

## REMEMBERING LOWESTOFT'S FALLEN

**Rosemary Collins** finds out how a town in Suffolk created a virtual war memorial

**M**ore than one million Britons died fighting in the First and Second World Wars. So it's no wonder that many of us have people in our family tree who fell in the two conflicts, and most of our towns and villages have a memorial commemorating the casualties from the local area. But how much do we know about the names on those memorials?

In Lowestoft, Suffolk, local historian Joe Thompson came up with the idea for a virtual war memorial after being inspired by a similar project in the nearby town of Felixstowe. Joe had previously created the heritage website Lowestoft Old and Now ([lowestoftoldandnow.org](http://lowestoftoldandnow.org)).

"With my background in IT and design I thought, 'Let's see'," he says. "The first thing I needed to do was to get good data." So he contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which keeps

an online record of the 1.7 million individuals commemorated on Commonwealth war memorials ([cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead](http://cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead)). He says that the CWGC staff were "supremely helpful" and sent him all of the records they had containing the word 'Lowestoft'. Although this created some false positives, it was a good starting point.

Joe then teamed up with Rev Damon Rogers, the vicar of St Andrew's Church on Roman Road. Using other records from the First World War, the pair identified more men who weren't commemorated on the war memorials – for instance, some who grew up in the local workhouse.

With funding from Lowestoft Town Council, Joe launched the website Our Fallen featuring a searchable database of 2,025 men and women from the town who were killed in the world wars: [ourfallen.lowestoftoldandnow.org/excel22](http://ourfallen.lowestoftoldandnow.org/excel22). The next step, Joe says, was turning to social media. He put out an appeal and got in contact with people whose family members were in the database, and they supplied stories and photographs of their relations.

"Although 20 years ago more old pictures would have still been available in family archives, there

Joe's site includes this photo of Flying Officer John Keith Turner, which was supplied by one of his relations



wasn't any social media then, so we wouldn't have been able to find them," he says. "Less material is available now, but the fact you can actually reach the people who own it has really brought it to life."

For example, the entry for John Keith Turner, known by his middle name, says that he was the son of John Pater Turner and Hilda Beatrice Turner. He was a flying officer with No. 69 Squadron who died

on 23 January 1945 at the age of 23. His nephew Mike Sims supplied a picture of Keith and a description

of how he died, when his Wellington was shot down during a reconnaissance mission in the Netherlands.

Joe adds that he can offer his website's template to other groups interested in creating a virtual war memorial in their community: "We want to be able to help other groups do this type of thing if we can. We have benefited so much from other people being kind enough to share their expertise, time or memories that we'd like to give back as well." 🍀

**We want to be able to help other groups do this type of thing if we can**

### TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email

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### GET INVOLVED

#### OUR FALLEN

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If you have any information about someone on the site, get in touch by email or phone. You can also send an email by clicking the text reading 'email re [NAME]' in the column headed 'Photos?' on the database.