

# “Softly Fall The Feet Of Them Along The English Lanes”



## The Lathom Remount Depot of World War One

by

Ron Black

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## OFFSIDE LEADER

This is the wish as he told it to me,  
Of Gunner McPherson of Battery B.  
I want no ribbon nor medals to wear,  
I've done my bit, and I've had my share  
Of filth and fighting, blood and tears,  
And doubt and death in the last four years.

My team and I were among the first  
Contemptible few, when the war-clouds burst.  
We sweated our gun through dust and heat,  
We hauled her back in the big retreat,  
With weary horses and short of shell,  
Turning our backs on them, that was Hell!

That was at Mons, but we came back there,  
With shining horses and shells to spare,  
And much I've suffered and much I've seen,  
From Mons to Mons on the miles between.  
But I want no medals nor ribbons to wear,  
All I ask for my fighting share  
Is this, that England should give to me,  
The offside leader of Battery B.

She was a round-ribbed, blaze-faced brown,  
Shy as a country girl in town,  
Scared at the gangway, scared at the quay,  
Lathered in sweat at the sight of the sea.  
But brave as a lion and strong as a bull,  
With the mud at the hub in an uphill pull.  
She learned her job, as the best ones do,  
And we hadn't been more than a week or two,  
Before she would stand like a rooted oak,  
While bullets whined and the shrapnel broke,  
And a mile of the ridges rocked in glee,  
As the shells went over from Battery B.

We swayed with the battle back and forth,  
Lugging the limbers south and north,  
Round us the world was red with flame,  
As we gained or gave in the changing game.  
But forwards or backwards, losses or gains,  
There were empty saddles and idle chains,  
For death took some on the galloping track,  
And beckoned some from the bivouac,  
Till at last were left but my mare and me,  
Of all who went over with Battery B.

My mates have gone and left me alone,  
Their horses are heaps of ash and bone.  
Of all who went out in courage and speed,  
Was left but the little brown mare in the lead.  
The little brown mare with a blaze on her face,  
Who would die of shame at a slack in her trace,  
Who would swing the team at the least command,  
Who would charge a house at the clap of a hand,  
Who would turn from a shell to nuzzle my knee,  
The offside leader of Battery B.

But I want no medals nor ribbons to wear,  
If I've done my bit, it was only my share,  
If a man has his pride and the good of his cause,  
And the love of his home, they are unwritten laws.  
But what of the horses who worked by our side?  
Who in faith as of children fought with us and died?  
If I through it all have been true to my task,  
I ask for one honour, this only I ask.  
The gift of one gunner, I know of a place,  
Where I'd leave a brown mare with a blaze on her face,  
'Neath low leafy lime trees, 'mid cocksfoot and clover,  
To dream, with the dragon-flies glistening over.

*Will Ogilvie, December 8th 1918*

## INTRODUCTION

A century ago the world went to war, perhaps the greatest war ever fought, with death and casualties on an industrial scale. The horse and mule were used in vast quantities by the combatants for tasks the newly developed motor vehicle could not do and these animals suffered the same appalling casualties as the men they fought alongside. In the early days of the war animals from the UK were used but, as the home grown stock was used up, many of the horses and mules came from overseas, America, Canada, Australia.

In 2012 the Lathom Park Trust produced a well researched little booklet about the Remount Depot situated within the park. For me it fell short, however, because after reading it I came away wanting to know about how the horses were purchased abroad, transported to this country and when trained transported to the battlefields of France, etc. and, for those who survived the carnage, what happened to them. I am given to understand no horse or mule can be traced from purchase to shipping to remount depot to active service; with that in mind but wishing to try to give some idea of what happened, I was lucky after much research to find a book entitled "The Horse and the War" written in 1918 by Captain Sidney Galtrey. I have quoted extensively from this book and to be perfectly honest I make no apology for doing so, holding the view that the views and recollections of a man who was there are infinitely better than those of a man who is rewriting his original words.

*Ron Black  
June 2014*

*[www.lakelandhunting memories.com](http://www.lakelandhuntingmemories.com)  
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## THE HALCYON DAYS

Life for the British Army Officer before the war had a number of advantages to civilian life. Below is Lt. Rory Macleod of the Royal Horse Artillery's account of the summer of 1914.

If we had enough horses we could hunt 6 days a week, 4 days with the fox-hounds & 2 with the harriers. Even the subaltern doing section training could hunt occasionally.

He would put on his hunting kit with a military Great coat on top and a forge cap, and, on hunting days, took his section in the gun sheds by electric light on such things as gun drill at 6 am, and the other drills, until it was time for him to leave and, on his return from hunting his poor men were subjected to lectures in the barrack room to make up time.

The country house people were extraordinarily kind. We were often asked out for meals, or to tennis or dances, & sometimes invite us to stay the night and hunt the next day.

Once I drove to a place, danced all night, hunted the next day, then on to another house for dinner and more dancing.

I got back to barracks in the early morning with only enough time to change my clothes & go straight onto parade.

A Highland fling performed on the Officers Mess dining table while wearing spurs had not improved its glossy finish & cost Lt. Macleod £20.

## THE LATHOM REMOUNT DEPOT OF WWI

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 Britain entered the war.

When the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) went to France on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1914 they took their horses with them.



*Embarkation: Horses being loaded on transport.*

Source: A. A. Chesterfield Fonds, Queen's University Archives

Sea ports had never seen anything like it; as the population watched reluctant horses urged up gangways and persuaded into railed enclosures that had been knocked up on deck.

The whinnying, shouting and bustle was a scene unusual even at the busiest ports. Some of the unboxed horses died of heart attacks.

The arrival in France was no better. They then had to overcome vertigo and terror as cranes grappled the slings around their bellies, hoisted them up from deep holds, then swung them high above the deck. Finally lowering them quivering to the cobbled quayside.

One groom from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Ox Bucks, known only as Allan, reported that he did not approve of wartime conditions, his horses, his pride and joy, stowed in cramped accommodation deep below the water line.



During the voyage he had been determined to stay with them and no one could persuade him to leave the airless hold lit by lanterns while he did what he could to reassure the animals while they neighed, stamped, sweated and scabbled miserably to keep their footing while the ship rolled.

Once in France life became even harder for the horses, mules and men, as the following extracts from letters show.

Boer War veteran James McKenzie was a reservist in 1914. He was mobilised and sent to serve with the ASC Remounts. Had it not been for the war his time as a reservist would have expired at the end of August 1914. He went to France with the original BEF. Writing to his wife in September he says:

We are constantly being moved up country, first from one base to the front, then back to the front from some other base. It is hard, rough work. We have had three stampedes so far, all during the night. Only last night there was a big rush with over 700 horses. Just imagine a stream of horses half-mile-long rushing by, as if



they were being pursued by a thousand demons. I consider we are lucky in being here.

I am rushing this letter as fast as I can, owing to us being moved tonight. I don't know where it will be to, but I can tell you this, that during the last ten days we have been at it all the time. We have had nothing but rain the last fortnight, so just fancy how we are sleeping. Last night, during the stampede, we had to build huge bonfires at the junctions of all the roads for miles round here. It was weird. The shadows of galloping horses, the sparks from flying hoofs, looked grand, although terrifying.

In another letter posted shortly afterwards he wrote:

I am in hospital at present. I wrote you the other day telling you about the stampeding of our horses. Well, the night after, I was along with a party taking horses to the front, when, as soon as we got to the railway siding, ready to entrain them for the front, they got out of control, and rushed down the platform sweeping all before them, including myself. I was crushed between two of them, and carried on about 20 yards, then thrown over a hedge. I don't think it will be long before I am all right. In fact, I am feeling much better now.

At the Battle of Le Cateau on 26 August 1914, Albert George, an Artillery Sergeant, remembered the bravery of one doomed team:

We could see ammunition wagons trying to replenish getting about half-way to the gun, then a couple of shells would burst blowing the drivers and horses to smithereens, it was a terrible sight but the last two days had made us used to it.

Another artillery man, Gunner J W Palmer, remembered the difficulties they faced in keeping their horses fed and watered during the painful retreat:

The position over the rations for both men and horses was rather precarious. These were the days when we went without rations of any kind or water. The horses were more or less starved of water. On the retreat we went to various streams with our buckets, but

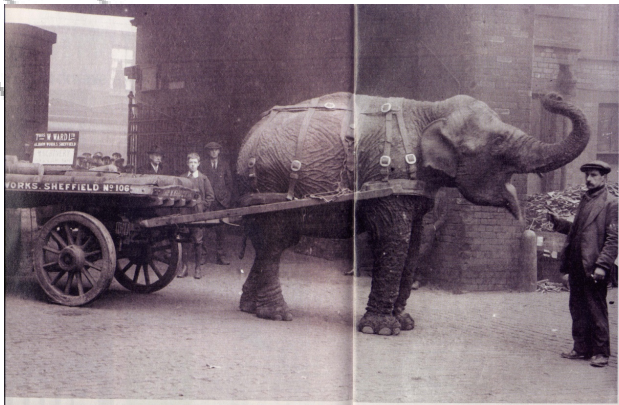
no sooner had we got the water halfway back to them, than we moved again.

We had strong feelings towards our horses. We went into the fields and beat the corn and oats out of the ears and brought them back, but that didn't save them. As the days went on, the horse's belly got more up into the middle of its back, and the cry was frequently down the line, 'Saddler—a plate and a punch!'

This meant that the saddler had to come along and punch some more holes in the horse's leather girth to keep the saddles on.

When war began in 1914 the British army possessed a mere 25,000 horses. The War Office was given the urgent task of sourcing half a million more to go into battle. They were essential to pull heavy guns, to transport weapons and supplies, to carry the wounded and dying to hospital and to mount cavalry charges. In the first year of war the countryside was emptied of shire horses and riding ponies, a heartbreaking prospect for farming families who saw their finest and most beloved horses requisitioned by the government. In the months preceding the outbreak of war the police had made an inventory of all horses, which speeded up the sourcing programme. The loss of these horses caused significant hardship to the farms and businesses which relied on them; however a steel works in Sheffield overcame this in a remarkable way.

Lizzie the circus elephant, who worked in the steel-works for the duration of the war and was returned to the circus at the end



The supply of horses needed to be constantly replenished and the main source was the United States, with the British government arranging for half a million horses to be transported across the Atlantic in horse convoys. Between 1914 and 1917 around 1,000 horses were sent from the United States by ship every day. They were a constant target for German naval attack, with some lost en route.

The horses were so vital to the continuation of the war effort that German saboteurs also attempted to poison them before they embarked on the journey.

The tragic fate that befell most of the horses was not lost on the British public, who petitioned the government to improve animal welfare during the war. The RSPCA and the Royal Army Veterinary Corps were both active in treating injured horses and trying to prevent unnecessary suffering. But the horses were so vulnerable to artillery and machine gun fire, and to harsh winter conditions in the front line, that the losses remained appallingly high. Indeed, the loss of horses greatly exceeds the loss of human life in the terrible battles of the Somme and Passchendaele.

However, through all the suffering and heartbreak, the close relationship between the men and their horses shone through. They did their best to care for them in the most testing and tragic conditions. Some men became as close to their horses as to their fellow soldiers and their loss was felt as deeply. All had their own names, personalities and histories, never to be forgotten.

At the end of the war some of the surviving horses were sold as meat to Belgian butchers, being regarded as unfit for any other purpose. But for the few that returned home there was a joyous welcome and reunion. It would be the last time the horse would be used on a mass scale in modern warfare.

Lord Lathom offered his ancestral home of Lathom Park which was some fifteen miles from Liverpool. His trustees offered, with his consent, the Hall & Parklands free of charge to the War Department should no other suitable location be forthcoming nearer to that city.

That offer was to be accepted, thus Canada Dock Liverpool along with the 'landing stage' became the focal point for importation of horses and mules in the North of England. Later to be followed by Bristol with the Avonmouth Depot and in 1915 Southampton with the depot located at Romsey. Horses from Canada initially, America, Ireland, Argentina were acquired by remount agents of the British Government. Horses were transported by rail from Liverpool into Ormskirk Station goods yard. After unloading they were 'drove on the hoof' down Derby Street and through the country lanes of Lathom exiting out of Cranes Lane into Lathom Park.

The other access for horses into 'the park' was also by rail. From Wigan Station ran a line to Skelmersdale cutting across what is now the large roundabout at the end of Ormskirk Road into the fields of Lathom heading towards Westhead Halt, from which a narrow gauge railway was constructed directly leading into the parklands of Lathom Hall. The Hall was to become 'home' for officers and HQ Staff and visiting army officers and staffs.

But before it all began, then as now there was the Council to deal with!

### THE REMOUNT DEPOT AT LATHOM PARK

At a meeting of the Waterworks and Sewerage Committee, the Clerk reported that Lathom Park was to be occupied by the War Office as a remount station for 1,000 horses and 1,000 men and that a supply of water for them was required; also that he had settled the agreement relating to the reservoir in Spa Lane with Mr. Peel, and with copy agreement for sealing by the Council.

A letter dated 26th August was read from Mr. W. A. C. Henderson of Sir John Jackson, Limited, as to the water supply to the remount depot. The Surveyor reported the result of his interview with the War Officer dealing with the matter.

It was resolved that the action of the Surveyor in making arrangements for supplying the water required into Stand Farm reservoir be approved and confirmed and that the work be proceeded with as quickly as possible.

It was further resolved that the seal of the Council be affixed to the agreement by the Chairman.

These minutes were approved.

### WAR OFFICE PLAN

A plan of proposed War Office Siding from Arley Pit Siding to Lathom Park showing proposed level crossings was submitted and also a letter dated 26th August from Mr. W. A. C. Henderson of Sir John Jackson Ltd. thereon, when it was resolved that the plan be approved subject to the Council being indemnified against any accident occurring owing to the construction and existence of the level crossings and that the action of the Surveyor in giving preliminary sanction be approved and confirmed.

**10th September 1914**

### THE LATHOM PARK REMOUNT DEPOT

Rapid progress is now being made with the construction of the remount depot at Lathom Park, it being stated that yesterday there were upwards of 600 men at work there. Its cost is estimated at £60,000 and when completed it will provide accommodation for no fewer than 5,500 horses and 1800 rough riders and grooms. A number of the latter have arrived this week including a batch from the Duke of Westminster's stables at Eaton Hall. The first contingent of horses, from Canada, is expected next week.

**1<sup>st</sup> October 1914**

### THE LATHOM PARK REMOUNT DEPOT

Despite labour troubles, considerable progress is being made with the construction of the remount depot at Lathom Park, and at present there is accommodation for nearly a thousand horses. The first batch of these are expected to arrive today or tomorrow—whether the depot will remain a permanent one or not is not publicly known, but it is certain that the War Office are not

sparing any expense in its erection. Upwards of ten miles of water mains and pipes are to be laid and all the stables and men's quarters are being fitted with the electric light by the Ormskirk Electric Supply Co. Over 600 men are now employed on the job.

## **8th October 1914**

### THE BILLETING OF TROOPS IN ORMSKIRK

On enquiries being made this morning at the Ormskirk Police Station with regard to the billeting of troops in the town, preliminary arrangements for which have already been made, we were informed by Superintendent Hodgson that quite a fortnight would elapse before any soldiers would arrive in Ormskirk to be billeted. Meanwhile, many of the billeting quarters bespoke are being occupied by the grooms and riders engaged for the Lathom Park Remount Depot.

### LATHOM PARK REMOUNT DEPOT BILLETED AT ORMSKIRK

The Lathom Park Remount Depot can now be described as a tin city. Over a hundred stables, men's huts and other buildings, all mainly built of corrugated iron are to be seen in all parts of the Park, and with close upon a thousand men at work the scene is a most animated one. Some of the buildings, but very few, are occupied as yet, and up to the time of writing no horses have arrived though the first batch is expected this week.

On Monday, however, nearly 200 grooms and rough riders arrived in Ormskirk and today their numbers have been augmented.

With no adequate accommodation at the depot yet, these men are being billeted in private houses in various parts of the town, Superintendent Hodgson having made the necessary arrangements, but it is more than likely that they will be drafted to the depot sometime next week. It is understood that when

completed the depot will accommodate nearly 7,000 horses and from 1,800 to 2,000 grooms.

### SUCCESSFUL SMOKING CONCERT

A successful smoking concert took place on Saturday last, at the Depot, an admirable programme having been arranged by Messrs. J and E Taylor of Ormskirk. Sergeant-major Terry (in the unavoidable absence of Major Graham) presided and a thoroughly enjoyable evening was spent. Mr Alf Porter was the humorist and delighted the company with an appropriate selection of songs, Mr Frank Eden (baritone) and Mr. Wm Bate of Bickerstaffe (tenor) also contributing to the programme. Mr. James Smith of Bickerstaffe had charge of the programme and officiated at the piano in addition to conducting a small orchestra.

