



LETTERS FROM THE 'FRONT'

The letter written by our great-uncle Evelyn (Jack) Denniston to Aunt Lil

- Saturday 27 May 1916 from Westons, Rusper, Sussex

My dearest Aunt Lil,

Just a line tonight as I may not get a chance tomorrow to thank you very much for your letter & for (in anticipation) for sending me eatables! I have given a list to mother & she will send it to you it is good of you sending them & they'll be thoroughly appreciated.

Have had a very nice two days here with mother and Aunt Evelyn am afraid Mother is not very well but I'm glad that Aunt Soph is coming next Wednesday & they are going away together somewhere.

We must insist that Mother must not be alone for the next two or three months until she is really strong again. Gladys is coming on 17th June for a fortnight or so so she is settled for the next 4 weeks with someone.

So glad to hear of Freddys & Sidney's promotion they are doing well

Am really glad to be going out again & am ready for whatever happens one never knows & I'm ready for anything & one must be prepared for anything & everything - it's the only way to go out prepared for all eventualities & for myself looking at it from my own (& purely selfish point of view) I shall be equally happy to come back or not at all - what more perfect way of quitting this life dying for the cause of all this trouble.

I myself feel I shall come back but if I do not you will know that I am equally happy so do not feel sad about it.

Best love, Aunt Lil, you are always such a brick to us all

Your loving
Evelyn

Sorry not to see you before I go but quite understand.

This letter is just between you & me as I know you'll understand whereas other might think me an ass!

IN AND OUT OF THE TRENCHES.

Mrs T. Dancy, of The Gardens, Holbrook, Horsham (who has two sons serving in France and two in England, at present), received the following letter this week from her son Jack, who is in the 7th Royal Sussex Regt. (885 Machine Gun Section):—

"My dearest Mother,—Thanks very much for your letter which I received on Thursday. We are out of the trenches now for a rest but I would sooner be up there as we have plenty of work making positions for our machine guns. I guess by the time you receive this I shall be in the trenches again. The Huns send over a few souvenirs every day but they don't hurt anyone as a rule, only knock the houses about a bit. It isn't very nice though, as one never knows where the next one is going to land and yet the people still live here; in fact there are houses with the roof blown off and the windows smashed in and yet the people still hang on. We get German aeroplanes over every day but they don't come far; as soon as our anti-aircraft guns open fire on them they get back as soon as they can, but our airman go round the German lines and don't take any notice of being shelled. It's a puzzle how they aren't brought down. I've seen over a hundred shells fired at them and then they have come away safe. You can tell Dad that I haven't been in any battle yet; we go in the trenches and hold the line. Of course one never knows when we are going to get an attack; in some places the German trenches are only forty yards away. They vary from that distance to seven hundred yards; one has to keep their heads down or else they get a bullet through it. That's about all there is, just sniping and grenades, and a few trench mortars and whizzy bangs. They sent over some shells every blessed morning at breakfast time the last time we were in the trenches. There are usually one or two get killed and several wounded each time we go up. I guess we shall have a scrap one of these days. Our artillery gave them some stick the other day. Their trenches, sandbags and barbed wire didn't half fly up in the air, and our snipers accounted for a good few of the devils as soon as they started building up their trenches again."

LETTERS FROM RONALD FARLEY TO HIS MOTHER:

"DEAR MUM" - extracts from letters home from Ronald Farley

Southwold, Suffolk. July 1944: 'Just a few lines to let you know I am still OK after a 10 mile forced march, it was hell, galloping along a road which we thought was the right way, after running about 12 to 13 miles the sergeant discovered we had taken the wrong road so back we had to go, doing around 15 to 16 miles instead of 10. Hope you are still OK at home, and not forgetting Monty the dog. How is he, has he learnt how to catch rabbits, if not you had better bring him out here because there are thousands and thousands of them out here ... most nights the boys go out in the evening with entrenching tools and just dig them outHave I told you that I am again, the best shot of the company with a score of 80 out of 85. I've got a lovely rifle, maybe I shall bring it home on my 14 days leave..... I have been put on a Draft so I guess I'll soon be gone - still one good thing I believe it is to France but of course I don't know yet.....

