

Pte. Edward Hurd

1st/4th Battalion, The Gloucester Regiment

21st March, 1918

At that time we were on the extreme right of the British line, adjoining the French at a place called Noyen, where there were a lot of woods. Mind you, where Noyen was, I couldn't tell you, everything was so desolate, no houses, nothing living - no life except the rats. We'd been expecting the Germans to do something. They'd prepared for a big push, to separate the British from the French - the tale was it was their last big effort to get to Paris. There were a million men lined up against one another, and we were outnumbered by two to one.

Early on that miserable morning I was just starting to have a bite from a parcel my wife had sent when, all of a sudden, the massive bombardment started - they'd opened up the start of their big advance. We had to get up and go back quickly. Men had to dump heaps of stuff. I had to leave my haversack and that behind, but I did manage to hang on to my greatcoat - and I'm very pleased that I did, some men nearly froze to death later on.

* * * * *

The Trench Diary

6th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

21st March, 1917

At 4.30am the enemy opened an intense bombardment with all calibre shells, using a new kind of gas shell, the smell of which was not unpleasant, but had the effect of sleeping gas.

At 8.30am he finished gas shelling but continued with other shells. It was very foggy and extra sentries were posted at all points. All Signal Commn. was cut by 4.40am.

At 10.20am the news was recd. by runner the enemy was in the front line. Support Coys. Bn. HQ moved into strong points Egypt where fighting immediately commenced. 2 pigeons were despatched and papers all burnt, the enemy at 10.30am were streaming down the ST. QUENTIN Road from both flanks and poured into LA FOLIE QUARRY.

At 10.35am he was reported to be pushing towards BENAY and CERIZY. 1 officer, 6 runners & 3 signallers commenced to fight their way to Bde. H.Q. with the news & to warn strong points. 1 officer reached Bde. 11.10am. 2 runners arrived 10 minutes after, 1 signaller also got over successfully.

Estimated 20 officers 540 other ranks actually in the front line at the time of attack.

*H Frampton
Capt. & Adjt.*

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

22nd March, 1918

Orders came for us to move at about three pm on the 21st and sometime later we arrived at the bridge over the St Quentin road into St Simon. On the way we'd passed frightened peasants clearing out their homes as best they could and leaving with whatever they could carry. It was a pitiful sight, seeing old men and women and young children with such terror in their eyes. They were pretty tearful times. When we got there the enemy was already shelling with black shrapnel just over our heads and the CO took us Company Commanders forward to see the ground. He showed me my front, said the position was very precarious, and told me to get the men digging in immediately.

* * * * *

Pte. Tommy Atkins

7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers,

22nd March, 1918

The last part of our journey was through a communications trench and as we were going in, troops were coming out from the front and we were asking them questions, curious to know about this, that and the other but we couldn't understand what they were saying 'cause they were all making funny gasping sort of noises in their throats. Gassed.

Anyway, we got to the front line and straight off I had to do two hours on the firing step. It was dark and I wasn't taking any precautions - had my head stuck up over the parapet trying to see what I could make out. The lance-corporal with me had a go at me 'cause during the day the Germans would take sightings at different spots along the parapet and have a machine gun clamped in position to take pot-shots at night.

When I'd done my stint I went down the bottom of the dugout. It was the Hindenburg Line, the Siegfried Line - German dugouts, German positions. Our people had captured them earlier. Oh, they were lovely but all the exits and entrances were facing the wrong way for us and our people had to alter them so that they had firing steps towards the Germans. Those trenches were 30 feet deep and underground they had wire netting bunks strung between uprights, one man up, one down. Great, but by the time I got down there they were all full up and I had to sleep on the floor. I can still remember what I had to eat that night. Bread, cheese and a Spanish onion.

I fell asleep and the next thing I remember was half hearing a lot of bumping, but I didn't wake up till the Lance Corporal came down and shouted, 'Come on! Get up top! We haven't had anything like this all winter. Jerry's coming over the top'. Well, my knees started knocking together but I got up there fast. The German bombardment had started before five and went on until nineish. We couldn't put our heads up, it would've been suicide. Couldn't see anything, couldn't do anything. Even when the sun come up we couldn't move more than a yard with all the fog and smoke.

At one time the Adjutant was stood behind us with another officer who had a dog under one arm and a pistol in the other hand, threatening to shoot anyone who didn't look to the front. Well, a shell dropped behind us and knocked the Adjutant out and the other one was nowhere to be seen - blown to pieces. I asked my mate if he'd been hit and he hadn't but when I'd sorted myself out I found I had a piece of shrapnel in the back of me tin hat, a piece in the butt of me rifle and another piece in me bayonet scabbard.

Not long afterward the fog lifted and we saw some Germans coming over the ridge - at a rough guess about twenty of them. Silhouetted against the skyline they looked like giants but all the rifles and machine guns along our line opened up and they were all cut down. Every one of 'em.

* * * * *

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

22nd March, 1918

The following morning the enemy broke through and our Battalion's right flank was seriously threatened. I got my men out and back just as the enemy opened up with their heavy machine guns. We were soon able to see men coming towards us on the horizon but the machine gun fire was pretty hot and it was impossible to make out if they were ours or Germans. They turned out to be men from the 60th King's Royal Rifles who had been forced out of their positions.

I was on my way to give the CO this information when the enemy started shelling us very heavily. Their machine gun and rifle fire increased and I turned to see what was left of my company, headed by an officer, running as fast as they could over the marshy ground - in terror - with men dropping in all directions. My company was being broken up - killed or wounded - nothing left except the dead, dying, wounded and maimed.

It was impossible to form up in the swamp so I led the men to Battalion HQ where I found that the enemy had started advancing and was trying to encircle us. The Huns attacked for about an hour and we continued to fire back, just managing to keep them at bay. At this point the CO was shot through the neck and Berry, who was next to me, got up to look over the bank. He got a bullet right through the head and was killed instantly. He fell on top of me with a groan. It was awful. He was one of the best and kindest men I have ever met. I was terribly upset to see him killed.

