

## Keld and the First World War.

'Swaledale in Yorkshire is a little country in itself' wrote Ella Pontefract in 1934. 'Once there, shut in by barriers of hills you are satisfied: shrouded by its mystery, the rest of the world seems unimportant and unreal.'

Then about Keld she writes: 'Keld is the last and the highest village in Swaledale, a goal to be reached from the valley, a haven to come down to from the hills. There are farms and hamlets beyond it, but the real life of the Dale stops there. It is a metropolis for the head of the Dale.'

How can I do better to define Keld? I can't really, but for the purposes of this talk, I need to say that I have thought of Keld in 1914/15/16 in terms of the families and community centred on the two chapels. There is a logic in this, since there was clearly a rich and full community life promoted by the chapels. Many of the family names of a hundred years ago are familiar to us today: Rukin, Thornborrow, Metcalfe, Clarkson. Alderson, Scott, Hutchinson.

The Keld of these families takes in the village of Keld itself, Thwaite, Angram, West Stonesdale, and the farms to the west and north west including and bounded by Pry House, Ravenseat, and reaching as far as Tan Hill.

The population had been in continuous decline for over fifty years. In 1841 the total was just over 700, with many more lead and coal miners than farmers. In 1911, it was 301. There were no lead miners, and 106 of the 110 adult males were engaged in farming. This, more than any geographical description defines the Keld of the First World War. Of the four men named here, Robert Rukin the oldest was a shepherd, Richard Alderson and Thomas Clarkson, were farm workers. (Waller Hutchinson was a bit different. His mother was the publican running the Cat Hole Inn, on the road out of Keld towards Thwaite, and at the time he was called up, he was an apprentice clog maker.)

This is not to deny the embryo tourism industry of the first two decades of the century. The Cathole played an important part in this but not the only part. In the 1890s the Cooperative Holiday Association had been bringing families from Lancashire to camp in Keld. Groups of Scouts camped here during the war period, and among the letters of condolence received by the Cathole's Mrs Hutchinson after Waller's death in 1918, is correspondence from visitors who had regularly made the pub their holiday base for many years.

At the same time, we have to remember, that the Keld of a hundred years ago, the Keld of Robert Rukin and Waller Hutchinson, was without electricity and mains drainage, and a few metalled roads. If you think it is isolated now, that is nothing to how it was pre-motor transport.

So Keld made its own life, and there was quite a lot of it, sponsored mostly by the two chapels, of which the Congregational Chapel was the stronger, with their Sunday Schools. The Institute had 40 subscribing members in 1914 and 36 in 1915. There was the Keld Band and an annual programme of events such as concerts, teas, harvests - two of them (service, tea and sale) Sunday School Anniversaries, (two of them too) Christmas day with tea and entertainment, to say nothing about the annual New Year's social which had caused such controversy in 1913.

Much of what we know about life in Keld at this time comes from the school logbook. At the time we are talking about, the schoolmaster was Thomas Brooksbank. Born in Hawes in 1882 where his father was a teacher, he became Keld schoolmaster in 1905, and was thus in his early thirties during the war.

The picture that emerges from Brooksbank's logbook entries - and elsewhere - is of a community where there is a lot of ill health, the cause of much absence from school; it was also a community dominated by the weather and dominated by the requirements of the farming year. For example an entry in July 1916 notes that Mary Thornborrow was back at school after being absent for 10 weeks on account of Scarlet Fever.

Then at the end of the same month he wrote: 'Very hot day. most people having begun hay, only nine children were present today.' In September the same year attendance dipped for Muker Show, Hawes Fair, and Brough Hill Fair.

Earlier, in October 1914, he records admitting three Parrington children from the Tan Hill Inn, Margaret 13, Olive 12, and Edna 8, and notes that up till then they had never been to school. (It is worth pointing out that these children had over four miles each way to walk, on what is now a section of the Pennine Way, but then was barely a track.)

