



## INFORMATION SHEET – SOLDIERS EXECUTED DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

To encourage the others.....

During the First World War, ten men associated with Worcestershire were 'Shot at dawn'. Executed following a Military Court Martial, eight of them were in the Worcestershire Regiment and remarkably four were shot on the same day, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1915. Considering that only 302 men in the British Army were executed in the field, this is a high proportion. In total some 3000 death sentences were passed during the war but most were commuted to some other form of punishment. There were 36 men from the Worcestershire Regiment actually sentenced to death.

6747 Private Albert Pitts 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment, came from Bengeworth near Evesham. Albert Pitts left a wife and three children, the eldest being 7 years old. He was an old soldier having previously served for 12 years, and rejoined at the outbreak of the War, signing on for another 4 years. His last letter to his wife, printed in the Evesham Journal, in which he says he is to be shot for being absent but could not help it as he tried to find his regiment, ends, "Try and forget me, for your broken-hearted husband, Bert Do your best for my kiddies".

The details in this Information Sheet are derived from original sources – the papers of the Field General Court Martials held at The National Archives series WO71 – and three books For the Sake of Example, (Judge) Anthony Babbington; Shot at Dawn, Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes; and Blindfold and Alone, Cathryn Corns and John Hughes-Wilson.

Although 302 men were executed, many more were tried by Courts Martial in the field. At the beginning of the war the offence for which men were executed was 'cowardice' while later it was more likely to be 'desertion'. Cowardice is subjective and lacks the evidence or proof that could be established for desertion.

## Albert Pitts

Private Albert Henry Pitts left his battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Warwickshire, near Zonnebeke, outside Ypres on 24 October and was captured at Boulogne in January. Due to the rumours going round the small town of Evesham, the local newspaper printed extracts from his letters, written from France to his wife, during the time he was absent. He appears to have made little effort to hide where he was but the three letters do tell a tale of someone confused. He was shot on 8 February but most unusually, Pitts' body was thoroughly lost and he is instead commemorated at Ploegstreet memorial.

His wife heard the news of his execution from a letter from the Army records Section a month later followed by his last letter, presumably written from his cell. The publication of such correspondence is unique in the story of the men executed by their own side.

Pitts was the thirteenth man to be executed in the First World War. Two years later another man from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshires, 1529 Private Samuel Cunnington from Hockley, Birmingham, was also shot.

1911 Census Bengeworth, Evesham, showing the Pitts family at 28a Mill Street

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.									
<p>Before writing on this Schedule please read the Instructions given on the reverse side of this paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in ink.</p> <p>The entries of the Schedule will be treated as <u>statistical</u>. Great care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, or in connection with the High Court, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.</p>									
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF FAMILY	AGE	SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE	EDUCATION or INSTRUCTION	PROFESSION or OCCUPATION	INDUSTRY or BUSINESS	REMARKS	IMMIGRATION
1. Albert H. Pitts	Head	26	M	Married		Drayman for Jack & Jones			
2. Anne L. Pitts	Wife	27	F	Married					
3. Arthur L. Pitts	Son	5	M						
4. Dorothy M. Pitts	Daughter	1 <sup>st</sup>	F						
5. Anne George	Servant	44	F	Widow					
<p>28a Mill St Evesham</p> <p>Signature: <i>Albert H. Pitts</i> Printed Address: <i>28a Mill St Evesham</i></p>									



The Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing, Belgium



## EVESHAM MAN SHOT AS A DESERTER.

As there are many rumors in the town with regard to the death of an Evesham soldier named Albert Pitts—a matter to which we personally did not propose to refer—Mrs. Pitts, of 22, King's-road, Bengeworth, asks us to publish the facts of the case as she knows them.

In the last week in November Mrs. Pitts received a letter from her husband, in which he stated: "I have been lost two weeks, but I have got on the right track for the regiment.

I can say I am writing this from Calais, only twenty-one miles from old England.

I have met a few Englishmen on a boat." On December 1st he wrote: "It leaves me quite well at present except my ears. I am gone quite deaf now, but I think it will go off. I have been struggling along. I have not had a chance to find my regiment, for you cannot understand the French. They direct you wrong, but I shall find them just now."

