

Bugler Hodge

A recent enquiry enabled us to find out about one of Saltash's characters.

Ernest Hodge was born in 1875 and spent most of his life in Saltash. When he died in 1961 aged 85 it was said that everyone in Saltash knew him. He was the last survivor of the eight local men who, in 1900, joined the Volunteer Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to serve in the Boer War.

At 5 feet 2 ½ inches Ernest was not tall enough to join as a fighting soldier but he did qualify to serve as a bugler. Times were very different then and the people of Saltash were very proud of their men who volunteered to serve in distant parts. His departure was delayed so that the parishioners of St Stephens-by-Saltash could present him with a silver-plated bugle as a mark of their appreciation. Ever since that time Ernest was known as Bugler Hodge.



May 1901, just after the return from South Africa – Ernest Hodge – front centre

In the First World War he volunteered again and joined the Royal Horse Artillery, taking part in the landing at Gallipoli. He again volunteered in the Second World War when he joined the Saltash Home Guard. He helped to guard the Royal Albert Bridge

before he was 'gently' retired. Shortly before he died Ernest said to a newspaper "I reckon they thought I'd done enough volunteering".

It was a tradition that, at least once during their term of office, the mayor would visit Ernest to be shown his most treasured possession, the silver bugle. Ernest's chief regret was that because of a chest complaint he could no longer play his beloved bugle.



Time: the era of the Boer War, 1899-1901. Place: Saltash. A young man, Ernest Hodge, is leaving home to join the troops at the front. But the citizens of Saltash are proud of Ernest and they delay him long enough to present a silver bugle inscribed with their feelings. Above: 85-year-old Mr. Ernest Hodge, of 18, Warfelton Crescent, Saltash, a five-medal veteran, holds the bugle that he prizes so much today.

At his funeral in December 1961 there were over 200 mourners, including the mayor, Alderman Maurice Huggins. The bugle, which had been silent for 30 years, was removed from its velvet lined box and a Royal Marine played the Last Post and Reveille as standards from the DCLI Old Comrades Association and South African War Veterans were lowered.

Terry