The whole of the logbook in between, including 1915, is peppered with references to the attendance officer and the constant battle to get children to school. The entry for 17 March 1915 reads:

*All the children were present this afternoon, an event that hasn't happened for about three years*

And there was a war on. Everyone played a part in the war effort, knitting socks and scarves and raising money for tobacco and other 'comforts'. In October 1914 they received a circular on 'Why we went to war'. From then on there are frequent references to efforts made by the children to raise money to help improve the lot of soldiers. In October 1915 Lucy Hutchinson, Chrissie Waggett and Jessie Parrington sold flags and sent the proceeds to buy comforts for soldiers in the Dardanelles. In December, Ralph Scott, George Clarkson, Bob Hutchinson and Mary Kilburn sold Christmas cards for soldiers and sailors comforts. In 1916 the children sent parcels to a British prisoner of war in Germany. In 1917 Keld held a week of action on behalf of the local servicemen, which involved house-to-house collections, and a whist drive, supper and a dance held at the Cat Hole Inn.

There are also indications in Brooksbank's records of tetchy relationships in Keld. His own position seems to have been singularly uncomfortable despite the fact that he had been Keld schoolmaster for ten years. The schoolroom was the only community space in the village big enough for concerts and other village events. If he knew about them in advance, he would clear the room of everything moveable and breakable. If he didn't apparatus and equipment would be damaged or go missing.

In June 1915 the infant teacher, Margaret Metcalfe left to get married. A week later, Miss Margaret Waggett, 23-year-old sister of school manager James Waggett arrived and announced that she was the new infant teacher. Ten days later on the centenary of Waterloo, James Waggett himself came to say that he was not sending his daughter to school again until proper precautions had been taken to stop the spread of scarlet fever. He also complained about the bad smell from the open grate in front of the school. The same day saw Brooksbank writing to another school manager John Kilburn, 'complaining about the idleness, impudence and disobedience of his [ten year old] daughter Mary'.

He seems to have got across the minister's wife. Mrs Atkinson. She wanted some children for a singing practice prior to the Sunday School Anniversary and came into school to say so. He was keeping them in for misbehaving. 'When I refused to allow the children to leave before their punishment task was completed, she went away in a rage threatening to "have this state of things altered".'

However, behind below and around all the ups and downs of village community life, was the farming year, the annual cycle in which, as the saying goes, there is a right time for everything. The cycle of the year is the much same today of course, but the farming practices have changed. In 1915, everything depended on human labour or the horse. Somebody will tell me when the first tractor came to Keld, but I don't imagine it was much before 1955, forty years after the time we are talking about. Before then if something moved it was because somebody pushed it or a horse pulled it. For this reason, farms were smaller a hundred years ago, and life harder for both the men and the women. The men may have tended the animals, and most of the outdoor work. For the women there was the endless round of washing, cooking, cleaning. On most farms the women will have seen to the hens, made butter and cheese, some to sell and some to eat. Busy times like hay time they were all involved.

Tupping, winter fothering, lambing, dipping, clipping, hay timing, lamb sales, tup sales, shows and fairs: it was keeping in touch with the key events in the farming year that kept Robert Rukin going while he was having a hard time in France.

We know quite a lot about Robert Rukin because he wrote home regularly and his mother kept his letters. They are now in the safe keeping of James Cooper, grandson of Robert's sister, Mary.

He was the oldest of the Keld men to be called up, which was in 1916 when he was 34. Let me tell you a bit about him. He was born in April 1882. His father was James and his mother Sarah Alderson and he was their first child. He was brother to the present John Rukin's grandfather. You can see his baptismal entry in the register of the Congregational Chapel, where the family were strong supporters.

He went to Keld School and then began work as a shepherd on the family farm. Robert and his two brothers, John and James, were members of the Keld Band: He played the tenor horn. Like his brothers, Robert paid his subscription regularly to the Keld Literary Institute. He borrowed books and went there to read the newspapers in reasonably warm and quiet surroundings.

This was the world he was abruptly taken from in the autumn of 1916, when he joined up at Richmond and was sent to West Hartlepool for basic training.

