

Rare Fungus linked to war poets

✘ Edinburgh Napier University has made a unique discovery at its Craiglockhart Campus.

A rare fungus, which may have been carried from Flanders Fields to Scotland by World War 1 soldiers, has been discovered in the grounds of a former Edinburgh war hospital.

Clavulinopsis cinereoides are the first to be found in Scotland and were spotted by Ecological Consultant Abbie Patterson at the old Craiglockhart military hospital.

The site, which is now home to Edinburgh Napier University's Craiglockhart Campus, served as a military hospital during the First World War, famously treating poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.

✘ Patterson said: "This really is a very exciting find and a first for Scotland. Within the UK and Europe there are very few records of this species and not a lot is known about it.

"Looking at an old photograph of First World War officers standing on the grass banking where I found the fungi, my thoughts turned to the question of how the species arrived here at all. I thought of the soldiers' boots trampling the devastated fields of Flanders and perhaps picking up spores of *C. cinereoides* and then depositing them on that grassy bank below the old Hydropathic."

Patterson discovered the species whilst working on a contract to catalogue biodiversity amongst plants, birds, mammals, lichens and invertebrates for Edinburgh Napier University.

The contract was headed by Edinburgh Napier's Sustainability and Environmental Advisor, Jamie Pearson. He said: "This

discovery was most unexpected. The fungus has now been accepted and entered into the records as a first for Scotland and the specimen is now with the Royal Edinburgh Botanic Garden Herbarium and is the only specimen they have of this species.

“The potential link with the likes of Owen and Sassoon is particularly exciting.”

Craiglockhart was requisitioned by the military in 1916 and treated close to 2000* shell-shocked officers. Owen and Sassoon met there in 1917, forming a firm friendship and writing some of their greatest war poetry.

Today the building's past is celebrated by the [War Poets Collection](#), a special exhibition housed within the University campus displaying letters and objects related to the officers and medical staff.