

Picture of John Keats with Fanny Brawne's ring

National Lottery players are a romantic bunch. For over 23 years they've been helping people across the UK discover thousands of love letters from the past.

Highlights from the archive projects we have funded since 1994 to the tune of £230million:

Iris Murdoch's letters to Philippa Foot – Kingston University

With National Lottery funding, Kingston University acquired a collection of letters from author Iris Murdoch to her close friend Philippa Foot, which revealed the intensity of their relationship.

[quote=Iris Murdoch]"My heart is very full of definite things to say. You stir some very deep part of my soul."[/quote]

Murdoch wrote: "Sometimes I feel I have to invent a language to talk to you in, though my heart is very full of definite things to say. You stir some very deep part of my soul. Be patient with me and don't be angry with my peculiarities. I love you very much."

Keats' letter to Fanny Brawne – Keats' House

In 2011, National Lottery money helped return a love letter to where it was written in 1820 by the poet, John Keats - Wentworth Place (now Keats House). Fanny lived next door. He wrote: "I shall Kiss your name and mine where your Lips have been - Lips! why should a poor prisoner as I am talk about such things."

Dear Mrs Pennyman – Teeside University

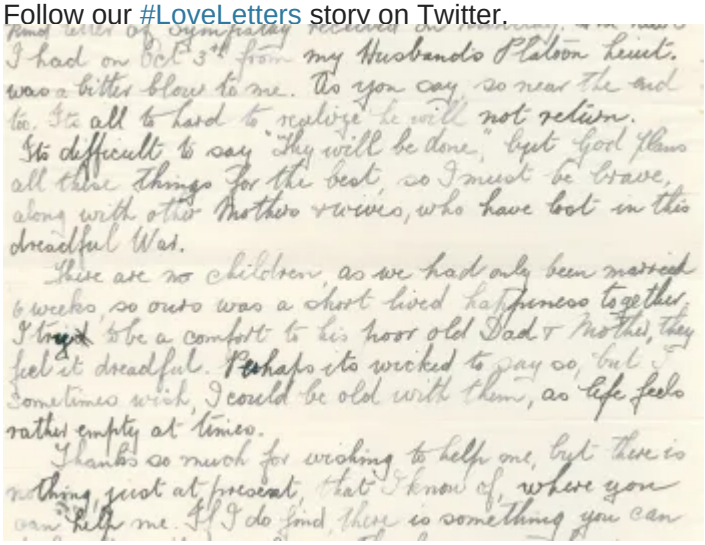
A National Lottery grant has enabled the digitisation of recently discovered letters which reveal the heartbreak and strength of women whose loved ones did not return from the First World War.

As Secretary of the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB) Widows and Orphan Fund, 26-year-old Mary Pennyman was tasked with writing to the mothers and wives of the men who lost their lives.

Bessie Walker had been married only six weeks when she was informed that her husband had been killed shortly before the end of the war. She wrote: "I try to be a comfort to his poor old Dad & Mother, they feel it dreadful. Perhaps it's wicked to say so, but I sometimes wish I could be old with them, as life feels rather empty at times."

Follow the conversation

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I had on Oct 3rd from my Husbands Platoon Lieut.
was a bitter blow to me. As you say, so near the end
too. It's all to hard to realize he will not return.
It's difficult to say "Thy will be done," but God plans
all these things for the best, so I must be brave,
along with other Mothers & wives, who have lost in this
dreadful War.
There are no children as we had only been married
6 weeks, so ours was a short lived happiness together.
I try to be a comfort to his poor old Dad & Mother, they
feel it dreadful. Perhaps its wicked to say so, but I
sometimes wish, I could be old with them, as life feels
rather empty at times.
Thanks so much for wishing to help me, but there is
nothing just at present, that I know of, where you
can help me. If I do find there is something you can

Letter from Bessie Walker, York Teesside Archives

Dear Mrs Pennyman…