

## 1921 Census

1921 and the shadow of war is beginning to recede but when the census is taken many households will be thinking about those who were on the last census but whose names will be missing this time.

My great grandmother must have thought about her son Arthur, who, like so many others, lost his life in the Great War. She must also have thought about her brother William who had committed suicide a few months after Arthur died. I can only imagine what a sad and painful time it must have been for her and the rest of the family, another severe blow falling so soon after the loss of her son.

Arthur was a soldier aged 24 and engaged to be married. His fiancée Nance never did marry but was always known in the family as Auntie Nance. Arthur was serving with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and was fatally injured during the battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917.

William was 44, a single man who was a carpenter. In spite of extensive research carried out by my sister, it has not been possible to discover what might have brought William to the point where he decided to take his own life.

On a happier note, the 1921 Census must have included some new names. My father was a baby in 1921, probably just learning to walk. There weren't as many cameras around in those days so I have never seen a photo of him as a very young child. Probably the youngest image I have of him, he looks about 6 or 7, arms folded with the unmistakable smile I came to know and love, just beginning on his face. He had probably been larking about with some other boys on the beach just before the photo was taken! He was always on the beach or the quay, shoes off, running around, he often told me.

My Mum's older sister Phyllis, was born in 1921 so was also on the Census for the first time. I have very happy memories of Auntie Phyll. She lived in South Wales for most of her life, so when my parents lived in Bristol we went to visit her and her family sometimes. She was a very warm and welcoming person but not very confident. When her husband, Uncle Dave, became Mayor of Torfaen she, of course, was Mayoress. She didn't relish being in the public eye at some of the events she had to attend. On one occasion she had to go to a Civic Dinner and was seated next to the guest of honour, the Duke of Gloucester. She was nevertheless, delighted to find that he was a very friendly and relaxed dinner companion, and soon put her at her ease.

The 1921 Census, like any other, was a snapshot in time, but behind the names and dates, what a wealth of stories there will always be.