

THEY SURVIVED BUT AT WHAT COST?

LEGACY OF THE WAR

The first world war left the UK with approximately 1,000,000 dead and missing, a figure that is often mentioned but not often mentioned is the figure of 2,000,000 military wounded. Many of these victims were amputees or had some form of horrendous facial disfigurements, some suffered the after effects of being gassed or were affected by shell shock. The people concerned had to live with the consequences for the rest of their lives.

"I wake in the morning and no longer are they there.
I scream in the night, is it courage or is it fear.
They fought this battle only once, yet I fight it every night."

Marshall. 1998 The Beaches of dead brothers.

Here are the stories of a few of the local people this applied to.



MEDICAL ADVANCES

First World War doctors and surgeons were presented with cases of horrific injury far outside the scope of their medical experience. They had to learn quickly, often experimenting with techniques that they would not normally have considered and as a consequence great strides in surgical procedures and plastic surgery were made.

The scale and type of physical injuries endured by soldiers in WWI challenged the ingenuity of prosthesis designers whose work to replace lost body parts would allow many to return to productive civilian life, this a process echoed today with many soldiers injured in the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns of our contemporary history.

It has been estimated that 240,000 British service men suffered some form of amputation during WWI

THOMAS LEONARD



Thomas was born in 1887 in Tottington near Bury. By the time of the 1911 census he had joined the Lancashire Fusiliers as a Private and was at that time serving in India. When war broke out in 1914, Thomas was in the Army Reserve and was despatched to France. He was in the battle of Mons. On Christmas Day 1914 he was sent down the line suffering from shell shock. So bad was he that he was sent home and did not return to France until August 1916.

Three months later he was severely wounded in the head and back, and was discharged as unfit the following year. Thomas suffered severely from the shell shock, and became so bad in November 1925 that he developed neurasthenia, which rendered him both deaf and dumb. In spite of these deficiencies, he went back to work as a weaver in the mill at Salterforth. The neurasthenia then made him bedfast, and his wife, also a weaver, had to come home to nurse him. After three weeks the nervous disorder spread to his eyes and he became totally blind. Five years later the local newspaper reported on a miraculous recovery of speech and hearing by a shell-shocked ex-serviceman, who had been without these faculties for over five years, in the village of Salterforth. This is not all for the man has partially regained his eyesight which left him six weeks ago. Later he was to suffer more trauma with the removal of both legs through gangrene.

Thomas Leonard died in 1962. It doesn't bear thinking about what this man went through. He was one of the unsung heroes of the 1st World War. He was awarded the following medals: 1914 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal. This seemed stark compensation for a lifetime of suffering.

