

Inspired by this visit, some of the school staff have found out about their own relatives' wartime experiences.....

JOHN BISHOP – Royal Navy – Daphne Hill

My Uncle, John (Jack) Bishop was born in November 1898 the second of two sons in Bewdley.

He left school at fourteen and with the help of his Grandfather (who signed his consent papers) lied about his age and joined the Navy

Jack joined the Navy in 1913 less than a year before World War One broke out. He became John Bishop, Boy Second Class, service number J28161. On 7th June 1914 he was promoted to Boy First Class which meant he was considered officer material.

In December 1914 he served on board the HMS Viknor as it set out into the North Sea. On the 11th January 1915 it sighted the SS Bergensfiord – a ship much wanted by the Royal Navy. After firing at the vessel, the British were able to board the German ship, finding on board, as suspected, important spies from the German secret service.

The last that was heard from the HMS Viktor was as she telegraphed the news of her interception and headed home, off the coast of North Western Ireland on the 13th January 1915.

The fact that some of the crew had time to put on lifebelts indicated that the ship took time to go down. No one knows what happened. It is generally accepted that the ship went down in the dark after being struck by a mine in rough weather.

After learning of their son's death, Jack's father thereafter would have the door left open every night just in case Jack came home.

(Read the full, unabridged account of Uncle Jack's story, [click here.....](#))

My Great-Grandfather - Jane Burnham



My great grandfather James Timothy Fitzgerald was born in Hull, Yorkshire on 30th September 1866. He was married with five small children, the eldest my grandmother being nine in 1915. He volunteered for military service on 27th March 1915 and was sent to France as a Gunner with the Royal Field Artillery. We know little of his army life except that he was gassed during the brutal battle of November 1917 for Passchendaele Ridge. We assume that as an artilleryman he did not have to wade waste deep in mud towards the German trenches, but was gassed by shells hitting his gun emplacement. He was invalided out of the army and returned to civilian life in February 1917. Sadly, he did not have long to enjoy his civilian life and family. He died in 1920 from tetanus, caused by a rusty nail penetrating his foot.

Grandad Jack Vogan – Clare Everett



Jack served in WW1 and fought at Ypres, He always called it "Wipers". He didn't talk much about his wartime experiences, but there are two stories I can remember.

Grandad came to live with us when I was at primary school, and as kids I can remember coming home from school, all 4 of us tumbling through the door and announcing that we were "starving!". Grandad would always tell us "you don't know the meaning of the word. Starving is when you've marched for days without a bite, and you belly thinks it's throat is cut"!!!!

The second story shows Grandad's rebellious side!

After a long march through muddy fields and feeling exhausted and starving, his commanding officer asked Jack to clean his boots. "I told him to clean his own bloody boots!" was Grandad's unwise response! He was taken to a Court Martial for that!!

The uniform Jack is wearing in the photo is from when he served in the Merchant Navy with the White Star Line. He was on the sister ship of The Titanic.

The later photo is taken outside the family home in Knotty Ash, Liverpool. Jack and Annie had five children, Joan, Betty, Jack, and the twins Frank and Marie (my Mum).

The photo was taken by Joan's husband Reg, on the day they moved to London.

I think Grandad Jack's love of travel was passed to all of his children as they all left Liverpool, to start new lives in Dublin, London, Canada and Bristol. Only Uncle Jack stayed close by in Manchester.

Alfred Field – Caroline Tarring

Alfred Field was my great Uncle. He died at Gallipoli – my father was named after him.

My parents tried on numerous occasions to visit his grave in Turkey, but were thwarted for some reason or another, so sadly no member of his family has ever yet visited his grave. It is something my sisters and I intend to remedy.

Alfred Field was a cyclist and his job was basically a messenger delivering communications within his unit by bike.

Private Alfred Field
Royal Marine Light Infantry
Age 24
Date of Death – 04/01/1916

John Knight

My father's side of the family were conscientious objectors in both world wars. In the first for religious convictions (my granny's father was a Baptist minister I believe). My granny is now a humanist and was one of the first members of CND, she has always had a pacifist leaning.

My Granddad was imprisoned in the Second World War for refusing to fight. He had a protected job in aircraft design, which he resigned from as soon as it became evident that his designs would be used in military aircraft, he was then conscripted as an unemployed male and refused to go, sentenced and imprisoned for a few months and then as part of his rehabilitation was given a Job in the Jewish jewellery sector in Northampton (whom quite by chance were also Knights).

My mother's lot were volunteers in both wars.

William Edward O'Shea – Edward Turfrey



William O'Shea was my Dad's great-grandfather. I have very little information about his wartime experiences except what my nana told me when she was alive. I know that he lived in the East End of London and worked as a stevedore in the docks. As far as I know, his father immigrated to London from Cork.

I believe that he was gassed in the war, but survived and was able to continue serving. After leaving the army at the end of the war, he suffered from a weak chest as a result of the gas and died relatively young.

I know as much if not more about him than my dad does. With my grandparents dead, what a shame it is not to know more.

Here's a story from World War 2.....

Eugene Callaghan – Pete Callaghan

Eugene Callaghan was born 4th February 1914 near Kanturk Co Cork Eire.

At an early age he immigrated to England to find better work than farming. He became a bricklayer.

War was declared on Germany in 1939 and Eugene and other Bricklayers, volunteered on 27th February 1940 and joined the Royal West Kents.

After training and different postings he was transferred to the 2nd Battalion the rifle brigade and was sent to North Africa. He was in North Africa from July 1941 until 27th October 1942. He told us of places Alexandris, sidi bahrani, mersa matruh , el quantara and the suez canal.

Like a lot of soldiers he never discussed any of the gun battles but talked of the places and events that were of interest. He could not believe how poor people were (ironic as he was once a poor Irish farmer himself). The group he was with were constantly on the move and in contact with the long range desert group.

The final action he saw was at El Alamein in late October 1942. He remembers that the guns were firing for days, and then they pushed forward. The Americans in error at one point bombed them and they then moved on towards a position called Snipe. It was then that things got really chaotic and the Germans captured him. They then pulled back and took him with them. He was lucky, a lot of his company died in this action.

The Commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Buller was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions during this battle.

From North Africa to Italy and then on to a prisoner of war camp Stalag 4B and the Stalag 3A until May 1945 (nearly 2 and a half years) . One night the Germans just left and the Russian army liberated the camp. No one left, as there was nowhere to go and no food, so they waited for the British army to arrive.

It took until 17th October for him to return to England and was demobbed on the 17th October 1945 at Winchester

When he was asked about getting the medals he was entitled to he replied” I don't want to get medals for killing people” and that was the end of the conversation until 1989 when he was 75, he went to the 50th anniversary celebrations in Hyde Park and saw a tent with 2nd battalion flags and he went in and had a long talk with them, about an hour. No one else knew what was said, but two months later two medals arrived.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS ARTICLE?

It would be great to receive your comments on what you have read.

Have you visited War cemeteries in Belgium or France (or anywhere else)?

What were your experiences or thoughts?

Do you know what your relatives did during World War 1?

Email anything that you'd like to contribute, including images, to: phscommunity@pershore.worcs.sch.uk