



Imperial Yeomanry on Patrol in South Africa

Private T. A. Brown Killed

Letter of June 10th 1900

Wiltshire Yeomen in South Africa Letters from the Front

We give below another letter which has been received from Trooper Tom Brown, of Upton Scudamore, at present with the Wilts contingent of the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa. It was written at Ficksburg, on June 10th, which testifies to some delay of the mails. He adds that he has heard also that one of them (he or his brother) was dead, and needless to say, denies the imputation. He goes on: "H. Pope we left behind at Urmonia last week with a touch of enteric fever, and Mr Thornton is in the hospital here with it, and a few we left behind on our way up. We have had none killed, being very lucky. At Blomfontein they were bringing fifty a day in bullock wagons from the hospitals dying of enteric fever; there were five or six thousand in the hospital. Twenty of us, I being one, left the company at Edenburg, and have been away from them five weeks, only joining them the day after they got back to Senekal. In the meantime we were escorting convoys, commandeering and looting. We went to Reddersburg, Smithfield, and Dewetadorp; took 500 Basuto ponies from there to Blomfontein Waterworks, Thabanchu, and Wynburg, and then acted as scouts for General Clement's column from there to Senekal. We advanced on the Boers in the afternoon we came in, but had orders to retire the day before. Herb and others were advance guard, and the enemy let them get right in the town, so you can guess they had a close shave or two, the Middlesex being very unluckily, six killed, with their major, and several wounded. The Boers had the major's ring, boots, leggings, and what was in his pockets. The other day three of the Middlesex went to a farmhouse, had some food, and when going away two Boers fired at them, killing one and wounding another. The Grenadiers lost very heavily there. The enemy fired the veldt below the kopjes, and as the wounded dropped down they were burnt dreadfully. We left a day or two later with General Rundle's column for Urmonia, always used as scouts. There we left them and went on to Ficksburg, and are camped there now. We have a commando of Boers about seven miles from our camp, so they afford us a little amusement. Wednesday morning forty of us were out on patrol, and if they had let us come another 500 yards without firing they would have had the lot of us. Instead of that, they opened fire on us, having our range to an inch, and they dropped the bullets round us like hailstones; very close shaves there were, but only one horse was shot as we retired. Nearly every morning our patrol has a look at their patrol with about a mile between us. I think they are going to be starved out. Six of them came into camp this morning and gave themselves up. I am mounted orderly at the telegraph office in town today, and the chaps tell me the wire is cut somewhere, so I just sat down and wrote this letter, as the mail is going out tomorrow. We have not had any rain since we left Capetown until Friday night: then it thundered and rained. I woke with my head in a pool of water, and then a white frost in the morning. We've has no tent since we left the Cape, and there are white frosts by night and boiling sun by day. I think it is about three

weeks since we had spurs or boots off, and I don't think I shall bother to take them off any more. We shot several springbok in our travels. You can go 200 miles and not see a tree. We think the war will be over in about a month.

Warminster and Westbury Journal, Saturday, 21 July 1900

The Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa - Wiltshire Yeomen Killed and Wounded

There was sad news awaiting the readers from this district of the South African casualty lists on Saturday morning, for there appeared on that day the news that two local members of the Wiltshire contingent of the Imperial Yeomanry had been killed and one wounded at Senekal on August 20th. Corporal W. E. Dean was reported severely wounded, and Private F. W. Young and Private T. A. Brown killed.

Chitterne and Imber have now to regret two wounded sons, both of them bearing the same name - well known and respected in both places - and both cousins. Private Frank Dean, son of Mr. Robert Dean, of Imber, was wounded some time since. Corporal W. E. Dean is a son of Mr. Joseph Dean, of Chitterne, and his wound, received apparently at the time his two brothers in arms were killed, is, we are informed, in the mouth. Information is very scanty, but he is not expected to make other than favourable progress towards recovery. All here hope for this in both cases, and further hope to see them back in health and strength, bearing honourable scars as the only reminders of their injuries when the rest of the troops come home.

The others are past all hope in this world, but they have died the noblest of deaths, in the cause of their country, against their country's foe; and we hope that, when the war is over, there will be a special effort made to raise some tangible and lasting monument in our most public place for the men from this neighbourhood who "heard their country's call," and left good homes and prospects to go out to South Africa, and endure untold hardships, wounds, and death for the land of their birth. Patriotism was in ancient days counted among the noblest of virtues, and rewarded as such. We cannot, alas, reward those that are gone, but we can at least do something to perpetuate the memory of what was the most real and sincere patriotism, a patriotism which has cost them their lives.

It seems harder to hear of these deaths now than if they occurred earlier in the campaign. After coming unscathed through all the fever and fighting, with the ranks unthinned by death until now, it is sad that the Boer bullets should have found the billets when we seemed in sight of the end, and were preparing for welcoming home the living rather than mourning for the dead.

