

Who is commemorated on the Memorial Clock Tower?

In March 1920 the Coalville Times newspaper asked people to come forward with the names of men who had fallen in the First World War.

By 1924 there was a list of 354 men from the Coalville Urban Area including Coalville, Whitwick, Hugglescote, Donington le Heath and Ellistown. The list also included a few men from Ibstock, Shepshed and Measham.

Before the war the men worked as miners, painters, printers, farmers, market traders and many other professions.



Above: Arthur Concannon and wife
© Coalville Times

Private Arthur Concannon pictured above with his bride, was a miner in Whitwick before going to war.

He is commemorated on the Memorial Clock Tower and on the War Memorial at Holy Cross Church.

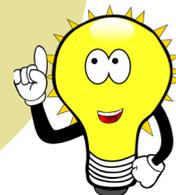
In a letter to his parents, his friend G H Phipps wrote:

" Arthur earned a V.C.* as big as a battleship. This is what everyone says who saw him. . . . We both went to Confession and Holy Communion two days before the battle. You are quite aware of what we were to each other. I have been hard hit by his death, for I could look the world over and not find a better chum. I have been fairly knocked up over it, and it makes me wild that after being out here two years and nine months, he should get knocked over at the eleventh hour. I feel it pretty hard, but then, what is my loss compared with yours? Please, accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Letters like this were very important for families who had lost sons, brothers, husbands...

Knowing that their son had attended a religious services just days before his death would have brought them some comfort.

Which words in this letter would have brought them comfort?



* The Victoria Cross was a medal for bravery initiated by Queen Victoria in 1856.



Above: Theophilus Jones
© Friends of Thringstone

The sporting Headmaster

Theophilus Jones was headmaster of Thringstone School. He came to Thringstone from Hartlepool about a year before enlisting. He was very popular, a good sportsman and played for Coalville Rugby Club.

In October 1914, aged 29, Theophilus joined the Durham Light Infantry Branch of Kitchener's Army.

He was killed while on his post during bombing of Hartlepool by a German ship on 16 December 1914. He was the first British soldier to be killed on British soil in the First World War. A total of 119 people were killed and 600 injured (including children) in the attack.

A well-attended funeral

A huge crowd and about 500 members of his battalion attended his funeral, at St Aiden's Church, West Hartlepool, some of whom gave a gun salute at his grave side.

An article in the Coalville Times reporting on his death on Christmas Day 1914, states that he was presented with a prayer book when he left Thringstone School, and this was pierced by a piece of shell which penetrated halfway through the book. At his memorial service Thringstone parishioners were shown the book before it was returned to his mother.



Above: Hartlepool Memorial Author: Andrew Curtis
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The image above shows the tablet that was erected by Hartlepool Borough Council in 1921 to mark the location where the first German navy shell landed during the bombardment and the death of, Theophilus Jones, the first British soldier on the mainland.

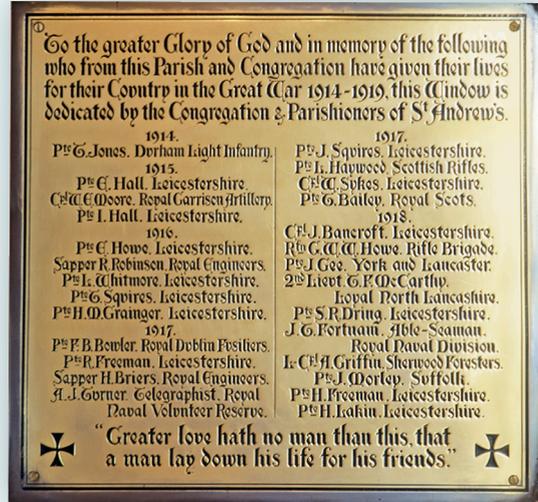
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Above: Memorial Window St Andrew's Church Thringstone ©Michael Faulkner

A memorial to remind us of their sacrifice

A beautiful stained-glass window in St Andrew's Church, Thringstone, was to be erected by the local school children in memory of their schoolmaster. The children raised £7 10 shillings over seven years to help to pay for the window. The window depicts Christian martyr St Alban, who changed clothes with a priest who was facing death, so that he was killed in his place. By the time the window was installed many men from the village had be killed, so it was dedicated to them all.



Above: Memorial Plaque ©Michael Faulkner

The brass plaque shown above is fixed alongside the stained-glass memorial window and is inscribed with the names of the soldiers from the village who died in the First World War - with Theophilus's name at the top.

The dedication reads:

“To the greater glory of God, and in memory of the following, who from this parish and congregation have given their lives for this country in the great war 1914-19, this window is dedicated by the congregation and parishioners of St Andrew's.”

Why does the image in the window help remind us of those who sacrificed their lives in the First World War? Why were letters home from fellow soldiers so important? How did they provide comfort to families who had lost relatives? Why are the war memorials located overseas on the site of the big battles so important? Why did Private Jones keep the bible with him at all times? What does it say about his faith that he was carrying this when he died?

