



Letters From the Trenches: A Soldier of the Great War

Bill Lamin

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The youngest of four children, Harry Lamin was born in Derbyshire in 1877 and left school at the age of 13 to work in the lace industry. In December 1916 he was conscripted into the 9th Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment, an infantry unit with which he served in France and Italy until more than a year after the war had ended. On the Western Front he took part in the Battle of the Messines Ridge in June 1917, and then in the costly, long-drawn-out agony of the Battle of Passchendaele (Third Ypres), in which he was wounded. Harry's battalion was later ordered to Italy as part of an Anglo-French force sent to shore up the Italian Army. Seeing action on the Piave front, the 9th York and Lancasters served in Italy until Austria sued for an armistice after the crushing defeat of Vittorio Veneto. With the war over, Harry remained in Italy, transferring to the Royal Munster Fusiliers in April 1919, and was finally demobbed in January 1920. Throughout his time in service, Harry wrote beautifully observed letters home to members of his family and to friends. Whether describing some action during Third Ypres; the frequent and often tedious marches and train journeys that were the lot of the "poor bloody infantry;" the mountainous country of the Italian front or the shattered landscape of Flanders, his narrative is always stoical, uncomplaining, good-humoured, and profoundly moving. Annotated, edited, and arranged by Harry's grandson—who discovered the letters in a drawer—this is an insightful tribute to a fine, brave, selfless and honourable man who endured everything that the war could throw at him and still came up smiling.

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