

An Earl's Barton Man on the Ecton Memorial Roll

George Townley, born in Earl's Barton in 1892 has two connections with Ecton, he was for a time Scout Master here and he was also the Uncle of Marian Gleave. George joined 4th Northampton Regiment on September 9th 1914 at Northampton, his brothers also joined up, Percy(East Surrey Regt.) and Fred (Lothian Regt.). From the moment George enlisted he kept a very detailed diary, covering his training, and he notes the first march from Beyton to Thetford on November 4th 1914 being 17 miles. Three days later he was marched from Thetford to Bury St. Edmunds a distance of 12 miles.

In December he joined the Signallers and was sent to the Dardanelles on the H.M.S. Royal George embarking on July 29th 1915 together with ¼ Northampton Regt, 54 Divisional Cyclist Co. And 54 Divisional Royal Army Medical Corps. They were escorted by the H.M.S. Laverock. In the Bay of Biscay he records two obviously memorable events one, being sea-sick and two seeing dolphins.

Arriving in Alexandria the men had a five mile march round the city with band, native policeman and a scout as guides. From there they sailed via the Greek Archipelago to Suvla Bay where they were given three days rations and a hundred extra rounds making two hundred and seventy per man. They were landed at Kangaroo Point, Suvla Bay and immediately marched to the rear of the fighting line at the battle of Kidney Hill. They then moved during the next few days to support various other units. Being a signaller meant that some nights he was on observation all night; on the 21st August he had the first night's sleep since 13th August.

Throughout all his time he was regularly receiving and sending letters and they seem to get through even in the most adverse conditions. One food parcel which arrived had the cryptic note – food spoilt by pears. There was obviously a Sikh regiment nearby as on 15th September he received some chupatties from Sikhs. After becoming ill he was sent to hospital in Alexandria and then to Queen Mary's Military Hospital, Whalley, Lancs. The diary stops here.

He later went on to serve on the Western Front and after the war went to Lincoln College Oxford. He was ordained and in 1957 became the Suffragan Bishop of Hull. He returned to live in Earls Barton in 1968/9 and became Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Peterborough 1970. He died March 1977 in Earls Barton.

Angela Crabtree.

“Peace is not a relationship of nations. It is a condition of mind brought about by a serenity of soul. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also a state of mind. Lasting peace can come only to peaceful people.”