

Tow Law Millennium Primary School.

Creative Writing & Local Heritage
Project.



Tow Law Millennium Primary School Creative Writing & Local Heritage Project.



The following anthology was created by the children of Tow Law Millennium Primary School throughout the 2019 summer term. The children developed their creative writing, poetry, art, photographic, communication and historical research skills in bringing this anthology together. They researched the experiences of the men who fell in the Great War 1914-18, as named on the Tow Law War memorial, as well as studying the impact of the Great War on the Home Front at Tow Law and the local community.

The children began their research by visiting the Tow Law War Memorial itself, and went on to use primary and secondary sources in order to understand the experiences of those who were named. The project also included a visit to Beamish Museum and historical records office, as well as working with the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum, to help them to piece together life at the front line for the soldiers from Tow Law. They used primary artefacts such as original letters, music, poetry, census records and photographs to develop their understanding of the period and to come to their own judgements.

The students presented their findings in this anthology of work in remembrance of the men from Tow Law, and the surrounding villages, who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Great War 1914-18,

The project was delivered by Everything English Education Consultancy, on behalf of Building Self-Belief CIO, and was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We hope you enjoy their work.

Historical Biographies

We researched the names of the soldiers who died in the Great War 1914 - 18 on the Tow Law War memorial.

We used Internet sites, census records, photographs, personal letters and other artefacts to help us to find out about their lives, their families and their experiences in the Great War.

These are some of the men that we researched.

Bernard Hedley Charlton, MC * - (*Military Cross*)

Cecil William Caygill, DCM *

George Hildreth Waugh

Henry Vasey MM * - (*Military Medal*)

John Vitty

Joseph William Ditchburn

Noel Forbes Humphreys M.C (*Military Cross*)

Thomas Pooley

Bernard Hedley Charlton, MC * - (Military Cross)



Bernard Hedley Charlton was the manager of the Hedley Hope Colliery, Tow Law between 1911 and 1914.

Bernard had already joined the Territorial Army in 1908 so he was well trained as a soldier when the Great War broke out. When War was declared, Bernard was a Company Commander and, together with his battalion from the Yorkshire Regiment, he volunteered for service abroad. He was sent to the Front in April 1915 and was badly gassed at the 2nd Battle of Ypres, consequently spending 5 months out of action.

In November of 1915, he was twice 'mentioned in despatches' for his bravery and he returned on leave to marry his fiancé Dorothy.

In the 1916 New Year's Honours list he was awarded the Military Cross for bravery, in recognition of this, the people of Tow Law presented him with a gold watch.

Bernard was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 27 December 1917 and continued to fight on the front line. On the 22nd March 1918, Bernard was killed having gone up, in the midst of thick fighting, to encourage his men in to an attack and is buried at Roisel, France.

He was described by his Commanding Officer as:

'Zealous, tactful and full of sound common sense, he possessed the complete confidence of those who were privileged to serve under him, he was the type of Officer who can ill be spared. How sad he was never able to fulfil his potential like so many of his generation.'

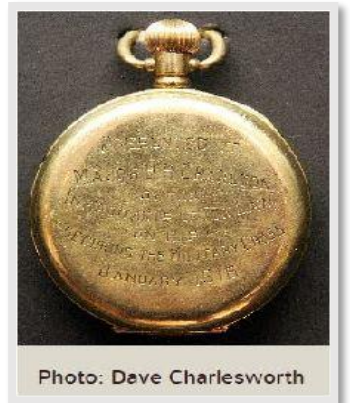


Photo: Dave Charlesworth

Cecil William Caygill, DCM *

(*Distinguished Conduct Medal)

Cecil William Caygill was born in Tow Law on the 3rd August 1895, the son of John and Agnes Caygill.

As a young man he drove the horses at the local coal mine, although by the time the Great War broke out in August 1914, he had moved to Chopwell. Cecil enlisted with the Durham Light Infantry in in September 1914 and landed in France in April 1915.

Cecil was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1918 for 'magnificent conduct' with two other DLI soldiers on the battlefield.

The official report stated that:

'After an attack by the German Army there were many DLI casualties left in 'No Man's Land'. Private Caygill, along with Privates J Gundy and T Thompson went forward and rescued the wounded in the face of heavy machine gun and sniper fire. They made nine journeys and brought in sixteen of their wounded comrades, whose lives they undoubtedly saved''.

The Distinguished Conduct Medal

Cecil survived the Great War and left the army in 1919.

He married Harriet Morley in 1920 and returned to working in the pit at Chopwell, where he died aged 82, in 1977.



George Hildreth Waugh



Private George Hildreth Waugh was born in 1892 and lived in Tow Law. He was the son of James and Mary Waugh. Before the Great War started George was a carpenter, like his father James.

George enlisted in to the Durham Light Infantry at Bishop Auckland in November 1915, aged 23.

He was wounded in France after being shot in the arm and was kept in hospital for a month to recover.

Sadly, in June 1917 George was reported missing in action, presumed dead, although his body was never found.

George's name is remembered on the Menin Gate in Belgium as well as on the Tow Law memorial.

The Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium where George Waugh's name is recorded.



Henry Vasey MM * - (Military Medal)



Gunner Henry Vasey was born in 1896, the son of Jonathan and Sarah Vasey of Inkerman, Tow Law. He born in to a mining family and had 12 brothers and sisters! At the age of 14 Henry or 'Harry' was employed as a Miner Driver at the Coal mine to lead the horses that pulled the wagons.

He enlisted in to the Royal Field Artillery at Consett and was sent to France in April 1915.

Henry was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. He was killed in action age 21 in May 1918, the last year of the Great War, and is buried in France.

The Military Medal for Bravery



John Vitty

Private John Vitty lived in Tow Law and joined the Durham Light Infantry when the Great War broke out. He was the son of John Thomas Vitty, who was a coal miner, and his mother Dorothy Vitty.

John was married to Gertrude in 1905 and had a daughter called Violet although he was living apart from them when the Great War started. John enlisted in to the Durham Light Infantry and was sent to fight in France.

Sadly, John was killed in the fighting in France on 5th November 1916. Although he has no known grave his name is written on the Thiepval Memorial in France as well as on the Tow Law memorial.

The Thiepval Memorial in France where John Vitty's name is recorded.





Joseph William Ditchburn

Private Joseph William Ditchburn was a Tow Law Pitman and Groom for the horses used at the mine. He enlisted in to the Durham Light Infantry at Wolsingham in 1911, three years before the war started.

Joseph's army records say he was an *'intelligent, steady, and reliable man and a good groom'*. However, he was also he also got in to trouble for *'speaking inappropriately to an officer and for being late for parade'*!

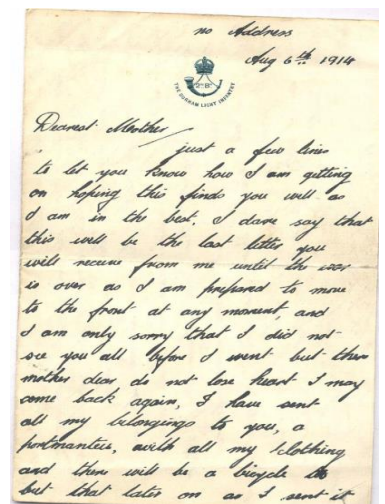
On the 6th August 1914, two days after the war broke out, 22 year old Joseph wrote a letter to his mother, Margaret, who lived in Crook. In the letter Joseph said he was sending his bike and clothes home, and said it would probably be his last correspondence to her until the end of the war.

He reminded her how much he loved her and wrote:

"Mother dear do have courage, if I do die I will die with good in my heart and all your love from my life."

Joseph and his Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry was one of the first to be sent to the trenches in France. He was shot in the stomach after taking part in an attack on enemy positions in October 1914 and died the following day in a French hospital.

Joseph died just 37 days after he landed in France. He is buried in a French cemetery although his name is not recorded on the Tow Law memorial.



Noel Forbes Humphreys M.C (Military Cross)



Captain Noel Forbes Humphreys was born in Wales in 1891, his parents were Reverend Henry James Humphreys and his wife Sydney. His father had moved to Thornley Vicarage by the start of the Great War.

Noel was one of nine brothers and sisters, three of the five brothers were killed during the Great War.

Noel moved to the North East with his father and went to Durham School. Noel was a keen sportsman and an outstanding Rugby player. He won 15 trophies with the Tynedale Rugby Team, and at just 17, he was picked to play for the British Rugby Lions in a tour of South Africa in 1910.

Noel moved to Willington where he worked in a solicitor's office until the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. He then enlisted in to the Royal Engineers and became a despatch rider delivering messages before he was eventually promoted to be a Captain in the Tank Corps.

Noel was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery and '*devotion to duty*' in June 1917.

The official report stated that when his tank became stuck in battle he '*commenced to dig it out, and though wounded, he completed his task and continued in action the whole day, finally bringing his tank out of action to the rallying point*'.

The Military Cross for Bravery



However, the next month his brother John was killed in the fighting in Africa. Another brother, Henry St Giles had already been killed in the sinking of the ship Lusitania in 1915.

There was better news for the Humphreys' family when Noel's brother Herbert also won the Military Cross for bravery in 1917.

Noel Humphreys continued fighting, along with his two remaining brothers, but on 24 March 1918, he was wounded in a battle in northern France. Sadly, Noel died of his wounds three days later, aged 27, and he is buried in France.

Noels' father, gave the opening address to the hundreds who gathered at the Tow Law Memorial when it was dedicated on the 10th September 1921.



Thomas Pooley



Private Thomas Pooley lived at East Hedley Hope, Tow Law with his son Thomas. His wife Hannah had died in 1907 so his wife's family helped him to raise his young son.

Before the war started Thomas had worked in the mines. When the Great War began, in August 1914, Thomas joined the Durham Light Infantry and was sent across to France to fight on April 20th 1915.

Sadly, just 6 days later Thomas was killed fighting at Boetleer's or 'Bootlace' Farm at the 2nd Battle of Ypres. The Durham light Infantry had become stuck in a trench with German soldiers firing down from high ground on both sides. After severe fighting the men managed to escape to safer trenches but it had come at the price of 593 British soldiers either killed, wounded or missing in action.

Thomas was one of four Pooley brothers who fought in the Great War although he was the only one to be killed in the fighting.

Thomas has no known grave and his name is written on the Menin Gate in Belgium as well as on the Tow Law memorial.

Creative Writing

We used our research to create stories based upon the real lives of the men named on the Tow Law War Memorial.

We have written about how their experiences would have impacted upon their families in Tow Law, as well as on the soldiers and nurses at or near the 'Frontline' in France.

