

# Press Release

10<sup>th</sup> November 2014

## **Railway man pays tribute to war heroes** ***Serviceman launches book celebrating the lives and sacrifices of WW1 rail workers***

An army reservist and rail worker has written a book detailing the sacrifices made by thousands of railway staff who lost their lives in the Great War, to help raise money for charity.

Inspired by the Great Western Railway (GWR) War Memorial at Leamington Spa train station, Daventry resident Jeremy Higgins, 50, has written the 'Great War Railwaymen', which is available from today (Monday 10 November). Jeremy has been working on the railway for 14 years, most recently as CrossCountry's Customer Service Director from its Birmingham Head Quarters. But his appetite for helping others doesn't stop there; he has been an army reservist for 30 years, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To pay his respects to those men and women who died during the Great War and to mark the launch of the 'Great War Railwaymen', Jeremy played a part in memorial ceremonies earlier today at Birmingham Moor Street and Leamington Spa train stations where he also laid wreaths.

Six months after returning from active duty in Iraq in 2007, Jeremy was standing on the station platform in Leamington Spa waiting for his train to Birmingham where he felt compelled to do something to honour the railway heroes of WW1. After glancing over at the GWR memorial, wondering about the men behind the names, he decided to start researching them.

Over the last seven years, he has devoted all his spare time to researching the exploits of 12,500 railway forbears, which can now be read by others in his compelling debut. Among the many stories is the example of Sergeant HB Parkin, a York-based clerk with the North Eastern Railway who served with the West Yorkshire Regiment. Parkin was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Conduct Medal for courageously fighting off a German attack single handily.

The proceeds from the book will go to The Railway Benefit Fund and The Army Benevolent Fund – The Soldiers' Charity, to help those who have served our country in more recent generations. Over £36,000 has been generously donated by a number of train companies across the UK already, thanks in part to Andy Cooper, Managing Director of CrossCountry, who rallied support.

Newly published author, Jeremy, said: "My aim with the book is to try to remember these people who served and died during the war, and to tell their stories to a new generation. The Great War Railwaymen is vital to our understanding of the railways, and those that ran them, and the significant role they played. I also wanted to raise money for two wonderful causes, which are very close to my heart.

"It has taken me seven years to research 12,500 of the 20,000-plus railwaymen who died in the Great War. I think their stories are just fascinating and hope others will too."

General The Lord Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff and army head - the grandson of a Royal Engineers Officer who ran ammunition trains in France during the Great War – comments on the book, saying: "it's a timely contribution to our commemoration of the First World War and the men and women of that generation who were caught up in its horror and intensity."

Jeremy plans to continue with his research and is keen to hear from anyone with information about individual railway workers who served in the Great War.

**-ENDS-**

For further information and photographs, please contact Kelly Mortlock or Jack Storry on 020 7025 7522 or email [crosscountry@grayling.com](mailto:crosscountry@grayling.com).

### **Notes to editors**

**About CrossCountry** - The CrossCountry network is the most extensive passenger rail franchise in Britain. Stretching from Aberdeen to Penzance, and from Stansted to Cardiff, it calls at over 100 stations. Based in Birmingham, CrossCountry connects seven of the Britain's 10 largest cities and delivers 295 services every weekday, equating to some 32 million passenger journeys a year.

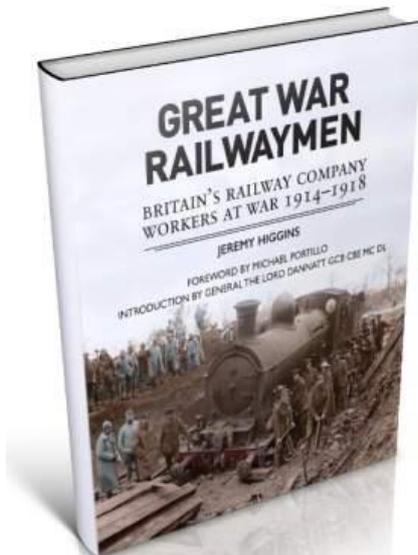
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### **About the book**



**GREAT WAR RAILWAYMEN**  
*Britain's Railway Company Workers at War*  
1914-1918

By Jeremy Higgins  
Foreword by Michael Portillo  
Introduction by General The Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC DL

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