Major Samuel George Berry

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

Killed in Action

France and Flanders

22nd March, 1918

Aged 42

Cliff Carpenter

[Pte. Arthur Carpenter

3rd Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment]

Arthur was my fourth brother to go. Went into the Warwicks to start with and then transferred to the Worcesters. When he came home on embarkation leave he had an 'LG' and a wreath of laurels on his arm. 'What's that then?' I asked him. 'Oh,' he said. 'That's an extra shilling a day.' And I said, 'Well, I hope that's all it means, Arth. What does it really mean, then'. And he said, 'It's up to us to get out there with the Lewis guns and bang the enemy back when they're trying to advance'. And that's what he did, but he only did it once. He'd only been in the trenches six hours when he died. Only six hours.



At first we just had 'reported missing'. Frances, Countess Waldegrave - she was President of the Red Cross - she got in touch with Arth's officer who was there when he was killed. Later on she brought back his reply down to Mother. It said that the order was given for the Lewis gunners to run out between the lines to force the enemy back. The officer went out with them but soon realised they were doing no good and ordered our fellows back. He said,

'Carpenter was running ahead of me when he fell. I rolled him over and could see he was shot somewhere in the kidneys. If he wasn't trampled to death then he was certainly bayoneted by the oncoming Germans'. Later that day there was a message for him to say our brother Chris had got him a transfer to be with him in the Coldstream Guards.

41853 Pte. Arthur Carpenter

3rd Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment

Killed in Action

France and Flanders

22nd March, 1918

Aged 19

* * * * *

The History of the Somerset Light Infantry 1914-1919

At dawn on 23rd the two Companies on the canal bank reported the presence of German patrols in St. Simon, and that hostile cavalry were advancing on the canal. The charges beneath the bridges were then fired and they went up with a roar. As soon as the sun rose the fog became worse and now it was possible to see only just across the canal. Charges beneath the bridge at Jussy had failed to explode and the Germans were across. The only Company of the Battalion then in touch

with Battalion Headquarters was A (Captain McMurtrie), which was ordered to form a defensive flank from Headquarters to the three Companies along the canal bank. But the marshy ground effectively prevented this order being carried out, though A Company managed to keep in touch with Headquarters. The end came quickly. Rifle and machine-gun fire had suddenly become intense and casualties were heavy. Captain McMurtrie took command of Battalion Headquarters as well as the survivors of his own Company. The three Companies on the canal bank were completely cut off and surrounded and, fighting all the way, Captain McMurtrie and his party fell back.

* * * * *

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

I now had to take command of Battalion HQ. A great many men had already been killed or wounded and I had no alternative but to withdraw still further. We fell back in fairly good order until we found a Colonel who was holding a small hill. He had a mixture of all sorts of regiments and I was given about 50 men and told to hold the left flank. We were unable to fall further back as we were almost completely surrounded. We all expected that by night-fall we'd either be killed, wounded or prisoners.

Dawn next day - the 24th - was very cold and thick with fog and as soon as it lifted the enemy started machine-gunning us very heavily from the high ground on our right, and shells began exploding everywhere. We stuck this until our own ammunition and bombs began to run out and then I got the order to withdraw.

* * * * *

The History of the Somerset Light Infantry 1914-1919

Captain McMurtrie's party was ordered to form part of the rearguard and hang on as long as possible to the position. So well did these gallant fellows carry out their orders that when the time came for them to fall back they found themselves completely surrounded and cut off.

* * * * *

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

The enemy was now lining the ridge and pouring deadly fire into us. Shells and shrapnel were exploding all over the place and enemy planes again flying over us and firing into our midst. Men were dropping everywhere, some were horribly wounded, groaning in their pain or shrieking for help. Many were silently dying, others already dead. It was a ghastly situation.

The end was very near and soon we ran bang into a huge number of Germans and were captured. An officer on a horse came up and signalled he wanted my revolver. He took it and fired one round into the ground. I was convinced he was trying it out before killing me. I waited, but nothing happened. The Germans could not believe that a 19 year-old could be a Captain. I then began my journey into Germany where I joined Norman Thatcher in four months of starvation.

* * * * *

L/Cpl George Taylor
6th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

By now Jerry had come over and taken the whole of the Somersets. In fact he come straight through an' took the best part of Gough's army. I'd got back to the Battalion HQ and told them how he'd broke through, but they weren't gonna do nothin. They were gonna stop there. I thought to meself, well you can do what you like, but I'm off and I turned around and started to make a bolt fer it.

* * * * *

The History of the Somerset Light Infantry 1914-1919

At about 10:20am a runner had arrived, breathless almost, with the news that the enemy was in the Battalion's front line. The Support Company and Battalion Headquarters then moved into a strong point, prepared to sell their lives dearly. By 10:30am the enemy's troops in great number were streaming down the St. Quentin road from both flanks. It is probable that by this time the 6th Somersets, as a Battalion, had almost ceased to exist . . .

* * * * *

Pte. Edward Hurd
1st/4th Battalion, The Gloucester Regiment
23rd March, 1918

Once we got the order to move we went back so far and then ran down a sloping field stopping at the bottom 'cause officers were shouting orders at us. Then shrapnel started coming over and men were getting hit and we kept down there till bullets began to come. You'd always know if they were level with your head 'cause they'd go 'houiss, houiss', but these were popping over the top of us, but they were still too close so off we went again. I looked back and saw the Germans coming over the fields towards us in waves and, course, I fired at them, but God knows if I hit one or not. That is the beauty about it all - you don't have the bad conscience that you've hit anybody. You might have, but you don't know it. They just kept on coming anyway, so back I went.

Well, that retreating went on for two or three days - no food, mind - with the Germans sending over shrapnel. Caw, didn't that bark when it went off! Eventually we came to a place with a

bridge over a canal, with a towpath running along the other side. We crossed the bridge and lined the canal. Out came our entrenching tools and we dug little holes and stuck the earth up in front of us. Then we could look over the top for the Germans, with first the towpath, and then the canal in front of us. The French forces on our right didn't cross the canal but they dug in on the opposite side. Lying as we were, in single file, the messages were sent along from one to the next, and eventually word came to keep that position at all cost. That meant we had to fix our bayonets.

After we'd been there a few hours, not seeing nobody and not shooting nobody, the shrapnel started again and I looked to my right and saw the French running away. Whether they hadn't had the message to hold on at all costs I couldn't say, but they were off, shoutin' and runnin' down to another bridge. Then, all of a sudden, a face come up over the parapet in front of me and disappeared again - the Germans had got over the canal, further along, and trickled along the towpath beneath us. I looked up and there were a German officer by the side of me, wagging his revolver. His men were behind him and one of the damn fools threw a stick grenade and pieces hit me in my leg. Well, that was it. Down goes my rifle and my accoutrements and there I was - captured.

