

Newspaper Extracts – The Coppard Brothers

From the “Bexhill Observer”, dated 13th February 1915

ALBERT COPPARD

“COUNCILLOR’S SON WOUNDED”

“News reached Bexhill a few days ago that Private Albert Coppard, 2nd. Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, son of Councillor and Mrs G. Coppard, of 15, Beaconsfield-road, had been wounded in the shoulder and cheek by a bullet and is now in hospital. In what action the wounds were sustained is not known. Before the War Private Coppard belonged to the 5th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (T). His brother, Mr G Coppard is with the 6th Sussex Royal Field Artillery (T).”

From the “Bexhill Observer”, dated 14th of August 1915

ALBERT COPPARD

[Please note! In this extract, “Albert Victor” is referred to as “V. Coppard” and not “A. V. Coppard” this is - perhaps, the first initial was accidentally missed by the newspaper.]

“WHEN DEATH FLIES PAST”

“BEXHILL SOLDIER AND BATTLEFIELD SENSATIONS”

“Private V. Coppard, second Royal Sussex Regiment, son of Councillor Coppard, of Beaconsfield road, Bexhill, has sent an interesting letter home describing how a soldier feels when he is first under fire. He says: -“

“The first shells have a remarkable effect. You have been marching under tension, expecting you hardly know what, when suddenly the whine of shrapnel breaks on you, with the crash of its explosion on the still air, and then another and another. Whether you realise what they are or not, whether they are near you or not, you duck, dodge, and feel you want to run anywhere. That this is war becomes a fact all vivid and threatening; the tension is snapped. There is the unexpectedness, the newness, the noise and the uncertainty of what will follow in that one instant.”

“Rifle fire affects you differently. You feel a queer emptiness where your stomach ought to be. You know that they mean you, and you want to disappear, but you don’t know how.”

A LEADER’S EXAMPLE

“Then you get hold of yourself and stiffen up, and go ahead. The officer’s example counts for much. He seems to find himself very quickly. The fact of his fearlessness gives you confidence. Then the advance – it’s the first disillusionment, and a pretty one. None of that music, colour flying, quick time work, you read about. Instead, a terrible strain, with perhaps your chum shot by your side, whom you may not stop to help. You have a current of thought which you try to force from you. You have an ever growing impulse to stop and shoot: you persuade yourself you could do much more good by staying in half cover and shooting and the comforts you to hear your rifle go off. But your line is advancing, and you must advance too.”

“As you stumble up, bullets whistle by your head. It’s no use dodging them, and then you are at them. . . . There is one good point in all this: it makes a man realise what home really is, and we are all longing for the time to come, and I do not think it is far distant, when we shall again be in dear old England amongst our families and dear ones.”

From the "Bexhill Observer", dated 25th March 1916

"BEXHILL SOLDIERS REMARKABLE LETTERS"

"STERNER METHODS FOR SAVAGE FOE"

"Councillor G. Coppard has received a very interesting letter from his son, Private A. V. Coppard, of the 2nd Royal Sussex, which, while expressing a firm belief in victory in 1916, voices a demand for sterner methods against the enemy in return for his ruthless methods of warfare. Private Coppard has been through a lot of terrible fighting, and has been three times wounded. He says: –"

"Today being my birthday, I thought I would occupy a part of my spare time in writing to you. Well, dad, we are out for six days rest, and we have been in one of the hottest places it has been my misfortune to be in. The only way I can describe our place we were in is by saying we were in hell itself. Never have I seen such awful sights and heard such a horrid noise. I may not tell you where we are, for reasons you already know. Anyhow, I shall never forget my experiences; things were awful. In a war like this, when all that stands dear for home and humanity is at stake, we are fighting against the devil and his hordes. There can be no more of the gentlemanly fighting we have been doing. Understand this fully, and then the long-looked-for victory is ours in the near future. We are going to win, that is certain, but unless we take off our coats, and fight the Huns with the same deadly implements of his own invention, then those thousands of brave fellows who have died and bled for the cause of England have suffered in vain."

"WAR TO THE KNIFE"

"You people in England should demand that our Base airmen be given the permission to fly over the towns and villages of Germany, burning and murdering everything that lives in their course. If by chance they kill women and children, well, war is war, and since the Germans will it, it must be to the knife. They have not spared our women and children. To win there must be a ruthless, relentless war. Away with the cry of 'Fair play', and let us start in real earnest. We are in the second year of the War. How do we stand? What have we gained? Are we determined to make good our failures and losses? Are we as ill-prepared for peace and the home-coming as we were nineteen months ago for the war? Those are, in my opinion, vital questions, and the time has come for the answer."

"THE YEAR OF VICTORY"

"I believe firmly that 1916 is the year of Victory. The spirits of the troops on the whole are wonderful, the system of operations splendid, but how about the so-called blockade as it is today? You have been allowing iron ore to be smuggled into Germany, and with the smuggled iron ore your sons, brothers, etc., are being killed and maimed. The present blockade is a farce. We all know that the enemy is beginning to feel the strain of the war. His own stores must be running short, and if you only demand that nothing should be imported into Germany through Holland and America they are beaten. And a thorough blockade is the only way to stop these things getting into Germany. The Huns will then have to use their scanty stores, and very soon their bellies will cry out for mercy. We must use ten to their one in shells, bombs, etc.; we must not spare the Devils – they are not human, we must treat them as they treated little Belgium – an eye for an eye."

