

Bert Grant, fisherman extraordinary

Since the item on local fisherman Bert Grant appeared in the March Newsletter, his son Gordon, has been lives in Sutton Coldfield, has been kind enough to send me the accompanying notes and photos. Bert's remarkable career included serving first in the army, then in the navy in the first world war, and then in the navy again in the second world war. — Ed.

Gordon Grant writes:

BERT GRANT was born on October 11, 1893, one of a family of ten, and lived at Howard Cottage on the beach at Pevensey Bay. He worked as a fisherman with his father Joe and his brother Alfred (known as 'Puff'), off the beach at the rear of the cottage, the locality now known as Tower View Caravan Park.

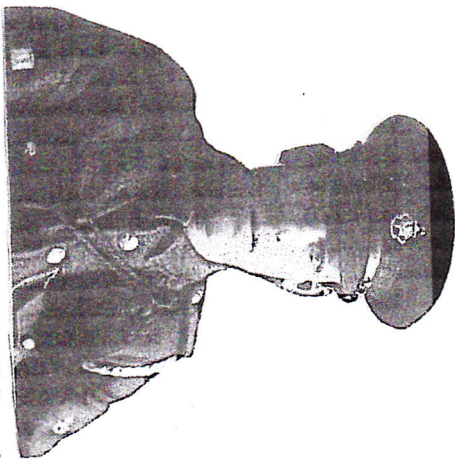
They had two boats that they kept on the beach, and a large shed for the nets and equipment.

Royal Sussex

In 1914 Bert joined the 13th battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, and on June 28, 1915, married May Taylor of Westham in Westham Church. He was wounded in the thigh in the battle of the Somme in 1916, and was invalided out of the army as a result. After he recovered he volunteered for the navy and spent the rest of the war stationed at Portsmouth or on naval duty at sea, being demobbed in 1919.

Fishing again

After the war Bert went back to fishing for a while, then went to work as a chauffeur for a publican who was also a boxing promoter. Bert used to drive him to various boxing venues around the country, and used to box quite a lot himself.



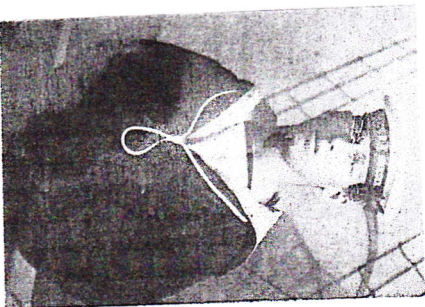
By the late 1920s he was living at Stone Cross, and by the early 30s had started selling his fresh fish door to door. His rounds were from Stone Cross, Westham, Pevensey, Pevensey Bay, and Normans Bay. Another round was Stone Cross, Polegate, Dittons Wood, Hailsham and Hankham, while there was also Stone Cross, Langney, Friday Street, Long Gardens and Seaside, Eastbourne.

In 1940 (at 47 — Ed) he volunteered for the navy, and was at Dunkirk helping with the evacuation of the troops off the beaches. After his ship had been sunk by a torpedo he swam to a nearby buoy and climbed on to it, covering the light with his oilskin coat, and was rescued by the crew of a boat which arrived to find out why the light had gone out.

Bert spent the rest of the war training recruits at bases in Fowey in Cornwall and Ardrossan in Scotland.

After the war he restarted his 'fresh fish daily' business, picking up where he had left off, and retired through ill health in the 1960s. He died in 1979 at the age of 86.

(Note: On May 29 two Dunkirk destroyers were sunk by torpedoes, Wakeful and Grafton. — Ed)



1917. Bert in the navy.

Right: May Taylor of Westham.

Below right: Gordon and Eve, late 1930s
Bottom: Bert and May's wedding on June 28, 1915.
Outside Peak Hill Cottage, Hankham.