* * * * *

Pte. Herbert Caines

Number 22 Train Crew Company

Royal Engineers

March, 1918

Well, we moved back - about eight or ten of us - and then got broken away from the main unit. We were told to work our way round the back of Amiens, to keep out of the way of the Germans and to head for the coast, looking for our company. We'd been moved down the line to set up a new railhead, and we'd set the place up lovely with the last word in switchboards. I was Controller and we were due to kick off at midnight. Then, before we could get started, Jerry started dropping shells and the order came we had to move. Headquarters had orders to dump everything in the river and clear out.

We marched in the daytime and slept rough at night - no rations so we had to scrounge food as best we could. We sat in fields and pulled up swedes and cut 'em up to eat with the few biscuits that we did have. We pooled everything and bought a few eggs - the French wouldn't give 'em away. To be honest, I was about the only one who had any money. We cooked our eggs in the same tins we had our tea in.



Eventually, after six or seven days, we got to some place on the road to Abbeyville and I suddenly saw our Captain. The Sergeant who was with us hailed him, 'Sir, we'm lookin' for you!' 'And I'm damn well looking for you, too!' It was pouring with rain and there were no billets for us so we were put in horse lines - gadding about where the horses had been. And there was nothing to sleep on. I ended up sleeping on a piece of corrugated iron. I sloped it so the rain would run off.

* * * * *

Pte. Tommy Atkins

7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

March, 1918

I don't know what day it was but I s'pose it was about 12 o'clock when we'd got the word to move out and back. We heard the German planes going over, 'Mmmuh. Mmmuh. Mmmuh'. Gothas, they were. Once we got moving we lost count of time and distance. We were on the move most of the time but eventually we got to a place called Rocquigny.

At one point when we were moving back I remember passing a bunch of men, sat on a bank by the roadside. I thought they were badly wounded, shouting and carrying on as they were. Afterwards I supposed they were drunk 'cause the troops had got hold of a lot of whisky and stuff from the YMCAs and canteens that were abandoned. And what our troops didn't get I gather the Germans did. That's reckoned to be one of the big things that slowed down their advance - they'd captured so much of our whisky and just got drunk.

When t'was getting dark a corporal came up to me and said they had a shell shock case in the lorry, and would I take him up to the casualty station. Well, I got him up there and there was a hell of a queue and there I was, holding on to this little chap. He wasn't very big - 'bout five foot - round cheeks. Not fit to be a soldier, but a lot of us weren't I suppose. I gradually worked us up to the Medical Officer, an American doctor. He told me to put this lad on a chair by the side of the hut and that's the last I saw of him. I went off to find somewhere to eat and somewhere to sleep.

Next morning I was at a loose end, with no idea where my Battalion was. Then some old soldier came up to me and asked which outfit I was with. I told him I couldn't find them. He said, 'Take my tip. You attach yourself to somebody or another and get the officer to give you a chit or they'll have you for a deserter'. Course I said I would and the first officer I saw were sat down on the bank with a red band round his hat, red around his neck and red epaulettes and I thought, 'Well, that's an officer all right'. So I went up to him and saluted and said, 'Excuse me, Sir. Could you tell me where I can find the 7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers?' And he looked at me and said, 'My good man, I am a Divisional General and I don't know where my Division is!' All right - so that didn't really happen, but that's how it felt that day. No-one seemed to know where the hell anyone or anything was. Everything was in a turmoil.

Anyway, I looked around and saw a convoy coming up the road and I thought, 'This looks good. It's going back the right way. I'll tag on the back of them'. I went up and explained my position to an officer and was told to fall in behind. So, fall in behind I did and I thought things were beginning to look up a bit. T'was a horse-drawn convoy of limbers and I didn't know what they had on board till we had gone a few miles and then stopped to unload. That was six Vickers water-cooled guns. I thought, 'Uho, that's torn it!'

So they set these guns up along the side the road overlooking a place called Delville Wood - a steeply sloping wood. My job was to carry the things of ammunition. There was an Irish Gunner and a Scottish Corporal on my gun - good combination, weren't it! The Corporal had a pair of binoculars and was looking through them and said, 'I can see the bastards, Paddy. Have a look through these'. 'Ah, b'Jasus! I can see the bastards, too.'

Well, they opened up with this Vickers gun and the Scots Corporal shouted, 'I can see the buggers goin' down, Paddy. I can see 'em goin' down!' I don't know how many belts we fired but right afterwards the Germans sent over just one shrapnel shell and a fellow right behind us was killed. They weren't long picking up our range, were they?

We went all over the place across country from there, sleeping when it was safe to sleep. I can remember at one point seeing a skull looking up out of the ground and I thought, I don't know, he's probably thinking, 'After we captured this ground, you're running away from it'. But we ended up in a place called Warlow Baillon where they sorted us out and sent me back to the Fusiliers and my mate, Chivers.

* * * * *

L/Cpl George Taylor

6th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

After I left the Battalion HQ I saw Jerry come down and go into the officers' place - looting I suppose. I crawled on fer about two miles and seed all their soldiers bringing up the Germans' guns and food and stuff. I were led out by then, dead like. When I thought t'were safe I walked on till I got to the river Jussy where I saw the Germans stop. They'd come up and go back and come up and go back. Well, about twelve o'clock I thought I'd risk it and I got into the river to swim over. Jerry must've heard the water go 'cos they come up and looked but they never saw me.

When I did get the other side I met up with some unit and told them what was happening over the river and then I found somewhere to get some sleep. When I woke up next morning everyone else had gone but I could see that Jerry was on the move again so I went off for about three miles an' come across a YMCA up on a hill. I went in and there were everything you could want - fags, whisky, everything. I don't mind telling 'ee, I had a bottle of whisky and a few fags.

As I was leaving the YMCA I found a machine gun left there - ammunition and all. Well, I could see the Germans comin' over by then so I stuck a pan on the gun and fired - and I know I got some. Then I smashed the pan on the gun and went off so fast as I could. I went fer miles till I bumped into some French unit - in a wood. They fed me and looked after me a treat. Next morning Jerry come on to us again - but the French stopped them. They had guns wheel to wheel in them woods and that's as far as Jerry got. No further.