The Private F. W. Young referred to above, though not a native of Warminster, is well known here, and may claim kin to the place. He is a son of the late Mr. G. E. Young, of Broadchalke, and a nephew of Mr. F. I. Flower, the medical officer for Warminster, and was a frequent visitor to this town, more particularly when the Yeomanry were stationed at Trowbridge Barracks preparatory to their leaving for the Cape. He was present at the service in the Minster on the Sunday before leaving, and was one of the three present in khaki uniform on that day. He was connected with Somerset House, and death has cut short a promising career.

The other T. A. Brown, will be even better known to readers of the Journal, in which many of his letters home have been reproduced. He came from the quiet little village of Upton Scudamore, and joined the Yeomanry along with his brother, Corporal Herbert Brown. Neither, in spite of the campaigning excitements and hardships in South Africa, forgot home associations; and in late letters Private Brown has been anticipating the conclusion of the war and a speedy return to England, which he left before he was twenty-one, spending his twenty-first birthday on the Cymric.

A Last Letter Home

A letter, dated July 18th, from Ladybrand, was received a short time since by his mother, in which he stated that he had received letters written in March, May, and June, and copies of the Journal all together on the day before, so that it could be seen, he said, that they had been knocking about for some time. After expressing the wish that the harvest would be a good one, he went on: "Herbert and our company were in that scrap at Senekal, where the Middlesex were so unlucky, but our fellows came off without a scratch. We came in next day, after being away out from the company five weeks with Lieut. Thornton's little lot. We were scouting for General Clement's Brigade for three weeks, and there I happened to meet the Wiltshire Regiment, with which were the Volunteers, some of whom I knew. Often of a night I used to go over and have a chat with them." He speaks of Lieut. Thornton, who has since been invalided home, getting a touch of fever, and going down to the hospital at Belfontein. Lieut. Thornton roughed it and lived the same as they did, and, went on the writer, "he must have felt the rough living and sleeping out on the veldt, and off again about four o'clock every morning, and without tea or anything until night but about two and a half biscuits to grind into you. I tell you, you could eat almost anything with riding hard all day, and you can seldom drink the water without boiling it. It was nothing fresh to see a dead horse in the water you had to drink out of. Since the fight at Senekal we have been backwards and forwards to Ficksburg for five or six weeks with General Rundle. The enemy were sniping at us all the time, and at Ficksburg we had a fortnight expecting an attack every moment. By day the shells were dropping a hundred yards from us, but they did not burst, and at night we were there in the trenches, or taking convoys to the different camps, because we did not dare to do it in daylight. Once or twice they could have captured all the lot of us if they had not begun to fire at us so quickly. They tried hard to get us bagged one day, but got sucked in. Herbert and I and four more were sent to draw the fire for a big gun we had placed on a kopje. The Boers let us get to within five hundred yard of them, and then let go. The dirt flew up all around, and the bullets were as thick as hailstones, but we lay pretty close along our horses' necks, and soon got out of range. Then our guns sent two shells over us smash in amongst the Boers, scattering them in all directions, and our fellows brought down several horses and men. We only lost one man, and they captures one of our fellows the other day at Ficksburg. That's all we have lost up till now, and the First Company have seen no fighting, and have lost seven men through fever, etc. We left Ficksburg a week tomorrow to come here for rest, and the night after we came away they made a night attack, and lost close on a hundred men. We are all right here. We are on full rations; jam every other day, besides plenty of bread, and I have got a good job - mounted orderly to the Colonel of the Worcestershire Regiment. They have a nice band, which plays every morning, and yesterday we had some races here. We have not got above six English horses, riding mostly Basuto ponies. My mare that came out dropped under me about a month ago, fairly done up, and since then I have had about twenty. It is very cold here at night, and in the mornings you will find ice the thickness of a penny, while in the daytime it is hot enough for haymaking. Our clothes we never take off unless changing a shirt, and my boots and spurs, before we came here I clean forget when I had them off last. Our clothes are all rags; I suppose we shall get some fresh ones soon. This is the last stand the Boers will make, I think, on the other side of Ficksburg. Our army is all round, with Rundle, Mehuen, and Buller, but we don't want to attack if possible."

Warminster and Westbury Journal, Saturday, 1 September 1900

Wiltshire Men at the Front

The following is the week's casualty list for the men of the Wilts Regiment and the Wiltshire Yeomanry:
Imperial Yeomanry Killed Trooper T. A. Brown, Biss Farm, Upton Scudamore. **Warminster and Westbury Journal, Saturday, 1 September 1900**



Photo by Mike Gutteridge, 2013

The marble memorial plaque to Tom Brown inside Upton Scudamore Church.