

The friends and family of Harry Patch, the last British survivor of the First World War, have announced his death. Harry died peacefully in his residential home in Wells, Somerset, aged 111.

Harry Patch was born on 17 June 1898 in Combe Down, Somerset. At the age of 18 he was conscripted into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, becoming number 2 in a Lewis Gun Team. Harry served in the trenches between June and September 1917, and saw considerable action in the Third Battle of Ypres, (often called the Battle of Passchendaele).

After the war, Harry returned to his trade as a plumber and married the young girl he had met while convalescing after the Battle of Passchendaele. They were married in 1919 and had two sons. His wife died in 1976 and his sons have also predeceased him. Harry retired in 1963. He married again in 1980 and his second wife died in 1984.

Harry didn't speak about his WW1 experiences until he turned 100. He was unfaltering in his wish for peace, stating that "War isn't worth one life", and spent the last part of his long life as a representative of a generation, promoting peace and reconciliation.

Harry was one of the three remaining British veterans of the First World War who took part in the 90th anniversary commemorations of the Great War Armistice in London in November 2008.

Jim Ross, who regularly visited Harry over many years, said on behalf of his closest friends:

"Harry died peacefully, surrounded by his many friends. While the country may remember Harry as a soldier, we will remember him as a dear friend. He was a man of peace who used his great age and fame as the last survivor of the trenches to communicate two simple messages:

Remember with gratitude and respect those who served on ALL sides;

Settle disputes by discussion, not war.

To us he was as tender as a poppy. We should remember him, and the generation he came to represent, with great pride and affection".

Veterans Minister Kevan Jones said: "It was my great pleasure to have met Harry Patch and I am deeply saddened by his death. Harry was a dignified and thoughtful

representative of a brave and selfless generation. I am sure that I speak on behalf of veterans and serving members of our forces when I express my pride in his conduct as the last Tommy."

Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt said:

"I know I speak on behalf of all ranks of the British Army in expressing my sadness on hearing the news of the passing of Harry Patch. Self-effacing about his experiences in the trenches he was no less effective in describing the horror they represented when invited to speak to school children about the realities of war. He was the last of a generation that in youth was steadfast in its duty in the face of

cruel sacrifice and we give thanks for his life - as well as those of his comrades - for upholding the same values and freedom that we continue to cherish and fight for today."