Eventually I got back to Etaples and after about a fortnight I was posted to the 8th Battalion. I wasn't with them that long 'cause in April, on the Somme, they lost nearly 400, killed and wounded and I were one of 'em. Jerry put over a shell and caught I on the leg. Put me out. That were me finished. I ended up in a hospital in Cardiff an' a doctor come through and put a mark on me leg, above the knee. I said, 'You b'aint cuttin' he off. He's got me this far - you ain't havin'n now'. It were too easy to cut arms and legs off in those days. Simpler.

* * * * *

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

Prisoner of War

24th March, 1918

The idea of my becoming a prisoner had never entered my head. I'd expected to be wounded, perhaps maimed for life - but somehow I never thought I would be killed. Now I couldn't get over the feeling that for me the war was over. Soon after we were captured we were halted at a former English casualty clearing station, where German doctors were working very hard to attend to crowds of English and German wounded. There were dead and dying everywhere. Others were waiting patiently to be tended.

We then began a tiring march to St. Quentin, passing a huge line of German infantry, gunners, transport and reserves of all kinds. It was like a procession of farmers and farm wagons, not the soldiers of a great army. Everything was in a terrible state. There were poor, bony, starving-looking horses, with ribs sticking out, and awful old carts that could fall to pieces at any moment. Another thing that struck me was the mixture of young boys and old men who seemed to make up their reserves. There was no discipline, no smartness, no decent uniform - they looked like civilians in patched-up clothes, tramping along, seemingly bored to tears.

There were no medical arrangements for them. If a man was severely wounded, he was left to die. The walking wounded were bandaged up and then left to make their own way to the nearest aid post, and then get back to Germany as best they could. There were no stretcher bearers, no ambulances, no ambulance trains. It was simply fend for yourselves. We passed many dead, both ours and the enemy's, and they had all had been stripped of their boots, and often their clothes. Germany was in desperate need of clothing and leather.

After 25 kilometres marching we reached St Quentin. The next day, as we marched through a fairly large town, an old French woman came up to give us food, but a passing German officer saw it and began shouting at the top of his voice, hitting the poor woman over the head with his whip. Then they arrested her and carted her off. We had a brief wait there for some French Officers to join us and then set off again at about mid-day for the worst march I've ever been on. It was a dusty road and we were absolutely starving - weak from lack of food. All that we had were some raw turnips and carrots that we got from a field that we passed.

The day after, they halted us in a place called Leval. It was Good Friday and all the villagers came out with coffee, biscuits, bread and eggs. Later on, we arrived at a small camp. We were given barley that evening and next morning coffee and a slice of bread, then soup at mid-day and again at six pm, but that was all. Then I had my first shave for about nine days - and it hurt!

On the following morning we were put on a train and all that day we travelled through beautiful country. Two days later we finally arrived at Rastatt Camp - and it was a pretty forlorn place. We were starving - we'd been on the train for almost three days and during that time had only had three meals. Rastatt was the biggest hell I have ever been in. We had a straw pillow and terribly hard straw mattresses and barely enough blankets on our beds to keep us warm during the colder days - and we were still famished. The sanitary conditions were awful and officers were everlastingly coming round to inspect the camp. And from the news we could get the Allies seemed to be almost certain to be beaten.

* * * * *

Pte. Edward Hurd

1st/4th Battalion, The Gloucester Regiment

Prisoner of War

March, 1918

Although I'd been captured, I don't think I ever felt they were gonna win. It was just a case of hoping you would live, and being a prisoner meant you had a better chance. I suppose we ought to have had a different fighting spirit but you had a feeling that you were safe - you'd finished with it. You'd see it through. I've no idea where we went once I'd been captured but there were German soldiers there to keep us in order and I had to hobble along as best I could with the shrapnel in my leg. After quite a while we were entrained - stuffed into the trucks like animals - couldn't move.

Eventually we stopped at a railway station where they had food for us and we were allowed to get out, so many at a time. The locals must have known there was a trainload of prisoners coming 'cause while we were waiting for our food the German women were standing round us shouting, 'Englander - schweineri', and spitting at us. I suppose it's only what they'd been told. We was always swines.

Well, they gave us soup from big cauldrons, 'cept you couldn't call it soup. No meat or anything, not soup as we would know soup - just watered down sour kroot stuff, nothing' with any strength to it. And that's what made a lot of men ill, including myself. While we were packed tight in these trucks some men needed to urinate - or do the other - and we had no option but do it there, where we stood. And the stench and smell - well! Eventually we got where we were going and were put into a disused brewery, with a big yard and buildings with bunks in.

By then my leg was swelling up badly, and I were put to bed. A French doctor came on the scene then and had me moved out on a stretcher. I think what happened next was laughable. As these two Germans were carrying me across the open yard, with a big red cross in the middle, they heard one of our planes coming. These Germans were terrified - just dropped me out there in the open and ran like hell. And there I was - left out there till it was all over.

Another time I got out of bed and crept and hobbled out towards the barbed wire where there was a German sentry. There were a Frenchman by me and I distinctly heard him say, 'Hanglely no bong, hanglely no bong, hanglely no kamrad'. You know what that meant? English no good. He was begging for food. You can't blame him though - the French were just as hungry as we were, and we might have done exactly the same - though I was pretty hungry, I don't mind tellin' 'ee. While we were still there we saw a party of German soldiers halt by their field kitchen. And do you know what they had to eat? A load of boiled stinging nettles! Yes, only stinging nettles. Could you see a British soldier fighting on stinging nettles?

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian

29th March, 1918

Potatoes

Last year the County of Somerset
Produced 24,800 Tons of Potatoes
Consumed 41,800 Tons of Potatoes

Deficit 17,000 Tons

Lord Rhondda and Mr Prothero
appeal to every man who has a farm,
a garden or an allotment to plant
more Potatoes to make the County

SELF-SUPPORTING

Frances Craig
Women's Land Army
March, 1918

During the war they couldn't get potatoes in London and there was no rationing so I went up from the farm by train, armed with a whole load of the stuff - a huge hamper and a great sack - for friends in Sheppey. When the train arrived I had to get from Paddington Station to Victoria and I wondered how the dickens I was going to get across London.

Hadn't the money for a taxi so I stopped one of the buses and said I'd give the driver half a pound of butter if he'd take me to Victoria. And he did! When I got there I gave another man some potatoes to take me up Tulse Hill. Priceless!



