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## Introduction

Discovering the 'Class of 1916' with the Class of 2016 has been an exciting and revealing journey.

We were lucky enough to find the Grassmoor Elementary School log book from 1916. Mr Charles Mason, the Headteacher for 28 years including those of the First World War, filled in his log books with real care and detail.

There was a strong sense of who he was; his pride in the school and the boys; love of football; care for his staff; and interest in the war.

*"Mr Mason is still alive in his log book."*

Morgan

This book shares some of the events and people that are mentioned or connected with the log book. There is also creative writing from the Class of 2016 and responses to their discoveries.

Whitworks Adventures in Theatre have brought the project to life creating drama experiences using real documents. Some of the stories in the book have been dramatised in the classroom so that the

Class of 2016 could understand the feelings and situation of the people of Grassmoor in 1916.

The project has included Derbyshire Records Office coming into the classroom and sharing World War I documents with the class. The class have visited the Digital Humanities Centre at the University of Nottingham, where they had the opportunity to scan objects and documents. The Class of 2016 also visited Armley Mills and experienced a World War I classroom.

We hope that you will enjoy sharing our journey, and experience the same excitement as you discover our research and stories.



## **Boys in the Class of 1916**

### **Is Your Ancestor Here?**

John Boam	Percy Skelland
Tom Baker	Arthur Hollingworth
John Gibbs	Stanley Stubbs
Fred Rhodes	Horace Fantom
Albert Holmes	John Siddall
Frank Rowe	Ernest Wilkinson
Ernest Hill	Joseph Alton
Reggie Hodgkin	Stanley Scothern
Victor Burnham	James Scothern
William Tideswell	Timothy Kirk
William King	Alfred Walker
Joseph Roe	Richard Bell
George Bedford	Clifford Beckett
Oscar Harper	Joseph Moore
Nathan Thompson	John Tideswell
Reuben Fletcher	Joseph Millington
Alan Bramley	Arthur Bridget
James Smith	Arthur Crampton
Tom Aiken	Percy Holmes
Arthur Brightly	George Alton
Rowland Hill	William Ord
Arthur Robinson	Richard Boam
John Smith	Walter Careless
John Capewell	Albert Bailey
Ernest Dawes	Bernard Trickett
Joseph Tuckett	Joseph Hardwick
John Smith	Edwin Holmes

## **Creative Writing**

Using what they had discovered about life in 1916 the Class of 2016 wrote to describe the differences between the centuries :

### **Home and School Then and Now**

*Scraping and scratching noises as chalk makes contact with  
slate.*

There's nothing but silence when the crumpled  
paper's marked with lead.

*Rattling noises travelled through the air as wooden toys are  
shaken.*

Loud noises echo as little fingers gently tapped on  
a digital screen!

By Megan, Bethany, Kyra, and Kameron

### **Travelling to School 1916**

*The rough roads clatter as the carts move against them.*

*The harshness scrapes against my leather soles.*

By Liam

## Children's Lives Then and Now

*As ink touches paper, Mr Mason reports on football.*

As the motors start-up, cars stream past my open  
window.

*The click of the clank of the train tracks and the children  
unaware of the dangers ahead.*

As I walked across the grassy field, I could see  
houses in the distance.

*The gravel like paving scrapes against my leather shoes.*

With the electrical current suddenly the light turns  
on.

*The boys and girls retreat to their homes at 5 o'clock after a  
long school day.*

As children play on the park, it becomes to be a  
playful day.

*As chalk rubs against a rough blackboard, children's ears  
ring.*

100 years since war broke out, civilisation  
drastically grew.

By Kaydee, Lydia, Ethan and Jenson



Grassmoor from the 1918 OS map

## Farming Then and Now

*The crunch of the gravel was made by the rough hooves from  
the cow.*

The smell of the fresh, creamy milk hit the air as  
the machinery started up.

*The boy's face lit up with a smile as the cow produced milk.*

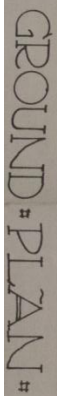
In a blur the bucket was filled up with the help of  
the rattling machinery.