One can imagine the shock to a countryman used to the solitary life of a shepherd in remote Keld to find himself living in close quarters with so many others and subjected to a strict, regulated military regime. . He described the routine in a letter to one of his sisters, dated 17 October 1916, as follows: *'We were oculated (sic) again last Friday for the last time. We have a bath every week. ....there is about 47 that sleep in the same room as I do. We have to be up every Morning and be on parade at quarter to 7 and then we go for a march and then we have Breakfast and then at 8 we go for Physical Training. There is a lot of us go to the W(eslyan) Chapel every Sunday forenoon the Service starts at half past ten it is beautiful Chapel I received the parcel alright the other day you can send me some more pastry when you write again.'*

Ten days later, writing to his brother, he admits: *'I am tired already of being at Squad drilling I wish many a time that I was back at farm work.'*

Robert's poignant letters home reveal a country lad desperately trying to keep up his spirits in circumstances he was not allowed to reveal, by concentrating on what was happening back home in Keld.

There are numerous references to annual events at the Chapels and to the seasonal farming calendar, enquiries about the weather at home and about other family members, particularly his niece Jenny, and requests for supplies. In fact almost every letter through 1917 contains a sentence like: 'You will be putting the cows into the pasture after a bit' or 'Pleased to hear the ewes made a good price again.'

*'I often think of you all when I am in bed at night.'* *'Remember me to all my friends at Keld.'* *'Talk about Keld and Thwaite being lonely but they are nothing to where I am at.'*

*'What kind of a day had you on Good Friday? Had you a good tea and service that night?'*

To his brother: *'Well I think you have made a good price of the Cows you will have had plenty of work to do the Sheep to fother twice a day you will be making a pole into the hay by now. Don't forget to look after the sheep well and give them plenty of hay and have them fit for Spring when they are due to Lamb especially the Hartlakes sheep that I used to fother last winter.'* (Hartlakes is now a deserted farmhouse on the path to Muker)

and in another, he talks about the flies and midges in 'the wood' that *'torment you when you are milking'*:

*'I often think about the miserable times I used to have in the wood milking the cows and tramping about the wood to look for them.'*

Robert had an early introduction to the war while still at Hartlepool. As an important coal and steel centre, the town was the focus of several Zeppelin attacks, and Robert witnessed the second of these, on the evening of 27 November 1916. Robert described the incident thus: *'The Zep at Hartley Pool last Monday Night and did a lot of damage on one Street there was not one house but was damaged and windows blown out and we were on guard all night keeping People out of the broken buildings. It was a grand sight to see the Zep on fire.'*

He ended this letter which was dated 3 December by telling his mother that a draft of men from his base had left for France the previous Friday, so preparing her for the worst.

Robert seems to have had the usual leave before being sent abroad as the next letter, dated 27 December, lets his mother know that he has returned to base safely and will probably be going out to France the following day. In fact they left at 7.30pm on Sunday 31st by train to Folkestone. After an all night journey they sailed for France at 1pm on January 1st 1917 to the 37th Infantry Base Depot at Etaples before being sent as part of reinforcements for the 6th Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment.

In June 1917 the 6th Yorkshires were engaged in the Battle of Messines (7-14 June 1917) which resulted in an Allied victory, and then they were part of the Battle of Passchendaele (July to November 1917 known as the battle of mud) where they suffered heavy losses. He couldn't write about any of this, and there are no letters between August and October. It is little wonder that his letters home focused on Keld and not his current circumstances.

From February 1918 Robert and another 6 men spent several months with the Royal Engineers 1st Army Corps moving supplies. He described his time there in a letter dated 19 September 1918 as follows: *'Well, I have been on with this job with 6 other pals since the 16th of February to look after coals and timber in a yard. We do 2 hours on each, at a time on the night time, and 4 hours off. During the day time 2 on and 6 off. So you see it is not a bad job, and then we have a nice hut to sleep in and wire beds to sleep on, (with) ? blankets apiece. Good meals every day and for dinner there is plenty of meat*

*and potatoes and we have rice pudding nearly every day, so there is nothing to grumble about whatever and the bread is good and white. There has been a good many Entertainments and Concerts in the Church Army huts, given by the soldiers. Good ones too.'*

Robert wrote home again on 26 September. He thanks his mother for her letter and a recent parcel. He asks her to send him some socks. He commiserates with them because the wet weather in Swaledale is stopping them getting the hay in, and he wishes them well for the forthcoming harvest festival.

