



*To my Darling Mum
from your loving son, Neil*

Somewhere in France

Foreword

LOST IN FRANCE

He had the ploughman's strength
in the grasp of his hand:
He could see a crow
three miles away,
and the trout beneath the stone.
He could hear the green oats growing,
and the south-west wind making rain.
He could hear the wheel upon the hill
when it left the level road.
He could make a gate, and dig a pit,
And plough as straight as stone can fall.
And he is dead.

Ernest Rhys

You know, it's a strange thing but all through my life nobody has ever wanted to know about my experiences in the war. Nobody ever asked, and I've never really wanted to talk about it.

Pte. Edward Hurd
1st/4th Battalion
The Gloucester Regiment

*To my Darling Ma
from your loving son, Neil*

Somewhere in France

Foreword

by

Major Sir Fergus Matheson of Matheson, Bt.

Formerly Coldstream Guards

Chris Howell has invited me to write this foreword as a tribute to my elder brother, Sir Torquhil Matheson - an enthusiast for military matters - for the help he gave Chris. The book is a collection of experiences of men and women, mainly from Somerset, who served our country in the Great War. Chris has done a remarkable amount of research, which has enabled him to capture for future generations not only the horrors of war but also a way of life and the spirit of the nation at a critical time in our history.

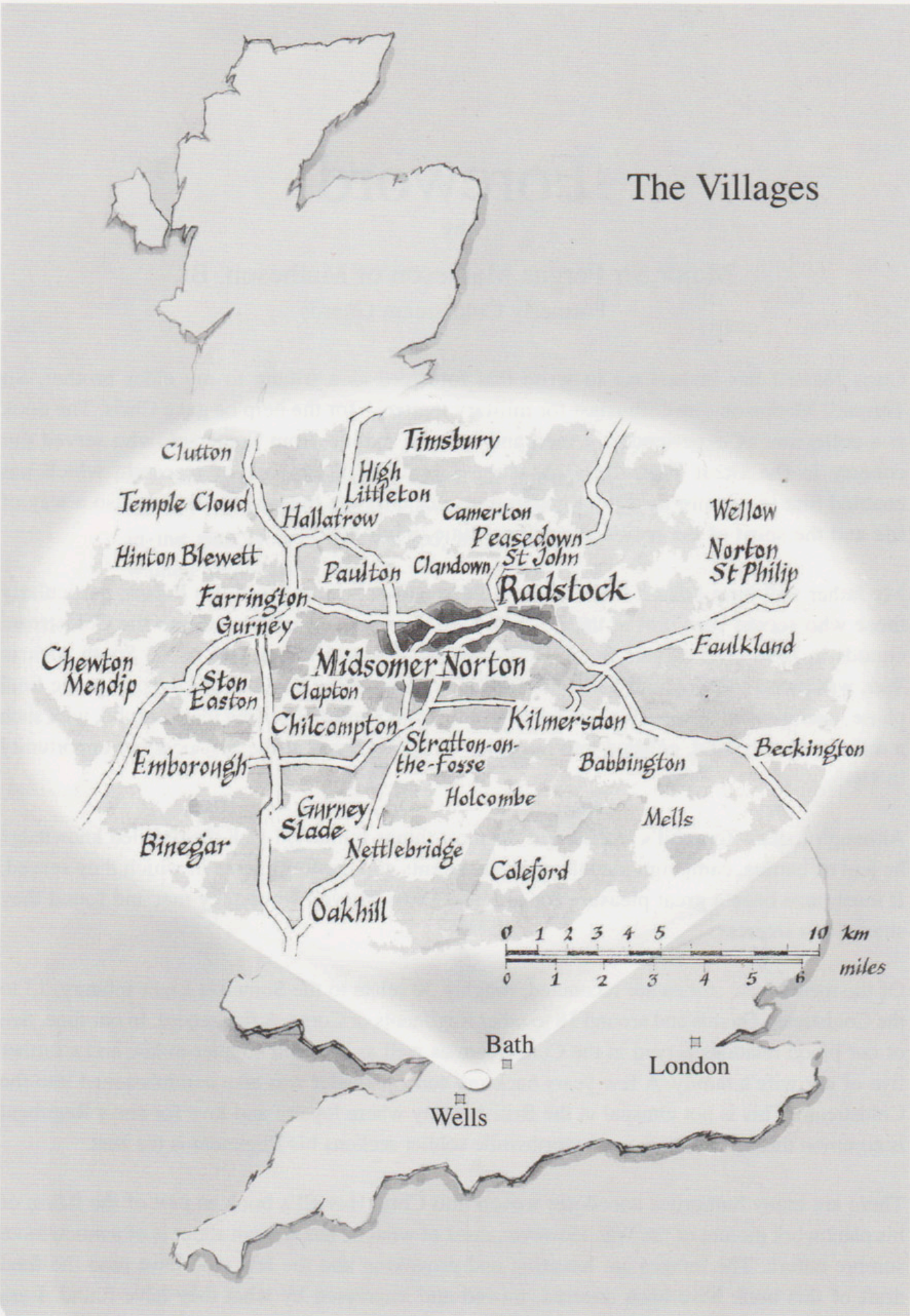
My father will have known some of the Coldstreamers whose anecdotes follow, particularly those who served with him in the 3rd Battalion. He was commissioned into the Coldstream Guards in 1894 after service in the Hertfordshire Militia. He took part in the South African War, was present throughout the 1914/18 War - commanding the Guards Division in the final phase - and went on to serve for another 17 years. It was hardly surprising that Torquhil, with such a military background, enlisted into his father's old Regiment at the first possible opportunity in 1943.

