

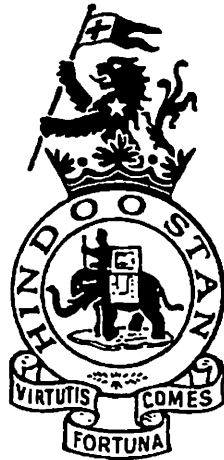


THE DUKE OF
WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT
(WEST RIDING)

The Volunteer & Territorial Battalions
1859 - 1999

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1/5 DWR in the trenches near Ypres 1915

FOREWORD

by

Brigadier W. R. Mundell OBE

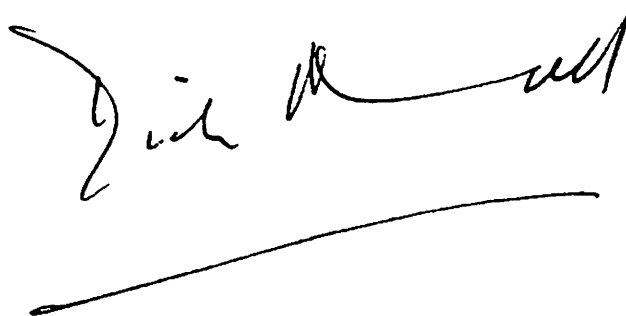
Colonel, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)

This history brings together in one volume the story of the Volunteer Force and Territorial Army soldiers of the Regiment. It fulfils a long-felt need within the Regiment for our past histories have tended to concentrate upon its regulars, whether the 33rd, the 76th, the 1st or the 2nd Battalions.

Starting, as it does, from the raising of the Volunteer Force in 1859 through to the present day, it records most comprehensively times of both peace and war. It is right and proper that great events, ferocious battles and the many sacrifices made by our Dukes Volunteers and Territorials should be so recorded. We should never forget that a significant proportion of the Regiment's Battle Honours were won, or shared with our regular battalions, by our Territorials and that no less than three of our ten Victoria Crosses were awarded to their officers and soldiers. This history will serve as a fitting and long overdue tribute to those brave Territorials of ours who answered the call of duty.

I am greatly indebted to Major Anthony Podmore who compiled this history at the Regiment's request. Indeed, the whole Regiment is grateful to him for writing such a valuable work of reference.

Every member of the Regiment who reads this book can but feel proud that he is a member of the great Dukes family. For sure, it deserves to be widely read and I commend the book to you all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. R. Mundell', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

18th June 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1995 my former Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tim Isles, then Secretary at Regimental Headquarters, asked me to compile a history of the Dukes Territorials. The Regiment's Territorials have a splendid record of service since being raised 140 years ago in 1859. This pamphlet seeks to summarise that service and no apology is made for not covering the Regiment's regular, militia or service battalions whose deeds are already encompassed in existing Regimental histories.

As with most activities involving the Territorials this book has very much been a team effort - not least on the part of our forebears whose dedication, gallantry and stoicism we record. I would wish to thank all those helpers who patiently responded to requests for information, and trust that I have included you all:-

Mr B Ashby; Lieutenant Colonel G C Barker Harland MBE, MC, TD; Brigadier P E Crook CBE, DSO, MA; General Sir Martin Farndale KCB; Sir John M Horsfall Bt; Major General D E Isles CB, OBE, DL.

Regimental Headquarters The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Lieutenant Colonel A W Scott Elliot); The Royal Artillery Historical Trust (Mr P G W Annis); The Light Infantry Office (Yorkshire) (Colonel J S Cowley); Regimental Area Secretary (Warwickshire), The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (Brigadier J K Chater); The Royal Anglian Regiment, Leicestershire Branch (Lieutenant Colonel F A H Swallow OBE); Regimental Headquarters The Royal Highland Fusiliers (Princess Margaret's Own Glasgow and Ayrshire Regiment), (Major W Shaw MBE); Regimental Headquarters The Royal Green Jackets (Colonel I H McCausland); Home Headquarters The Queen's Royal Lancers (Captain J M Holtby); The Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry (Captain J A Charlton-Jones); Regimental Headquarters The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's) (Major E Green); The Royal Green Jackets Association, London TA Association (Mr D Stephenson); The Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum (Lieutenant Colonel C D Darroch DL); US National Guard Bureau (Renee Hylton).

I do hope this compilation enhances the reputation of the Dukes Territorials and stress that any mistakes or errors are mine alone. Perhaps more importantly, those Territorials who serve today and carry the name of the Dukes Territorials forward may rightly be proud of their volunteer heritage. For the last 140 years our volunteer forces have expanded and contracted as the whims of governments and the defence of the realm have dictated. If nothing else, their history clearly shows those who serve today that well-recruited and effective Dukes units, of whatever establishment strength, will survive successive winds of change.

To today's Dukes Territorials, this is the proud heritage readily entrusted to each and every one of you by your forebears, guard it well and, above all, never lose the distinctive good humour that is the hallmark of your work.

Tony Podmore
Horsforth
West Riding

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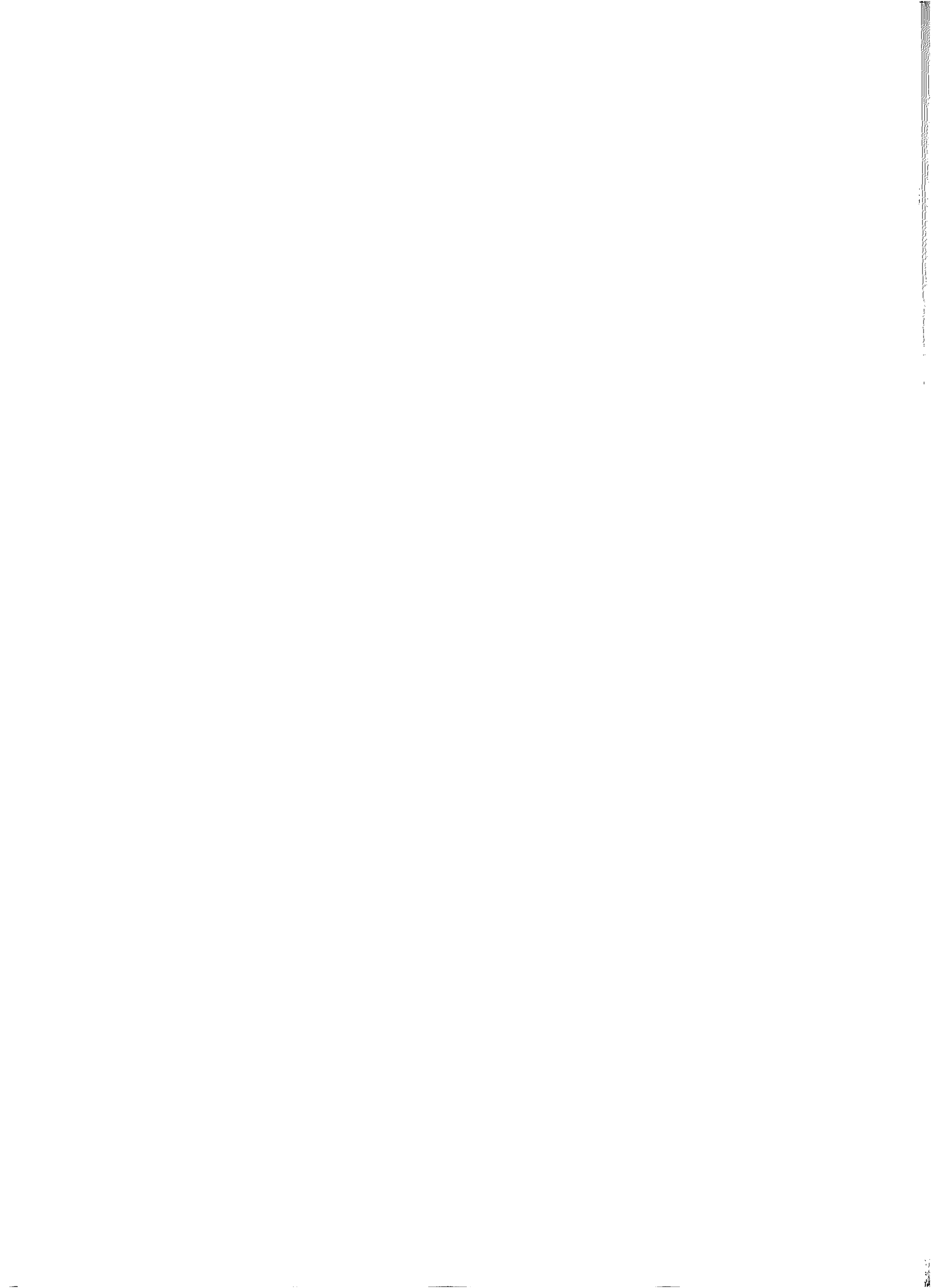
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CHAPTER 1

1859-1883: AN ARMED AND VERY DANGEROUS RABBLE

"I have considered and provided for the defence - the successful defence - of the frontiers of many countries. I am especially sensible of the certainty of failure if we do not, at an early moment, attend to the measures necessary for our defence and of the disgrace, the indelible disgrace, of such failure. I am bordering upon 77 years of age, passed in honour, I hope that the Almighty may protect me from being the witness of the tragedy which I cannot persuade my contemporaries to avert."

The Duke of Wellington, letter to Sir John Burgoyne on the national defences, 1847.

(*A history of the Volunteer Infantry.* Robert Potter Berry. 1903.)

In the mid-1850's Britain and France were allies, and fought side-by-side against the Russians in the Crimea, 1854-1856. It was during this war, that the French had successfully employed new 'ironclad' floating gun batteries against the Russian coast defences. French naval innovation continued between 1854 and 1858 when they developed a steam-powered battle fleet and achieved numerical equality with the British Royal Navy. The French realized that armoured warships were the way forward, and had begun to build a new ironclad navy, mounting technically advanced breech-loading rifled cannon. This was led by the laying down of the *Gloire* [1], a wooden hulled ironclad warship in March 1858. However the British Navy did not introduce armoured warships during the 1850's, and France therefore enjoyed a notable advantage as a potential invader. There was resistance within the Royal Navy's establishment which was against departing from traditional wooden hulled warships. But this was overcome and Britain responded with an innovation which went beyond the French method of adding armoured iron sheets to otherwise traditionally built wooden hulled ships. Britain produced Her Majesty's Ship *Warrior*:

"She freed designs from the limits of wood, allowing them to make best use of the new elements already employed in Gloire. Warrior pointed to the future, Gloire was the end of the line. In this respect France had lost the new naval race even before it had properly begun."

(*Warrior.* Dr Andrew Lambert. 1987.)

Despite their recent Crimean alliance by 1858 Britain's relationship with France was far from friendly. There was a constant fear that the French were seeking an alliance with the Russians. France's Emperor, Napoleon III, a nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, intervened in Italy, (his expansionist posture was later made real in 1860 when France annexed Savoy and Nice). French public opinion was outraged when an Italian named Orsini made bombs in England which he then used in an attempt on the life of their Emperor. The traditional enmity between Britain and France was further fuelled when they began developing the port of Cherbourg, apparently to launch a seaborne invasion of Britain.

Britain's apparent reluctance to introduce current technology had given the invader a temporary advantage for the French Navy had the crucial advantage of steam-driven warships which could cross the Channel, whilst the sail-powered Royal Navy was becalmed in port. By 1859, Napoleon's officers were encouraging the invasion of Britain, at a time when France had an advantage, albeit temporary, in naval capability together with ground forces needed to carry out seaborne landings. Despite repeated warnings from The Duke of Wellington, Britain's home defences were at a low level of readiness. The Army Commander-in-Chief, HRH the Duke of Cambridge, was very much against the tide of public opinion advocating the formation of a volunteer force to defend the imperilled nation, for he wrote to Lord Panmure, then Secretary at War:

"I dismiss at once from my mind all ideas in the public prints (newspapers) about volunteer corps. If such a system were to be adopted, the spirit of the Regular Army would be destroyed and jealousies would at once be engendered. Volunteers would do as much or as little duty as they liked, and in fact they would be an armed and very dangerous rabble. Some gentlemen are coming forward promising to raise 1,000 men for a Lt-Colonelcy; others a 100 for an Ensigncy, but none has as yet found anything like that number of men, and I doubt very much whether any will succeed in their expectations"

(*The Defenders.* G Cousins. 1968.)

The Regular Army of the day had few forces at home, and was also stretched to meet the overseas demands of the British Empire. Not least, for example, in India where the mutiny of 1857 had meant that the British regulars were hard pressed to maintain stability. At home the Militia was ineffective, and the only volunteer force available was the Yeomanry Cavalry, formed during the 1790's, together with London's Honourable Artillery Company, and one or two volunteer infantry corps. Thus the scene was set for raising those corps of the Yorkshire (West Riding) Rifle Volunteer Corps, whose volunteer successors have served continually since 1859, and who are today the 3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (Yorkshire Volunteers). It should be explained that the West Riding was to become particularly strong in Artillery and Rifle Volunteers. The County not only raised the volunteer forebears of the present-day Dukes' Territorials, but also those of The West

Yorkshire Regiment (now The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire), The York and Lancaster Regiment (later represented by 3 DWR), The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (The King's Own Yorkshire Yeomanry).

THE VOLUNTEER FORCE

As the threat of a French invasion grew public and political pressure rose to such a level that steps were eventually taken to ensure Britain's defence. In May 1859 General Peel [2], the British Secretary of State for War, issued two War Office Circulars authorising the Lord Lieutenant for each County to raise Corps of Volunteers. Not only were the volunteers to be unpaid, but they were also expected to equip themselves, and to supply their own uniform and accoutrements [3].

Rifles were issued at 25% of establishment with the remaining volunteers being expected to buy their own which they did willingly. The lack of War Office funding mirrored the regular officers' view that the volunteers were at the very best harmless lunatics and, at the worst, as utterly valueless as a military force, and in any case a great nuisance:

"The Regular Army had, in fact, little contact with the Volunteers before the Cardwell reforms. It is therefore not surprising that so many Regular officers, often woefully ignorant of their own profession, failed to recognise the problems of the Volunteer Force at home and the performance of Auxiliary troops abroad."

(Riflemen Form. Ian F W Beckett. 1982.)

Being clothed at the volunteers' personal expense, the War Office placed few restrictions on uniform patterns. Indeed who would dare tell a Yorkshireman what to wear when he had paid for it with his own brass:

"Regulation 95 *Every volunteer corps is allowed to choose its own uniform and accoutrements, subject to the approval of the Lord Lieutenant of the County and provided that no gold lace is introduced."*

(The Regulations of 1861 for the Volunteer Force, so far as relates to the Infantry. War Office. 19th January 1861.)

At County level, Corps of the same Arm were required to have a uniform colour of cloth, and all were required to wear badges of rank in the regular army pattern. The Volunteer Force was forbidden gold lace as this was deemed the prerogative of the regular soldier. However this lack of gold lace was welcomed by the volunteers, many of whom were gentlemen in the early days, if not middle class. They certainly did not wish to be mistaken for regular soldiers whom the public largely regarded as worthless and incorrigible rogues, the dregs of society. Further War Office Regulations defined the rifle volunteer's dress and equipment:

"Regulation 98 *As the force should at all times be prepared for actual service, it is recommended that every Volunteer should, in addition to the articles worn on his person, be provided with the undermentioned kit, which is calculated on his minimum requirements in the field. For members of a Rifle Volunteer Corps - Knapsack; greatcoat or cloak of the pattern approved for the corps; one flannel shirt; one pair of flannel or serge trousers; one pair of worsted socks; one pair of boots; one hold-all containing knife, fork, spoon and comb &c; one towel; soap; one tin of grease; one mess-tin and cover."*

"Regulation 99 *The pouches should be capable of containing sixty rounds of ammunition, and should be so fixed as not to interfere with the arrangement of the knapsack."*

"Regulation 100 *Commissioned Officers and Sergeants alone are permitted to wear side-arms when off duty, and then only the authorised weapons of their respective ranks."*

(The Regulations of 1861 for the Volunteer Force, so far as relates to the Infantry. War Office. 19th January 1861.)

Rifle Volunteer Corps and Artillery Volunteer Corps were quickly raised in Yorkshire's Ridings, most dating from 1859. By Autumn 1859 some 60,000 had enlisted in the nation's new Volunteer Force. The Volunteer Force of 1862 had a national strength of 162,681, which comprised 662 Light Horse, 24,363 Artillery Volunteers, 2904 Engineer Volunteers, 656 Mounted Rifles and 134,096 Rifle Volunteers.

THE WEST RIDING RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

The rapid expansion of the new Volunteer Force created many Corps of Rifle Volunteers in the West Riding. Although all bore the title 'Corps' War Office regulations at first authorised a 'Corps' to be at differing strengths. The smallest could be a 'sub-division' of under 30 'effectives', secondly a company strength of 30-90, and finally a corps of four or more companies usually based in a large town. Late 1859 and the early 1860's saw the city based Corps amalgamating into battalion strength units.

The Mayor of Halifax received a petition on 27th May 1859 which called for the raising of a Halifax Corps. The Mayor responded by calling a public meeting at Halifax Town Hall for the 3rd June. The Meeting "*warmly approved the formation of a Volunteer Corps for the town and district*", and agreed "*that immediate steps be taken to obtain the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant and the proper authorities to enrol such persons who are willing to join the Corps*". 119 Halifax volunteers responded by enlisting, but their enthusiasm was tempered by true West Riding prudence regarding personal expense:

"We, the undersigned, are willing to enrol ourselves as members of a Volunteer Rifle Corps for this town and district, provided the cost of uniform, arms, and accoutrements does not exceed £9 per annum."

William Moore, the Constable of Huddersfield, similarly called a meeting at Huddersfield Gymnasium Hall on 9th June 1859 "*for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of establishing a Volunteer Rifle Corps*". This meeting was also well attended but less successful. Feelings ran high that the raising of the volunteers was a Tory plot to divert attention from domestic matters, as well as being a move to introduce conscription. This was not unusual, across the country many such meetings were disrupted by the peace protesters of the period. The Huddersfield meeting became increasingly heated, and was broken up in disorder. Not only was no conclusion made but the organisers also received a claim for £5 to cover the cost of damaged furniture. Suspicions grew that this first meeting had been intentionally packed with objectors, and a Mr T H Battye held a further meeting at his office on the 22nd June. This was to result in a number of the prominent citizens of Huddersfield agreeing to form 'The Huddersfield Rifle Club'. At that early time the aim of a 'Rifle Corps' and 'Rifle Club' were the same. Membership was agreed at a cost of a guinea a year, together with a charge of £10 to cover arms, uniform, and accoutrements. Clearly the men of Huddersfield were spendthrifts aside the more careful men of Halifax.

They met again on the 5th July at the Riding School, Ramsden Street, when the people of Huddersfield, and the surrounding hamlets, were invited to enrol. Some seventy volunteers joined on the then not unusual understanding that they would be permitted to elect their own officers, and to agree the times for drill and practice. Further to the north more corps of West Riding Rifle Volunteers were raised:

"At a meeting held at the Court House, Settle on Wednesday, July 6th 1859 called to suggest the raising of a Corps of Volunteer Rifles, J W Farmer Esq in the Chair. The following resolutions were approved, Moved by Geo Stansfield Esq, Seconded by C J Geldard Esq 'that a committee be formed with power to add to their number'. About 30 names of gentlemen of the neighbourhood were entered upon the committee. Moved by Henry Robinson Esq, seconded by F T Clapham Esq, 'that a working committee be appointed, to consist of the following gentlemen: Thomas Clapham - Austwick Hall, William Carr - Stack House, Richard Hardacre - Hellifield House, Robert Hargreaves - Stockdale, John Ingleby - Austwick, George Stansfield Jr - Settle, John Birkbeck, W Morrison (Secretaries), and that of these, three do form a quorum, Signed J W Farmer - Chairman."

(West York Rifle Volunteers 1859-1887. K D Pickup. 1982.)

The Earl Fitzwilliam, then the West Riding's Lord Lieutenant, received a steady stream of applications requesting authorisation to form Rifle Volunteer Corps. Having gained his approval, the applications were then forwarded to the War Office. It was the date that the War Office granted approval which granted seniority to the corps of West Riding Volunteers. The senior in the County was numbered the '1st', and this was granted to the corps raised in the City of York which was designated as the '1st Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps'.

The Halifax Corps was approved on 13th October 1859 and became the '7th Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps'. The first commanding officer was Captain E Ackroyd, who was later Lieutenant Colonel Ackroyd, and in time, as a Colonel, was to be the unit's first Honorary Colonel, and served as such until succeeded by Lord Savile KCVO. This was a period when many corps were raised, and sometimes re-numbered as more flourishing corps absorbed smaller ones. This resulted in the Halifax Corps being renumbered as the '4th' in April 1860. On 18th November 1859 the Huddersfield Corps, five companies strong, received approval and was numbered as the '10th', but again the corps was renumbered as the '6th' later in 1860. The Skipton Corps was formed as the '12th' on 8th February 1860. So were raised the three battalions, based at Halifax, Huddersfield, and at Skipton, which were, in time, to be retitled as Volunteer Battalions of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment). It soon became clear that whereas the towns could produce battalion strength units, the many smaller rural corps needed some form of battalion-sized administration. This brought about the War Office instructing the formation of Administrative Battalions. In June 1860 the Skipton Corps became the '2nd Administrative Battalion', and thereafter included the corps at Bingley, Burley, Guiseley, Haworth, Keighley, and at North Craven (Settle and Ingleton).

Similarly in 1862 the Huddersfield Corps became the '5th Administrative Battalion', and included corps at Holmfirth, Lindley, Meltham, and Outlane. However as administrative battalions the individual Corps they administered retained their former numbered titles and patterns of uniform. Uniform styles were very much the privilege of each individual corps, after all they paid for them out of their own pockets. Halifax chose a dark green tunic with long skirts, black mohair braud with black silk lace, worn with a plumed shako helmet which bore their corps badge and included the Arms of Halifax.

The George Hotel, Huddersfield, on 5th September 1859 witnessed the dress for Huddersfield Corps being decided. Mr James Laycock brought along his old uniform worn when a member of the 'Armed Association'. This bottle green coatee with stove-pipe shako was an 1800 pattern and did not influence the committee's choice. The Huddersfield's uniform was based upon London's 'Victoria Rifles'. It was dark grey, trimmed with mohair braid, Austrian knot lacing with black 'facings'. This was worn with an 1855 pattern shako with a black cock feather plume, with the badge bearing the motto 'Arma Pacis Fulcra' (Arms the mainstay of peace). Huddersfield's close association with textiles brought reasonable prices with the cost of the complete uniform amounting to £3 15 shillings and sixpence. Further business at the George included the appointment of Captain H F Beaumont [4], of Whitley Hall, as commanding officer. As with all Volunteer Force officers, his commission was signed by the Earl Fitzwilliam, then Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding. Annual subscriptions to corps funds were also agreed, and these ranged from £10 10 shillings for a captain to 10 shillings and sixpence for a private. These sums should be related to weekly pay of the period when a manager earned about £2 10 shillings, and a skilled workman's 60 hour week brought in between £1 12 shillings and £1 15 shillings.

Uniform caused its own problems. Some members of the Huddersfield corps rank and file were found to be removing the black braid stripe on the trousers so that they could double as civilian dress on Saturdays and Sundays. This was countered by changing the braid to scarlet piping sewn into the seam to thwart removal. This however did not discourage the trousers being worn for work for one volunteer, a joiner, tried on his trousers and demanded of the tailor "Where's th'oile for a two-foot rule?". Up in Settle the 29th November 1859 was a special occasion:

"The 29th November 1859 was a red-letter day for the corps, as they appeared for the first time in uniform. Naturally the event excited great interest in the town, and large crowds assembled to witness the muster. The uniform was a loose grey coat with dark braid, small cloth cap, wide 'Zouave' trousers fitted tight below the knee, and patent leather leggings. The men were armed with a short Enfield rifle, with bayonet, twenty of these rifles having been purchased to start with."

(The Early Days of the Settle Volunteer Corps. Thomas Brayshaw. 1916.)

Having organised, equipped, and dressed themselves, the volunteers needed premises which again had to be paid for by themselves. For example, the Huddersfield Corps secured the use of the Cloth Hall Yard in August 1859 by agreement with Sir John Ramsden Bt who then owned the best part of Huddersfield town. Sir John was to be a great supporter of the Volunteer Force. He was the first Commanding Officer, and later Honorary Colonel of the Leeds Artillery Volunteers, and Under-Secretary of State for War in Palmerston's administration. An outside area for field exercise at first proved harder to find. Huddersfield's volunteers were a novelty as a letter from Messrs E T Monk and Co of Lower Aspley Mills records:

"We shall have great pleasure in allowing the Rifle Corps the use of our field, but as we have a great number of workpeople to whom rifle shooting would be a novelty, and for some time would give us some trouble to keep them at work during practice time &c."

(A History of the Volunteer Infantry. Robert Potter Berry. 1903.)

Monk's, then silk-spinners, went on to offer free use of the field if the Corps could come up with a means of preventing their workers being distracted by the volunteers' activities. The corps eventually arranged the use of the cricket field in Trinity Street. The modifications to the field cost corps' funds £309, and it was used for shooting practice and drill. In 1863 the Corps acquired a 'long range' at Ashenhurst, above Longley Hall Park. Drills continued to be held at the Cloth Hall Yard, and later at St Paul's schoolrooms. In the middle of 1860 buildings behind the Crown Hotel, in Upperhead Row, were secured as an armoury, orderly room and offices. Training was carried out between seven and eight o' clock every morning. Long before those hours a drummer paraded at Edgerton, New North Road, Newhouse, and other areas, where he blew reveillé and summoned the rifle volunteers to duty. Quite what the residents thought of this military alarm clock can only be guessed at. Permanent headquarters were established in 1863 at the Riding School, Ramsden Street, and these served until 1901 when the present drill hall in St Paul's Street was occupied. The Halifax Corps similarly occupied temporary premises until 1868 when the corps began to build its own drill hall, in Prescott Street, which was occupied in 1870. Settle's approach was at first to use the large room at the Joiner's Arms "for drill on wet days". The first large parade of the Huddersfield Corps was held on Saturday December 31st 1859 when members reported to the Cloth Hall Yard at 2.30pm. It was led by the Meltham Mills Brass Band which was "certainly one of the best in the county in which musical pre-eminence is only attained by rare excellence":

"Then, headed by the Meltham Mills Band, they proceeded down Cloth Hall Street and along New Street to St George's Square, where, in the presence of some thousands of persons, they went through a number of military evolutions. Then they marched up New North Road to the old cricket ground, where they had file practice and marching, and fired blanks. It is gratifying to learn on the authority of the reporter that considering the little field practice the men have hitherto had, they went through

the whole with remarkable precision. After practising 'til nearly dusk the corps returned to St George's Square, fired three rounds of blank cartridge and were then dismissed."

