



The Taylor Brothers

55 Statham Street



standing from left to right: Eric, Alfred, Arthur
seated from left to right: Edward, Thomas

We knew from the Register of Electors that three brothers - Arthur, Eric and Alfred from 55 Statham Street were away serving in the armed forces in 1918 and 1919. It was only when we found this photograph posted on a family tree on www.ancestry.co.uk that the whole story started to emerge.

The Taylor brothers were from a family of 10 children who survived to adulthood (a further three children died in infancy). Their father Thomas moved to Derby from Warwickshire with his family sometime between 1861 and 1871. They may have moved for work; his father's occupation in 1861 was listed as a ribbon weaver; by 1871 he describes himself as an Elastic Weaver. Elastic web was used to make braces, the wrists of gloves, stocking tops and elastic panels for boots and shoes.

Rather than follow his father into the textile mills Thomas trained as a Locksmith and

Bellhanger along with his younger brother David and they later went into business together. On 13 May 1882, now aged 24, Thomas married Derby girl Elizabeth Martin. Their first daughter Elsie arrived the following spring, with eldest surviving son Thomas born late in 1885. By the 1891 census they were living with their family of 4 children at 6 Cedar Street. Thomas (senior) was now a Lock and Whitesmith - someone who makes articles out of metal, particularly tin, and can also be a finisher or polisher of metal goods.

When the 1901 census was taken the family had grown to eight children but were still living at 6 Cedar Street and the house must have been very cramped for the family of ten. Daughter Elsie (18) was now helping her father run his business and Thomas junior(15) was an apprentice Whitesmith.

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The Taylor Brothers (continued)

By 1910 the family had moved to 19 North Street with their youngest child, Edward born in 1904. The company of Whitesmiths was now “Taylor, Whiting and Taylor” and was based at St Peters Street. As well as being Whitesmiths they also offered Electrical Services.

On 13 December 1914 after a “long and trying illness”, Elizabeth, mother of the family died aged 51. The funeral service was held at St Aidan’s Church which stood at the bottom of Cedar Street – both parents were active in the life of this church, with Elizabeth a prominent member of the

Mothers’ Union.

It may have been her death that prompted the family to move to 55 Statham Street, next door to oldest daughter, Elsie who, having married Alfred Towle in 1909 was now living at 57 Statham Street with their two young children Alfred and Jessie. Being next door she would be able to keep an eye on the family; especially her youngest brother Ted (10) and sister Hilda (12). By this date not all the older children were at home. Thomas had married in 1910 and Annie (born 1887) had married in 1912.

When was this photograph taken?

Getting all the brothers at home at the same time during the war must have been an unusual event and one important enough to warrant a photograph. It gives us information not available from other sources about the military service of the brothers. Taylor is a common name, and given that over 40% of military records from WW1 were destroyed in the Second World War it has proved impossible to trace with certainty any of the older four brothers’ service histories.

Alfred, the fourth brother, only turned 18 in June 1918 when he would have been called up under conscription regulations then in force, although he may have volunteered under age.

Both Arthur and Eric have long service chevrons on their right sleeves. The stripe was first authorised under Army Order 4 of 1918, which was published on 20 December 1917 and therefore would not be worn before this date and, as chevrons were not awarded until after the full year of qualification, this suggests the photograph was taken after the end of the war early in 1919.

Arthur has the full complement of long service stripes, including the red stripe worn by those serving overseas before 31 December 1914. The chevron on Eric’s left sleeve indicates that he was a regular soldier or was in the Territorial Force before the war, but as he has just three chevrons on his right sleeve, one for each year of service overseas service - this may mean that not all his service was abroad.

Grateful thanks are due to descendants of the Taylor family who have shared information with us and given permission to use the photographs.



Thomas Taylor

1885 - 1964

At the time the group photograph (above) was taken Thomas was living outside our research area and we were unaware of his military service until we saw the picture.