Then there is a gap in the letters till 16 October when his mother wrote to him. I am going to quote this letter complete, though it is quite long. It seems to me to sum up the poignancy of the wartime situation in Keld; and it is a reminder - if we needed one - of how the women suffered too in this war. It is full of family and village news including the news that his little niece, Jenny, is longing for 'Uncle Robert' to come home. His mother begs him to write as they have not heard from him for several weeks.

*My dear Robert*

*Just a few lines to tell you that I have sent you another box of yesterday. I hope you will get it all right. John got some pears at the Harvest Sale I said I would put them in for you I think they are not so ripe and Jenny got one she came up the night before the Harvest and stayed until yesterday She went down with Sarah as she went to help Mary to clean the room and mind the big rough lad as he has grown but I have not seen him for five or six week. Jenny is as uneasy as ever and wishes Uncle Robert would come back. Your father and John was at Hawes yesterday they meant buying a mug Lamb but they did not buy one they were so dear. Annie Waggett. is going to be married on Saturday at Keld Chapel and old Honley Bill is dead and was buried on Monday at Keld your father was there. It is fine today Father and John has gone down into the Lakes to work at hay but I think they are not going to mow the Little Field as it has got so late they will put heifers in and the oldest calf in.*

*I hope that you are well as we are we have been looking for a letter every day from you do write and let us know how you are. I hope that you are all right. I have sent you one pair of socks will send you another pair when I get some if you don't come before which I hope you will.*

*And now dear Robert I must close with all best love from all and for your dear Mother. It is the Harvest Festival on Sunday Hull is preaching wish you had been there hope to see you soon with God's blessing to rest of you and to keep you safe. God be with you till we meet again.*

*I will leave that half sheet it will do to write on.*

But when she wrote it Robert was already dead. This letter came back to her, eventually, marked KiA (Killed in Action). Robert had been transferred to the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment in preparation for an offensive against the Hindenburg Line. They moved up to take part in the Battle of Canal du Nord and began to attack the village of Epinoy. Between 27th and 29th September the Battalion lost 8 officers and 185 men. Robert was one of them. He died on 29th September 1918.

William Waller Hutchinson (known as Waller) is the other soldier whose letters survive and give us a fascinating insight into life as a soldier in the first world war, as well as reflecting something of life back home. They are in the safe keeping of his nephew also William Hutchinson.

He was born on 29 September 1898 in Kirkby Stephen. He was not from a farming background.

The Hutchinson family had been involved in the hospitality business at least since the time of Waller's great grandfather, Thomas Bousfield, who was already running the Black Bull at Nateby in 1841. All the family were employed in the business in one capacity or another.

So it came about that in 1881, 18 year old William Robinson Hutchinson, was employed as a horse keeper for his grandmother, Mary Bousfield, at the Black Bull. He was good with horses, which was useful as his club foot made him less suited to running a busy inn. He was still working there twelve years later when he married Harriet Tyson.

William and Harriet moved to Kirkby Stephen where William worked as a yardsman and head coachman at the Black Bull Inn there. He looked after the horses and took visitors to and from the railway station. The couple's first five children, including Waller, were born there.

In 1906 the licence of the Cat Hole Inn at Keld became available. William moved to Shildon to work with the horses used in the coal mines, while



Harriet and the children came to Keld to take over the Cat Hole. Harriet ran the Cat Hole very efficiently until 1947. The two youngest children were born there Robert and Beatrice, who died as a baby.

The younger Hutchinson children, Waller, Jane, Lucy and Robert, all went to Keld School where they did well. By 1915 Waller was apprenticed to James Parrington the clog maker at Bridge End.

The Cat Hole was the focus of much activity in Keld and Waller seems to have made many friends in the area. His letters are full of references to them, notably Dick at Pry, who receives tobacco from him, doesn't reply to letters, and when Waller leaves home for what proves to be the last time helped him catch the train back to barracks. Waller played the tenor horn in the Keld band

Waller was called up in early 1917. Unlike the others, he did not join a Yorkshire regiment, but was posted to the Lincolnshire Yeomanry a reserve unit, and then when the time came for active service, moved to the regulars of the Lincolnshire Regiment. By early March 1918 he was in France.