(Ibid)

September 1860 was busy, for it was announced that all Yorkshire's new Volunteer Force were to be reviewed at York at the end of the month. A rehearsal review took place at Peel Park, Bradford, on the 15th September when the Corps from Bradford, Wakefield, Huddersfield, and Leeds took part. Some 10,000 spectators turned up to see the 1,200 volunteers practise their evolutions, and the arrival of the five battalions at Peel Park was signalled by the firing of one of the 'Sebastopol Guns' which were mounted on an earthwork battery at the east end of the park:

"A number of evolutions were gone through similar to those expected to be undertaken at the York Review, although the programme had to be slightly altered in consequence of the formation of the ground. The movement, however, which most interested the spectators was when the five battalions formed in squares with bayonets fixed to resist cavalry, and were charged by the (12th Royal) Lancers in double line. These soldiers had only returned a few weeks ago from India. They rode young horses only partially trained, and considering that circumstance, and the nature of the ground, the charge was splendidly made."

(Ibid)

A Grand Review of Yorkshire's Volunteer Force was first held at the Knavesmire, York, on September 26th 1860. The diary of William Morrison [5], commanding the Settle Corps, records careful preparations for the event. As well as military stores, it was suggested that each rifle volunteer might need to take his "Pipe in case and probably 'Cavendish' or 'Pigtail' tobacco, as occupying little bulk and being more easily preserved from weather damp".

Even more comforting were the Corps stores, for amongst the essentials of axes and cooking apparatus were two small barrels to contain spirits. Yet Captain Morrison's careful preparations for the review probably struck a note of alarm in the Settle volunteers, who had invested hard-earned money in their splendid uniforms, for it also contained the possible need for "One 'housewife', to sew up rents in Volunteer clothes occasioned by skirmishing among blackthorn". Yorkshire's Rifle Volunteers paraded as three 'Brigades'. The 2nd Brigade of 1,900 included the Huddersfield and Homfirth Corps, some 332 volunteers, commanded by Major H F Beaumont, the Halifax Corps paraded 255 under Major Ackroyd, and the Corps from the Skipton district had 326 present. General Sir George A Wetherall KCB KH, Inspector of Volunteers for the Northern and Eastern Districts, reviewed Corps from the three Ridings:

"The grand stand, a building which has been erected and improved at considerable expense, was placed at the disposal of the Lord Lieutenant by the Racing Committee. The Review ground, which was kept by a detachment of the 12th Lancers, under the command of Captain Wombwell, presented an imposing and magnificent sight."

"The state of the ground, however, was a great drawback. In many places it was so sodden that in marching past the grand stand the men were ankle deep in mud, while in other places they had to wade through pools of water several inches deep. It was computed there were about 40,000 to 50,000 spectators. There were about 500 or 600 policemen on duty. The General first made an inspection of the arms and accoutrements, after which the other evolutions set down in the programme were proceeded with, but after the companies had gone through the movement of marching past the saluting point, which they did in a very commendable manner, worthy of regular troops, the General brought the Review to a close, the ground being in such a state as almost to preclude the possibility of further evolutions being successfully carried out."

(Ibid)

The volunteer's splendid endeavours were applauded by Lieutenant General Sir George Weatherall:

"The General, in addressing the Commanding Officers of the various regiments, said that he had no hesitation in saying that the Volunteers he had just reviewed were amongst the finest body of men he had seen and he had witnessed few Field days on which troops had drilled better. They were composed of men from agricultural and manufacturing districts combined and they laboured under considerable disadvantage. They deserved, however, great credit for their efficiency and he himself could hardly imagine how they had acquired it. He was quite satisfied that the Yorkshire Volunteers were peculiarly fortunate in their officers."

(Ibid)

Such fine words belied General Weatherall's true feelings about Volunteers, for he had, as Adjutant General, previously spoken out strongly against the formation of the Volunteer Force, and regarded the formation of the Volunteer Force as likely to produce soldiers "incapable of discipline and a bad substitute for the Militia" [6].

War Office regulations regarding 'colours' for the volunteers followed the principle that 'Rifles' did not traditionally bear colours:

"Regulation 101: Neither standards nor colours are to be carried by corps on parade, as the Volunteer Force is composed of arms to which their use is not appropriate."

(The Regulations of 1861 for the Volunteer Force, so far as relates to the Infantry. War Office. 19th January 1861.)

This ruling did not deter the Yorkshire volunteers for the Halifax Corps were presented colours by a Mrs Bury at a parade held on 21st September 1860. They had been made by the 'Ladies of Halifax' and bore the Arms of Halifax on both sides. These rifle volunteer colours remained with the Halifax Corps until 1910 when they were laid up at All Souls Church [7]. The Huddersfield Corps received their unofficial colours in St George's Square on 28th March 1868. These rifle volunteer colours were to remain with the unit until 1936 when they were laid up by the 5th Battalion at Huddersfield Parish Church.

The colours conformed to regular patterns and bore a scroll 'VI West York Rifle Volunteers' and another bearing 'Huddersfield 1859', with the motto *Arma Pacis Fulcra*. They were purchased for 40 guineas, and presented by Mrs Charles Brook:

"Lieutenant Colonel Greenwood, officers and privates of the Huddersfield Rifles, as a token of the high regard in which Mrs Captain Learoyd and the ladies of Huddersfield have towards your noble corps, I am requested to present for your acceptance these colours. In doing so we are quite sure that in your hands they will never be dishonoured. For myself, I feel greatly the honour conferred on me in being selected by the ladies to present them to your battalion, for I am sure it is done in compliment to my husband, knowing as we all do, the warm interest he ever takes in the prosperity and success of the Volunteers of our native town."

(A History of the Volunteer Infantry. Robert Potter Berry. 1903.)

Training centred on marksmanship, their sole weapon being the .577" (14.7mm) rifle which used the standard War Office issue ammunition. The most common type was the 1853 pattern .577" Enfield muzzle-loading rifle, which weighed 9 pounds and had a 55" long barrel to which could be attached a sword bayonet. A breech-loading 'Snider' conversion was introduced in 1864 following the success of a similar Prussian bolt-action 15.43mm 'needle-gun' used against the Danes. Not only was loading quicker but it no longer needed a long ramrod and this enabled firers to reload whilst lying down in cover. But the Snider conversion was to be short-lived as a purpose built breech-loader, the 0.450" Martini-Henry, was issued to the regular army by 1871, resulting in the Snider converted Enfields passing to the Volunteer Force.

The Rifle Volunteers certainly regarded themselves as élite soldiers. Such élitism was supported by the advent of the rifled weapon which the volunteers bore. Not for them were the old smooth-bored muskets of the regular army which had to be fired in volleys to have any effect on an enemy, even at short ranges. The smooth-bored percussion musket was the regular soldier's issued weapon until 1851. The 'Baker' rifle, named after the inventor Ezekiel Baker, a London gunsmith, was introduced into the British Army in 1800, this muzzle-loading flintlock fired a substantial 0.62" (15.7mm) lead ball weighing one ounce, and a rifleman could hit a man with it at ranges up to 250 yards. But its issue was restricted to the '95th Rifles' and the 5th Battalion of the '60th Foot' whose role on the battlefield was that of skirmishers in advance of the formed ranks of musket bearing 'Infantry of the Line' regiments. The regular's Baker rifle was replaced by the 0.704" 'Brunswick' rifle in 1837 which was made at Enfield and the first to use percussion caps, but again it was only issued to the few 'rifle regiments'. It was not until 1851 that all regular infantrymen began to see the new 0.702" 'Minié' rifle when its issue was authorised by The Duke of Wellington.

The reason that the rifle became general issue was due to improved bullet technology. The accuracy of the rifle over the smooth-bore musket was achieved by the rifle barrel imparting spin to a bullet. However to impart this spin the ball-shaped bullet had to be a very tight fit if it was to be gripped by the rifled grooves inside the barrel. This required very careful loading which was also a slow process and was deemed to be a specialist skill beyond the average infantryman of the period. However the Minié rifle fired 0.702" (17.8mm) elongated bullets which had a hollow base fitted with an iron plug. This made them easy to load with the iron plug forming a tight seal to the rifling on firing. Despite the new bullet's conical shape small-arms ammunition continues to be called 'ball' to this very day. The Minié rifle was not in service long being replaced by the smaller calibre 0.577" Enfield in 1853. Even then not all the regular infantry divisions who later served in the Crimean War of 1854-1856 had received the new rifle. For example, the Guards' battalions were each sent to the Crimea equipped with 250 Minié rifles and 650 smooth-bore muskets.

The rifle was a technically advanced weapon which required much greater individual skill than the musket. The musket's individual effective range was about 40 yards and had to be fired by formed bodies in volleys, infantry fire was thus a Drill Sergeant's skill. But the new Enfield rifle was sighted to 900 yards and was certainly effective when fired by an individual at 400 to 500 yards. Thus the new rifles were individual weapons with a range that

outdistanced the contemporary smooth-bored field guns, and as such required a quite different specialist's approach. The skill and intelligence demanded by the rifle had great appeal to the volunteer, who perceived it as revolutionising warfare, and calling for virtues above the brute courage and harsh discipline dictated by the regular soldier's use of the musket. To this was coupled the skill and intelligence demanded by their role as rifle regiments whose soldiers acted in smaller groups as skirmishers and marksmen. Small wonder that the skill of the rifle volunteer was, somewhat romantically, linked with a revival of the individual expertise displayed by the expert English archers of Crécy and Agincourt. This pride in their role was proclaimed by most of the volunteer infantry units who took care to title their corps as 'Rifle Volunteers'. Skill-at-Arms was given great emphasis, at a time when their Regular Army counterparts had only recently discarded the musket in favour of the rifle. The diary of the Settle Corps records the emphasis placed on skill-at-arms:

"Malham Tarn was the scene of a great shooting-match in August, on which occasion five of the best shots from each of the Settle, Skipton, and Ingleton Companies competed for a silver bugle, the gift of Captain Morrison (commanding the Settle Corps) The Skipton Corps, some 80 strong, and headed by their band, marched from Bell Busk station; the Settle men (about 60) with their band, and supplemented by the Ingletonians, assembled in the market place and marched to the Tarn from thence. Great crowds of spectators witnessed the competition, which was enlivened by selections of music from the two bands. The result was an unqualified victory for the Settle team, the members of it making the three highest scores, Lieut. Ingleby heading them."

(The Early Days of the Settle Volunteer Corps. Thomas Brayshaw. 1916.)

A return match took place at Crookrise ranges, near Skipton, in May 1861. The Settle Corps was again victorious, and the event was supported by the remarkable number of 3,000 spectators. Their jubilant return to Settle was greeted by the corps band, a huge crowd of townsfolk which was followed by "A jovial evening at the Crown Hotel". An important feature of the formation of the West Riding Rifle Volunteers was to be that their activities introduced a new social focal point for their communities who then were experiencing increasing leisure time. Drill Halls therefore not only became centres for military skill but also a prime mover in the social life of the community through organising balls, dinners, concerts, bazaars and outings. In the formative period however only 25% of the volunteers were authorised to be equipped with War Office issue rifles in peacetime, and so the volunteer was expected to buy his own rifle and ammunition. By January 1860 the War Office issued rifles at 50% of establishment, but it was not until January 1861 that each volunteer could expect to be issued with a rifle. William Morrison's diary again records details of the rifle volunteers' domestic arrangements:

"Settle January 11th 1860"

"Ammunition obtained from Eley is, like all ball cartridge manufactured by private makers, very inferior to that supplied by the Government. Allowance from the Government amounts to 90 rounds per man per annum."

"Settle January 17th 1860"

"Private Bradley to be employed to do all cleaning etc at the armoury behind J Hartley's shop. To clean all Rifles at a fixed tuppence per rifle. Wages for Bradley half-a-crown each Monday."

"Sergt. Major Hook, late of the 50th Foot and at present of the 1st Royal Lancashire Militia, be enrolled with the rank of Sergeant, as the drill instructor."

These early issue rifles were the long Enfield rifle many of which were inferior stocks from the Crimean War. As a result many volunteers chose to buy their own 'two-band' Enfield rifle. A subsequent offer from the War Office to buy-in these better rifles at cost was met with resentment, as most volunteers considered the War Office issue 1853 pattern Enfield rifle to be markedly sub-standard, and not good enough for volunteers. No special issue of ammunition to train recruits was made, but the War Office did issue ammunition, at cost price, at a set scale for each 'effective' rifle volunteer, of 100 rounds of ball, 60 rounds of blank, 176 percussion caps and a further 20 percussion caps for 'snapping' practice. Only five practice targets per company, again at cost price, were issued by the War Office.

To supervise marksmanship two members of each volunteer company were encouraged by the War Office to gain the qualification of 'Chief Musketry Instructor' through attending, at their own expense, a fourteen day course at the regular army School of Musketry at Hythe.

Each unit was required to have its own rifle range, in locations authorised by the Lord Lieutenant, with a minimum specified range of 100 yards, but they were often up to 1,000 yards or more. Here rifle practice took place up to three times a week and the poor scale of issue ammunition led to the volunteer rifleman buying his own at the price of sixpence for a packet of ten rounds with percussion caps. Volunteer Ranges were required to comply with strict War Office specifications, and to be inspected, but this did not always prevent mishaps. A native of Springdale reported hearing breaking glass, followed by something striking the wall but a yard above her head:

"On examination this proved to be a conical rifle ball which had proceeded from the practice ground, near Gledholt Lane. It had passed through the glass, making a hole scarcely larger than itself, travelled a passage 8 or 10 yards long, and indented the wall where it struck to a depth of quarter of an inch, the ball itself being flattened and grazed on one of its sides. Had the point of entry to Mr Wrigley's house been a yard lower, the ball would have caught the servant as she was passing upstairs and life might have been sacrificed."

(A History of the Volunteer Infantry. Robert Potter Berry. 1903.)

Queen Victoria gave active support to the Volunteer Force, and offered a £250 prize for a national shooting match to be held in July 1860. Competition was fierce - £250 then represented more than two years' wages. This first "Queen's Prize" was won by Private Edward C R Ross, 7th Yorkshire (North Riding) Rifle Volunteer Corps ("The Teesdale Volunteers"), who fired at 800, 900, and 1,000 yards. Honours came to the West Riding in 1865 when Halifax's Private Sharman won the Queen's Prize. This competition was first held at Wimbledon, but it later moved to Bisley where it is still competed for today.

Formation training took the form of six 'Drills':

"The first lesson was confined to instruction in the 'falling-in' and 'telling-off' of a squad; opening for squad drill; the position or attitude of the Volunteers, which was to be 'perfectly easy and natural, without any stiffness or constraint'; standing at ease; facing; closing the squad; dressing and dismissing a squad."

"The second lesson is addressed to marching; stepping out; stepping short or marking time; the diagonal march; breaking off and reassembling; the double-march and wheeling."

"The third lesson to the manual exercise and the method of piling arms."

"The fourth lesson to platoon exercise by numbers; coming to the ready; to shoulder and order from the capping position; to firing and reloading; kneeling and platoon exercise in slow and quick time."

"The fifth lesson to the formation of a squad in two ranks; telling-off; firings; skirmishing; extending from the halt; closing on the halt; extending and closing on the march; advancing and retiring in skirmishing order; including to a flank; changing front or direction whilst skirmishing; firing in skirmishing order; rallying a square or resisting cavalry."

"The sixth, and last, lesson dealt with the formation of the Corps or Company; the posts of officers; dispersing and assembling; advancing; retiring and wheeling; wheeling into columns of sub-divisions or sections; company square; skirmishing; skirmishers closing on the support; relieving skirmishers and bugle calls."

(The Manual of Drill and Rifle Instruction for Volunteer Rifle Corps. 1859.)

It soon became apparent that some form of permanent staff was required to help the volunteers with their training and administration. The first circular of July 1859 sanctioned the employment of an adjutant for a corps of 500 men or eight companies. However they had to be paid for from Corps funds as no War Office grant was made. By 1878 the system was changed to that of regular officers being seconded for a period of five years. From February 1860, regular army drill instructors were attached to Corps, for a three month period, at a charge to Corps funds of half-a-crown a day and lodging allowance. From August 1861, Corps were authorised to employ retired Sergeant Instructors on a full-time basis, again provided that they were paid by Corps funds.

High standards of personal conduct were imposed upon officer and rifleman alike. Anyone wishing to enlist was required to have two serving members act as referees before they could sign the binding contract which enlisted them. Regular attendance and training standards were required before being certified as 'efficient'. Each volunteer had to attend a minimum of nine drills, was required to be proficient at drill, skill-at-arms, field exercises, and had to attend the annual inspection of the Corps. From 1863 the War Office paid £1 for every member of the Corps rated as 'efficient', and a further 10 shillings for every member qualifying at the rifle range. To this new funding the Government made a quaint addition and "also repeated the gracious permission accorded by George II of wearing hair-powder untaxed". Discipline was strictly enforced. Any volunteer failing to qualify as 'efficient' at the end of the year was not only struck-off strength but was also taken before the local magistrate where he was heavily fined for lack of diligence. The diary of the Settle Corps records company orders for November 24th 1871 signed by Captain J Birkbeck, who was a founder member of the Corps:

"No 241 Private Thomas Blackwell neglected to make himself an efficient member of the Corps, and is struck off the strength of the company. He will deliver to the stores the articles listed: 1 great coat, 1 knap-sack, 1 haversack, 1 rifle, 1 bayonet & scabbard, 1 sling, 1 snap cap, 1 forage cap, 1 undress coat."

(The Early Days of the Settle Volunteer Corps. Thomas Brayshaw. 1916.)

Whereas some volunteers were struck-off for their performance, the weak attendance of others sometimes merited blanket disapproval:

"Members who will not make small sacrifices of their pleasure and ease for a pressing occasion, and who require to be continually spoken to in order to secure their attendance at drill at all, are not the kind of men the Commanding Officer wishes to have under his command."

(Ibid)

This gentlemanly rebuke proved effective. Although different in phrasing, the problem of poor attendance it addressed was to be equally familiar to successive volunteer commanding officers for the next 135 years, and will doubtless remain so in the future.

Of all the West Riding Rifle Volunteer Corps, that in Saddleworth was notably independent. Well down the Lancashire side of the Pennines, but still in the West Riding, it was then a thriving woollen manufacturing town with a population of about 20,000. The Corps was raised in 1860 being then approved as the '34th Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps', and in 1862 permission was given for 'Saddleworth' to be included in the title. It was first commanded by Captain F Whitehead, an official of the Royal George Mills. A company, unofficially named 'Lady Dartmouth's Own', was raised at Slaithwaite, and the Earl of Dartmouth later became an officer in the corps. By 1864 the Corps was at a remarkable battalion strength with companies at Woolroad (Saddleworth), Delph, Golcar, Kirkburton, Lydgate, Marsden, Slaithwaite, and Woodsome. When the '5th Administrative Battalion' was formed at Huddersfield in 1862 it made overtures to include the Saddleworth Corps which fiercely resisted and avoided inclusion by recruiting itself up to full battalion strength thus ensuring its continued independence.

The Saddleworth Volunteers were not without local influence. For example, a bazaar held at Uppermill, under the patronage of the Earl and Countess of Dartmouth and the Countess Fitzwilliam, realised £1,400 for corps funds. The Saddleworth Corps waist-belt bore the motto 'God and Fatherland', strong words but this would then refer to the recruit's oath which then stated that they were 'Ready, if need be, to fight and die for God and Fatherland'. By 1877 numbers had reduced, and it was reluctantly placed under the administration of Huddersfield. Yet they remained fiercely independent even after the Huddersfield Corps became the '2nd Volunteer Battalion'. In the mid-1890's the Saddleworth volunteers manifested their stubborn independence by "*hooting the Adjutant in St George's square*" and this led to the further reduction of this most unusual unit. Yet the Saddleworth district continued to provide companies, and it was to provide a substantial part of the 7th Battalion when the Huddersfield battalion was later required to double its strength in 1908.

Between 1859 and 1880, the West Riding Rifle Volunteers steadily established their Battalions. In 1880 the "Administrative Battalion" arrangement ceased, and the Corps were 'consolidated'. By this time Halifax's 4th Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps had six companies at Halifax (2), Sowerby, Brighouse, Hebden Bridge, and Upper Shibden Hall. Huddersfield's 5th Administrative Battalion became the 6th Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps, with companies at Huddersfield, Holmfirth, Saddleworth, and Mirfield. The 2nd Administrative Battalion at Skipton became the 9th Yorkshire, West Riding, Rifle Volunteer Corps, with companies at Skipton, Settle, Burley, Keighley, Haworth, and Bingley. Also in 1880 the West Riding Brigade Bearer Company was formed on the establishment of the Halifax Corps. It remained administered by the Corps until 1908 when it was transferred to form part of the Yorkshire Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance.

Not only had the West Riding Rifle Volunteers more than done their patriotic duty, they had also enjoyed themselves and, on balance, the Volunteer Movement was accepted as having done more for the Regular Army than vice-versa. Sir Garnet Wolseley, former Inspector of Reserves, somewhat optimistically stated in 1878:

"In fact, the Volunteer Movement has popularised the Army, and the soldier is now looked upon as one from whom much is to be learnt, as a model to be copied, rather than as the pariah to be despised, which he was before our citizen army sprang into existence."

(Letter to the Bury Committee. (to Lord Bury MP.)

Yet change was coming. The next twenty years brought the start of their association with The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), and this coincided with developments which swapped scarlet for khaki and muzzle-loaders for machine-guns. But the British regular army had not fought a war against a fully industrialised nation since 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo, most of the wars had been minor skirmishes policing the British Empire. Two decades before the Americans had fought a bloody civil war which had resulted in 616,000 casualties. They too had opened the war armed with new rifles (many of which were Enfields), but whilst clinging to the traditional close-order tactics directed by old smoothbore muskets:

"The musket was one great source of woe for the Civil War soldier. It looked like the old weapon of infantry tradition, but in actual fact it was a new piece, and it compelled a radical change in infantry tactics. The change was made late and slowly, and thousands of lives were lost as a result. Infantry tactics at that time were based on the use of the smooth-bore musket, a weapon of limited range and

accuracy. Firing lines that were much more than a hundred yards apart could not inflict very much damage on each other, and so troops which were to make an attack would be massed together, elbow to elbow, and would make a run for it; if there were enough of them, and they ran fast enough, the defensive line would not hurt them seriously, and when they got to close quarters the advantage of numbers and the use of the bayonet would settle things."

"But the Civil War musket was rifled, which made an enormous difference. It was still a muzzle-loader, but had much more accuracy and a far longer range than the old smoothbore, and it completely changed the conditions under which soldiers fought. An advancing line could be brought under killing fire at a distance of half a mile, now, and the massed charge of Napoleonic tradition was miserably out of date. When a defensive line occupied field entrenchments - which the soldiers learned to dig fairly early in the game - a direct frontal assault became almost impossible. The hideous casualty lists of Civil War battles owed much of their size to the fact that soldiers were fighting with rifles but were using tactics suited to smoothbores. It took the generals a long time to learn that a new approach was needed."

(*The Civil War [American]*. Bruce Catton. 1960.)

The experiences of the American Civil War of the 1860's were therefore available as a clear signal to Europe's armies on the style of future wars involving industrialised nations. More so when the rifle's deadly accuracy was later allied to quicker breech-loading mechanisms using smokeless powder, and the introduction of machine-guns. Yet the British Army did not recognise the lessons of the American Civil War which were lost in time. The lessons remained to be rediscovered the hard way by the British 'Tommy' on the battlefields of South Africa and, later, of France and Flanders.

[1: In 1860 a Sheffield steelmaker, John Brown, took a trip to Toulon where he surreptitiously inspected La Gloire. He was not impressed by the rough cobbled appearance of its hammered armour plating. John Brown knew that he could manufacture thicker, smoother armour plating by the process of rolling steel and he rapidly designed and built a new rolling mill at his Atlas Works in Sheffield. His works was manufacturing rolled armour plate by 1861, winning a Gold Medal at the London Exhibition of 1862. In August 1862 the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, visited John Brown's Sheffield home at Shirle Hall and saw the armour plate being made at the Atlas Works. By 1863 John Brown was making armour plating 12" thick which was capable of withstanding the heaviest artillery shot and was far superior to that fitted by the French Navy. The Royal Commission on Armour Plate awarded the bulk of the Royal Navy's order to John Brown, and by 1867 three-quarters of the Royal Navy's ironclads were fitted with armour plate from the Atlas Works. During this time John Brown was also an officer in Sheffield's Hallamshire Rifle Volunteers and had built Endcliffe Hall as his private residence. John Brown was knighted in 1867 becoming the first Sheffield steelmaker to be so honoured. Sir John Brown died in 1896 and was buried at All Saints' Parish Church, Eccleshall, Sheffield.]

[2: The 'Volunteer Force' raised in 1859 was formed using an existing act of Parliament - 'The Yeomanry and Volunteer Act 44, Geo III c54 of 1804.]

[3: 'Accoutrements' were defined by the War Office "Accoutrements, to be provided at the expense of the members, will consist of waist-belt of black or brown leather, sliding frog for bayonet, ball-bag containing cap-pocket, and twenty-round pouch. Patterns may be seen, on application at the pattern-room, War Department, Pimlico". General Order as to carrying on Ball Practice number 730, Musketry Instruction 4 (1859), War Office 11th June 1859.]

[4: Captain Henry F Beaumont was described by the Victorians as "a gentleman of substance and position in Yorkshire, the County of broad acres". He was elected as captain of the Huddersfield Rifle Volunteers, became Commandant in March 1860, and was promoted Colonel in May 1868. Colonel Beaumont kept an interest in the Battalion which lasted until his death and he continued to provide annually the Beaumont gold medal which was presented for shooting. He was born in 1833 and educated at Eton and Trinity College, later being a Member of Parliament, a Justice of the Peace, and a Deputy Lieutenant for the West Riding. He was made the second Freeman of Huddersfield in 1894 and died in 1913.]

[5: Diary of William Morrison Esq JP, the first Commanding Officer of the Settle Rifle Volunteer Corps. Morrison, as Lieutenant Colonel later commanded the 2nd Administrative Battalion, and was later Honorary Colonel when the unit became the 3rd Volunteer Battalion.]

[6: Royal Commission on the Militia, April 1859]

[7: The Colours of the Halifax Rifle Volunteers were later stolen from All Saints Church, only one being recovered by the police. This surviving colour was framed and placed in the safekeeping of the Prescott Street Drill Hall in 1987.]

CHAPTER 2

1883-1908: IT'S NOOAN A CAMPIN' DO THIS, THA KNOWS

"We are not interested in the possibilities of a Defeat."

Her Majesty Queen Victoria, December 1899.

THE CARDWELL REFORMS

In 1868, Edward Cardwell was appointed Secretary of State for War and tasked with putting the Regular Army onto a more efficient footing:

"If it is possible to sum up his achievement in a single phrase, it was the victory of professionalism over patronage. It has been claimed that in the process he destroyed the regimental system which alone had preserved the Army as the sum of its parts: on the contrary, it was the very strength of that system which he seized upon as the essential framework of his own 'new model'. The main thrust of all his own - and, indeed of all subsequent - reforms was to create, within the financial limits set by political parsimony, an army fit to fight a war rather than play at peace. The unexceptionable object was to be achieved not without dust and heat, for there are no trenches defended more stoutly than those occupied by privilege and prejudice."

