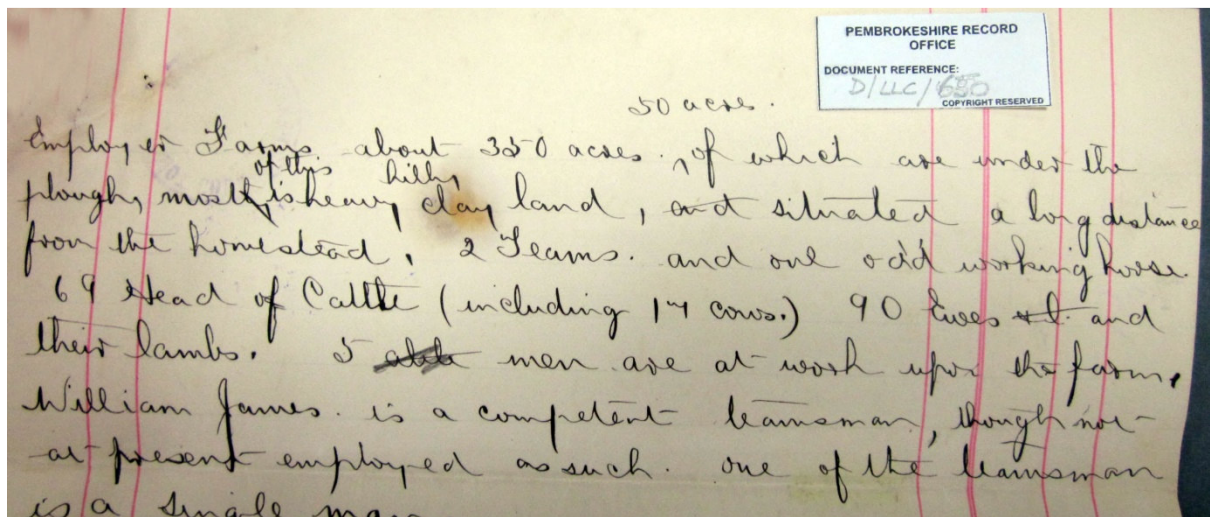


WWI – Exemption from Military Service

In going through some papers of the Corston Estate near Monkton, I came across a plea from owner Mrs M Leach to exempt one of my ancestors Gilbert Skyrmes from WW1 military service. The letter written by her agent William G Wynne on 20 May 1916 says:

“Employer farms about 350 acres, 50 of which are under plough. Most of this is heavy hilly clay land and situate a long distance from the homestead. Two teams and one odd working horse 69 head of cattle (including 17 cows) 90 ewes and their lambs. The Cattle-man has already been called up and the second teamsman will also probably be called shortly. Employer will then only have 5 men on the farm (including Skyrme who will then be her only teamsman) and one other of those being of military age will probably be called under the New Act.”



The papers included an early draft of this letter which included this paragraph:

“5 able men are at work upon the farm. William James is a competent teamsman, though not at present employed as such. One of the teamsman is a single man.”

The word “able” was then crossed out! A tribunal held at Pembroke Town Hall on 5th June then requested specific information on “the number and ages of men actually employed on estate and farm.”

Gilbert, then aged 40, was given a conditional exemption. A glance at many papers of the period report many such exemptions for essential jobs. For instance, in March 1916 the Narberth Rural Tribunal granted 60 exemptions. And in October the Pembroke Rural Tribunal reviewed exemptions for 40 single young men under the age of 30. It was argued that farm labour was scarce and that many farms were operating with half their normal complement of labourers.
