

SOUVENIRS FROM A METAL TRUNK

IN AN UPSTAIRS CUPBOARD in my brother's cottage there is an old metal trunk which, when I was young, I used to pester my father to let me look inside – this I was allowed to do from time to time and was fascinated by what I found there. The contents span the years from before the Boer War until the last war, 1880s to 1945.

My father spent many years in the army. He was a Norfolk man born at Mautby on The Broads in November 1881. At the age of 17 years he joined The Royal Norfolk Regiment based at Great Yarmouth and was soon posted to India, remaining there until the outbreak of the Boer War in Africa. In the metal trunk are his original enlistment papers, photos of army colleagues taken in India, a country he found full of interest and which he loved in spite of the repeated conflicts there – old Indian coins, smokers' pipes made from tortoise shells and Kafirs' pipes; also a photograph of father aged about 19 years, another of a group of correspondents which included Winston Churchill and a large volume of the whole history of the Boer War which makes interesting reading.

After serving his time abroad he returned to England and eventually to civilian life but he remained on the Army Reserve. In 1912 he married my mother. Just under two years later came the outbreak of the 1914 – 1918 war, and so he was called up to join his old Regiment, sent to Europe and saw a lot of action on the Somme.

There is a letter which was sent to my mother dated 19th April 1915

notifying her that her husband had been wounded; he had in fact been seriously wounded in the head and during the period of his convalescence, mother received a letter from the Army Pay Office enclosing 15s 7d (77p) – a weekly separation allowance for her and one child. For his part in the war father was awarded the Military Medal with, later, a Bar; these are in the case with the commendation document.

The final treasures include a small army bible with a message from Lord Roberts on the inside cover, a well worn booklet of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Fifth Army hymn sheet and some photographs; one of my grandmother, who died at the early age of 48 in 1899, and one of grandfather together with various aunts and uncles. All have been preserved.

During the 1939 – 45 war father served in The Home Guard. He received a document which all who served at the time had sent to them. It reads;

"In the years when our Country was in mortal danger, George Henry Everett, who served from 1st June 1940 until 30th December 1944 gave generously of his time and powers to make himself ready for her defence by force of arms and his life if need be."

(signed) George R.I. King

We as a family are proud to have his memories and souvenirs – a piece of family history which spans three generations.

Harry Everett.