

CHIN-WAG Newsletter

Villiers Park Educational Trust's commemoration of the First World War through extracts from the Old Etonian's and Eton Manor's CHIN-WAG Newsletter

No. 24. Vol. 1.

July 1916.

In this edition of CHIN-WAG we commemorate the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, fought between July and November 1916. We remember all of the Eton Manor Old Boys who served.

Letter from Mr Wellesley

Letter-writing has not been easy of late. For a fortnight we trekked down without a rest, and since arrival in this cheery spot have been 'standing to' lying out in the mud of a stubble field – sometimes dry, but often soaked – horses and men unrecognisable for filth.

Weather has taken a turn for better the last two days, and we are gradually getting clean. Life has not been over pleasant, but we wear our smiling faces and all goes well. You will have read of the happenings of war, so I won't describe them. This country is desolate beyond belief – like Epsom Downs after Derby week: no grass, no anything; rolling plains of mud, scarred more and more with trenches, mine craters, shell holes as you get nearer the lines. What *were* villages are almost impossible to recognise – a few odd bricks, nothing more.

This must go to post. Hope to be in a more comfortable spot soon, when I shall be able to write you more fully. Good luck to all.

Yours

G. V. W.

Trenches

There are some, apparently, who do not yet appreciate what life in the trenches is like. They will probably do so better after reading the following description from Captain Gilbey:

"Choose a very muddy plot of ground and dig a hole 4 feet deep and 2 feet wide. Fill it half full of dirty water. Put an old saucepan on your head and a bag of stones on your back, and get into the hole and sit down. It will be more realistic if the gardener comes along with a water-can every half hour and waters you. When it gets dark the gardener should bring you some corned beef and some biscuits. Let him drop them twice before he finally deposits them in the mud. About midnight make him bring two rats and let them loose in your trench. The longer you stay in the trench the more thrilling it will be."

~ In Memoriam ~

Private J Williamson

It is with great regret that we have to announce the death in France of Jock Williamson, killed by the explosion of a shell.

He was one of the oldest members of the Eton Old Boys' Club, and he was the first of its members to get married. The greatest sympathy will be felt by all for Mrs Williamson. His death just now is the more pathetic as he was hoping to have leave from France before long, and he was looking forward eagerly to seeing his second daughter, who had been born since he went out to France.

Jock was always one of the most devoted of Club members, and it was only last month that he wrote: "I often try to picture what that night will be like when the war is finished and the boys meet round the old Club fire: what a night that will be when they are all telling their experiences." When that night arrives, Jock, alas! will not be present; but his memory will long survive in the Club – the memory of a gallant comrade, straightforward and true in all his thoughts and deeds".



A German Airman's view of the British Trenches

Please revisit www.villierspark.org.uk each month for the next edition of CHIN-WAG from a century ago.