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Introduction

Britain declared war on Germany on Tuesday 4 August 1914. The following four years became known as World War I, the Great War, and is considered to be one of the deadliest conflicts in history. It was 'the war to end all wars' as countries joined forces to defend their borders. The Allied Powers included Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Japan and other countries. The Central Powers included Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies. The United States remained neutral until it declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917. It is estimated that overall between 7 to 8 million military personnel died or were missing in combat of whom between 744,000 to 887,000 were from Britain.

Germany's advance into Belgium and Luxembourg created a Western Front which became the main theatre of war during WWI. Their advance into France was halted at the Battle of the Marne and by the end of 1914, the Western Front was marked by a long series of trench lines, approximately 400 miles, that changed little until 1917. Offences along this front included artillery bombardments and infantry advances. However, severe casualties were inflicted due to machine gun emplacements (a heavy machine gun placed within a square of sandbags covered by a canvas tent), entrenchment (series of trenches), artillery and barbed wire. It is estimated that in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, there was more than a million casualties and in the Battle of Passchendaele (Third Battle of Ypres, 1917), there were another 487,000 casualties. To break the deadlock of trench warfare, both sides tried new military technology including poison gas, aircraft and tanks. The Hundred Days Offensive of 1918 caused a sudden collapse of the German armies who surrendered in the Armistice at 11am Monday 11 November 1918.

During the war, back in England, life changed on the home front. With many men away, women become clerical workers, bus and tram conductors, worked on the land and joined the engineering sector including the munitions factories. Women were also recruited into the armed forces as nurses, doctors, drivers, cooks and telephonists. British Summer Time was introduced to give more daylight working hours. During the war, cultural entertainment continued although theatres sometimes changed the themes of their productions to be more patriotic. The war led to inflation and many poorer families could not afford the increase in food prices. The impact of the German U-boat campaign also led to food shortages and eventually rationing of food was introduced in February 1918. There were fixed allowances for sugar, meat, butter, jam and tea. Fuel was also in short supply and rationed. It was in this context that George Batchelor wrote postcards to his future wife, Nellie Oughton, as he trained as an infantry man with the Northants Regiment at Shoreham in preparation to go to war and she remained at home in Northampton.

In very stark contrast and a hundred and sixteen years later, on 23 March 2020, the United Kingdom went to war in response to a global pandemic due to an invisible virus called Covid 19. The world gradually went into 'lockdown', country by country at different speeds and intensity. The virus was said to have originated from Wuhan in China and quickly moved around the world, initially to northern Italy and Spain before emerging as a deadly killer in the UK. Schools, pubs and restaurants were closed on Friday 20 March and people were told to 'Stay at Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives. People were allowed to only leave their homes for essential reasons, for example buying food, from 23 March with all non-essential shops closing the following day. On 11 July 2020, there were 44,798 deaths attributed to Covid 19 in the UK according to the data collection methodology at the time which was later changed on 12 August 2020. The virus killed more people over the age of 70, more men than women, more people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and more people with multiple disabilities. It was an invisible killer which had killed 568,055 people across the world as of 12 July 2020.

Shops in the UK introduced rationing during the Corona Virus pandemic by limiting the number of products which could be bought following the panic buying of toilet paper and pasta. Hand sanitizer and face masks became essential items to be purchased. The introduction of 2m social distancing rules meant that signage appeared on pavements and in shops. As lockdown was gradually released

after the first wave and as the number of daily deaths reduced, rules were imposed on where you could meet others and how many you could meet outside or inside buildings. Images from China, Spain, US, Africa and all over the world were shared and debated via live news channels and facebook and other media sites so that individuals saw and heard information immediately. A daily Corona Virus Update on the BBC news channel at 5pm led by politicians but supported by scientists and medical experts provided data in tables and graphs throughout March to June. These daily briefings ended on 23 June 2020.

According to the media, we were said to be living through a 'war'. It was an analogy used to compare the experiences of the present times to the combat war of WWI and its links to the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918. That virus had lasted from February 1918 to April 1920 and over four waves infected about a third of the world's population although mostly young adults. The impact of WWI and the Corona Virus pandemic may be considered similar in terms of how they changed people's behaviours, the rationing of food and the deaths of loved ones. It was similar in that slogans were used. In WWI posters encouraged actions of 'Do your bit, Save food' and 'He did his duty, Will You do Yours?'. During the Corona Virus television adverts promoted the guidelines of 'Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives' and later in August 2020 there was the slogan of 'Eat Out to Help Out'. It was also similar in that particular people were drawn into the public eye, in WWI it was the military leaders, for example, in Britain there was Douglas Haig, whereas in the Corona Virus it was political leaders, for example, in England, Matt Hancock, the Health Minister, and Rishi Sunak, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It was during the Corona Virus epidemic 2020 that this story was written. Writing this story has involved going on a sensitive and poignant journey. The postcards which have survived being sent between George and Nellie during WWI were originally kept in two albums by Nellie Batchelor. It is not known how many were actually sent and none of the letters which are referred to in the postcards have survived. The albums were dismantled in February 2020 by myself, Elaine Batchelor, in order to read and transcribe the cards. I am the author of this story and I am the wife of the Keith Batchelor, the grandson of George Batchelor.

The process of transcribing the postcards led to several questions being posed including what was the timeline of different events during the war and how did these influence the writing of the postcards, what did the titles of regiments mean on the postcards, where were the places mentioned in the postcards, and when did George go and return from France. I did not know about the Great War or the places in France and it has been a personal journey to find out a little more about the context of these postcards.

George and Nellie wrote about events which were important to them. George wrote about a range of topics in the 1914 postcards including the weather, going on a march or parade, visits to church, taking part in different types of training (musketry, rifle, skirmishing) and stories of incidents (for example, the ripping of his overcoat, losing the Battalion Band, getting inoculations, organising a weekend pass and collecting books). George also talked about his feelings, a wish to transfer to another type of regiment and his enjoyment at seeing the moonlight and listening to singing. Nellie similarly wrote about a range of topics including the health of herself and her family, her work, the weather and her days out to Barby in Northamptonshire.

George Harold Batchelor and Nellie Elizabeth Oughton lived through the 'war to end all wars'. The postcards and many artefacts which they kept safe and passed down the family including uniform badges and buttons, documents and photographs have provided a rich and personal record upon which to recreate this story.

Their children, Kenneth George and Mary Elizabeth, are sadly no longer with us. However, their grandchildren, great- grandchildren and great- great- grandchildren are living through this present 'war' with an invisible virus and it is hoped that this story provides a record for them to remember their ancestors who survived the Great War and the pandemic which followed it.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank George and Nellie and their families for keeping all the artefacts safe for the future generations to touch and read. Real objects and books from the past have been an inspiration to write this story.

I would like to thank Gary Baines and the Shoreham Fort Trustees for allowing me to include photographs of Shoreham Camp. https://www.shorehamfort.co.uk/past/shoreham-camp/

I would like to thank Peter Robinson, Registrar, at the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery for providing information about a photograph of the 5th Northants.

I would like to thank Roger Bateman at Shorehambysea.com for allowing me to include images from their historical website. https://www.shorehambysea.com/

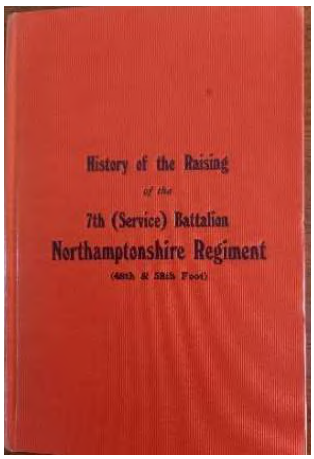
My subscriptions to Ancestry and British Newspaper Archives have been invaluable and enabled documents to be accessed.

In particular, I would like to thank Oliver Brittan, my nephew, Keith Batchelor, my husband and Maureen Barter, my mother, for proof reading the emerging versions. And for my brother, Ian Brittan, for bringing this into print for the Batchelor family to read and keep with the postcards.

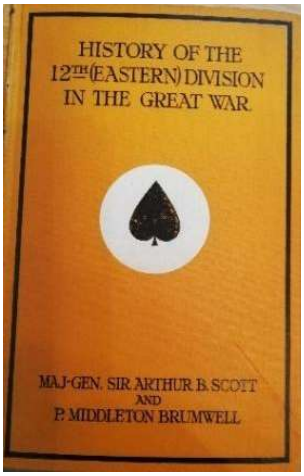
References

Two books have been passed down the family relating to the 7th and 5th Battalions, Northants Regiment and have been used to identify key dates and information.

- The dates related to the 7th (Service) Northants are taken from **History of the Rising of the 7th (Service) Battalion Northamptonshire** Regiment written by Captain and Adjutant Guy Paget in August 1915.
- The dates related to the 5th Northants are taken from the **History of the 12th (Service) Division in the Great War** written by Maj-Gen Sir Arthur B. Scott and P. Middleton Brumwell in 1923.



Paget (1915)



Scott and Brumwell (1923)

Other books have been purchased to contribute to understanding the timelines for the postcards.

- **7th (S) Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment 1914-19** Published H.B. King 1919 – purchased June 2020
- The **Northamptonshire Regiment 1914-18** Published 2005 – purchased June 2020
- The **Battle of Loos** Philip Warner Published 1976 and reprinted in 2009 – purchased May 2020
- **A Private's War –** recollection of Private Frank James 1st Northamptonshire 1914-18 Published 2013 – purchased June 2020
- **Pioneer Battalions in the Great War –** K.W. Mitchinson Published 2014 reprinted – purchased July 2020

Many websites have also been used to provide descriptions and images. These were accessed during February – August 2020. These included:

https://firstworldwar.com

https://wartimememoriesproject.com

https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk

https://www.postalmuseum.org

https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/british-army-ranks

https://rememberourdeadregimentallist.weebly.com

https://vad.redcross.org.uk

Chapter One – George and Nellie

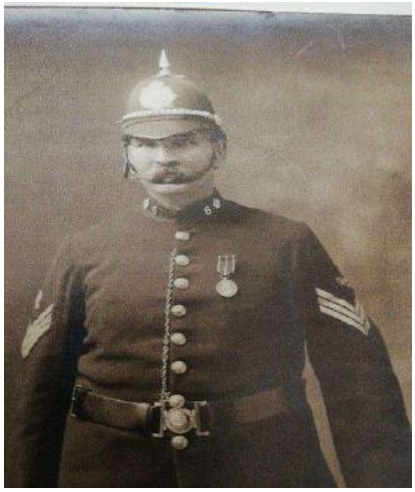
In this chapter, there are two sections. The first introduces George Harold Batchelor, a printer, from Northampton and his family. The second introduces Nellie Elizabeth Oughton, his future wife, who also lived in Northampton and her family.

George Harold Batchelor

George Harold Batchelor, the fourth child of William and Elizabeth Batchelor, was born on 26 April 1894. His birth was registered on 9 June 1894. He was baptised on 23 September 1895 at St Michael Church, Northampton. This is now St Michael and All Angels Church as shown in the map.

George's parents, William and Elizabeth Batchelor, were born in Barby, Northamptonshire. This village, traced back to 1716, is the ancestral family home for the Batchelor family.

Barby is a village which lies approximately midway between the towns of Rugby in Warwickshire and Daventry in Northamptonshire. It was an agricultural village, occupied by farm workers and associated tradesmen, and those involved in weaving and shoemaking. In 1777, there were 10 weavers in an adult male population of 54.



William Batchelor, originally an agricultural labourer, moved from Barby to Northampton to join the Northampton Borough Police Force on 15 November 1883, age 22. The 1839 County Police Act gave each county the power to set up their own police force. In 1856, the County and Borough Police Act made it compulsory for all towns and counties to set up a proper full time, paid police force. By 1900, there were 181 police forces in Britain.

William initially lived at 4 Ethel Street, Northampton. It is assumed that he was not allowed to marry immediately so Elizabeth remained in Barby.

Ethel Street is off St Edmund's Road in the town centre. It consists of terraced houses with off road parking. No 4 is now within a building which has been converted into flats from the old boot and shoe factory of Gaiter and Spat in part of the conservation area of Northampton.

Northampton is a large market town in the East Midlands and lies on the River Nene. In 1801, the population was 7,020 but it had more than doubled by 1831 to 15,351. This was attributed to the demand for footwear caused by the Napoleonic Wars. By 1901, the population had grown to 90,923 and by 1931 it was 92,341.

Northampton had gained a reputation for quality footwear and leather manufacture and the arrival of the Grand Union Canal in 1815 and Bridge Street railway station in 1845 enhanced this reputation. During World War 1, the town's factories supplied over 23 million pairs of boots to the armed forces.

Elizabeth Thompson, age 23 and a dressmaker, married William, age 27, on 17 October 1887. Elizabeth had continued to live in Barby until they were married.

They moved into 85 Hervey Street, Northampton, a 2/3 bedroomed terrace house. In 1911, they lived in this house with their eight of their eleven children. Two had sadly died and one had married.

1916 The Batchelor Family

l-r back Ernest Edward Batchelor, Lilian (Lil) Batchelor, Mabel (May) Batchelor, Mildred (Mill) Batchelor.

l-r front Gladys Batchelor, Nora Batchelor, Elizabeth Batchelor, William Batchelor.

In the photograph, are six of the children as George Harold and William Lawrence Batchelor were in the army and Beatrice, their eldest daughter, was already married. Sadly, Ernest Edward, died aged 16 years from the Spanish flu on 4 July 1918 and Mildred died aged 20 from tuberculosis in April 1919.

Nellie Elizabeth Oughton

Nellie Elizabeth Oughton, the third child of Thomas and Alice Mary Oughton, was born on 30 November 1891. Her birth was registered on 4 January 1892 at All Saints, Northampton. She was confirmed on 17 November 1914. She spent September 1911 in the women's surgical ward (Spencer Ward) at the General Hospital, Northampton. Nellie was called Nell after her marriage. Nellie died on 18 December 1941 from breast cancer aged 50. She was buried in Northampton.

Thomas and Alice Oughton lived in Northampton. Thomas was the Town Representative of the L.M.S. Railway Passenger Department. They had eleven children. One, Mabel Mary, sadly died aged two years old and another, Eveline (Eve), sadly died, age 27 years old, from a brain tumour.

Thomas and Alice Oughton – parents of Nellie Oughton

1916 The Oughton Family

l-r rear standing Reginald (Reg) Oughton, John Fowles, Thomas (Tom) Oughton, John Oughton, Herbert Littler, Mabel Oughton/Fowles.

l-r front seated Nellie Oughton, Arthur Oughton, Thomas Oughton, Alice Oughton, Lillian (Lily) Oughton/Littler.

Before WWI, George and Nellie were both apprenticed to John Dickens and Company, Abington Street, Northampton. It is thought that this is where they met. George was an apprentice printer from the age of 15. His Indenture was for 6 years and dated 26/04/1909 to 25/04/1915. Nellie was an apprentice in account book making, called Machine Ruling. Her indenture was for almost 6 years from 20/02/1907 to 30/11/1912. In the 1911 Census, she was recorded as an Account Book Maker. George and Nellie had several things in common including going to church and caring for animals.

George Harold Batchelor - printing apprentice – aged 15 or 16 years.

Chapter Two – Setting the Scene

As well as the postcards, George saved and passed down to his son, Kenneth, various artefacts which have contributed to the writing of his story. In this chapter, there are details about the New Army and George's Unit Card, medals, dog tags and Christmas tin. There are then two short sections about military units and the army postal service.

New Army Volunteers

War was declared on 4 August 1914 after German troops marched on France through Belgium. George Harold Batchelor enlisted as a volunteer on **September 7 1914, age 20,** five weeks after war was declared.

Initially the **New Army**, as it was called, consisted of volunteers who enlisted in response to the call to arms by Lord Kitchener who believed many men would be needed and that it would be a long war and not over by Christmas. The first 1,000 volunteers were called the First Army or K1. There was an old regular army, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) which in later years was dubbed the 'Old Contemptibles', but they suffered massive casualties in the early part of the war and replacement men had to be drawn from the Territorial Army and the New Armies.

As time passed, conscription laws had to be passed in order to provide the number of men needed at the front. The first law was the Military Service Act in January 1916 which specified that single men aged 18 to 40 years were liable to be called up for military service unless they were widowed with children or ministers of a religion. There was a system of Military Service Tribunals to adjudicate upon claims of exemptions based on certain classes of industrial worker.

In September 1914, George's older brother, **William Lawrence,** was aged 22 and his younger brother, **Ernest Edward,** was aged 12. His other siblings were six girls aged between 29 and 7 years old. Margaret Batchelor, the daughter of William Lawrence, recalled in 2019, that when George decided to join the Army, he was reminded by his brother, William Lawrence, to make sure he told his mother, Elizabeth, of his decision. George and his mother were said to be similar in nature and both described as a little 'unemotional'.

William Lawrence Batchelor.

Brother to George Harold Batchelor.

William Lawrence Batchelor worked as a nailer for a packing company in Northampton. In a test case, reported in the Northampton Mercury on 2 June 1916, the Military Service brought an appeal against his employer for saying his work as a nailer was vital and that as a single man of 23 he should go into the Army. The company said he was vital in making packing cases for Army boots. However, they lost the appeal and William joined the Army in 1916 in the cavalry section. A postcard dated 8 August 1916 was sent to George from his sister Milt, '*I expect you were surprised to hear that Will had joined the Army'.* William's daughter, Margaret, remembered in 2020, that her father felt that he ought to join up rather than be exempt and the day after the court case, when the cavalry

were in Northampton he signed up. Margaret also recalled that George and William met up in France and Belgium at some point during the war although it is not known when. She added they never had a cross word between them.

Ernest did not go into the Army as he was too young. Sadly, he died on 4 July 1918 from the Spanish flu aged 16.

The influenza pandemic of 1918-19 was also called the Spanish flu. It is thought that about a third of the population were infected and about 50 million died. In the spring of 1918, the number of deaths was low but a second wave came in the autumn and victims died within hours or days of developing symptoms. One unusual aspect was that it struck down many previously healthy young people. 228,000 people died in Britain in the summer of 1918.

On November 1918, the News of the World wrote about two ways to combat the Spanish flu - "*Wash inside nose with soap and water each night and morning; force yourself to sneeze night and morning, then breathe deeply. Do not wear a muffler; take sharp walks regularly and walk home from work; eat plenty of porridge."*

During the Corona Virus pandemic in 2020, there have been similar messages about washing your hands for at least 20 seconds and singing Happy Birthday to measure the time. However, in contrast face coverings rather than a muffler became mandatory when travelling on public transport and going into shops. No one was asked to eat porridge!

Military Units

The addresses and dates on the Postcards identified that George was a member of different Battalions within the Northants Regiment and its associated Battalions, Companies and Platoons during his training in England and active service in France on the Western Front. The following descriptions were used to support an understanding of the structure of the New Army during WWI.

A **regiment** has distinctive titles and uniforms under the command of a Colonel. When at full strength, an infantry regiment would normally comprise of two field battalions or 8–10 companies. In a regimental system, each regiment is responsible for its own recruitment, training, and administration and therefore each regiment develops its own history and traditions.

A **battalion** is another military unit. A battalion may consist of 300 to 800 soldiers and is divided into a number of companies. A battalion is typically commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel.

A **company** is a further military unit, typically consisting of 80–150 soldiers and usually commanded by a Major or a Captain. Most companies are formed of three to six platoons.

During WWI, different regiments were combined together and commanded by different **Divisions**. These Divisions were then allocated to different **Corps** during battles.

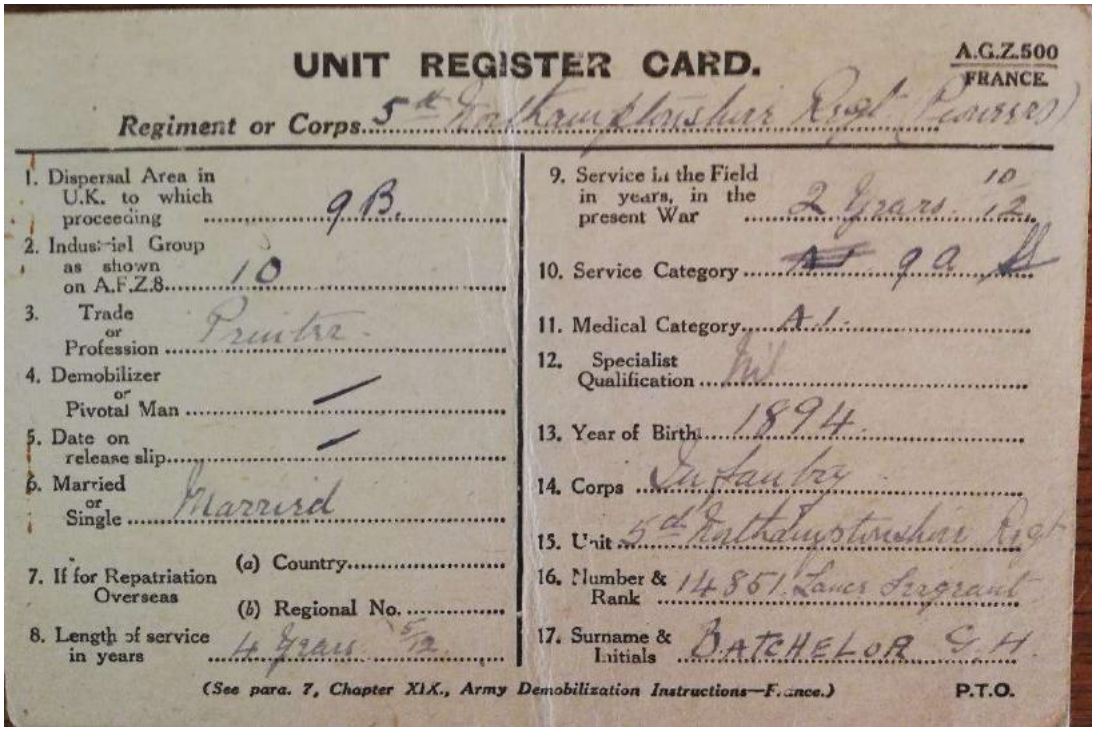
As the Great War grew and operations became so large, articles in the newspapers and army records stopped identifying platoons and companies and replaced them with reference to battalions. By spring 1915, it was said that battalions ceased to be a unit mentioned in dispatches and their place was taken by the division, twelve times its size. Initially there were 7 divisions with 84 battalions, however, by 1916, there were 84 divisions in the field (Volume XIII, Great War series, page 253).

Unit Card

At the end of the war, George was given a Unit Card which summarised his time with the Northampton (Northants) Regiment between 1914 and 1919.

George Harold Batchelor joined as a **Private** and was promoted to **Lance Corporal** and then **Lance Sergeant** in the **Northampton Regiment**. His service number was **14851**.

- His total Length of Service was recorded as 4 years and 5 months.
- His Service in the field was recorded as 2 years 10 months.
- He served 1 year and 3 months in the 7th Service Battalion, Northampton Regiment V.
- He served overseas in France on active service.
- His Unit Card states he was in 5th Northampton Regiment (Pioneers) and his trade before the war was a Printer.
- He was admitted to hospital (in London) on 26/11/1915 with trench foot and discharged on 07/01/1916 after 10 days.
- He was awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.
- The Company was WO329.
- He was transferred to the Army Reserve on 10/04/1919. Medical Category A1, Class Z.



UNIT REGISTER CARD. A.G.Z.500 FRANCE

Regiment or Corps: 5th Northamptonshire Regt (Pioneers)

1. Dispersal Area in U.K. to which proceeding: 9B
2. Industrial Group as shown on A.F.Z.8: 10
3. Trade or Profession: Printer
4. Demobilizer or Pivotal Man: —
5. Date on release slip: —
6. Married or Single: Married
7. If for Repatriation Overseas (a) Country: (b) Regional No.:
8. Length of service in years: 4 years 5/12
9. Service in the Field in years, in the present War: 2 years 10/12
10. Service Category: 9a
11. Medical Category: A1
12. Specialist Qualification: Nil
13. Year of Birth: 1894
14. Corps: Infantry
15. Unit: 5th Northamptonshire Regt
16. Number & Rank: 14851 Lance Sergeant
17. Surname & Initials: BATCHELOR G.H.

(See para. 7, Chapter XIX., Army Demobilization Instructions—France.) P.T.O.

Dog Tags

George Harold Batchelor was given a dog tag in 1914 which was made of vulcanised asbestos fibre. The outbreak of war on 4 August 1914 meant the Army was not able to produce enough aluminium identity disks which had been introduced on 9 January 1907. The new type of disc was approved on 21 August 1914.

The first dog tag has his name G. H. Batchelor, his regiment number 14851, COE (Church of England) and 7 Northants. It was a red circular disc. Attached to the piece of string is a silver sixpence dated 1914 with the head of the King, George V. Whilst old sixpenny pieces are relatively common the idea that this was placed around the neck of George during the first months of WWI is very special. Sixpence coins are said to give luck.

There is another single red circular tag which has L. C. Batchelor G. (Lance Corporal), NN CE and 14851. When George left England to go to France in September 1915, he had been promoted to Lance Corporal. NN is no regiment assigned. CE is Church of England.

In September 1916, there was a change regarding the number of dog tags worn by each man. The British Army heeded the necessity to issue a disc which would remain on the body after death to be used in future identification. This led to the introduction of a red and green tag.

The new green disc was also made of vulcanised asbestos fibre but in a green/brown shade and shaped octagonally. It was approximately 35 mm by 30mm. The green disc became Disc No.1 and was attached to the long cord around the neck with the No. 2 disc – the original red one – being threaded on a 6-inch cord from this disc. No. 1 was to remain on the body after death but No. 2 would be removed for identification.

There are two sets of red and green tags for George. One set has G. Batchelor, NN (no regiment assigned) and CE (Church of England), 14851 and the other set has G.H. Batchelor, NN CE, 14851. It may be that George was given these when he changed regiments after his illness in London or Scotland as described in the next chapter.

1914 Christmas Tin.

George, like other service men, was sent a Christmas Tin from Princess Mary.

The Princess Mary Christmas box was a brass or silver tin containing a number of gifts intended to be distributed to all members of the armed forces of the British Empire on Christmas Day 1914. Princess Mary was the daughter of George V and she launched an appeal to fund this gift. Tins sent out after Christmas had a card wishing the recipient ‘a victorious new year.

The contents include a New Year card and bullet pencil. It was therefore sent in 1915 or later rather than December 1914. There is no reference to the tin being received in the postcards.

World War One Medals

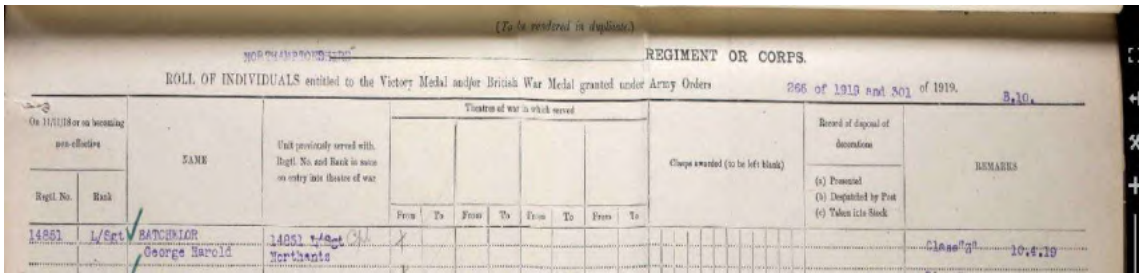
l-r 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Star

George survived the Great War and he was awarded the three medals of WWI. These have been passed down the family line and are now held by James Kenneth Batchelor, his great- grandson.

The 1914 -1915 Star was authorised in 1918 for award to those who saw service in a theatre of war as defined in Admiralty and Army orders between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915. George went to France in September 1915 so he was given this medal and associated ribbon.

The British War Medal was a campaign medal of the United Kingdom which was awarded to officers and men of British and Imperial forces for service in the First World War. Two versions of the medal were produced with about 6.5 million being struck in silver.

The Victory Medal (United Kingdom) was issued to all those who received the 1914 Star or the 1914–15 Star, and to most of those who were awarded the British War Medal. It was not awarded singly.


(To be rendered in duplicate.)

REGIMENT OR CORPS.

ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the Victory Medal and/or British War Medal granted under Army Orders 266 of 1919 and 301 of 1919. B.10.

On 11/11/18 or on becoming non-effective		NAME	Unit previously served with. Regtl. No. and Rank in same on entry into theatre of war	Theatres of war in which served								Clasps awarded (to be left blank)	Record of disposal of decorations (a) Presented (b) Despatched by Post (c) Taken into Stock	REMARKS
Regtl. No.	Rank			From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To			
14851	L/Sgt	BATCHELOR George Harold	14851 ~~L/Sgt~~ Cpl Northants	X										Class "A" 10.4.19

George was listed as L/Sgt which has been crossed out in pencil and replaced with Cpl suggesting he had a temporary appointment to Sergeant during active service in France.

Army Postal Service (APS)

George sent Nellie postcards from Shoreham Camp near Brighton between September 1914 and August 1915 whilst he was training with the 7th Northampton Regiment. Nellie and other family members sent postcards to him at the camp. Postcards were sent to George in France and he sent cards back when possible.

All mail bound for the troops on the Western Front were sorted at the London Home Depot by the end of 1914. The Depot covered five acres of Regents Park and was said to be the largest wooden structure in the world employing over 2,500 mostly female staff by 1918. During the war the Home Depot handled about 2 billion letters and 114 million parcels.

The APS established base depots at Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais and the mail was carried with munitions on supply trains to the front. In 1917 over 19,000 mailbags crossed the channel each day with half a million bags conveyed in the run up to Christmas.

Prior to WWI, the standard national postage was a penny for letters. A charge which had been been in place for 75 years but it was increased in June 1918 by half a penny.

All of the postcards sent in 1914 had a half a penny stamp.

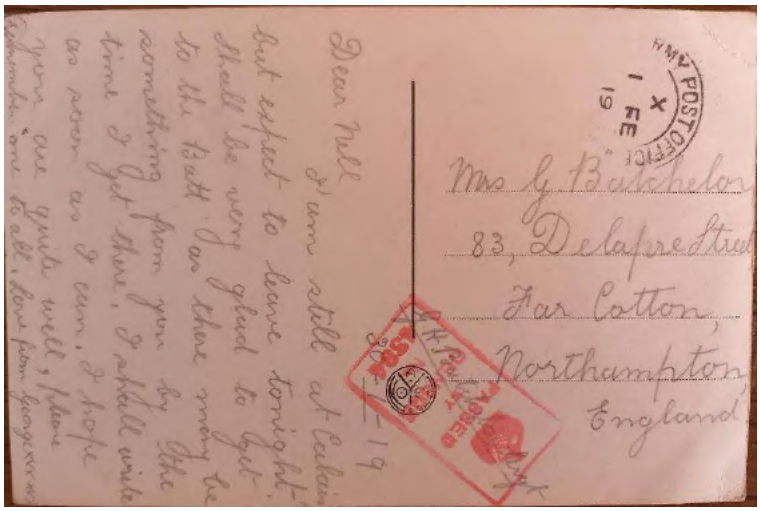
In 1915, there were three postcards sent with a half a penny stamp and five sent with a penny stamp.

In 1917, the postcards sent within England had a half penny stamp, but those sent to France had a penny stamp.

In 1918, there are two postcards with stamps, one from Dover to Northampton and one from Northampton to France and both had a half penny stamp.

The 1919 postcards sent by George to Nellie were stamped with a Field Code of 4. The Army Post Office 4 was Calais. There are some postcards stamped FPO 37. It is not known where this was located.

Postcard dated 1 February 1919.



Chapter Three – Postcards tell a story

The postcards have been used to create a narrative within eleven sections to tell the story of George between September 1914 and March 1919. The sections include quotes from the postcards and information from books and articles written at the time and after the war.

Postcard Timeline

The timeline is not an exact timeline but provides a context for the postcards year by year and month by month. In each section, quotes are inserted from the postcards to add to the description of events which are described by George. The full transcriptions of the postcards are in Chapter Five and details of the pictures on the postcards are in Chapter Six.

There are 11 sections:

1. TRAINING In ENGLAND – after enlistment - 1914 postcards
2. TRAINING in ENGLAND - 1915 postcards
3. FRANCE – active service – no postcards
4. ENGLAND – return with trench foot - 1915 postcards
5. ENGLAND – return to training – 1916 postcards
6. FRANCE – active service – 1916 postcards
7. SCOTLAND– unknown reason - 1916 postcards
8. ENGLAND – retraining – 1917 postcards
9. FRANCE – active service – 1917 postcards
10. FRANCE – active service – 1918 postcards
11. RETURNING HOME – 1919 postcards

1. TRAINING In ENGLAND – after enlistment - 1914 Postcards

*Between September and December 1914, George was in **A Company, 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment**. It was based at **Shoreham Camp, Southwick**, near to Brighton for training.*

There are 51 postcards and 1 Christmas postcard sent from George to Nellie. There are 5 postcards sent from Nellie to George. There are 2 postcards sent from George to his mother, Mrs Elizabeth Batchelor, 1 postcard from George to his 'Mother, Dad and all' and 2 postcards sent from friends to George.

The **7th (Service) Battalion** of the Northants Regiment was formed at Northampton in September 1914 and came under the command of **73rd Brigade in the 24th Division**.

George was in **A Company** because he was one of the first to volunteer.

The **7th (Service) Battalion Northamptonshire (Northants) Regiment** was one of the many 'Service' battalions raised at the beginning of the war through the prompting of Lord Kitchener. Kitchener predicted a long and brutal war even though others said it would be over by Christmas 1914. Kitchener fought off opposition to his plan of building a new force of well trained and well led divisions rather than having the New Army battalions placed into existing regular or Territorial Force divisions which was the view of the Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, **Field Marshal Sir John French**. Those recruited into the New Army were used to form completely new battalions under existing British Army Regiments. The new battalions had titles of the form xxth (Service) Battalion, Regiment name.

Post card dated 23 August 1915.

Field Marshall Sir John French

The 7th Battalion became known as '**The Mobbs' Own**' because one of the first men to volunteer was Edgar Mobbs, a well-known Rugby player from Northampton. Mobbs was initially turned down by the army as he was too old. So, he set up his own 'sportsmen' company of 250 sportsmen known as 'Mobbs Own' for the Northamptonshire Regiment. He enlisted as a private but eventually became Lieutenant Colonel in the Battalion. Mobbs was killed in action on 29 July 1917, in the course of an attack in Shrewsbury Forest, Ypres in the Battle of Passchendaele. Mobbs' charisma and appeal led to many men from Northampton rushing to join the new battalion. In June 2020, a brochure was published by the Northampton Saints Foundation through Heritage Funding about the men and their families from Mobbs Company, which formed D Company in 7th Battalion, Northants.

Kitchener's New Army was initially made up of two Army Groups referred to as the First Army and Second Army or K1 and K2. These were both formed on 26 December 1914. The Third Army referred to as K3 was formed in July 1915. Within each Army Group there were different Divisions. K3 consisted of Divisions 21 to 26 inclusively. A fourth Army Group K4 was formed in February 1916 with the influx of more volunteers and then broken up into a new K4 and a new K5 in April 1916.

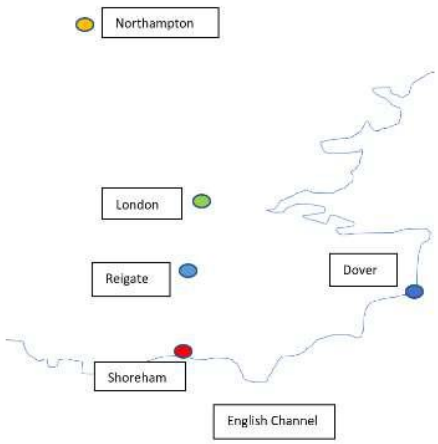
The **24th Division** was constituted of three Brigades which were made up of different Regiments and their associated Battalions. Before 11 October 1915, the 24th Division consisted of the 71st, 72nd and 73rd Brigade. After this date, the 71st moved into the 6th Division and the 17th Brigade moved into the 24th from the 6th Division. In addition, the 24th Division had Divisional Troops, Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and Royal Army Medical Corps. The 24th Division saw action at the Battle of the Somme (1916), Battle of Passchendaele (1917) and the Final Advance in Picardy (1918). It was disbanded by March 1919.

The **73rd Brigade** comprised of the following Battalions from different Regiments from the East of England.

- 12th (Service) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) (left October 1915)
- 9th (Service) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment
- 7th (Service) Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment
- 13th (Service) Battalion, Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment)
- 2nd Battalion, Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) (from October 1915, left February 1918)
- 73rd Machine Gun Company (M.G.C.) (joined 14 March 1916, transferred into Divisional MG Battalion 5 March 1918)
- 73rd Trench Mortar Battery (joined 15 July 1916)

The **7th (Service) Battalion Northants Regiment** moved to **Shoreham by Sea** in the **South Downs** on **12 September 1914**. George wrote to Nellie on 8 September to say that he was still at home in Northampton, '*They have not sent us off yet. They say we may go tomorrow, or it may be 2 or 3 weeks'.*

Shoreham by Sea is approximately 134 miles (216km) south of Northampton by road. In 2020, it would take approximately 3 and half hours to travel by train.



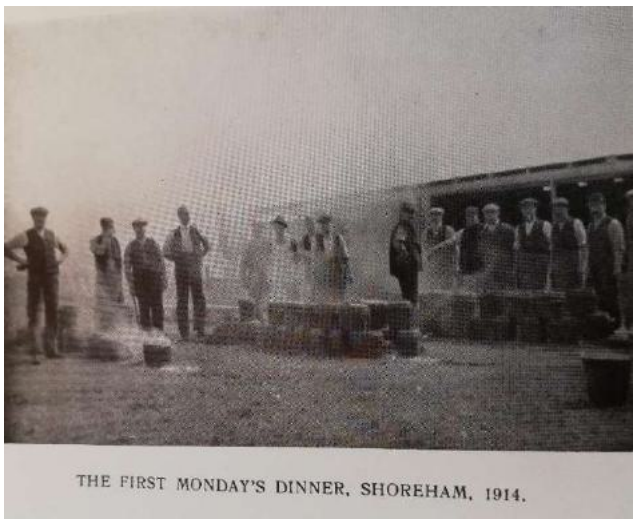
Postcard dated 23 October 1914.

On 12 September 1914, Colonel Fawcett, commanding and Major Woodham, adjutant, dispatched 488 men from Northampton to Shoreham-by-Sea as the 7th (Service) Battalion. Captain Guy Paget assumed command of them as there was no one else initially available. On 14 September, more recruits arrived in the camp including 175 from Peterborough referred to as Whitsed's Light Infantry, 250 with Mr Mobbs and a further 100 recruits from other places. By 14 September 1914, there were 1,088 men from Northampton and Peterborough and other areas dressed in civilian clothing in a camp which lacked shelter and had difficulties in feeding them.

According to Captain Guy Paget writing in 1915, the Battalion had 80 bell tents, 64 dixies, 1,000 blankets, an open shed 24ft by 9ft, which was used as the officer's mess and quarters, stores, an orderly room and a cook house. There was an ex-2nd Lieutenant and one Lance-Sergeant to look after the 1,000 raw recruits (Paget, 1915, page 9-11).

The First Monday's Dinner

(Paget, 1915, page 8).



Shoreham Camp. By kind permission of Shoreham Fort Trustees.

The first parade according to Paget (1915) took place on Tuesday morning, 15 September 1914, when the men formed into two rough lines. The Battalion was formed into 4 companies with the first arrivals being placed in A and B under Major Bagnall and Captain Hunt respectively. C Company was the Whitsed's Light Infantry under Lieutenant Birch and D Company, Mobbs' Own, was under Captain Paget. George was placed in A Company signifying that he was one of the first volunteers to arrive at the camp.

According to King (1919) who wrote about his experiences of being an officer with the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment at Shoreham, Mobbs was the life and soul of the battalion as a whole and Paget was responsible for much of the early organisation (page 3). Paget was an ex- Scots Guard and the First Adjutant of the Battalion. There was a spirit of rivalry between the Companies and if Mobbs' Company made progress on any activity then the other three companies would rise to the challenge to better it. King (1919) wrote that although at times the rivalry became bitter it meant that when they left England a year later, they left as a battalion and not four separate companies (page 5).

The camp moved on 17 September 1914 from the East Camp to the North Camp in Shoreham. On 18 September, Lieutenant-Colonel Parkin was appointed Acting Brigadier of the 73rd Infantry Brigade which consisted of the 12th Royal Fusiliers, 9th Royal Sussex, 7th Northants and 13th Middlesex. On 21 September, Brigadier-General Oswald, Indian Army, arrived and took over the Brigade from Lieutenant-Colonel Parkin.

By kind permission

Shoreham by Sea website

September 1914

There are 7 cards dated September from George to Nellie. There is 1 card from Nellie to George. The first postcard of this story is dated 8 September 1914.

During September, training started in earnest. George wrote on 22 September, '*They are putting us through it now. Have had about 8 hours parade'.* The Battalion was inspected by Sir Douglas Dawson on 23 September and he was highly complementary on their appearance. Sir Douglas said they came out on parade like a battalion of His Majesty's Guards. On 25 September, George said they had *'drilled on the golf links right on top of the Downs'* and that he was '*burnt as red as a Devil'*.

George said he had been paid on 25 September. Men had to queue and were paid in alphabetical order according to Paget (1915). It appeared that George sent some of his money back to Nellie for safe keeping as he wrote on 18 October, '*I did not send all my money. I drew 13/- but am keeping a bit back for the trip if we get it'*. He added on 26 October, '*will send some money at the end of the week. It's worth something to have a banker isn't it'.*

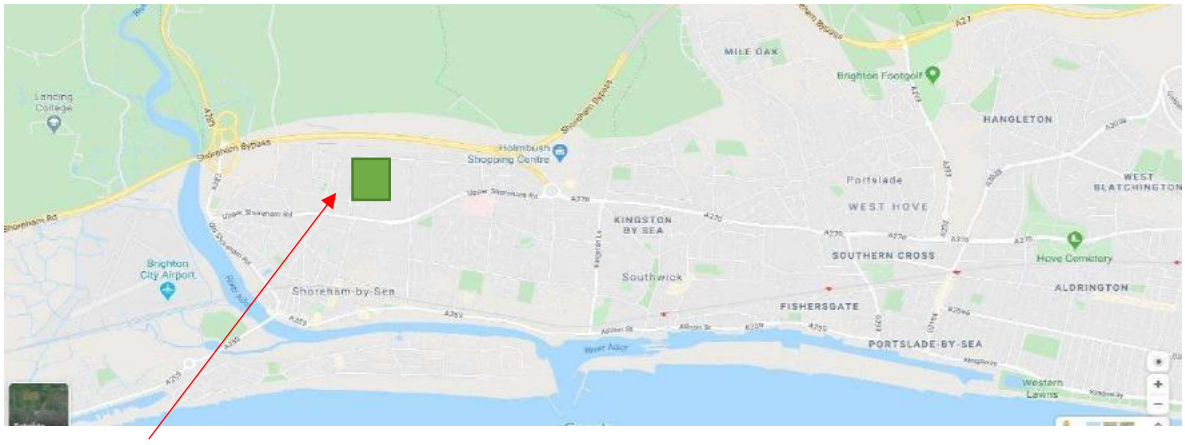
The First Pay Day

(Paget, 1915, page 12)

On 26 September, George wrote to tell Nellie that they had been to **Lancing College** for '***musketing drill'*** in the morning which was '*several miles*' from the camp and '*awfully hot on the road'* followed by a '*battling parade at 2pm'*. The 7th Battalion marched to Lancing College each day and borrowed the O.T.C. (Officers' Training Corps) rifles for early musketry training. They were instructed by the Officer in Command, Major Haig-Brown (King, 1919, page 4).