He wrote good letters and in many ways he can tell his own story. You can read between the lines of his letter of mid March (censorship was very severe) and gain an inkling of life at home and 'over here'. I will let it speak for itself.

*Just a line to let you know I am very well and glad to hear you are all the same I got the parcel alright last night and thank you very much. I am making it spin out as we are getting short rations just now, but we can't grumble.*

*I got the letter from Bobby and Mr S. It was a good letter, he said he hadn't much news, but it took a lot of reading, I will write to he when I get a bit of time, tell him I got the pad alright and thank him, it is very useful, you can't buy writing paper here. Annie puts me some in every time she writes, and it does.*

*You need not send me any more parcels as you won't have much to spare now with these rations, I will tell you when I want one, and I will be getting that money from the whist drive, so it will put me on a bit, I have got plenty of handkerchiefs now Annie sent me two in her last letter. I could do with a pair or two of laces you can't get any here, and candles and if you send any cigarettes send woodbines.*

*I am pleased you have got the watch alright but don't send it back again, it is too rough for it out here if you come across a cheap one anywhere, you can get it, it will be alright for when I am on guard, I have not got that parcel yet but I should get it alright if you registered it,*

*I wrote to Dada the other day, It was a long time since I wrote to him so I thought I had better send him a few lines, I like to get (him) a letter from him. I am going to start and write to Mr S now but I don't think I will get it away today. Well I can't think of any more at present so I will close. With best love from Waller.*

A week later he was wounded. It was on the second day of the Battle of St Quentin, which opened the Somme Campaign for 1918. He tells the story himself.

*Just a line hoping it finds you alright, as I am as well as can be expected. You would get the field card alright saying I was wounded but I couldn't write before as we have been moving about all the time,*

*Well I had not got it so bad as it might have been, it was a bullet went in one cheek and out the other, it went through the roof of my mouth, and knocked all my top teeth out except three at the back, I can't eat anything hard, as my mouth is very sore. I sent Annie a card and one to Shildon, but I don't know when I will get them a letter wrote, as I have no paper, I found these two sheets in my pocket, I lost the pad that you sent me, and everything that I had.*

*I was pleased when got hit, I was properly done up I could not have done another day, but I am alright now plenty of everything. You can tell them at Shildon and Annie where I am wounded as they will be wanting to know, and I will write to them as soon as I can, and tell Ambrose I had not forgot him yet, tell him I have still got that knife he gave me. I can't send you an address as I don't know how long I will be here they are always moving you from one place to another. Well I can't think of any more at present so will close. With best love from Waller.*

A week later, when he was in St Luke's Hospital Halifax he gave some more detail

*Well I am not very badly wounded, just a nice little Blighty through the face it went in one cheek and out the other right through the roof of my mouth and knocked all my front teeth out, I have just about four left at the back, it did not*

*touch my bottom ones and I don't know how it missed my tongue, it was just luck. I didn't think I would get to Blighty with it, I was pleased when I got away from the last hospital I was at in France, it was an Australian hospital, it was just outside Boulogne, they're were trying to starve us out I think, we didn't get half plenty to eat, I was at Amiens two days it was not far from Peronne where I got wounded and I was pleased when I got it, I was properly done up. We had not had a bite for two days and when I got my boots off my feet were bleeding.*

Then he was at the very large hospital facility at Beckett Park in Leeds. Now part of Leeds Beckett University, it had just been completed as the Leeds Teacher Training College, when at the outbreak of war it was requisitioned as the 2nd General Northern Hospital. Here he had an operation to sort out his mouth and stayed here for several months, until his mouth had healed and his false teeth were ready.

By 10 August Waller was in Cork, being trained to use a Lewis Gun. His certificate of competence is dated 31 August. He was still in Cork, a place he clearly hated, on 1 October, but was back in France a week later. The first intimation that anything was wrong was in a letter to his mother from his long-standing friend Frank Collier dated 10 October which says he is sorry that Waller was ill again and in hospital. A newsy letter from Waller on 21 October makes no reference to illness, but another letter dated 6 November brought different news.

