

FORGET ME NOT THE BAILEYS OF WARREN FARM HOBY



Edward and Ellen Bret Bailey lived at Warren Farm with their six surviving children.

Edward was a farmer and two of their sons, Charles and John, served in the First World War. Charles was in the Leicestershire Yeomanry and John the Royal Naval Division. Ellen Bailey and Alice James, from The Elms, were sisters.

Early in the war Charles wrote letters to The Melton Mowbray Times and these are transcribed below. In July 1915 Charles was promoted to Second Lieutenant and this promotion was reported in the paper: *Sergt CC Bailey of Hoby and Serget J Swain of Leicester, of the Leicestershire Yeomanry, who took part in the famous stand made in the great fight near Ypres in May, have been gazetted Second-Lieutenant and transferred to the 2nd Battalion Leicestershire Regiment. Serget Bailey has been home from the front for a few days and left to take up his new duties on Thursday.* Shortly after his promotion, Charles was seriously wounded and was eventually discharged from the army on medical grounds.

During the war Edward was a member of the Board of Guardians of the Melton Mowbray Poor Law Union and the report of their proceeding of 4th November 1915 contains the following: *...the Board might express sympathy with their friend Mr Bailey of Hoby who was not there that morning and to whom they all knew trouble had come in the serious wounds his son had received.....* Two weeks later Edward was able to report in his reply *.....I am pleased to tell you he is progressing satisfactorily and is receiving every care and attention in the HRH Princess Henry of Battenburgh's Hospital London.*

In the 1970's, Edward and Ellen's youngest daughter Sybil (Ellison) was interviewed by the Reverend Wiberly and in which she talks about her brothers: *..... when war broke out in 1914, my brothers both went to war one in The Leicestershire Yeomanry, the other ran away because he thought father might stop him, so he went off and joined the Marines. Well he was 6ft tall and very good looking and of course we didn't hear from him for a long time and eventually we did, some body in the village found him I think, he was at Deal with the Royal Marines, then, poor old chappie got posted to Gallipoli and then my other brother in the Yeomanry, he was given a commission and in those days it was supposed to be an honour, well as soon as he got back he was gassed and wounded and very nearly lost his leg....*

Sybil went on to say *..... of course when they came home on leave there were always tears, it was terrible, .you never knew whether we were going to see them again.....*

Charles survived his injuries and according to Sybil was still able to play cricket. John also survived the war but tragically, in the 1920's, took his own life at the farm.

Thursday 24th December 1914

Leicestershire Yeomanry in Action

STIRRING ACCOUNT BY SGNT. CC BAILEY OF HOBY | A WARM TIME IN THE TRENCHES

Sgnt CC Bailey leader of "A" Squadron Leicestershire Yeomanry and son of Mr & Mrs E B Bailey of Hoby from whom we published an interesting dispatch from the front a few weeks ago, now sends us a fuller account of the experiences of our local Yeoman at the war, and it will be conceded that he pens an admirable and vivid narrative of the course of events. He writes:

My Dear Mr Editor - I should like to beg a small space in your venerable paper to tell your readers some of my experiences with the Yeomanry at the front. We left Diss where we had been training since we mobilised on November 1st for ---- and embarked for ----- We had to turn out at midnight and entrain; poring with rain which made it very uncomfortable besides getting well wet through. The people at Diss gave us a fine send off and we all sang our favourite song "It's a long way to Tipperary" and the train steamed off. When we arrived at ----- the boat was waiting and it was not long before we were all on board and started off. It was a lovely crossing and a great number of men had never been on board before, so had a great treat with their voyage. We arrived at ----- at ----- the next morning, disembarked and went to a camp just outside. We were not allowed to stay there long, as we had orders to move off to a base at --- the next day. We entrained and had a journey in cattle trucks and only the bare floor to lie on. I must say it was not very comfortable and we did not get much sleep. We had several halts sometimes at a station and we managed to get some coffee, not forgetting rum, that warmed us up. We travelled via ----- . It was on this journey that we lost some of our badges etc. The French people pestered us for souvenirs. On our arrival at we went to the cavalry barracks and rested our horses. They looked very sick after their journey. After about three hours we proceeded to ----- and bivouacked.

