

Our Rough Island Story is a project supported by Heritage Lottery Fund which began in June 2016.

The St Werburghs Community Centre has a First World War Memorial plaque on the front of the building, naming ninety three men from the old Mina Road Boys School.

A team of Volunteers have worked hard to find the men's stories, asking how they lived, how they died and who was left behind, building a picture of this community a century ago. This year the research has continued focussing on the Battle of Passchendaele and this booklet publishes their work.

This project would not have been possible without the dedication of our wonderful team of Volunteers

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Thank you all dearly.

We would also like to extend special thanks to Big Ideas Company C.I.C., Bristol Archives, BAFHS, St Werburghs Primary School, Derek Stanley, Linda Joy, the late Bill Shepherd, Iris Cotter and the descendants of the soldiers for their support throughout the project.



St Werburghs Centre
A Community Venue for East Bristol

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St Werburghs Centre
A Community Venue for East Bristol



OUR ROUGH ISLAND STORY

2017 EDITION

ST WERBURGHS PASSCHENDAELE STORIES



Written by our team of Volunteers
Design by Xeena Cooper



LOTTERY FUNDED

Introduction

This booklet uncovers the stories of St Werburghs people and their experiences of the Third Battle of Ypres better known as

The Battle of Passchendaele.

This was an area on the Western Front, a small town on a high ridge, an important strategic position because of a rail line that supplied the German Army. The aim for the Allied forces, was to cut off the railway and take control of the high ground.

The long battle began in July and ended in November 1917. As autumn set in the rain seemed endless. Transforming what was once landscape into quagmire where men were fighting in seas of mud, bombs and blood.



body was never found, so he has no known grave, and his name is commemorated on the memorial at Cambrai.

At the war's end three of the brothers could celebrate victory, although Fred continued to complain of the pain caused by the metal splinter lodged in his buttock. Bertie, however, died in 1920 and was buried in Greenbank Cemetery, Bristol. We don't know the cause of death, but as he is listed on the school Roll of Honour plaque, we might assume that it was as a result of the sickness that saw him discharged in 1917.

Three brothers are commemorated on that plaque - George, William and Bertie. Fred survived, though wounded and in pain. We know little of Frank, other than that he lived to the end of his life in South Wales. Physically, Frank was intact, but we can only guess at his state of mind after the virtual destruction of his family in WW1.

Remembrance Service on Friday 10th November 2017

Our team of researchers invited pupils and staff from St Werburghs Primary School as well as neighbours, to attend a Service of Remembrance at the Community Centre and lay a wreath by our Memorial Plaque.



The Lodge Family

written by Ian Chard

The Lodge family had lived at 37 York St, St Werburgh's for 23 years when war broke out in 1914. During that time James and Mary brought up six children –William, Bertie, Fred, Frank, Florence and George. James was a drayman with a local brewery, while Mary kept home for the large family. All of the boys attended the local Mina Road Boys school, each being admitted at about the age of seven and leaving when they reached fourteen. All found work locally, five becoming either labourers or factory hands, while Frank worked as an advertising agent for a local newspaper.

Bertie and George joined the Territorial Force early on, no doubt inspired by the intense patriotism of the time. Fred joined up in 1915, while it looks as though William may have joined later; by 1914 he was married with three children, so was perhaps less enthused by idea of going off to war.

By the opening shots of the Battle of Passchendaele, Bertie had been honourably discharged due to sickness, and Fred, having already been wounded twice, was recuperating at home in England. George and his comrades in the 2/6th Gloucestershire Regiment had already experienced war at its most gruesome, but this time were not initially in the front line. Only on the 23rd August was the battalion called upon to join the fight. A German strongpoint known as Pond Farm was attacked, and captured, by George and his mates on that day. Fourteen men of A Company died in the fighting, and three died of their wounds the day after. One of those three was 20-year-old George Lodge. His body was buried at the British Army cemetery at Brandhoek, near Ypres.

Only three months later William fought alongside his comrades in the Essex Regiment at the Battle of Cambrai. Initial success was followed by a deadly counter attack that left the British army reeling. William's

This is the Time to Remember

A poem written by Derek Stanley in response to stories from our memorial.

Today I went to touch the
monument
to those who died
from this school,
to those whose lives we
celebrate.

This is their story,
their rough island-story.

They did not choose war,
they did not choose to die.

At the roll call of their names
who answers?

Where are you boys?

Dead sir

Boys?

Dead sir.

Thomas?

I died in Greece.
And me sir,
shot through the heart.

Albert, Charles?

Lost at sea –
our ship sunk.

And us two, sir
the Battle of Jutland,
a thousand of us lost
when our ship went down.

I died in Belgium...
I died of meningitis...

And you boys?
And all you boys?

We died of our wounds sir,
our terrible wounds sir.

And all you boys?

Dead sir.

Not all of you...?

Yes sir, we died in France,
of bullets, shells –
and the terrible cold.

So many men,
so much grief.

It is never too late
to remember.

Death at Poelcapelle

Written by Philip Legg

Samuel Burroughs, Maurice Tremplin and Frederick Upton were three working class men from St Werburgh's. They were all born in Bristol and attended Mina Road Boys' School. Samuel was born in 1892 and by 1914 he was married to his wife, Ada, and working as a barman. Frederick was born in 1894, came from a large family and worked as a corn porter. Maurice was born in 1897, was single and also came from a large family.