(*A Companion to the British Army. David Ascoli. 1983.*)

The 19th century British regular soldier had long been neglected. Cardwell's reforms improved welfare, abolished punishment by flogging, raised educational standards and improved pay. After 1881 regular cavalry and infantry officers were no longer allowed to purchase their commissions. For example an ensign's commission in an infantry regiment of the line might cost about £450 after which progression as an officer was by buying a higher rank and selling the existing one, subsequent progression brought a Lieutenant Colonelcy for about £4,450. A new rank of 'Warrant Officer' was also introduced in 1881 and brought the arrival of the beloved regimental sergeant major. This was coupled with a reorganisation of the Regular Army 'Infantry of the Line', completed by 1881 as a result of work done by the 'Localization Committee'. The existing 110 regular regiments, usually made up of one or sometimes two infantry battalions, were grouped to form 69 new "County Regiments", each of two Regular Battalions, together with "Militia" Battalions. 66 of the new County Regiments were allocated a Regimental District.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT)

On 1st July 1881 *The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)* was formed by the amalgamation of two regular 'Regiments of Foot' (the 33rd and the 76th), each of one battalion, together with one existing militia 'double-battalion'. The new regiment had at first been titled *The Halifax Regiment (Duke of Wellington's)* by the War Office in May 1881, but the title was changed at the regiment's request. The Regiment's regular 1st Battalion was formed by the 33rd (*The Duke of Wellington's*) *Regiment of Foot*, and the regular 2nd Battalion by the 76th *Regiment of Foot*. The 3rd and 4th (Militia) Battalion of the Regiment (a double-battalion) came by the redesignation of the 6th *West York Militia*.

VOLUNTEER BATTALIONS

The West Riding Rifle Volunteer Corps at Halifax, Huddersfield, and Skipton came within the new Regimental District of *The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)*. This was to result in all three being redesignated as the Regiment's 'Volunteer Battalions' in 1883 [1]. Although now bearing the name of the Regiment the Volunteer Battalions were not permitted to bear the Regiment's colours, battle honours, or distinctions. The volunteer's uniform pattern followed that of the regulars, except that silver lace, badges and buttons were worn, rather than those of the regular soldier which were gold. 1st April 1883 thus witnessed the demise of the old West Riding Volunteer Corps. The 4th Corps at Halifax became the *1st Volunteer Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)*, with companies at Halifax, Brighouse, and Hebden Bridge; Huddersfield's 6th Corps became the *2nd Volunteer Battalion*, with companies at Huddersfield, Holmfirth, Saddleworth district, and Mirfield. Skipton's 9th Corps became the *3rd Volunteer Battalion*, with companies at Skipton, Settle, Burley, Keighley, Haworth, and Bingley.

Communication to the volunteers was mainly by word of mouth during parades or by the posting of printed 'routine orders':

"Regimental Orders (RO November 1st 1889). Regimental Orders throughout the year will be posted for the information of members of the Corps at Mr Jennings, Wine Merchant, Northgate; Mrs

Hays, Confectioner, Bull Green; Mr Illingworth's, Photographer, Crown Street; on the Notice Board at the Drill Hall; and at usual places for outlying Companies or Detachments. See also local papers."

(2nd Volunteer Battalion. Standing Orders. 1889.)

The Halifax battalion also formed a Cyclist section about this time. Cycling was an important new social pastime in the Victorian era and its military use was much more readily adopted by the volunteer than by the regular army. It should be remembered that movement of volunteer infantry at that time was limited to either railway or march route. A unit's small number of horses were either for transporting stores or as officers' 'chargers'. Bicycle mounted troops therefore introduced the ability to travel at 8 miles in the hour, much faster than marching troops, which could act as the unit's eyes and ears without having to rely upon the availability of yeomanry cavalry.

The Volunteer Force's experimental use of cyclists received War Office approval in 1893 with permission for each battalion to form a Cyclist section of one officer, two NCOs, a bugler, and twenty soldiers. By 1901 the establishment was increased to seventy-five all ranks. The volunteer cyclist section's role allowed them to operate independently from their battalion, and this led them to regard themselves as the élite of the battalion. Their cycles were modified with clips being fitted to carry their rifles, regulations even required a clip for the officer's sword. Their home defence role made the cycle a useful addition to the infantry battalion. When the Territorial Force was formed in 1908 a complete Cyclist Battalion was formed from the former 2nd Volunteer Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment for the Hull district. Volunteer Cyclist detachments continued until the First World War when the continuous trench systems made their use impractical.

Changes in the volunteer's weaponry were now some years behind the Regular Army, and the *Martini-Henry* rifle was issued to the volunteers in 1887. It was breech-loading, of .45" calibre, used black powder, and was sighted to 1,450 yards, later versions being 0.303" calibre. This rifle was then replaced by the *Lee-Metford* rifle in 1888. This fired a .303" (7.7mm) round and had an eight round magazine, later improved to ten rounds with the introduction of the Mark 2. It was sighted to 2,900 yards, and a new "bolt-loading" action enabled 12 rounds a minute to be fired. The rifle's propellant charge was, at first, black powder but it was soon replaced by cordite which, being smokeless, was a marked improvement as any previous attempts at concealment had been given away by clouds of smoke. In 1895 the Metford barrel was discarded in favour of the Enfield pattern, thus producing the legendary *Lee Enfield* rifle. The rifle remained the volunteer's sole weapon, apart from officers who were equipped with sword and revolver.

Attending an 'annual camp' was by now well established. Typical are the instructions to soldiers of Huddersfield's 2nd Volunteer Battalion which arranged for a special train to take them to Aldershot for a week beginning 28th May 1898. Detailed instructions were given on the equipment required by each man who was instructed to parade in 'full marching order, less valise'. These included uniform items and the box of pipe clay and sponge essential to clean his accoutrements, and the ever present pair of spare bootlaces. The Battalion duty drummer was tasked with sounding the 'Advance' when the train was ready to leave Huddersfield with the strict warning to all ranks that 'no cheering or shouting is to be permitted'. Camp instructions also included a reminder of their rifle volunteer origins with the unit address being given out as '*The Huddersfield Rifles, The Camp, Aldershot*', this despite the fact they had now been Volunteer Dukes for over fifteen years. Timely reminders were given to those who may not be familiar with the fact that, once at camp, the volunteer soldiers were under military law:

"An order given by a senior must be obeyed at once. If any man thinks he has received a wrong order, he must nevertheless obey promptly, and afterwards may, accompanied by an NCO of his company, complain to the Captain of his company in a respectful and temperate manner. If he still thinks he has cause for complaint, he may request the Captain of his company to bring him up before the Commanding Officer."

(Ibid)

SOUTH AFRICA 1900-1902

The British Army first invaded the Cape of South Africa in 1795, during the revolutionary wars, when they overcame opposition and imposed British rule on the colony. Large numbers of British settlers began arriving in the 1820's and the Boers, descendants of Dutch settlers, were moved north where they founded the independent republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Many of the British settlers in the Transvaal owned large parts of its wealth, due to gold and diamond discovery and paid large sums in taxes. The British settlers in the Boer republics were not happy at paying such large taxes without having a voice and they looked to Britain to press their case for an improved franchise and other civil rights.

Negotiations between Britain and the Boers produced little result, and the general situation began to deteriorate. British troop reinforcements which had been moved to Natal, on the Boer's southern Transvaal border, were seen as a threat by the Boers who issued an ultimatum for Britain to withdraw. The British government refused, and, as a result, war between Britain and the Boer republics was declared on 11th October 1899. The Boers fielded a competent army, raised as a militia, which had the significant advantage of being used to the local conditions. They had all learnt excellent fieldcraft and marksmanship skills and were able to live off the land. Virtually all Boer forces were mounted infantry, as compared with the British, of whom only one in eight was mounted. The Boer's 50,000 Mauser rifles were to prove more than a match for the 50,000 British Lee-Enfield rifles:

"So the Regulars who had been trained in the barrack square in the methods of Inkerman and Sebastopol were joined by reservists short of training, and together they set off in the wake of their commander for a war that was to be far removed from their conception of war. Composed nine-tenths of infantry trained to use rifles from deployed positions, to stand firm against charges, and to obey en masse the tactical commands of their leaders, they were about to have a painful initiation into a mounted war of movement against a will o' the wisp enemy who would not stand and fight it out but would prefer to sting at long range by stealth and subterfuge."

(The Defenders. Geoffrey Cousins. 1968.)

Unlike the British, the Boer army was organised under a system whereby only their artillery and specialists were full-time professionals. Their Mounted Infantry was manned by a system which required all male white citizens, aged between 16 and 60, to be liable for active duty call up under the command of the 'veldkornet' of the local ward. By law every burgher of military age had to be permanently provided with a rifle, (usually the five-shot Mauser), a riding horse, saddle and bridle, and provisions for eight days. It was common for only the professionals in the Boer army to wear uniform. The burgher soldier would wear his normal dark coat, corduroy trousers and wide-brimmed hat. Dried beef or venison and hard-baked oven rusks would be packed into his saddle-bags as a basic field ration.

The Boers quickly proved to be a highly mobile, hard hitting and elusive enemy. Within a month of the outbreak of war they had invaded and seized Natal, and the British Army commanders realized they had greatly underestimated the capability of the Boer army. The Boers had a large area of operations ideally suited to their superior mobility, and this war created a demand for numbers of British troops unprecedented since 1815. What the British had expected to be a minor 'police-action' was to erupt into a hard fought war.

The open 'veldt' was a boon to riflemen who could, collectively, effectively engage targets at up to 800 yards with the individual rifleman hitting targets at 500 yards or less. The breech-loading rifles allowed the defender to fire in excess of a hundred aimed shots in the eight to ten minutes it took an attacking force to cross the last 800 yards. Whereas a determined attacker could get within 500 yards without losing excessive casualties good camouflage and smokeless ammunition made the Boer marksmen very hard to locate.

The problem for the British attacker was how to cross the lethal fire-zone in the final assault. British infantry already knew how effective rifles were at long ranges and the difficulties encountered by any attacker wishing to cross the final fire zone. They had used it to good advantage in numerous colonial wars since the rifle was introduced, but British regular infantry had not considered how they would overcome the problem. The infantry needed to close with the Boers' defensive positions and responded to their murderous fire with the tactic of sections being required to advance in short rushes of 30 to 40 yards, each section covering another with rapid fire into the enemy's supposed positions. But it was found that whilst trying this the British infantryman quickly exhausted the supply of ammunition he carried and still being short of the enemy's defensive line, it was impossible to resupply him until nightfall. Nor did night attacks solve the problem for the contemporary British infantry were not trained to carry out night attacks, and their attempts resulted in blundering about in the dark with the resultant noise warning the Boers who would quietly slip away undetected.

The bulk of Britain's battlefield casualties in the Boer War were to occur in the last two hundred yards of an infantry attack as they entered the critical fire zone which was swept by rifle and machine-gun fire, as well as artillery. Indeed, a relatively safe crossing of this critical zone was not achieved in the first two years of the Great War, 1914-1918, much to the infantryman's cost. It was not until the advent of tank support, the introduction of effective communications by wireless, and the artillery creeping barrage being developed that the attacking British infantryman could have any realistic prospect of overcoming defensive positions.

THE VOLUNTEER ACTIVE-SERVICE COMPANIES

Volunteer Battalions were at first not required, as their terms of service limited them to Home Defence. The turning point came in the "Black Week" of December 1899. The unheard of happened, when the British Regular Army was defeated three times by the Boers, at the battles of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso:

"It was a week that left Britain stunned and her enemies scornful. The complacent Victorian myth had been exploded. The rulers of an Empire on which the sun never set had reached the nadir of humiliation. And over the European horizon hung a question mark. If a party of Boer farmers, fighting more or less as individuals and not embarrassed by the absence of Army discipline, beat the best troops Britain put in the field, how could the Home Country hope to foil the ambitions of Germany, Russia, or France."

(Ibid)

The call to the Volunteer Battalions came on 2nd January 1900. The War Office called upon each Volunteer Battalion to raise an "Active Service Company" of 116 volunteers [2]. To get round the "Volunteer Act", every man had to enlist in the army for one year. Service Company volunteers were required to be aged between 20 and 35, first-class shots, physically fit and of good character, and graded as 'efficient' for the last two years.

Each Volunteer Battalion received a special grant of £9 to equip the man, and was also allowed to keep the man on as 'supernumary strength' in order to qualify for capitation funding. The volunteers were allowed to retain their volunteer distinctions, and were able to serve as a complete company with their regular battalion on active service in South Africa. He earned regular rates of pay and was also entitled to an additional annuity of £5 on discharge. A number of members of the battalions also enlisted for service with the Imperial Yeomanry, to fill the demand for mounted troops, as well as the medical services. Scarlet uniforms no longer suited the new warfare. Cotton drill khaki uniform was issued, together with khaki Foreign Service helmets. The helmet was quickly found to be impractical and was replaced by a colonial slouch hat.

The Volunteers were destined to serve as part of the 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), and their record of active service in South Africa follows this regular battalion. The 1st Battalion, then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel G E Lloyd DSO, was at Aldershot when war was declared. It was not until 2nd December 1900 that its 1,013 soldiers were instructed to mobilise for South Africa. Instructions were given that its 'H' Company was to become 'mounted infantry' and the battalion left Aldershot for Southampton on 29th December 1900. The new century had dawned when the battalion landed at Cape Town on 20th January 1900 where it took a special train to Naavpoort and there joined the 13th Brigade, commanded by General C E Knox, together with the 2nd Battalion Gloucesters, 2nd Battalion The East Kents and the 1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry, this brigade formed part of the 6th Division commanded by Lieutenant General T Kelly-Kenny. The 1st Battalion remained there until 2nd February. The battalion was first in action at Klip Drift, by the River Modder, as part of the 13th Brigade which attacked Boer defensive positions on 'kopjes', or hills:

"The part played by the 33rd [1 DWR] was an important one. They held the enemy on the left flank, and supported the attack which Kelly-Kenny [their division's commander] made on the kopje. The men were under fire all day, and after driving the enemy out of the first laager, and holding him in front for eight and a half hours, they were ordered to advance with the Gloucesters on that part of the Boers' position in the Battalion's front. This was done brilliantly. The Boers were driven out of the two kopjes, but not without loss for Corporal Newman was killed, and Captains Harris and Taylor and 21 NCOs and men wounded."

(History of the Thirty-Third Foot, Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. Albert Lee. 1922.)

The Boers however slipped away in the night and the Dukes 6th Division went in a pursuit which demanded relentless marching both by day and night. The Boer commander, Piet Cronje, eventually elected to make a stand by the River Modder at Paardeberg rather than risk losing his slow moving transport wagons. At this time the British Commander, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, was unwell and his Chief-of-Staff Kitchener took over and took the view that prompt action was required if the Boers were not again to escape.

This resulted in the Dukes 13th Brigade being reinforced by another famous Yorkshire Regiment, the Green Howards, for the attack. Their task was to clear the southern bank of the River Modder, a 1,500 yard stretch of open 'veldt' which the Boer marksmen swept with accurate rifle-fire. The day's fighting was inconclusive and cost the 1st Battalion 130 killed and wounded. Kitchener was afterwards criticised for launching his attack too quickly and then losing control of his forces. On the morning of the 19th February further reinforcements arrived in the form of the 7th Division together with naval guns that had been pulled overland and immediately commenced bombarding the Boer positions. The ensuing siege trapped this group of Boers and all 3,919 were forced to surrender. The Boers' laager had been heavily pounded during the artillery bombardment and the area was a littered mass of burnt-out wagons and rotting draught animal carcasses.

Subsequent operations in March found the Dukes, on foot, chasing the famous De Wet Commando which was wholly mounted. After various skirmishes the 1st Battalion had sustained about 250 killed and wounded when it arrived to occupy Bloemfontein:

"The war, however, was by no means over. De Wet succeeded in inflicting disaster by ambush on Broadwood at the end of March, and this put heart into the enemy that the continuation of the

struggle was determined upon by the Boers. 'Peaceful Burghers', it is said, 'became active enemies.' and the situation gave cause for anxiety. Lord Roberts [commanding the British Force] thereupon decided to follow up the Boers."

"Making his plans, he left the 6th Division [including 1 DWR] at Bloemfontein. He had, however, to wait a considerable time before moving his army forward, owing to the exhaustion of his cavalry and artillery. He had but 34,000 men, and in order to carry out his scheme fully 50,000 were needed, of whom 15,000 must be properly mounted as a striking force. There was an ever-increasing number of sick. In addition the horses required rest and forage, while railway communications demanded attention. The army, moreover, needed to undergo complete reorganisation."

(Ibid)

The volunteers were soon issued with khaki uniform and, after a brief period of training at the Dukes Halifax Depot, left the West Riding for South Africa. They were given a tremendous send-off; in Huddersfield alone an estimated crowd of 20,000 turned out to see them off. The regulars of the 1st Battalion were by now depleted for not only had it lost a complete company as mounted infantry but it had suffered about 25% casualties in two months. The prospect of reinforcement by the Volunteer Companies was therefore a welcome one. Back in the West Riding the seriousness of the situation was only too well known:

"It will never be overlooked that they left friends, home and Motherland at a time of national danger. Many of us have not forgotten the gloomy news that was coming from South Africa when they were undergoing their preliminary training at Halifax [DWR Depot]. It was no light thing in those days to leave all one loved behind and face the unknown perils of war. But those who had undertaken the duty realised the seriousness of the step. 'It's nooan a campin' do this, tha knows,' said one to an exuberant friend who was 'seeing him off' at the Station as though he was going to a picnic."

(Huddersfield Daily Chronicle. Saturday May 25th 1901.)

The 1st Battalion, now supplemented by the welcome volunteer company, remained at Bloemfontein until the 29th May 1900 when orders came for the battalion to move to Winburg. With a squadron of the 9th Battalion Welsh Imperial Yeomanry they formed a 'flying column' under the command of the 1st Battalion's Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd which first marched to Dessel's Farm, some ten miles north of Bloemfontein, and on the next day another 14 miles to Kruitfontein Drift on the River Modder where 53 Boer burghers surrendered. After several arduous marches the column entered Winburg where it strengthened the town defences together with those on surrounding 'kopjes'. Nor was the relentless boredom of seeking out the Boer eased by creature comforts. All that the soldier needed he had to carry himself for supply transport was minimal. The staple ration of tinned beef dissolved into a syrupy mess in the heat and could literally be poured from the tin can. BLOATER paste was also issued together with unleavened biscuits, in place of bread, which were hard enough to be generally known as 'dog biscuits'. Local farmers might occasionally be persuaded to barter fresh food such as chickens and eggs but they had not enough surplus to feed such a large army.

When Pretoria fell to British Forces on 5th June 1900 it at first seemed that the war was over. Field Marshal Lord Roberts returned to London leaving Kitchener in charge. The Boers responded with guerilla warfare with a policy of hit and run attacks after which they disappeared before the British Army could respond. Kitchener replied with a two-part policy aimed at depriving the Boers Commandos of food and shelter from the Afrikaner farms together with rounding up Boer women and children. Wherever Boers were thought to have gained shelter British troops burned farms to the ground and destroyed crops and livestock. Women and children were placed in large camps resulting in the British Army coining the notorious term 'concentration camp'. 26,000 Afrikaner women and children died in these camps where medical services were minimal, mainly from measles or pneumonia.

Having deprived the Boer Commando of their logistic support Kitchener's plan was to dominate the ground by the introduction of a 'blockhouse system'. This system relied on manned blockhouses, linked together with barbed wire and telephones. Blockhouses had at first simply protected the railways but the system steadily spread and, by 1902, there was a system of 8,000 blockhouses covering 3,700 miles manned by 50,000 white troops and 16,000 African Scouts, each blockhouse cost but £16 to build. They were manned by infantry, who summoned mobile columns of mounted infantry when Boers were spotted.

It is ironic that the bloody lessons of the Boer War forced the Regular Army to form the Mounted Infantry units, which then brought about the Boer's defeat. The Volunteer Force had itself anticipated a need for a new mounted infantry force more than twenty years previously, but the idea had been dismissed as yet another volunteer eccentricity by the War Office mandarins. In August the battalion came under the command of Major General A H Paget and moved to Arcadia Camp, Pretoria by August 13th. By this time the Volunteers had suffered their first losses for a number had already died of disease at Bloemfontein, and others had needed to be

invalided home. On the 16th August the battalion left Pretoria and was actively involved in operations north of Pretoria when, in addition to the Boers, movement was made difficult by the thick bushveldt and long marches along dusty roads in excessive heat. On the 18th August the Volunteer Company was in action for the first time, together with 'A', 'B' and 'G' Companies as a half-battalion group. The group, commanded by Major le Marchant, was surprised by shellfire from two guns hidden on a kopje and responded with sustained rifle fire throughout the day. Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd, commanding the 1st Battalion, sent reports of the work of the Volunteer Active Service Company:

"Our Volunteer Company have been doing very well, and have had hard work at outpost and other field duties. They are very intelligent, and being determined to be a credit to their regiment and their country. I find it a great pleasure to work with them and to have them under my command. If we meet the Boers again I have every confidence they will give a good account of themselves. I am particularly struck by the efficiency of the three Volunteer officers. They not only have a very good knowledge of their duties, but have very good heads on their shoulders."

(Ibid)

By August 1900 the 1st Battalion had moved to Pienaar's River where it was involved in constructing defences and making good the railway-line and river bridge which had previously been destroyed by the Boers. From the 10th September General Paget's force, and the 1st Battalion, were engaged in flying column work during which several Boers were captured, but there was little heavy fighting. On November 23rd the battalion was moved to Eerstfabricken where Boer commandos under General B Viljoen were raiding and threatening the railway at two key points, namely Balmoral and Wilje River. General Paget's force located the Boers at Rhenoster Kop where they held a defensive position within a natural fortress made up of several defended kopjes.

General Paget, whose force just matched the Boers decided to attack on November 29th with his infantry on the right and his mounted troops on the left. Nor did the ground favour his assault:

"Everywhere in front of the British troops spread hundreds of yards of bare grassland, which afforded a perfect field for the rifle-fire of the defence, and a dangerous glacis to the attack. Viljoen's situation, then, was as tactically formidable as it was strategically risky, and none could foretell how the cards would fall."

(History of the Thirty-Third Foot, Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment. Albert Lee. 1922.)

Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd led the advance with the Dukes together with four companies of the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers. After advancing about 400 yards they were met with an overwhelming rifle fire from the Boer positions. Colonel Lloyd eventually led one of his companies to the ridge, but it was impossible to advance further, it was during this time that he was shot dead whilst going forward to plan the attack's next stage. Incessant fire was exchanged but to neither's advantage, and the Dukes had to crawl backwards and forwards through the grass with supplies of ammunition and water. By nightfall it was clearly impossible to hold the ridge, and the decision was taken to withdraw and await support from another column, led by General Lyttleton, to make a supporting attack on the next day. The Dukes lost 33 casualties during this short action. There was little rest, for the Dukes were moving again at 2am, and shortly after it was discovered that the Boers had left the kopjes and made good their escape.

Lieutenant Colonel Rivett-Carnac later assumed command of the 1st Battalion, and their remaining active service in South Africa was either on outpost duty, and manning blockhouses along the Pretoria to Pietersburg line, or taking part in drives against small bands of Boers. By May 1901 the first of the Volunteer Companies had completed their tour and were exchanged with others. Led by Lieutenant Wilson, from Mirfield, they returned to a hero's welcome at Huddersfield from a crowd estimated in excess of 40,000:

"From the moment they alighted from the train and received the town's welcome at the hands of the Mayor to their parting after such a long and momentous association, their demeanour was that of men who had done nothing out of the common. Their bronzed faces bore unmistakable testimony to their exposure to the African sun. Clad in khaki, with the little bit of ribbon on their breasts, indicative of the fact that the men had taken part in the South African campaign, and wearing either the service helmet or the slouch hat, they looked as 'hard as nails', to quote the observation of one spectator of Saturday's demonstration."

(Huddersfield Daily Chronicle. Saturday May 25th 1901.)

The return of the first volunteer service company was marked by a presentation of medals, made by the Commanding Officer of the Dukes Depot, Colonel Le Mottec, at Halifax:

"The Volunteer movement has never stood higher in the estimation of the military authorities than it did now. The behaviour of the Volunteers showed that the spirit of the nation was as high as it ever was, and the question was how to utilize this fine material to the best advantage. Conscription was

out of the question at present, and the only alternative was the extension of the Volunteer movement for the securing of efficiency for all who joined."

(The West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

The Boers eventually surrendered under the sheer weight of dominance of ground and deprivation of supplies and the war ended in June 1902. The Dukes regulars sustained a total of 336 casualties during the war of which 75 died of disease, of the volunteers one sergeant and nine privates died on active service. The British sustained some 22,000 deaths in this war, and of these 13,250 were caused by enteric fever and other illnesses. This should be compared with 30,000 Boer losses, of whom 26,000 were women and children.

The Boer War severely drained Britain's regular home defence forces. In 1899 there were 71 regular infantry battalions in Britain but by February 1900 it was reduced to nine - three Guards' battalions and six of immature soldiers. Britain was therefore largely undefended and, on 12th February 1900, the Government authorised each Volunteer Battalion to expand to a strength of 1,000 men. The Volunteer Force's artillery was re-equipped with its 98 batteries receiving improved guns, 4.7" guns to the 'position batteries' and 15 pounder guns to the field batteries.

The Government was also concerned that the Volunteer Force must be trained to a standard adequate to defend the country without much regular support. It provided for Emergency Camps which lasted three months for volunteer artillery and one month for volunteer infantry, both of which brought a special grant to unit funds if 50% of the unit attended camp for at least fourteen days. This was in addition to the normal 'capitation allowance', at two guineas a man, together with army pay and allowances, with 'separation allowances' for family men. By May 1900 the Government announced that 179 of the 214 volunteer infantry battalions had already undertaken to attend emergency camp.

The events of the Boer War were to change the British Army. The infantry had encountered, for the first time, troops who fired rifles and machine-guns (which used smokeless powder) from concealed positions, and artillery that no longer fired on direct lines. The advantage had decidedly swung in the defender's favour. Britain's future commanders still did not fully appreciate that even the best infantry could not be expected to advance against a concealed defence consisting of machine-guns and artillery.

Improvement in artillery technology had brought increased ranges resulting in gunners not always now being able to see where their rounds landed from the gun lines. This required the development of 'indirect fire' - when the fall of shot is adjusted by a detached fire-controller who signalled required adjustments to the gun lines. Improved ammunition also introduced shrapnel shells fitted with time-fuses thus enabling 'air-burst' which scattered shards of shrapnel downwards and from which infantry in the open had no protection. Haig however thought that artillery would "*only be effective against really raw troops*", and Sir Ian Hamilton's appreciation, that infantry must in future use surprise and infiltration tactics, and be well supported by controlled artillery, was at first dismissed. This man also advocated that infantry should be provided with "*steel shields on wheels*" during the assault. Hamilton was ignored, and it was not until 1916 that his prophetic analysis proved sound.