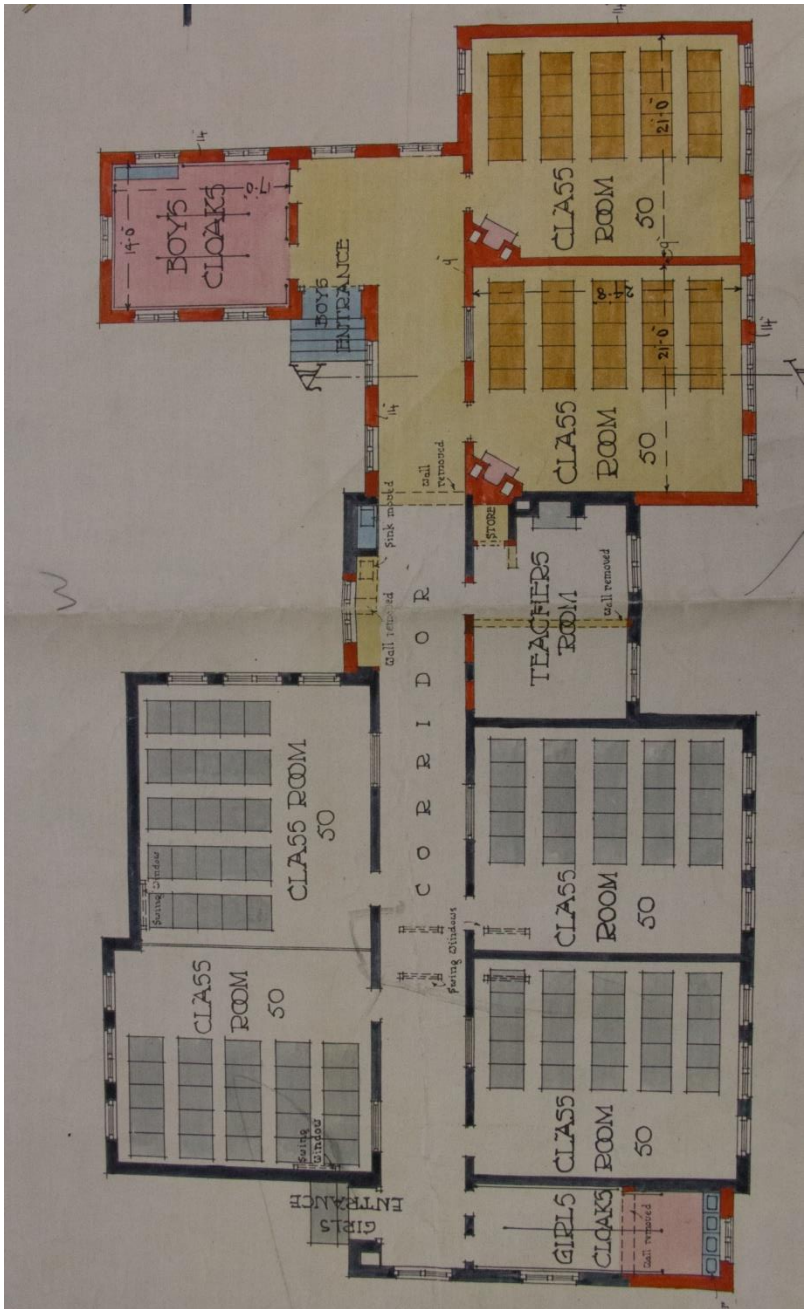
By Madison, Ava, Abigail and Hope



Class of 2016 were fascinated by the school plans  
from 1910, especially when they could see their  
own classroom and noted that 50 children would  
have occupied the space in 1916!







## George Rushton's Story

Mr George Rushton joined the school as a teacher in July 1914. He was originally from Abbots Bromley in Staffordshire and had trained to teach in Birmingham. During the following year and a half, he proved an admirable addition to Grassmoor Elementary School. Much loved by the boys, he put tremendous effort into Mr Mason's beloved football teams, and would often stand in to run the school for Mr Mason when the Headteacher was suffering with his nerves.

The British Government introduced conscription in 1916 and in January George was called up. Mr Mason wanted to appeal the decision, the education committee did not support this view and so teacher George Rushton became Private George Rushton, 241761, of the 2/6 Battalion Sherwood Foresters. George was sent to Watford for his basic training.

*Please see over for Mr Mason's logbook entry about Mr Rushton's conscription.*

1916  
(Jan. 10 - Jan. 14/16)

Jan. 10 Re-opened school. Good attendance.  
If we attend well, that is, gain good To this month, the whole day for To may be gained.

11 Managers' Meeting. Correspondent instructed to write to Educ<sup>n</sup> Committee to ascertain if they intend to appeal against M<sup>r</sup>. R. being called up so soon. Atte<sup>r</sup> officer's visit.

14 The Committee do not intend to move in the matter. Have today sought to make arrangements with P. teachers. Nothing settled as yet. M<sup>r</sup>. R. asked to be released today.  
Wkly To = 94.2 St V. 96.1

So on February 1 1916, Grassmoor Elementary School gathered to say goodbye to Mr Rushton.



Watchmakers in Admiralty.

**Mappin's Famed Luminous 'Campaign' Watch**

This fine movement wristlet watch was first used in great numbers at Omdurman. And desert experience is the severest test a watch can have.

During the last Boer War it received its high reputation for reliability under trying conditions.

It is commemorated and jewelled. In silver case with steel inner case.

It is fitted with a luminous dial, which shows the time on the blackest of nights.

**£2:10:0**

**Mappin & Webb LTD**

Subsidiaries to His Majesty King George V.

115, 117, Oxford St., W. N. Queen Victoria St., E.C.1, London.  
22, Regent St., W. Royal Warrant, 1907.

