

Researching names on war memorials: Mochrie family case study



War Memorials Trust

This sheet aims to show what information can be found out about an individual named on a war memorial, and their family, using some of the resources suggested in War Memorials Trust's 'Researching names on a war memorial' helpsheets and lesson plans. You may find it helpful to use this sheet in conjunction with these to see how some of those resources can be used. It will demonstrate how pupils can find out the stories behind the names on their local war memorial and in doing so develop their knowledge of the impact of war.

This research focuses on the Mochrie family, who lost four sons during World War I (James, Matthew, Robert and Andrew). Their names are now listed on the Kilbirnie war memorial in Ayrshire, Scotland. The brothers fought in different regiments but what makes their story stand out is that three of them were killed on the same day, 25th September 1915, during the Battle of Loos. This sheet has been written to mark the 100th anniversary of their deaths. The fourth brother, Andrew, also fought at Loos and survived. He was killed in 1917.

Please note that this case study is intended to show what can reasonably be achieved by school-age young people undertaking research. The information about the Mochrie family given here is the result of using only sources easily available to that audience and is not exhaustive; other sources of information are available and it is possible to carry out more detailed and accurate research than that which is shown here.

Before you start: information on the war memorial

Some war memorials give information about the people they commemorate so it is always worth seeing if this is the case for your memorial before starting further research. If you do not have a specific person in mind who you want to research, a careful study of the memorial may also reveal interesting patterns such as several casualties with the same name which may help you and your pupils decide who to investigate further.

The four Mochrie brothers are listed on Kilbirnie war memorial with 155 other local men who died during World War I. It is not immediately apparent that they are siblings – it is not unusual for the same surname to appear on a war memorial with no immediate relationship between the people and there is nothing on the memorial that would suggest their relationship. The memorial does, however, list their ranks and this is helpful to note as it may help to narrow down long lists of possible people with the same surname who may appear during your research.

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Initial research: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

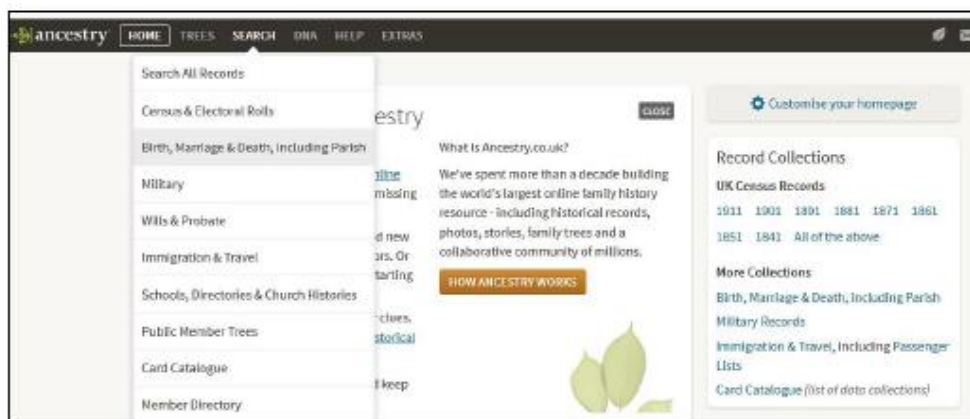
As recommended in War Memorials Trust's resources on researching names on war memorials, we started by searching for the brothers' names on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission casualty database. The war memorial lists their full names and regiments so locating the correct records following the instructions in those resources and on the site is fairly straightforward. This revealed the fact that they were brothers; their parents' names and address are included in the 'Additional information' section on each of their records.

MOCHRIE, JAMES	
Rank:	Corporal
Service No:	10503
Date of Death:	25/09/1915
Age:	28
Regiment/Service:	Gordon Highlanders "E" Coy, 2nd Bn.
Panel Reference:	Panel 115 to 119
Memorial:	LOOS MEMORIAL
Additional Information:	Son of Andrew and Margaret Mochrie, of 8, Glasgow St., Kilmorie, Ayrshire; husband of Louise Reper (formerly Mochrie), of Ward St., Rasth, New Zealand. His brothers, Andrew, Robert and Matthew also gave their lives.

The CWGC records also give the dates the brothers died, highlighting the fact that three of them were killed on the same day. It also tells us their ages and where each brother is commemorated (none of them has a known grave; James, Matthew and Robert are listed on the Loos memorial and Andrew on the Arras memorial).

Further research: birth, marriage, death and census records

Knowing the full names, ages and dates of death for the brothers, and the names of their parents, it is now possible to find more details about them and their parents using birth, marriage and death records that are available online from genealogy websites (see www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links). Using the ages and dates known, it is possible to work out roughly when the brothers were born and find these records.



Census records also reveal important information. As well as giving information about the individual you are searching for, they can give information about others in their household so you know you have the correct family. In the screenshots below, a search for 'Andrew Mochrie' returns 229 possibilities (shown in the top image). By using the information already known (e.g. that the Andrew Mochrie killed in 1917 was 38 so would

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have been born around 1879) these possibilities can be reduced and the correct record identified (in this case it is the second one in the list –Andrew Mochrie, born around 1880). The correct record (bottom left and right) also gives information about other members of his household including his brothers and parents whose names are known. This confirms that the selected record is the correct one, and can be helpful when searching for names that are not very unusual.

