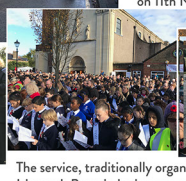
390 Project Newsletter

The Tommy

The 6' high figure from 'There But Not There' stood proudly in Memorial Square on 11th November and was donated to the project. He will return on Sunday 10th November 2019. Ten smaller bench silhouettes were provided through a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and have been donated to some of the project's partner schools and churches.

Remembrance Day Service : 11/11/2018



On The Day

The rain stopped, the sun shone and close to 2000 people packed Memorial Square Isleworth, and all available surrounding spaces, on 11th November at the Armistice Centenary Remembrance Day Service.

The service, traditionally organised by the Royal British Legion, Isleworth Branch, had a very special focus this year, the fifth and final year of the involvement of the Isleworth 390 project to mirror 1914-1918, and honour the memory of the 390 servicemen listed on the Isleworth Memorial. Ali Walton, from All Saints Isleworth, led the service, supported by other local church leaders and Lynn Green from the Royal British Legion. The parade, headed by the Pride of Murray Band, started from The British Legion in North Street and included members of the armed forces and local services, local dignitaries, police and army cadets, cubs and scouts. At the entrance to the Blue School, 390 children from 10 local schools joined the procession, each wearing a sash with the name of one of the servicemen on the Isleworth Memorial, carrying a scroll with a page about his life, and wearing a special commemorative badge.

During the service, they laid individual named crosses on the Memorial. After the service, the parade made its way to St Mary's School, where members of the community could visit the Memorial Wall to the 390 servicemen, share refreshments and sign pages of remembrance. Relatives and descendants of the servicemen swapped stories in St Bridget's Hall and also saw some of the reflections from students at West Thames College. The school students enjoyed their well -earned refreshments, provided by the Co-Op Food Store, Isleworth, and the whole morning was filmed by Fairweather O.B. Ltd.

> "It was very touching and moving that all those children could relate to a soldier who had died. I loved the fact that not only did they have a sash but also the wooden cross. A very ambitious project! Through this project I have been able get in touch with a relative I never knew I had - our grandfathers were both brothers to Howard Holloway (one of the 390). Anyway Pat and I (and our husbands!) spent much of the day together - firstly at the service, then visiting the home in Newry Rd where they all lived; then All Souls Church and the Ailsa Tavern (remembered by my Grandfather Billy as their watering hole when he was alive). Thank you Isleworth 390. I've also heard from another friend of the family - so you really have brought us together." Nicola Gay

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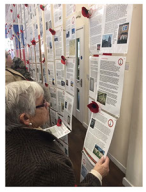
Community Involvement



Locals have walked past the 390 names on the Isleworth Memorial since 1922. It is a familiar sight. However, we wanted to find a new way to engage the local population, something that would make an instant impact.

'The Memorial Wall' did just that. The pages, recording the lives and deaths of almost all the 390 servicemen, were laminated and painstakingly hole punched!

They were hung downwards (in alphabetical order) using tie wraps, plumbing pipe and cord! When finished, the display was 20 metres long and 3 metres high. It hung proudly in St Mary's Primary school and did indeed have an immediate impact on everyone who saw it. It was also rewarding to see so many local people stop and read snippets of the servicemen's histories, and it was amusing to watch the school children trying to locate 'their' man.

Addresses of our Servicemen

LINKFIELD ROAD
ISLEWORTH

SOUTH STREET
ISLEWORTH

To trace our servicemens' families we used the Censuses from 1891, 1901 and 1911. In doing so we found the Isleworth addresses where they had lived, both before and during the 1914-1918 war.

Although the area suffered some bomb damage during World War 2 and also has undergone re-development in places, we realised that many of our servicemen's homes still existed. As a result, we decided to write a letter and deliver it to each property we had identified as a home of one of our 390. We invited the current residents to come along to the centenary event on 11th November and provided them with information about the serviceman who had lived in their property. We also gave them an image of a large poppy and asked them to display this in their window. The addresses included two local public houses, the Ailsa Tavern and the Woodlands Tavern (formerly the Railway Inn) where the sons of the publicans had died. Afterwards we received an email from one local resident saying "You have educated my daughter and all the kids in her year on the history of her home" and another who said "I was moved to hear that we now occupy a house once lived in by a WW1 soldier".

ALGAR ROAD
ISLEWORTH

Relatives and Descendants of our Servicemen

Many of the servicemen on the war memorial had brothers and sisters who married and had their own families. In addition, as the 1914-1918 war progressed, older and increasing numbers of married men were recruited for war service. Deaths of these husbands often meant that their wives were left to bring up large numbers of children single-handed. For example, a widow of one of our 390 was left to bring up 8 daughters aged between 16 and 1. Where we could, we tried to trace both brothers and sisters and any children of our servicemen on family history websites, to see if we were able to find descendants or relatives. On some occasions, relatives interested in their own family histories contacted us, having seen information on our website. Many of these descendants are still local to West London but some are spread far and wide. This includes some relatives living across the UK, but also in countries like the USA and Australia.

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The Triumphs and Tribulations of Researching WW1 Servicemen

Researching WW1 servicemen often seems to involve more tribulation that triumph, but you learn a great deal.