Lancing College is now an Independent school. It originally opened as St Mary's School in Shoreham in 1847 before moving to its site in Lancing in 1857. An Officers' Training Corps had been formed at the College in 1905 by Allan Haig -Brown. Allan Haig- Brown died on 25 March 1918 in France on the first day of the German Spring Offensive.

On 28 September, the camp moved to **Buckingham Park, Shoreham**.



Buckingham Park in Shoreham by Sea– between Shoreham Bypass and Upper Shoreham Road.

George wrote, '*went into Shoreham last night by myself, my pal went to the Salvation Army. I wandered through the church yard and as the door was open and about a dozen standing round, I stopped to listen for about ½ hour. It was the harvest festival and they sang one psalm to the same tune as All Saints. It bought me back home, but how different it seemed to stand there in my old clothes and muffler on a Sunday. I was back at camp at 8pm and then went into the Y.M.C.A. tent and sang hymns till bedtime'*. George referred to All Saints Church in Northampton which he attended. During WWI, the Salvation Army provided motor ambulances, refreshments huts in military camps and parcels of food and clothing. The Y.M.C.A. provided what was commonly referred to as 'welfare work' but also entertainment.

On 30 September, George had musketry drill and twisted his knee, he wrote to Nellie that he would see the doctor in the morning '*because it is a bit painful on the march'*.

George and probably many other volunteers were not used to such heavy physical demands. King (1919) wrote that the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment was a collection of enthusiastic amateurs. They were recruits in name only as they paraded in Buckingham Park, Shoreham because they wore civilian clothing and had no rifles. The N.C.O. (non-commissioned officers) were distinguished by a white or red arm band for Corporals and Sergeants and a red sash for Sergeant Majors. The initial lack of uniform had its compensations though if the men were seen in the village after hours in their civilian clothing. They would apparently claim they were one of McAlpine's men who were building the hutment camp (King, 1919, page 1-2).

October 1914

There are 18 cards dated October from George to Nellie. There are 2 cards from Nellie to George. There is one card from George to his parents. The postcard dated 24 October included George's regimental number.

October started well according to George. On the evening of 1 October, he went to the Y.M.C.A. where a concert was held, *'some of the fellows sang some nice sentimental songs'* and *'it was a lovely moonlight night, and the moon shining in the sea looked handsome'.*

On 3 October, he wrote, '*we are the second largest force in Great Britain, Aldershot has most and we come next. Hope you can understand this small scrawl. Thank you for getting the book for me. My knee is going on alright now, it is just a bit stiff. We are having plenty of food thanks. Have been to Lancing College again for musketry drill this morning, …. and dusty on the road. They are making rapid progress with the huts, I am quite warm and comfortable at night now'.*

During the evening of 4 October, he went to a service held by the Salvation Army with two other men. He wrote that it had been a lovely night and they were back in camp by 9.30pm. According to the postcard dated 18 October, George wrote to his 'Mother, Dad and all' to tell them he had had his hair cut again '*and look almost bald headed'.*

During the evening of 20 October, the men attended a concert in the Officers' Mess. On the evening of 21 October, there was another concert in the Y.M.C.A. and General Ramsey was present. The songs '*were nearly all patriotic'* because it was a celebration of Trafalgar Day. Trafalgar Day is the celebration of the victory won by the Royal Navy, commanded by Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, over the combined French and Spanish fleets at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. General Ramsey went on to lead Operation Dynamo in World War II at Dunkirk which involved the 'little boats' getting thousands of men back from the beaches of northern France.

George wrote to Nellie on 21 October with a thoughtful comment on the war, '*there doesn't seem to be alteration in the war, does there?'*. Nellie wrote a reply in her postcard dated 22 October, *'it is as you say, the war does not seem much better'*.

On 22 October, he wrote that *'I don't go out of camp much now, am in bed some nights at 7.30'.* In the same postcard, George tells Nellie about the postcard set he has ordered from the post office in Shoreham which had images of the Scots Greys.

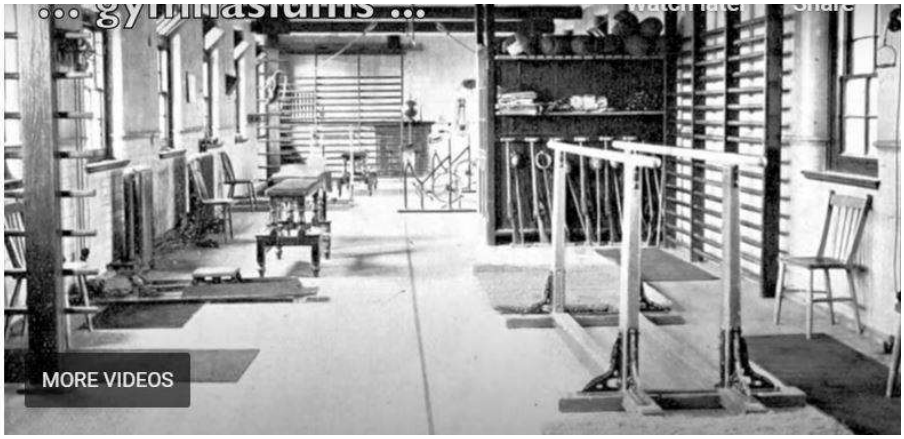
Shoreham camp continued to be developed during October. As well as the building of the huts, the Y.M.C.A. had a new canvas structure and on 27 October. George wrote it '*was alright in there now'* because presumably it had been open to the weather before. On 28 October, he wrote that they also had a *gymnasium* in activity.

YMCA

With kind permission from
Shoreham by Sea website

Gymnasium

With kind permission From
Shoreham by Sea website



The **uniform** for the men was initially emergency blue. King (1919) explained that the New Armies were given blue uniforms because of the need to refit the original Expeditionary Force in France in Khaki who had suffered such heavy losses.

The first issue to the Regiment was on 6 October 1914 and according to Paget (1915), it was not popular with the men because of its resemblance to convicts clothing (page 15). The emergency clothing was issued in four sizes only and one company was given only very large or very small so the tailors had to work hard to refit them (King, 1919, page 3).

The Battalion was inspected on 6 October by Major-General Sir J.G. Ramsey, K.C.B., Indian Army, General Officer who commanded the 24th Division of which 73rd Infantry Brigade formed part. He praised them for their physique and steadiness. This was the first time any uniform had been worn with one company wearing for the first time the blue emergency clothing. George wrote to Nellie late at night on 6 October, '*we were inspected this morning by the General and he was very pleased with us, he said'*.

V. M. Lunnon who was an officer in 11th Essex wrote about his memories of the initial uniform in the Battle of Loos book by Philip Warner. He recalled that *most men had been issued with a nondescript blue uniform and forage cap, these served their purpose for a time, but there was a shortage of overcoats and boots and quite a few men were in their civvies* (page 210). On 4 October, George wrote that he had now got an '*overcoat'.* This replaced his old green coat which he had torn when it had got *'hung up in some barbed wire'* as he and others had gone over the Downs that afternoon.

On 18 October, George sent a postcard to his 'Mother, Dad and all', 'g*lad you like the photos alright. Thought you would like this P.C. so am sending one to you. We look a bit different to these in our convict suits, don't we?'*

Training during October consisted of different physical activities to build stamina and strength. This included rifle drill, skirmishing, marches and drilling. On 2 October, there was a **rifle drill** in the morning which led to George writing to Nellie, '*we shall soon be fit at this rate'.* This early rifle drill may not have used real rifles though, as the Battalion was not provided with rifles until there was an issue of 333 D.P rifles on 14 October followed by 66 more on 23 October (Paget, 1915, page 17).

King (1919) wrote that there was an issue of wooden dummy rifles but they did not resemble the real ones in shape, weight nor appearance. They were used though as clothes lines for washing between rows of tents (page 4). V. M. Lunnon recalled that men needed to have stamina to drill with real rifles, as they weighed 14lbs (6.4kg) and were difficult to master (Warner, 2009, page 211).

George wrote that 5 October had started with '***skirmishing'*** and they had also been skirmishing in the afternoon of 6 October which meant that he felt very tired that night and would post the card the following morning. There was little rest though as George had an hour's parade after nightfall on 7 October '*but not a night attack as we expected, it was a lovely night but too moonlight for our purpose'.* On 8 October, George wore his new dark overcoat and spent the morning in hot sun, **drilling** on the hillside. On 19 October, George and the others went to **Lancing College** and '*came back over the hills, jumped a wide ditch and climbed a steep hill'.* It is likely that George hurt his arm during this training because he wrote to Nellie on 21 October that '*his arm is going on alright'* and on 22 October, that *'his arm was about better'.*

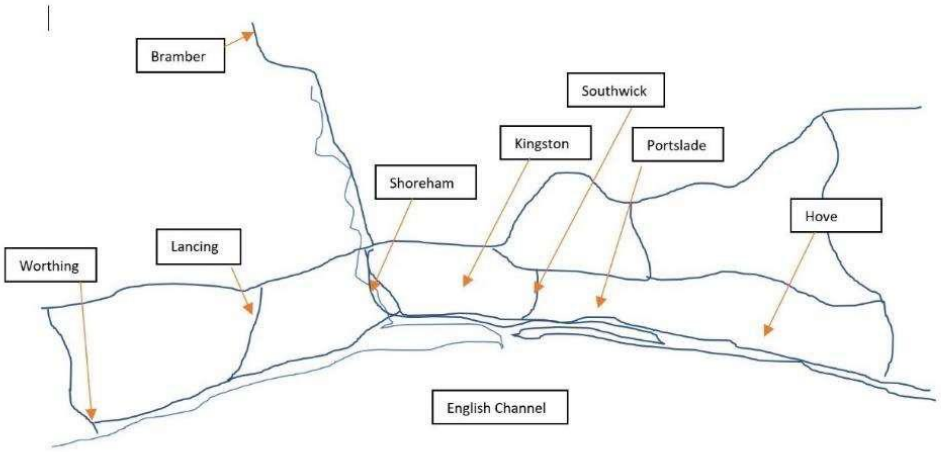


Diagram to show key locations during training 1914.

Marches were a key part of the training. On 24 October, they went on a 2-hour route march. On 27 October, they had a 10-mile route march over the Downs, around Southwick and through Shoreham. If there was poor weather then marches did not always take place.

George was given **responsibilities** during October including acting as tent orderly and working in the Officers' Mess. On 18 October, George was **tent orderly** for the day. The rest of the men went to church parade and at some point, George sat on the baggage and wrote to Nellie to tell her he had had his hair cut *'have had my hair cut again, and look nearly bald headed now'.* He told her that the tents had been struck (taken down) in the morning and three had been sent back to Northampton for the weekend but were due back at midnight. Later that evening George and '*another chap out of our tent went to Shoreham Church'*. It was '*like old times'* and '*made a distinction between Sunday and weekday'*. George was involved in the Church back in Northampton and as a child sang in the choir at St Michaels Church in Northampton.

On 23 October, George was on duty in the **Officers' Mess** between 6am and 10pm, which he told Nellie had a bonus of being '*in for some good food once more'.* He wrote that he was very busy and that he thought Nellie would '*laugh to see me struggling with the piles of greasy crocks'.* Nellie replied on 24 October, *'I should think it must seem as if you were maids of all work when you have to go in there'.*

The Battalion was presented on 6 October with a **drum and fife band**, consisting of one big drum, six guard drums, 12 bugles and 20 flutes. Mr Holloway, from the Northampton Independent, presented these to the Battalion on behalf of the town and county. The Northampton Independent was an illustrated weekly paper about Northampton published every Friday. On 21 October, George wrote that they had a '*voluntary parade this morning and went on a march and lost the band. Band is the instruments sent from Northampton. We have a bagpipe'.* Nellie replied on 22 October, '*Dear George. I got your PC this morning. Sorry to hear that you lost your Band'.*

Photograph of Northampton Regiment and Band

By kind permission of Shoreham by Sea

The **weather** was a feature of many of comments in the postcards during the autumn and winter especially as the weather in Shoreham worsened which led to the open grassland turning into a mud bath.

Shoreham Camp. By kind permission of Shoreham Fort Trustees.

On 23 October, George wrote '*the weather is nice today but underneath everything is like a duck pond. It is up to our boot tops in mud'.* On 24 October, the '*weather was fine but looks a bit cloudy at times'.* The rain continued on 25 October so '*it was too wet to go to church last night so we went to the Y.M.C.A. but was in bed about 8'.* On 27 October, George wrote that *'it rained hard again first thing this morning, and the mud is thicker. It is up to our knees in fact, more or less'.* They had struck camp on this day to air the ground under the tent, however, George wrote that in doing so, '*someone had sat on the bread bag so they had crumbs for tea'.* It must have caused a little laughter.

During October, soldiers were given weekend passes, regiment numbers and inoculated. George organised a **weekend pass.** He wrote to tell Nellie that he had asked on 4 and 5 October but he had still not heard if he had one on 8 October. On Friday 9 October, he wrote '*I shall come tomorrow*'. He left Shoreham at 2.20pm on Saturday 10 October and arrived in Northampton train station between 7 and 8pm. He was back in Shoreham by 14 October when he sent a quickly written postcard, *'Dear Nellie. Hope you like this. Weather wet. Have no time write more. With love George xxxxxx'.*

Soldiers usually travelled across the country by train. In 1914, it was said that there was a very extensive railway network in Britain. At the end of 1911, it had been estimated, there was 23,351 route miles which generated £127,199,570 with trains operating over 428,633,062 miles in total and accessing over 4,000 stations. Before the war, there were over 700,000 people working on the railways although when over 100,000 enlisted this led to a skill shortage in the running of the trains. Shockingly, at the time, this gap was filled by women who began to wear trousers to do the work.

A Royal Proclamation had acquired the railways for use in wartime and train companies revised timetables accordingly. However, this did not preclude those with money still taking a continental holiday by train, although printed timetables did state that holiday plans may be affected by the war, and perhaps it was better to plan a winter holiday rather than a summer one.

The railways were responsible though for ferrying troops and supplies to the front and bringing casualties back home. It is calculated that by 31 August 1914, the railways had transported nearly 120,000 servicemen to Southampton. During the next 21 days, a train full of troops reached the docks every 12 minutes over 14-hours each day. Within a month of war being declared, trains travelling to Southampton had transported: 118,454 service personnel, 37,649 horses, 314 guns, 5,221 vehicles, 1,807 bicycles and 4,557 tons of baggage.

Servicemen who were given home leave were given a rail ticket to travel. In addition, volunteers provided free refreshments at the stations from local donations.

George was told his **regiment number**, 14851 on 24 October and wrote to tell Nellie to write this after his name on future postcards.

George had his second set of **inoculations** in the afternoon of Wednesday 28 October. He went to the hospital and then all men were off work until the Saturday. According to Paget (1915) the 7th Battalion always held the highest record in number of men who were inoculated against typhoid, they had 100% of their officers and non- commissioned officers and 99.98% of men inoculated. Only one man refused in the whole Battalion (page 17-19).

Sir William Osler, Regius Profession of Medicine at Oxford University, had persuaded senior army officers about the necessity of vaccinating troops against typhoid, despite a conscientious objector law preventing compulsory vaccination which was backed by the Anti-Vaccination League. He won the argument though and nearly 97% of the troops were vaccinated. There were also vaccines against cholera, anthrax, rabies and plague but they were used randomly.

In Western Flanders and France, the war was taking its toll. Between 14 October and 22 November during the First Battle of Ypres thousands of lives were lost. The Allies and the Germans failed to achieve any significant breakthroughs along the front lines as they engaged in trench warfare. The British Expeditionary Force fought from Arras in France to Nieuport on the Belgian coast. They were more than 54,000 British soldiers killed.

November 1914

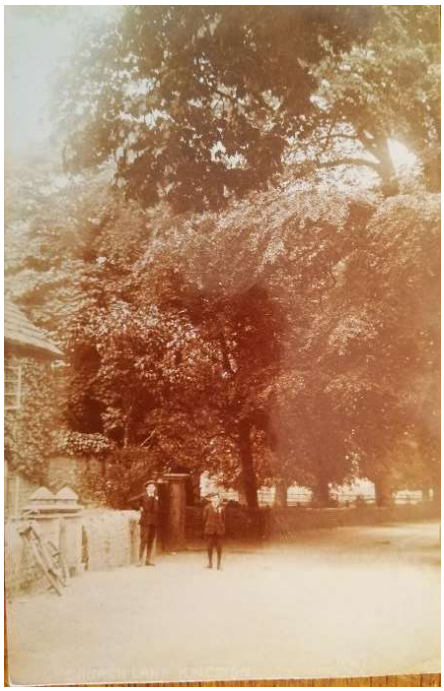
There are 21 cards dated November from George to Nellie. There is 1 card from Nellie to George.

George had a **weekend pass** at the end of October and returned to camp about 11am on Sunday 1 November, '*Arrived at London about 7.45 and took bus to Victoria, the Royal Horse Guards were on guard in Whitehall. We caught the train at Victoria at 8.35 and arrived Brighton at 9.45 so you will see we flew along. We spent about half an hour in the town and then caught train to Shoreham and got to camp about 11 o'clock'.*

The **weather and conditions** in the camp worsened during November. On 1 November, George wrote '*it is awfully muddy'.* On 2 November, they could not parade as it was raining again, '*the mud is above your boot tops again, it is wretched. But as we have a wood floor now, it is alright in the tent up to now'.*

It seems that the poor weather enticed a kitten into the tent as George wrote, '*we have got a kitten in the tent now, a black one',* however, the following day, it had gone, *'we have lost our kitten already, it ran away last night, and we have not seen anything of it since'*.

On 3 November, George wrote, '*the weather cleared up yesterday afternoon, so we went for a route march around Shoreham and Kingston'.*



Kingston, Church Lane.

Postcard dated 31 May 1915.

On 13 November, George wrote the weather was still '*rotten'* but on 15 November, *'it was fine but cold all day until about 9pm then it started to rain and poured all night'*. The ground was too wet to drill on 16 November although it was sunny but cold. It was such a cold night that their top blankets were wet when they woke on 17 November. George wrote '*it was a white frost, enough to freeze us on our first parade'.* George commented again on 19 November, *'it is getting awfully cold under canvas now'* and that there were rumours about billeting. The weather continued to be very cold, '*raw cold'* as George wrote on 23 November.

Paget (1915) wrote that the Battalion would have suffered very severely from cold if it had not been for the blankets generously sent from people in Northampton and Shoreham (page 15). In addition, the rain continued to reduce the camp site to mud. In the last card from November, dated 25 November, George wrote *'I don't know if we shall shift, but Lord Kitchener's address are that all troops must be out of canvas by 27th which is on Friday but our huts are not done yet'.* The huts at Shoreham had been started on 1 October and were due to be finished on 1 December but they were not ready for occupation until April 1915 (Paget, 1915, page 15).

Training continued and included **route marches, digging and filling in trenches**. On 3 November, George went '***skirmishing*** *over the hills in the morning'* and had a '***gymnasium parade'*** in the afternoon. On 4 November, they went over the Downs in the afternoon and then '*finished the afternoon by* ***filling in a trench which Mobb's company had dug out'***. A similar pattern took place on 5 November, they went marching over the Downs in the morning and then filled in trenches which had been dug out by another company in the afternoon. On 9 November, they went on a **route march** in the afternoon to Bramber and did not get back till dark. They did not do any night parades on 9, 10 and 11 November. On 10 November, they went '***entrenching*** *in a field on the side of a big hill'.* George wrote '*it very soon blistered my hands, but I think I shall make a good navvy after a bit'.* On 11 November, the morning was spent **attacking** on the Downs with the wind blowing them about followed by entrenching in the afternoon. The area above Buckingham Park and Slonk Hill were transformed to create a realistic battleground where trenches were dug and barbed wire laid before them.

Entrenchment was the fastest method to dig a trench. It allowed many soldiers equipped with their shovels and picks to dig a large portion of trench at one time. The soldiers stood in a line on the surface and dug. However, this meant that the diggers were exposed to all the dangers that the trenches were supposed to protect them against. So, entrenchment had to take place either in a rear area where diggers were not as vulnerable, or at night. British guidelines for trench construction stated that it would take 450 men approximately 6 hours to dig 275 yards (251m) of front-line trench (approximately 7 feet deep and 6 feet wide)(2.1m by 1.8m) at night. The trenches were built in long straight lines but the paths insides were laid out as zig zags to prevent firing along the whole length.

British non-commissioned ranks carried an 'entrenching tool' as part of their personal equipment. This was a metal head with a wooden handle. The head was a spade at one end and a pick at the other. The handle was called a helve.

Entrenching tools. Photographs from Shoreham Fort.

An alternative to entrenching was **sapping**, where a trench was extended by digging at the end face. It was safer but took more time as only one or two men could fit in the area to dig. The men hid in a small hole called a scrape and gradually extended it without exposing themselves.

King (1919) wrote that early trench - digging training did not always conform to the latest theories from France. They did not initially dig wide traverses with no straight lines. However, he added that all men learnt how to use the entrenching tool to enable them to dig sufficient cover which they needed in the Battle of Loos in September 1915 (page 8).

George had '***musketry training'*** on 13 November. Further rain meant they did not have church parade on 15 November. The morning of 17 November was spent digging trenches which '*soon warmed us up'* and then they had their first **bayonet** lesson.

Bayonet. Photograph from Shoreham Fort.

George spent the 18 November on an all-day '*route march through Bramber and Beeding and over the hills to Worthing, and through Lancing and Shoreham, coming back about 20 miles in all'*. They took food with them and had a hot dinner when they returned about 5pm. George wrote '*you can tell I feel a bit tired'.* Unfortunately, whatever they ate did not agree with them and about 100 men were excused duty on 19 November. A route march was carried out during the afternoon of 23 November through Brighton. The morning of 24 November was spent trench digging and then musketry in the afternoon.

Paget (1915) wrote that Company training started on 30 November and Battalion training commenced on 1 April 1915 (page 21). King (1919) added that the companies were well placed at Shoreham to access training facilities at Lancing College, the sea at Bungalow Town for bathing and the facilities of Brighton and Worthing for when off duty.

In amongst the hardships of training and living in wet and muddy conditions, George took walks on his own and made time to be on his own to write letters and postcards which **reflected how he felt**.

On 1 November after returning from a weekend in Northampton, he wrote *'it is a bit rough after being a gent for a couple of days. I feel a bit upset but shall soon settle down again'*. On 2 November, George did not go to church but took a walk to Portslade and was back in camp about 8pm, '*it was a splendid moonlight night, one of my favourites, just the sort for a walk around Hardingstone'.* Hardingstone is a village in Northampton near to where George's family lived. On 3 November he walked into Southwick on his own and collected another set of postcards.

During November, George continued to be on duty for different **responsibilities**. On 1 November, he was tent orderly and on 5 November, he was on picket duty. On 12 and 21 November, he was on orderly duty. He was on guard duty on 25 November.

The conditions in the camp continued to deteriorate because of the weather. George took a pragmatic view about the proposal for the men to move into billets because of the poor conditions in the camp, writing on 19 November, *'I don't expect that would be like living at home, but it would be better than this I should think'.* George also reflected on the rumours of the men going to France in January by writing on 16 November, '*I will wait until I get there before I believe it'*.

George wanted to **transfer** to the Life Guards. He wrote on 5 November to Nellie to say that he wanted to transfer and asked her '*Don't you think it would be better Old Dear'*. He also wrote to his mother about this idea because on November 9, he wrote to Nellie to say '*I have not heard from Mother yet so have received no advice'*.

It is assumed that he went to see Major Bagnall who commanded A Company. On 6 November, he wrote, *'I have been before the Major this morning to try for a transfer, but I can't get one, I feel wild over it, for it was the chance of a life time, The standard may never be lowered so much again. I can see I enlisted too soon'*.

Sadly, for George, he was not able to transfer. On 10 November, he wrote to Nellie to say he could not transfer because '*he could not get a commendation from George Bates as all he could ask were at the front with the regiment*.' It is assumed that George Bates was in the Life Guards and may have been able to recommend George to transfer. On 15 November, George was still thinking about transferring as he wrote that the '*postmistress told me that if I want a transfer, I must write an application direct to the Colonel'.* However, it seems that George did not write or if he did, that he was not successful, as he remained with the 7th Northants.

In September 2020, Helen Raymond, a grand-daughter of George, wrote in her memories about him, *he had originally wanted to be in the horse guards but to enter them you had to be 6ft and he was only 5ft 11in, if I remember correctly. He had been advised that if he waited until Christmas he would almost certainly get in as the height restriction would have been removed.* Sadly, it seems that in November 1914, the standards regarding height had not been removed so George did not get accepted to the Life Guards who worked with horses.

George wrote a poignant comment on the postcard dated 12 November to Nellie to reassure her that '*of course, you did not try to keep me at home, it would not have been right under the circs, do you think so?'.* In addition, a letter from Nellie to George which has not survived must have included some reference to the thoughts of George's sister Mabel, who was called May, about George being sent to the front sooner if he had transferred to the Life Guards because George wrote on 12 November that '*May is quite wrong in thinking that I should have to go to the front sooner if I transferred, because it would take longer to train for cavalry than foot'.* George wrote again in a pragmatic manner to Nellie on 13 November, '*of course, I talk of when I get back. I am not going to stop away for good if I can help it. We must look on the bright side you know'.*

Nellie went on a holiday in early November to Whitchurch before returning to Northampton to be confirmed on 17 November 1914. During November, two soldiers were billeted with Nellie's family. George wrote '*glad you have got two decent soldiers, I hope and know that they will find it warmer where they are going than it is at Shoreham'.*

December 1914

There are 5 cards dated December from George to Nellie. There is 1 card from Nellie to George. There are 2 cards from George to his mother.

There are no surviving postcards for the first three weeks of December. On 3 December, the Battalion moved into the unfinished huts because Buckingham Park had become a sea of mud that was between 6 inches to 3 foot deep (15 to 91cm). On 5 December, the Battalion moved into billets in Southwick with their headquarters being set up at the Old Green School (Paget, 1915, page 17).

Southwick was described as being prettily situated around a village green which was used for parades. It is a seaside town about four miles west of Brighton.

Southwick, The Green.

Postcard dated 26 October 1914.

Southwick, Looking East.

Postcard dated 29 December 1914.

Few houses in the village of Southwick refused to supply a room to the men. Each company was allocated one end of the village as its billeting area and usually they were billeted in one or two streets. They could then turn out on parade at very short notice (King, 1919, page 7). The men and officers ate at their billets which enabled them to get to know each other in their company and contributed to the development of each company (King, 1919, page 7-8). The Orderly Officer slept at the village school in case the Battalion received any urgent orders.

According to King (1919), Sunday mornings were spent in church parades at the local church and Saturday morning were spent in company or battalion route marches through Portslade to Brighton and back along the sea front. The marches were led by the band and attracted good crowds which had an effect on local recruitment.

George was billeted in a house called **Brambledene, 12 Roman Crescent in Southwick**. He sent a photo postcard to Nellie of the house in December 1914.

Postcard dated 24 December 1914.

No date on postcard. Brambledene is the last house on the right-hand side of the road.

On 10 July 2020, Gary Baines, Chairman of Shoreham Fort, provided this photograph of 12 Roman Crescent, Shoreham.

During the time the Battalion was under canvas from 12 September to 5 December, according to Paget (1915), there were only two cases of desertion and there were never more than four men in hospital at one time. Paget (1915) wrote '*as the autumn of 1914 was the wettest on record, and no floorboards were issued till December, this small amount of illness speaks well for the physique and health of the Battalion'* (page 21). In the same time period, there were only 5 cases of drunkenness, four discharges owing to misconduct and no court martial or civil conviction against any member. George wrote on November 23 that *'we have two men with weak hearts in the tent, so I expect they will go home for good'.*

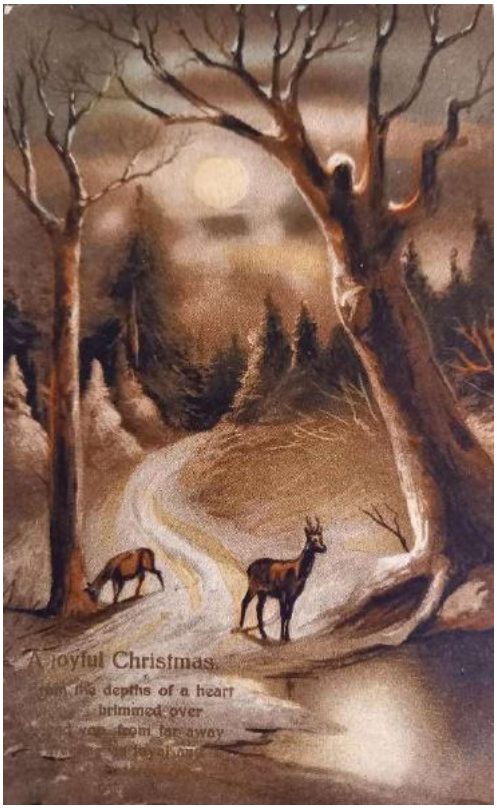
A photograph was taken on 12 December 1914. George wrote to his mother on 26 December, *'Thought you might like one of these. Old Roebuck put his head in my way, but I can be seen at little'.*

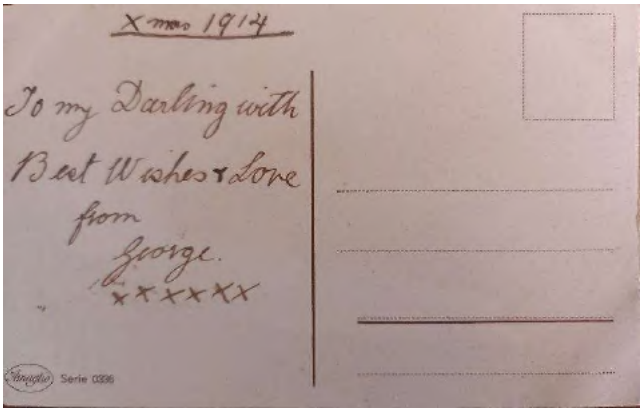
George is 6th from the right at the back. There was an Edward Roe in A Company, 15121.

George had a weekend pass just before Christmas. He arrived back in Shoreham at 12.45pm on 22 December 1914.

J.G. Ripley was a photographer and picture framer who lived in Southwick. He published many real photographs of Southwick and Shoreham which are numbered. A YouTube video shows some of his photographs . https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LcePmSYfZY

George sent Nellie his best wishes on 24 December in a Christmas postcard. As there is no stamp or address, it is assumed it was sent inside an envelope with a letter which has not survived.





George went to church on 25 December in the morning and was off duty on 26 December. George wrote to his mother on 26 December, '*we had a decent time yesterday, but should have liked to have been at home'.* On 29 December, George was back on duty and there was a walk to Brighton. There was going to be a 7th Northants Regimental Christmas card produced but apparently these '*fell through'.* The last card of 1914 is dated 31 December and George wrote '*the weather is very bad down here now, it's wet this morning and we cannot parade'.*

On 21 December, there was the first German aid raid on Britain. An aeroplane dropped bombs in the sea near to Dover. The second German air raid dropped bombs onto the ground near to Dover.

In France, along the Western Front, there were unofficial and localised truces on Christmas Day.

2. TRAINING in ENGLAND - 1915 Postcards

George moved to Southwick until May 1915 before moving into a billet in Reigate in May 1915 and a billet in Horsham. He moved into the ***Inkerman Barracks*** *in July 1915.*

There are 32 postcards sent from George to Nellie. There is one postcard sent from Nellie to George. There are individual postcards sent to George from Lilian, his sister, from a friend Martha, possibly from Brambledene and from Tom, the brother of Nellie.

January

There are 11 cards dated January from George to Nellie. There no cards from Nellie to George. There is 1 card from Lilian to George.

George wrote on 3 January 1915 that the battalion was '*shifting tomorrow, Thursday, to the Gsararies, Kingston'*. Kingston by Sea is north of Southwick. However, George told Nellie that the postcards were still to be addressed to Brambledene. as '*we may be back here again soon, at any rate, we all hope so'*. It is not clear where the men were housed nor for how long in Kingston. The regiment remained in Southwick until they moved back into Shoreham Camp in April.

George sent 7 postcards showing photographs of Southwick and 2 of Kingston in January.

Postcard dated

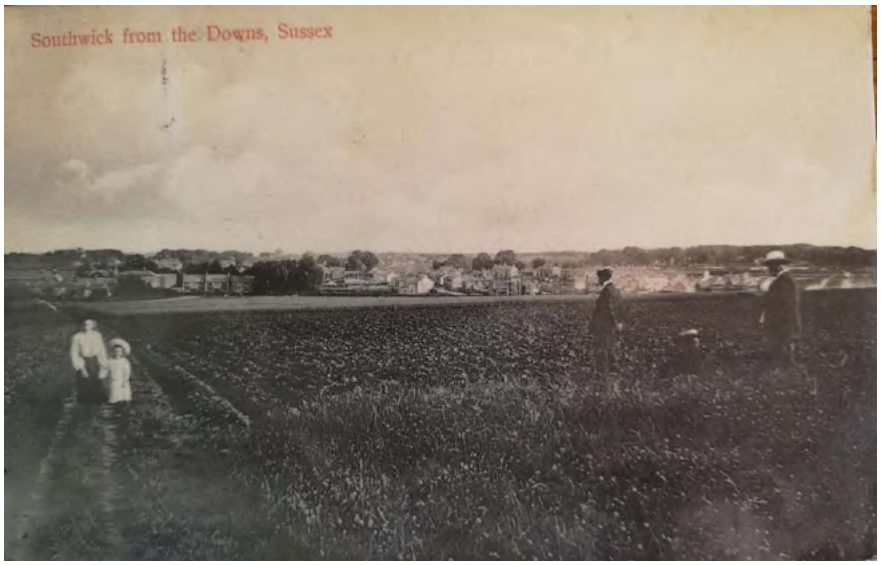
10 January 1915.

Training continued in Southwick. The first issue of khaki uniforms was on 5 January 1915 and 500 C.L.L.E. rifles were provided on 19 January. George wrote on 10 January, '*our field training should last five weeks'* and on 12 January, '*it should start next week'*. George went skirmishing over the Downs on the morning of 14 January which was '*quite a change to get up there again but very cold'.*

Southwick from the Downs.

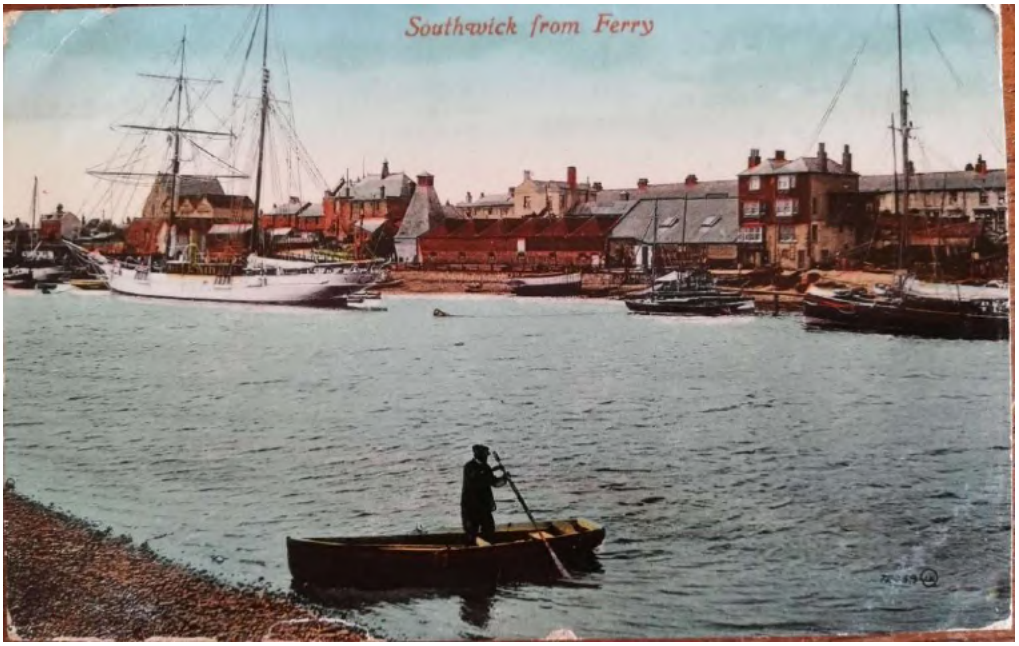
Postcard dated

19 January 1915.



In the afternoon of 18 January, George wrote '*we had some rare sport yesterday, charging over walls nearly as high as myself*'. In the morning of 19 January, they had firing training again. There was no parade on 21 January due to the wet weather. On 26 January, they spent the morning on the range on the beach. George also learnt how to fire inside a **miniature range.**

His postcard dated 27 January 1915 identified the building in Southwick which housed the miniature range. '*This picture shows the canal. That is the back of the Town Hall which appears directly above the stern of the yacht. Next to it, you will a long low, red roofed building. This is one of our miniature ranges'.*



Southwick. Postcard dated 27 January 1915.

The **weather** continued to be unsettled during January and comments about it featured in most of the postcards. Three postcards in January did not refer to the weather but the other eight contained the following comments.

January	Description of the weather
3	Weather has been alright today
6	It was wet yesterday. Much better today
10	Lovely morning
12	Weather is much better here now
14	Very cold on the Downs
19	Weather had taken a turn for the better
21	Wet so no parade
26	Lovely day, on the beach firing

George tried to get a **weekend pass** during January. On 13 January, he wrote *'I think I shall be able to come soon if we don't get shifted'.* He wrote similarly on 19 January, '*I shall try to come and see you again soon, if possible'.* He and some of the others did come back to Northampton on 30 January but they were back in Southwick on 1 February. The men who returned went to a rugby match at Franklin Gardens, presumably to march and support local recruitment. George wrote 'I *think that is why they are allowing the trip'* on the Saturday afternoon.

Franklin Gardens are the home grounds for the Northampton Saints Rugby Team. They were originally known as Melbourne Gardens and created by John Collier. John Franklin brought them in 1886 and sold them for £17,000 to the Northampton Brewery Company in 1888. The Gardens were described as the 'Champs Elysees of Northampton' and they had running tracks, a cricket ground, a lake and zoological gardens. The Saints moved into the grounds in the late 1880s and a new rugby stand was built in 1896/7. They were the home grounds of Mobbs' Own men and it is imagined that the regiment would have been warmly welcomed. It is poignant to think that George's son, Kenneth George, would have his wedding reception at Franklin Gardens forty years after George attended a rugby match there with his regiment.

Nellie must have sent postcards and letters during January which George responded to in his postcards but none have survived. During January, Nellie, her mother and sister were ill. George wrote on 12 January, '*sorry to hear your Mother is having to keep to her bed'* and '*hope Eve is better'*. Eveline was in hospital in April 1913 in the Knightley Ward, General Hospital, Northampton and sadly died on 4 January 1928 aged 27 from a brain tumour. Nellie's mother was Alice Mary Oughton, nee Brooks. She had worked as a shoe machinist from the age of 13 in Northampton which was internationally known for shoemaking.

On 19 January 1915, Germany attacked England for the first time around the Norfolk coast using two Zeppelin airships (L3 and L4) armed with 24 bombs.

February

There are 8 postcards dated February from George to Nellie. There are no other postcards.

Infantry training for the men in the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment continued during February. However, the comments in the postcards sent by George do not seem to focus on describing the different types of activities in the same way as they had in the postcards during the months of September to December 1914. Maybe they had become more familiar and seemed less important to describe to Nellie or there was less intensity in their training because of the poor weather. On February 2 after the men, including George, returned from Franklin Gardens, Northampton, it was another wet day and they could not parade so they went out for a march around Hove in the afternoon. George wrote '*got caught up in a storm'.* Similarly, on 9 February, George wrote '*we have not been on parade much today as it has been wet again'.* It rained again all day on 17 February so they had the day off. On 18 February, they went on a march to Hove. New recruits joined the regiment during February and on 11 February, they had their inoculations. George wrote '*I wouldn't mind another dose'* if it would have allowed him to have the weekend off.

George expressed **how he felt** about being away from home. On 2 February, after the visit to Franklin Gardens, he wrote, '*I am settling down to it a bit again, but I will try and come home again soon'.* On 4 February, the order to shift back into Shoreham camp was cancelled. George wrote '*we are not to be shifted after all at present. The order was cancelled at 12 today and we were supposed to go at 2pm. We are all very much delighted, you can bet'.* On 8 February, he wrote, '*I hope we shall get a move on. I am a bit fed up with it down here, all of us are'.* George was ill for next two days and wrote on 11 February, '*have been under the doctor and off parade for two days, but hope to be out tomorrow for the General's inspection'.*

Nellie sent newspapers and presents to George according to the postcard comments. On 9 February, George thanked Nellie for the 'black jack' which he had eaten. I remember these sweets from my childhood, they were chewy, tasted of aniseed and made your mouth go black. Nellie told George about her visit to the theatre to watch a musical. He wrote back '*I should have liked to have been there'.* It is presumed that the theatre was the Royal Theatre, Northampton which opened in 1884 and later became the Royal and Derngate Theatre in 2006. Between 1884 and 1927 its most popular productions included George Edwardes musical comedies, operas and melodramas.

March

There are 3 postcards dated March from George to Nellie. There are no other postcards.

The Battalion was still billeted in Southwick as the camp was being finalised. On 7 March, George wrote, '*it is six months today since enlisted'* and on 8 March, '*we have finished field training now'*. On 24 March, he wrote, '*from what I can hear we shall soon be up at the camp again, but I trust that is not true'.* The weather continued to be unsettled as George wrote on 8 March, '*rather funny weather down here now, sun and snow'.* The idea of returning to the huts on a campsite was not necessarily welcomed.

As well as training, the men were also involved in **competitions**. Paget (1915) wrote that although the Battalion had only two days' notice, they came third in the cross country run of the 24th Division on 1 March 1915. A fortnight later, they won another cross country run which had been open to all troops in Sussex.

April

There is one card dated April from George to Nellie and there is one card from Nellie to George.

The training to date had been Company training according to Paget (1915), however, from 1 April 1915 it moved into Battalion training.

The Battalion left Southwick on 10 April and moved into No. 6 Hutment, North Camp, Shoreham. George wrote on 9 April, '*please excuse PC this time. I intended to write but we are all upside down, as we shift into the camp tomorrow'.*

Arial view of the huts.

The photograph below was taken at Shoreham Camp outside one of the new huts. The wooden huts accommodated 20 men each and included a Corporal who was in charge of the hut.

