



History Recon Research Enquiry

Name of enquirer	Simon Smith
Name of subject	Nicholas Jackson
Army number	12066 M/354137
Regiment	Coldstream Guards Army Service Corps

1. Enlistment and Training



Before enlisting, Nicholas worked as a blacksmith striker, an occupation involving the heavy manual labour of assisting a blacksmith in forging ironwork. His next of kin is identified as his father, Alfred Jackson, of 59 Devonshire Street, Accrington (which is still standing and can be seen in this picture), and record that he was of the Roman Catholic faith.

On 9th September 1914, barely five weeks after Britain declared war on Germany, Nicholas travelled to Accrington to attest for military service. Rather than joining one of

the newly-raised Service Battalions (such as the famous Accrington Pals), he enlisted into the Coldstream Guards, one of the oldest and most prestigious regiments in the British Army. On enlistment he was allocated the regimental number 12066 and enlisted for the duration of the war.

His medical examination recorded him as standing 5 feet 8½ inches tall, weighing 132 pounds, with a chest measurement of 36 inches. He was described as having blue eyes, brown hair and a fresh complexion. These details, although administrative in nature, provide one of the few surviving physical descriptions of Nicholas before his wartime service.

Three days later, on 12th September 1914, he reported to the Foot Guards Depot at Caterham, Surrey. Caterham served as the principal training establishment for the Brigade of Guards, where recruits underwent their initial military instruction before joining operational battalions. Here Nicholas would have completed recruit training, including drill, musketry, physical training, route marching and field exercises, while also learning the



exceptionally high standards of discipline expected within the Guards regiments. Training here was notoriously intense and Caterham was nicknamed “Little Sparta”.

The surviving records show that during December 1914 Nicholas was stationed at Victoria Barracks, Windsor. It was here that the only significant disciplinary offence recorded during his early military service occurred. Having been granted leave, he failed to return at the required time, remaining absent until 10:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve. He was subsequently charged with overstaying his leave and awarded three days' confined to barracks together with the forfeiture of three days' pay.

W. P. Griffiths & Sons Ltd., Printers, Old Bailey. [226] W3520/221 600m 10/14m .55 Forms B. 120 2a.

REGIMENTAL CONDUCT SHEET.

Army Form B. 120.

ARMY 8 CORPS (M.T.)

Regiment of GOLDSTREAM GUARDS.

Regimental Number and Name: 12006 Nicholas Jackson Attested 9-9-1914. Joined 2-9-1914.

Number of sheets (in words) 1
Signature of C.O. or Adjutant: Adjutant Bn. Coldstream Guards Regiment.

Place	Date of Offence	Rank	OFFENCE	Names of Witnesses	PUNISHMENT awarded	Date of award, or of order dispensing with trial	By whom	Date of Commencement	Date of Expiration	REMARKS
Windsor	21 st Dec	Pvt	2 days 22 hours absent over leave from 12 noon till 10.30 p.m. 24 th Dec	Lt W.D. Smith Lgt G. Taylor Lgt G. Jackson	7 days L.C.O.	26 th Dec	Major Hon G.W. Buckton	26 th Dec	3 rd Jan	Forfeit 3 days pay by R.D.

By early February 1915 Nicholas had successfully completed his training. On 9th February 1915 he embarked from Southampton for France, where he was posted to the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards. The battalion formed part of the Guards Division and had already been serving on the Western Front for several months. On 16th February 1915, the battalion records confirm that Nicholas joined the unit in the field, marking the beginning of almost two years of front-line service in France and Belgium.

2. The 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards and the Western Front

At the time Nicholas joined, the 2nd Battalion had already experienced six months of campaigning on the Western Front. Having landed in France during August 1914 as part of the original British Expeditionary Force, the battalion had fought in the Retreat from Mons, the First Battle of the Marne, the First Battle of the Aisne and the First Battle of Ypres. Like much of the British Army, it had suffered significant casualties during these early campaigns, and Nicholas arrived as one of many reinforcements required to restore the battalion's fighting strength.