On January 21st he wrote a letter which he addressed from his company of the Warwickshire Regiment, giving the division and brigade numbers. In this letter he said he did not receive the Christmas parcel his wife sent. This letter is endorsed as follows:—"Pte. Pitts was absent during Christmas without leave and naturally his present has not reached him.—Censor."

Mrs. Pitts heard nothing further until Wednesday morning of this week, when she received the following letter:—"Infantry Record Office, the Old Barracks, Warwick, March 2nd, 1915.—Madam, — No. 4747 Pte. Alfred Pitts, 2nd Batt. Royal Warwickshire Regt., was sentenced after trial by court-martial to be shot for 'when on active service deserting his Majesty's service,' and the sentence was duly executed on Feb. 8th, 1915, at 7.30 a.m. R. E. FOMMY, Lieut.-Col., for Brigadier-General i/c Infantry Records, No. 7 district." Mrs. Pitts communicated with the authorities at Warwick as to her husband's Christian name, and was informed that her husband had signed the names of Alfred and Albert.

Yesterday (Friday) morning Mrs. Pitts received the following letter from her husband. The letter bears no address or date, but was forwarded from Warwick:—"My dearest wife and kiddies.—Just a few lines in answer to your loving letter I received quite safe. Well, I expect this will be the last letter from me, my dear, as I have got to be shot for being absent; but I could not help it. I tried to find my regiment. I did my very best, but it can't be helped. My dear, I wish I could have seen you all. You must try and do your best for kiddies. I should not upset myself. My dear, I did my duty before I was absent. It has all been trouble with us. I was very unlucky. I am so sorry to have to write a letter like this, my dear. I am quite done up. I did not think I should have to come to an end like this, dear. I would sooner have been shot by a German. Well, I must close now, darling, for the last time. Try and forget me, for your broken-hearted husband. BEER. Do your best for my dear kiddies. God bless them. May He always be with you and them." Here follow a number of crosses which represent kisses.

Mrs. Pitts has three young children, the eldest seven years of age. Pitts had served twelve years in the Warwicks and was a reservist at the outbreak of hostilities, when he signed on for another four years.

Extract from The  
Evesham Journal, March  
1915

## Oliver Hodgetts

8662 Private Oliver Hodgetts 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Worcestershire Regiment had gone missing twice before, the second time being punished with Field Punishment No.1 – tied to a wheel for 90 days. Hodgetts was charged with 'misbehaving before the enemy in such a way as to show cowardice' though his previous absences could have persuaded the court that the charge could have been desertion. Corns and Hughes-Wilson give details of his case including his absences during the fighting at Festubert and Aubers Ridge.

After the Court's judgement his commanding officer, Lt Col Grogan added details of his previous absences and described Hodgetts as a worthless soldier – a term reiterated by Douglas Haig on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

He was shot on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1915 and is buried in the Royal Irish Rifles Graveyard, Laventie, Pas de Calais, France (Grave number IV.D.2)

In the Registers of Soldiers' Effects it is noted that his sole legatee was Lucy but she was not entitled to any War Gratuity since he was shot for cowardice. Born in Birmingham and baptised at St Nicholas in October 1895, to Joseph William and Lucy, Oliver William Hodgetts was a pre-War Regular. In both the 1901 and 1911 Census records however, there is no trace of the young Oliver.

Note from Hodgetts' Court file

A.G. G.H.R.  
In my opinion this is a very bad case of  
deliberate intention to desert so as to save  
himself from the enemy's bullets. The man  
is worthless as a fighting soldier. -  
I concur in the opinions expressed by the  
Battalion Com<sup>d</sup>, S.O.C. Div<sup>n</sup> and S.O.C. Corps and  
recommend that the sentence be carried out.  
Lt. Col. 1<sup>st</sup> Army. D. Haig, Gen<sup>l</sup>.  
28 May 15.



## 2

Date 27<sup>th</sup> May 1915

No.

[illegible]

(a) If the name of the person charged is unknown, he may be described as unknown, with such addition as will identify him.

(b) Recommendation to mercy to be inserted in this column.

A. S. Valley

Convening Officer.

