



Boothroyd Primary Academy June 2019



DEWSBURY SACRIFICES

Boothroyd Primary Academy 26thth and 27th June 2019

I visited Boothroyd Primary Academy on the 26th and 27th of June 2019. Over the course of two days I taught 47 Year 6 children and 90 Year 5 children.

The soldiers that we looked at were Matthew Oldroyd Fryer and William Edward Speight. The pupils responded extremely well to the workshops and were interested and engaged throughout. They made some very intelligent comments and asked some thoughtful questions. I was delighted with their enthusiasm and the high standard of work that they produced.

Matthew Fryer lived at 24 Back Tweedale Street, Dewsbury. After discussion with one of the Teaching Assistants, it transpired that this street no longer exists, but that it was close to Tweedale Street, which is still there. Some of the children knew where this was.

The pupils were surprised to learn that Matthew was one of 11 children, with 23 years difference between the oldest and youngest. They were saddened to hear about the tragedy that afflicted Matthew's life. He and his wife lost twin boys when they were only a few weeks old. His wife Sarah died before he did, probably from the flu, so that when Matthew died seven months later, their remaining four children were left as orphans. The very detailed profile includes a haunting photograph of Matthew and Sarah and their four children, the littlest one a young baby, shortly before Sarah lost her life. The pupils were concerned as to what had happened to the orphaned children and I could tell them from the information provided in the profile that they had gone into the care of their two Grandmothers.

His profile also states that he was a member of Gladstone Liberal Club. One of the Teaching Assistants worked out that this is now a small mosque, which some of the pupils attend! We also learnt that Matthew had died from 'gas and shellshock' and this prompted some good discussion, particularly about how shellshock was handled then and the modern equivalent today.

Our other soldier, William Speight, lived on Quarry Road, Westtown, which is close to the school and many of the pupils knew where this was. Unfortunately, we don't know the number of the house that he lived at. The pupils were interested to learn that William also came from a large family, being one of nine children.

This very detailed profile included a poignant photograph of William, his wife Florence and their only child, Frank, possibly taken just before William left for France. William died on the 24th August 1917, when Frank was only 19 months old. The pupils were saddened to realise that Frank wouldn't have had any memory of his father. The profile revealed that Frank lived until June 1990, and the pupils agreed that he must have treasured this precious photograph and his father's medals. They were fascinated to read the cutting from the newspaper which includes a long extract from a very moving letter, written by his platoon commander, describing William as 'one of the most valuable men in my platoon'.

Suzanne Hudson

