



A Very Unimportant Officer: Life and Death on the Somme and at Passchendaele

Captain Alexander Stewart, Cameron Stewart

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Rediscovered after 80 years gathering dust on a family bookshelf and first brought to public attention on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme, *A Very Unimportant Officer* is a detailed and intimate account of the experience of an ordinary officer on the front line in France and Flanders throughout 1916 and 1917. Recruited to The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in 1915 at the age of 33, Captain Stewart went 'over the top' many times, outliving 'so many better men', as he says with typical humility. Through his vivid testimony we learn of the mud ('more like thick slime'), the flies and the difficulties of suffering dysentery while on horseback. In one memorable passage he describes engaging the enemy while smoking a pipe - an episode for which he was awarded the Military Cross. Yet through the chaos and horror of the trenches, Captain Stewart reflects with compassion on the fears and immense courage of the men under his command. Newly edited by his grandson, Cameron Stewart, *A Very Unimportant Officer* gives us a fascinating insight into the horrors and absurdities of trench life.

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