In November 1910 Thomas, who trained with his father as a whitesmith, married Mary Jane Coverley at St Werburgh's Church Spondon. They moved to 11 Cedar Street and raised their family of 7 children there. Thomas wears a British Army General Service Uniform (the cap badge indicates this) and therefore we cannot tell which regiment he served with. So far we have not been able to identify with certainty the badge on his sleeve although this could well be the badge of a Warrant Officer Class 2. Many different appointments were held by WO2, including Company Sergeant Major, Regimental Quartermaster Corporal and Orderly Room Sergeant.

We are not sure of Thomas' service history as, at the date this photograph was taken (see above for evidence), he may have been taking a break from active service. Certainly we know that in May 1918 he was in Derby as a report in a local newspaper names him as a witness to a traffic accident on Kedleston Road, when a three year old girl was knocked down by a tram. The report refers to him as a "mechanic" - as no mention is made of his military rank or regiment it could mean that he had left the army - perhaps discharged as no longer fit for military duty due to health reasons?

This uniform was worn by the Territorial Reserves who were involved in home defence among other duties. If Thomas served in the UK he would not be entitled to a campaign medal.



Thomas in 1954

Thomas continued to live in Cedar Street. In the 1939 Register we learn that he was a Builders' Smith (General Hand Heavy Worker) but also that he probably served as community police officer during the war.

His wife, Mary Anne, died in 1950 and his youngest daughter Margaret lived with him until she married Roy Bridges of 42 Elms Street (off Kedleston Road near The Horse and Groom) in 1953. For the final years of his life Thomas lived with Margaret and Roy and passed away aged 78 on 8 August 1964 at Manor Hospital.



Arthur Taylor

1893 - 1960

Born in May 1893, and the second son, by 1911 Arthur was a Student Architect's Clerk with Derbyshire County Council.

At some stage between 1911 and 1914 he signed up for military service with the Royal Artillery – the medal strip above his breast pocket may be the 1911 coronation medal. The presence on his right sleeve of long service stripes, including the red stripe worn by those serving overseas before 31 December 1914, indicates that he enlisted before the start of the war or served with the Territorial Force all of whom were immediately mobilised when war was declared. We know from his obituary in the Derby Telegraph that he served with the "Derbyshire Artillery", becoming Regimental Sergeant Major aged 23 (in 1916). Officially the regiment was the 4th North Midland (Howitzer) Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (RFA) (Derbyshire Artillery) and was made up of 1st & 2nd Derbyshire (Howitzer) Battery, 4th Midland (Howitzer) Ammunition Column, and they had their headquarters at 91 Siddals Road.

On 2 November 1918 he married Florence Annie Marshall of Springfield, Chelmsford Essex and he resumed his career as an Architect with Essex County Council after he was demobilised. The couple moved to Derby when Arthur took up a post with the borough council in September 1919.

His obituary states that he served as Chief

Assistant Architect and supervised the construction of most of the 7,000 council homes built in Derby between the wars and he also had responsibility for much of the post-war housing in the borough.



Arthur (standing left) and Florence, 2 November 1918

By 1923 Arthur and Florence were living at a newly built house on West Park Road (off Woodland Road) called "Springfield" after Florence's home village in Essex. Arthur and Florence had three daughters, but sadly she died in 1930.

Arthur remarried in 1931 – Eveline May Birkinshaw who lived at 73 Park Grove with her parents. They continued to live at "Springfield" until after World War 2, and in 1947 their daughter, Elaine, was born. Arthur retired in 1955 and shortly afterwards Eveline and he moved to Dawlish in Devon where their house was also called "Springfield". Arthur died in June 1960 and Eveline later in the same year.



Eric Taylor

1897 - 1968

Eric was still at school when the 1911 census was taken so we don't know where he worked before going into the armed forces.



