

WOODHAMS
—STONE—
COLLECTION

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Taxidermy Horse Hoof Inkwell

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Many museum collections include examples of antique taxidermy. Not to modern taste, they often divide opinion and are problematic to display. The inkwell in the Woodhams Stone Collection, however, has a happier story than most examples of taxidermy.



The inkwell is made from a horse hoof with silver-plated mounts and a glass inkwell. The inscription on the cover reads:

MALTON
1910-1935
CARRIED LORD GRIMTHORPE
IN GREAT WAR 1915-1917
BOUGHT BY HIM OUT OF THE ARMY
& HUNTED TILL 1930
GIVEN TO J. PALEY
who looked after him all these years
by
HIS GRATEFUL OWNER

The Lord Grimthorpe of the inscription refers to Ralph William Ernest Beckett, 3rd Baron Grimthorpe and Malton was his real life 'warhorse'.

Ralph Beckett was born in 1891 and served in the Yorkshire Hussars during the First World War. The Yorkshire Hussars (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own) was formed in April 1908. It was territorial force, intended to be a home defence force for service during wartime. The regimental headquarters were in York with squadrons based in various Yorkshire towns. B Squadron had a base in the town of Malton. In August

1914 the territorials were mobilised and the men were assembled at their headquarters; B Squadron assembled at York under Major Viscount Helmsley. In September 1914 a foreign service regiment was formed from those Yorkshire Hussars willing to serve overseas. It was perhaps at this time that Ralph Beckett married Mary Archdale at St Martin's, Coney Street, York.



In February 1915, after a winter training in Essex, the Yorkshire Hussars were split up and employed as divisional cavalry. B Squadron, including Beckett and his horse Malton, were sent to France via Boulogne to support the North Midland Division. In October the Division was moved down to Bethune to provide support for the ongoing Battle of Loos. Later that month the Division took part in their first offensive operation at the Battle of the Hohenzollern Redoubt near Auchy-les Mines. The British attack failed and resulted in 3,643 casualties, mostly in the first few minutes. The cavalry never even got the opportunity to advance.

The changing nature of warfare led to a rethink of the role of the cavalry and the Yorkshire Hussars were brought back together as a regiment. By August 1917, however, it was decided that the Regiment was to be re-organised. On 26th August it was dismounted and sent to Etaples for infantry training. Our horse, Malton, probably returned to England at this point. Ralph Beckett had become 3rd Baron Grimthorpe on 9th May 1917. With the end of the cavalry, Grimthorpe joined the newly created Royal Air Force in 1918. He did not completely give up riding in favour of flying, however. He bred race horses, and later thoroughbreds, at his Eastthorpe Hall stud. He was also joint Master of the Middleton Hunt from 1921. Malton was now a hunter rather than a cavalry horse.



Grimthorpe clearly had a great affection for his horse, Malton. Although, the inkwell may seem strange and even ghoulish to us today it was a memento of a much-loved animal and a sincere gift to James Alexander Paley who worked for Grimthorpe at Eastthorpe Hall. It was also quite a costly memento. It was made by Peter Spicer & Sons of Leamington Spa. Spicer is regarded as one of the greatest British taxidermists of the period with many high profile clients including royalty.