

Hellifield's "Tunstill's" men

In September 1914 Harry Gilbert Tunstill a land agent residing at Otterburn House in the hamlet of Otterburn near Hellifield wrote a letter to the Craven Herald newspaper stating his proposal to raise a company of 100 men, including his own enlistment, from the local area to serve in the war effort. Plans were soon drawn up and a series of recruitment meetings were set up throughout the area. The recruits became known in the local district as "Tunstill's" men.



The second meeting of H.G. Tunstill's campaign took place outdoors on Hellifield's village green, chairman of the meeting was Captain J.C. Yorke (Halton West), with speeches from Tunstill and Mr. E.H. Russell the Hellifield stationmaster. Mr. Russell spoke on behalf of the Midland Railway Company and stated as the largest employer in the area the company would fully support and encourage their employees in their recruitment. (Sadly, Russell's son Arthur Charles Russell

was killed in the war in 1916). Music was provided by the Settle brass band. At the close of the meeting the Hellifield men who came forward to enlist were:

- James John Angus
- Charles Graham
- Thomas Harding
- Charles Harwood
- Sidney Hoar
- John Ernest Linnett
- Joseph Edward Preston

- Thomas Procter
- Christopher Ralph
- Norman Roberts
- Fred Graham

At the end of the recruitment campaign, with the required number of men reached, they were attested at Settle on the 19th September 1914 and were given a rousing send off as they departed by train from Settle station, bound for the West Riding Regiment's depot at Halifax. They travelled to Silsden station where they were met by other groups of local recruits and marched together, headed by the Silsden brass band to Keighley, for an inspection in the town hall square by the mayor. In the afternoon they boarded a special train taking them on to Halifax.

After a few days at the Halifax depot, they went on to their training camp at Frensham near Aldershot where they were to become "A" company of the 10th battalion West Riding Regiment (Duke of Wellington's). Tunstill, who enlisted as a private, was commissioned as a Captain in November 1914. The battalion moved to France in August 1915 and served in many of the major battles on the western front before being transferred to the Italian front towards the end of the war. Captain Tunstill stayed with the company until he was discharged as unfit for active duty due to a leg and ankle injury in October 1916. He continued his army service in England being involved in the training of recruits.

(continued overleaf)



Joseph Edward Preston



Christopher Ralph

S. AIDAN'S CHURCH,
MELLIFIELD.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22nd, 1916.



IN MEMORIAM.

Corpl. Charles Hopwood,

5th Batt. 1st Canadian Division,
KILLED IN ACTION JUNE 2ND, 1916.

Private Chris Ralph,

10th Batt. Duke of Wellington's W. B. Regt.,
KILLED IN ACTION OCTOBER 5TH, 1916.

Private Joseph Preston,

10th Batt. Duke of Wellington's W. B. Regt.,
KILLED IN ACTION OCTOBER 4TH, 1916.

Gunner Robert Corless,

2th Canadian Trencher Brigade,
DIED FROM WOUNDS SEPTEMBER 27TH, 1916.

"They have done what they could."

J. W. Lambert, Printer, 1916.

Sadly, two of the Hellifield recruits were to lose their lives in the conflict during 1916.

They were: Joseph Edward Preston aged 28 years and Christopher "Kit" Ralph aged 30 years. Both men were unmarried. The two men were employees of the Midland Railway Company and have no known graves.

They are remembered on the Thiepval memorial to the missing of the Somme in France, the Midland Railway war memorial in Derby and Hellifield's village war memorial.

Lest We Forget.

John Pearcy