The 2nd Battalion formed part of the 4th (Guards) Brigade, serving alongside the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards, the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards and the 1st Battalion Irish Guards. During 1915, these battalions formed one of the British Army's most experienced infantry formations, frequently being called upon to hold important sectors of the line or participate in offensive operations.

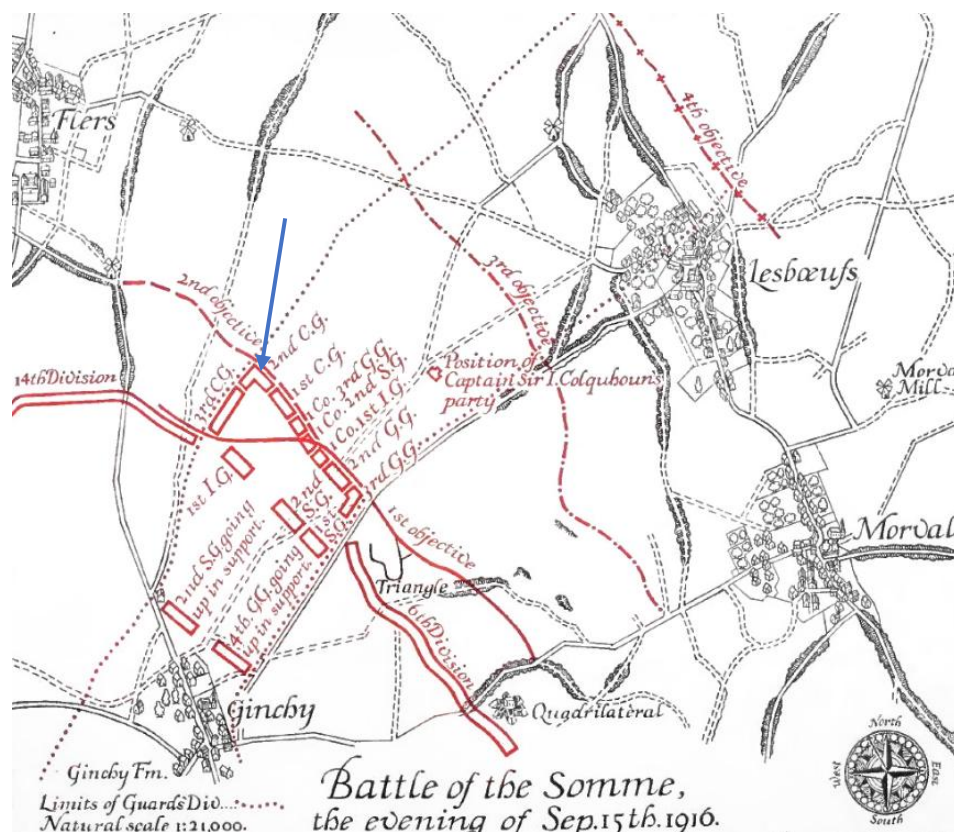


For Nicholas, the transition from training in England to active service in France would have been immediate. Following arrival at one of the British Base Depots, he was processed through the reinforcement system before joining the battalion in the field. From that point onwards he became part of the battalion's routine of trench warfare.

Life on the Western Front rarely consisted of continuous fighting. Instead, battalions rotated through a regular cycle of front-line trenches, reserve positions and periods away from the line. Whilst in the trenches, much of a soldier's time was occupied maintaining defensive positions, repairing barbed wire, improving trenches, carrying supplies, standing sentry and undertaking patrols into No Man's Land. Even during comparatively quiet periods, artillery fire, snipers and trench mortars ensured that casualties remained a constant feature of daily life.

When withdrawn from the front line, the battalion did not rest completely. Training, route marching, weapon maintenance and working parties continued almost without interruption. The British Army continually sought to improve the effectiveness of its infantry, particularly as new weapons and tactics were introduced during the course of the war.

