



Ken Tallett just before he went to France, 1915/16

JIM TALLETT REMEMBERS THE RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS FATHER – KEN TALLETT (1898-1987), OF BUCKINGHAM STREET AND ABINGDON ROAD

KEN WAS A SIGNALLER USING FLAGS, MORSE CODE, AND POSSIBLY HELIOGRAPH. ALTHOUGH HE DESCRIBED SOME OF HIS TIMES IN ENGLAND, HE SAID VERY LITTLE ABOUT FRANCE EXCEPT THE AWFUL CONDITIONS IN TRENCHES AND DUG-OUTS, WET, COLD, THE NOISE OF THE GUNS, AND THE CONSTANT DANGER FROM SHELLS AND MACHINE GUN FIRE. HE PICKED UP A CIGARETTE CASE BEHIND THE GERMAN LINE . . . JIM HAS IT WITH HIM, ALSO KEN'S MEDALS AND BADGES.

AFTER ENLISTING IN 1915 KEN AND FRIENDS, PARTICULARLY FRANK AND STAN WALKER, AND OTHERS FROM GRANDPONT, SPENT THEIR FIRST DAYS IN THE OXFORD AND BUCKS AT COWLEY BARRACKS (BUILT 1876). IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT UP TO A POINT SOME GRANDPONT MEN STAYED TOGETHER, EVEN IN FRANCE.

FROM COWLEY THEY WENT TO NORTHAMPTON FOR FURTHER TRAINING, TO BLYTH (NORTHUMBERLAND), TO ESSEX – WRITTLE, BROOMFIELD, MERSEA ISLAND - AND THEN TO FRANCE. ROUTE MARCHING WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF TRAINING, ALWAYS CARRYING HEAVY PACKS BANDS USUALLY ACCOMPANIED MARCHING, BUT KEN SAID NOTHING ABOUT SINGING THE POPULAR AND PATRIOTIC DITTIES OF THE TIME. IN ESSEX, SEA WALLS WERE PATROLLED. BRIGADIER ROSE, *THE STORY OF THE 2/4th OXFORD AND BUCKS* . . . DESCRIBES TWO MARCHES IN ESSEX IN WHICH KEN AND FRIENDS ALMOST CERTAINLY PARTICIPATED. ONE WAS 25 MILES – STARTED AT 8am AND FINISHED AT 5pm – 653 MEN. THE OTHER – 29 MILES – 685 MEN, LASTED 11 HOURS. THE BAND MARCHED ALL THE WAY AND PLAYED THEM IN AT THE END. ALL THIS WITH FULL PACKS, BLANKET, AMMUNITION AND RIFLE.

KEN WAS VAGUE ABOUT EXACTLY WHERE HE WENT IN FRANCE. HE DID TALK ABOUT RAILWAY JOURNEYS AS WELL AS MARCHING, SENTRY DUTY. BRIGADIER ROSE LISTS DATES AND PLACES: 1916 LAVENTIE, THE SOMME, 1917 ABLAINCOURT, CAMBRAI, RAINECOURT, DANNICOURT, ARRAS, YPRES, ST. QUENTIN, AND IN 1918 DOMART-EN-PONTHIEU.

KEN CAME BACK TO ENGLAND IN 1918, AND FINISHED HIS SERVICE WHILE AWAITING DEMOB AS A MEDICAL ORDERLY AT THE ASHHURST HOSPITAL – WHERE HE MET MY MOTHER, ALSO AN ORDERLY, MARRYING IN 1923.