Although I share Torquhil's enthusiasm for most things military, I lack the detailed knowledge he had of battles, campaign medals, their recipients and the Regiments in which they served. It must have been a great pleasure for him and Chris Howell when they met and found they shared this interest.

Of the men whose stories are recounted, roughly 30 relate to the Somerset Light Infantry, 13 to the Coldstream Guards and around 18 to other Regiments or Corps. A fine record. In our time, five of our blood relations served in the Coldstream as well as Torquhil's father-in-law and a further five of my wife's family. A few years back my son Alexander was also commissioned into the Coldstream. This is not unusual in the British Army where loyalty and love for one's Regiment is common throughout, and every worthwhile soldier reckons his Regiment is the best.

There are many humorous anecdotes woven into Chris Howell's book as part of the fabric of his patchwork picture of the War. However, most of what he has written about is of a much more sombre nature. The images are haunting and provoking and the few who have read the final draft of this book have been angered, moved and impressed by what they have found. I am delighted to commend his work and pleased that my brother was able to contribute to it.

The Villages



Introduction

At the end of the Great War there were thirty two, so-called, Thankful Villages in the whole of Great Britain; villages to which all the young men who went to war returned alive. Remarkably, a quarter of those villages were in the County of Somerset. But there was no thankful village among the mining and farming communities that lie mid-way between Bath and Wells.

This book is a record of what the men and women who lived in that tiny part of the country did during the war. It is not a military history but rather a collage of letters, cuttings and memories, a patchwork picture of the period.

Between 1979 and 1990 I produced a series of oral history and photographic records of life in Somerset around the turn of the previous century. One character, a small-time farmer and horse-and-cart haulier, called Charlie Fry, cropped up in all of them and I was occasionally asked to write a book solely about him. I had a problem with this though, because despite having a great deal of material about him there was one period of his life that few knew about; his service in the Great War. Some who knew him well even insisted that he had not served.

As I continued with research for other books, and with the possibility of a Charlie Fry book in mind, I usually asked people what they recalled of the war in general and of Charlie in particular. In the process I built up a sizeable resource of notes, tapes and photographs, copies of which I gave to the Imperial War Museum. Otherwise, because I had no time to devote to the book, it lay undisturbed in shoe-boxes.

