



The Extraordinary and the Everyday

A Year in the Life of a Rural Community, 1914-5

Newsletter No. 4: Christmas Edition
December 2014



The Christmas Truce of 1914

This photograph shows German soldiers of the 134th Saxon Regiment and British soldiers of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment meeting in No Man's Land on December 26 1914

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The Christmas Truce

Avon Dassett History Group research has not uncovered personal papers of any of the men of Avon Dassett who served during the Great War.

However, a visit to The Imperial War Museum gave us the opportunity to read and transcribe the diaries of some of the comrades of our village soldiers. The diary of Private W. Tapp of 1st Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, written between November 1914 and January 1915, gives a very clear description of the conditions the men were living in during the winter of 1914/15 and a first-hand account of the Christmas Truce.

Below is the Christmas Eve entry from Private Tapp's diary. The whole diary can be found on the website: ww1.avondassett.com

December 24th 1914

We go back to the trenches tonight Xmas Eve, it is going to be a moonlit night so I think we shall lose a few men while we are relieving the other regiment. We get near the trenches but can't hear any firing, now we hear some singing in their trenches and ours, we have got settled now it is about 7 pm and one of the Ger's who can speak English is shouting over to us to go over, we shout back "come half way" it is agreed on, our sergeant goes out, their man takes a lot of coaxing but comes at the finish, and we find they have sent two, we can hear them talking quite plain, they exchange cigs and the German shouts to wish us a Merry Xmas, we wait for the sergeants return, he gets back and tells us they are not going to fire tonight nor tomorrow if we don't, they have got lights all along the trench and also a Xmas tree lit up, they are singing and we gave them one...this night I would not have missed for a lot, I don't go to sleep til 2.30 Xmas morning get up 6.30 see all the Germans walking about on top of their trenches, now some of them come over without rifles, of course our fellows go to meet them including myself, it is a strange sight and unbelievable, we are all mixed up together, there are quite a lot can talk English, they all say it is a pity to fight while we are all up to our knees in mud, their trenches are worse than ours, we exchange some souvenirs, I pull a button off my coat a G does the same so we exchange, also cigars, I have got 2 buttons, one cap badge and 2 cigarettes.



Follow events on our blog: ww1.avondassett.com



DECEMBER LOCAL NEWS

December 3: The Warwickshire Hunt meet at Northend.

December 5: 29 out of 31 candidates pass a nursing exam at Farnborough.

December 10: Farnborough Rural District Council meeting, chaired by Mr W. J. Weld. The clerk said that he had written to Mrs and Mr Ronald Holbech with reference to the death of Lieutenant Holbech.

December 17: Meeting held in Fenny Compton to make garments for soldiers.

December 17: Thomas Joseph Weld, Territorial Force, 1st Lovat Scouts, to be made Second Lieutenant.

December 27: Mary Wyten is baptised at St John the Baptist church, Avon Dassett.

December 29: Charles Griffen of Farnborough is fined 2s. 6d. for allowing swine to stray onto the highway.

December 31: A fire occurred in the packing room in the property of Mr Guest Brown at Fenny Compton Wharf



REMEMBERING RELATIVES

The picture below is of **ARNOLD RENNIE BAKER**, great-uncle of Tony Nixon of Bitham Hall, Avon Dassett. He was the third son of Mr and Mrs F. G. Baker of Waterdale, Wolverhampton.

Baker was a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps, 27 Squadron and was reported missing presumed dead on August 28th 1917 aged 23. He is commemorated in the Linselles Communal Cemetery (Nord France).



IF YOU HAVE A PICTURE, MEMENTO OR STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.

