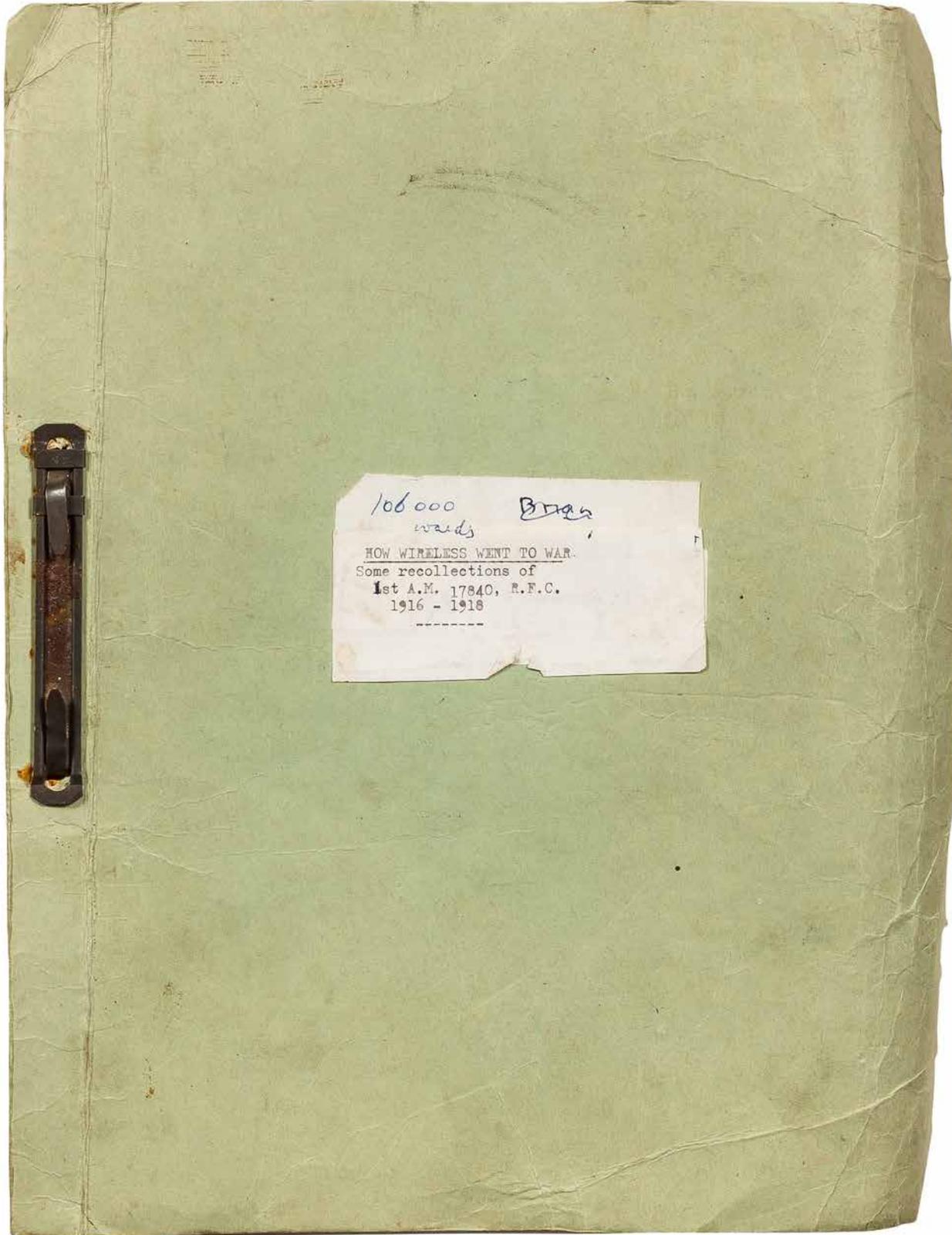


Herbert Davies Chalke

[Manuscript]: "How Wireless Went to War: Some Recollections of 1st A.M. 17840, R.F.C. 1916-1918"

England: circa 1955 - 1983

\$4000



Quarto. Photo-mechanically reproduced sheets prong and clasp bound in green wrappers. Contains roughly 106,000 words typed over 267 pages with hand edits in blue ink throughout. Very good or better with some edgewear, creasing, and small tears.