"A LASTING PEACE"

"The armies of God are locked in a bloody struggle with the devil and his hordes, but never yet has Satan vanquished God, and I firmly believe that this terrible rocky path of sacrifice is leading to the summit of a lasting glory and peace. Until this peace is here we must, and shall, fight on ruthlessly, returning their evil doings a hundredfold."

"If they continued to strike England from their aircraft we must return the compliment, for how can the Germans hurt England except for the air? Remember we are masters of the sea and why not of the air? Now, my dear parents, I have relieved my mind a wee bit; there are lots of things I should like to tell you, but I dare not. Keep up a good heart; I shall soon be home again."

From the "Bexhill Observer", dated 28th October 1916

ALL FIVE SONS

"COUNCILLOR'S FIVE SONS SERVING" "

Councillor and Mrs G. Coppard, of Beaconsfield-road, have five sons serving. They are George Coppard, sergeant-instructor, R. F. A.; William F. Coppard, corporal, 9th Royal Welsh Fusiliers; Albert Victor Coppard, corporal 2nd Royal Sussex Regiment; Thomas H. Coppard, private, 11th Middlesex Regiment; Edward H. Coppard, private, Royal Suffolk Cyclist Corps."

From the Bexhill Chronicle dated 26th. May, 1917

ALBERT COPPARD

"Scout-Sargent A. V. Coppard, son of Councillor G. Coppard, of Beaconsfield road, has also been mentioned in dispatches. He is in the R. S. R. He passed through the battles of Loos, the Aisne, Marne, Neuve Chappelle, Vimy Ridge, as well as in the very early days of the war the retreat from Mons. He has been wounded three times, and all the time that he has been out he has only been home on leave once."

From the Bexhill Observer dated 3rd November, 1917

THOMAS & EDWARD COPPARD

HOME ON LEAVE

"Private T. H. Coppard, Machine Gun Company, son of Councillor G. Coppard, 15, Beaconsfield-road, is home from the Front for a few days leave. His brother, Private E. H. Coppard, has also been home from "somewhere in England", and returned yesterday (Friday)."

From the "Bexhill Observer", dated 20th April 1918

GEORGE & ALBERT COPPARD

"Councillor and Mrs George Coppard, of Beaconsfield Road, have received the sad intelligence that their eldest son, Sergt George Coppard, R. F. A., has died in hospital at Bungay, Suffolk. Previous to the war he was a member of the local battery of the Territorial Artillery, and has been since engaged on instructional work. It was only a fortnight ago that Councillor Coppard received the news that his second son, Sergt W. J. Coppard, Royal Welch Fusiliers, had been wounded by shrapnel, and was in hospital at Halifax. Of the three other sons serving, Pte (Acting-Corpl) A. V. Coppard, Royal Sussex Regiment., has just been awarded the Belgium Decoration Militaire."

From the "Bexhill Observer", dated 20th July 1918

ALBERT COPPARD

"SUSSEX MEN FRATERNISE"

"Councillor G. Coppard has received from his son, Scout-Sergeant Albert Victor Coppard, Royal Sussex Regiment, who recently gained the Military Cross, a letter from the Western Front in which he gives an account of a pleasant reunion with others of the Royal Sussex, meeting these for the first time on the field. The Sergeants' Mess of Sergeant Carey's Battalion gave a whist drive, dinner and concert on 26th June. Three prizes were won by Sergeants of the Royal Sussex. A band played selections, and the menu included salmon, cold ham, biscuits, salad, potatoes, cheese and fruit. The affair was very successful. Nearly all those present were from Bexhill and Hastings."

From the "Bexhill Observer" dated 4th January 1919

ALBERT COPPARD

"GALLANT SERVICE REWARDED"

"Few local men have seen as much of the war in France as Acting-Sergeant A. V. Coppard, son of Councillor and Mrs G. Coppard. He has been through a lot of fighting with the gallant 2nd Battalion of the county regiment: on one occasion he had the honour of being mentioned in despatches, and he was also awarded a Belgian decoration. Sergeant Coppard now receives the Distinguished Conduct Medal as a further recognition of his services at the Front."

From the "Bexhill Observer", dated 25th January 1919

ALBERT & EDWARD COPPARD

"WITH THE ROYAL SUSSEX IN GERMANY"

"Councillor George Coppard, who, by the way, has two grandsons in France, has had three soldier sons home during the past few days – Sergeant W. Coppard, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the eldest surviving son, who has been in hospital, Sergeant A. V. Coppard, 2nd Battalion Royal Sussex, the holder of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Belgian "Decoration Militaire" for Merit (which is a star), and Corporal E. H. Coppard, Bedfordshire Regiment."

"Sergeant A. V. Coppard has been with the 2nd Royal Sussex on their march into Germany, and when he left on leave they were between Bonn and Cologne. His experience was that the German civilian population took the defeat well, and the English soldiers in occupation have behaved splendidly. He and another Sergeant were billeted with a German family, and were treated well. The lady, who spoke a little English, said she could now understand what an Englishman was, and it was the Englishman's personality which won the war."

"The German towns appeared very clean and up-to-date. The English soldiers have free rides on trams and go to the German theatres and picture houses. Sergeant Coppard's pardonably proud of the Battalion to which he belongs, and of the fact that Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, V. C., is their Commanding Officer; he was attached to them from the South Wales Borderers."

"Sergeant Coppard met Mr A. G. A. Smith, from the Town Hall, who is now a Lance-Corporal."

"An amusing incident of the march into Germany has been that men and officers have stood on bridges and wound their watches in order to really "wind up the watch on the Rhine"."