Although Nicholas's surviving service papers contain relatively few entries during this period, this should not be interpreted as inactivity. Administrative records generally only note significant events such as promotions, transfers, disciplinary matters, wounds or hospital admissions. The absence of entries throughout much of 1915 and the first half of 1916 simply reflects that he remained continuously with his battalion, carrying out the demanding routine expected of every Guardsman on the Western Front.





During this period the battalion participated in numerous operations across France and Flanders, including periods in the Ypres Salient and the Loos sector. These months provided Nicholas with invaluable experience as an infantry soldier, but also exposed him to the constant dangers of trench warfare. By the summer of 1916, the British Army was preparing for its largest offensive of the war—the Battle of the Somme.

The Somme offensive represented a fundamental change in the scale of British operations. Rather than limited attacks against individual trench systems, the offensive sought to break through the German defensive line along a broad front. Throughout July and August 1916, additional formations were committed as the battle developed. Among them was the Guards Division, including the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards.

By September 1916, Nicholas had served approximately nineteen months at the front. He had progressed from an inexperienced recruit to a seasoned infantryman within one of Britain's elite regiments. The battalion now prepared to take part in the next phase of the Somme offensive, an attack centred upon the villages of Flers, Courcelette and Ginchy (see map above).

The battle that followed would prove to be one of the defining moments of Nicholas Jackson's military career. It would also leave the first permanent mark of his service, as the surviving records show that during the fighting he became one of many Guardsmen wounded in action.

3. The Battle of Flers-Courcelette and Wounding

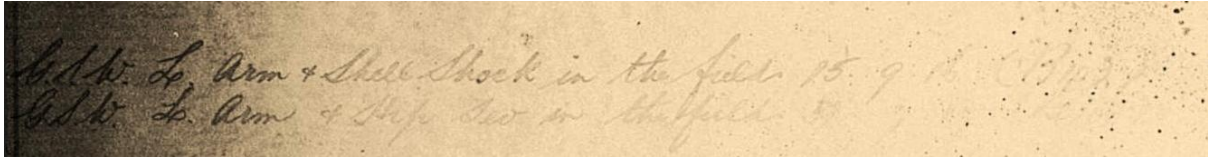
The attack commenced before dawn following an intense artillery bombardment. The Guards Division advanced alongside other British formations against heavily defended German positions around Ginchy and Flers. The battle has since become famous as the first occasion on which tanks were used in combat. Although only a small number reached their objectives, their appearance marked the beginning of a new era in modern warfare. For the infantry, however, success still depended upon advancing across open ground under machine-gun and artillery fire.

The battalion war diary records heavy fighting throughout the day as the Guards attacked strongly defended trench systems and consolidated newly captured positions. Casualties were significant, with officers and men killed and wounded during the advance. Among those casualties was Private Nicholas Jackson.

His casualty record states that he sustained a gunshot wound to his arm while serving in the field. He was also suffering from shell shock, demonstrating that, alongside his physical injury, he had been exposed to the intense bombardment characteristic of the Somme fighting. At the time, shell shock was a poorly understood condition encompassing both psychological trauma and the physical effects of prolonged exposure to artillery fire.



Modern understanding would recognise many such cases as post-traumatic stress injuries or blast-related trauma.



Immediately after being wounded on 15th September 1916, he was admitted to No. 14 Field Ambulance. Despite its name, a Field Ambulance was not a vehicle but a mobile medical unit positioned behind the fighting. Here wounded men received emergency treatment before being sorted according to the severity of their injuries and evacuated further to the rear.

By 24th September 1916, Nicholas had reached one of the British General Hospitals at Rouen. Situated on the Lines of Communication, Rouen served as one of the principal medical centres supporting the British Expeditionary Force. Thousands of wounded soldiers passed through its hospitals during the war, receiving surgery, specialist treatment and assessment before either returning to duty or being evacuated to Britain.

Only three days later, on 27th September 1916, the records show that he was discharged from hospital to the Base Depot. This indicates that his injuries, although serious enough to require hospital treatment, were not considered permanently disabling. Rather than being invalided immediately to England, he entered the reinforcement system where recovering soldiers awaited further medical assessment before returning to their units.

