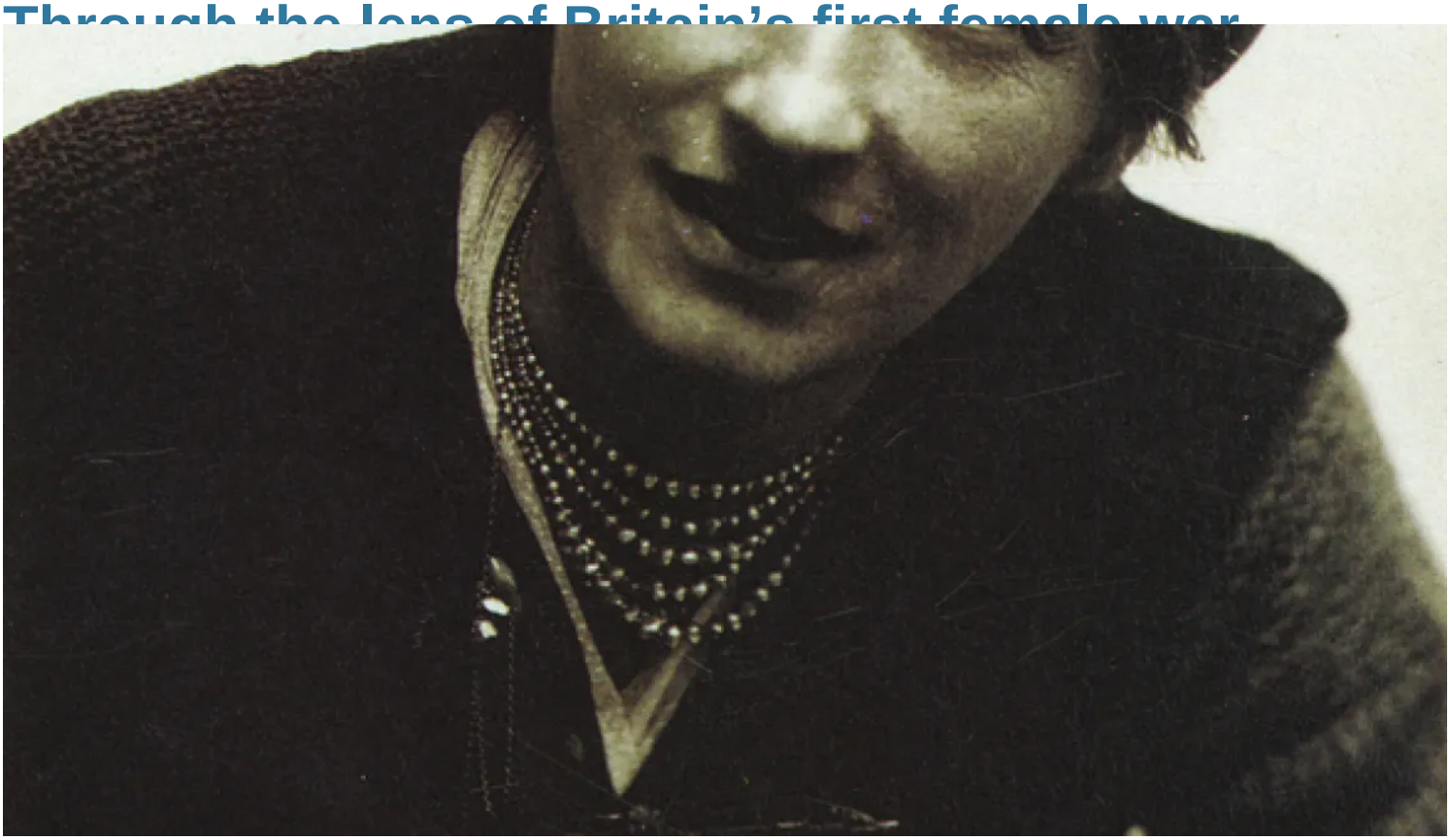
Through the lens of Britain's first female war



Pioneering photographer Olive Edis Norfolk Museums Service

A grant of £81,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will enable the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) to bring together her work and journals from collections across Britain and abroad to create a digital archive. The project will also transform the world's largest collection of Olive's work at Cromer Museum in her home county.

Born in 1876, Olive forged a remarkable and renowned career. An early user of the Lumière brothers' autochrome technique, her work includes some of the first colour photographs of Canada. She opened her own studio in Sheringham and became famous for her portraits of people from all walks of life – from Norfolk fishermen to Prime Ministers and the Royal Family.

Her talents were soon recognised by the Imperial War Museum which commissioned her to photograph the people, particularly women in the armed services, and the effects of the First World War. Olive's mission included a tour of Belgium and France in 1919 where she captured some of the devastating impacts of the conflict, including in Ypres.

Olive's task, and her direct involvement in the suffragette movement, also provided a unique insight into the changing role of women during the conflict, both on the Home and Western Front. A journal she kept on her European tour forms an incredible first-hand account of the experiences of her subjects and photographs taken in Norfolk during the war provide an insight into the effects of the war on those left behind.

Today, her work is displayed at Cromer Museum, the Imperial War Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Media Museum and even in Austin, Texas at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre.

As well as the creation of a fully accessible digital archive, Norfolk Museums Service will use the National Lottery funding to boost awareness of Olive Edis' inspirational life.

Visitors to Cromer Museum will be able to use smartphone and touch screen technology to explore her complete collection and even take photos using the same techniques as Olive. A touring exhibition in Norfolk and range of workshops and talks will bring her story to life.

Youngsters will have the opportunity to follow in her footsteps with practical photography sessions, research and drama workshops and the opportunity to work with a director to create a film of Olive's life.

Tracey Crouch MP said: "As the first woman to work as an official war photographer, it's fantastic that Heritage Lottery Fund funding will be used to tell the extraordinary story of Olive Edis. This digital archive of her poignant work will give us a stark look at the harsh realities on the Home and Western Front, but also the changing role of women during the war. I'm delighted that her work will receive the recognition it deserves and provide future generations with a better understanding of life during the First World War."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "Olive Edis' work spans social, gender and geographical boundaries to provide an incredible glimpse into the personal world of her subjects, particularly those who were affected by the First World War. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players we are thrilled to support this project which will finally provide her inspirational story with the recognition it deserves."

Hilary Cox, Norfolk County Councillor for Cromer, said: "Olive Edis was a visionary; a pioneer who pushed the frontier of photography, and helped to challenge and change the perception of women, and their role in society at the beginning of the 20th century. This is marvellous news and I am thrilled that we will now have the opportunity to do more to highlight the courage, expertise and excellence of a woman from North Norfolk who should be a household name."

Notes to editors

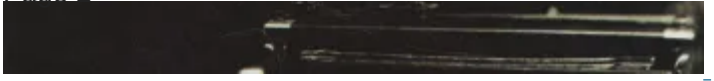
Norfolk Museums Service comprises museums, collections, study centres and countywide services relating to archaeology and education. It remains a unique partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's district councils, and is now regarded as one of the leaders in the museum sector and one of only 21 museum services in England to be awarded Major Partner Museum status by the Arts Council. For more information, visit the Norfolk Museums website.

Further information

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Focusing on Britain’s first female war photographer