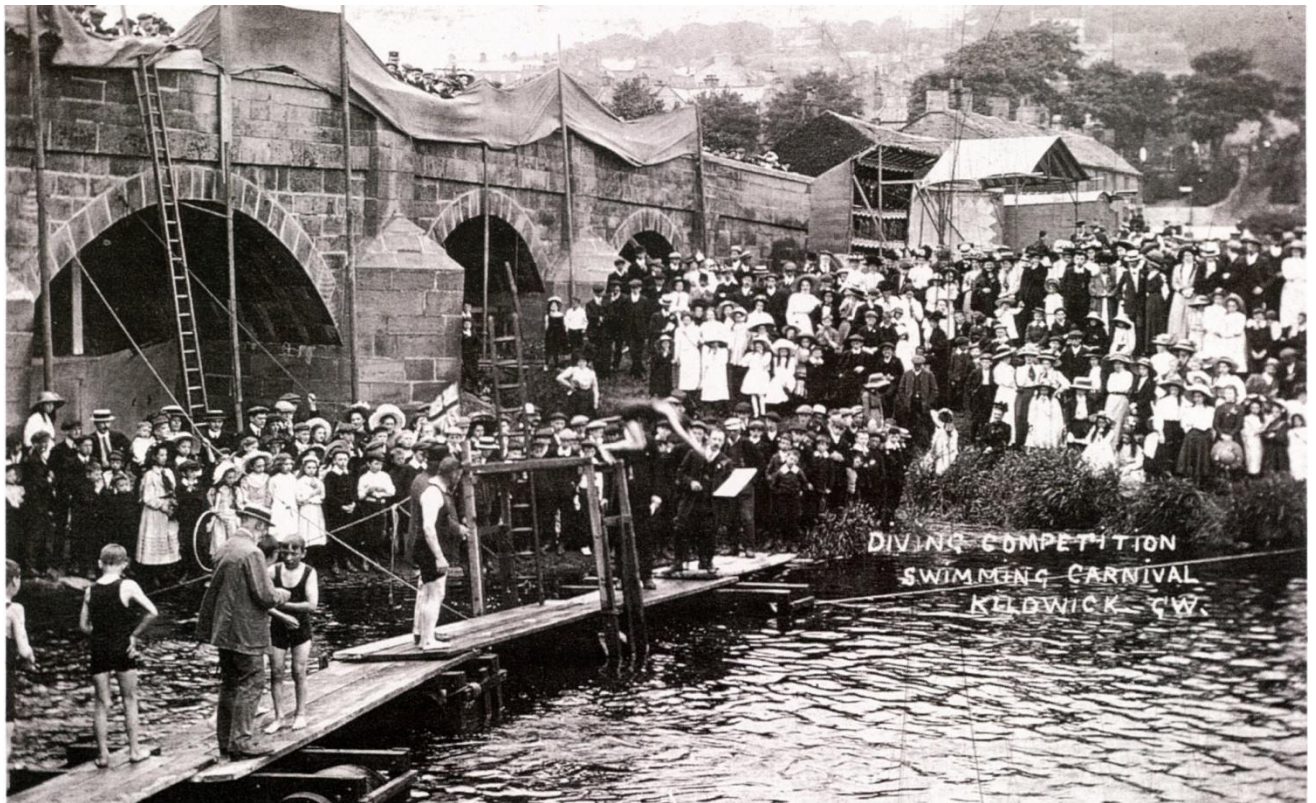


Farnhill Volunteers and the WW1 Poets – 2

Mobilization and recruitment – The lads in their hundreds by A.E. Houseman

War came suddenly.

Even in late July, only a week before war was declared, the Kildwick Swimming Carnival went ahead as usual.



Members of the Territorial 6th battalion of the West Riding Regiment, including Herbert Barker, Albert Edgar Bower, Arthur Brown and Fred Holmes went off to Marske for their summer training.

THE TERRITORIAL CAMP

FINAL ARRANGEMENTS.

Final arrangements have been made for the Territorial camp at Marske-on-Sea, near Saltburn. The training will be for fifteen days, commencing Sunday next. A fatigue party of 30 left Skipton on Thursday to prepare for the arrival of the main body, and it is anticipated that 200 officers and men from the Skipton and Barnoldswick Companies of the 6th Duke of Wellington's Regiment will spend the whole or a portion of the period under canvas.

However, the camp was broken up early and, on August 3rd, the Territorials were brought home. An order for their immediate mobilization was received on the evening of the 4th and by 10am the following morning the Territorials were assembling and being formed up as the 6th battalion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment.

At 12:40 on Thursday (6th August) 660 men, armed and equipped, departed from Skipton Station en-route, as they thought, to Immingham Docks and from there to the continent. (In fact they were being sent to a training camp.)

This from the Craven Herald:

As the "Terriers" marched past on their way to the station one old farmer was heard to remark thoughtfully "There seems to be a lot of young 'uns amongst 'em", and his neighbour fully eighty years of age knowingly replied "Aye they're good enough, but they've not gotten t' best yet. They've got t' call on us.

There was no questioning the fitness of the patriotic band of soldiers, untried as many of them were. They left the town amid subdued but sincere farewells. As Craven's sons have shown in the past, they will not be found unready or wanting in the test that lies before them. Good Luck !

A similar mustering took place in Keighley where the order to mobilize was issued at 6pm and by 9pm 250 men had gathered at the Drill Hall, cheered on by five or six thousand well-wishers. Just after midnight the men were despatched by train to Skipton. Their departure was cheered by the crowd, which by this time had grown to over 10,000.

A further group of 191 Territorials, those who had returned late from Marske or who could not be equipped in time for the earlier departure, left Skipton station on 9th August. A final group of 100 left on Wednesday 12th.

At the same time that the Territorials were being mustered, other men were attending recruitment posts in Skipton, Crosshills and Keighley. About 70 were sworn in on Wednesday (5th) and by the end of Thursday this number had increased to 200. On Monday 9th an order to increase the 6th battalion strength by a further 500 men was received at Skipton and over 100 of the new recruits were immediately sworn-in.

Although published in 1896, the collection of poems *A Shropshire Lad*, by A.E. Houseman became very popular during WW1.

In one poem, Houseman talks about the young men coming into town for a fair. It's not too much of a stretch to imagine that this is what it must have been like as men gathered to join-up and be sent off to an uncertain future.

XXIII. The lads in their hundreds, by A.E. Houseman

*The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.*

*There's chaps from the town and the field and the till and the cart,
And many to count are the stalwart, and many the brave,
And many the handsome of face and the handsome of heart,
And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.*

*I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell
The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;
And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them farewell
And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.*

*But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to scan;
And brushing your elbow unguessed-at and not to be told
They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,
The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.*