- You learn that war memorials and official records are not immune from error.
- You learn that while some servicemen are well-documented and have helpful family trees on some of the big online genealogy sites, others slipped through life unnoticed.
- You learn to decipher appalling handwriting and decode military jargon.
- You learn that genealogy is not a hobby; it is an obsession and you have succumbed.

Your starting point is the bare minimum of information; all you get from the memorial is a surname and initial. If the Commonwealth War Graves website gives you names and addresses of your serviceman's parents, wife or other relatives, you can follow these clues to reconstruct his life. But there are cases where there is no detail beyond name, rank, service number, and date and place of death, so you have to fall back on other resources.

A Medal Roll card will offer clues to when he joined up; if he won all three WW1 medals, then he saw service in France before the end of 1915, so he was either already in the army in 1914 or volunteered very soon after war was declared.

The Register of Soldiers' Effects will tell you the name and relationship of the person who received his war gratuity and pension. Very few servicemen had no named legatee. All servicemen had a service record which gave details of his name, age, home address and family members, but untold damage was caused in WW2 when an incendiary bomb landed on the War Office Records Store. A massive restoration project has reconstructed, microfilmed and digitised what was left, but the scale of damage means that we have only about 40% of the records.

If all this fails – and it can fail! – you still have census returns, baptism and marriage records, electoral registers, including records from Canada, Australia and the USA, as well as local newspapers to help you in your search. This is where you find the really interesting information and may triumphantly identify your man's family. What if your airman, sailor or soldier was a "sojourner" in Isleworth? someone with no local family links, but was living there when war was declared and whose friends or employers wanted him remembered on the memorial? Local newspapers are a wonderful resource for this kind of man. If he played for the local football team, was the leading light of the local Amateur Operatic Society, was active in local charity events, or even got arrested for disorderly behaviour, his name will be in the papers.

Researching WW1 servicemen is an emotional roller-coaster. You experience disappointment when your promising lead fizzles out; elation when you find the page with his entire family on it; confusion when you find three Josephs in two generations of the family and they all served in WW1; triumph when you fit the last piece of the puzzle in place. And sadness when you realise you've gone as far as you possibly can and it's time to leave that story.

At the present time, we have found out about all bar 29 of the servicemen on the Isleworth Memorial, do please get in touch with us if you know about any of the following names:-M. Adams, C. Bignold, G Boswell, R. Byford, E. Clayton, J. Cornell, W. Couzens, E.T. Davies, W. Davis, W. Elliott, T.E Evans, E. Evens, L. Giles, J. Hand, Charles Hiscock, Charles Humphrey, J. James, R. Lloyd, Frederick William Lucas, C. Martin, L. Meehan, P. Morris, J. O'Leary, G.P. Purdy, J. Robinson, W.A. Smith, W.W. Wackerill, C. Wells, W. Willis.

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Thank You

We'd like to thank everyone who has helped with the Isleworth 390 project this year, including:

All Saints, Isleworth; The Blue School; The Bolder Academy; Chris Gray; Classic Miniatures; The Co-op Food Store, Isleworth; Creative Sauce; Costco; Dave Fairweather; David Bright; Elaine Pearce; Fairweather OB Ltd; GV Multi Media; Isleworth Town Primary & Nursery School; The Green School for Boys; The Green School for Girls; Gumley House School FCJ; Hounslow Local Studies and Archive; The Isleworth Society (the project's parent body); Isleworth & Syon School; Joan Conlon; St John the Baptist with St Mary the Virgin, Isleworth; Len Wiles; Lynn Green; The London Borough of Hounslow; Marlborough Primary School; Mary Brown; Mary Downes; Margaret Mills; Mike Derham; The Milford Arms, Isleworth; Nowell Anderson; P&R Fabrications Ltd; St Mary's Catholic Primary School; St Mary's PTA; Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Bridget; Sam Pipola; The Royal British Legion; Sky; The Swan Inn, Isleworth; The Tuesday Club; William Grant Foundation; Worple Primary School; and other individuals who have donated to the project and all of the stewards and other helpers at the exhibition and with the refreshments on 11th November, and of course the team of researchers who have dedicated their time and energy to find out so much about the lives of the 390 servicemen, which were so tragically cut short by World War One.

Stop Press!

We have just received confirmation that the project has received a Community Grant from the London Borough of Hounslow, which will help with its final stages in 2019. These include:

1. A book about the 390 and a map showing where the 390 servicemen lived
2. Guidelines for curriculum units in primary and secondary schools
3. Preparing all of the research for donation to Hounslow Local Studies and to a national archive
4. A plaque in Memorial Square
5. A pledge by all of the churches and schools to continue to remember all those affected by war, and especially the 390 servicemen on the Isleworth Memorial

NEWSFLASH
Look out for the magazine 'Who Do You Think You Are'? The Isleworth 390 project will feature in their February edition

To find out more about the book (scheduled for production late Spring 2019) and/ or to pre-order a copy and have your name portrayed in a page 'List of Subscribers', email: isleworth390@gmail.com or phone:- 020 8847 0157

Visit the project website at: www.isleworthww1.co.uk to read about the servicemen, see the gallery of photographs taken on 11th November and follow the links to two films about the project.

Get in touch via our email address: isleworth 390@gmail.com

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