I have done my best to validate all that I was told. Some was improbable, some unlikely, some wrong and some downright impossible. One former infantryman gave me a graphic account of his part in an action that took place months before he joined his regiment. Another soldier was said to have been killed three miles from his brother, when they were, in fact, three thousand miles apart. Charlie, I was informed, had been in the trenches for seven years during the war - and this did seem unlikely!

The majority of Somerset's soldiers served with the Somerset Light Infantry - the SLI. Rather surprisingly, I found that, the second most likely regiment to recruit the farmers and the miners of North Somerset was the Coldstream Guards, a Regiment founded on the borders of England and Scotland. Charlie Fry had been a Coldstream Guardsman.

Quite early on I had the good fortune to meet Sir Torquhil Matheson - Major Sir Torquhil Matheson of Matheson, Bt. - who was at that time Chief of the Matheson Clan. A former officer in the 3rd Battalion of the Coldstream Guards, who had served in the Second World War, Torquhil was passionately interested in the history of his regiment. He is the only contributor to the book who did not live through the Great War, but his intimate knowledge of its history, his devotion to his Regiment; his enthusiasm for my subject and his constant encouragement to me to 'get on with it', was immensely important to me. Torquhil had promised to write the foreword when I finally finished the book but sadly he died in 1995. I am delighted that his brother, Sir Fergus Matheson of Matheson, Bt., has now kindly agreed to do so.

I was told that Charlie Fry had definitely been in the 3rd Battalion of the Coldstream (which he wasn't) and I was extremely anxious to find anyone who had fought with that Battalion. I would have travelled anywhere in the world to meet such a man. One Guards officer from whom I sought advice was scornful of the notion that I could be successful. Then, somehow, the press picked up the story and one evening I had a phone call from a lady who asked if I would like to talk to her father. Had he been in the 3rd Battalion? Yes. Was he able and willing to talk about the war? Yes. And then - deep breath - where does he live? 'At the top of the village. We can see your house from here.'

The following day I met, for the first time, two of the most dignified gentlemen I have known. In the morning I visited Brigadier Leslie George Pollard, a retired professional soldier of the Royal Signals, and in the afternoon, a former coal miner, 9606 Private Samuel John Taylor of the Coldstream Guards.

We'll start with Sammy.

Midsomer Norton
Somerset
February 1891

Sammy Taylor*

Schoolboy, Coal Miner, Soldier

Mother always used to say the snow were blowin' through the tiles on the roof and on to her bed when I was bein' born. An' I don't reckon as how I've ever been rightly warm since. We used to have a lot of weather in our house. If there were a big thunder-storm we'd be covered up in bed, frightened, and she did open the windows front and back fer to let the lightenin' go straight through and not to strike the house and harm us.

There were always music goin' on somewhere when I were a nipper. Never learnt to read music but I used to play the tin whistle an' the mouth organ. An' my uncle bought a squeeze-box one day an' I learnt to play that when he weren't about. There were a music shop along Radstock Road in the '90s - old Jonah Dando's. I went to'n fer some piano lessons an' when he did go out I did try to knock out a tune on me own - but he did always hear me an' nip back an' rap me over the knuckles. Never 'ad time to learn anything proper, though, 'cos my lovely mother got double pneumonia an' died when I were ten.

**Where a person's name is printed in bold type it indicates that his or her story is continued at a later stage*

After that the home sorta broke up. Didn't see much of Father any more 'cos he did go off and do other things. I were getting a bit wild and ragged till me half-sister - married to Uncle Ike - took me in. Sometimes a gang on us used to get up on the batch - the old slag heap down in Welton. **Oliver Brooks** - he were always in charge - and his cousin **Jack Britten**, and my cousins the Prangley boys and I were always there. Oliver useda put on his bandolier that his brother Alfred had sent him back from the Boer War - he were out there with the Coldstream Guards, like my Uncle Ike - then he useda take this cannon thing what he'd made and climb up on the batch an' pretend it were a fort. Then the rest of we used to scatter round an' pretend to take him. Sometimes he useda capture all on us, but most times he did reckon to blow us all to pieces before we caught'n. Old Oliver did always win wi' his cannon. He always reckoned he'd get a VC one day.