On 29th September 1916, Nicholas rejoined the 3rd Guards Base Depot at Le Havre. The Guards Base Depot acted as the holding and reinforcement organisation for Guards regiments serving on the Western Front. Men recovering from wounds, sickness or leave passed through the depot before being posted back to their battalions as replacements became available.

Eventually, on 18th March 1917, the records confirm that he was once again posted to the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards, returning to active service with the battalion after approximately six months away from the front line.

Nicholas's return to the 2nd Battalion demonstrates that both the Army and its medical authorities considered him sufficiently recovered to resume front-line infantry service. Unfortunately, his return to the trenches would prove temporary. Within only a few months, the surviving records show that he would once again become a casualty of the Western Front, an event that ultimately ended his career as a Guardsman and led to his transfer into the Army Service Corps.

4. Return to the Front and Transfer to the Army Service Corps



Although the surviving service papers contain few entries covering the following months, the battalion was once again heavily engaged. During 1917 the 2nd Battalion participated in operations associated with the Arras Offensive before later moving north into the Ypres Salient, where the Third Battle of Ypres—better known as Passchendaele—would dominate the latter half of the year.

The battalion returned to the front during one of the most demanding periods of the war. Continuous artillery bombardments, difficult ground conditions and determined German resistance produced heavy casualties amongst both officers and men. Having already survived one wound during the Somme campaign, Nicholas once again found himself serving in the front line during a major British offensive.

On 15th July 1917, Nicholas was again admitted from the field suffering a gunshot wound to his left arm together with the effects of shell shock. It is unclear where he was at this time as the battalion were supposed to be positioned far behind the lines, out of artillery reach. However, many men were left at the front for a variety of reasons.

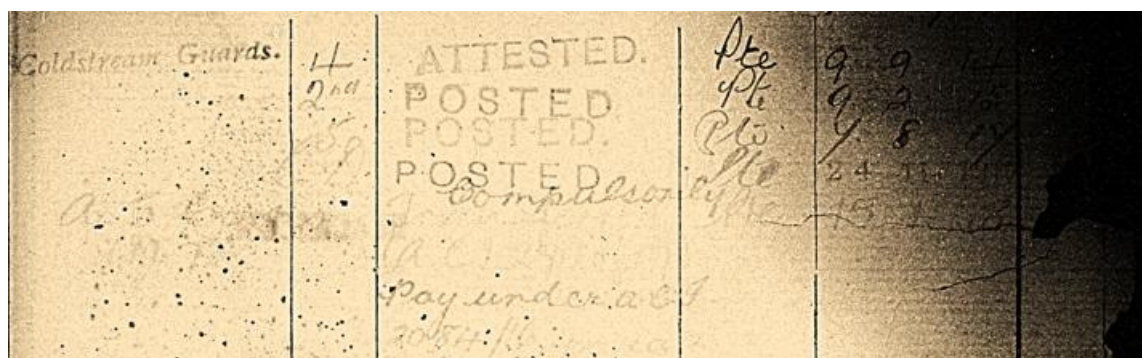
This represented Nicholas' second recorded combat wound in less than twelve months and confirmed that he had once again become a casualty whilst serving with the 2nd Battalion. Unlike his previous injury, this wound effectively brought his infantry service to an end.

After receiving initial treatment in France, Nicholas was evacuated through the British Army's medical system before being returned to England. His service papers record that on 7th August 1917 he was admitted to the Ontario Military Hospital, Orpington, Kent.

Originally established as the Ontario Military Hospital by the Canadian Government, the hospital specialised in the treatment of wounded soldiers evacuated from France. By the time Nicholas arrived, thousands of casualties from the Western Front had already passed through its wards. His admission confirms that his injuries required prolonged treatment rather than the shorter period of recovery associated with his first wound.

The records indicate that Nicholas remained at Ontario Military Hospital for approximately seven weeks. During this period he underwent treatment before eventually being discharged on 25th September 1917 and granted a period of convalescent leave.