Colonel B F S Baden-Powell served with the Scots Guards, particularly as commander of the besieged Ladysmith garrison, and later wrote advocating the merits of setting the veldt on fire to generate smoke-screens to cover movement from view and fire. He also called for artillery fired smoke-generating shells but the lesson was not picked up and had to be re-learned again in the Great War. Colonel Baden-Powell was to become a Major-General and was in time appointed as the first General-Officer-Commanding the wholly Territorial 'Northumbrian Division', later numbered the 50th, when the Territorial Force was created in 1908. He also founded the Scout Movement.

Some change though did come from the Boer War. The Regular Army formed the British Expeditionary Force. The Volunteer Force too was reorganised, for on the 1st April 1908 the Territorial Force came into being.

[1: The West Riding Rifle Volunteers were redesignated as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Volunteer Battalions The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) under War Office General Order - Army Organization Number 14 dated February 1883.]

[2: The War Office authorised 'Active Service Companies' under Special Army Order Number 2 dated January 1900.]

CHAPTER 3

1908-1914: GOD SAVE US FROM OUR OWN ARTILLERY

"Henceforth my Yeomanry and Volunteers are to form the Territorial Force.....the Imperial Army of the Second Line which lies within the shores of this kingdom."

His Majesty The King to his Lord Lieutenants, 2nd October 1907.

THE 'TERRIERS'

On the evening of March 31st 1908 the Duke's Volunteer Battalions had existed for 25 years; as midnight struck they now became the 'Duke's Territorials'. The change had been brought about by Richard Haldane, then Secretary of State for War, who directed a three-part change to the British Army. It was to produce an establishment for Regular Army of 6,494 officers and 160,200 soldiers; a 'Territorial Force' of 11,875 officers and 302,100 soldiers; and Reservists.

First, the Regular Army which was reorganised to produce a highly trained 'British Expeditionary Force', of six infantry divisions and one cavalry division, to be used at short notice anywhere in the world. This 'BEF' was to become the 'Contemptible Little Army' of regular soldiers who stemmed the German invasion at Mons in 1914. Second, the 'Militia' became the 'Special Reserve' whose reserve units were based at Depots to provide reinforcements for the Regular Army.

The third element of change affected the three 'Dukes' Volunteer Battalions when the old Volunteer Force was retitled the Territorial Force on 1st April 1908 [1]. Like the Volunteer Force it succeeded this was to be a non-professional force recruited from the civilian population and trained, as far as possible, to regular army standards. In the event of war the Territorials had the three-part role of supplying garrisons for vital points, resisting an invasion, and supporting the British Expeditionary Force by voluntary enlistment for service abroad. The Territorial Force had a much larger establishment of 314,000 Territorials and produced 14 complete Infantry Divisions (each of 12 TF battalions), 14 Cavalry Brigades (the Yeomanry), Army Troops and Coast Defence units.

However the new terms of service brought little real change. Territorials were required to attend a 14 day annual camp, pass a musketry course and attend certain drill nights. Yet the identified need for volunteers in South Africa did not generate the requirement that members of the new Territorial Force would automatically serve overseas in the event of their mobilisation. Terms of service limited the Territorials to serve within the United Kingdom in the event of war.

A new 'Territorial Force Association' was formed in the West Riding, one of 94 across the country, charged with administering the Territorials. The first President of the Association was Colonel the Earl of Harewood, with Colonel the Earl of Scarbrough as Chairman. The Association's role was in obtaining recruits, producing drill halls and ranges, and in providing clothing and equipment. The introduction of the Territorial Force also brought a system whereby the volunteers' existing drill halls and ranges, which had been built and paid for out of volunteer funds, were compulsorily purchased by the Territorial Force Association. The West Riding Territorial Force had an establishment of 18,300 but, on 1st April 1908, only 414 officers and 9,663 soldiers were on strength.

THE WEST RIDING DIVISION

The change also brought about the formation of 'The West Riding Division TF' which was to be entirely composed of Territorial Force units representing All Arms. The West Riding Division was made up by three Infantry Brigades (each of four battalions) supported by four artillery regiments. The 'White Rose of York' was adopted as the division's emblem. Although renamed the units were very much as they had been raised in 1859/1860.

Within the new Division, the '1st West Riding Brigade' was made up by the TF Battalions of The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) at York, Bradford and Leeds. The '2nd West Riding Brigade' by the TF Battalions of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) at Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton and Milnsbridge. The '3rd West Riding Brigade' by the TF Battalions of The York and Lancaster Regiment at Sheffield and Rotherham, together with the TF Battalions of The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry at Wakefield and Doncaster. The infantry brigades were supported by three TF Field Artillery Regiments, at Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield, and a new TF Howitzer Regiment at Otley. The whole Division was supported by its own Engineers, Signals, Medical units and was, as such, capable of conducting independent operations.

EXPANSION

These changes brought about the renumbering of the Dukes Volunteer Battalions. Halifax's 1st Volunteer Battalion became the '4th Battalion' with an eight rifle company establishment. At this time the battalion was only 290 strong but within four years had reached 732. Its 'Brigade Bearer Company' was transferred from its establishment to become part of the new *Yorkshire Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance (TF)*.

Skipton's 3rd Volunteer Battalion became the 6th Battalion, again of eight rifle companies. It was a strong unit having 1198 all ranks on strength in 1908. A link with its origins was that its Honorary Colonel was Walter Morrison who had been the first officer enrolled when raised as rifle volunteers. The battalion's former 'C' Company at Burley [2] was transferred out and converted to artillery to become a howitzer battery of the *4th West Riding Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)*.

The largest change came to Huddersfield's 2nd Volunteer Battalion the main part of which became the 5th Battalion. However its companies in its western area, from Longwood on the western edge of Huddersfield to Mossley and the borders of Oldham, became a new 7th Battalion with headquarters at Milnsbridge. The 7th Battalion's first commanding officer was Colonel G W Treble CMG who had just been appointed as Huddersfield's Postmaster, and who was not only to establish the new battalion but also destined to lead it on active service during the First World War. Thus the three former Dukes Volunteer Battalions became four Territorial Battalions, each with an establishment strength over 1,000 all ranks, and now wholly formed the new *2nd West Riding Brigade of The West Riding Division*.

Khaki serge 'service dress' uniform, worn with a khaki serge peaked cap, had steadily been introduced as working dress. This was worn with customary Duke of Wellington's pattern badges together with a letter 'T' denoting a Territorial Force unit. The regular soldier was still considered by the public to be a 'licentious brute', and the Territorials took care to wear their 'T's for they had no wish to be mistaken for regular soldiers. Leather *Slade-Wallace* pattern equipment was in time replaced by the 1908 pattern webbing equipment, and the issue of Mark 1 Lee-Enfield rifles. For nearly fifty years the volunteer's firepower had been limited to the rifle alone. The advent of the Territorials brought to each battalion an issue of two 'Maxim' machine-guns mounted on limbers, manned by an officer, one sergeant and eleven soldiers. Regular infantry battalions had been issued with two Maxim machine-guns from 1890. The final version of this machine-gun was to be the 'Vickers-Maxim' which came into regular service in 1912. The Vickers-Maxim was later developed into the Vickers medium machine-gun which remained in service until 1963 when it was replaced by the 7.62mm General Purpose Machine-Gun.

Drill Night training continued as before with the 'Infantry Training Manual' of 1905 and 'Pollocks' Elementary Military Training, 1908' being the much thumbed source of knowledge for instructor and student alike. A typical drill night would commence at 7.30pm when the duty drummer would sound the 'Dress' as a signal for those attending to draw their kit and be ready to parade. At 7.55pm the drummer would sound the 'Assemble' and, having formed in ranks, the Orderly Sergeant would call the roll and report to the Company Commander. At 8pm the drummer sounded the 'Continue' and companies marched alternately to the lecture room or drill hall. After the first half-hour period lecture room and drill hall were exchanged as the drummer sounded 'Stand Fast'. 'First Post' was sounded at 9pm. Training subjects for the barracks' square or drill hall were 'Concentration of fire', 'Skirmishing', 'Meeting cavalry attack', 'Scouting' and 'Semaphore signalling'. Lectures covered subjects such as 'Hasty entrenchments', 'Entanglements and defence of hedges and banks &c', 'Reconnoitring and Reconnaissance' and 'Protection at Rest'. Skill-at-Arms remained a central part of training with the advent of the Territorial Force bringing demands for higher standards.

The Annual Musketry test for recruits was in two parts, first on the miniature range, and then on to the open range. This required four out of five shots to be in a 12" ring at 100 yards, five hits, (four to be inners) from five rounds at 200 yards. First Class shots had to achieve a further five hits each at 300 and 500 yards. All firing took place from the prone position and support was permitted for the 500 yard targets. The trained soldiers' test demanded a much higher standard and included 'Snapshooting' and 'Rapid fire' up to 500 yards, with additional 'Attack' live-firing.

The Territorials' transport was restricted to railway trains and then having to march in column to their destination; although infantry battalions had a few horses these were used as officers' chargers or for drawing supply and medical carts. Their counter-invasion role however demanded mobility and the introduction of the increasingly popular motor-car led to a novel scheme in May 1909. Huddersfield's 5th Battalion sought help from the Huddersfield Automobile Club to carry out a 'motor-mobilisation'. Part of the battalion was deployed at Meltham, to act as an enemy, whilst the remainder formed-up at Huddersfield. Here large crowds saw them mount-up into an assortment of petrol or steam-powered vehicles to musical accompaniment provided by the battalion band. Thus mounted the Territorials raced out to Meltham to counter-attack and there dismounted, again to the strains of the band which had dashed ahead by train. Then followed the 'Battle of Crosland Edge' which predictably ended with the enemy being roundly defeated. The victors and vanquished then motored back to Huddersfield complete with the band which endeavoured to play them along despite being tightly packed in

and the bumpy roads. Perhaps quaint by modern standards but nevertheless exercising typical volunteer initiative in speed of movement which was well ahead of regular army thinking, and 29 years ahead of the War Office arranging for Territorial infantry battalions to be mechanized.

The advent of the Territorial Force also brought the War Office's approval for them to bear colours:

"Each infantry battalion that does not bear the title 'Rifles' or 'Rifle Brigade' or is not dressed in the uniform or does not wear the appointments of the Rifle Regiment, may carry two Colours, King's and Regimental."

(War Office Circular memorandum no. 100 dated 3rd September 1908.)

An additional qualification was that a unit was to have achieved 75% of establishment strength before it could receive new colours. The pattern of new Colours, King's and Regimental, followed that of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), except that Territorials were still not regarded by the War Office as full members of their regiments:

"None of the devices, mottoes and distinctions authorized for a Regular regiment will be borne on the Colours of an Infantry Battalion of the Territorial Force which, though affiliated to it, does not bear its titles."

(Standards, Guidons and Colours. Maj J T Edwards. 1953.)

The Colours of the four Dukes Territorial Battalions were each therefore emblazoned with their sole volunteer battle honour 'South Africa 1900-1902'. The Dukes Territorials received colours from His Majesty King Edward VII at Windsor Castle on 19th June 1909, when 109 mounted and infantry units of the new Territorial Force were presented. That is all but the Milnsbridge's 7th Battalion which did not receive colours until September 1909 when they were presented by Lady Lewisham at Slaithwaite. No reason is recorded for this delay, but it is probable that, as a new battalion, the unit did not at first qualify through the 75% ruling.

From 1908, annual camps were held as a Division with the four 'Dukes' battalions concentrating for training, and together forming the 2nd West Riding Brigade. In 1908, the first annual camp of the West Riding Division was attended by over 97% of the Territorials then on strength. The division was welcomed by Redcar Urban District Council which *"expressed high appreciation of the gentlemanly conduct of the troops, and hoped to welcome them again"*. But if the West Riding Territorials were, as ever, willing and hard-working in camp, the Division's first commander, Brigadier-General J A Wright CB, reported problems with equipment:

"As regards the equipment necessary, this is very far from being complete, and I hope before many months to remedy this great and dangerous defect. The artillery were deficient of guns, and the wagons, and the harness is unsuitable for issue to Territorial troops.....The Engineers were deficient in necessary equipment, consequently all ranks suffered as regards instruction and training."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

1909 found the battalions at camp in Guisborough. Camp that year was the well proven format of hard work and fun, but a sad accident occurred when the Leeds Rifles' acting Chaplain fell from his horse after being shot dead during field firing. The Commanding Officer of the 7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion reported the sad event, and exhorted his Leeds riflemen to take care with rifles and ammunition, but he also took care to emphasise that the Territorial who fired the deadly shot was from a Dukes battalion. Divisional exercises were quite ambitious, and at Aberystwith in 1913 the whole West Riding Division took part in a twenty-five mile route march:

"For the first time in the land manoeuvres of the Division, live shell was fired by the Otley and Ilkley Howitzer batteries and this gave a tremendous touch of realism to the army experiences of the so-called 'Saturday Night Soldiers'. Unfortunately there was an error on the part of one of the layers of an 18 pounder [3] gun and the shell burst in a farmyard killing a pig. This was the first 'casualty' caused by the Division and gave rise to several witticisms, 'God save us from our own artillery' and so on."

(A history of the 6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

Unknown to them, the new 'Territorials' of the West Riding Division had but six years to build the infantry skills and mutual confidence required of them before the Division was embodied for war. By the 31st May 1914 the establishment of the West Riding Division was 574 officers and 17,680 other ranks, and its actual strength had increased to 537 officers and 14,699, a substantial improvement upon when the division was first formed but six years before. The state of Britain's 1914 army is well described by Basil Liddell Hart:

"For the progress in organization in the years before 1914, the British Army owed much to Lord Haldane, and to him also was due the creation of a second-line of partially trained citizens - the Territorial Force. Lord Roberts had pleaded for compulsory military training, but the volunteer principle was too deeply embedded in the national mind for this course to be adopted, and Haldane wisely sought to develop Britain's military effectiveness within the bounds set by traditional policy."

“As a result, 1914 found England [sic !] with an expeditionary force of some 160,000 men, the most highly trained striking force of any country - a rapier amongst scythes. To maintain this at strength the old militia had been turned into a special reserve for drafting. Behind this first line stood the Territorial Force, which if only enlisted for home defence had a permanent fighting organization, unlike the amorphous volunteer force which it superseded. The British Army had no outstanding asset in war armament, but it had developed a standard of rifle-shooting unique among the world's armies.”

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

[1: The Volunteer Force became the Territorial Force on 1st April 1908 under ‘The Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 7, Edward VII c9 dated 1907.]

[2: When raised as Rifle Volunteers the Burley Company's (23rd WRRVC) first captain was Captain W E Forster who later became Secretary of State for Ireland. He worked for William Fison and Company who gave generous support to the volunteers.]

[3: This account was written after the Great War. The 4th (West Riding) Howitzer Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF), (which had been formed by a Dukes Company in 1908), were actually equipped with 5” howitzers at this time. 18 pounder guns were not in service with Territorial Force artillery units until issued during the Great War.]

CHAPTER 4

1914-1918: AN INSPIRATION FOR ALL TIME

"The Empire will never forget the inestimable services rendered by Territorial Troops throughout the Great War, more especially during those early and critical days before the new armies were ready to take the field. The gallantry and self-sacrifice of the men who fought and fell will be an inspiration for all time.

I send my best wishes for the future of the Territorial Army."

His Majesty King George V. On the 21st Anniversary of the formation of the Territorial Army. 1st April 1929.

Many documentaries about the Great War often emphasise the heroic stand by the regulars of the British Expeditionary Force during 1914, or the gallant waves of the local 'Kitchener' battalions who were slaughtered in the Somme offensive of 1916. Yet little is said about the Territorials, despite the fact that they produced more front-line infantry battalions than either the Regular Army or Kitchener's New Army:

"Equally distinct were the Territorials from what has been called the New Army, whose Officers and men had ample time to prepare themselves for what they were required to do. I sometimes wonder if the eyes of the country will ever be open to what these Territorial soldiers of ours have done. I say without the slightest hesitation that, without the assistance which the Territorials afforded between October 1914 and June 1915 it would have been impossible to have held the line in France and Belgium, or to have prevented the enemy from reaching his goal, the Channel seaboard."

(1914. Field Marshal Viscount French of Ypres. 1919.)

EMBODIMENT

The summer of 1914 was, as always, the time for the Territorials' annual camp. July 26th found the three Brigades of The West Riding Division, commanded by Major General T S Baldock CB, established in tented camps along Yorkshire's East Coast. The four Dukes battalions had set out to join their 2nd West Riding Brigade for annual camp at Marske-by-the-Sea with the two other infantry brigades encamped at Scarborough and Whitby. It was to be the camp which some said lasted five years. Whilst away, the prospect of war with Germany steadily grew. Just before war was declared pre-arranged 'Special Service Sections' in each battalion were despatched to guard key installations. Thus, for example, orders arrived on the 2nd August during the Halifax 4th Battalion's church parade. These resulted in Captain R E Sugden, (then commanding Brighthouse's 'D' Company), taking 100 members of the battalion to Grimsby, there to guard the Admiralty Wireless Station, at Waltham, as well as the local electricity and water works. On August 3rd orders came for annual camp to finish early, and Brigadier General E F Brereton DSO instructed that the 2nd West Riding Brigade dispersed back to unit drill halls:

"On August 3rd, the men of the [4th] Battalion returned to their homes, where they waited in hourly expectation of the order to mobilise. These came on the evening of the following day, and the same night the Battalion was concentrated at Halifax, the men sleeping in the Secondary Schools in Prescott Street. The Battalion was about 650 strong. Scarcely a man had failed to report."

(The history of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

On embodiment [1] each Territorial received a £5 bounty together with a kit allowance of ten shillings, new boots and shirts. Arrivals at the barracks were not restricted to those on strength, for many former Territorials and new recruits flocked to join their local battalions. But they did not remain long at their drill halls:

"At about 1.30pm on August 5th, the [4th] Battalion marched down Horton Street to the Railway Station, and there took the train for Hull, its allotted station. There was no public send-off. War had come so suddenly that people hardly seemed to realise what was happening."

(Ibid)

Once deployed at their pre-arranged war stations the Dukes Territorials had various duties. Halifax's 4th Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H S Atkinson TD, was at Hull and was required to guard naval establishments and the docks, as well as digging trenches to form coastal defences:

"Perhaps the most congenial duty was the rounding up of a number of Germans in the district; these were searched - some of them were found to be in possession of revolvers - and were then marched off to SS Borodino, one of the new Wilson liners, on board of which they were confined. The guard on the vessel was found by the Battalion and this was considered to be a good job."

(Ibid)



THE DUKES TERRITORIALS EXPAND

So many new recruits arrived that the original battalions each raised duplicate 'second line' [2] battalions within a few weeks of embodiment. The expansion in time produced the eight Dukes Territorial Force battalions which were to acquit themselves with distinction during active service in France and Flanders. The original 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions became the 1/4th, 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/7th Battalions and remained in the 147th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division. The second-line battalions they each raised were designated as the 2/4th, 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions, and later formed part of the 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division. These second-line units were raised on a skeleton of experienced Territorial officers and soldiers whose local knowledge often enabled them to fill their ranks, as discovered by Gilbert Howcroft [3]:

"A week or two later I encountered Major Gilbert Tanner [4] who had been 2 in C (Second-in-Command) of the 7th West Riding, and had been left behind to form the duplicate, the 2/7 WR, who called across the road 'Would you like to have a commission in the new Battalion?' - 'Yes sir, if I'm fit' - 'Don't talk nonsense' he said, 'Take these papers, get them signed, and bring them to HQ on Monday'. And so did I become fit. I went to Dr Price, my family doctor, who knew as well as I did that I had no physical defects, and he just signed the papers."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

In 1914, Second Lieutenant Howcroft's first experiences with the Second-Line Dukes Territorials found him at first living at home and travelling to 'C' Company's Mossley Drill Hall for elementary training:

"We had many new and raw officers, a few more experienced officers and NCOs who had difficulty forgetting the old eight company system. The old companies were about half on the Yorkshire side of the hill, but recruiting was so much better on the Saddleworth side that Saddleworth had 'E' Company, Springhead 'G' Company (the pride of Captain Bagnall's life, as the strongest company in the British Army) and 'F' and 'H' Companies in Mossley. The new companies were 'A' at Milnsbridge, 'B' at Marsden, 'C' at Mossley, 'D' at Springhead, and the QM depot at Uppermill which also housed the remains of the old 'E' Company now in 'D'. Recruiting was always unbalanced by the large number of possible recruits available from Oldham and district (Lancashire), and from Ashton (Lancashire), Stalybridge (Cheshire), and Mossley, a small town with three wards originally in the three counties, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire."

(Ibid)

Both the West Riding Territorial Divisions were identical in that the original units of The West Riding Division were mirrored exactly by the second-line units in the Brigades of the 62nd Division. The 49th Division retained the White Rose of York emblem on their uniforms. The new 62nd Division selected a Pelican, with one foot poised, it was vowed that the Pelican would only place its foot flat when the 62nd Division stood upon German soil.

Thus the Dukes Territorials' fortunes in the Great War is a story of twelve infantry battalions. Four of these, the 3/4th, 3/5th, 3/6th, and 3/7th Battalions, existed to provide reinforcement drafts, and to act as home-based holding units for personnel recently recovered from wounds, or those who had been down-graded medically. Theirs was an essential role, but space does not permit other than passing reference to them. The remaining eight battalions saw active service in France and Flanders on the Western Front. The 'first-line' 1/4th, 1/5th, 1/6th, and 1/7th Battalions with the 49th (1st West Riding) Division, the 'second-line' 2/4th, 2/5th, 2/6th, and 2/7th Battalions with the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.

THE 49th (1st WEST RIDING) DIVISION

The four first-line battalions quickly joined their 2nd West Riding Brigade which had concentrated at Selby. Most of the Territorials were confident that the war would be over by Christmas:

"The 5th (Huddersfield) required 250 men to bring it up to strength, and Colonel (then major), Norton [5] DSO was sent out to Huddersfield to secure the necessary men. After a lightning campaign conducted with much success by Colonel Norton and the local recruiting committee, the men were raised in a very few days. Old Territorials who had left the district returned, some from long distances, to rejoin the old battalion preferring 'the Dukes' and a Yorkshire battalion to those raised in the districts where business had called them. Others who never had any thought of soldiering before joined the ranks, and the 250 marched proudly to their battalion. They were the flower of the young manhood of the district. Many of them have distinguished themselves in the campaign, and not

a few have been promoted to commissioned ranks; some as members of the company which Colonel Norton then commanded, of whom practically every third man has become an officer."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

However the rush of mobilisation was then followed by a long wait that was spent in training and the defence of key-points:

"Only two days were spent at Immingham, and then the [4th] Battalion marched to Great Coates, where it remained for nearly five weeks. This was the beginning of the long period of intensive training which preceded its departure overseas. The men were billeted in barns, granaries and stables, thus getting an early taste of what was to become their normal mode of life for long periods in France. Training consisted mostly of route marches, and battalion and company schemes. Great attention was paid to musketry. Newly-gazetted officers began to arrive, and further drafts of men brought the Battalion up to full strength, before it left Great Coates, though a good many National Reservists were rejected at the medical examination. The weather was perfect. Days of glorious sunshine followed one another with monotonous regularity."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The West Riding's Territorials were eager for active service. The enforced service at home during the winter of 1914/1915 was not borne with good humour. Many suspected the war might be over before they had a chance to be actively involved. Frustration at their lack of useful employment further increased. News came through that the Regular Army was being hard pressed. Sir John French had by now received eighty-four infantry battalions, each about 1,000 strong, who were now engaged in fighting the Germans. Now, three months later, only nine had between 350 and 450 men, twenty-six were only 200 to 300, and eighteen battalions had less than 100 men. The famous London Scottish, one of the very few Territorial units on active service, had already fought at the battle of Messines, and gained the distinction of being the first Infantry Territorials in action. But of the 800 who went into action only 160 of the London Scottish survived unscathed. Back home the West Riding Territorials could not understand why their offer, so readily volunteered, of a trained division for active service was seemingly being ignored by the War Office:

"But in spite of everything there was much discontent in the Battalion, though one can hardly grumble at the cause of it. The men longed to be at the 'Front'. Most of them had expected to go overseas very soon and, as the weeks dragged into months, some began to wonder if they would ever get there. Practically everything was going to the 'New Armies', which were in training, and there was little left over for the Territorial Force. Furthermore, there was the ever-present fear of invasion, and it was not deemed safe to send the Territorials overseas until new troops were sufficiently trained to defend the country in case of need. But few of the men understood these things. One man actually deserted in order to enlist in another regiment, because he thought the Battalion was not going out. Another wrote direct to the Secretary of State for War to ask the reason for the delay and, of course, was well 'told off' for his pains. Rumours were plentiful, but, as nothing came of them, they only served to increase the feeling of disappointment."

(Ibid)

In October 1914, the 1/4th, 1/5th, 1/6th, and 1/7th Battalions moved into billets around York and carried out more training at Strensall. During November, the Division was tasked with defence duties on part of the east coast. About January 1915, the 'platoon system' was introduced and each battalion's existing eight companies were reorganised as four companies with an establishment of 30 officers and 992 soldiers. In 1908 battalions were composed of eight rifle companies, the revised four rifle company system composed companies each of 6 officers and 232 soldiers. This reorganisation had already been introduced to regular infantry battalions in late 1913 as a 'four-square' system. The four rifle companies, designated 'A' to 'D', were each of four platoons, themselves each of four sections. Company Headquarters had two captains, one as commander, the other as second-in-command, with a Company Sergeant Major [6], a Colour Sergeant, and ten soldiers. Platoons were commanded by a subaltern with 47 soldiers, three in platoon headquarters, and four sections of a Corporal and ten. To these were added the battalion's specialists, such as the machine-gun section of two guns, the quartermaster's and transport sections. Signalling systems were very basic with signal flags, signalling lamps and heliographs, field telephones were on limited issue for static positions.

Even when the Regular Army was all but worn out, the Secretary of State for War, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener [7], continued to personify the regular officers' long held disdain of the Territorials. Winston Churchill later attributed Kitchener's reluctance to employ the Territorial Force on active service to their 'Territorial' designation:

"It would have been far better to have formed the new volunteers upon the cadres of the Territorial Army [Force], each of which could have been duplicated or quadruplicated in successive stages. But the new Secretary of State [Kitchener] had little knowledge of and no faith in the British Territorial system. The name itself was to him a stumbling-block. In the war of 1870 he had been present at a battle on the Loire, probably Le Mans, in which the key position, confided to French Territorial troops, had been cast away, entailing the defeat of the whole army. He dwelt on this incident to me on several occasions, and I know it had created fixed impressions on his mind. Vain to explain how entirely different were the characters of the troops forming the French and British Territorials - the former aged conscripts in their last periods of service; the latter keen and ardent youths of strong military predilections. They were Territorials and that was the end of it...."

(The World Crisis, 1911-1914. Winston Spencer Churchill. 1927.)