When I got to Sheppey it was full of troops. My friends there had a horse and I used to ride it down to the aerodrome to watch, and one of the pilots came out while I was on this pony in Land Girl uniform and said, 'Would you like to go up with me?'. Would I! He said I should come back at a certain time and he'd do it. Course, he shouldn't have. It was against all the rules. He was flying one of those fighters they had in those days. He gave me goggles and a muffler thing and up we went. Flew all over the Medway and Sheerness with me feeling all queer and queasy. He broke every rule ever made. Then he asked if I'd like to go to Queensborough for a meal, but as I was staying with friends I couldn't. Then I rode back to the farm.

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian
29th March, 1918

In connection with the calling up of young single coal miners, a Medical Board commenced duty at Radstock Victoria Hall on Monday. A certain number of men are being called up for examination each day and it is expected that the work will take three weeks to complete. The government have decided to recruit 50,000 coal miners from the British mines and the proportion allotted to the Somerset coalfield is 311, all young men between the ages of 18 years and 8 months and 25 years. A certain number will be from each colliery and that number will be calculated in proportion to the number of men employed in each pit in December 1917. Only single young men and widowers without children are being called up, and only those who are passed as fit by the National Service Medical Board will receive their papers to join the Army. Men will be called up for service in the order in which they are drawn until the number required has passed into the Army. If any man should refuse to present himself for medical examination at the time required he will be medically classified as Grade 1, which means fit for general service.

Pte. Tommy Atkins

7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

April, 1918

After the Vickers Gun business we had a rough time at Auvelais Wood for nearly two months. We were up against an outfit called the Jaeger Rifles - huntsmen. We made one attack that was supposed to capture the wood. Went in about 600 strong and came out after two days with 127 men and a Second Lieutenant. Then they sent in a Battalion of the Marine Light Infantry and they did something I'd never seen before. They mounted their guns along a ridge behind the attacking troops and fired over their heads as they advanced. I can remember seeing the tops come off the trees as they went forward. The Marines re-captured the wood.

One day Chivers and I got up into the front line and found some rations abandoned by the Artists Rifles. Oh, they used to amuse our lads no end! Normally, when we relieved another outfit at night, we'd call out, 'What mob are you?' And they'd answer, 'The Lancs' or 'The Dubs' or whatever, but with this lot we'd call out 'What mob are you?' and they'd answer, 'We ah not a mob, we ah The Ahtists Rifles'. Always the same: 'We ah not a mob, we ah the Ahtists Rifles'. Our lads used to fall about! Anyway, so we found these rations what they'd left; bread and cheese and so on. And a half a gallon of rum. We took the cans back to the dugout and the Corporal said he'd take care of the rum - thought he might. He gave us a drop each and then sat down in a corner with a pint enamel mug and the can. T'wasn't very long before he was asleep an' then we had our turn.

One day we were taking rations up the line, struggling through the mud and slime, and Chivers reckoned he'd rather be dead. And next day he was. Where we were was on a bit of a slope with an Artillery battery behind us - 4.5 pounders I think they were - that used to fire over our lines. We came under attack at eleven and he went straight down. He didn't appear to be in any immediate danger but I asked an officer if I could go back and get a stretcher. But I was told there was no point. He was dead. Later on that day, when we'd come out the line, I went to the bivouacs for a kip - just canvas stretched over poles - and Martin, who I'd just shared a parcel with in the line, was already there, asleep. Well, like always, even when I dropped off I could still hear these shells firing and bursting and the next thing I know the Provost Sergeant is pulling at my blankets. 'Where's Martin's tunic?' 'I don't know. Ask him.' 'I can't. He's dead' 'He was asleep just now.' 'Well, he's dead now - you'd best look sharp if you want to see him. They're taking him away.' Seems the poor devil had woken up and gone out for a stretch and a German shell come and blew him to bits.

Pte. Albert Chivers

7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

Died

5th April, 1918

Pte. James Martin

13th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

Died

5th April, 1918

[Forty six men with the surname Martin died whilst serving with the Royal Fusiliers in the Great War. 2,755 more Martins from the UK and its former colonies also died whilst serving with other units.]

Somerset Guardian

26th April, 1918

News was received in Radstock on Friday morning of the death of 2nd Lieut. Leslie Foster, Somerset LI, elder son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Foster, of Elmdale, Radstock. 2nd Lt. Foster was a very bright and cheerful young man who identified himself closely with the activities of the Wesleyan Church, Radstock.

Victor Foster

Schoolboy

Leslie was my eldest brother. The Post Office were very sensible about it, they'd had the telegram overnight but didn't send it up until the morning. A girl brought it up with the normal mail at eight o'clock. I was the only one here, and I did not know what to do with myself. The whole world collapsed. I couldn't go to school.



My brother was seven years older than me and when he left school he had helped father with his building concern, then he started going to evening classes and took drawing exams and building instruction and decided to go into teaching. He'd just got his first job, at the Manual Training Centre in Twerton, Bath, you know.

Then in January 1916, he joined the army, exactly a year after my cousin Cecil was killed with the Coldstream Guards. Leslie went into the Somersets at first but then he got a commission and transferred into the King's Liverpool Regiment, which was what one of the Lewin boys had been in, I believe. I learnt afterwards that Leslie had taken over command of his company shortly before he was killed. There were a whole lot of my brother's classmates who were killed, you know, a whole stack of them.

In the end I did take a train in to school - just had to do something, and the Head saw me. Said, 'Well, we didn't expect to see you today, Foster'. It was just the way he said it - I could have chucked something at him.

2nd Lt. Leslie C Foster.
King's Liverpool Regiment.
Killed in Action
France and Flanders
13th April, 1918
Aged 25

12th April, 1918

THE CALLING UP OF YOUNG MINERS - THE RESULT OF THE DRAWS

The medical examination of unmarried miners and those who were widowers without dependent children has been proceeding this week at the Victoria Hall, Radstock. The draws have been made by the Rector of Radstock, the Revd. A N Bax, as a person having no direct interest in collieries or miners. The first draw took place on Friday afternoon.

* * * * *

Joe Ruddock

Coal Miner

Oh ah! I were down there at the last goin' off - down the billiard room at the Vicky Hall. At one time, see, the miners couldn't be taken, but they got so short of men they changed the rules. What they done was have the vicar - Reverend Bax - draw so many as had tuh go out of a hat. Over 300 of them. They had chaps from 23 pits down there and that took nearly two weeks to sort 'em all out. Here, this's me with a bunch of 'em what went - the 'andsome one at the back, with the specs. I were born in 1900 - I waddn' old enough to be illegible.