We studied what motivated soldiers to go to war and analysed how their emotions and feelings may have changed when they arrived on the Western Front.

We explored a range of creative writing techniques in planning our stories.

We hope that you enjoy them!



My Son Noel

I was excited for my 21 year old son Noel to enlist in the DLI, but I so regretted letting him. If I knew what would happen I would have said 'Absolutely not!' I did not know that the propaganda would lie, it said things like 'It will all be over by Christmas' and 'It will be an adventure!'. The recruiting Sergeant said that the men would earn better money in the Army too.

After he had signed up and left for France I read in the newspapers some terrible news. The lists of the soldiers who had died went on forever, Why didn't they tell us the truth? My son could even be dead by now!

Later I got a letter telling me he had been promoted to a Captain in the Tank Corps, but I remain scared for him. What if he gets Trench Foot? I have heard about it from returning soldiers and it sounds awful. I pray he comes home fit and well but he could easily be injured because of the 'Boche' as they call them. I can see it now, our Noel coming home without a leg. What if he doesn't come back at all? I do hope he will be alright.

After four years my son Noel finally returned and he has won a Military Cross too! My son! I am so very proud of him and relived that he has returned to Tow Law safe and sound. I know I am very lucky compared to many other mothers around me.

By Ziva Ashe



Why Can't We Live in Peace?

Today was frightful. I thought I was going to die. A cloud of yellow gas covered me and my pals on the battle field. Then everything went black.....I think I was rescued but I knew nothing of it. Maybe Thomas Arthur my friend from back home, who enlisted with me, rescued me and carried me over 'no man's land' back to the field hospital - but I don't really remember. If Tommy did save me then I owe my life to him! I can faintly remember being given a lot of anaesthetic by a nurse, which obviously must have helped otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Eventually, I was sent home on leave for my recovery so I went back to Tow Law. My mother was so happy to see me – she even cried. I know she was distraught when I left to fight in the Great War but I hope she understands why I wanted to fight with my pals in the first place.

I was on sick leave for five months so I took my opportunity and proposed to Dorothy. I knelt down pulled a ruby ring out from my pocket and said 'Will you *Dorothy Amber Rose take me Bernard Hedley Charlton to be your husband?* She said 'YES, YES, YES!' So that was that, we got married. I know it was a bit cheeky but I couldn't wait!

The people of Tow Law gave me a gold watch for my bravery. I have this very close to me now as it is very special. My mother keeps asking me, what happened? Can you remember anything at all when you were gassed? I keep telling her, I blacked out, my lungs had no air in and my legs felt weak and the next thing I knew everything went black. Then I was in hospital and I was at home and surrounded by the people I love.

After five months of rest I was back at the front line, fighting again and making my country proud. The trenches were worse than ever this time. It was like they were melting, they were so wet and sticky. Shells exploded and people died. There were holes in the ground along with men. A bullet bounced off my helmet it was like an earth quake in my head- if it wasn't for my hat I would be dead by now. I am scared for my life every minute of the day.

I am missing my mother's breakfasts but I will just have to deal with eating rock hard stale bread, cheese and bacon until I can go home again.

By Isabelle Wright

Violet's Adventure!!!

My name is Violet and I have decided to follow in Dad's footsteps and go off to war. I am determined to be a Nurse not a fighter though.

My mother, Gertrude, felt proud about my decision but also nervous. The more people that went off to war the more who would get hurt.

I eventually set off to go to war and had to get a boat to go to France which took five hours from the North East. When I arrived, it was not what I was expecting, it was worse! How did I not know that war was this bad?

A couple of weeks later, I got a letter from Tow Law which I had been dreaming about since I arrived. After reading Mother's letter I felt homesick and sad. I just could not believe where I was. All around me were injured soldiers waiting to be helped. I helped, as best as I could but I was so tired. It was hard work as I said to myself '*one down loads more to go*'. Every hour more injured soldiers came in injured.

A DLI soldier called Henry Vasey came in who I recognised from Tow Law. Even though he was very brave, he was screaming in pain. He had loads of bullet wounds that were deep and were pouring out with blood, but I got my tweezers out and pulled out the bullets.

I did this day after day until, three months later it was finally time for me to return home on leave. I was ok, but I felt cold inside, tired, but happy to be home at last. My Mam said she could not believe I had been so brave!

By Serena Stagg

Dear Mum,

I feel a bit homesick but don't worry, I will be fine.

See you soon.

Dear Violet,

This
is your mum
Gertrude. I just want
to make sure you are
ok

MUM

The Day He Came Back!

This is a story about a small girl called Violet who came from Tow Law, she is 9 years old and she is one of the hundreds of children whose fathers have gone to fight in the Great War. When Violet was told that he was going she was destroyed. Violet loved her father so much and she did not want him to leave, it was the worst time of her life.

(These are the letters that they shared.)

After four years of fighting, November 11th 1918 was the day that finally Cecil William came home to see his beloved daughter Violet Rose William.

As Cecil walked back to the house he had a beaming smile on his face, 'This will be the best' said Cecil.

"Dad, is it really you? I thought you were never coming back! You have lost your arm and you didn't tell me, anyway you are BACK and alive!" said Violet excitedly.

"Yes, it is me Violet, your dad, look how much you have changed. You are such a big girl now 13 years old! How I have missed you and I am really sorry I did not tell you but I did not want to worry you", smiled Dad.

Hand in hand Violet and her Dad walked into the living room both beaming with joy!

"Tell me about one of your great adventures dad" said Violet

"A lot of trench life was boring, so I decided to go in to no man's land to save some of my fellow Brit's, it was a horrible place but it was worth saving my people!" said Dad

"Wow! Dad that is amazing dad even with one arm" smiled Violet and they gave each other a big hug once again.

By Maisie Morton

Dear Dad,

When are you coming back? You said you would be back by Christmas but it has been a year and you are still not back. I am getting really worried now Dad please come back soon.

Lots of love from Violet

Dear Violet,

Do not worry I am coming back very soon. I am writing this just before one of my last battles, then me and you can be together this time for ever. I love you Violet I really do

Love from Dad

George Hildreth – A Mother’s Story

Hi my name is Barbara Hildreth and I have a son called George. He wanted to join the DLI and go to war but I did not want him to. I thought he was too young to join but it turns out he wasn't, you had to be 18 or 19 to join up but he was 23 so he could go if he wanted to.

At the start of the Great War I felt scared, worried and angry. I felt angry because he did not listen to me. When he was about to leave me I had to say a couple of things to George, the first thing was 'be very careful!' The second thing I said to him was 'What if you get killed?' When he heard me say the second thing, he turned around and said, "Mum I will be fine".

When he went out of the door, I missed him straight away and I didn't know what to do with myself. I went and sat on my bed and started sewing as sewing was my way of taking my mind off what he was doing. My emotions were horrendous, I thought war was a terrible thing. I really hope he survives this war, I don't want him to die, he is my only hope for a better future. I just wish he didn't have to go to war with the others.

I am kind of proud of him but kind of not proud at the same time. I am proud of him because he is brave enough to go and fight for his country. It is a good thing because he actually wants to do something for the country. My feelings, and I have repeated them lots of times, is that I feel proud, worried and heartbroken.

I feel very emotional and I am angry is because he didn't listen to me about enlisting. I do sometimes have daydreams about him coming home alive and unharmed. I also have happy memories and pictures in my head that make me want to cry. I have a lot of things on my mind right now.

Weeks later I got a brown envelope through the post, what can it be? That's weird it is a telegram, but why do I have one of these? So I opened it and it said 'Dear Mrs Hildreth your son is missing in action'.

My worst fears had come true.

By Yasmin Kerwick

The Day I Saved My Pals.

My name is Cecil and I am 19 years of age.

I am a private in the Great War and I am in the trenches in France for the first time.

When I woke up from my 'beauty sleep' at the Front Line, I slowly started to crawl up to the top of the trench and look out across the middle of 'no man's land'. Then in a blink of an eye the Germans began to fire a machine gun and what sounded like a huge bomb exploded and I was covered in mud.

The only things I had with me were my precious letters from home, my sniper rifle and my bayonet. As I looked up from the mud all I could see were my friends getting killed. I was so sad, but I knew I had to be brave, to save them and not be a coward.

I had no choice but to take the safest route possible to get to my friends and save them. I got up from the earth and had to run for cover every second to stay alive. It was extremely hard because the rats were running everywhere and bullets were bouncing off my helmet. The smell also put me off because it was so bad. I was thinking to myself 'I will be very lucky to get to my friends and save them'.

I dragged my pals back in to the trenches and then I realised I had been shot by a bullet in my leg. I was full of pain, but I thought to myself, 'this is not the end, I can still fight'. Even though I could barely walk I loaded up my rifle and shot it into the German trenches in revenge.

Even though I am back in the British trench now I felt like this was the end because I was so injured. Slowly I fell asleep because after saving 16 men in a whole day I was exhausted. All of a sudden, another shell exploded and woke me up again. 'That could have been me' I thought and I knew I was very lucky to survive and I was pleased that I was with my pals again.

By Curtis Crow

DLI Soldiers defending a trench in Belgium in 1915.



Back Home

Back home, in the lovely countryside at Tow Law, I am having the time of my life with my wife, dancing to the most beautiful and romantic music. It is 1915 and leaving my wife to fight in the Great War is the one thing I will always regret. My name is Cecil William Caygill and I am so pleased to be away from that muddy battlefield, away from war. I love being with my wife and I will never leave.

Suddenly, I awoke and realised I had been dreaming of home in the trenches! BOOM! went an exploding shell.

“Bully Beef!” shouted a soldier, holding up a can and repeating the words ‘Bully Beef’ again. As I reached up and grabbed the tin I wished that I had not woken up at all.

“SHUT UP!” demanded an officer, “we are trying to get to sleep!”

‘BOOM!’ They are firing shells at us screamed an officer, ‘Duck and cover!’ he shouted again to everyone in the trench. His words suddenly sent a message to my brain that said ‘You better listen to me or you are dead meat’.

So I did what I was told and I took cover in the medical bay of the trench dugout. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The shells were getting closer by the minute. ‘BOOM!’ Until one was a direct hit on the trench. I heard more shells but luckily they fell behind the trench.

Suddenly, the guns stopped and I heard nothing but someone screaming for help. I peeked out to see someone in his Private’s uniform but he was different to all of the others he had a head, a body, two arms but only one leg! “AHH!” he shouted in agony.

“GET HIM ON THE STRECHER!” demanded the furious officer.

Everyone then began to push past me trying to get into the medical bay in the dugout. I didn’t want to see all the blood and torture.