**14th October 1914**

While the camp is being built and readied for the horses (and later mules) it may be worth looking at the way they were purchased in the United States and prepared for shipment to the UK. Brigadier General T. R. F. Bate, writing in 1918, takes up the story...

### Buying British Remounts in America

AS quite two-thirds of the horses and practically all the mules used in the British Army in France and the other theatres of war come from the American Continent, it will, perhaps, be of interest to trace the history of the Army horse and mule from its source on the other side of the Atlantic till it reaches the remount depots in the United Kingdom.

It is interesting to know that the first batch of American and Canadian horses arrived in England in October 1914. In the early stages of the activities of the British Remount Commission in Canada and U.S.A. practically the whole continent was covered in the search for suitable animals. Later experience proved that it was more profitable from every point of view to centre all

activities in the middle-western states, which are par excellence the draught horse producing area of the continent.

The proposition in front of the Commission was to produce a steady flow of horses and mules to England at a rate varying between 25,000 and 10,000 a month. This proposition may roughly be divided under three headings: (1) The actual purchase; (2) care after purchase, including railway transit; (3) and embarkation.

Before describing the actual method of purchase it will be as well to make a brief analysis of the fortunes of the animal before he comes before the official purchaser. It has been found time and again that in purchasing such large numbers of animals as are in this case involved it is imperative to buy only from well-known and reliable horse dealers. Such dealers have their show-yards in large towns where the livestock business is a big concern. The chief centres used by us are Chicago, St. Paul (in Minnesota), Sioux City and Des Moines in Iowa, St. Louis, Kansas City and also, in the earlier stages, Toronto and Montreal in Canada. In each of these centres one, or perhaps, in some cases, two or three firms of reliable dealers engage to show to our purchaser so many horses a week.

Now, the big dealer buys most of the horses he shows, both buying himself and sending out agents among the farmers, among whom he has a regular clientele. The dealer who cannot afford to put down a lot of ready money for purchase outright allows smaller dealers and also farmers to show horses under his, the dealer's aegis, the small man having to pay the dealer so much on every horse bought by the government inspector. Such horses are known as subject horses. This latter method, though in many ways undesirable, cannot be entirely eliminated. When it has been arranged with a dealer to show horses to one of our purchasers he is given a description of the class of animal required—height, weight, etc. After a few days' experience with the purchaser the dealer gets to know the type of horse that will be taken, and tells his buyers accordingly; and very soon, if he is a good dealer, the "rejects" should be few and far between.



Dealers do not find it worthwhile to keep horses a day longer than necessary before they show them to the purchaser. I have often known horses taken off the train by the dealer in the morning and shown for purchase in the afternoon. In this way purchasers are confronted with the task of selecting suitable horses from animals in every sort of condition—some over-fat and soft, others hard and fit, while many are in very poor condition. This brings us to the actual method of purchase—our purchasers have all, or nearly all, been selected from men who have had lifelong experience in buying and handling horses. Each buying centre has its allotted one or more purchasers, each purchaser buying from one or more dealers, and each having his own veterinary officer. The procedure is always substantially the same, differing only in matters of detail.

At a suitable place in the dealer's yard there is a "show alley" where the purchaser stands. Each horse is walked up to him. Unless immediately rejected, it is then walked away and trotted, and if passed by the purchaser as desirable as regards conformation, it is handed on to the veterinary officer to be examined for soundness—including being galloped (cavalry horses ridden, draught horses driven) for wind. If passed by the veterinary officer it is put in a pen alongside—under the eye of both purchaser and veterinary officer—until the pen contains seven or ten horses, when the lot are branded with a broad arrow, purchaser's brand, etc. Manes of draught horses are hogged, tails trimmed, shoes, if any, removed; after which the animals are put in the pens reserved for purchased animals. No animal is considered actually bought until it is branded; and, in the case of heavy horses, the formality of weighing is insisted on before branding.

It may be interesting here to touch on the much debated question as to the number of horses one man can buy in a day before he loses his "eye". Few men agree on this point, and no doubt some men can buy more than others; but after seeing many thousands of horses and mules purchased the writer is strongly of opinion that, as regards horses at any rate, there are few men who can buy

more than 100 a day without laying themselves open to a strong probability of their “form” deteriorating.

Having now got to the period when the animal has become the property of the British Government, we come next to that stage of his existence which includes safe transportation to the Atlantic seaport, and all the machinery of organization which this entails. Before entering on such a descriptive itinerary it will be as well to discuss briefly two main principles, either of which it has been possible to adopt.

An even perfunctory knowledge of the map of North America will enable any one to realize the enormous expanse of country which has to be traversed between the purchase area in the Middle Western states and the embarkation area on the Atlantic seaboard. One of the most serious factors which has to be contended with in the horse business in North America—a factor which I venture to think is anything but widely understood in this country—is shipping fever, which, speaking untechnically, is a sort of influenza constantly resulting in pneumonia or similar pulmonary diseases. It is a deplorable, but indisputable, fact that over 70 per cent, of horses moved over rail contract this shipping fever—some directly and others a considerable period after detraining. So far, though researches are continually being made, only qualified success with preventive serum has been achieved. We have two possible principles to adopt: Should we keep the horses in the country a sufficient time to let them get over their shipping fever before embarkation; or should we embark them with the least possible delay—the latter alternative meaning the contraction of the disease on board ship and after arrival in the United Kingdom? The former alternative has been adopted, and, in the writer’s opinion, there is no doubt whatever that it is the soundest plan. It will be seen easily that the adoption of the principle of keeping the animals in America till they are “salted” entails the upkeep of considerable organization, besides that of purchase on the other side of the Atlantic.

It has been found that the minimum period of detention from time of purchase till date of embarkation is seven weeks, and, though

circumstances cannot always be such as to allow of this being adhered to, this procedure is adopted as closely as possible. A glance at the map will show that the area in operation is most simply divided into two zones—the purchasing zone and the embarkation zone. In each of these zones there is a system of remount depots—situated as far as possible in places with suitable railway facilities.

It may be mentioned here that the chief sources of infection of shipping fever are dealers' yards, stockyards and railway cars, all of which, owing to their continual floating population, become so infected as to be almost hopeless of satisfactory sanitation. Consequently, horses, once they are purchased, are kept as brief a time as possible in any of the three. There is a law in the States which forbids any horses being kept on a train without off-loading, watering and feeding for longer than thirty-six hours. As most of the journeys from the purchasing zone are of several days' duration, it has been found necessary to form subsidiary remount depots at suitable points on selected railways, such depots being used as off-loading and feeding stations. All these depots—purchasing area, embarkation area and off-loading stations—require and possess their necessary staffs of executive and veterinary officers and subordinate employees.

Now let us come to the movement of the animal itself. We left him just purchased walking out of the dealer's yard branded with the broad arrow, etc., and the property of the British Government. At some purchase points there are depots in the vicinity, and the horses are walked over and come under the supervision of the depot officer on the very day of purchase. At others the depot may, through force of circumstances, be located a short train journey away. In the latter case the purchasing officer has to make local arrangements until he has collected a sufficient number to fill a train, which varies from 300 to 600. In either case the animals get a rest for a week to ten days or perhaps a fortnight

before starting on their real journey towards the embarkation area. During that time they are malleined<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the glanders test. Those which show any symptoms of sickness are segregated, and from day to day the fittest are cut out and put into pens in which only those fit to travel, colloquially known as “shippers”, are kept.

Every depot has its veterinary hospital and staff, into which serious cases are put. Now let us imagine we are starting off with a trainload of “shippers” from a depot in the purchasing area. First, we note that every horse on our train has had its temperature taken as a final precaution, and any found exceeding 101° are rejected and retained till another occasion. We are going on a journey of about thirty-six hours. If in winter, probably in a temperature of 25° below zero; if in summer, it may be 110° in the shade. We are now entirely in the hands of the railway authorities, but our departure and probable time of arrival, with the numbers and classification of the animals on the train, have been wired on to the commanding officer of the off-loading depot, where we are looking forward to having the horses taken off, rested, watered and fed.

Let us arrive! We are met by various members of the off-loading depot, probably including the CO and his veterinary officer. Off-loading is a quick process, and probably in half an hour every horse is out of the train. They are put into pens alongside the railway, when the sick and seedy-looking ones are again segregated from the fit, and hospital cases are taken off to the veterinary hospital. This, I venture to think, gives a general idea of how transportation is organized and carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> *The mallein test is a sensitive and specific clinical test for the contagious and usually fatal bacterial disease glanders, common in horses, donkeys and mules. Mallein is usually injected by an eye-drop. If an animal is infected it will show swelling in the eye from around 48 hours of injection.*

The next stage or stages are worked on exactly the same plan; always remembering that every horse is examined and every horse has his temperature taken before starting on any railway journey. Theoretically this should mean that only fit horses arrive in the depots in the embarkation area. Practically it means that, though it is impossible, or appears impossible, not to receive some sick horses in the embarkation depots, at any rate every possible precaution has been taken to make the number of sick as small as possible. No effort is spared to try and keep the embarkation depots free from being clogged with numbers of sick animals. In the embarkation depots the animals get a final rest of several weeks, which, with a system of extensive runs, makes a sort of finishing process before going on board ship.

Embarkation itself requires little or no description except to remark that the final selection for fitness of animals from the embarkation depots for sending on board ship is made with even greater care than former inspections. In this connection it must be mentioned that the adequateness of the arrangements on board ship, for which the embarkation officer—also a remount official—is responsible, is a priceless factor in the matter of the condition of the animals on their arrival in the United Kingdom.

So far little or no mention has been made of the different types of horses which are purchased for the Army, nor has the mule been more than being mentioned, but a brief description would appear to be desirable. Broadly speaking, three types or classifications of horses have been purchased and exported from the United States and Canada—cavalry, light artillery, heavy artillery. Experts have known for some time, and our purchasing activities have proved beyond contention, that the cavalry horse as we know him in England does not exist in North America in any numbers which are appreciable for modern war requirements. What have been bought as cavalry are the best that can be procured, but that is all. The cavalry horse is not a commercial factor in America, and that, in a nutshell, is the reason of the scarcity of the type.

The light artillery horse is the commercial equine article of the country, and has proved himself good through and through. It is a

remarkable fact that after the export of hundreds of thousands of this class of horse the high standard is still being maintained. The requirements for the light artillery horse are: Height, 15 h. 2 ins. to 16 h., weight about 1,200 lb., short on the leg, short in the back, strong in the neck and quarters, and as much quality as procurable.

The best of these horses are bought from the states of Iowa and Illinois. The strains of Shire, Clyde, Belgian, Normandy and Percheron are the predominant types, and it is a matter of contention which is the best. One can only give one's opinion that, from what one has seen, a predominating Percheron strain appears to give by far the best results.

Heavy artillery horse production in any quantities in America has been a recent innovation, and it has been, and is, a very difficult matter to procure an appreciable number of such horses which possess the requisite weight. Two classifications have been purchased so far: those of a minimum weight of 1,400 lb. and those of a minimum weight of 1,500 lb. It must be remembered that American and Canadian breeders hate hair on the leg, and consequently the so-called heavy horse of North America with practically clean legs never looks the weight of his cousin in this country. Complaint has been made that the American heavy horse is too light; but when the writer left America in March 1918, there were then coming in many heavy horses which would compare well with our heavy cart-horses. In this class, again, Iowa and Illinois are predominant, though many good heavy horses have been bought in Canada. The same strains are predominant, and, though the Percheron maintains his high place, the Shire blood runs him very close.

#### ORMSKIRK AND THE WAR 1600 HORSES ARRIVE AT LATHOM PARK REMOUNT DEPOT

There has been great stir in Ormskirk and the district this week. On Sunday the first batch of Canadian horses for the remount depot at Lathom Park arrived by train at Ormskirk Station from Liverpool and their detraining was witnessed by large crowds of

people, the Derby-street bridge and its approaches being one black mass of folks. No fewer than five trains had been chartered to convey the horses, which numbered 850 and at the station they were met by the grooms and led to the depot.

Despite the great crush everything passed off without the slightest hitch, the police arrangements made by Superintendent Hodgson, who personally controlled them, were admirable; he receiving great assistance in the regulating of the traffic from the railway station to the depot from two detachments of special voluntary constables.

The first detachment was in charge of Commander R. R. Glover, with Mr. G. D. Kennedy as secretary and they were as follows:- Messrs. E. E. Linaker, C. F. Ellis, H. J. Cooke, R. E. Hattersley, W. J. Occleshaw, H. Constantine, Hy. Symonds, E. Glover, A. Culshaw, H. Torr, E. E. Pappadimitriou, T. P. Parker, W. H. Woods and F. Potter. The second, on duty in the Park, was in charge of Commander B. W. Peel and consisted mainly of special constables from the Burscough and Lathom districts. Supt. Hodgson desires to cordially thank them for their most useful services. On Monday afternoon the second batch of horses, to the number of 750, arrived in three special trains, the total now at the Depot being 1600 horses with between 500 and 600 grooms. These are accommodated at the Depot but quite a couple of hundred of the men are still being billeted in the town, pending the completion of their huts at the Depot, which is being hurried forward as quickly as possible. Colonel Roebuck is in command of the depot, but we understand that a general will later take charge. It might be stated that the horses are of a most useful stamp but most of them have been handled very little.

### **Ormskirk Advertiser 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1914.**

But how had the horses been shipped over and then unloaded on the docks in Liverpool? Captain Galtrey takes up the story...

Let me invite the reader to meet the horse and the mule as they arrive at a port in the United Kingdom and endeavour to give some idea of their personalities, their characteristics and, as

impartially as may be, examine their merits and demerits. For, surely, it cannot fail to be of absorbing interest to know something of a more or less intimate nature about the horse that has made a great reputation in this war, that has saved the situation where the horsing of the armies is concerned, that, in short, has most convincingly “made good”. Some day it will be revealed exactly how many horses were bought by agents of the Remount Service in the United Kingdom, and astonishing figures will be forthcoming, when the proper time arrives, to show the great numbers imported. Then it will be realized how immensely we have been dependent on the imports, and what a debt is owing to them, and at the same time to what a desperate pass we should have come had those imports not been available.

Let it be understood that in discussing the war-horse of today the individual in question is the animal officially classed as the “Light Draught”. He is the outstanding success of the war. The other conspicuous success is the mule, but he is not a horse. He is just a mule — a law and character unto himself — and, therefore, calling for separate treatment, and to be judged only from his own unique and peculiar standpoint. We in the United Kingdom have produced our breeds and classes for war purposes. The Shire horse by size, weight and physique naturally filled the role of the heavy draught. The thoroughbred, the three-quarter and half-bred thoroughbred just as naturally have played the part of the charger, and no horse ever bred in America can beat the British riding-horse with thoroughbred blood in his veins. The pony bred in these islands has been a valuable asset, and hereafter many a man will bear tribute to his charger which has been a pony and classed for service purposes as an officer’s cob. The Hackney horse has been utilized, but this breed produced but a “handful” as it were of the hundreds of thousands bought for our Armies.

The point to bear in mind is that, though America has sent us chargers, troop horses and cobs, that country must always be gratefully remembered for the light draught. He is the horse which has come in numbers quite out of proportion to other classes. He is the horse most typical of the millions of imports. Hardiness, placidity of temper, strength and power, virility of



constitution, with what is called “good heart”, versatility and extraordinary activity for his size and weight—these are characteristics that have impressed themselves for all time on all who have had to do with him. The riding-horse from America is on the whole deceptive. He is usually high in the withers, suggesting that the shoulders are sloping and that he must carry the saddle in the right place. The truth is that the shoulder is straight more often than not, and the scapula narrow with a consequent loss of freedom in action which the riding man perfectly well understands. There are, of course, exceptions, and, perhaps, what is lost in positive correctness of action is compensated for by that measure of comfort to be derived from the “lope” or “tittupping” gait of the Yankee saddle horse.

But, whatever the class of horse, the fact remains that when they arrive in this country they come to us raw and rough to a degree, unkempt, ragged and mere caricatures of horses. We may pass over the time they spend in the large reception and “Seasoning” Depots in America—that period during which they are brought together for inspection and purchase by the accredited buyers of the Remount Service, with their subsequent rail journey to a port of embarkation on the east coast of the United States—and introduce ourselves to them as they are first met on the transport which has brought them to the English port of disembarkation. As the war has gone on the arrangements on shipboard have improved with experience; and we may be sure that everything possible has been done to make the voyage as bearable as possible for the animals, so that loss should be avoided if humanly possible. Such minimum loss has been made possible, we may take it, through the employment of painstaking, conscientious and intelligent individuals in charge, judicious feeding to suit the unnatural conditions, and the observance of sanitary and hygienic conditions.