Other times, when we'd finished our manoeuvres, we did take pit shovels up on the batch and slide all down the side. Useda sit on with the handle out the front to hold on and steer an' then shoot down wi' our legs cocked out. We did fly down there like winkie! We useda have a laugh, mind. Oh, we did have some fun when we were kiddies.

When I left school there was nothing else to do but go into the mines but it were always my hobby fer to join the Coldstream Guards. When Uncle Isaac come home from South Africa he did tell me and me sister about 'em. Uncle reckoned the Coldstream were second to none - Nulli Secundus, he'd say - and that were drummed into we: nothing above us. And they had bearskins. And that's how I come to fancy the Coldstream. Fancied them more than any.

Well, in 1912 I got fed up with being underground and I couldn' stand the under-manager. On the Town Hall they had photographs of the different Guards on a board and I thought t'were time to do something about it. T'were only ten mile to Bath so that same day I walked in to the recruiting place and zed, 'I'm come to join the Coldstream Guards'. 'Oh well, I don't know



'bou that,' he zed. 'I've got plenty of vacancies in the Somersets.' So I zed if it weren't the Coldstream I were off home again. He made me wait while he phoned. I got in the Coldstream.

I got a shillin' a day when I joined, an' had tuh go tuh the shop and buy me shining kit out of that shilling. A tin of Bluebell oxblood polish fer me chinstrap and stuff. They put us through it at Caterham all right! That were strict, mind! The Sergeant Major would come out on the parade ground and give 'ee a good tap in the ribs with his fist. He did say, 'It's no good trying yer hand in here. We duh tame lions!' An' we did believe him, too.

Oliver had joined up before me but I seen a lot of him while I was at Caterham. After me training I went to the 3rd Battalion at Windsor. We were called the Cushy 3rd 'cos we always had such good shots in our lot. An' they always called Taylors 'Cushy' for some reason - so I were always 'Cushy' after that.

That picture were taken at Windsor. The chap what did wear that sash did lend it to me fer the picture, just fer a bit of sport. Smart boy, eh?

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian

1st May, 1914

My attention has been called to a poster issued by the 4th Prince Albert's (Somerset Light Infantry) calling for recruits, by which it appears that some real advantage is at last being given to the Territorial soldier. The bill sets forward the terms of enlistment, that the recruit must not be less than 17 and not more than 35 years of age, that he must engage for four years, and may at the end of that time re-engage for one or more year, if he wishes. The point chiefly emphasised, however, is the amount of pay and allowances granted. It is the plain duty of every young man who is able to bear his part in the defence of the country, and it seems now as though all ought to be able to afford the annual camp, one of the chief difficulties hitherto prevailing.

The unmarried private, who makes himself efficient, receives for his 15 days training 15s pay, 20s bounty and boot allowance 2s 6d, making 37s 6d in all, or nearly 19s a week. This is all clear profit as he is well looked after in the matter of food, which is excellent and well varied, and, of course, clothing and equipment are provided free and railway fares paid. A married private gets separation allowance for his wife and also for his children.

In the case of a married man without any family, he would receive £2 13s 9d for the 15 days, and if he had any children, 2s 6d a head for boys of 14 and under and girls of 16 and under. Of course these advantages are conditional on the performance of drills and musketry, and the bounty of £1 and the separation allowance to married privates are not granted unless camp is attended for the full 15 days.

15th May, 1914

A movement is afoot to raise a half-company of Territorials at Radstock. At present it is understood there are but four young men living in Radstock who belong to the Territorial Force, and this is not considered creditable for a place the size and population of Radstock.

