



The Pioneers Project

An easy read report

This easy read report is about our research that looked at how people with learning disabilities were involved in the First World War.

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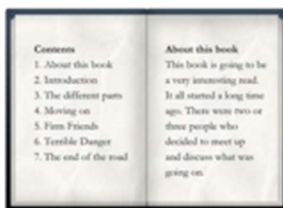


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Introduction



This report is about our research that looked at how people with learning disabilities were involved in the First World War.

The Pioneers Project was the name of our research project.



There have been two teams involved in the project.



The first team did their research from 2017 to 2018.



The second team did their research from 2019 to 2020.



Each team worked with Dr Lee Humber, a historian.

He is very interested in the history of people with learning disabilities.



Jess

Each team were supported by a staff member from My Life My Choice.

- The first team was by Jess Tilling



Lisa

- The second team was by Lisa Davidson



The purpose of this report is to tell you what research we did, how we did it, what we found out and what we would like to do next.

What research we did



Our research looks at what life was like for people with learning disabilities 100 years ago.

This is very different to what life is like now.



From 1914 to 1918 there was a war. This was called the First World War.



People were fighting because Archduke Franz Ferdinand was killed.



It was a world war because people from all other the world were fighting.



It was a deadly war, 20 million people died in total.



Back then, most people with learning disabilities lived in one of two places:

- Long-stay hospitals that were known as 'lunatic asylums'
- Workhouses were places for people with little or no money



It wasn't nice to live at these places, people who lived there would:

- Sleep in rooms with lots of people
- Sometimes, people would share the same bed



- Share clothing with other people



- And sometimes, be abused by staff

Stop Hello Eat
Words
Person Day Open

Back then, the words people used for people with learning disabilities were a lot different to the words we use now.

Idiot Imbecile
Feeble-minded



People with learning disabilities were called things like 'idiot,' 'imbecile,' 'feeble-minded.'

These were words doctors and nurses used.



People thought people with learning disabilities couldn't learn or look after themselves.



But, as this research project has found, people with learning disabilities could do so much more.

What we wanted to find out



We wanted to find out what life was like for people with learning disabilities during the First World War.



We also wanted to know what jobs people with learning disabilities may have had during the war.



We wanted to find the names and stories of First World War soldiers with learning disabilities,



We want to share these names and stories and show others the contributions people with learning disabilities made.

How we did it

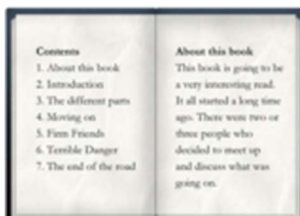


The teams went to lots of different places. To find:



**Joseph
Stables**

- Names of First World War soldiers with learning disabilities,



- Stories of First World War soldiers with learning disabilities.

The first team visited:



- Soldiers of Oxford Museum in Woodstock, Oxford
- Oxfordshire History Centre in Cowley, Oxford
- The First World War battlefields in France and Belgium

The second team visited:



- King's Own Royal Regiment museum in Lancaster
- The Royal Albert Hospital, a long-stay hospital in Lancaster
- National Archives in Kew, London



We looked at records in archives and online to find the stories of these soldiers.

What we found

Names



We found the names of soldiers with learning disabilities.



We found records of people who lived at the workhouse on Cowley Road.

Their names are:



- William Taylor
- Arthur Busby
- Thomas Newell
- Frederick Camings
- William Hastings
- Alfred Cox
- Frederick Palmer
- James Finch
- Arthur Finch
- Cecil James Saunders
- Henry Nowell Nicholls



We found a Roll of Honour at the Royal Albert Hospital, a long-stay hospital for people with learning disabilities.



A Roll of Honour is a memorial for people who fought in a war.

The Roll of Honour we found listed 16 people with learning disabilities who were soldiers in the First World War.

Their names are:



- James Thompson Anderson
- Thomas Bedford
- Albert Edward Davies
- Frank Duck
- George Elliott
- Thomas Fish
- Joseph Hewitt
- Patrick Keeligan
- Richard Lucas
- Leonard Maw
- Tom Nicholson
- Isaac Scott
- Joseph Stables
- John Taylor
- John Wilfred Wainmann
- Charles Henry Wright



We found records of injured soldiers who were treated at Netley Hospital.



We looked through the records and picked out the ones that talked about soldiers having a learning disability.

Their names are:



- Charles Adams
- Arthur Pew
- Robert Douglas
- Robert Shackleton
- Samuel Moore



We wanted to know the stories of these soldiers and so we used online records to find out more.



It was a long and difficult job but we found some stories.

Stories



Joseph Stables arrived at the Royal Albert Hospital when he was 7 in 1900.



At 22, Joseph left the Royal Albert Hospital on 9th August 1915.



One month later, he became a soldier.



In 1916, Joseph fought in the Battle of the Somme.

In the same year, Joseph fought in the Battle of Ancre.



Joseph was shot and sadly died at Ancre.

He would have been 23 or 24.



We also found the story of Arthur Pew.

He was a Lance Corporal. A Lance Corporal is a more senior soldier.



Arthur was in the 19th Kings Royal Rifles Corps.

This means he was in a specialist and skilled group of soldiers.



It also means Arthur fought on the frontline.

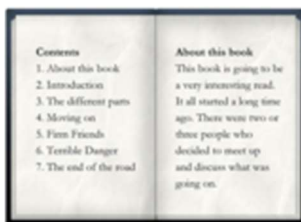
The frontline is where most of the fighting in a war is.



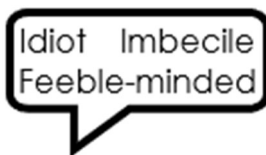
We are not sure if Arthur survived the war.



We found these stories saddening.



And we found these stories interesting.



Back then, people like Joseph and Arthur were called 'idiot,' 'imbecile,' or 'feeble-minded' so them becoming soldiers must have seemed impossible.



It tells us that these words mean nothing and that people shouldn't be labelled.

Future research



This research had made us think about the history of people with learning disabilities more.

We thought of future research projects that someone could do:



1. There used to be a farm in Wallingford. There are records that make us think the residents had learning disabilities.

Where did they go during the First World War?



2. The Special Constables Act of 1914 encouraged more police officers to be recruited.

Did people with learning disabilities join up?



3. What did women with learning disabilities do during the First World War?



Thank you for reading our easy read report.



If you would like to learn more about the Pioneers project, please contact Lisa Davidson.

Call her at 01865 204214 or email her at lisa@mylifemychoice.org.uk



Lest we forget, the unforgotten, the forgotten and the never found.



This project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund



This report was made by My Life My Choice and the young people involved in this research project.

For more of our easy read, visit www.mylifemychoice.uk or call 01865 204214 to find out more.