

Kathleen finds medal of her Great War hero uncle



MYSTERY: Kathleen Hayes still does not know the identity of the donor who delivered her uncle's World War I medal

War-time relic turns up in a garden after research reveals relative was killed in action

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FINDING out a close family relative died in the First World War just ahead of its 100th anniversary is an emotional experience.

But when 77-year-old Kathleen Hayes (nee Johnson) and her family tried to find out more about John Johnson, who died aged 19 at the first Battle of the Scarpe, they made another amazing discovery - and she is now the proud owner of her uncle's Victory Medal.

Kathleen, of Linnards Lane in Wincham, was born and raised in the village and after a visit to Marston graveyard in July she noticed the name of a J Johnson on the war memorial.

The inscription states that the teenager was killed in 1917. Knowing that the war memorial contains the names of fallen men who lived in the surrounding area, she wondered if he could be a distant relative.

Kathleen's nephew Tony had been researching the family tree and they discovered that it was rifleman John Johnson, son of Alfred and Emma Johnson, who lived on Wincham Lane in Wincham, and he was Kathleen's uncle.

on the internet brought up a post on a World War One forum from February this year, in which Michele Bennett had posted on behalf of a work colleague, who had found a Victory Medal numbered 3823 buried in his garden at Lostock Gralam.

A reply from Alan Greveson on the forum provided further information as to who the medal had been awarded to, and Tony was able to tell his aunt about her uncle.

Since July, Kathleen and her family have tried to find out who had found the medal and after contacting the World War One forum directly they were given their contact details.

Tony said: "Unfortunately, when this person knocked on my aunt's door she was so surprised that she didn't ask for his name so we don't know who actually found the medal.

"How it came to be buried in a garden in Lostock Gralam is a complete mystery.

"In the space of a few months, my aunt discovered she had a relative who was killed in the First World War and someone completely unconnected to our family found his Victory Medal, all just ahead of the 100 anniversary of the outbreak of war."

Private John Johnson took part in the opening battle of the Arras Offensive and was killed in combat.

He has no marked grave but is commemorated on a memorial at the British Cemetery in Arras, France.

Tony, together with Kathleen's son, Robert will be travelling to Arras in April next year to pay their respects.