

The story from John Barnard.

1916 - 1919.

France + Belgium

Michael J. Barnard.

1-2014-

With the Greatest Care,

Dad died in 1987 aged 89. He was miraculously one of the few survivors of the battles around Cambrai, Ypres, Vimy ridge, Armentiers and Lillebeke Lake. He was a battalion runner with the 274 Infantry Battalion, 2nd Worcestershire Regiment for 18 months both in France and Belgium. Once he went over the top with 22,000 men and was only one of 15 who came back unscathed. Dad was wounded several times, was in hospital twice and on returning to his regiment was promoted to Lance-Corporal.

There were very few occasions that Dad spoke of his experiences but one peaceful summer evening after a days slum picking during my school holidays Dad completely out of the blue and with faltering words and tears in his eyes he told me of the many times he had been on a burial party. He went on to tell me of a burial near Lillebeke Lake that has haunted him all his life. It was of a pal that had been killed the day before and Dad with his other pals had managed to

gather together a few wild flowers and foliage to make a wreath.

My picture is of that service at Zillebeke Lake and it is partly drawn with a small red pencil that I found in Dad's leather wallet that he carried throughout his time in France and Belgium.

Dad went on to tell me about the Unknown Soldier. He recalled it was the idea of the Rev. David Railton an Army chaplain in Dad's sector. Close to Dad's line was the HQ of Brigadier General Wyatt who was blind-folded to choose the unknown soldier from unidentified men who had fallen on the battlefields of the Somme, Ypres, and Passchendaele. Draped in the Union Jack the body was returned to England aboard the British destroyer the Verdun.

It arrived at Whitehall on the morning of November 11th 1920. At the burial in Westminster Abbey the nave was lined with a guard of honour of 100 holders of the Victoria Cross.

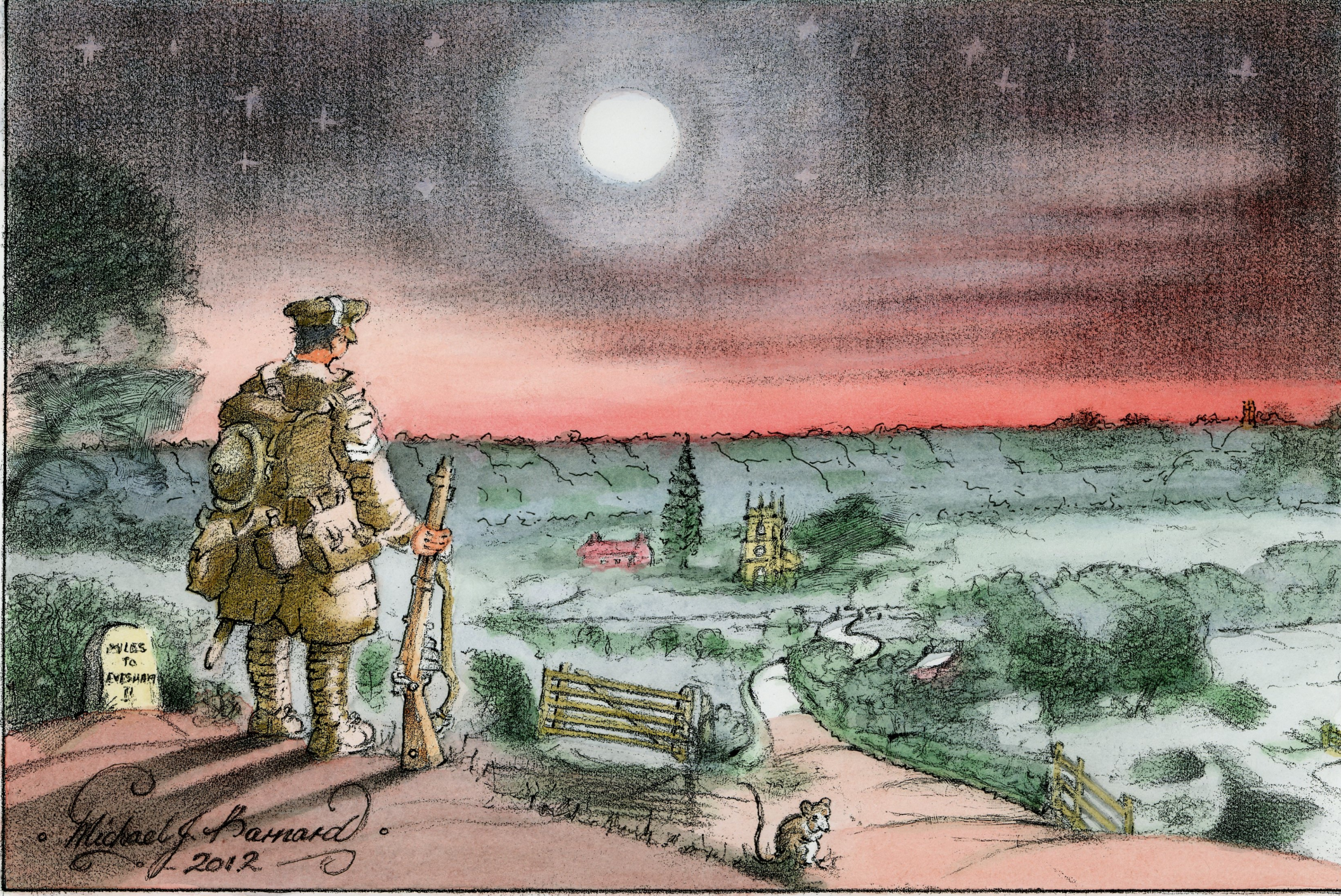
Dad I'm sure was only too pleased to have told me this story and it was his way of telling me why that every year he went to the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall.



The Terrible Five.

H. Heathfield
21st Infanterie
Widford Camp
Cheshamford.

Bad back row with pipe.



Michael J. Barnard
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"Home at last"

L/Cpl John Barnard 1919-