

The couple who killed themselves to avoid the horrors of WWI: Revealed, the story of soldier and his wife who couldn't bear to be parted

- **Shadrach Critchley, 35, and his wife Annie, 45, were found lying side by side**
- **Alongside bodies were handwritten notes saying they didn't want to be apart**
- **Were found shortly after Mr Critchley was recruited to Cheshire Regiment**
- **Friends told an inquest held on May 28, 1915, he had 'rued signing up'**
- **A jury who heard evidence recorded a verdict of temporary insanity**

By Amanda Williams , 22 May 2014

A heartbreaking suicide pact taken in 1915 between a soldier and his wife so they could avoid the horrors of the First World War has been discovered in archives.

Shadrach Critchley, 35, and his wife Annie, 45, were found lying side by side on a mattress at their home in Leigh, Greater Manchester, on Monday May 24, 1915 - shortly after Mr Critchley was recruited to the Cheshire Regiment.

A newspaper cutting from the time reveals that alongside the couple were two handwritten notes, expressing their wish 'never to be parted'.



Shadrach Critchley, 35, and his wife Annie, 45, were found lying side by side on a mattress at their home in Leigh, Greater Manchester, on Monday May 24 1915 - shortly after Mr Critchley was recruited to the army

The tale was uncovered by volunteer historian and genealogist Susan Berry, 50, who came across the incident during her research.

Ms Berry, from Leigh, said: 'When most people think of World War One they tend to think of men dying on the front line or from injuries received in combat, but Shadrach's and his wife's deaths were also a direct result of the war.'

'I'm not sure what people's attitudes would have been like at the time towards events like these.'

'The story made me think about what people must have been going through emotionally when the men went off to war.'

Born in 1881, Mr Critchley was brought up in Leigh and followed his father Thomas down the pit, working as a coal miner.

He married Annie Heaton in 1906 and the census five years later suggests they lived in Westleigh, Greater Manchester, and did not have any children.

Mr Critchley is listed in the local newspaper in April 1915 as a new recruit to the Army and was stationed at Birkenhead, but returned home on May 22 for three days' leave.

Sensational Suicide at Westleigh.

**SOLDIER AND HIS WIFE
ASPHYXIATED.**

**REMARKABLE EVIDENCE AT
THE INQUEST.**

DID NOT WANT TO BE PARTED.

The sad tale was uncovered by volunteer historian and genealogist Susan Berry, 50, who came across the incident during her research

According to friend and fellow soldier Richard Adamson, he was at the Fleece Inn the night before he was due to rejoin his regiment, telling him he had made a mistake in enlisting in the forces.

Mr Adamson said he had tried to reassure him it would be fine but when he went to the Critchleys' house the following evening, he forced open the door and found both Shadrach and Annie on a mattress on the kitchen floor.

An inquest heard the couple had written notes expressing their wish not to be parted, and were buried together in St Paul's churchyard in Westleigh.

At the inquest, the jury, who heard evidence concerning their deaths, recorded a verdict of temporary insanity.

Mr Critchley's name was finally given posthumous recognition when he was placed on the Brookwood Memorial, in a list of around 500 men who died on British shores.

PICTURE & STORY



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I have
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the trenches.
We
have been
gassed and
shelled. Oh
it was some-
thing awful,
but I will
let you know
better when
I come home
on furlough.
It's lovely
being here;
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Private Keegan
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ATHERTON.

AMBULANCE MEN FOR HOSPITAL DUTY.

Eight members of the Atherton Division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade left on Friday to take up duty in a military hospital at Robery Hill, Birmingham. They are—Private A. Jackson, 207, Tyldesley-rd.; A. W. Hemthorn, 42, Alma-st., S. Tabson, 24, Morley-st.; J. Partington, 125, Bar-bone; J. Wintle, 10, Oak-st., Tyldesley; A. Jones, 9, Manhouse-lane; A. Haslam, 130, Wig-an-rd.; and G. E. Long, 40, Lilford-st. Men are still required for Home Hospital Reserve and the medical units for foreign service. All men who possess a first aid certificate should apply to Corporal W. Hutchinson, 53, Lilford-st., Howe Bridge.

GASSED AND SHELLED.

Private Joseph Keegan, of the 1st King's Own Royal Lancers, who joined the King's Own Royal Lancers in February has been brought from the firing line and taken to the Borough Hospital, Birkenhead, suffering from various veins, in a letter be to his family he states:— I have been amongst it whilst in the trenches. We have been gassed and shelled. Oh it was something awful, but I will let you know better when I come home on furlough. It's lovely being here; no shells flying about. Private Keegan will probably have to undergo an operation on his leg.