The results in such cases have been splendid. Take a recent example which came within the personal experience of the writer. A ship arrived from a port in the United States, having occupied about twenty days on the voyage. She had sailed with 1,270 animals, including nearly 1,000 mules, and some very bad

weather had been experienced. Only one animal was lost on the voyage, through a sudden seizure which could not be combated. Let us, for example's sake, take note of these 1,269 animals, for they are typical of the war-horse in the rough state, before the horse-masters of the Remount Service have "ironed" them out for their work in France.

She is a big ship, and her length, except for the interval occupied by her engines and boilers, is used to accommodate the live cargo. The great thing is that she has come safely through danger zones and that she is at last alongside the berth at her destination with the welcome aliens ready for immediate disembarkation. There is no time lost. "You can begin to unload now," says the naval officer to the Remount Officer, and the latter's men are on board and leading off the first horses and mules in less time than it takes to write this. The ship has been about twenty days on the journey, and bad weather has been experienced, necessitating the closing down of hatches. Moreover, the cleaning-out has had to be carried out under difficulties which have grown more formidable as the voyage has lengthened. Below decks the atmosphere is heavy and unhealthy, and the fumes of the disinfectants mingle with ammonia gases. The horses are obviously used to what they have helped to create, and their keenness and alertness show that they have suffered no more than temporary inconvenience. They seem to know that something unusual is going to happen. There is no motion on the ship; the engines have ceased to throb, and the movements of the animals in their narrow stalls or pens seem more insistent. They know as well as we know that they are going to emerge from their imprisonment into the sweet, fresh air and the blinding light of day. The horses know. The mules are dis-trustful, because it is their one thought and principle in life to be suspicious and apprehensive. They fear more trouble.

So, out of the unsalubrious, gas-laden air and the forbidding gloom of the decks below stairs the first of the horses come quietly and with marked docility down the sloping "brows", or gangways, on to a foreign soil. They blink in the sunshine, shake their heads and neglected manes, and quietly submit to the first

requirements of their new military existence. Some are sullen and soberly matter-of-fact, seemingly devoid of all excitement and emotions of any kind; some are nervous and distraught, wild-eyed, and betraying fear as if they cannot understand the violent upheavals that have occurred in their usually uneventful existences. These latter snort like the ancient war-horses were supposed to snort and breathe fire on the threshold of battle. The war-horse of the twentieth century, if he be not placid and unmoved, is at least mildly demonstrative when first “joining up” in England. Perhaps he is too “used-up”, too weary of the sea, to protest too much; and perhaps, also, what we took to be a snort of annoyance and a dilated eye of apprehension were really nothing more than normal excitement that one unpleasant phase was over and that something unknown was being entered upon.

But the calm and placid new-comer is in an overwhelming majority. He carries himself bravely in spite of a soiled and unkempt appearance that suggests anything but the idea of bravery and the chivalry of battle. Shall we who saw and handled him then ever forget the impressions made by his coming? He came in several sizes and weights—the narrow, lightish-boned rider; the heavy “light draught”, which is not as heavy and imposing as the heavy agricultural horses of the United Kingdom; and the light draught with bone, size and activity for the Field Artillery and quick-moving horse transport. This latter is the war-horse that has made history, and probably there were twenty of him to one of any other kind. He would not have impressed you then as he moved softly and quietly off the “brow”. You would, perhaps, have laughed at anything less beautiful and inspiring, and you might have wondered at the boldness and seeming incompetence of our buyers on the other side. He was shoeless, long-haired, tousled-maned, ragged-hipped, and he almost dragged his tail on the ground, so long and full and caked with dirt was it. His neck had gone light and mean, his backbone stuck up like a knifeboard, and his ribs were pushing through his neglected hide.

Such was our war-horse in the rough, a true and faithful representation of the raw material rendered thus unrepresentable by

the flesh-weariness of the irksome and exacting existence on board ship. Yet, through it all, as he stamped and fretted to be free, and as he stepped on shore, he flung out a challenge to his new masters. He was willing to be born again. Blacks and greys there were in abundance. They were obviously the prevailing colours, and there were also, of course, bays and chestnuts; but the colour scheme afforded a contrast to that to which we in this country are used. Blacks and greys are by no means the dominant colours here. Then, after noting the colours, you would remember that the Percheron stallions of France are chiefly black and grey, and that the war-horse from the United States and Canada is first and foremost the progeny of the Percheron horses that were imported from France through all the years.

Certain characteristics belonged to them all. Take the black horse that has just stepped jauntily off the “brow” and which has neighed with a lustiness and inquisitiveness betokening health and a vitality quite opposed to his ungentlemanly appearance. He is 16 hands, and the first and last impression is of his thickness and sturdiness of physique.

This idea of thickness seems to belong to him in every respect. His head is plain and thick across the jowl; his neck is short, cresty and thick, and it passes abruptly into straight shoulders. Then his middle-piece is thick and capacious, and, though the croup is short, he is thick across the quarters because the loins are wide and inclined to be ragged. He stands on sound, clean legs, showing very little hair about the heels, but the legs are not orthodox as we would have them. The hocks are slightly away from him and he shows a tendency to be back at the knee; while the feet are big, flat and saucer-like in shape; too big, one would think, for the rest of the animal. Still, those all-important legs have splendid bone.

Yes, this black horse we are looking at is undoubtedly a stranger—a “Yank”, as we have learned to designate him, but he is the great utility horse of the war, useful rather than ornamental. Through him and all of them the stamp of the Percheron in the breeding stands out clear and distinguished. It is there in the

power of the quarters, the shortness and crestiness of the neck, the clean, sound legs, the hard constitution and good temper, and the willingness to work.

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### SMOKING CONCERT AT THE DEPOT

Another enjoyable smoking concert arranged by Messrs. Taylor of Ormskirk as held on Saturday evening last, when nearly all the officers who are in residence at Lathom House were present.

#### **Ormskirk Advertiser 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1914**

No little congestion takes place at the Ormskirk Post Office and particularly on the nights at the latter end of the week, as a result of the large number of grooms and other workmen connected with the Lathom Park Remount Depot who being strangers make good use of the postal facilities. Mr. Smith the Ormskirk Postmaster desires us to state, however, that the inconvenience thereby caused will soon be removed as a sub-post office is in course of erection at the Depot which will greatly relieve the pressure at the head office. Moreover, the postal authorities are further faced with the difficulty of obtaining experienced men for counter work, owing to so many being called away for telegraphic and other duties on the field of battle.

The great influx of labourers and grooms into the town and District since the commencement of the building of the remount depot at Lathom Park has been responsible for the increased drunkenness that takes place as shown by the police court reports each week and on Saturday morning last the Chairman of the Ormskirk Magistrates (Mr. James Bromley) gave warning that offenders would be dealt with more severely in the future. Moreover, it is no secret in the town that a shortening of the licensing hours has been unofficially spoken of, perhaps more on account of the rowdiness that occurs than for the actual excessive drinking, for it is stated that the remount men are guilty more of exuberance of spirits than excess of spirits of another kind.

Licence holders in the town and district, therefore, should continue to exercise the greatest care, as we believe they do, of the serving of drink. A great deal depends on them in a matter of this kind.

**5th November 1914**

#### ARMY REMOUNTS

The Council of the Hunters Improvement and Light Horse Breeding Society has adopted a resolution urging (a) that Government buyers be instructed to avoid if possible the purchase of mares for military purposes and (b) that in consequence of the large number of mares that have been and are being at the present time sent out of the country for military purpose, those mares suitable for breeding purposes and which are unfit for service be brought back.

**Ormskirk Advertiser 12<sup>th</sup> November 1914**

#### THE REMOUNT DEPOT

A further cargo of Canadian horses were expected to arrive at Ormskirk last Sunday, but owing to the late arrival of the steamer in Liverpool they were held over until the following day when 1174 arrived in Ormskirk and were taken to the Lathom Park remount depot, and on Tuesday, a consignment of 250 were sent away. The work of the grooms there in breaking in the horses is rather hazardous, and they seem to thoroughly enjoy the rough riding which usually takes place every afternoon about three o'clock.

Yesterday Colonel Ady and another officer from the War Office made an inspection at the Remount Depot.

**Ormskirk Advertiser 15th November 1914**



Although not at Lathom this contemporary picture shows the “Rough Rider” method of breaking horses.



This picture from Romsey remount depot shows how horses would be trained as a team to pull waggons with each “new” horse alongside an experienced one.

And what happened to the 250 horses referred to above as “sent away”? Capt Galtrey takes up the story...

## The Crossing Overseas

THEY passed out of the gate and away to France in threes. “Eyes right!” commanded the squadron leader as the files of threes came up to the Commanding Officer, and the man riding the near side horse did as ordered and looked high authority full in the face. The Colonel solemnly acknowledged the tribute of respect for the King’s uniform, but his eyes were focussed on the horses, not on the man. For there was being enacted the last scene at the remount depot in England, the depot which has made so much horse history as a receiving and collecting station for all the horses and mules from the scattered training remount depots throughout the United Kingdom.

They were the animals destined for their important part in the war zones and they had come in as fit for overseas. Ostensibly they were fit, too, since both in theory and practice there should be unanimity as to what constitutes fitness. That unanimity does not always exist is another story. One can never account altogether for the part human nature, with its weaknesses and vanities must play.

You must believe, therefore, that when the files of threes passed by the Colonel and out of the gate to their unknown destiny they were physically fitted for the ordeal of war so far as conscientious horse-masters and veterinary science could make them. Conscience, we may admit, is an elastic thing, and the few may approve, where fitness is concerned, of staring ribs and soft muscle, without being absolutely conscienceless. Honest endeavour and an ever-present thought for the welfare of those who will later make use of the horses and mules, and sometimes, perhaps, depend on their physical condition for the saving of their own lives and the lives of others, have surely been the guiding thought in approving of their final transfer from England to France, and thence to theatres beyond.



“Fifty light draught horses, twenty-five heavy draught horses, and twenty-five draught mules, all properly branded and shod, sir,” says the squadron leader to the Commandant as he introduces his party for embarkation. So squadron follows squadron, and, as the files of threes lengthen, they make a long winding column which reaches far out on the way to where the big ships are. It is up to the Commandant now to legislate for the armies overseas. The onus is upon him if unfit animals are sent to those battery commanders, cavalry divisions, horse transport, and ammunition columns so urgently needing fit ones. So it may be that now and then a peremptory order to “halt!” breaks in on the slow march past, and the Colonel makes a closer inspection of a cumbersome heavy horse or a shuffling mule. He may be “tucked up”, “split up”, or rather “dried-up” looking—pretty expressions that mean something not quite compatible with fighting fitness. “Pull him out, and give him a little more time,” observes the critic-in-chief, and the “heavy” goes back to the lines to stay awhile yet in Blighty. Some chargers go out, too, and many a thoroughbred has filed past this same spot to do credit to our incomparable breed. Cavalry horses may have their place in the procession, or their turn may be due on the morrow; and if they have gone to France, they may also have gone further towards the rising sun. For the cavalry have accepted chances in the more distant theatres.

So the long line of three hundred or so has been completed, to be followed by another an hour later, and still another after that. With the conducting officer at the head, and each man mounted and leading two horses, they have made a move through the streets to the docks. Each horse has been provided with a canvas nosebag, for use it may be, on the boat, certainly for use in France. How many tens of thousands, one wonders, have passed along those streets and have filed through those dock gates? How many more will do so? For four years now men, horses, and material have been steadily, hour after hour, day after day, hurried France-wards, through those same gates. To meet what fate? People in those streets have long ceased to wonder at the almost daily processions. Familiarity strangely deadens interest. Once they stood to admire the noble outline of the heavy gun

horse, and they marvelled at the numbers of field-gun and wagon horses, and the mules in their thousands from across the ocean. They wondered more and more where they could all come from, and how soon it would be before the reservoir had been drained dry. But the processions came up and went by almost day after day, and the people gave up wondering, as being useless and tiresome. Still they are coming and going.

They have finished their last journey on English soil now, and they are tied up in a great dock shed. They may share it with troops detraining and stores awaiting shipment. A skilled veterinary officer is making a final inspection prior to approving them for embarkation. A very few he keeps back. He detects a high temperature and the beginnings of respiratory trouble. The last three-mile walk has developed and made evident what had not been suspected until then. The animal thus attacked must wait for another day so, also, must one which shows symptoms of skin irritation—*anathema*, indeed, and feared greatly for its devastating consequences if disregarded. And after these last necessary formalities have been observed they are ready for shipment.

“Mules first”, is the order. That is because they are just mules. Outlaws of nature they may be in spite of their tremendous utility and value as aids to the carrying on of modern war, and so they are made to travel steerage as it were. They have to go “below stairs” in the stalls in the dark lower holds. To get there they must descend steep gangways from the main deck. Their descent is necessarily undignified, though, after all, could anything look undignified where *no* dignity attaches to an animal? The greatest admirer of mules—and who that has worked them in the Army does not admire them?—will not concede dignity to them. They are just mules. They would not be mules did they not show extraordinary shyness and distrust of the water troughs at which they are invited to drink before being led on board. They are thirsty and really want water, but they must think in their queer thinking machines that someone has poisoned the water, and so they will not yield to cajolery to drink. They believe all the world is against them, and they especially do so when they are reminded

that they must not spend the rest of their lives looking at the gangway or “brow” before venturing along it from dock to ship. They do not snort or get excited as a horse does when he makes up his mind to “jib” and be unpleasant; they just push hard on their toes in the ground, and refuse to be led any further.

Of course, they have to surrender, because there are ways and means, and the war has lasted long enough to convince our English muleteers that the obstreperous mule is not invincible and that a long rope with a breeching to haul on is the “high explosive” with which to gain victory.

In that way our long-eared friends are dragged across the threshold, and thereafter they go without more ado to their quarters below—stumbling, slipping, and sliding, but always avoiding falling. Thus to their quarters and close companionship for twenty-four hours or more. Next come the horses, with the heavy horses as near the top deck as possible, for they want fresh air; and, moreover, the shorter the time they occupy in getting on and off the ship the better. From now until they are landed at a port overseas and handed over to the care of base remount officers it is the duty of the conducting officer and his men to look after their welfare. That officer obviously has responsibility, but it is certainly lightened by the easy way his animals travel, even though the waters of the English Channel are often troubled and unruly.

He also takes certain wise precautions to lessen risks. He is not sparing-of water, and he does not feed on hard corn, because he knows that a diet of oats could soon induce colic and other ills of a horse’s digestive system. He wisely feeds on hay, and knows, too, that if horses are kept picking and eating slowly they will not get into mischief and be inclined to worry, kick, and bite each other. Then, when the day is drawing in and night comes on to cloak the wonders of the Naval Service and Admiralty transport across those perilous waters, he has the animals tied up short. In that way he reduces the chances of trouble should the crossing be bad.

All night long a strict vigil is kept by the conducting party. True, the horses are not resting, but they are not giving trouble. They are fidgety and nonplussed as if wondering what new, strange destiny awaits them. They do not settle as resignedly as do the perverse and illogical mules. The latter may have rebelled at embarking, but, once on board, they become the acme of good manners and immaculate behaviour. A ship's hold might have been their home from foal-hood. They never heed the steady pulsating throb of the ship's engines. They could not know of the anxious vigil high up on the bridge, in the look-out on the foremast or on the gun platform, or of the sleeping troops covering all the space of the mess decks.

Have you ever thought, one wonders, of these four years of silent, dead-o'-night traffic from shore to shore of the English Channel during which hundreds of thousands of war-horses have been carried across in safety? of the Remount Service which has brought them together from a far distant land, and is now distributing them again into the battle arenas? Has the average Englishman given more than a passing thought to the wonderful organization of the Navy which has protected our transports on their ever risky errands? or of those gallant Captains Courageous and their splendid crews who have braved for all this time the lurking perils and navigated their ships from safety, through danger with the ever-present chance of disaster, to safety again?

Certainly the Remount Service is conscious of uninterrupted triumph over hidden foes, a triumph which the protecting escort of destroyers and careful navigation in face of extinguished lights have done everything to secure. When you have stood through the night by the side of a Captain Courageous you will have understood something of the nervous and mental strain borne night after night by those who have supported a great burden of responsibility. It is not a time for talk—just quiet deeds and orders given and executed in hushed tones; frequent glances by the Captain in the privacy of his chart-room at the course as laid down in secret Admiralty instructions, observations to port and starboard, and always the hiss of the bow waves as the ship hurries on at full pressure to beat the coming light of day. You

can imagine in some small way the tension of the long looks ahead and abeam, and the always present anxiety to solve the mystery of the darkness. The escorts you know are there, frequently changing their guardian positions, and, when necessary, winking out messages of instruction and extra caution. The thought stiffens your courage and especially when the blessed wireless reads in those disquieting messages of "Government war warnings", of the presence on and under the waters of the vicious enemy. You know that every precaution to save ship and many lives is being taken. Again the thought is comforting. The night may seem long, though, sometimes, not long enough; for the first grey streaks of dawn are fast paling into another day before the ship is safe, where wind and wave are silent and where danger dares not follow. A little while more and the night's work and strain are over. The gallant destroyers have messaged a "good morning!" and are speeding on their return. The French pilot has been picked up and the ship comes to a brief rest again. That is how an instalment of our vast army of war-horses comes to France. They, like the men that stream in day after day, are only just coming to grips with the grim realities of active service.

