

= Goodbyeee =

" Goodbyeee " , or " Plan F : Goodbyeee " , is the sixth and final episode of the British historical sitcom Blackadder 's fourth series , entitled Blackadder Goes Forth . The episode was first broadcast on BBC1 in the United Kingdom on 2 November 1989 , shortly before Armistice Day . Apart from the one @-@ off short film Blackadder : Back & Forth made a decade later , it was the last episode of Blackadder to be produced and transmitted .

The episode depicts its main characters ' final hours before a British offensive on the Western Front of the First World War , and Captain Blackadder 's attempts to escape his fate by feigning madness ; after he fails to convince General Melchett , and Field Marshal Haig 's advice proves useless , he resigns himself to taking part in the push . Goodbyeee has a darker tone than other episodes in the series , culminating in its acclaimed ending in which the main characters are assumed to die in machine @-@ gun fire . The episode 's theme of death ties in with the series ' use of gallows humour , its criticism and satire of war , and its depiction of authority figures contentedly sending their subordinates to face the enemy , while unwilling to do so themselves .

Richard Curtis and Ben Elton wrote the episode , and further material was provided by cast members . Its final sequence , which shows the main characters going " over the top " , uses slow motion , as the programme 's creators were unhappy with the result of the scripted ending . The enhanced scene has been described as bold and highly poignant .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

Each series of Blackadder depicts its protagonist , always a scheming and ( except in the first series ) witty man named Edmund Blackadder , in different periods throughout history . In Blackadder Goes Forth , he is Captain Blackadder ( Rowan Atkinson ) , an officer in the British Army on the Western Front during the First World War .

Joined by his colleagues ? the poor , stupid and unhygienic Private Baldrick ( Tony Robinson ) , and the overly optimistic , upper @-@ class and equally idiotic Lieutenant George ( Hugh Laurie ) ? Blackadder tries constantly to escape his position and avoid the " big push " , which he fears will result in his death . His efforts are hindered by the loud and intimidating General Melchett ( Stephen Fry ) and Melchett 's strict , sardonic , and jobsworth staff officer , Captain Darling ( Tim McInnerny ) .

= = = Events = = =

Captain Blackadder 's trench receives a phone call from HQ : a full @-@ scale attack has been ordered for the next day at dawn . Realising that this is likely to mean his death , Blackadder plans to escape by pretending to be mad : he puts underpants on his head and sticks pencils in his nostrils . His plan is thwarted when General Melchett arrives to see what is happening and remarks that he shot an entire platoon that used this exact method ; Blackadder overhears and narrowly escapes Melchett 's punishment by pretending he is relating the story to Baldrick .

Melchett leaves after George declines his offer not to participate in the push , and Baldrick suggests that Blackadder ask Field Marshal Douglas Haig to get them out ; remembering that Haig owes him a favour , Blackadder decides to call in the morning . George , Baldrick and Blackadder discuss the War and the friends they have lost ? George mentions the Christmas truce of 1914 ( in which the belligerents stopped fighting to play football ) and realises he is the only " Trinity Tiddlers " member still alive ; this is paralleled in Baldrick 's pets , who have all died . Back at HQ , Melchett surprises Captain Darling with a front @-@ line commission . Darling 's pleas to reconsider are misinterpreted , and Melchett insists that he go .

The following morning , Blackadder calls Field Marshal Haig and reminds him of his debt ; Haig

reluctantly advises using the underpants method , and abruptly hangs up . Darling arrives , and his animosity with Blackadder dissolves as they are both put in the same situation . George tries to cheer everybody up , but finds himself as scared as the others . Darling states that he had hoped to live through the War , return to England and marry his fiancée .

The men are called to the trench to prepare for the big push . There is a moment of hope when the British barrage lifts , but Blackadder reminds his colleagues that they have stopped only to avoid hitting their own men . Baldrick has another " cunning plan " to escape , but there is no time to hear it . Blackadder concludes by earnestly wishing his comrades good luck , and they charge over the top into thunderous machine @-@ gun fire . The sequence enters slow motion as a slow piano version of the Blackadder theme is played . The series ends as the violent chaos of no man 's land fades into a tranquil field of poppies , with only birdsong to be heard .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton , who swapped computer disks to make edits . They stuck to a rule whereby they could not add back material the other had removed . The script was collaboratively edited by the cast members of Blackadder Goes Forth during read @-@ throughs . Elton was primarily responsible for the sequence in which Blackadder explains how the First World War started ; the running gag of Baldrick using mud and bodily fluids to make coffee throughout the episode was greatly expanded during rehearsals .

The episode 's title is a reference to the popular First World War song " Good @-@ bye @-@ ee ! " , which was based on a catchphrase of the comedian Harry Tate . The song is also heard in an earlier episode ? " Major Star " . The title is a departure from those of previous Blackadder Goes Forth episodes , which are puns on military ranks .

During the filming of the episode , which took place before a studio audience at BBC Television Centre , Rowan Atkinson described sharing his character 's dread of impending death and feeling a " knot in the pit of my stomach " , something that he had never experienced . Hugh Laurie said that filming was sad because " even for comic effect , we were representing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people " . Regarding guest star Geoffrey Palmer , the producer John Lloyd said " [ We ] probably could have given [ him ] more attention " , calling him " a wonderful actor " who is " really just delivering three or four plot lines [ pieces of dialogue essential to the plot ] " .

The slow motion and fade effects at the end of the episode were not scripted , but the decision to use them was made in editing after the final scene was hastily filmed on an unconvincing polystyrene set , ruining the poignancy of the sequence ; the episode 's director Richard Boden added the poppy field image . The piano version of the theme tune was performed by Howard Goodall and recorded in a gymnasium , giving it what Lloyd described as a " liquid , lonely sound " . The episode 's end credits were omitted . Tim McInnerny did not know about these changes before the episode aired , and has said that he found the ending particularly emotional .

