



REGINALD HENRY FAGGETTER

(This unnamed family photo of a Queen's Private is believed to be Reg Faggetter)

Pte. G/2178, 7th Bn. The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)

Killed in action on Friday, 29th September 1916, Schwaben Redoubt, Thiepval, Somme

On September 12th, the day after Leonard Grace, Reginald Faggetter enlisted in the same unit, the 7th Queens. By a twist of fate, they would both die on consecutive days just over two years later and their military experiences would have been very similar, although it seems that Reg was an orderly for a time to the Adjutant, later to become C.O., Lt. Col Kemp-Welch, whereas Len became an infantryman.



Terrys (Box) Cottage in 1902 (now the Old School House)

They would almost certainly have known each other, even though Reg was some twelve years younger. The Faggetter family were long-established in Pirbright, first appearing in the mid 17th century and, in the 19th, almost all in the building trade, mainly bricklaying, as was Frank, Reg's father and Henry, his grandfather, who was well into his fifties when Frank, the youngest of thirteen, was born in 1863. Mary Ann, his mother, was left to bring up the children when Henry died in 1874,

but fortunately her sons were old enough to be able to support her at Terry's Cottage, now the Old School House, in Church Lane (*photo previous page*).

In 1886, father Frank married a Bramley girl, Ellen Susannah Hoare, and appears to have moved to Eastleigh, in Hampshire, where Elizabeth Ann was born the next year, but they came back to live at Lavender Cottage on the Green in 1890, when Sidney was born. Two more Pirbright moves followed, to Collins Green 1895-7, where Reg was born in December 1896 and 12, The Gardens 1897-8. In 1901 the family was living at 5, Rose Cottages, Brookwood, Frank probably working for his cousin, Esdor David (Ned) Faggetter, who was busy building the houses in Connaught Road, Brookwood. In 1909 they came back to live with Frank's eldest brother Henry at Terry's Cottage, their mother having died in 1904, and this is where they were in the 1911 census, Reg still just a schoolboy (he left in September that year). Frank's short and final move came in the next year, to Church Cottage, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Just over a month after the outbreak of war, on September 5th, in the heady scramble to join the war before it was "over by Christmas", Reg enlisted at Guildford. He would probably have been in the same party as Leonard Grace posted to the 7th Queens, who were under canvas at Purfleet, Essex until January 1915, when huts were built. In April the Battalion moved to Colchester for a week's manoeuvres covering 150 miles, then had to march straight back to Colchester from Ipswich. At the end of that month the 18th Division moved to Codford St Mary, near Salisbury Plain for more manoeuvres and rifle practice before the real war started for them at the end of June with a journey to Dernancourt, on the Somme. It appears that Reg was attached to the Signals section, which is unusual, as this was normally

Royal Engineers' territory.

Clarence "Clarrie" Jarman of Woking also joined the 7th Queens in 1914 and, although wounded, survived the war. Here are his recollections of the next few months-

"We took over a section of the line from the 1/Norfolks, with Albert behind us and Fricourt, held by the Germans, in front of us. At first to hear the bullets whizzing by and shells whining over us made us duck,



Somme mud (Wikipedia)

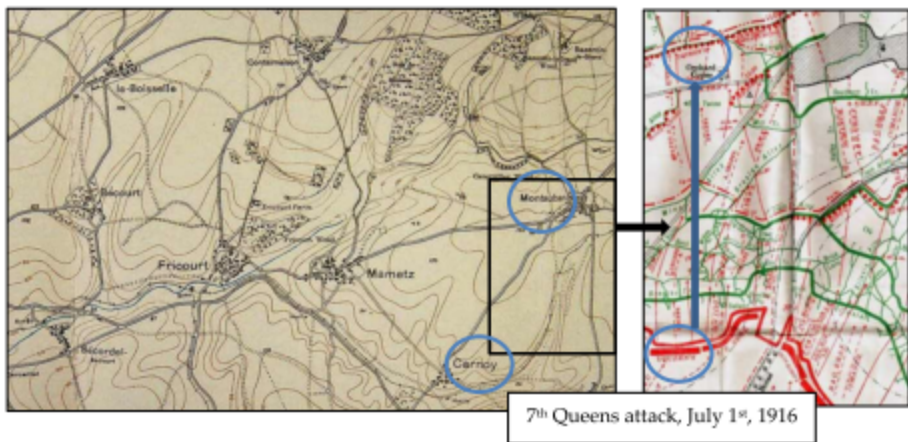
but we soon got used to it and treated this with contempt...During the rest of 1915 and all through the winter we remained on this front between La Boisselle and Suzanne on the right of the British line, linking up with the French. The conditions during the winter months were pretty grim, snow at Christmas with rain and freezing cold. The trenches became thick with mud and we were often up to our knees in water, which was miserable, to say the least."

Through the turn and turn about system, not all time was spent in the front line-

“When out of the line, our time was fully occupied. First we had to clean the mud off uniforms and boots and clean buttons, rifles and boots. We had to parade for a bath and change of underwear. The bath house was usually in some old barn and we had to bath in tubs. Our clothing after being in the line was pretty lousy. In fact, we were hardly ever free from lice... In old barns we had to sleep on lice-infested straw and the rats just ran over us.... Other duties when out of the line consisted of parades, route marches, physical jerks and often we worked with the REs making up roads, laying railway tracks and water mains, hence the saying:

*The bees do the work and the bees make the honey,
But the Queens do the work and the REs draw the money”*
(Royal Engineers were paid more than the Poor Bloody Infantry)

After two weeks rest, the 7th Queens went up the line again to Suzanne in preparation for that fateful day, July 1st, the first day of Battle of the Somme. For ten June days Allied artillery shelled the German lines day and night in what turned out to be a fruitless attempt to annihilate them and breach the wire. On Thursday, June 29th the battalion took up position in the assembly trenches, only to be told the attack had been postponed for 48 miserably wet hours before zero hour, 7.30 a.m. on Saturday.