All Census & Electoral Rolls results for Andrew Mochrie

Search Filters: Broad Exact

andrew
mochrie

COLLECTIONS: All Collections

Edit Search New Search UPDATE

All Categories

Census & Electoral Rolls

1700s 1800s 1900s

1700s 1800s 1900s

1710s 1810s 1910s

1720s 1820s 1920s

Results 1-20 of 229

RECORDS CATEGORIES

Note: To get better results, add more information such as Birth Info, Death Info or Location—even a guess will help. [Edit your search](#) or [learn more](#).

1901 England Census
1800s (DECADE)

NAME: Andrew Mochrie
SPOUSE: Margret Mochrie
BIRTH: abt 1858 - Cormyle, Lanarkshire (Glasgow), Scotland
RESIDENCE: Westgate, Northumberland

View Image

1901 England Census
1800s (DECADE)

NAME: Andrew Mochrie
BIRTH: abt 1880 - Blackston, Renfrewshire, Scotland

View Image

All Results

Andrew Mochrie
in the 1901 England Census

VIEW

View blank form

Add alternate information

Report Issue

Name: Andrew Mochrie

Age: 21

Estimated birth year: abt 1880

Relation to Head: Son

Gender: Male

Father: Andrew Mochrie

Mother: Margret Mochrie

Birth Place: Blackston, Renfrewshire, Scotland

Household Members:	Name	Age
	Andrew Mochrie	43
	Margret Mochrie	41
	Andrew Mochrie	21
	John Mochrie	19
	James Mochrie	11
	Eupherima Mochrie	8
	Matthew Mochrie	6
	Robert Mochrie	3
	George Mochrie	6/12
	Mary Houston	10/12

From here, you can really start to piece together the family's history. The census shows their address at the time the census was taken and, using the same search methods, you can compare this to previous census records and track where they lived every ten years.

Finally, knowing more about the brothers' parents means you can use the marriage records to find out when they married, and from there use older census records to find out about their parents and extended family.

It is a good idea to keep dates and spellings of names flexible when looking for information like this as there are sometimes discrepancies between different records, often due to a mistake in transcription or mistakes/omissions in the original records. For example, knowing that Andrew Mochrie was 38 when he died in 1917 (as shown on the CWGC record) would suggest he was born in 1879. However, a search for this date plus 2 years either side reveals he was actually born in 1880. You therefore need to be a little flexible on initial searches.

Military records

As well as census records, genealogy websites also provide access to certain military records and these can be used to supplement the information provided by birth, marriage and death records and the census. These can be a little more difficult to find and interpret but can usually tell you when and where someone enlisted and additional information (if it is not given on the CWGC records) about where a casualty fought and died.

Research results

The following information is a summary of the information about the Mochrie family, including the four brothers named on Kilbirnie war memorial, found through using the methods mentioned above and piecing together evidence from the different sources.

Before World War I

The Mochrie brothers were four of seven children born to Andrew and Margaret Mochrie. Their father, Andrew, had been born in 1858 in Lanarkshire, Scotland. In 1861 he lived with his parents, John and Mary, still in Lanarkshire but the family had moved to Renfrewshire by 1871. Aged 13 at the time, Andrew worked as a message boy.

By 1881 Andrew was 22 years old and married to Margaret, who had been born in 1860 in Midlothian, Scotland. They lived at 5 Back Row, Paisley Abbey, Renfrewshire. Andrew's occupation was listed on the 1881 census as a night stoker at a chemical works.

Their first child, also called Andrew, was born in Paisley in Renfrewshire in 1880 and was a year old at the time of the 1881 census. His brothers, John and James, were born in 1882 and 1890 and their names also appear on the 1891 census, by which time the family lived in Moor Park, Renfrewshire where Andrew (the father) worked as a driver.

The family's only daughter, Euphemia, was born in 1893 and three more brothers, Matthew, Robert and George, followed in 1895, 1898 and 1900 respectively. Matthew was born in Lanarkshire, suggesting the family moved between 1891 and 1895 when he was born, but the last two children were born in Newcastle, and the 1901 census shows that this is where the family lived in 1901, suggesting they moved again after 1895.

Further census records were unavailable but it can be assumed that the family moved back to Scotland prior to World War I and that the parents at least were living in Kilbirnie where their sons are commemorated on the war memorial.

During World War I

Andrew Mochrie was a Private in the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 9th Battalion. He enlisted in Edinburgh and was killed in action on 9th June 1917 at the age of 36 or 37. He is commemorated on the Arras memorial.

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James Mochrie was a Corporal in the Gordon Highlanders 2nd Battalion. He enlisted in Glasgow and was killed in action on 25th September 1915 at the age of 24 or 25. He is commemorated on the Loos memorial.

Matthew Mochrie was, like his eldest brother, a Private in the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 9th Battalion. He enlisted in Edinburgh and was killed in action on 25th September 1915 at the age of 20. He is commemorated on the Loos memorial.

Robert Mochrie was a Private in the Royal Scots Fusiliers 6th Battalion. He enlisted at Ayr and was killed in action on 25th September 1915 at the age of 17. He is commemorated on the Loos memorial.

Conclusion

Although the story of the Mochrie brothers must have been well-known at the time of their deaths and the impact of this felt within their community, today there is little obvious record of it other than what people have found by undertaking this type of research into the war memorial in Kilbirnie. Without researching the names on the memorial further, it is possible that their unusual story would not be known especially as World War I moves further into the past and first-hand accounts of it are lost. Therefore, it is crucial that we continue to engage with, research, and learn from war memorials and work to safeguard them for future generations to do the same.

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