= = Themes = =

In the episode , Field Marshal Haig is shown casually sweeping away toy soldiers with a dustpan and brush ; BBC News Magazine 's Finlo Rohrer called this a " visual allusion to his callousness " , but quoted the historian Gary Sheffield as saying " The real Field Marshal Haig was certainly not a callous man . He was commanding the largest British army ever . Whatever he did you ended up with lots and lots of casualties . " Sheffield also noted that " Melchett is an amalgam of Haig and John French and the other generals " , so Haig effectively " appears twice " . The series , and the storyline of " Goodbye " especially , often depicts the " lions led by donkeys " perception of the War , an element of Blackadder Goes Forth that has been criticised by historians .

In his book *The Great War* , Ian F. W. Beckett also cited Sheffield : the latter commented that Blackadder Goes Forth was successful because " the characters and situations needed no explanation , so familiar was the audience with the received version of the war " . Beckett noted the popularity of the episode 's final scene , and compared it to a similarly popular one from *Dad 's Army*

. He said that this comparison demonstrates the historian A. J. P. Taylor 's observation that the Second World War has been regarded as a " good war " in comparison to the first ; he opined that " television producers ... have much to answer for in the perpetuation of the image of the Great War as one in which a generation of ' lions ' were needlessly sacrificed by the ' donkeys ' " .

The producer John Lloyd cited the episode 's lack of another major character as the reason they had time to " explore the relationships of the five principal people " . Rowan Atkinson said that the scene involving Darling 's " ghastly realisation " of his commission was " very sad " ; Lloyd commented " I love the fact that Captain Darling does have some compassion ; he 's not just a bureaucrat " . They noted that " all the comedy just goes away " upon Darling 's arrival in the trench , and that " there are still funny moments , but dramatically there 's no comic content , it 's just leading inexorably to the end . "

Comparing the ending scene to those of previous series of Blackadder in which the main characters were also killed , the writer Richard Curtis commented that " I think it was by chance that [ previous series ] ended with Blackadder being killed ... but series four , we did do it very much on purpose . " He said that he and Elton felt they could use the First World War as a setting if the characters died , considering " if we did do that ... it would not be too disrespectful , and would actually represent some of the tragedy of the First World War " .

= = Reception = =

Following its original broadcast on BBC1 at 9 : 30 pm on Thursday , 2 November 1989 , the episode was praised for its powerful and memorable ending . One journalist called the scene " a classy ending to a TV classic " and the Sunday Times said that it was " brave " and " properly responsible " of the writers to end the series poignantly , especially when the episode aired close to Remembrance Day .

The episode has also been the subject of more recent reviews : Rob Cromwell of The Guardian listed the final scene among six " perfect end @-@ of @-@ show finales " , saying of Blackadder : " It was brilliantly funny throughout , right up until the last 60 seconds " , and praising the writers and producer John Lloyd for " deliver [ ing ] a perfectly pitched , poignant ending " . Comparing Blackadder Goes Forth to the 2012 war serial Birdsong , Alison Graham of the Radio Times commented that " Nothing ... evokes the terror of those unspeakable battlefields or leaves such an overwhelming sense of loss as [ its characters ] going over the top to their certain death " . Den of Geek 's Carley Tauchert placed the episode second on her list of " top 10 TV show endings " , calling it " one of the greatest interpretations of the madness of war that has ever been put on film " . The academic and theatre director Mary Luckhurst contrasted the regular British comedic treatment of the Second World War with the absence of comedies set in the First World War , until the Blackadder series , which she considered " an important British dramatic treatment " of the War . Of the final episode Luckhurst wrote :

" Goodbyeee " went a good deal further than any other sitcom or comedy , by terminally sending pretty much the entire cast over the top in 1917 , into a silence that has ... endured ever since . Many millions of viewers were shocked , and almost all taken aback by the abrupt realization of tragedy amid much @-@ loved national television and after riotous laughter to that sudden and bitter end ...

In a poll conducted by Channel 4 and The Observer to determine television 's one hundred most memorable moments , the final scene of " Goodbyeee " came ninth ; it was one of only two entries in the top ten that was not news coverage ( the other being a scene from Only Fools and Horses ) . The Radio Times in 2001 asked a panel of comedians , writers and producers to pick their " 50 favourite sitcom moments " ; " Goodbyeee " was the only Blackadder episode included , and was ranked eleventh . The British Film Institute 's Screenonline called the episode 's ending " unexpectedly moving " , and noted that , unusually for a comedy programme , it was repeated as part of a serious commemoration of Armistice Day : for its 80th anniversary in 1998 . The series ' overview from the website of UKTV 's channel Gold , which airs repeats of Blackadder , calls the final episode " a seamless blend of gallows humour and rich poignancy " , and " a fitting end to an

iconic series ". In his segment advocating for Blackadder to be voted Britain 's Best Sitcom , the broadcaster and journalist John Sergeant called the final sequence " the one sitcom moment with claims to immortality " .

Some historians of the First World War have taken a different view . William Philpott referred to the series , by name , as " bathetic " and felt it part of a " post @-@ facto generalisation of the nature of their war " that " sucked in " even veterans of the conflict . In other words , the First World War soldier had become a " victim " in the public consciousness , a circumstance at odds with the historical record . The impact of Blackadder on the public consciousness was so pervasive that Gordon Corrigan referenced it in his book cover copy when he published his book " Mud , Blood , and Poppycock , " which was an attempt to " dispel various myths " about the war .