Clarrie again-

“The weather had turned fine and warm, the trench ladders were in place and, on the blast of whistles and after wishing our chums the best of luck, over the top we went, expecting, as we had been told, just a walkover.... We actually went over the top at Carnoy and our objective was Montauban. (see map) The Germans.... came at us with what must have been hundreds of machine guns, coupled with artillery fire and just mowed us down. On top of this our own field guns were for the first time using what was called a creeping barrage, firing over the top of us and a great many of our lads must have been killed or wounded by our own shells. Instead of a walkover it was a complete slaughter.”

Clarrie himself was badly wounded in the leg and by good fortune rescued from no-mans land the next day. His leg was subsequently amputated, but he lived to tell his tale.

Reg Faggetter survived this battle, with over half the battalion, 532, as casualties. A fortnight later, they were involved in more fighting with the 55th Brigade in an unsuccessful, but fiercely contested



Men of the 7th Battalion on the Montauban – Mametz Road on the first day of the Battle of the Somme 1916' (*Queens History. S.H.C.*)

attempt to retake Trones Wood, the ground changing hands a number of times, before being sent for a week's rest to Grovetown Camp and Fletre, both well to the rear.

Early in August, the 18th (Eastern) Division, with the reinforced 7th Queens, moved to a quiet training area near Armentieres. This came to an end on September 28th with another move to Puchvillers in preparation for an assault on Thiepval and the Schwaben Redoubt. From early 1915 the Germans had been fortifying the higher ground on the Somme for defence and artillery observation of the lower ground to the west. This included a number of formidable strongpoints with deep dugouts and lines of trenches front and rear.

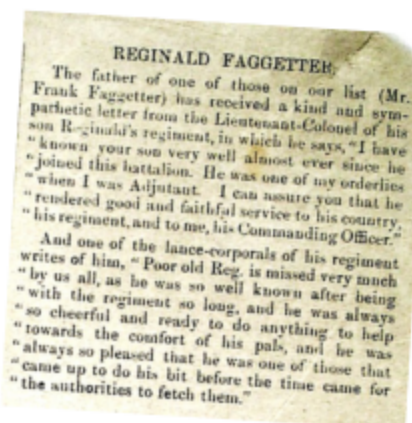
Soon after midday on September 28th, the attack began. Things went well to start with, but the nearer the Tommies came to the Redoubt, the stiffer the opposition, with machine guns versus bombs (hand grenades) and by nightfall, when the 7th Queens were relieved, it was still in German hands, not to be finally taken until nine days later. A signaller's life could be as hazardous as an infantryman's. In those days before radio, the only contact with HQ was by runner or cable, which was frequently cut by shellfire. Then poor 'Sparks' had to run and duck and crawl with his heavy reel through shot and shell to lay another. Probably hit by shrapnel, Reg Faggetter died of wounds the next day. That day, 495, nearly half of the battalion, were either killed, wounded or missing, proof of the savagery of the fighting and rivalling the casualties on the first bloody day of the Somme.



The Schwaben Redoubt under shellfire (centre, just below the skyline) July 1916. The River Ancre runs through the trees of Thiepval Wood in the valley below (*IWM*)



Church Cottage 1924



Quoted in the Church Newsletter in November, these letters of sympathy (*above right*), written away from the heat of battle by Reg's C.O., Lt. Col. Kemp-Welch and one of his N.C.O.s would have been scant consolation for Frank at Church Cottage, still grieving for his wife, Ellen Susannah, who had been buried in Pirbright churchyard barely a year before, after a long illness. He would have been all the more anxious for his remaining son, Sydney, who was in the Machine Gun Squadron of the 3rd Cavalry Division, but fortunately he would survive the war and marry twice.



From left: Albert Avenell, Sydney Faggetter, Elizabeth Avenell nee Faggetter. Frank Faggetter far right

Sydney had enlisted in the 4th Hussars on March 14th 1906, claiming he was 19 years old: he was actually 16, having been born on February 12th 1890! He had been a railway porter before joining the Army, most probably working at Brookwood Station. When he married Edith Collyer on March 29th

1919 at Pirbright, Sydney's occupation was given as a soldier. After serving 15 years, he re-enlisted on March 14th 1921, finally being discharged on October 13th 1925, his home address being given as Leonards House, Pirbright. In later life he would say he spent most of his time in France, so one wonders if he knew of his brother's death. In 1946 he married his cousin Elizabeth Mary Elwick, nee Boylett at Guildford Register Office and her grandchildren remember Sydney as a strict disciplinarian who didn't seem to like children!

Elizabeth Alice Faggetter, the oldest child, looked after her father from the time of her mother's illness and death. She married Albert Avenell (*photo above*) in 1929 at the age of 43 and the three of them continued living together at Church Cottage until Frank's death six years later. Albert and Elizabeth carried on in residence for more than thirty years, he passing away in 1967 and she two years later.