George is on the second row, seated, second from the left. George has one chevron on his arm. He is a Lance Corporal. This was a promotion and it would have bought greater pay and responsibility. A private was an ordinary soldier who may be appointed to Lance-Corporal. This was the lowest rank of a non-commissioned officer and they usually served as second in command of a section or small group of men. They made sure the men carried out their duties such as polishing their boots and shaving.

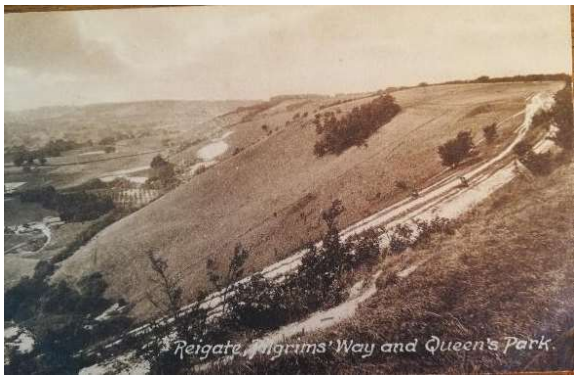
There are 52 men in the photograph with others looking on from the hut windows. It is not known why the men in the photograph were chosen as there appear to be a range of different ranks. There are two men in shirt and tie in the middle of the second row from the front. It may be that this is A Company.

During April, further equipment was issued. The pack mules arrived on 21 April and the leather equipment for them arrived between 23 and 27 April. The latest service rifles, however, were issued only six weeks before the departure to France (King, 1919, page 10).

May

There are 3 cards dated May from George to Nellie. There are no other cards.

Less than a month after returning to the huts at Shoreham Camp, the 7th Northants were ordered to move to **Reigate** to work on the London defences that were being constructed in that area. The Battalion marched to Reigate where A and B Companies were billeted and C and D Companies were billeted in Redhill.



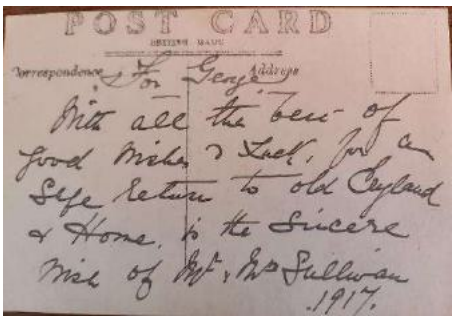
Reigate.

Postcard dated 2 May 1915.

George was **billeted** at 35 Albion Road, Reigate, Surrey with Mr Charles Sullivan, Mrs Gertrude Sullivan and their daughter Christine. He arrived on 1 May with the advance party by train, '*the regiment will march and arrive on Tuesday'.*

Reigate was described as '*a lovely place, very pretty'.* George wrote on 2 May that '*we have a good billet but may have to shift when the regiment gets here'.*

The **Sullivan family** sent Christmas cards and birthday cards to George and Nellie throughout and after the war. These have been collated into a separate folder.



Postcard photograph of Mr and Mrs Sullivan and Christine, 1917.

Mr Sullivan died in January 1921, aged 46, after a fall from his bicycle. He had been hanging onto the back of a lorry when the lorry turned over and threw him off fracturing his skull. The inquest was reported in the Surrey Mirror, 14 January 1921. Mrs Gertrude Sullivan wrote to Nellie to tell her of the accident. Sadly, Mrs Sullivan died a year later from the shock of this accident.

The trenches defending London were situated on the reverse slope of the hill overlooking Reigate. There was said to be a long march up and down after work. The Battalion were responsible for digging the trenches and then guarding them. The Battalion dug and guarded them for a fortnight and then they were ordered back to Shoreham (King, 1919, page 11).

Trenches at Reigate.

(Paget,1915, page 20).

Paget (1915) wrote that they left Reigate by route march on 19 May. Apparently on the way a '*local nut*' who ought to have joined the army a long time ago, jeered at the soldiers and so he was taught a lesson by means of a dunking in a full water butt which stood conveniently nearby (page 23).

Back at Shoreham Camp on 24 May, George wrote to Nellie to thank her for the 'Independent' weekly paper which she had sent him, '*it came just right as I was on guard and wanted something to read'.* He added, '*we have had rather a slack time since we came back, but expect to start as usual tomorrow'.*

The Bungalows,
Shoreham by Sea.

Postcard dated

24 May 1915.

June

There are 2 cards dated June from George to Nellie. There are no other cards.

George organised a weekend pass for 5 June. He wrote on 4 June, '*Just to tell you that I have got a pass from Sat till Monday. We have a route march in the morning so perhaps shall be a bit later starting than I was last time, but with luck I may get off early'.*

The Battalion continued training throughout June, however, there are no more postcards until 29 June 1915.

The Battalion was ordered to leave Shoreham and join the rest of the 24th Division, the Aldershot Command, on 21 June but the move was postponed until 29 June. The move enabled them to use the Aldershot ranges for musketry practices because the ranges which had been constructed in Shoreham had been found to be unsafe and were condemned.

The march was via Horsham and Guildford to Pirbright and Woking, a journey of 51 miles. On 29 June, George wrote '*by this you will see we have made a start. It has been a rather wet day, and we got a bit wet, but we arrived here between 3 and 4 this afternoon and don't feel much the worse for it. We have marched about 19 miles today and it will be about the same distance from here to Guildford, where we are due tomorrow. We are billeted in a brewery here, but of course there is nothing to drink but water there now'.*

Although George wrote that he didn't feel much the worse for the long march, according to Paget (1915), four men had to go into the ambulance during the march on the first day and the second day was very tiring due to the heat. The march up Guildford Hill after 21 miles of walking was still at the regimental march of 128 steps to the minutes. According to Paget (1915), a large crowd came out to see them as they looked so impressive (page 24) and that they had left Shoreham 904 strong and marched into Inkerman Barracks with 902 men (page 25).

The 7th Battalion, Northants and 9th Battalion, Royal Sussex went into the **Inkerman Barracks** in Woking and the other two Battalions went into the Pirbright Camp (Paget, 1915, page 24).

Parading at Inkerman Barracks.

(Paget, 1915, page 6).

July

There are 3 cards dated May from George to Nellie. There is one card from Martha to George, an unknown friend, and one card from Ada, the elder sister of Nellie.

The Battalion was inspected with its first line of transport on 8 July by General Sir F. Howard K.C.B., Inspector of Infantry (Paget, 1915, page 25). The Battalion commenced a general musketry course on 15 July. According to V. M. Lunnon (Warner, 2009, page 211) few men actually fired more than 15 to 20 rounds before they went into battle. George wrote on 17 July that he had got back late from firing from the range and had been unable to write due to tiredness. The Battalion had been issued with C.L.E. and D.P. Lee-Enfield rifles but on 8 and 10 July, these were replaced with the short Lee-Enfield. They were provided with the long bayonet on 24 July (Paget, 1915, page 25).

George sent a postcard to Nellie on 14 July with a photo of St Johns, '*which is only a few minutes' walk from the Barracks, but it is a very small place but rather nice'.*

On 17 July, he sent a postcard of the Inkerman Barracks, '*This is view of the front of the Barracks. You will notice the wing that juts out right at the far end, well that is my abode, the second window from the right on the first floor'.*

Inkerman Barracks, Woking.

Postcard dated 17 July 1915.

On 25 July, George had an interesting afternoon. He and five other men were invited to tea by a gentleman. He wrote, '*so we have a stroke of luck sometimes you see'.* I wonder who it was and why they were invited. He then added '*I am quite alright myself. Have spoken to the Sergeant about a pass'.*

Other troops were beginning to be posted to France and George noted that the 4th and 6th Battalions were going soon. Preparations were being made to move to France.

August

There is one card dated August from George to Nellie. There is one card to George from Tom, brother of Nellie, and one from Christine in Reigate.

On 12 August, the 24th Division was reviewed by Field Marshall, Earl Kitchener, Secretary of State for War who expressed himself highly satisfied with all he saw (Paget, (1915), page 26).

Paget (1915) wrote that the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment went to Chobham Common on Monday 16 August until Tuesday 24 August to take part in a trench warfare scheme (page 26). During the First World War, trenching exercises were held in **Chobham Common** in August 1915 in advance of Kitchener's Third Army's (K3) mobilisation in France. Chobham Common was 17 miles from Aldershot where the 24th Division had been posted during 19 to 23 July. The trench warfare scheme included TEWTS (tactical exercises without troops) as well as lectures (Warner, 2009, page 212).

Paget (1915) states the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment was inspected in their trenches by their Majesties the King and Queen and H.R.H. Princess Mary on Thursday 19 August 1915. The Wartime Memories Project website states Lord Kitchener inspected the 24th Division at Chobham ranges on Thursday 19 August and the King inspected them on Friday 20 August 1915. These dates do not match, however, they may differ in relation to inspecting the 24th Division rather than the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment.

There is no postcard mentioning the visit by the King or Lord Kitchener. George arranged to have a final weekend pass in late August and he arrived back at Inkerman Barracks on Monday 23 August. He wrote in his postcard '*all four-day leave is cut to two and they sent lots home yesterday'.* It is assumed therefore that he returned home on Friday 20 August. He added *'feel as usually do after a holiday but hope to come again soon'.* According to George, he was going to Chobham Common the following week because he wrote on 23 August, '*Don't know when I shall be able to write as we are going to Chobham Common for 4 days, but shall be pleased to hear from you, address to Barracks and that will find me alright'.* A postcard dated 24 August from Christine to George confirmed that he had been home on final leave before being shipped out to France and not yet been to Chobham Common, '*Thanks so much for the letter, pleased to know you have been able to get home, but sorry it is a final leave. I am wondering if you will come through Reigate by train, let us know when you are on the move'.* It may be that George had already been to Chobham Common the week before his leave and that they did not go back again as he had thought. There is a difference in the dates though.

The 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment received their orders to proceed to **France** on 21 August 1915 and they left on 28 August 1915.

Paget (1915) listed the men in each company as of 17 August 1915. George is listed in A Company as a Lance Corporal.

Major C Bagnall who was the Officer in Charge of A Company was found by a Medical Board to be only fit for home service and was given a good send-off before their departure according to King (1919, page 15).

7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment – August 17 1915

Extract for A Company (Paget, 1915, page 35)

7th (SERVICE) BATTALION NORTHAMPTONSHIRE REGT.

ROLL OF THE ABOVE BATTALION BY COMPANIES ON 17th AUGUST, 1915.

A COMPANY.

Regtl. No.	Rank and Name.
3/11057	R.Q.M.S. Cole, F.
3/11048	C.S.M. Waite, Wm.
14931	C.Q.M.S. Martin, W. E.
3/11025	Sgt. Billingham, T.
3/11012	,, Love, C. R.
15912	,, Orton, H.
15929	,, Smart, W. A.
17343	,, Spring, W.
15146	,, Stevens, J.
3/10978	,, Nunney, C. J.
3/10997	,, Bailey, J.
15378	,, Chapman, B.
15177	L.-Sgt. Dickins, H. B.
3/10684	,, Bowell, H. J.
3/10973	,, Lakey, Wm.
13599	,, Martlew.
15859	Cpl. Beesley, G. W.
3/10935	,, Warren, Wm.
14195	,, Kock, G. H.
14160	,, Jones, H. R.
20051	,, Freeman, R.
20049	,, Arnitt, J. C.
20047	,, Spence, A. H.
20050	,, Chadwick, J.
20048	,, Afford, Wm. H.
3/10971	,, Warren, E.
15015	L.-Cpl. Abbott, W. J.
15290	,, Anderson, T.
14165	,, Beaumont, J. J.
14978	,, Godfrey, P. C.
14170	,, Hog, A. C.
14182	,, Nash, R.
15924	,, Rogers, A.
14205	,, Thomas, A. H.
14831	,, Slark, C. H.
13600	,, Harod, W.
14777	,, Faulkner, C. S.
15858	,, Beadsworth, W. G.
15360	,, Orpwood, S.

Regtl. No.	Rank and Name.
15870	L.-Cpl. Broadbridge, C. E
15185	,, Barber, F. S.
15863	,, Bond, A.
15216	,, Redley, Wm.
15353	,, Rogers, W. J. A.
17261	,, Nicholas, W. J.
15364	,, Meadows, T. M.
16393	,, Garfield, E. R.
14950	,, Hooper, W. R.
14984	,, Clift, J. N.
14851	,, Batchelor, G. H.
15004	,, Bazeley, H.
17193	Pte. Andrews, W. J.
17063	,, Ayres, F.
17056	,, Ambridge, W.
16982	,, Abbott, A.
14959	,, Ashton, H.
15399	,, Barnett, E.
14852	,, Barnett, H. S.
15857	,, Battison, H.
15875	,, Beasley, Geo.
15384	,, Bell, J. R.
15862	,, Blakeman, H.
15116	,, Brice, J.
15281	,, Briggs, P.
15865	,, Britchford, W. G.
15381	,, Brown, F. R.
15869	,, Brown, Jos.
15867	,, Brown, J. T.
14046	,, Bull, B.
14792	,, Butcher, F.
14648	,, Bull, J. R.
17062	,, Bugby, A.
17077	,, Barttlett, H. S.
17133	,, Brinsley, J.
17136	,, Botterill, H.
17383	,, Bugby, Geo. W.
17610	,, Barratt, T. A.
18204	,, Brightman, J.

3. FRANCE – active service – 1915 no postcards

George was in the **7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment which was part of the 73rd Brigade in the 24th Division and 9th Division.** The Battalion left for France and landed at **Boulogne on 2 September 1915.**

September and October

There are no postcards dated September or October from George to Nellie.

King (1919) provides a description of the Battalion's movements on leaving England. The Battalion travelled from Folkestone to Boulogne and arrived in the early morning of 2 September. They had a few hours rest at a camp outside the town before marching to Crequey for A and B Companies and Torey for C and D Companies. Both small villages were about four miles from Fruges and the Battalion were the first British troops to be billeted there. They stayed for three weeks. On 21 September, the Battalion received their orders and marched towards the direction of the firing. They had practised the process of getting on and off buses expecting to be bussed to the battle front but instead they had to walk. This march took 4 days and was undertaken in secrecy. They travelled at night to Laires, then L'Ecleme and then Beuvry which was two miles south west of Bethune hiding during daylight hours. On 25 September at 11.15am, they received the orders to march to Vermelles where they hid amongst the ruins. At night time, they left Vermelles to join the 9th (Scottish) Division to which the 73rd Infantry Brigade had been allocated. The men eventually moved into the Hohenzollern Redoubt area, a strong point of the German 6th Army.

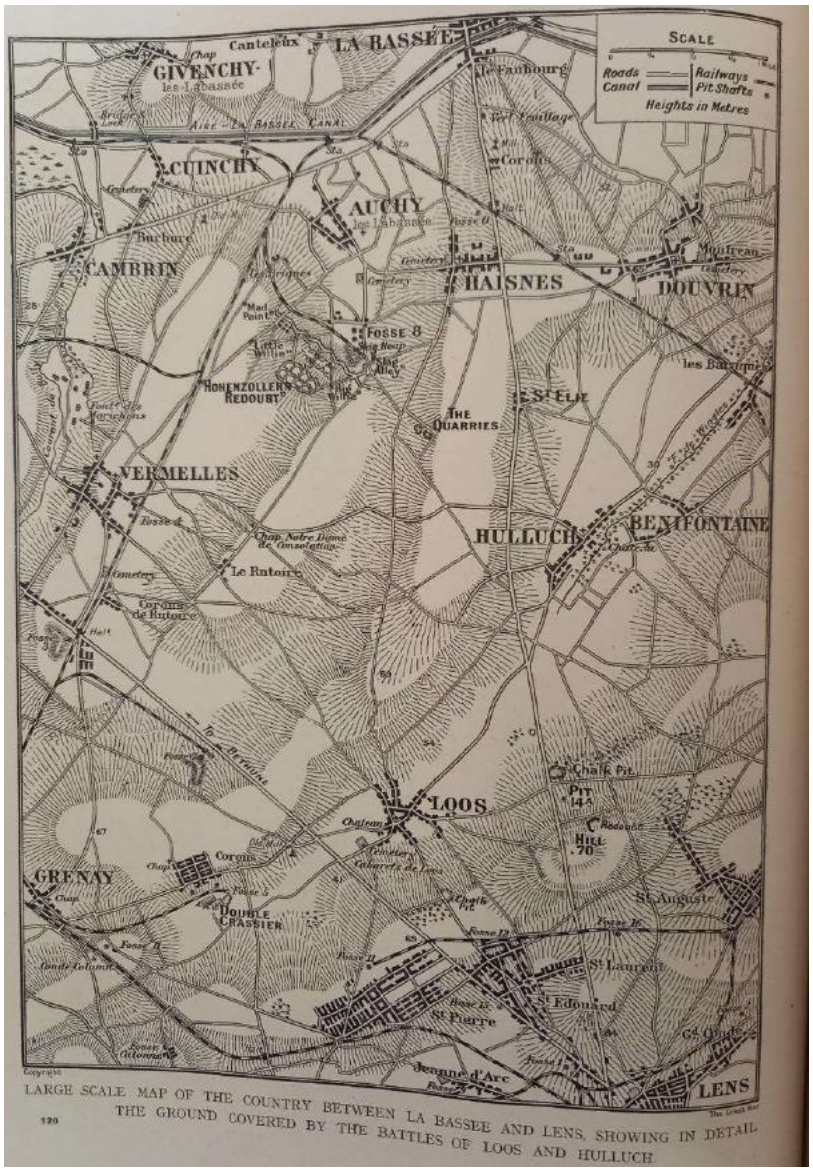
The **Battle of the Loos** took place between **25 September 1915 to 8 October 1915** in Loos, France. The Loos area was a coal mining region with many mines and slag heaps. The French and British had tried to break through the German defences in Artois and Champagne to restore a war of movement. However, their attacks were contained by the German armies.

The Battle of Loos was described as 'The Big Push'. The battle was the biggest British attack of 1915 and the first time that the British used poison gas. It was the first mass engagement of the New Army Units. Sadly, it is also remembered as a failure and embarrassment according to memories written by others.

The 24th Division was meant to be in reserve as the men were raw recruits. However, the men who had marched to the front for four days, with little food and sleep, were sent into battle tired and unexperienced. Their orders were to follow a Scottish officer to their appointed positions. The men in the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment took over trenches from the Scottish Division and faced two days of counter attacks by the Germans. During the battle, Major Mobbs was wounded but remained at duty and then took over command on 25 September when Lt. Colonel Parkin was killed.

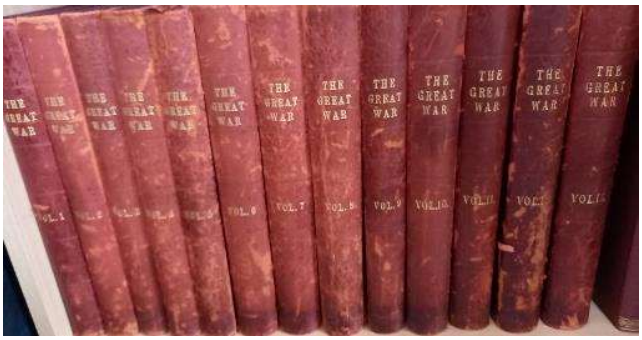
The British casualties at Loos were about twice as high as German losses with more than 61,000 casualties and 7,766 deaths. The New Army units which had been rushed into a battle area for the first time after landing in France were devasted. In the 7th (Service) Battalion, there were 377 soldiers, of whom 11 were officers, who died. The failure of the battle led to the resignation of Field Marshal Sir John French. He was replaced by General Sir Douglas Haig. Sadly, it has been written, that many mistakes made were not learned and they were repeated in the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916.

1915 Battle of Loos. Vermelles is shown on the left where the 7th Northants hid in the ruins before moving towards the Hohenzollern Redoubt.



The Great War, Volume 5, page 120.

The Great War is a set of 13 volumes printed between 1914 and 1919. It was bound in red leather after the war by George. Sadly it has red rot now.



4. ENGLAND – return with trench foot - 1915 postcards

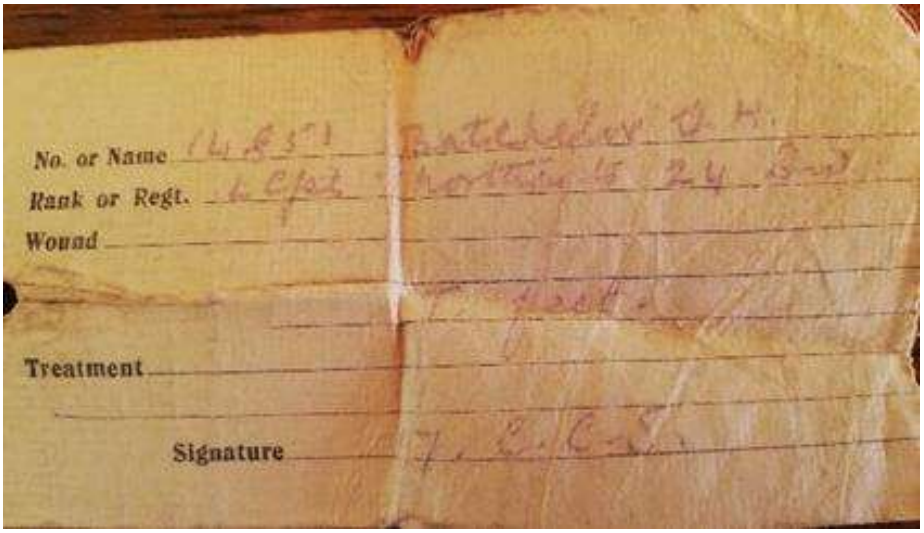
*George returned to England after the Battle of Loos with trench foot and went to a **hospital in London**.*

November and December

There are no postcards dated November or December from George to Nell. There are three postcards addressed to George in hospital in London. There is one postcard from Ada, Nellie's sister to Nellie. There are two postcards from Mrs Sullivan to Nellie dated 11 November 1915.

At some point after the Battle of Loos, the experience of continually being in the trenches which were full of water led to George being sent back to England with **trench foot**. Any soldier who was injured in the field would be treated firstly at a Regimental Aid Post in the trenches by the Battalion Medical Officer and his orderlies and stretcher bearers, then moved to an Advanced Dressing Station close to the front line manned by members of a Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). If further treatment was needed, a solider would be moved to a **Casualty Clearing Station**, a tented camp, behind the lines and then if required moved to one of the base hospitals usually by train. The seriously wounded were taken back to Britain by Hospital Ship and onto the relevant hospital for further treatment. With the wide range of serious injuries, hospitals began to specialise in certain types of injury in order to provide the best treatment, with soldiers being sent by train to the relevant hospital. This is why many of the wounded were sent to hospitals many miles from their homes.

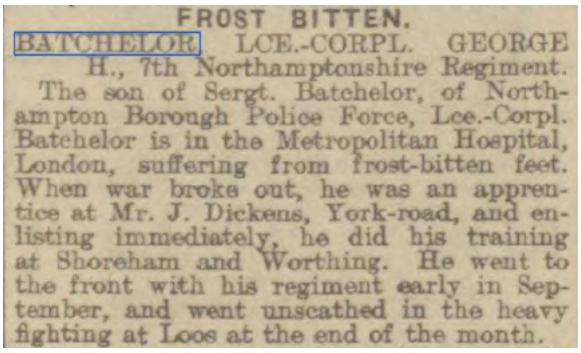
A label was found in a small envelope in February 2020. It stated that Lance Corporal Batchelor G.H. had T feet. (trench feet) and had been treated at 7 C.C.S. **Casualty Clearing Station 7 was at Merville** about 10 miles north of Bethune and 20 miles south of Ypres. It opened in December 1914 and moved to different locations during the war and ended up at Ligny St Flochel.



Label for Lance Corporal G.H. Batchelor – T. feet. 7 C.C.S.

I found a newspaper article in May 2020 using the British Newspaper Archives website about George Batchelor being hospitalised in December 1916 with frost bitten feet. This confirmed that George had been in hospital and at the Battle of Loos.

The WW1 records state he was admitted on 26/11/1915 with trench feet. He was discharged on 07/01/1916 after 10 days. **The Northampton Chronicle and Echo** reported on 03/12/1915 that George was in hospital with frost bitten feet.



FROST BITTEN.

BATCHELOR, LCE.-CORPL. GEORGE H., 7th Northamptonshire Regiment. The son of Sergt. Batchelor, of Northampton Borough Police Force, Lce.-Corpl. Batchelor is in the Metropolitan Hospital, London, suffering from frost-bitten feet. When war broke out, he was an apprentice at Mr. J. Dickens, York-road, and enlisting immediately, he did his training at Shoreham and Worthing. He went to the front with his regiment early in September, and went unscathed in the heavy fighting at Loos at the end of the month.

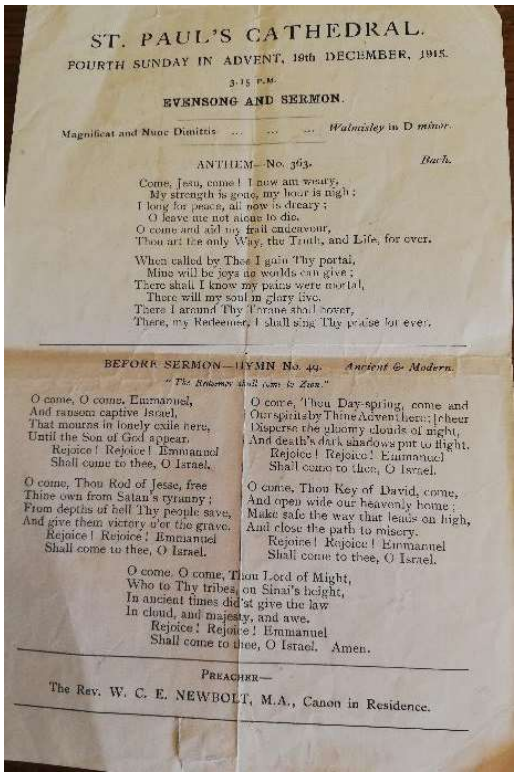
https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002129/19151203/023/0003

According to Private Frank James in the published recollections of his experiences in the 1st Northamptonshire regiment (2013), the two most common complaints were trench fever, caused by body lice, and trench foot, caused by feet being immersed in water for a long time. He wrote that the latter was 'frowned upon by the hierarchy, who considered it an offence and a sign of malingering' (page 44). It does not seem fair now that such perceptions were held.

George was sent back to England and admitted to the **Metropolitan Hospital, Enfield Road, London**. There are three postcards addressed to Lance Corporal George Batchelor at B2 Ward, Top Floor, Military Section, Metropolitan Hospital, Enfield Road, De Beauvois South, London. Two of the postcards were sent from Christine (dated 5 and 11 December) and one from K. S. (dated 5 December and assumed to be K. Sullivan who is Mrs Gertrude/Gertie Sullivan). These are from Reigate and the family where he billeted in May 1915. There is another postcard from Ada, the elder sister of Nellie, to Nellie (dated 30 November) in which she writes '*Dear Nell. I was very sorry to hear about George. I do hope it is not very serious. Tell Mother If they go to London on Wednesday and he can have anything, not to forget me, I will give anything towards it. I hope they will come back by a train so they are back before I come away. One thing Nell, he is in England, that is something to be thankful for'*.

Mrs Sullivan wrote two postcards to Nellie on 11 November concerned that she had not heard from George after writing to him three times. '*We cannot make out not hearing from him for so long. I have now written 3 times and no answer. Do trust all is well. Have you heard any news. Should be pleased to know'.* There must have been such relief to hear that George was in England.

During his recovery in London, George attended an Evensong and Sermon on 19 December 1915 at 3.15pm in St Pauls, London. The Collection went towards the Metropolitan Relief Fund. He also attended a concert held on 25 December 1915 in the Hospital organised by Mr and Mrs John Tucker. George must have sent Nellie the copy of the programme and a photograph of the singers. These papers were found in a box of various birthday cards and other documents in June 2020.



ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT, 19th DECEMBER, 1915.

3.15 P.M.

EVENSONG AND SERMON.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis ... ... *Walmisley* in D *minor*.

ANTHEM—No. 363. *Bach.*

Come, Jesu, come! I now am weary,
My strength is gone, my hour is nigh;
I long for peace, all now is dreary;
O leave me not alone to die.
O come and aid my frail endeavour,
Thou art the only Way, the Truth, and Life, for ever.

When called by Thee I gain Thy portal,
Mine will be joys no worlds can give;
There shall I know my pains were mortal,
There will my soul in glory live.
There I around Thy Throne shall hover,
There, my Redeemer, I shall sing Thy praise for ever.

BEFORE SERMON—HYMN No. 44. *Ancient & Modern.*

"The Redeemer shall come to Zion."

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

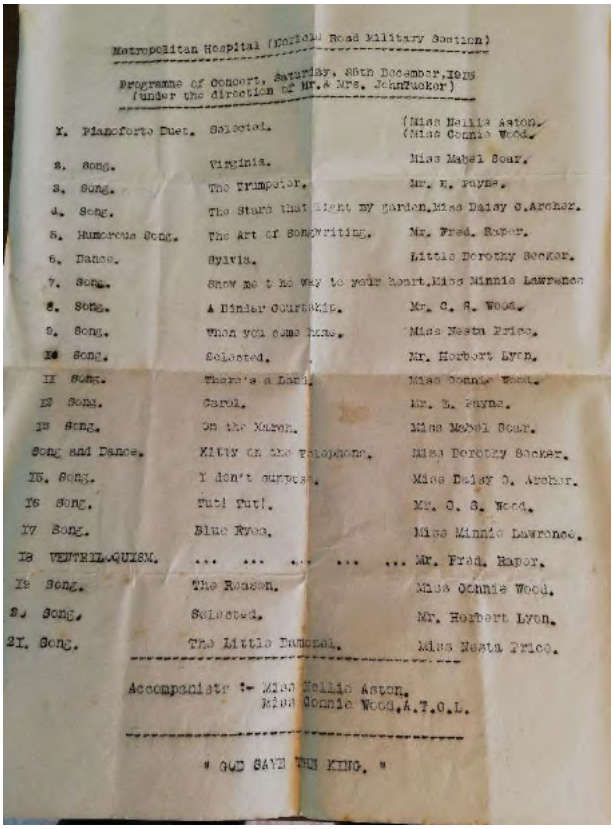
O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did'st give the law
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. Amen.

PREACHER—

The Rev. W. C. E. NEWBOLT, M.A., Canon in Residence.



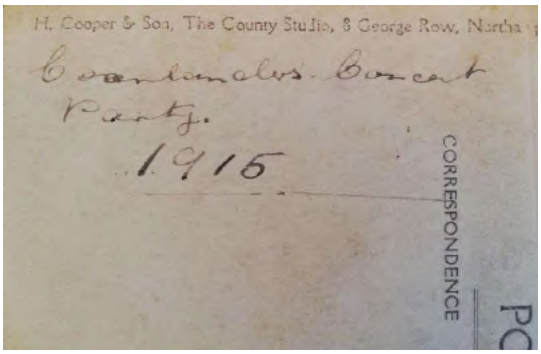
Metropolitan Hospital (Kingland Road Military Section)

Programme of Concert, Saturday, 25th December, 1915
(under the direction of Mr. & Mrs. John Tucker)

1. Pianoforte Duet.	Selected.	(Miss Nellie Aston. (Miss Connie Wood.
2. Song.	Virginia.	Miss Mabel Sour.
3. Song.	The Trimpeter.	Mr. E. Payne.
4. Song.	The Stars that light my garden.	Miss Daisy O. Archer.
5. Humorous Song.	The Art of Songwriting.	Mr. Fred. Raper.
6. Dance.	Sylvia.	Little Dorothy Secker.
7. Song.	Show me the way to your heart.	Miss Minnie Lawrence
8. Song.	A Dinlar Courtship.	Mr. C. S. Wood.
9. Song.	When you come home.	Miss Nesta Price.
10 Song.	Selected.	Mr. Herbert Lyon.
11 Song.	There's a Land.	Miss Connie Wood.
12 Song.	Carol.	Mr. E. Payne.
13 Song.	On the Mawn.	Miss Mabel Sour.
Song and Dance.	Kitty on the roadstone.	Miss Dorothy Secker.
15. Song.	I don't surpose.	Miss Daisy O. Archer.
16 Song.	Tut! Tut!	Mr. C. S. Wood.
17 Song.	Blue Eyes.	Miss Minnie Lawrence.
18 VENTRILOQUISM.	... ...	Mr. Fred. Raper.
19 Song.	The Reason.	Miss Connie Wood.
20 Song.	Selected.	Mr. Herbert Lyon.
21. Song.	The Little Damsel.	Miss Nesta Price.

Accompanistr :- Miss Nellie Aston.
Miss Connie Wood, A.T.C.L.

" GOD SAVE THE KING. "



H. Cooper & Son, The County Studio, 8 George Row, Northa

Coonlanalos Concert Party.
1915

CORRESPONDENCE

5. ENGLAND – return to training – 1916 postcards

January and February

It is not known where George was based between January and February 1916. There are no postcards which have survived and there are no other documents related to this time.

Once a solider was deemed fit enough to leave convalescence, he would return to one of the Command Depots for rehabilitative training after which they would be allocated to a battalion. Frequently, it was a different battalion or regiment to that in which they had previously served, as his place would have been taken by another man to maintain numbers. If fitness was not fully recovered, then they may be transferred to a non-front-line unit, such as the Labour Corps or to a training battalion so that they could put their field experience to use by training others or to a home service unit which had lower fitness requirements.

George did not return to the 7th (Service) Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment. The family talk did not ever refer to this Regiment nor his experiences at the Battle of Loos. However, his 'bad feet' were referred to and his grand-children remember that he took care of his feet.

The 7th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment went on to further engagements in various battles including Guillemont (September 1916, an attack by K4 on the Romanian front), Vimy Ridge (April 1917, which was part of the larger Battle of Arras in northern France by Canadian divisions), Messines (June 1917, West Flanders, Belgium, which included the detonation of underground mines by K2), Battlewood (cannot locate details), Pilkem Ridge (which was the opening attack of the Third Battle of Ypres, Belgium, and became known as Passchendaele) and Cambrai (November 1917, France, which included the first large scale use of tanks).

March

There is one postcard dated March from George to Nellie.

On March 1, the only postcard which has survived, identified that George was now attached to the **8th (Reserve) Battalion, Northants Regiment** and that he was moving on 2 March to the **Hyderabad Barracks** in Colchester. George wrote '*we are shifting into these barracks, so my address will be A Coy, 8th Northants, Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester'.* It is presumed he went for retraining after convalescing.

The **8th Northants was a Reserve Battalion**. It was formed in October 1914 at Weymouth as part of the Fourth New Army (K4) and was a Service Battalion under the command of the **103rd Brigade originally of the 34th Division**.

The **34th Division** largely comprised of locally raised units known as the Pals, notably those raised in the north east, Manchester and Grimsby. In January 1916, the 34th Division landed in France and its first major action was the attack at La Boisselle on the first day of the **Battle of the Somme** during which it suffered heavy casualties.

Hyderabad Barracks,
Colchester.

Postcard dated

1 March 1916.

The 8th (Reserve) Northants moved to Penzance in January 1915 and on 10 April 1915 converted into a 2nd Reserve Battalion. They moved in May 1915 into the Hyderabad Barracks in Colchester which had the year before seen between 30,000 and 40,000 men training on the site. In March 1916, the 8th Northants moved to Sittingbourne as part of the 6th Reserve Brigade. This became the 28th Training Reserve based in Maidstone after August 1916 and then it became the 245th Graduated in May 1917. Recruits were posted to these battalions for basic training before they were posted to an active service unit.

6. FRANCE – active service – 1916 postcards

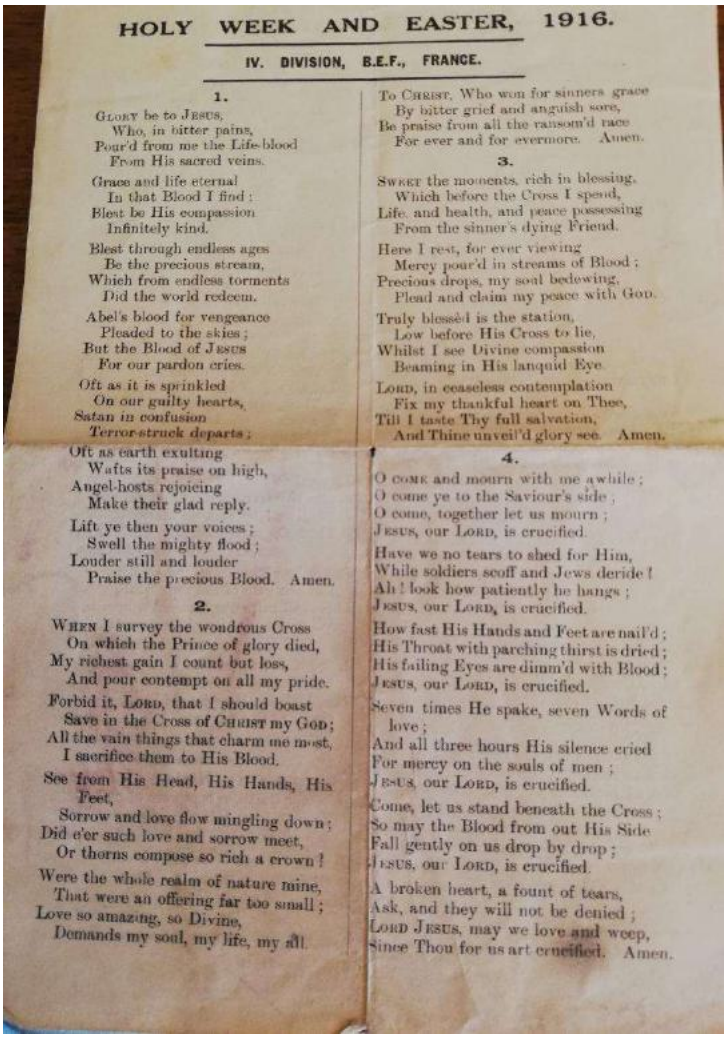
March, April and May

There are no postcards dated March, April or May 1916.

It is not known how long George spent at the Hyderabad Barracks with the 8th Northants. Initially because of the dates on the postcards, it was assumed that George was back in France by June 1916, however, a song sheet from Easter 1916 was found in a box of documents in Spring 2020.

Easter 1916 was 23 April and it is assumed that when the 8th (Reserve) Northants moved to Sittingbourne then George went back into active service and went to France with the **4th Entrenching Battalion in the British Expeditionary Force.**

George was therefore back in France by April 1916. The **IV Division** was a permanently established regular army division and one of the first to be sent to France. It was present during all the major defences including the Battle of the Marne, Battle of Ypres, Battle of the Somme and the Battle of Passchendaele.



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER, 1916.

IV. DIVISION, B.E.F., FRANCE.

1.

GLORY be to JESUS,
Who, in bitter pains,
Pour'd from me the Life-blood
From His sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal
In that Blood I find;
Blest be His compassion
Infinitely kind.

Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream,
Which from endless torments
Did the world redeem.

Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the Blood of JESUS
For our pardon cries.

Oft as it is sprinkled
On our guilty hearts,
Satan in confusion
Terror-struck departs;

Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel-hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

Lift ye then your voices;
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious Blood. Amen.

2.

WHEN I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, LORD, that I should boast
Save in the Cross of CHRIST my GOD;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

See from His Head, His Hands, His Feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

To CHRIST, Who won for sinners grace
By bitter grief and anguish sore,
Be praise from all the ransom'd race
For ever and for evermore. Amen.

3.

SWEET the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.

Here I rest, for ever viewing
Mercy pour'd in streams of Blood;
Precious drops, my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with GOD.

Truly blessèd is the station,
Low before His Cross to lie,
Whilst I see Divine compassion
Beaming in His languid Eye.

LORD, in ceaseless contemplation
Fix my thankful heart on Thee,
Till I taste Thy full salvation,
And Thine unveil'd glory see. Amen.

4.

O COME and mourn with me awhile;
O come ye to the Saviour's side;
O come, together let us mourn;
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.

Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! look how patiently he hangs;
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.

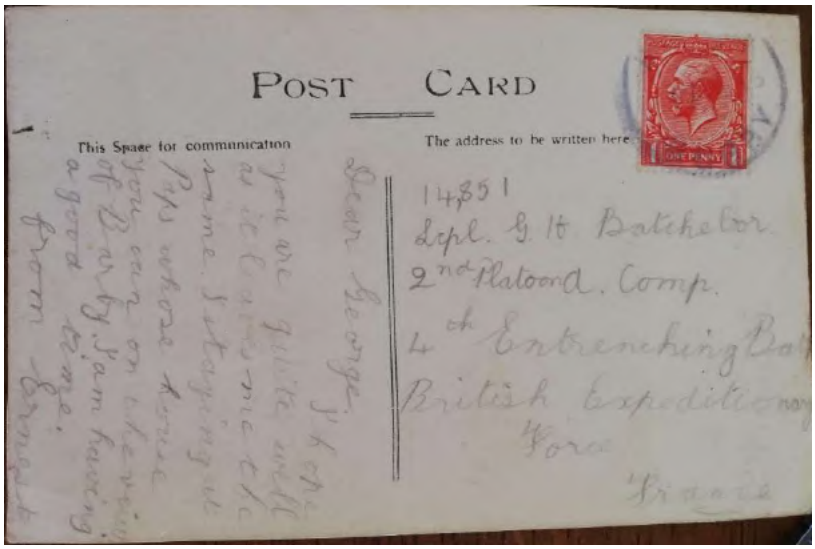
How fast His Hands and Feet are nail'd;
His Throat with parching thirst is dried;
His failing Eyes are dimm'd with Blood;
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.

Seven times He spake, seven Words of love;
And all three hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men;
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.

Come, let us stand beneath the Cross;
So may the Blood from out His Side
Fall gently on us drop by drop;
JESUS, our LORD, is crucified.

A broken heart, a fount of tears,
Ask, and they will not be denied;
LORD JESUS, may we love and weep,
Since Thou for us art crucified. Amen.

George was in the **4th Entrenching Battalion** between at least **June to August 1916** according to postcards addressed to him. He was attached to the **2nd Platoon, A Company**. It is not known where he went in France.



Postcard dated August 8 1916 from Ernest.

Photograph of Ernest Edward Batchelor, the younger brother of George.

Entrenching Battalions were temporary units to create pools of men, from which drafts of replacements could be drawn by conventional infantry battalions. The Entrenching Battalions often possessed no transport and frequently had to rely on other units for cookers and camp kettles. There were usually about a thousand men who carried out work such as digging, pumping, wiring and trench boarding. Men would stay in these units for about three weeks before being sent out in Company strength with men from the same regiment to different locations (Mitchinson, 2014, page 193/4).

The first batch was formed in early 1915 but they were disbanded by Autumn 1917 due to shortages of manpower. There was a second batch of Entrenching Battalions created in early 1918 when there was a reduction from four to three battalions per infantry brigade. Surplus men were formed into 25 Entrenching Battalions, however, these were dissolved by the end of April 1918.

