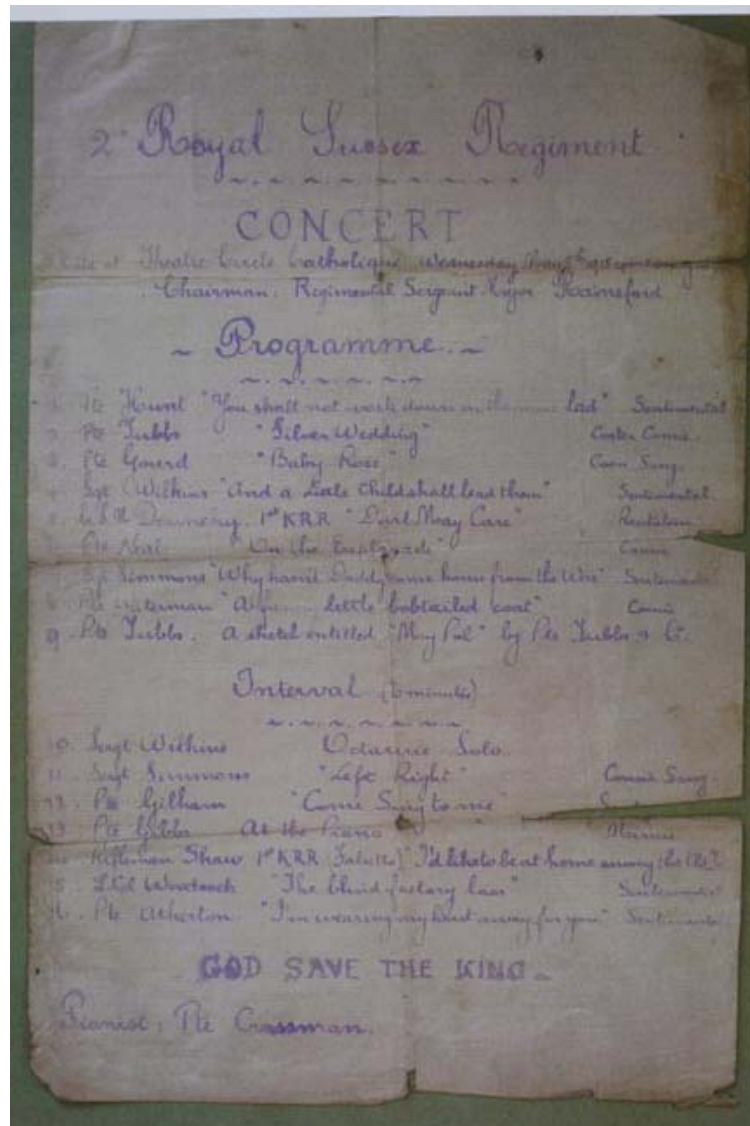


Learning Resources for Teachers:

Learning Resource: **William Rainsford**



Clue 2- Royal Sussex Regiment Concert Programme May 5th 1915.

The concert programme lists Rainsford as the Regimental Sergeant Major in-charge of organising the concert. These were cabaret shows put on in order to entertain the troops with songs and sketches.

The newspaper article below is an example of a letter published in the newspaper of the time regarding entertainment at the Front.

"THE STAR SHELLS."

A SUSSEX CONCERT PARTY IN BELGIUM.

We have received the following letter from Lance-Corporal T. Turner, Royal Sussex Regiment (Pioneers), whose home is in Bognor, but whose present address is "B. E. F., France":—

People at home in England can hardly realize to what an extent entertainments are given in different parts of the fighting areas to amuse our boys. Many and varied are the different forms of amusement. We have the cinema, concert parties, divisional parties, brigade and regimental parties.

One of the most popular and well known parties who have toured France and Flanders are "The Star Shells," composed entirely of men from the Pioneer Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment. The party have had the pleasure of entertaining many thousands of officers and men of H.M. Forces, and also of our brave Allies. They were formed just over twelve months ago and have appeared in most of the principal towns of Northern France and Flanders. Of course one does not get the palatial halls of Old England, but the show does not suffer in any way. Our theatre at present is situated in close proximity to our firing line, and the boys call in to see us on their way back from the line after doing reliefs.

The cold, fatigue, and strain of the firing line, are soon forgotten inside our cheery

home. Whilst waiting for the show to start the accompanist plays a few well known airs on the piano, just to keep the boys all merry and bright. The show opens with a concerted item, "The Pioneers' Chorus," and then "The Entertainment Stores." In quick succession, "Tich," our funny man, convulses the audience with his funny dance and song. He has to respond to a well-earned encore. All is silent for our next number. It is our lady number, "Nansi." She, of course, is immensely popular, and her graceful figure and sweet voice fairly bring down the house. Her rendering of "Fares, please" and "Oh Johnny! Oh" makes you feel that you are at home listening to one of our famous artistes somewhere in the West End.

Number three is a musical item, a trombone solo, and the performer has to accede several encores. This number is well known in most of the principal halls in England.

Our next number introduces a well known and popular comedian, in song and story. His "Swim, Sam, Swim," makes the house rock with laughter, and he certainly is most popular amongst the boys, his tongue twisting choruses causing much fun and pleasure all round.

Next we have our light comedian, and his bright and cheery rendering of "Good-bye-ee," and "Give me a Blighty Girl," keeps the boys in a happy mood, and all join in the refrain. "Some" turn this. "Glorious Devon" is next heard and proves to be a favourite with all. "Tich" again makes an entry amidst cheers and obliges with a song, dance, and a selection on the bones. "Tich" is a really great turn, and he keeps everybody convulsed with laughter while he occupies the stage.

"Nansi" again treats the boys with two more popular numbers, in Dutch costume, "Tulip Time" and "I come from Holland," and concludes with a well executed clog dance. Visions of

the Gaiety and the London Hippodrome seem to come before your eyes when one thinks of the old days. "Flannigan's Ball" and "Dooley's Farm" are the numbers to follow, and also the well known "My old Shako" and "The Sergeant of the Line." "Nansi" and partner sing two duets, "Hello, my dearie" and "One hour of love with you," which is a most popular item, and the pair have to respond with "Why must I do all the loving?" The comedian next sings "The Gay Cavalier," and the concert concludes with "Nansi" and partner in a sketch entitled "An Unknown Admirer," very pretty, well played, and very effective. We close with singing the National Anthem, as only soldiers can sing it. This ends the concert as given by our "Sussex Star Shells," every evening if possible.

The boys go back to their billets, bright and cheery, and singing the songs of the night, ready for the line next morning. Surely this is a good omen and deserves all encouragement and assistance to carry on in the future.

If any lady or gentleman of your district would care to help us cheer up the fighting boys of our county regiment, old dress suits of any description, music, songs, or anything that would help to keep the show going, would be greatly appreciated.

All communications should be directed to the "Bognor Observer,"

329 Lance-Corpl. T. TURNER,
Royal Sussex Pioneers,
B.E.F., France.

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