PR. J. KEEGAN.

WOUNDED SOLDIER'S LETTER.

Phs. Ben. Coop. of the 1st King's Liverpool Regiment, who is lying wounded in the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich, writes to his mother at 10, Factory-st.: "I am doing fine so far, and hope I shall soon be home again. I told you the Germans could not kill me. I prayed on the night of the charge, and that gave me confidence and courage. I am sorry to say that my mate, who was only three or four yards from me, got one straight through the face, killing him instantly. So you see how I was fixed, but I had made up my mind if I had to go for it, and I dashed straight through. We were the second party to go over the top, and they put the machine guns on us. We had a lot of men, but we took four lines of trenches and 500 prisoners, so we did not do so badly."



PR. BEN COOP.

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WOUNDED IN AN ATTACK.

After having narrowly escaped losing his leg on two previous occasions Private Bob Farlow, of the 1st King's Liverpool Regiment, who is lying wounded in the Royal Herbert Hospital, Woolwich, writes to his mother at 10, Factory-st.: "I am doing fine so far, and hope I shall soon be home again. I told you the Germans could not kill me. I prayed on the night of the charge, and that gave me confidence and courage. I am sorry to say that my mate, who was only three or four yards from me, got one straight through the face, killing him instantly. So you see how I was fixed, but I had made up my mind if I had to go for it, and I dashed straight through. We were the second party to go over the top, and they put the machine guns on us. We had a lot of men, but we took four lines of trenches and 500 prisoners, so we did not do so badly."

Sensational Suicide at Westleigh.

SOLDIER AND HIS WIFE ASPHYXIATED.

REMARKABLE EVIDENCE AT THE INQUEST.

DID NOT WANT TO BE PARTED.

Mr. S. F. Butcher (district coroner) and a jury, presided over by Mr. Stevens, met at the Westleigh Conservative Club, on Wednesday afternoon, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Shadrach Critchley (35) and his wife, Annie (43), who died at 17, School-st., Westleigh.—Thomas Critchley, 20, School-st., drainer, said the man was his son, whom he last saw alive about 11 o'clock on Sunday morning. He was then at the door of his house, along with his wife. They then both seemed as usual. Witness did not speak to them. He next saw his son's dead body along with his wife's, in their house about 10 o'clock on Monday night. Witness was sent for out of bed. Deceased was formerly a drainer and enlisted on April 15th last in the 3rd Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, stationed at Birkenhead. He came home on Saturday night on three days' leave of absence, and should have reported himself on Monday. Witness thought he had gone when he went to his work. He never



heard him or his wife threaten to take their lives. Witness also gave evidence of identification concerning the woman, and said they had no children.—"Were they very fond of one another?" asked the coroner.—Witness replied in the affirmative.—Richard Adamson, a private in the 3rd Battalion Cheshire Regiment, stationed at Birkenhead, living at 13, School-st., said on Saturday he and deceased came home on three days' leave of absence, deceased being accompanied by his wife. Witness and deceased had been frequently together whilst he had been at home. He was last in his company in the Pheon Hotel, Westleigh, about 12-30 on Sunday. He was quite sober, and appeared in his usual state of health. On several occasions he had

Ened About Having Joined the Army, He said it was hard, and witness had said the same. He told Critchley to "buck up"

Rally to the Flag.

WEEKLY LIST OF LEIGH RECRUITS.