Convening Officer.  
Comd'g. 24th Inf. Bde

## Frederick Ives

Corporal Fred Ives 12295 went absent from his battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Worcestershire, shortly after the outbreak of war, on 13 September, when he escaped while awaiting details of a different charge at court martial for an offence on 10 September. He was arrested in late June the following year having spent ten months or so allegedly working as a French civilian in a munitions factory. Ives had been a regular in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion but seems to have transferred while at home on leave in August. (The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion was in Burma at the start of the war).

At his trial there were suggestions of shell shock and memory loss and although he was found guilty of desertion, the court recommended mercy. This was not accepted by Army Command.

Ives was tried on 7 July and was assumed to have been shot on 26 July with four other Worcestershire men but more research (Corns and Hughes-Wilson) asserts his execution took place on 22 July. It had previously been thought that the entry in the Commonwealth Graves Commission index was incorrect but evidence in the War Diary of the 4<sup>th</sup> South Lancashire Regiment who supplied the firing party, confirms the date at Busseboom. Ives was later re-interred at Perth (China Wall) Cemetery on the eastern edge of Ypres, grave I.G.41

Note of Lt Col Stuart dated 18 September 1914 referring to Ives absconding on 16<sup>th</sup> having been remanded for court martial.

Head Quarters

4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade

A  
152 following

I beg to report that the 12295 Corporal F. Ives, of the Batten under my command, whom I have remanded for trial by court martial left his trench while under shell fire, and without orders or permission, on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. and has not been seen since. I make this report as possibly, he may rejoin some other unit or be found in rear.

Lt Col Stuart  
Comd: 3<sup>rd</sup> Div. The Worcestershire Regt.

18.9.14

The court's judgement, sentence of death, recommending mercy

Sentence  
To suffer death  
by being hanged.

54  
The court sentence the accused No 12295  
Ct. West Dor. S. Pon. Wootton Bassett Rpt. to  
suffer death by being hanged.

Recommendation to Mercy

The Court recommends the accused to mercy  
on the grounds that in his sworn evidence  
the accused states that he was suffering from  
loss of memory when he shot himself, and  
the possibility that such loss of memory may  
have resulted from heavy drink.

Signed at Bournemouth this 11th day of July 1915.

J. A. W. J. C. C. M.



Confirmation of the date of Ives' execution

*July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1915.*

*This is to Certify that I attended  
the Execution, this day, of*

*Corporal F. Ives No 12295*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Worcestershire Regiment*

*and that I examined the remains  
of the same.*

*Charles D. Law.*

*Lieut. R.A.M.C. (2<sup>nd</sup>).*

*Medical Officer 4<sup>th</sup> South Lancs. Regt.*

The stake at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, commemorating Corporal Ives



**Bert Hartells; Ernest Fellows; John Robinson; Alfred Thompson**

In a unique act in the war. 9722 Private Ernest Fellows from Birmingham, 8164 Private Bert Hartells, 7377 Private John Robinson, and 7625 Private Alfred Thompson, all of 3<sup>rd</sup> Worcestershire Regiment were executed on the same day, 26 July 1915.

For some time it was thought five men were shot, with the fifth being Corporal Ives, presumably as he was from the same Battalion. But evidence now suggests 'only' these four – probably all shot together, since the time of 4am and confirmation of death by the same Medical Officer and evidence in the War Dairy all match up.

Field General C M

Pics Bert Hartells.

Ernest Fellows

Worce.

In the Field.

14<sup>th</sup> July 1915

Outside wrapper for Filed  
General Court Martial  
papers on Hartells and  
Fellows, July 1915

42  
43

Hartells (32) and Fellows (29) went missing together on 15 June 1915. In their defence they claimed to be drunk. All four were tried separately but Hartells and Fellows faced the same evidence as each other, on 14<sup>th</sup> July, as did Thompson and Robinson. All four were tried by the same Tribunal, Bert Hartells said in his defence that he "went out to get a drink and came to a village close to my bivouac where I met a friend. There we had two or three bottles of drink and not being used to drink I became the worse for it and instead of returning to my bivouac I wandered away".