From the photograph we know he served with the Royal Army Medical Corps and from the long service chevrons on his right sleeve we know that he served overseas. The stripe was first authorised under Army Order 4 of 1918:

"His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of chevrons to denote service overseas undertaken since 4th August 1914."

The chevron on his left sleeve is a good conduct chevron that was awarded to Privates, Lance Corporals and Corporals for good behaviour; it could lead to bonuses in pay and was an incentive to remain out of trouble. Given his age, it could have been awarded for 2 years of good conduct. The chevron indicates that he was a regular soldier and had enlisted before the War broke out as only Regular Army were entitled to accrue them.

The RAMC is part of the Army Medical Services (AMS). In World War 1 the Corps was responsible for providing immediate first aid and emergency care on the front line through to routine treatment or long-term care at hospitals. Sick and wounded from the front were moved backwards from the front line to a series of posts where their treatment was assessed: first to the regimental aid post, then to advanced and main dressing stations, then a casualty clearing station (which could accommodate up to 1,000 men) and finally, if their injuries could not be dealt with in the field, to a general hospital either in France or home to England via hospital ship.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 most transport was horse-drawn and the introduction of hospital trains would have speeded up journeys for the wounded. Many of these trains were built in Derby. We can be sure that Eric witnessed some terrible injuries and worked under appalling and upsetting conditions.

By autumn 1919 Eric had been demobilised and came back to live at 55 Statham Street, until 1926 when he married Lilian May Harrison. Two children were born: Audrey in 1927 and John in 1928. By 1939 the family were living at 42 Ashfield Avenue, Chaddesden and Eric's profession is listed as "Electrical Wireman". At some date Eric and Lilian moved to Southend-on-Sea where Eric died in 1968 aged 71.



Alfred Taylor

1900 - 1972

Born in June 1900 we know little of Alfred's early life – in the 1911 census he was still at school, but would have left education soon after to begin his working life.

He would have only been eligible for military service from June 1918. However, boys did lie about their age in order to sign up early and recruiting officers were often happy to turn a blind eye. Perhaps this photograph was taken at about the date he was conscripted for military service at a rare time when all brothers were at home together.

We know from the photograph that he served with the Royal Engineers who played a vital role in maintaining communications in the war. They maintained the railways, roads, water supply, bridges and transport – essential for the war effort. Royal Engineers maintained the telephones, wireless and other signalling equipment essential for communications. Some units were attached to fighting divisions designing and building front-line fortifications – they would have been involved in chemical and underground warfare. They also maintained the guns and other weapons used by the infantry and artillery. By 1917 the Engineers numbered over 295,000 men working in a diverse range of roles.

Alfred probably served from June 1918 and after his training was completed may not have experienced much front line fighting.

Following the Armistice in November 1918 there would have been plenty of work for the Engineers rebuilding bridges and roads and re-establishing communications networks in Northern France and Belgium.



He was demobilised by spring 1920 and in 1921 he married Hilda Ferguson who lived in Milford, Derbyshire. They moved to Duffield Road in Little Eaton and had two daughters, the first born in 1922.

In the 1939 Register Alfred is listed as an Assistant Works Manager in a Joinery company, a job he continued throughout his working life. Alfred, by this time a widower, died on 15 February 1972 aged 71.



Edward (Ted) Taylor

1904 - 1982

The youngest surviving child in the family, Ted, was only 10 when his mother died in 1914. Given that the group photograph of the five brothers was probably taken in 1918 or 1919 it is perhaps surprising to modern eyes that Ted appears in the uniform of the Sherwood Foresters.

What is also striking is how young he looks given that he was a teenager when this photograph was taken – he looks so much younger.