A manuscript for an unpublished book entitled *How Wireless Went to War: Some Recollections of 1st A.M. 17840, R.F.C. 1916-1918* compiled and written by Herbert Davies Chalke. It appears he began working on it around 1955 but with additional laid in material and edits dated through 1983 when he eventually died. The manuscript is split into two parts, his experiences in the war as a wireless operator, and his postwar life in the medical area. The war-era writing includes combat as well as the daily life of the soldier illustrated with photocopied photographs and images. He rights in the introduction: “this memoir has been written at the suggestion of Mr. Peter H. Liddle, the Senior Lecturer in History and the Head of Archives at the Sunderland Polytechnic, whose initiative has resulted in the setting up and the development of the Archives of the Great War.” He continues, “I had hoped that by doing so I would put on record the contribution made by the wireless operators of the Royal Flying Corps and the R.A.F. attached to the artillery, to the success of our arms in France and Belgium between 1914 and 1918. Here was an opportunity to say something – even belatedly – about the efforts of a small group of servicemen to which war historians seemed to have paid too little attention.”

Chalke was underage for enlisting when the war broke out but writes about his eagerness to join which included wearing an armband that “signified that [he] would enlist when the time came.” During this time he volunteered at the recruiting office which involved preparing recruit filings and helping them get to the train station. He went on to attend medical school, all the while waiting until he was able to enlist “before the war was over.” Once he was able to enlist he discusses his training and drilling stating that “discipline” was the key lesson to be learned. Most of the day the wireless operators were drilled on Morse code with exceptions for potato peeling, drills, and marching. After training, his unit was sent to France, then Belgium and Algeria, and he details the trip over seven pages. When they weren’t fighting the men cautiously explored the area between the Somme and Ypres, passed the time in camp singing songs such as “Lili Marlene” and “Tipperary,” as well as hymns, all in an effort to boost morale. His account discusses the wireless, relationships with other soldiers, and a close call with mustard gas. He ends this section writing, “in the years that followed there were many things to think about besides the war of 1914-18, but now and then something would happen which revived memories and turned one’s thoughts back, bringing with them almost forgotten pictures of certain scenes and events.”

The second half of the manuscript discusses Chalke’s life between the wars. According to the London archives, “he worked as a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in North Wales, Dorset, Hampstead and Camberwell from 1930-1963, and was in charge of the 1933 investigation into tuberculosis in South Wales.” This section discusses his time in Wales including cases and interactions with the local people. During World War II Chalke “served in the Royal Army Medical Corps as Assistant Director of Medical Services to the Allied Forces in North Africa, and Senior Hygiene Officer in Italy.” Following the war he returned to his post in Wales until he retired in 1963. During his retirement he devoted his time to studying alcoholism and “was one of the founders and the first editor of *The Bulletin of Alcoholism*. Additionally laid in are three letters, two from Chalke’s literary agent and the editor of *The Practitioner*, and another to Chalke’s wife sending condolences after his death.

An in depth account of a young doctor’s time as a wireless operator with the Flying Corps as well as his post war career as a doctor. [BTC#418050]

HOW WIRELESS WENT TO WAR

Some recollections of a Wireless
Operator, in the Royal Flying Corps.
in the Great War, 1914-1918

BY

1st A.M. 17840. R.F.C.



R.F.C.
FARNBOROUGH
DEC 1915

24th April 1980.

Dr. Hugh L'Etang,
Editor,
THE PRACTITIONER,
30, Calderwood Street,
London, SE18. 6QH.

Dear Dr. L'Etang,

I have been away, so please accept my apologies for not answering your letter of 1st April. I am naturally delighted you are prepared to read Chalkie's m/s, which I have had copied and which is with this letter.

It seems to me that it would be appropriate to have contemporary photographs of the scenes and events he describes and we are searching for these now.

Parts of it are rather heavily talking medical "shop", yet the book as a whole would, I am sure, appeal to a wider audience. Would you give me your view? Perhaps a little 'editing' would make these passages of universal interest yet retain their interest for doctors. Your advice will be most valuable.

I look forward to hearing from you when you have read the book.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



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Mrs K Chalke
32 Severn Road
Porthcawl
Glamorgan S Wales

Your reference

Our reference

D/DMS(B)29/13/MS2B

Date

26 October 1983

Dear Mrs Chalke

I am to thank you very much for your letter of 19 October in reply to ours of 12 October in the matter of a Commission Parchment for your late Husband's Commission as Lieutenant Royal Army Medical Corps (TA) on 13 April 1939.

I am very sorry to hear of the death of your Husband: please accept my sincere condolences on behalf of the British Army.

I am pleased indeed that you have decided to accept this document (you are in perfect right to do so) - it is now enclosed with our compliments and very best wishes. Would you be so kind as to acknowledge safe receipt of this Parchment in due course.

Yours very sincerely

6 Lieutenant General
Military Secretary