Kitchener remained adamant that the Territorial Force's 14 Infantry Divisions and 14 Yeomanry Cavalry Brigades were "not competent to take the field". With hindsight this has a certain irony for the British Territorials who had originally been raised with the prospect of fighting the French were now extremely willing to go to their aid [8]:

"From October onward, there was a steady stream of [regular] reinforcements to fill the gap. But Kitchener remained stubbornly and dangerously adamant that Haldane's Territorial Army was not fit to fight. A few - only seven - Territorial battalions were committed to battle at 'First Ypres'. They conducted themselves with a distinction that put Kitchener to shame."

(The Mons Star - The British Expeditionary Force, 1914. David Ascoli. 1981.)

Kitchener was to be similarly cavalier towards the New Army battalions he directed to be raised, and suggested they be simply numbered. His Military Secretary intervened advising that the men would have no regimental traditions to uphold, and that the New Army battalions should be part of existing regiments. Kitchener replied "I don't care as long as we get the men." A curious imperative considering his prejudice did not permit him to direct the timely use of the existing Territorial Force. Field Marshal French (who had resigned as Chief of Staff in April 1914), had repeatedly asked that Territorials were immediately sent to the front as individual units became ready, and was later to recognise the misuse of the Territorial Force at the outbreak of the war:

"I have spoken elsewhere of what I have always regarded as our great initial administrative mistake in the war, namely the raising of an entirely New Army, when the machinery for expanding the Territorial Force was already at hand, and would have proved by far the most efficient and economical method of raising the troops required."

(1914. Field Marshal Viscount French of Ypres. 1919.)

By late 1914 the supreme effort and professional skill of Britain's regular infantrymen had brought the German invasion to a shuddering halt:

"So ended 'First Ypres'. During the following days there was desultory fighting along the salient. But the Germans had no longer the heart or strength to pursue what was now a lost cause. They retired to lick their considerable wounds and manufacture their excuses. They had not captured Ypres. If they had cause for any congratulation, it was this: they had destroyed the old Regular Army. In the British [regular] battalions which had fought from Mons to Ypres there scarcely remained with the colours an average of one officer and thirty men of those who had landed in August, 1914. The old British Army was gone beyond recall."

(The Mons Star - The British Expeditionary Force, 1914. David Ascoli. 1981.)

Not all Germany's soldiers facing the Allies were highly trained professionals with years of military training. At least one was not German but an Austrian living in Munich and he had specially petitioned the King of Bavaria on 3rd August 1914 for special permission to join a Bavarian (German) infantry regiment. Permission was granted the following day, and, despite the fact that this volunteer had been turned down on medical grounds by the Austrian Army a year before, he was serving in the *List Regiment* of the Bavarian Army by the 16th August 1914. By October 29th he was in action for the first time when his regiment sustained 349 casualties during fighting at Gheluvelt, when he was promoted Lance Corporal. By November 5th 1914 his regiment had suffered 700 casualties out of its original 3,600 during its first ten days in action. His actions on this day brought the award of the Iron Cross Second Class to this Austrian soldier in the German Army, one Adolf Hitler.

[1: The Territorial Force was embodied for active service under War Office Army Order Number 281 effective 4th August 1914.]

[2: The Territorial Force was authorised to raise Second-Line units under Army Order Number 399 dated 21st September 1914.]

[3: 2Lt Gilbert Howcroft was not untypical of the 2/7th Battalion's officers, but his subsequent service to the Dukes Territorials was to be quite exceptional. Gilbert Burdett Howcroft was born in Uppermill in the Urban District of Saddleworth on 18th July 1893. He joined the 2/7th Battalion in 1914, and was posted to the 1/7th Battalion in July 1915. He was later decorated with the Military Cross, and was badly wounded in April 1918. He rejoined the 7th Battalion after the war, and became Brevet Lieutenant Colonel in 1938. In the Spring of 1939 the 7th Battalion again duplicated and Lieutenant Colonel Howcroft was appointed to command the 1/7th Battalion, which he commanded until early 1940 when the age limit for Commanding Officers required that he retired. He then served as an OC on troopships for the remainder of the war. Colonel G. B. Howcroft CBE MC TD JP was later appointed Honorary Colonel of The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA). Colonel Howcroft was an architect by profession working in the family practice of A J Howcroft and Son. Amongst his many designs are the Saddleworth Cenotaph which is sited on 'Pots and Pans Hill' and is visible from all parts of Saddleworth.]

[4: Major Gilbert Tanner was destined not to remain with the 2/7th, and was soon posted back to his first-line brigade as a reinforcement officer. He at first served with the 1/6th Battalion but later moved to his old 1/7th Battalion, and was decorated with the Distinguished Service Order. He was later the 7th Battalion's first commanding officer when the unit reformed after the war.]

[5: Major G P Norton was a Chartered Accountant and a member of Messrs Armitage and Norton of Huddersfield.]

[6: In 1914 Company Sergeant Majors were still regarded as 'senior non-commissioned officers' but in 1915 the rank became 'Warrant Officer Class 2'. Regimental Sergeant Majors, until then the only Warrant Officers, were redesignated as 'Warrant Officers Class 1'.]

[7: Field Marshal Horatio Kitchener (1850-1916), appointed Secretary of State for War in August 1914. He was lost at sea when His Majesty's Ship Hampshire was sunk on 5th June 1916.]

[8: Kitchener's opinion of Territorials has a certain irony. Not least due to the fact that the French 'Territorials' which had formed Kitchener's opinion had themselves been in action against the Prussians at that time. This Franco-Prussian War of 1870 had, in turn, enabled Kaiser William 1st of Prussia to proclaim the Second German Reich on 18th January 1871. This resulted in a large German Army, the 'Kaiserheer' which remained Prussian dominated having thirteen Prussian divisions, two Bavarian divisions, and one division each from Württemberg and Alsace-Lorraine - a former French province gained by the Prussians following the war.]

FRANCE AND FLANDERS 1915-1918

"Fifty years were spent in the process of making Europe explosive. Five days were enough to detonate it."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

The German Army of 1914 was in reality made up by the four armies of Bavaria, Württemberg, Saxony and Prussia. The whole army was largely controlled by the Prussians whose King, Kaiser Wilhelm, was also Germany's Emperor. Field Marshal Count Alfred von Schlieffen had been the Chief of the German Staff from 1895-1903. As early as 1895 he had begun to develop what became known as the 'Schlieffen plan', and which he completed in 1905. This plan covered the German invasion of France, and anticipated that the terrain dictated that Germany must violate Belgian neutrality if they were successfully to envelope the French Army in a rapid victory. His optimistic war plan required 53 German divisions to carry out a gigantic wheeling manoeuvre through Europe, and a further 8 divisions at the pivot. By August 1914 his successor, General Helmuth von Moltke, had diluted the plan to match logistic factors, despite von Schlieffen's dying words:

"It must come to a fight, only make the right wing strong. When you march into France let the last man on the right brush the Channel with his sleeve."

Unlike the British Generals, von Moltke did not regard his reserve army as troops of doubtful quality, but had the confidence to commit them as part of the assault waves. Every physically able citizen aged 17-45 was liable for service in the German Army. The first term of service was from 17 years with enrolment into the 'Landsturm' or Home Defence Militia. At age 20, those selected were trained for two or three years, according to branch, followed by five years on the German regular reserve. A conscript was then required to pass into the 'Landwehr' from the age of 39 to 45 years. In addition an 'Ersatz Reserve' (the 'Restanten') was formed by those not selected for military service:

"Tactically the Germans began with two important material advantages. They alone had gauged the potentialities of the heavy howitzer, and had provided adequate numbers of this weapon. And if no army had fully realized that machine-guns were 'concentrated essence of infantry', nor fully developed this preponderant source of fire power, the Germans had studied it more than other armies, and were able to exploit its inherent power of dominating a battlefield sooner than other armies."

(Ibid)

The development of effective artillery and machine-guns, and not least the superb marksmanship of the British infantry, produced firepower which dominated the battlefield. Cavalry could no longer provide the mobile arm on the battlefield and, until tanks were developed, mobile warfare became virtually impossible. The German invasion was therefore eventually fought to a standstill. In August 1914 Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm III had been seeing his troops off to Belgium when he promised "You will be back home before the leaves are off the trees"; just as the British thought "the war would be over by Christmas" - neither prophecy was true.

The opposing armies became locked into continuous opposing trench systems which virtually replicated medieval siege warfare. The historian John Terraine highlights the situation:

"The problem, in a nutshell, was the 'hiatus of the mobile arm'. Modern technology had entirely solved the problem of bringing the mass armies to the battlefields; now what was needed was a means of moving them on the battlefields. The horse was still invaluable in the last stages of approach to the fire zone, but inside the fire zone the horse was helpless and useless. And there was nothing else. So, while statesmen and general publics looked for 'great captains' who would dismiss the problem by 'thunderbolts of war', the soldiers awaited the new key which only technology could provide to unlock their prison.....So the humble spade became a master-weapon."

(White Heat. *The New Warfare 1914-1918*. John Terraine. 1982.)

The experiences of the other Yorkshire Territorials of the East and North Ridings merit comparison. The 150th (York and Durham) Brigade began their move to the front-line at about the same time as the West Riding Division. But the Territorials of The East Yorkshire Regiment, and The Green Howards were immediately thrown into desperate fighting on Saint George's Day 1915. At Langemark, on the Ypres sector, the Germans discharged 168 tons of chlorine gas from 4,000 cylinders in five minutes. This cloud of gas swept across a four-mile wide front held by one Canadian and two French divisions. The effect of this gas was devastating, resulting in the French-Algerian troops fleeing, leaving a dangerous 800 yard wide gap in the line through which the Germans, wearing anti-gas respirators, advanced. It was to close this vital gap that the 150th (York and Durham) Brigade advanced. A few days later an officer commanding an artillery battery watched as Yorkshire's other Saturday Night Soldiers answered the long standing questions on the worth of the Territorials:

"The Northumbrians had only just arrived from England. They were rushed up to the front to assist in the defence of Ypres. I don't suppose any of the men of this gallant Territorial Division had ever been under fire before. The first shell that fell among them will be stamped for ever on my memory. As their leading lines topped the Verlorenhoek Ridge, some 2,000 yards behind our battery position, they came into view of the German artillery observers who opened on them with heavy and light artillery. At a steady pace with perfect intervals they advanced. It flashed through one's mind as to how these untried troops would stand their first baptism of fire. Would they face the great ordeal without flinching?"

"Looking at them with powerful glasses at this short range, the sight was truly inspiring. Not a man altered his pace or direction, except those who were left lying on the ground. As steadily as the oldest veterans they continued their advance without a falter. The dead and wounded were left for the stretcher-bearers. How often during this battle had we seen the Germans bolting from our artillery fire, and the German is a brave soldier. It made one proud indeed to see our young Territorial troops go through their first ordeal with a courage, a steadiness, and a perfect discipline which could not be surpassed. It encouraged one at a time of great strain to feel that such men could not be defeated."

(*The British Campaign in France*. A Conan Doyle.)

This earned their first battle honour St Julien, but at a terrible cost, for their 50th (Northumbrian) Division sustained 5,204 casualties, mainly in the infantry battalions, between 22nd April and 25th May 1915:

"It was commonly supposed that the West Riding Division was to follow the [50th] Northumbrian Division abroad, but for some reason their re-fitting was delayed, and in the end we set out before them [9]. In our enthusiasm we were delighted with our luck, but little realised how great it was. We were sent forward from the base to the outskirts of Fleurbaix, where we were nursed by easy stages into a more or less distant familiarity with the war, whilst the Northumbrian Division on our heels was plunged straight from the coast into the Second Battle of Ypres, and was fighting for its life and the safety of the British line before it even had time to smell the atmosphere of the line, or learnt to know, even as we knew, the immeasurable gulf which separated training and the real thing."

(*The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*. Capt D P Grant.)

The West Riding Territorials of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division thankfully were to experience a less traumatic introduction to trench warfare.

FLEURBAIX

On April 14th 1915 orders at last came through that the 49th (1st West Riding) Division was to proceed to France and active service:

"At last one day early in April, definite news was received. A tactical tour for the officers and senior NCOs [Non-commissioned officers] of the Battalion had been arranged under the supervision of the Brigadier. When the latter arrived he brought the news that the Battalion was to move in a few days. Immediately there was a light-hearted feeling about that party such as there had seldom been before."

"The days which followed were full of excitement and activity. There was an enormous amount of work to be done, and very little time to do it. During the last few days there was little rest for officers and NCOs. Up to that time it had been extremely difficult to obtain articles of kit and equipment. Owing to the enormous demands of the army already in France, and the fact that the productive power of British factories was scarcely a hundredth part of what it was towards the end of the war, there was little material available for distribution at home. But, now that the Battalion was under orders for the Front, all kinds of stores were thrust upon it. The miscellaneous selection of spring carts and vans, which had done duty as transport vehicles, were replaced by proper limbered wagons; transport animals and harness arrived quicker than could be dealt with. Men were constantly being paraded to receive some article of kit or equipment; one time it would be new winter underclothing, another time new boots. These articles are particularly worthy of notice. Why a Battalion should be fitted out with winter underclothing early in April is a question which probably only the War Office officials of the period could satisfactorily answer. While as to the boots, it was not long before many a man was yearning for his comfortable old pair."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The Dukes moved by train on the following day, and by the 16th April their 147th Brigade was regrouping at Merville. The experiences of Skipton's 1/6th Battalion are not untypical:

"On the 18th [April] there was Church Parade, and in the afternoon motor-'buses were provided for a party of fifty officers and NCOs to proceed to Fleurbaix, where they were attached to the 13th Kensingtons for twenty-four hours' instruction in the trenches. Even instruction had its perils, and this trench party returned one casualty; Sergeant T Richardson, 'slightly wounded'. On the 20th, the motor-'bus came again for a party of twenty-six in all, and next day a platoon from each Company in the Battalion studied trench warfare as pupils of the 25th Brigade."

"This instruction, which included bomb-throwing, was continued till April 26th, when the Battalion paraded at 4.45pm and marched to new billets at Fleurbaix, reaching Rue de Quesne at 8 o'clock. The next night at 11pm Pte J Walsh was killed by rifle fire, and on Thursday, April 29th, Fleurbaix was shelled by heavy guns, which found the billets occupied by this Battalion. A single shell killed two privates and wounded a third: 'The dead were buried where the shell fell, owing to Private Pickles being so mutilated. No Service - Chaplain not available."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

They were soon moving into the front-line at Fleurbaix:

"At length a communication trench is reached. The men are quieter now. Over to the right an occasional shell is bursting. The crack of a rifle is heard now and then. The trench is muddy, and, here and there, water is over the duckboards. Private 'Z' slips, and expresses his opinion of a sandbag-full of charcoal, which he is carrying, in unmistakable terms. The trench seems endless, but, at last, the front line is reached. Other men, covered with mud and wearing equipment, are waiting there. The relief goes smoothly. Sentries are changed, duties are handed over, the latest intelligence reports about 'Fritz' or 'Jerry' is imparted. 'Quiet tour'. Not a casualty in our Company. He doesn't fire if you lie doggo."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The layout of trench systems varied with the terrain, but a typical battalion frontage in 1915 was 700 yards (640 metres). Two rifle companies would be placed in the forward trench line each with three of their four rifle platoons, the fourth rifle platoon of these companies would be with company headquarters in the 'close support' trench line placed about 20 yards (18 metres) behind. The battalion's third rifle company would be placed 200 to 300 yards (180-275 metres) behind the two forward companies in the 'support line' trenches. The same distance again in the rear would be battalion headquarters with the fourth rifle company in the 'reserve line' of trenches. This layout system was repeated at Brigade level, each having two infantry battalions in the forward trench line.

one battalion in close support, and one battalion with brigade headquarters in reserve. Fleubaix was to be a 'quiet sector' of the trenches where time was spent receiving instruction in trench warfare from those who had learnt the hard way:

"From the General Officer Commanding to the latest-joined private, every man in the 49th Division was new to trench warfare, and so had everything to learn. Training in England had mostly taken the form of open warfare, and practically no-one in the Infantry had had any instruction in field engineering, or in looking after his own comfort. So necessity became the main teacher, and perhaps a better one could not have been found."

(Ibid)

May 1915 was a hot month, and the Brigade took over a sector at Neuve Chapelle:

"What is the most enduring memory of the Neuve Chapelle sector? There can only be one reply: 'The Dead'. Our men existed for ten days in a vast cemetery where no one had been buried. In front and behind the line, along communication trenches, everywhere, putrescent bodies! The parapets were built with them: they served as directing points to dugouts and sentry posts, and even helped to give directions to patrols across No Man's Land. The heavy sickly stench, which could be felt miles away, lay like a cloud over the trenches where men ate and slept. The heat during May was terrific: men gasped and sweltered under it, and the ration of tobacco and cigarettes soon gave out."

(A history of the 6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

In February 1915 they had handed in their old rifles which were replaced by the supposedly 'improved' Lee Enfield with high-velocity mark VII ammunition, which was a 'long rifle' converted. But it soon proved unserviceable through jamming too easily, often after less than ten rounds had been fired, as the magazine spring was too weak and the clips were the wrong shape. Nor could it be fitted with a grenade launcher as could the later short Lee Enfield. The chance of a decent short Lee-Enfield was therefore not to be missed. The area was littered with unburied dead bodies from both sides. Many took the opportunity to risk going out into No Man's Land and retrieve the newer pattern 'short Lee-Enfield' rifle from the bodies of the British regular soldiers. The normal scale of rifle ammunition was for each man to carry 120 rounds with a further 100 rounds per man, packed on 50 round 'bandoliers' in battalion reserve. Good equipment was very much at a premium. Territorial infantry battalions still only had two Maxim machine-guns. Effective hand grenades still had to be developed, and they had to rely upon improvisation. Trench-made bombs were constructed out of old jam tins, or lengths of galvanised piping, into which one ounce gun-cotton primers were fitted as the explosive charge, with a length of safety fuse which had to be lit before the bomb was thrown. 2Lt Howcroft, now posted to the 1/7th Battalion, later recalled early experiences of bombing parties:

"We came well behind the Germans in bombs, and even in trench mortars. A Brigade bombing class was set up to practise throwing bombs which were lit by a fiendish thing called a 'Nobel lighter', hand twisted to light a shortened fuse. In changing hands I dropped mine. The heroic thing to do was to fall on the bomb and save your comrades. But it struck me that five seconds gave time to pick it up, and so it proved for I picked it up and threw it away according to instructions with I thought a couple of seconds to spare. I heard very unofficially that the Brigadier (General in those days) was rather amused and pleased."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

The West Riding Divisional artillery's three field-gun regiments (each then named 'Brigades') were each equipped with 36 obsolete breech-loading 15 pounder guns converted to quick-firing, restricted to three shells a gun each day, whereas regular artillery regiments had 54 of the newer 18 pounder guns. The fourth Artillery Brigade in the division was the 'howitzer' brigade from Ilkley and Otley. They were equipped with old 5 inch howitzers and Territorial Gunner Norman Tennant recorded the gun's effectiveness during the last live-firing camp before war was declared:

"Next day the guns were brought into action ready to fire our first live shells, the target being an old bell tent on the hillside about a mile away.....It was fascinating to observe for the first time the devastating fire of our 5 inch shells bursting in the target area but rather disappointing to see the bell tent still standing at the end of the day."

"Perhaps this was hardly surprising since our weapons were the old Boer War BL Howitzers; the letters BL stood for breech-loading and seemed to imply that it was a desirable improvement on a muzzle loader. One of these pieces of ordnance belonging to our sister battery, the 10th, is now in the Imperial War Museum - a fitting place for it."

(A Saturday Night Soldier's War. Norman Tennant. 1983.)

The reality of war was quickly brought home. Even such a 'quiet sector' was dangerous:

"Unlike their artillery, the German machine gunners and riflemen were extremely active. The Rue des Bassières and the Convent Wall were always dangerous spots, while at night the enemy traversed the front line parapet with great accuracy. His snipers were very wide-awake and excellent shots; they had all the advantages of superior observation and high command, and some of them were certainly equipped with telescopic sights. It was almost as much as a man's life was worth for him to show his head above the parapet for a few seconds in the daytime. Nearly all the casualties in the Fleurbaix sector were from bullet wounds."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

At that time an infantry battalion would defend a 1,000 yard sector with thirteen of its sixteen platoons in the front-line trenches, therefore about 700 men had less than one yard each when the firing bays were fully manned at 'stand-to':

"The British positions were held at this time almost entirely by rifle fire. Few heavy guns were in use then and, though there were a fair number of field guns, no really effective barrage could be put down owing to the scarcity of ammunition. A very few rounds daily were all that the artillery could fire. Some of their ammunition was of poor quality. 'Prematures' were not uncommon and caused much worry..."

(Ibid)

Yet the very closeness of the German enemy led to lighter moments, as Private F A Smith [10] of Huddersfield's 1/5th Battalion told in one of his letters:

"The other night the lads in our trench entertained the Germans by singing a song or two which were applauded, not in the usual way, but by a volley or two that thudded and rattled along our sandbag parapet. By way of an encore we gave them 'Has anyone seen a German Band', which brought an extra round of applause from Mr Fritz. During the next day one of our lookouts spotted a German flag which had been planted about half way between our trenches and their own."

"One of our men (Private Harry Convoy of Dock Street, Huddersfield) in 16 platoon made up his mind to secure the flag. At twilight he went out, and much to the amusement and surprise of his comrades, he brought back the flag. On one side were the words 'John Bull Kaput' - 'Mitt Gott fur Kaiser V Reich' or in Private Smith's words 'John Bull Jiggered', 'God and Right was with the Kaiser.'"

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

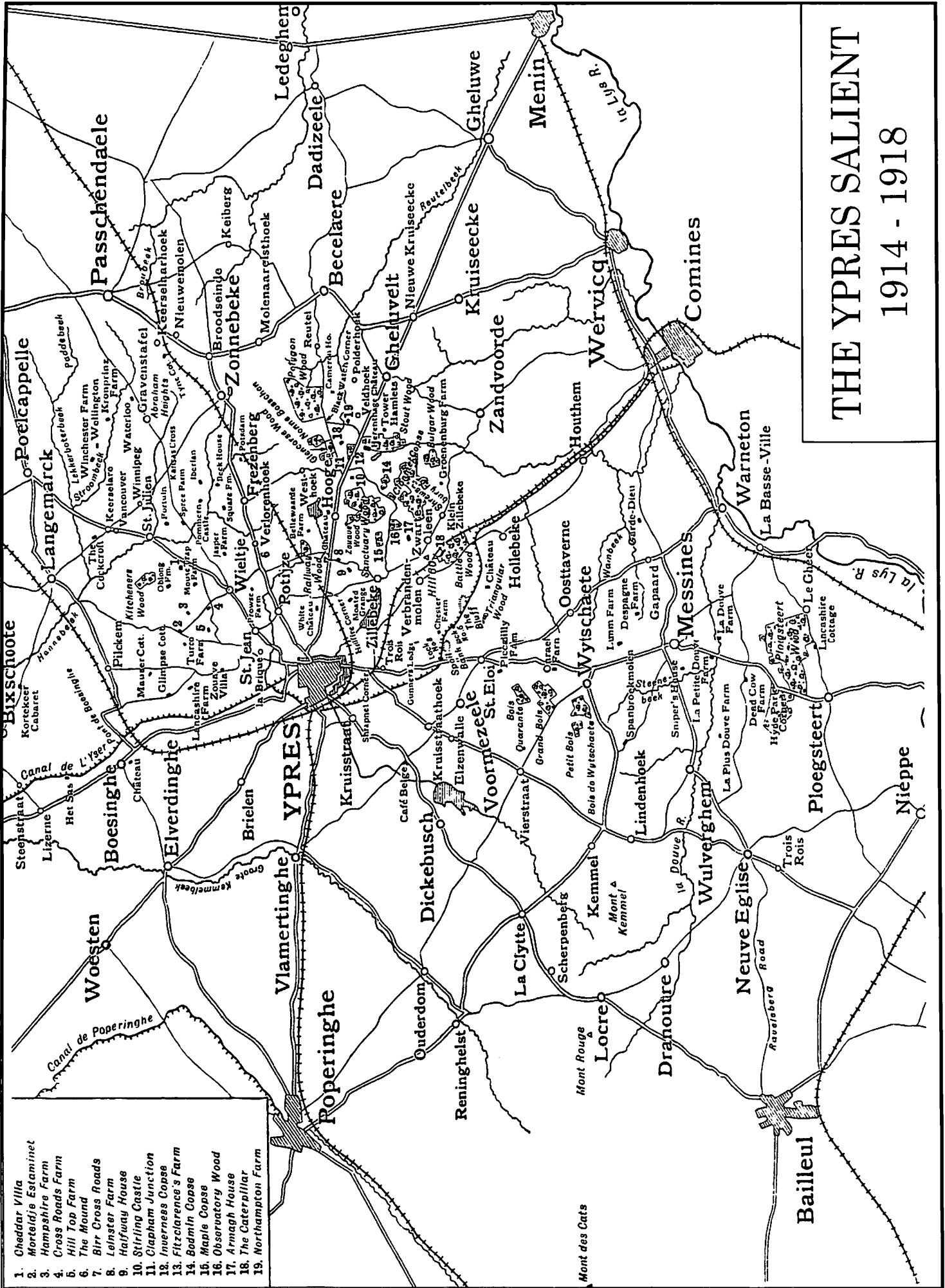
It was not until October 1915 that the West Riding Artillery received the better 18 pounder quick-firing gun, and the following January saw the obsolete 5 inch howitzer replaced by new 4.5 inch howitzers. The closeness of enemy trenches brought difficulties in using artillery whose high explosive shells covered large areas threatening friend and foe alike. Small infantry trench mortars, or 'trench howitzers', were introduced in order to lob high explosive bombs from the forward trenches into those of the enemy. Early models were improvised locally by Royal Engineers from melted-down cartridge cases, some were even borrowed from museums. The first new purpose-built mortar was the '2" trench howitzer' which fired a toffee apple shaped bomb up to 500 yards. Later came a 4" trench howitzer whose rifled barrels were made by converting naval armour-piercing shells and which fired an 11½ pound bomb about 350 yards. This was to be the only rifled mortar ever in service with British infantry. Another pattern of mortar was the lighter 3.7" trench howitzer which fired a 4½ pound bomb about 350 yards. They all used 'gun cotton' as propellant for the bomb and were fitted with the breech mechanism from the Lee Enfield rifle, using a special cartridge, to fire them off. Early bombs were detonated by a length of safety fuse cut to the required length and lit immediately before firing and a few bombs were fitted with artillery fuses.