Although discharged from hospital, his military career was about to change significantly. On 24th November 1917, the service papers record that Nicholas was compulsorily transferred





from the Coldstream Guards to the Army Service Corps (Mechanical Transport). At the same time he was allocated a new service number, M/354137.

This administrative entry is particularly significant. Unlike a voluntary transfer, the records specifically state that the move was compulsory, indicating that the Army no longer considered Nicholas medically suitable for continued front-line infantry service.

By late 1917 the British Army had developed an increasingly sophisticated system for retaining experienced soldiers whose wounds prevented them from returning to the infantry. Rather than discharging such men, many were transferred into branches where their knowledge and experience remained valuable. The Mechanical Transport section of the Army Service Corps was one such organisation.

The Army Service Corps had become one of the largest and most important support organisations within the British Expeditionary Force. Its Mechanical Transport companies operated thousands of motor lorries, ambulances, staff cars and specialist vehicles responsible for moving ammunition, food, engineering stores and reinforcements from railheads to the front line. As the war became increasingly mechanised, experienced soldiers capable of undertaking transport duties were in constant demand.

Nicholas's transfer therefore did not represent the end of his military service but rather the beginning of a new role. Having already served over three years with one of Britain's elite infantry battalions and survived two separate wounds, he was now being redirected into an organisation whose work underpinned every major British operation on the Western Front.

The final administrative entry on his Coldstream Guards records is signed by the regiment's Adjutant, formally ending Nicholas Jackson's service as a Guardsman. It marked the close of a chapter that had begun with his enlistment at Accrington in September 1914 and had taken him through recruit training, almost three years of front-line infantry service and two separate combat wounds.

His future military career would now continue under a different cap badge, in a very different role, but one that remained essential to the successful prosecution of the war. The surviving records allow that next phase of his service to be reconstructed in remarkable detail.

5. Service with the Army Service Corps

The records show that by January 1918 Nicholas was serving with the 16th Company, Army Service Corps, based at the Eltham Sub-Depot in south-east London.

Eltham formed part of the Army Service Corps' administrative network, processing newly transferred personnel before allocating them to operational companies. Soldiers arriving from other regiments underwent further assessment, administrative processing and, where necessary, additional training before taking up their new appointments.



One particularly interesting document survives from this period.

On 27th January 1918, the depot adjutant noted that Nicholas's medical classification had not been entered correctly in his records. An instruction was therefore issued requiring him to parade before the Medical Officer at 2:30 p.m. so that his physical category could be formally assessed.

Although a relatively routine administrative entry, it demonstrates the Army's careful management of wounded personnel. Before Nicholas could be employed within the Mechanical Transport branch, the Army needed to establish exactly what duties he remained physically capable of undertaking.

Two days later, on 29th January 1918, Nicholas appeared before the Medical Officer.

The examination recorded the lasting effects of his wartime service. His records refer to the gunshot wound to his left arm together with the continuing effects of shell shock, while later medical entries also suggest ongoing problems affecting his hearing. These were not simply historical injuries but conditions still influencing his fitness for military duty many months after he had left the infantry.

Despite these limitations, the examining authorities considered Nicholas fit for further service within the Army Service Corps. On 1st February 1918, he was formally posted to 1050 Company, Mechanical Transport, Army Service Corps, based at Aldershot.

By 1918 Aldershot had become one of the principal centres for Mechanical Transport within the British Army. As motor vehicles increasingly replaced horse transport, the Army required thousands of trained drivers, mechanics and transport personnel to support military operations. Mechanical Transport companies were responsible for moving almost every type of military supply, including food, ammunition, engineering stores and personnel. Although less visible than the infantry fighting in the trenches, their work was essential to maintaining the British Army in the field.

Like many men transferred from the infantry following wounds, he was likely employed in whatever capacity his medical classification permitted. This may have included transport duties, depot administration, vehicle maintenance support or other responsibilities appropriate to his physical condition.

During this period there is little evidence of disciplinary problems or further operational postings. Instead, the surviving records portray a soldier continuing his military service while managing the lasting consequences of his wartime injuries.

