

Perran-ar-worthal Local History Group

Following the AGM Joanna Mattingly gave an interesting talk entitled 100 Faces 100 Stories. Local historian Joanna was the manager of this project with aimed to highlight local Cornish stories of WW1. The idea was to find unusual “quirky” aspects of war stories.

Some of the stories Joanna featured were of recruiting “sergeants” Sir Arthur Quiller Couch who helped raise a regiment in Truro, entertaining the recruits to cream tea at his home in Fowey and cutting the mens toenails. The Reverend Archibald Wood of Gerrans also spurred the young men to enlist telling those that did not to leave the parish.

Many horses were requisitioned but Albert and Captain were hidden in a mine adit at Chapel Porth. In Sennen the donkey owned by local fishermen, was shot by Scottish soldiers as it wandered across the beach at night after not responding to three challenges of “Halt. Who goes there”.

Jan Pill (probably John Penberth) looked after horses for the Royal artillery but could not stand the cruelty. He deserted after home leave but decided to return to Plymouth to re-enlist, he re-joined the army as a stretcher bearer under a new name, luckily escaping the fate of most deserters, to be shot.

Many civilians were involved in the war in “reserved” occupations. Joe Snell was a market gardener. He kept a diary for many years, each entry a snippet of local & national news. Frank Parkyn from Lerryn ran the China clay works on a very reduced workforce, Army pay was higher than a clay workers!

Other men were exempt from army service for health reasons. Ronald Copeland (Trelissick) had poor sight but converted his car into an ambulance and served in France driving wounded soldiers. Other men refused to fight for reasons of conscience. John Sturge Stephens of the Quaker ropemaking family of Falmouth was Cornwall’s first Conscientious objectors. Others included Tom Tremewan and his brother John from Perranporth. Tom later wrote 2 books about life in Perranporth but the war years are omitted.

Men also served on other fronts, George Behenna of Mevagissey was sent on a special mission to sink battleships on Lake Tanganyika. The future Bishop of Truro, Joseph Hunkin served in Gallipoli as a chaplain.

Women also played their part in the war, Emily Hobhouse was the only person who went to Germany during the war to try & make peace. Fryn Jesse was a journalist

with the expeditionary forces, and locally Margaret Lidgey of Cosawes was the only female mine captain.

More details of these and many other fascinating stories can be found on the 100 faces 100 stories website <http://www.100firstworldwarstories.co.uk>