Dear Mrs Hutchinson,

I am writing this letter for your son Waller, to whom I have been talking in one of the Wards of this 21st Casualty Clearing Station, B.E.F., France, where I am chaplain. He has had this Influenza for several days, and does not feel up to writing himself yet, so I said I would send you these few lines to let you know where he is and what has happened, so that [you] will not worry. He hopes to write himself before long. I am sending a similar letter for him to his father at Shildon.

Yours sincerely,  
J.B. Simpson.

And five days later on 11 November 1918:

Dear Mrs Hutchinson,

I am writing again just similar letters to you and your husband at the different addresses, because I want to tell you both how sorry I am that your son Waller did not get over his attack of influenza. I expect the matron has written home too, but I should like to say that I saw him each day after I wrote before, and we had little talks and prayers. He was such a good and uncomplaining patient and yesterday when he could hardly talk I sat with him for a little while and he held my hand and seemed happier like that, and I asked him if I should send his love home to you both, and he smiled and whispered 'Please do.' He passed away [th]is morning just before two o'clock. We laid his body to rest this afternoon in the hospital cemetery not far away, and he was borne to the grave beneath the Union Jack. The authorities take good care of these military cemeteries, and a neat, wooden cross will be erected over his grave before long. Please accept my deep sympathy with you in your loss.

Yours sincerely,  
J.B. Simpson.

It seems a supreme irony that Waller Hutchinson survived his wounds, went back to France, but never saw action, and died on Armistice Day. Of Spanish flu. He was just 20. His mother who didn't get the notification for a day or two must have believed he was safe once the war had ended. She could only have been partly consoled by the many letters of condolence from family, friends and guests of the Cat Hole.

So far as we know there are no surviving letters from Thomas Clarkson or Richard Alderson and consequently we don't know so much about them, or their reactions to their experiences. So I am going to sketch out what we do know in the hope that somebody somewhere has more material which we can add to this record.

Thomas Clarkson, born in 1888, probably at Hartlakes. was the youngest child of John Clarkson, coal miner and horse driver, and his wife, Ann. The family moved a lot. In 1891 they were at Kisdon, and 1901 at Greens. Thomas worked for John Kilburn of Angram (Keld school manager and father of the disobedient Mary) as a farm labourer. Thomas's mother, Ann, died in 1909. His widowed father, John, was still at Greens in 1911.

Thomas enlisted at Richmond in June 1916 and like Robert Rukin was posted to the Yorkshire Regiment (The Green Howards). He was 27 years old. Later he was transferred to the Durham Light Infantry.

His unit left for France on 8 October. Thomas lasted six months before being seriously wounded in the head on 14 April 1917 at Etaples. On 19th he was sent home and was in the King George Hospital in London. They sent an official telegram to his father the next day reporting that he was dangerously ill. His father didn't go to see him, but his brother, Jack, did. Thomas developed meningitis and died ten days later. His body was sent home for burial, and you can see his grave in Muker churchyard.

Thomas's father died in 1920 so his medals were received by his brother, George Clarkson, of Pry House on 6 January 1922. In 1928 a Memorial Scroll was received by his brother in law, John Reynoldson. His memorial plaque is in the safe keeping of Robert Clarkson.

I am indebted for much of the information about Richard Alderson to Keith Taylor, whose book *Swaledale and Wharfedale Remembered* contains much detail about the many men from the two dales who died in the war.

He was born at Skeugh Head, above Angram, 14 June 1896, went to Keld School and on leaving school he worked on the family farm. Like Rukin and Hutchinson, he played in the Keld Band. He joined up in 1916 with the rest, and his first tour in France resulted in him being wounded during the battle of the Somme. He was sent to England to recuperate, and this allowed him to come back to Keld for the funeral of his sister, who died young leaving two little boys. He can't have been seriously wounded because he was back in France in early 1917. His unit, the Green Howards were at Ypres from May onwards, and in July they were involved in various raids and skirmishes preparing for what was to be the Battle of Passchendaele which began at the end of the month and lasted till November.

We can deduce a little about what happened from the letter the chaplain sent to his mother.

