

Beate Dennis

remembers her Grandfather August von Hagen - 11/02/1890 - 18/03/1954

My grandfather served in the German army during the First World War in Belgium and France and fought, amongst others, in the battle of Ypres.

Neither my parents nor my grandparents ever talked about the wars. I don't know much about them and had to piece together a lot of the information from old photos, diaries and letters.

One story, however, I was told many times:

It was one Christmas Eve, my grandfather was in charge of his German regiment, and armed with a bottle or a hip flask he walked towards the demarcation line in the evening. At the very same time, the commanding officer of the French troops happened to do exactly the same and there the two of them met. My grandfather was fluent in seven languages, and they started talking to each other. Both sides agreed that the war was madness (the actual word used was the French word (with apologies) 'merde'), allegedly they finished the bottle, exchanged details and when they parted, they promised each other that the winner of the war would come and visit the loser.



My grandfather was one of the fortunate ones who returned home from the war. After three weeks the door bell rang and there was Monsieur Emile Barbier who had kept his word.

That was the beginning of a truly wonderful lifelong friendship, and as a token of his gratitude and appreciation my grandfather, who was a businessman, made M Barbier his exclusive agent in France. They met regularly, my grandfather went to France (Grasse) and M Barbier often came to see my grandfather.



After his death the friendship was transferred to my parents, and I fondly remember a most wonderful holiday with my parents and my sister in Grasse.

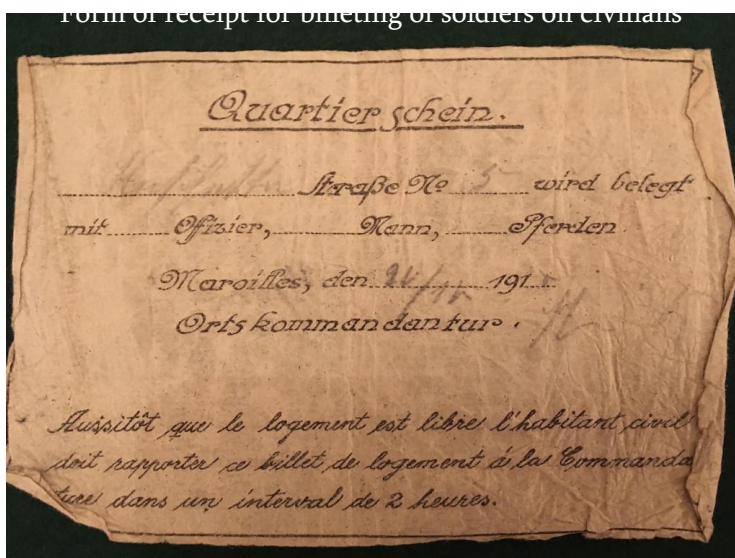
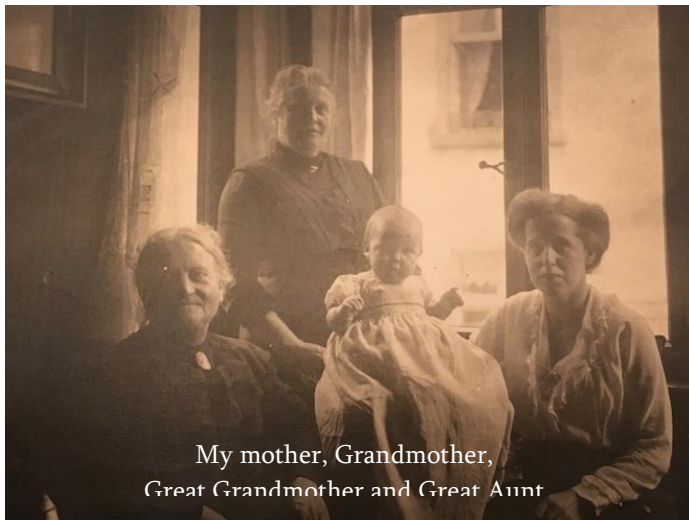
During this meeting on Christmas Eve my grandfather and M Barbier also agreed that their troops should have a game of football on Christmas Day which they did. I always thought this was a wonderful, special and totally unique thing to do. Nobody can imagine my disbelief when I saw exactly this played out in the film 'The War Horse', how could anybody dare pinch my grandfather's idea? It must have happened more than once!

M.Barbier's biography can be found on salvatore.sutera-sardo.pagesperso-orange.fr/Acceuil/presentation.htm Présentation - Témoignage photographique du Lnt Emile Barbier:

And also on <http://salvatore.sutera-sardo.pagesperso-orange.fr/Accueil/Biographie.htm> - Lieutenant Emile BARBIER - (1888-1969).

25 October 2018

August von Hagen - Photographs



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