As a mark of respect he was presented with an illuminated watch from the teachers and scholars. This was an extremely prestigious and expensive present.

George Rushton's leaving event was recorded by Mr Mason in his log book:

33	(Jan. 31 - Feb. 11/16)
Jan. 31	M <sup>r</sup> R. absent - at home prior to sailing.
Feb. 1	M <sup>r</sup> Rushton's last day at school for the present. Teachers & scholars presented him with an illuminated wristlet-watch. We all are very sorry to lose his services, yet one and all are proud that he has nobly responded to the call of King & Country. In making an effective reply, he urged the boys to maintain their good name during these trying days, and thanked all for the kind way in which he had always been received by parents, teachers & scholars. {Zeppelin laid over Midlands last evening}
2	Half-holiday - Sale of Work in school.
4	Holiday all day (7% for 2 wks.) Att <sup>ce</sup> Officer's visit Jan 31/16 Wkly. % = 94.8 St. M. 99.6 % (Splendid) (Feb. 7 - Feb. 11/16)
7	Att <sup>ce</sup> Officer's visit.
8	Read a letter from M <sup>r</sup> Rushton to the scholars Permitted boys to reply to it. He is now 4855 M.C. G. Rushton, 3/6 <sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters "C" Comp <sup>y</sup> and is stationed at Watford Herts. Filled in att <sup>ce</sup> made by Mr. Barber



The Class of 2016 used drama to re-create this event from 1916.



The Class of 2016 had an exciting time using their historical detective skills to pin-point exactly who George Rushton's fiancée was and where she lived. Eventually it was established that she was Sally Scothern of Windwhistle House. Her family were a major presence in the life of Grassmoor and her brother, Clifford, was at Grassmoor Elementary School in 1916.

Here is a sequence of letters imagined and written by the Class of 2016 between Private George Rushton and Sally Scothern.

*My dearest Sally,*

*It's different being a soldier since I studied for being a teacher. It's hard training to be a soldier. My days at the training have not been that well. I am okay, I'm safe for a while. I have made a lot of new friends. Make sure to stay strong.*

*With love George.*

***Dear George my love,***

***I hope you tell me the truth soon. Am going to bear with it for now. Whenever you feel comfortable to tell me. Just tell me! And I will always love you. Don't you worry. Don't stress yourself out. Keep safe.***

***Sincerely your love, Sally Scothern.***

*Dear Sally,*

*My training is going well, apart from the hurt in my heart from seeing you. We've done gun training and I injured my arm, the constant bleeding getting on my nerves. Thick, sticky, red blood on my bandages. But I am okay. The early mornings jogging to warm up for the day ahead. I'm so sorry but I have to go back to training.*

*I hope to see your stunning face again.*

*Yours truly George Rushton.*

***Dear George,***

***I miss you, every day I wake up not knowing if you are safe. I want you in my arms where I***



***know you are safe. I cooked your favourite today, raspberry crumble. The smell brought back memories of you sitting next to me at the dinner table. I'm crying just thinking of you.***

***Your true love Sally.***

*Dear Sally,*

*My training is at a higher level than I thought it would be. The exhaustion is unreal. It hurts me inside, waking up every day without you. The atmosphere is uninhabitable especially the ice cold, misty air surrounding me. I have one minor injury: a small cut laid across my finger. I long to see your beautiful face again.*

*From G Rushton.*

***Dear George,***

***My sweetest George, I understand the circumstances. I love you with all my heart; I believe you can make it out alive! I hope you're okay. I can't wait for you to come home, you're doing the right thing.***

***Love from Sally.***

*Dear Sally my precious,*

*There is not much I can tell you as it might break your heart. I really miss you. I can't tell you how much I long for you but I'm okay and safe. Well, I will never be safe but I'm doing this to you and to serve my country.*

*The purpose of this is to defeat the others and in this tragedy. I'm so sorry that you have to go through this.*

*From the depths of my heart, your beloved George.*

*PS I love you no matter what.*

***Dear George,***

***Please! Please!***

***George don't endure the war for me, for if I am to die well that would be God's will. This choice is up to you.***

***I just only wish I could see you again. I would even sell my soul to Satan.***

***A funny thing happened yesterday I baked your favourite dish (raspberry crumble).***

***I hope you received your parcel.***

***I have acknowledged you don't always get them but I hope you get this one.***

***I am scared but I hope you live and I swear I will stay strong.***

***Sally.***

*Dear Sally,*

*My dearest Sally, how I wish I could tell you the truth as part of this is a lie. As you know my loving heart is yours and I hope you feel the same way...*

*Although I had no choice to come here I'm making the best of it and the conditions are "acceptable". So don't worry about me.*

*Sincerely your love, George Rushton.*

***My Precious George,***

***I am missing you so much my love. The war does sound horrible. You're so brave going. I would not be able to go and I would be so scared to go, so I would refuse. Nothing is***

