

## WATCHBORE AND THE STORY OF TIME (PART TWO)

**In which Watchbore reveals the most significant wristwatch of all time and brings the story to a grateful conclusion.**

Readers will recall that they left Watchbore in a meeting with his delightful new part-time personal assistant, Miss Gloria Luscious, a lady whose secretarial skills, as Watchbore was discovering to his gratification, were proving to be quite remarkable for one so young.

But Watchbore must draw a veil over the boring minutiae of his day-to-day business activities, and take you to the Somme battlefield in the late summer of 1916, where Private Harold Watchbore 8760, 3rd regiment of the South African Infantry Division, is about to lose his life in another futile attempt to take Delville Wood.

“The bombardment will cease as soon as I begin my afternoon nap,” commanded a well lunched general several miles from where Private Watchbore sat cowering in a smelly trench.

Whether Private Watchbore advanced into his own barrage or the machine-gun bullets of the opposing team is a matter of small importance in the similar fate of a million other soldiers. Like most of them, Private Watchbore was a victim of bad timing.

The vital necessity being in a position of military advantage in the crucial time between the lifting of the barrage and the opening of enemy machine-gun fire is what persuaded soldiers in the front line reluctantly to adopt an item of female jewellery — the wristlet watch.

Extensive horological research conducted by Watchbore proves that the very effeminate wristwatch would have never won the male wrist and become the symbol of the 20th century without the noble sacrifice of Private Watchbore and

millions like him. Thus, as he stands, hat over his heart, before a cross in a field of crosses, listening to the haunting notes of the Last Post fade away, Watchbore draws great comfort from the knowledge that they died for Omega.

It is fitting, therefore that the watch chosen as the single most significant wristwatch is the one that crossed the gender barrier to become the icon of our age. It's a 1916 purpose-made military wristwatch, with a protective cover over the glass, black dial and luminous markings. Equally fitting is that it is displayed next to the timing device of a Polaris missile warhead.

While Watchbore knows that his readers are avid for a few thousand more gem-like words on the various interesting clocks and artworks on show in this fascinating exhibition, and eagerly await full details on the similarities and differences between the Inuit and Australian Aboriginal concepts of time, he must regretfully disappoint them by bringing this cliff-hanging tale to its ignominious conclusion.

He will thus gloss over the many other fascinating facts learned at the exhibition, such as the alarming news that Vishnu will destroy the entire universe in 311,040,000,000,000 years, and that Panquetzalitzli is the 15th day of the 20-day Aztec week. He must also deprive his expectant readers of the full epic of his Herculean production of 20,000 words of eyeglazing drivel in record time, and fast-forward to the day when an envelope bearing the symbol of the world's most feared media empire is delivered to Watchbore's garret.

It was from the Editor.

“Dear Watchbore,” it lied. “Congratulations. Your 20,000-word piece on ‘How I set My Watch to the Ancient Greenwich Time Signal’ is just the kind of unreadable trivia that we knew we could rely on you to produce. In fact, I will go so far as to say that even if I ate prodigious quantities of alphabet soup \* followed by a large Vindaloo curry I would be incapable of voiding myself of copy as appalling as this. It is indeed so dreadful that it will at last enable us to make our long-planned breakthrough in publishing history.

Instead of going through the expensive and unnecessary process of publishing new articles to keep the same old ads apart each month, we will print the same text every issue and simply change the ads. This is what our advertisers have been demanding for years, and market research has shown your text is totally unreadable, so nobody will notice.

Among the most immediate cost savings will be you, as it will have by now dawned upon you that we no longer need your so-called literary services. In other words you have written yourself out of a job.

Good riddance,

The Editor.”

Watchbore was last reported to be engrossed in reducing his 20,000 word text by a word each day, until he had distilled it into a phrase of unparalleled wisdom, expressing all that will ever be known about time and watches — a task that will keep him agreeably occupied for the next 54 years and nine months. However, before he was led away by the two gentlemen in white coats, he managed to smuggle out to Richard Paige a selection of his more accessible works, the less subversive of which might be published for the entertainment and edification of TimeZoners.

In the meantime he heartily recommends that TimeZoners put The Story of Time Exhibition, which closes on September 24, on their itinerary. They will find it in the

splendid surroundings of the Royal Observatory and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, just 7 1/2 minutes (of arc) east of downtown London, England.

\* A clear broth in which float noodles shaped like letters of the alphabet. How Watchbore learned to read.

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