

## **MARKSMAN**

*The reluctant murderer and the fairground huckster.*

It was a surprise to find that my father was an excellent shot.

After joining the Somerset Light Infantry in 1915, he was trained to shoot a rifle. Having perfect eyesight and a steady arm, he was awarded a marksman's badge. When his battalion landed in France, he unpicked the badge from the sleeve of his battledress. He had enlisted to fight the enemy, he said, but not to murder them in the guise of a sniper.

Years later during another war, my mother and my father are together on the ENSA tour where they met. They visit a local fairground and it is only natural that my father should want to impress my mother with his shooting skills.

The rifles at the shooting stall have been fixed — a common practice. Their sights have been altered or their barrels bent. My father misses with his first two shots but adjusts his aim and fires again. This time he hits the target and prepares to walk away but some jibe from the huckster incenses him. He pays for three further shots and wins a prize. He pays for three more and wins another. A crowd begins to gather. Three more shots. Another prize. Again and again. Coldly taking aim. Relentless. Until the huckster pleads with him to stop and offers a reluctant apology.