*really happening at home. What is happening at war?*

*I do not want you at war. I want you at home.  
I do not want to go to war. You are a very  
brave young man. Your mother and father are  
worried about you and I said you are fine.  
They were very grateful.*

*I want you to be safe, I also want you to come  
home and be all right. Please come home,  
then you can have food every day.*

*Lots of love Sally.*

*Dear Sally,*

*I have missed you clearly. I won't be able to tell you the  
truth but there are things I just can't put into words.*

*How are things at home?*

*All I can see is death and all my patience has died out. So  
many pessimistic thoughts fill my head.*

*The conditions are mediocre.*

*I cannot write any more. I love you so much that it is the only reason I carry on.*

*Love George.*

***Dear George,***

***Thank you for informing me, I was starting to think you were gone. I am so relieved you are okay. I'm doing well thank you. It is really quiet without you. Please come home.***

***Everyone is worried about you. I'm waiting at the door every day for you. I really do miss you.***

***From the depths of my heart Sally Scothern.***

*Dear Sally*

*How I wish I could tell you the truth however I can't. This experience has been mind blowing, although I am weak without your love, I managed to keep my emotions to myself. The conditions are acceptable and the ration packs are okay so don't worry I'll be back someday.*

*Sincerely your love George Rushton.*

*Dear George,*

*I wish you would come back. I miss you so much and my life has gone down the wrong path since you left for the war. I'm not able to tell you how much I miss you. When will you come back and see me?*

*From Sally.*



Cards brought in by Hope

## **The Easter Rising in Dublin April 1916**

The 2/6 Sherwood Foresters were sent to Ireland  
in response to the Rising

### **Private Rushton's imagined recollection of his journey and the first few days in Ireland:**

*"It was Easter Monday and we were all enjoying ourselves relaxing in the park in Watford. Suddenly a message came from the barracks, we were all to return immediately.*

*By Tuesday morning we were on a train travelling to the fighting. But we weren't heading south.... Towns passed and it became clear we were travelling north.*

*We were crowded onto boats. Can you imagine our horror when we landed in Dublin? It was Ireland. It was our country. As we marched into Dublin we were cheered by the crowds.*

*It felt like we were on holiday until the snipers started.*

*It was particularly terrible as we were made to march across a narrow bridge. It became knee deep in dead and wounded...."*

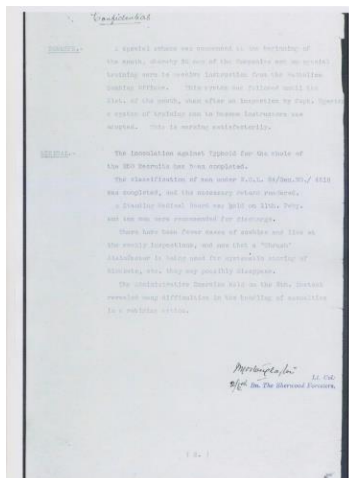
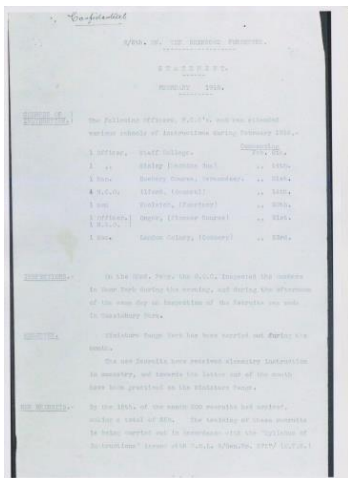
Here are two responses from children in the Class of 2016 when they learnt about and experienced the Easter rising.

*"I had mixed emotions about the Easter Rising. I felt mostly scared but kind of sick at the same time. It also made me sad because of all those men who lost their lives."*

Jenson

*"I also have mixed feelings for the Easter Rising because the Irishmen weren't fair with the English and they hurt a lot of people. A lot of Englishmen died out there."*

Kaydee



Sherwood Forester's Training Diary from Watford



## Mr Mason's log book entry on the Easter Rising:

Again on the following Thursday upon my return from my holidays we defeated Barrow Hill at Grassmoor 4-0  
May 5/16 Linn Fain Rebellion in Dublin has been vigorously put down during the last 10 or 12 days. Mr. Rushton or rather Private G. Rushton was among the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters who were dispatched on Easter Tuesday under very short notice to engage in stamping out this rising. We are pleased to hear that Pte. Rushton is quite well after his first baptism of fire.  
100 eggs in all up to the present have been contributed.

*Mr Rushton, or rather Private G Rushton was among the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters who were dispatched on Easter Tuesday under very short notice to engage in stamping out this rising. We are pleased to hear that Private Rushton is quite well after his first baptism of fire.*

George Rushton stayed in Ireland for the rest of the year. Early in 1917 he returned to this country and was then sent to France in April. 10 days later he was killed during a British attack near Hancourt, in the Somme. He is buried in Bellicourt British Cemetery nearby.