The British Expeditionary Force was the British Army sent to the Western Front during the First World War. The term 'British Expeditionary Force' might be said to only refer to the forces present in France prior to the end of the **First Battle of Ypres** on 22 November 1914. However, the use of B.E.F. remained the official name of the British armies in France and Flanders during World War I.

June

There is one postcard dated June 1916 to George from his mother, Elizabeth Batchelor. She told him that she had been to Barby, Northampton, for a visit. Barby was the birthplace of herself and George's father, William Batchelor.

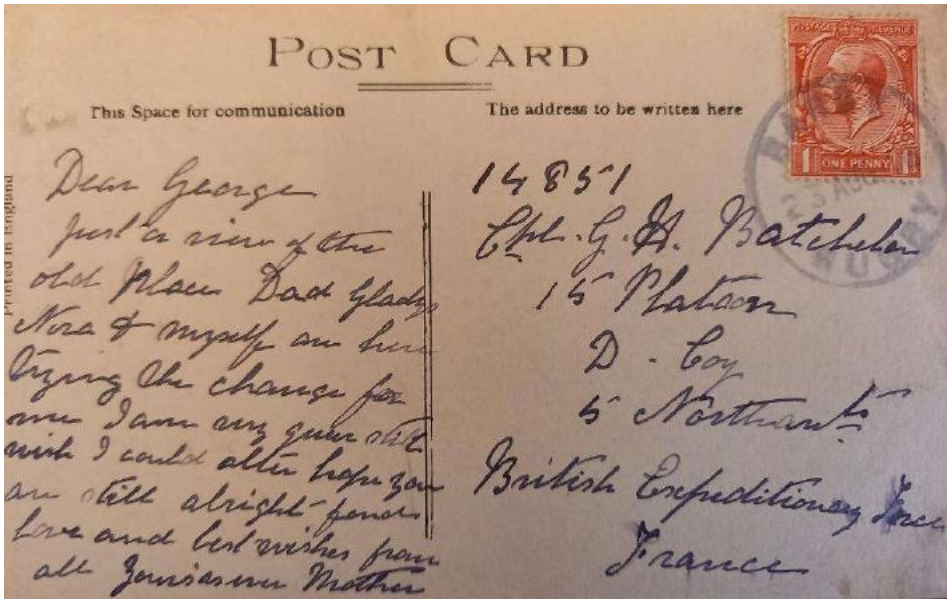
July

There is one postcard dated 22 July 1916 to George from his sister Mabel (called May). She wrote, *'Hope you are still getting on alright, as we haven't heard this week'.*

The first day of the **Battle of the Somme** was 1 July 1916. It is not known where George was located during July with the 4th Entrenching Battalion but it is poignant to think that the postcard sent to George by his sister May during July was returned at some point for safe keeping by Nellie.

August

There are three postcards addressed to George dated August 1916. They are two dated 8 August. One is from Ernest, his brother, and the other from Mill, his sister. Both are addressed to 2nd Platoon, 4th Entrenching Battalion. The third card is dated 23 August from his mother and addressed to **15 Platoon, D Company, 5th Northants. B.E.F.**


POST CARD

This Space for communication

Dear George
Just a view of the
old Place Dad Gladys
Nora & myself are here
trying the change for
you I am very glad that
wish I could also hope you
are still alright fondest
love and best wishes from
all Your loving Mother

The address to be written here

ONE PENNY

14851
Cpl. G. A. Batchelor
15 Platoon
D. Coy
5 Northants
British Expeditionary Force
France

George had been moved from the 4th Entrenching Battalion and was now allocated to the **5th Northants Regiment** which was part of the **12th Division.** He remained with this Battalion until the end of the war. It was the 5th Northants and 12th Division that the family history had always talked about.

The **5th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment** was raised at Northampton in August 1914 as part of Kitchener's First New Army and joined the 12th (Eastern) Division as divisional troops. The **12th Division** was formed as part of the 'First Hundred Thousand'. It was one of the six new Divisions of **K1, First Army.** The First Army was under the leadership of General Sir Douglas Haig, who took over command of the whole of the British Expeditionary Force from General French. The Infantry Brigades of the 12th Division were the **35th, 36th and 37th.** The 12th Division had initially trained at Shorncliffe before moving to Hythe in November 1914. They were under the command of Major-General James Spens, C.B.

In January 1915, the 5th (Service) Battalion, Northants Regiment converted to a **Pioneer Battalion** and moved to Aldershot for their final training in February 1915 (Scott and Brumwell, page 3). The 5th Northants were the Pioneers for the Division. Pioneers were soldiers who repaired roads, removed obstacles and made bridges. They also hunted for 'booby traps' and dug trenches. These were vital to the maintenance of supplies (Scott and Brumwell, 1923). Mitchinson (2014) described pioneers as 'organised and intelligent labour'.

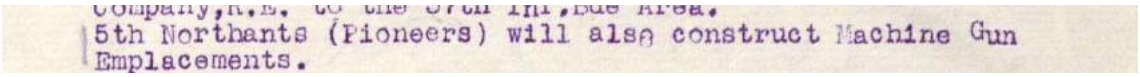
Pioneer Battalions were new units created in the British Army to respond to the dilemmas of trench warfare. The trenches needed to offer the infantry some protection from the shells and to enable the men to stay in them for lengths of time. In December 1914, the War Office announced that a Pioneer Battalion was to be created for each Division in the New Armies. The initial numbers were 24 officers and 859 men (Mitchinson, 2014, page 255). The Pioneers were designed to be equipped and trained as infantry but to be more closely afflicted to the Royal Engineers. They were given special training in entrenching, road making, demolition and other work which was generally called pioneering. The battalions composed of 50% of men who were used to working with a shovel and pick and 50% of men with a recognised trade. The trades included joiners, masons and bricklayers but they also needed to be able to dig. Pioneers were also trained to undertake technical work on railway embankments, to construct wire obstacles and to fell trees. It was declared that these men would wear a distinguishing badge and be paid 2d a day more than corresponding ranks in the infantry. Later a crossed rifle and pickaxe badge was designed (Mitchinson, 2014, page x – xii). Several Pioneer Battalions received men from Entrenching Battalions according to War Diaries (Mitchinson, 2014, page 193) and it is presumed that George's experiences with the 4th Entrenching Battalion would have positioned him well to be placed with the 5th Pioneers Northants.

The 12th Division had proceeded to France on 30 May 1915 and landed at Boulogne. They were concentrated near St Omer and by 6 June they were in the Meteren- Steenwereck area with their Divisional HQs established at Neippe. They underwent instruction from the more experienced 48th (South Midland) Division and took over a section of the front line at Ploegsteert Wood on 23 June 1915. They were also in action in the Battle of Loos from September 30, taking over the sector from Gun Trench to Hulluch Quarries and consolidated this position, under heavy fire. During the period of the Battle of Loos, 117 officers and 3,237 men of the 12th Division were killed or wounded.

The 12th Division relieved the 8th Division on 1 July 1916. In the changeover, the 5th Northants (Pioneers) remained at **Millencourt.** They were joined by the Pioneers from the 8th Division. On 2 July, the Fourth Army, which included the 12th Division, attacked Ovillers. This was later to become known as the first battle on the Somme, referred to as the **Battle of Albert** (1 to 13 July 1916, Somme).

The **War Diaries of the 12th Division, 37th Brigade Headquarters June 1915 – June 1917** have been read to identify references to 5th Northants when George may have transferred to this Regiment. There are also references to the **36th Brigade** in these diaries. The War Diaries were accessed via ancestry.co.uk.

The 5th Northants were given the instructions to consolidate strong points and communication trenches and construct Machine Gun Emplacements on 2 July 1916.


5th Northants (Pioneers) will also construct Machine Gun
Emplacements.

On 3 July 1916, the 5th Northants were instructed to carry out repairs and re-establish wires on the Divisional Front and clear out communication trenches. The 12th Division was transferred to X Corps as a reserve army on 5 July. George may have been in contact with men from Northampton in this Division during his time in the Entrenching Battalion.

On 6 July 1916, an attack was planned to capture the village of Ovillers on 7 July by the 36th Brigade. Two companies of the 5th Northants were detailed to support the infantry. The 5th Northants (Pioneers) were tasked with making communications between a tunnel and trench with a company of them placed in reserve at the Aveluy Bridge head-defence.

6. Consolidation and distribution of Field Companies and Pioneers :-

(a). The 36th Infantry Brigade will consolidate as strong points :-

X.8.a.1.3.	X.8.b.2.3.
X.8.a.2.0.	X.8.b.5.4.
X.8.a.6.3.	X.8.b.7.7.
X.8.a.9.5.	X.8.c.1.8.
X.8.b.1.6.	X.8.b.5.3.

69th and 70th Field Companies,R.E., 2 Companies 5th Northants and 2 carrying parties of 200 each with a proportion of Officers, detailed from the 36th and 37th Infantry Brigades respectively will be detailed for this duty.
Rendezvous - the AVELUY Bridge-head Defences at 9 p.m. tonight.

Communications. -

The Tunnel, X.7.b.5.3. and a communication trench from X.7.d.4.3. (VINCENT ST.) will be connected as soon as possible with the German front line.
1 Company 5th Northants (Pioneers) will carry out this work.
Rendezvous.- OVILLERS POST at 9 p.m. tonight.
O.C.,69th Field Company,R.E. is attached to 36th Infantry Brigade as Engineer Advisor from 6 p.m. tonight.

September and October

There are two postcards dated September 1916, however, they have no address on them so it is presumed they were sent as part of a letter or maybe a parcel. One is from Christine and K Sullivan (Mrs Sullivan) from Reigate and the other from Charlie who is an unknown friend of George. There are no postcards dated October 1916.

It is possible that George was engaged in fighting and pioneer work with the 5th Northants who were engaged during the **Battle of Pozieres** (23 July – 3 September 1916, Somme) and the **Battle of Le Transloy** (1 to 20 October 1916, Somme) before the **Battle of the Somme** came to an end on 18 November 1916.

At some point for an unknown reason, George was injured or not well which resulted in him being sent home in November 1916.

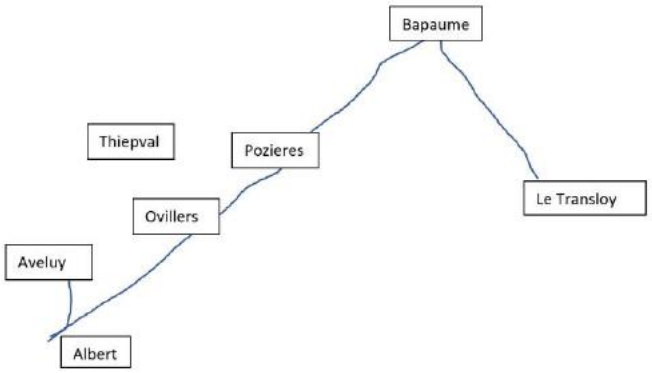


Diagram and map to show places around the Battles of Pozieres, Le Transloy and the Somme

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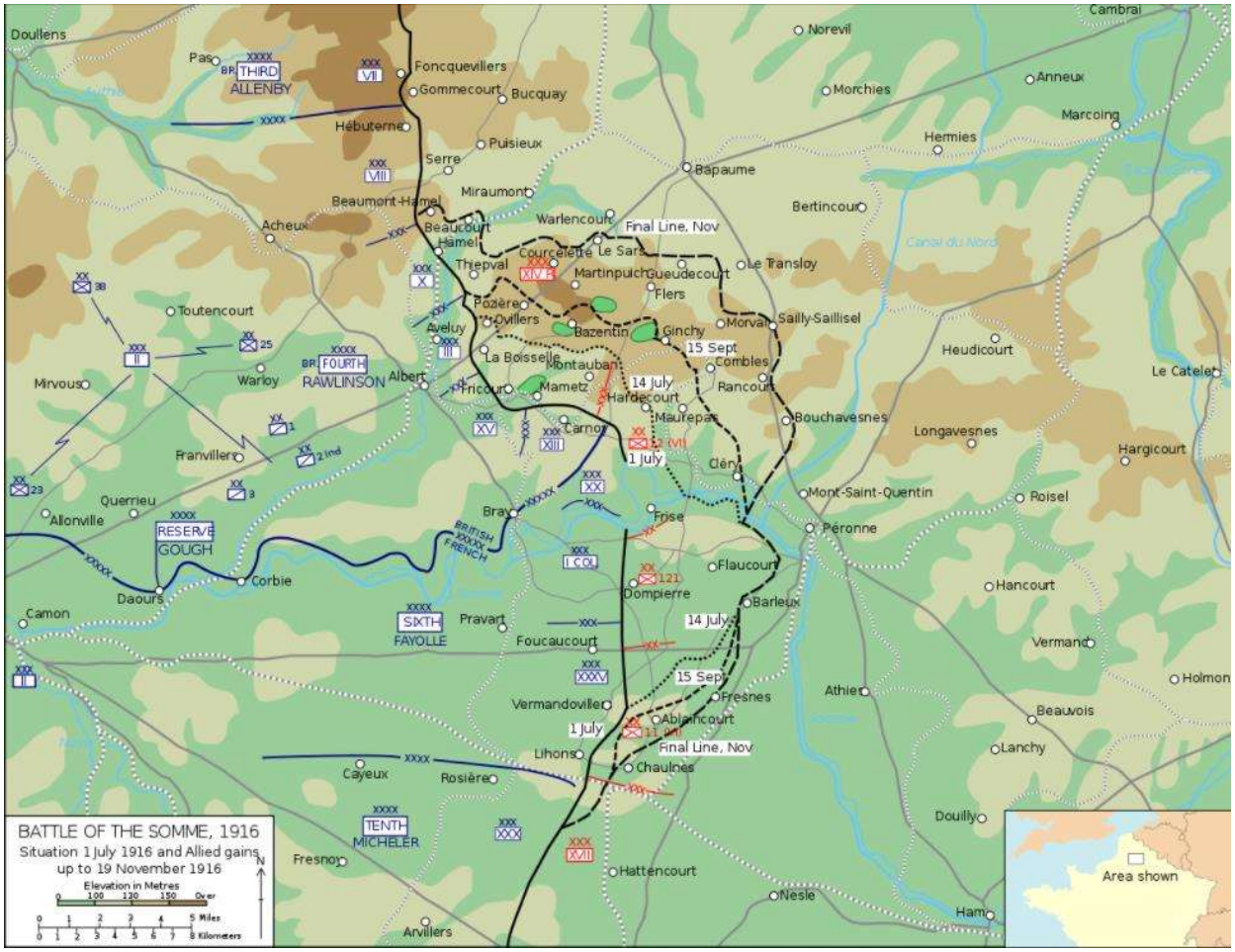


7. SCOTLAND– unknown reason - 1916 postcards

November and December

There is one postcard dated 29 November 1916 from George to Nellie. There is one postcard dated 8 December 1916 from George to Nellie.

The postcards identify that George returned home from France. It is not known why but the images on the postcards and two others found in June 2020 suggest that he may have been injured but not seriously and sent to Scotland to recuperate.

The postcard dated 29 November 1916 is a photograph of the Nurses Home in **Edinburgh War Hospital.** George sends the postcard to wish Nellie a Happy Birthday.

The postcard dated 8 December is a photograph of **Princes Street, Edinburgh.** George wrote to Nellie to tell her that he would be '*moved tomorrow to somewhere else in Scotland*'.

Two more postcards were found in June 2020, several weeks after the postcards had been transcribed. Neither of these have been written on. The first is a photograph of Whitehall Red Cross Hospital. Whitehill Red Cross Hospital was an auxiliary hospital in Midlothian. Auxiliary hospitals were often based in a country house, however, it is not known where this hospital was based.

The second photograph is of men in a hospital ward although it is not possible to identify George. It is suggested that George left the front line to recuperate from an injury in November and December 1916 in a hospital in Scotland and that he was possibly transferred to an auxiliary hospital. It seems strange for these two photographs to have been kept unless they had some significance.

The Edinburgh Hospital in the postcard dated 29 November was called Craiglockhart War Hospital. It opened in 1916 in Edinburgh as a military psychiatric hospital to care for officers suffering from the psychological effects such as shell shock. It may be that George suffered from shell shock or some other psychological condition and was moved to this hospital and then to another hospital or convalescent home in Scotland. This was not talked about in family memories which would follow conventions at the time which encouraged men not to talk about their experiences. Or it could be that he had a broken limb like the other men in the photograph above.

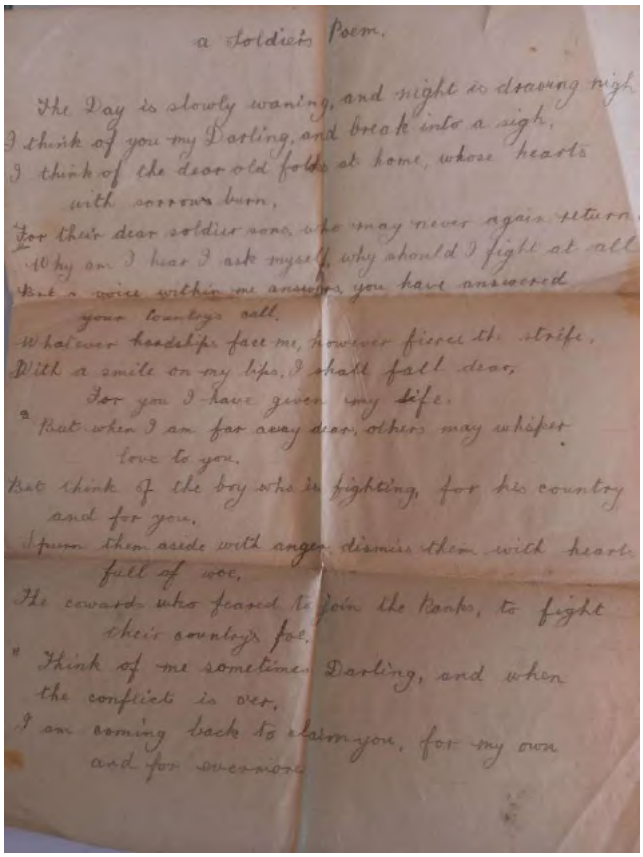
The famous poet Wilfred Owen was hospitalised at Craiglockhart Hospital between 26 June and 3 November 1917 suffering from shell shock. He was advised by Dr Arthur Brock to put his war experiences into poetry. Owen wrote Dulce and Decorum Est in 1917 and Six O'clock in Princes Street. He also wrote Anthem for Doomed Youth. Siegfried Sassoon was also at Craiglockhart when Owen was there. His poetry described the horrors of the trenches.

George may have written a poem. It is not known when he wrote it or if it was related to his time in Scotland. It was found in an envelope with two photographs of Nellie and a photograph of a child. These may have been placed together in the envelope over the years and were not originally linked together.

The poem is called 'A Soldiers Poem'. It appears to be an original poem and not copied from elsewhere. There is a spelling mistake in the original and shown in the transcription – *why am I hear rather than here.* It is written on very lightweight paper in pencil.

A Soldiers Poem

The Day is slowly waning, and night is drawing nigh,
I think of you my Darling, and break into a sigh.
I think of the dear old folks at home, whose hearts with sorrow burn.
For their dear soldier sons, who may never again return.
Why am I hear I ask myself, why should I fight at all.
But a voice within me answers, you have answered your country's call.
Whatever hardships face me, however fierce the strife,
With a smile on my lips, I shall fall dear,
For you I have given my life.
But when I am far away dear, others may whisper love to you.
Spurn them aside with anger, dismiss them with hearts
full of woe.
The cowards who feared to join the Ranks, to fight their country's foe,
Think of me sometime Darling, and when
the conflict is o'er,
I am coming back to claim you, for my own,
And for evermore.


a Soldier's Poem.

The Day is slowly waning, and night is drawing nigh
I think of you my Darling, and break into a sigh,
I think of the dear old folks at home, whose hearts
with sorrow burn,
For their dear soldier sons, who may never again return,
Why am I hear I ask myself, why should I fight at all
But a voice within me answers, you have answered
your country's call.
Whatever hardships face me, however fierce the strife,
With a smile on my lips, I shall fall dear,
For you I have given my life.
But when I am far away dear, others may whisper
love to you.
But think of the boy who is fighting, for his country
and for you.
Spurn them aside with anger, dismiss them with hearts
full of woe.
The coward who feared to join the Ranks, to fight
their country's foe,
Think of me sometime Darling, and when
the conflict is over,
I am coming back to claim you, for my own
and for evermore.

8. ENGLAND – retraining – 1917 postcards

January

There are four postcards dated January 1917. There are two from George to Nellie. There is one to George from his mother and one to George from his brother, Will.

After convalescing in Scotland, George returned to training. He joined the **3rd Northants Regiment** as a Lance Corporal in **Gillingham** in January 1917. This change of regiment confirmed that George had returned from France due to some injury and had again been placed with a different battalion within the same regiment on return to duty.

On 1 January, George arrived at Fort Downland in Gillingham and wrote '*just to let you know I arrived safely here about 3pm. Will send address later when I know properly what it is. Quite a lot here whom I know'.*

Gillingham Park.

Postcard dated 1 January 1917.

The **3rd (Reserve) Battalion** was formed on 4 August 1914 in Northampton and moved to Portland in Dorset. In May 1915, the battalion moved to Gillingham, Kent and then to Strood, Kent. The Battalion returned to Gillingham in May 1916. In May 1918, they moved to Scrapsgate, Sheppey where it remained until the end of the war. George would have engaged in re-training in 1917.

Gillingham Station and Kingswood Villas.

Postcard dated 2 January 1917

February

There are no postcards dated February 1917. George was still based in Gillingham.

He had the measles at some point during his time in Gillingham according to a postcard sent from Gillingham although the date is not clear. George wrote, *'I am sure you must have been wondering why I did not write, but I have been in hospital with measles and only came out this morning'.*

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness which today is luckily uncommon and treatable. Prior to the 1960s, when a vaccine was introduced, seven to eight million children per year died from measles.

March

There is one postcard dated 6 March 1917. This was a Tuesday and George had returned to Gillingham from a weekend pass. He wrote the postcard, showing an image of Trafalgar Square, at his billet before handing back his pass.

George returned to France on active service.

9. FRANCE – active service – 1917 postcards

George returned to France with the **5th Northants (Pioneers) as part of the 12th Division by July 1917.**

April, May, June

There are no postcards for these three months.

If George had returned by April then he would have been engaged in the **Battle of Arras**, which took place 4 April – 16 May 1917. It was considered a memorable battle and according to Scott and Brumwell everyone carried out their duties brilliantly including the Pioneers (page 106). This battle also comprised of the **First Battle of the Scarpe** (9-14 April 1917) in which the 12th Division led the first major British assault east of Arras. In the book written by the Northamptonshire Regiment, they confirm that the 5th Northants worked and fought at Arras and in that battle, they won repeated praise (Regiment, 2005, page 283). They were also involved in the Second Battle of the Scarpe (23 – 24 April), the Battle of Arleux (28-29 April) and the Third Battle of the Scarpe (3-4 May).

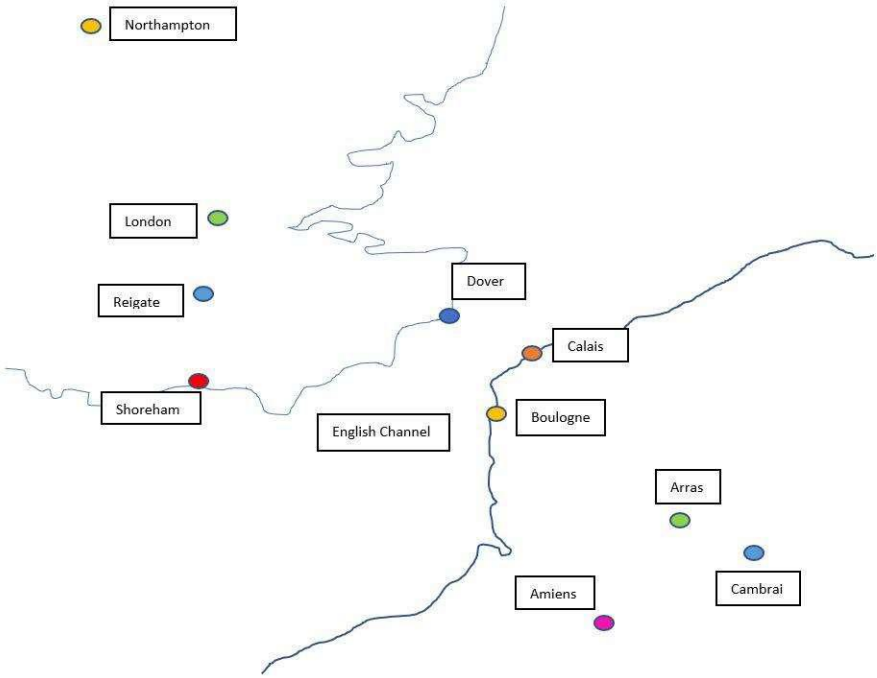
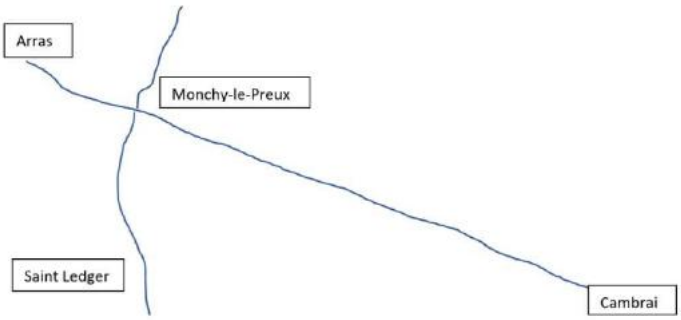


Diagram to show location of Arras and Cambrai in France.

July

There is one postcard dated 25 July 1917 to George from his mother.

During the defence of **Monchy-le-Preux** in July 1917, the Royal Engineers and 5th Northamptonshire Regiment, assisted by working parties from the infantry, steadily improved the communication trenches, made dug outs and machine gun posts, laid water pipes up to the reserve line, and generally bettered the conditions of the trenches (Scott and Brumwell, 1923, page 121).



1917 Battles of Arras, Monchy-Le-Preux and Cambrai.

The **War Diaries for the 12th Division** have been read for July 1917 to March 1919. Extracts are included where there is a reference to the 5th Northants.

There was an instruction for the 5th Northants (Pioneers) on 14 July 1917 to dig a trench.

9. The Company of Pioneers allotted to this Brigade will, on the night of the 14th/15th instant, dig a trench due East from the junction of HOOK TRENCH and VINE LANE.
This trench will eventually be connected up with the new line to form a Communication Trench.

On 17 July, a further order, No 141, was sent to the Brigade to consolidate their position which involved the 5th Northants digging out trenches and creating communication links.

5. On our left the 5th Northants are digging out a Communication Trench and establishing a Post to cover our Left Flank at about O.2.d.8.1.

6. "A" Coy., 5th Northants (Pioneers) will complete communication between HOOK and New German Trench.

During the night the following work of consolidation was carried out :-

Six posts were dug in GERMAN NEW TRENCH.
220 yards of wire entanglements were put out in front of this trench.
VINE STREET was prolonged out to GERMAN NEW TRENCH. This entailed 150 yds. of digging. Work on this trench had been commenced previouslyfor two nights, but seventy yards remained to connect it up with the NEW GERMAN TRENCH; it was made deep enough throughout to use by day.
A strong post was established and dug in at O.2.d.6.2.

The Brigadier of the 37th wrote that the A Company of the 5th Northants alongside the others deserve the highest praise.

The 87th Field Company, R.E., who superintended the wiring, and "A" Company, of the 5th (Pioneer) Battn. Northamptonshire Regt., who dug the communication trench between HOOK and NEW GERMAN TRENCH, deserve the highest praise; each completed their task under great difficulties and under a heavy fire.

During July, there were many casualties in the Division. There were 10 officers and 181 other ranks killed and 35 officers and 952 other ranks wounded or missing. The number of casualties was a serious matter because reinforcements were scarce as the main offensive at Ypres had commenced (Scott and Brumwell, 1923, page 120). The Battle of Passchendaele (3rd Ypres) took place between 31 July 1916 - 10 November 1917.

Against this backdrop, George's mother wrote on 25 July, '*your card safe to hand. Thankful you are alright. I am sending a parcel, expect arrive a day or two'.* Sending and receiving letters was as important as receiving rations and ammunition. It must have been a significant morale booster to be in touch with family back at home.

August

There are three postcards dated August 1917. There are two cards to George from his sister Mabel (May) and one to George from his sister Mill.

Two of the postcards are photographs of Barby. Another is a patriotic card to send *Warmest wishes and love from all at home.*

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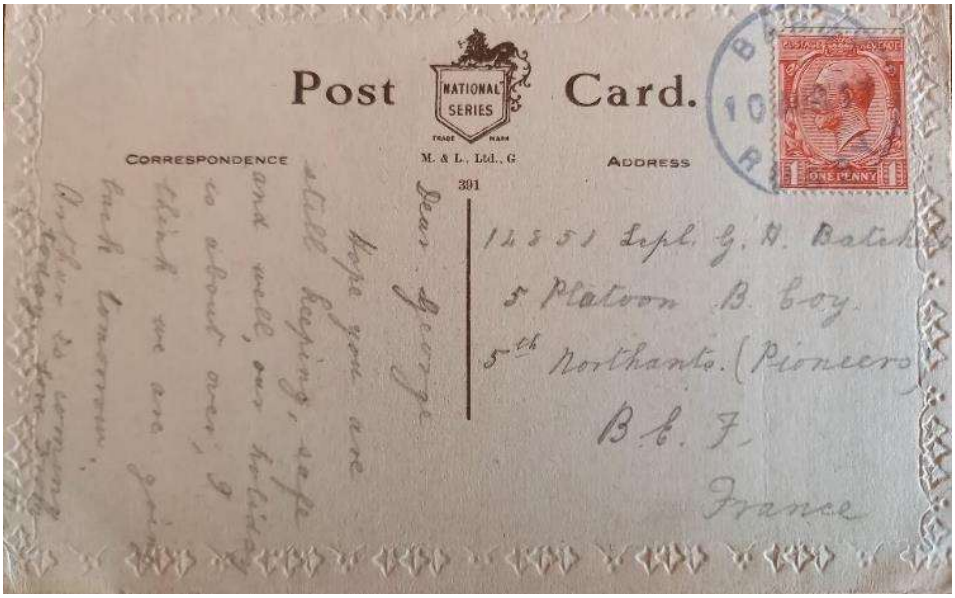
Postcard dated

10 August 1917



September

There is one postcard dated September 1917. It is to George from his sister, Mabel (called May).

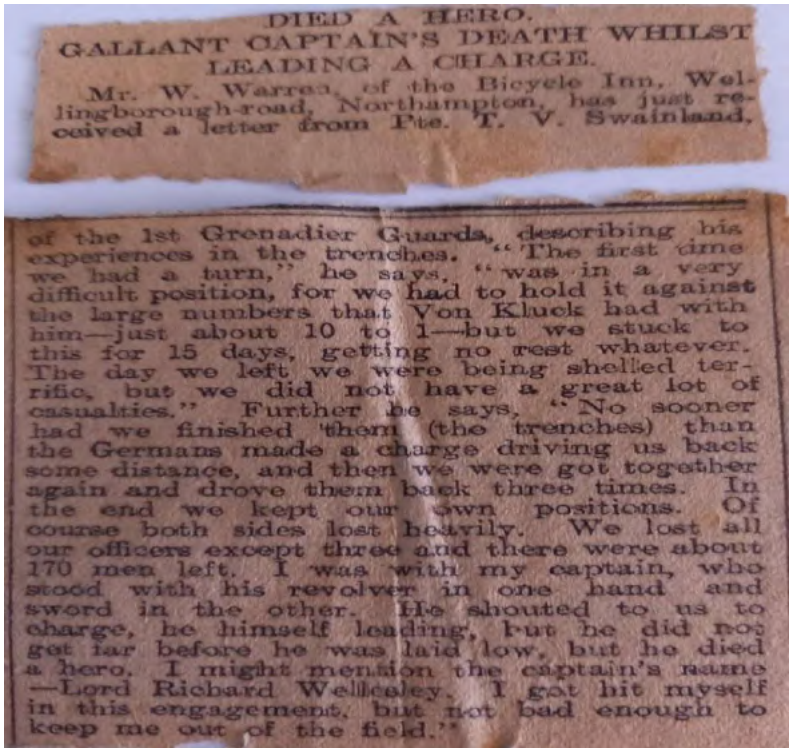
Mabel (May) married Thomas Victor (Victor) Swainland. He was in the 1st Grenadier Guards and was sadly injured by a bayonet. May wrote on 15 September, '*I haven't forgotten all about you, the Gren came home on leave Wednesday, so I have had time for writing, he seems better than I expected to find him'.*

Victor had been in active service since 1914. He wrote a letter to a friend which was published in a Northampton newspaper in 1914 regarding his experiences in the trenches when men had retaken a trench using bayonets and his captain had been killed.

Mabel Swainland.

The captain was Lord Richard Wellesley. He was the second son of the Duke and Duchess of Wellington and died in action on 29 October 1914, age 35. He had been promoted to captain of the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards in 1908.

This newspaper cutting was found in June 2020 inside a Christmas card dated 1914. It may have been placed there for safe keeping.



DIED A HERO.

GALLANT CAPTAIN'S DEATH WHILST LEADING A CHARGE.

Mr. W. Warren, of the Bicycle Inn, Wellingborough-road, Northampton, has just received a letter from Pte. T. V. Swainland, of the 1st Grenadier Guards, describing his experiences in the trenches. "The first time we had a turn," he says, "was in a very difficult position, for we had to hold it against the large numbers that Von Kluck had with him—just about 10 to 1—but we stuck to this for 15 days, getting no rest whatever. The day we left we were being shelled terrific, but we did not have a great lot of casualties." Further he says, "No sooner had we finished them (the trenches) than the Germans made a charge driving us back some distance, and then we were got together again and drove them back three times. In the end we kept our own positions. Of course both sides lost heavily. We lost all our officers except three and there were about 170 men left. I was with my captain, who stood with his revolver in one hand and sword in the other. He shouted to us to charge, he himself leading, but he did not get far before he was laid low, but he died a hero. I might mention the captain's name —Lord Richard Wellesley. I got hit myself in this engagement, but not bad enough to keep me out of the field."

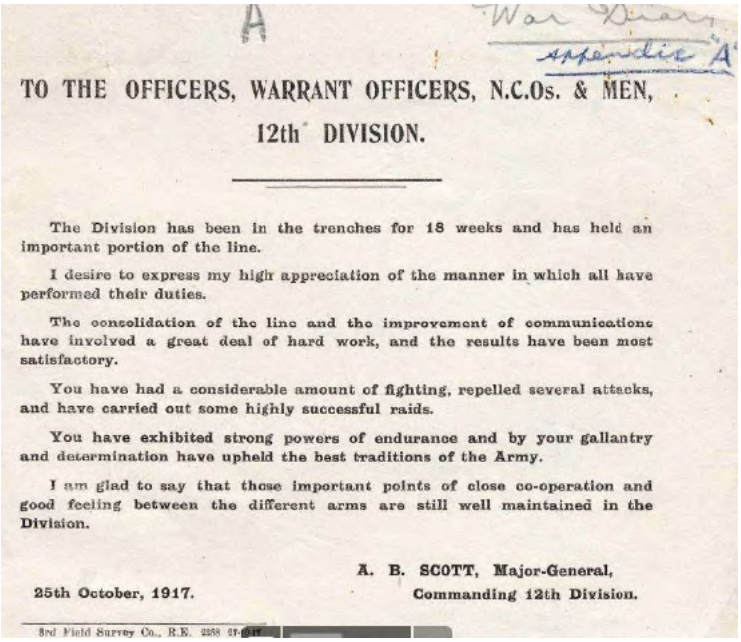
In the postcard sent from George to Nellie on 14 January 1915, he refers to the newspaper cutting which Nellie has sent him about the Gren – *it seems the Old Gren has been amongst it properly.*

October, November, December

There are no postcards for these months 1917. There is one Christmas card sent by George and one Christmas card sent by May to George.

The **Battle of Cambrai** took place between October and December 1917. Cambrai was an important supply point for the German line. It was known to the British as the Hindenburg Line.

Towards the end of October, there were rumours concerning the 12th Division in terms of its numbers, suggesting it either needed to be relieved or receive strong enforcements, although the latter was probably not possible due to the fighting at Passchendaele. The 12th Division was in the trenches for 18 weeks in the end and held an important part of the front line. They also set a record of holding a line without relief on an active battle front which was recognised by Major General Scott on 25 October 1917 (War Diaries, 12th Division).



A

War Diary
appendix "A"

TO THE OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, N.C.Os. & MEN,

12th DIVISION.

The Division has been in the trenches for 18 weeks and has held an important portion of the line.

I desire to express my high appreciation of the manner in which all have performed their duties.

The consolidation of the line and the improvement of communications have involved a great deal of hard work, and the results have been most satisfactory.

You have had a considerable amount of fighting, repelled several attacks, and have carried out some highly successful raids.

You have exhibited strong powers of endurance and by your gallantry and determination have upheld the best traditions of the Army.

I am glad to say that those important points of close co-operation and good feeling between the different arms are still well maintained in the Division.

A. B. SCOTT, Major-General,
Commanding 12th Division.

25th October, 1917.

3rd Field Survey Co., R.E. 2258 21-6-17

On 21 October 1917, the War Diaries of the 12th Division show that the 37th Brigade was to be relieved by the 10th Division on 23 and 24 October. They were then to be moved from the Cambrai Road sector to the Ivergny area for rest and training.

MONCHY Trench Map. 1/10,000 — October 21st, 1917

1. The 37th Inf.Bde. will be relieved in the CAMBRAI ROAD Sector by the 10th Inf. Bde., on the 23rd and 24th October, 1917, in accordance with the attached relief table.

2. (a) On relief, the 37th Inf. Bde. will move to the IVERGNY area, in accordance with the attached march table.
(b) For the purposes of this move the 87th Field Co., R.E. and 36th Field Ambulance will be attached to the Brigade to form the 37th Inf. Bde. Group. The 5th Northamptonshire Regt. (Pioneers), 36th M.G.Company, and 235th M.G.Company will also march with the group.

As the villages near to Cambrai were blown up by the Germans in February 1917, the Field Companies, Royal Engineers and the Pioneer Battalion were sent ahead to form shelters and erect huts which were to be camouflaged. The 5th Northants (Pioneers) moved with the infantry on 25 and 26 October.

MARCH TABLE. Issued with 37th Inf.Bde. Order No. 154.

Serial No.	Date.	Unit.	From	To.	Head of column to pass starting point at.	Route.	Remarks.
1.	24/10/17.	Transport of 6th Queen's, 6th Buffs, 7th R.Surrey Regt.	ARRAS	IVERGNY, IVERGNY, BEAUDRI-COURT.	7.30 a.m.	PORTE DE BAUDIMONT - BARBARCQ - AVESNES-LE COMTE - GRAND RULLECOURT - SUS-ST LEGER.	Starting Point:- Transport Lines. Column in charge of Bde. Transport Offr.
2.	24/10/17	6th Buffs, 6th Queen's, 7th Regt, Surrey Rgt.	TILLOY	IVERGNY, IVERGNY, BEAUDRI-COURT.			By Lorry. Rendezvous:- BETHUNE CORNER, TILLOY.
3.	25/10/17	6th R.W.Kent Regt., 37th M.G.Coy, 37th T.M.Bty, 37th Sniping Coy., 37th Inf.Bde.H.Q., 5th Northants, 36th F.A.Coy., 235th F.A.Coy, 87th Fld.Co., R.E., 36th Fld.Amb.	ARRAS	LATTRE ST. QUENTIN, BAUTEVILLE, BOIELLETTE, LATTRE ST QUENTIN, BAUTEVILLE	8.30 a.m., 8.45 a.m., 8.55 a.m., 8.58 a.m., 9.00 a.m., 9.03 a.m., 9.18 a.m., 9.28 a.m., 9.38 a.m., 9.48 a.m.	PORTE DE BAUDIMONT - BARBARCQ.	Starting point:- Road Junct. 200 yds. West of PORTE de BAUDIMONT On ARRAS-ST. POL ROAD. Transport follow their respective Units.

Serial No.	Date.	Unit.	From	To.	Head of Col. to pass starting point at	Route.	Remarks.
No.4.	26/10/17	6th R.W.Kent Regt., 37th M.G.Coy, 37th T.M.Bty, 37th Sniping Coy., 37th Inf.Bde H.Q., 5th Northants, 87th Fld.Coy R.E., 36th Fld.Amb., 235th M.G.Coy, 36th M.G.Coy.	LATTRE ST QUENTIN, BAUTEVILLE, LATTRE ST. QUENTIN, BAUTEVILLE, BOIELLETTE, BAUTEVILLE	LE SOUICH, BREVILLERS, IVERGNY, GRAND RULLE-COURT., LE SOUICH, SARS-LE-BOIS, Destination to be notified by 36th I.B.	8.30 a.m., 8.45 a.m., 8.55 a.m., 8.58 a.m., 9.00 a.m., 9.03 a.m., 9.18 a.m., 9.28 a.m., 9.38 a.m., 9.48 a.m.	AVESNES-LE-COMTE - GRAND RULLECOURT - SUS-ST.LEGER. AVESNES-LE-COMTE - LIFTCOURT.	Starting Point:- Rd. Junct., BAUTEVILLE - AVESNES and AVESNES - BARBARCQ ROAD. Transport follow their respective Units.

The route to be taken by the 5th Northants was changed on 23 October.

1. For Route of 5th Northants, delete "PORTE DE BAUDIMONT - HABARCQ" and substitute "BEAURAINS - ACHECOURT - DAINVILLE - WANQUETIN". The route of all other Units remaining unchanged.

During their occupation of the **Monchy** sector, the 12th Division carried out a large number of improvements, water was laid to within 800 yards (732m) of the front line, Battalion headquarters were lit by electricity, dug outs were plenty and commodious, kitchens were created forward of the reserve line and communication trenches were deep and well boarded. These were said to help the comfort of the troops and saved them a vast amount of fatigue (Scott and Brumwell, 1923, page 130).

On return to the front, instructions were given to 5th Northants on 12 November to repair a road which was needed in a planned attack on 17 to 20 November.

15. ADVANCE OF CAVALRY.

The following road is reserved for the use of Cavalry and is not to be used by other troops till the Cavalry have passed through :-

GOUZEACOURT - BARRICADE (R.21.d.3.4.) - LA VACQUERIE.

The repair of this road and of the BARRICADE - BONAVIS Road will be carried out by the 5th Northhants Regt: under the orders of the C.R.E.

After the attack on 20 November, the Brigadier-General wrote some remarks regarding things which were *capable of development*. This included the negative impact of all infantry men being asked to carry heavy entrenching tools which he felt had increased the number of casualties.

Note: The activity of the men was much impeded by the amount they had to carry.
A heavy entrenching tool on the back prevented them from throwing themselves quickly on the ground and casualties were increased by this cause.
e. Arrangements had been made for extra tools and ammunition to be brought up on a supply Tank. Owing to loss of direction on the part of the Tank it did not reach the rendezvous. The stores however proved very useful to a neighbouring Brigade.
This idea is capable of development.