I was relieved that I had survived and my mind began to wonder. I just wanted to go home to see my family again. I hope they would still love me after all of the death I have been involved in. I hope that they don’t think I am a German in disguise when I return! Then my mind came back to reality.

“How’s your peg leg doing,” I asked the man who’s leg got blown off.

“It’s alright, I’m still going walk again no matter what,” he replied as he lifted his peg leg up on the table. I looked out of the dugout and in to the cloudy sky and wished I was back at Tow Law once again.

That is my war story. RIP Cecil William Caygill.

By Zak Wild

Believe and You Will Return - (A story about my relative)

Hello, I am John James Bradley aged 23 from Tow Law, and this is my story.

I woke to the larks again, it was another gruesome day in the trenches, but this one felt, different. I was the first one awake, as usual, so I started making breakfast. Today's special was stale bread, bacon and cheese! Just as I got a whiff of the bacon Sergeant Arthur woke up. He looked at me longingly, wanting some too, so I sighed and slapped another piece of bacon onto the grill, and gave him my sandwich.

Just after I had finished my food, the whistle blew. It was time to go 'over the top' into 'no man's land'! For the first time since I had arrived in France I felt ecstatic! At last I was going to fight the enemy, but as I jumped over the trench I got a bad feeling in my gut. I tried to ignore it and just carried on attacking with my pals. The noise from the firing of guns stopped me from hearing the warning shouts about the poison gas. My eyes stung and my legs went weak, then everything went black.

I did not remember anything at all when I woke up, except that Sergeant Arthur had saved me, and that I was in Durham Hospital. My mum and fiancé were by my bed. When I saw Dorothy standing there, I knew what I had to do. I knelt down and reached into my left pocket, there was the ring that I had kept and slowly said, "Dorothy Amos, my dearest girlfriend, will you marry me?" She had tears streaming down her face when she said "YES!" I hugged her until my arms ached.

Sadly I would not survive the war. When everything went black, I know I tried my best, I know I was a good soldier and I know I would have been a great husband too.

By Kendra Bradley



The Day I Survived The War

The day the war ended and we defeated the Germans I felt heroic and grateful. I had a warm feeling inside me all day even though I was in the trench.

'I'll just make a bacon sandwich' I thought when suddenly I saw a RAT! Then the worst thing happened ... it stole my sandwich. GONE! So I hit an old shell case with a stick and sounded the alarm.

"What is it? ," said the Captain

"My sandwich has been stolen by a giant rat' I explained.

"Never mind" said the Captain, "Now where's my bully beef you can have some of that instead".

I loved eating in the trenches as I felt safe there, it kind of felt like a home to me. I felt that my pals always had my back and that I always had theirs.

Then suddenly, *BOOM!* A shell exploded and ruined the moment. I knew I was shell shocked from the sight of my friend being launched into the air. All I saw and felt was anger, death and blood on my face.

Later that day, when I heard that after 4 years of fighting, the Germans surrendered, my brain and heart almost melted with relief.

I screamed at the top of my voice, "FAMILY HERE I COME!"

By Sonny Laing



A Soldier's Story

I first joined the Territorial Army in 1908 so I am well trained and know we have a job to do in France. I can't believe that at last I am on my way to war! I am going to miss my family but it is only going to be a couple of months. I will be back before Christmas but I know this might be the last thing I write. I am just 45 minutes away from the trenches and I can't wait to get there. My country will be very proud of me because I am fighting for my King and my loved ones.

When I finally arrived at the trenches I was starving so we cooked some 'Bully Beef'. I could not wait to try it so I put loads on my spoon and tasted it. It had gone off and was disgusting! So I spat it out but unfortunately, I got in to trouble for wasting food. Captain John screamed in my face so loudly that I thought I would die. I had no other choice to eat it, so I forced it down.

One morning, a pal of mine called Jack, stood up and poked his head over the trench and he got shot in the head. We wanted revenge so we started shooting at them but they started shooting at us and that went on for some time. Jack was the first person to die on our Company and we were devastated. He was a very kind person and I hope that no one else dies on our Company in the future, but I know they will.

In the fighting that followed we were attacked by poison gas and they threw grenades at us. When the enemy 'came over the top' we shot them with our heavy machine guns. Then it was our turn to run at them. When I tried to jump over our trench, I just collapsed because I had breathed in the Mustard Gas. After the battle, when, everything calmed down, I was taken to the nurses in the Casualty Clearing Station. They said that I could not go into action again for 5 months and I was very upset as I felt I was letting my pals down.

That November, I was awarded the Military Cross for bravery.

By Billy Laing

'Over The Top'

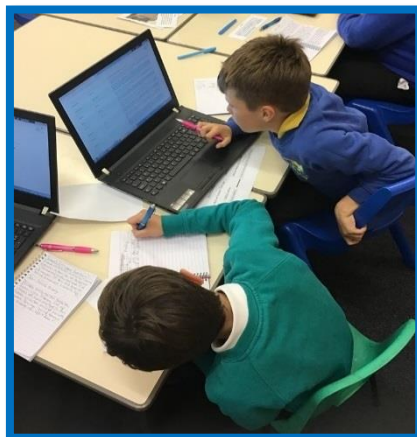
When I first enlisted for the Great War I thought it was an adventure, but now it feels like a journey in to hell! I had felt proud and happy, I thought this was my chance to be a hero and I was going to save my country. But now that I have seen what war really looks like I feel scared and sad. If I knew what war would truly be, I would not have signed up. I also thought we would have a good meals, but no it's sloppy bully beef stew. Every day it was the same food, Bully Beef after Bully Beef until I felt sick of it. When I worked in the mines it was dark smelly and dirty but being in the trenches make the mines look clean. Being a soldier is the worst job ever!

In the beginning, I was working on the big Artillery guns. It was safe but your hands could get jammed and you were are a bigger target for the German shells. Then I was moved to fight in the trenches. There I saw rats bigger than a dog, blood and guts and bombs going off as if it was a bomb fire night. There were wounded soldiers all around. It was really freezing at night; a guy next to me was suffering from trench foot. The next thing I knew he had died and we had to scare the rats from his body. I wrote many letters to my parents saying how I felt, I don't know if they got to them.

When we went 'over the top' there were exploding shells all over 'no man's land' and we were going wild with our rifles. Some the soldiers tried charging with their bayonets but they did not succeed. When I first went to France I thought I would see the Eifel Tower but because of all the war going on, I did not get the chance. I loved France until now. I was wounded at least ten times, not badly but I was shot in the arm. The amount of blood I have seen will never be erased out of my mind.

As I was going over 'no man's land' I thought to myself am I really prepared for this? I knew I wasn't, no one could be. My life flashed before my eyes and I was shot in the leg. A British Tommy tried to help me but he barely made it. I had a grenade that still had its pin in so I picked it up, took the pin out and threw it in the German trench. I fought until the end until a German soldier saw me and finished me off.

By Caiden Robson



Going To War

My name is Private Hedley and it is the day of my great adventure. I am really excited to go, I just hope it's fun.

When I enlisted I felt 'over the moon' because I have never had an opportunity to travel like this before. I am going to go to war with my pals. The posters tell me that it's going to be lots of fun so I am looking forward to it. I joined up with my best friend Tommy, he's a great laugh and fun to be with.

After two months of training with the DLI in County Durham I have arrived in France. It is damp, dull, and freezing, I can't even feel my feet or my toes!

"Are you ready to fight and 'go over the top'?" said Captain Highland said to us in the trenches.

"What do you mean captain Highland?" I replied.

"At the end of the day young man you signed up" said captain Highland.

"I didn't get told I might die", I stammered.

The rest of the men agreed with me but said nothing.

After I got told to go 'over the top', I felt betrayed. The propaganda posters looked so different, I don't even think I'm fit enough to be fighting. Now I am worried that I am going to die. I am in my own world right now. At the end of the day I know that I am representing my country and I want to do everybody in Tow Law proud. I would do anything for my family and I just want to come back safe and sound – but that would be a miracle come true.

By Kayden Tolmie



John Vitty – A Mother's View

I am so proud that my son is being brave by going to war. When John joined the war effort, it was the happiest and proudest day of my life. He looks so proud and smart in his new uniform. He is ready to fight for our country and prove us right and he is leaving to go to France soon.

However, I am proud on the outside, but on the inside, I feel depressed. I sound proud but I feel lost without him. He went because of the white feathers being given out and he said he did not want to be known as a coward. I would rather him be a coward and survive than go to war and end up dying or be really injured.

I now regret letting him go to war. I really want him to come home, but I know that will not be happening soon. I don't want him to die and I worry he will be killed because people have said that their family members have gone to war and never come back. Will that happen to my son?

John became a Private soldier in the war. However, on the 5th November 1916 he was killed in action at just 34 years old. It is a day I shall never forget. I know I should have said that he can't go, I prayed that he would come home, but he didn't. I will never send any more of my kids to war.

By Naomi Atkinson



Joseph Ditchburn's Story

At the age of 22, I woke up on a drenched sandbag bed in a trench in France. As always, I woke up to the sounds of gunshots. I was cold, wet, tired and very hungry. First thing in the morning a shell struck with a deafening noise. I took a deep breath and was relieved that it was not a deadly poisonous gas.

I was sat on a hard, uncomfortable bench in the trench dugout and I could hear the continuous thumping of the falling bombs outside. I grabbed a water bucket and tried to get hydrated. My brother was carried off on a stretcher two days ago and I will not be surprised if he dies.

After three days of doing nothing at the front line, I finally got the order to climb up in to 'No Man's Land'. As I peeked through my helmet, across the brown dirt I saw all of the scary smoke from the deadly shells ahead of me. As I rushed across, I tripped over and fell into a shell hole which made me vulnerable to dreaded German snipers. As I struggled to get myself out, I saw tanks that were ditched in the ground and a plane crash near me. Many bullets impaled me but I kept on going. Eventually, after 7 hours I finally died of my wounds but at least I died knowing I served my country and fought like a hero.

By Rudi Wilkie



Henry Vasey's Story

When I signed up to fight in the Great War I was excited. When I saw those propaganda posters pointing at me telling me to be a man I really thought it was my time to be a hero. However, when I got there it was so different to what I had heard about it, it was hell!

In the war I was a Gunner with the Royal Artillery and my name is Henry Vasey. I was born 1896 and when I was just 14 I became a Driver at the coal mine and lead the horses that pulled the wagons. I enlisted into the Royal Field Artillery at Consett and was sent to France in April 1915 but when I arrived there I realised I would regret it straight away. I was 19 when I joined the war but after being at war for a matter of weeks I felt like I was a 90 year old!

