

## William Silas Woodhams – Training Reserve

From the following certificate in his possessions we know that William attended a Sergeant's training course at the Scottish Command's NCO's School between 8<sup>th</sup> July and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1916. He came out of that course with a 'Very Good' certificate, recommendation for promotion to Sergeant and scores which would enable him to be an instructor in Drill and an assistant instructor in Musketry.

*Very Good* Certificate.

**SCOTTISH COMMAND N.C.O.'s SCHOOL.**

REPORT on No. *56125* *1668* *Russell Woodhams W.*  
*27th* Bn. *Royal Fusiliers* Regiment,

attended a course of instruction at the Scottish Command N.C.O.'s School from *8/7/16* to *2/9/16*

	Marks obtained.	Max.
Drill	<i>16</i>	20
Musketry.	<i>14</i>	20
Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training	<i>12</i>	20
Conduct and General Ability	<i>8</i>	10
Written Examination	<i>16</i>	30

His Notebook was *Good*

Based on the foregoing, this N.C.O. is recommended for promotion to *Sergeant*  
not recommended for further promotion at present.

*R.B. Harley* Capt.  
Commandant, Major,  
Scottish Command N.C.O.'s School.

CASTLEHILL SCHOOL,  
EDINBURGH,  
*2/9/16*

NOTES.—1. These certificates are classified—  
Special.  
Good.  
Fair.

2. Candidates who obtained 14 Marks or over in Drill or Musketry or Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training, are considered fit to act as assistant-instructors in such subjects.  
Candidates who obtained 16 Marks or over in any one of these subjects are considered fully qualified to instruct in such subjects.

3. The written examination included questions on—  
Map Reading. Sanitation.  
First Aid. N.C.O.'s Duties.

William Silas Woodhams Sergeant's Course 1916

From his Medal Roll we know that William left France on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916 but he was not due in Edinburgh until 8<sup>th</sup> July. There is no record of what he was doing between those dates, maybe he was attending other training courses.

Initially I assumed that William returned to the front once he completed his Sergeant's course in Edinburgh. But then I came across a couple of postcards addressed to him in 1917 that indicated this was not the case. The page from his Medal Roll confirms that he didn't return to France until 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1918 when he was with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Fusiliers. Incidentally Eric had been discharged from the Army in April 1917 as being unfit for service due to his injuries. Undoubtedly he was suffering from what we would now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

From the postcards and the results from his Sergeants course we can put together some idea of what William was doing between September 1916 and January 1918.

POST CARD.

THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN HERE.

No 56125  
Lt Spt W. Woodham  
F. Coy  
103rd I. R. Batt.  
Chocolate Factory  
Portobello  
Edinburgh.

The other side is my address  
for 14 days - 14 days!  
The weather, hills & sea. A.B.  
can be known as a very  
already - many hours  
for every 100 ft. that will  
give and for. Cattle -  
there are something like 38  
of no size - dense some  
have having a great time  
the morning air. The trees  
is delicious. Good also are  
at the Chocolate Factory.

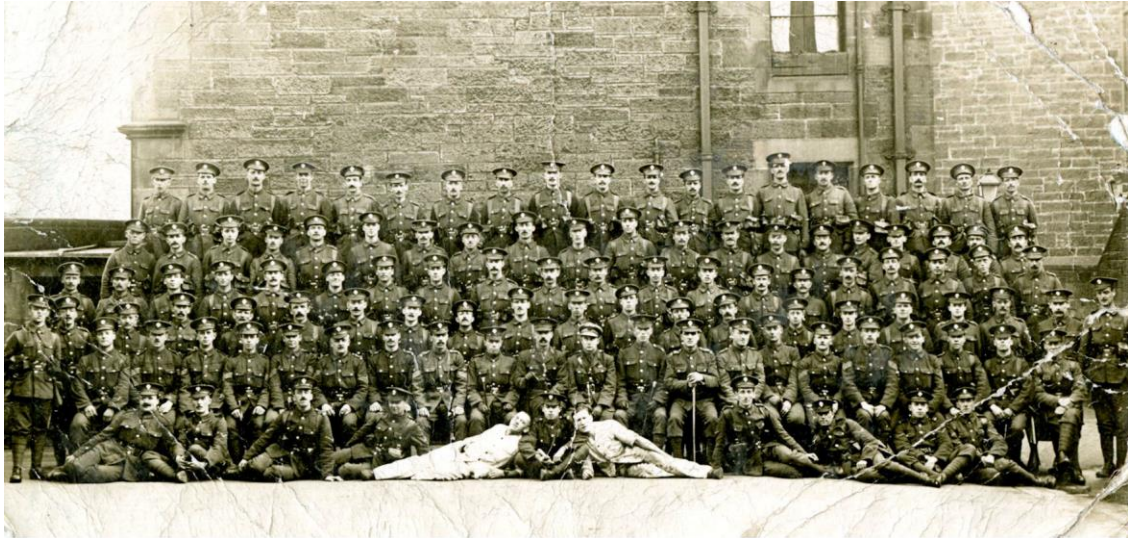
A photograph of a large, multi-story red brick building with arched windows and a decorative cornice, identified as the former site of the Glasgow School of Art. The building features a prominent external staircase on the left side and is situated on a street corner.

