

# MEN LEAVE FOR THE FRONT



Commemorative coin for centenary of outbreak of The Great War, based on recruiting advertisement showing General Kitchener 'Your country needs you'

At first the forces relied on volunteers, but with heavy loss of life compulsory enlistment or conscription was brought in by the Military Service Act of 1916.

Conscription lasted until mid-1919.

- Single men from 18 to 41 were first called up.
- In June 1916 married men.
- Later the call-up age was raised to 51.
- Widowers with children and ministers of religion were exempt.
- Military Service Tribunals heard claims for exemption on grounds of work of national importance, domestic hardship, health and conscientious objection.

The lists below show the variety of regiments and units the men joined, so their experience of war differed.

## **1911 POPULATION IN CENSUS compared with NUMBER OF SERVICEMEN**

Below are **LISTS OF SERVICEMEN** from Crockenhill, Eynsford, Farningham and Lullingstone known to have served in the Armed Forces, but these are very unlikely to be complete. Also **LISTS OF VOTERS IN 1918 and 1919.**

<b>CROCKENHILL with EYNSFORD</b>	<b>= 2147</b>	<b>3544 acres</b>	<b>404 houses</b>
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Serving from Crockenhill	= 206
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Serving from Eynsford	= 194
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18% of total population of villages

(but much higher % of men between 18 and 51 years of age)

<b>FARNINGHAM</b>	<b>= 1286</b>	<b>2739 acres</b>	<b>242 houses</b>
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Serving from Farningham	= 195
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15% of total population

(but much higher % of men between 18 and 51 years of age)

<b>LULLINGSTONE</b>	<b>= 113</b>	<b>1557 acres</b>	<b>15 houses</b>
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Serving from Lullingstone	= 16
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14% of total population

(but much higher % of men between 18 and 51 years of age)

## **IMPACT OF CALL-UP**

**It is hard to imagine what the impact on individual lives and on the village communities when so many men left.**

## **IMPACT ON THE VILLAGES**

Families were parted from loved-ones, probably for the first time.

Many women were left to bring up families without their husbands.

Employers lost workers & labour had to be found among older men and women.

Parents missed sons.

## **IMPACT ON THE SERVICEMEN**

It is very unlikely that labouring men had ever travelled abroad, or rarely been beyond London and the South East.

As most found employment in the villages in which they lived, and so were close to their families and friends, the wrench would have been even more difficult.

Yet many joined up in the spirit of adventure, duty and patriotism.

## **5th BATTALION ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT – SWANLEY DISTRICT**

4 August 1914 - Mobilised.

Formed from Territorials, training on Salisbury Plain when war declared.

29 October 1914 -  
Embarked for India.

5 December 1914 - Arrived at Jhansi, India,  
being the most far-flung serving unit of local men.

Below are newspaper cuttings  
describing the early months at  
Jhansi.

They had little to do there, but prepare for the  
order to be sent to The Front, which never  
came.

January 1915 - A photograph shows the Swanley District men at Jhansi. Those  
underlined came from Crockenhill, Eynsford or Farningham.

After nearly 3 years in India they were  
drafted for active service in Mesopotamia.

5 December 1917 -  
Embarked for Mesopotamia.

See separate sheet for  
Campaign in Mesopotamia.

27 December 1919 - Demobilised in Mosul (Iraq).

**THEY WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO BE ENLISTED, BUT AMONG THE LAST TO  
BE SENT HOME, arriving in England on 22 January 1920**



Swanley District unit of 5th Royal West Kent Regiment, Jhansi (India), January 1915. (top) F. Mills, J. Turner. (next row) J. French, A.H. Chambers, Corp. E. Billing, T. Daynes, W.J. Clark, E. Manted, A. Skeys, F. Hyder. (3rd from back) A. Mayger, C. Jennings, W. Whiffen, R.A. Brown, J. Humphreys, A. Myers, D. Lee, D.F. Hollands, W. Blake, G. Ellis, Lance Corp. E. Johnson. (front) L. Corp. L. Larkin, L. Corp. Blake, Corp. A. Lawson, Serg. R. Darley, -?-, Serg. W.H. Chambers, Corp. C. Brown, L. Corp. F. Henry, L. Corp. E. Cologne, T. Couchman

**SWANLEY DISTRICT UNIT OF 5th ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT**  
**at JHANSI (INDIA), JANUARY 1915**

**Names of men in photograph** (underlined came from Crockenhill, Eynsford or Farningham)

(top, left to right))

F. Mills, J. Turner.

(next row, left to right)

J. French, A.H. Chambers, Corporal E. Billing, T. Daynes, W.J. Clark, E. Manted, A. Skeys, F. Hyder.

(3rd row from back, left to right)

A. Mayger, C. Jennings, W. Whiffen (buried in Basra), R.A. Brown, J. Humphreys, A. Myers, D. Lee, D.F. Hollands, W. Blake, G. Ellis, Lance Corp. E. Johnson.

(front row, left to right)

Lance Corporal L. Larkin, Lance Corporal C. Blake (died in India), Corporal A. Lawson, Sergeant R. Darley, -?-, Sergeant W.H. Chambers, Corporal C. Brown, Lance Corporal F. Henry, Lance Corporal E. Cologne, T. Couchman

## **SWANLEY DISTRICT UNIT OF 5TH ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT**

Two local men whose photographs come from the group photograph died far from home.