Here are the reminiscences of an unnamed dock worker from the port of Southampton during WWI...

Of course during the First World War it was very busy, with transports and ammunition ships and God knows what else. You 'ad about half a dozen ships who were doing nothing else but carrying horses across. During the First World War the tugs were always busy because you 'ad a convoy went away every night, there was a convoy ships when they ... the slower ones used to start off early and then the fast ones, what we called the flyers that were takin' the troops across, that was the fast small fast turbine ships and one or two paddle ships, they used to go, go away later, that was between 10 and midnight and the last one that sailed always at two o'clock in the mornin' was the hospital ship and they were mainly requisitioned railway boats, Great

Western Railway ships and that sort of thing and the St Andrews, St Pauls, St David ...

The Lathom Park Remount Depot, quite the largest in the kingdom, is now approaching completion and is expected to be out of the hands of the contractors by the end of the present month. To the Ormskirk district its construction has been a veritable god-send as for nearly the past three months, hundreds of skilled and unskilled workmen has been employed there in different capacities - men, the greater part of whom would probably have been unemployed or on short time.

The wages paid have been up to the local standard rate, in fact, above, for the past two or three weeks and workmen have had the option of working on Saturday afternoons at pay and a half, and on Sundays at double time rate, an opportunity which few of them have not neglected. It is understood that the contractors are offering the best men similar positions at Salisbury Plain where additions on a large scale are contemplated by the War Office. As to how long the Remount Depot in Lathom will exist, it is impossible to ascertain. A great deal of course depends on the date of the conclusion of the War, but after that period it is more than likely that it will be continued for some time. It is understood, however, that the place is not to be a permanent depot despite the huge cost, believed to be between £60,000 and £70,000. The Park on which the Depot is erected has been leased at an annual rental per acre to the War Office by the Trustees of the Earl of Lathom.

**19<sup>th</sup> November 1914**

### SCOTSMAN IN TROUBLE

Peter McCannily who spoke with a strong Scottish accent pleaded guilty to being drunk.

Pc Walker said that at twenty minutes past eleven on Saturday night he saw the prisoner lying on the side of the road in Hall Lane, Lathom. He picked him up and found he was drunk.

Prisoner said he was very sorry, but he was not in the habit of taking drink. If the magistrate would overlook it this time he was sure he would not lose his job. Superintendent Hodgson stated that the prisoner was a groom at the Remount Depot, and left there about seven o'clock. He went to the Plough Inn, Lathom, where he had two whiskies and a rum.

A fine of 2s 6d and costs was imposed.

### WARNING TO RIOTOUS GROOMS THREATENED WITH GAOL WITHOUT THE OPTION

Chas Fred Williamson, another groom at the Remount Depot, pleaded guilty to being drunk and riotous.

PC Sharp stated that about half past ten on Saturday night he saw the prisoner at Greetby Hill, Ormskirk. He was drunk and shouting most filthy language, at the same time wanting to fight with several other men. A few minutes previously witness had cautioned him about his conduct. Several residents in the locality came out of their houses through the noise made by the disturbance.

Prisoner explained that he was on the footpath and some strangers came and pulled him off. He might have said a few words, but he did not think he had said anything "over extraordinary".

Superintendent Hodgson told the Bench that the prisoner had been at the remount depot since October. The man's language was disgraceful and in front of ladies too. Unless the grooms conducted themselves differently he would ask the magistrates to send them to gaol without the option of a fine. He could not allow these men to come to town on a Sunday night upsetting everybody. He had sympathy with some of the men but he had none with a man who came in on a Sunday creating a disturbance by using filthy language. Prisoner had previously been fined £5 and costs for driving a motor vehicle to the danger of the public in London.

Prisoner was fined 10s and costs or gaol for 14 days.

**Ormskirk Advertiser 17<sup>th</sup> December 1914**

THE DANGEROUS CROSSING  
Derby Street and Burscough Road crossing

A powerful car owned by Mr. W. L. Longworth a Government Horse purchaser of Horwich (was in an accident) He was a cotton Spinner from Horwich.

**Ormskirk Advertiser, 14 January 1915**

LOSS OF BAY MARE

A writer in *The Field* tells of the experience while commandeering horses for the Expeditionary Force.

“Sometimes an owner being off the premises at the time of our visit, we took a favourite horse all unknowingly and when the horse had reached the depot, being passed by the vet and branded on the hoof before the case could be altered. On one occasion an owner turned up at the depot in an agony lest his bay mare should be passed and when she was and he knew the worst kissed her on the nose and he cut a good sized piece of hair off her main and watched her for a long while as she was led away across a big field to the horse lines. Often we heard how Germany two, three or four months ago had bought up all she could at horse fairs—notably at Wrexham—and again in Derbyshire. All professional horse buyers seem to know it. One wonders, and doubts, if the authorities had any eye for the business at all.”

**Ormskirk Advertiser 14 January 1915.**

This story of the Germans purchasing horses pre-war is currently unsubstantiated.

CORRESPONDENCE  
THE MEN AT THE LATHOM REMOUNT DEPOT

To the Editor of the Ormskirk Advertiser.

Sir—I have been making sundry enquiries as to what is being done for the men at the Lathom Remount Depot and cannot find



that any steps have been taken on their behalf to provide them with any means of wholesome recreation.

I should be glad to know, through your paper, if this is so or if there is any place in the camp where the men can have a quiet read or write letters, or enjoy social talk or play games etc. I hear on the other hand complaints about the men when in Ormskirk using the public houses too freely. Surely it is not right to blame the men for using the only shelter open to them especially during weather of the last two months. Could not the Working Men's Institute be thrown open to them and the men invited to use it? I am enclosing you some accounts of work done in other camps, and surely the men who are looking after the army horses ought to be as much thought of as the men who are preparing to use them when ready, is one soul more valuable than another in God's sight.

If I have been misinformed I shall be glad to know what is being done.

Hoping I am not taking up too much space.

Yours truly

A WELL WISHER OF THE MEN

**Ormskirk Advertiser 28<sup>th</sup> January 1915**

THE ORMSKIRK WORKING MEN'S INSTITUTE  
Annual Meeting

Adverting to the letter in our columns last week respecting the men from the Remount Depot at Lathom Park, and suggesting that the Working Men's Institute be thrown open to them—here is a case in point where a penny a week might serve the purpose, and there are many besides, military and otherwise, who might like to make use of the rooms for a short period, provided the opportunity was offered and fully made known.

**4th February 1915**

## MULES AT THE REMOUNT DEPOT

During the past fortnight a large number of mules have been landed at the Remount Depot at Lathom Park. Many of them are particularly fine animals, standing over 17 hands.

This Depot is the largest and most successful of its kind in Great Britain.

Thousands of horses have been dealt with and continue to arrive and depart, almost daily the new branch line to the Park from Skelmersdale Station having greatly facilitated the loading and unloading.

### **25th March 1915**

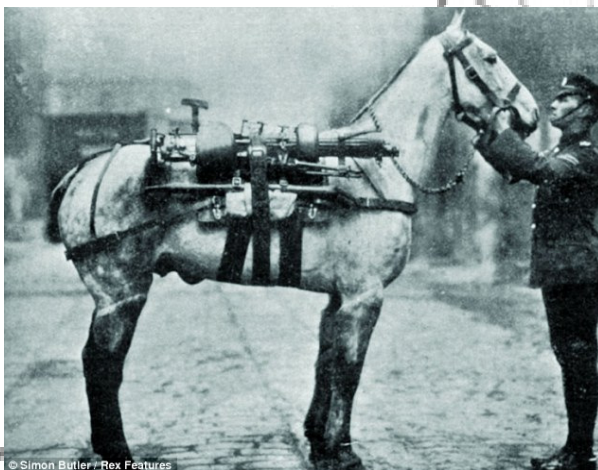
At this point it may be worth spending some time getting to know the mules, the sight of which, even today (2014), remains rare in this country, so once again we will return to Galtrey.



Mules at War 1916 © unknown

At long last we come to the mule, which, though he occupies this tardy position, is probably the most serviceable and satisfactory

animal used in the war. Indeed, the writer, who has had experience of both horses and mules with a battery in two theatres of the war, would unhesitatingly say that if he had the remounting arrangements for any future war, mules would supplant horses to the greatest possible extent. Though for purchasing purposes mules in America have been divided at different times into several classifications, as a general principle mules may be regarded as being divided into three main categories—heavy mules for heavy artillery purposes in Eastern war theatres, light draught mules which have practically taken the place of horses in wheeled transport other than artillery, pack mules for pack transport.



Mule carrying a machine gun

The heavy mules run to a height of 16 h. 2 ins. or even 16 h. 3 ins., and weigh about 1,300 lb. The light draught mules are between 15 h. and 13 h. 3 ins., and weigh about 1,100 lb., while the pack mules are under 15 h. down to 14 h. 1 in. All these types of mules are found in the middle western states of Missouri and Kansas, and the southern states of Tennessee, Texas, Alabama and Georgia, though one does not get the larger type much out of Missouri and Kansas.

In the earlier stages of the war cotton, for which industry the mule is entirely used, was down to 6 cents a pound and mules were easy to get and procurable at reasonable prices. Now cotton is up to 27 cents a pound, sugar and other agricultural industries are at a premium, and owing to these causes, coupled with the fact that the capital number of mules available was never an inexhaustible quantity, the supply of mules is daily becoming more difficult.

In conclusion, it is only fair to describe a few of the sterling qualities of this often vilified and still more often caricatured animal. The mule is practically immune from many of the diseases inherent in the horse—notably he suffers less than half as much from shipping fever. He, as a general rule, has sounder legs than the horse. He can certainly stand more hardships. He eats less and is less particular about his food, though more particular about his water. He thrives on work. Great as has been the success of the American gun horse, still greater though perhaps less appreciated, have been the war qualities of the American mule. Long may he thrive!



Military Bridle © MulesRus

Attacks on the transports by U boats caused great loss of life in terms of the horses and mules. In an effort to strike back the Royal Navy employed vessels known as Q ships<sup>2</sup>. Below is an account of an action.

**Nicosian** cargo steamship, 6,369/1912, Leyland Line, Liverpool, sailing New Orleans for Liverpool, carrying mules. (L - 20th) - stopped at 1500 by U.27,73 miles S by W of Old Head of Kinsale c100 miles S of Queenstown), Q-ship Baralong was nearby, sighted Nicosian and received signals she had been captured by one or two U-boats. Baralong, still with real identity intact headed as if to pick up Nicosian's crew from their boats, the U-boat passed behind the stopped ship to intercept the new arrival

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<sup>2</sup> *Following the First Battle of the Atlantic, by 1915 Britain was in desperate need of a countermeasure against the U-Boats that were strangling her sea-lanes. Convoys, which had proved effective in earlier time were rejected by the resource-strapped Admiralty and the independent captains. Depth charges of the time were relatively primitive, and almost the only chance of sinking the submarine was by gunfire or by ramming while on the surface. The problem was luring the U-boat to the surface.*

*A solution to this was the creation of the Q-ship, one of the most closely guarded secrets of the war. Their codename referred to the vessels' homeport, Queenstown in Ireland. These became known by the Germans as a U-Boot-Falle ("U-boat trap"). A Q-ship would appear to be an easy target, but in fact carried hidden armaments. A typical Q-ship might resemble a tramp steamer sailing alone in an area where a U-boat was reported to be operating. By seeming to be a suitable target for the U-boat's deck gun, a Q-ship might encourage the U-boat captain to make a surface attack rather than use one of his limited number of torpedoes. The Q-ships' cargoes were light wood (balsa or cork) or wooden caskets, and even if torpedoed they would remain afloat, encouraging the U-boat to surface and sink them with a deck gun. The crew might even pretend to "abandon ship". Once the U-boat was vulnerable, the Q-ship's panels would drop to reveal the deck guns, which would immediately open fire. At the same time, the White Ensign would be raised. With the element of surprise, a U-boat could be quickly overwhelmed.*

and when she appeared again, Baralong had the White Ensign hoisted and opened a heavy fire from 600yds which soon sank U.27. As Baralong picked up Nicosian's crew, Germans were seen swimming for the stopped ship and fearing they would board and scuttle her, opened fire on them in the water. Four Germans managed to reach her and disappeared below. With guns and ammunition onboard, Baralong sent her small Royal Marine contingent across to hunt them down, no doubt on a "shoot-on-sight" basis, before they could do any damage. All four were killed. Nicosian's crew returned and brought her into Bristol holed by U-boat shells. On the bases of reports by some of the American muleteers carried by Nicosian, the Germans described the incident as an atrocity and demanded the crew of Baralong be tried for murder and punished. Britain agreed to an impartial tribunal as long as the enquiry included the sinkings of liner Arabic, firing on the boats of collier Ruel and the attack on E.13 in neutral waters. The Germans dropped their demands although still threatened reprisals.

**19<sup>th</sup> August 1915**

#### FOREMAN GROOM'S SHOCKING DEATH AT LATHOM KNOCKED DOWN BY LIGHT ENGINE

On Friday last, Mr. S. Brighthouse, county coroner conducted an enquiry at the Town Hall, Skelmersdale, respecting the death of Thomas Jolly (38) of Weymouth Street, Halliwell, near Bolton, a foreman groom employed at the Remount Depot, Lathom, who was killed on the railway under tragic circumstances the previous Tuesday.

Mr. B. Piercy was foreman of the jury and there were present Mr. H. E. Daniels (representing Yorkshire and Lancashire Railway Company).

Mr. W. Swarbrick (District Passenger Superintendents Office).

Mr. W. Y. Shawcross (representing the Locomotive Department).

Mr. I. Brassington (Organising Secretary National Union of Railwaymen) and Inspector Clegg.

Mrs. Jolly, the widow gave evidence of identification and said that her husband was a cabinet maker by trade. Formerly he was a riding master in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers and went through the Boer War where he was a dispatch rider. He had been employed at the Remount Depot for about 4 months. He was a strong healthy man, not addicted to drink.

Henry Roger, of Aughton Street, Ormskirk, a flagman in the employ of the Y and L Railway Company at the Spa Lane Crossing, Lathom, on the branch line leading from Skelmersdale station to the Remount Depot stated that during the time that he had been employed there the grooms from the Remount Depot had regularly walked along the line to and from Skelmersdale, though he had repeatedly warned them of the danger. About seven o'clock on the previous Tuesday night, two grooms came along from the Depot, one of them carrying a lighted lamp. He told them they had better take the main road as there was an engine coming out of the Park shortly and one of them replied, "We shall be alright, we shall look out." A few minutes later a light engine left the Park with the whistle blowing and it was blown again before it reached the crossing. About ten minutes afterwards Arthur Wearden, who had in the meantime gone along the line returned, and told witness that he thought some men had got knocked down. Witness then heard someone shouting for help. Together they went about half-a-mile down the line, and saw the two grooms whom he recognised as the men he had warned apparently seriously injured. Deceased was in the four-foot way with his head resting on the right hand rail. He was unconscious and his head was crushed and bleeding. Birchall lay at the end of the sleepers and was conscious although his left leg was badly crushed. Witness went to the Skelmersdale railway station and informed the stationmaster, and afterwards returned and did what he could for the men until the stationmaster arrived. He saw a lamp and a parcel lay on the left hand side of the track.

In reply to the Coroner, the witness stated that from the Park going down the branch line saved the grooms about a mile and a quarter. They could have gone down Coalpit-lane after passing the crossing. There was a very strong wind, and they were

walking against it towards Skelmersdale, which would keep the sound of the engine from them.

Arthur W....., a groom at the Remount Depot said that soon after seven o'clock on the night in question he was in Coalpit lane, Lathom going in the same direction as the two grooms referred to by the last witness. At Spa Lane crossing he saw a light moving towards Skelmersdale and soon afterwards a light engine passed him and overtook the moving lights which at once came over to the right, as if someone had jumped quickly. After the engine had passed he heard cries for help and ran back to the crossing and told Roger and together they hurried to the scene. The night was very dark and a strong wind was blowing and the witness did not hear the engine until it was practically upon him.