weight of heavy guns that could threaten Leith Docks and the Rosyth Naval Base. These threats were investigated but no action was taken although the building was taken over by the military and used as accommodation for thousands of troops during the war. More detail can be found at <https://www.portobelloheritagetrust.co.uk/page49.html>.

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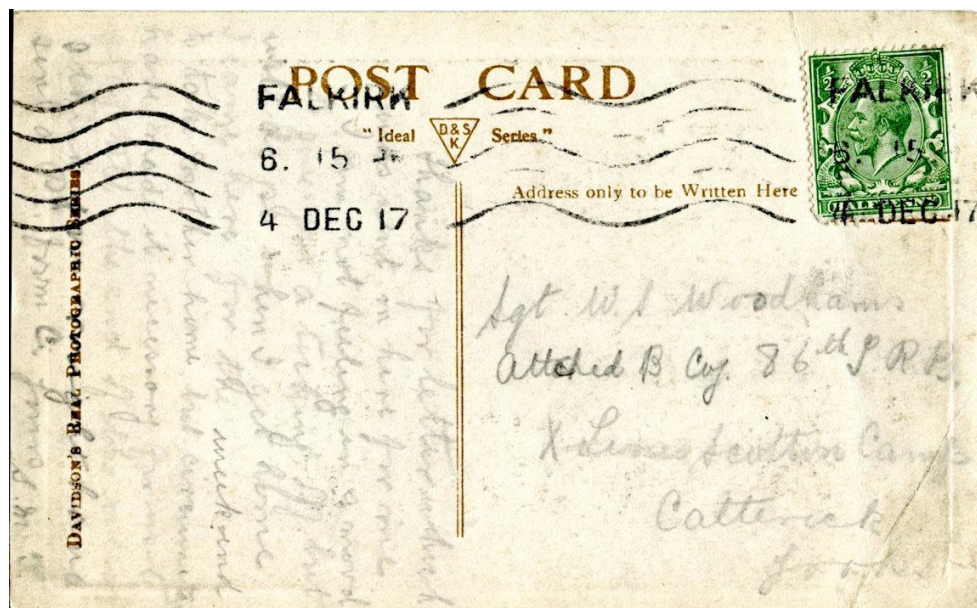


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Scottish Command NCOs School, Edinburgh

The photo above is from William's possessions and like the Clipstone photo it appears to have been carried with him on his person judging by its crumpled state. I believe William is the second person from the right in the front row seated on chairs. As in the Clipstone and Abbey Manor photos he is wearing his cap with the peak well down over his eyes. The men in this row all appear to have sergeant's stripes. So I assume they are the instructors on this particular course. In which case it would have been taken at some time when he was himself an instructor.



From the second postcard we can see that by December 1917 William had become attached to the 86<sup>th</sup> Training Reserve Battalion which was part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Training Reserve Brigade and formed from the 31<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Northumberland Fusiliers. According to the Long Long Trail website, which is another very useful source of information, *"The 20th TR Brigade also absorbed the 33rd and 34th Northumberland Fusiliers and the 13th Durham Light Infantry. By May 1917 the brigade had moved to Catterick and became dedicated to receiving recruits who would be allotted to the Machine Gun Corps. It moved again, to Clipstone, in early 1918 and was then retitled as 1st Training Brigade, Machine Gun Corps."* So that ties in with the address on the postcard.

As an aside the postcard appears to be from a close friend with the initials SMK. I have no idea who SMK is but he appears to be a relatively close friend. It's difficult to read the pencil writing but this is what I can make out.

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*Thanks for letter which was sent on here for me. I am not feeling in a mood to give you a ticking off but will do so when I get home. I came here for the weekend to take mother home but circumstances have made it necessary for me to stay till the end of the week. I thought that you might have sent a PC from C(atterick). Yours S. M. K.*

The postcard is from Falkirk so I assume this is from a male friend who William had met in the Edinburgh area, but what he deserved to be ticked off about remains a mystery.

It may be that during this period William spent some time at Chisledon Camp near Swindon because his possessions include a postcard of the Sergeant's Quarters at that camp and he would only have been able to stay there after he had qualified as a Sergeant.



Postcard of Chisledon Camp, near Swindon, Wiltshire