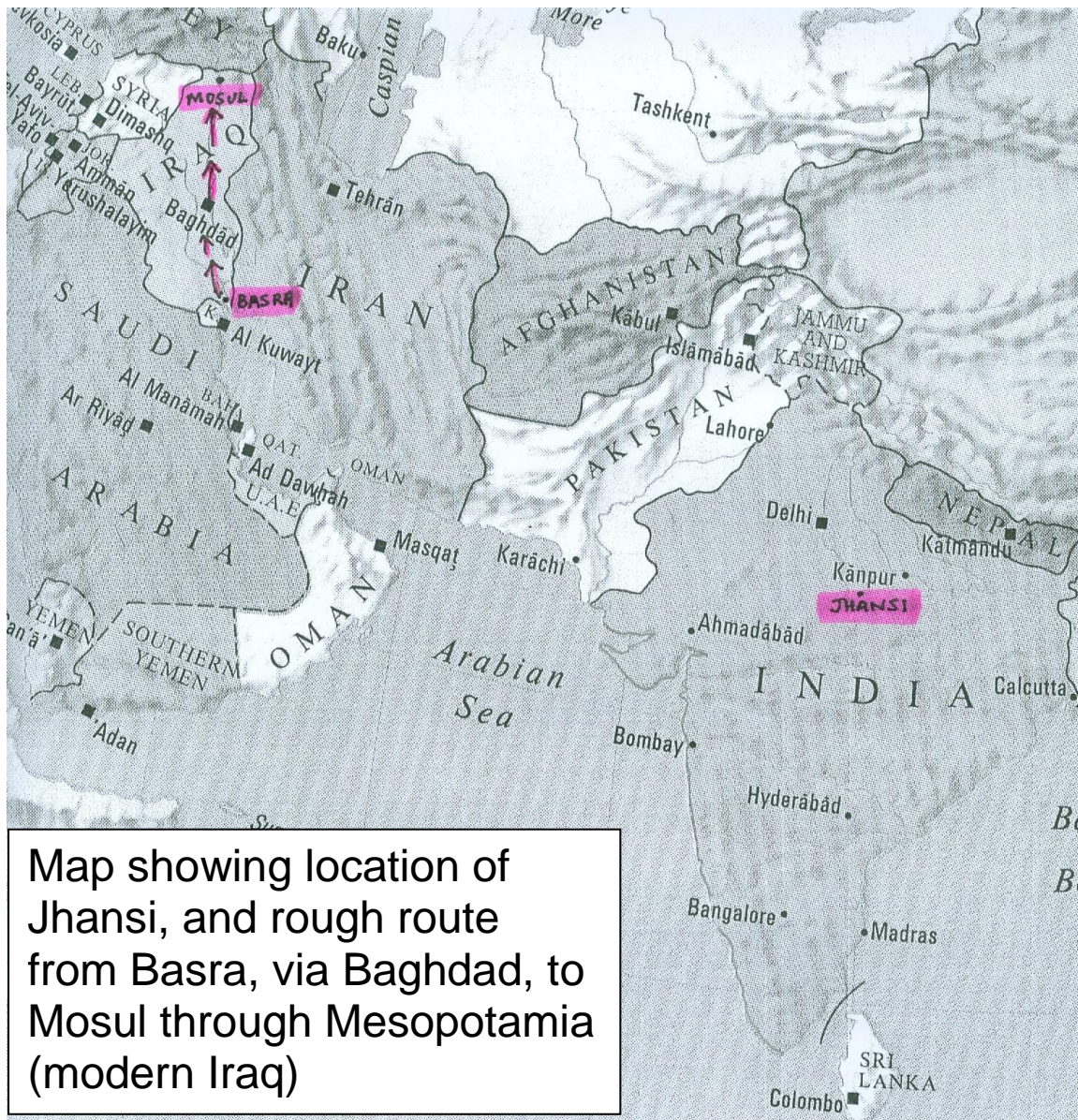
**William Edward Whiffen from Farningham**, the son of William and Alice Whiffen of Beesfield Farm, died of sickness on 31 December 1916, aged 22, and was buried in Basra Cemetery.



**Charles Blake from Eynsford**, the son of William and Emily Blake of 2 Church Cottages, died of sickness in Colaba Hospital,

India, on 23 November 1917. In the group photograph he was a Lance Corporal, but he gave up his stripe to serve in Mesopotamia.

# SWANLEY DISTRICT UNIT OF 5TH ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT



## In Mesopotamia

The Battalion comprised 19 officers and 727 men. The weak and sickly were left behind.

From January to October 1918 the troops struggled up the Tigris towards Turkey.

They arrived just about when the Armistice was signed with Turkey on 31 October 1918.

There were 17 officers and 409 men left.

They spent a year in Mosul before being sent home.

22 January 1920 arrived in U.K.

Map showing location of Jhansi, and rough route from Basra, via Baghdad, to Mosul through Mesopotamia (modern Iraq)

## **ITEMS of 1st WORLD WAR DONATED TO THE SOCIETY BY MICHAEL HUSSEY**

- **PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM**, compiled by Frank Hussey, featuring PERCY WALTER HUSSEY, originally of the West Kent Yeomanry, but later in Royal Irish Rifles. He was in Allenby's campaign in the Holy Land and there are newspaper cuttings of this.  
There are original photos of the men in training in England.
- **AUTOGRAPH BOOK** (brown cover)  
Unknown owner. Has several apt written entries, and some autographs of servicemen.
- **AUTOGRAPH BOOK** (tartan cover)  
Sidney Hector Hussey from father Frank Hussey. Written entries, including from headmaster L.R. Hillier of 1 April 1915.
- **UNEMPLOYMENT BOOK**  
Sidney Hector Hussey, born 30 March 1900, with stamps from July 1917 to January 1918.
- **NATIONAL REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES**  
Frank Hussey, foreman papermaker. Hector Sidney Hussey, engineering. Both of Fairview Villas, Eynsford.