



# **The Englishman's Daughter: A True Story of Love and Betrayal in World War One**

*Ben Macintyre*

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*"I have a rendezvous with death, at some disputed barricade." Alan Seeger, 1916*

In the first days of World War I four soldiers, left behind as the British army retreated through northern France under the first German onslaught, found themselves trapped on the wrong side of the Western Front, in a tiny village called Villeret. Just a few miles from the Somme, the village would be permanently inundated with German troops for the next four years, yet the villagers conspired to feed, clothe and protect the fugitives under the very noses of the invaders, absorbing the Englishmen into their homes and lives until they could pass for Picardy peasants.

The leader of the band, Robert Digby, was a striking young man who fell in love with Claire Dessenne, the prettiest maid in the village. In November 1915, with the guns clearly audible from the battlefield, Claire gave birth to Digby's child, the jealous whispering began, and the conspiracy that had protected the soldiers for half the war started to unravel.

Never before told, *The Englishman's Daughter* is a harrowing tale of love, duplicity and their tragic consequences, which haunt the people of Villeret eight decades after the Great War.

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