His CO wrote that he always did his work in the trenches and that this event occurred while he was on transport duty away from the front line. The 7th Brigade Commander, CR Ballard, noted Hartells' previous absence in 1914 and appeared concerned that discipline had been good in this Battalion "until about a month ago" and it seems for this reason he recommended the death penalty.

Bert Hartells was from near Alvechurch and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Worcestershire Regiment in 1904, serving in Ireland and then was posted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in Ceylon and then India. Unusually his personal effects were returned to his father William, and his common-law wife, with whom he had two children, finally received a war pension in 1918.

Ernest Fellows' defence also concluded that he had not meant to desert as he had a wife and children and his character was described as being very good.



Extract from Bert Hartells' defence, written by the court clerk

Defence.

The accused Pr. B. Hartells produced Reps  
elect to make a statement

On June 15 about 2.30 pm I went out to get  
a drink and came to a village close to my  
house where I met a friend, there we had  
two or three bottles of drink, and not being  
used to drink I became the worse for it and  
instead of returning to my house I wandered  
away. I then got ill and took another drink  
to put me right again, this made me worse.  
I then lay down and went to sleep and woke  
up about 6 am the next day and came  
across a man who belonged to the Territorials  
of the 161st whom I knew before, we had  
some drinks together, I then tried to find my  
cellar and wandered about from day to  
day until I finally reached the farm  
where the military police found me.  
I did not intend to drink as I have a  
wife & children.

The character statements for Hartells from his Battalion and Brigade Commanders

Statement of Character of  
No 8164 Pte B. Hartells

This man has always done his  
work well whilst in the trenches  
His last case of absence was  
whilst he was employed on the  
Transport & he did not avoid  
any dangerous duty.

He has been with the Battalion  
since the arrival of the Expediting  
Force in France (August 1914).

I have no evidence to guide  
me as to the reason this man  
was absent.

The above report is based on the  
personal knowledge of this man's  
Company Commander.

~~I have no personal~~  
knowledge of ~~him~~ him  
myself.

Col. J. H. G. Capt.  
Comdr. 3rd Worces.

15.7.15  
7

Ref A.F. A/4/23.

No 8164 Pte B. HARTELLS.

Para 113 See CO's report attached.

Para 2. The discipline of the 3rd Worces has been  
very satisfactory up to about a month ago.

Para 4. I recommend the extreme penalty because

1. he has been absent before and because there  
is no doubt that he intended to desert.

15.7.15.

Col. J. H. G. Capt.  
Comdr. 7th Inf Bde.

## Memorial stake commemorating Ernest Fellows at the National Memorial Arboretum



John Robinson (31) and Alfred Thompson (25) deserted together on 27 June but were quickly found and arrested on 5 July 1915. Robinson had been a Regular for 13 years and both have good character references from their commander. 15432 Private Ernest Danks was also tried by this court martial charged with 'Desertion on active Service' but was found not guilty – though he was found guilty of being absent without leave and sentenced to three months field punishment number one, known as 'crucifixion'. Little else is known of Danks except that he landed in France on 17 March 1915 with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and subsequently joined 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. He survived the war.

Alfred Dennis Thompson came from Birmingham and in the 1911 Census he is listed as being out of work. He lived in Sutton Street, son of William and Martha Thompson, with three siblings, his brother Albert's wife, Jinnie, and their two children Albert and Fanny.



The Court Schedules for Hartells, Fellows, Danks, Thompson and Robinson, counter-signed by Second Lieutenant Peel of 1<sup>st</sup> Wiltshire Regiment, commanding the firing squad.

Promulgated this Twenty sixth day  
of July 1915 in the cases of  
No 8164 Pte B HARTELLS. and  
No 9722 Pte E. FELLOWS.  
26/7/15 P.T. Peel 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut SCHEDULE. Sentences on the above  
except 1<sup>st</sup> WILTS was duly carried out at  
4 am on July 26<sup>th</sup>  
Date 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915. No. 2 P.T. Peel 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Lieut 1<sup>st</sup> Wiltshire Regt.