Maintaining a continuously defended front-line required careful management and an all too familiar routine of trench warfare soon came into being:

"Each company held a section of the front line, with two platoons in front and two in support. Usually these platoons inter-relieved every forty-eight hours, but towards the end of the time reliefs were sometimes carried out every twenty-four hours. The Battalion spent four days in the line and four in Brigade reserve; these latter periods were sometimes passed on the canal bank and sometimes in the farm houses further back. While in brigade reserve every available man was kept hard at work in the forward area either on the new drainage scheme, or trying to clear some of the mud and water from the communication trenches. Only twice during the wet weather did the 147th Infantry Brigade have a spell in divisional reserve, and even then there was not much comfort."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

THE YPRES SALIENT
1914 - 1918



1. Cheddar Villa
2. Morteldje Estaminet
3. Hampshire Farm
4. Cross Roads Farm
5. Hill Top Farm
6. The Mount
7. Birr Cross Roads
8. Lanster Farm
9. Halfway House
10. Stirling Castle
11. Clapham Junction
12. Inverness Copse
13. Fitzclarenc's Farm
14. Bodmin Copse
15. Maple Copse Wood
16. Observatory Wood
17. Armagh House
18. The Caterpillar
19. Northampton Farm

In May 1915 the 49th Division played a supporting role in the attack on Aubers Ridge which was carried out by the 8th Division:

"On the evening of May 8th the [4th] Battalion marched up to its assembly positions. Every man was in full marching order and carried an extra bandolier of ammunition and the usual miscellaneous assortment of sandbags, extra rations, etc. On arrival, all set to work to improve their accommodation. Battalion Headquarters occupied Croix Blanche Farm, from which building a good view of part of the battle area was obtained the following day."

"At 5.30am on May 9th, the British Artillery opened fire, and, to the inexperienced soldiers of the Battalion, the bombardment appeared to be terrific. 'The bombardment was a fine sight and (it was) difficult to realise that anyone could be alive after it in that particular zone' says the Battalion's War Diary. Actually, it was very thin, but none of the men had any conception of what massed artillery can do. The German reply was slight, and was entirely confined to counter-battery work on that part of the front. In their ignorance, some put this down to the enemy's scarcity of ammunition. This mistaken idea that the enemy was short of shells was not uncommon then. For a long time nothing was learned of the progress of the attack. At length some wounded began to arrive, and rumours to spread. Some of these latter were only too true. It is unnecessary to tell the details of the day as the Battalion never became engaged. It is sufficient to say that British Infantry, who lacked nothing in gallantry but had little artillery support, were ineffective in the face of countless German machine guns."

(Ibid)

Routine was broken on 3rd June when the division elected to fire off a 'Feu de Joie' to celebrate The King's birthday. Every available man in the West Riding Division stood-to on the trench firestep, and a ripple of rifle fire ran three times from one end of the division's front-line trenches to the other. This stirred up the opposing Germans who, suspecting an attack, manned their front-line and opened rapid fire from their trenches. June 12th 1915 brought praise from on high to the West Riding Territorials, though not perhaps, as might be expected, for a gallant feat of arms:

"The Commander-in-Chief notices with gratification the record of the 49th (West Riding) Division during the month of May, which shows that no single conviction by Court-Martial has occurred, a condition which does not obtain in any other Division of the Armies.....He desires his appreciation of this fact be duly conveyed to the 49th Division."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

[9: A virtually identical swapover by these two divisions happened in 1944 when the initial plan was for the 49th (West Riding) Division to be an 'assault division', and for the 50th (Northumbrian) Division to be its 'follow-up division'. However, the plan was changed and the 50th was allocated the assault role with the 49th as follow-up.]

[10: Private F A Smith, 1/5th Battalion, enlisted 3rd December 1914, killed in action 16th October 1915.]

THE YPRES SALIENT

Ypres [11], the most westerly town in Belgium, was militarily important as it commanded a number of vital routes and lines of communication. Whoever held Ypres held the key to the Channel Ports - Calais and Boulogne. It was also politically vital that Ypres remained in Allied hands. When Belgium was created in 1839, Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and France had guaranteed her neutrality. In 1914 Germany's invasion of France violated Belgian neutrality, resulting in Britain declaring war. The ensuing success of the German armies resulted in little of Belgium remaining in Allied hands when the fixed continuous line of trenches developed in late 1914. It therefore became increasingly vital that Ypres was held as a diplomatic symbol.

The relative ease of the 'quiet sector' at Fleurbaix was short lived. On 28th June 1915 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division received orders to move to Ypres; the infamous 'Wipers', the Division was to be the first Territorial Force division to be detailed for a long spell in the area where the British front-lines bulged into the German defences to create the Ypres Salient. July 1st 1915 witnessed the Dukes Territorials marching in to occupy the Salient, an area which was to become all too familiar to them in the following years and which was subjected to incessant enemy shelling with gas, and explosive ammunition, and was constantly swept by machine-gun fire, and ever vigilant enemy snipers:

"For the British Army there was only one Salient. So much misery, mud, murder has nowhere else been compressed in so small a place. The ground reeked with gas; was polluted with dead and the debris of a hundred battles; was tortured by an everlasting storm of shells. There was no possibility of peace or safety in the Salient."

(A History of the 6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

Complex systems of 'support', 'communication' and 'front-line' trenches were progressively developed. These became easier to get around as newly-dug trenches took on Yorkshire place names, for example with 'Skipton Road' trench and 'Colne Valley' leading to 'Glimpse Cottage' which itself had 'Huddersfield Road' to the south and 'Barnsley Road' to the north:

"The tour was a very anxious one. Away on the left the 148th Infantry Brigade was having a very rough time of it, the enemy making frequent counter-attacks to recover ground which he had lost a few days before. Not knowing when the enemy's attention might be turned further south, the Battalion had to be very much on the alert. No one slept at night, and two officers per company were always on duty during the day. The men in the front line trenches were fully occupied with sentry duties and working parties, and it was deemed inadvisable for any of them to go away from their positions. Thus, all carrying fell on the reserve company, which had a very hard time of it. Trolley lines were not yet in use, and all rations and RE [Royal Engineers] material had to be carried right up the line from the canal bank - a distance of well over a mile. But all ranks worked magnificently."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The front-line trenches were manned twenty-four hours a day throughout the division's seven months at Ypres, and the battalions in the front-line were backed-up by others in support at short notice, and the remainder in reserve:

"The monotonous routine went on with no variation of six days in the front-line, six days in support - probably the canal bank 200 or 300 yards back, six days in the line, six days in reserve, probably at Elverdinghe Park. In the line nobody got much sleep - practically none at night. There was always the chance of death waiting for you round the next corner from a chance bullet or one aimed at you - equally fatal. In daylight a moment of curiosity looking over the parapet gave a man on the other side the chance of putting a bullet through your head - for the Germans of 1915 were very well trained in musketry."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

Trench warfare brought a demanding workload with a wearying list of duties for company officers, as one of the Dukes Territorial officers recorded:

"I am at present the only officer besides the captain [Company Commander] in 'C' Company, so I have plenty of work to do. I am generally on duty from midnight to 6am, and all day long. We had three casualties when I was on duty last night. A rifle grenade which landed in Bay 1 of our position (we have 22 bays to look after) killed a sergeant and wounded two men. We have also a platoon in reserve which we have to look after. The main things I do are:- (1) During bombardment I rush along to see where each shell has landed, and dig out anyone who is buried: (2) Get stretcher bearers to wounded: (3) See that the dead are buried: (4) Improve the trenches, and repair portions broken down by shells etc: (5) Censor letters: (6) Ensure that sentries watch day and night to see if the Bosches (Germans) are coming: (7) Get to know as much of the enemy as possible - where his machine-guns and snipers are: (8) See that ammunition does not run short: (9) See that men change socks, keep fit, and have serviceable weapons: (10) See the commanding officer and brigade officers when they come round to explain what is being done, and give any information desired."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

The same unknown officer recorded the many uses of the simplest of trench stores:

"Sandbags are absolutely ubiquitous. They form our armour against all fire. We sleep in huts made of them. Our rations come up in sandbags, and we usually find bits of sandbag on our bread or meat. We pack our luggage in a sandbag when we cannot get into our packs everything we want for the trenches. We learn bayonet fighting by sticking sandbags filled with sods or soil, and hanging from a wire like clothes on a clothes-line. If the trenches are muddy we tie sandbags over our puttees to keep them dry and clean; if we want a seat a sandbag forms our chair."

"If we want a bed, empty sandbags tacked across a wooden frame make a good substitute. If we want to make an earth dugout snug, and to keep out mice, we line the walls with empty sandbags. When we are shot a sandbag is sewn over the heads, and packed in where the oil-sheet is not large enough to cover us. If we are blown to bits the fragments which remain are collected in a sandbag by the pioneer, and the sandbag and contents are buried with all due ceremony and respect. Our letters are sent in a sandbag, and when your personal belongings are forwarded home after death, in nine case out of ten, they are despatched in a sandbag. Great O! Great is thy name and place in the war, O! sandbag! Indeed I do not know what the war would be without thee!."

(Ibid)

All rations had to be carried forward to the front-line, first by horse-drawn transport, and then manhandled forward by working parties through the communication trenches. Rations were often exclusively tinned Machonichie's stew or 'M&V', meat and vegetables, or 'bully beef', together with hard biscuit in place of bread. All water had to be manhandled forward in cans and it always tasted of the chlorine which was liberally added as a health precaution. One small source of cheer was the daily rum ration issued to combat the effects of cold and damp. This came in buff earthenware jars with a brown glazed neck and were labelled 'SRD' for Special Rations Department, but read by the front-line infantryman as 'Seldom Reaches Destination':

"Every effort was made to provide hot food and drink, but the difficulties of getting it to the companies before it was cold were almost insuperable. Any attempt to light a fire was bound to draw the attention of the hostile artillery or trench mortars, and so only 'Tommy's Cookers' could be used."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The headquarters' staff of the 49th Division were not noted for their frivolity but the divisional commander allowed a communication to be sent out which more than displayed an appreciation of front-line conditions:

*"If all the troops with all the tools
Should dig for half a year,
Do you suppose," our Captain asked,
"That we should now be clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Adjutant,
"Knowing the Brigadier."*

(Ibid)

The distance across No Man's Land between the British and German trenches was often very small as reported in August 1915 by a former member of the Halifax Guardian staff then serving with the town's 1/4th Battalion:

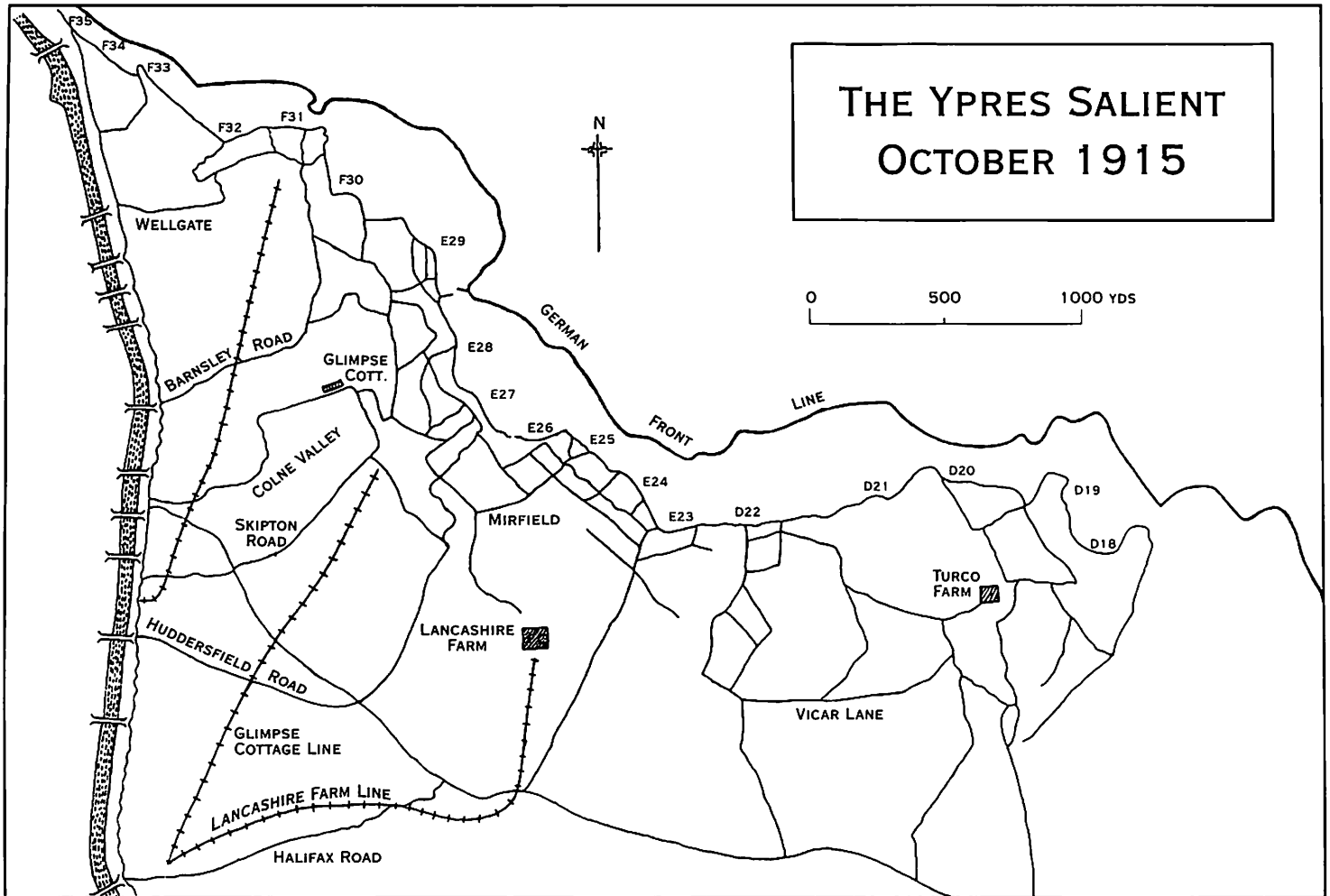
"The Huns opposite us in our trenches are evidently first-class troops, and not 'Landsturms' or short-sighted professors. We saw several through the periscope, walking about, coming in front of their barbed-wire, and coolly inspecting us through telescopes. They were all of magnificent build, more like our guardsmen than the hen-pecked looking gas-poisoners we had expected. In the afternoon of the last day there, the Bosches announced by means of a huge placard, the fall of Brest-Litovsk, and accompanied it by loud cheering. They all sounded to be round the notice, so we opened rapid fire and the notice quickly disappeared."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

Down at the side of the Yser Canal 2Lt Howcroft of Milnbridge's 1/7th Battalion was sent forward to reoccupy a bombing post which had been hastily abandoned being reputed to be within fifteen yards of the Germans:

"I sent for the Sergeant now in command of the squad of about twelve men, to go well after dark and to take up a stock of bombs [hand grenades]. And so we went up along the canal side and into the trench taking no particular care to be quiet because the enemy were sure to hear us coming; in fact we were greeted with a salvo of bombs, all of which fell and exploded well ahead of our parapet, a source of great confidence to our gallant bombers, and a confirmation of the doubt with which I had regarded the assertion that the forward posts were about fifteen yards apart. I took it to be our duty to return the firing, not as a salvo - we had too much variety of bombs, and even of men. The Mills bomb was not yet available and I think the Nobel lighter was obsolete but we had a lot of 'explode on impact' models - pull the pin and throw with care."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)



By the end of October 1915 the good weather broke and heavy rain became normal:

"When the Autumn rains began in August, the trenches disappeared or became canals. The whole Salient, as General Perceval [General Officer Commanding 49th Division] reported officially, was 'permanently flooded'. The line could only be held by a system of detached posts, where men were prisoned till nightfall, up to the knees in water day and night, and without room for any exercise. Tremendous efforts were made throughout the Division to combat the most serious danger of water-logged trenches - 'trench feet', and the Division had a very good record.....Thousands of tins of anti-frostbite grease were sent out to the Division from the Territorial Association at York; gum boots - though never in sufficient quantities - were issued in thousands."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

The task of holding the Wipers trenches became almost insuperable:

"During the earlier part of its stay in the Ypres Salient it [the Battalion] had seldom done more than two tours in the same sector. But from the end of October, until it was finally relieved in December, the Battalion held no sector of the line except the extreme left; and, in every way, that sector was the worst on the divisional front....The front-line was in places more than two feet deep in semi-liquid mud, and parts of it were entirely isolated from neighbouring posts, except by cross-country routes; stretches of communication trenches were waist deep in water. And this was the result of only about two days of steady rain. For the next two months conditions gradually became worse and worse."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The collapse and confusion of the water-logged trenches soon brought losses:

"The case of Private T Atkinson - the first prisoner the enemy secured from the Battalion - was a good illustration of this. In company with another man, he had successfully delivered rations to an isolated front line post, but, on the way back, the two had disagreed about the direction of their own front lines and separated, each going his own way. The other man rejoined his platoon in safety; Pte Atkinson, apparently, walked straight across No Man's Land into the arms of the enemy."

(Ibid)

By December 1915 the condition of the trenches in the Ypres Salient were quite appalling:

"A man had a ghastly prospect in front of him when his turn came to form part of the front line garrison for forty-eight hours. For all that time he would be thoroughly soaked and terribly cold; his boots would be full of water, he would stand in water and mud; his physical pain, mental weariness, and bodily fatigue would be his constant burden. The chances were that he would not complete his tour of duty - that before his time was up he would succumb to the enemy snipers, or be on his way to hospital a physical wreck."

"One example is sufficient to show what appalling casualties were suffered during this period. About the beginning of December, an officer took up twenty-four other ranks for a tour of duty in the front line. At the end of that time he brought out with him one signaller and three other ranks. Every other man had become a casualty."

(Ibid)

Gas shells were often used at Ypres. Early improvised protection against gas was crude, being afforded by covering the nose and mouth with a handkerchief pre-soaked in urine. Later cotton waste, wrapped in black gauze and soaked in photographic solution was issued in pad form. But these pads were virtually impossible to breathe through, as were the 'P Helmets' without mouthpieces, which had a single window made out of mica which was extremely fragile. These were issued later. In mid-November 'PH' Tube Helmets were issued, which had a valve operated mouthpiece, and improved anti-gas filtering chemicals. It was shortly to prove a life-saver. By mid-December 1915 rumours filtered through to the 49th Division that the Germans were about to try a second gas attack on Ypres. Several patrols were sent out by the Division with the aim of locating the enemy's gas-projectors and all ranks were warned to be especially alert. The enemy trenches were too close to the 49th Division's front line for artillery safely to fire on them. The Dukes were instructed to clear their forward trenches at 5.00am each day so that the German front lines could be bombarded by the division's artillery:

"About 5am on the morning of December 19th all front line platoons, except those of 'A' Company, began to withdraw according to the plan. Many had actually reached their positions for the day when, at 5.30am, flares suddenly shot up all along the enemy lines. Whether they were red or green is a matter for dispute among those who saw them; but the point is not important. They were evidently a signal for the attack to begin. Immediately, what is described by survivors as a 'sizzling' noise was heard, a greenish-white cloud appeared over the enemy parapet and began to drift towards the British lines, and a terrific bombardment with artillery and trench mortars was opened on the Canal, the British communication trenches and reserve positions."

(Ibid)

The 1/4th Dukes held their positions to a man as the Division's artillery responded to their 'SOS' flares with a storm of fire onto the German front lines. The 1/6th Dukes, then in support, advanced steadily through an enemy barrage to reach their allotted positions. The 49th Division's position had been swamped by a barrage of explosive shells in which was mixed a heavy concentration of phosgene gas:

"The enemy gas-shelling began in earnest about half an hour after the cylinder gas was let off, and the shower of these deadly quiet shells coming through the darkness like rockets and exploding merely with a dull 'splash', added a new horror to the scheme. Men in some cases were gassed by them before they had realized what kind of shells they were or had adjusted their [anti-gas] helmets. Everyone stuck to his post however. There were no stragglers that day from the 49th Division. Instead of the enemy finding a trench line full of the gassed and dead, and a clear way to the canal, he was check-mated before he left his own trenches, and the few enemy parties who got on their parapets melted away before the storm of our bullets and shells."

(A History of the 6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

Nor was the German armoury limited to missiles and gas as a member of the 1/4th recorded:

"As an instrument of frightfulness, liquid fire is a credit to the hellish aspirations of the Boche, but its futility as a weapon of offence was very evident. When it was first used it was only natural that its formidable appearance should yield it some small measure of success, but once its impotence to hurt was realised it ceased to be worth the oil it consumed. Least of all is it likely to demoralise the phlegmatic troops from the furnaces and foundries of the West Riding."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

Despite the severity of the gas attack the Germans hardly made any attempt to follow it up with infantry. Both the rapid response of the 49th Division's artillery and the tenacity of the Yorkshire infantry clearly deterred them. The Territorials of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division had spent a hitherto unknown length of time in the Ypres Salient. At home even 'John Bull' magazine asked why the division had been kept in the Salient for seven continuous months. The West Riding's Territorials had overcome the most appalling conditions:

"Men of the quiet, tight-lipped and dogged type, who talked little, though occasional flashes of humour brighten even this ghastly picture, but simply obeyed orders without question and held on. Perhaps their feelings can be best expressed by quoting the remark of one of them when on short leave from that hell. 'Well sir, we either have to laugh or cry, and we prefer to laugh.'"

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

For many of the 'old-originals' far too many bullets 'had their name on it'. The odds against survival were heavily stacked against them as remembered by Gilbert Howcroft:

"I had a long experience and knew very few cowards. How dangerous was it? The [1/7th] Battalion spent 6 months July to December in the Salient, and the average number of men exposed to danger would be perhaps 500. A chronicler before me gives the casualties as 50 killed and 260 or so wounded, and so you had about one chance in ten of being killed, and an even chance of being wounded in 6 months."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

[11: The town was then marked on maps at 'Ypres' but was usually spoken of as "Wipers" by the British Tommy. It is today marked on maps as 'Ieper'.]

THE SOMME 1916

New Year 1916 arrived to see the 49th Division marching out of the Ypres Salient, and all the way to Calais where a month was spent resting and training. In February their Brigade moved to occupy the front-line at Thiepval on the Somme:

"Intense cold weather and frequent heavy falls of snow spread a regular epidemic of trench feet, for the trenches, though well dug and dry, nevertheless lacked deep dug-outs in which the men could shelter. The line was held very thinly and after a three hours' bout on sentry, often in a blinding snow storm, a man came off duty more dead than alive."

(A History of the 6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

New equipment began to be issued, in January 1916 each battalion's section of two machine-guns were withdrawn to form Brigade Machine-Gun companies. These guns were replaced by an issue of four 'Lewis' light machine-guns to each battalion. This was not a good exchange, for the infantry battalions lost a good medium machine-gun which was capable of maintaining long periods of sustained fire due to its belt-fed mechanism. The Lewis gun however only had a 47 round drum magazine, and was in reality more of an automatic rifle than a light machine-gun, it also had a delicate mechanism which demanded expert handling and care to keep it in action. Machine-guns were to become increasingly important, and by 1918, each battalion had 36 Lewis light machine-guns. Trench mortars had also progressively developed. The 2" trench howitzer had proved to be too heavy for the infantry and was transferred to the Royal Artillery, leaving the infantryman with the 3.7" and 4" versions. The Stokes 3" mortar was introduced in 1916 and featured the great improvement that its bombs were self-firing by means of a detonating cap in the base which fired when the bomb was dropped down the mortar barrel onto a fixed firing-pin in the bottom. The firer therefore had only to drop the bombs into the barrel leaving the weight of the bomb to cause the propellant to detonate.

The Stokes mortar was capable of being moved in three parts but it was a substantial weight for its three-man crew, who also bore the normal infantryman's load - the mortar barrel weighed 44 pounds, (20kg), the bipod 18 pounds, (8kg) and the baseplate 29 pounds, (13kg). A supply of mortar bombs, each weighing 11 pounds (5 kg), also had to be carried. A Stokes mortar team could easily fire its allocation of twenty-eight bombs in less than three minutes, thus in fixed positions supplies of bombs were stockpiled, or, when used for mobile tasks, ammunition carrying parties were essential if the weapon was to be kept in action. Its arrival was welcomed as recalled by the 1/7th Battalion's Lieutenant Howcroft who witnessed a demonstration:

"We had a few - a very few, of the old elementary mortars. This new one was explained but when they began feeding shells into a mortar and they came out again so that you had four or five shells toppling through the air at once, a spontaneous cheer broke from the troops. They had been at the receiving end of trench mortars for so long - and now - a new heaven and a new earth."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

Each man received the new steel helmet between April and June 1916. These were shrapnel helmets, known as a 'Brodie' after the designer or, more commonly, simply as 'tin hats'. They were at first unpopular and caused much perspiration to the wearer and not a little bad language. Until that time the Territorials wore their pre-war issue peaked khaki cap, but took the precaution of removing the rim stiffening wire so that they did not reveal a distinctive round shape to enemy aircraft. These were the first steel helmets to be worn by all ranks. Each Dukes battalion had been issued with just two French pattern steel helmets whilst at Ypres but nobody wished to risk ridicule by wearing them, and the helmets remained in store. In May 1916 each infantryman in the brigade was required to wear indentifying coloured flashes on the right sleeve, near the shoulder, and another in the middle of the collar at the back. These were generally introduced *"To assist officers and NCOs who were not familiar with their men to reorganise rapidly after an attack"*.

In March 1916, the 49th Division was relieved by the 36th (Ulster) Division [12]. The Dukes spent the next four months training and preparing for the Battle of the Somme. From March a large part of the Dukes work involved the 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions working from the front line trenches then held by the Royal Irish Rifles of the 36th (Ulster) Division. It involved digging tunnel mines, from which high-explosive mines could be exploded on 'Z' day immediately prior to the attack:

"During the twenty-four hours of duty, three shifts, each consisting of two officers and one hundred and twenty other ranks had to be found. Each shift was supposed to do eight hours' continuous work, but it was not allowed to stop until the next shift was ready to take its place; so late arrivals became very unpopular. To take a typical shift, say one which was due at the mines at 8am. The party paraded at 6.15am and marched to Auchonvillers. From that point it had to carry timber, sandbags and other RE material, required in the mines, up a long communication trench. Arriving at the mine at 8am the men had to work continuously until 4pm. The work was very hard. The men were formed into a chain from the mine face, along a tunnel, and then up the steps of the shaft. Their work consisted of throwing or passing the sandbags of 'spoil' from the mine face to the open, where a further party disposed of them. It can be imagined how monotonous the work was, and how tired the men were at the end of the shift. They then had another one and a half hours of marching back to billets."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

By April 1916 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division was celebrating its first full year of active service with about 40-45% of the 'old originals' remaining in each battalion. On Saint George's Day the Division's attentions were directed towards digging out the assembly trenches in Aveluy Wood from which the infantry of the 36th (Ulster) Division was to lead the attack on Thiepval. As the Dukes working parties arrived, conditions inside the woods were in stark contrast to what was to come:

"The life in the woods was really quite enjoyable, in spite of occasional spells of rain. Hedauville Wood was full of nightingales, and many men sat out to listen to their song. Beetles also abounded and were not much appreciated; often it was necessary to get up at night to catch enormous flying specimens of these insects. Strange to say, the enemy artillery made little attempt to harass troops in the area. The Germans must have had a good idea of the attack that was impending. They had good ground observation and plenty of aeroplanes. Martinsart village was crowded with troops and, in the evenings, there were sometimes thousands in the streets. Yet it was never shelled."