Perhaps we should pause a moment here and reflect on the task facing the army chaplains during the war. The letters I quoted from the chaplain to Mrs Hutchinson were brief, handwritten, obviously, but full of compassion and personally relevant to both Waller and his mother. Each chaplain must have ministered to hundreds of wounded and dying men, and written hundreds of letters to their relatives. Its relevant to ask how they kept themselves going in the face of such suffering.

The Chaplain of the Green Howards, Rev A T W Law wrote to say that he had been to the orderly room and enquired about Richard. 'There is no doubt about the fact that he was killed in the raid as I told you.'

He goes on to say that a burial party went out as soon as it was dark and fairly safe and buried all the unidentified casualties together.

He explains that on a raid no-one wears an identity disc for fear of capture. 'There are many nameless dead and many who are never buried except by shells. God bless and comfort you.'

So Richard Alderson is one of many thousand casualties of the First World War who has no known grave. His memorial is to be found on the Menin Gate at Ypres. There is a picture of it in the display.

It was at about this time that Thomas Brooksbank the schoolmaster himself was called up, and losing his appeal, he left Keld School clearly with many regrets at the end of April 1917. He had been head for 12 years.

There were four supply teachers during the summer term, but the temporary head who took over after the summer holidays, Kate Parkin, stayed eighteen months till Mr Brooksbank's return in March 1919.

The only reference to the war meanwhile is on 12 November 1918, when 'At Mr Harker's request the school had the afternoon holiday to celebrate the Armistice.' The school had been closed for a whole day a fortnight earlier for Thwaite Fair.

And shades of the world beyond the hills can be seen in the entries for the end of November 1918:

'Nov 28. Attendance 10/42. The majority absent through influenza. Telephoned Dr Connon. He ordered school to be closed for a fortnight.'

What conclusions can we draw from such poignant stories? Certainly some Keld families were never the same again. Mrs Rukin never got over Robert's death. Going back to her last desperate letter for a moment, we can sense her holding fast to the detailed ordinariness of everyday life. Late hay at Hartlakes (too late in the little field) Father & John going to Hawes to buy a mug lamb, but coming back empty handed because they were too dear. Annie Waggett's wedding, Honley Bill's funeral. Mrs Rukin died in 1922 not

long after the war. It is noticeable that many grieving mothers did not live for many years after the war was over.

We have little direct information about Mrs Hutchinson. She successfully kept the Cat Hole for another thirty years, and maybe drew some solace from serving a wide range of customers. Her grandson Bill says he was close to his grandmother but never heard her - or indeed his father (Waller's younger brother) - mention Waller. On the other hand, in February and March 1920 she was corresponding with Miles Alderson (of Muker who was still in the army) about getting a photograph of Waller's grave.

It wasn't all silence though: the family did keep his name alive and still do. Two of her grandsons William Hutchinson and William Waller Metcalfe were both named after their uncle. They were at the Tower of London last autumn to hear his name read out and plant a poppy for him.

Like Mrs Rukin, Mrs Hutchinson kept the letters - not only the letters from Waller but also those from friends and guests who sent condolences. It echoes what I said earlier that the women also suffered in this war. We can read the letters today after almost 100 years because the mothers kept them and passed them on to their daughters who treasured them in their turn.

The Clarkson and Alderson families as I understand it, also drew down the blind in the same stoic matter-of-fact way that dales folk have and never spoke of their lost sons. They all seem to have handled their grief by shutting it away and getting on with daily life.

It wasn't just the grieving families. There were the Keld institutions like the Band (which lost three players) and the Institute and the village as a whole. It paid its own tribute in 1921 when it unveiled the memorial at the top of the village. What today would seem a ceremony of inordinate length is a ceremony that testifies to how strongly emotions were running in Keld. With the band and three parsons in attendance there were three hymns and an anthem, three band contributions and effectively four sermons. There has been a ceremony here every Remembrance Sunday since.

Other changes were happening too. They can be traced back to the introduction of machines half a century earlier, but as Marie Hartley goes on it was 'accelerated by depopulation; It became marked at the time of the First World War when with the mass production of consumer goods the village craftsman continued his downhill slide to extinction. It came with a rush following the end of the Second World War when the horse already on its way

to complete replacement by the motor car on the roads was superseded by tractors on the farm.'

But Keld had lost four of its sons and indeed was never quite the same again.

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