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A Poignant Gibraltar Postcard

Jennifer Schofield

When war was declared on 4th August 1914, the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment was based in Gibraltar. On the 31st August they embarked for England, arriving at Southampton then moving to Lyndhurst to join the 21st Brigade of the 7th Division. On the 7th October 1914 they mobilized for war and were landed at Zeebrugge.



Figure 1. Front - Galleries & Commercial Mole, Gibraltar.

Two days before leaving, on the 5th, 8058 Private John Thomas Rudman wrote to a friend in Southampton on a Gibraltar postcard (view of Galleries & Commercial Mole), obviously bought before the regiment left Gibraltar. The text says: *“Dear Friend, Just a few lines to thank you for your good wishes we are embarked allright hope to come back & see you again so long 8058 JT Rudman Wilts Regt. X Active Service”*

On closer inspection it becomes clear that Private Rudman was a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters. In the top left of the card you can see the letters AoF, the acronym for this society. This is further reinforced by the mode of address – “Dear Friend” and by the address – “Foresters Hall, Mansion Road”. No. 14 Mansion Road was the Forester’s Hall for the *Sir George Hewitt Court 5069* until the property was sold in November 1964¹. The building is still there today and the Forester's Crest and Arms are still above the door. Private Rudman must have visited whilst on furlough on his way through Southampton and met Mrs Cornich there.



Figure 2. 14 Mansion Road.



Figure 3. Reverse of the Postcard – Note the “Soldiers Post” instead of a Stamp.

The 2nd Battalion landed at Zeebrugge with 1100 all ranks. Exactly fourteen days later only 250 men answered the roll call – and Private Rudman was one.

He survived the slaughter of the Western Front for another two and a half years before sadly being killed in action on 9th April 1917 during the Battle of Vimy, part of the Arras Offensive.

(See also page 4259 below – Ed.)

¹ p10042 of the London Gazette, 24th November 1964



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