

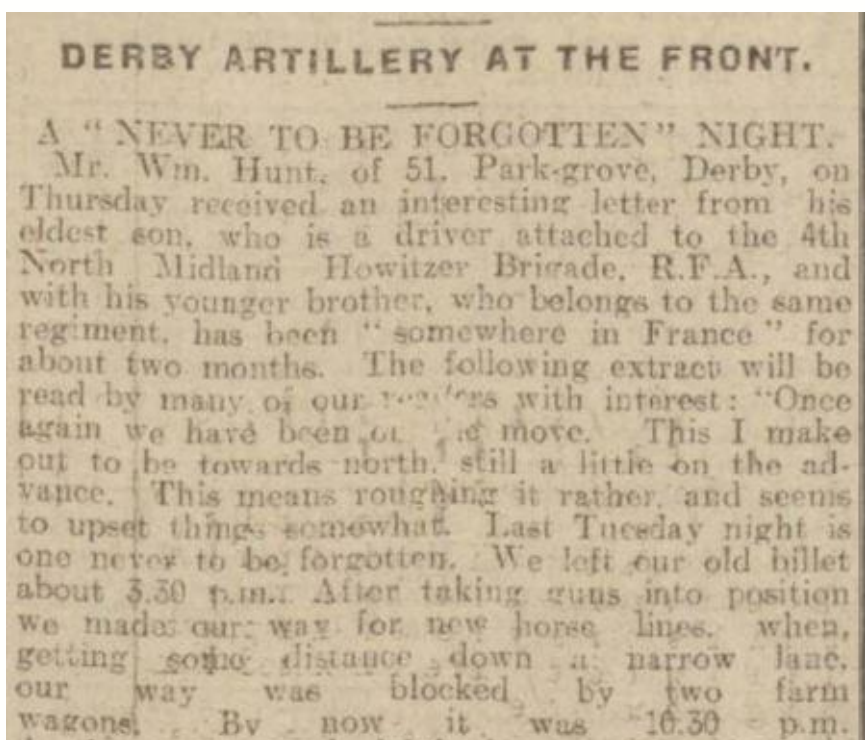


# William and Frederick Hunt

## 51 Park Grove

In April 1915 William Hunt, serving in France, wrote a letter home to his parents. His father forwarded it to the local paper and it was printed in full on 23 April 1915.

William and his younger brother Frederick were serving with the North Midland Howitzer Brigade (part of the Royal Field Artillery) "somewhere in Northern France". The two brothers (William born 1890) and Frederick (born in 1892) volunteered right at the start of the war and were posted, with the 4<sup>th</sup> Midland Howitzer Brigade to France in February 1915. The headquarters of the Brigade was at 91 Siddals Road Derby.



The letter (transcribed overleaf) gives a detailed account of what it was like to experience the battlefields of Northern France. The night described would have been in early April. ©Local World Ltd (image created courtesy of the British Library Board) *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1915.

The division served on the Western Front for the duration of the war and took part in

major battles such as the Battle of Loos in (1915) and the Battle of the Somme (1916) suffering heavy losses along the way.

The Hunt family – William (a pork butcher), his wife Charlotte, and four children Florence, William, Annie and Frederick first lived in our area at 60 Park Grove, moving there in 1907. By the time the 1911 census was taken Florence was married and living with her husband Charles Boughey at 37 Statham Street and William, aged 20, was living and working on a cousin's farm near Ashbourne. In 1912 the family moved to 51 Park Grove, staying there until they moved out of the area sometime before 1918.

Very little is known about the lives of William and Frederick, or indeed where their military service took them later in the war. William married a local girl, Jessie Willatt, a Clothier's Cashier who lived at 33 Park Grove from about 1908 to 1911. They married on 14 August 1918 at St John's Church, when William's occupation is given as "Soldier" and place of residence "High Wycombe". In 1921 the birth of their son, William, is recorded and in 1939 they were working and living at the Post Office in Leigh, near Uttoxeter. William was the Sub-Postmaster and Postman while Jessie helped in the shop. We know Frederick trained as a legal clerk before the war but nothing definite is known about his subsequent life.



# William and Frederick Hunt

## 51 Park Grove (continued)

### DERBY ARTILLERY AT THE FRONT

#### A "NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN" NIGHT.

Mr Wm. Hunt of 51 Park Grove, Derby, on Thursday [*possibly 22 April*] received an interesting letter from his eldest son, who is a driver attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> North Midland Howitzer Brigade, R.F.A. [*Royal Field Artillery*], and with his younger brother, who belongs to the same regiment, has been "somewhere in France" for about two months. The following extract will be read by many of our readers with interest: "Once again we have been on the move. This I make out to be towards north, still a little in the advance. This means roughing it rather, and seems to upset things somewhat. Last Tuesday night is one never to be forgotten. We left our old billet about 3.30 pm. After taking guns into positions we made our way for new horse lines, when, getting some distance down a narrow lane, our way was blocked by two farm wagons. By now it was 10.30 pm. As the gun teams had left the guns in action, we attached ourselves and horses to one of them. The officer giving the order, we proceeded to walk or march, when all in a moment wagon, horses, and men were dumped into a ditch of about 5ft. by 5ft. 3in. bank full of water. After scrambling out we stripped the horses of their harness and dragged out the poor devils one by one. I miss out one point, that is, it was raining the whole of the time. By this time our own wagons had come up in the rear, and stopped up the road completely. So we had to stand our horses until daybreak. Eventually one by one the men fell asleep, some in the saddle, others on wagons. I, with a few others, lay down on the saturated plough land, alongside of the road, unable to stand any longer. I was roused on account of water running down my collar. Then I left my horses, and down the lane slopping along I went, and found a cowshed and lay in the manger under their heads. Well I ought not to grumble, only that when night came round again and I made my bed my blanket went with a flop; you may guess how dry it was."

Transcription of letter published in the Derby Daily Telegraph on 23 April 1915