Some of 'em reckoned they'd skip the draw and go straight in the Navy - but they couldn't, 'cos they were told the Navy was full, thank you very much. An' if this goes in your book spell me name right. I'm a Dock not a Dick.



Pte. Tommy Atkins

7th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers

April, 1918

We were in the outpost one night at Auvelais Wood and an officer came round to ask if there was anything to report. He was only a youngster - their life expectancy wasn't very long - three months or so. They used to get picked off if they were in front and in the end they dressed them up in ordinary uniforms - not like officers. Anyway, I said I thought I'd seen someone moving about in the German lines. Well, he couldn't see anything so he went on his way to the next outpost on our right. He hadn't been gone long when I heard Crash! Bang! Wallop! from the outpost on my left. They'd been firing a Lewis gun at the German lines all night and Jerry must have got fed up with it because they'd sent over a raiding party and stopped 'em, using their stick grenades - potato mashers. They were longer than ours but lighter and you could throw them farther. Two of our chaps were wounded and ran away but the third one they'd caught and taken back with them. Just in case they put him through the mincer and shelled where we used to sleep, we slept out in our fox-holes after that.

Another time we were trench mortaring them and it seemed that they were dropping short so I said I'd go and tell them. As I was making my way back along a lane they started firing back - just to show there was no hard feeling - and I dropped down into a ditch away out the way of whatever it was - gun, mortar, manure, anything. I could see the flashes and hear the cracks of the bullets over our heads like someone slashing a large whip in your ears. While I was in the ditch I could smell a horrible smell and I found this corpse of an officer who'd been dead for weeks if not months. His skin had gone black as coal and bloated, with his uniform all blown up. I noticed that he had long finger nails and long curly hair. It'd gone on growing.

About Easter time, Padre came round trying to get people to go to Holy Communion, because most people are a bit shy about going. He persuaded two of us to go - the only time I've ever been in all my life. I'm C of E. I don't think it made much difference to my future.

* * * * *

Captain Douglas McMurtrie

7th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry

Prisoner of War

1st June, 1918

On June 1st we were moved from Rastatt to Graudenz with guards who had orders to shoot if we tried to escape. One officer did get away but was later caught and got eight days cells. (At Rastatt an officer who tried to cross the wire was shot through the head and killed. Later on three others did manage escape but were eventually caught and thrown into the cells for their trouble.)

After we'd been at Graudenz a while, 16 officers made an attempt to escape. They'd got into the cellars and then bored through a yard of concrete with only a pen-knife and made a tunnel, 34 feet long, shoring it up with bed-boards. When they had about two hours work still to do we were asked to make a row to attract the attention of the sentries. We shouted and sang and whizzed tins down the stone corridors and created absolute pandemonium. Bosch sentries immediately appeared but there wasn't an English officer in sight. As soon as they had gone we started the row again and the same thing happened.

In the meantime the escaping officers had finished their tunnel and got clear of the camp armed with maps and haversacks with food. The first two ran into a sentry but the other 14 escaped. They were all caught in time, but one party got as far as Danzig and were free for over two weeks.

Another officer - Captain Clinton - did escape in an almost impossible fashion. There were about half a dozen insulated wires running from the second floor of our block to a wooden telegraph pole. Clinton climbed along these wires under the eyes of a sentry with a loaded rifle who was too astonished or slow to open fire. He got clean away - on his sixth attempt.

* * * * *

Pte. Edward Hurd

1st/4th Battalion, The Gloucester Regiment

June, 1918

After I was captured I was shunted around to various places and then I was taken to a place called Stendahl, in the Province of Saxony. I was put in a field hospital - all tents - and this is a strange thing, I seemed to be all on my own. I was quite a novelty. They'd come round and look at me and say, 'London kaput, Patee kaput, London kaput'. I remember one German there, and he was human - he gave me a little muslin bag with tiny biscuits in - 'Here Tommy, good'. There was proper doctors there, too, and they cut open me leg and got out the shrapnel, but they never put me to sleep - naw. You had to be hard - hah!

There were some wicked incidents happen out there but there were some laughable ones, too. I remember once a group of us went out for a walk with an armed guard and then we all stopped in a field for a rest. This guard stuck a bottle up on a post and fired at it and missed. Well, one of our fellows who'd been out there for some time could speak pidgin German and borrowed the rifle and had a go and hit the bottle. Borrowed a loaded rifle!

One day a British doctor turned up from somewhere and took a look at me, 'cause I still had this dysentery thing. How he got it I don't know, but he gave me some Scott's Emulsion - that's a very white liquid that tastes and smells like fish. That got me on my feet and ultimately I became as sound as a bell.

Somerset Guardian

5th July, 1918

Lance Corporal George Henry Taylor, Signallers, has been awarded the Military Medal for service in France during the 'push' of March last. He has been in the American Hospital in France with a wound in his left arm, and has since been transferred from his old Battalion to another. His old Commanding Officer has written congratulating him on the fine spirit he has shown. He is only 19 years of age, although he has been serving nearly three years and has been wounded twice. After his first wound he left hospital and came home on leave, and his parents did not know he had been wounded till he had been home for several days. They have not yet heard anything about his award.



* * * * *

Pte. Sid Hawkins

6th Tank Battalion

8th August, 1918

Our Whippets were meant for Cavalry support but it never really worked out properly. Early in August we found ourselves lined up in the edge of a wood near Amiens, with the Cavalry - the elite horsemen - behind us in the trees. The Dragoon Guards were there and the Hussars - several of the well-known regiments. Everyone was waiting for 6 o'clock or daybreak, whatever it was. Then the whistles did go and off we went and, oh, that was a wonderful sight, that was, as they all came galloping through and streaming out of the woods. I don't know what happened to them after that - we didn't see them any more.

1st/2nd September

Colonel West - he with the stick in the picture - were only in charge of the Battalion for ten days. He knew no fear. I remember one day he touched me on the shoulder and said, 'Hawkins. Come on, I want you to come along with me'. And he and me and another soldier went up near the German lines. Then he told us to get in a shallow - well, we did that quick enough, while he were stood up there with all the Germans shooting at him. Bullets were whistling by'n but he took no notice. We always were issued with pistols - revolvers, Colts or Smith and Wessons, I had me Colt and me Marksman's Certificate - but it would have been suicide to shoot back, but there he were, just stood up looking through his glasses at the ground where we should get at 'em next morning. God knows how they missed him.