The Derbyshire Times on Saturday, June 2 published the following letter written by Private G.H.Sault to George's fiancée, Sally Scothern of Windwhistle House, Grassmoor.

**Private Sault:** *Your letter and paper arrived today but my friend, Private George Rushton, I am very sorry to tell you that he was killed in action on April 27. I'm returning the letter but not the paper, as I don't think you would wish for it, and seeing that it is the Derbyshire Times it is greatly appreciated. I cannot tell you anything about how he met his death, only that he fell doing his duty. He was a great friend of mine, we have been chums since joining up. Please accept my deepest sympathy, trusting you will be able to bear the news bravely. -Believe me. Yours sincerely Private G.H.Sault.*



## GRASSMOOR CASUALTIES.

The residents of Grassmoor and Hasling will learn with the deepest regret that Private



George Rushton, of the Notts and Derbys, has been killed in action in France. Prior to enlistment he was assistant schoolmaster at the C.V. School, Grassmoor, which position he had held for 12 months. His loss is keenly felt by the staff and scholars alike, with whom he had become a general favourite. He took a great interest in the

**PIE. G. RUSHTON.** lads, not only in the school, but equally away from school, and led them often to victory in hard-fought games at football. Most courteous and cheery in disposition, a genial spirit, and the stamp of man that left its impress on the hearts of friends who now mourn his loss. Private Rushton was but 24 years of age, a native of Yeatshall, near Rugeley, Staffordshire. His college days were spent at Salter's College, Birmingham. He joined the Forces on February 1st, 1916, and went into training at Watford. He passed through the Irish Rebellion, and remained at Dublin and the Curragh for some considerable time. On returning to this country, he was stationed at Salisbury Plain and Lönth. He left England for France on April 10th, 1917, and was soon in the thick of the fray, unfortunately falling 12 days after arriving at the Front.

In a letter to his fiancée, Miss Scothorn, Windchill House, Grassmoor, Pie. H. Sauls says:—Your letter and paper arrived to-day for my friend, Pie. Geo. Rushton, but I am very sorry to tell you that he was killed in action on April 22nd. I am returning the letter but not the paper, as I don't think you would wish for it, and seeing that it is in the *Derbyshire Times*, it is greatly appreciated. I cannot tell you anything about how he met his death, only that he fell doing his duty. He was a great friend of mine, we having been chums since joining up. Please accept my deepest sympathy, trusting you will be able to bear the news bravely.—Believe me, yours sincerely, Pie. G. H. Sauls.

# The Story of Levi Hill

This is a story that the Class of 2016 thought was important to share because it moved them and made them realise how “free range” the children of 1916 were, compared to children’s lives today..

## Mr Mason’s Logbook entry on Levi Hill April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1916

the time.  
(Ap. 3 - Ap. 7/16)  
Ap. 3/16 Sorry to report that Levi Hill<sup>(S.N)</sup> was killed by Express yesterday at the level crossing (Bellman)

Ap. 3/16 (cont.) The Teachers & Scholars have decided to send a wreath as an expression of their deep sympathy. Surplus cash<sup>contributed</sup> to be spent in purchasing something useful in the way of attire for his elder brother (Rich. Hill) in St. V.  
Result of Return Match against Brimington at Frassmoor. Won - 3-0. (a very exciting & well attended game.)

In the Courier on 8 April 1916 the following story appeared:

## **Danger Spot at Hasland. Level Crossing on Main Line. Grassmoor Child Killed.**

It is an account of the incident and the enquiry which was held at the Sportsman Inn, Grassmoor on Monday.

**Mr Hill:** We live at 22 Revel Street. I thought my son was playing in the yard at the time the accident occurred. He was a very quiet lad and not in the habit of going out. I don't know what made him go.

**Mr Darnall:** I am the signal man at the Avenue signal box.

**The Coroner:** Please can you describe the signals and where they are.

**Mr Darnall:** The crossing is over five sets of lines. There is a cart track across, but the gates were locked and the key is kept in the signal box. There are small swing gates for the use of the public. There is a subway under which the River Rother flows. This is frequently used by the carts in preference to crossing the lines except when the river is in flood. It is however, impossible for passengers to pass under as there is no footbridge over the stream.

**The Coroner:** it seems a dangerous thing for children to be playing about such a crossing.

**Mr Darnall:** I agree but there is no means of warning or preventing children from crossing except by shouting from the signal. These are the happy hunting grounds of scores of children on Sundays and during summer evenings.

**The Coroner:** Please could you describe the incident.

**Mr Darnall:** When I went on duty at the Avenue signal post at 2 PM on Sunday, at least 50 youngsters were playing about. About 3:11 PM, I set the signals for a goods train on the way up the line and for the 1:50 PM Derby to Leeds express on the downline.

