

# WW1 BRITISH ARMY PENSION RECORDS LAUNCH ONLINE

*Online launch coincides with 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
Passchaendale – case studies available*

- **One million World War One soldiers' pension records now available online**
- **Case studies available**

**\*\*Embargoed until 00.01hrs Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2007\*\***

The pension records of almost **one million soldiers** who fought in World War One are now available online as **Ancestry.co.uk** completes its *British Army World War One Pension Records* collection to coincide with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic **Passchaendale** campaign.

The collection, which spans 1914 to 1920, lists the names of many soldiers discharged due to injuries or illness sustained during or following service in World War One. The originals are held by **The National Archives**.

Visitors to **Ancestry.co.uk** will now be able to search the collection to discover key information including physical description, regimental number, service history, locations served, date and place of birth, former occupation, next of kin, promotions, and also the medical information relating to the disability for which a pension was granted.

For each soldier listed there are on average 10 pages which comprise their unique set of records, making this an exceptionally 'image rich' historical collection.

The completion of this online collection coincides with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Passchaendale**, one of the most violent battles of World War One. Beginning on 31 July 1917, the battle, also known as the **Third Battle of Ypres**, was fought for control of the village of Passchaendale (now

called Passendale) in West Flanders, Belgium. The village was not captured until the following September, with more than 310,000 lives claimed.

Many of the the servicemen who were injured during the campaign and survived are listed in the collection. *(further information and images are available on request).*

**Sergeant William Booth MM** from Sussex joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sussex Regiment aged just 19. Although he didn't see active service overseas until 1916, he was wounded several times over the course of the war – the first just a month after arriving in France. William's battalion took part in operations on the first day of Passchaendale, where he was one of the regiment's 150 ranks casualties, sustaining multiple shrapnel wounds to the legs, arms and face. He was evacuated back to England never to return to France.

**Corporal Alfred Lee MM** from Kempsey in Worcestershire joined the army in April 1916 and went to France in September of that year as part of the Royal Tank Corps, then in its early stages of development. He was awarded the military medal for his service at Passchaendale, and later that year was wounded in the Battle of Cambrai. Despite recovering from these wounds he returned to his unit, only to be wounded again on 22 December 1917 and evacuated to England, where he saw out the remainder of the war.

Former fishmonger's assistant **Sergeant Thomas Berry DCM** joined the Rifle's Brigade aged 19, before the outbreak of war. He went to France in summer 1914 and stayed with the company for the duration of his service, including operations at Passchaendale. Here he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for taking charge of his platoon when his Sergeant was killed, engaging enemy snipers and driving off an attempted bombing attack. But nine months later, in May 1918, Berry was gassed and returned to England. He was declared medically unfit for further service in 1925.

**Ancestry.co.uk** Managing Director Simon Harper comments; *"The completed British Army World War One Pension Records provide vital information on this brave group of men and are an important resource for anyone interested in researching virtually any soldier who sustained illness or injuries whilst serving in the First World War.*

*"The records paint a rich account of the more-often-than-not horrific experiences that many British soldiers suffered and are a stark reminder of how important it is for us not to forget those who fought for our country."*

The complete British Army World War One pension records can be viewed at [www.ancestry.co.uk/military](http://www.ancestry.co.uk/military).

**The National Archives'** head of business development, Dan Jones, said: *"These First World War pension records are particularly popular but up to now you had to come to The National Archives to see them. It is great that this next stage of the digitisation – which will allow worldwide access to this important collection – has now been completed. The National Archives is committed to making more of the records it holds available to everyone, wherever they live, and working with commercial partners, such as Ancestry.co.uk, helps us to do this."*

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS / IMAGES:**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Relatives of soldiers who appear on the records and have researched their war records are available for interview:**

**Alan Smailes**, son of **Walter Smailes**, a member of the East Yorkshire Regiment who was injured during 1917 and retired from the army. Walter recuperated at Netley Military Hospital, Southampton and Alan has researched his full war record.

**Clive Seymour**, a relative of **Charles Eidmans**, a Londoner who volunteered in 1914. Charles enlisted as a Private but rose through the ranks to 2nd Lieutenant until he fell to shellfire in late 1917. Reported dead to his wife, he was found by German soldiers and operated on in their military hospital. He was repatriated by the Red Cross in 1918. Clive has researched Charles' war record and can relate his full story.

#### **About Ancestry.co.uk**

**Ancestry.co.uk**, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk), is the largest and most popular online resource for family and social history in the UK. It has more than **725 million searchable names** in major collections including the seven England, Wales and Scotland Censuses (1841-1901), the Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes (1837-2005), British Army World War One Pension Records, UK and Ireland Parish and Probate Records and the British Phone Books (1880-1984).

**Ancestry.co.uk** is part of the global network of Ancestry sites, which offers members **5 billion searchable names**: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) in the US, [www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca) in Canada, [www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au) in Australia, [www.ancestry.de](http://www.ancestry.de) in Germany, [www.ancestry.it](http://www.ancestry.it) in Italy and [www.ancestry.fr](http://www.ancestry.fr) in France.

#### **About The National Archives**

**The National Archives**, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), is a **government department**; and also an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)

**The National Archives is at the heart of information policy** – setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK, and providing a practical framework of best practice for opening up and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensures that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

**The National Archives is also the UK government's official archive**, containing 900 years of history from Domesday Book to the present, with records ranging from parchment and paper scrolls through to recently created digital files and archived websites. Increasingly, these records are being put online, making them universally accessible.

**The vision of The National Archives is to:**

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone