

ADVENTURES OF A
MOTORCYCLE DESPATCH RIDER
DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR



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Adventures of a Motorcycle Despatch Rider During the First World War

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The Battle of Mons, The Battle of le Cateau, The Great Retreat, Over the Marne to the Aisne, The Battle of the Aisne, The Move to the North, Round la AssÉE, The Beginning of Winter 1914, St Jans Cappel, Behind the Lines.....etc

Adventures of a Motorcycle Despatch Rider During the First World War Details

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From Reader Review Adventures of a Motorcycle Despatch Rider During the First World War for online ebook

Sean McLachlan says

This is gripping account of the despatch riders who delivered messages just behind the lines during World War One. Lots of good English stiff-upper-lipness and casual drinks under fire. The period covers the earliest battles such as Mons and the Aisne, and ends with first Ypres. This makes it especially valuable to WWI buffs since there aren't as many good books about the opening months of the war as there are for later periods.

This illustrated edition has some fine photographs of the early battlegrounds as well as the couriers and their machines.

I wish there had been some more info about the motorcycles. Like many enthusiasts, the author seems to assume that everyone knows as much as he does! It also assumes knowledge about the war itself, since the book was cobbled together from Watson's diary and letters home.

This book won't be of much value to someone just getting into reading about WWI, but anyone with a firm grasp of the early phase of the war will find this a quick, enjoyable read.

Susan Chamberlain says

Getting some perspective on a period of history to which I have not paid much attention.

Cheryl M-M says

I have the Kindle edition of this book, which for some strange reason is no longer available or at least the version I bought is no longer available.

Reviewing the content isn't simple, because the writing and flow is sub-par and yet the actual account of events overweighs the lack of literary prowess.

Hidden within a large amount of details about places, divisions, skirmishes and soldiers is a different layer of history. One that is told almost without any emotion at all, by a young man in the middle of events so horrific that we possibly cannot even fathom how scared he must have been. Saying it sounds so trivial, a despatch rider, that doesn't sound very dangerous at all does it. When in fact these young men and boys were sent through the middle of battles, gunfire and often past enemy points to deliver verbal and written messages amongst the command posts.

Hard to even imagine nowadays with all the technology we use in warfare. They were the carrier pigeons of then and the sms of today.

It is very dry reading, but well worth it for history buffs.

Tom Schulte says

Quick, easy read about being a motorbike messenger with The Allies in France/Belgium during WW I. I really enjoyed the point of view of this non-fighting role that got to witness much of the unfolding strategy.

David Sprague says

Most interesting about the motorcycle rider were the people he met, how he ate and the constant moving. Sleep was hard to come by as you would expect. The worst part of the book was trying to make some sense out of the bigger picture as ground was gained or lost. The story about the spies was very intriguing. The best of the book was that it was a first hand encounter from a war year's ago. I think a book like this is hard to come by.

Jenny T says

The memoirs of Captain William Watson, written in 1915, of his days as a corporal with the Royal Engineers as a motorcycle dispatch rider during World War I. His journey through Ireland and France is fraught with close encounters with enemy fire and the aftermath of battle, combined with extreme boredom, shattered nerves, cold, wet, loneliness, and hunger. The last two feature so prominently in his experiences that he often rhapsodizes about his meals and female companionship when he gets them (describing one particular stew as "epic").

He's by turns wry, witty, unflinchingly honest, and quietly brave. "It is a diabolical joke of the Comic imps to put fog upon a greasy road for the confusion of a despatch rider." I enjoyed getting to know him through what he chose to write about, and, while the geography was sometimes hard to keep track of, I learned a lot about the day-to-day life of an ordinary guy in the War.

Jim says

Intensely interesting insight into of the first world war from the British perspective. The early bravado quickly giving way and the uncertainty of war fogging the days. Difficult to read at times, but worth the effort.

Rob says

Enjoyable read.

Tony says

Readable but somewhat rambling narrative of a motorcycle messenger's experiences in the first mine months of the war.

Ericka says

Not exciting, but informative

The author was a non-combat military serviceman, so his stories aren't as thrilling as others. He does a good job of describing the contradictory nature of war. One moment he is talking about an idyllic town their division is staying in and it sounds like a vacation, but then it will abruptly change when the shells start bursting around them. His letters home also possibly downplay a lot of what is going on, and we're probably also heavily censored for sensitive information. I find the attitudes of the time among the British and the French and Flemish to be particularly interesting. You don't always get much from the civilians' side.

Overall not a bad read, but it takes patience.

Josh Hamacher says

The author was a courier with the British army during World War 1. Upon enlistment in the army he's given the rank of corporal due to his college education and also receives a fairly plum assignment. This book is an edited version of letters he sent during the first nine months or so of his enlistment.

Watson is a capable enough writer, but frankly his story isn't that interesting. He spends more time talking about what he and his mates had to eat each day than the actual war (although in his defense his assignment was fairly boring). The book also has almost no background material and so I felt lost as a modern reader due to the lack of cultural context.

Matt Kelland says

A very bland read that feels more like a despatch than a memoir. For example, he relates leaving his gun on a hill, going back to retrieve it, evading German cavalry patrols, and nearly getting shot by a British sentry on his return. This could be a great story, but he tells it in literally three short sentences, with barely more detail or description than I just did. It feels like a wasted opportunity for a gripping read.

It was also shocking to see the repeated mentions of shooting German prisoners with apparently no concern that it's a war crime.

The Kindle version was also annoying: it had page numbers left in: a hallmark of a poor quality conversion.

Ashok says

It's an okay read. It is NOT about motorcycles - if that's is what you are interested in (like me). The author barely mentions the motorcycles he used, or anything about them. It's more of a running commentary of his time as a dispatch during war time, and he happened to be using a motorcycle. That's all. It rambles on a bit at times, and there's a lot of interesting words that you wouldn't see in use anymore. Then there is of course the brutality of the war, although the author has made no major attempt at conveying it. What I gained from

this book is an insight to how a war is run - as how many units communicate with each other, and advance or retreat in tandem with 'ze germans' lines.

However, the most eye opening of all is how low-tech the first world war was! Thirty miles an hour is 'fantastic progress' and forty miles an hour is positively 'flying'..! I rode into work this morning doing 90-100 miles an hour, and that's just good progress to me. How times have changed!

Michael Flanagan says

Not a bad read kept me entertained for most of it. The narrative does have a tendency to ramble at times but when it's good it's real good. The author does seem to have a preoccupation with food though.

Julie says

i wish this book was in paperback. i know two people i would get it for immediately.
