

Private Horace Joseph Bench

Born June 1896. Baptism July 1896. Southam
Parents, Arthur & Louise.
Married Maggie Burrows in Devon, 1925. Maggie was born in Devon.
Horace dies 1971. Maggie dies in 1956.

His Medal Card records his Campaign Medals
From the Medal Card it can be seen that Private Bench was in the 5th Field Bakery, Army
Service Corps (ASC) Regimental No. SS/143. (SS = Supply Section.)
The ASC had many different trades with their own responsibilities i.e. Bakers, Butchers etc.
The ASC became Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) in November 1918.

Each Field Bakery was a large affair with 93 men and large ovens. *"The Field Bakery, with a total personnel of 93 was divisible into six Bakery Sections of ten ovens each, and capable of making bread to support 26,000 men."*
5th Field bakery was stationed at a base Camp at Le Havre.

The Medal card also records that Horace was transferred to the Royal Berkshire Regiment.
Regimental No. 43692.

The "Qualifying Date" for Campaign Medals on his Medal Card records that he was in
France/Belgium on 14/8/14.

His Campaign Medals were:

The Victory Medal, The British War Medal and the 1914 Star.

The Victory Medal and British War Medal were authorised and instituted in 1919.

The 1914 Star was sanctioned in 1917 with the 'Clasp and Rose' not until 1919.

It is unlikely that members of a Field Bakery stationed at Le Havre would have received the
'Clasp and Rose.' These were issued to men who engaged the enemy, or came within artillery
range, during the specified period '5th Aug – 22nd November 1914.

Both the 'Rugby Advertiser' and 'The Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser' of September
1918 report that he has been wounded and gassed.

The reports in both newspapers say that he had been serving since the commencement of the
war and wears 'the Mons Ribbon.' Actually, the medal is officially known as 'The 1914 Star'
(aka 'Mons Star')

To have been in France at such an early date in the war, only ten days after the 'Declaration,'
leads to the assumption that he would already have been involved with the military pre-
August 1914, either Regular or Territorial, although no evidence of this has been discovered.

To have been wounded and gassed he would have come 'under fire' when he was serving
with the Royal Berkshire Regiment as records show that 5th Field Bakery were located at Le
Havre for the duration, away from any fighting.

On 21st March 1918, the Germans made an all-out assault on the Western Front which was
nearly successful. Many BEF units were completely overrun with substantial losses of men.
To help 'stem the tide,' soldiers from the base units, bakers, butchers etc, were given rifles
and put into the line.

It is highly likely that this is how Horace Bench found himself in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, an infantry unit, being wounded and gassed.

Unfortunately, it seems that only his Medal Card has survived.

Research has not uncovered his Service Record, but this is not unusual as about two-thirds of these records were either destroyed or fire-damaged in the WWII London Blitz.

Neither has his Pension Records, nor record of a Silver War Badge, been found for this research project.

Both are often available for a wounded soldier, but not always.

Perhaps his medals have survived and are in a relative's possession.

Also, he couldn't be found on the 1921 Census.

However, evidence became available that led to researching emigration/immigration records. From what can be made out he left England on 4th May 1920 making for Quebec, Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railways ship 'Grampian'.

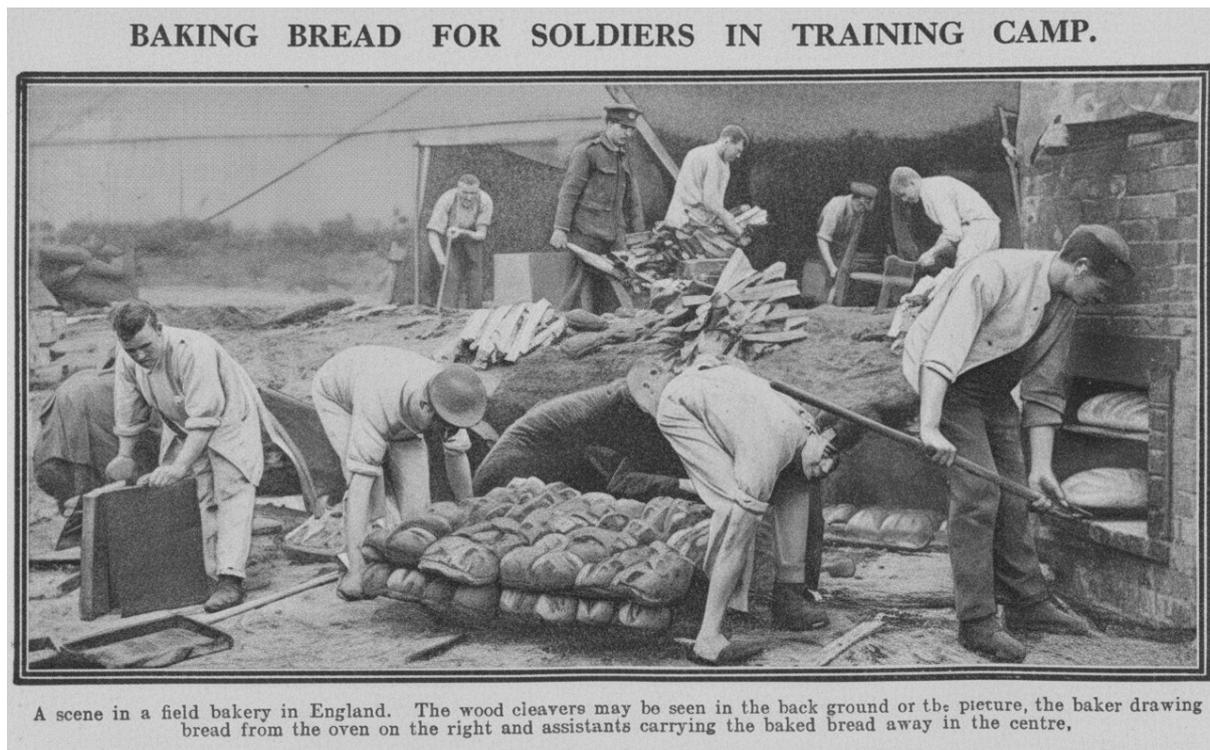
He didn't stay long. He returned Third Class on the 'Melita' also belonging to the Canadian Pacific. He listed his profession as 'Baker.'

This was on 6th August 1921.

The 1921 Census in England had been compiled on 19th June 1921, hence his omission.

After returning from Canada, and up to his death, there isn't any evidence of Horace living in Southam again.

He eventually settles in Guildford, Surrey, employed as a 'Bread Baker and Confectioner.'



The Daily Record, September 27th 1917



Imperial War Museum Photograph Q4786. Military bakers at the Bakery, Calais, March 1917