* * * * *

Lt. Arthur Coombs

4th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry
April, 1914

Four, you say. Well, I was one of them. I'd already joined them. At that time the powers that be must have known that the war was coming and they were having great recruiting campaigns all round the country. I thought it was a good idea so I joined and was commissioned that April. My first recollection of the Terriers was years earlier when they had had a show - a field day - up at the Clandown coal pit, all dressed in their red coats. When I joined them as an officer I knew as little as any recruit. I was 18 then, and you can imagine me, looking very young for my age and put in charge of coal miners and knowing less than they did about military matters. Sergeant Ashman



used to drill the men in the field opposite Radstock Church and I joined in with them. This is us: G Company of the 4th Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry - Prince Albert's own - at Norton Hill Station that Summer. They were a grand crowd. I knew them all and where they came from and so on. And they seemed to accept me all right. They nicknamed me 'Our Boy'! By the way, our Company had nine of the 11 in the Battalion football team. I was inside right.



Lt. Leslie Pollard

Indian Army

I always wanted to be a soldier - and I wanted to soldier in India. Father was then Commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Somerset Territorials and it was his view that if Mother wanted me to go, then all well and good, because he couldn't afford to keep me in a British regiment where you had to have two or three hundred a year in order to live. All you got as a second lieutenant was five bob a day. Mother had been born in India, daughter of a Major General, so it pleased her that I should go there.

At the end of my first term at Sandhurst I was made a Lance-Corporal and by the time I passed out I was the Senior Colour Sergeant in charge of all the cadets and all the parades. I put that down to a good upbringing in Midsomer Norton. So, I was commissioned from Sandhurst in January 1911, and left for a year's attachment to the West Kent Regiment in Peshawar.



My father, who was **Dr George Pollard**, happened to know someone - a patient - in Farrington Gurney, who had a relation commanding an Indian Battalion and so it was all arranged for me to join his battalion when I'd finished with the West Kents. And that was that. After my year with the West Kents I was posted to the Hasara. It was all a matter of knowing someone in order to get on - someone in Simla, someone in Delhi.

I joined my Indian regiment at Quetta - though they had nothing to do with India, really. They were Hasarists from Afghanistan. Well, I reported to the guardroom. Second in Command was sent for. 'See those men over there?' 'Yes.' 'Go and take charge.' A curt reception, but no more than I expected. We subalterns were a damn nuisance - conceited young men - we were bottle-washers. Well, by that time I spoke Hindustani pretty well so I went out and started talking. No reaction. They spoke Persian.

I'd been at Quetta about a year when the Battalion had orders to leave. Go out by rail for about six hours - to the end of the railway line, where the desert started. We then had 28 days' marching out to the Persian border, averaging 20 miles a day. All over desert - there was no road. I was acting as Quartermaster at that time so I had to stay behind each morning to see each camp was cleaned up. I had a camel to catch up with the Battalion which marched steadily till it came to mid-day - luncheon time - when I would catch up with them and have breakfast and lunch together.

We were at the border for a year, stopping gun-running. There was a telegraph line which worked occasionally but no other communication except once a month when a convoy came through with stores. That's where I found myself in 1914, when war broke out in Europe.

Cpl. Clifford Jeffery

West Somerset Yeomanry

4th August, 1914



On August 4th we were all mobilised. When I were 15 I'd joined the Yeomanry. They were short of recruits, see? That were the only way I could see to get a bit of hollerday from the farm I were born on. Father were born there and his father came there in 1854. I was bred for farming - couldn't do anything else. I joined as a Territorial and when you signed you had to say if you could supply a horse - if you couldn't they'd find you one. I had me own - Scot's Lad - with a big white face. We had to sign for four years and go to camp every year. This picture were taken in Exmouth in 1912 and there I be - like a great scarecrow, see? I stayed Corporal 'cos I were too good. They couldn't put me higher.

