

This article was in the Dewsbury Reporter and was found by Karen Holloway while she was looking for information on locals who were in KYOLI. Karen kindly printed it off, but it was very difficult to read. The date it was in the Dewsbury Reporter was May 13 1915. There is also a photo of Henry in France, around the dates mentioned, at the Mill, with some other officers from other countries. This article was rewritten by Charles Day junior, Director of Henry Day & Sons Ltd. Savile Bridge Mills, Dewsbury on 05.03.2013.

WORK AMONGST THE WOUNDED

Local gentleman's thrilling experiences.

The heroism of the French soldiers.

Lieutenant Henry Day of Dewsbury who is with the French Red Cross Section in charge of a motor ambulance and had written the following letter to his brother Mr Charles Day of Messrs Henry Day and Sons, Wellington Mills, Dewsbury from Commercy, France.

February 20th.1915

I was out this morning at 6.30 and our first duty is seeing to hospitals being cleared of cases to be taken to the station. Then our next journey is out to the Front. Today I went to a place named ETANG, which is in the FOREST OF APREMONT, and had to come back in the dark without lights until out of the danger zone, which is not a very nice with one wheel sticking in the mud and shaking the car to bits. We have had a busy day and are expecting a few night journeys, as the French have lost a trench out at ETANG today and afterwards blown it up with mines when the Germans took possession of it. We heard there were about 500 casualties. I must say we only go out at night, except for very serious cases. I have had a few and can say it's no picnic. No lights, the road like a ploughed field, full of convoys, troops, artillery transporters etc. and we cannot use a horn but continually shouting out "A DROIT" and expecting every minute to go in the ditch or the car to smash in two with the bumps. We have all got the "LAISSE PASSER" i.e. the French official passport for the military zone and which is a token of their trust in us, which means we may go anywhere about the French lines. I could write pages on the French soldiers. They are wonderfully cheerful and full of confidence in the future and what crowds of them.

SHELLS BURSTING IN THE AIR

February 21st.

When I wrote yesterday I said we expected a heavy day as there had been an attack. Well we got it all right. We were up at 6 am and got the hospital cleared and out to a place called MARBOTTE, where the small shanty which is dug in the hillside and covered with a wooden roof and the floor with straw and serves as a hospital or more correctly as a shelter for the wounded as they are brought out of the trenches. I had four very bad cases and unfortunately all of them were hit by their own guns. The French artillery had changed and did not get the exact range at first and wounded quite a number of their own men. I went out again and got five more, four of which were stretcher cases and one sitting by my side, who had a bullet wound in his cheek. I had to take this lot to a place named SORCEY about 5 miles from here. We had just finished dinner at 8pm and all drawn up round the fire (ten of us) when a telegram came for a car to go out to the Front. Well, I took my car out along with another chap named Owen and as it is about 10 miles by road and we had no lights and the road full of traffic and most of the way in low gear. It was about 10 pm when we arrived.

It was, fortunately, a nice night though pitch dark and quite a sight to see the French guns firing from the woods behind us and shells bursting into the air, one fell about 50 yards from us. There was one poor man who had a bullet wound in his head. It had entered by the side of his nose and came out in a slanting direction behind his head. They said they did not think he could live long but when we got him to the hospital here, I and Owen went in to see him and the doctor told us he thought he could save him. We ripped his clothes off and oh poor chap - he was half conscious through it all and how he thanked us. Another chap had been hit by a piece of shell just below his heart and he suffered fearful pain and all the way back to the hospital he was groaning most pitifully, which I find gets on one's nerves more than anything when driving, as you can imagine. A run 10 miles to get back on a most wretched road without lights and in low gear with 4 poor fellows inside who feel the least movement and you are powerless to avoid the ruts, stones and holes in the road made by the German shell fire. However we landed back at 11:30 pm and then got this poor fellow attended to and put in a nice clean bed. He craved for a drink of water but they dare not give him one. As we came away in the midst of all his suffering he thanked us with a "MERCİ MONSIEUR". Another fellow had a bullet wound in his arm, sat patiently waiting his turn, he was only 18 and looked miserable till Owen lit a cigarette and put it in his mouth and the change in his look was worth a bit to see. He thanked us most profusely on leaving and by God our thanks are due to them. We got 'home' after midnight and made ourselves a nice cup of tea and went to bed feeling we had done a little bit of our duty and came to the conclusion that it is much better to try and save a life or to than destroy them.

'MANSIONS' IN THE MUD

February 28th

I was out at the Front again today within 200 yards of the German lines and two French officers took me along with them to their quarters. We passed the Generals' 'Chateau', which is dug out of the hillside with a roof of earth and the front all wood with three small windows. They then took me to their 'hotel' which consisted of a kitchen, drawing, dining and bedrooms all combined in one. Their cook was a chef from Paris and in ordinary times had been in the service of a wealthy American family. They insisted on me having something with them so had a cup of tea, which was very acceptable. They took me to another 'mansion' (all these places are named after big hotels in Paris) dug in the hillside, where one of the French soldiers had made a violin out of an old chocolate box with four wire strings; the bow was a small branch off a tree with the hair from a cuirassier's hat fastened to each end and out of this primitive instrument he got a most beautiful effect and tone. He played the Marseillaise, then the Serenade of Winowski's and I asked him if he knew "Un peu d'amour". He did not recognize the name so I hummed it to him and he knew immediately and played it beautifully. He had studied in Paris and in Italy and was truly an artist.

Whilst we were here a French aeroplane flew over our heads and over the German lines. It was amusing to see them trying to bring him down. We could see the shells bursting near him and had to 'bob in' for fear of falling pieces and then out again to see him. He seemed to me to be having them 'up the pole'. They are dare-devils and delight in playing their tricks. Well, when I had got back to my car they had brought half a dozen wounded men so I had to get back. Whilst on the road I had to stop for half an hour until a column of infantry about a mile long passed me. They were coming from PONT A MOUSSON in the ST MIHIEL direction and consisted of six batteries of French and 75 field guns. We are moving on average 1000 soldiers a week with our 20 cars, not all wounded, but many suffering from various complaints such as frostbite rheumatism etc. When the time comes to advance we shall push the Germans out of ST MIHIEL. It's no use moving till the conditions are better. The French are full of confidence in the future and are a fine lot of men and born fighters