I looked through the window of my box and saw that there were two children staring through the hand gate and standing on the downline to watch the goods train pass. I opened the window of the signal box and shouted and motioned to the two women standing with a perambulator on the outside of the swing gate.

**Emily Ashmore (witness from Wingfield Road, Grassmoor):** Six boys were playing on the

opposite side of the line. Immediately the brake of the goods train had passed they made an attempt to dash across the line seeing that the express was nearly on the level with the crossing. I called to them to stop as I was absolutely terrified. Five of them did so. But Hill continued to run.

**Mr Darnall:** He had almost got clear over the lines when the left hand buffer of the engine which was travelling between 50 and 60 miles an hour struck him. Putting the signals at danger I went to Hill and found that he'd been killed instantaneously.

**The Coroner:** They would not know the express was coming?

**Mr Darnall:** No, but I had warned them only a few minutes previously not to cross the lines.

**The Coroner:** Can you tell me if there's been any other fatalities at the same crossing?

**Mr Darnall:** There have been two fatalities at the same crossing although it is far back in terms of years.

**The Coroner:** I recall level crossing fatality at Carr Vale some four years ago when five or six

children were killed, but in that case they had to cross the metals to go to school.

**Mr White (a member of the jury):** The crossing is a most dangerous one and the jury believe that there should be some means devised to ensure the safety of the public in crossing.

There are five sets of metals, including the mainline and shunting operations were going on during the daytime. When a goods train is passing the view of any approaching express is completely obscured from anyone standing at the gates waiting to cross.

It is a wonder that adults have not been killed. It is not really fit for any nervous person to cross.

There should be some method of locking the swing gates to prevent the public passing through when trains are approaching.

The signalmen in that box deserve great credit for the sharp lookout they have kept on the children and so prevented fatalities that may have occurred long ago. Quite recently a number of boys were caught tampering with the signals for which they were summoned.



**The Coroner:** It certainly would be better if some means could be devised whereby passengers could crossover safely. It seems that perhaps a subway could be devised.

The verdict of accidental death was returned. The jury recommended that this crossing was dangerous to foot passengers and other means should be put in place to ensure their safety.



**Picture of Grassmoor High Street in 1908**

# The Story of Annie Thomas

*“Annie Thomas is a normal school girl, so maybe people will look at us in 100 years”*

Kaydee

By looking at the 1911 census the Class of 2016 discovered that a young lady called Annie Thomas, living at 26 Chapman Lane, Grassmoor, was the same age as them during 1916.

*“A census tells us about the family. For instance their names, where they live, their age, where they work, their relationships, the number of children and their birthplace.”*

Hope

*“From the census I have realised that the family had 18 children, but nine unfortunately had died. The information has raised some questions.”*

Megan

*“In the Thomas family there are 10! people living in their house. Whereas in my house which is the same size, I can only fit in three.”*

Morgan

The Class of 2016 decided to have a go at a few of the subjects which Annie might have experienced.

## Knitting



Mr Mason mentions in a logbook entry that a soldier came in and children were encouraged to knit socks for the troops. Unfortunately it was clear that no member of the Class of 2016 would be knitting any socks!

## Copying



## Health and Manners



On 24 July 1916, 'Health and Manners' was changed to 'Home Training' at Grassmoor Elementary School.

## Simple Dance - Waltz



The whole Class of 2016 performed their waltz together at the end of the session.

Mr Mason and the 1916 teachers would have been proud of them!

## Battle of Jutland

On May 31, 1916, Jutland, the great naval battle of World War I, was fought. The Class of 2016 explored this event.

This is what Mr Mason had to say:

June 5-9, 1916

*Address boys on naval victory won off Jutland (May 31). Great losses on both sides, those of Germany proving to be the greater, although according to the first reports ours apparently were. Adml Beattie with only his cruiser Squadron engaged the German High Seas Fleet, until Adml Jellicoe came up with his grand fleet, when the Germans fled behind their mines to their own posts. But for nightfall and low visibility very likely the whole German fleet would have been wiped out. As it was they suffered terribly. Result:-blockade intact, fleet still patrolling North Sea and commerce as usual. Hence fear of invasion more remote than ever. James Thomas, seaman (a former scholar) now over on three weeks leave, was engaged in this battle, his ship the "Barham" of the Queen Elizabeth class undergoing refurbishment.*

James Thomas is Annie Thomas's older brother.

(June 5 - June 9/16)

- June 5 Addressed boys on Naval Victory won off Jutland (May 31). Great losses on both sides, that those of Germany proving to be the greater, although according to first report ours apparently were. Admiral Beatty, with only his cruiser-squadron engaged the German High Seas Fleet, until Admiral Jellicoe came up with his grand fleet, when the Germans fled behind their mines to their own ports. But for night-fall & low visibility very likely the whole German <sup>Fleet</sup> would have been wiped out. As it was they suffered terribly. Result:- Blockade intact, fleet still patrolling North Sea & Commerce as usual. Hence, fear of invasion more remote than ever.
- James Thomas, Seaman, <sup>(a former soldier)</sup> now over on 3 wks' leave, was engaged in this battle, his ship the "Barham", of the Queen Elizabeth class, undergoing repairs.
- 6 Att<sup>ce</sup> officer's visit.