Anyway, there we were on August 4th, all mounted and lined up on the parade ground, and the Colonel made his big speech calling for volunteers. Then another big-wig bloke who were there made another speech. They wanted us to volunteer to go abroad as a unit. The North Somerset Yeomanry went abroad early 'cos they volunteered as a unit, and we'd 'a done the same if we'd all volunteered. So they said, 'Will those willing tuh volunteer ride two steps forward?' Only two of my troop went forward - I and Albie David. Had the officers bloody shitting! Two of us out of about 30. Those bloody officers were cut, suh. They were sure we were going to volunteer as a unit. But our lot never had enough guts.

The gutless sods tried all sorts of wheezes tuh get out of it. They'd parade sick and the doctor'd give them a certificate and they did go home. As the buggers refused to volunteer to go abroad we were used for home defence to begin with. We went over to Winchester and stopped the night in a girls' college there and then we went on up to the East Coast. We travelled by night and crooped down under a hedge by day. Then we were distributed round to different farms.

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian

7th August, 1914

During the past week many men from this district have been called upon to leave their occupations and rejoin the colours. An effort is being made to organise a committee to safeguard the interests of the wives or families or other dependants of those who have been called away. Dr Pollard has kindly taken the initiative in the matter so far as Midsomer Norton and Chilcompton are concerned. If any of the wives or parents of the men serving either in the Army or the Navy would call at the new Drill Hall tomorrow, about 5:30, Dr Pollard would be pleased to see them. It is hoped to make such arrangements in the district that there would be no hardship felt by those who are for the time being deprived of their bread winner.

No. 191

Army Form D. 463A.

ARMY RESERVE.

GENERAL MOBILIZATION.

Notice to join the Army for Permanent Service.

Name J. Foy Rank Private
Regimental Number } 7264 Coldstream Guards. { Regt. or Corps.

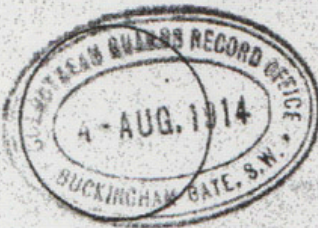
You are hereby required to join the Coldstream Guards.
at CHELSEA BARRACKS, LONDON. on 5 - AUG. 1914

Should you not present yourself on that day, you will be liable to be proceeded against.

You will bring with you your "Small Book," your Life Certificate, Identity Certificate, and, if a Regular Reservist, Parchment Reserve Certificate.

Instructions for obtaining the sum of 3s. as an advance of pay and a Travelling Warrant where necessary, are contained in your Identity Certificate.

If your Identity Certificate is not in your possession and you are unable to proceed to join, you must report at once to this office, either personally or by letter.



Stamp of Officer i/c Records.

Rupert Shepherd
Schoolboy

I knew lads who went pretty well instantly, like that. Before the war our Member of Parliament visited public houses and offered farm workers £1 to sign a paper. Most of them didn't read it - couldn't read it, maybe - but they were most anxious to get hold of his pound. But what that was was a call-up paper in case of emergency - which of course happened in 1914. In August

1914 or just before, they were actually called from their harvest fields to join up. The lads I knew - five of them - were quite surprised to find themselves in uniform. They were Army Service Corps horsemen. Wasn't just the lads who were taken, neither. They used to commandeer suitable horses from farms for hauling guns or officers' mounts and so on. We're told to remember our four legged friends - well those horses died by the thousand in France.



Where I lived then, there were fields used as camps for the first few months of the war, and for a while the soldier boys lived in tents. There were them - the ASC - and various other regiments parked round and about and I used to go there to see them. I was just twelve at the time but no-one seemed to mind me being there.

* * * * *

Hilda Seymour
Schoolgirl

I used to go and watch my father at the blacksmithy he worked at, by the side of the Railway Inn in Chilcompton - he was a blacksmith there with Mr Fred Perkins. All through the First War the Irish horses used to come off the train. War horses - to be shod. He used to do the farrier bit - shoe them for to go off to war. I don't know how they went, but they did. Used to work till twelve at night sometimes to get them all done.

