

Nick Brown

“Alexander Robb (Northumberland Fusiliers), my wife's great uncle, was killed in action on 28th December, 1915, aged 22 years. He is buried at St. Pierre Cemetery, Amiens.

“My Grandfather, Jack Strong, fought at Gallipoli in 1915. He went across with the Devonshire Yeomanry as part of the second wave. He kept a diary which records the names of many of his friends who died alongside him.”

Excerpts from Jack Strong's diary:



Oct. 16th 1915: Very heavy shelling, heaviest reported since May 21st. Great lumps of shell weighing about two or three pounds. Major Grigg killed. While standing up his head was blown clean off by a shell. Also

gunner killed. Church service in the evening.

Nov. 29th 1915: My 21st birthday. The greater part of the day was spent in my dugout, still wet through and nothing to change into. Shivering from the intense cold. Tremendous great shells passing overhead and exploding.

Anne Owen

“My grandad Joseph William Noel (“Noel”) Orton was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1917, aged 26. Before that, he was listed as a Sapper. When he joined up, he was assigned to the cavalry because he knew how to ride a horse! He moved on to a motorcycle and was involved in transmitting the rudimentary signals of those days, using large wire loops and morse keys to send magnetic pulses down the line. He rode up and down behind the lines carrying messages. He didn't return from Belgium until 1919.”

Tamesis recollections: Lest we forget November 2018

100 years ago the First World War ended, and a new world began. The example and experience of those who lived through it shaped the world we live in today. In 2018 The Royal British Legion is leading the nation in saying Thank You to all who served, sacrificed and changed our world.

This afternoon we join the Royal British Legion and millions of people around the world in remembering our forebears who lived and served through conflict, on this significant centenary anniversary. We've been reflecting individually on how our own families were involved. Here are some of the choir's memories.

Clare Garner

“My father, Captain Harry Giblin, was in the D Day landings. He served in the East Yorkshire Regiment which landed on Sword Beach to take over Pegasus Bridge from the paratroopers who had been holding it the night before Operation Overlord.



He suffered a shrapnel injury after two weeks – his arm was saved by an excellent field surgeon. Like many of his generation, he rarely talked about his experiences.

“He would have been 100 on Christmas Day this year.”

John Cobb

“My great uncle Archibald (Arch) Cobb was a biplane pilot in World War 1.



Sopwith Camel biplane, 1917

“In World War 2, both my uncles, Ron and Fred Cockburn, served in the North Africa campaign. My dad’s cousin Alan was a Spitfire pilot who came over from Canada and stayed with my dad’s family.

“My grandad, Gilbert Cobb, was an ARP sergeant during World War 2. He co-ordinated ARP activities in Gloucester.

“The Gloster Aircraft Company had a factory there: it designed and built Hurricanes and Typhoons as well as experimental jet aircraft, so it was a Luftwaffe target. My dad recalls that one of the perks of the job was that the family was allowed to have a telephone!”

Suzanne Smith

“My Grandad worked as a chemist at Porton Down during World War 2. My other Grandad came home from the front on leave for New Year 1943, and nine months later my mum was born.”

Tim Beavan

“My Grandad was an engineer who didn’t serve in World War 2 because he was needed to help the war effort at home. He worked on designs for the triggers of automatic weapons and soundproof communications areas on submarines.”

Charlie Hobson

“My Grandad was known as ‘Lucky Jones’ after the D Day landings. My mum remembers him wearing his commando green beret for gardening after the war: it had a bullet hole at the top, close to where the badge was pinned.



“My great uncle Stan Robinson was in a reserved occupation as a railway officer and volunteered for night duties as a firefighter. He fought the flames when York was targeted by German bombers in the Baedeker raid on 29 April 1942 and the great glass-domed roof of the station threatened to collapse. As my mum says, the war also had a big impact on the ordinary people at home trying to keep going.”



York station after Baedeker raid

Louise Rappale Moore

“My dad Terry was an army officer so I grew up on army bases surrounded by soldiers! Dad was in logistics and especially Bomb Disposal. He served in Northern Ireland during the troubles and commanded all military explosive ordnance devices (EOD assets). This included the disposal of munitions from World Wars 1 and 2. Subsequently he was responsible for provision of specialist EOD vehicles for UK, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia. His father was also in the army and spent World War 2 in Palestine and Egypt in the Pay Corps.

“My maternal grandfather used his optical engineering skills from a civilian career as an optician for his service in World War 2. This included maintaining and repairing cipher equipment in Kenya, before being invalided home with enteric fever. The rest of his regiment moved on to Burma and were all but wiped out.

“My great uncle Wilson Harris was in the Glider Regiment which played a key part in the D Day landings in World War 2, as part of the airborne Operation Tonga.”



Operation Tonga gliders

Andy Button

“My father was a Captain in the Royal West Kent Regiment, a small contingent of whom held back the might of the Japanese army in April 1944 at Kohima while General Slim organised reinforcements. According to my uncle, dad came back a psychologically damaged man - the fighting there has been described as the most vicious of World War 2.



“There is a cemetery on the battle site for the Allied forces: the words ‘When you go home tell them of us, and say; for your tomorrow we gave our today’ are carved on the memorial.

“At the National Memorial Arboretum in Derbyshire there’s a replica of the Kohima war memorial: I was moved and proud to visit it earlier this year.”

