

# The Private War of Charlie Savage

"What was it like, fighting in the war, Granddad?"  
I asked, but enlightenment I never had.  
He was skilful at being evasive  
And I was never sufficiently persuasive.

The most information that I could obtain  
(And from further detail he would refrain)  
Was, "I avoided the worst bits of the action."  
But I guessed the truth from his reaction.

It is said men heard 'talking a good war',  
Had seen less action and not more  
Than soldiers who saw the ghastly things  
Which caused the silence that real horror brings.

He was the lucky one, not being blown to bits,  
Or condemned to a life of awful fits,  
Or robbed of limbs like men he knew,  
Or turned into a human barbecue.

"What was it like, fighting in the war, Granddad?"  
I asked again, his eyes looked sad.

"Did you know the Rangers won four-none?"  
The subject changed, the chance had gone.

He hoarded war memories just like a miser:  
When I asked he left me none the wiser.  
He locked them up and swallowed the key,  
Trying to protect himself as well as me.

I have tracked his steps from cards he sent,  
I know the towns to which he went.  
But I can't imagine months in waterlogged trenches  
Amongst death, destruction and awful stench.

These fighting men were heroes, all.  
Most would survive yet many fall.  
These men were playing against marked cards  
Staking a thousand lives for a hundred yards.

"What was it..." "Brian! Come here and sit by me –  
Grandad has seen things no man should ever see."  
My mum could see her father I'd upset  
He was trying his hardest to forget.

I later grew old enough to realise  
To mention war to him would not be wise.  
His company and tales I always enjoyed  
But the 'W' word took pains to avoid.

Yet his life was long, also happy, and  
From those marked cards he drew a lucky hand.  
Thoughts should turn to those who paid the cost  
And whose young lives, on our behalf, were lost.

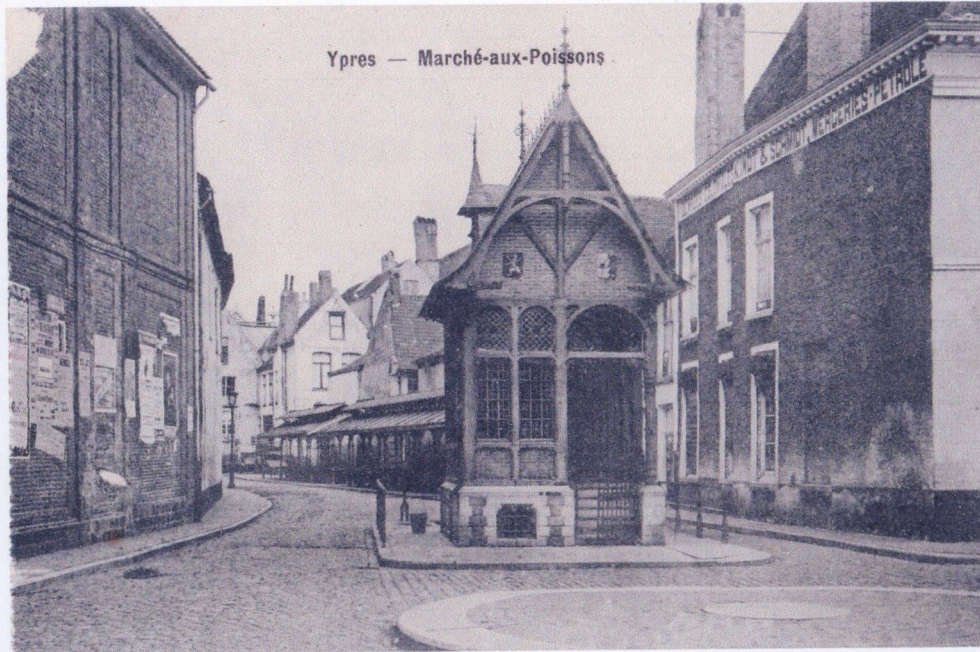
Grandad took his secrets to the grave,  
More information he never gave.  
So I know dates and places, but nothing more  
About Pte. Charlie Savage's private war.



*Pte. 46026 Savage, Charles of the Worcestershire Regiment  
With son Fred, taken circa. 1915. He enlisted in 1916, aged 38.*



*Sentiment in silk for my mum (To my little Doll, with love).*



*"Wipers", infamous theatre of war.*



*Trench humour: trying to make light of it.*

6/5/18  
 D-8  
 I am writing a  
 post card hope you  
 are all quite well  
 as I am fair I  
 will send a letter  
 soon with best love  
 to all from Charlie

CAS  
 Mrs B Savage  
 South View Terrace  
 Badsey in Evesham  
 Worcestershire  
 England

The only one sent singly, the others sent in with letters. Note censor's stamp.

WITH ALL GOOD  
 WISHES FOR  
**CHRISTMAS**  
 AND  
**THE NEW YEAR**

FROM  
 Dad to  
 Fred & Doll

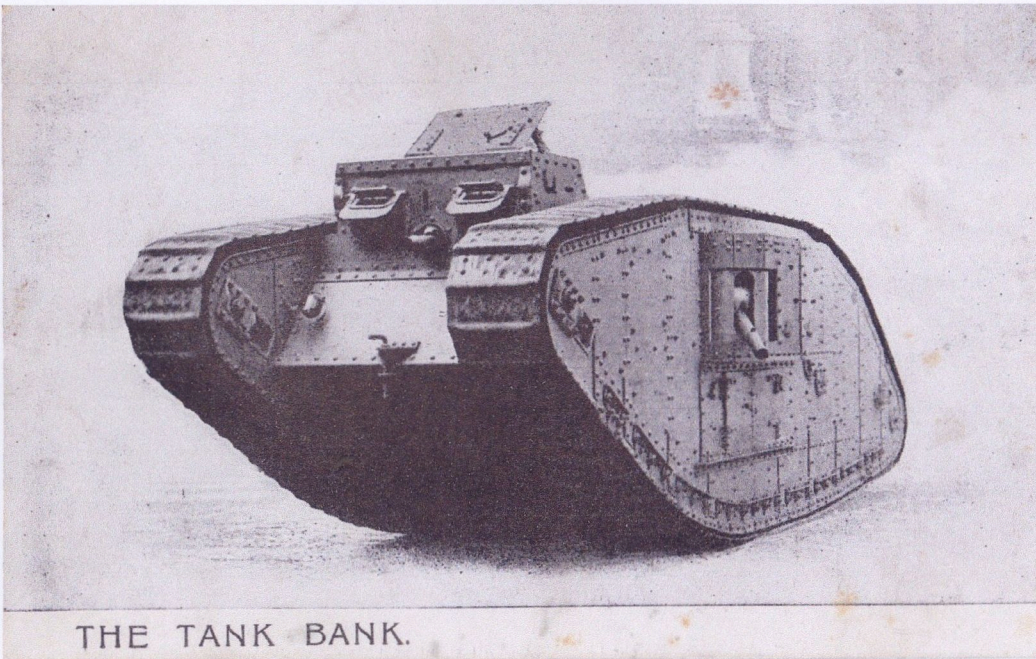
XMAS 1917



We are after you Fritz!



*Having a lovely time? Is this by Mike Barnard – surely not?!*



*Not the complete answer.*