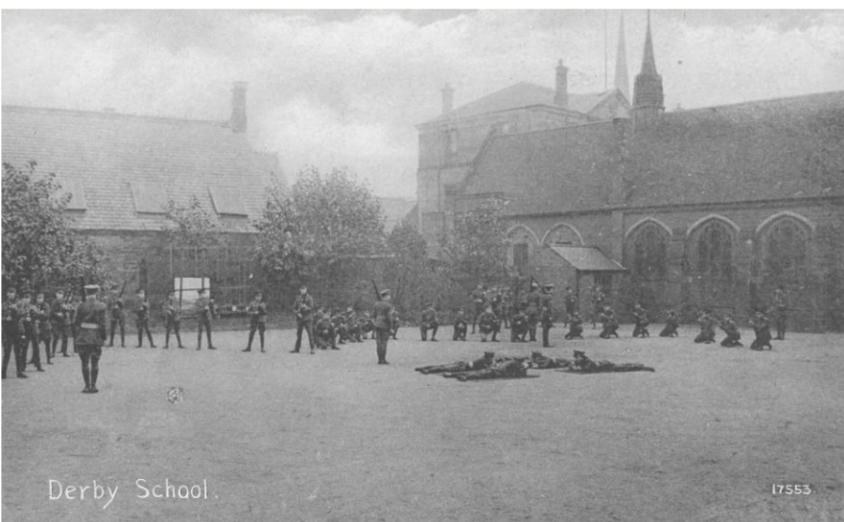
It could have been that he was a cadet soldier who would run errands and fulfil tasks at local barracks (eg Normanton). In the First World War a big expansion of the Cadet Force took place and the War Office took over the responsibility for its administration from the Territorial Associations. There were young soldier battalions but Ted would probably be too young to serve in such a unit.



Studio portrait of Ted, signed in the bottom right corner: "Your loving brother Ted"

Ted married Barbara Penny from Derby in 1931 and they had two daughters and one son. In the 1939 Register he is recorded as living at 15 North Avenue Darley Abbey – working as a Chemist in the dyeing industry (this was with ICI). By late September 1939 he had already volunteered with the ARP in Belper. Sometime during the war they moved to Middleton near Manchester where Ted continued to work for ICI until his retirement in about 1964.

When Ted retired they moved to Pevensey in Sussex where he died in April 1982.



This postcard shows boy cadet soldiers from Derby School engaged in training in the school yard at St Helen's House

And what about the sisters?



Dating from a similar time to the studio group of the five brothers an informal photograph of all ten siblings survives. We have been able to verify from the current owners of the house that it was taken in the back garden of 55 Statham Street where the family lived at the time. What is interesting is the ramshackle lean-to on the back of the house. It is likely the photograph was taken in the Spring of 1919.

The daughters left to right:

Elsie (1883-1973): Elsie was the oldest in the family. When this photograph was taken she was living at 57 Statham Street with her husband Alfred Towle and young children Alfred (born 1912) and Jessie (born 1913). Alfred was the manager of the Tailoring Department of the Derby Co-operative Society. They married in August 1909 at St Alkmund's Church. In the 1911 census they are recorded as living at 37 Sale Street, Rose Hill. By 1914 they had moved to Statham Street, living there until they moved to 229 Duffield Road in the early 1930s.

Annie Louise (1887-1980): She married John Edgar Fielding, an engineer, in February 1912. They had 3 sons and one daughter. By 1935 they were living at 44 Stenson Road.

Frances (1889-1986): Frances married 'Jack' Burrows in December 1921. He was an Assurance Agent and in the 1939 Register they are recorded living at 5 Boulton Street, off Harvey Road in Allenton.

Hilda (1902-1995): the youngest daughter in the family, she married Bertram Barker, in 1929 and they had one son. In 1939 they were living at 19 Scarsdale Avenue, Allestree. Bertram, a railway clerk, was in the ARP Service during World War 2. She died aged 92, living in Duffield.

Doris (1895-1995): Doris married James Rankin a locomotive engineer in June 1928. When the 1939 Register was compiled they lived at 275 Uttoxeter Road, Mickleover. Doris was recorded as a housewife. They didn't have any children. She died just short of her 100th birthday.