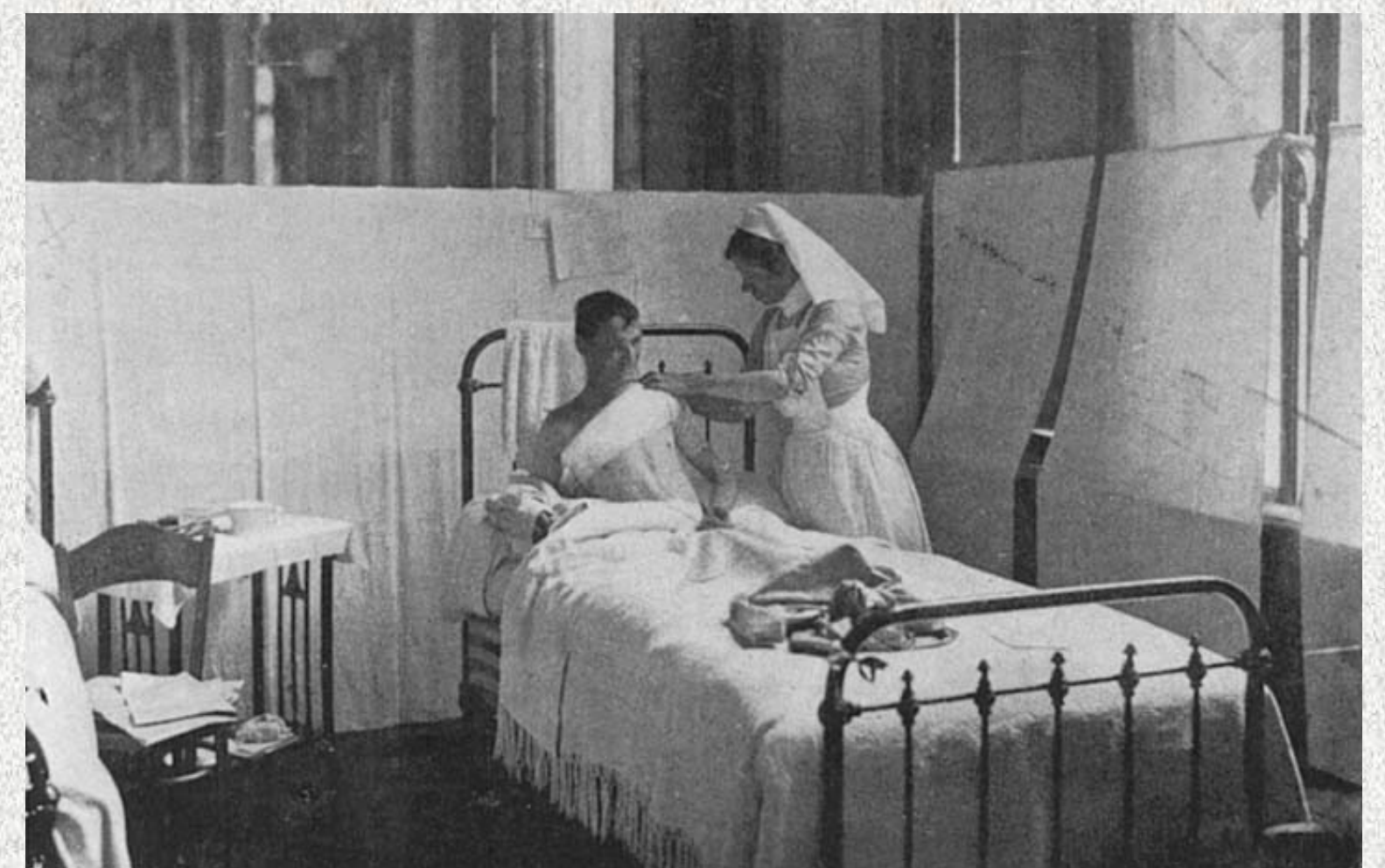
WRIGHT FIRTH



Lance-Corporal Wright Firth who had a leg amputated and who suffered severely from gas poisoning was hospitalised in Le Havre, France. Wright, the son of Squire Firth, was born in 1893. He worked in Birley's mill prior to joining the 10th Battalion Duke of Wellington's regiment, along with his brother Walter Firth.

Writing home to sister Edith from training camp Wright tells how he "arrived at Ashford from Maidstone; 19 miles we go today on our last march. We passed Lord Kitchener yesterday", he added 15 miles today. Feel fit and well." Wright was severely injured on the Somme and following the amputation of his leg he was fitted with an artificial limb. His nephew, also called Squire Firth, recalls being sent to Earby station from time to time to collect a new leg delivered there for his uncle.

In 1922 Wright became a councillor on EUDC and twice was elected chairman of the Council, 1941-42 and 1947-48. He died in 1954 aged 61 and Mr Atkinson of Skipton, who attended his burial at Thornton, was one of the stretcher-bearers who carried Wright Firth from the Somme battlefield where he had been so severely wounded. Wright's brother Walter was gassed and invalided out of the army. He became the manager at Earby Co-operative.



FRANK MOORE



Gunner Frank Moore
Born: October 1893 Burnley Lancashire.
1911 Census: Living in Windy Bank Colne.
Occupation: Cotton Weaver.
1912 Marriage 13 January to Alice Bentley of Colne.
1914-1920:
Enlisted 16 January 1914 aged 21years.
Regiment: Royal Garrison Artillery.
Posted 17 November to No. 2 Depot Fort Rowner Gosport Hampshire.
Posted 17 December to No. 3 Depot Plymouth Devon.
Posted to France 1 March 1916.

Hospitalized in France with a shrapnel fragment in a shoulder which was left in place for the duration of his life.
Posted back to England 23 November 1918 and demobilised in 1920.

Frank and his wife Alice then became licensees of the Bay Horse public house in Market Street Colne. In 1926 they moved to Barnwood Road Earby. Frank returned to cotton weaving, and in 1933 they took the tenancy and licence at the Station Hotel Earby which at that time was owned by Massey's Brewery Burnley. They maintained the tenancy until 1949 which at that time was the longest sitting licensees in the area.

In 1950 Frank and Alice moved to Colne Road Earby where Frank took up work at the Bancroft Mill Barnoldswick as a loom sweeper. He retired in 1963.

In retirement Frank suffered a stroke and although it did not immobilise him he lost his conversational speech. Frank died peacefully in 1979 at 86 years of age.