Yesterday, to the whole Empire's great regret (as well as that of the Allies & neutrals) Lord Kitchener & his staff were drowned <sup>(mainly)</sup>.

Mr Mason's log book entry on the battle of Jutland.

The children of the Class of 2016 imagined Annie and James saying goodbye at the train station at the end of his leave.

**This is how Connor imagined it.**

Annie: I don't want you to go.

James: Unfortunately, I have to go.

Annie: What if you get seriously injured?

James: Sorry! I have to go, mother will be here for you.

Annie: But I want you, I need you by my side.

James: And I will be there when I come back, and trust me I will come back.

Annie: What about John Cornwell, he died at sea.

James: I'll be fine, I survived it once, I'll survive it twice.

Annie: (*heavy breathing*) But the dangers are more common now the Germans know what they're doing.

James: Yes, but we also know what we're doing, I just need your trust to help me through... Please.



Annie: But here it is safe, you will stay safe here.

James: But people's lives are in danger, including yours.

Annie: As long you're safe with us then we are fine.

James: Annie, please I have to go, the train will be in in five minutes.



**Illustrated War News image of young Jack Cornwell a celebrated hero of Jutland**

**This is how Millie imagined it.**

Annie: I don't want you to go!

James: I'm sorry: I have to go, it's for your own good.

Annie: But why do you have to go?

James: Because the government is making me!

Annie: Why is the government making young boys go to war? Why can't they?

James: I don't know, all I know is I've got five minutes until my train comes.

Annie: But I don't want you to be like John Cornwall.

James: I'm sorry but my train is here, I've got to go. Don't worry I look after myself I promise. I'll write to you.

Annie: Nooo! James!

*(James gets on the train almost in tears while Annie's face is in her hands sobbing.)*

## The Alton Family

The Class of 2016 looked at the 1911 census for the Alton family; a family of 10 who lived at 2, Cross Street, Grassmoor.

*“The census also tells us that the Alton family is a very large family with seven males and three females. They have two daughters and six sons. It also tells us where they used to live. The Altons had written down a son but then crossed him out. We think that he had died at nine months... The census also tells us what they did for a job. Uriah Alton the head was a coal miner. His wife did not work. The oldest son was a pit pony driver.”*

Madison

Before William went to war, he worked alongside his father in the deep hard seam at Grassmoor colliery as a loader. Uriah was a Hewer.

George was seven and Alfred was three in 1911. In 1916 they would have been at Grassmoor Elementary School, and indeed their names were actually found on the admissions register.

This family had a very close connection to the Class of 2016. Two of the children, Isabel and

Madison, and a teaching assistant, Kaye, are all descendants of this family.

Isabel says: *“To me it feels strange and surreal learning so many different facts about my family. It actually made the project more difficult for me as there’s so many things to take in, it’s hard to process.”*

**Class of 2016 have imagined some of the letters that the family may have written to each other.**

*My Loving Brother,*

*I have only been here a few hours. How were mother and father after I left? I am so sorry that I had to leave. Is everyone else doing fine? And how are you my dearest brother?*

*It’s not like living at home here. The food is disgusting. It is so bland. It is nothing like mother’s cooking. I wish I was at home being entertained by Alfred and Maude. You are the dearest brother to myself, you are the only one I can write to because you are the oldest brother I have got.*

*Please do not come, it is monstrous here. You would not like it. I will be all right.*

*You are always in my heart. I will be coming home soon I promise you.*

*Your loving brother William.*

Madison

*Dear Brother,*

*How was your journey? I hope it was fine for you. I miss you lots. It is not the same without you here. I wish I could see you and I would like to be there with you.*

*You're the best brother I could have fighting for our country. I am very proud of you brother and I hope you will be safe there.*

*I am frightened for you and very scared. The family is fine but they miss you to. Your brothers and sisters are asking for you.*

*I will write again. Bye brother.*

*From George.*

Beth Clark

*My dearest Uriah,*

*I am writing to inform you my arrival in France was successful. The nerves have sadly got the better of me over the past five days. The exhaustion has captured my energy,*

*my body was not made to be put through this macabre war. The conditions are uninhabitable. I would like to inform you that it would not be my greatest pleasure if you notified mother and father of my recent emotions but I would like you to inform them I love them and miss them just greatly.*

*I am pleading that you are all well, my heart breaks at the thought of you in danger. It would satisfy me significantly if you send Wilfred goodnight from me...*

*You are always in my heart, your loving brother, William.*

Isabel

*To My Dearest Brother,*

*I cannot believe that you have gone off to war. It feels like a decade since you have left. I miss you so. It must be amazing you and your friends fighting to victory for our country.*