The conditions in the trenches were disgusting. All you could smell is the odour of dead bodies and rotten flesh. We saw our friends' bodies in 'No Man's Land' turn from white to yellow to purple to slime. It was an absolutely horrific sight. Rats all around the trenches! Soldiers with trench foot, sleeping on the muddy floor. When you sleep all you can hear is rats scratching and to make it worse at night I was cold as a block of ice.

For breakfast, we have bullied beef and the taste of it was absolutely disgusting and I wasn't feeling up to eating it. When I woke up a bit, I felt a bit scared as well as proud of myself at the same time because I have come to war to fight for my country. My mam would probably be really proud of me but angry at the same time because I didn't tell her properly before I left.

I feel disgusted about the situation here although I got the medal for bravery. I am from Inkerman in Tow Law and I regret leaving my family behind.

(Henry Vasey was killed in action in France in 1918, aged just 21 years old.)

By Lewis Hind



The War

“Emmmmm Mam, Mam are you there?” I asked, while walking through the kitchen door. My Mam was standing there in her jade green frock. Her blonde hair fell around her shoulders as she moved.

“Of course dear, where else would I be?” Mam answered.

I looked at the big beaming smile on her face. I thought, *‘do I really want that smile to fade away’*. I gulped. “I mm...I’m...going to War!” I stuttered. The happy smile started to fade.

“Wow I am very proud of you!” mam said forcing a smile while giving me a big hug. “When are you going?”

“Tomorrow morning,” I said.

There was an eerie silence and mam fell down onto the chair. She stared at the floor for what seemed like hours, but in reality, it was just long enough for her to break down into tears! Telling my wife Gertrude was easier than my mother, she is very patriotic, believes in me and thinks it will all be over at Christmas.

I had been a miner and now I was at the railway station going to be a soldier. I leaned towards the railway carriage window regretting what I have done. I could not bear to see my family like that, especially my Mam, Dorothy. She said she wanted me to go, but deep down I knew she was as just as worried as I was. I did not tell my daughter Violet as she is just little, only 7 so I just said I was going away for a bit.

At the front line, I literally was thrown in the trenches with no escape - it was horrible, it was HELL and I could not bear it. There were even soldiers stuck in ‘No Man’s Land’ who were still breathing. I sat on a muddy bloody bench, in the trench, wishing to be back home with a freshly made casserole off my mam. I longed to see my daughter’s face playing a happy game - but where I was it was no happy game.

I was out of My Bully Beef and my Private’s uniform rubbed annoyingly against my skin with the lice. The gunshots got louder now. I put my tin down and I stared at my gun beside me. All of a sudden, an Officer shouted to ‘Charge’ and I just ran with the crowd away from my safe spot. I tripped up in the mud, with everyone was pushing and shoving but I made it to the enemy trenches fighting for my life. I cannot even describe what it was like. Then a bayonet pierced my skin. I dropped and laid in the mud. I felt my heart beat get slower and slower until it stopped...

By Lara Appleby

The Day I Saved My Pals' Lives

This morning I felt exhausted because of all of the fighting we have been doing. I am also confused because I can't remember how many days I have left here at the Front Line. I am also sick of eating Bully Beef because it gets boring although sometimes we get bacon, cheese and bread.

Waking up in the trenches is hard because when you wake up, there are sometimes rats crawling on you. It also stinks because the dirt, rubbish and bodies build up for weeks. I feel horrified when I see my pals die in front of my eyes but I will keep fighting for my country because I am brave.

Hopefully, soon I can get home to Tow Law because I miss my house and I even miss the coal mine. Even though mining was a horrible job I still miss it compared to this.

After the last battle I could see lots of injured people stuck out in 'No Man's Land' and I felt sorry for them and I wanted them to see their family one more time. So that night I went out of the trench 9 times and saved 16 lives bringing the back in to the our trenches. Many of them were terribly injured and trying to get them back I had to dodge lots of bullets but I did it. I am proud because I saved the lives of my pals.

By **Reece Blenkinsop**



Joseph Ditchburn's Story

I was walking down the street when I saw a propaganda poster. It reminded me of my little boy Joseph who has gone to fight in the Great War. Everyone cried out what a hero he was when he enlisted. However, everyday when I walk down the street and see all the posters I dread to think what will happen to him, or what could have already happened.

My other children read the newspaper with me to read what has happened in the war and we go down the very long list of names of Englishmen who have died. Joseph's name is not listed yet, which is a relief to us but brought us sadness when we think of the others.

The war is a horrid thing to sign up to but some men felt they did not have a choice. They did it without a thought and did not really know what they were signing up for. All of the women and girls found out how much they needed their men, we felt sorrow and desperation without them.

All we want are our boys back home and we WANT THEM NOW!!!! We didn't know we needed them in our life as much as we do. I hear gossip about someone who died, which of course will happen in war, but I long for it to end soon so my precious little boy comes home safe and sound.

I have hope for my Joseph, and all the young lads, I am proud of him for joining up but h....he could die, anyone could.

[By Darcie Wild](#)



The Day My Daughter Went To War

My daughter, Violet Graham went to war as a nurse at the age of 17. When she first told me I was very upset and angry. Violet has one brother in the war called William Graham.

Violet is leaving her whole family heartbroken, I am proud because it is a good to save people's lives in the war, but bad because the Nurses can get hurt. The Field Hospitals are behind the lines, but a shell could still hit them. I asked her when she left,

“What if you got hurt because although you are not fighting at the front line you could still die?”

I daydream about her coming home and being a hero with a medal. I had to be brave and hold back the tears, when they went, so they would not see how upset I was just in case they got upset too.

I was confident, after a while, that Violet was not alone because some of her friends were also Nurses in the war. I got letters and postcards from her and they made me happy because I then knew she was all right.

Luckily, Violet did return home along with her brother, they both survived the war. I was so overwhelmed and shocked when I saw them because it had been such a long time. They looked so grown up I nearly cried!

I hope they both never go back to war again because I missed them a lot. If they ever wanted to go back to war I would not let them, because I cried myself to sleep nearly every night because of how much I missed them, and stayed up wondering if they were alright.

In Tow Law, we played games and spent time together and it felt like the family was complete again. I am glad she is back home safely and we are so very proud of her.

I feel very sad for the people that died in the war, but also lucky, because I still have my two children with me.

By Lilith Umpleby

Thinking of Home

Hello, my name is Thomas Pooley and I am 21 and I am a soldier in the Great War.

This morning was my first day in the trenches. They were disgusting and cold, not like we were told before we joined. I looked out across 'No Man's Land', it was wet and muddy and there was no way I wanted to go out there. In the trenches there were rats everywhere and bodies stuck in 'No Man's Land'.

We mostly ate Bully Beef, it was all we got but we had to eat it or we would starve. After a while I thought it was disgusting!

I know there will be a battle soon and I might have to go 'over the top', but in my mind all I can think of is my Mam's cooking and the smell of lovely home cooked broth.

By Matty Tyler

My Brave Son!

When my son John joined the war effort, it was the happiest and proudest day of my whole life. When I saw him in his new uniform, ready to fight for our country, he really looked like a brave soldier.

However, deep inside I was not as proud as I seemed. I felt bad for letting him go. We had so much fun together and that won't happen anymore with him going off to fight in the Great War.

When my son went to war he was really proud of himself but really he did not know what was going to happen at the front line. I have heard news that there has been terrible fighting and many deaths and injuries.

Some ladies gave my son a white feather in the street, but he was actually going to sign up! He is definitely not a coward.

Unfortunately, my son got moved to front line and did not make it. He was killed in action and I have been left with a hopeless heart.

The war propaganda is betraying people to get them to join the war, they think it going to be a big holiday but war something complete different.

By Paige Smith

The Day She Left!

It was seven in the morning and I was making breakfast for everyone. In the newspapers the headlines were shouting 'War has broken out!' I needed to wake up the children so they could hear this as they needed to know. They got out of bed and I also got Dad out of bed too.

The front page said, soldiers could enlist at the local church but you must be over 18. It said that young men should join up and not be cowards it said that war would make young feel happier.

Both my sister and brother went to war. She was a nurse and he was a soldier. I remember the last dinner we had together before they left. Afterwards they went upstairs and began to pack their bags for the mid-day train. We stopped to say goodbye to Gran before we said goodbye at the station.

I will never forget how sad I felt.

By Olivia Adamson

The Day George Went To War

Poor little George, as soon as he signed up for the war I was so proud of him but now, I have huge regrets about it.

When I now look back I feel I did the wrong thing letting him go because war is terrible. I do not mean to be selfish but I'd rather him stay at home than fight at the front, but I know he is no coward. I am still very proud of George for enlisting in the DLI and fighting for his country because it was a very patriotic thing to do.

George went to war when he was 23 but unfortunately he never made it home to Tow Law. I feel lost and isolated without him and life really doesn't feel the same. He would write to me and his father through the post. He told us about the corned beef he had every day and hot water to drink. In 1917, on George's birthday I was expecting a letter from him, but the post came there was a brown telegram- I was afraid to open it because I then realised, it was bad news...

Those horrible, spiteful Germans have killed my brave little soldier, HOW DARE THEY! Even now I am still very upset, angry and lost but he will always be remembered and loved in my heart forever.

(In June 1917 George was reported missing in action- his name is remembered on the Menin gate in Belgium as well as the Tow Law Memorial which I have seen.)

By Jodie Galley

A Day in the Life of Henry

When I signed up, I thought it was going to be an adventure. I thought I would be able to hang around with my friends and relax in a comfortable house behind the lines or in a bunker, but I was wrong. - It was hell!

In the Great War, I am a Gunner and my name is Henry Vasey. I am on the front line and it is very scary. I am 20 years old now so I have been in war for at least a year and today was the worst day so far because winter started.

I awoke on a freezing cold winter morning and I felt so tired because I only got three hours sleep all night. My bones feel weak because I have hardly slept in the last three days and my ears are in agony because of how much noise there is.

When I had breakfast, it was the same old boring disgusting 'Bully Beef'. I did not eat it because if I did I would of throw up, but as I was so hungry I tried to force it down.

The trenches are terrible, they were muddy, wet, dirty and generally disgusting - I hate being in in the trenches. The other thing is that we see blood, guts, bombs and dead bodies everyday. In the situation I find myself in I am worried and scared because I do not want to be killed. The thought of being killed is terrifying.

I am from Inkerman near Tow Law, I used to be a miner driver and it was hard work, but it was the only way I could make money. Now I am in war and this is even worse than the mine.