The railway from Ormskirk to Skelmersdale commenced construction in the summer of 1858 after first being authorised in August 1846. The Railway did rather well for itself and on 1st July 1906 a steam railmotor service was introduced running 28 trains in each direction and also halts were opened at Westhead and White Moss. Another increase in use was due to the Army Remount Depot at Lathom Park which introduced a specially constructed branch line to Lathom House at the beginning of the First World War. This was completed by February 1915 and ran from the Station, across Engine Lane and Slate Lane, alongside Firwood Road, across Spa Lane, through Samples Farm and into the Lathom estate to the Depot. This branch line was mainly used to ship horses to the Depot, and after the War had ended it was last used to store unwanted railway wagons until after 1920 when the line was taken up.

#### FATALITY AT LATHOM REMOUNT DEPOT GROOM'S SHOCKING DEATH

On Tuesday last Mr. S. Brighouse, the county coroner, conducted an inquiry at Lathom House, on the circumstances attending the death of Private James Holden, 47 years of age, a groom employed at the Army Remount Depot, Lathom Park, who was



killed on Monday morning as the result of a team of horses bolting in the Park—Mr. H. Ashton was foreman of the jury.

Major Haltron-Willett, the commanding officer of the deceased's squadron, and Captain and Adjutant Clayton were present.

Mrs. Holden, the widow, who was much distressed, stated that before enlisting her husband lived with her at 31, Elstow-Street, off Stanley-road, Bootle. He was a carter in civil life, and had been -- -- horse all his life. She last saw him alive on Sunday night, when he was home.

Private James Holden, a son of the deceased, attached to the 8th King's (Irish) Liverpool Regiment, stationed at Canterbury, gave formal evidence of identification.

John Pearse, a salesmen of 138, ---lane, Skelmersdale, stated that at a --- -- -- on Monday evening he was driving a pony and lorry - - Lathom Drive, in Lathom Park, and saw the deceased riding the leading horse of four attached to a transport wagon along the drive. The horses were galloping along and deceased drew on to the grass out of the way, but when he had gone a short distance, he fell off, between the horses, and he thought the second pair and the wagon caught him. Witness ran to his assistance, but he only breathed a few times and expired.

In reply to the Coroner, witness stated that the deceased drew off the drive to avoid running into him.

Sergeant Marshall ----, of - Squadron, hut 13, said that the deceased and Private Evans were proceeding along Lathom Drive when the wheel horses became very restive, one of them throwing the rider. The team then bolted and ran across the Park. Deceased was riding the leading horse, but was unable to stop them, and he afterward fell off between the horses. He thought the wagon must have gone over him. Two other horses were being ridden.

Private Samuel Lawler, of B Squadron, stated that he was -- the horses of his wagon when the four horses were coming along the drive in front of Lathom House. He put on the --, but was unable to stop the horses.

The Coroner remarked that it was surprising to him that there were no more accidents. As they knew large numbers of horses came into the Depot, and the men knew nothing about their tempers, that it was wonderful they managed them as well as they did. Major Sutton-Willett stated that every care was taken to prevent accidents, and he was extremely sorry to lose Holden, as he was a particularly steady man. There are about 2,300 men and about ---- horses at the Remount Depot. The foreman observed that the jury were fairly well acquainted with the conditions regarding the training of horses at the camp, and they all sympathised with the widow and family. A verdict of "Accidental death" was returned.

### **16<sup>th</sup> September 1915**

James Holden was the husband of Annie Holden of 31 Elstow Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool.

1901 Census: 9 Queen Street, West Derby—James and his wife Annie with children Annie, Sarah, James E and William A.

1911 Census: 13, St. Martins Cottages, Liverpool—James and his wife Annie with children Sarah, James, William, Mary Ellen, Margaret, John and Thomas.

James was a carter on both Census returns and in 1911 they had been married for 18 years with 9 children born and 7 still alive. His service records have survived. These show that on enlistment at Liverpool, on the 27th June 1915, he was a carter and had previously served with The Liverpool King's (1237). He was 5ft 7½ inches tall, had a 39 inch chest and flags and had Eagle tattoos on his chest.

He was married on the 26th December 1892 to Annie Cosgrove and his younger children were May, b. 1905, Margaret, b. 1907 and John, b. 1908. His wife was awarded a pension of 25s 6d for herself and these three children on 10th April 1916.

James was accidentally killed while on military duty and was stated as being 44/180 days and weighing 155lbs. He died from a fracture at the base of his skull.

He was buried in a public grave at Ford R.C. Cemetery on the 17th September 1915 and is commemorated on a Screen Wall near the entrance gates. His place of death was given as 31 Elstow Street.

### **13th January 1916**

A DANCE will be given in the INSTITUTE, ORMSKIRK, by the Warrant Officers and Sergeants of the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, on WEDNESDAY 19TH JANUARY, 1916. Dancing from 8.00 p.m. to 2.00 a.m. Light refreshments free.

### **20th January 1916**

#### LOCAL ACCIDENTS

During the past week, Henry Johnson, Scarth Hill, who was delivering coal at the Remount Depot, fell from the shafts of his cart and fractured his leg. He is under treatment at the Cottage Hospital and is progressing favourably.

### **17th February 1916**

#### BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION—FIRST ORMSKIRK TROOP

By kind invitation of Captain Elgee, the first eleven journeyed to Lathom Park on Saturday to play the Remount Trumpeters at football.

The Scouts came out victorious 7-0. The special reporter of “The Remount Herald” was present and no doubt a full report will appear in the next issue.

Both teams were entertained to tea by Captain Elgee at the Salvation Army Hut.

### **2nd March 1916**

The “Remount Herald” was a small newspaper which began in late 1915, initially fortnightly but in early 1916 it changed to monthly.

## ORMSKIRK POLICE COURT—SATURDAY HAD DONE HIS “BIT”

Gilbert Hignett, an old soldier, pleaded guilty to being drunk and disorderly in Sandy-lane, Skelmersdale, at quarter past eleven the previous night. The accused, in a voice which could scarcely be heard, stated that he had drink owing to having heard that two of his brothers had been killed at the war. He was wounded at Hill 60. He was not used to drink and that it was the first time he had ever been in a police court. Supt. Hodgson remarked that this case was rather a sad one but there was no excuse for him getting drunk. Accused had been wounded in the right leg at Hill 60 and had been discharged, being given a pension of 4s.8d.per week.

He was engaged as a groom at the Remount Depot and had been 23 years in the Army. A fine of 9s.was imposed.

**9th March 1916**

## ENTERTAINMENT AT LATHOM

A most successful dramatic entertainment took place at Hall-lane School, Lathom, on Shrove Tuesday in aid of the Waifs and Strays. The musical portion of the programme was chiefly contributed by men from the Remount Depot, to whom hearty thanks are due for so kindly giving up their evening.

**16th March 1916**

## REMOUNT DEPOT OFFICER'S ACCIDENT

Lieut. Norman Laing of the R.A.M.C, the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, (son of Dr J. C. Laing of Burscough) met with a nasty accident on Sunday last. He was riding a horse and when near to Lathom House, the horse became restive, throwing its rider and rolling over him. Lieut. Laing was rather badly crushed but was later able to proceed to his home at Burscough where he is doing as well as can be expected.

Removal of the large quantity of manure became a lucrative source of income

### TENDERS - ARMY CONTRACT

Tender for the REMOVAL of PRIVY SOIL from the REMOUNT DEPOT, LATHOM PARK, NEAR Ormskirk, commencing 10th April 1916, will be received at the under-mentioned Office until Twelve noon on Tuesday the 4th April, 1916. Forms of Tender can be obtained on application to the District Barrack Officer, Headquarter Office, Watergate House, Chester.

**30th March 1916**

### BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION—FIRST ORMSKIRK GROUP

The return football match with the Lathom Remount Depot Trumpeters took place at Lathom on Saturday. Since the last match, the home team had been greatly strengthened, and won the game by 3-1.

### ORMSKIRK POLICE COURT—MONDAY REMOUNT SOLDIER COMMITTED TO SESSIONS

Pte. George Skidmore of the A.S.C. Remount Depot, Lathom Park, who had been remanded from the previous week, was again charged with breaking into and entering the Ormskirk Golf Club Pavilion and stealing one clock, one key, one pair of boots, five handkerchiefs, one pair of mittens, one of drawers, one pouch and one sponge, valued at £5. Miss E. Norris of Stanley Street, Ormskirk, said that on March 17th she saw the Golf Pavilion securely fastened, but on returning the following morning she found a pane of glass near the catch of the window in the gentlemen's dressing room broken and one pane of glass near the catch in the ladies' sitting room window broken. The whole place appeared to have been ransacked. PC. Thompson of Skelmersdale said he found several distinct footprints in the soil near the

windows, some of which clearly showed the impression of a strap which fastened the spurs onto boots. On enquiry at the Remount Depot he found that the prisoner had been absent during the night. He procured his boots and found they corresponded with the imprints in the soil near the Pavilion. Prisoner said he was sorry, he did it in a fit of temper. He was committed to the Quarter Sessions at Liverpool to be held on the 18th April.

### **20th April 1916**

Meanwhile the attacks on the Horse Transports in the Atlantic continued; here is an account by a U-Boat captain from April 1916.

Adolf K.G.E. von Spiegel commanded a German U-boat during the First World War. He published his memoirs in 1919.

The steamer appeared to be close to us and looked colossal. I saw the captain walking on his bridge, a small whistle in his mouth. I saw the crew cleaning the deck forward, and I saw, with surprise and a slight shudder, long rows of wooden partitions right along all decks, from which gleamed the shining black and brown backs of horses.

‘Oh heavens horses! What a pity, those lovely beasts!’

‘But it cannot be helped,’ I went on thinking. ‘War is war, and every horse the fewer on the Western front is a reduction of England’s fighting power.’ I must acknowledge, however, that the thought of what must come was a most unpleasant one, and I will describe what happened as briefly as possible.

‘Stand by for firing a torpedo!’ I called down to the control room.

‘FIRE!’

A slight tremor went through the boat—the torpedo had gone.

The death-bringing shot was a true one, and the torpedo ran towards the doomed ship at high speed. I could follow its course exactly by the light streak of bubbles which was left in its wake.

I saw that the bubble-track of the torpedo had been discovered on the bridge of the steamer, as frightened arms pointed towards the

water and the captain put his hands in front of his eyes and waited resignedly. Then a frightful explosion followed, and we were all thrown against one another by the concussion, and then, like Vulcan, huge and majestic, a column of water two hundred metres high and fifty metres broad, terrible in its beauty and power, shot up to the heavens.

‘Hit abaft the second funnel,’ I shouted down to the control room.



All her decks were visible to me. From all the hatchways a storming, despairing mass of men were fighting their way on deck, grimy stokers, officers, soldiers, groom, cooks. They all rushed, ran, screamed for boats, tore and thrust one another from the ladders leading down to them, fought for the lifebelts and jostled one another on the sloping deck. All amongst them, rearing, slipping horses are wedged. The starboard boats could not be lowered on account of the list; everyone therefore ran across to the port boats, which in the hurry and panic, had been lowered with great stupidity either half full or overcrowded. The men left behind were wringing their hands in despair and running to and fro along the decks; finally they threw themselves into the water so as to swim to the boats.

Then—a second explosion, followed by the escape of white hissing steam from all hatchways and scuttles. The white steam drove the horses mad. I saw a beautiful long-tailed dapple-grey horse take a mighty leap over the berthing rails and land into a

fully laden boat. At that point I could not bear the sight any longer, and I lowered the periscope and dived deep.

**Hough, R., *The Great War at Sea* (1983); Spiegel, Adolf K.G.E. von, *U-boat 202* (1919)**

### A THANKLESS JOB

On Saturday afternoon last a soldier stationed at the Remount Depot was thrown from a mule in the neighbourhood of the Plough, Lathom, when an Upholland man seeing that the soldier had fractured a leg, efficiently rendered first aid. The unfortunate man was afterwards removed to a neighbouring barn where he was left in charge of military friends. So far as we can gather, those about the injured man did not appreciate the valuable services rendered and the “Good Samaritan” did not even receive a word of thanks.

**18th May 1916**

### THE EARL OF LATHOM ATTAINS HIS MAJORITY IN THE TRENCHES

On Tuesday last the Earl of Lathom attained his majority—Not amidst the great rejoicings that marked his late father’s entry into man’s estate, but in the trenches of a foreign land, our nearest ally, engaged in the great cause of Right versus Might. Nevertheless, the heartiest congratulations of the residents of Ormskirk and the district, including his devoted tenantry, are extended to the young Earl in arriving at the 21st anniversary of his birthday—one of the first landmarks in the lives of most men—and the hope is genuinely felt that in due course he will be spared to return to the home of his father and grandfather, and take his part in the public and social life of our town and district, as did his illustrious predecessors.

Lord Lathom, who is attached to the Lancashire Hussars Yeomanry, which he joined while the latter were in camp at Rufford Park a week or two before war broke out, has been at the



front (in France) for about six months, being over at Lathom some five or six weeks ago on short leave. He holds the rank of Lieutenant and, standing close on six feet high, he makes a very fine soldier.

### **1st June 1916**

With the U boats attacking convoys bringing in food, there were increasing demands on the farmers to produce more but the re-mount depot also did its share.

With a view to increasing the potato production of the country, the War Office have issued instructions to the effect that all the spare land round Army Camps must be cultivated and planted with potatoes. At the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, this is being done (or has been done) and we understand that in order to encourage the men, the officers are offering prizes for the best kept and highest productive plots.

### **CARTING MANURE FROM THE REMOUNT DEPOT**

Edward Bamber, carter and contractor, of Lord Street, Lathom, asked for time to give him the opportunity of replacing the man, when appearing for one of his carters, John H. Gibb, but his appeal was refuted, the Lord Mayor remarking that such man could not be indispensable. Captain Dickinson said I am told that the principal job of this man is carting manure from the Remount Depot at Lathom.

### **8th June 1916**

#### **LYING ON THE FOOTPATH**

James Smith (19) employed at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, pleaded guilty to being drunk in Moor Street, Ormskirk, on Saturday night. PC. Shaw said that he found the prisoner lying on the footpath at about quarter past ten and when he assisted him to his feet he found him so helplessly drunk that he could not stand without being held up. Prisoner said he had been cold and tried a little whisky which got hold of him. Superintendent Hodgson

stated that the prisoner was employed in the veterinary lines at the camp, and of course he would be discharged now as they were going to make the place into a military camp and do away with all the civilians. A fine of 10s or seven days, was imposed.

### THE VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Major Brittlebank, in charge of the Veterinary Hospital Lathom Park, appeared to apply for the exemption of 12 men employed at the hospital. He withdrew four of the applications adding that the remainder were medically unfit.

**20th July 1916**

### THE REMOUNT DEPOT

Wm. Rothwell of The Cranes, Lathom, was given conditional exemption for James Dutton (27), attested, married and two children, living in Orrell's Lane Burscough. The claim was that the man was indispensable to him in regard to the sanitary arrangements at the Remount Depot. The man worked on the farm during the day.

**27th July 1916**

### ALLIES BUYING HORSES

The Allies are still buying large numbers of American horses, says a Chicago correspondent. In the past 2 weeks contracts for 10,000 horses have been placed in the West. Omaha is the concentration for shipment and £33 is the contract price per head.

### A COLLECTOR OF BONES

Thomas Hornby (34) of Whalley Farm, Parbold a master carter and contractor at the Remount Depot, stated that he collected bones from the Depot. He was married and had 3 children and was unattested. (Conditional exemption)

**August 17th 1916**

## BOXING AT THE REMOUNT DEPOT

Next Wednesday evening an interesting charity boxing match will take place at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park. A limited number of tickets will be offered to the public, for which application can be made to Messrs. J & E Taylor, the canteen proprietors at Lathom Park, or Ormskirk.

**August 24th 1916**

## BOXING AT LATHOM PARK

Last evening an attractive boxing programme was gone through at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, in the presence of a full audience.

The two chief bouts were between Sgt. Northcopp of the AVC and Percy Wilson of Hull, both well known boxers but, to the disappointment of the onlookers, the contest terminated in the first round when Northcopp was dis-qualified on a foul. Further particulars are unavoidably held over.

**August 31st 1916**

## MILITARY SPORTS AT LATHOM

On Saturday September 9th an interesting programme of military sports will take place in the Recreation Grounds at the Veterinary Hospital at Lathom Park by kind permission of Major J. W. Brittlebank. The proceeds are for war charities.

**September 14th 1916**

## MILITARY SPORTS AT LATHOM MANY INTERESTING EVENTS

There was quite a bright gathering—with khaki in the ascendant—on Saturday afternoon on the occasion of military sports in connection with the No. 7 Reserve Veterinary Hospital, Lathom (close to the Remount Depot, Lathom Park) where Major

J. W. Brittlebank is the presiding genius. Thanks to the untiring efforts of Captain Warburton, who acted as hon. Secretary (and to others of Major Brittlebank's excellent staff), quite an ambitious programme had been prepared and the large crowd which had foregathered in the spacious and well laid out field adjoining Stand Farm spent a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, the day's weather of course greatly adding to the afternoon's sport.

