



**PRIVATE ABRAHAM ACTON,
OF WHITEHAVEN.**

Fighting continues in the Dardanelles. Later this month the British win the Battle of Gully Ravine on the Gallipoli peninsula but at a high casualty cost.

Increasing numbers of women are being employed in British munitions factories.

THE WAR

WHITEHAVEN'S V.C. KILLED IN ACTION

PRIVATE ABRAHAM ACTON

On Thursday morning, Mrs Acton, of 14a Peter Street, Whitehaven, received an official intimation from No. 3, District Record Office, Preston, dated June 1st, 1915, conveying the sad news that her son, Private Abraham Acton, V.C. of the 2nd Battalion the Border Regiment, had been killed in action in France on the 16th of May. Private Acton, V.C. was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Acton of 14a Peter Street, Whitehaven and was formerly a member of "A" Company, 5th Battalion Border Regiment and on the recommendation of Captain R. R. Blair he joined the 2nd Border Regiment in January, 1914. Deceased was about 22 years of age, and spent his last birthday (December 17th) in the trenches, where some four days later he gained the V.C. Private Acton was educated at the Crosthwaite Memorial School, under Mr. D. Lindow, and he had always been popular amongst his comrades in the army and companions in civil life. He was an old scholar of the Hogarth Mission Sunday School, and his name is on the Mission "Roll of Honour".

Private Acton wrote on January 2nd to his mother, - "We are expecting the Victoria Cross, two of us, for bringing in two wounded men under fire from the Germans. The General has recommended us for it. So you will see I have not been idle out here." Later the Mayor of Whitehaven forwarded Private Acton a telegram conveying hearty congratulations on the distinction conferred upon him, and stating that his valour reflected great credit on himself, and brought honour to his native town. They were all proud of him and wished him a safe return. The sad news of his death has been keenly felt by the townspeople and much sympathy has been expressed to his mother and family in the great loss they have sustained.

"HAPPY AS MUDLARKS."

Sergeant T. Aitken, who is in a Highland Regiment, writing on the 23rd May to his wife, Mrs. Aitken, of 23, Peter-street, Whitehaven, states:—"Of all the nights I have been in action, last night was 'my lad.' We were making trenches and had no coats on, and it rained heaven's high. The lightning and thunder—it was worse than ever I have seen it in my life, and the shells screaming over us and the Maxim fire whizzing all round, independent of the snipers, you can hear them flashing past your ears, though we were getting used to it now. It is bad enough, and I am just about sick of it, but keeping up a good heart and looking for better things to come."

On Wednesday Mrs. Aitken received a postcard stating that her husband was well, and adding:—"I am going up again to the firing line. The Whitehaven fellows have not been yet. So hope for the best." A further postcard received on Thursday states that Sergeant Aitken has been admitted into hospital suffering from gas.

In a letter dated May 20, to his wife, Sergeant Aitken gives some graphic details of his experiences:—"The experience I have had is nothing to what I went through this week in the trenches. My Company 'D' was the first to go in and the last to be relieved. We have never had a wash nor shave and the weather was hellish, rain and sleet, and the dead bodies in thousands getting thrown up. The trench I was in there was a foot sticking out and we had to get it out and bury it again. The smell was awful. I am clacked up with clay and wet through, but we are in a good class of men, happy as mudlarks. The man that was next to me was shot through the arm—he is a Whitehaven man called Ralph, and there is a few more casualties. We have been a fortnight under fire. We were bivouacking in a wood and just as we got out it was blown to blazes. The worst of it is coming in and going out of the trenches. We have had a do at their snipers. I can stand all their firing as long as they keep their poisoning gases away. The death they die is something awful with the gas, but any way I am in great hopes of coming home sound and well."

3 June 1915



PRIVATE CRAWFORD,
2ND BORDER,
KILLED AT THE DARDANELLES.

3 June 1915



SERGT. F. J. BURNS,
OF MILLOM.
4TH K.O.R. LANCASTER REGT.
KILLED IN ACTION.

24 June 1915

HOW SIX CLEATOR MOOR MEN HELD A TRENCH.

