

This Learning Resource has been produced by the South Gloucestershire in the First World War Project 2014 – 2018, a public engagement project commemorating the centenary of the First World War.

The people of South Gloucestershire served in the armed forces, became nurses and worked in factories. They made aircraft, motorbikes and boots for the servicemen; even the horses were sent to the front line of The Great War. This project tells the stories of the contribution that South Gloucestershire made to the First World War.

The Great War - Life in the Trenches - Alf Flux and his Kit Bag

KS 2/3

Children will learn what life was like for an ordinary soldier one hundred years ago in the trenches of the First World War.

National Curriculum: History/English

This learning resource follows the story of local man Alf Flux from boyhood in Hambrook to the trenches of the Western Front.

Teacher's information and suggestion notes.

This Learning Resource Contains:

- A PowerPoint presentation

(Downloadable with these teachers notes on the SGC project website)

- Accompanying Teacher's Information and suggestion notes for each slide
- Activity – Writing postcards
- Other Free First World War Project Learning Resources
- Feedback form
- It can also be used with the **Alf Flux and his Kit Bag Loans Box***, a replica kit bag full of handling objects, a soldier's personal belongings

* **Booking is essential for the loans box by emailing:** museums@southglos.gov.uk

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The Great War – Life in the Trenches

Alf Flux and his Kit Bag

Teachers Information and suggestion notes for each slide

This learning resource follows the story of local man Alf Flux from boyhood in Hambrook to the trenches of the Western Front in the First World War.

Here are further background notes for each slide of the accompanying PowerPoint for the storyteller to engage the audience by helping them to look really carefully into the images and expand on the slide text.

The Family Portrait

This is Alf with his mother and brothers and sister. We are very used to images, we take photographs on our phones all the time. One hundred years ago things were very different, few people owned a camera so people would go to a photographer's shop specially to have a portrait taken and they would want to present themselves as best as they could. People would wear their best clothes. Look how Alf's mother is wearing her best dress with her prized brooch at her neck. Tom has a smart new suit and his shoes are shiny, Kitty has a very clean pinafore and a neat hair ribbon, even the baby has new shoes. Alf, in the front, sitting on a box covered by a fur rug, has a smart sailor suit on, the fashion of the day for small boys. All the children are very clean and tidy. They have all been 'arranged' by the photographer, and when the photographer was ready, they had to sit very still or the photograph would come out blurry. That might be why they look a bit serious.

Ask the children: To sit up as if a photograph is going to be taken of them, are they tidy? Can they sit still to the count of 10?

Sit up with them, re arrange your clothes or hair slightly and count to ten.

School Photograph

Point out Alf. This photo was taken over one hundred years ago. For some of the children it would be the only photograph that was ever taken of them.

Ask the children: Have they had a school photograph taken?

Ask the children: If these children were dressed in your clothes would they look any different to children today?

Look at the clothes the boys are wearing, stiff white collars to their dark suits and short trousers.

The girls are also wearing dark, practical clothes.

Ask the children: Can you spot the child who could not keep still long enough?

School leaving age for Alf and his friends would be 13 years old when most of them would have to start work.

King and country

Here is Alf as a grown up, he would have been working on the family farm since he was a young teenager of thirteen, ten years ago. Now he is a man.

Ask the children: How would Alf hear about national and international news?

There is no TV, radio or computer and few people had telephones.

Ask the children: What did they have? Answer: Newspapers and cinema news reels, if you lived near a picture house. Posters were also very important.

Their worldview would have been very different to ours. What was happening in Bristol or even London would seem a very long way away. What was happening across the channel would seem like another world. News was not instant, it took time to spread.

Alf was a young man keen to experience the world and be part of the enterprise of war with his friends. It must have been very scary for him to say goodbye to his family, but exciting too. Very difficult for his family to see him go.

Kitchener

This is still one of the most famous posters ever. Lord Kitchener British military leader, statesman and secretary of state for war. Posters like this would have been commonly pasted on the walls in streets and in shops. It would have been very difficult not to be one of the 'gang' and join up, to be with your friends and to be seen to be defending the country.