Next day we were attacking at a place called Lagnicourt and it were a bit rough. Colonel West rode out in front of us, on a white horse - a white horse, mark you! - shouting to us to give them what for. 'For God's sake put up a good fight,' he was shouting. Daft article. There was incredible machine gun fire that day. He was bound to get killed. And he was. I saw him go down. He got the VC for that.

Somerset Guardian

August, 1918

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER GEORGE PROWSE'S MAGNIFICENT RECORD

Although employed as a coal miner **Chief Petty Officer Prowse** volunteered for service and enlisted on Feb. 27th, 1915, with Able Seaman William Sherborne, another Camerton man. CPO Prowse sailed for the Dardenelles on September 5th, 1915, but came back to France in August 1916. He was wounded [*in the shoulder and thigh*] in the Battle of the Somme on November 13th, 1916, and also at the Battle of Arras [*a three inch wound below the heart*] on April 23rd, 1917. His gallant conduct when in action has been brought to the attention of his superior officers on more than one occasion.



THE LONDON GAZETTE

August, 1918

Distinguished Conduct Medal

Chief Petty Officer George Prowse

Led his men with great gallantry against a machine gun post holding up the flank of his company. On a subsequent occasion he held a position against repeated counter-attacks which were supported by an intense bombardment for twenty four hours. His courage, leadership and cheerful disposition had an invaluable effect on his men.

Somerset Guardian

September, 1918

. . . Chief Petty Officer Prowse's invalid father quite recently received a most interesting account of his son's devotion to duty during the great advance on September 2 and 4 last. A recommendation, signed by 23 officers and non-commissioned officers and men of his Battalion, was forwarded to the Commanding Officer stating that 'his almost super-human courage and devotion has commanded the deepest respect and admiration of his Company, who all trust that the highest award possible will be made to a brave soldier'.

This recommendation related that on September 2nd a portion of Chief Petty Officer Prowse's Company was disorganised by heavy machine gun fire from an enemy strong point. He collected all the men around him and organised and led them with the greatest coolness and bravery against this strong point, which, after very stubborn resistance on the part of the enemy, he succeeded in capturing with 23 prisoners and five machine guns. Solely through his gallant assault on the enemy position, many casualties to the company advancing to the right were avoided. After reaching the objective, he, on his own initiative, took a patrol forward in the face of much opposition. After lying isolated in open ground, swept by machine gun fire until darkness set in three hours later, he established a machine gun post on the high ground east of [*name of place omitted*]. By this daring action he succeeded in cutting off all enemy communications to and from the village and caused important captures of men and transport.

Several furious actions took place during the night. On one occasion he rushed 50 yards in front of the position to an ammunition limber that was endeavouring to escape, engaged three Germans in personal combat, shooting them and capturing the limber. He was the inspiration of the successful coup de main effected by the company on that night. He was among the first to enter the village on Sept. 4th and took a Lewis gun section to the outskirts of the village to cover the advance of the remainder of the Battalion on the right. Accompanied by only two men he rushed forward with complete disregard of personal danger, and with bomb, bayonet and revolver attacked the nest, killing six Germans and capturing 13 with two machine guns. CPO Prowse was the sole survivor of his heroic little band, and by his gallant action he enabled the Battalion on his right to push forward without more loss by machine guns from the village.

A heavy artillery barrage on the village, prevented the arrival of support, and to a determined counter-attack with bombs and machine guns, the forward positions were compelled to fight a rear-guard action through the village to the main English position. In the withdrawal, Chief Petty Officer Prowse's gallantry in picking up, under heavy rifle fire, wounded men who would otherwise have been abandoned, was quite noticeable. He placed a wire barricade across the main street, barring the enemy's advance and remained alone to effect this purpose. Throughout the whole operation his magnificent example and leadership were an inspiration to all, and his courage was superb.

* * * * *

Sub-Lieut. John Mullooly

*Drake Battalion
Royal Naval Division
30th September, 1918*

Dear Mr Prowse,

I am very sorry to have to inform you that your son was killed on September 27th during an attack on a hostile enemy machine gun nest, which attack he led and owing to his example and determination, was succesful in wiping out the enemy's machine guns and crews. Unfortunately your son was struck by a bullet and died instantly. The Naval Division have been engaged for such a length of time in constant attack that there are very few of the old battalion here who personally knew your son to drop you a letter. For his work, example and courage he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and his honour was a well-merited one. I speak as a newcomer but words cannot express the praise your son has had from anyone who had come in contact with him.

With my deepest sympathy

I remain yours sincerely,

John Mullooly

Sub-Lieut. Tom Simmonds

*Drake Battalion
Royal Naval Division
31st October, 1918*

Dear Mr Prowse,

I am unable to give you any information regarding your son's death as I was hit previously. We were together at the time when I was hit. George was quite all right when they carried me away and it was not until I arrived here that I actually learned of his death which I can assure you I have deeply felt. No one realises the value of such a man except those

who are closely connected with him. I can assure you that his loss is greatly felt. It is one of those losses that we cannot replace very easily nowadays and in losing your son this Company, and also his Battalion, has suffered. A more upright, honest and quieter man I have never met and his whole conduct in action and among his men won the admiration and respect of all connected with the Battalion.

He was loved and respected from his Commanding Officer downwards and his name will always live in the history of the Battalion. It was gratifying to me that he was awarded the DCM and also that the further recommendation for the Victoria Cross is still under consideration, the result of which we should hear any day now. No man ever earned distinction more than your son and when I recommended him for the VC he fully and justly deserved it and I can assure you that every man in the Battalion was delighted when they knew and it is my sincere wish that the award is granted.

I am more than sorry that he will never wear his well-earned distinction but I sincerely hope that you will cherish the award granted him and always look on him as a brave and true soldier and - above all - a true gentleman. If I wrote all day I would not be able to express my feelings towards him and no-one knows how deeply I feel his loss. I am extremely sorry that I am unable to give you any information about his sad death but I must ask you to please accept and convey to all concerned my deepest sympathy towards you in your sad bereavement in the loss of such a gallant son.

Just as I am finishing this letter I have received this morning's Times and am delighted to see that your son has been awarded the VC so please accept my heartiest congratulations, and if you should have the opportunity to visit me here I should be delighted to see you.