(Ibid)

A story of that period not for the squeamish:

"Bob Taylor [13], Captain of 'A' Company (1/7th) went out early when there was an autumn mist in the air and saw several of his men out in no man's land. Among them he spotted his favourite malefactor - one Jake Shaw [14], a frequent visitor to the police court in peace time. 'Jake' called his company commander, 'Be careful out there; it'll be clear soon, then you'll get shot'. 'Oh, Ah'm just looking if any of the stiff's has a set of teeth that'll fit me', Jake replied."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

The Somme offensive of 1916 was first mooted at a conference of the Allied Commanders held at the French Headquarters at Chantilly, on 5th December 1915. The French Army's Commander in Chief, Marshal Joffre, advocated a joint British French offensive on a wide frontage. The first plan included a substantial French contribution with 40 of their divisions advancing on a 25 mile frontage, with 25 British divisions on an adjacent 14 mile front. By 14th February 1916 the Allied Commander had agreed that the 1st July was to be 'Z' day, the first day of the Anglo/French offensive. However, events overtook the plan on 21st February when the German launched a major attack on the French at Verdun. This resulted in the hard-pressed French handing over part of their sector to the British Army which, as a result, now held a continuous sector some eighty miles long stretching from Ypres to the Somme.

Nor was this the only effect of the German offensive, for not only had the British Army to hold an increased frontage but the French contribution to the Somme offensive was severely reduced. In the event only 5 French Divisions, rather than the planned 40, attacked on 1st July 1916, and then only on an 8 mile frontage. Sir Douglas Haig's despatches later stated his three-fold objectives for the Somme offensive of 1916:

1. To relieve the pressure on Verdun.
2. To assist our Allies in the other theatres of the war by stopping any further transfer of German troops from the Western Front.
3. To wear down the strength of the forces opposed to us.

The German trench lines on the Somme ran through several villages which had been converted into fortresses, and between these, on the ridge crests, were knots of trenches, or 'redoubts':

"The soil of this place is the best conceivable for digging, for it cuts like cheese and hardens like brick in dry weather."

(The Battle of the Somme. J Buchan. 1916.)

Not only did the soil aid the German defenders but so did the terrain:

"The Germans held the advantage along the ridge. From their chain of villages and redoubts they could inflict a murderous cross-fire from hundreds of machine-guns, if they were attacked. Two further complete trench systems lay behind the front line. The German army had fought here in 1870, and had made a special study of this ground in their military academies before the war. They had two years to prepare their defences. The British would have to attack uphill."

(Battle of the Somme. Christopher Martin. 1973.)

Winston Churchill wrote later:

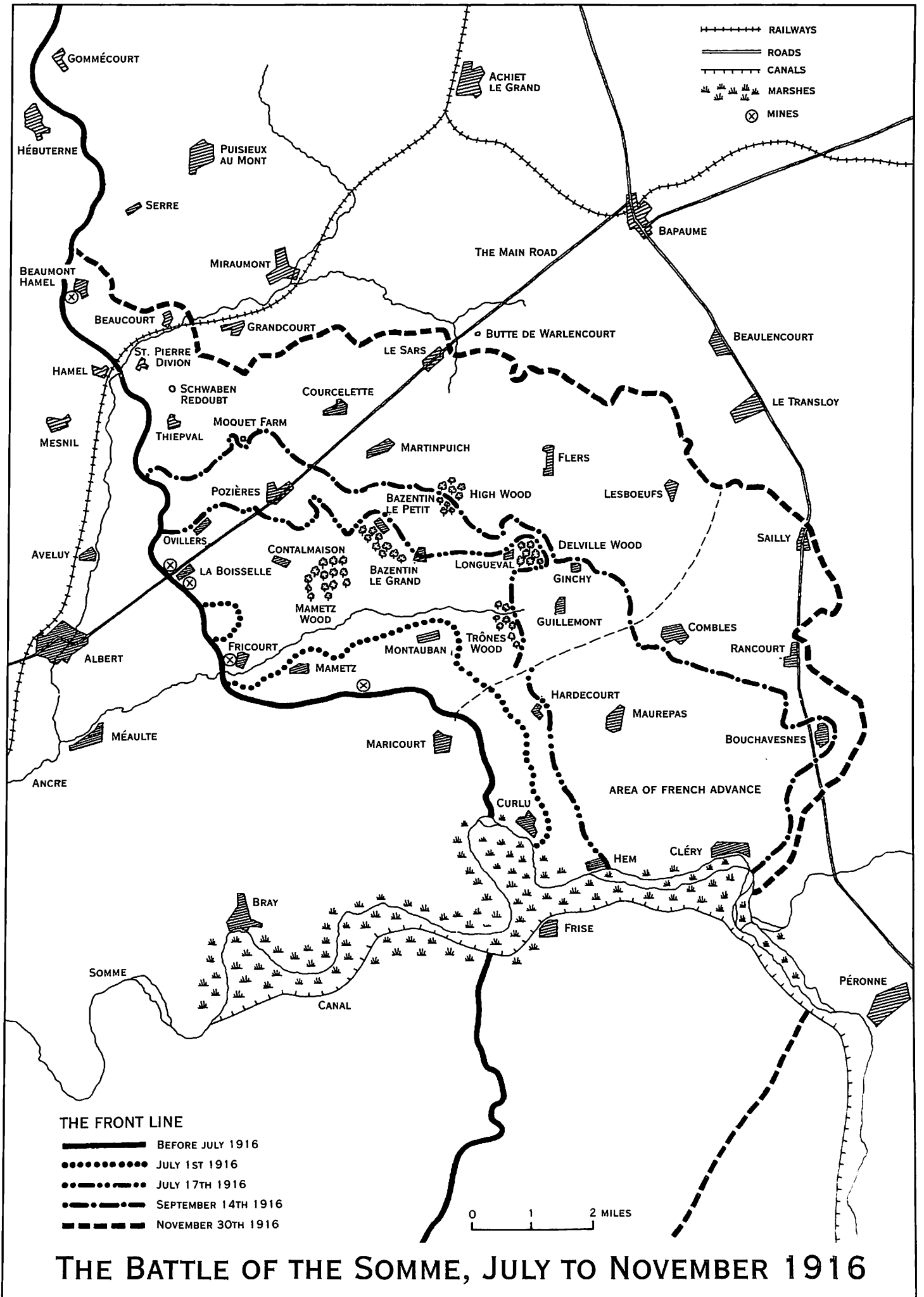
"The policy of the French and British commanders had selected as the point for their offensive what was undoubtedly the strongest and most perfectly defended position in the world."

(The World Crisis. W S Churchill. 1927.)

The main British attack was across a 14 mile wide frontage between Maricourt and Serre. Rawlinson's Fourth Army employed 11 infantry divisions in the assault wave, with a further five divisions in close reserve, and 2 cavalry divisions stood by to exploit any break through the German lines, with a further two cavalry divisions in reserve. In addition, to the north of the Fourth Army, two divisions of the Third Army were to make a subsidiary attack around Gommecourt. Just before the battle General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Commander of the British Fourth Army, had eighteen divisions of infantry, some 519,324 men. Of this force about 60% were of Kitchener's New Army. In addition he had 1,537 guns, equivalent to one gun for every 20 yards of front, gun ammunition was plentiful.

1st JULY 1916

For the attack the 49th (1st West Riding) Division formed part of Xth (10th) Corps together with three 'New Army' divisions; 25th, 32nd, and the 36th (Ulster) Divisions. The Corps' left flank was on the River Ancre and the right near Authuille Wood. The Corps objectives included the villages of Grandecourt and Thiepval and for the attack the 32nd Division was on the right, the 36th Division on the left, the 49th Division in support, with the 25th Division in reserve. The German positions at this point were the strongest in the Maricourt-Serre area. It was a maze of trenches, stuffed with machine-gun posts in three separate lines of complex trench systems each protected by dense belts of barbed-wire. British artillery fire was continuously to bombard these positions from 24th June to 1st July. But the impenetrable barbed-wire was, in the event, neither cut nor destroyed for the high-explosive bombardment merely tossed it about into an even more impenetrable jumble. It was not until the artillery '106' fuse was developed that barbed-wire could be cut successfully without the shells making large craters which themselves were additional obstacles to the attacking infantry.



During the night of the 30th June/1st July the Dukes, as part of the 49th Division, moved into the previously prepared assembly positions at Aveluy Wood there to occupy the trenches they had dug in the preceding months and to await orders. Now about one mile behind the front line their role was to be ready to assist either of the two attacking divisions whose objectives were about three miles behind the German's forward trenches:

"The Battalion itself marched to 'B' Assembly trenches in Aveluy Wood, arriving long before dawn. There was none too much room in the trenches, but the men were got in somewhere. The enemy was quiet. There can be no doubt that he knew full well what was impending, but he reserved his fire for the better targets which would soon present themselves. Few of the men even tried to sleep; excitement was far too high for that."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The hour of the attack was set at 7.30am, 1st July 1916. Rawlinson had wanted to attack much earlier before the enemy machine-gunners could see the advancing ranks of British soldiers. But the French had many more heavy guns and insisted that the attack was made in full daylight so that their heavy guns could be brought to bear accurately. The preparatory British artillery bombardment commenced on the 24th June, and a hurricane of fire fell on the German trenches and supply lines for a solid week. 1,723,873 artillery shells were fired at a cost of six million pounds. The barrage was so intense that it could be heard in southern England where the incessant vibration rattled windows:

"The question that remained was whether the British infantry could cross no-man's land before the barrage lifted. It was a race to the death - the greatest of such races - run by nearly sixty-thousand men in the first heat.....The necessity of crossing no-man's land at a good pace, so as to reach the parapet before the enemy could reach it, was not mentioned. But to do so would have been physically impossible, for the heaviest handicap of all was that the infantryman was so heavily laden that he could not move faster than a walk. Each man carried about 66lbs, over half his own body weight....Even an army mule, the proverbial natural beast of burden, is only expected to carry a third of his own weight."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

Dawn came up at 4.00am on the 1st July, and the birds began to sing. It was to be a clear summer day with temperatures reaching 72°F. At 7.30am the British artillery's sustained bombardment lifted from the German lines. Along the 14 miles of British assault frontage 60,000 men climbed their trench ladders and 'went over the top', the 32nd and 36th Divisions moved forward with magnificent dash. The Ulstermen had a spring in their step for the 1st July was a special day being the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne:

"They swarmed over the first enemy lines; they over-ran Thiepval and St Pierre Divion, the Schwaben and Leipsig Redoubts. Some of the Ulstermen [36th Division] even reached Grandcourt Railway Station. But their casualties were appalling. 'Mopping-up' was then unheard of; counter-battery work was in its infancy; creeping barrages were unknown. Down came the enemy artillery barrage, and it was such as few have seen before. German machine-gunners and riflemen, emerging from the security of their deep dugouts, took the attack in enfilade and in reverse. Men fell in thousands. The survivors were too few to maintain the positions they had reached. By an early hour the attack on the Xth Corps front had failed."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The Dukes, waiting for orders in Aveluy Wood, had no knowledge of the carnage taking place only a short distance to their front. Their positions were not troubled by enemy shelling for the German gunners were concentrating upon the infantry exposed in No Man's Land. The reasons for the high casualties have been analysed by many historians, and are indentified by the Leeds historian Peter Liddle:

"...The inability to locate and destroy German batteries, an insufficient awareness of the true strength of the German underground defence system and that the British bombardment was to be rendered still less effective by the high proportion of defective shells, worn or dated artillery pieces, there was still a fatal flaw. This flaw was the failure to require the infantry to exercise speed, keeping up with the barrage and being in on the defenders before they manned their parapets."

"This was the only way in which some element of tactical surprise could be achieved and, as fate was to decree, it was also the only way there would be any protection to the infantry as the men were exposed crossing No-Man's Land. With too much faith put in the artillery completely to fulfil her role in the battle and no confidence that the infantry, especially New Army [Kitchener] infantry, could operate in any other way than methodically walking across and occupying destroyed positions, over and under-confidence respectively were to combine in the production of a tragedy."

(The 1916 Battle of the Somme Peter H Liddle. 1992.)

After some time wounded began to trickle past and some information about the attacks was forthcoming. At 9am the West Yorkshires' 146th Brigade, 49th Division, was ordered forward to Thiepval Wood from where they were to launch a supporting attack on the Schwaben Redoubt and Thiepval village. The West Yorks were severely disadvantaged; not only did they not know the area for the attack, but their orders were received at 3.30pm for an attack to start at 4pm. It was to be a gallant but vain effort at tremendous cost, for example one typical West Yorkshire's Territorial battalion lost every third man as a casualty - "the men dropped in rows." It was during this time that Corporal George Sanders of the 1/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion gained the award of the Victoria Cross for his part in the assault on the Schwaben Redoubt. At 11am the Dukes also received orders to cross the River Ancre where they crowded into the southern dugouts where they remained for the rest of the day. Stragglers and wounded from the attacking battalions began to pass through them. Rumours of the attack's failure increased. Far from the anticipated role of passing-through and exploiting the successes of the attacking waves, the Dukes now spent their time carrying wounded and exhausted men to the rear. The returning Ulstermen also recognised that bravery was not exclusive to the attacking British infantrymen:

"But no explanations that can be found stand without ample tribute to the fighting qualities of the German soldier. The dash and bravery of the counter-attacks of the [German] bombers moving up from the valley merit high praise. The highest, however, must be reserved for the [German] machine-gunners, who had sat for days in their dugouts without fresh food. The very earth shaking to the thunders of our artillery, and then came up and brought their guns into action at the right moment."

(History of the 36th (Ulster) Division. Cyril Falls. 1922.)

The British casualties of the 240,000 who crossed the start-line on 1st July 1916 were 57,470 including 19,240 killed and 35,493 wounded. At 7pm on the next day, 2nd July, the Dukes Brigade moved forward to relieve the Territorials of The West Yorkshire Regiment, 146th Brigade, at Johnstone's Post on the southern end of Thiepval Wood. These battalions had been involved in desperate fighting and were only too pleased to hand over their sectors in order to return to the relative safety of Aveluy Wood:

"Utterly exhausted and worn, with their ranks terribly thinned, the West Yorkshiresmen, on reaching Aveluy Wood, bivouacked for the night. Some of the Companies, however, were not 'in' until dawn. 'I found myself leaning on a rifle' said a man of the 1/6th Battalion [Bradford's Territorials], 'staring stupidly on the forty exhausted men who slept around me. It did not occur to me to lie down until someone pushed me into a bed of ferns. There were flowers among the ferns and my last thought was a dull wonder that there could still be flowers in the world.'"

(The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1923.)

The Dukes 147th Brigade then occupied the forward trenches along the edge of Thiepval Wood which were then subjected to sustained enemy shellfire, the enemy believing that further attacks were about to be made. These trenches were few in number and without protection from enemy fire and view. To their front the remnants of the 32nd Division again attacked but this only resulted in their capturing a small part of the Leipsig Salient. Throughout this period a constant stream of wounded, both from the Dukes and the forward divisions passed through their area, and dead literally lay in heaps around their regimental aid posts:

"No Man's Land was thick with dead; occasionally a wounded man, who had lain out for days, succeeded in crawling in to the British lines. Trenches and shelters had been so terribly battered that all work had to concentrate on the necessary repairs."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The Dukes were instructed to hold the sector facing the enemy-held Schwaben Redoubt and Thiepval until mid-August. It was a ghastly place. The sunken Thiepval Road was crowded with the bodies of dead Ulstermen who had fallen there or crawled there to die on the fateful 1st July, as recalled by Lieutenant Howcroft:

"The saddest sight I ever saw was near Authuille and Aveluy Woods where part of the 49th Division was to assemble and advance to attack the third line of Germans. There was open ground half a mile long where troops had marched in fours out of the wood, had been shot down in fours by machine-guns, and when I was there, were still lying in fours. A sad sight. I think they were the pitiful remains of some division that succeeded to the task of the 49th a week or ten days later. Many hundreds of men lying there, killed to no reason, the most unlucky of an even greater host who were not shot dead but were able to get away to die at greater leisure. Why? Too easy in the making of a plan to believe that every bit works. That 10 minutes after zero every machine-gun will be silenced, that at the same moment the second line of defence will have been overrun by our first line of attack. Time then did not allow any slower speed than marching in fours, nor any thought of not being able to move at all."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

The trenches which had been cut out of the Somme chalk were now almost obliterated by fire. The Dukes role was to be largely one of simply clinging on to the positions whilst British attacks to the south attempted to turn the German fortress of Thiepval. British artillery fire was incessant; constant demands were placed upon the Dukes to provide raiding parties and to carry out patrols. Not all British trench-warfare weapons were reliable, indeed some were more dangerous to friend than enemy:

"The delights of this place were enhanced by our heavy trench mortars, who had this time struck a very poor line in fuses, with the result that everybody, including the Trench Mortar officers themselves, completely lost confidence in the weapon. 'I have the misfortune to be,' said one to our Commanding Officer, very dismally, 'the Heavy Trench Mortar Officer. I have been ordered to fire. Will you please clear your front line. ?'"

(The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt D P Grant.)

It was impossible for individuals to cook meals in these trenches, all food was therefore carried forward long distances, through endless communication trenches; by the time it arrived at the forward posts it was all but inedible despite the best endeavours of the quartermasters and carrying parties. Clean clothing and drinking water were both in short supply during this hot summer when temperatures were often over 70°F, sometimes rising to 80°F. Both the enemy and trying filthy conditions made for a particularly harassing time.

The treacherous gap between the British and German trenches had cost many lives and resulted in plans to dig 'parallel trenches' out towards the German lines to shorten the dangerous No Man's Land. This was to revert to virtually medieval siege warfare tactics. As the Dukes put out covering parties over 1,000 men came forward from the 148th Brigade every night to dig out the parallels in the chalk soil of the Somme. The white chalk of the newly-turned earth showed up as advancing white ribbons to the German observers who were thus able to call down accurate predicted artillery fire on the working parties. The 'parallel system' was eventually completed and absorbed into the British front line before the 49th Division's 147th and 148th Brigades momentarily left the line on the 27th August. 146th Brigade (West Yorkshires), however, remained in the line being temporarily placed under command of the 18th Division for its attacks upon Thiepval.

[12: The 36th (Ulster) Division was a 'Service' division. It was formed from the pre-war 'Ulster Volunteer Force', an organisation created by Sir Edward Carson to protect Protestant rights against pressure for Irish home rule. The division formed in 1914, with headquarters in Belfast with 107th, 108th and 109th Infantry Brigades, it suffered 5,500 casualties in the period 1-2 July 1916. The war memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division is at Thiepval.

[13: Captain Robert Taylor was one of the 7th Battalion's pre-war officers, a partner in a Huddersfield firm of solicitors, Messrs Barnicot & Taylor]

[14: Jake Shaw survived the war, and rejoined the 7th Battalion to serve in the battalion transport.]

SEPTEMBER 3rd 1916

The 49th Division was at last to attack and was given the objective of capturing the first two enemy lines near the Schwaben Redoubt which was between St Pierre Divion and Thiepval Village. A very short period was then spent reorganising and assault training. The 147th (Dukes) and 146th Brigades were to be part of a large attack on both sides of the River Ancre. The Dukes 147th Brigade was to be on the right flank with the 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions forward, the 1/6th in support, and the 1/7th in reserve. The plan was that at 'Zero Hour' a supporting 'hurricane bombardment', lasting three minutes, was to be fired on the German front line, together with gas and 'ammonal' bombs discharged by the Special Brigade Royal Engineers, followed by eight minutes fire on the German support trenches.

The Dukes attack departed from the newly built parallels along the Hamel-Thiepval Road after which it was planned that they would take but three minutes to cross the 250 yards to the enemy front trenches. This ground was by now a morass of shell-holes and debris, and was wholly covered by enemy crossfire. The ground had been battered beyond recognition and had few, if any, recognisable landmarks. The Dukes moved forward to their jumping-off positions on the previous day, 2nd September 1916:

"A hot meal was served at 8 Opm, and, about an hour later, the platoons began to move off to their positions of assembly. No smoking was allowed, and the strictest orders about silence had been issued. So, with no noise save the squelch of boots in the mud and the occasional rattle of equipment, the men passed through Aveluy Wood, along a specially taped line, drew bombs and other battle equipment."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

Dawn of September 3rd 1916 found the 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions ready to attack, as recalled by a member of 'B' Company in the leading wave:

"We reached our position in the 'parallels', or three lines of shallow trenches dug just in front of our first line, after one halt at a bomb store where we got supplied with bombs, about two o'clock on the morning of September 3rd - Cleckheaton Feast Sunday.....It was a lovely mild night, and we sat or lay in the bottom of the trench waiting for the time to come. What it feels like, and what a man thinks while waiting, no-one knows who has not experienced it, and beyond my power to put into words.....Then the order came 'Get Ready'. Those who had dozed off to sleep wakened and stretched their limbs. Next the order came down 'Ten minutes to go', and we all saw to our equipment, got the bombs handy, and all in readiness."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

Dawn broke at 5.0am on the 3rd September, and at 5.10am the hurricane bombardment began. The Dukes fixed bayonets and swarmed over the parapet:

"Dawn was just beginning to break, but there was a slight mist on the ground which prevented one seeing very far.....'Two minutes to go', at which every man fixed his bayonet. Then 'Go', and we were in No Man's Land in two waves, the first about fifteen yards in advance of the other. I was in the second wave which was led by Captain Hirst [15].....The ground trembled, and the air seemed full of iron, but still we kept on. Then an enemy machine-gun on our right thinned our ranks. His artillery also opened fire, dropping several shells amongst us, but forward we went, leaving many a brave comrade. We rushed on into the German line where we met with no opposition, the only Germans there being dead or cowering in dug-outs, too terrified for anything."

(Ibid)

But the Germans were also on alert, signal flares went up all along their front line. Despite the very effective British artillery barrage, they opened up subjecting the Dukes to a murderous cross-fire from numerous machine-guns. Yet they steadily advanced. Despite their many casualties, the first objective was soon taken. Keeping direction had proved difficult resulting in the 1/4th and 1/5th Dukes mixing together, and the rear waves began bunching up on those leading. This was due to the 1/5th Battalion which had lost direction and therefore failed to capture the Pope's Nose Salient. Enemy artillery fire came ten minutes after Zero hour and the two reserve Dukes battalions, 1/6th and 1/7th, now standing ready in Thiepval Wood, were deluged with enemy shrapnel and high-explosive shells.

Yet the forward 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions doggedly held on to the German first line which had itself been all but shattered by over two months of attention from the British artillery. Heavy enemy machine-gun fire caused the Dukes' casualties to mount as they endeavoured to consolidate their positions in the cover of the many shell-holes. Their second objective was captured by 6.0am, but they were now subjected to increasing enemy mortar and artillery fire, for as the Dukes now held former German positions the enemy knew precisely where to drop their fire. British guns added to their discomfort as one or two had failed to 'lift' sufficiently and were therefore shooting into the Dukes rear. The 1/5th Battalion's loss of direction had left enemy machine-guns on the Pope's Nose intact; these now poured enfilade fire into the West Yorkshire's of 146th Brigade, on the Dukes flank, who were unable to break-in to the German lines. Enemy counter-attacks soon came from the direction of the Schwaben Redoubt to their east. Although these attacks were light and unsuccessful, they stole precious time from the Dukes who desperately needed to consolidate their gains and turn the German trenches round. By 7am the 1/4th and 1/5th were still holding the German lines but the two battalions were hopelessly mixed up and spread as isolated platoons in trenches and shell holes which were not interlinked. Communication, and therefore effective co-ordination, at this crucial phase was impossible.

Even more critically, their rifle and machine-gun ammunition had all but run out and they had few of the bombs, essential for trench-fighting, left. The enemy's artillery fire on the rear supporting Dukes battalions cut-off any hope for resupply of desperately needed ammunition, their only option was to scavenge a small resupply from their own dead and wounded who now littered the area. The Germans were determined to drive the Dukes off this side of the Schwaben Redoubt, for the position was capable of dominating the whole of the 49th Divisions' area of attack with fire and observation and it was central to the German defence of the sector. The opposing Germans of the 1st Battalion 180th Infantry Regiment were heavily reinforced by the German 3rd Battalion 66th Infantry Regiment. German bombers advanced from the third line of trenches at the 'Strasbourg Line' under the cover of sustained machine-gun fire from the Schwaben Redoubt. Strong enemy counter-attacks now developed against the Dukes who by now were extremely low on ammunition, indeed some platoons had none at all:

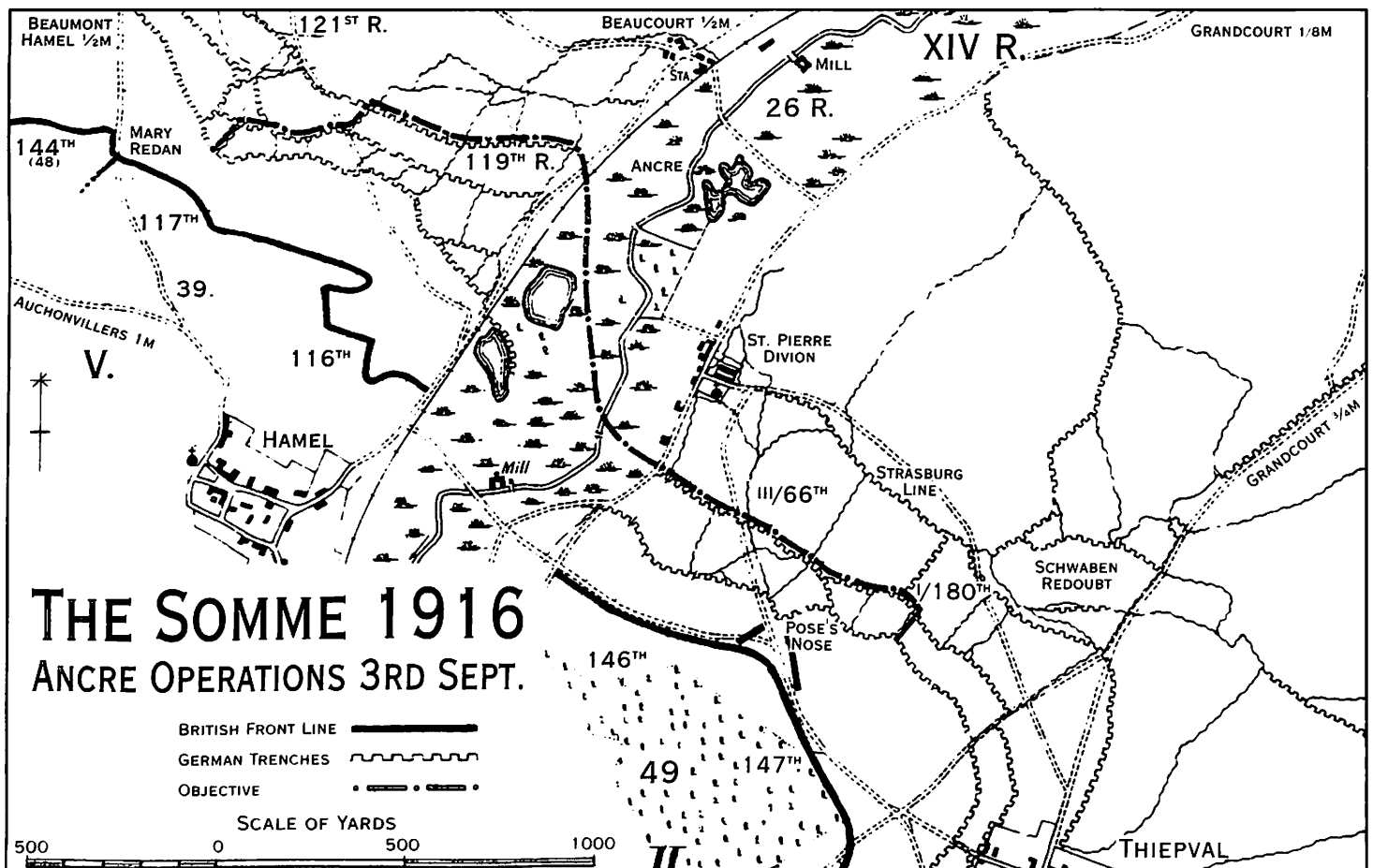
"The situation soon became impossible. With no bombs and scarcely a round of SAA [small-arms ammunition] left, they were forced slowly to withdraw to their left. On arriving at Point 66, they found themselves between two fires, for the enemy bombing party from the west was also approaching along the trench. The position was clearly untenable. Lieutenant Everitt [16] only had a handful of men left. He gave orders to withdraw down the communication trench to Point 54. The withdrawal was conducted slowly and in good order, two or three men waiting at the bend in each trench to cover it. At length the front line was reached, but only a few isolated men of B Company could be found there; the enemy artillery and machine guns had done their work only too well. Everything that had been gained was lost. Not a Britisher remained in the enemy lines, save the few men who had been captured. The number of these was very small. On the authority of the Germans themselves, only seven unwounded prisoners from the 4th and 5th Battalions were taken that day. Many men were still lying out in shell holes, and, during the rest of the day and night that followed, some of these crawled into the lines. But there were far more lying out there who would never crawl again."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

At 5pm the Division's 148th Brigade relieved the Dukes, all except parties from each battalion who remained behind to bring in their wounded from No Man's Land throughout the night. The 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions had suffered their most serious casualties in a single day since the war began, in numbers that were not to be eclipsed until 11th October 1918. Typical were the figures for the 1/4th who started the action with 18 officers and 629 soldiers of which 11 officers and 336 soldiers were casualties; few were taken prisoner. Some historians do not regard the 1916 Battle of the Somme as a victory. But Peter Liddle gives another perspective in the conclusion to his recent book:

"What is being claimed is, that in 1916-17 terms, a British victory was won on the Somme, not one to be greeted with bell-ringing and bunting, indeed one more appropriately honoured by the draperies of mourning, but a victory nevertheless. Second, the resolve of the soldier of the British Expeditionary Force in France had not been broken by the experience of the Somme and the significance of this cannot be over-estimated. A victory and an avoidance of a defeat: no mean achievements."