Getting kitted out

When Alf joined up he was given a new uniform, new clothes from top to toe. Underclothes, shirt, jacket, trousers, overcoat (or great coat), socks and boots (possibly made in the Kingswood boot factory) and a kit bag. The uniform was Khaki (dull darkish green/brown) in colour. Each soldier kept his own uniform clean and in good repair, ready for inspection every day, even in the trenches.

Ask the children: Why Khaki? Answer: Camouflage, before this the British soldiers wore a smart red uniform, but as weapons got more accurate at close quarters, this made the men a sitting target. It was the experiences of the soldiers in India and Africa that changed things, as those with mud on their uniform survived longer.

Ask the children: Why a dog tag? Why 2 dog tags? Answer: One to stay with the body (dead or injured) and one for the authorities.

Army Training

This image is from a newspaper that shows the men doing their first aid training.

Alf may have gone with fellow recruits to Salisbury plain to do his training.

Ask the children: Has anyone been across Salisbury plain? It's a bit bleak with few trees and little shelter.

Ask the children: Has anyone been camping? Did you have fun? Did it rain? Was it a bit scary at night? Was it cold? How did you cook?

In training, Alf would have started learning how to be a soldier, he might have thought, at first that it would be a bit like camping with his friends. But it would not be much fun with a sergeant after you! The soldiers had to learn to work together as their lives might depend on each other in the battles to come, many would become firm friends.

This was also where the men were assessed to see what skills they might have and where they would be best placed within the army. For instance, if they had been miners then they would go on to be sappers (Corps of Royal Engineers) and use their experiences to tunnel underneath enemy lines. If they were electrical engineers then they might be taught how to work with the latest technology, telephones. Women were not allowed to fight on the front lines, but they could become nurses or drivers or motorbike messengers.

The Trenches of Flanders

Ask the children: How many men can you see in this trench? Answer: 2.

Ask the children: Why should it be over the height of a man deep? Answer: to shield the men from snipers. The trenches stretched in a long line over hundreds of miles from the coast of Belgium right across France to the Swiss border. Across fields, rivers and woods, through towns and villages in every sort of terrain. Where they could not be dug out, sandbags and corrugated tin sheets would be used for the walls. The soldiers would be in the trenches for six days before going back behind the lines for R&R for six days then back again into the trenches in rotation. They were out there 24/7 all year around for four years, in all weathers, no bed, no tap, no shelter except what you might be able to scrape out of the trench wall and very little home leave.

No Mans Land

If Alf looked over the edge of the trench, this is what he might have seen. This was once a wood with birds and rabbits and badgers, now it is shot to pieces. It is full of barbed wire and mud. At night raiding parties from both sides would go out into this mud to mend the wire or listen to the enemy who were not far away. Sometimes flares would be sent up and Alf would have to be very still until it went out so he was not seen by a sniper. The enemy was sometimes close enough to smell their food and hear them talk.

Trench Map

This is a sort of aerial view, here is no mans land in the middle of both front lines. Look at the shape of the lines they zig zag.

Ask the children: Why do they zig zag? Answer: Because a blast has a force which will run along a straight trench and knock out more men than it would in a short stretch that turns a corner where the blast will not go. As the war went on and the lines moved they became a maze, easy to get lost in.

A Maze of Lines

Some of the lines lead back to the relative safety of a field hospital or supply depot.

Ask the children: What do you think they did if they needed the toilet? Answer: The toilet was called a latrine and this was a hole dug in the ground used everyday, by hundreds of men. New holes would be dug every few days and the old ones filled in. (If you had got on the wrong side of your sergeant this might be one of the duties assigned to you!)

Breakfast and More

Alf would have look forward to his food, especially if it was hot and brought up from behind the lines on a frosty morning.

Food from home

Sometimes his mother might send Alf a cake in a tin, this he would share with his mates as they would share things with him. It might be a bar of chocolate or a tin of jam sent from home, or even something grown in the family garden.

Making a cup of Tea

Tea was a great reviver of spirits on a long freezing night.

Ask the children: Why use tinned milk? Answer: No fresh milk.

Rats, Lice and Trench Foot

Ask the children: What happens to your skin if you have been in the bath too long? Answer: It goes wrinkly. For the men in the wet trenches, if they did not look after their feet they went black and it was very serious. There would be foot inspections every week, pairs of soldiers had to be responsible for the state of each others feet to encourage them to look after themselves and each other.

Pick out a pair of boys and ask them if they would like to be responsible for each others feet or get told off by the sergeant!

