

Horace Bowes



Horace with his wife Susannah

Horace Bowes was born in January 1895 in Tollerton, the third of four children of blacksmith John Bowes and his wife Mary Anne. By the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to his father and continued to live at home above the shop.

Horace signed up in Tollerton on 3rd December 1914 and, unsurprisingly, was assigned to the Army Service Corps as a shoeing smith. Along with the above picture of him in later life, his service record gives us further information regarding how he would have looked at the time; it states that he was 5ft 9 ½ tall and weighed just under 10 ½ stone. Less than a week after signing up, Horace was transported down to Woolwich to commence his army training which continued until September 1915. Meanwhile, on 20th February 1915, he married Susannah Meek at Luton in Bedfordshire. She presumably travelled down for the occasion; her last recorded address (in 1911) was in Newcastle, but following her marriage she was living in Alne, so it's possible she had moved there at some point after 1911 and that's how she met her husband.

Following his training, Horace sailed from Southampton to Le Havre on 14th September to join 665 Company as part of the British Expeditionary Force. This company was apparently involved in general construction, so Horace would presumably be attending the horses who transported building supplies. Two months after he arrived in France (and a few weeks less than nine months from their wedding!), his wife gave birth to their son, also called Horace. There is very little information regarding the first two years of his service abroad aside from the fact he was granted ten days' leave from 5th February 1917, although his record doesn't state whether he was able in that time to return home to see his 15 month old son for the first time. He was also awarded a good conduct medal in April of the same year. However, he was wounded by a shell on 29th November

1917, which injured his right buttock, thigh, leg and toe. Although the wounds to his leg, thigh and buttock were fairly superficial, the injury to his toe broke a bone and also became septic. On 5th December, therefore, he was invalided back to England where he was treated at the Northumberland War Hospital until 18th January 1918.

Following his discharge from hospital, he spent the next three months at an unnamed Command Depot, possibly either Ripon or Alnwick. These establishments provided rehabilitative training of soldiers too fit for convalescent camp, but not yet fit enough to be returned to unit. After he left the Command Depot on 7th April 1918, he was posted to the Reserve Depot at Blackheath, where was certified fully fit 11th August.

Following his full recovery, Horace sailed from Southampton to Cherbourg on 19th September 1918 and then travelled by train to Taranto in south eastern Italy. He then sailed from Taranto, arriving in Itea in Greece on 9th October, finally arriving in Salonika on 12th October where he joined the Base Horse Transport Depot and was attached to 112 Company, 26th Division. The role of such divisions was carrying stores and supplies, providing the main supply line to the transport of the brigades of infantry and artillery and other attached units.

Although the war was over within a month of Horace's arrival, he remained in Salonika until 1st June 1919, when he sailed to England, arriving at Ripon on 16th June. He was finally demobbed on 13th July 1919.

Following the war, Horace continued working as a blacksmith until he emigrated to Hamilton, Ontario in April 1924 to take up farming. By this time he and Susannah had a growing family, with a daughter Vera born in 1920 and a son Walter born in March 1924. The family sailed out to join Horace in Hamilton in December of that year, where a further son, Robin, was born in February 1926. A third boy called Eric was apparently born some time after, but it's not clear exactly when.

Nothing more can be found out about the family until Susannah died in 1974 and was buried in Hespeler Cemetery, which is about 30 miles from Hamilton. With regard to Horace, however, I can't be sure when he died; there is apparently no tombstone for him in the same cemetery as Susannah. However, there is a Horace Bowes who died in York in 1975. This may well be "our" Horace Bowes as he was the right age (75) even down to the month of birth, so perhaps following his wife's death Horace was visiting his family and the area of his youth when he was taken ill and died. However, at the present time I still can't be one hundred per cent sure it's him.