- Aspinall, Frank, 406, St. Helen-st., R.F.A.
Baker, Walter, 4, Henry-st., R.F.
Barker, Albert, 72, King-st., M.B.
Barnes, Wm., 207, Glabe-st., R.F.
Bent, Alfred, 11, Newton-rd., Louton, R.F.A.
Best, John Thomas, 16, Fire-lane, R.A.M.C.
Boardman, Wm., 17, Green-lane, R.W.F.
Bolton, William, 7, William-st., R.F.
Brindle, Robt., 12, Boardman-st., R.F.
Carroll, Daniel, 177a, Kirkhall-lane, R.O.S.B.
Cassidy, Richard, 24, Talbot-rd., R.A.M.C.
Cheetham, Geo., 2, Miller-st., R.W.F.
Cunningham, Thos., 76, Kirkhall-lane, R.F.
Cunliffe, Thomas, 10, Dornington-st., R.F.
Doherty, Peter, 5, Clarence-st., R.F.
Evans, Peter, 1, Old Hall Mill-lane, R.A.M.C.
German, Thomas, 268, Chapel-st., R.F.A.
Coleclough, Harold, 29, Noble-st., R.F.
Coward, Thomas E., 1, Oak-st., R.F.
Crotty, John Henry, 1, Parnell-st., R.F.
Cullen, Wm., 20, Holt-st., R.O.S.B.
Green, Percy, 16, Holt-st., R.F.
Grundr, Matthew, 40, Dukinfield-st., R.W.F.
Harte, Jos., 12, Green-lane, R.W.F.
Hill, William, 23, Fire-lane, R.F.A.
Hilton, Percy, 39, Trafalgar-st., R.F.A.
Hindley, Jas., 11, Ducie-st., R.F.
Houghton, Thomas, 61, Twist-lane, R.F.
Howard, Frank, 28, Sval-st., L.N.L.
Knowles, Wm., 42, Kirkhall-lane, R.A.M.C.
Knight, Enob., 19, Tunncliffe's Old Row, L.N.L.
Lytchgoe, Joe, Harold, 21, Mayfield-st., Atherton, R.F.A.
Lewis, F. W., 3, Dukinfield-st., R.F.
Lester, Thomas, 5, Poplar-st., R.F.A.
McAlister, John, 1, Brunswick-st., R.F.
McDonnell, Jos., 11, Tread-st., R.O.S.B.
McKenzie, Peter, 22, Parsonage Terrace, R.O.S.B.
Morris, James, 28, Dukinfield-st., R.W.F.
Morris, Martin, 25, Dukinfield-st., R.F.
Morris, Samuel, 15, Selwyn-st., R.F.
Nightingale, Thomas, 5, Albert-place, R.F.
Nightingale, Wm., 42, Dukinfield-st., R.F.
Nuttall, Samuel, 3, Tunncliffe's New Row, W.R.
Parr, Wm., 31, Clifton-st., R.W.F.
Parsons, Jas., 175, Kirkhall-lane, R.O.S.B.
Pasquill, Samuel, 66, Bedford-square, R.F.A.
Platt, Wm., Hy., 24, Green-lane, R.W.F.
Roberts, John Edward, 30, Sportsman-st., C.E.
Shepherd, Gordon, 26, Church-st., R.E.
Stones, J. F., 87, Bedford-square, R.F.
Speakman, John, Lady-lane, R.F.
Sturup, Ernest, 5, Noble-st., R.F.A.
Sturup, Thos., 5, Noble-st., R.F.A.
Sykes, Harry, 18, Thomas-st., S.L.
Thorne, James, 20, Hamilton-st., Atherton, R.F.A.
Thorne, Thomas, Patterdale-rd., R.F.A.
Tillington, Jas., 7, Brighton-st., R.F.
Tollitt, Samuel, 21, Common-lane, R.F.
Unsworth, Fred, N., 12, Grammer-st., R.A.M.C.
Ward, John, 14, Jaffrey-st., R.F.
West Abraham, 5, Market-st., Boothstown, R.A.M.C.
Wood, Alfred, 227, Kirkhall-lane, L.F.
Woolley, Allen, 8, Prescott-st., R.F.A.
Wood, Granville, 43, Platt Fold-st., R.A.M.C.
Woods, James, 22, Henry-st., R.F.
Whittle, Thos., 6, Warrington-rd., S.L.
Williams, John, 28, Thompsett-st., R.F.
Sd MANCHESTERS.
- The following have enlisted at the Leigh Drill Hall:—
Adamson, John, 3, Woolpack Court.
Allred, Gilbert, 130, Bolton-rd., Atherton.
Allred, Thos., M., Platt-st.
Ashton, Henry, 74, Gordon-st.
Ball, Jos., 8, Arthur-st.

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Mr Critchley is listed in the local newspaper in April 1915 as a new recruit to the Army and was stationed at Birkenhead, but returned home on May 22 for three days' leave.

The memorial, located in Surrey alongside a huge cemetery containing the final resting place of more than 1,500 Commonwealth servicemen who died in the UK of their wounds, was erected in 2004, almost 90 years after Shadrach's death.

Hannah Turner, local and family history officer at Leigh Local Studies, said: 'It's a very sad story and one we had never come across before.

'It shows that the deaths during the war didn't just happen on the battlefield.'