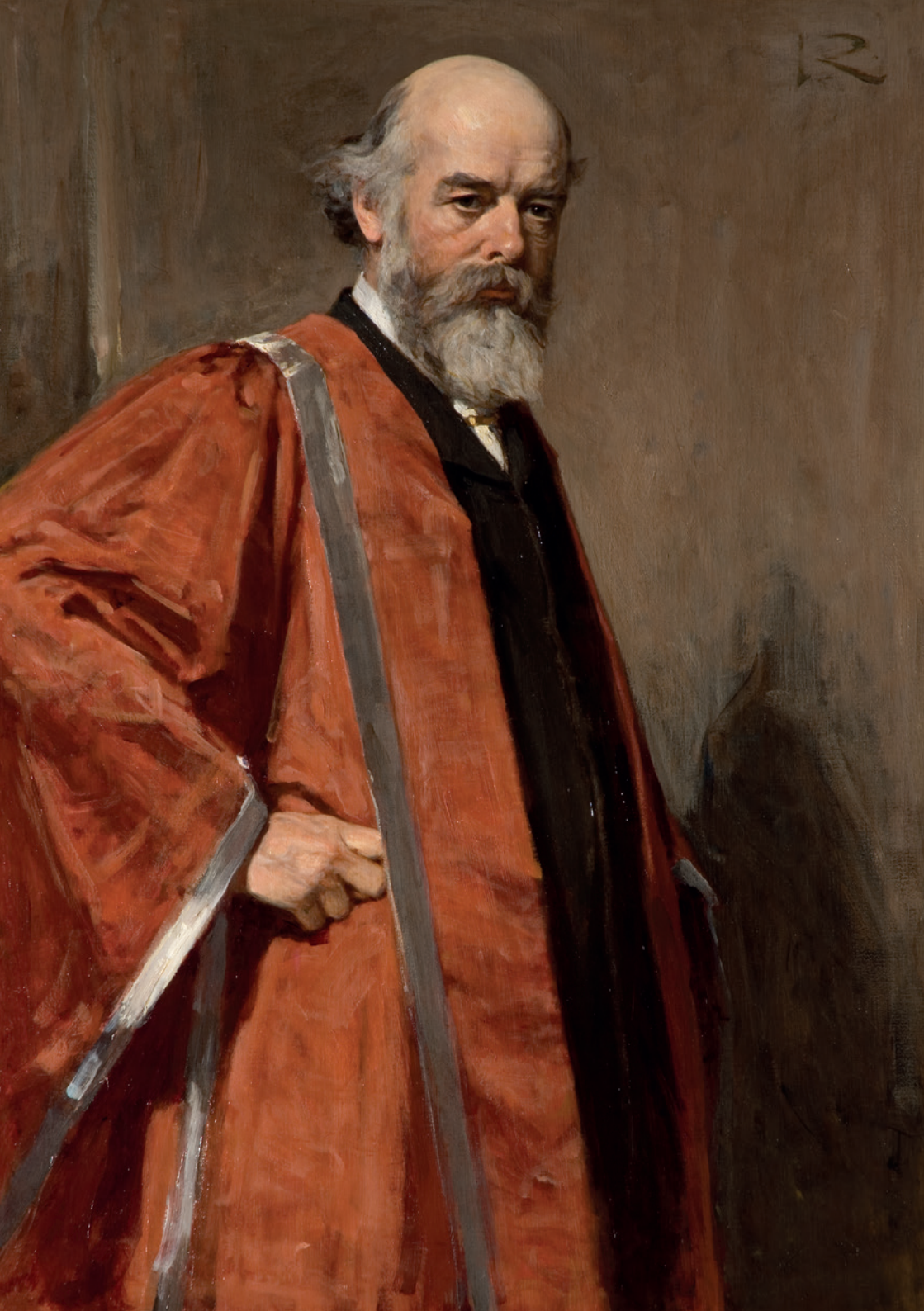
*Patients in ward watching outdoor*  
*performance of 'Twelfth Night'*

Library of Birmingham











## Oliver and Raymond Lodge

Of the many staff and students at the University of Birmingham who fought in the War, 175 tragically lost their lives. One such student was Raymond Lodge. He was the son of Sir Oliver Lodge F.R.S. (1851-1940), who was an accomplished public lecturer and a pioneer in the study of electromagnetism and radio telegraphy. In 1900 Joseph Chamberlain invited Lodge to become the first principal of the newly established University of Birmingham.

