



In The News

Upton Lovell

BOOK DEDICATED TO THE “FORGOTTEN BATTALION”

By Victoria Ashford

A fragile note documenting the experiences of a Wiltshire battalion during the First World War prompted a Warminster author to uncover the story of the "forgotten battalion".

Paula Perry, of The Maltings, Warminster, had been sorting through a box of items belonging to her late grandfather Albert Edward Bailey, of Upton Lovell, near Warminster, when she came upon artefacts from his time serving in the 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment.

Tales of troops serving on the Western Front dominate today's war literature, while relatively little is recorded about troops serving in places such as Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, the north-west frontier of India and in Persia that is, until Mrs Perry discovered her grandfather's belongings and decided to find out more.

She said: "They were known as the forgotten battalion because they didn't fight on the Western Front so when they came home nothing was ever written about them.

"In one battle alone they lost 124 men. That was on August 10, 1915.

"There was a fragile piece of paper that started it. I found it in my grandfather's wallet. The relevance of it was that it was about their journey to Persia and the 400 miles they travelled. I wanted to find out a little bit more about it."

More than 600 troops from the 5th Battalion, many of which were Wiltshire men, were killed in battle or from disease, which was common throughout the period, and this has been recorded in Mrs Perry's book.

A History of the 5th (Services) Battalion Wiltshire Regiment 1914-1919 covers everything from the start of the soldiers' training to their struggles against the harsh environment, the gunfire and terrible sanitary conditions.

Mrs Perry approached the Royal Gloucester, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment Museum in Salisbury, which encouraged her to produce the book, and has used Warminster Library to help with her research, which began in 2000.

In the acknowledgements section of the book she pays tribute to the library staff saying that if it were not for the 'staff's fantastic help' her book would not have been possible.

To say thank you, Mrs Perry donated a book to the library on Friday.

The 5th Battalion was based at Tidworth and made up of people who had enlisted as soldiers for the duration of the war.

The battalion fought in Gallipoli for eight months until January 1916 before heading to Egypt and then Mesopotamia (Iraq) by April 1916 where they remained until the end of the war.

A History of the 5th (Services) Battalion Wiltshire Regiment 1914-1919 is priced at £19.99.



Paula Perry and Warminster librarian Richard Violet

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