On 5 December, the 5th Northants were part of the train trails moving the Division away from the front line for rest and retraining. The train took them from Tincourt to Edgehill (Dernancourt) and then they marched to Millencourt.

MARCH AND TRAIN TABLE
to accompany 37th Inf. Bde. Order No. 167. December 5th, 1917.

Serial No.	Personnel of :-	Pass starting point (BRIGADE W.H.Q.S.S.) at :-	Entrain at TINCOURT	Detrain at EDGEHILL (DERNANCOURT)	On detraining march to and billet at :-	Remarks.
1.	6th Queen's	10.00 a.m.	2.20 p.m.	5.00 p.m.	HEDENCOURT.	
2.	6th Buffs	10.15 a.m.	" " "	" "	"	
3.	No.4 Coy., 12th Div. Train. & 37th L.R.B.G.	10.25 a.m.	" " "	" "	MILLENCOURT	
4.	7th R. Surrey Regt.	3.30 p.m.	8.00 p.m.	10.40 p.m.	LAVIEVILLE.	
5.	6th R.W.Kent Regt.	3.40 p.m.	" "	" "	"	
6.	37th M.G. Coy.) 37th T.M. Bty.) 37th Snipers.)	3.50 p.m.	" "	" "	"	
7.	5th Northants (pioneers).	4.00 p.m.	8.20 p.m.	11.00 p.m.	MILLENCOURT	
8.	37th Fld Co., R.E.	4.10 p.m.	" "	" "	HEDENCOURT	
9.	37th Fld Ambulance.	- -	" "	" "	MILLENCOURT	Joins on behind column on march from HEDENCOURT to TINCOURT at Rd. junct. in W.26.C. not before 4.30 p.m.

Note :- 1. Intervals of 200 yds. will be maintained between Companies of Infantry on the march.
2. Route to TINCOURT via LIERAMONT - LONGAVESNES.

5th Northants (pioneers). 4.00 p.m. 8.20 p.m. 11.00 p.m. MILLENCOURT

The 12th Division spent Christmas 1917 away from the front line in billets. They were billeted in Aire, Thiennes or Berguette. The 5th Northants were billeted in Thiennes (War Diaries). The 12th Division was considered lucky as it had already spent Christmas 1915 and 1916 out of the front line. The Divisional Artillery arrived back from Cambria on New Year's Day (Scott and Brumwell, 1923, page 161).

George sent a Christmas card printed by the 5th Battalion (Pioneers). There is no named person. The card listed the battles which they had been engaged in – Ypres, Loos, Somme, Hohenzollern, Ovillers and Arras. The card is made of card with a paper insert.

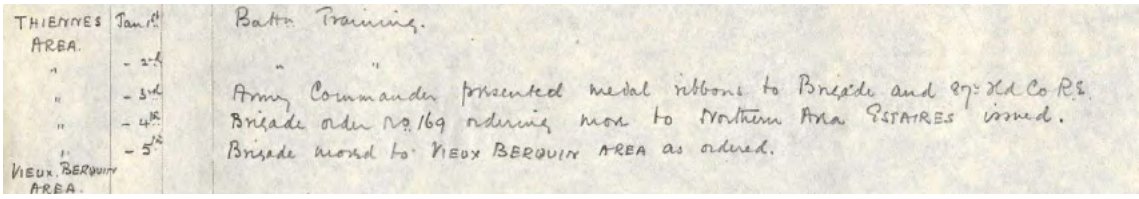
There is a Christmas card to George from his sister Mabel (May).

10. FRANCE – active service – 1918 postcards

January

There are no postcards dated January 1918.

The Division moved back to the front on 5 January with their headquarters at Merville. They began work on the trenches which were not in a good state. The War Diaries report there were quiet nights throughout January with some episodes of shelling.


THIENNES AREA. Jan 1st Batn Training.
" - 2nd " "
" - 3rd Army Commander presented medal ribbons to Brigade and 2nd Lt Co R.E.
" - 4th Brigade order No 169 ordering move to Northern Area ESTAIRES issued.
" - 5th Brigade moved to VIEUX BERQUIN AREA as ordered.
VIEUX BERQUIN AREA.

On 28 January, the 12th Division's infantry were relieved by different regiments and went into reserve. The War Diaries do not refer to the 5th Northants (Pioneers).

After the campaign of 1917, the question of man power became more serious and it was decided to reduce each infantry brigade by one battalion. In a brigade, there may have been three to five battalions which comprised approximately 1,500 to 4,000 soldiers.

February

There is one postcard dated February 1918 from George to Nellie on his return to France after his marriage in Northampton.

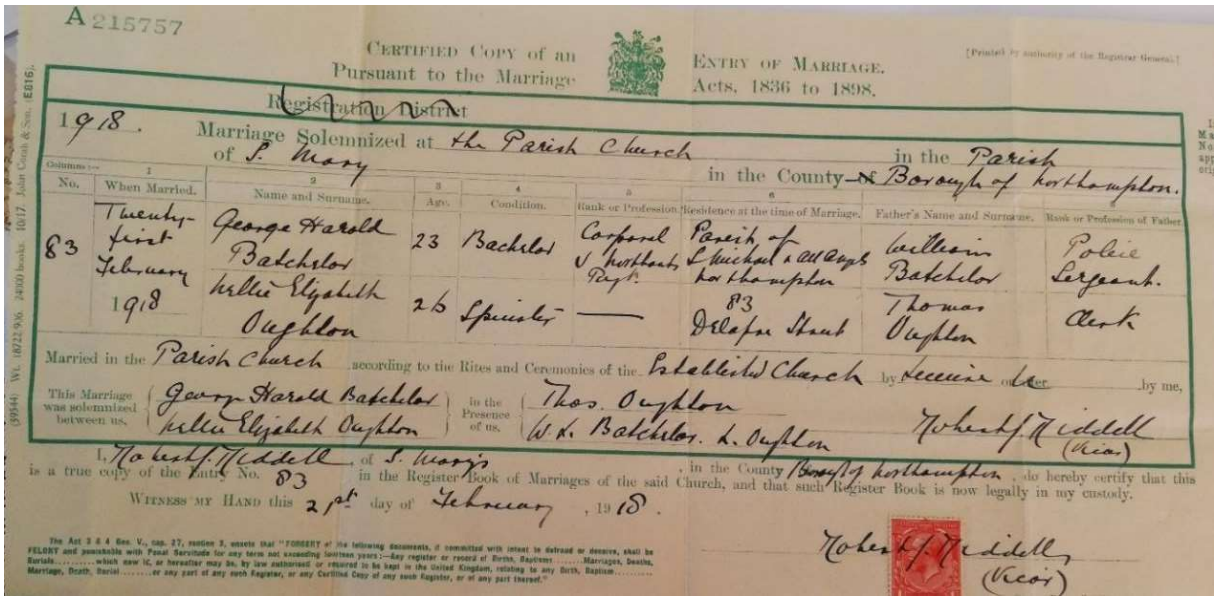
The War Records for the 37th Regiment state there was nothing to report in the first two weeks of February. There was increased artillery activity on 17 and 20 February due to good visibility and aerial activity on 16 and 21 February.

George returned home in **February 1918 to marry Nellie.** It is not known when he went on leave but they were married on **Thursday 21 February 1918** at St Mary Church, Far Cotton, Northampton.

On the marriage certificate he was said to be a **Corporal in the V Northants Regiment.** His marriage was witnessed by his brother William Lawrence Batchelor, Nellie's sister Lilian Oughton and Nellie's father Thomas Oughton. George was 23 and Nellie was 26. William Batchelor, his father, was a Police Sergeant in Northampton Town Centre and Thomas Oughton, Nellie's father, was a Clerk in the railway. Nellie, 26, was said to have no profession although she had been an apprentice book maker and lived with her parents and siblings at 83 Delapre Street, Northampton.

This may be a photograph taken on the wedding day of George Harold Batchelor and Nellie Elizabeth Oughton.

21 February 1918.



A 215757

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF MARRIAGE
Pursuant to the Marriage Acts, 1836 to 1898.

[Printed by authority of the Registrar General.]

Registration District

1918. Marriage Solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of S. Mary in the County ~~of~~ Borough of Northampton.

Columns:— No.	1 When Married.	2 Name and Surname.	3 Age.	4 Condition.	5 Rank or Profession	6 Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father
83	Twenty-first February 1918	George Harold Batchelor	23	Bachelor	Corporal N. Northants Regt.	Parish of S. Michael & All Angels Northampton	William Batchelor	Police Sergeant.
		Nellie Elizabeth Oughton	26	Spinster	—	83 Dallas Street	Thomas Oughton	Clerk

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Licence or Banns by me, Robert F. Meddell (Vicar)

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Harold Batchelor, Nellie Elizabeth Oughton in the Presence of us, Thos. Oughton, W. H. Batchelor, L. Oughton

I, Robert F. Meddell, of S. Mary's, in the County Borough of Northampton, do hereby certify that this is a true copy of the Entry No. 83 in the Register Book of Marriages of the said Church, and that such Register Book is now legally in my custody.

WITNESS MY HAND this 21st day of February, 1918.

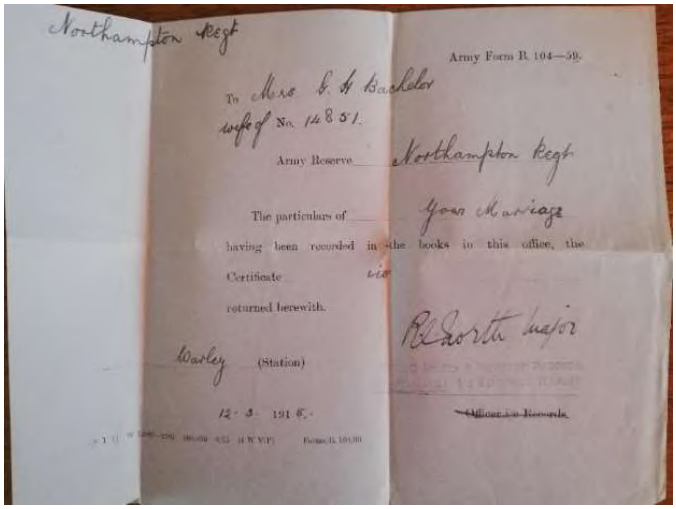
Robert F. Meddell (Vicar)

The Act 3 & 4 Geo. V., cap. 27, section 3, enacts that "FORGERY of the following documents, if committed with intent to defraud or deceive, shall be FELONY and punishable with Penal Servitude for any term not exceeding fourteen years:—Any register or record of Births, Baptisms ..... Marriages, Deaths, Burials ..... which now is, or hereafter may be, by law authorised or required to be kept in the United Kingdom, relating to any Birth, Baptism ..... Marriage, Death, Burial ..... or any part of any such Register, or any Certified Copy of any such Register, or of any part thereof."

Wt. 18722-906 24000 books 10/17 Judge Cecil & Son. E616.

Wedding Certificate of George Harold Batchelor and Nellie Elizabeth Oughton, 21 February 1918.

The marriage was recorded on Army Form B. 104 -59. It was registered on 12 March 1918 at Warley Station.



Northampton Regt

Army Form B. 104—59.

To Mrs B. A. Bachelor
wife of No. 148 51.
Army Reserve Northampton Regt

The particulars of your Marriage
having been recorded in the books in this office, the
Certificate
returned herewith.

R. L. Gorth Major
Officer i/c Records

Warley (Station)

12 - 3 - 1918.

The photograph is thought to have been taken in **February 1918** when George returned to be married. George has two chevrons on his uniform signalling he is a Corporal which would match the marriage certificate. William Lawrence (sitting) was in the cavalry as evidenced by the spurs on his boots.

The uniform of George identifies the badges and buttons which were kept by George and passed down the family. On the lapels of his collar are the badges which were adopted by the Pioneer Battalions, a cross rifle and pick.

On his epaulettes are the Northampton badges.

On his hat, there is the Gibraltar badge named after the Gibraltar Barracks in Northampton.

A set of buttons from his uniform were saved and tied up on an old piece of string.

On 25 February, George travelled back to Dover to return to France. He wrote, '*have just arrived at Dover. Feeling very blue. Don't know how long we have to wait here. Found Maude and Arthur alright, it was much better than waiting on the station. Will drop a line when we get overseas. I shall be not be sorry to get back to the Batt now I have got so far'.* It is not known who were Maude and Arthur.

In the War Diaries, the 37th Regiment were in working parties between 24 to 28 February. George would have returned to France and been employed in pioneering work.

March

There is one postcard from Nellie to George dated 7 Wed. In 1918, only the months of March and November had a Wednesday dated 7th, so it is assumed to have been written in March soon after their wedding.

In the card, Nellie wrote to George about her bike trip to Barby and added '*but oh, Duck it don't half make you remember times before. I think I wanted you more than ever last night if it were possible to'.* A poignant thought that immediately after their marriage, they were separated again.

In contrast to the normality of a bike ride in Northampton, during the night of 24 March in France, the 12th Division moved by bus to the vicinity of **Albert**, '*the men of the 5th were rushed up by motor-buses to Albert*' (Northamptonshire Regimental History, 2005, page 285). It was reported that a large body of Germans were moving on Albert and a company of the 5th Northants were sent to support the Suffolk Regiment in the town.

The War Diaries report the actions during 25 to 31 March. The 5th Northants moved to Bouzincourt on 25 March.

March 25th	a.m.	
	8.50	The Brigade Group, consisting of 37th Inf.Bde., 69th, 70th and 87th Field Companies, R.E., 5th Northants and 38th Field Ambulance, de-bussed at BOUZINCOURT.
	9.30	All went into billets at BOUZINCOURT.

April

There are two postcards dated April 1918. One is to George from Christine Sullivan in Reigate and one is from his mother.

During the **Battle of Bapaume**, companies of the 5th Northants fought on the front line as part of the Third Army. On 5 April at 1.40am, the 37th Brigade received notification that there was going to be an attack on Amiens. At 6am, the front and back lines were heavy shelled and shelling continued throughout the morning. At 1.30pm, the 5th Northants and Old Boys were told to hold the Corps Line. Shelling continued to 7pm (War Diaries).

	There are hard pressed.
1.30pm	Message received from Divn stating that 5th Northants & 37th Bde Corps have been ordered to hold the Corps line.

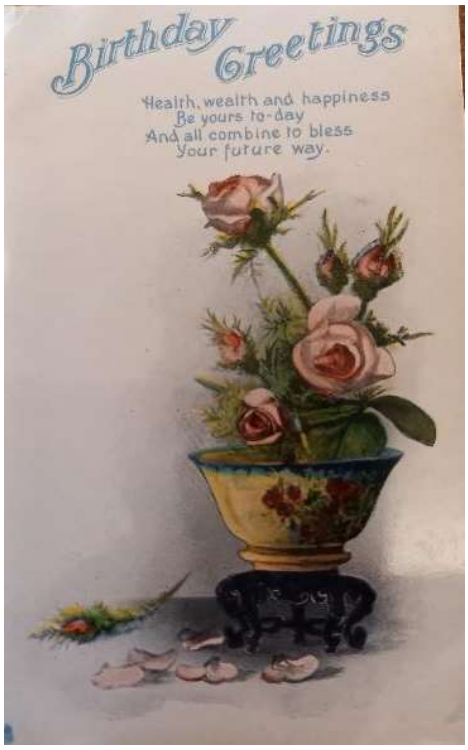
On 12 April, dry socks were sent up the front line as many men had wet feet. This was said to have helped save a lot of trench feet.

during the whole of this period. Dry Socks were sent up to the line with the rations every evening, this undoubtedly saved a lot of trench feet.

On 7 April, the 37th Brigade moved to support the 35th Brigade as the latter was very weak due to losses in men. There was heavy gas shelling with mustard and phosgene shells on 8 April in Senlis.

By 20 April, the 37th Brigade was moved back from the front line and placed in training.

On 26 April 1918, George was 24 years old. He was sent a birthday card from Christine in Reigate. She wrote, '*just a post card to wish you best wishes for a happy Birthday. I hope you will be home for good and the War over for your next Birthday'.* There is no address on the card so it must have been sent in a parcel and then returned to Nellie for safe keeping.



May to November

There are no postcards dated May to November. There is one postcard from Mrs Sullivan to Nellie on 11 November 1918, Armistice Day.

In May, the 37th Brigade moved in and out of the front line. At the start of June, they were in Puchevillers undergoing training. The 12th Division was notified on 5 June, that it would be transferred to the XXII Corps but administered by V Corps.

1. The 12th Division is transferred from V Corps to XXII Corps.

2. The Division will remain in its present location and will continue to be administered by V Corps until further orders.

3. The XXII Corps has been placed in G.H.Q. reserve and is composed as follows :-

12th Division.	17th Armoured Car Battalion.
37th Division.	82nd. Squadron, R.A.F.
58th Division.	

On 25 June, a report was sent detailing a planned attack. The 5th Northants (Pioneers) were told to wear a piece of cloth 4 by 2 inches sown on each shoulder below the shoulder strap as identification.

8. Distinguishing Marks.
(a) All ranks engaged in the operations, including Pioneers and R.E., will wear a piece of 4 by 2 sewn on each shoulder in continuation of, and below, the shoulder strap.

Another order was sent regarding an operation on 30 June/1 July. The companies of the 5th Northants (Pioneers) were allocated to each battalion to dig communication trenches across No Man's Land.

13. PIONEERS. Each Battalion will have placed at its disposal 1 Company (less 1 platoon) 5th Northamptonshire Regt. (Pioneers) to dig communication trenches across "No Man's Land" as follows :-

Right Battn.
(i) Open up old trench from junction of BOUNDARY TRENCH with Front Line to Sap at W.15.d.62.30. in German Front Line.

Left Battn.
(ii) From British Front Line at W.15.c.80.95.
to German Front Line at W.15.a.95.05.

Assembly Positions are given in Appendix "A"
These troops will move up under orders of Os.C. Battalions concerned.
On completion of work they will return to their Unit.

On 1 July, it was reported that the Pioneers went forward at 1.50am. There was a conference at Brigade Headquarters at 2.30pm and the Officer in Command of the Pioneer Battalion was present. Fighting and gassing continued throughout 1 and 2 July. During the night of 2 July into 3 July, the 5th Northants were part of Operation 2 to dig communication trenches across No Man's Land.

3. A party of 210 O.Rs. 5th Northamptonshire Regt. (Pioneers) will dig a connecting trench from W.15.d.75.80. linking up with Post at W.15.b.30.25. to Post in German Front Line at W.15.a.99.45.

4. Two parties of 45 O.Rs. each 5th Northamptonshire Regt. (Pioneers) will deepen and improve the Communication Trenches across No Man's Land.

The 37th Brigade were said to be 'holding old British front line' on 3 July. They were relieved from the front line by the 36th Brigade The completion of this relief process was given the code word, 'Beer'.

Ref:- 57D. S.E. 1:20,000 3rd July, 1918.

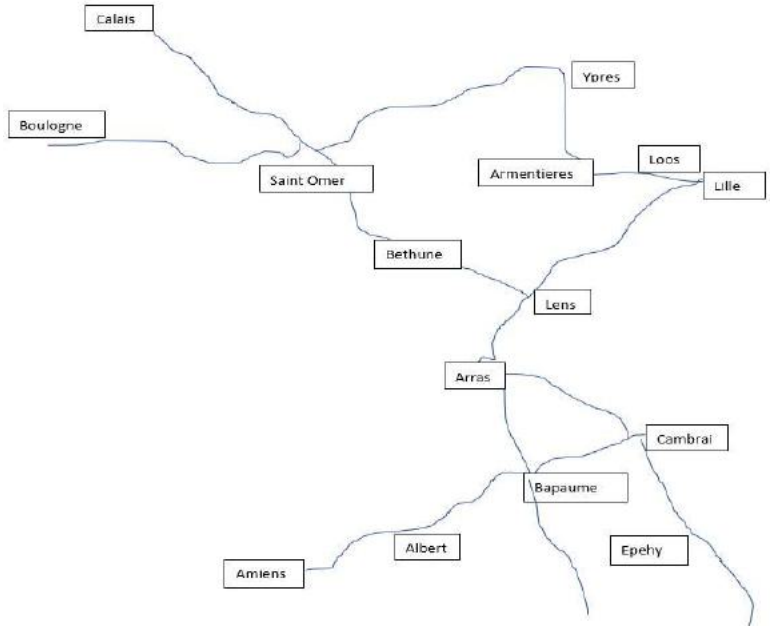
1. The 37th Inf.Bde. will be relieved by the 36th Inf. Bde. in the AVELUY Right Sector of the Divisional Front in accordance with the attached table.

2. On relief the Brigade will be in Divisional Reserve and Units will take over the same areas as vacated by them on June 29th, 1918.

3. Completion of relief will be reported to Brigade Headquarters by wiring the Code Word "BEER".

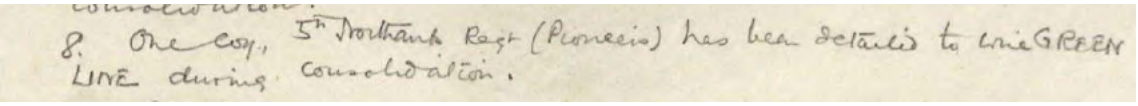
The 12th Division moved to XII Corps on 13 and 4 July 1918. They were initially to be moved by train and then route march to the south of **Amiens**. However, the order was changed to a bus and route march. There was no reference to the 5th Northants in these orders.

Diagram to show location of key places in France



The **Battle of Amiens** began on 8 August 1918 and became known as the start of the **Hundred Days Offensive** that ultimately led to the end of World War 1. On 8 August, the 5th Northants were in reserve for the main offensive towards Amiens. On 24 August, the 12th Division was part of an attack on the front line.

During this time, the 5th Northants were detailed to wire the Green Line.

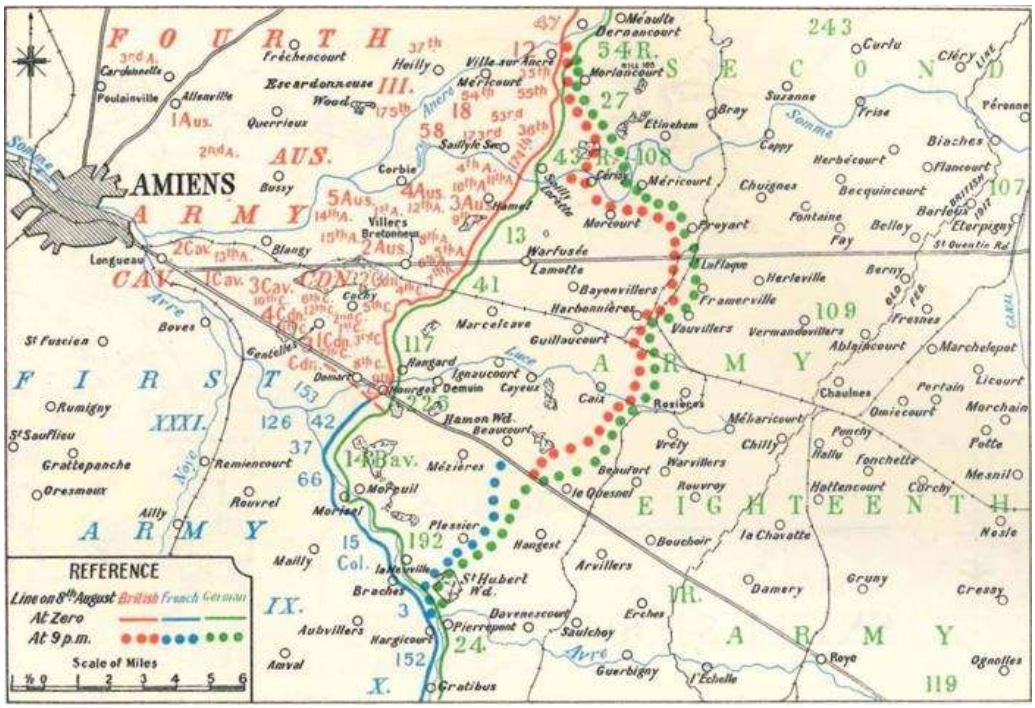

8. One coy., 5th Northants Regt (Pioneers) has been detailed to wire GREEN LINE during consolidation.

Map showing the red, green and blue lines –

8 August 1918.

Tank 100

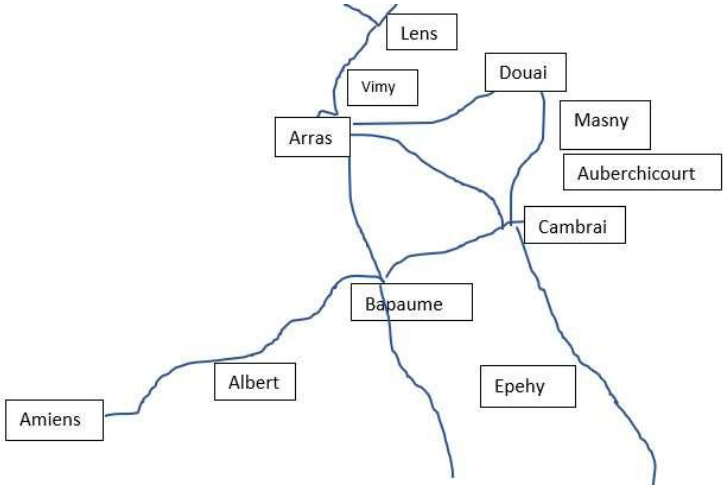
The Tank Museum website



The fighting continued until the end of the month with the 12th Division moving 11 miles forward according to the War Diaries.

On 6 September, a company of the 5th Northants (Pioneers) along with the Royal Engineers and 87th Field Company, built a 45-foot bridge over part of the Canal de Nord in 7 hours. It was strong enough to take heavy traffic. It was needed as part of the plan to attack and cross the Canal du Nord and move into the northern extension of the Hindenburg Line and capture the city of Cambria, a crucial German communications and supply centre. The attack on the Canal du Nord was due to take place on 27 September.

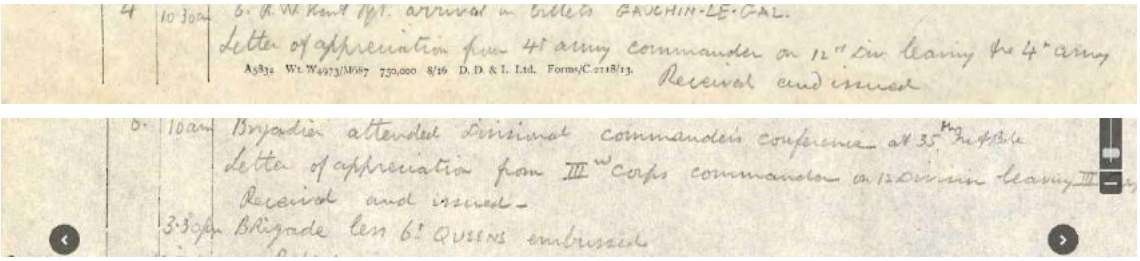
On 7 September, the advance party continued towards **Epehy.**



1918 Bapaume, Amiens, Epehy and Vimy area.

After a short rest, the 12th Division attacked on 18 September. Two companies of the 5th Northants, which were still joined to the 35th Brigade due to their high losses, dug into trenches. They were engaged in fighting for the next 12 days before being relieved on 30 September. The Division was so reduced in numbers it was said to be unfit for active operations until reinforced and so they were withdrawn from the battle front. Scott and Brumwell (1923) stated that *all ranks by their gallantry, zeal and determination in the face of every difficulty, had nobly borne their part in the triumph of the British Army over a formidable enemy, including the Royal Engineers and Pioneers by their skill and application* (page 212). There were 128 casualties in the 5th Northants (Pioneers) on 18 September 1918 (Mitchinson, 2014, page 252).

On 5 October, the 12th Division left by bus to the Proyart area and joined the VIII Corps of the First Army. They had letters of appreciation sent to them from the IV Army and III Army which they had left.


Letter of appreciation from 4th army commander on 12th Div leaving the 4th army
A5832 Wt. W4973/M687 750,000 8/16 D. D. & L. Ltd. Forms/C.2118/13.
Received and issued
10am Brigadier attended Divisional commander's conference at 35th Bde
Letter of appreciation from III Corps commander on 12 Division leaving III
Received and issued.
3.30pm Brigade less 6th QUEENS embussed

The 12th Division relieved the 20th Division in the front line at Oppy on 6 October 1918.

37TH INFANTRY BRIGADE
ORDER NO.235

Ref:- LENS 11 1:100,000
44A.S.W. 1:20,000 4th October, 1918.

1. The 12th Division, less Artillery, will relieve the 20th Divn., less Artillery, in the Centre Sector of the VIIIth Corps Front during the period 5/7th October, 1918.

The 12th Division continued to move forward taking the front line. The Pioneers, Royal Engineers and Field Companies were said to have earned a deep debt of gratitude from the Division. Scott and Brumwell (1923) stated that they carried out arduous tasks including repairing roads, removing obstacles and making bridges which on many occasions were under heavy fire. They also searched for booby traps and found 150 in three days in October in Mericourt and Billy-Montigny (page 224).

Photograph in A Private's War of the 5th Northamptonshire making roads (James, 2013, page 207).

At the start of November, the 12th Division was in Coutiches in training and recreation. When the **Armistice** was signed on **11 November 1918**, the 12th Division had already moved to the Masny-Auberchicourt-Somain-Erre area, east of Douai, with their headquarters at Masny. Initially they moved to Rumegies before going to Auberchicourt area on 26 November.

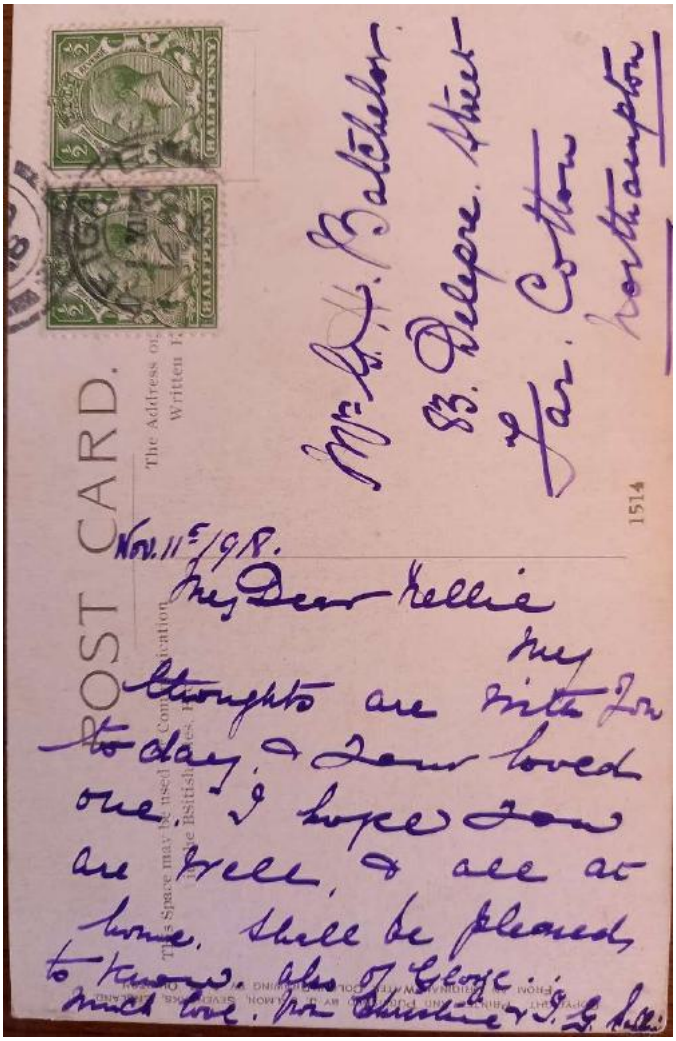
	6/11	Brigade Route March
	7/11	Training & Recreation
	8/11	Training & Recreation
	9/11	Training & Recreation. Warning order from Div: move to RUMEGIES - LESCELLES area on 10th
RUMEGIES.	10/11	Move to RUMEGIES - LESCELLES area. Bde HQ. 6th Buffs. 6th Queens 37th TMB. RUMEGIES. 6th Resident Rgt. LECELLES
	11/11	Armistice signed
	12/11	Chaplin General addresses Brigade. Thanksgiving Service
	13/11	Training continues
	14/11	Training

According to Scott and Brumwell (1923) the 5th Northants (Pioneers) made a racecourse on which two successful meetings were held. Firstly, there was the Association Football Tournament for the Major General Scott's cup which was won by the 9th Essex Regiment who beat the 5th Royal Berkshire Regiment. Secondly there was a cross-country race for Major General Higginson's cup which was won by the 9th Royal Fusiliers (Scott and Brumwell, page 226). In the War Diaries, it refers to men engaged in Training and Recreation, but it is not possible to identify any specific dates for these two events.

Between May 1915 when the 12th Division first landed in France and 11 November 1918, there had been 2,105 officers and 46,038 other ranks lost in action.

There were 1,700 men from Northampton town who were lost from the 6,000 killed who enlisted in the Northamptonshire Regiment.

Mrs Sullivan wrote to Nellie on Armistice Day.


POST CARD.

The Address only may be written here.

Nov. 11th/18.

My Dear Nellie

My thoughts are with you to day & your loved one. I hope you are well & all at home. Shall be pleased to know. Also of George.

Much love. From Christine & S. G. Sullivan.

Mrs G. H. Batchelor.
83. Pelham. Street
Far. Cotton
Northampton

1514

Postcard dated 11 November 1918.

Mrs Sullivan to Mrs G.H. Batchelor.

My thoughts are with you today and your loved one. I hope you are well and all at home. Shall be pleased to know also of George, Much love from Christine and S G Sullivan.

December

There are Christmas cards dated Xmas 1918.

On 1 December, the 12th Division had a church parade. On 4 December, there was a lecture on wireless telegraphy. There was an inspection and presentation of medal ribbons by the Divisional Commander, Major General H.W. Higginson D.S.O. on 10 December. The first party of men to be demobilised took place on 11 December 1918. During the rest of December, the 12th Division was on Salvage or Recreation duty alongside church parades. A football match took place on 30 December which was won by the 5th Regiment Berks with a score of 3 to 1 against 6th Regiment West Kent.

Mr and Mrs Sullivan wrote a card to George to send '*all the best of good wishes for Xmas 1918 and hoping you will soon be home and a safe return to old England*'.

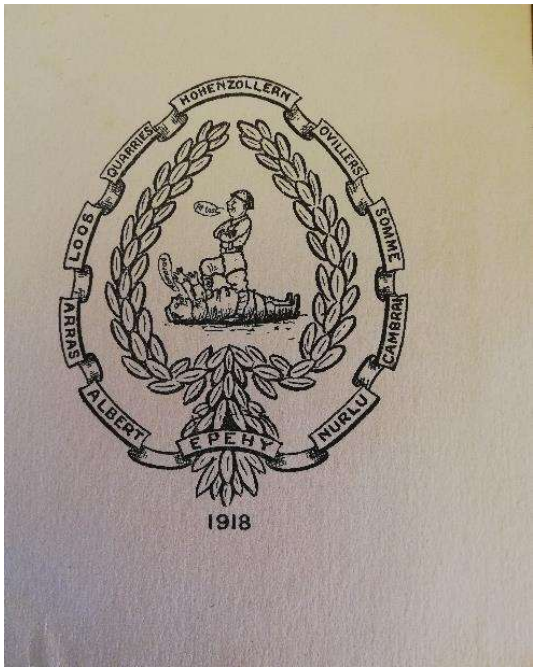
REAL PHOTO POST CARD

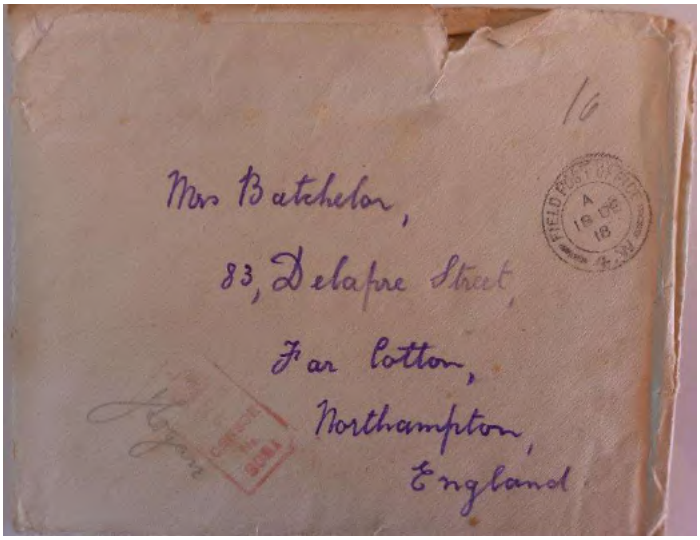
Printed in Great Britain.

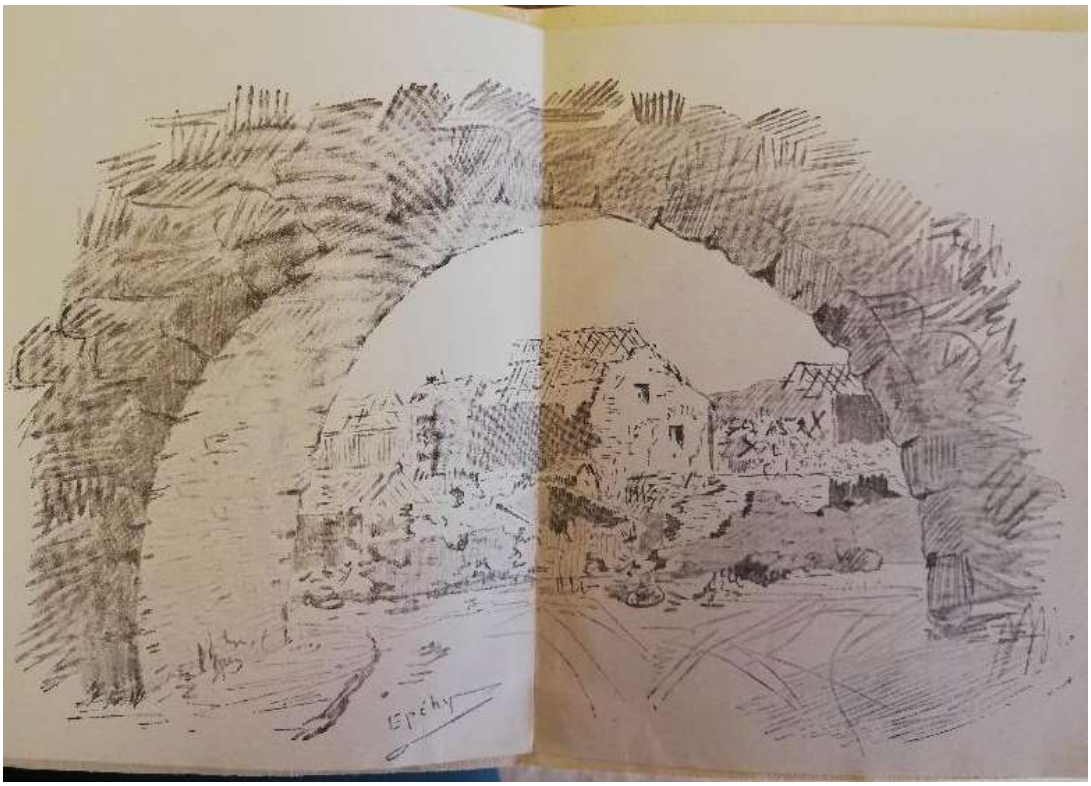
Address below.

Dear George. With all the best of good wishes for Xmas 1918. & hoping you will soon be home & a safe return to old England. from Mr. & Mrs Sullivan

The 5th Northants (Pioneers) Battalion produced its own Christmas card with a hand drawn image of **Epehy**. Inside it reads, '*from George with love'.* According to the Northamptonshire Regimental history (2003), Epehy was the last major conflict in which the 5th Northants were engaged and where 128 men were lost (page 307).







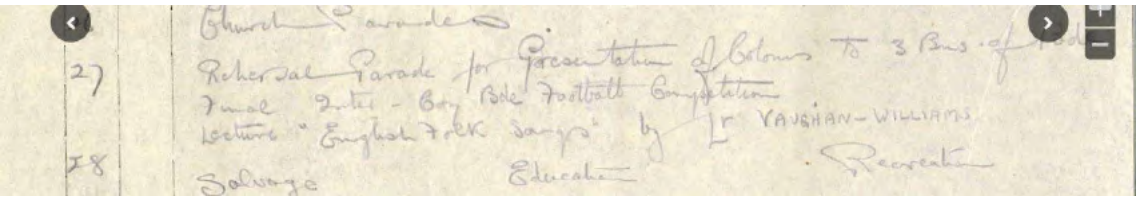
11. RETURNING HOME – 1919 postcards

George remained in **Calais, France** until March 1919. The postcards dated 1919 are stamped with a census mark and field post office codes.

January

There are two cards dated January 1919 from George to Nell who is no longer called Nellie but Nell on the postcards.

In January, the 12th Division continued to engage in salvage and recreation as they waited to be demobilised. There was a lecture on English Folk Songs by **Lt Vaughan Williams** on 27 January.



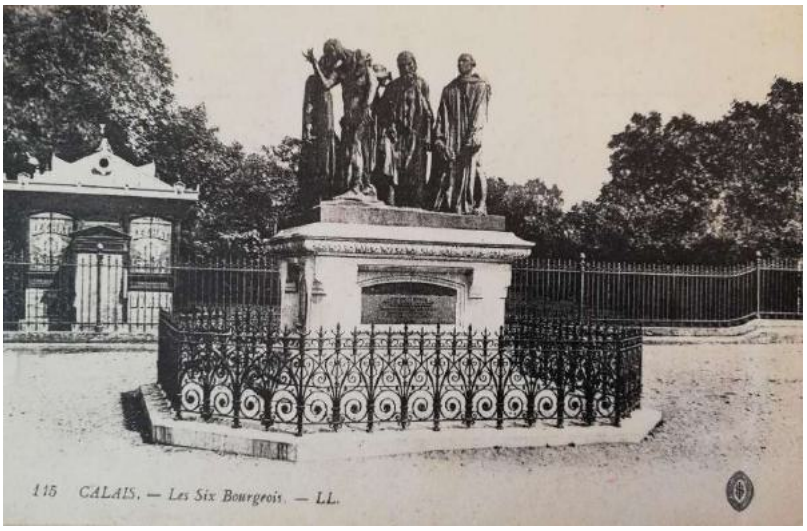
Williams was the Director of Music for the First Army between November 1918 and February 1919. He became the president of the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1932 and composed many famous pieces of music including The Lark Ascending and the score to the WW2 film 49th Parallel.

George will not have heard this talk though because he had begun the process of **demobilisation**. The demobilisation of men depended on the terms of his service. Men with scarce industrial skills including the miners were released first. Those who had volunteered early in the war were given priority. Before a soldier left his unit, he was examined medically and given forms relating to clothing and employment. Men spent time in a **transit camp** near the coast before being given a homeward sailing. Once they got back to England, they were given other certificates relating to identity and pay at a dispersal centre. George was based in a transit camp in Calais on 27 January 1919.

