



# Every Picture tells a Story

By Annette Power

(Adult Category)

Archie Neville was a plucky lad from the historic market town of Wimborne Minster. He wasn't the brightest in his class, but a decent lad at heart. Every weekend you could find him getting up to mischief. Trout tickling in the River Allen, skinny-dipping at Eye Bridge, goading the local prize bull to charge at the farmyard gate. In fact, any act of derring-do he thought he could get away with!

But Archie had a soft side, which caught the attention of Daisy Loveless, as their eyes met across a crowded playground at Wimborne National School. The school bell rang, and Archie stole a kiss from Daisy. Cupid's arrow hit its target and Archie and Daisy became childhood sweethearts.

When Archie left school, he worked as farmhand for the Richards Family at Chilbridge Farm on the Kingston Lacy Estate. Archie loved the outdoor life and loved his job too, looking after the sheep, hay baling, harvesting and transporting livestock to Wimborne Market.

Daisy left school two years later and started work in the estate office at Deans Court, home of the Hanham Family. As the years passed, Archie and Daisy's romance blossomed as they enjoyed their time together. From boating on the River Stour to picnicking at Badbury Rings, such were the heady days of true love for the two sweethearts.

Yet, despite their hopes and dreams, Daisy's parents never really approved of Archie and his mischievous ways. They believed she could do better and forbade her from marrying until she reached the age of 20, by which time they hoped she would have grown-up and out of love with Archie and moved on to someone more respectable.

On 4 August 1914 came the outbreak of the First World War. A time of crisis, despair and fear of the unknown for the nation, the town of Wimborne Minster and Archie and Daisy too.

Archie, 18, was determined to do his duty for King and Country and, despite being under-age by one year, managed to inveigle his way into joining up for military service alongside some of his 'pals' from his school days, becoming Private 771350 Archie Neville and serving in the 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment.

Daisy, 16, also wanted to do her duty for the war effort, so volunteered as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) at the Beaucroft Red Cross Hospital which was set up to look after injured soldiers returning from the battlefields of the Western Front.

The First World War was fought, won and lost on many fronts and in many bloody battles, far and wide, with countless losses and casualties on all sides.

In summer 1916, in a sun-baked trench not far from the River Somme, Archie lay withered, shell-shocked and battle-weary. He reached into his pocket with his cracked, blistered hands and took out a photograph. It was a photograph of Daisy. His hands shook, his lips quivered, his eyes filled with tears as he looked at the photograph before pressing it close to his chest.

At that same moment, on the other side of the English Channel, unaware of Archie's fragile state of mind and body, Daisy sat in her rocking chair clasping a photograph of Archie and holding it close to her chest. They were each reflecting upon their love for one another, the happy times they'd shared and the heartache of being apart for nearly two years.

By the time she was 20, Daisy's parents finally relented and agreed that Archie had proved his worth, both as man and boy, and gave their blessing for the relationship to be formalised. Archie Neville, 22, on home leave from war service, married his childhood sweetheart, Daisy Loveless, 20 at Wimborne Minster on 3 July 1918.

After their wedding, Archie and Daisy enjoyed a brief honeymoon in their marital home in Chapel Lane, Wimborne before Archie returned once more to the Front Line. Another heart-wrenching moment for the newly-weds.

Seven weeks later, on 21 August 1918, after four years fighting for the allied forces, for King and country and for the freedom of our nation, Private 771350 Archie Neville, 6<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment, was killed in action by shell fire. His body was never found. He was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery (posthumously) for helping his comrades, both junior and senior, which led to his tragic and untimely death.

Sadly, Archie never did see nor hold Daisy in his arms again. Neither did he know she went on to give birth to their one and only son, Alfred.

Private Archie Neville's name is commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial in Pas-de-Calais, which includes the names of 9,843 British and South African soldiers who were killed during the Advance to Victory and who have no known grave.

In 1918, at the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month", the guns fell silent, with the loss of 1,000 soldiers from Archie's battalion of the Dorsetshire Regiment alone.

One hundred years later, in August 2018, the descendants of Archie and Daisy study the photograph of them on their wedding day, together with Archie's Military Medal for Bravery.

"So, Daddy, are these my Great-Great Grandparents on their wedding day, and my Great-Great Grandfather's First World War medal?" asked 12-year-old Poppy. "Yes," replied her Dad. "And did you know, you were named after the 'poppy' of remembrance, the symbol of commemoration for all those who died fighting for our country."

Poppy placed the photograph and medal back in the family memory box ready to take with her to the Commemoration Service for the Centenary of the First World War at Wimborne Minster on Sunday 11 November 2018.

A momentous occasion on which to honour those who fought for our freedom in what was believed to be 'the war to end all wars', as well as a timely reminder of Archie and Daisy Neville, without whom Poppy would not be here today.