

Photograph provided by www.stepshort.co.uk



The Harbour Canteen offered a final cup of tea before the horrors of the trenches

Foreign branch breakthrough

When my aunt died, I was left a pile of papers, and with them her attempts to research the history of our family. The pile included a browned envelope addressed to the German Reform Church in London.

By chance, I put the copy of my grandfather's baptismal certificate next to it and the Gothic script matched. The envelope gave me the name and street of the church in Vienna, in 1888.

Luckily my sister was visiting Vienna last year, so I asked her to see if the church was still there. There were three churches in the same street. She managed to find someone who took her to the archives, where they produced the baptismal register for my grandfather. It revealed my great-grandfather's baptismal date, which was the same day as his wedding, one month earlier.

The certificate was very informative, as it gave the names of

our 2x great-grandparents and exactly where they were from.

This led us to Duron near Köln and Gdansk in Poland (which was at that time East Prussia)

Thus, in one fell swoop we got back another generation with names and locations. Our great-grandmother

was born in East Prussia on the stud farm for the Trakehner horses.

The horses are, bred for ceremonial occasions and are used by Lloyds Bank as their symbol.

The father is supposed to have been the bailiff/ stud manager, but again the records are incomplete.

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Runaway to sea

There was always a story told in our family about one of my grandfather's brothers running away to sea. I joined the Royal Navy and served on several ships and shore establishments over 32 years. I have always had an interest in my family history after listening to my grandmother's recollections.

Over the years I have slowly accumulated facts and information about the family, and eventually, thanks to the internet, I found my

runaway – George Robert Gunton, born in Peterborough in 1873. He appears in the 1891 census in Peterborough, working as a coppersmith apprentice.

In the 1901 census he's living in Gillingham, Kent and his profession is listed as Engine Room Artificer, Royal Navy. Knowing that he was serving in the Royal Navy, I then obtained his service record from The National Archives, which confirmed he joined as an ERA at the age of 22 and his previous profession was coppersmith.

He rose through the ranks and served on various ships and training establishments. And in the 1911 census he appears as living on a ship alongside the wall in Portsmouth. He died at the age of 30 and is buried in the naval cemetery in Gillingham.

During his short career he rose to one of the highest positions in the Artificer Engineering Department; was cited as a correspondent in a divorce case; married and had one son; named his wife as correspondent in his own divorce; and served long enough to be awarded the long service and good conduct medal.

Co-incidentally, I ended up as a Charge Chief Marine Engineering Artificer and was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Was I unknowingly following in his footsteps? If anyone at all has any more information about the Gunton family living in Jubilee Street, Peterborough I would love to hear it!

Rodney Gunton

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Brian Smith's family research led him to Vienna



Rodney Gunton unknowingly followed in his great-uncle's footsteps by joining the navy