

'My family's story'

Does your family have a WW1 story?

During the coming three years of the WW1 Centenary, B&NES staff are invited to contribute a story for publication on the Council website.

Do you have information, diaries or mementoes from a great-grandfather or great-uncle or other relative? Or perhaps you had a great-grandmother or great-aunt who served as a nurse or auxiliary?



Helen Daniels and Ann Cullis with the WW1-100 banner

The Arts Development team leads on the Council's commemorations for the WW1 Centenary and manages the web pages here: <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/tourism-and-heritage/local-history/world-war-one-centenary>

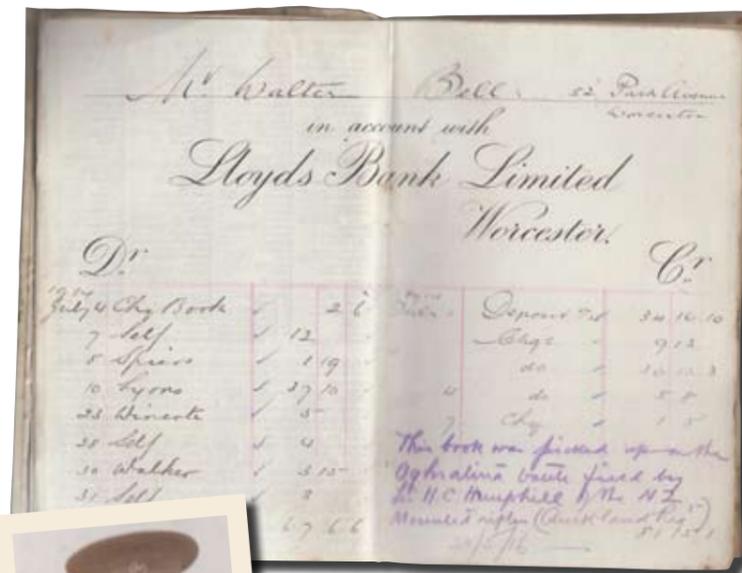
Ann Cullis and Helen Daniels from the Arts Development team are co-ordinating the Council's commemorative events and projects throughout 2014-18. Ann has been researching her great-grandfather Walter Bell.

Walter Bell was born in 23 April 1868 and joined the Army at 18. After 20 years' service he became Riding & Musketry Instructor to the Worcestershire Yeomanry. In August 1914, the Worcestershire Yeomanry were called-up and in 1915 he embarked for North Africa. He was the Quartermaster, in charge of supplies and logistics.

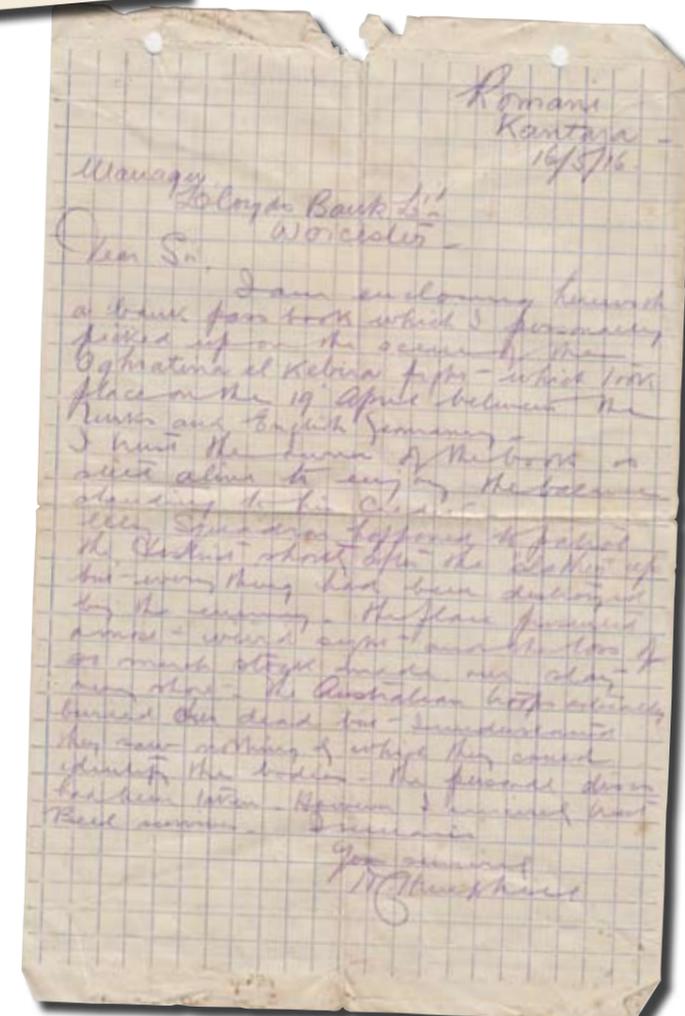
On 23 April 1916, his 48th birthday, the Yeomanry were ambushed by Turkish forces at the Battle of Qatia. Captain Bell and several hundred officers and men were taken Prisoner of War and travelled by train and on foot through Egypt, Palestine and into Turkey, where they were held in Yozgad prison until December 1918.

I have Walter Bell's diaries and notebooks. They include his calculations of provisions – bread, potatoes, soap, clean clothes – which he negotiated with the guards, and lists of Turkish vocabulary. I also have his bank passbook with a letter from a fellow soldier to the bank manager in Worcester. He says that after the Battle of Qatia, he found the passbook on the battlefield, and does not know if the owner is dead or alive, but hopes one day he will return to Worcester to reclaim his passbook.

He did safely return, promoted to Major, and died aged 80 in 1948.”



Left: Major Walter Bell, great-grandfather of Ann Cullis; Above: The bank passbook found on the battlefield, with a note written by the soldier who stumbled upon it; Below: The soldier's letter to the bank manager in Worcester



If you would like to contribute your WW1 story, please contact: centenary_worldwar1@bathnes.gov.uk with the subject 'My family's story'.
www.bathnes.gov.uk/WW1Centenary