

PIGSTICKING IN CHIPPING



Pig-sticking

The interest of the British public was caught by stories of India in the 1880s. Rudyard Kipling in 1888 had published his book "Plain Tales From The Hills". In 1889, Baden-Powell, later of Boy Scout fame but then in military service in India, wrote about the sport of the rajahs, "pigsticking". It was a skilled and dangerous sport which some of the British army officers in India enjoyed. It consisted of hunting on horse-back the native wild boar – a large and savage animal. The aim was to ride down the boar with a lance. The cunning boar would twist and turn and dash for cover, and good riders and specially trained horses were needed, at least as good as polo horses.

Private Francis Thomas, from the East Yorkshire Regiment, at Chipping Camp in 1894, probably knew something of the techniques of pigsticking. He may even have served in India. But his enthusiasm, when the worse for drink, sent him in pursuit of a domestic pig belonging to George Hodgkinson and his wife Emma at "Eddleston's" in Thornley. (location not yet known precisely, but not far from Lee House Chapel)

On the evening of Wednesday 15th August 1894, Mrs Emma Hodgkinson, returning from a neighbour's house, found her pig out of its cote, lying cut, bleeding and dying in a ditch in the garden. About an hour earlier she had spoken to a soldier and directed him to the camp. Her young son, Thomas, and his friends had also met him. They had been marching like soldiers and on seeing the private they asked him to show them how to drill. He did so, and also put his bayonet on his rifle, and allowed them to handle it. They saw it was covered with blood. A local butcher, Cornelius Kenyon, who examined the pig, said its nine stab wounds were such as would have been caused by the soldier's bayonet. The Chipping policeman found bloodstains on the soldier's hands and jacket, and he appeared to have had some drink.

The case was heard at the Clitheroe Police Court and Private Francis Thomas was charged with killing the pig. The Clitheroe Times expressed amazement when the soldier was put in prison and the case passed to the Quarter Sessions Court at Preston. The editorial on 17th August 1894 gave the following satirical account:-

"THE AUTUMN MANOEUVRES OF PRIVATE FRANCIS THOMAS" "BEING ANOTHER STORY FROM PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS" "SPORT AT CHIPPING CAMP"

"Let's go out and kill something", says the Briton, at such times as he feels most elevated; this desire for the shedding of blood being set down as one of the characteristics of the race. Private Francis Thomas has been marching and counter-marching, doing sentry-go, stacking arms, falling in and falling out, and at the finish gives the Queen no sort of a show for her money. No killed, no wounded, no casualties of any description. He hears on the 12th August the opening up of the grouse season, with the birds strong on the wing, strong in the larder, and strong in the price, and the blooming marching and counter-marching continues regardless of all that; and his soul revolts. He reads of the sham fight at Aldershot before the German Emperor, of the tremendous slaughter that might possibly have ensued had the cartridge been ball-cartridge; and his soul revolts further.... Cannon to the right of him, cannon to the left of him, volley and thunder; but for Private Francis Thomas the same interminable marching, varied only by the counter-marching, and similar empty inanities indicative of the pomps of war; but no accompanying blood. Once more does the soul of Private Francis Thomas revolt, and this time with success, "Up Guards and at 'em", and he goes out on slaughter bent. But no grouse for Private Francis Thomas. Although he is licensed to carry a gun, he must observe the Game Laws, he must only shoot to order. Happily, though, for Private Francis Thomas there is no Game Law that affects the domesticated pig, as distinct from the kind utilised for pig-sticking purposes in India. So having equipped himself ... he goes out on a foraging tour. "So he hunted and he hunted, and nothing could he find", until he found this luckless pig, upon which he practises bayonet drill until the animal has learnt nine different thrusts. This done, he becomes so elated that he gives to a dozen small boys returning from a tea-party, a sort of general inspection and march-past, going through his drill for them. After this, the humour of the thing --- if anyone can see any humour in it --- ceases, and Private Thomas is arrested and forwarded to Preston."

When two months later the case was heard at Preston, the magistrates dismissed the episode as "stupid senseless mischief" under the influence of drink, and since the soldier had already served time in prison he was discharged.

Nothing was said about reimbursing the Hodgkinsons for the loss of their pig.