WE COULD NOW HEAR THE SOUND OF GUNS

and naturally expected that we were making our way to the firing line. Every day it was getting colder, but we were lucky in getting a farm barn to sleep in with plenty of straw. After being there for a few days we had orders to join the -----, which consists of the 1st and 2nd Lifeguards and proceeded to the front. We marched to ---- and bivouacked there for the night. It rained the whole day long and our cloaks and kit hung like buckets of water on our shoulders. The night was horribly cold and wet. We all slept in an empty house on the bare floor. There was a tremendous cannonade of guns going on and we knew we must be getting very close to the firing line. The fire from the guns lit up the darkness. There was a cavalry regiment of Algerians staying here too. Reveille was at 4am and we marched off at 6am to Ypres. We had to pass through Ypres under fire. The town had been bombarded for 24 hours and was burning. It was a horrible sight to see this beautiful town in ruins and flames and we never saw a single person in it as we passed through. A little further on one of the British guns went off just by the side of the road close to us. We nearly jumped out of our saddles with such a sudden shock. We bivouacked about two miles out and were under shell fire the whole night. This was our first experience of fire and we did not like the whistling of the shells going over our heads. The "S" Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery was in the same field and were jolly good mates for us, all sleeping in front of our horses in the open. The 1st and 2nd Life Guards were in the trenches at the time. We spent the next day digging trenches to get ourselves under cover and had just finished when we were ordered to take ourselves up

IN THE FIRING LINE.

We all turned out except a few who were left in charge of our horses. We started off at dusk and had to tramp through mud and water nearly up to our knees with our cloaks dragging on the ground like a lady's dress. The amount of kit we had to carry made it very hard work. Shells were dropping all around and as we neared the firing line we had our first experience of bullets whizzing over our heads. On looking round on several occasions at our long queue as we marched in half-sections, I could not help but laugh. You may imagine every man kept very low and in spite of the mud and water was very often on his hands and knees. I can tell you I was myself. There was not a word only a whisper. We tramped along and finally got there and were ordered to form the support. There were not enough trenches for all, so the unfortunate ones had to begin to dig themselves in and I can tell you they were not long in doing so. [Excision by Censor]. We were in a thick wood and had a splendid position. [Further excision]. They seemed determined to have Ypres and thanks to our first line we held them against great odds. The enemy's guns were continually pouring shells onto us and on one occasion they got our range beautifully and soon had us with those horrible "Jack Johnsons" or "coal boxes" as we call them. As we were retiring and had just got outside the wood about a dozen came together and burst amongst us. One dropped about twenty yards from me and my troop and killed one of the Guards and injured two. This shell dropped about two yards from this poor fellow and blew him into twenty pieces. It was a horrible sight and I shall never forget it. Of the men injured one had a hole in his back the size of a five shilling piece, a piece of the calf of his leg blown away and a wound in his thigh; and another wound in his arm. These "Jack Johnsons" make a hole in the ground large enough to bury twenty to twenty-five horses