Raymond Lodge (1889-1915) enrolled on a Mechanical Engineering degree at the University of Birmingham in 1906. He volunteered for military service in 1914 and was sent to France. He was killed on 14 September 1915. Some of his personal possessions and military kit were returned to his parents, including his hipflask and gun-cleaning pouch. Raymond's death prompted Oliver to expand his work into radio waves and the aether. Oliver and his wife, Mary, attended séances with the aim of contacting Raymond. He wrote *Raymond or Life and Death* and *Raymond Revised* to document his research and experiences. Whilst some of Lodge's contemporaries were sceptical about his views, he was not alone in turning to spiritualism for comfort in light of the devastating consequences of the War.

*Portrait of Sir Oliver Lodge, George Reid, c.1910*

*Gun cleaner with leather pouch belonging to Raymond Lodge, A. G. Parker and Co., Birmingham*

*Silver hipflask belonging to Raymond Lodge*

Research and Cultural Collections



## Useful reading

Thekla Bowser, *The Story of British V.A.D. Work in the Great War* (1918)

Reginald H. Brazier & Ernest Sandford, *Birmingham and the Great War 1914-1919* (1921)

Florian Ebner and Jasmin Meinold, *Käthe Buchler: Fotografien zwischen Idyll und Heimatfront* (2012)

Susan Greyzel, *Women and the First World War* (2002)

Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (2009)

Jonathan Reinarz, *Healthcare in Birmingham: A History of the Birmingham Teaching Hospitals, 1779-1939* (2009)

Siân Roberts, *Birmingham, Remembering 1914-18* (2014)

Jay Winter & Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War, Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919* (1999)

Val Williams, *The Other Observers: Women Photographers in Britain 1900 to the Present* (1986)

## Websites

Information on Käthe Buchler's work (in German) and images:

- [dasregionalegedaechtnis.de/fotoarchiv/fotografien-zwischen-idyll-und-heimatfront](http://dasregionalegedaechtnis.de/fotoarchiv/fotografien-zwischen-idyll-und-heimatfront)
- [dasregionalegedaechtnis.de/fotoarchiv/die-welt-in-farbe](http://dasregionalegedaechtnis.de/fotoarchiv/die-welt-in-farbe)

Birmingham Museums, Flickr Gallery and Sound Archive:

- [flickr.com/photos/birminghammag/sets/72157639960670576](https://www.flickr.com/photos/birminghammag/sets/72157639960670576)
- [soundcloud.com/birminghammuseums](https://soundcloud.com/birminghammuseums)

Cadbury Research Library, Archival Resources for WW1:

- [birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/documents/srg/ww1-resources.pdf](http://birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/documents/srg/ww1-resources.pdf)
- [flickr.com/photos/cadburyresearchlibrary](https://www.flickr.com/photos/cadburyresearchlibrary)
- [forward100birmingham.wordpress.com](http://forward100birmingham.wordpress.com)

University of Birmingham, *How Battle Trauma Spawned Surgical Advance*:

- [birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/original/surgical-advance.aspx](http://birmingham.ac.uk/research/impact/original/surgical-advance.aspx)

*“Considerable Derangement of Civilian Life”:*

*patriotism and protest in suburban Birmingham 1914-1918”:*

- [suburbanbirmingham.org.uk](http://suburbanbirmingham.org.uk)

Library of Birmingham, First World War:

- [libraryofbirmingham.com/1318251798962](http://libraryofbirmingham.com/1318251798962)

*Nurses and patients at the gate*, Käthe Buchler, 1914-1918

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Deposit Stadtarchive Braunschweig







*Beyond the Battlefields* is a touring exhibition co-organised by the University of Hertfordshire Galleries, Photomuseum Braunschweig and the AHRC funded First World War Engagement Centres at the University of Birmingham ([voicesofwarandpeace.org](http://voicesofwarandpeace.org)) and the University of Hertfordshire ([everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk](http://everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk)).

It will tour to the Grosvenor Gallery, part of the Holden Gallery, Manchester Metropolitan University from 2 February - 1 March 2018 and the University of Hertfordshire Galleries from 15 March - 5 May 2018.

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