*I remember when we were little, we used to play wooden soldiers, me the officer and you the soldier. I cannot wait until I go to war. It is my dream to follow in your footsteps.*

*I hope life is treating you well. You are always in my heart and in my thoughts.*

*Your beloved brother, Uriah.*

Abigail

*My Dearest Brother,*

*It has just been a few days since I arrived in France, hope you are well. Do not tell mother and father that I am frightened, but tell them I am well.*

*How are mother and father? I cannot wait to see you. I hope the family is well.*

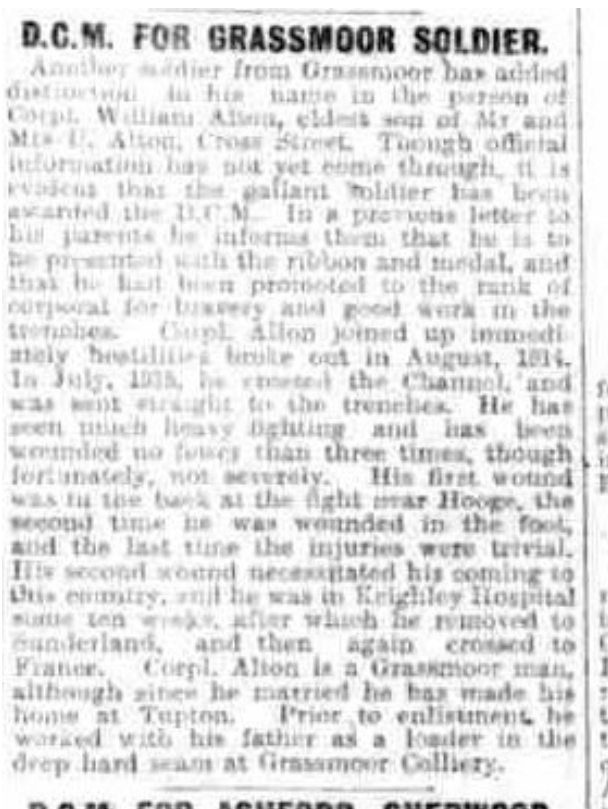
*I miss you all. I wish I could see you today. I hope you are splendid.*

*You are always in my heart, William.*

Kameron



This Derbyshire Times article from September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917 commemorates when William was decorated and tells a little more of his story.



William also appears in the War Graves Register having died on 11 June 1918, aged only 22.



## 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016, Talking to My Daughter, Kaye

*“It’s really hard to believe that my father’s eldest brother, uncle Bill (William Alton) who would have been only 19 and newly married would have joined a war to fight in France.*

*He was a miner alongside his father Uriah and wouldn’t have needed to join the army as miners were needed at home, but the propaganda used to enlist soldiers would have made going to fight for your country courageous and morally the right thing to do for young fit lads.*

*Having spoken to my father George about William, he had told me that William had told him that after battles he would try to retrieve his pals that had fallen so that they could have a decent burial.*

*This was a very brave thing to do as this could have resulted in his own death. I now know this to be true as in two letter sent to his mother and sister published in the Derbyshire Mercury he had confirmed to pals of his from Grassmoor had been killed and he assisted in burying them.*

*It’s only now that I can truly realise what this would have done to William mentally and physically. He knew after being injured himself that when at home recuperating he*

*told my father that if he went back to France he wouldn't be coming back. His fears were unfortunately true. I am so very proud of my uncle. He along with so many others were real heroes and deserve all the recognition for future generations. “*

Mr Kieth Alton



## **Thanks**

Kieth Alton

Pat Bradley

Beverley Calderbank

Matt Davies - University of Nottingham

Mike Noble - University of Nottingham

Becky Sheldon - Derbyshire Records Office

Kaye Walters

Jenny Warrington - Community Researcher

Gertie Whitfield - Whitworks Adventures in  
Theatre

Paul Whitfield - Whitworks Adventures in Theatre

Marjorie, Dougie and Anne - from Smithybrook  
View

Heritage Lottery Fund without whom this project  
would not have been possible.

## Acknowledgements

Derbyshire Records Office have supported this project.

Here are the DRO Document Reference Numbers for the documents quoted in this book:

Log Book	D4199/1/4
1918 OS Map	D7849/5/25.15
Admissions Register	D4199/2/2
Admissions Register 2	D4199/2/3
Architects Plans 1910	D2200/65/2.4

Newspaper articles are from the Derbyshire Courier and Derbyshire Times. They can be found online through the British Newspaper Archive.

## Photographs

p10 Imperial War Museum Collection  
p28 Commonwealth War Graves Commission  
p35 Public Domain  
p43 Illustrated War News 1916

Further information and stories can be found on the following websites:

[watheatre.co/grassmoor-class-of-1916](http://watheatre.co/grassmoor-class-of-1916)  
[history pin.org](http://historypin.org)  
[livesofthefirstworldwar.org](http://livesofthefirstworldwar.org)