The four events which commenced at half past two in a separate ring were watched with keen interest; one of the more attractive being the mile walk in which all eyes were centred on the plucky performance of one of the competitors, a civilian named W. William who, despite his advanced years, finished the course amidst a cheer—all unfortunately that he got.

The 100 yards open was easily won with the spoils going to Private Jolley of the Scarisbrick A.V.C.

Obstacle Race; Sack Race; Three-legged Race; Wounded soldiers' egg and spoon Race; Musical chairs; Best single horse turn out; Best pair horse turnout.

Unfortunately time did not permit all the events being concluded and these were run off on Monday evening.

Through the kindness of Mr. J. P. Berry the president, of "Highcliffe", Ormskirk, the Skelmersdale Old Prize Band with Mr. Farrington conducting, were in attendance and played a splendid programme of music that was thoroughly appreciated.

The band now has a fine little drummer in Master Leonard Dickinson, son of the renowned trombone soloist.

After the sports, the band played for dancing which was pleasantly indulged in by the young people, until dusk.

**September 28th 1916**

THE REMOUNT DEPOT, LATHOM PARK  
INTERESTING EXHIBITION OF HOME GROWN PRODUCE  
HELPING THE FOOD SUPPLY

As a result of an order from the War office early in the year, that all camps should as far as possible utilise all the spare ground in their occupation for the production of vegetables and other foodstuffs, the squadrons at the Army Remount Depot, Lathom Park, encouraged by the officers at the camp, have vied with each other in following out the instructions from headquarters, the outcome being an exhibition of produce (grown in the different squadrons) on Saturday last in the Regimental Institute at the Depot, by permission of the Officer Commanding, Lieut. Colonel Hobson, D.S.O

The exhibits were judiciously staged and made a really excellent show, there being no less than 93 entries. Substantial prizes—in all amounting to about £20—had been offered by the officers and a very keen spirit of rivalry had been engendered amongst the men. In some of the squadrons, the land was not of the best for growing high-class produce but a keen and diligent attention compensated for this deficiency and on the whole the men are to be warmly congratulated on this, their maiden effort. As one walked through the lines, every conceivable patch of soil appeared to have been utilised by the soldiers, many of whom were absolute novices at the business, whereas others who in civil life had been engaged as gardeners or work upon the land, found a return, if only temporarily, to their old occupation a pleasant change from the humdrum of a soldier's life.

Mr. B. Ashton, head gardener to the Earl of Lathom, was the judge, and he also gave the men helpful hints and helpful advice as to the seeds etc., at the same time exhibiting a stand in one corner of the room of fruit and flowers that had grown in Lathom Gardens, to show the competitors what could be done—this by way of an incentive.

It is impossible to enumerate all the different exhibits, but potatoes, swede, turnips, tomatoes (outside grown), marrows,

cabbages, runner beans, dwarf beans, and cauliflowers were of outstanding merit.

There was a large attendance during the afternoon—Colonel Hobson and a large number of his officers being present, whilst the keen interest shown by the men themselves augurs well for the future.

The Skelmersdale Old Prize Band, under the conductorship of Mr. Farrington, were in attendance, playing suitable selections in the afternoon; whilst in the evening a successful promenade concert was held, dancing and song being the order of the programme.

It should be stated that all the exhibits were afterwards handed over to the Ormskirk Cottage Hospital—a true soldierly act.

A word of praise is due to Captain and Adjutant Charter, who organised the show with his characteristic thoroughness and efficiency.

### THE CHAMPION SQUADRON

The most successful squadron was K, of which Sir Timothy C. O'Brien, the famous Middlesex cricketer, is the major, who took no fewer than ten first prizes and four seconds. They seem to be on top of everything they go in for and must be a sterling body of men. The Army Veterinary Hospital also did well, with five firsts and three thirds.

**September 28th 1916**

### REMOUNT OFFICER'S BEREAVEMENT

Viscount Maiden, a lieutenant at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, has suffered a severe bereavement in the sudden death of his father, the Earl of Essex, who was found dead in bed at Lord Derby's Newmarket house on Monday morning last. He had been in indifferent health since being knocked down by a motor car some months ago and heart failure is stated to be the immediate

cause of death. Viscount Maiden, who succeeds his father in the earldom, has been stationed at Lathom Park for some considerable time and much sympathy is felt for him in his great loss.

**15th March 1917**

### SOLDIERS AND HORSES FOR PLOUGHING

We understand that about 20 soldier ploughmen and teams are available at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park. The men and horses will only be available to work from 9 to 12 and 2 till 5, and the farmer will have to provide forage for the horses for the mid-day meal only. Both men and horses will return to the Depot each evening. The rate charges for the services of a man and a pair of horses is 12s. for 8 hours or a proportionate amount for 6 hours' work. Applications should be made to the Commandant at the Remount Depot, where a form of agreement can be signed and all further particulars obtained

**5th April 1917**

### THE REMOUNT DEPOT AND FARMERS

There are now no fewer than 43 teams and soldier ploughmen from the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, engaged on working on farms in the district, and their assistance is greatly appreciated. In addition to the above, 50 men from the camp are now on agricultural leave, also helping farmers. About a month's furlough being granted. Two of these are now engaged as stallion men.

**26th April 1917**

### HIGH PRICES FOR UNFIT ARMY HORSES

On Thursday afternoon last Mr. G. W. Stretch conducted a very successful sale of horses from the A.V.C., Lathom Park, which had been rejected as unfit for military service. There were 37 in

all, many being horses of an all-round useful stamp and brisk bidding followed, there being an unusually large company present. Prices ranged from £8 to £59. 10s. and averaging nearly £26 each.

### **3rd May 1917**

#### **FORMER REMOUNT OFFICER REPORTED DROWNED**

It is reported that the vessel conveying Captain Pollock of The Common, Parbold, to Egypt, has been torpedoed and that the gallant officer has drowned. Captain Pollock was a veterinary surgeon at the Remount Depot. Lathom.

### **10th May 1917**

#### **THE PRIVY SOIL AT THE REMOUNT DEPOT**

Report from Council meeting.

The Clerk to the Council submitted correspondence which had taken place in regard to the privy soil at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, which the Army Authorities had proposed to burn and to which the Council had taken strong objection.

The first letter was from the Western Command at Chester and stated that destructors were going to be put in operation at once and that the contract between the Council and the Army authorities as to the removal of the privy soil must be considered terminated under Clause 1 of the Conditions from the date the destructors were taken into use of which the Council would be notified.

The Clerk afterwards wrote to the Director General, the Food Production Depot, London, pointing out that the Council considered the burning of the privy soil at the Depot a great waste of valuable manure, and that there was a shortage of manure in the district.

A subsequent letter received from the Board of Agriculture stating that the War Office Authorities were firmly of the opinion



that incineration (or burning) was necessary for the full maintenance of health in the camp, but at the same time in recognition of the importance at the present juncture of obtaining abundant supplies of fertilising materials, they might be prepared to consider arrangements by which the Council could cart away a specified number of loads or take the full supply of manure as previously, but for a limited period, on condition that they gave an assurance that they would meet all requirements of the sanitary officers as to hours of carting, the position of dumps (if any) and nearest point to the camp at which the manure might be supplied. They desired the Council's views on the practicability of the proposals.

To this the Clerk replied stating that he would bring the matter before the Council and asked from whom he should obtain particulars of the requirements of the sanitary officers, adding that he was sure the Council would willingly do all they could to meet the wishes of the War office if it would lead to the refuse being used as a fertiliser on the land.

A further letter stated that the War Office would supply all particulars of the requirements of the sanitary officers direct.

A letter was also read from the Burscough Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen protesting against the military authorities proposing to burn the privy soil. Mr Studdart: Does that mean that very probably the manure will not be destroyed?

The Clerk replied that if the Council complied with the requirements it would not be destroyed.

Mr. Studdart: There is chance, if pressure is applied, that you can get them (the military authorities) to have sane moments (laughter).

The Chairman: They say something about Clause 9. Is there such a Clause?

The Clerk: No.

The Chairman remarked there did seem some hope of the manure being used now, but they could do nothing until they heard further from the authorities.

The Surveyor said he understood they were pulling the destructors down as they were either too small or the wrong sort.

**5th July 1917**

**PRIVY SOIL AT THE REMOUNT DEPOT**  
Report from Council meeting

A letter was read from Major Pool, commanding officer, Preston, stating that incinerators for the destruction of rubbish and privy soil at the Remount Depot were now ready for use and he was directed by the Western headquarters to determine the contract with the Council to remove the privy soil as from July 7th.

Mr. Studdart asked what was the position of the Council in regard to compensation in the matter, seeing that the contract was to be determined without any cause of complaint being advanced against the Council. It seemed to him a most arbitrary proceeding when an agreement had been entered into. The Council had been put to a very considerable expense in providing plant for the work, men's time had been taken up in meeting their convenience and very little consideration had been given to the farmers in the matter of the manure. He thought all along that the Council had had nothing but perhaps the very worst treatment perhaps the most cavalier form of treatment from the Remount Depot which it was possible for civilians to have. Undoubtedly their past experience had been their past experience.

The Clerk stated the Council could put in a claim for compensation for the loss they had sustained in the purchase of cart or other tackle for doing the work.

Mr. Studdart thought they should put in a claim for loss of profits also.

Mr. Ainscough said he could have quite understood the determining of the contract if the military authorities had shown any good cause.

It was agreed to put in a claim for compensation for the purchase of the material required to do the work.

**2nd August 1917**

### FEEDING THE TROOPS REMOUNT DEPOT GROWING POTATOES FOR THE WHOLE CAMP - REVIEW OF THE CROPS

The war has revolutionised all pre-existent conditions, both from a civilian and Army point of view and perhaps more in regard to the production of home-grown food than in any other direction. We have had and are having hundreds of thousands of acres of new land being cultivated by farmers in this country to meet the submarine menace whilst in addition to this, at all the Army camps distributed throughout the length and breadth of the countryside where there is the land, every available yard is being turned over to make the camps as near self-supporting as possible.

A striking instance of this Army activity is furnished at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, where Lieut. Colonel G. W. Hobson, D.S.O., is the commandant and who from the outset has given the enterprise his whole-hearted approval and support.

Our agricultural representative visited the camp on Friday last and made a very interesting tour of inspection of the crops growing there, in company with the Captain and Adjutant Charter, under whose personal supervision the cultivating of 66 acres in the Park for the 1917 crop has been undertaken. Capt. Charter has had considerable experience of agriculture in Africa and other overseas countries but he does not profess to be expert in the intensive methods of cultivation so long and successfully pursued in West Lancashire, yet the work speaks for itself and highly it speaks, too, and it was probably immediately after a visit to the Remount Depot which prompted the remark of Major

Belcher of the Navy and Army Canteen Board, on the occasion of his second meeting in Ormskirk, when he said that if the farmers of the Ormskirk district wanted to know how to grow potatoes they had better go to Lathom Park.

That, however, by the way, for we all know that the West Lancashire farmers are second to none in the whole world as potato growers.

Before commencing our tour which, on a warm day like Friday, is no light task, the distance entailed being three or four miles, the writer was shown a collection of implements and other impedimenta which included a large number of spritting boxes stored conveniently for the next season's potato seed. These are in the tenant's room, which brought back pleasant recollections to the chronicler of old cricket days at Lathom Park, now, alas, never to return. In the stables we were also shown a large collection of Epicures in bags which have recently been lifted. These were uncommonly big stuff and clear and sound—a large weight of these will be surplus to the men's needs and will go onto the market.

In the course of our tour, we were told that 66 acres of park land, after being liberally top manured, had been ploughed, and all had been done by soldier ploughmen and the Army horses. The work of turning over ground that had been old sod for the memory of living man was not an easy one but the job got done—and was well done—and the results speak for themselves. A liberal supply of lime was also used subsequently to good advantage to the later crops. No fewer than 45 out of the 66 acres are planted with potatoes and everywhere all the varieties, without exception, looked extremely well, in fact they will compare favourably with any we have ever seen grown outside the park. The old Up-to-Dates from local seed, second year's Scotch, have been planted in the greatest numbers, and being in full flower they presented a fine picture to the eye, as all Dates do at this stage of their growth. Spraying was proceeding on the occasion of our visit, for whatever may be the opinions of local farmers, at the camp it is believed that prevention is better than cure and all the potatoes

have been liberally treated with the spray mixture. It would have been interested to see how the Irish Dates, of which large areas have been planted in the Ormskirk District, would have fared on this virgin soil, but at the present, crop is quite satisfactory.

### THE ALMS HOUSES NOT FORGOTTEN

An area of British Queens with their white foliage, are also growing very well and from a root or two we exposed, these will lift exceedingly well. Continuing our journey past the Preston Lodge, we came across an acre and a half of allotments which had been provided for the aged occupants of the Alms Houses, the oldest of whom had never seen any portion of the Park black side up. The land was ploughed up for the old people and part of the seed was provided by the Estate and all the crops have grown wonderfully, especially the onions which were almost equal to the Westhead standard.

Farther afield we came to the King Edwards, of which variety there are some twelve to fifteen acres, and they too, like the Dates, are thriving off the old sod. They are as promising as any the writer has seen this season and must dig up a big yield in September, for they are now at the height of their growth. We are now coming to the lines, or squadrons, all of which bear evidences of the men's private efforts.

### WELL-CULTIVATED SQUADRONS

Here we see what may be termed super allotments, all of which are, of course, in the hands of the men themselves and very creditable they are to all concerned. It would perhaps be invidious to single out any particular line but special mention might be made to "A" and "K" squadrons, where the gardens, both vegetable and flowers, are very fine indeed. Prior to reaching this point, we had seen several acres of cabbages, turnips, onions and other vegetables growing not too far from the Newburgh Lodge, and these too, were all that could be desired. Evidence of the difficulties of tillage was forthcoming in a plot near the electricity

works, which had been transformed from a waste piece of stony ground to a fine crop of King Edwards. Drainage in this and other portions of the cultivated plots had also been undertaken, where it was felt desirable to cope with the possibility of surplus water and nothing is left to chance. Close to the "Station" or discharging platform, we were shown a plot which had been given for the use of the railwaymen connected with the Depot, and this the men had used to the fullest advantage.

Our tour concluded with a look at the earlies—Epicures—which are growing or have grown on the south side of the Dairy Farm. These are now being lifted and as stated, the crop is an excellent one, whilst the plants between the drills are likewise very satisfactory. Several soldiers were engaged in lifting potatoes as we passed, and all knew their work.

In a few minutes conversation at the close, Capt. Charter stated that a start was made with the planting of potatoes on April 17th (earlies) and all were completed by May 20th. They would have sufficient potatoes and other home-grown vegetables to feed the Camp for another twelve months which, of course, means a saving to the National Exchequer.

### THE NOBLE HOUSE OF LATHOM

This article cannot be concluded without a word for the Earl of Lathom, whose self-sacrifice in placing the whole of his park and residence at the disposal of the War Office, free of charge, is in keeping with the best traditions of our worthy neighbour. Not only has this been done, but every facility has been placed in the hands of Colonel Hobson to render the camp a self-contained one, and permission was readily granted, in the national interest, to turn over grassland which had been in that condition possibly for hundreds of years, in order that that effort, however great or small, might help to thwart the evil designs of the Kaiser and his party to starve us out by cutting off our overseas food supplies.

Similar efforts are being made at the Army Veterinary Corps Camp at Lathom Park under the superintend-ence of the

Commandant, Major J. W. Brittlebank, but this will be the subject of a special article.

**6th December 1917**

LATHOM AND BURSCOUGH COUNCIL  
Monthly meeting of Burscough UDC report extract:  
A "TRAMWAY"

At a meeting of the Highway etc. Committee, a letter was read from Mr. B. W. Peel, on behalf of the Earl of Lathom, giving six months' notice to terminate the agreement for the tramway across Spa-Lane and Cock-street, Lathom, such tramway being no longer required

**2nd May 1918**

LATHOM PARK MANURE  
SCHEME FOR MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

On Tuesday at a meeting of the Ormskirk War Agricultural Executive Committee, held at Bank Chambers, Mr. R. Rothwell presiding, a scheme was adopted for a more equitable distribution of the manure from the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, concerning which there have been many complaints.

Mr. R. Marshall (Bescar Lane) attended and complained of farmers in the district who were hoarding manure for 1919, when there was such a shortage for the 1918 crop of potatoes.

He considered such hoarding as unfair and most unpatriotic, Mr. H. Turner, the hon. Secretary, then submitted a list of farmers who had been storing manure for next year.

