

## Village Echoes

This year, on 18<sup>th</sup> June, England will commemorate the bicentenary of the Duke of Wellington's victory over Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo. The village of Waterloo is just a few miles south of Brussels and it was here that 68,000 British, Belgian, Dutch, German and Prussian troops faced the 72,000 strong French Army for the battle which brought to an end Bonaparte's domination of Europe and resulted in his exile to the island of St Helena, in the South Atlantic, where he died in 1821.

The Army Service Records for the period reveal that among the troops at Waterloo were four men born in Goudhurst who fought in and survived the battle. They were Stephen Barham, Richard Bishop, Thomas Easton and William Field.

Stephen Barham, born in about 1771, joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars in 1794. He was a soldier in Troop number 4, led by Captain John Gray and, unlike his captain, who was slightly wounded, he survived the battle unscathed. Barham was discharged from the army in June 1817.

Richard Bishop was born in 1786 and joined the 52<sup>nd</sup> Light Infantry in 1804 at the age of 18. At the time of the battle he was in Captain James Frederick Love's company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion as a drummer. He also appears to have survived unscathed, although his Captain, later to become General Sir James Love, was severely wounded. In all Richard served just under 20 years with the regiment and achieved the rank of Corporal before being discharged as unfit for service because of rheumatism and general derangement of health in April 1823, when he was 37.

Thomas Easton was born in 1793 and must have been a tall young man as he joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards in 1814 at the age of about 20. His army records also state that he was a bricklayer by trade, had brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion and confirms his height at 5ft 10 inches. By the time of Waterloo he had gained the rank of Lance-Corporal. However, his career in the army was relatively short as he was discharged on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1817, aged 23. His intestines had been injured and his health impaired as a result the severe wounds he had received at Waterloo.

William Field, born about 1779, served in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers, also known as the 16<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons. He was originally a blacksmith by trade and fought throughout the Peninsular Wars. At Waterloo he was part of Captain Richard Weyland's troop and appears to have survived unscathed, unlike Weyland who was wounded. In 1822, after 21 years' service he received his discharge from the Army and was stated to be suffering from rheumatism.

It has not been possible to trace what happened to these men once they had left the army. There is no evidence to show that they returned to Goudhurst.

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