

German Wound Medal Discovery



I finally got my hands on the whitewashed zinc medal found in the fields near my house.

Back in the spring, I had the great privilege of holding a German wound medal. This was particularly exciting for me because it was evidence that, just like my character Lukas Schiller in *A Dangerous Act of Kindness*, German POWs were working in the fields around my home, the countryside where I set the book.

Durnell's Farm Camp was a German working camp that stood on the plot now occupied by the Didcot Power Station. It was from here that I imagined my character Lukas Schiller heading out to work, hoping that chance would bring him back to where he'd felt "a strange disconnection from the chaos, from the war, from his past, as if those few days at Enington Farm were the only life he'd ever lived."

My book was finished. My publication date set. In a delightful piece of serendipity, an archaeologist, Michael Osborn, was metal detecting in a field ten minutes from my front door. There he found this German wound medal, which must have been dropped by a POW working in the field.

It's a 'silver' medal, awarded for three or four wounds or a more serious wound such as deafness, brain damage or facial disfigurement (Zoller's maybe?). These were initially silver-plated brass. The one that Michael found is whitewashed zinc, which dates it later in the war.

I know the field well. I used to walk up there with my dogs when I needed a break from writing. I could imagine how Millie must have felt, working in the mud and cold on her lonely farm. When I pass the field now, I can imagine Lukas there too, working on the land and dreaming of peace.