Somerset Guardian

7th August, 1914

There is no doubt that the August Bank Holiday was under a shadow this year. Not only did the sinister shadow of war have its natural effect over things, and keep people from whole-hearted rejoicing, but the rain finished matters off. The downpour at mid-day damped everyone's ardour, and spoilt the attendances at various fetes, while the pelting rain in the evening finally drove all in doors. Naturally enough indoor amusements reaped the benefit. Still, it was a distinctly 'grey' holiday in all respects.

14th August, 1914

I am pleased to see that there has been a general abandonment of flower shows and social functions of a similar kind in this district. The Midsomer Norton Show should have been held yesterday but on Monday the committee and officers wisely decided not to hold it. Last Friday night the committee of the Radstock Horticulture and Poultry Show, which was fixed for Wednesday next, unanimously decided to abandon the event. It is almost inconceivable to think how people can entertain the idea of flower shows, sports and social functions when the whole country is faced with such grave danger. All petty considerations should give way to national considerations.

Many enquiries have been made respecting the local G Company (Territorials) who have been away from the district since July 23rd. I am in a position to state that the men are on Salisbury Plain. The Company, with the rest of the Battalion, left the district for a fortnight's



stay only, and consequently many of the young fellows made no preparation for a longer period. When it was found that they were likely to be away for a much longer time a message was received that the men needed shirts and socks.

The parents or friends of the Territorials who knew of their needs left parcels at the Radstock Rectory to be forwarded. The ladies of Midsomer Norton and Radstock took up the matter immediately at the wish of Col. Pollard and on Saturday and Sunday large sewing parties sat at the Victoria Hall, Radstock, and the Town Hall, Midsomer Norton, where over 200 good warm flannel shirts were made and a large number of pairs of socks were also purchased.

On Monday morning Mr Louis Beauchamp kindly motored Col. Pollard to Durrington to deliver the goods. Parcels addressed to individuals were handed over to them and **Capt. the Hon. Edward Strachey** promised to see the proper distribution of the whole of the goods.

* * * * *

Herbert Caines

Railwayman

August, 1914

Railways were always in my blood. When I was born, in 1888, Father was the station master at Norton Hill Station, in Midsomer Norton, and when I was eight or nine I remember seeing men going off to the Boer War from there. Mind you, Vic Foster was telling me how when his father was a lad he was at the gate of their cottage one day and saw a red coat coming along the road. Then his father saw it and said, 'Here's your Uncle Levi coming back from the war in the Crimea'.

I used to play up at the station and as a ten year-old I used to be able to work the signal box - the telegraph and all. The signalman felt sure I'd go into the railways when I grew up so he'd let me take the trains through with the little needles they used to have on the signal boxes in those days. I used to work those trains through while he sat watching.

Anyway, when I was 16 I'd gone into Bristol to work in the goods offices of the Bristol Midland Railway and then, ten years later, I got married - six weeks before war broke out. Everybody went crazy - crazy to go. 'Kill the Germans! Kill the Germans!' And I said well, yes, but they might kill you. They'd gone mad. And those recruiting concerts they had - I went to them and saw how they worked men up to a pitch. Fellows didn't know what they were doing, they'd just go and sign up and live to regret it. I saw what was happening. It was clear that this war was going to be different. And the enemy was a formidable one. I went to the concerts - but I didn't fall.

Pte. Arthur Fricker
1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment
29th August, 1914

My Dear Wife,

It was on August 22nd when we came into contact with the Germans and on Sunday 23rd their big guns were pointed at us. The roar was like thunder. All night long we lay in the trenches and the air seemed full of smoke and fire. Towns around were all in flames and men, women and children were running everywhere, in fact some ran towards the Germans' lines.

On the morning of the 26th we were at them again, the Germans being shot down like rabbits. About 12am a German aeroplane, flying the Union Jack and the French colours, was flying down our positions. We thought it was one of our own but whenever she dipped the German artillery took range and as soon as she got up and out of reach they simply poured the shells upon us. Within 10 minutes we had 5 killed and 47 wounded and a number we cannot account for. It was just like hell on earth.

