

Iain Whyte

talks about his grandfather George Adamson Whyte



earlier.

My father was a baby when my grandfather went to war in 1915 and he met him only once, when he was about ten or eleven months old. He in turn grew up and worked in a factory from the age of 14 basically because my grandmother would not accept free education for her son to which he and she



were entitled, because, she said, it was charity. That would seem more than ironic given that her husband gave his life for his country.

His death had a direct effect on my brothers and myself; not only did we not have a grandfather but we had no uncles or aunts or cousins, and my father worked in a factory all his life because he had not received the education which he might otherwise have had. The loss of my grandfather has affected who we are, where we've lived, the way I and my brothers think, and a lot of our views have been formed at least in part by what happened to George all those years ago.

In 1998 I was the first in our family to discover where our grandfather was buried, and most years I have gone over to visit the grave. Last year I went over on the centenary of his death on 4 September, and it was a great privilege to be able to deliver the exhortation at the Menin Gate - *They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old* - in front of the huge crowds who gather each evening at 8.00pm. It was one of the most moving things I have ever been involved with and it made a real connection with someone I never knew, but who is nevertheless very much part of me, even today.

I have two mementoes of my grandfather; the first is the King's Penny. The second is the picture of my grandmother with my father, which I think was sent to my grandfather at the front, along with the picture of my grandfather. This is an absolutely crucial picture for me - George is looking away as if he is never able to see his wife and son - it says so much about the effects there must have been on this young woman, losing her husband and being left with her only son for all these years.



September 2018