(Henry Vasey was killed in action in 1918 at the young age of 20 and was buried in France)

By James Allan



Going To War

This is the day my son goes to war. I am both scared and happy at the same time. He said he was 'excited to go' but I know it will be horrible.

I am scared on the inside but happy on the outside. He has never been far from the house before, never mind going to France to fight! There will be lots of other soldiers going to war as well but I am still nervous. He is only 27 and he wants to go to war to do his 'duty', but I am scared in case he does not come back. He said that if he dies he will always be happy because he will never forget home.

Now he is gone I keep having daydreams about him because I am so worried. He will have to eat horrible food at the front and I know that he won't like it. I am trying to be brave but I even worry about him getting 'Trench Foot' without a clean pair of socks to change in to.

I know he will be a good soldier and he is looking for adventure because he has never been away before. He could become a hero and get a medal for saving someone's life. If he returns he is never doing anything like this again.

By Dean Donohue

The Life of Thomas Pooley

I am Thomas Pooley and this is my life. I am 26 years old. When I looked at the propaganda posters war looked like a bit of fun, but realistically it was awful. For a fact, it was nothing like the posters said! I am not a coward but I would rather be anywhere but at the front line.

How it started!

It was 1915 and the Great War had been going on for a year. I was taking my son, Thomas Jnr, to the park when I saw a poster saying,

"Join up now, don't be a coward!" - I decided that as a brave and proud father I would enlist and do my bit.

The next day I enlisted in the Durham Light Infantry with my pals. My friends and I thought it was going to be a great adventure. Within 3 months I was sent out to the front and I had to say my last goodbyes and cheerios to my family and friends at the station.

When I turned up in France I was gob smacked. It was an eye sore. The trenches were awful, muddy, and dark and surrounded by death. After just a few days I was already fed up, tired, hungry and missing Tow Law and my family.

By Leah Wolowiec

Thomas Pooley's Day

I am Thomas Pooley and this is my story.

This might be my last thing I write but I hope you understand my thoughts.

It all started on the 28th of July 1914, I was going to the pub and saw a poster about the war it said,

'Join the war and have a great adventure – enlist and take the king's shilling!'

So I decided to go to the recruiting office. It was the biggest mistake of my life!

In the following days...

I said farewell to my son Thomas Jnr and gave him to my deceased wife Hannah's family to look after. I marched off with the rest of the soldiers and on the way we had a good laugh not knowing what was going to happen to us. I should have realised that war is serious, and that I should not have gone, but I was clueless.

Once we got to the front line, we were exhausted but we were soon made to fight. An Officer stayed behind in the trench to make sure that we all went 'over the top' if not he had a gun ready to shoot us!

We eat 'Bully Beef' and the tea has mud and dirt in it. I am not sleeping well because I am so scared that someone is going to shoot me at night, so I drink rum and whisky to help keep me awake. After just two weeks in the trenches, I was covered in fleas and lice. It was so disgusting.

The conditions in 'No Man's Land' are horrendous. There are scattered limbs all over, shells exploding and rotting bodies getting eaten by rats the size of dogs. Despite this horror, I think about my beautiful son, home cooking, people cheering at me as I march along Tow Law High Street with my medals heading for comfy bed to rest my tired head on!

Oh how I miss Tow Law!

By Ashleigh Croft



The Tragedy of War

I cannot take it anymore! All of my friends are dead and I cannot even remember home anymore, Tow Law. It is like hell here, all of it, every bullet and every rat, all of it.

My mother is not sending letters anymore. The last one she sent was about Dad dying from his wounds, he had been shot by a sniper. When I heard that I was heartbroken and felt as if I had nothing to live for. Well that was a year ago and I have grown so much since then.

The ground around me is disgusting and the rats are the size of my leg. It is scary here, even the Germans are scared and they seem to be winning here. The only thing I like about it is the pay which is more than I got outside the Army.

My name is Cecil Caygill and I am only 21. I was born in 1895 and I lived in Tow Law most of my life, although just before the Great War started I moved to Chopwell.

I write to my mother regularly and tell her I am fine because I don't want to scare her. I know that I am lucky to still be alive.

By Liam Duffy



The Day My Son Went To War!

My son George Hildreth Waugh, is on his way to war! I just feel like my life has been destroyed. I never knew that my son was going to end up engaging in this awful situation. He doesn't understand that he could die! I feel heartbroken on the inside but on the outside I have to look proud of my son. This may be the last time that I will express my true anger.

Although, George is extremely strong and also very brave, I just feel like he won't be that confident in battle. It is absolutely horrible being in this situation! I wonder how he is feeling today. I can't be too angry with him though because I love him too much! When the war began I thought I was doing the right thing and letting my son do what he wanted along with his pals, but now I regret it. Life isn't easy for mother left behind like me. Every day, I just feel like I need to cry.

A few months after George left, there was a loud knock at the door. It was the Postman and he gave me an important letter. It read...

'Dear mother,

It's me (George) I have achieved so much since I moved here and I hope you feel proud of me. I have been earning my army pay and hopefully I will be able to send it to you at some point. I may be back on leave soon but for now I am about to go up to the front line. Please send my love to everyone and to you, please don't worry about me. Love George xxxxxxxxxxxxxx'

My son is still alive! At first my heart ached and I was so proud of him!

A couple of days later I could not sleep and I knew something wasn't right. I went down the stairs and there was a brown envelope lying on the floor. I sat down and I opened it. It was from the War Office and it read...

'Dear Mrs Waugh,

I'm sorry to say that your son (George Hildreth Waugh) is missing in action'.

My heart sank I began to think. Where is my son? Why is he missing? Is he dead? I cried wildly for an hour. What was I going to do? My emotions began to push through my head like a bullet. Now I understand it is the mothers who suffer as much as the soldiers at the front.

By Abigail West

Wounded

Hello, my name is Robert Thompson I am a Rifleman in the DLI.

Asleep in the trenches I am dreaming of Tow Law. I see myself in the countryside with my wife Matilda and son. Suddenly, the dream turns in to a nightmare as I see German soldiers attacking my home with machine guns! Then I wake up.

“Same dream Hu?” said my Pal as he shook me awake. ‘Here, Robert, here is your beef, bacon and cheese sandwich’. I am so hungry that I eat it in seconds, although, at least I got breakfast as sometimes it doesn’t arrive.

The trench we are in is very muddy and very squelchy. The trench is close by the river Somme and we are constantly getting bombed.

The officer tells us that once again we ‘Need to MOVE!! And as the shells drop once again I feel that I can’t do this anymore!

By Shay Thompson

Capture and Escape.

Enlisting in the Durham Light Infantry to join the war was one of the most exciting days of my whole life! I only thought I would be fighting once in a while but I was clearly wrong! At the front line every day is non-stop gun shots, grenades and exploding shells.

It is terrifying, exhausting and depressing here, as whole new world the second you set foot out of the trench I to ‘No Man’s Land’. It is almost impossible to see through the constant thick grey smoke. I almost killed myself attacking a German trench yesterday. I pulled the pin out of a grenade and I threw at the German trenches. When it blew up I expected the explosion to be very small but I was wrong and it nearly took me with it.

The worst thing for me is the food. The biscuits are so hard that they almost broke my tooth! We also get ‘Bully Beef’ which is easier to eat but I still find it horrible. I even feel guilty about eating the food of my dead comrades when they do not return from an attack. Nothing can go to waste here so the food goes to those who are still alive.

When I was marching through a deserted town were ambushed and my pal next to me as shot. We were forced to surrender and, after hours of marching, I was put in to a prisoner of war camp. Later I managed to escape and my reward was being sent back to the front line again!

By Keiran Pacey

The Day Mary Came Home!

It was 9.00 a.m. in the morning when the newspapers turned up. The front page was all about the new war and there was an advert asking for Nurses to enlist, it said...

'Join the war and be a nurse to help the wounded soldiers'.

My daughter Mary said "How old do you have to be to join?"

"You have to be 18 " I replied.

"Can I join?" she said Mary, "I really want to join, I am 19 and I want to help our soldiers"

A few weeks later and Mary was getting ready to leave for the front line.

For four years my daughter Mary helped the injured soldiers. I missed her so much but I knew she was doing good work.

When she came home at the end of the Great War she was in bandages and was walking with crutches.

"What happened?" I said

A shell landed near our hospital and nearly killed me when I was helping the wounded. I knew that it would be a long time until she was fully recovered but I was glad she was back in Tow Law with me once again.

By Kady Wolowiec

The Life of Nurse Hannah

There was a brave woman called Hanna Brook, who at 19 decided to help in the Great War.

On the journey to France, she felt proud to be on her way to help the soldiers but also quite scared because she thought the propaganda posters may be lying.

When she arrived at the Field Hospital she felt very let down because there were bodies on the floor with lots of injuries. She felt like she had to do her best to help the soldiers live. She quickly put on her nice new nurses uniform and got to work. She just got in to the hospital and straight away a soldier came in with a bullet wound in his leg. She bandaged him up then put him a bed with a crutch at his side. Then she gave him some anaesthetic to kill the pain. Hannah was so pleased that she had managed to save his life.

From morning to sunset over 100 wounded soldiers came in for her to care for. She grew so tired that she started to cry because she just remembered her brothers were in the war too.

By Charlotte Brown

Propaganda Posters

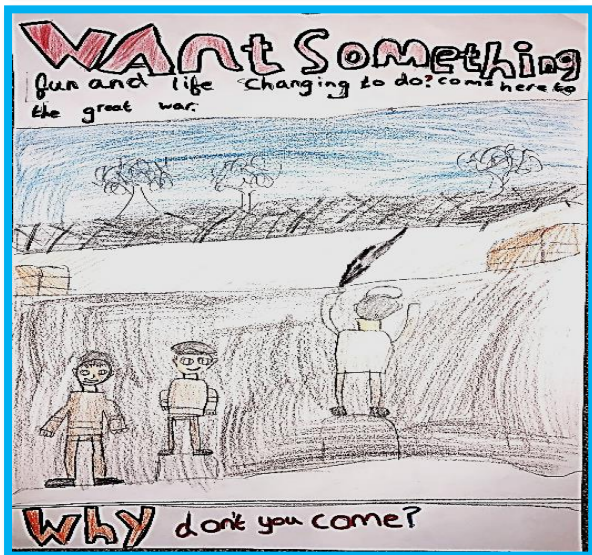
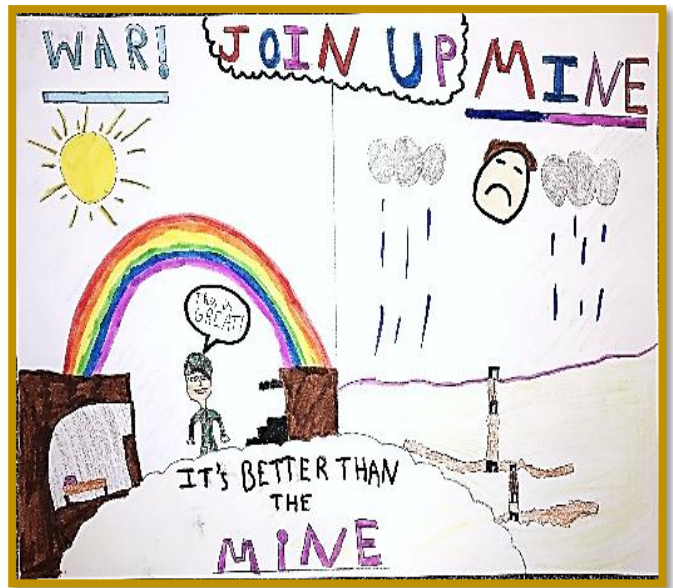
We studied the way that the government encouraged people to fight for their country during the Great War 1914 -18 without telling them all of the facts about the horrors of war.