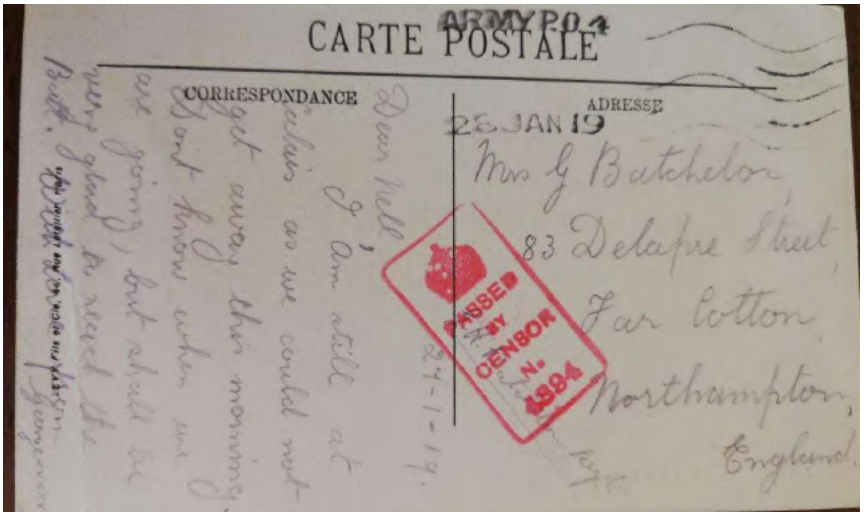
George and other men had travelled to Calais before 27 January 1919 as he wrote, '*I am still at Calais as we could not get away this morning. Don't know when we are going, but shall be very glad to reach the Batt.'.*

Postcard dated

27 January 1919



George had been promoted to a **Sergeant** according to the postcards sent in 1919**.** It is not known when**.**


CARTE POSTALE

ARMY P.O. 4

CORRESPONDANCE

ADRESSE

28 JAN 19

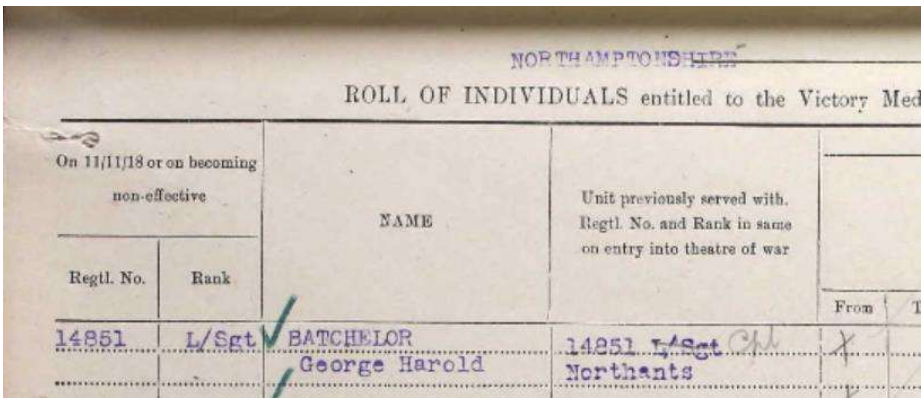
Mrs G. Batchelor
83 Delapre Street
Far Cotton
Northampton
England

PASSED BY CENSOR No. 1394

Dear Nell,
I am still at
Rouen as we could not
get away this morning.
Don't know when we
are going, but shall be
very glad to need the
Buff. [illegible]
Yours
George

24-1-19.

The Roll of Individuals entitled to the Victory Medal also identified he was as Lance Sergeant but it was crossed out in pencil and replaced with Corporal. This suggests it was a temporary appointment during the conflict of war.


NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the Victory Med

On 11/11/18 or on becoming non-effective		NAME	Unit previously served with, Regtl. No. and Rank in same on entry into theatre of war	
Regtl. No.	Rank			From
14851	L/Sgt	BATCHELOR George Harold	14851 ~~L/Sgt~~ Cpl Northants	X

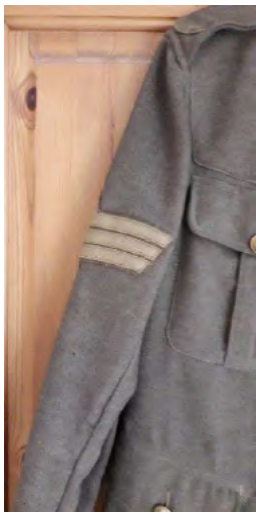
Lance Sergeants were not full sergeants, who had three gold chevrons, but they were allowed the same privileges. A photograph of George shows him with three white chevrons on his uniform which also signified his appointment to **Lance Sergeant.** It is not known when the photograph was taken. George does not have the 5th Northants (Pioneers) badges on the lapels of the collar. He is wearing the Ribbon medal for the 1914 Star above his left pocket. The single ribbon medal was found in a box in June 2020.

George Harold Batchelor – three white chevrons – Lance Sergeant.

The jacket with the three chevrons was kept after the war by George. It was handed down to his daughter, Mary, and she passed it to her daughter, Margaret, who has passed it to her son.

Photograph of George Batchelor's uniform.

July 2020.



Photographs taken on July 26 2020 by Margaret Knapton, grand-daughter of George Batchelor.

February

There are 4 postcards dated February 1919 sent from George to Nell.

George remained in Calais waiting to return to England. He bought a new set of postcards printed in Calais. He wrote to Nell on February 1, '*I hope you will like these cards. I bought them at Calais. I thought they would be alright for your album. Haven't got an envelope large enough to put them in so must send them one at a time'.*

Postcard dated

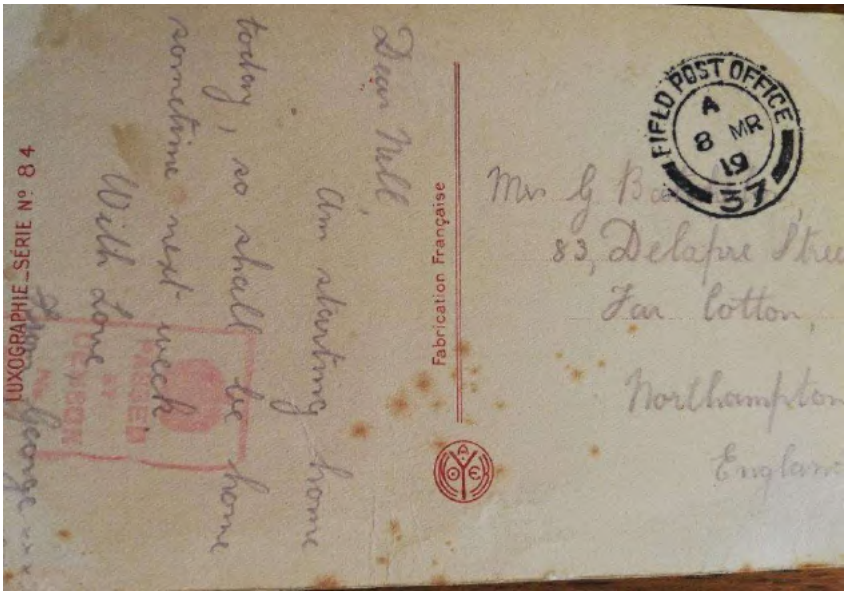
1 February 1919.

On 4 February 1919, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales spent two days with the 12th Division in Auberchicourt. He presented Colours to the Infantry Service Battalions during parades which were held at 10.30am, 11.45am and 2.30pm. The 5th Northamptonshire Regiment was in the second parade (Scott and Brumwell, 1923, page 226).

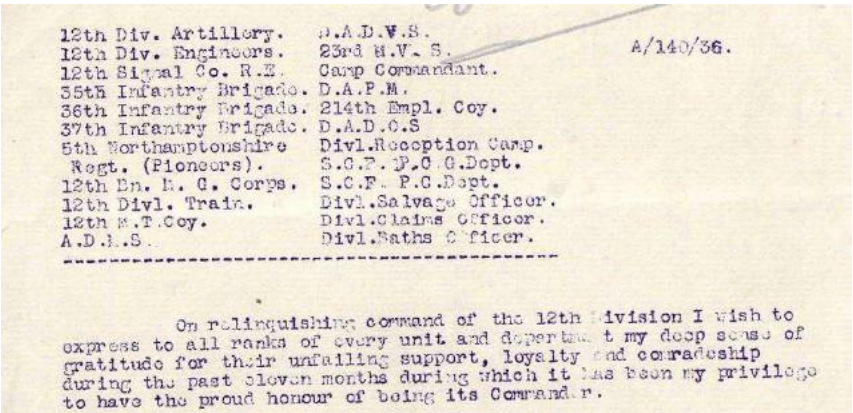
March

The last postcard in this story is dated **8 March 1919**. George wrote '*Dear Nell. Am starting home today, so shall be home sometime next week. With Love George xxxxxx*'

He had survived the war and began the process of leaving the Army.



On 16 March 1919, Major – General Higginson wrote a final letter to the 12th Division relinquishing command and expressing a deep sense of gratitude. It included a reference to the 5th Northants (Pioneers).



A/140/36.

12th Div. Artillery.	D.A.D.V.S.
12th Div. Engineers.	23rd M.V.S.
12th Signal Co. R.E.	Camp Commandant.
35th Infantry Brigade.	D.A.P.M.
36th Infantry Brigade.	214th Empl. Coy.
37th Infantry Brigade.	D.A.D.O.S
5th Northamptonshire Regt. (Pioneers).	Divl.Reception Camp.
	S.O.P. P.O.W.Dept.
12th Bn. M. G. Corps.	S.O.P. P.O.Dept.
12th Divl. Train.	Divl.Salvage Officer.
12th M.T.Coy.	Divl.Claims Officer.
A.D.R.S.	Divl.Baths Officer.

On relinquishing command of the 12th Division I wish to express to all ranks of every unit and department my deep sense of gratitude for their unfailing support, loyalty and comradeship during the past eleven months during which it has been my privilege to have the proud honour of being its Commander.

Chapter Four - After the War

Demobilisation Process

Form A.G.Z. 500 France

George was given a Unit Register Card which identified the dispersal area in the UK as 9B. The Unit Card summarised the military history of George. He was in the 5th Northamptonshire Regiment (Pioneers). He had been in the service for 4 years and 5 months. He had been in active service for 2 years and 10 months in the infantry. He was a Lance Sergeant. He had no specialist qualification. He had been a printer and was married.

George arrived back in England and went to the Dispersal Centre in Purfleet. The envelope is dated 13 March 1919. He was given various forms and certificates.

On 13 March 1919, George was given **Army Form Z.11 – Protection Certificate and Certificate of Identity.**

He was in the 5th Battalion, Northampton.

He was a Lance Sergeant.

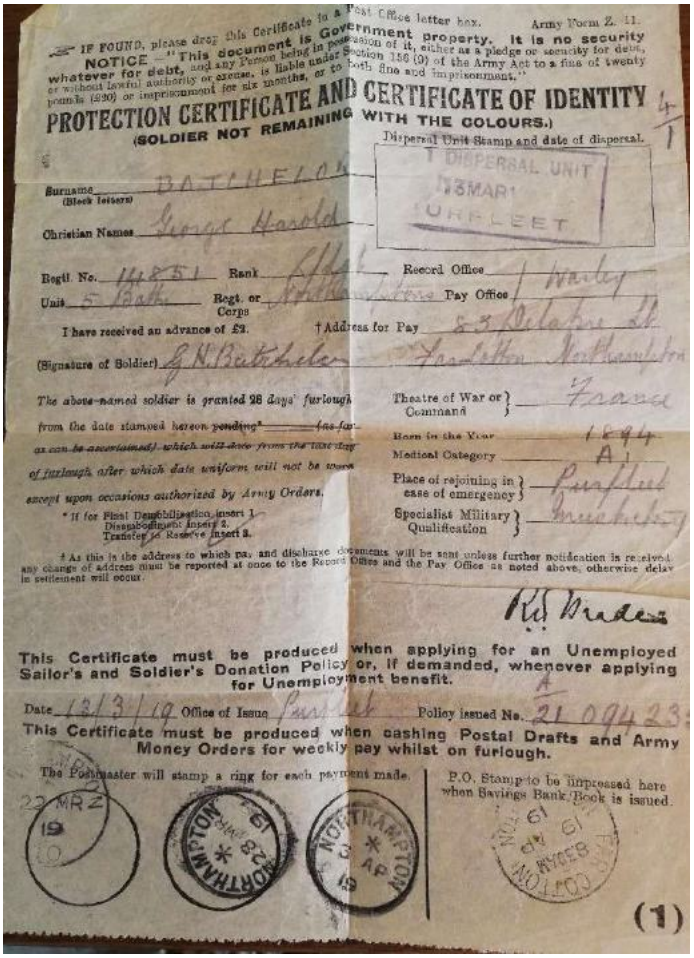
It has been stamped on different days as George cashed Postal Drafts and Army Money Orders for weekly pay whilst on furlough. He was granted 28 days furlough.

The form was stamped on 22 March, 28 March and 3 April in Northampton.

A Savings Book was issued on 19 April 1919 according to the stamp from Far Cotton, Northampton.

George was described medically as A1 and having a specialist military qualification in musketry.

He was not able to wear his uniform after the furlough ended.



Army Form Z. 11.

IF FOUND, please drop this Certificate to a Post Office letter box.

NOTICE.—"This document is Government property. It is no security whatever for debt, and any Person being in possession of it, either as a pledge or security for debt, or without lawful authority or excuse, is liable under Section 156 (9) of the Army Act to a fine of twenty pounds (£20) or imprisonment for six months, or to both fine and imprisonment."

PROTECTION CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY
(SOLDIER NOT REMAINING WITH THE COLOURS.)

Dispersal Unit Stamp and date of dispersal.

DISPERSAL UNIT 13 MAR PURFLEET

Surname (Block letters) BATCHELOR
Christian Names George Harold
Regtl. No. 14251 Rank Cpl. Record Office Warley
Unit 5 Bath Regt. or Corps Northamptons Pay Office
I have received an advance of £2. †Address for Pay 83 Delaine St. Far Cotton Northampton
(Signature of Soldier) G H Batchelor

The above-named soldier is granted 28 days' furlough from the date stamped hereon pending* ~~(as far as can be ascertained) which will date from the last day of furlough, after which date uniform will not be worn except upon occasions authorized by Army Orders.~~

Theatre of War or Command France
Born in the Year 1894
Medical Category A1
Place of rejoining in case of emergency Purfleet
Specialist Military Qualification Musketry

* If for Final Demobilization insert 1. Disembodiment insert 2. Transfer to Reserve insert 3.

† As this is the address to which pay and discharge documents will be sent unless further notification is received, any change of address must be reported at once to the Record Office and the Pay Office as noted above, otherwise delay in settlement will occur.

R.S. Bruce

This Certificate must be produced when applying for an Unemployed Sailor's and Soldier's Donation Policy or, if demanded, whenever applying for Unemployment benefit.

Date 13/3/19 Office of Issue Purfleet Policy issued No. A 21 09423

This Certificate must be produced when cashing Postal Drafts and Army Money Orders for weekly pay whilst on furlough.

The Postmaster will stamp a ring for each payment made.

P.O. Stamp to be impressed here when Savings Bank Book is issued.

22 MR 19 19

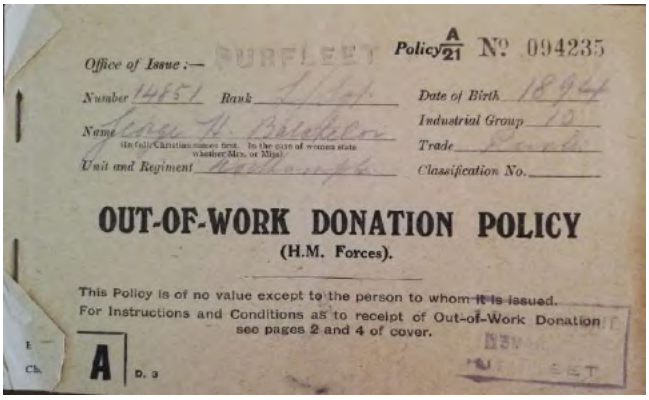
NORTHAMPTON 28 MAR 19

NORTHAMPTON 3 APR 19

FAR COTTON 19 APR 19 BRANCH

(1)

On 13 March 1919, George was given an **Out of Work Donation Policy**. His trade of printing was classified as an industrial group of 10. Out of work money was made available from 7 April 1919 to 8 April 1920. However, no money was ever drawn on this as George was employed by Northampton County Borough Police from 10 April 1919.



Office of Issue :— PURFLEET

Policy A/21 No. 094235

Number 14851 Rank Lance Sgt. Date of Birth 1894

Name George H. Batchelor (in full Christian names first. In the case of women state whether Mrs. or Miss) Industrial Group 10

Trade Printer

Unit and Regiment Northampton Classification No.

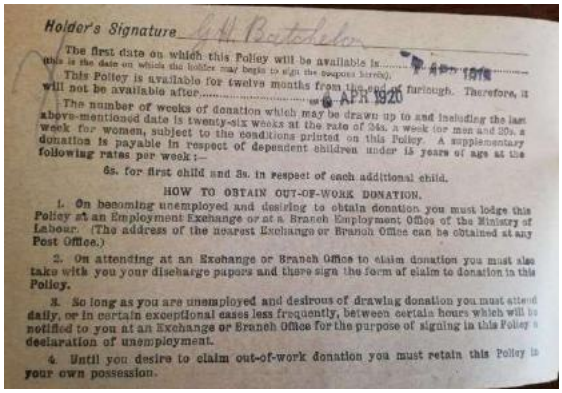
OUT-OF-WORK DONATION POLICY

(H.M. Forces).

This Policy is of no value except to the person to whom it is issued.

For Instructions and Conditions as to receipt of Out-of-Work Donation see pages 2 and 4 of cover.

A D. 3



Holder's Signature G. H. Batchelor

The first date on which this Policy will be available is 7 APR 1919 (this is the date on which the holder may begin to sign the coupon herein).

This Policy is available for twelve months from the end of furlough. Therefore, it will not be available after 8 APR 1920

The number of weeks of donation which may be drawn up to and including the last above-mentioned date is twenty-six weeks at the rate of 24s. a week for men and 20s. a week for women, subject to the conditions printed on this Policy. A supplementary donation is payable in respect of dependent children under 15 years of age at the following rates per week:—

6s. for first child and 3s. in respect of each additional child.

HOW TO OBTAIN OUT-OF-WORK DONATION.

1. On becoming unemployed and desiring to obtain donation you must lodge this Policy at an Employment Exchange or at a Branch Employment Office of the Ministry of Labour. (The address of the nearest Exchange or Branch Office can be obtained at any Post Office.)

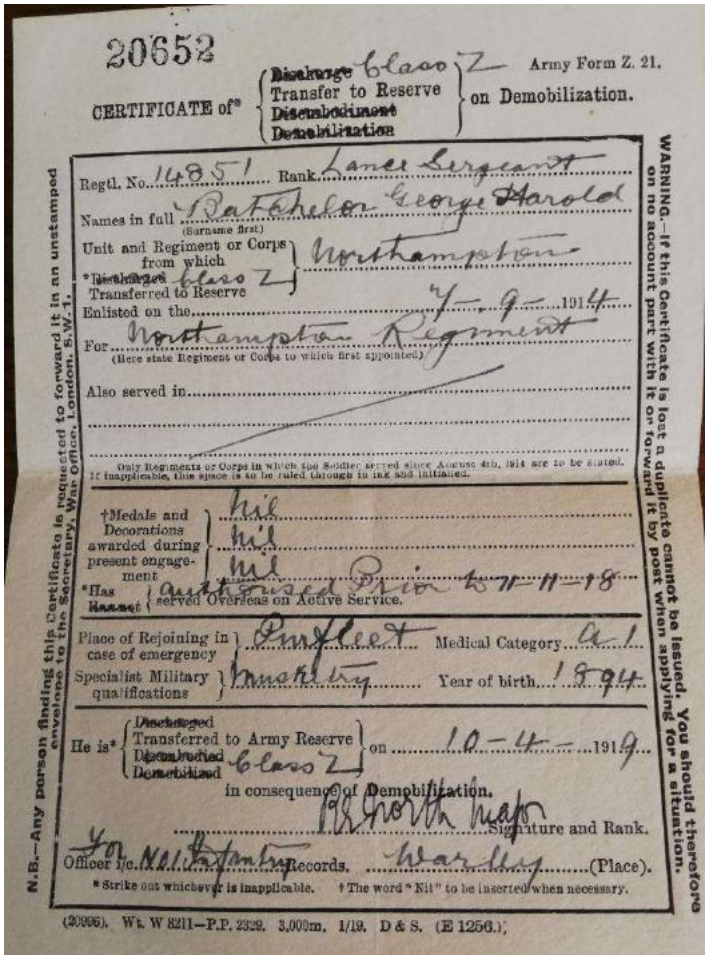
2. On attending at an Exchange or Branch Office to claim donation you must also take with you your discharge papers and there sign the form of claim to donation in this Policy.

3. So long as you are unemployed and desirous of drawing donation you must attend daily, or in certain exceptional cases less frequently, between certain hours which will be notified to you at an Exchange or Branch Office for the purpose of signing in this Policy a declaration of unemployment.

4. Until you desire to claim out-of-work donation you must retain this Policy in your own possession.

On 10 April 1919, George was given **Army Form Z.21 – Certificate to Reserve on Demobilisation.**

The information confirmed the information in the other documents. He was demobilised as Class Z Army Reserve which meant he was liable to be recalled in the event of grave national emergency. He was recorded as being a Lance Sergeant in the Northampton Regiment with a specialist military qualification in musketry. He had enlisted on 7 September 1914 and was demobilised on 10 April 1919 having served overseas on active service up to 11 November 1918.



20652

CERTIFICATE of* ~~Discharge~~ Class Z Transfer to Reserve ~~Disembodiment~~ ~~Demobilization~~ on Demobilization. Army Form Z. 21.

Regtl. No. 14851 Rank Lance Sergeant

Names in full Batchelor George Harold (Surname first)

Unit and Regiment or Corps from which ~~Discharged~~ Transferred to Reserve Northampton Class Z

Enlisted on the 7-9-1914

For Northampton Regiment (Here state Regiment or Corps to which first appointed)

Also served in

Only Regiments or Corps in which the Soldier served since August 4th, 1914 are to be stated. If inapplicable, this space is to be ruled through in ink and initialled.

†Medals and Decorations awarded during present engagement Nil Nil Nil

*Has ~~Served~~ served Overseas on Active Service. Aug 1916 Prior to 11-11-18

Place of Rejoining in case of emergency Purfleet Medical Category A 1

Specialist Military qualifications Musketry Year of birth 1894

He is* ~~Discharged~~ Transferred to Army Reserve ~~Disembodied~~ ~~Demobilized~~ Class Z on 10-4-1919 in consequence of Demobilization.

Pr North Mgr Signature and Rank.

For Officer i/c. Nat Infantry Records. Warley (Place).

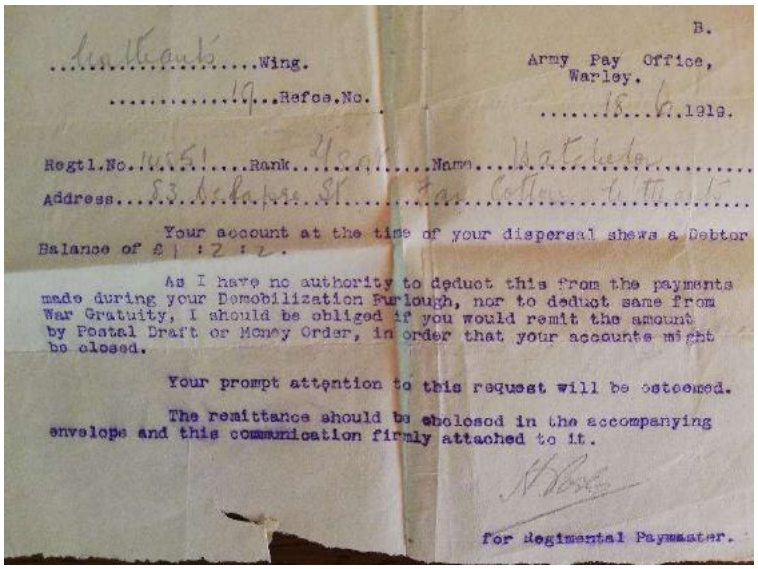
* Strike out whichever is inapplicable. † The word "Nil" to be inserted when necessary.

N.B.—Any person finding this Certificate is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary, War Office, London, S.W.1.

WARNING.—If this Certificate is lost a duplicate cannot be issued. You should therefore on no account part with it or forward it by post when applying for a situation.

(20996). Wt. W 8211—P.P. 2329. 3,000m. 1/19. D & S. (E 1256.)

In June 1919, George was asked to send £1, 2 shilling and 2d to the Army Pay Office, Warley in order to settle his account.



B.

Northants ....Wing.

Army Pay Office,
Warley.

....17....Refce.No.

....18...6..1919.

Regtl.No. 14851 ....Rank Sergt ....Name Batchelor

Address 53 Ashmore St. Nr. Cottenham Cambs.

Your account at the time of your dispersal shews a Debtor Balance of £1 : 2 : 2.

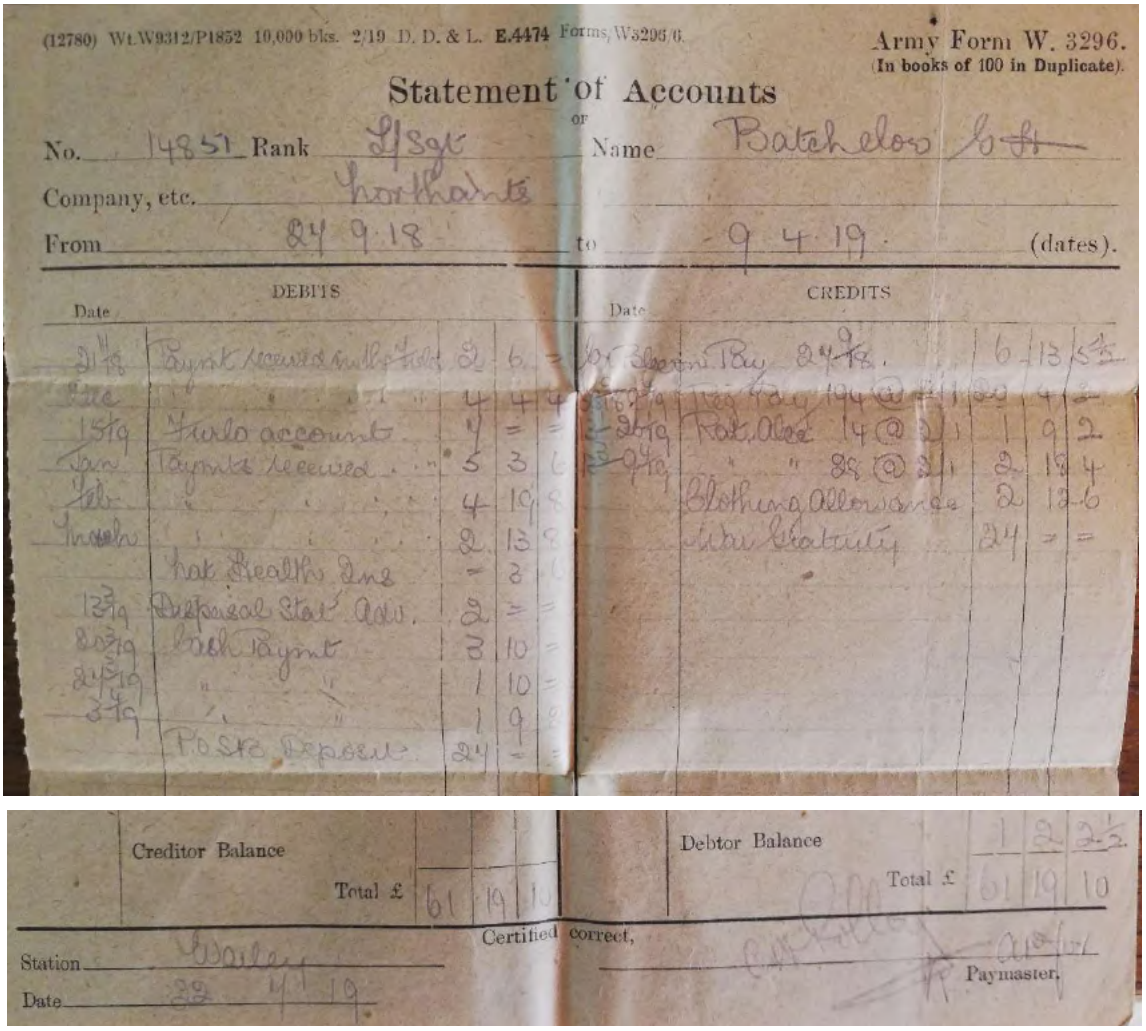
As I have no authority to deduct this from the payments made during your Demobilization Furlough, nor to deduct same from War Gratuity, I should be obliged if you would remit the amount by Postal Draft or Money Order, in order that your accounts might be closed.

Your prompt attention to this request will be esteemed.

The remittance should be enclosed in the accompanying envelope and this communication firmly attached to it.

for Regimental Paymaster.

The **Army Form W. 3296 Statement of Accounts** covered the period from 27 September 1918 to 9 April 1919.



(12780) Wt.W9312/P1852 10,000 bks. 2/19 D. D. & L. E.4474 Forms, W3296/6.

Army Form W. 3296.
(In books of 100 in Duplicate).

Statement of Accounts
or

No. 14851 Rank Sgt Name Batchelor

Company, etc. Northants

From 24.9.18 to 9.4.19 (dates).

Date	DEBITS				Date	CREDITS			
21/18	Pymt received on leave	2	6	=		Balance Pay 24/9/18	6	13	5½
Dec	" " "	4	4	4		Reg Pay 194 @ 2/1	19	4	=
15/19	Final account	4	=	=		Rat. Allce 14 @ 2/1	1	9	2
Jan	Pymts received	5	3	6		" 89 @ 2/1	2	13	4
Feb	" " "	4	10	8		Clothing Allowance	2	12	6
March	" " "	2	13	8		War Gratuity	24	=	=
	Nat Health Ins	=	3	6					
13/3/19	Dispersal Stat Adv.	2	=	=					
20/3/19	Back Pymt	3	10	=					
24/3/19	" "	1	10	=					
3/4/19	" "	1	9	2					
	Postal Deposit	24	=	=					

Creditor Balance					Debtor Balance		1	2	2½
Total £		61	19	10	Total £		61	19	10

Certified correct,

Station Warley

Date 22/4/19

Paymaster.

Northampton Police Constable

George joined the Northampton County Borough Police Force on 10 April 1919 as a Police Constable, PC 95. This was the same day he was demobilised from the Northamptonshire Regiment. He moved from one uniformed role to another. His father, William Batchelor, a Police Sergeant, PS 49, retired from the Northampton Police Force on 14 September 1922.

George Batchelor PC 95 Northampton County Borough Police.

George's police beat was Northampton Town Centre. He sometimes stood on point duty at the meeting of the Drapery, Mercers Row, Gold Street and Bridge Street, Northampton. The Northampton Chronicle and Echo reported typical incidents which George dealt with as a police constable in the years after the war. For example, speaking to drunk men on 28 August 1922 and 8 December 1923 and dealing with a man driving a car with no licence on 17 October 1924. It was certainly a different role than digging the trenches and building roads but he still needed to be physically fit and resilient in responding to these behaviours. It seems a strange coincidence that his grandson, Keith, would manage a riding/clothes shop on Gold Street sixty years later when he and I moved to Northamptonshire after our marriage.

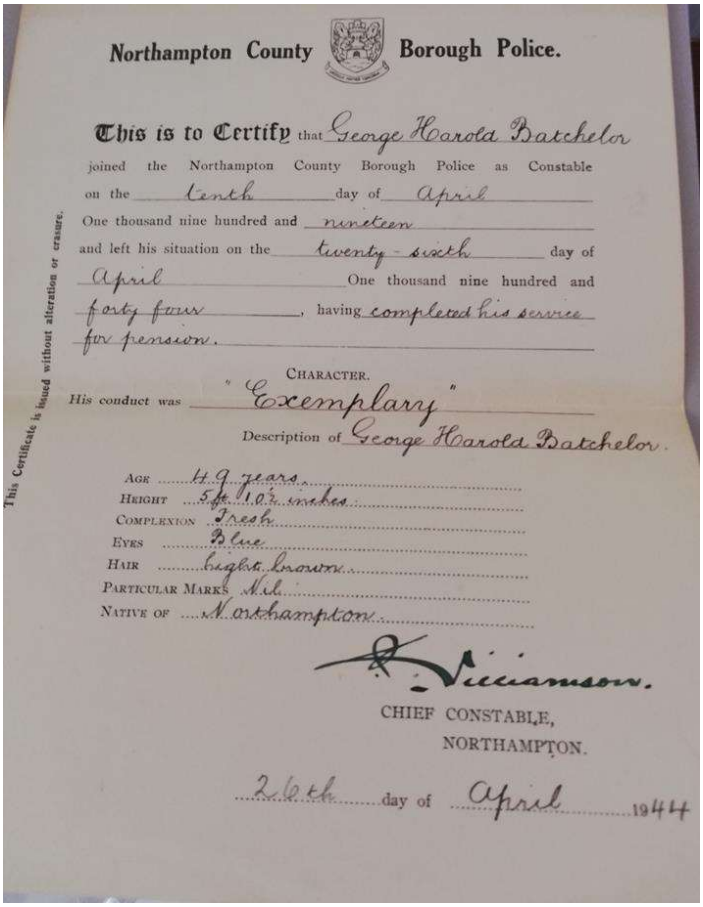
It is not clear where George and Nellie lived when he returned from France in March 1919. However, in 1920, they purchased 33 Thirlestane Road, Northampton which was a 3-bedroom terrace house. On 19 November 1920, George applied for an advance of £80 to purchase the house at an interest rate of 5 ½ %. On 23 December 1926, the deeds were given to George. George and Nellie had two children, Mary Elizabeth and Kenneth George.

George was given a police bike which was replaced in the late 1930s. However, he continued to use the old bike and would only use the new one for special occasions. The bike was always kept clean and polished in the front room of his house.

He retired from the police force on 26 April 1944, one day before his 50th birthday having completed 25 years of service. His conduct was said to have been exemplary.

He continued to have problems with his feet after the war. His daughter's children, Margaret and Helen, recalled in 2020, that he took a lot of care of his shoes and feet. His son's daughter, Christine, added that he polished inside the shoe as well as outside, a habit gained from the war.

There are no details in his Army records about his height. However, in the Police record on his retirement he was said to be 5ft 10 ½ in. He may have been a little smaller due to age than when he joined the 7th Northants in 1914, but maybe this confirms why he did not meet the height standards of 6ft to join the Life Guards in 1914.



Northampton County Borough Police.

This Certificate is issued without alteration or erasure.

This is to Certify that George Harold Batchelor joined the Northampton County Borough Police as Constable on the tenth day of April One thousand nine hundred and nineteen and left his situation on the twenty-sixth day of April One thousand nine hundred and forty four, having completed his service for pension.

CHARACTER.

His conduct was "Exemplary"

Description of George Harold Batchelor.

AGE 49 years.
HEIGHT 5 ft. 10½ inches.
COMPLEXION Fresh
EYES Blue
HAIR Light brown
PARTICULAR MARKS Nil
NATIVE OF Northampton

R. Williamson.
CHIEF CONSTABLE,
NORTHAMPTON.

26th day of April 1944

Nellie was ill as early as 1910, age 18, according to information within other postcards which she kept. She died from breast cancer on 18 December 1941, age 50.

George married Evelyn Winnifred Alice Page in July 1942, six months after the death of Nellie.

Evelyn, a tailoress, was born 15 March 1909 and she was a friend of George who enjoyed dog walking.

Evelyn was called Aunt Evelyn and George would not allow her to be called grandma.

George and Evelyn continued to live at 33 Thirlestane Road, Northampton. In the 1939 Register, Nellie's elder sister, Elsie and her husband, Arthur Blake, lived next door at 35, Thirlestane Road.

George died on 13 September 1979 in a home in Rushcliffe, Nottingham, age 85, where he had moved to be closer to his daughter, Mary.

George came back to Northampton to be buried. This is another story which needs to be added as recalled by his niece, Margaret Batchelor, daughter of William Lawrence Batchelor, on 15 November 2015.

He had a hurst to carry him back from Nottingham to Northampton for the funeral. This broke down and the only transport available was a hatchback. As he was so tall, they had to put the coffin in at an angle. George was very regimented so it was considered ironic that it was not so neat and fixed.

BATCHELOR — George Harold (late Thirlestane Road) passed peacefully away on September 13, 1979, aged 85, in a nursing home in Nottingham. Beloved husband of Evelyn, dear father of Mary and Ken, and Andrew and John. Also grandchildren and great grandchildren. Service at St. Mary's Church, Far Cotton, on Friday, September 21, at 2 pm, followed by interment at Towcester Road Cemetery. All flowers to the church please.

BATCHELOR — George Harold, passed away peacefully. Remembered with affection by his family.

The newspaper article was wrong.

Andrew should have been Audrey, the wife of Ken.

Newspaper cutting. Unknown paper and date.

Evelyn died on 9 September 1988 after spending some time living in a care home in Leicester, nearer to her stepson, Ken Batchelor.

Children of George and Nellie

George and Nellie had two children, Mary Elizabeth and Kenneth George Batchelor.

l-r Kenneth George (Ken) Batchelor George Harold Batchelor Mary Elizabeth Batchelor

l-r Mary Elizabeth Nellie (Nell) Batchelor Kenneth George (Ken) Batchelor

George and Nellie took their two children on holidays during the 1920s and 1930s to Hastings, Yarmouth, Brighton, Shoreham and Southwick as well as places in Derbyshire, Bedford and Nottinghamshire.

They always had a dog.

Photograph, Yarmouth 1926.

Their daughter**, Mary Elizabeth,** married **John Wilkins** and had three children, Helen, Margaret and Jane. They had an adopted son, Michael.

- Helen married Christopher Raymond and they have two sons, Philip and Jonathan. Philip married Wendy and they have two sons, Matthew and Henry. Jonathan married Clare.
- Margaret married Christopher Knapton and they have three children, Rebecca, David and Alexander. Rebecca has a son William. David has a daughter, Martha, from his marriage to Kathryn and a son, George Tom from his second marriage to Amy**.** Alexander married Rebecca Lily and they have a son, Elijah.
- Jane married Philip Smith and they have a son, Stephen. Stephen has a partner Oona.

Their son**, Kenneth George (Ken) married Audrey Watts Smale** and had four children, Michael, Barbara, Christine and Keith.

- Michael was sadly still born.
- Barbara married Jeff Watts and they had two children, Steven and Lisa. Barbara sadly died aged 26. Steven married Susie and they have two children, Jamie and Holly. Lisa married Alan Goody and they have three children, Alex, Hayley and Ryan.
- Christine married David Giddens and had two children, Karen and Sophie. Karen married Mark Chamberlain and have two sons, Jacob and Edward.
- Keith married Elaine Brittan and had two children, James Kenneth Batchelor and Anna-Marie Emma Batchelor. James married Sophie Hambleton and they have a daughter Freya Maisie Batchelor. Anna has a partner Paul Beauchamp.

A Tour of the WWI Battle Fields 1939

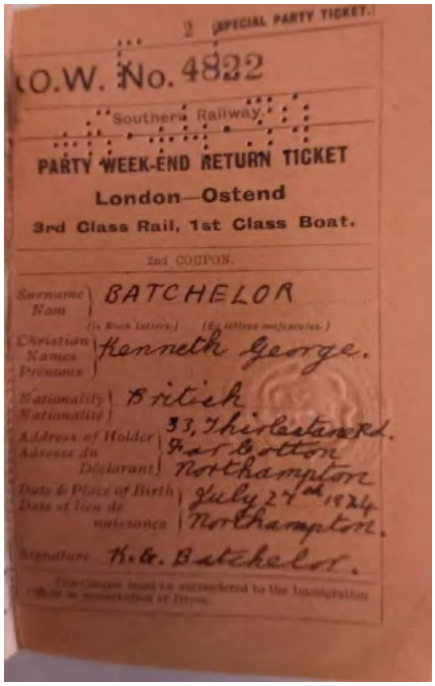
In March 1939, Ken, age 15, and his father, George Harold, age 45, went to visit the sites in which the 12th Division had fought during WWI in France and Belguim. The tour was arranged via Frames Tours and called the 12th Eastern Division, Easter Battlefields Tour 1939. The documents related to the tour were kept by Ken Batchelor.

The 6 day tour started on Thursday 6 April 1939 with a train journey from Victoria Station, London to Dover leaving at 22.30 and arriving at 00.39.

A steamer left Dover at 1.00am and arrived at Ostend on Friday 7 April at 5.00am.

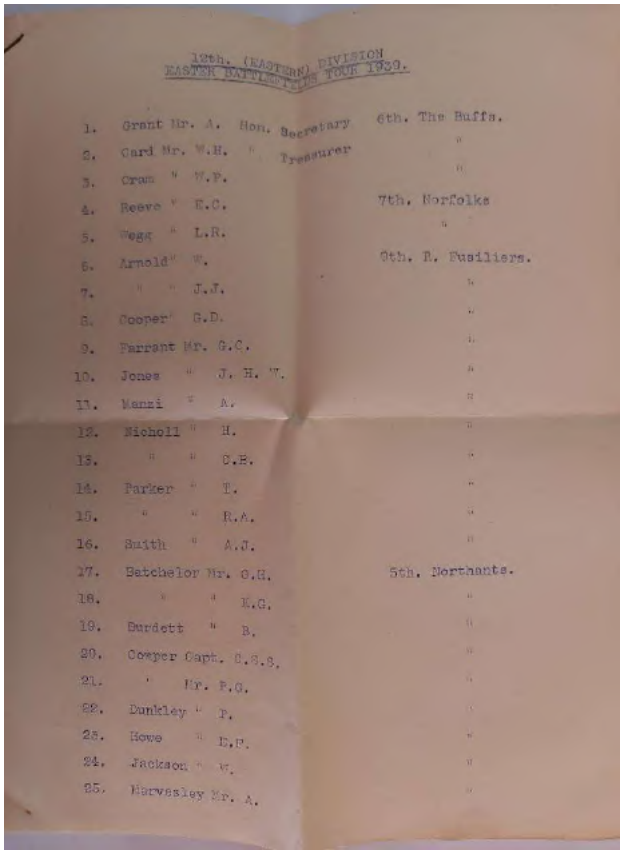
The return journey took place on Tuesday 11 April 1939.

There were 53 men from different Regiments who were all associated with the 12th Division.



