

Prologue: What I Have Lived For

Prologue.

What I have lived for.

These passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, & unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither & thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy - ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness - that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints & poets have imagined. This is what I sought, & though it might seem too good for human life, this is what - at last - I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love & knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain & suffering in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, & the whole world of loneliness, poverty, & pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, & I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, & would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

Description:

This is the prologue to the *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, written on 25 July 1956 in his own hand. The text follows:

PROLOGUE.

WHAT I HAVE LIVED FOR.

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy -- ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness -- that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what -- at last -- I have found.

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Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

Archive Box Number: Black Display Binder

Date: 1956

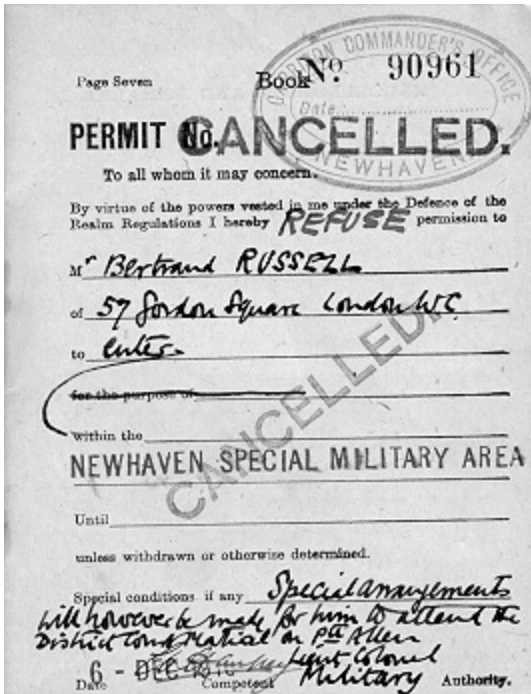
Date	1.12.16.
Issued to :- Style or Title	Mr
SURNAME (in capitals)	RUSSELL
Christian Names	Bertrand
Postal Address	57 Gordon Square London W.C.
Signature of Holder	Bertrand Russell
PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.	
Height	5' 9 ins.
Sex	male
Build	thin
Hair, colour	grey
Eyes, colour	hazel
Distinctive Marks	but
Entered by	



Person(s) in Photograph: Bertrand Russell

Description: This is a page from the Defence of the Realm permit book which was issued to Russell during World War I after his peace activism led to his being banned from certain areas of Britain. Russell had already been convicted and fined for airing his anti-war views, and he served nearly five months of a six month prison sentence handed down in February 1918.

Archive Box Number: RA2 *712



Date: 1916

Description:

This is a photograph of another page in Bertrand Russell's permit book. Here he was denied access to the "Newhaven Special Military Area". However, special arrangements were made for him to attend the court martial of his friend Clifford Allen. The Garrison Commander of Newhaven wrote Bertrand Russell the following reply:

"Herewith a Special Pass to enable you to visit Newhaven Special Military Area for the purpose of attending the District Court Martial on Private R.C. Allen. Your Permit Book is also returned. The Pass will not enable you to stay the night in Newhaven, or to go anywhere else in the Town except to the Court Martial room & return to the Station." The letter is dated December 10th, 1916.

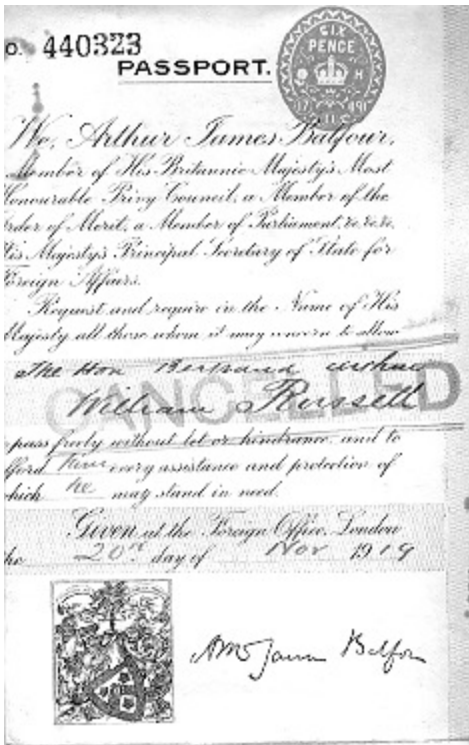
Archive Box Number: Russell Archive RA2 *712

Date: 1916

Description:

One of the pages of Bertrand Russell's 1919 passport.

Archive Box Number: RA2 *712



Date: 1919

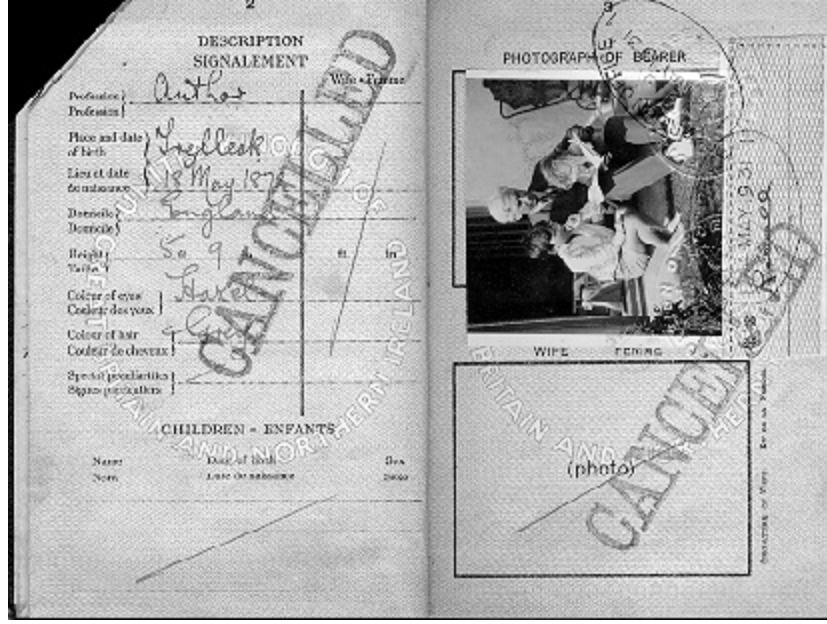


Person(s) in Photograph: Bertrand Russell

Description: Bertrand Russell's passport photograph and signature, 1919.

Archive Box Number: RA2 *712

Date: 1919



Person(s) in Photograph: Bertrand Russell, John Russell, Kate Russell

Description: This is a passport picture of Bertrand Russell with his two children by Dora, John and Kate.

Archive Box Number: RA2 *712

Date: 1941