Body lice, (several times bigger than nits) live in the seams of clothing and bite, and the bites itch.

Rest and Recuperation

Clothes were fumigated to get rid of the lice and the men could buy fresh food, if they were lucky and rest a while.

Letter from Alf to his mum

Read this through and *Ask the children*: Who is he writing to? Where is he? What can he see? Is he thinking of home? What had they travelled in? Is he being careful about what he says? Why?

Personal Items

Ask the children: What would you take with you for comfort, if you were going away from home? Especially if you only had a small bag that had to carry lots of other official things as well? It would have to be small enough to keep it safe, maybe pocket sized.

Writing Home

Post was very important, sometimes they were sent local newspapers from home, that gave them an idea of how the war was viewed at home.

Alf Flux Family History.

Here is Alf in his uniform. Alf did not survive, he died one hundred years ago on the 21st March 1918.

Ask the children: Where did he live? How many children were in his family?

Where did Alf die?

Post Script

This is the last written evidence of Alf to be found, as he was resting in the church crypt with his mates he wrote his name on the wall with the rest of them. It is still there today.

The Great War – Life in the Trenches

Alf Flux and his Kit Bag

Activity - **Writing Postcards**

Each person writes two postcards:

One Postcard from the trenches at the front.

One postcard from home.

Write each postcard out in rough first, in pencil.

Then copy it out, in ink, in your **best handwriting**.

Postcard From The Front

Imagine being one of those soldiers, just like Alf Flux in the trenches at the front. It is a very different place to the home you have left. What it would be like, always in danger and under the most horrid conditions?

Write a postcard home to your parents/friend/family.

Some things would be censored. (crossed out if it was thought the information would be useful to the enemy.)

Think about what you might want to tell them, do not say too much about where you are or what has happened in the war, or casualties, just tell them about what is around you.

Include:

A description of where you are (the trench).

A description of the place around the trench, (woods/fields, shell holes, mud.).

How you got to where you are.

What the weather is doing and how it affects you. (Summer/winter/wet/cold/trench foot).

What is the worst thing about where you are? Tell them about the food (or the rats).

Say something that would give comfort. (I hope that you are warm/will see you soon...).

You can be funny, ask about other members of the family.

Send good wishes home. Thank them for something sent to you in the post.

Sign it.

Postcard from Home

Imagine being the parent/ girl friend/ sister/ brother of a soldier at the front. How you would feel with someone from your close family at war, so far away?

Write a postcard to them.

Include:

Enquire about how they are, ask if they are eating well. Send good wishes.

Hope they like something you are sending them (maybe a lucky charm or food).

Tell them about the weather at home and how you are managing.

News from home. (The cat has kittens/you scored a goal in football).

What others at home are doing (A new job or learning a new skill).

Be encouraging, say something that would give comfort. (e.g. I am looking forward to...).

Sign it.

South Gloucestershire in the First World War Learning Resource

Other Free Learning Resources available are:

The Great War - Life in the Trenches - The Alf Flux Kit Bag (Plus a Loans Box)*

School Children in the Great War – Messages and Mufflers

The Girls who made Grenades – The Warmley Grenadiers

Empire Foods - The War at Sea - (Loans Box)*

The Amy Hill Autograph Book - Cleve Hill Hospital

The Amy Hill Autograph Book - Wounded on the Somme

The Hill and the Flux Family

Home Life during the First World War

The Armistice Day Investigation Quiz

* Booking is essential for the loans boxes by emailing: museums@southglos.gov.uk

For more information about this project please go to:

www.southglos.gov.uk/ww1

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South Gloucestershire in the First World War Project Learning Resources Feedback Form

To mark the centenary of the First World War 1914-1918 these learning resources have been created to assist teachers in show the impact of the First World War in this area and also how communities were changed.

Please tell us what you think of these resources or if you have any comments or further information about the First World War in this area do let us know by filling in this form.

Please return to: museums@southglos.gov.uk

Name of School -----

-----Date -----

Did you find the resources easy to use? Yes/No
How do you think the resources worked with your class?

Other Comments-----

Thank you for your participation

This is an HLF project supported by South Gloucestershire Council. For more information and more free learning resources on The First World War in this area please go to: www.southglos.gov.uk/ww1