Private Pockley, 5th Border, son of Mr. Alec Pockley, Ennerdale Road, Cleator Moor, in a letter to his sister from Dalmeny Hospital, says:—

"An officer came to me and four more chaps, and asked us if we would come along with him, which we did. The five of us had to hold a trench 100 yards long. We opened a rapid fire on the enemy as hard as we could, go to make them think that the trench was fully manned. They got within 100 yards of us when a miracle happened. Three machine guns came on the scene, just each side of us, and opened fire on them. Reinforcements also arrived—Cleator Moor lads to the rescue—and before the Germans could advance another 50 yards, there was not one of them left. We cheered at the top of our voices. The officer gave us good praise, and said, 'Well done, Borders.' He is a captain belonging to the Irish Fusiliers."

"All through the struggle Johnny Carruthers and a young fellow from Aldby Street, called Rooney, the boxer, and myself, stuck together. We were determined to stand to our guns to the finish, which we did. Dead and wounded comrades lay on both sides of us. We had marvelous escapes, Johnny and I were sitting at the bottom of the trench having a well-earned smoke, when I just happened to say to Johnny: 'Get those letters off the top of the trench and see who owns them.' Johnny got up, and just then a shell burst over my head. It struck the top of the trench and burst, hanging me up. I managed to scramble out of it, but was too frightened to look where Johnny stood. I thought he was killed, but to my delight, he was safe and sound. I got up to move along a bit, and as soon as I put down my left foot I fell, and poor Johnny, the tears were rolling down his cheeks—he thought I was done. He dragged me along to a place of safety, and bandaged me up. I lay in the trench 16 hours, and during that time Johnny stood over me. We never ate a bite. He has been a good friend to me, and I shall never forget it, and when we parted I could have cried."

10 June 1915

THE WAR.

SIX MILLOM MEN KILLED IN THE TRENCHES.

The news that reached Millom this week is bringing the gigantic war which is being waged on the plains of Flanders and Northern France nearer to Millom homes. During the past week no less than six of the Millom Territorials, as well as three others belonging to same company from Conihilton, have given up their lives for their King and country. The first inkling of the unfortunate news reached Millom on Saturday but people were loth to believe, it knowing that similar rumours were prevalent on previous occasions without any foundation for the same. On Monday morning, however, the sad information was confirmed by letters from Captain Donald Barratt, the explanation being given that the fatalities occurred through the explosion of a German shell in the trench, which the Millom men with others, were defending. Death in five of the cases was instantaneous, and the men were buried the same night behind the trenches.

Sergeant Burns, son of Mr. Michael Burns, Newton Villas, Holborn Hill, had been five or six years in the territorials. He took every keen interest in the work, and the men with whom he was associated thought a great deal of him. Captain Barratt, in conveying the sad intelligence to Mr. and Mrs. Burns, spoke in the very highest terms of the conduct, reliability, and efficiency of the deceased non-commissioned officer.

Corporal William Henry Milton was the only son of Mr. Milton, Haverigg. He was a prominent member of the Millom Football Club, his ability as a three quarter being fully recognised, whilst when required he also proved a capable full back or half back.

Private Lister was the son of Mr. John Lister, Albert Street, Millom, at one time landlord of the Ship Hotel. Like Corporal Milton Private Lister was also a prominent Millom athlete, having won many flat races at the Millom Whitsuntide and other district sports.

Private Fitzwilliams was the oldest son of Mr. Abraham George Fitzwilliams, Market Street, Millom. He was held in the highest respect by every one who knew him, being a quiet, inoffensive youth.

Private T. Crossman was the son of Mrs. Crossman, King Street, Millom. Deceased, who was also a Territorial, has 14 or 15 relatives, including three brothers, with the colours.

On Tuesday morning Mr. Holmes, The Hill, Millom, received information respecting the death of his son, Private William Holmes, who was seriously wounded when his fellow territorials were killed. He lived to reach the hospital at the base, but the wounds were too serious to hope for his recovery.