One further medical episode occurred on 7th March 1918, when Nicholas reported sick whilst serving at Aldershot.

The examining doctor recorded problems affecting his ears and referred him directly to a specialist at the Cambridge Military Hospital, one of the Army's principal military hospitals. Although the papers do not specify the precise diagnosis, the referral suggests that his



symptoms required specialist assessment rather than routine treatment. Given his previous exposure to heavy artillery fire and documented shell shock, it is possible that these complaints were associated with blast-related injury sustained during his service on the Western Front.

Following treatment, Nicholas returned to duty and continued serving with the Army Service Corps for the remainder of the war.

By the time the Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918, Nicholas had served continuously in the British Army for more than four years. His military career had taken him from the elite infantry of the Coldstream Guards, through two serious combat wounds, to a new role supporting the Army's increasingly mechanised transport service. Although no longer serving in the front line, he remained a serving soldier throughout the final months of the conflict, contributing to the enormous logistical organisation that sustained the British Army until the end of hostilities.

The war may have ended in November 1918, but Nicholas's military service did not. Like hundreds of thousands of other soldiers, he remained in uniform whilst the Army undertook the enormous task of demobilising its wartime forces. His final months of service would bring one last disciplinary offence, a prolonged spell in hospital, and eventually his return to civilian life after almost four and a half years in uniform.

6. Final Service and Demobilisation

By the beginning of 1919, the surviving records show Nicholas serving with 704 Company, Mechanical Transport, Army Service Corps. The papers do not record when he transferred from 1050 Company, but by January he was attached to 704 Company whilst awaiting his eventual release from military service.

One final disciplinary entry appears during this period.

On 1st January 1919, Nicholas was granted a pass but failed to return by the required time of 11:00 p.m. Instead, he remained absent until 9:00 p.m. on 2nd January, an absence of approximately 22 hours. The offence was recorded as Absent Off Pass, a relatively common disciplinary matter during the months immediately following the Armistice when many soldiers were awaiting demobilisation.

Unlike more serious offences committed during wartime, the punishment awarded was simply Admonishment. This was the lightest formal punishment available under military discipline and amounted to an official warning. The comparatively lenient sentence suggests that the offence was not considered serious and had no lasting impact upon his military record.

Only two weeks later, Nicholas's service took another unexpected turn.



On 16th January 1919, he was admitted to Merryflats Military Hospital, Glasgow, suffering from Acute Laryngitis.

Unlike his earlier admissions, which had resulted from wounds received in action, this illness was unrelated to combat. Acute laryngitis causes inflammation of the voice box and throat and was a common condition during the winter months, particularly amongst soldiers living in crowded military accommodation. Despite its comparatively routine nature, the illness was sufficiently severe to require hospital treatment.

Nicholas remained at Merryflats for 41 days, finally being discharged on 26th February 1919.

Before leaving hospital he underwent a final medical assessment and was classified as Class A, confirming that he was once again considered medically fit for military duty. This classification is particularly noteworthy given his previous history of two gunshot wounds, shell shock and earlier specialist treatment. Despite these earlier injuries, the Army now regarded him as fit to complete his remaining period of service before discharge.

Following his release from hospital, Nicholas returned briefly to military administration before being posted to the Southport Command Depot on 9th March 1919.

Southport was one of several large demobilisation centres established to process soldiers leaving the Army. Here, men completed their final medical examinations, returned government equipment, settled outstanding accounts and received the documents necessary to return to civilian life.

The final medical papers preserved within Nicholas's service record provide one last insight into his wartime experience.

Despite almost four and a half years of military service, two periods of wounding, documented shell shock and continuing medical treatment during his transfer to the Army Service Corps, Nicholas signed the declaration stating that he did not claim to be suffering from a disability attributable to his military service.

It is impossible to know his reasons for making this decision. Some soldiers believed their injuries were insufficient to justify a pension, while others wished to avoid further medical examinations and administrative delays. Many simply wanted to return home as quickly as possible after years of military service. Whatever his motivation, the declaration formally ended any immediate claim for a disability pension arising from his wartime injuries.