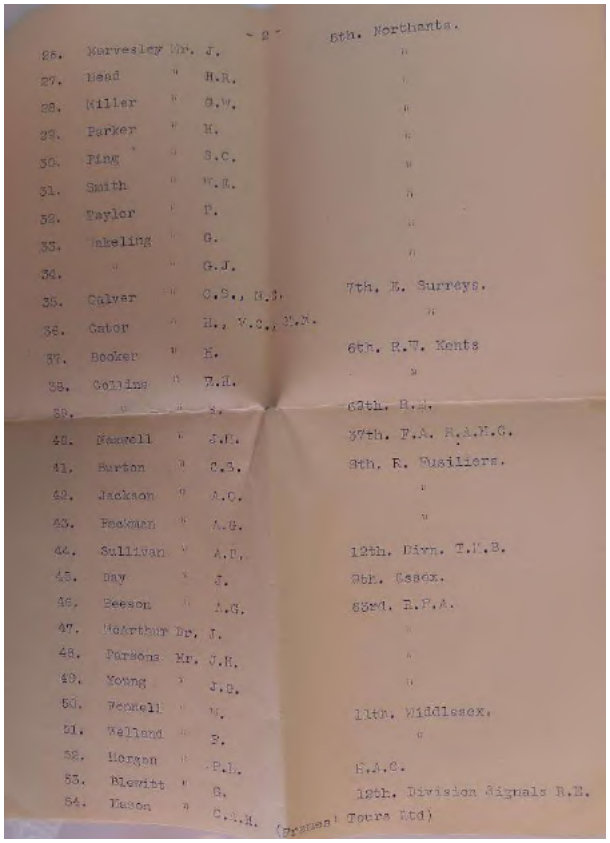
The men on the tour were from different regiments with many stories to tell and poignant memories to consider. The number in brackets is the number of people from each regiment.

6th Buffs (x3), 7th Norfolks (x2), 9th Royal Fusiliers (x 11), 5th Northants (x18), 7th East Surreys (x2), 6th Royal West Kents (x2), 69th Royal Engineers (x1), 37th Field Ambulance Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) (x1), 8th Royal Fusiliers (x3), 12th Division Trench Mortar Battery (T.M.B). (x1), 9th Essex (x1), 63rd Royal Field Artillery (x4), 11th Middlesex (x2), Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) (x1) and 12th Division Signals Royal Engineers (RE) (x1). There are 7 occasions when there are duplicate surnames which may suggest that a son was being taken on the tour with their father.



12th. (EASTERN) DIVISION
EASTER BATTLEFIELDS TOUR 1939.

1.	Grant Mr. A.	Hon. Secretary	6th. The Buffs.
2.	Card Mr. W.H.	" Treasurer	"
3.	Cram " W.F.		"
4.	Reeve " E.C.		7th. Norfolks
5.	Wegg " L.R.		"
6.	Arnold " W.		9th. R. Fusiliers.
7.	" " J.J.		"
8.	Cooper " G.D.		"
9.	Farrant Mr. G.C.		"
10.	Jones " J. H. W.		"
11.	Manzi " A.		"
12.	Nicholl " H.		"
13.	" " C.E.		"
14.	Parker " T.		"
15.	" " R.A.		"
16.	Smith " A.J.		"
17.	Batchelor Mr. C.H.		5th. Northants.
18.	" " E.G.		"
19.	Burdett " B.		"
20.	Cooper Capt. S.S.S.		"
21.	" Mr. F.G.		"
22.	Dunkley " P.		"
23.	Howe " E.F.		"
24.	Jackson " W.		"
25.	Harvesley Mr. A.		"



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26.	Harvesley Mr. J.		5th. Northants.
27.	Mead " H.R.		"
28.	Miller " S.W.		"
29.	Parker " H.		"
30.	Ring " S.C.		"
31.	Smith " W.E.		"
32.	Taylor " P.		"
33.	Wakeling " G.		"
34.	" " G.J.		"
35.	Calver " G.S., M.S.		7th. E. Surreys.
36.	Cator " H., V.C., D.S.O.		"
37.	Booker " H.		6th. R.W. Kents
38.	Collins " E.H.		"
39.	" " S.		69th. R.E.
40.	Maxwell " J.P.		37th. F.A. R.A.M.C.
41.	Burton " C.S.		8th. R. Fusiliers.
42.	Jackson " A.C.		"
43.	Peakman " A.G.		"
44.	Sullivan " A.E.		12th. Divn. T.M.B.
45.	Day " J.		9th. Essex.
46.	Beeson " A.G.		63rd. R.F.A.
47.	McArthur Dr. J.		"
48.	Parsons Mr. J.H.		"
49.	Young " J.S.		"
50.	Pennell " W.		11th. Middlesex.
51.	Welland " E.		"
52.	Morgan " P.L.		H.A.C.
53.	Blewitt " G.		12th. Division Signals R.E.
54.	Mason " C.A.H.		

(Grenes' Tours Ltd)

The tour started after an English breakfast at the Avenue Hotel in Ostend at 5.45am. A bus then took the group to Arras via Ypres – Ploegsteert Wood (for a stop) – Armentieres – Fleurbaix – Neuve Chapelle – La Bassee – Hulluch (stop) – Lens – Arras. After lunch in Arras, they travelled to Feuchy Chapel – Cross Roads (stop at Divisional Memorial) – Monchy-Le Preux (stop) – Roeux – Gavrelle – Bailleul – Thelus to Vimy Ridge with stops at the Canadian Memorials, Tunnels and Preserved Trenches. Return to Arras and meal.

On Saturday 8 April, they travelled from Arras – Beaurains – Boyelles – Ervillers – Bapaume – Transloy – Rancourt – Peronne – Roisel – Epehy and a stop at the Divisional Memorial – Ossus – Le Catelet. After a packed lunch they continued to Bantouzelle – Gouzeaucourt – Le Pave – Cambrai and back to Arras.

On Sunday 9 April, they travelled from Arras to Puisieux – Auchonvillers – Mesnil – Aveluy – Ovillers (stop) – Thiepval – Pozieres – Albert. After lunch at the Hotel de France et Angleterre, they travelled to Morlancourt – Meaulte – Fricourt – Mametz – Montauban – Longueval – Flers – Gueudecourt – Bapaume and back to Arras.

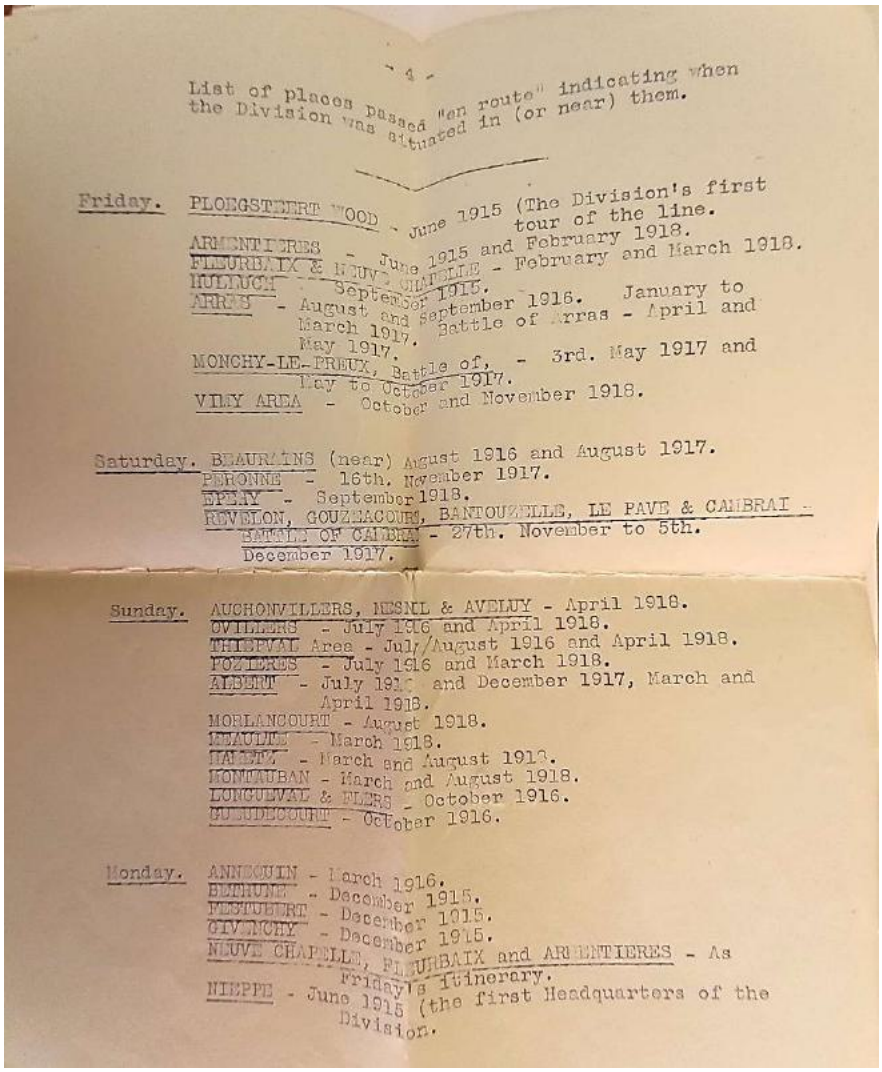
On Monday 10 April, they travelled from Arras to Aix – Noylette – Bully-Grenay – Vermelles – Hulluch (stop) – Annequin – Festubert – Neuve Chapelle – Fleurbaix – Armentieres. After lunch they travelled to Nieppe – Bailleul – Abeele – Poperinghe – Ypres. They had dinner at the Hotel Splendid in Ypres

and attended the Last Post at Menin Gate Memorial at 9pm. They travelled to Ostend and embarked on a night steamer to Dover.

They arrived back on Tuesday 11 April at Victoria Station, London at 7.20am.

The men were told that no passports were needed as the pink coupon in their travel ticket took the place of the passport. However, they did need to take some form of identification with them. They were told not to take too many cigarettes with them as the French Customs were very strict in regard to the importation of these. Interestingly the men were advised to take a bar of soap with them in their hand luggage. And to remember to bring their medals and wear a 12th Division Badge.

In the tour details, the places were listed in relation to the battles in which the 12th Division was situated in or near to.



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List of places passed "en route" indicating when the Division was situated in (or near) them.

Friday. PLOEGSTEERT WOOD - June 1915 (The Division's first tour of the line.
ARMENTIERES - June 1915 and February 1918.
FLEURBAIX & NEUVE CHAPELLE - February and March 1918.
HULLUCH - September 1915.
ARRAS - August and September 1916. January to March 1917. Battle of Arras - April and May 1917.
MONCHY-LE-PREUX, Battle of, - 3rd. May 1917 and May to October 1917.
VILLY AREA - October and November 1918.

Saturday. BEAURAINS (near) August 1916 and August 1917.
PERONNE - 16th. November 1917.
EPEHY - September 1918.
REVELON, GOUZEACOURT, BANTOUZELLE, LE PAVE & CAMBRAI - BATTLE OF CAMBRAI - 27th. November to 5th. December 1917.

Sunday. AUCHONVILLERS, MESNIL & AVELUY - April 1918.
OVILLERS - July 1916 and April 1918.
THIEPVAL Area - July/August 1916 and April 1918.
POZIERES - July 1916 and March 1918.
ALBERT - July 1916 and December 1917, March and April 1918.
MORLANCOURT - August 1918.
BEAULIEU - March 1918.
HALLEY - March and August 1918.
MONTAUBAN - March and August 1918.
LONGUEVAL & FLERS - October 1916.
GUILLEMONT - October 1916.

Monday. ANNEQUIN - March 1916.
BETHUNE - December 1915.
FESTUBERT - December 1915.
GIVENCHY - December 1915.
NEUVE CHAPELLE, FLEURBAIX and ARMENTIERES - As Friday's itinerary.
NIEPPE - June 1915 (the first Headquarters of the Division.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and so began another World War. Only twenty years after George had returned home from the war to end all wars and 5 months after he and Ken returned from this battlefield tour, there was another call to arms to protect our freedoms. Ken Batchelor, enlisted into the Royal Air Force on 28 July 1942, age 18, as an armourer. He was stationed at East Kirby with the 57th Squadron and loaded the ‘bouncing bombs’ into the Lancaster aeroplanes. That is another story.

Chapter Five – Transcripts of Postcards

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
8 Sept Nellie was in Folkestone – sent to c/o Mrs May, 8 Alexandre Street	*Dear Nellie. They have not sent us off yet. They say we may go tomorrow or it may be 2 or 3 weeks. We are stopping at home so you can write address to home if you like and if I am shifted mother will forward it. With my best George x. I will let you know as soon as we shift x.*	Lion and Mane
10 Sept **Nell to George**	*Dear George. Received your letter this dinner time. Mrs May says if you are sent to Kingston you will be close to us as it against Deal. It is lovely weather. Father says his light is alright although it has stopped neither steam boat or train. Write again before we come home. With best Nell x*	Folkestone
20 Sept **Unknown**	*Pte. G.H Batchelor Card addressed to Shoreham Camp. Pre-printed back about message of King to Army. Stamped Northampton. No name.*	England Flag
22 Sept	*Dear Nellie. Hope you will like this series of P.C. I have bought 6 and will send them all to you through the post. Thanks for taking cards to secretary. They are putting us through it now. Have had about 8 hours parade. Will write letter soon. Remember me to Dot, Ada and all at home. Am alright. I hope you are. With love George xxxx*	The King's Guard. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9587
23 Sept	*Dear Nellie. I forgot last night to thank you for the PC which I was very pleased with. It is very appropriate, I think. You did quite right in giving A. Harris my address. I am still with the same fellows. It is very hot here today. This is what I ought to be, but you will see I am not on the picture. They look different to our ragged lot. Colonel Ripley is coming here to take command, they say. Hope you are alright. With love George xxxxxx*	1st Life Guards. Military in London. Series 2. PC 9081.
25 Sept	*Dear Nellie. Hope you will like this one, I think it is fine. They will go with those others alright, because they are some of the same series. Please let me know if they damaged on the way. It is another nice day but very hot. We drilled on the golf links right on top of the Downs. We have been paid this morning so let me know what I asked as soon as possible if you have not already done so. Hope you are alright, just let me know if you are not. I am burnt as red as a Devil. Will send again tomorrow if poss. With love from George xxxxxx*	Mounting Guard. Military in London. PC 6412.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
26 Sept	*Dear Nellie. Sorry to hear work has not picked up, hope it soon will. I can ?? you. I am quite alright. We have been to Lancing College this morning for musketing drill, and have just got back. It is several miles from the camp and it was awfully hot on the road. I think this card is a beauty, don't you? I have 2 more left, but am going to get some more today. I have applied for another pass. WCI (??) midnight, so shall probably go to Brighton tonight. There is another battling parade today at 2 o'clock. With love George xxxxxxxxxx*	21st Lancers. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9081.
28 Sept	*Dear Nellie. Received your letter this morning. Tell your Dad, I haven't had a starling yet. Weather is still fine, not quite so hot today. Went into Shoreham last night by myself, my pal went to the Salvation Army. I wandered through the church yard and as the door was open and about a dozen standing round, I stopped to listen for about ½ hour. It was the harvest festival and they sang one psalm to the same tune as All Saints. It bought me back home, but how different it seemed to stand there in my old clothes and muffler on a Sunday. In camp you can scarcely tell Sunday from weekdays but when you get into the town amongst the fine folks, you soon notice it. I was back at camp at 8pm and then went into the Y.M.C.A. tent and sang hymns till bedtime. Hope you are still alright, as I am at present. With love from George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.
30 Sept	*Dear Nellie. Glad you like all these cards. I buy them at Southwick. It certainly does look a bit business like, now they are pulling machines down. What are they having another printing machine for? Have they got a lot of work? I hear from family pretty often, about twice a week. Have heard from Soothy and Ware Smith. Had musketry drill again today. Have twisted my knee a bit, shall go to the doctor with it in the morning, because it is a bit painful on the march. Let me know all the latest when you write again. Hope you are still going on alright. With love George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.
2 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Glad you like these cards. My knee is going on alright thanks. You be very careful when your biking, and none of that don't care business. Thank you for the newspaper cutting, but I could have understood it better if you had sent it to me. Thanks for looking after the books for me. I did not go out last night but stayed in the YMCA as I said I should. We had rather a good concert there, some of the fellows sang some nice sentimental songs, and altogether I quite enjoyed it. It was a lovely moonlight night, and the moon shining in the sea looked handsome. I might go to Brighton again tomorrow. We have been having rifle drill again in the morning, so we shall soon be fit at this rate. So long for the present, remember me to all. With love George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
3 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter this morning. Thanks for the newspaper cutting, but I don't know if we deserve it. That must be the General's opinion I suppose. I am still going on alright and hope you are the same. Tell Bat I hope his voice will soon come back. You did not tell me that Albert Basely had gone to Shorecliffe. We are the second largest force in Great Britain, Aldershot has most and we come next. Hope you can understand this small scrawl. Thank you for getting the book for me. My knee is going on alright now, it is just a bit stiff. We are having plenty of food thanks. Have been to Lancing College again for musketry drill this morning, it is dirty, hot and dusty on the road. They are making rapid progress with the huts, I am quite warm and comfortable at night now. Am going to Brighton today. So long Old Dear, with love from George xxxxxx. P.S. You don't say if you have got another job yet.*	7th Hussars. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9587.
4 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I have not received anything from you today, and I don't suppose I shall now, because there is only one delivery on Sundays and that is in the morning. Went to Brighton last night. Am going to try for a pass this week, but will let you know later. It will only be from Saturday 2pm till about 9am on Monday, I think, but will be better than nothing, I have got an overcoat now. Have had Rev. Jukes from St Giles this morning at church parade. With love from George xxxxxx*	The Gordon Highlanders. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9587.
5 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Received your Saturday's PC today. You say I am getting quite good for going to the Salvation Army, but whether I am any better or not, 3 of us went there to a service last night. Your visitors did not stay very long, did they? Yesterday we went over the Downs in the afternoon, and found some nice little nook. Wish you had been here then. I got hung up in some barbed wire and tore my coat a bit, but its only my old green one. We have been skirmishing this morning. It's very hot again, I am going to ask about a pass today. You may be sure I shall come this week if I can. Don't forget to tell me anything that will interest me when you write. It was another lovely night last night, but was back in camp at 9.30. I am alright and hope you are the same. Expect things are about the same. I think that is all now. So long. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Horse Artillery. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9081.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
6 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter today. Have asked about a pass but don't know yet if I shall get it. I shouldn't go walking about country roads at night if I were you, whether its light or night, it isn't safe. I think you are doing quite right about your work, but if I do come on Saturday, we can talk things over. We were inspected this morning by the General and he was very pleased with us, he said. Have been skirmishing this afternoon, and feel very tired tonight. I have not been able to write till this evening so expect you will receive this rather late but will send in the morning if possible. I think that is all, so will now close, hoping to see you soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9567.
8 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Hope you like this one. I think it is very good for Infantry. The sun is very hot this morning, especially as we have been drilling on the hillside. We had an hour's parade after nightfall yesterday, but not a night attack as we expected. It was a lovely night but too moon light for our purpose. I changed my overcoat for a dark one, this morning. Have not heard anything of my pass yet, but don't expect to until tomorrow, so it doesn't allow much time to let anybody know, does it. But I think I shall get it alright, so if do, I and my pal will travel together. With love from George xxx*	Grenadier Guards. Military in London. Series 3. PC 9081.
9 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Shall come tomorrow Saturday if nothing turns up. I shall arrive during the evening. We leave Shoreham at 2.20 so expect me sometime between 7 & 8 but will let you know if possible. Will make no difference for Christmas. With love George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.
14 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Hope you like this. Weather wet. Have no time to write more. With love George xxxxxx*	2nd Life Guards. PC 9426.
15 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Have just received your card. Don't forget the book this week. Sorry your photos are not as nice as you would like. But if you think it best to stand again, do so, but be sure and stand the same way or they won't be a pair. You need not trouble to send proofs, I will leave to you. Sorry to hear Nora's brother have gone under. Glad that you have got more work, but no doubt you will find it a rum show up there. It is a wet day again today. With love from George xxxxxx. Went to Portslade to prepare camp for the Warwick's yesterday, was wet all day.*	2nd Life Guards. PC 9426.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
18 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I have received your letter this morning. I did not send all my money. I drew 13/- but am keeping a bit back for the trip if we get it. We had some that was owing to us. Hope your photo will turn out better this time. The weather is lovely here today. Hope you will like this card, and trust it won't get damaged on the way. These are the Regiments aren't they, Old Dear. Have had my hair cut again, and look nearly bald headed now, but hope it will soon grow a bit. We have struck tents again this morning. Three out of our tents have gone to Northampton for the weekend, but they have to be back by midnight tonight. Am sitting amongst the baggage writing this but wish I was in the same place as I was this time last week. They are on Church parade now and I hear them singing Crown Him Lord of All. It sounds lovely. Well so long for the present. With love from George xxxxxx*	2nd Life Guards. PC 9426.
18 Oct **George to parents**	*Dear Mother, Dad and All. I received your P.C. yesterday. Hope you are going on alright as I am, thanks. We have had some wet days this week, but it is lovely today. Have had my hair cut again, and look almost bald headed. Glad you like the photos alright. Thought you would like this P.C. so am sending one to you. We look a bit different to these in our convict suits, don't we? You will perhaps see Bill Lee today, he is at home this weekend. Don't send my muffler. Will write again soon from George.*	Photograph of men in 7th Northamptonshire Regiment.
19 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I am sending another to the collection. Hope you will like this one. The weather is very nice this morning. We have been to Lancing College again this morning, and came back over the hills. We had to jump a wide ditch and climb a steep hill. It found my leg alright. I was tent Orderly yesterday. I and other chap out of our tent went to Shoreham Church last night. I enjoyed it alright, it seemed like old times, at least it made some distinction between Sunday and weekday. The rumour of the trip is still going the round, and hope it will come true. Remember me to all please, I don't think there is anything else to say this time. With love, from George xxxxxx*	2nd Life Guards. PC 9426.
21 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I received your card by the afternoon post yesterday. I also, hope your photo will be alright this time, especially as you think you were smiling. Old Peaky would soon find that Kitchener's was nothing to laugh at if he got here. I hope you are faring well, my arm is going on alright thanks. We had a voluntary parade this morning and went on a march and lost the band. Band is the instruments sent from Northampton. We have a bagpipe. We start our regular parades tomorrow, I think. We had a concert in the Officers' Mess last night. Am going to try to get some more of these PCs tonight if possible, this is the last one I have left. There doesn't seem to be much alteration in the war, does there? Remember me to all at home, please. Have heard from home this morning, I think that is all now, so ta ta for the present. With love George xxxxxx*	Irish Guards. PC 9431.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
22 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Thanks for your letter which I received this evening. Hope you are well, my arm is about better. Glad your photos are better this time, I am longing to see one of them. Hope you will like this card, I think it lovely. Have ordered a set of Scots Greys, shall have them Saturday night. We had a concert in Y.M.C.A. last night, and General Ramsey was present. They were nearly all patriot songs for as you know it was Trafalgar Day. It has been wet all day today. I shall be in the Officers' Mess tomorrow, so am in for some good food once more. Our boys seem to be giving the Germans socks now don't they Old Dear. You must take any notice of Old Peak's cheek, I don't go out of camp much now, am in bed some nights at 7.30. With love from George xxxxxx*	Flags.
22 Oct **Nell to George**	*Dear George. I got your PC this morning. Sorry to hear that you lost your Band. I must say these PC are alright, they are printing some lovely ones at shop. I don't suppose we shall be able to get hold of any. Hope you have had better weather today than us, it has rained greater part of to-day. It is as you say, the war does not seem much better. I don't know when it will. I don't know if you will know this PC but I had not got a plain one and only one stamp so I could not write a letter. I hope you are alright and your arm going on alright. B. Inglis's stepfather has got six months for showing a wrong permit. Of course, you know he is an Austrian. No more now. With love Nellie xxxxxx*	Canal.
23 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I have managed to find time to drop a line, you see although it is a very busy day for me. I am in the Officers' Mess today, and you would laugh to see me struggling with the piles of greasy crocks. I am getting quite a handy man. I went on at 6am and shall be on till 10 tonight. The weather is nice today but underneath everything is like a duck pond. It is up to our boot tops in mud. Hope you will like this card. We come over this bridge to bathe, they call it Norfolk Bridge. The water you see is the River Adur, over which the bridge is stretched. This river runs between Horsham and Bungalow Town. We are to be inoculated next Wednesday afternoon. Hope to see you again soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Shoreham.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
24 Oct **Nell to George**	*Dear George. I must say if the bridge is anything like the PC, it must be nice. It is another wet day here to-day. Hope you are having it a bit better. I hope you got the letter alright and also that you had another good feed. I should think it must seem as if you were maids of all work when you have to go in there. It does seem funny to see the cars down Bridge Street. The folks stood watching it as if they had never seen a tram in their lives before. I don't suppose you will get this before Monday. I have nothing else to say, so long.*	Folkestone.
24 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I have not got any more cards yet, but I am going to see if that set, I ordered has arrived. Hope you will like this one, it looks a nice spot, but I have not seen it yet. My regiment number is 14851, so please write it after my name when you write. The weather is fine to-day, but it looks a bit cloudy at times. Hope you are feeling well, my arm is better now. We are going on a 2 hours route march this afternoon. I recognised the PC you sent yesterday. I saw a Northampton Echo and see they are starting to send the vans to Cotton. Tomorrow Oct 25th is the anniversary of the Charge of the Light Brigade. With love from George xxxxxx*	Old Shoreham Post Office.
26 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Thanks very much for P.C. which I received this morning. It turned out a pouring wet day and night yesterday. I went in the afternoon to Old Shoreham and saw the Post Office., it is just like the P.C. I sent to you. But it started to rain so we had to hurry to camp. The mud here is inches deep. Our company has been on a march to Portslade this morning, the weather is lovely today up to this. It was too wet to go to church last night so we went to the Y.M.C.A. but was in bed about 8. We shall be drilling until 7.30 tonight and tomorrow night but shan't do much after we have been inoculated again on Wednesday. Will send some money at the end of the week. It's worth something to have a banker isn't it. Hope you will like this set of cards, have no doubt that you will, they are fine. I try to catch the post as early as possible, so please let me know if you get them by the morning delivery. Well I think that is all now, will write tomorrow if possible. With love from George xxxxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
27 Oct	*Dear Nellie. Have just returned from a ten-mile route march, we have been right over the Downs, and walked our way round to Southwick and through Shoreham. It rained hard again first thing this morning, and the mud is thicker. It is up to our knees in fact, more or less. We went to Lancing again yesterday afternoon and frightened off the rain by taking our coats. I like this card and hope you will. We struck camp yesterday again to air the ground in the tent, and somebody sat on the bread bag so we had crumps for tea. The YMCA have had a new canvas structure put up and it is alright in there now. It was a lovely moonlight night last night. I would sooner have been in Hardingstone than on outpost duty. Hope you are quite well, I am, but we have got to be inoculated again tomorrow. Do you like printing any better? Will send again tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.
28 Oct	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC this morning, and glad you get mine early. I was going to remind you about the book, I had forgotten it myself until today. Weather is a bit better here, but very uncertain. Glad you like the card, are they military cards they are printing at shop. I have just returned from Hospital, have been for another dose of inoculation. No more work till Saturday. I know it was three years ago since you came out of the hospital, but could not remember the date, thought it was 18th. We have a gymnasium in activity now, and shall soon all be Sandovas (?). Well ta ta for the present, Old Dear. Will send another card tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.
1 Nov	*Dear Nellie. By this you will see I have arrived here alright. Arrived at London about 7.45 and took bus to Victoria, the Royal Horse Guards were on guard in Whitehall. We caught the train at Victoria at 8.35 and arrived Brighton at 9.45 so you will see we flew along. We spent about half an hour in the town and then caught train to Shoreham and got to camp about 11 o'clock. It is awfully muddy, there has been an awful lot of rain down here. I am tent orderly today, it is a bit rough after being a gent for a couple of days. I feel a bit upset but shall soon settle down again. Would'st bully beef and pickle for Sunday morning's breakfast. Did you go to the theatre last night? I think I shall go to church tonight. We have got a kitten in the tent now, a black one. It's a lovely morning, might have given it today don't you think. I think that is all now, so chin up Old Dear, it will soon be Christmas. With love xx from George xxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
2 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Hope you received my PC of yesterday. I did not go to church last night, but took a walk to Portslade and was back at camp about 8pm. It was a splendid moonlight night, one of my old favourites, just the sort for a walk around Hardingstone. The mud had dried up. Lovely yesterday, but it is raining again this morning and we can't parade. The mud is above your boot tops again, it is wretched. But as we have a wood floor now, it is alright in the tent up to now. I hope you will like this card. I have only one more of this set left, so if it is fine and I am able to get out early enough, I shall go to Southwick tonight and fetch that other set. We have lost our kitten already, it ran away last night, and we have not seen anything of it since. I will send tomorrow if possible. With love George xxxxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.
3 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Have received your letter this morning. I wondered if you went to the theatre. Ted Roe came back last night. The weather cleared up yesterday afternoon, so we went for a route march round Shoreham and Kingston. It was a lovely moonlight night, so as I could not get anyone to go with me, I went to Southwick by myself and fetched that other set of cards. I was back at camp before 8. It rained again last night and first thing this morning, so I can tell you it is very muddy. We have been skirmishing over the hills this morning and returned through old Shoreham. We are to have a gymnasium parade this afternoon. This card is the last of this set, but I think you will like the others, so look out for one tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	21st Lancers. PC 8635.
5 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I hope you like this new set. Yesterday afternoon, we went over the Downs and finished the afternoon by filling in a trench which Mobb's company had dug out. I am on picket today. I am going to see if I can transfer to the Life Guards. Will let you know how I get on. Don't you think it would be better Old Dear? With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.
6 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I have been before the Major this morning to try for a transfer, but I can't get one, I feel wild over it, for it was the chance of a life time, The standard may never be lowered so much again. I can see I enlisted too soon. We have just been paid, but I didn't draw full pay. These Scots Greys are very fine I think, I hope you will like them. I shall write a letter at the end of the week if possible. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.
7 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Hope you are still getting on alright. I haven't heard anything since Thursday, It is a lovely day here, in fact, it is enough to roast you on the march. Excuse scrawl as I have not much time, Will write a letter tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
9 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Hope you received my letter of yesterday. I did not go to church last night. In fact, I did not go out of camp at all yesterday. One of the tents in another camp caught fire in the evening, but the fire did not spread. It was a nice day out, very dull this morning. I have not heard from Mother yet so have received no advice. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.
10 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I received last night your letter of Sunday. I think A Beeby is lucky to get his kit so soon. I don't know the reason why I could not transfer, but I can't get a commendation from George Bates, all he could ask are at the front with the regiment. Mr Moss would not advise me. I am glad you received my letters and PC. You didn't say if you minded me sending those cards back. I don't think these are nearly as good as this series. These are absolutely top notch, I think, the best I have ever seen. Wish in someways that I had been a trumpeter like the two boys on this picture. I have only one more of this set left to send, but shall perhaps go to Southwick and get the other set tonight, but of course I have those two Lancers as well. We went on a route march to Bramber yesterday afternoon and did not get back till dark. You need not worry about what I send. I think that is all for now, I am quite alright and hope you are too. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.
10 Nov **Nell to George** Sent from Werswall Hall, Whitchurch	*Dear George. Just a PC to thank you for yours yesterday. I am pleased to hear you are getting on alright. Mother tells me how well you are looking. I like being here very much though it is awfully hilly but still that doesn't matter. I was very pleased to hear from you and always will be. I am being confirmed a week today. N Oughton*	Whitchurch
11 Nov	*Dear Nellie. This is the last of this set. Hope you got the others alright. Yesterday afternoon we went entrenching in a field on the side of a big hill. It very soon blistered my hands but I think I shall make a good navvy after a bit. We have done no night parades this week up to now. We have been attacking on the Downs this morning. It was fine up there with the wind blowing about. I should like a holiday down Hove and Brighton so will see what we can do when I get back. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Scots Grey. PC 9980.
12 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC last night. You have got neither of the cards I bought. Sorry hear E Battison got hurt. I expect it upset you. Of course, you did not try to keep me at home, it would not have been right under the circs, do you think so. May is quite wrong in thinking that I should have to go to the front sooner if I transferred, because it would take longer to train for cavalry than foot. We went entrenching again yesterday. I expect this will be a bit later, but I am orderly today, so had to write when I could find time. With love George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
13 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC this morning. The weather is rotten today. We have been on musketry drill. Thanks for fetching the book. Of course, I talk of when I get back. I am not going to stop away for good if I can help it. We must look on the bright side you know. Tell Eve I hope she will soon be better. I sent a PC to your Mabel on Sunday and have had one in return. This is the last of this set, I think. I have not got the others yet. I wrote to the Gren last night. With love from George xxxxxx*	17th Lancers. PC 8637.
15 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I fetched the other set of PCs last night, but bought this in place of that one you have got. Last night we went to Southwick and Portslade. It was a very cold night, but turned to rain and so were unable to go on Church parade. It has cleared up now however, and the sun is shining, but it is extremely dirty underfoot. I hope you received my letter alright which I sent you today. I see Kitchener wants another million men, so somebody will have to turn out now. The postmistress told me that if I want a transfer, I must write an application direct to the Colonel, so what would you do? I think that is all, so look out for the Black Watch tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9367.
16 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC of Saturday, this morning. I did not go out of camp at all yesterday. It was fine but cold all day until about 9pm then it started to rain and poured all night. It was a bit rough under canvas, I can tell you. Pleased to hear that Eve is a bit better, hope she will soon be quite recovered, but you don't say what is the matter with her. You've started stuffing A Bignett a bit too soon, it is not quite Christmas yet, is it? Glad you have got two decent soldiers, I hope and know that they will find it warmer where they are going than it is at Shoreham. The soldiers on this card look alright, I think. We may go to France in January, but I will wait until I get there before I believe it. Ground is too wet to drill, but weather is sunny though cold today. Hope you are alright. With love from George xxxxxx*	Black Watch. PC 9994.
17 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I have received your letter this morning. Sorry to hear your Ivy is ill. I hope Eve is better. ?? I hope you ? cards packs, seems to be about right. We went on a route march yesterday afternoon. It was a very cold night and our top blankets were wet when we woke this morning. It was a white frost, enough to freeze us on 1st parade. We have been digging trenches this morning, that soon warmed us up. Hope you will like this set. It looks proper wintry round here now. With love George xxxxxx*	Black Watch. PC 9994.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
18 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Sorry I could not send earlier, but have been on a route march all day. We went through Bramber and Beeding and over the hills to Worthing, and through Lancing and Shoreham, coming back about 20 miles in all, so you can tell I feel a bit tired. We took a bit of food with us, and had hot dinner when we got back about five. We had our first bayonetted fighting lesson yesterday. Hope you are alright. With love from George xxxxxx*	Black Watch. PC 9994.
19 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I am sending a little earlier today, as I have only done one parade. It is haw cold today. We had something that disagreed with us, so there is about 100 of us excused duty this morning, But I feel pretty fair now. There's not much up with me now. It is getting awfully cold under canvas now. I should think we shall soon get a shift. There are rumours flying about as usual, about billeting us or something of the sort, I don't expect that would be like living at home, but it would be better than this I should think. I have not ordered another set, but shall try and make up of those odd ones you have got. With love George xxxxxx*	Black Watch. PC 9994.
21 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I am sending last of this set but have not got anymore yet. I think, I shall try to Southwick tonight, and if I do, I shall try to get some more, but have not ordered any as I thought we might shift this week. I think we soon shall now, as it says on order today 200 parcels and the men are to be told off to look after Officer's baggage, in case of a removal. It is a grand day but very cold. I am orderly today. Hope you will get this on Sunday. With love George. xxxxxx*	Black Watch. PC 9994.
22 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC last night and heard from home that Dad is bad in bed. I don't know whether you know but he has fallen down and hurt the guide(?) in the back of his thigh. Was rather surprised to hear about Bert, but it is his duty. I think, the Gren's name is Vic. I am quite well thanks and hope you are. I fetched some more of these cards last night, have three besides this of this Regiment and think they will complete the set. It is sunny today, but very cold. I think we are having a shift this(?) week but am not sure yet. But will let you know if we do. Have no more to say now. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9367.
23 Nov	*Dear Nellie. I have heard nothing else about shifting, but hope we shall not be long. It is raw cold today. I did not go out yesterday until last night, then I went with another chap round Shoreham and Southwick. We are going on a route march this afternoon. We have two men with weak hearts in the tent, so I expect they will soon go home for good. Hope you will like this. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9367.

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
24 Nov	*Dear Nellie. Was glad to hear that you received my letter alright. The weather is nice but cold still. I had a box of walnuts from your Mabel today. Have not heard anything more from home so don't know how Dad is getting on. I shall be on guard tomorrow so if I do not write, you will know how it is. We went on route march yesterday afternoon and marched through Brighton. We were trench digging this morning and on musketry this afternoon. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9367.
25 Nov	*Dear Nellie. You will see by this that I have been able to do different to what I told you yesterday. It rained again during the night so of course there is plenty of mud about. This is the last card to this set I think, hope you like them. I have not heard how Dad is, but hope he is getting on alright. I don't know if we shall shift, but Lord Kitchener's address are that all troops must be out of canvas by 27th which is on Friday but our huts are not done yet. With love from George xxxxxx*	5th Royal Irish Lancers. PC 9367.
20 Dec **Nell to George (sent to Brambledene**).	*Dear George. I hope you got back quite safely, as I have not heard up to tonight. Hope you will have a good time. Best wishes from all. With love Nell xxxxx*	Good Wishes.
23 Dec	*Dear Nellie. I arrived quite safely about 12.45 last night. It was very cold, quite a frost at Southwick. I saw this card on the station platform at Victoria and knew you would like one. Shall write tonight if possible. These, you will notice, are the 2nd Life Guards. With my very Best and Love from George xxxxxxxxxx*	2nd Life Guards. No number.
23 Dec **George to his Mother**	*Dear Mother. I arrived quite safely at 12.45, rather late you see. Was rather cold and frosty. Saw this card at Victoria Station, so sent to you and Nell one alike. They are the 2nd Life Guards, Will write tonight if possible. George.*	2nd Life Guards. No number.
24 Dec	*Dear Nellie. I have managed to get a photo of the house for you. I am sending a letter this afternoon, but am sending this now in case the letter should be too late for delivery tomorrow. So in case it should not come I will send you my very Best Wishes for Christmas on this card. With love from George xxxxxxxxxx* There is another postcard showing Roman Crescent. *This is our avenue, it is rather nice don't you think? You can just see a bit of our house, it is the last house on the right hand side of the road, the house farthest away, I mean. Of course, this photo was taken in the summer.*	Brambledene 12 Roman Crescent Southwick Nr Brighton (Billet in Southwick)

1914 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
26 Dec	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC this morning, and I think it very nice. I hope you received my letter yesterday. I posted it before three o'clock on Christmas Eve. I hope you enjoyed yourself as well as possible under the circumstances. It was a lovely day down here, an ideal Christmas day. We are off duty again today but weather is wet. I had to go to Church yesterday morning. Please let me know if you received the letter. I am quite alright and hope you are as well. Shall write a letter tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick.
26 Dec **George to his Mother**	*Dear Mother. Thought you might like one of these. Old Roebuck put his head in my way, but I can be seen a little. Am going on alright. We had a decent time yesterday, but should have liked to have been home. Thanks very much for Christmas card, hope you received mine George.*	Photo of 7th Northants Regiment – taken Dec 12th 1914.
29 Dec	*Dear Nellie. I hope you received my letters and postcards, but have not heard whether you have received anything since I came away. I did not get the letter you wrote on the 23rd until yesterday, but I expect the post is all upside down. Hope you will like the view. The building with the clock is the town hall. This is the coast road and runs right into Brighton. We walked as far as Brighton on Sunday afternoon. I hope you are alright and well, and shall be very pleased to hear from you soon, but perhaps there is something on the way, I hope so. I think that is all this time. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick.
31 Dec	*Dear Nellie. I received both your PC and letter and was pleased to hear that you got all mine. I did not tell you but the regimental Christmas cards fell through. Hope you will like this card. I sent one of the Green before, but this is much better photo and much nicer, I think. It is wet this morning and we cannot parade. I expect you have started work again. You can see the church tower on this card. The church is called St Michaels so it seems like old times to go there. I think that is all this time. I send my very Best Wishes for the New Year. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick.
Xmas 1914	*To my Darling with Best Wishes and Love from George xxxxxx*	Xmas Card
Xmas 1914	*With love and Best Wishes from George xxxxxx*	Xmas Card

1915 Postcards

During May 1915, George was billeted with Mr and Mrs Sullivan and their daughter, Christine in Reigate. Postcards and Christmas cards sent from them to George and Nellie have been transcribed where appropriate to provide information about George. Mr and Mrs Sullivan continued to send cards during and after the war until their untimely deaths in 1921 and 1922 respectively. Searches for Christine found that she married but did not have any children. Their cards have been kept with the family history folders.