We used these ideas in recreating propaganda posters of our own.

We focused on concepts that were used in the posters such as bravery, guilt, cowardice, adventure and patriotism.



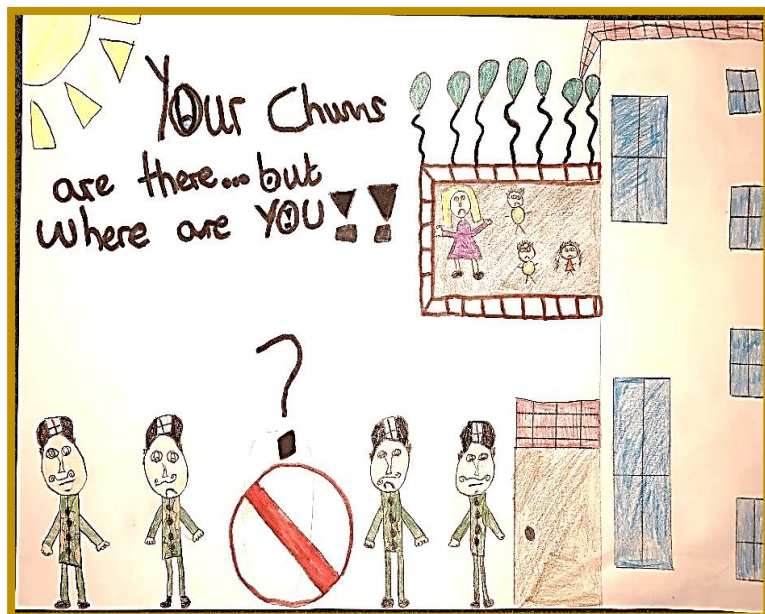
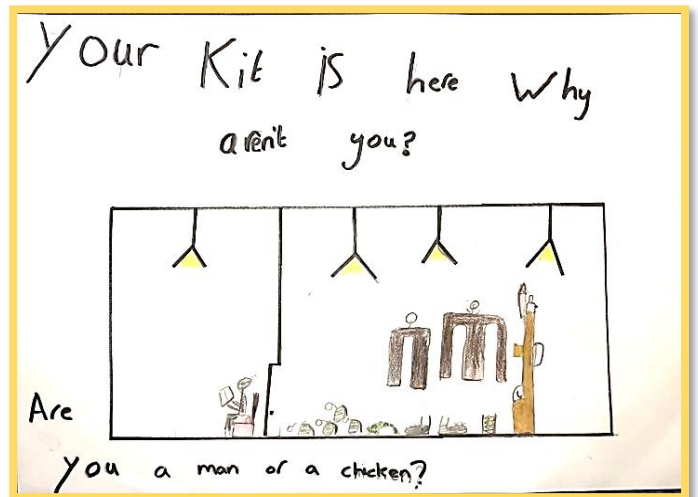
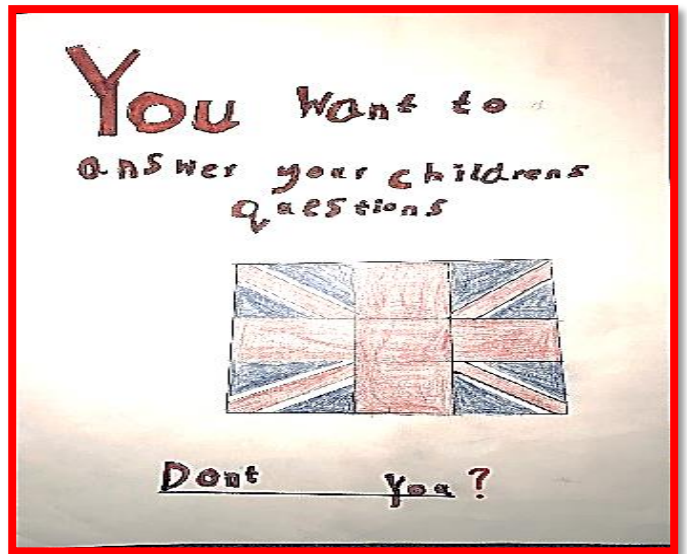
Propaganda Posters



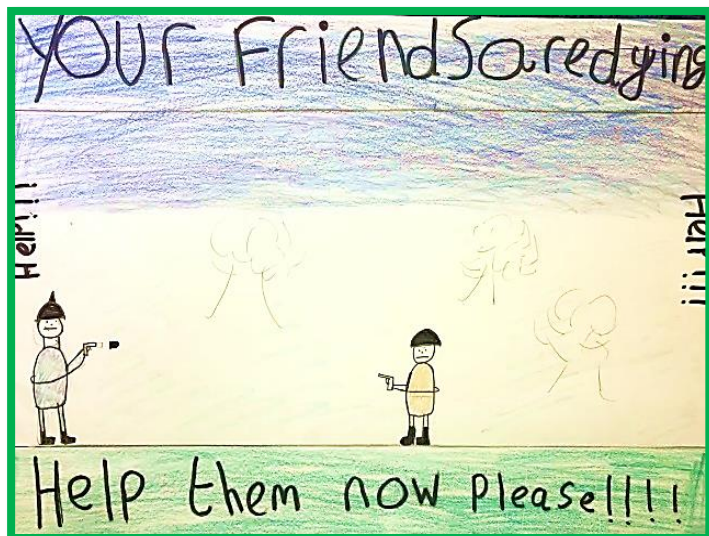
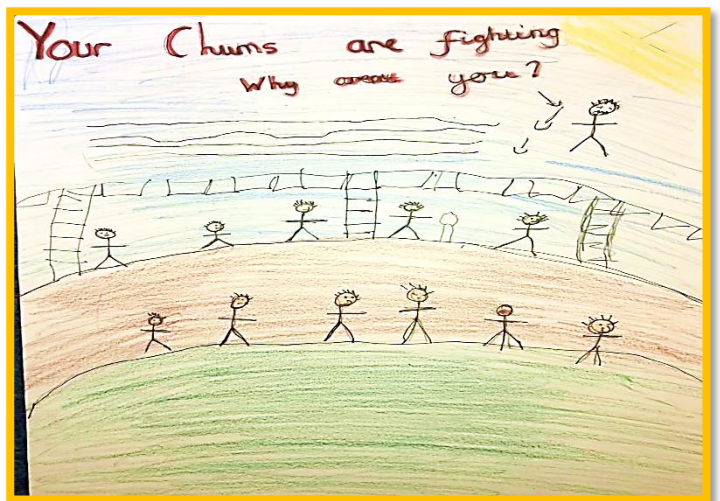
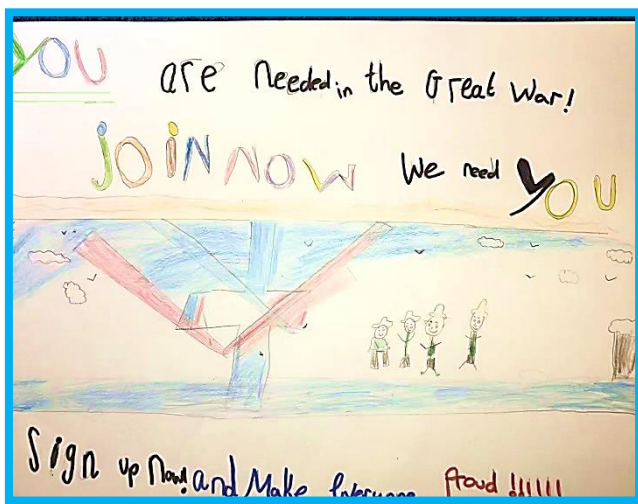
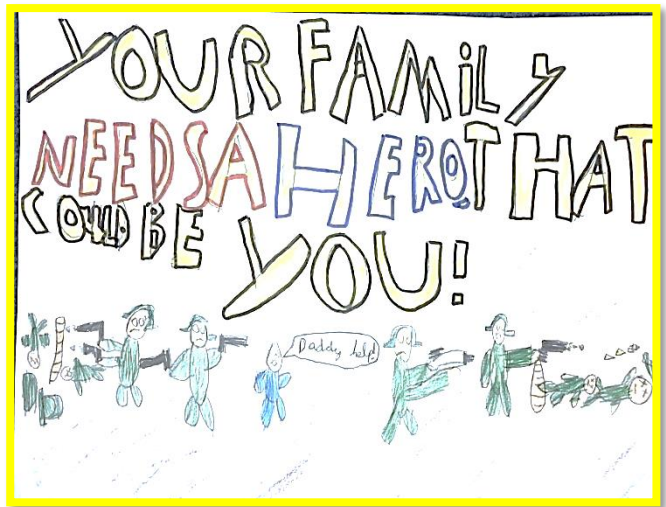
Propaganda Posters