August 12th: Many thanks for your parcel ..Blimey arn't those cakes nice; are the apples off the tree down the garden, if so they are getting ready early. So if you still got those blasted flying bombs you don't say much about them, Dusty told me about one dropping up Hoyles (Cowix).

4th September: Glad to tell you I have missed this draft what is going but I have been put on a snipers course just as Dad said, still one thing I shall be going down to Bisley the course lasts for about 4 weeks so perhaps the war will end by thenCould you send on my cigarette case ..also that Royal Sussex cap badge which is on the window sill.

16th September:One thing about being a sniper you should get 3d a day extra pay and get a smashing badge with cross rifles and a letter S marked in gold braid ..PS who's got that R.Sussex badge I left behind?

Undated: Well we arrived in - OK after a very rough crossing - I was not sick. I guess I should have joined the Navy instead.

20th October: As you can see we have moved again, the best of it I am still with my old Pals which helps things along a bit ... However we are practically in the line now but I can honestly say its nothing to what I thought it would be, I pictured something like the first world war, sleeping in trenches with water up to your neck, shells and bullets flying around and Christ knows what else but it's OK up here, so whatever you do DON'T get flustered and worried or else.....

29th October: I don't know how long I have been over here, 3 weeks I believe, but up till now I have not received any letter from you at all, still I've given you so many addresses I guess its my own fault.

2nd November: I think it's OK to tell you we have crossed the Dutch border. Where? I can't say, but if you watch the paper pretty careful you might guess....somehow I am stuck for news - there are a lot of things I would like to tell you but the censor don't like it - he might get mad, still I suppose its for our own good.

10th November: Look here, Mum, I've got a funny feeling by the way you are writing letters now that you are very worried over George and myself. Please don't, if you keep on worrying you will make me worried and I never will win this war, so cut it out 'Fargog'.

11th November: Many thanks for your letter received today and very glad to hear you are all OK at home. No, I have not received Mrs T (Mrs Trevaskis) letter yet. I am looking forward to it but did you say answer it, look here you had better write out a letter and send it on to me as you know how I write letters. Still I guess I will manage it. Yes we are still out of the line thank God, as its pouring with rain here and mud up to your necks, here's hoping we never go back there.

Undated extract:close to Jerries lines for that but at the moment we are out of the line for a rest and we may get some. I should say we need a rest too there's too much water here for my liking, but you should see the Jerry prisoners we take, scruffy looking sods, unshaven, dirty clothes and they stink terrible.

21st November: Just a few things for yourself and the kids for Christmas there isn't much but presents are scarce out here, its up to you who has them, the scent would do for Pam also the powder and one of the necklaces, the other for you. I am sending home my watch for Peter which is OK except for a couple of screws missing which turn the hands and he can have the ringsorry there is nothing for Pop but I just could not find anything whatsoever. I hope I might find something later on. Well, here's wishing you all a very happy Christmas and hoping to be in civvy clothes this time next year. Lots of love, Ron.

Infantry Record Office, Exzeter, 5th December 1944

Sir, It is my painful duty to inform you that a report has been received from the War Office notifying the death of: No 1444 2502 Private Farley, Ronald Eric, The Gloucester Regiment in Western Europe 25th November 1944. The report is to the effect that he died of wounds. I am to express sympathy

34452 Sgt T W Barratt, 12 Platoon B Coy, 2nd Bn Glosters
B.L.A. 1/12/44

Dear Mrs Farley

I am writing on behalf of your son Ronald's platoon mates to express our deepest sympathy in your loss of so fine a boy as Ron. I was rather puzzled whether to write boy, lad or man. He was just a boy, wasn't he? Nineteen is just on the threshold of life but make no mistake about this, he was a man too! We are all scared out here but Ron never showed it. We've got a fine bunch of lads here but I can honestly say that Ron was one of the finest lads I've ever had. Even when we were soaked, tired and muddy, nothing was too much trouble to him, always cheery and always a smileYours sincerely, Tom Barratt.