Name of Alleged Offender (a)	Offence charged	Plea	Finding, and if Convicted, Sentence (b)	How dealt with by Confirming Officer
<small>Not more than six names to be entered on one form.</small> No 8164 Pte BERT HARTELLS 3 <sup>rd</sup> B <sup>n</sup> Wiltshire Regt Pte 3433 2	Desertion, & other terms	Not Guilty	Guilty Death.	Confirmed 26/7/15
No 9722 Pte ERNEST FELLOWS 3 <sup>rd</sup> B <sup>n</sup> Wiltshire Regt Pte 3434 2	Desertion, & other terms	Not Guilty	Guilty Death.	Confirmed 26/7/15

(a) If the name of the person charged is unknown, he may be described as unknown, with such addition as will identify him.

(b) Recommendation to mercy to be inserted in this column.

Confirming Officer,

President.

Promulgated this Twenty sixth day  
of July 1915 in the cases of

No 7625 Pte A. D. TOMPSON,

No 7377 Pte J. ROBINSON

SCHEDULE.

Sentences on the  
above duly carried  
out at 4 am 26 July

P. T. Bell 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut  
of Capt. 1st WILTS

26/7/15

Date  
17 July 1915

No. 1

Name of Alleged Offender (a)	Offence charged	Plea	Finding, and if Convicted, Sentence (b)	How dealt with by Confirming Officer
<p>89</p> <p>No 15432 Pte ERNEST DANKS 3rd Worcestershire Regt</p> <p>3435 12</p> <p>Not more than six names to be entered on one form.</p>	<p>Desertion on Active Service</p>	<p>Not Guilty</p>	<p>Not Guilty of desertion but Guilty of absence without leave.</p> <p>3 months Field Punishment No. 1.</p>	<p>Confirmed</p>
<p>90</p> <p>No 7625 Pte ALFRED DENNIS THOMPSON 3rd Bn Worcestershire Regt</p> <p>3436 2</p>	<p>Desertion on Active Service</p>	<p>Not Guilty</p>	<p>Guilty Death</p> <p>Recommended to mercy on account of injury to his back whilst he was serving with him.</p>	<p>25/7/15</p>
<p>91</p> <p>No 7377 Pte JOHN ROBINSON 3rd Bn Worcestershire Regt</p> <p>3437 2</p>	<p>Desertion on Active Service</p>	<p>Not Guilty</p>	<p>Guilty Death</p> <p>Recommended to mercy on account of his good service during previous campaigns, he has been out since the beginning of the war.</p>	<p>Confirmed</p> <p>25/7/15</p>

(a) If the name of the person charged is unknown, he may be described as unknown, with such addition as will identify him.

(b) Recommendation to mercy to be inserted in this column.

Convening Officer.

President.



Both Thompson and Robinson offered as defence that they had been drinking and tried to make contact with French officials. Robinson had 13 years' service with the regiment and was 31. His Battalion CO wrote on 15 July, the day after the trial, that his character was not satisfactory – and then said 'His nerves have been bad for some time past'. However the court recommended mercy 'on account of his good service during present campaign, he has been out since the commencement of the war'. General Ballard endorsed the recommendation of the court for mercy.

The court recommended mercy for Thompson due to an earlier head injury and he also received support from his CO, who wrote that although his conduct had until recently been 'good', it had become 'somewhat indifferent.... Due no doubt to the fact that his nerves have been in a bad state for some time past'. Again Ballard's agreement was overruled by High Command.

Thompsn was referred to a medical Bord which met on 20<sup>th</sup> July to assess the relevance of his head injury which he said gave him headaches and affected his memory. His nervousness at the examination as put down to the circumstances and not the injury and they decided it ahd no permanaent effect on him.

What is particularly interesting about Brigadier General Ballard's note in these cases – the same day as Hartells and Fellows – is that he refers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion having lost its CO and second in command on 16 June and the subsequent deterioration in discipline as a result.

*Statement of Character  
of No 9977 Pte John Robinson*

*This man's character both in the  
Trenches and out has not been  
Satisfactory - His nerves have  
been bad for some time past.*

*He joined the Battalion in February  
1915.*

*It appears reasonable to assume  
that he did intend to avoid going  
into action.*

*Col. H. H. H. H. H.  
Commander of Worcester*

*11.1.15  
7*



Statement of Character of  
No 7625 Pte Alfred Dennis  
Thompson

The conduct of this man both  
in and out of the trenches has  
until recently been good  
latterly it has been somewhat  
indifferent due no doubt to  
the fact that his nerves have  
been in a bad state for some  
time past.