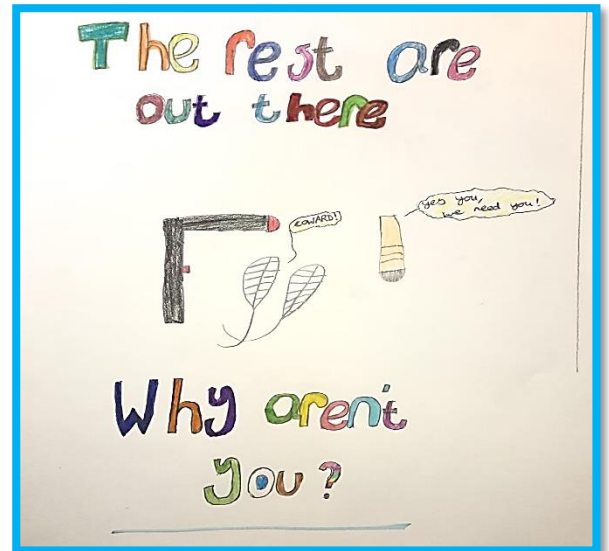
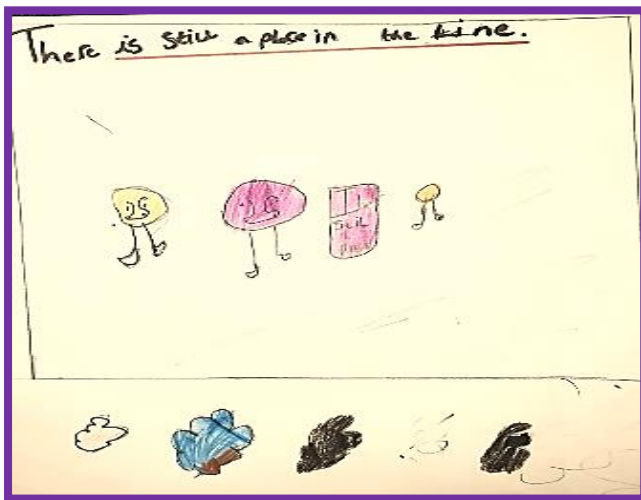
Propaganda Posters



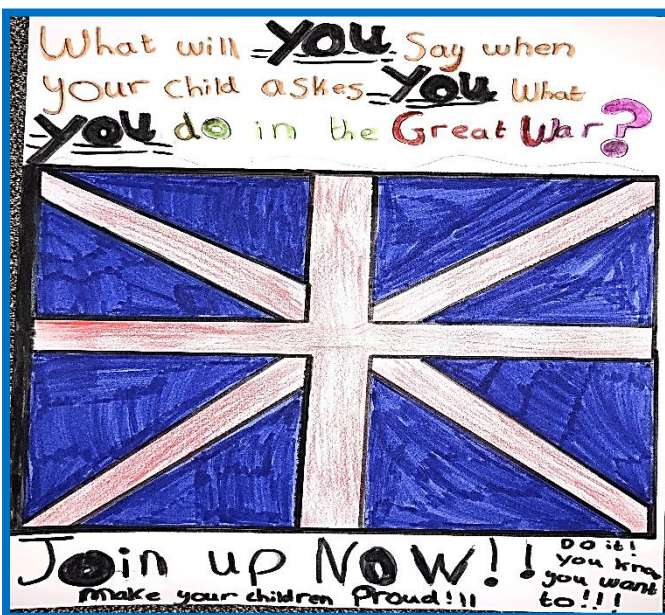
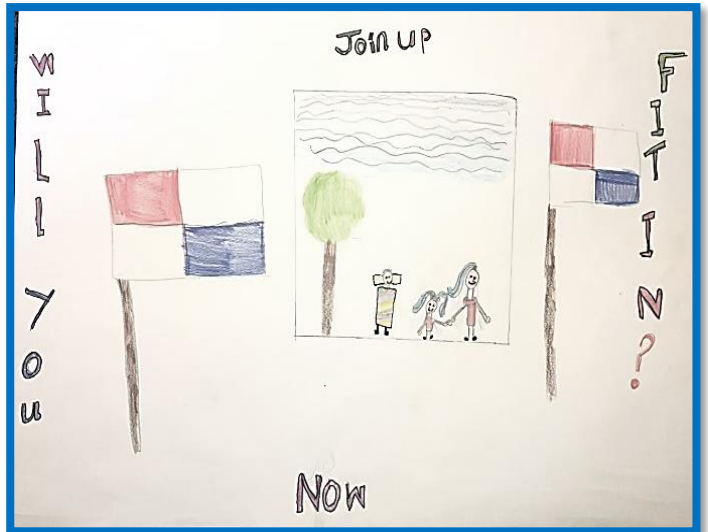
Propaganda Posters



Propaganda Posters



Propaganda Posters



Great War Poetry

We studied the music and poetry of the Great War.

We looked at the way songs, such as, 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' and 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' were designed to take the soldiers minds off of the fighting and the misery of the trenches.

We also looked at the modern poetry of John Agard in his poem 'Flag' and the Great War poetry of Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon. We analysed poetic techniques, and the messages about war and conflict that the poets were trying to express.

We hope you enjoy them!



Great War Poetry

Soul of War

I once was a simple boy, living a normal life.
Then I joined the war – it was a living Hell.
But I did it for the freedom of my country
For my family, for my people, I did my duty.

All I can now imagine, is death,
All I see are bodies with no soul.
Why am I fighting?
I have no soul, no pride, no freedom.

One happy day,
I finally return to my loving family
Now the days of sadness are all forgotten,
buried deep inside.
I will be forever be thankful for,
My family, my life, my soul.

By Sonny Laing

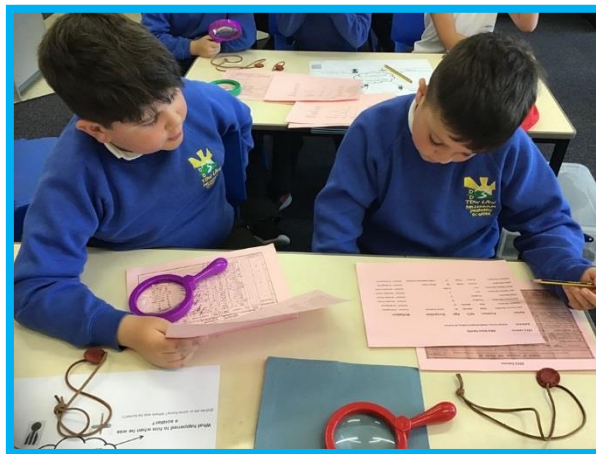
Hell

Just a little boy with a big dream.
Never dreaming of this Hell as reality.
Now dream and wish about home.
Away from this Hell, this torture.

The coldness in the trenches
Rats as they crawl, gnaw and dwell.
Mud as it splashes and smothers
My new home is a living Hell.

People fall and are wounded
People shoot bullets to kill
My life and those around me at risk
In this special kind of Hell.

By Reece Blenkinsop



Memories of Father

When I was six,
father went off to fight in the Great War
Without his fun and laughter,
life was just a bore.

When I was nine, my mother explained
that father had left us alone
He was gone for good, never to return.

A twelve, I started work,
I saw the struggles of life.
I stared at a photo of him
and shared my tales of strife.

At twenty, it was my turn,
I learnt to save.
Like father, I had to fix them,
motivate them and be brave.

Our life together was not to be,
But the memory of him never leaves
me...

By Maisie Morton

Over by Christmas

The start of the war joy all around,
Laughter and happiness.
Lack of attacks,
Everyone unharmed, hope reigned.

But then Christmas arrived,
The bombs rained down,
the shell shock hit.
More mourning, less laughter.

My pal was stupid enough to take a bullet
What a horrible sight,
I will never forget.
Who is going to tell his mam?

As I scratched my head
Rats lie in my bed
The mud soaked in my shoes
Trench foot – a soldier's blues.

On the mud I lie -
No thoughts of glory,
I am just waiting to die.

By Rudi Wilkie



Reclaiming My Life

Another day in the trenches,
sucks away any happiness
I remember my life before, smiling, laughing every day.
It is like over these last couple of years the war has
taken it all away.

As I sleep on my sandbags
I am not a coward
I am not gallant
I am not brave.

My mate shot himself – a coward of the trenches?
But I don't judge, in a split second it could have been
me.

Memories of my daughter keep me alive
I don't choose death, death chooses me.
I cry, cry in hope to see my daughter again.
If there was a way I can tell her I am fine, I would.
It's like a living Hell here,
to see these scrambled dead bodies:
Helpless, hapless, and humourless.

I am ready to go home. Will my daughter still love me?
After all of the death and destruction I have caused?
Hopefully she won't see me as the enemy in disguise
And still love a man who kills.

I am ready to reclaim my life once again, and forget the
horrors of war.
I will live my life with my daughter,
as if it had never happened at all.

By Zac Wild

World War One

The fun life that starts it all,
Proud of our country,
No death at all.
Then war comes around
Off we go, 'March!'
The adventure is beginning,
Now, off we go.

We defend our beautiful
country
from demon hearts,
the Devil's bounty.

The reality hits.
Oh my God!
Death.
At every corner,
Cries.
In every trench.

There is too much time to
dwell.
This is no life,
it is a living Hell.

By Liam Donohue

Where is my Father?

When I was five, my father disappeared.
on the mantelpiece I glared at the photo,
I wouldn't see him for years and years.
Of happier times without the tears.

One day my mother explained to me
And I cried to myself to sleep,
He had left me, left me all alone to weep.

Was he hurt?
Was he dead?

On my tenth birthday, he was truly gone.
He was never coming back!

My mother worked hard,
I work down the mines.
These were tiring and trying times.

Wasn't his death to make life better -
Would he believe I was back down the mines?

By Serena Stagg

Soldiers

Sat in the deep dark mud pits!
The rain drips through,
while you are trying to sleep.
I feel so hopeless.
What does the flag mean to
me?
Certain death?
Guns everywhere,
missing family.

I do not feel bold,
I am weak,
I cannot be brave!
When will I go home?
This is really serious!
Is this what I signed up for?
I am so scared.

By Paige Smith



War is Hell!

Scared, nervous, honoured.
Worried about leaving home –
loyal – patriotic – proud.
March, march, march,
on the soldiers go!

After a week, stinking,
covered in mud –
feeling powerless but not giving up.
Brave, scared, horrified.
March, march, march,
on the soldiers go!

A year in the war, aching,
Missing home and family –
Feeling like you're in hell.
March, march, march.
On the soldiers go!

Wanting to kill yourself
but one side of your mind says no.
March, march, march,
march, march, march,
To glory we must go.

By Jodie Galley

War

Nervous, proud, happy,
I am ready for war to begin –
An adventure is yet to come.

Patriotic, family, friends.
Wanting to do my best,
Bang! Boom! Crash!

Emotional, mud, fear.
Where are all my friends?
Trenches side by side.

Trauma, rain, mud.
Why did I come here?
Fear occurs once again.

Alone, sad, depressed.
When will this end?
Bored, Despair, Death.

By Abigail West

The Reality of War.

Overwhelmed, Gory, HELL!
Appalled by peoples' actions –
Never content.
Wanting more...

