

William Devote 1897 – 1944

William Jacob Devote, born in Pembroke in 1897, was known to his family and friends as Billy. When Billy was 25 and living at the East Gate Hotel (run by his parents Richard and Flory) he married Mabel Wignall from the Royal Oak. Once married he moved to the Oak and worked as a wholesale game and rabbit merchant in premises through the old coach arch at the back, whilst also running the Tavern itself with Mabel.



The Devotes were originally from Italy and were living in Pembroke by 1844. First to arrive in Pembroke from Italy, via north Wales, was Jacob Devote whose first son was Billy's Grandfather, John Devote - born in the East End that

year. John and his wife Naomi ran the Rose and Crown - later renamed East Gate - then moved along the road to be licencees of The Black Horse Inn where Blackhorse walk is today.

In the photograph on RHS you can see businessman Billy Devote with his wife Mabel, his mother-in-law Lizzie Wignall, his son Teddy, and three



other workers on the left. The game crates are stamped with the name W.J Devote Pembroke, and in season they would be sending up to 4 tons of rabbits a day to the Midlands by train. A keen sportsman himself, once a year Billy held a sumptuous dinner for friends, farmers and trappers at the Royal Oak.

Decorated for gallantry in France in WWI Billy was well liked, and when WW2 came he went to work in Milford in the Mining Depot there. Enterprising and able to turn his hand to most things he was a considerate and kindly employer. In summer months he could even be seen around Pembroke and Pembroke Dock with a pony-drawn ice cream cart. He died at the young age of 57.

The Pembroke Story is grateful to Steven Devote for letting us share his stories.