

COMING HOME 2

For the greater part of this year the news has been dominated by the crisis in the Falkland Islands. This summer, after the triumphs, tragedies and dramatic events of the conflict, the whole country was united in welcoming home those men and women who had been half way round the world in the service of their country. In towns and villages across the nation flags were out, street parties held, hands shaken, speeches made and presentations given in honour of the local servicemen back from the war.

Eighty years ago another bloody conflict, the Boer War, ended in May 1902. Since the war and its aftermath is a recurring theme of history, it seems appropriate, in this year of the Falklands, to record another homecoming which took place at that time – the return to Brigstock of Private William Ross, who, like his counterparts today, had gone thousands of miles to fight for his country. Brigstock welcomed him home in style, as the following report from the Kettering Leader of July 1902 makes clear.

Friday 18th July 1902

RETURN OF A BRIGSTOCK MAN FROM THE WAR

On Tuesday evening the village of Brigstock was en fête on the occasion of the return from the war of another inhabitant in the person of Private William Ross of the First Gordon Highlanders, who was called out at the commencement. Private Ross returned in the same ship as Lord Kitchener and landed at Southampton on Saturday. As soon as the opportunity arose, Private Ross wired to his wife of his safe arrival and that he would return to Brigstock on Tuesday evening. Mr F. J. Steward, having been acquainted with the fact, at once began to arrange for a welcome home. Mr Charles Spencer, as on two previous occasions, volunteered his carriage to convey the wife and children to Kettering to meet Private Ross, who arrived there at six-thirty p.m. The carriage was met outside the village of Brigstock by a contingent of mounted men, marshalled by Mr F. J. Steward and followed by the Brigstock Band. The horse was taken out and ropes attached to the carriage. The sight was an imposing one. The carriage contained the soldier, completely bronzed and dressed in his highland costume, accompanied by his wife and three children, one being an eighteen month old babe which was born after his departure to the war; and a comrade who had returned three weeks previously. (Private John Adams of the Northamptonshire Regiment dressed in khaki with his wife). The band played first 'Soldiers of the King', followed by many other lovely airs. The carriage was first drawn to the man's cottage where his kit was soon deposited and then proceeded through the whole of the village, halting here and there to receive a word of welcome from his many friends and neighbours. At the Market Square the procession halted and was addressed by Mr F. J. Steward who said that everyone in the village was glad and rejoiced to see their noble friend and soldier safe back to his wife and family, having passed through many dangers during his long service to Queen, King and Country. The band then played the National Anthem. Mr Abbott also addressed a few words of welcome and Private Ross suitably replied and especially thanked all for their kindness shown to his wife and family while he

had been away. Mrs Ross also returned thanks. The procession then called on its way at the house of Mr Jabez Rowell, Mr Nicholls, the Vicarage and Mr T. Beeby who welcomed Ross and spoke of the honour he had done to his country. Mr and Mrs F.J. Steward kindly entertained Mr and Mrs Ross at tea. Musical honours were later accorded Mr and Mrs Steward and also Mr Chas Spencer for the free use of his carriage. Collections were made in the village and the money given to Mr Ross.

William Simon

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