

Roland Boys Bradford Durham County Record Office (D/DLI 7/804/10)

The incredible story of four brothers from County Durham will cast an emotive perspective on the legacy of the First World War.

Born in the village of Witton Park, George, James, Thomas and Roland Bradford all fought in the First World War. Only one of them returned home, while two others became the only brothers to both be awarded the Victoria Cross.[quote=Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East] “The story of the Bradford brothers, their family and the community they shared their home with provides an incredible and emotive perspective on the impact of the First World War." [/quote]Their story will provide a starting point for a project which will see past and present residents of the village exploring the legacy of First World War in their community.

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: “The story of the Bradford brothers, their family and the community they shared their home with provides an incredible and emotive perspective on the impact of the First World War. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, we’re pleased to support this project which will see people in Witton Park come together to remember the George, James, Roland and Thomas, share their own memories of the conflict and reflect on how it has shaped the place in which they live today.”

The project is led by Groundwork North East and Durham County Council, supported by a £49,800 grant made possible by money raised by National Lottery players.

The Bradford brothers

George, James, Roland and Thomas Bradford were all decorated for their service during the First World War:

- At the age of 25, youngest brother Roland became the youngest Brigadier General in the history of the British Army. In 1917 he led his brigade in the Battle of Cambrai, the first major tank battle, but was killed on the tenth day. He was awarded the Victoria Cross
- On St George's Day, and his 31st birthday, George volunteered for a mission against German submarines in Zeebrugge, during which he was killed. His bravery saw him posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross
- James' actions during the Battle of the Somme in 1917 earned him a Military Cross, but as he neared the end of a week-long battle he was injured and later died in hospital
- Eldest brother Thomas was the only one who returned home from the war. Afterwards he stood for Parliament twice and in 1939 he was knighted for his contribution to public services

Events for Witton Park residents past and present

A series of family events, public talks and school workshops will draw on the themes of motherhood, family and life in the village during wartime. The project will also tell the story of the 150 Belgian refugees who moved to Witton Park during the conflict.

The National Lottery funding news comes ahead of the dedication of a Victoria Cross memorial stone for Roland Bradford which will be laid on Sunday 11 March in the newly completed memorial garden. The laying of a memorial stone for George will take place in 2018. The memorial garden and stones have been funded by Durham County Council.

On the 22 March, past and present residents of Witton Park are invited to the first in a series of public events where they can find out how to get involved in the project and add their own memories and artefacts.