Samuel joined the 4th Battalion, the Gloucestershire Regiment before the First World War started in 1914. This was a Territorial Force unit, where the men were civilians but trained as soldiers in their spare time. Maurice enlisted in the 6th Battalion soon after the war had begun. This was also a Territorial Force unit, but by now they were committed to full-time service.

Both battalions originated in Bristol but moved to Essex for training. The battalions formed part of 144th Brigade, 48th (South Midland) Division and they landed in France in March 1915. As the more experienced man, Samuel was with them from the start, but Maurice joined them with other reinforcements in October. Frederick joined up in May or June 1915 and was posted to the 4th Glosters in October - Samuel's battalion, which was already in France by then.

From 1915 onwards they were steadily introduced to the realities of modern warfare. During 1916 the battalions were involved in the Somme offensive. In 1917 the Germans retreated to the Hindenburg Line and the battalions fought in the battles of Langemarck and Polygon Wood as part of the Third Battle of Ypres, which was fought in terrible muddy

When the official news of his death came
some of those boys had already joined him
some of the girls had lost brothers
some had children of their own.

And when I learned about war
in that school, over half a century later,
local history was out of fashion
Mr Barker's name was not remembered
we listened to John Lennon
and Plastic Ono Band
singing 'Give Peace a Chance'
wore white poppies
kicked our scuffed shoes
against the War Memorial

Remembrance

Grandad was a collar stud, pearl and silver;
Uncle was a uniform button, the regiment's insignia.
Poppy Day parade was a long black river through the Market
Town,
petals of grief riding the marched time of the drums.

Surnames etched on the stone memorial
were the same as the ones in the school register.
The never-born children of the Old Boys
played alongside us, at Tag, Catch, Farmer's Den,
and the shuddering conclusion of Oranges and Lemons

Mr Barker in the School Log book 1912-1914

By Pauline Swards

That first Christmas
after it was not all over
he came back to school,
no longer headmaster
but foot soldier on a visit

High St, Market Place, The Terrace
the town had never seemed so small
or as dear, his mother
beside herself laughing and crying
she made him tea in a china cup -
he told her off -
and at school he stood on even less ceremony
than he had before, at assemblies and prize days.

He sat on the desk,

some of the girls
thought he was handsome
He made the boys feel like men,
thanked them for their parcels
of chocolate and smokes,
the news of the football team,
that had reached him in a France
He could not speak of directly.

His topics he spoke about that day:
the train, food, prayers, horses, the importance of trust, the
scratchiness of serge,
plants he'd remembered from the nature table.
He could not keep away a hint of horror
when he paused between sentences

conditions. As part of the continuing battle,
the Germans launched determined counter-attacks
from 30 September, but the British were again on
the offensive on 4 October. By this time both
Samuel and Maurice were experienced soldiers and
had been promoted to corporals. On 9 October both
battalions took part in a general attack on
Poelcapelle, going 'over the top' and meeting
heavy resistance. They were successful but lost
many hundreds of casualties. Amongst those killed
in action were Samuel, aged 25, Maurice, aged
20 and Frederick, aged 23.

What happened after their deaths is a sad
reflection of the problems encountered in
processing the unprecedented number of Great War
dead. Like thousands of others, the bodies of
Samuel and Frederick were never found. Their
names are recorded on the Tyne Cot Memorial, but
they have no known graves. Poelcapelle British
Cemetery was created after the Armistice when
graves were brought in from surrounding
battlefields. As he was killed in action, Maurice
would have been buried initially near where he
fell. Such graves often disappeared when land
was repeatedly fought over, but his survived and
he was exhumed and re-buried in 1920. During
this process, however, several corrections had to
be made to his records concerning his initial,
rank and unit, and sadly his full name was never
recorded on his headstone.

Frederick & Herbert Stiddard

Written by Dave Miles

Frederick and Herbert Stiddard were both born in the 1890s in Bristol. They both attended the Mina Rd Boys School, which is now the Community Centre.

The 1901 census shows The Stiddard Family living at 102, Goodhind Rd in Easton. Then in 1911 they were living at 4, Sandbed Road, St Werburghs with their parents Joseph a carter for the sanitary authority and Florence.

Frederick was 15 years old and worked as a printer at the local chocolate factory in the years leading up to First World War.

At the outbreak of war he was 18 years old and on 1st Sept 1914 he joined the 4th Gloucester battalion which was approx 800 soldiers.

Herbert, was the younger brother & didn't join up until January 1916. He was assigned to the 20th Battalion of Durham Light Infantry (a.k.a The Wearsiders)

On 5th May 1916 Herbert and the Wearsiders departed for France landing in Le Havre. Herbert was probably involved in the Somme battles at Flers-Courcelette & Transloy Ridges in 1916.

Then, in 1917, the Wearsiders were involved in major battles during the Passchaendaele campaign at Messines, Pilkem Ridge and ultimately Menin Road which took place between 20th-24th September 1917.

Despite repulsing heavy machine-gun attacks and counter-attacks by the Germans, the battalion held their position but casualties were very high- over 300 men were killed or wounded.

It is quite possible that Herbert Stiddard was one of the many wounded at this battle, because he was sent home to England where he died from his wounds on 10th November 1917 aged just 20. He is buried in a family plot at Greenbank Cemetery in Bristol. Tragically for the Stiddard family, his brother Frederick had been killed in action at the age of 22, in the same region of Belgium on 2nd October just 39 days earlier.

Their father Joseph lived until 1938 till the age of 71 and mother Florence until the age of 75 and died in 1946. They are all buried together at Greenbank cemetery in Easton.

