

The Paddock Information Collection – The most comprehensive source of information about Paddock

Private Joe Rossenthaler – a guard at Paddock (Bill Ridgeway)

Dennis Lisney states ^[1] “They also had blast proof doors which I had removed in the 1970s for safety reasons. When they were cut out a letter was found in one door. It was put there by an officer [we now know this was a Private] of the ‘Middlesex Regiment’ who guarded the place. The letter speculated that it would be a hundred years before it was uncovered.”

The accompanying page (undated) was found at the Brent Archive. The note by Private Joe Rossenthaler is dated 7 October 1940 and cutting from the Willesden Chronicles refers to it being untouched for 31 years it is reasonable to assume it was published in about 1971. Of course we still do not know where Private Joe Rossenthaler is buried so the question “where are you now Private Joe” remains unanswered. The full text of the note is “Air raid dugout / Pte 8570 / Joseph Antony / Rosenthaler / 10th Middlesex Reg[iment] / at Dollis Hill / Experimental Station / G.P.O. / 7/10/1940 / My birthday being 48 today / I wonder how many / years it will take / before this 2½ ton door / in which I am depositing / this note is broken up and / this note found / I will give it 100 years”.

Additional information from Bob Jenner

Some notes on ‘Joe’:

He was born in 1892, which made him 22 years when WW1 started. He was an early recruit to the Army Service Corps (later Royal Army Service Corps) with a regimental number of 8570. This number would have had a prefix of either S for Supplies or T for Transport whilst serving with ASC/RASC.

At some time between the wars, Joe left the regular army but had joined the Territorial Army (not the RASC) as a reserve, retaining his old army number but losing the S or T prefix. The note indicates he was a member of the 10th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge’s Own). The National Defence regiments were formed from the more elderly and some less fit soldiers who were not suited to front line service. Joe as a 41 year old was an obvious candidate. Of interest is the fact that the Sergeant who maintained the disused Paddock, was also a member of the RASC, there may be a tenuous link here to staffing questions.

Source

¹ *The Paddock Information Collection – Object 133A – A series of 8 letters (4 March 1986 through 1 June 1997) between Dennis L Lisney and the Cabinet War Room, Grange Museum) (Brent Archives)*

More information from *The Paddock Information Collection* is available at www.bunkers.org.uk/paddock.htm

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WHERE ARE YOU, PTE JOE?

About 1971 a review of fire precautions at the P.O Research Station was carried out. Particular problems arose with the Paddock Block which is the single story building, laying N-S parallel to Brook Road by the Northern gate. The building has two underground floors and was built as a potential alternative cabinet meeting place should such a move prove necessary during the war. At the Northern and Southern ends of the building were two escape routes which were shut off by large steel doors, somewhat like those seen on built-in safes, which were provided to make the building bomb resistant if not bomb proof. During the fire inspection it was noted that at least one door could not be opened easily because it had warped and they were so heavy that they were difficult to move in a hurry. It was decided that they should be removed and this entailed cutting them into manageable pieces for removal. The letter referred to was found tucked into one of the doors.

During the war this block was under guard by the Middlesex Regiment.

Where are you, Pte Joe?

ARMY Private Joe Rosenthaler chose an unusual "letter box" to post his greeting card . . . an old air raid dug-out at the back of Dollis Hill Post Office research centre.

And there it has been untouched for 31 years, tucked inside a 2½ ton armoured plate steel door — until last week that is.

But it seems Joe miscalculated. He didn't think the card would be found for at least 100 years.

And now the Post Office are sending out an appeal so that they can "return to sender".

The note was written when Joe was a Private in the 10th Middlesex Regiment. It just stated his name, rank, and number.

Added was the message: "I wonder how many years it will take before this 2½ ton door in which I am depositing this note is broken up and this note found? I will give it 100 years."

But the door has been dismantled and the Post Office would like to trace the writer, who must be about 79 or 80 by now.

So where are you Mr. Joseph Antony Rosenthaler?

ILLUSTRATION

CHRONICLE