and, with the ground being so wet go further in and when one explodes forces the earth about 60 feet high. I think with them going into the ground so deep has saved a lot of our lives. We retired to our left flank and took cover in another wood waiting about five hours for these shells to cease. On doing so we returned to our dugouts again. Our Regiment was exceedingly lucky and we lost none. One man was hit through the arm in C Squadron and Pte GC Woods, one of my own troop, had one bullet through the butt of his rifle and another through his magazine, so had a very narrow shave. We were relieved at about 8pm, after having been in the trenches 48 hours. We were very pleased, as we were all fearfully wet and cold; in fact our feet were perished. We got back to our horses which were about four miles away and soon heard that they had a bad time of it there, having been under artillery fire the whole time, one horse being killed. After 48 hours off we had to take our turn again in the trenches and have another 48 hours on. We had the same line to take up again. Thank goodness the trenches were all ready this time for no sooner had we got into them than the Germans kept sending terrific bursts of rapid fire. It was not safe to show an inch of your head over the top or you would have been done for and with it being so cold and wet everyone got so cramped. We were under a terrible lot of artillery fire again and had several British guns near us and they did some fine work by putting the Germans out of action. Our men were fine and stuck it well. They were now getting use to fire and took very little notice of a bullet or pieces of shrapnel striking the trench. After doing our usual relief for trenches we were given 24 hours rest so we thought we would get away from the fire and take the horses onto ----- and have a billet for ourselves and try and get dry. We had nicely got settled down, when we were awakened at midnight with shells bursting just over us. They sent about 50 in less than half an hour killing 21 of our horses and wounding several. It was a marvellous escape for us. All were in three empty houses not more than 150yds away from the horses, and if a shell had actually struck our house we should all have been killed. We moved off about four miles away. Some of the horses were blown to bits. We were ordered to the trenches again and went and relieved the ----. When we arrived they informed us they had killed 500 Germans that night, and had had a big battle. They did not worry us and (censored). We were very thankful a frost set in but during the next day a terrific snowstorm came on and covered the ground with snow. It was bitterly cold and our hands and feet got frostbitten. [Excision] There was a farmhouse about 200yds behind us; it got totally destroyed and burnt to the ground. We had several airplanes over us during the day and located our trenches. They did their level best to get the exact range and sent a great number of shells at us but did very little damage. We took up another position on the ----- and were now only a

LITTLE OVER 100YDS FROM THE GERMAN TRENCHES

We had barbed wire entanglements in front and, they had too. As we were marching up a sniper shot one man and one of the men in my troop, Corporal Rourke, who is known as "Tut-ter-tut" and is absolutely George Robey all over, had a strange experience too. It was very, very, dark and as he was moving from one trench to another he had the misfortune to tread on a wounded pig. This animal gave a loud shriek, naturally startling the Corporal who fell all his length in about a foot of water and sludge, his head falling just against the pig's mouth. "Tut-ter-tut" had his bayonet fixed but soon found out it was not a German hog with the aid of a pocket switch so let him off with a slight caution as (censored) words failed him. We had to step over several dead men, also lifted some out of the trenches before we could get in. It was very painful seeing their frozen bodies. Trooper Phillips had just three outside his trench one having his head completely blown off. (Passage censored). We could see there had been some severe fighting with the regiment we relieved. We were kept very busy during the night and we had several snipers close to us, who kept sending us a reminder or two. They certainly did not make us flinch. We returned their fire with great effect and let them know if we were Territorials we could lay them out in the right manner. We came under heavy artillery fire early the next morning. (Long excision by the Censor). We were relieved at night by the French and were very tired having a seven mile walk to get to our horses. The hardships were telling on us, as for nearly three weeks we had been under fire and getting practically no sleep. The following day, we were told our Brigade was ordered to rest and would go away to a rest camp to get fully equipped. Our hearts rejoiced; I think we deserved it. During all this time our clothes had never been dry and the cold had terribly frost bitten our feet and hands, besides clothes being all in rags. I must say our

POSTAL SERVICE AND TRANSPORTS ARE WONDERFUL

We always get our letters and have never been a single day without food and plenty of it too. We had odd washes but shaves were out of the question, most of us looking more like criminals than British soldiers. We are all as happy as a King and have our little sing-songs, singing ragtime by our camp fires at night. "Tut-ter-tut" and "Rabbi" another of the "IT's" keep us in great form. "Rabbi" is a fair nut with his mouth organ that he brought with him and the galloping Rutlands I am proud to lead are worthy of every possible praise, always ready at the right moment to do their bit. We have had a lot of cigarettes and chocolate sent out to us and we thank our dear folks at home for thinking so much of us. We are all fit and wish your readers a jolly happy Christmas.

I am yours faithfully

Sergeant Charles Cecil Bailey, Rutland Troop, Leicestershire Yeomanry, December 9th 1914