On 28th March 1919, Nicholas Jackson was formally discharged from the British Army.

His military career had lasted almost four years and seven months. During that time he had volunteered within weeks of Britain's declaration of war, served with one of the Army's elite infantry regiments, fought on the Western Front with the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards, been wounded twice in action, suffered the effects of shell shock, and completed the final stages of the war within the Mechanical Transport branch of the Army Service Corps.

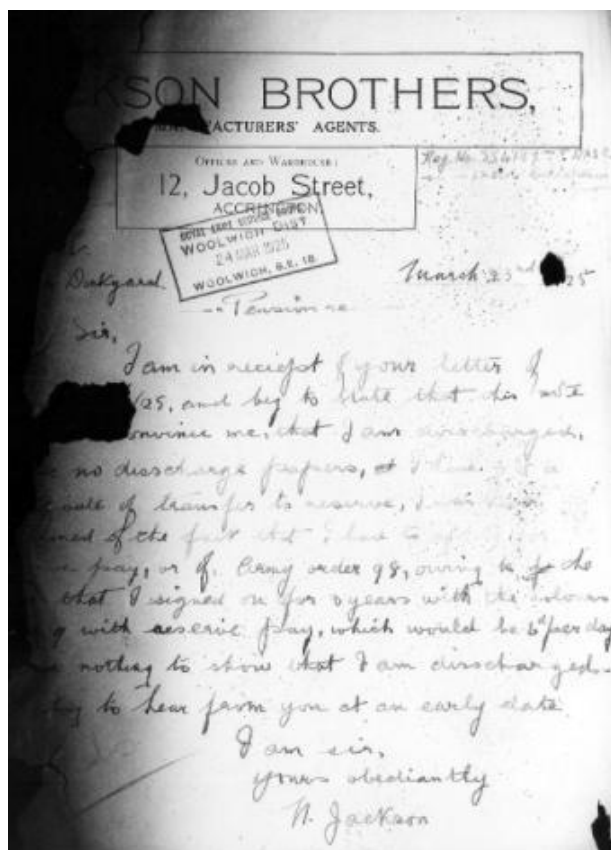


A Personal Letter

This letter adds a fascinating post-war update to his story. Written six years after his service ended, Nicholas is fighting the military bureaucracy over his back-pay.

When he signed his demobilization papers in 1919 (where he checked the box saying he wasn't claiming a *disability* pension), he was transferred to the Class Z Army Reserve. Because he originally signed a traditional Guards enlistment contract (3 years active service "with the colours" and 9 years in the reserves), he expected to be paid his standard reserve retention pay of 6 pence a day.

The army bureaucracy apparently wrote to him claiming he was fully discharged and owed nothing. Nicholas writes back sharply on business letterhead, pointing out that they never gave him full discharge papers—only a transfer to the reserves—and he wants the money he is contractually owed!



Transcription:

Sir,

I am in receipt of your letter of []/25, and beg to state that this does [not] convince me, that I am discharged. [I hav]e no discharge papers, it [is] a [certifi]cate of transfer to reserve, I was [not info]rmed of the fact that I had to apply for [rese]rve pay, or of Army order 98, owing to [the fact] that I signed on for 3 years with the colours [and 9] with reserve pay, which would be 6d per day. [I have] nothing to show that I am discharged.

[Await]ing to hear from you at an early date.

I am sir, yours obediently N. Jackson

Medal Entitlement

This medal card confirms that Nicholas was entitled to the Victory Medal, British War Medal and 1914/15 Star.

Name	Corps	Rank	Regiment No.
JACKSON	C. S.M.	Pte	12066
Nicholas	A.S.C.	Pte	27/254137
Medal	Rank	Regiment No.	Remarks
Victory Medal	RAS 8/101	25287	CLZ.
British War Medal	do	do	
15 Star	RASC/109	1314	
Honour of War first award to	11 France		
Date of entry theatre	9. 2. 15.		