

HOW DO YOU FIND OUT WHAT YOUR FAMILY DID IN WW1?

Presented by Matt Baker

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World War One is full of stories of sadness, heroism and sacrifice. And I was keen to find out what role my family played in the war.

My dad told me about my great-granddad - Tommy Baker. Early on in the war he volunteered to go to the front. Now my dad has told me that he was a cement worker from Hull who signed up to join one of the Pals' Battalions that was raised from the city.

Well, we know that he was in the transport section but really, other than that, our knowledge is pretty sketchy. So today I'm hoping to find out quite a bit more about what Tommy and his pals got up to.

David Bilton is an author who's written extensively about the World War One and the Hull Pals my great-grandfather belonged to.

Matt: Where does the name Hull Pals come from? What's all that about?

David: Your great-grandfather was from Hull. And he joined the army in Hull. So there's the first part of it.

There was four and a half thousand men all joined up together but they were linked by streets, by friendship or by occupation, pals. So, like, your great-grandfather could well have walked out from the cement works with two of his friends and said, "Let's go and sign on now. We're all from the cement works, we're all doing the same job, let's join".

Here's my great-granddad Tommy with his pals in the 11th Tradesmen Battalion. He became a mule man in the transport regiment.

Matt: What would have been his role?

David: His role was to make sure that the people that were going to do the fighting had everything that they needed. He would have come over every night and dumped the material in the specific places, so there would be a grenade dump, a small arms ammunition dump; there would be a food dump and he would be taking things, and then going back, and each night he would do that.

And on the very spot David's brought me to, Tommy was involved in one of the bloodiest battles of World War One, The Battle of Arras, which claimed over 4,000 casualties every day. As a mule man part of his job was to carry the wounded back to safety.

Matt: He must have seen some horrific things then.

David: Yes, particularly as he would take the wounded back in the evening, in the dark, when the night came down. They would just put them over the saddle.

Matt: Just lay them over the mules and then just yomp back. God! You just feel so proud... You just feel so proud of what he did.

It has been remarkable finding out what my great-granddad Tommy got up to during the war. And now, you can find out more about the role that your family played in World War One.

Images Mary Evans, Imperial War Museum, Matt Baker