He joined the Battalion in  
November 1914.

It appears reasonable to assume  
that he did intend to avoid going  
into action.

15.7.15.

Edmund Hughes Capt  
Comd of War Dept.

Ref. A.M. A/4/23.

~~The~~ NO 7625 Pte A.D. THOMPSON.

Para 1.43 See CO's report attached.

Para 2. The state of discipline of the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Bn has been very satisfactory until  
about a month ago. The loss of the  
CO and 2<sup>nd</sup> in command on June 16<sup>th</sup>  
has been a great one to the Regt.

Para 4. I recommend the estimate pedally should  
not be inflicted as I endorse the recommendation  
of the Court.

15.7.15.

Charles P. G.  
Comd 7<sup>th</sup> Inf Bde.

The above note refers to the attack on 16<sup>th</sup> June on Bellewaerde Farm, Lake and Spur by 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion with the Irish Rifles. Stacke's History records what happened: two companies of the Worcestershire battalion went into attack mid-afternoon, losing their commanders almost immediately. Support troops from 14<sup>th</sup> Division could not get through to assist due to crowded trenches of wounded and disorganised companies. German bombardment on several thousand men in a confined area was devastating. Across nine battalions in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division over 3,800 officers and men were lost. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Worcestershires alone lost over 300 men killed, wounded or missing including Lt Col Stuart and Captains Buckler, Maitland and Gabb – eleven officers in all.

Following the attack the Battalion remained in what Stacke called "a most unhealthy sector" until 8 July and lost more officers and men to German shelling of Hooze and Sanctuary Wood. Thompson and Robinson absconded on 27 June while Hartells and Fellows went missing on 15<sup>th</sup>, before the attack on Bellewaerde.

Ernest Fellows is interred at the Perth (China Wall) cemetery V.K.13, having been transferred from the Ramparts Cemetery in Ypres. John Robinson is buried in the Aeroplane Cemetery in Ypres, II.A.6/7 and the stone has an inscription from his family from Nechells. Alfred Thompson's grave is also in Aeroplane Cemetery at II.A.8, as is Bert Hartells, at II.A.6/7, after also being transferred from his original resting place in the Ramparts Cemetery.

### Charles Depper

Private Charles Depper 5715, 1/4th Royal Berkshire Regiment was born in Rock Hill, Bromsgrove in January 1886.

In 1911, he moved to Canada, but returned to England to enlist when war broke out. When called up for front-line duties, Depper left his battalion but was intercepted en-route for Calais. He was court-martialled and buried in G.1 Beauval Communal Cemetery, Somme.

The Battalion War Diary entry for the 13 September 1916 reads;

*Private DEPPER, was executed at 6.10a.m. having been tried by FGCM for "When on Active Service, deserting His Majesty's Service", and found Guilty. The execution was witnessed by 40 of the Battalion under the Command of Lieutenant Hampshire the Orderly Officer of the day. Weather:- a wet morning but fine later.*

His brother Walter served with the 14<sup>th</sup> Worcestershire Regiment (Severn Valley Pioneers) and was killed in action on 1 November 1918 and is buried at St Pol British Cemetery II.C.17



