

*Spaniel in the Works Theatre Company and Age UK Gloucestershire
Present*

PASSCHENDAELE AT HOME



*Writing by the Ageing Well group
inspired by the lives of
Gloucestershire soldiers
who were at Passchendaele*

(Funded by the Passchendaele at Home project from the Big Ideas Company)



PASSCHENDAELE AT HOME

Spaniel in the Works Theatre Company are a Gloucestershire based theatre company performing a range of works and styles in a variety of venues including theatres, village halls, museums, art galleries and libraries. Formed in 2002 the company are also responsible for the annual Stroud Theatre Festival.

Passchendaele at Home is a nationwide research-and-remember project inviting communities across the UK to discover and remember servicemen who were wounded whilst fighting at the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917 and who died of their wounds in the UK. It is led by the Big Ideas Company and publicly funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
www.bigideascompany.org.

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William Josiah Chivers

Born July 1886

Died 22nd Nov 1917

William Josiah Chivers was born in Rainbow Hill in Worcestershire, the third child of Henry Thomas Chivers and Elizabeth Pullman.

Henry worked as a storeman for an engineers and before the outbreak of war, the family lived in 87, St Pauls Road, Gloucester. At this time William is described as being an “agent auto machinist”

William joined the army in December 1915. He was part of the Royal Engineers 26th Light Railway Section. He died of an illness on 22nd November 1917



Thoughts

Relieved to continue engineering and having involvement in the new light railway construction. It will make a big difference to the transport of men and ammunition considering the terrible state of the tracks – nothing better than mud paths.

The bulk transport of supplies should make it easier for everyone – except.....when tragedy strikes with all the ammunition in one place. What an explosion and a direct hit carrying troops will cause such loss – doing the damage of scores of German machine guns. Spared the infantry man's honour at the front and probably worse for a direct hit, with a ready supply of shrapnel – rails, wagons, locos and ammunition

Dreams

*Dreaming of being home again,
Is the only thing that keeps me sane.
Rainbow Hill is embellished in my being
Only the noise, filth and trauma stop me seeing.*

*How I wish this ghastly war would stop
As I see my mates going over the top
They don't come back and one by one
They will be all gone, dead and done.*

*Will I be able to survive this?
The thoughts of Rainbow Hill and home are bliss.
Tell the folks back home I miss them more and more.
My brain, my body, my heart and soul are sore.*

*My life back home if very dear
Now the days are filled with fear
Be assured I love you all
Remember this always should I fall.*

William Charles Phillips
Born 5th March 1884
Died 17th December 1917

William Charles Phillips was born in Tetbury in Gloucestershire, the son of Charles Phillips and Elizabeth Hooper

His father Charles, worked as a baker before his death in 1894 when William was only 10 years old.

William lived with his aunt and uncle in Tetbury and worked as a groom. On 7th November 1905 he married Violet Cook and they had 5 children.

William joined the Army Service Corps as a driver on 4th November 1914. He was discharged on 20th January 1917 under King's Regulations 392 paragraph xvi. His condition was described as:

“.....confused and disorientated. Is much demented and memory greatly impaired. Physical signs indicative of general paralysis, articulation greatly impaired, coarsely tremulous, pupils fixed, considerable paresis....not result of active service but aggravated thereby. Permanent, total incapacity. Neurasthenia”

On 13th June 1917 was admitted to Gloucester County Asylum

He died on 17th December 1917.

Letters Home

Dear all,

I haven't got much time to tell you much. I am holding up to what is happening. Things are not nice. At least we will be having meat tonight. Another horse dropped dead with exhaustion. Miss you all. Won't be long before I am home.

Dad

We've travelled on water – not my be all. You would have liked this.

Now mum has got the message – don't spend too much time on the naughty step. I pray each day address my thoughts to my photograph. The animals in my charge have to behave – no more favourite rides – you will hear more about it.

I finish, my mug of the best brew is here. Keep the kettle boiling.

Dear Mother,

I hopes that you are well as I worry. I know that Violet will see you alright if you gives a hand with the little 'uns. It is pretty grim here. It does not stop raining and it's just mud, mud, mud. The food is poor, we do with some of dad's baking. I dream of crusty bread and the smell instead of sweat and damp.

You can keep France, give me old Tetbury and the hills any day. It's so flat apart from the holes and the trees or what's left of them.

Give auntie and uncle my love. They was good to me till I met Violet. Do visit her mum, won't you? We will soon be home the Captain said so and he's a good chap and never wrong.

Love Bill

Archibald Wilfred Smith
Born 29th March 1884
Died 23rd September 1917

Archibald William Smith was born in Tuffley, the ninth child of George Smith and Harriet Parker.

George was a carpenter and Archibald became his apprentice. The family lived in Howard Street, Gloucester.

In 1903, Archibald married Emily Rosina Whiley and they had three children Ruby, George and Albert.

Archibald joined the Royal Engineers as a sapper and died on 23rd September 1917 in Newcastle.



A Letter to Father

Dear father,

Thank you for your letter which was recieved this week. You appear to work very hard and for long hours. Mother is missing you very much, as am I.

Grandfather has taken on a new apprentice but says that he does not work as hard as you did.

Last month we recived notifiication to say that Uncle John had been killed during the battle of Passchendaele. We are all very sad to hear about this. Please be careful and come home safe.

If it is possible we would like to send you a parcel for Christmas. Please tell me what you would like for Christmas and I will tell Father Christmas to see if it is possible to get the reindeer to the front and find you. Mother has already started to knit you a pair of socks and I am making you a Christmas card.

Mother tells us stories about the war but tries not to scare us. I hope that this terrible war will be over soon, then we can go down to the park and play football again and you can teach me how to be a carpenter like you and grandfather.

I will pray every night for the end of this terrible war and that you will be sent home safe and soon.

Your ever loving son.

A mother to her son

Dear son,

I hope you are keeping well. We're all quite fit, seem to have missed the colds that are doing the rounds.

The Government has sent us a young woman from the Woman's Land Army to help us while you are fighting for your country. Not much muscle on her but I'm sure she's had some good hearty farm food we will alter that.

Keep thinking of you and how much we miss you. Hope the weather's being kind to you. We've had such a lot of rain so messing with the harvest. Miss old Albert, our dear old horse, not the same without him here.

Glad you recived the parcel of cigarettes and chocolates, sorry the banana was a bit squashed. Won't send them again. Probably won't be having them much longer.

The family send their love to you. Hoping you will be home soon.

*Love
Mum x*



Remembering Passchendaele is a collection of writings by the Ageing Well group in Gloucester to look at Gloucester soldiers killed at the Battle of Passchendaele.

It was created as part of the Passchendaele at Home project a nationwide research-and-remember project inviting communities across the UK to discover and remember servicemen who were wounded whilst fighting at the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917 and who died of their wounds in the UK. It is led by the Big Ideas Company and publicly funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). www.bigideascompany.org.

Ageing Well are a group of older people who carry out a range of creative tasks from writing and knitting to performance. The group is supported by Age UK Gloucestershire.

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