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
3 Jan	*Dear Nellie. We are shifting tomorrow, Thursday, to the Gsararies, Kingston, but when you write, please send them to Brambledene as usual, for we may be back here again soon, at any rate, we all hope so. Hope you are getting along alright. Please remember to all. Weather had been alright today. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.
6 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter this morning, and am so glad that you feeling better. I had wondered a good many times how you were. It was wet here yesterday but is much better today. Hope you will like this card, it is the only view of Southwick that I could get, but I must try another shop. Things are about the same down here. I will send a letter on Friday if possible. Remember me to all. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick Canal.
10 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I received your PC yesterday. The canal is a bit different to ours but so nice. Our field training should last five weeks. It was a lovely morning today, we walked into Brighton and back. I saw Montpelier Road, is that where you stayed? I shall be on pidquet (piquet) tonight. Hope you received my letter and that you feel quite well now. I am alright. With love from George xxxxxx*	Kingston Church.
12 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I was very pleased to receive the PC from you this morning. It is rather quaint in places down here, as you say. Sorry to hear your Mother is having to keep to her bed, but hope she will soon be about again. We start field training next week. Am glad you are quite better now. I am quite alright thanks. Hope you like these views but if you would rather have the other sort, please let me know. Kingston joins Southwick which is just off the picture a little to the right. You will notice the Downs in the background. The camp is situated on them, but is off the picture a little to the left. Shoreham is about ¾ mile to the left. The coast road runs along the front of these houses. Hope Eve is better and remember me to all please. Weather is much better here now. With love from George xxxxxxxxxxxx*	Kingston Pier.
13 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I hope you will like this card, it looks rather pretty don't you think. This street runs from the coast road, just opposite the Town Hall, to the Old Shoreham Road. Roman Crescent is the second turning on the left. I hope your Mother is getting better. I think I shall be able to come soon if we don't get shifted. I have been told it only referred to a cheap weekend trip they have been running to London. Do you remember today the 13th? With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick Street.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
14 Jan	*Dear Nellie. Your letter arrived this morning. Sorry your work is dropping off so. Hope your mother will soon get a turn for the better. Thanks for the newspaper cutting, I see the old Gren has been amongst it properly. This picture is another part of the road of which I sent a photo yesterday, but a bit higher up. We went skirmishing over the Downs this morning. It was quite a change to get up there again but very cold. Hope you are still alright. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick Street.
19 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter, and am glad you received mine. Hope your mother is up by now. It was a pity you could not go to the theatre last night. I saw in the paper that it was Effie Mann who was leading lady, the same one we saw in the Dollar Princess, you will perhaps remember. I should not send the case at present, as I have not smoked as many cigarettes this week, so unless you particularly want to do so. The weather had taken a turn for the better, I think. We have been firing again this morning. We had some rare sport yesterday, charging over walls nearly as high as myself. I shall try to come and see you again soon, if possible. Remember me to all please. Hope you are alright. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick from the Downs.
21 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I was very pleased to receive your letter which I received this morning. Am glad you went up home again. Sorry to hear that Nora's brother is dead. I think they had had their share of trouble. Which brother of Flo Edwards is it? I did not know she had one enlisted. I am glad your mother is getting better. I wish you had told me it was your Dad's birthday. I should like to meet your Uncle and Aunt. Hope you are alright, I am. It is wet here today so we can't parade. Will send a letter tomorrow. This lighthouse is really at Kingston. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick /Kingston Lighthouse.
24 Jan **Lilian to George**	*Dear George. I am sending you this card because I thought that you like these cards and I heard that you had got some of them. Perhaps you have this this. Lilian.* *Sent to Brambledene, 12 Roman Crescent, Southwick, Nr Brighton*	Changing of the Guards, London.
26 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I was glad you received my letter, and liked the photos. Hope your Dad, Mother and Eve are getting better and all of you are well. I am quite well but poor old Roebuck has gone into Preston Hospital today. Hope you will like this card, it is very old fashioned, don't you think? It stands on the Green. It has been a lovely day, we were down on a range on the beach this morning. Will send again soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Southwick, King Charles House.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
27 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I am glad you got my other letter. I received yours this morning. I meant to send a letter but it is early closing here today, and I can't get a stamp. I had this card and stamp by me. I almost forgot what was on that ring you saw, but I think it was a drum and drum sticks. I am almost sure of it. I have thought of it several times. This picture shows the canal. That is the back of the Town Hall which appears directly above the stern of the yacht. Next to it, you will a long low red roofed building. This is one our miniature ranges. Hope all your invalids are getting on better now. Will write again soon. With love from George xxxxxxxxxxxx*	Southwick.
29 Jan	*Dear Nellie. I hope you will like this, it is one of a new set I have got. I have a bit of good news this time, if nothing unforeseen happens, I shall be with you tomorrow, there is a condition, and that is, we are to go to the football match at Franklins, I think, that is why they are allowing the trip. We start in the morning, and if the train arrives soon enough, I will run down at dinner time. But if not, will you please go up home. I shall be there as soon as poss. after the match. At any rate I will write and tell Mother that you will probably be up home tomorrow afternoon, Saturday. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.
1 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know I arrived quite safely and in good time. I shall post it at roll call, so you may get it to night. Will write letter tonight. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.
2 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Hope you received my letter alright. I hear it rained at home Sunday night, didn't look much like wet when I left, did it? It has been wet here today, we could not parade this morning, but went for a march round Hove this afternoon and got caught in a storm. I am settling down to it a bit again, but I will try and come home again soon. I heard from Aunt Edith today and will send the letter to you when I send my next letter. I am sure you will like to read it. Hope you like this set of cards, tell me if you don't. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.
4 Feb	*Dear Nellie. I was very pleased to receive your letter this morning. We are not to be shifted after all at present. The order was cancelled at 12 today and we were supposed to go at 2pm. We are all very much delighted, you can bet. That stamp must have stuck alright as I have not yet received a letter or PC without one. Weather is still very nice. Hope you are going on as well as possible. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
8 Feb	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter this morning. Glad you like the PC. I thought you would. Edith always writes a good letter. Thanks very much for getting my books. Let me know if Bert goes. I hope we shall get a move on. I am a bit fed up with it down here, all of us are, I think. I meant to ask you before but did you take that little photo home with you that Sunday night. I have wondered several times if you forgot it. The weather is rather unsettled again, it was wet this afternoon and again tonight. This is the last card of the set but I have got the other set, I hope you like them. I hope you are alright as well. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 2. PC 9135.
9 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Thanks for your letter which arrived this morning. Thanks for the black Jack, I have eaten it, and hope it will do me good. I am glad you are going to the theatre and hope you will enjoy it. Sorry to hear that the chain of your bangle broke, it must have been rather weak just there. It would have been much safer if he had slipped it through the lock when he mended it, though. I heard from Ted Roe tonight and he expects to be out by Saturday, if he has good luck. Ask Tom if he will have a bed mate again soon. This is the first card of the new set, hope you like them. We have not been on parade much today as it has been wet again. Tell your Dad I should like some of the old ivy to liven things up a little. Hope your mother and Eve are better by now. The days draw out again, don't they? Light here this evening till getting on for 5pm. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 1. PC 9134.
11 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Your letter arrived this dinner time. We are expecting Ted Roe on Saturday, he will come here I daresay. The poor old Gren looks like being cut out again after all. Glad you liked the theatre, should have liked to have been there. Have heard no more about shifting. No fear of ivy down here, they can't brew beer. Hope you are well and all are at home. I am a bit better thanks. Have been under the doctor and off parade for two days, but hope to be out tomorrow for the General's inspection. Weather is very nice, just like spring. A lot of the new recruits are to be inoculated this afternoon, and are going home while Sunday night, I wouldn't mind another dose on those terms. I shall send tomorrow if possible. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 1. PC 9134.
18 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know I am still kicking about. It rained all day yesterday so we had a day off. Weather much better today. Had a march to Hove this morning, it was just like spring. Hope you are alright and that your Mother is much better. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 1. PC 9134.
28 Feb	*Dear Nellie. Many thanks for the 'Independent' which I received this morning. I was very pleased with it. It is a very nice day today. I did not have to go to Church this morning, so walked along the front as far as Brighton and back, and really got blown away. Hope your cold is better by now. How are your Mother and Eve now? Remember me to all please. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 1. PC 9134.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
7 March	*Dear Nellie, Thanks very much for the 'Independent', it arrived yesterday dinnertime. It is six months today by the date since enlisted. I hope you are much better by now, and will soon be quite well again. Hope you will like this card. I think it very good. Only one to beat them and you know which that is, don't you? Our kid went to Weymouth yesterday, we miss him too. With love from George xxxxxx*	Royal Horse Guards. No number.
8 March	*Dear Nellie. I received your letter this morning, glad you got mine alright. Very pleased you are a little better. Your head is like mine, it save your feet, does it? There's some excitement still it seems. I wrote home yesterday and asked May to come down and see you. I hope I said right. Am sending PC as I have not much to say and I have had these by me for some weeks. I have one more left of this set now. Rather funny weather down here now, sun and snow. We have finished field training now, 6 months today since I enlisted. I will write again soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Famous British Battles. Series 1. PC 9134.
24 March	*Dear Nellie. Hope you will like this, it is rather a pretty spot in the summer. Weather was very bad this morning but it is first rate now. I hope you are getting better, and that all are well at home, I am quite alright thanks, but things don't get much more lively. By what I can hear we shall soon be up the camp again, but I trust that is not true. With love from George xxxxxx*	Kingston.
6 April **Nell to George**	*Dear George, I got your letter yesterday morning, before I came out. You will see by this, that we have been. It was alright Monday, but it is very wet and rough today. I shall write tomorrow when we get back so no more now. With love Nell xxx*	Barby.
9 April	*Dear Nellie. Please excuse PC this time. I intended to write but we are all upside down, as we shift into the camp tomorrow. However, I will write as soon as I am able. Weather is grand but April showery. I received your letter yesterday and will answer in my next letter. With love from George xxxxxx*	Old Portslade Village.
2 May **Sent from 35 Albion Road, Reigate, Surrey**	*Dear Nellie. I came here yesterday with the advance party, and we came by train. The regiment will march and arrive on Tuesday. We have a good billet but may have to shift when the regiment gets here. But if you write on Monday, I shall get it alright. Hope you got my letter. This is a lovely place, very pretty. With love from George xxxxxx*	Reigate.
24 May	*Dear Nellie. Thanks for the 'Independent' which I received yesterday. It came just right as I was on guard and wanted something to read. The weather is very nice. We have had rather slack time since we came back, but expect to start as usual tomorrow. Hope you will like this photo, it is part of Bungalow Town. Have heard no more about shifting. Should very much like to be home today. With love from George xxxxxx*	The Bungalows, Shoreham.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
31 May	*Dear Nellie. Thanks for the 'Independent' which arrived Sunday. Hope you received my small parcel which I posted Friday. Hope you are alright. Weather very warm down here, shall be pleased to hear from you soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Kingston.
4 June	*Dear Nellie. Just to tell you that I have got a pass from Sat till Monday. We have a route march in the morning so perhaps shall be a bit later starting than I was last time, but with luck I may get off early. However, if I am not at the Castle at 4.30. I hope to be there by the next train down. I shall come for certain if nothing very unforeseen happens. With love from George xxxxxx*	King and bulldog.
29 June	*Dear Nellie, By this you will see we have made a start. It has been a rather wet day, and we got a bit wet, but we arrived here between 3 and 4 this afternoon and don't feel much the worse for it. We have marched about 19 miles today and it will be about the same distance from here to Guildford, where we are due tomorrow. We are billeted in a brewery here, but of course there is nothing to drink but water there now. Hope you got my yesterday's letter alright, but expect you did. We have passed through some lovely country today, and as you will see by this PC, it doesn't seem a bad place here. I will send a card from Guildford if poss. With love from George xxxxxx*	Horsham.
6 July ***Lance Corporal Batchelor***	***Martha to George*** *(maybe from Brambledene)* *Dear Old Batch. Just a line to say I got your card safe. Glad to hear you all got these alright but sorry to hear it was so dirty. I am afraid you not find it like Brambledene. Remember me to all the boys I know especially Little Custie Whright. I haven't had my old clock done yet. Will send you one as soon as I do. Love Martha.*	Southwick.
14 July	*Dear Nellie. I hope you will like this PC. I hadn't much to write, so thought perhaps you would like a view of this part. St Johns is only a few minutes' walk from the Barracks, but it is a very small place but rather nice. I heard from Old Bert this morning, he said he thought I was rather long winded as I had not answered his last letter, he sent about 3 months ago. Remember me to them all at home please. I will write on Friday if I can. Hope you are getting along alright. With love George xxxxxx*	Woking.
17 July	*Dear Nellie. Sorry I could not write yesterday, but we were late coming back from the range. I will write letter tomorrow. We are having some rather bad weather here. This is view of the front of the Barracks. You will notice the wing that juts out right at the far end, well that is my abode, the second window from the right on the first floor. I hope this will find you quite well. I hope to see you soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Inkerman Barracks, St Johns, Woking.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
23 July	***Ada (sister of Nellie) to George–*** *8 Alexandra Street, Folkstone* *Dear G. Don't have a shock will you when you get this as I so often write to you, but I am having of such a lovely time here, no boys though. This is a lovely place. I've got a nice 3rd Hussars here. What did you say anything for Old Sal came here Tuesday. Staying another week. With love yours sincerely Ada.*	Folkestone.
25 July	*Dear Nellie. Thank you for the 'Independent' it reached me this morning. Hope I shall be with you this time next week. Had the Bishop to preach to us this morning. He is holding a Confirmation Service today. Six of us have an invitation from a gentleman for tea this afternoon, so we have a stroke of luck sometimes you see. I heard from home on Friday, and May told me that the Tom was there from Wednesday past till Sunday next. Bit of rotten luck, isn't it, I should very much have liked to have seen him. Hope you are alright. This is a photo of the main street in Woking. I see that 4th and 6th Battalions are soon going now. I had a PC from Old Sal yesterday morning, she says she is having a good time, but it wouldn't be her, if she didn't, would it? I am quite alright myself thanks. Have spoken to the Sergeant about a pass. With love from George.*	Woking.
7 Aug	***Tom to George*** *from Elston House, Conquest Road, Bedford (a terrace house).* ***Sent to George at 85 Hervey Street.*** *Dear George. I had an application for leave all ready and signed when I got into a scrape which has put the stop hat on it. I am so sorry that I cannot come after all and in default wish you the very best of health. Good Luck. Yours very sincerely Tom.*	Bedford.
23 Aug	*Dear Nellie. I arrived here quite safely at 9 o'clock. All four day leave is cut down to two and they sent lots home yesterday, We met some of them going home at Euston. Don't know when I shall be able to write as we are going to Chobham Common for 4 days, but shall be pleased to hear from you, address to Barracks and that will find me alright. Feel as usually do after a holiday but hope to come again soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Field Marshall Sir John French.
24 Aug	***Christine Sullivan in Reigate to George*** *Dear George. Thanks so much for the letter, pleased to know you have been able to get home, but sorry it is a final leave. I am wondering if you will come through Reigate by train, let us know when you are on the move. Please ? me to ? Much love from Christine x. Our best wishes to you. Yours sincerely a sincere friend. Will write letter later.*	Reigate.
8 Sept **Nellie in Folkestone**	***Mrs Elizabeth Batchelor (mother to George) to Nellie*** *Dear Nellie. Thanks for the PC. Glad you arrived safely. If this lovely weather continues you ought to have a grand time. I heard from George yesterday. No doubt you have also heard by now. Fond remembrances to all. Yours very sincerely. E B*	Country scene.

1915 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
11 Nov	**Gertie Sullivan to Nellie.** *My Dear Nellie. First a little view of Reigate, I hope George did not send this one to you while he was here. We cannot make out not hearing from him for so long. I have now written three times and no answer. Do trust all is well. Have you heard any news. Would be pleased to know, With much love and remember, yours sincerely Gertie Sullivan.*	Two cards – continues from one to other. Reigate.
? Nov	**Ada (sister of Nell) to Nell**. *Dear Nell. I was very sorry to hear about George. I do hope it is not very serious. Tell Mother If they go to London on Wednesday and he can have anything, not to forget me I will give anything towards it. I hope they will come back by a train so they are back before I come away. One thing Nell, he is in England, that is something to be thankful for. Have you let Mabel know? Kindest wishes for your birthday. With love from your sister Ada.*	Birthday Card.
5 Dec	**Christine Sullivan to George in the hospital.** *Dear George. This comes from little Christine with love and a big X and hoping you will soon be well again. With kind love from Christine.*	Reigate.
5 Dec (dated 5 Nov wrongly)	**Mrs K Sullivan to George** at **Hospital B2 Ward Top Floor, Military Section, Metropolitan Hospital, Enfield Road, De Beauvoir South, London** *Dear George. Just a line from Reigate to let you know we are thinking of you today. Trust you are going on alright and that you had my letter safely. Kindest wishes from us both K.S.*	Reigate.
11 Dec	**Christine Sullivan to George in the hospital.** *Dear George. I am sending a p.card hoping you are still getting on alright. Mamma and Daddie will be pleased to hear how you are. With much love from Christine xxxxxx*	Horse.

1916 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
1 March	*Dear Nellie. We have shifted into these barracks, so my address will now be* ***A Coy, 8th Northants, Hyderabad Barracks, Colchester****. Hope you are all well, will write again soon. With love from George xxxxxx*	Photo of Hyderabad Barracks.
18 March	**Christine to George** *To Dear George and Nellie. With love from Christine.*	Reigate Castle Cave.
13 June	**M (mother) to George** *The two girls and myself have been to Barby for the day, rained nearly all day, from M.*	Barby.
22 July	**May (sister) to George** *Dear George. Hope you are still getting on alright, as we haven't heard this week. We are still about the same at home, letter to follow. Having some nice weather at last. How you getting on. Love from all, from May.*	Barby.
8 Aug	**Ernest (brother) to George** *Dear George. I hope you are quite well as it leaves me the same. Staying at Paps whose house you can on the view of Barby. I am having a good time. From Ernest.*	Barby.
8 Aug	**Mill (sister) to George** *Dear George. You will see I have arrived at Barby again, having a nice time. I expect you were surprised to hear that Will had joined the Army. With love Mill.*	Barby.
23 Aug	**Mother to George** *Dear George. Just a view of the old place. Dad, Gladys, Nora and myself are here trying the change for sure. I am very queer still, wish I could alter. Hope you are still alright, fondest love and best wishes from all, Yours as ever Mother.*	Barby.
26 Sept	**K. Sullivan to George.** *Dear George, This comes from Christine and I hoping all is still well with you and that you are still safe. Let us hear from you again shortly. With love from Christine and the best of good wishes from myself. Yours sincerely K.S.*	Good Luck, Safe Return.
27 Sept	**Charlie (unknown) to George.** *My dear George. Have enclosed a picture for your drawing room, no doubt you have got one, also a wine cellar. How do you get on with the French lasses? I often wish you were near to us, so you could pop round and have a hand, also a song, and most of all attend to our Ivy, it wants shifting. Kind regards and good luck to you. Hoping to see you before long. Yours sincerely Charlie 27.9.16*	Friend at the Front.
29 Nov	(To Nellie). *Wishing you Many Happy Returns of the Day. With love from George xxx*	Nurses Home, Edinburgh War Hospital.
8 Dec	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know I am being moved tomorrow, but I am afraid to somewhere else in Scotland. Will let you know the new address on return if possible. With love from George xxxxxx*	Princess Street, Edinburgh.

1917 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
1 Jan	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know I arrived safely here about 3pm. Will send address later when I know properly what it is. Quite a lot here whom I know. With love from George xxxxxx*	Gillingham.
2 Jan	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know my address. It goes down rather rotten but I expected that. Saw Harry Stocker this morning, he expected to come back today he said. Jack Bull is here and marked Garrison duty abroad. Will write later. With love from George xxxxxx* ***D. Coy, 3rd Northants, Fort Downland, Gillingham, Kent.***	Gillingham.
8 Jan	**Mother to George**. *Dear George. Many thanks for P.C. Shall be glad to hear news from you. Have had the letter from Will up to the minute. Your old pal A Cross is getting married. No important news to tell you. Love and best wishes from all, Mother.*	Meadow Walk, Northampton.
13 Jan	**Will (brother) to George.** *Dear George. I sorry I can't get to know anything yet but will try again. If I don't succeed before they send you away, I may be able to when I go over the water. Will write again, Will.*	Rifle Brigade Barracks, Winchester.
6 March	*Dear Nellie. Just to let you know I have arrived at Gillingham and in good time. The train got in at ten minutes to seven. I am writing this at the billet and shall post it as I go up to hand in my pass, so you should receive it sometime tomorrow. With love from George xxxxxx*	Trafalgar Square.
?	*Dear Nellie. I am sure you must have been wondering why I did not write, but I have been in hospital with measles and only came out this morning. I asked J. Hrows to write and tell Mother and to ask her to let you know. I expect I shall be home next week. I have received your letter and will answer it later, but I want you to get this as soon as possible, so am not writing a letter this time. With love from George xxxxxxxxxxxx*	Gillingham.
25 July	**Mother to George** *Dear George. Your card safe to hand. Thankful you are alright. I am sending a parcel, expect arrive a day or two. Love and best wishes from all. Yours as ever Mother.*	Meadow Walk, Northampton.
8 Aug	**May to George.** *Dear George. Hope you are still getting on alright, we are staying at Barby this week, hope you will be able to another year. Nell came to see us yesterday morning, Ernest and his friend cycled over yesterday. Went back this morning. Letter to follow. love from May.*	Barby.
8 Aug	**Mill to George** *Dear George. To let you know I have not forgotten you. I am having a weeks holiday at Barby, so have sent you a card of the old place. Nell came over to see us yesterday, she is staying at Crick. With love Mill.*	Barby.
10 Aug	**May to George.** *Dear George. Hope you are still keeping safe and well, our holiday is about over, I think we are going back tomorrow. Arthur is coming today. Love from May.*	Wishes from Home.
15 Sept	**May to George** *Dear George. Just a card to let you know, I haven't forgotten all about you, the Gren came home on leave Wednesday, so I haven't had time for writing, he seems better than I expected to find him. Love and best wishes from May.*	Abington Park, Northampton.

1917 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
Xmas 1917	**May to George**	Xmas Card.
Xmas 1917	**From George.**	5th Northants Battalion Xmas Card. B.E.F. 1917

1918 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
25 Feb	*Dear Nell (George's wife now). Have just arrived at Dover. Feeling very blue. Don't know how long we have to wait here. Found Maude and Arthur alright, it was much better than waiting on the station. Will drop a line when we get overseas. I shall be not be sorry to get back to the Batt now I have got so far. With love George xxxxxx*	Dover.
7 March	**Nellie to George** *My Own. Just a P.C. hope you are still quite alright. You will see by the heading where I have landed, as Sid Beeby said on Sunday, he would bike down on Tues to see how Mill was getting on, so it came to me all at once. I might as well go with him, so I did, but Mill asked me to stay and your Aunt said she should, but Sid had to go back but he said he should come again this week, so I am staying until Friday. But oh, Duck it don't half make you remember times before. I think I wanted you more than ever last night if it were possible to. We went to get some cards and both Mill and I thought that this one would do just alright for you. I asked Sid if he would see if there were any letters for me before he comes again and then I am going back with him. Do you think there is any likeness on the front? I must leave off now. Best love and wishes. Your loving wife Nellie xxxxx*	Happy Days.
18 April	**Christine to George** *Dear George. Just a post card to wish you best wishes for a happy Birthday. I hope you will be home for good and the War over for your next Birthday. It is wet here this week. Much love xxxxx Wishing you many Happy Returns from your loving little friend. Many Happy Returns for the 26th of April, Christine. I hope you will like the P.C.* 35 Albion Road, Reigate, Surrey, England	Birthday card.
20 April	**Mother to George** *Dear George. Your very kind letter dated 16th safe to hand this morning from which I return your many, many thanks. Letter to follow. Love and best wishes from Mother.*	Kingsthorpe Mill, Northampton.
Censor No 591 unknown date 1918	**Will to George** *Dear George. Thanks very much for letter received. Pleased to hear you are keeping well as it leaves me at present. You got through the bit of trouble alright then, the same as myself. I had a letter from Tom and he is alright. By the way George how do you like postcard. what did you ? you England had time to find out girl. Will write a letter a day or two. Yours sincerely Will.*	Funny Card.
11 Nov	**Mrs Sullivan and Christine to Nellie** *My dear Nellie. My thoughts are with you today and your loved one. I hope you are well and all at home. Shall be pleased to know also of George. Much love, from Christine and G Sullivan.*	Reigate.
18 Dec	**From George with love** 5th Northants Battalion Xmas Card Envelope dated 18 Dec 1918. Field Post Office 4W. Censor No 20.	5th Northants Battalion Xmas Card.
Xmas 1918	**Mr and Mrs Sullivan to George** *To Dear George. With all the best of good wishes for Xmas 1918 and hoping you will soon be home and a safe return to old England. From Mr and Mrs Sullivan.*	Remembered friends.

1919 Postcards

Date	Content of postcard	Postcard Image
27 Jan	*Dear Nell. I am still at Calais as we could not get away this morning. Don't know when we are going, but shall be very glad to reach the Batt. With love from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp 4394 Army PO 4	Calais.
30 Jan	*Dear Nell. I'm still at Calais but expect to leave tonight. Shall be very glad to get to the Batt as there may be something from you by the time I get there. I shall write as soon as I can. I hope you are quite well. Please remember me to all. Love from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp 4394 Army PO ?	Lady.
1 Feb	*Dear Nell. I hope you will like these cards. I bought them at Calais. I thought they would be alright for your album. Haven't got an envelope large enough to put them in so must send them one at a time. Am not getting settled much at present, that is the want of holiday making. Hope you are well. Please remember me to all. With Best love and Wishes, from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp 208? Field Post Office 4.W	Lady.
5 Feb	*Dear Nell. Hope you are alright and a bit more settled. I am still kicking about. Hope you will like these and trust they don't get damaged on the way. Love to all from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp ? Field Post Office 37	Scene.
8 Feb	*Dear Nell. Haven't anything of yours to answer, so thought I would drop a card today. Perhaps I may get something when the mail comes up today, and I shall write then. Weather is nice and sunny but very cold here. I have not heard from home yet since I came back. Hope you are quite well. With love from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp 208? Field Post Office 37	Lady.
12 Feb	*Dear Nell. Hope you will like this., I thought I would send it today as I have nothing from you answer. Hope you are quite well. Weather is much better now but we haven't got rid of all the snow yet. I haven't heard from anybody at home yet. I shall be writing soon. With Best love and Wishes from George xxxxxx* Censor Stamp 208? Field Post Office 37	Scene.
8 March	**Dear Nell. Am starting home today, so shall be home sometime next week. With Love George xxxxxx** Censor Stamp 208? Field Post Office 37	Scene.

<u>George returned home – safe and well on 13 March 1919</u>

Chapter Six – Postcard Images

Short History of Postcards

A postcard is a rectangular piece of thick paper or thin cardboard intended for writing and mailing without an envelope but they do require a postage stamp. They are usually printed and sold by a private company, individual or organisation. The study of postcards is called deltiology.

The first known printed picture postcard, with an image on one side, was created in France in 1870. However, there was no space for a stamp so it is not known if they were posted without envelopes. Postcards were issued in Britain by the Post Office in 1870 and were printed with a stamp as part of the design. There were initially two sizes but the larger one was withdrawn. Over 75 million were sent in Britain during 1870. In 1894, the Royal Mail gave permission to British publishers to manufacture and distribute picture postcards. Early postcards were pictures of landmarks, scenic views, photographs or drawings of celebrities. In 1899 a standard size postcard was introduced, 5.5 inches by 3.5 inches. In 1902, the *divided back* postcard was introduced, which allowed people to write messages on one half of the back and an address on the other half. These were allowed to be sent abroad after 1906. The cost of postage was ½ d (half a penny) up to 1918 and then increased in June 1918 to 1d (an old penny pre decimalisation).

Many of the postcards sent by George to Nellie in 1914 and 1915 have **Tuck's Post Card** written on them. Raphael Tuck and Sons were an early postcard manufacturer based in London. Their brand names include Oilette which were numbered in sets of 6.

Real photo postcards were photographs which were developed and printed onto postcard stock with a caption written on the negative. They were produced from the early 1900s. Kodak sold a postcard camera into which a roll of film would take pictures that were developed onto specialised postcard paper. These cameras were used to capture many family photos and events and there are examples of these in the family history folders. Some real photograph postcards were also mass produced by photographers.

George ordered sets of postcards from the old Shoreham Post Office during 1914 and 1915 shown in the postcard sent on 24 October 1914. He visited the Post Office for the first time on 26 October. There were so many soldiers in Shoreham Camp that a new post office had to be built which is still standing.

Groups of Postcards

The images on the postcards have been identified in the transcripts using a short description, for example, the name of the place or the title and code printed on the card.

The cards have been grouped as Patriotic, Types of Guards (Kings, Life, Mounting, Grenadiers, Irish), Lancers (21st, 17th, 5th), Scots (Gordon Highlanders, Royal Scots Grey, Black Watch) and photographs of places in which the Regiment was based.

Patriotic

The first postcard sent by George to Nellie on 8 September 1914 is considered to be an example of a patriotic picture, The Glory of a Lion is his Mane.

George sent another patriotic card, the Banners of Liberty, on 22 October 1914.

Military

The first set of military postcards sent by George to Nellie in September and October 1914 were from the **Military in London set,** series 2 and 3.

1st Life Guards.

Postcard dated

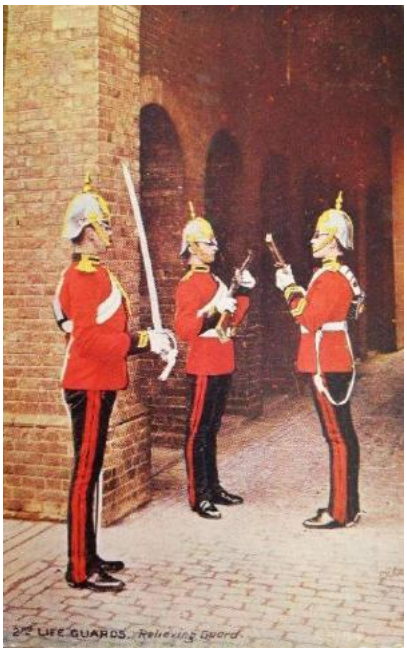
23 September 1914.

Grenadier Guards.

Postcard dated

8 October 1914.

George sent postcards from the **2nd Life Guards set,** number 9426 and the **Irish Guards,** number 9431.



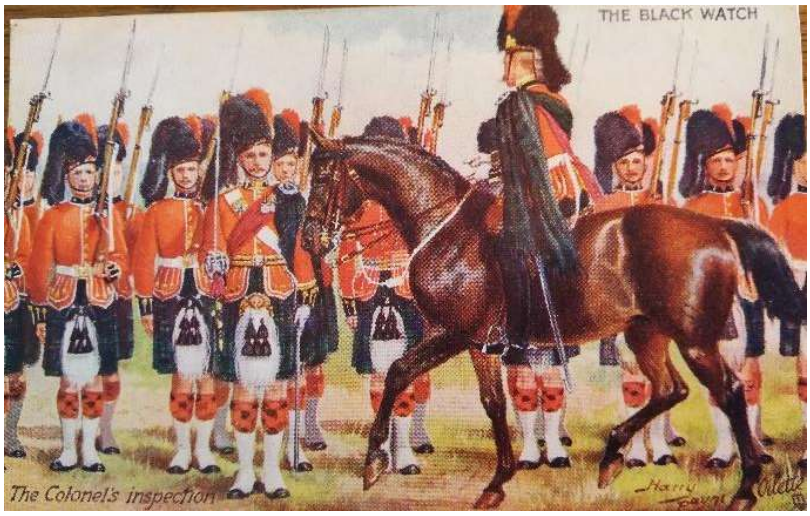
Postcard dated 18 October 1914.

Postcard dated 21 October 1914.

George purchased a set called the **Black Watch,** postcard number 9994 and sent these in November 1914. He did not order another set. He thought the soldiers looked *alright* in these postcards.

Postcard dated

16 November 1914.



Postcard dated

18 November 1914.

George sent postcards with images of the **21st Lancers**, postcard number 8635, **5th Royal Irish Lancers,** number 9567 and the **17th Lancers**, number 8637.

21st Lancers.

Postcard dated

27 October 1914.

5th Royal Irish Lancers.

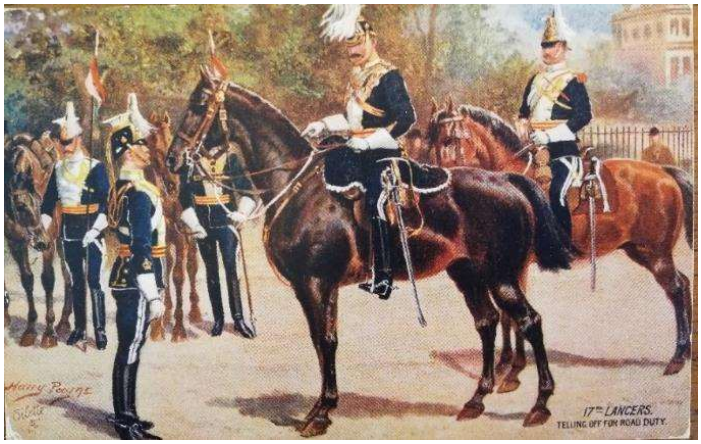
Postcard dated

25 November 1914.

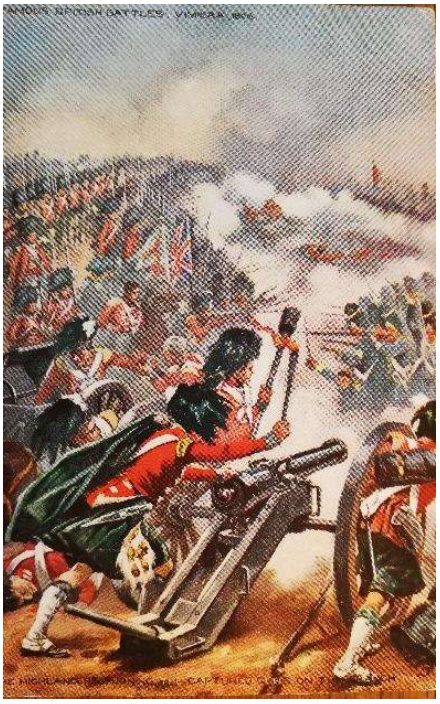
17th Lancers.

Postcard dated

12 November 1914.

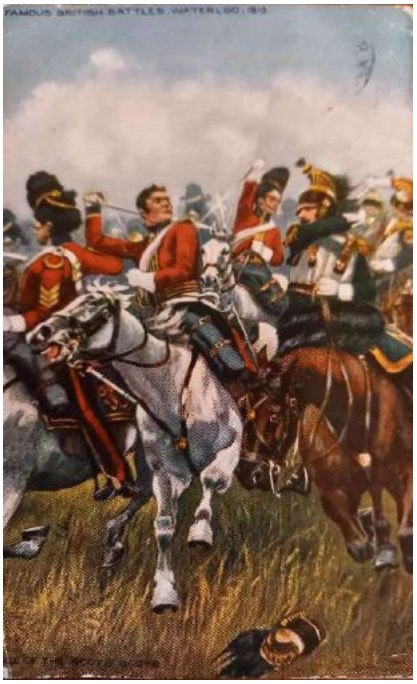


In 1915, George purchased two sets of **Famous British Battles**. Series 2, number 9135, these were sent in late January into early February followed by Series 1, number 9134, in February into March.



Postcard date 3 January 1915

Series 2



Postcard dated 2 February 1915

Series 2

Postcard dated 8 March 1915

Series 1

Postcard dated 18 February 1915

Series 1

Places

George sent postcards with photographs of the **places** he was based in or travelled through. Some of these were mass produced real photograph postcards.

Southwick.

Postcard dated

6 January 1915.

Horsham.

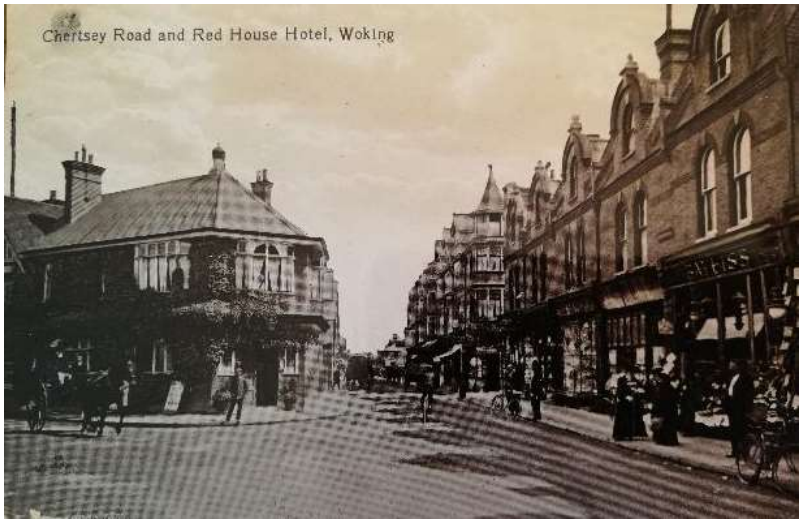
Postcard dated

29 June 1915.

Woking.

Postcard dated

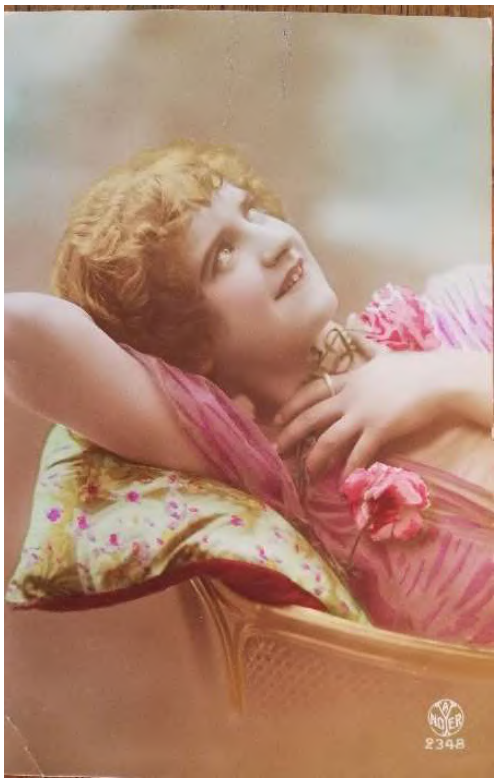
25 July 1915.



In 1919, George purchased sets of cards in **Calais.** These are of ‘pretty ladies and scenes’ which were a very different subject matter to those previously sent.

Postcard dated

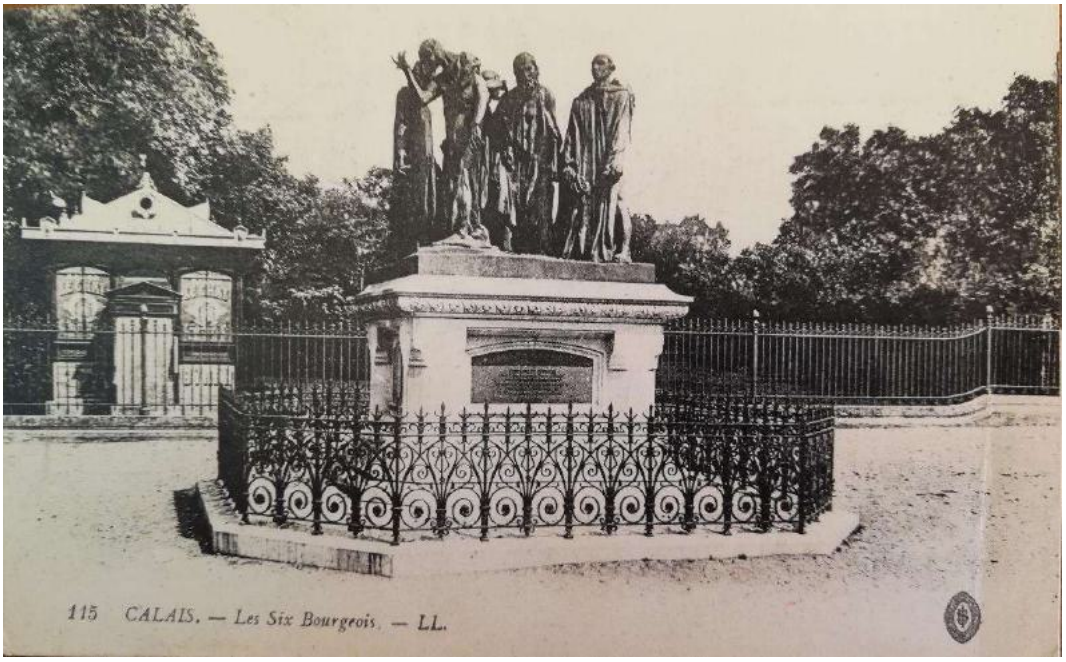
1 February 1919.



Postcard dated

5 February 1919.

It is not known when George purchased black and white photograph postcards of places in France which reflected the damage caused by the war. These may have been purchased whilst he was waiting in Calais to be demobilised. One of these was sent on 27 January 1919.



George commented on many of the images on the postcards which he sent to Nellie for her to keep in her album. He wrote comments such as:

> *Glad you liked the P.C., I thought you would.*
>
> *Hope you will like this one, I think it is fine. They will go with those others alright, because they are some of the same series. Please let me know if they damaged on the way.*
>
> *Hope you will like this card, I think it lovely.*
>
> *You didn't say if you minded me sending those cards back. I don't think these are nearly as good as this series. These are absolutely top notch, I think, the best I have ever seen. Wish in someways that I had been a trumpeter like the two boys on this picture.* (He refers to the Royal Scots Grey as being the best ones in November 1914).

Chapter Seven

A personal reflection

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading and writing about the postcards and finding out more about their content and context in relation to George and Nellie. I met their grandson, Keith Andrew Batchelor, in March 1978 at a Scout social event in Thurmaston, Leicester. At that time, George, age 84, was living in a care home in Nottingham nearer to his daughter, Mary and her husband. George died and was buried in September 1979 when Keith and I were on holiday in Ilfracombe just before I went to university. His father, Ken, did not contact Keith when George died because their family dog had also died in the same week and Ken thought Keith might be upset about the dog. I met Evelyn who lived with George and Nellie's son, Ken and his wife, during the early 1980s before she moved into a care home in Aylestone, Leicester. She was a very quiet lady who wore a green coloured visor to protect her eyes from bright light. Sadly, she did not attend our wedding in 1983 due to poor health.

I retired in August 2019 and spent September to January 2020 sorting out boxes of documents and photographs. I wrote the majority of this book between February and October 2020. It was never intended to be an academic study but it has been a wonderful challenge to research terms and events which I was not aware of and to match these to the real artefacts which had been lovingly kept by George and Nellie and passed down the family. The boxes of photographs and medals were not organised or labelled and it has been like opening a treasure box every time and finding another wonderful little piece of the story.

George was talked about in the family as being strict and a little unemotional. He was said to be a man who liked to walk and was said to walk his many dogs to death! On reading the postcards he wrote to his future wife during times of great adversity and sacrifice, I think, he showed himself to be a man of great feeling and thought and emotion. The number of loving kisses, xxxxxx, at the end of each postcard was generally six but there were times when he added in 10 or 12 suggesting there were times, he wished to express a great intensity of emotion.

There were stark contrasts found in the postcards with George writing about his life as a soldier engaging in hard physical training and living in a field with mud up to the top of his boots alongside his thorough enjoyment in attending a YMCA concert and listening to the singing in a church. He continued to love music and during the 1920s and 30s purchased many 33" and 78" records of operas and classical pieces of music which have been passed down to us. Margaret Batchelor recalled that he particularly liked Brahms and Wagner.

It has been very moving at times to read and record the words of George to Nellie. I hope that this short story offers the next generations an opportunity to remember him as a young man who was actively engaged in and survived a 'bloody and long war' which was meant to end all wars. His survival and marriage left a legacy of two children who are sadly no longer with us, seven grandchildren although two are sadly no longer with us, 12 great- grandchildren and 14 great- great-grandchildren.

As a member of a Pioneer Battalion, George would have worked to create safer and more pleasant conditions for the men who went over the top. Memoirs and history books have often focused on those brave infantry men rather than those who also bravely dug the trenches or built the latrines or cleared the roads and it has been a wonderful journey to find out about this essential work.

And lastly

At the time of writing this story, Shoreham Fort which is near to the site of Shoreham Camp was organising the building of a memorial replica WWI trench using concrete sandbags for use in future educational tours. Sadly, it was cancelled in September 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. However, they asked for £10 towards each bag and Keith and I paid this on 6 July 2020. In addition, they asked for statements to be sent which would be kept in memorial of those men who were at Shoreham Camp before they went to France. The following words were sent.

In memory of George Harold Batchelor, 14851, my grandfather, who trained at Shoreham Camp 1914-15 with the 7th Northants before going to France in September 1915 as a Lance Corporal in A Company. He returned to England in November 1915 with trench foot after the Battle of Loos. He was back in France by April 1916 and joined the 5th Northants (Pioneers). He returned safely in March 1919 and joined the Northamptonshire Police Force. – from Keith Andrew Batchelor.