(Ronald Farley was only 18 years old)

SOURCES;

The original Booklet, published in 1991, was researched by the late Mrs Eve SeRusperd of Axmas Cottage, Mrs Margaret White of Averys and Paul Reed of Flanders Research.

During the course of this research Mrs Seaward interviewed the following people:-

Mr Len Adams	Mr G L Beecher
Mrs Daisy Brooking	Mrs Win Cocks
Mrs Mabel Collins (nee Cocks)	Mrs Clinch
Mrs Rosamund Chapman (nee Trivett)	Mrs Cudsen (nee Brooker) *
Mr Ken De bow	Miss Diana de la Rue
Mr Peter Farley	Mr & Mrs Michael Gander
Miss Hurst	Mrs Daisy Kilner
Mrs Betty Page	Mrs Win Pettifer
Mr Jack Phelps	Mrs Audrey Scott (nee Watts)
Mrs Sexton	Mr George Walder
Mr Tony Watts	Mrs Constance Whitehead (formerly Hart)
Mrs Janet Wise	General and Mrs Wood
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Believe this is mis-spelt and should be Mrs Cusden	

Since the Booklet was published vast amounts of information has been made available on the internet and these resources were used to up-date and add to the original information.

New Sources used were:

War List of the University of Cambridge
Tonbridge at War
West Sussex Country Times (Horsham Library)
Index to Servicemen and other in West Sussex Newspapers 1914-19
The Ross-shire Journal
The London Gazette
The Cricketer.com
General Registry Office (Birth, Marriage & Death Certificates)
Commonwealth War Graves Commission Web Site
Find A Grave
WW1 War Diaries
History Points/.../gun-craft-tragedy
Yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk
aviation-safety.net
www.chinditscloth1943.com/lieutenant-victor-st-george-de-la-rue
Marlborough College's Archivist
Absent Voters' List 1918 Horsham & Worthing Districts
Rusper School and Collyer's School Admission Records
Photographs and papers from the families of Evelyn Denniston and Jack Dancy
International Red Cross index to POWs
Forces as at War Website
<http://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.co.uk>

Ancestry.com and Find My Past.com

- Birth Marriage & Death Indexes
- Digitalised Parish Records (Baptisms, Marriages)
- Australian Birth Index
- National Probate Index
- UK Soldiers Died in the Great War
- Censuses
- Register of Soldier's Effects
- WW1 Medal Rolls and Indexes
- Public Family Trees
- British Army WW1 Service and Pension Records

RUSPER AND THE TWO WORLD WARS - PAUL REED

abridged from the "Men Who Marched Away, published in 1991"

When the Great War came to a close in the winter of 1918, over a million men from the British Empire had died in what was pledged to be the "War to end all Wars". They had left behind them mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, sweethearts, children and friends. It was the greatest loss this country had every suffered in War and indeed in the whole of its history. Everyone knew someone who had died; there was no escaping death's cruel hand in those four long years of endless casualty lists and telegram boys coming to the door with the fateful message "we regret to inform you.."

This great feeling of loss created in British society something that was essentially a new phenomena – the desire to remember and record the names of those who had fallen. It had its roots in Victorian society where the commemoration of the dead had become big business, but as such it was only those with money who ended up buried in style, as many of our rural and urban cemeteries testify.

After the Great War the desire was there to commemorate all of the dead – both those from the back streets of the many industrial cities as well as the men from the large houses in the every growing suburbia. This extended into the countryside where the names of farm workers were to be recorded alongside the squire's son from the big house on the outskirts of the village.