Forced in to war.
People LITERALLY jumped out of their skin!
Hanging on to a dream, a dream.
A dream to get back to your loving home.

Germans antagonising you.
Thinking about the other side.
Winning with Pride!
BANG, BANG, BANGING.
Your whole life and dreams;
Ended forever.

The stench - indescribable, unescapable
death.
My dream is to go home. To see the teary,
proud, loving faces,
before I take my last breath...

By Lara Appleby

Honour

I was honoured at first,
My brain felt like it would burst with
pride.

The mud, lice, the giant rats and the
blood,
It was terrible, scary. Disgusting.

The stench in the trenches meant no fun,
but it had to be done.
No going back.

A golden bullet through my heart.
From my loved ones I now depart.

By James Allan



The Poppy

There once was a boy walking down the street
who saw a poster that was quite unique.
It said, 'Defend your country, it's now or never'.
So he invited his pal and they joined together.

'It will be over by Christmas'. They said.
But little did they know that they would end up dead,
With people screaming 'off with their head!'

The smell of death was everywhere but some people didn't seem to care.
Then the enemy came behind him with a gun,
Aimed, fired, a scream of pain,
And the pals watched in vain.

The next day the body was gone.
Buried in the mud, left underground,
Dead and can't hear a sound.
But there was a tiny ray of hope
A poppy.
He died for us, the flower is to help us all cope.

By Ziva Ashe

Never Forget!

Marching through the squelchy mud.
Three feet deep where
bombs hit the ground with a thud!

The overwhelming sight of horror, rotting.
Bodies going different colours.
Disintegrating, bloated, we wait, squatting.

Proud but angry, full of sighs.
Noise popping ears,
Pals dying before my eyes.

Alone, sad, depressed, close-ups.
Nothing but the memories of death!
Shaking ground, will it swallow me up?

The darkness coming. We are deprived.
Loneliness.
Nothing but bodies here – dead and alive!

By Leah Wolowiec

Step by Step

Today is terrible!
Leaving your family,
your friends behind
Fight for your country
Making people proud.

Running around in circles
Clueless, nervous, terrified.
Hoping it will end
But it never will.

Soldiers marching
Sync by sync
Step by step
Beat by beat
Death by death.

By Keiran Pacey

Today

Today we started with twenty thousand men,
now we have got ten thousand.
Trapped in trenches, more like a pen.

Today, my best friend, too weak to go any further.
Shot himself in the head, another number!
I wanted to stay-with him

Colonel said "Private Josh – push, forward or die."
In the blink of an eye,
I got shot, I knew I was going to bleed out-
Waiting for the medics to come.
They saved my life, they said "Continue."

The next battle. Trapped,
killing people before I snapped.

Today, war ended, what a relief –
I get to go home and see my family - renew my
belief.

By Curtis Crow



I Imagined!

I Imagined that the war
Would be over by Christmas -
But it was not.

I saw my dad packing - I was sad
All dressed smartly at seven in the
morning
Took Dad to the port, all feeling like
we were in mourning.

Before he left he gave mum a kiss
Hugged his sweet children.
And gave a final wave goodbye, God
bless.

I saw - my brother and sister - crying.
I imagined, never seeing him again –
dying.

By Olivia Adamson

The Trauma in the War

It's time to join the war
People marching, getting ready to fire
Then I said to myself,
I am not sure now – it is so dire.

Muddy trenches
Rats crawling all over us
As we passed by the battlefield.
Bodies, lying around.
Dead. Depressing.

Acting brave, trying to hold back the tears.
Acting like nothing had happened
Why is the war not over yet?
What will happen next?
There is no way home.

By Kady Wolowiec



No Man's' Land

No Man's' Land is a terrible place where the
Germans land.

We have five more months - so they say
They told us it would be over by Christmas.
An 'adventure', they said.

Did I get some adventure – nothing I would
ever like to repeat.

I hope I left something for my family.
When I die will they remember me?
Do they miss me?

I hope they miss me, respect me.
Hear my plea.
Because I, like them, know of the shocking
state of mind
when you confront death in war.
No glory, only death in No Man's Land.

By Charlotte Brown

The Kill

March, march, march!
Just signed up
'Adventure, patriotism, love of the
King, pride of the country!'
But what they say isn't true

After a few weeks
Fear and death haunt us now -
But what they say isn't true

No glory here
Wet muddy trenches
Dead bodies floating about
The guts of the young lads churn up
But what they say isn't true.

Cried 'soft' the boys cower at the
screches from the sergeant
The boys will do as they are told
Yelling is all we have left
But what they say isn't true

The truth - No adventure, no
patriotism, where is the King?
The truth – we are living in the Hell
where youth and laughter go.

By Isabelle Wright



Saviour

One day soldier's drinking merrily
Next day, my pal was stupid enough
to shoot himself in the head.
Some would say a coward – but they
don't know.

The trench we call home
Lice cling to us.
Rats - feasting on dead bodies
Woodlice drink our blood
Everything around me was Hell

I was happy when the war ended
I was wanting to celebrate with my
family
But it was too soon.
Too many memories of Hell.

I saved my country.
Who is going to save me?

By Matty Tyler

Yes, Sir, Yes

Don't listen to what they say
Lies all lies
Embrace the gun
The saviour of a soldier's life
Sir, yes Sir.

They say it is glamorous and pretty
No quitters fight to the end.
Life is war here
Sir, yes Sir.

Blood and guts
screams of pain.
Exploding death.
Bombs of doom.
Do as you are told.
Yes, Sir yes.

Hiding behind the trench
Protect yours and your pal's lives.
They matter the most
Look left, look right
A glimpse, my pal, shot.
Carry on marching
Carry on fighting
Sir, yes Sir.

By Kendra Bradley



The Marching Men

We're the marching men
We hide in the bunker
We call it the den
The first bomb boomed.
The shell shock hit
Then the bullets,
Then the reality.

Bodies got shot – swelled, they stank.
I was no longer scared,
but this was no prank.
So many lice, so many mice, so much death.

At last, back home, forget about war.
I open the door, take a step inside,
I am safe now.
I feel happy now –
I only march in my dreams.

By Shay Thompson

The Pressure of War

My son said he didn't want to go to war,
He's gone!
Gone to war without telling me.

He is too young,
He's gone!
I am worried to death about him.

I miss my son,
He's gone
I want him back.

I love my son,
He's back!
Never to go to war again.

I am happy now, not like before
He is home.
I do not want him to leave, I abhor war.

I asked my son, 'Why did you go?'
He said "The pressure,
the pressure of war."

By Dean Donohue



Reality of War

Marching through the cheering crowds
With our pals.

Kissing our mother's goodbye.

Seeing your friend's head blown off

All alone, can't take any more.

Help, help, heeeellpppp!

Can't hear

Getting dizzy

Can't breathe

Collapsing.

Blood through my shirt...

Drip, drip, drip

Getting your gun out.

Too late...

By Ashleigh Croft

War Horse

At the start I was proud, brave and intelligent
My happiness turned to sadness and anger.

I don't know what to do.

If I stay, I am a coward, if I go, I am a hero.

People getting killed

blood dripping – drip, drip, drip.

Shocked! I'm anxious!

Nervous, powerful – I try to look noble.

All words good and bad fill my head.

I'm losing my life!

Shells going off – BOOM!

I can't breathe properly, is this a Godsend?

I am going to DIE! I don't want to die.

But I also hope that this is the end.

By Yasmin Kerwick



The Horror and Torture of War

Marching, trenches and mud.
It's horror and torture.
Nowhere to go-
Nothing to do except fight!

Loud bombs, bullets flying
It's horror and torture.
Horrified, scared soldiers,
Be proud of the fighting!

Proud, brave hero?
It's horror and torture.
Mud swallows us whole
Bullets and bombs everywhere.

Happy, excited, freedom.
No more horror and torture.
War ending, marching home.
Time to forget –
time to enjoy with my family.

By Naomi Atkinson

In The Trenches

Men in trenches, shooting,
Rats crawling around, gnawing flesh.
Bombs go off.
Grenades explode.
Bullets fly.

Soldiers shocked at the sight of
blood.
Mud trampling over feet.
Death on repeat.

Flags tall, soldiers fall.
Men appear fearless,
Inside they feel hopeless.

I thought it would be fun,
now I want it to be done.

By Caiden Robson



The Great War

Marching, trenches, mud.
It's horror and torture!
Nowhere to go
Nothing to do except fight!
Loud, bombs, bullets firing.

Scared soldiers cower.
It's horror and torture
Be proud of the great war.
Proud, brave, heroes.
Bullet firing everywhere.

Happy, excited, freedom.
No more horror and torture.
War ending, marching home
time to rest-
enjoy the time with family.

[By Lewis Hind](#)

My Neighbourhood

Signing up - a day to feel patriotic.
I feel powerful.
I'm doing it for my pals and my gal.

At war, every day for a hopeless lie.
I am powerless.
I'm full of aggression
I don't want to die.

I feel traumatised, no home no hope.
I am powerless.
Going home is just a dream.

All I want – is to spend some time in
My Neighbourhood.
See my pals, see my gal.

[By Kayden Tolmie](#)



The War

Bullet shots are all you can hear.
Then the whistling of bombs.
Screams crying out, the squelching of
mud.

The men wanted an adventure
Now Men hope for help.

We Remember:
When they had spirit,
When they had hope,
When they had bravery,
Deep within their hearts.

It was full of humour on the way there,
Where they didn't expect what was
coming,
Where they didn't expect death was
leaning over them.
They could not see the shadow at the
end of their path,
When they joined,
When their path seemed long and then
grew short.

So, all you young people,
next time think twice.
Your honourable decision could lead to
the end of your life.

By Darcie Wild

The Trauma of War

It is time to sign up to the War
Excited to go,
People marching,
Not knowing what to expect,
Everyone proud of themselves.

Trenches muddy
Rats crawling around the floor
I said to myself, "I don't know
about this anymore."
It was like hell, but even worse!
We had no freedom at all.

I then gave up with the war
Not knowing what to do anymore.
Acting all happy even though we
were depressed.
Dead bodies rotting, soldiers
with trench foot.
Beds so uncomfortable our heads
hurt.

I asked myself 'Why is the War not
over yet?'

By Lilith Umpleby

With grateful thanks & acknowledgement to:

- ✓ The children and staff of Tow Law Millennium Primary School for their enthusiasm and commitment in the research and creation of this anthology;
- ✓ The Heritage Lottery Fund for their generous support;
- ✓ Everything English Education Consultancy for their delivery of the historical & creative writing sessions across the summer term;
- ✓ To Kelly & Kate our volunteers from Sunderland University for their support.