Mr. M. Cave, sub-agent to the Lathom Estate, had been asked to attend and after explaining the difficulties regarding the removal and distribution of the manure from the Depot, suggested the formation of a committee to deal with it.

This should consist of two representatives of the Lathom Estate, two of that committee, and one of the Ormskirk Branch of the Lancashire Farmers' Association, with an independent chairman.

The committee might meet once a week, or as arranged, and deal with the applications received for the manure and allocate the manure according to the applicant's requirements for the 1918 season.

Due regard should also be paid to the demands from allotment holders.

Mr. Caves' proposals were adopted and Messrs. R. Rothwell and T. Sumner were appointed to represent the executive committee and Mr. R. Marshall was commended as the representative of the Ormskirk Branch of the L.F.A.

It was agreed that Mr. A. O. Blackhurst of Lathom be the independent chairman.

It was also resolved, on the motion of Mr. T. Sumner, seconded by Mr. J. M. Woods, that the County Executive Committee urge the Board of Agriculture and the Ministry of Supplies to put a ban on all hoarding of manure until the end of May, so that as many potatoes as possible could be grown this season.

#### **4th July 1918**

### **LATHOM PARK REMOUNT DEPOT MANURE SYSTEM OF EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION FORMULATED**

On Thursday last a meeting convened by the Manure Allocation Committee of the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, was held at the Kings Arms Hotel, Ormskirk, for the purpose of submitting a scheme for the more equitable distribution of manure from the camp. There was a large attendance, over which Mr. S. T. Rosbotham, J. R. presided.

The Chairman stated that the Manure Allocation Committee consisted of Messrs. T. Sumner and R. Rothwell, representing the Ormskirk War Agricultural Executive Committee; Mr. Robert



Marshall, the Ormskirk Branch of the Lancashire Farmers' Association; Messrs. D. Berry and W Sephton, the farmers of the Lathom Estate; Mr. H. Trafford, the Ormskirk and District Allotment and Cottage Gardens Association; with Mr. A. O. Blackhurst as Chairman and Mr. W. Cave as secretary. He would now call upon Mr. Blackhurst to outline the scheme.

Mr. Blackhurst stated that the Lathom Estate, who were nominally owners of the manure in Lathom Park, had endeavoured in the past to supply all demands. Complaints, however, had been made that supplies were guaranteed to people who were already well supplied, whilst other farmers could not procure any manure whatever. With the object of eliminating these troubles, a committee was appointed, the object being to make arrangements for the manure for the 1918-19 season and to do away with the waste of time in waiting at the early mornings. One difficulty which faced them was the floating character of the horse population at the Depot, but it was necessary for the health of the camp that the manure should be removed each day and this would require the close co-operation of all. Loads would be sent out to each intending purchaser informing him or her of the number of tons allotted which would be based at the rate of 15 tons per acre of green crops to be grown. Delivery must be taken over a certain period. If during the period indicated by the committee, a purchaser could not take delivery, the Committee wished that purchaser to send a substitute and then return the compliment at a later stage. The area to be covered was within five miles from the camp and there were something between 150 and 200 purchasers. Regarding delivery by rail, there were very few wagons at the disposal of the Committee as only wagons coming laden into the Depot could be used for dispatching the manure.

Mr. M. Cave stated that the Committee had placed a contract for a new weighing machine and in future the manure would be sold by the ton, which would place all purchasers on the same footing.

The Committee had decided that the price should be per ton at the Depot but if they found the price was too high, they would reduce

it (hear, hear). They did not want to make money out of the manure but were simply out for food production.

Mr. R. Rothwell reminded those present that they would have to put themselves to some inconvenience to help the Committee in the schedule.

The Chairman agreed, stating that the military authorities were behind them with a big stick and insisted on the manure being moved daily.

Mr. Rosbotham moved a vote of thanks to the Committee for what they had done. The Lathom Estate was always very willing to help forward agriculture in every possible way.

Mr. Stephen Hurst seconded and the motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Blackhurst responded and stated that the question of short weight in boats of manure was going to be tackled once and for all and thoroughly threshed out.

### **11th September 1918**

#### **TRAGIC DISCOVERY ON THE ORMSKIRK GOLF LINKS**

On Monday afternoon last Mr. F. A, Jones, deputy coroner, conducted an inquiry at the Ormskirk Golf Clubhouse, concerning the death of Pte. Joseph Williams, of the A.S.C. Remount Depot, Lathom Park, whose body was recovered from a pit on the links, on Saturday afternoon.

### **12th September 1918**

#### **NEXT SATURDAY'S FETE AT LATHOM PARK**

Given fine weather—which surely will not be overdue—on Saturday next the annual fete in connection with the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, will be a huge success.

There are endless attractions, not the least being the show of farm produce grown at the camp, the display of which will be finer than ever this year.

Then there are the sports and the driving and parade of the horse, to say nothing about the baby show which is confined to youngsters below six months' old and in which there is, we understand, a good entry.

All the produce grown will be sold on behalf of the Red Cross, to which fund all the proceeds will be devoted. The cause is a good one, the event is a popular one and it is to be hoped the public of Ormskirk and the surrounding district will visit the Park in their thousands on Saturday afternoon.

The proceedings commence at 2 o'clock.

### **19th September 1918**

#### MEANWHILE IN FRANCE

The battery was in action before Le Quesnoy. In the afternoon when the gunners had ceased firing they lay back on the grass and speculated which of the endless teams of horses and mules would get across the bridge.

The sappers were working hard under steady shell fire. A gallant party of military Police were clearing away the dead horses and men that littered the road.

A gun team would come trotting down the hill towards the bridge and a 100 yards from it would break into a gallop. Hooray!

They got safely across. Here's the next lot! Bang! That's got them. No it hasn't as horses and men, less 1 driver emerge from the smoke and gallop up the road into safety.

Very early on the last morning Shadbolt was watching the men dragging the heavy howitzers into a little clearing in the wood.

The day was grey and overcast; the raindrops from a recent shower were dripping sadly off the trees. Above them a few

pigeons disturbed by the movements of the men. A despatch rider rode up and handed him a message form. "Hostilities will cease at 11 a.m. today. A-A-A. No firing will take place after this hour". He sat on the stump of a tree. In any case the order did not affect them. The enemy was already out of range and they could move no further.

This then was the end. Visions of the early days swam before his eyes. Hugh was gone, Tyler, Little Rawson, Sergeant Powell, Elliot, James Johnson—the names of the dead gunners strung themselves before him. This was the very end.

"Mr Severn."

"Sir."

"You can fall the men out for breakfast. The war is over".

\* \* \*

And so what happened to those animals that had survived the horrors of the battlefield, or were deemed unsuitable for the "work" for which they had been purchased? A small number at the end of the war were returned to the UK (one estimate is 60,000), but for many the situation was perilous. Once again the Captain takes up the story...

### "Cast and Sold"

HAVE thought it well to include some reference to the methods of disposing of "casters"—those animals which are cast by the Army authorities as being no longer serviceable for military purposes. Every Remount officer must have intimate knowledge of this phase of remounting, or, shall I say, dismounting, since the Army is taking a considered farewell of old servants that for physical reasons can no longer serve. They are being given their discharge.

In a great theatre of war like France casting is carried out on a big scale because several hundreds of thousands of horses and mules

are in our possession, and the proportion of worn-out, too-old-at-fifteen or twenty years of age, incurably lame or sick, and hopelessly wounded must be very considerable. The very large majority of them are not sold at public auction as in England. They are beyond rendering any more service either to the State or the civilian individual and mercifully destroyed either for human food or for the by-products resulting from the rendering down of their carcasses. I have touched on that in a previous chapter with special reference to the large sum of £50,000 or more which every month is paid to the State in respect of the disposal of cast British Army horses in France. It represents wastage to our horse resources, but a small gain as a set-off to the dead loss.

In England the horse has not actually been to war. He has been training for the ordeal or he has been employed here for a long time doing his job faithfully and well until there comes a time when joints and sinews, perhaps at all times predisposed to lameness, collapse under the strain. The war, you must remember, is over four years old at the time of writing this (1918), and a horse can be fresh and well at ten years of age but hopelessly worn out at fourteen years of age after an interval of wear and tear. It need scarcely be said that there must be very solid reasons for the casting of horses, and if those reasons were good two or three years ago they become doubly so as time goes on and the question of replacement does not become easier. The Army Veterinary Service is the chief casting authority, for the simple and all-sufficient reason that its officers are the professional experts of disease and unsoundness. If they say a horse will always be lame or can never be healthy and strong again, then it is the obvious thing to give the animal its discharge so that it may no longer remain an expense to the public in the sense that it would never again be able to do any work to justify its keep and general maintenance. It follows that "casters" therefore must come from the veterinary hospitals in greater numbers than from the Remount Depots.

A Remount casting authority may exercise his powers in the case of an animal which he does not consider is fitted to do any sort of job in the Army, either in draught, saddle, or pack. It is singular

how you may come across the occasional “misfit” even where the work is so varied as in the Army. The Remount officer may also cast on the ground of vice, though there is a reluctant disinclination to act. No officer likes to consider himself beaten by a vicious and dangerous horse, and the result of a longer period of patience, or methods which have to be “vigorous to be kind”, have often resulted in the sentence of casting being removed. Still an occasional incorrigible wrong 'un among so many thousands is bound to occur. One does not mind the kicker so much. The horse that strikes with his forelegs or rushes at you open-mouthed and bellowing like a bull is not a pleasant individual for the bravest man to tackle. The striker with his forelegs gives you so little warning and may do so much damage. A development which has done much to reduce castings in this country as well as to advance the prices realized at sales of “casters” is the tremendous stimulus given to national food production. Many a draught horse with ringbone, navicular, or even laminitis, has had his career of usefulness extended through being transferred from the Army to the Food Production Department. He was useless in a team with a General Service wagon on the roads; his poor old feet and legs would not stand the “jar”. But he could work in comparative comfort in the plough or on the stubbles, and moreover he helped to produce corn at a time when horse power on the land was very badly wanted.

Perhaps the lot of the cast riding-horse is most pathetic. Who wants him? He can no longer carry a man because his poor old forelegs have “gone”, and there is not enough of him to make a draught horse. And yet any old job in the shafts must mark his rapid descent in the equine social scale. Few want to buy the cast mule. The average Englishman does not understand the mule; neither does he seem to wish for any better appreciation of the gallant old slave. Certainly it is a mystery to one who has seen him do so splendidly in this war and can gladly concede the undoubted virtues he possesses. Their small feet are not adapted to work on heavy land, but that may be more apparent than real. The real test is how the mule acquits himself, and there seem to

be no conditions to which he cannot adapt himself. Still, as I have said, no one wants to pay much for the cast mule. It may be because there is practically no chance of curing a mule suffering from pronounced bone lameness, or that one cast for vice is regarded as being altogether past praying for as a possible convert to better and less heathen-like ways.

Much of the mule's so-called vice is merely its way of demonstrating fear and suspicion rather than an aggressive desire to open an ugly offensive with-out the slightest provocation. The miscellaneous collection of British tradesmen, who may have dealt in rare books or had practised as undertakers or green-grocers, and who seemed to be posted to Remount Depots more by design than accident, were not ideally suited to winning the confidence of the apprehensive and suspicious mule. I am reminded in this connection of a good story told in the course of a lecture on the management of horses in the war by Major C. D. Miller a most efficient and successful Remount officer, to the Cavalry School in France. He was referring to the class of men remaining for service in the Remount Depots after the transfer from time to time of all men placed in category "A", and he went on to say: "When censoring letters one day I came across one written by one of my men to his girl at home. In civil life he had been a traveller—in piece goods or ladies' lingerie, or something equally 'horsey'. He told her that he was enchanted with everything in Remounts except the horses and mules. The horse he considered a very dangerous animal at both ends and damnably uncomfortable in the middle.

"The mule, he found, generally took great pains to make friends with you so as to make quite sure of being able to kick you on exactly the right spot when the opportunity should arise. When I saw the writer of the letter riding I knew he had told his girl the truth, and when I saw him in the stable I longed to be a mule!"

To return to the disposal of cast Army horses, the reader will understand that a local auctioneer is requested to hold a sale, which is duly advertised so that prospective buyers may attend on the day. As a preliminary to their leave-taking of the Army each

“caster” is branded on the near shoulder with a “C” indicating that he has absolutely and finally been given his re-entry into civil life. Then the rather doleful procession of a score or so, a man riding one and leading another, sets off in charge of an officer, who is carrying with him to the place of sale his authority and all other documents. For, of course, you never do anything in the Army without the assistance of many documents! It follows that the party is one to arrest the attention of the passer-by, who may not realize that the animals are the outcasts of the Army. For one thing the pace is funereal, which is suggested by the slow march and the drooping heads. You may not hurry the lame, the halt, and the blind, to which may be added the broken-winded; and so the pace of this little procession with its suggestion of real pathos is that of its slowest unit. The most unsophisticated onlooker notices that they are not the strong and healthy, bright-eyed animals that usually leave the Depot for the train en route for overseas. He notices the knife-board back, the staring ribs and the sunken eyes of the chronic debility case; the shuffling amble of the incurably lame; and the swollen “greasy” legs of the heavy draught horse. The presence of one or two others he may not so well understand, for stone-blindness is not at once apparent to the passer-by, the broken-winded riding-horse has no outward signs at the moment to indicate his troubles, and the one condemned for vice is apparently at the high-water mark of robust health. Naturally the man in khaki has not elected to ride the confirmed kicker, bucker, and biter.

“Ere comes a circus,” shrieks a delighted small boy, whose mother hastily gathers him up from the middle of the road and explains that it is the Army going out on manoeuvres. One also seems to have overheard the muttered criticism of the elderly lady who frowns on this seemingly shocking evidence of Army neglect and cruelty towards their “poor dear horses”. And the girl who now drives the baker’s cart cannot resist an inquiry of the Corporal with the party as to why he had brought out his horses without their wheels.

At the place where they are sold their preliminary inspection is carried out by prospective buyers with as much care as a



connoisseur of art and antiques will display in quite another kind of mart. Such inspectors too! Soft-hatted, bowler-hatted specialists in cheap horseflesh, who know exactly where the dividing line is that separates the “fair” and the “bargain” prices. Their hope is that the Remount people may have made a “blob” in casting one or more that were “not ’arf bad” and might profitably be patched up by more skilful hands than are to be found in the Army! So the “casters” must endure an ordeal of intimate inspection—all except the vice cases, which the velvet-waist-coated experts discover for themselves without the telling. For it should be understood that these cast Army horses are sold without any sort of guarantee. Of what virtue could they guarantee them? I confess I am unable to name one. Their total innocence in this respect is of course the *raison d’être* of their visit to the auctioneer’s.

If you want to see the real expert at work watch one of these prospective buyers. He may be a horse-dealer with forty crowded years of experience behind him in the humble line of business, a dealer in “antiques”, “has beens”, and “crocks”. He may be a rural butcher with a taste and capacity for occasional horse “coping”; or he maybe the inevitable bargain-hunter who is at every sale and horse fair. They were certainly not born yesterday, as it were, and they get up very early in the morning and remain fairly wide awake when any business is doing. He knows where to look for the cause of casting. He cannot find tendon troubles about the heavily-fired legs, serious bony enlargements, or spavins, he knows how to test the patient for his eyesight, and if he is still mystified he watches his opportunity to use his stick to see if the animal grunts to the flourish of it and so reveals his wind infirmity. Sometimes he even attempts to seek light from the severely non-committal Remount officer in charge like an importunate and insinuating backer essays to worm himself into the confidence of a trainer or jockey on the racecourse. For, of course, it is important that the speculator in Army “casters” should not allow himself to get too badly “stuck”. He knows there are risks, and his ways of trying to reduce them never failed to

raise my admiration of his resource and his knowledge of cheap horseflesh.

They cluster at the foot of the auctioneer's rostrum after the approved manner of buyers at Tattersall's in London and laugh derisively when the salesman expatiates in a professional manner on the virtues and limitless possibilities of the ex-cavalry horse. You see he is doing his best for the Government and taking every care that he shall earn his commission. Moreover, most auctioneers I have seen at work have entered into the spirit of the sale and have good-humouredly adapted their chaff to the cosmopolitan character of their horse-coping audience. "Now, gentlemen," he observes, "we'll give him one more run and please keep your sticks down. He's not used to them." "No, gov'nor, you're right there; what 'e's been used to 'as bin goin' about in a Bath-chair, I expect!" observes an old stager with a nomad's face and style of dress. The crowd opens out to let him be run up, and the result of the manoeuvre is that some one hardens his heart and starts the bidding at a couple of guineas. The auctioneer looks pained at the insult, and the bidder has a slight shock of anxiety until competition begins and the "caster" has found a new owner. So on through the programme, and then there is the squaring up on the spot with the auctioneer and a general adjournment of the buyers to adjust private transactions.