27490 Pte. Arthur Fricker
14th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment
Killed in Action
France and Flanders
23rd March, 1918

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian
4th September, 1914

The new Service Battalion of the Somerset LI, (the 6th) has now been raised to the strength of 1,000. In five days 1,000 recruits have enlisted in the Somersets. As a result the 3rd Battalion at Plymouth has been brought up to 1,600 and it is intended to bring it up to 2,000.

I hear that the 4th Somerset LI are fit and well on Salisbury Plain but are short of potatoes and green vegetables. If any have garden produce to spare here is a good use to which it could be devoted. Arrangements have been made to convey it to the command and if any friends of the men could leave any vegetables at the Rectory (Radstock) up to tomorrow (Saturday) evening they would be sent to the camp on Sunday.

Charles Lewin

(Headmaster of Radstock Church School)

Chairman of the Somerset Football Association

addressing the Somerset FA Council

2nd September, 1914

We meet tonight under circumstances little expected when we closed our successful last season. Our gathering is held while over us all lies the shadow of a war that has no parallel in the history of the world, a war whose outcome is fraught with the most momentous consequences to many different nations, and in which England is taking a noble and strenuous part.

Obviously at a time like this our procedure as a County Football Association cannot, and ought not to, follow the lines of former years, when benificent peace held sway, and our sole duty was to promote and control sport. I thought it well to ask our secretary to call at short notice a



meeting of the League's Board of Appeal, that being a small body most easily got together. We met last Saturday, and it is now my duty to lay before you for consideration, and I hope endorsement, the result of our deliberations.

First and foremost we must put patriotism before sport. We must recognise and impress upon footballers that it is more essential to be able to shoot the King's enemies, than to shoot goals; to defend our country's honour is stupendously more important than to keep a rival team at bay, and to fight in England's cause is far nobler than to win points in league football.

Patriotism, duty, nay, even the instinct of National self-preservation, all demand that able-bodied

men should obey the Nation's call to arms. It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. Heaven forbid that future historians should be able to say that the youth of this country was found wanting on the field of play while it should have been on the field of battle. Medals for successful football are good; medals for active service are infinitely more meritorious.

But - it may be asked - do you propose to stop Association Football in Somerset? No, for reasons I shall presently give. We shall carry out a restricted programme, modified from time to time during the season as circumstances require. If we hear that such and such a competition cannot be run, or that certain clubs have disbanded because so many players have joined Kitchener's Army, we shall rejoice and we shall invite clubs to send our secretary the names of any players who have become soldiers, that we may compile what it will be no mere figure of speech to call a roll of honour.

We propose allowing some football to go on because a considerable number of players are too young for enlistment, while a certain proportion of young men were, in the early days of recruiting, rejected on account of some slight physical defect, frequently the condition of the teeth. Surely it is better that these should keep themselves fit and ready for the call that may yet come to them by playing outdoor games rather than by idly loafing about.

We shall indicate a way in which clubs and players can help the Prince of Wales's fund, and we shall ask you to vote, here and now, a sum from the County funds towards the same object. County matches may be abandoned for this year.

* * * * *

To the Editor
Somerset Guardian
2nd September, 1914

Sir,

I attended the meeting held on Tuesday last in the Victoria Hall on behalf of the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund, expecting to see the hall well filled with the young men of Radstock and district. It was rather a wet blanket to find hardly half a dozen young men in the room. This indifference, this apathy, certainly reflects rather badly on our youthful population at a time when our nation is fighting for its very existence as a first-class power. I must say with regret that the severe strictures passed upon the young people of Radstock from the platform were thoroughly well deserved. Let them buck up, shake off this callous indifference and realise that life at a critical hour like the present has its duties as well as its pleasures even for young men . . .

Yours etc.

J A Irvine