

FORGET ME NOT

HERBERT WILLIAM HENRY TYLER LESLIE CASE'S FATHER.

My father joined 7th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment at the beginning of the war in September 1914, when he was 22 years old. He never spoke about the First World War to me or my brother and sisters and it was only after he died in 1970, when we found the letters he had written to his parents during the war, that we began to piece together his army career.

Father was promoted to Lieutenant in 1915 and embarked for France in July of that year. He was employed as the bombing Officer of the Battalion which by then was part of the 110th Brigade. Father was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery on 3rd July 1917 and was twice Mentioned in Despatches. Unfortunately I have not been able to find the citations that accompanied these awards so I do not know what he did in battle to get them.

In late September 1916 he commanded D & C Coys 7th Battalion in an attack on Gird Trench near Gueudecourt, which succeeded with only 5 casualties, in taking 371 German prisoners. Father was promoted to the rank of Major on 7th June 1917 and later to Acting Colonel, becoming the youngest person to hold this rank at that time. Father saw a lot of action in 1918; he was involved in the retreat at Ypres in March, in action on the Marne in May, in August he commanded the 7th Battalion in the initial offensive at Thiepval Ridge and saw continuous fighting during the German retreat in September. Later that month father took command of 9th Battalion The Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry for two months, during which time that Battalion successfully attacked the Beaurevoir Line.

When the Territorial force was reconstructed into the Territorial Army in 1920 he was persuaded to join 4th Leicesters (TA) as company commander, a post he held from 1922 until 1930. During the Second World War father commanded the City of Leicester Btn. Home Guard.

I have recently discovered that the letter father wrote on 16th July 1916 was printed in several newspapers around the country including publications as far away as The Dundee Evening Telegraph and The Western Daily Press. How this came about I do not know.



In the wood 16/7/16

We are being relieved tonight, thank goodness. We have had hell for 6 days in the great attack, yesterday we did wonders. There are thousands of stories to be told, but oh! it is awful, the fighting was terrific, we took half a wood, a village and 4 lines of trenches but we had to pay for it, so did the boche. I was the Adjutant and the CO and along with Evans are the only ones left. Guyther, Dodson and Hewitt were left out. Clarke Simpson, Compton, Burnett, Newton, Wakeford, Gutteridge, Wright, Gifford, Pickering Clarke, Reid, Bamm, Hollis and Abbot - killed in action. Houghton, Orrit, the Colonel, Thornton, Webb, Nicholls, Shelton - wounded, we hardly realise the awful blank (sic). The 6th have only two officers, the 8th and 9th have about five each. I have been lucky but nearly exhausted, have not been to bed for six nights, neither have I had my boots off, but we cheered up tonight. I pray I shall never have to go through this again. I nearly broke down this morning and was on the point of going to the MO but decided to stick it. Everything is quiet this morning and the Boche is fairly cowed. Must pack up now. Goodbye

28/5/1918

At last I am able to write you a note. I've had some narrow shaves during the last day or so and at present the Colonel, myself and another officer are all that are left. Howitt and Vanner got through and are at the transport lines. There are 40 men altogether.

Fortune has favoured me again and I hasten to tell you I am alright, I think we shall be out of it in a day or so.

I've enjoyed the open fighting but am so tired and hungry. I've found a billet and am going to have a meal, the first for three days and I hope to sleep. I've not closed my eyes since the battle started.....

June 5th 1918

We are at last getting some good food and plenty of sleep, as an instance of the straights we found ourselves in the show, one fellow found a crust of bread on the road, we broke it in half and ate it, I thanked him heartily. I can't tell you how I enjoyed that crust. I put my water bottle down once for five minutes (like a fool) and somebody bagged it.

I lost all my kit during the show, had to throw away everything except my pistol, I couldn't carry them any longer. By the way I think in future every time you see the 21st Division mentioned, you'd better send me a new set of kit.

I've put in a claim for £20 which if I get it will cover everything. My Valise etc with the transport is saved, I bought some shaving kit in a French town.....

I am feeling very fit, except my hand is rather shaky, it always is after a show. We are quite ready (those that are left) for another fight, one gets rather callous of the horror and as the shells were not too bad after the first day we quite enjoyed fighting with rifles.....

I wish they'd send us to teach the Americans, I could teach anybody anything about scrapping with the utmost confidence.

ETHEL KIRKHAM BEALE STEVE HORSFIELD'S GRAN

These are photographs of my Gran Ethel and her brother Thomas. I believe these photographs were taken during the First World War as Gran is wearing a VAD nurse's uniform and Thomas is in army khaki but I have not been able to find any information about their war service.

The British Red Cross holds VAD records, they confirmed that this is a VAD uniform but have no information about her and there are no badges on her brother's uniform that might help to pinpoint his regiment.

Gran was born in December 1885 in Hyde Cheshire and was three years younger than her brother. From the age of 12 she attended school in the mornings and worked in a cotton mill in the afternoons; she became a full time mill worker at age 13. Gran died in 1974 aged 89.

Gran's husband Herbert was born in 1873 and would have been too old for military service at the start of the war. From June 1916 men aged 18 to 40 years old were liable to be called up for military service unless they were widowed with children or were ministers of a religion. The age limit was also eventually raised to 51 years old.



Ethel and Herbert

Herbert's occupation was as a Heavy Glove Slitter and he may have been exempted from the military due to his occupation as no doubt he would have been involved in the manufacturer of military kit. One of his proudest memories was of the time when he chose the skins and cut out the leather gloves for Sir Ernest Shackleton and his men on their expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. Herbert died in 1951 aged 78.