Prices, of course, have varied a good deal. Early in the war "casters" as a rule would only make the price the knacker could afford to pay. There was no demand for them at that time, but times have changed. The horse slaughterer can afford to pay a better price, for there is a market for the meat and a demand for the hide, etc. Then there is a general horse shortage of general utility animals in the fifth year of war, especially of draught horses for the land. It is the reason why animals which have no military value have made some remarkable sums at auction, showing that the user had to avail himself of any sort of assistance, however temporary it might prove to be. All my experience goes to show that judicious casting of Army horses is most essential in the interests of financial economy and general efficiency. The authorities, be they veterinary or remount, may

not like to show heavy casting returns in case the former should be criticized for condemning where they ought to cure, and the latter for their general horse management. The reluctance to do so, however may surely be overdone since it means that animals are kept at the public expense, which, because of their proneness to disease and sickness, have little or no chance of doing active work with units and, therefore, must spend their days passing between Remount Depots and Veterinary Hospitals and congesting both. Certainly it is not true economy to go beyond certain limits with chronic cases of lameness and those which come under the category of "aged and worn out". If a horse is not considered good enough to send over-seas then he is relegated to home service, and when the time comes that he is useless for the latter he should surely be retired for good financial reasons from Government ownership. Thus he would become a "caster", and the Government would be relieved of the further responsibility of his maintenance.

The inclusion of this chapter in "The Horse and the War" needs no better identification than the need for explaining a procedure by which the worn out and the diseased are discarded and relieved from further service of "national importance".

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#### FETE AT LATHOM PARK STRIKING MILITARY DISPLAY AT THE REMOUNT DEPOT

The weather conditions were of the worst possible character on Saturday last on the occasion of the annual fete in connection with the Remount Depot, Lathom Park. Rain fell for practically all the day, marring a great deal of the pleasure of the proceedings, but failing to diminish the interest of those who braved the elements and went forth to see the sights.

Thanks to Lieut. Col. G. W. Hobson, D.S.O., the commandant and to Major Charter, his trusted adjutant, the arrangements were

all that could be desired and on this account, the Clerk of the weather was severely “strafed”, his abominable behaviour robbing the whole countryside of a most pleasurable afternoon. However, all concerned took the right view of things—the philosophic one—and whether as onlooker or competitor there was no grumbling, not even if you sunk boot-tops in the waterlogged grass and mud. All were out for the afternoon in spite of fate. All the programme was also in connection with the No.7 Reserve Veterinary Hospital, Major J. W. Brittlebank, C.M.G., the old commandant journeying over from the A.V.C. Headquarters at Chester to renew acquaintances with old Remount friends.

### FINE VEGETABLE

The exhibition of products grown in the various squadrons and at the Veterinary Hospital was a great source of attraction. These were staged in several large marquees and compelled universal admiration from visitors. It would be difficult to discriminate between the exhibits, but as usual the potatoes made a great display, once more proving that Major Charter must be regarded as an expert in arable agriculture. All the green vegetables were also especially worthy of mention. No. 36 and No. 3 squadrons were outstanding, the winners throughout. Quite an interesting feature of the exhibition was the collection of the different varieties grown at the Depot, which must have numbered well into three figures. Mr. B. Ashton, F.R.H.S., of Lathom Gardens, was the judge

### THE SPORTS MEETING

The programme of events at the sports meeting was preceded by the judging in the morning of the artillery horses, mules, heavy horses, etc., which are in training at the Depot. These made a superb display and many were the encomiums passed at their smart appearance—and many were the sighs for the possession of many of the horses by a coterie of local farmers who were present. This part of the proceedings brought the war much nearer to the minds of the spectators perhaps than ever before.

A pleasing feature in the sports was the number of horse races, which kept interest well maintained notwithstanding the conditions. As usual the officers' scurry was the big event, and this was well contended. Lieut. Col. Hobson just failing to repeat his last year's success, Lieut. Walker beating him in a gruelling finish by half-a-length with, appropriately enough, a horse named Air Raid.

The winner however, was not accorded all the laudations, a few of which were reserved for Capt. Taylor, who came in "in a canter"—the last of the batch.

At intervals during the afternoon an admirable programme of music was given by the Remount Depot Band, under the direction of Sgt. Trumpeter P. E. Jenkins; they helped all to forget weather troubles.

At the close Major Charter showed his unlimited versatility by auctioning the exhibits in the vegetable section, and in this capacity, as well as in that of organiser, he was a conspicuous success, for the proceeds realised the splendid sum of £150.

This and the proceeds are to be devoted to the Red Cross Funds.

## **12th December 1918**

### **ARMY HORSES**

On Friday last, horse buyers and others from all parts of the country visited Ormskirk for a sale of Army horses from the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, conducted by Messrs. Freeman and Stretch, at Park Road, near Coronation Park. One hundred and fifteen horses were offered; the collection included heavy horses, mares and colts. As was only to be expected with the prospects of a perfect peace in view, prices did not touch those figures which characterised sales at Ormskirk during the past few years. The total realised for 115 horses was £2,584, highest price being £62 for a heavy bay mare.

## **9th December 1918**

## REMOUNT HORSES

It is estimated that during the war the Government took somewhere about 17 per cent of the horses in Great Britain for military purposes. The Remount Department is now laying its plans with a view to placing at the disposal of the public in the course of the next few months, sufficient animals to restore the pre-war situation and enable the country once again enjoy the advantage of an ample supply of horses for all purposes. Until the veil was lifted the other day by Major-General Sir W. H. Birkbeck, Remounts, the public can have had but little idea of the magnitude of the task involved in satisfying the requirements of the British Armies in various scattered theatres of war. In peace times Remount Service only thought in thousands. During the last four and a half years it has been compelled to think in hundreds of thousands. Since the date when mobilisation was ordered, it has provided close upon 900,000 horses and 270,000 mules—a stupendous achievement, carried out quietly, but with a very real degree of efficiency.

The number of horses has been made up as follows: Purchased in the United Kingdom - 468,088; Shipped from North America - 419,164; a total of 887,252.

“The British Expeditionary Force left England horsed as no Army had ever been horsed before”. Such is the view of the present head of the Remount Service. After paying a visit to two important remount depots—Swaythling and Romsey—one would like to supplement General Birkbeck’s remark concerning the “Old Contemptibles” by stating that the new armies raised in such immense numbers have also been supplied in a manner beyond all criticism. In order to cope with the extraordinary volume of work thrown upon it, the Remount Service found it necessary in the course of the War to establish four train centres in this country for the reception of animals, namely, Swaythling, Romsey, Shirehampton and Ormskirk.

Each depot has accommodation for 5,000 horses and during the periods of greatest pressure their resources were taxed to the utmost to keep pace with the demands from the various fronts.

General Birkbeck has paid a well deserved tribute to the way in which the country gentlemen of England have assisted in the work of buying horses and in manning the remount depots.

### **Daily Telegraph 13th March 1919**

#### **BIG SALE OF ARMY HORSES 200 OFFERED THIS WEEK**

This week a record number of Army horses are being offered for sale at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, by Messrs. Freeman and Stretch, and despite the inclement weather so far vouchsafed, prices are being maintained to a wonderful degree. In the four days—from Tuesday to Friday—no fewer than 1,200 are coming under the hammer and these include a large collection of heavy horses, all in splendid working condition, many direct from France.

On Tuesday 299 were sold, realising £11,671. Yesterday's sale totalled £10,167 for 288 horses.

The sale is being continued today and tomorrow.

#### **900 MORE NEXT WEEK**

Next week—Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday—900 more horses will be sold at the Remount Depot.

### **17th April 1919**

The Ormskirk Golf Club promises to soon recover its pre-war glory and already the Council have been making great improvements on the links. Thanks to labour being more plentiful, the whole course has received much-needed attention, particularly the bunkers, and the Club has every prospect of attaining to that popularity which it was on the high way to securing before the war broke out.

The competitions are to be resumed as usual and these will open with one commencing on Good Friday and continued on Saturday

and Easter Monday for a beautiful silver challenge cup presented by the Officers of the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, who have enjoyed the hospitality of Club whilst engaged on military service.

### FINAL SALE OF ARMY HORSES

On Wednesday and Thursday next Messrs. Freeman and Son will conduct the final sale of Army horses at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, when over 600 will be offered.

**15th May 1919**

### SALE OF ARMY HORSES

On Thursday afternoon last, Messrs. Freeman and Son offered for sale by auction at Park Road, Ormskirk, 66 Army horses from the Remount Depot, Lathom Park. They were a mixed lot—riders, light draughts and heavies—and the demand was exceptionally keen, there being a large company present. The total realised £3,447. 10s. The highest price paid was £107 for a heavy gelding.

**3 July 1919**

During the remainder of 1919, there were many sales of horses from the Remount Depot, and then structures and other items associated with the depot itself.

### BIG SALE OF ARMY HORSES

On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of next week, Messrs. Freeman and Son will offer for sale at Park-road, Ormskirk, 800 horses from the Army Remount Depot, Lathom Park. They are an excellent collection and embrace heavy and light horses, vanners, etc.



## SALE OF ARMY HUTS AT LATHOM PARK

Big prices were obtained on Tuesday for Army Huts, buildings, etc., at a sale by auction, conducted by Messrs. Freeman and Son at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, which is now being dismantled, after being in existence since the early stages of the war. One hundred and fifty lots were offered, and the buildings being of wood with corrugated iron roofs, are easily capable of conversion into dwellings.

Two large dining blocks made £190 and £150; barrack huts from £91 to £114; stables from £100 to £137.10s.; shoeing forge £59; squadron offices £58 and harness room £42. The total amount realised was £5,065. Many large West Lancashire farmers were purchasers of the smaller wooden erections, for use at their farmsteads.

**11th December 1919**

## SUCCESSFUL REMOUNT SALE

A large sale of Remount horses was held last week by Messrs. Peter Freeman & Son, of Ormskirk, in Park Road and the price indicated a revival of the horse trade. The grand total realised £21,295 for 731 horses. Another sale is being held on Dec. 29th and 30th, when a further 400 horses will be disposed of.

**25th December 1919**

## SALE OF REMOUNT EFFECTS

Messrs. Peter Freeman and Son of Ormskirk, have an excellent sale of barrack huts, stables, etc., at the Remount Depot, Lathom Park, where there has been a good attendance both on Tuesday and yesterday. Barrack huts were sold at prices ranging from £80 to £100; stables from £80 to £110; squadron offices £70; Salvation Army Hut £201. Amongst the purchasers were many local farmers and produce merchants. The sale is being continued to-day.

**11th March 1920**

This appears to be the final mention of the Lathom Park Remount Depot in the copies of "The Ormskirk Advertiser" held at Ormskirk Library (records were searched up to the end of 1924).

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Do Not Copy

## EPILOGUE

Today little remains of the depot; the land was restored and returned to the Earl. Hardly any trace remains of the camp or the men and animals that passed through other than a hut now used by the scouts. The line of the railway line from “Skem” can be picked out with a good eye and a map.

The only horses now are used for pleasure riding and they can be seen gently cropping the grass, but every now and then one pauses and raises its head; perhaps it can hear a neigh on the wind.



The story of “The War Horse” inspired some poetry, so to close here are some of the best.

## WAR HORSES

We combed you out from happy silences  
On thymey downs;  
From stream-veined meadowlands alight with crowns  
Of buttercups, where, for you, shapely trees  
Made spacious canopies.

Now (day and night) unsheltered, in the mud  
You droop and ache;  
While ruthless hands, for human purpose' sake,  
Fashion the complex tools which spill your blood  
And ours in rising flood.

No deputation (yet) your wage controls.  
Ungauged, unpaid  
Your overtime. The war blast leaves no blade  
Of green for you—poor ghosts of happy foals!—  
Munching your minished doles  
In ravages by human frenzy made.

*G. M. Jeudwine*

## THE REMOUNT TRAIN

Every head across the bar,  
Every blaze and snip and star,  
Every nervous, twitching ear,  
Every soft eye filled with fear,  
Seeks a friend, and seems to say:  
“Whither now, and where away?”  
Seeks a friend and seems to ask:  
“Where the goal, and what the task?”

Wave the green flag! Let them go!  
Only horses? Yes, I know;  
But my heart goes down the line  
With them, and their grief is mine! —  
There goes honour, there goes faith,  
Down the way of dule and death.  
Hidden in the cloud that clings  
To the battle-wrath of kings!

There goes timid child-like trust  
To the burden and the dust!  
High-born courage, princely grace  
To the peril it must face!  
There go stoutness, strength and speed  
To be spent where none shall heed,  
And great hearts to face their fate  
In the clash of human hate!

Wave the flag, and let them go! —  
Hats off to that wistful row  
Of lean heads of brown and bay,  
Black and chestnut, roan and grey!  
Here's good luck in lands afar —  
Snow-white streak, and blaze, and star!  
May you find in those far lands  
Kindly hearts and horsemen's hands!

*W. H. Ogilvie*

## MUSINGS OF A MULE

I am only a common or garden mule  
Who was bred in the U.S.A.  
I was born in a barn on a Western farm  
Many thousands of miles away  
From where I am munching a Government lunch  
At Great Britain's expense to-day.

With dozens of others I knew, and have seen,  
In my Little Grey Home in the West,  
Where the grazing was succulent, luscious and green,  
And Life was a bit of a jest,  
I have sniffed the salt breeze blowing over the seas  
And I've landed in France with the rest.

The journey was horrid—a horrible dream  
Was the loading—its shindy and row  
And the people expecting a moke to be keen  
To swarm up a frightening "brow"  
And slither down ramps that were greasy and damp  
To a standing unfit for a cow.

They packed us like herrings 'way down in the hold,  
With never a thought nor a care  
For animals worthy more Government gold  
Than all of the rest who were there;  
And the best spot, of course, was reserved for the horse,  
Who had to have plenty of air.

Well, we jibbed and we strafed and we kicked the Light Draught  
And I planted my heels in the hide  
Of a man on the ship who was flicking a whip  
And whose manners I could not abide;  
But I've travelled so often since then in the trucks  
I have learnt how to swallow my pride,  
And I go where I'm put without lifting a foot  
For a rag song and dance on the side.

Many months at a time I was up on the Somme  
In the rain and the mud and the mire:  
We were "packing" the shells to the various Hells,  
In the dips of the vast undulations and dells  
Where the field guns were belching their fire.

It was very poor sport when the forage ran short  
First to eight and then six pounds a day.  
But we managed to live on the blankets they brought,  
Though blankets I now think, and always have thought,  
Are but poor substitution for hay.

I remember a week when we played hide and seek  
With the shrapnel the Boches sent over:  
I remember the night when they pitied my plight,  
And pipped me, and put me clean out of the fight  
With a "Blighty"—then I was in clover.



For they dressed me and sent me quick out of the line  
To a hospital down at the Base,  
Where the standings were good and the weather was fine  
And the rations were not a disgrace:  
There, just within sound of the Heavies I found  
La France can be quite a good place.

And now I've recovered—I'm weary and thin  
And I'm out of condition and stale,  
My ribs and my hips are too big for my skin  
And I've left all the hair of my tail  
On the middlemost bar of the paddock I'm in.  
For they turned me out loose, as I'm frail.

Now the life in a paddock according to men  
Is a sort of a beautiful song  
Where animals wander around and can squander  
The time as they wander along,  
With nothing to worry them, nothing to do  
Except for food intervals daily; but you  
Can take it from me they are wrong,  
For paddocks are places conducive to thoughts  
That settle unbid on the brain,  
And often I find them to follow a kind  
Of a minor-key tune or refrain  
As I doze for an hour in the afternoon sun  
Or I stand with my rump to the rain  
I dream of the barn on my Illinois farm  
And I *long* to be back there again.

*L. L. L. L., Base Indian Remount Depot, B.E.F., France*

## CANADIANS

With arrows on their quarters and unit numbers on their hoofs,  
With the trampling sound of twenty that re-echoes in the roofs,  
Low of crest and dull of coat, wan and wild of eye,  
Through our English village the Canadians go by.

Shying at a passing cart, swerving from a car,  
Tossing up an anxious head, to flaunt a snowy star,  
Racking at a Yankee gait, reaching at the rein.  
Twenty raw Canadians are tasting life again!

Hollow-necked and hollow-flanked, lean of rib and hip.  
Strained and sick and weary with the wallow of the ship.  
Glad to smell the turf again, hear the robin's call,  
Tread again the country road they lost at Montreal!

Fate may bring them dule and woe; better steeds than they  
Sleep beside the English guns a hundred leagues away;  
But till war hath need of them lightly lie their reins.  
Softly fall the feet of them along the English lanes.

*W. H. Ogilvie*

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