Amongst others who were somewhat seriously wounded during the past week or so are Private Moore, Robinson Row, Holborn Hill, and Private Burns, Pool Side, Haverigg. Information has also reached Mrs. Burns, Castle Street, Millom, who has five sons in the Army, that two of her sons were wounded.

The greatest sympathy is felt throughout town with the bereaved families, the consolation being that they died for their country, from a continuation of the perpetration of the atrocities which the Germans have been guilty of in Belgium.



**CORP. HORACE BLACK,
5TH BORDER REGIMENT, T.F.
(CLEATOR MOOR).
KILLED IN ACTION.**

17 June 1915

SUBMARINE OFF IRELAND

The ss. Greenisland of Belfast, which arrived at Whitehaven on Tuesday morning for coal, was chased by a German submarine when off Ireland. She was near the shore at the time, and the captain was taken steps to beach her, when help arrived, and the submarine made off, so allowing the Greenisland to proceed on her course

17 June 1915

These articles are taken from the *Whitehaven News*, held on microfilm at Whitehaven Archive and Local Studies Centre, and indexed by volunteers.

The issues covering the time of the Great War have been indexed by a group of volunteers in an eighteen-month long project undertaken to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of war, and to act as a lasting memorial to all whose lives were touched by the events.

17 June 1915

ANOTHER MILLOM MAN EXPIRES FROM WOUNDS

Information was received at Haverigg on Tuesday evening that Private T Burns, of Pool Side, Haverigg, had expired in the hospital from the wounds he had received. It appears that on Monday, June 7th, the day before the other Millom men were killed in the trenches, Private Burns was shot by a German sniper, the bullet passing through his body. Private Burns, prior to the war, worked at the Hodbarrow Mines and was much respected by all who knew him..

24 June 1915



PTE. WM. HOLMES, HILL OF MILLOM. 4TH K.O.R. LANCASTER REGT. DIED OF WOUNDS IN FRANCE.

24 June 1915

ANOTHER WHITEHAVEN MAN KILLED.

Official information, dated June 5th, has been received by Mrs. Crawford, Bennett's Court, Queen-street, Whitehaven, stating that her husband, 5552, Private R. H. Crawford, 2nd Border, British Expeditionary Force, was killed in action on the 16th May. He was an old soldier who served in the Boer War, and he enlisted after the outbreak of war. He was in peace times a shift hand at Ladysmith Pit..

10 June 1915



PVT. CHARLES PAGE, SILECROFT.

10 June 1915

GERMANS CRY TO ENGLISH FOR MERCY.

LOCAL SOLDIER'S STORY.

Miss L. Ball, Sandwith, Whitehaven, received a letter from her brother, 1718, Private W. Ball, "A" Company, No. 1 Platoon, 5th Border Regiment, Northumberland Brigade, B.E.F., on June 3rd, in which he states: "We landed in the trenches at nine o'clock on Monday night. At two o'clock on Tuesday we were gassed. We got shelled out of the trenches, so we had to get up in the first line to strengthen the others. I saw the Germans coming in droves towards our men, and the gas, it just about killed me. I don't know what I would have done if I had not had my respirator on. It knocked some of them out; it was that strong, but the rest of us stuck to our rifles, and believe me we did cut them up. They started to shout "English, English, mercy, mercy," but we showed them no mercy, not for what they had done. There was one German officer got hold of one of our wounded men with his left hand and thrust his sword through him with the other hand. They don't take any wounded prisoners; they bayonet them, and I think we should show them no mercy. I would sooner be shot than taken prisoner. They think if they can't beat us with guns, they will choke us with gas. I tell you what, it's murder in this war. You wouldn't think it, not till you saw it. I know I have had my share of it, and only been in a week. No. 1 Platoon went in with 47 men, and we only had two killed and seven wounded, so we came off lucky. The other platoons lost heavily. I saw some awful sights up there. It's like hell. There is one big town, and there isn't a brick left in it. I will tell you what, there was a shell dropped in a graveyard, and lifted coffins up out of the ground. They never left a headstone standing. The church is the same, nearly knocked to the bottom. When a shell bursts it makes a hole in the ground you can bury twelve houses in it, so you will know what it will do when it drops in a house."

10 June 1915

