

Remembering 100 Years On

Remembrance Sunday, which falls on 11 November 2018, is a day for the nation to remember and honour those who have sacrificed themselves to secure and protect our freedom.

We asked a few of our colleagues for any stories of their families, who served and sacrificed during WW1:

Paul Waite's Great-grandfather, Gilbert Scott, born 1869 and father to 6 children, of which two fought, and died in the war (Paul's Great-uncles).

Wallace Evelyn Scott, born 1890, died 28th March 1918, ranked Pioneer in the Royal Engineers, buried in St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen in Seine-Maritime.

Reginald James Scott, born 1876, died 1916. Like his father-in-law, Reginald was a coal miner hewer before joining the Garrison Artillery. Reaching rank of sergeant, he was commanding a line of guns on a day the Germans gassed the area. He remained by the guns, despite the gas and received a Distinguished Conduct medal, ranked 2nd only to the Victoria Cross. He died on the 31st March 1916 and is buried in France. His widow, Rose Ann, married Thomas Davies in 1920.

Both are inscribed on the Stogursey War Memorial.



Paul's grandfather, John Alfred Waite, was a Sergeant Major in the Lancashire Fusiliers. Badly wounded in action, but survived to practice as a dentist after the war, where Paul's dad was born in 1933.

Paul's wife, Lisa, also had relations in the war, serving with great distinction in the navy.

Tony Doyle from our Wellington Office says:

"I have no personal story from World War One, but my wife, Di, recalls the story of her grandfather who served at Gallipoli in the infantry. When the war ended it was normal to shoot the regiment's horses, but her grandfather and many of his friends would not do it.

They decided to walk home to the UK through Europe. It was early 1920 that they arrived back in England, with their beloved horses, some 15 months after the war had ended.

There's loyalty and love for you!"

Marc Carey, our Kent representative, has written:

I spent a number of years researching my family tree – I was especially interested in my grandfather's family as he never really talked about them, and his sister lived in Canada. He passed away before I was old enough to ask the really important questions, so it took me a number of years to piece things together - Here's what I know about my Great grandfather and his role in the war...

For some reason my G Grandfather joined the army in 1898 under a false name – taking the surname of a neighbour to gain entry. He was not under age and no explanation is given in army records when he finally owned up to the fact some years later. Later research unearthed a scene of poverty in his early life and some elements of criminality, so perhaps he had a 'reputation'?

Initially he was drafted to work on ships and travelled around the world – his army records show visits to Mauritia, St Lucia, Bermuda and Sierra Leone. He joined the Royal Engineers as a 'foreman of works' but by April 1918 he was promoted to Quarter Master Sargent. When WW1 broke out he was shipped over to France – arriving in Ypres on the 27th Aug 1915. He spent the next 5 years there! Finally leaving 24 March 1920.

His first placement was part of the British Expedition Forces (BEF) – joining HQ 10 corps. In 1916, the BEF had moved into the Picardy region of France and the year was dominated by the Battle of the Somme. Allied forces attempted to break through the German lines along 25-mile (40 km) front north and south of the River Somme in northern France. On the First day on the Somme the BEF, suffered 59,000 casualties.

He was then transferred to 2 Corps and then HQ 13th Corps - Remained in the Ypres area and Flanders throughout the war.

He received three medals during the campaign – the Victory medal (acting in the theatre of war), The British Medal (campaign abroad) and the '15 Star medal (for his involvement in the France campaign).

Although little is known about his actual work in the army – as a 'foreman of works' he likely organised frontline engineering works – bridge building, tunnel digging, trenches, supply tracks (rail lines to move supplies/weapons etc in front of expedition forces). Often, they were the first soldiers up front. Paving the way.

After the war a final tally showed that 419,654 British and 204,253 French were killed, wounded, or taken prisoner; of the 623,907 total casualties, 146,431 were either killed or missing during these campaigns.

My great grandfather spent most of his married life in the army – which is why my grandfather never really talked about him... here's why. Although my great grandfather married and (obviously) had children, he never really played the role of 'dad'.

My great grandmother lived in a borough of London (Croydon) and basically brought up two children alone. My grandfather was 10 years older than his sister and he acted as a surrogate father to her. Sadly in 1920 my great grandmother suddenly died – this forced my great grandfather to come home from France to deal with the situation.

He decided that my grandfather was old enough to fend for himself (aged 13) sending him out on his own and he shipped his young daughter off to Canada to live with a cousin (of sorts) – where she remained for the rest of her life. He then went back to the army until his final release just a few months later. He later remarried and in later life reconnected with my grandfather, but I don't think there was any love there.

So – who knows what terrible things my Great Grandfather saw in war – it certainly hardened him up and the response to the loss of his wife (in such a perfunctory manner) was probably a result of the man he had become through war.

Sometimes the scars of war are not on the battlefield, sometimes they are formed at home.

And finally, Gary White, director of Aspen Waite White in our London office has this to say:

My grandad Sydney Herbert White fought at the Battle of Ypres as part of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and was taken prisoner of war. On return home after the war his mother was shocked to see that at the age of 26 he had lost all his hair. They put it down to the trauma of war, but if you skip forward 2 generations to my brother Steve, he was also bald by the age of 26 so perhaps it was just a hereditary thing after all!

I remember my Dad saying that his father Sydney never once spoke about the war before he died in 1962, so I just about remember him as a child. In around 1972 my dad and I met another former WW1 soldier, Bill Allen (who was a distant uncle of dad's) when he was close to death in hospital. He spoke of his vivid memories of the conflict and in the hour or so we sat with him at his bedside in the hospital in Hornchurch dad said that Bill had spoken more about that war than he had ever heard from his own father.

I just wish I had taped it or written it down as we were both transfixed by what he said to us as the memories were clearly vivid and he had probably never shared them before. Bill's daughter, my auntie Iris, who is now 90 herself confirmed this.

Bill actually lost his son in the second World War, shot down in a bombing raid over Germany in a Wellington I believe, aged only 19. I went to see a medium (Ronnie Buckingham) with Jane's mum 7 years ago after she had tragically lost her daughter and the guy spoke vividly and literally described very accurately my entire life and ancestors etc. The only unusual thing he said to me was that a young WW2 RAF man came through to him, which at first puzzled me, but when I checked with my auntie his appearance fitted exactly the description both parties gave me...amazing.

It is so important that we remember and share these memories Paul and I applaud you for doing so in the Podcast this week. I look at the young lads playing for Heybridge Swifts and think how different things could have been 100 years ago for them. We are so indebted to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice 100 years ago so that we can live in peace today. They had the bravery to stand up to tyrants and prove that freedom will never be defeated and hatred will never succeed. I will be travelling over to Ypres again before the year is out to pay my respects. It is a beautiful town nowadays and they treat the graves and memorials to the fallen there with great respect.

Well done indeed.