

The Extraordinary and the Everyday

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



Newsletter No. 5: February 2015

The Last Entry in the Personal Diary of Private W. Tapp

January 26th 1915

Lots of sniping today they have knocked the top row of sand bags to pieces and filled my dinner with dust as I have masked the potatoes. It is the Kaisers birthday tomorrow so we shall be on the lookout for a surprise.

Diary of Private W Tapp, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, November 1914- January 1915 Imperial war Museum Archives.

The whole diary can be found on the blog: <http://ww1avondassett.com>.

Trench Warfare

By the end of 1914 the moving battles seen in the early weeks of the war had all but ceased. The new emphasis for the allied forces became the defence of strategic landmarks. These defences consisted of trenches, wire fences, mined dugouts, deep bunkers and concrete emplacements. Throughout 1915 both sides attempted to end the deadlock with major offensives but the fighting and bombardments were at close quarters so, instead of achieving objectives at long distance, gaining one hundred yards was considered a success. The human cost of this type of warfare was immense. Casualties and deaths were recorded in their thousands and there were also heavy losses of animals, equipment and ammunition. Despite these losses the front line remained almost static for the duration of the war, with little ground gained by either side.

Private Watts

William Winthorpe Watts, son of George Winthorpe and Emily Watts of Avon Dassett enlisted in the R.A.M.C. at Leamington Spa on 23rd January 1915. In the 1911 census George was described as a Sub-Postmaster and boot maker and William as assistant boot maker. William was 23 years old when he enlisted.



Warwickshire Hunt in 1915

At home hunting continued for the duration of the war

Follow events on our blog: ww1.avondassett.com



LOCAL NEWS AND WAR NEWS

1st January: British battle ship *Formidable* was sunk in the channel. Only 200 crew were saved.

10th January: The engagement was announced between Ronald H. A. Holbech of Farnborough Hall and Catherine Emma Hoskyns of Cotefield.

16th January: A recruitment meeting was held at the school room in Fenny Compton. Patriotic songs were sung and there was one recruit.

24th January: A squadron of German destroyers and battle cruisers were encountered in the North Sea heading for the British coast.

30th January: 30 men attended veterinary classes at Warmington.

1st February: Warwickshire Schools attendance Committee state that there are about 80 Belgian children attending schools in the area.

7th February: There was growing agitation for an increase of 2-3 shillings in farm worker's wages.

17th February: John Mullis of Avon Dassett, aged 79, was buried.

19th February: Fenny Compton Boy Scouts raise £12 for the British Red Cross funds.

22nd February: The Warwickshire Hunt met at Bitham Hall and Mr J Fielden was in command of the field.



LIEUTENANT JAMES BURGESS

James Burgess (grandfather of Jill) was the third son of Mr and Mrs John Burgess of Dalmellington, Ayrshire. He was studying at Glasgow University and was a member of the Officer Training Corps when the war began. After a short period of munitions work, he enlisted in the Highlands Light Infantry. He was attached to the 1st Reserve Garrison Battalion which was formed at Fort George in Inverness. Lieutenant Burgess did not see active service. Garrison Battalions were used to provide guards for strategic buildings and personnel and to provide training. He returned to Glasgow in 1918 where he continued his army career alongside his academic studies until 1920 when he graduated.