# War Diary 1/4<sup>th</sup> Royal Berkshire Regiment September 1916

WAR DIARY			Army Form 62, 2118			
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY			1/4 <sup>th</sup> ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGT.			
Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. This Page will be prepared in manuscript.			(Leave heading not required.)			
Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events and Information			
Reims	24/9		<p>Work on a No. 12h            Very little work was done in the morning. Except looking at the            French position. was reported at 11 am. Leaving for Tied by P.O. C.M. for            the 1st and 2nd Divisions. During the morning the 1st and 2nd Divisions            The situation was discussed by us of the Battalion under the command of            Lieutenant Humphreys. The details of the day            Weather: a hot morning but fine later</p>			
do	25/9		<p>On 25/9 morning but fine later. Work on a No. 12h            Weather: a fine day.            The Battalion paraded at 12.30 pm when the Commanding Officer promulgated            the following orders to the Battalion for duty and was posted to Companies            as indicated:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p>Platoon</p> <p>Captain C.E. Stewart</p> <p>Sgt. J.P. Evans</p> <p>Sgt. P. Roberts</p> <p>Sgt. A.D. Wilson</p> <p>Sgt. J. Smith</p> <p>Sgt. C.C. Hall</p> </td> <td> <p>Regimental</p> <p>1st Battalion Regt</p> <p>do</p> <p>2nd Battalion Regt</p> <p>3rd Battalion Regt</p> <p>4th Battalion Regt</p> <p>5th Battalion Regt</p> <p>6th Battalion Regt</p> </td> <td> <p>Company to which posted</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>C</p> <p>D</p> <p>E</p> <p>F</p> <p>G</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Platoon</p> <p>Captain C.E. Stewart</p> <p>Sgt. J.P. Evans</p> <p>Sgt. P. Roberts</p> <p>Sgt. A.D. Wilson</p> <p>Sgt. J. Smith</p> <p>Sgt. C.C. Hall</p>	<p>Regimental</p> <p>1st Battalion Regt</p> <p>do</p> <p>2nd Battalion Regt</p> <p>3rd Battalion Regt</p> <p>4th Battalion Regt</p> <p>5th Battalion Regt</p> <p>6th Battalion Regt</p>	<p>Company to which posted</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>C</p> <p>D</p> <p>E</p> <p>F</p> <p>G</p>
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## John Wall

The determination of Army Command to make examples of deserters and cowards and thus prevent repetition did not even work within the same battalion since Sergeant John Wall of 3<sup>rd</sup> Worcestershire Regiment would have known of the execution of five of his comrades in 1915. Wall, a Regular soldier from Bockleton near Tenbury, had landed in France at the earliest opportunity, on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1914, and served throughout that time with the Battalion and in his own statement of defence says 'I was in the battle of Ypres in 1915', Bellewaerde, where again he found himself on 10 August 1917, ordered into attack.

During the attack, strafed by bombs from both sides, Wall's platoon was exposed and the Lieutenant ordered men to find cover – many squeezed into the dugouts but over time, groups were able to get out and move up the line, leaving three men. In describing what happened he says that he did not know what to do when he found his company had gone on ahead when he and two others remained in the Dugouts rather than head back and be accused of desertion he would await the Company's return. His comrades, Privates WH White and Rowlands, did not face a charge and indeed were cross examined as witnesses at Wall's trial.



His behaviour was so uncharacteristic that a regimental officer at the time wrote in his diary that it has felt like a miscarriage of justice. Wall's parents, William and Harriet had an inscription on his stone which is II.F.42 in Poperinghe New Military Cemetery, west of Ypres. The place where prisoners were tied and shot is marked with a post in the town of Poperinghe.

The charge sheet against Sergeant John Thomas Wall

CHARGE SHEET.  
\*\*\*\*\*

The accused, No.13216 Sergeant J. WALL, 3rd  
Worcestershire Regt., a soldier of the Regular Forces,  
is charged with :-

" When on Active Service DESERTING His Majesty's Service,  
in that he

A.A.  
Sec.12 1a

in the trenches on 10th August 1917, when his Company  
were moving to take over trenches at BELLEWAARDE  
RIDGE, absented himself from his Company and remained  
absent till his Battalion had left the line on the  
12th August 1917, with intent to evade service in the  
trenches."

August 14th 1917.

*prewally*  
Lieut-Col.,  
Commanding, 3rd Worcestershire Regt.

To be tried by F.G.C.M.

15/8/17.

