

THE GEORGE BYGONE – November 2018: Another George Cavalryman (1914-18)

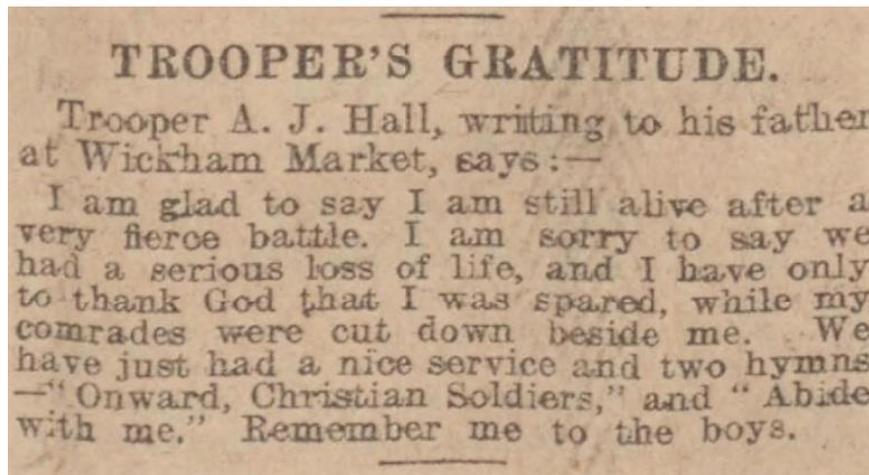
This month's Bygone, unsurprisingly, looks at The George's connection to the First World War, on the hundredth anniversary of its end. Albert James Hall, born at Easton on 19th Mar 1893, was the second son of Charles Hall, landlord of The George from about 1908 until 1924. Albert, who would already have been a member of the volunteer cavalry regiment, was called up to the 1/1st Battalion of the Essex Yeomanry on the 12th of November 1914. He was sent to France as a member of C Squadron, the regiment travelling from Melton, where they had been encamped, via Woodbridge and Southampton to Le Havre arriving on the 1st December.



The Yeomanry took a major part in what became known as the Battle for Frezenberg Ridge, part of the 2nd battle of Ypres, on May 13th 1915. The following, subsequently, appeared in the *Essex Newsman* on the 29th of May:

“ ESSEX YEOMANRY ... STORIES OF SPLENDID GALLANTRY. In the last " Essex Newsman" we reported the heroic charge upon and capture of German trenches near Ypres by the Essex Yeomanry, in conjunction with the Horse Guards Blue, the Life Guards, and the 10th Hussars, on May 13. Unfortunately the casualty list was exceedingly heavy —the enemy shelling the Yeomanry in the captured trenches with great accuracy—but the deed was a noble one, will live in history, and is described by Brigadier-General B. Johnson as “the finest thing he has ever seen.” The casualties the Essex Yeomanry numbered 163, out of 307 engaged.”

The article also included a number of participants' accounts including:



Of the engagement itself, following three weeks of heavy fighting the Essex Yeomanry was moved into a support position at the strategically important Frezenberg Ridge. Their main task was to dig a communications trench to ease communications between the front line and GHQ. At 4am on the 13th, the Germans started a bombardment which lasted 4 hours and damaged the defensive trenches held by the 2nd Life Guards (Blues), Leicestershire Yeomanry and the 3rd Dragoon Guards. The German offensive took the trenches held by the Life Guards and desperate fighting took place. Reinforcements were called for and the Essex Yeomanry, the Horse Guards and the 10th Hussars charged the trenches and drove back the German offensive.

Albert, by then a Lance Corporal (promoted 27 April 1916), was later awarded the Military Medal on the 18th July 1918 (*London Gazette*), possibly for his part in a different action at Monchy on 11th April 1917, when, his cavalry brigade was ordered to advance mounted over open country to occupy high ground east and north east of Monchy-le-Preux, a key position between the Scarpe and the Sensee rivers to the east of Arras.



During the advance, led by the Yeomanry followed by the 10th Hussars, the leading two troops of the Essex's C Squadron (of which Albert was a member) were mown down by machine gun fire crossing a ridge and the two regiments hurriedly occupied Monchy and dug in. Led by Lt Col Whitmore of the Yeomanry, they held Monchy against determined German attacks for 18 hours until relieved by infantry. The Essex Yeomanry suffered 135 casualties and almost all of their horses were killed. Many gallantry awards were made in respect of the action, notably the Victoria Cross given to Lance Corporal H. Mugford of the Machine Gun Corps, but, - incidentally - formerly of the Essex Yeomanry, for keeping his machine gun in action with both legs broken and other wounds.

The Essex Yeomanry Regiment was ultimately disbanded as a unit on April 4th 1918, and its soldiers were sent to reinforce three other cavalry regiments; Hall was sent to the 11th Hussars. Although wounded, on August 8th 1918 at Harbonnieres during the Battle of Amiens, Lance Corporal Hall survived the First World War, unlike the 32 other servicemen listed on the memorial in Chapel Lane, dying on the 26th July 1981, at the age of 88.

After his father's death in 1924, his mother Hannah continued to run The George, with Albert's elder brother, William Charles, taking over (until about 1936 or 1937) on her death in 1930. Albert married Lillian G Robinson, probably at Wickham in 1922, and for many years ran a grocery shop on The Hill. Their son Dennis, born in 1924, was later village Postmaster and Albert's descendants still live in the area. Certainly 'Family of The George' members!

If you have any historical facts, memories, photographs of The George, or characters associated with the pub or groups that used it you wish to share, contact us by e-mail at heritage.wmgeorge@btconnect.com.