The most common way to commemorate the War dead was to build and erect a War Memorial. They took many forms – from simple stone obelisks, to crosses, to ornate statues of soldiers or biblical figures or even Christ.

The Village of Rusper was no exception. Shortly after the Great War the local people organised a Rusper Memorial committee, raised the necessary funds and erected a simple stone in the grounds of the church, recording the names and ranks of those from the parish and some of the neighbouring hamlets and farms, who had been killed between 1914 and 1919. Further names were added after the Second World War.

Three quarters of a century later, a team of researchers, anxious about the poor state of the memorial and curious as to the fate of those commemorated, found the job of tracing these men somewhat difficult. There were a few local people left in the village from the far off days of 1914, and likewise a handful who could remember the names which were added after the Second World War. After several months of research most of the men from Rusper and its environs had been traced and the names reflected well the overall pattern of enlistments and casualties in the two World Wars.

Obviously there were a larger number of names recorded for the Great War, many of them belonging to the county Regiment, the Royal Sussex. Despite the fact that the headquarters of the 4th (Territorial) Battalion was only a few miles away at Horsham, nearly all the local men who joined the Royal Sussex Regiment enlisted in the 11th, 12th or 13th (Southdowns) Battalions of Kitchener's Army. Their dates of death reflect the major action of those Battalions.

The Regular Army was represented by Christopher Cox, a private in the 3rd Rifle Brigade who had served in the Boer War. As part of the British Expeditionary Force, his Battalion landed on 12th September 1914 and he was killed only two weeks later.

The officers reflect the social order of the day with Captain Eric Casswell being commissioned in a "snobs" Regiment like the Rifle Brigade, and ending his days as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps, Captain Walter Spencer joining the 23rd Londons, and Captain Guy Dowling commissioned in the Kings Own Royal Rifles. All came from some of the large houses on the edge of the village.

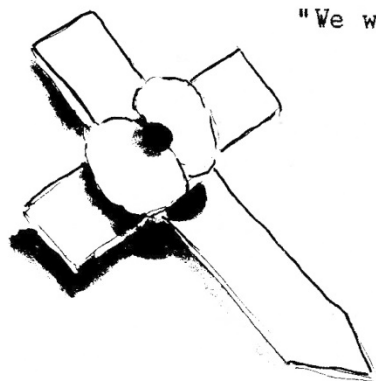
Of particular interest and perhaps not a little unusual for the small parish like Rusper are the three men who served in the 22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. The 22nd were a unit of Kitchener's Army raised by the Mayor and Borough of Kensington in September 1914.

Indeed it was known as the "Kensington Battalion" and each of the original enlistments had their regimental number prefixed by a "K". Privates Walder, Holcomb and Singleton were all in this Battalion and all had the "K" prefix; none of them had any connection to Kensington and had probably never even been there. So the reason? The commanding officer of the Battalion had a large estate at Roffey, a few miles to the south-west of Rusper, which he turned into a camp for the Kensingtons and where the three privates, and almost certainly several other Rusper men who survived the War, travelled to enlist in October 1914. The Battalion disbanded in France at both the time of Holcomb's death.

The names of those killed in the Second World War are also unusual, with five of the eight names being those of officers. Three were RAF officers, two of whom had the Distinguished Flying Cross. Of the other two officers, one was killed with the Indian Brigade in Burma and the other at St Nazaire with No. 2 Commando. Of the three other ranks, two are buried in the churchyard itself and the third was killed in Holland.

The men whom the War Memorial commemorated have been dead for a long time now. Whole lifetimes have come and gone. Few people care to remember them these days but let us hope that someone will pause in Rusper High Street, look at the list of names – all too long for such a small community – and ask what happened to them. Let us hope this booklet may provide a few answers.

Note: Paul Reed, a professional researcher, specialising in the two World War, kindly volunteered his services in the preparation of the original booklet, seeking out official data from Government records.



"We will remember them!"