*(Signature)*  
Brig Gen.,  
Commanding, 7th Infantry Brigade.

gone out:

88. I did not know what to do for I felt that if I went out of the line I should be accused of being 'Deserted' so I decided to remain in the dug out which was in the firing line. I remained there for the night & the next day. On the following day I made for RAILWAY DUG OUTS where I found some men of another company who told me, 'that my company was coming up at any time.' I waited there until I knew that the company was out & I then reported to Capt. Stokes.  
no cross-examination

197 witness  
recalled  
by the Court

C. S. M., J. Davies recalled by the Court upon his former oath states:-

The Concrete Dug out in question was <sup>89</sup> actually in the line was about 800 yards on the left flank of the



## Robert Young

Private Robert Young 204232 was executed serving in 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, in Salonika on 18 September. He was 21, conscripted to the Army, and had been in action for the first time. He had only spent four months with the Battalion by the time of his trial and had never been on patrol, yet he is referred to as a shirker. He had charges against him while in England of being absent from the camp, and in Salonika of being absent, losing equipment and stealing for which he was sentenced to two years hard labour, suspended.

Having already tried to avoid conscription, and trying to leave camps, Robert Young was not suited to be a soldier. The records show a defence was provided by Lieutenant Sabin. Young stated that he had been upset by the death of comrade Corporal Wallace who was killed when their dugout was shelled and Young had to carry Wallace's body to shelter.

The court recommended mercy due to nervous strain but senior commanders simply as a shirker and considered he was either mentally deficient or wanted to commit a crime that would keep him out of the war altogether. Commanding 78<sup>th</sup> Brigade, General Wingate wrote on 12 September that 'As we are on the eve of active operations and the example of one Worcester man may contaminate others at some critical moment I recommend that the sentence be carried out.'

Interestingly three men from 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been found guilty of mutiny in May and been sentenced to 10 years penal servitude, each, though this was commuted to 2 years hard labour – Privates Purchase, Fulford and Roper. There is no reference to this episode in Stacke, but he does note the attack on 3<sup>rd</sup> September which killed Corporal Wallace and one of the men who arrived to try and help, CSM Pardoe DCM.

## Robert Young's Service Record

[illegible][illegible]



Colonel Wheeler's statement, OC 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion

2  
(2)

To 78 Inf Bde.

Not much is known of this man as he has only served with this bn during the following periods Jan 16/8 to March 17/8 and from July 10/8 to present date.

In answer to the four points in your memo:-

① As judged from his A.F.D. 12<sup>th</sup>, his character both before and since joining this bn is 'bad'.

② No evidence available. He has never been on patrol.

③ Full particulars were wired for last night from 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon.

④ He is not a good soldier and is known as a skinker. He has never volunteered for patrol.

I consider that he left the front line, if not to escape the specific post for which he was detailed, then so as to get out of the immediate danger zone at a time when men were short and conditions unusually unpleasant.

Further, that he took so little trouble to get clear away from the Bde area:

either because

(a) he is mentally deficient

or (b) he wished to commit a crime of such a nature that he would be removed from the fighting line for the rest of the war.

C. Wheeler. LT Col

cdg 11<sup>th</sup> Bde / Tagg

12. 9. 18

### Other names

A number of witnesses from the Worcestershire Regiment were heard during the Courts Martial and since individual soldiers were not often referred to in official records, they have been listed here:

Hodgetts –

9607 Pte Waugh 1<sup>st</sup> Bn

5174 CSM Morgan 1<sup>st</sup> Bn

11368 Lance Sergeant A Mason 1<sup>st</sup> Bn

11028 Cpl Shaw 1<sup>st</sup> Bn

Danks –

9297 Sergeant (Acting CSM) Sidney Byron 3 Bn

17795 Lance Cpl Charles Ockford 3 Bn

Robinson –

7965 Sgt William Johnson 3 Bn Killed 18 November 1917

Thompson –

20004 L/Cpl Sidney Bray 3 Bn

Fellows –

10603 L/Cpl Frederick Carr 3 Bn

Ives –

3496 Sgt Major Charles Hodgkinson 3 Bn



References:

Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes – Shot at Dawn - 1989 Wharncliffe  
Anthony Babbington – For the sake of example – 1983 Leo Cooper  
Cathryn Corns and John Hughes-Wilson – Blindfold and Alone – 2001 – Cassell  
Captain H FitzM Stacke – The Worcestershire Regiment in the Great War – 1928

The National Archives:

WO 71 Series Field General Courts Martial Proceedings  
WO 213 Series Field General Courts Martial Registers  
WO 95 Series War Diaries First World War