Yours most sincerely,

Thomas Simmonds

Z/424 Chief Petty Officer George Prowse
Drake Battalion, Royal Naval Division
Killed in Action
France and Flanders
27th September, 1918
No Known Grave
Aged 32

Pte. Stan Small

10th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment

18th September, 1918

After the battle for Petit Couronné when we had so many men killed and wounded we had to lie low and get re-organised - get men out from England to make up our numbers. We had some come from the Lothian and Border Horse - nice chaps. Then, in September, we attacked again, went back up with Greek forces on the right and us on the left - and this time we broke through. After a bit we were pulled back from the front and riding on top of my mule I could see absolutely tremendous explosions going off in the enemy's lines. Well, we got back to our camp at round about two in the morning and hadn't bin there more than half an hour when the Sergeant said, 'Harness up'. We were goin' straight back up where we'd just come from.

Well, we got back into the ravine, waitin' to attack. They were puttin' up these Very lights from the Bulgarian lines and they did come down from the sky and show everythin' up on the wrong hand. They were doin' that till just before daylight. Then the order came. Advance! Oho! I shall never forget it! The Devons were in the lead - the first of all the Division. We went up to the enemy lines and found these deep trenches and then had to run around to see what we could find to fill 'em in to get the wagons over.

That day we kept goin' forward without too much trouble but the next day the Derby Yeomanry lined up in front of we because the Bulgars were occupying a village the other side of a bit of a plain. They drewed their swords and CHARGE! They went off all across this plain, full belt, wi' us behind 'em. Pigs, ducks, fowls and all sorts scattered all over the place - that were so funny.

The Germans and the Bulgarians had gone by the time we got there, leaving their dead horses and heaps of other things. I found a wooden box and levered it open and found it was full of German helmets - lovely helmets with the spikes on - but I had nowhere to put one to take with me.

Well, we went on for another few days until we come to a place where they were making some resistance and I took my half-limber back to fetch 20 or 30 more boxes of ammunition. I loaded up the stuff we needed and as I was going back up this track I could see them coming towards me in regimental order. Then the officer in front put his hand up to me and said, 'We don't need that stuff now. The Bulgarians have surrendered. The war is over'. Well! I just couldn't believe it. For me the war was over!

Then, 'By the way, Small', the officer said. 'My horse had his head chopped off wi' a piece of shrapnel back there. I've left my saddle and a bottle of whisky. Would you go up and fetch the saddle and the bridle and the whisky?' Course, I went up and found the horse with his head chopped off and took the saddle off and had a drink of his whisky. Fancy that. The war over.

Somerset Guardian

4th October, 1918

Many of my readers will be interested in the news of Mr C J Lewin and his family which has reached me this week. I find that Mr Lewin's work at present is at Burnham-on-Sea where he has fitted up a temporary office. He resides at Weston-super-Mare and after the war a permanent County Library will be erected for him there. Captain Cecil Lewin, MC, has taken part in the recent fighting and up to the present is safe and well. Lieutenant Claude Lewin, MC, is at Reading University taking the Agriculture course. His shattered right arm is progressing slowly but satisfactorily. Mr W Roy Lewin, who finished up his school career by obtaining first class honours in the Oxford Senior Examination, has joined the Royal Air Force.

[November, 1918]

Mr and Mrs William Carter, of the Batch, Paulton, had four sons who served in the army during the Great War. To them fell the sad distinction of being the parents of the first and last Paulton men to be killed in the war. Corporal Vincent Carter, 1st Somerset Light Infantry, the oldest of the four brothers, was a miner when war was declared. He volunteered for service and was killed in action in France on May 9th, 1915. Private Herbert Carter, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, was called up in the first group of young miners. He was only in France a short time when he was killed in action at the Battle of Cambrai by machine gun fire. He was the last Paulton man as far as is known to be killed.

93551 Pte. Herbert Carter
17th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers
Killed in Action
France and Flanders
8th October, 1918

* * * * *

Pte. Alfred Flinn

1st Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry
Diary entry, 4th October, 1918

Over the top. Talking & laughing with pals, when our barrage dropped at 6 pm. Went straight over, and ran into barrage. Looked back - saw three runners - supposed to be with me. Waited for them, then ran forward again into barrage. Saw one runner drop. Bit further on other two runners dropped - shell wounds in BACK. Went forward again alone. Met sergeant - told me to come back, as was moving into the barrage. Came back little way, then forward again - moving towards Hun lines - felt shock in left arm - thought I had stopped bullet. Went forward again. Felt arm was wet. Asked pal if was bleeding, he said yes. Didn't believe him, as couldn't see it. Went forward again 'til pain too bad, looked round for way

to dressing station, saw none. Sat down in entrance to Hun Tambour. Tried to move away when Fritz opened fire with MG - missed me by few inches. Remained under cover. Several times attempted exit with like result. Eventually crawled out - managed to fall into shell hole, when machine gun had another pot at us. Shells bursting all round. Din like nothing else on earth. Never expected to get out alive.

* * * * *

Pte. Jim Peppard

1st/4th Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry
October, 1918

I stayed out in Indial on general duties. Poonah, it were. Then I got taken ill. I led out on the sand an' thought I were gonna die. They said t'were a touch o' cholera, or sim'lar the same - an' they sent me up in the hills to Wellington, for convalescence. We did go up the mountain in an engine on cogs - ever so steep, an' when we got to the top we could look down an' see the cattle an' that, ever so small, down on the plain. That were beautiful. I must have stayed there two or three months an' I got back to the depot the same afternoon as our lads left in the morning fer Russia - what fer I could never find out. But I found out that Maurice Baber had been transferred to the Hampshires then were taken ill an' died. That's he, standin' alongside me in the picture there. He were always so healthy.



0811 Pte. Maurice Baber
1st/9th Hampshire Regiment
Died
Poonah, India
21st October, 1918

* * * * *

Somerset Guardian

October 25th, 1918

Influenza of a very severe, virulent and fatal type is at present epidemic in the district, although its effect has not been so pronounced so far in Radstock as in Clandown, Midsomer Norton and some surrounding places. Several deaths have already been recorded. The greatest precautions are being taken to deal with the infection. All the schools have been closed and . . . Dr Bulleid, as Medical Officer of Health, advised the closing of all places of worship.