(The 1916 Battle of the Somme. Peter H Liddle. 1992.)



The battle-weary Dukes then moved back to reorganise and rest. During this time several large reinforcement drafts were absorbed which brought each battalion back to 'establishment strength'. Rest periods also brought happy reunions, and a steady trickle of the slightly wounded returning to their battalions which was inevitably followed by exchanges of news and celebrations. Replacement officers also arrived, some former officers returning having recuperated from wounds, and others, former soldiers of the battalions, who had received commissions. Not untypical was Lieutenant Colonel R E Sugden DSO who was one of the Battalion's pre-war Territorials and who had served from when it was a 'Volunteer Battalion' and first seen active service in the Boer War with the Imperial Yeomanry. In 1914, when a Captain, he had been one of the first officers to be mobilised whilst at annual camp when he commanded the battalion's Special Service Section which took up war stations around Hull whilst the remaining Dukes moved back to their drill halls there to mobilise a few days later. He later went with the Halifax Battalion on active service in 1915, and served with them until December 1915 when he was wounded at Ypres. He now returned to command his battalion, despite the fact that he had not fully recovered the use of his left hand and arm. This valiant Territorial was to remain with his battalion until June 1918 when he was deservedly promoted Brigadier-General to command the 151st Infantry Brigade of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

THE LEIPSIG REDOUBT

September 15th was to see a glimmer of hope for the long-suffering British infantry whose passage across No Man's Land had until then been at such great cost in casualties. Well to the Dukes' east, and unknown to them, top secret British 'tanks' appeared for the first time on the battlefield. The 'steel shields on wheels' that had been advocated by Sir Ian Hamilton over a decade before, after the Boer War, at last appeared. Just 32 tanks were used in co-operation with infantry for an attack on Flers. They showed great potential, and the previously cynical British commanders, who were mainly cavalymen, conceded the worth of these revolutionary new weapons and placed an order for 1,000 to be built. A well-kept secret was now out for little tactical gain. It was to be another year before the Dukes Territorials enjoyed the benefit of tank support at the Battle of Cambrai. On that same day, the Dukes were back in the front-line at Aveluy Wood, and on the 17th they attacked the Leipsig Redoubt at 6.30pm in the evening.

Before the attack substantial numbers of men were organised into ammunition carrying parties as a result of the lessons of September 3rd. To many of these parties this was their first experience of the trenches, but they stood up well and their endeavours resulted in messages coming from the 1/7th Battalion that they had more than enough bombs. The 1/7th captured their objective and the positions were relieved by the 1/5th Battalion with the 1/4th Battalion moving to close support. However the driven-out Germans knew only too well where the Dukes now were and subjected them to heavy fire. The area was a terrible mess:

"Rain and shell-fire had turned the ground into a mass of mud, littered with the awful debris of battle. Never had the Battalion seen so many dead Germans; and there were many British too. Bodies were lying all over the ground in the open; many more were exposed by the shovel and hastily re-covered. A hot September sun beat down in the daytime, and the air was filled with the stench of decaying humanity. Water was scarce, as every drop of it had to be carried up, and had to be used very economically. Ration parties had a very hard task, for there were neither tracks nor proper communication trenches."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The newly-captured area now had to be made ready for an attack on Thiepval by the 18th Division, and the Dukes therefore set-to burying the dead and digging new assembly trenches and communication trenches, all the time being subjected to heavy enemy fire. They were at last relieved on the night of 24th September 1916. The Dukes left the Somme battlefield and moved to Halloy where, on the following day, they heard that Thiepval had finally fallen. Thiepval was central to the Battle of the Somme. After the war a British war memorial was built at Thiepval on which are the names of all who were killed during the battle but have no known grave, it bears 73,412 names. The Battle of the Somme lasted from 1st July to 18th November 1916. The offensive cost Britain and the Dominions 419,654 casualties. French losses were 204,253 and estimates of German losses range from 437,000 to 680,000.

Just to the east of the Dukes Somme objectives, a German soldier was wounded in the leg by shellfire on 7th October 1916. He later described the battle as "*a veritable inferno, rather than war*", and considered himself to be lucky to have got back to his lines after being wounded. Whereas tens of thousands of Germans were killed on the Somme, fate chose to spare this German soldier for another day - his name was Adolf Hitler.

On 18th October 1916 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division moved into the front-line at Gommecourt, and remained in the district for four months. Constant patrolling was carried out:

"One dark night a large party of men blackened their faces, armed themselves with bombs, and under cover of a sudden 'strafe' from our artillery they sprinted across No-Man's land, jumped into the German trench, and carried all before them. Just before they arrived the bombardment lifted to the German support line, thus cutting off the enemy's retreat, and preventing him from bringing up reinforcements. From the British trenches the subsequent proceedings were rather obscure. The fitful glare of bursting shells, and flares sent up from the German trench, enabled our observers to discern the general features of the battlefield but very little could be seen of the combatants."

"The affair lasted about half-an-hour. Then, in response to a previously arranged signal, our men came back. A sergeant of the bombers, who had been in the thick of the fray, burst into our dug-out with a face as black as a chimney sweep, and a brow like the village blacksmith's. He was a startling apparition, though his face was all smiles. What he must have looked like to the Germans one can hardly imagine."

(History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment during the first three years of the Great War. J J Fisher. 1917.)

The result of this one action was that the Germans responded with hastily prepared patrols of their own. Two of these accidentally met within twenty yards of the Dukes barbed-wire, mistook each other for British patrols and began to bomb each other whilst the Dukes shot at them both from the safety of their own trenches.

Despite their severe losses, the West Riding Division very much retained its Territorial flavour. Brass letter 'T's were still proudly worn on uniform as one officer in the Division discovered when he removed them during a short attachment to a Guards unit. He unfortunately forgot to replace them on returning to his own Territorial battalion. This annoyed his brother officers who held an unofficial 'court martial' which found him guilty and sentenced him to having his hair shaved into a letter 'T'.

The 49th (1st West Riding) Division was destined to remain in the Fonquevillers area as the autumn of 1916 passed to winter. Conditions in the trenches had become appalling for little had been done to maintain them as the British fully expected that, by now, these trenches would have been left far behind by the great Somme offensive. But the Dukes were by now old hands at such conditions having already experienced a winter in the even more foul trenches at Ypres, so hard work with skill made their positions reasonably habitable.

December brought a move to Halloy where they spent time at rest or unloading stores at the nearby railheads. Whilst here several large reinforcement drafts arrived which again brought the battalions up to strength. More importantly, Christmas was celebrated out of the front line:

"The chief event was Christmas Day. Great preparations were made as usual. A motor lorry was obtained to fetch additional supplies from Amiens. Dinner accommodation was a difficulty. Only one suitable room, at an estaminet, could be obtained, and that would only hold one company at a time. So, the dinners started at noon and ran on right through the afternoon, the men sitting down in four company shifts. But everything went off well, the usual smoking concerts helped to pass the time, and the anniversary was thoroughly enjoyed by all."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

December 1916 closed a year of gloom for the Allies. The strength and morale of the French Army was at a dangerously low ebb and, on the Eastern Front, the Russians even lower. The carefully planned Somme offensive had not produced visible results, and America remained neutral. France also declared that it only had enough military strength for one more battle for after that the country simply did not have enough men of military age to replace its losses. The French Marshal Joffre therefore warned Field Marshal Haig that the British Army would, yet again, have to take more of the burden.

[15: Captain C Hirst, a pre-war officer of the 4th Battalion, was killed during this action.]

[16: Lieutenant, (temporary Captain), N A Everitt had commanded 'A' Company 1/4th Battalion since December 1915, he was killed in action later in the day.]

1917

By 1917 the Allied Armies had suffered a massive number of casualties, and manpower shortages began to govern operations on the Western Front. The French Armies were to undergo severe problems in May 1917. Service grievances resulted in mutinies in sixteen French Corps, and French troops ordered into the front-line claimed that they were willing to defend trenches, but not to attack. The number of French deserters rose greatly, whereas 509 had deserted in 1914 the figure had risen to a staggering 21,174 by 1917. The French Minister for War claimed that he could only rely upon two divisions in the Champagne sector, and that other French trenches were barely guarded. It took a substantial French man-management effort, coupled with fairer systems for tours in the trenches, and improved welfare to restore calm. Twenty-three French soldiers were executed and more than a hundred ringleaders were deported to the Colonies before the mutinies were settled. On the Eastern Front, Russia had suffered monumental casualties whilst fighting the Germans. Revolution broke out in Russia during March 1917. The Russian Armies progressively collapsed to the point that by December 1917 Lenin, now the ruler of Russia, had concluded an Armistice with Germany. The progressive collapse of the Russian armies was to permit the Germans to release numerous divisions from the Eastern front which they were then able to transfer to face the British and French on the Western Front.

In January 1917 the Dukes were part of the Third Army and in the trenches at Berles. The artillery of both sides was very active, and in some places only forty yards separated the opponent's trenches. Heavy trench mortars came into the Dukes forward trenches to fire and, being notoriously inaccurate, they were required to clear the trench before firing. This proved to be a valid precaution for on more than one occasion 'premature' explosions not only destroyed the mortar but killed all those near it. An exceptionally heavy frost came at the end of January causing all the water and mud in the trenches to freeze rock hard. Trench bottoms became so icy that it was impossible to walk in them without first taking the precaution of tying sandbags around their leather-soled boots. Conditions were hard, particularly for sentries who were exposed on the fire-steps where a biting north-easterly wind often caused thermometers to register 28 degrees of frost. Hot drinks and rum were provided, and sections did bayonet drill in the front line simply to keep warm. And all through this time there was the constant ever-present demand to provide working parties and actively to patrol No Man's Land regardless of the weather.

An increase in fire-power was steadily bringing about changes in the method of holding the front-line. The introduction of the Lewis light machine-gun to platoon level improved infantry firepower, increased numbers of enemy artillery and trench mortars made it inadvisable to concentrate large numbers in the foremost trenches. A system of semi-isolated defensive posts serving as strongpoints, rather than the previous linear system, was developed by filling in sections of the old continuous system using earth or barbed wire entanglements.

In February 1917 the Brigade moved to the Riviere sector taking over from battalions of The King's Royal Rifle Corps. Here the trenches were perfectly laid out precisely to the many handbooks that had been produced about trench warfare. They were so 'text book' that the system was used as a training ground for potential officers. 'Perfect' it may have been but this 'F1 sub-sector' was rapidly becoming obsolete. Although the first six months of 1917 were relatively quiet for the Dukes, it was nevertheless demanding and dangerous:

"The F1 Sub-sector was the liveliest the Battalion held whilst it was with the Third Army, but it is not to be compared with such places as Thiepval Wood or Nieuport. Heavy artillery was not much used by the enemy, though the reserve company HQ had the reputation of being the datum point for 5.9s. But the German field guns were very active on many parts of the front. The most frequently shelled spot was the top of Forest Street - the communication trench on the extreme right. That point was constantly and very accurately 'whizz-banged', for the enemy could easily detect any movement there. All parts of the front line came in for attention. The enemy also used 'rum-jars' and vane bombs very freely."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

It was during this period that Lieutenant Colonel H A S Stanton, Commanding the 1/5th Battalion and former adjutant of the 1/4th, was severely wounded. In late February 1917 the first-line Dukes were joined by a few officers from their second-line battalions. These came for a period of instruction as their 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had now arrived in France. In early March 1917 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division left the Third Army and came under command of the First Army. There was little respite for the Dukes, who now moved to the Ferme du Bois sector which was overlooked by the German positions on the Aubers Ridge. Here the country was very flat and criss-crossed by ditches. Much of the land was still farmed and its inhabitants hardly seemed to be affected by the war. It was exceptionally quiet with some six-day tours in the line passing without a single casualty. Despite this, aggressive patrolling of No Man's Land remained the order for the day. On April 14th 1917 the first-line Dukes Territorials celebrated two years on active service. Remaining members of the old originals, now fewer in number, met to mark the event. Band concerts, and 'refreshments' were arranged and, after three cheers and a chorus of 'For He's a jolly good fellow' the Colonel rose to speak:

had converted the whole area into a quagmire, the whole drainage system having been completely destroyed by artillery fire."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

Even as the Dukes arrived, and were about to settle for their first night back, an urgent order came from the Headquarters of the 147th Brigade that a successful attack had been made on a wide front and that they should expect to move into the front-line. The British attack had, by chance, been timed for the same time as one planned by the Germans. Fortunately the German 'Zero Hour' had been fixed for a few minutes after the British one and the 1,000 yard deep British artillery barrage had all but annihilated the three German divisions which were assembled in close order in the open ready to attack. The Dukes therefore marched out of camp at 11pm to support the 2nd New Zealand Infantry Brigade and to take part in the battle for the Passchendaele Ridge:

"The night was very dark and wet, and great difficulty was found in carrying out the relief. The route to Pommern Castle, where Battalion HQ was located and round which the whole battalion was posted, lay along No 5 Track - a single line of grids, in particularly evil condition, with fearsome mud on both sides. Relief was not complete until after dawn. Some anxiety was felt as to what should be done in case the enemy attacked, for not a man in the Battalion had any clear idea of where he was, or where the front line lay. Accommodation was very bad. One or two low-lying, very wet, and extremely uncomfortable pill-boxes were occupied by Battalion HQ; but nearly everyone had to be content with a shell-hole over which he could spread his waterproof sheet. October 5th was spent mainly in trying to build habitable shelters."

(Ibid)

They were soon relieved, with instructions to spend two days preparing for a large-scale attack, on a six mile front, planned for October 9th. Large carrying parties were formed to prepare forward dumps and parties of officers were sent forward to reconnoitre routes up to the line and assembly areas. Preparations also included the West Riding's artillery regiments moving their gun lines forward so as to be within range of the infantry. But if movement for a heavily laden infantryman was difficult, shifting horse-drawn guns and ammunition limbers was another matter:

"September 30th: The Officer Commanding and the Sergeant Major went forward to look for a likely position for the guns, and from their description the job is going to be a tough one as the ground is spongy and one mass of shell holes."

"October 6th: The fine weather has come to an end and a steady downpour is filling up all the small shell holes and turning the whole area into a sea of mud. Detachments have been working all day trying to make solid platforms for the guns and a level track to reach them from the road. The team horses are bringing up shells in canvas pack-saddles as it is impossible to get wagons through the mud."

(A Saturday Night Soldier's War, 1913-1918. Norman Tennant. 1983.)

The 49th (1st West Riding) Division's task was to advance on a 1,500 yard frontage towards Belle Vue Spur, an offshoot of the main Passchendaele Ridge, also to attack on the 49th Division's right was the 66th Division, with the 48th Division on the left. The division was to capture two objectives, the second being 1,250 yards from the British front line. The plan put the 148th (1/3rd West Riding) Brigade on the right flank, the 146th (1/1st West Riding) Brigade on the left flank, with the Dukes 147th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade in reserve. Very heavy rain started on the afternoon of the 8th October and was to continue without respite throughout the night much hampering the assembly of the attacking infantry brigades:

"The distance from Potijze to the assembly position was not more than seven kilometres, as the crow flies, but by winding tracks it was probably twelve. The tracks all ran across ground which had been won from the enemy within the last two months, and it had been subjected to very intense shell fire - and the rain fell pitilessly the whole time. Through batteries of guns, past heaps of unburied dead Germans, into a very inferno of confusion and noise, the Battalion advanced to the position of assembly. The terrible conditions of the march can perhaps be realised, to some extent, when it is stated that we did not reach our position until 4am [on the 9th] - ie one hour and twenty minutes before zero hour. Our men had been marching for eleven and a quarter hours, and were soaked with rain, and nearly exhausted."

(The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt D P Grant.)

The artillery barrage opened at 5.20am as the two forward West Riding Brigades advanced. They were soon slowed down by the sea of mud and vastly swollen streams - for in many places water stood waist deep. Whilst staggering across the virtually impassable ground they were quickly met by murderous fire from machine-guns

which pinned down many of the attackers. The artillery barrage was found to have been ineffective and ragged. More importantly the creeping barrage had moved too quickly for the infantry wallowing in the mud and the protective shellfire got too far ahead of them to do any good.

Many of the division's guns had been unable to get far enough forward to fire because of the seemingly bottomless mud. Of those guns which had somehow managed to get forward, many had been knocked out by enemy shellfire, other had sunk in the mud, and the few that were capable of firing had done so at extreme range. The result was that the infantry found that few German defenders, if any, had been killed by artillery although many had been killed or wounded by their rifles and Lewis guns. The division's two forward brigades were by now substantially depleted in numbers, and those remaining were pinned down in the terrible mud by a veritable wall of enemy fire. By mid-morning the Dukes were called forward from reserve by orders to cross the swollen waters of the Ravebeke stream to reinforce their forward brigades:

"Under a hail of machine-gun bullets, in the face of accurate sniping, and with shells bursting all round, they steadily advanced by section rushes, in extended order. The rear company gave covering fire to the leading one, and machine-guns also assisted in keeping down the hostile fire. But many men went down, killed or wounded, in the mud, before the [Ravebeke] stream was reached. Then followed the crossing of the Ravebeke. Some of C Company had carried saplings with them which they threw across, others crossed on the fallen trees which were already lying there, yet others literally forced their way through the mud and water. On the far side of the Ravebeke the fire was, if anything, heavier; but the men pressed on to Peter Pan where many of them gained some temporary protection amongst ruined buildings."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The Dukes arrived to discover that it was as if the two forward brigades in the first wave had been swallowed by the sea of mud into which they had advanced. Their route forward was a litter of dead and wounded, many of whom were sliding into the mud, and they were now scattered in numerous isolated water-filled shell-holes holding tenuous positions. Some stragglers were now temporarily gathered up by the Dukes who incorporated them into their companies - many of which had sustained 30% casualties simply moving forward to link up with the division's first assault waves:

"The men settled down for the night as best they could, tired out with their efforts of the day. Every officer and man was covered with mud from head to foot, and his clothes were thoroughly soaked with water. In these circumstances little comfort could be hoped for, especially as the Battalion failed to get in touch with the ration convoy. The night was very cold. Patrols were pushed out to maintain contact with the enemy, and these found the pill-boxes on Belle Vue Spur and the neighbourhood of Wolfe Copse still held."

(Ibid)

Dawn of October 10th commenced with the customary German barrage. Little happened during that day except very accurate sniping and heavy enemy shellfire. At 10pm the New Zealanders arrived, and relieved the 49th Division:

"From about midnight until long after dawn, the troops of the 49th Division streamed down the road, some singly, some in groups of two or three, others in formed bodies. It is doubtful whether, before or since, the Battalion has been more thoroughly done up. After living in that waste of mud and water, with practically no shelter, for nearly a week, it had carried out an attack over the same appalling ground, and then consolidated and held its position in the face of violent artillery and machine-gun fire."

(Ibid)

Following the attack on the Belle Vue Spur the Dukes were withdrawn to St Jean. Here the camp was far from adequate and the men had to make do with bivouacs or covered holes in the ground. The lack of shelter and pouring rain was hardly a recipe for the rest and recuperation the Dukes merited. On October 12th the New Zealanders made a further assault on the Belle Vue Spur. The Dukes had already found that an important difficulty whilst fighting in the mud was the large number of men needed to evacuate a casualty, sometimes needing sixteen men to get one stretcher-case back. This had resulted in a number of wounded drowning in the mud before they could be rescued:

"The shell holes began to fill up more quickly as the rains became heavier, and we began to see how deadly those 'planes with their big [bomb] craters had been. Some broke up the road. Some made great holes near the road. And when, as quickly happened, they filled up they became death-traps for

man or beast. Some men have a special facility for falling into shell holes and, even in dry conditions, are figures of fun to their mates. Let no man mock at the man who falls into a big shell hole in wet weather, his mates will, at great risk, get him out. Not so the horse or mule. He is too heavy and he can't catch a rope. His fate is to struggle and slip further and further in till he can struggle no more. There are few sadder sights."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

The New Zealanders asked for 200 men from each of the Dukes battalions in the 147th Brigade to assist in evacuating the anticipated wounded. Volunteers readily came forward and they worked for two days in the battle-area without rest, their labours receiving grateful thanks from the New Zealand Division:

"The weary battle for Passchendaele Ridge was continued throughout October. Division after Division was flung into the cauldron of fire and mud with varying success. Sometimes an advance of a few hundred yards was made, sometimes the attacks failed completely, but there was always the same tale of heavy casualties. East of Ypres the whole salient was one vast sea of mud strewn with the wreckage of war. There was not a sign of vegetation anywhere; scarcely a brick remained of the farms with which the area had been dotted; nothing could be seen for miles but men and horses (alive or dead), guns, débris and MUD."

(The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt D P Grant.)

By mid-October 1917 the Dukes marched back to a hutted area south-east of Vlamertinghe, which although comfortable was very crowded. Here a period of training was carried out, particularly to train the many replacements for specialists who had suffered heavily in the battle. At this time command of the 49th Division passed from Major General E M Perceval CB DSO to Major General N J G Cameron CB CMG who had, until then, commanded the 151st (Durham Light Infantry) Brigade, a Territorial brigade in the 50th (Northumbrian) Division. After other moves the Dukes moved, on 9th November, by motor-bus to the area of Ypres where they were destined to remain until the Spring of 1918. Here the battle for the Passchendaele Ridge was still raging, and at that time involved Yorkshire's other Territorial battalions of the 150th (York and Durham) Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division. The 147th Brigade took over the Broodeseinde sector, and their arrival was greeted by a hail of enemy gas shells. All tracks to their front line positions were heavily shelled by the enemy, and their positions were under constant enemy observation which prohibited any movement by day. Even the German Chief of Staff, General Ludendorff, acknowledged the heroism of the Allied soldiers who fought at Passchendaele:

"Enormous masses of ammunition, such as the human mind had never imagined before the War, were hurled upon the bodies of men who passed a miserable existence scattered about in mud-filled shell holes. The horror of the shell-hole area of Verdun was surpassed. It was no longer life at all. It was mere unspeakable suffering. And through this world of mud the attackers dragged themselves slowly but steadily, and in dense masses. Caught in the advanced zone by our hail of fire they often collapsed and the lonely man in the shell hole breathed again. Then the mass came on again. Rifle and machine-gun jammed in the mud. Man fought against man, and only too often the man [the British soldier] was successful."

(My War Memories, 1914-1918. General E Ludendorff. 1929.)

A great deal of work had to be invested into securing the positions leading to endless demands to dig trenches, place out barbed-wire, and deploy patrols. It was useless to try to improve the front-line trenches for any attempt to dig them deeper simply resulted in them filling up with water and in uncovering numerous bodies in various states of decomposition. Movement in the front-line was impossible, no fires could be lit, water was in short supply, the only hot food and drink was that individually prepared using 'Tommy's Cookers'. The West Riding's Territorials paid an enormous price to hold the continuously shelled Passchendaele Ridge:

"Perhaps the most damning comment on the plan which plunged the British Army in this bath of mud and blood is contained in an incidental revelation of the remorse of one who was largely responsible for it. This highly placed officer from General Headquarters [in fact General Sir Lancelot Kiggell, Haig's Chief-of-Staff] was on his first visit to the battle front - at the end of four months' battle. Growing increasingly uneasy as the car approached the swamplike edges of the battle area, he eventually burst into tears, crying, 'Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?', To which his companion replied that the ground was far worse ahead. If the exclamation was a credit to his heart it revealed on what a foundation of delusion and inexcusable ignorance his indomitable 'offensiveness' had been based."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

This 'Third Battle of Ypres' had a tremendous human cost, for the Allies had suffered 244,897 casualties of which 66,000 had been killed in action. It had also been a severe blow to German strength and morale, for they had sustained 400,000 casualties in this fighting. The Dukes were still in the front line for Christmas 1917. A well-intentioned greetings message necessarily sent in 'BAB' code caused a confusion which has a timeless familiarity for all soldiers who have been involved in decoding such signals:

"One Company Commander, after laboriously putting a message of seasonable greetings into B.A.B. code, sent it over the wire to another company. The Officer Commanding that company, delighted with his success in deciphering the first few letters of it, repeated it to Battalion HQ and to the remaining companies, in his own name. Rumour has it that one company, not very expert in B.A.B. code, spent a dreadful night wondering what operation was to take place; perhaps the mistakes which had been made in encoding the message accounted for the inability of these officers to read it."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

At the close of 1917 the four Dukes first-line Territorial battalions had seen thirty-three months of continuous active service on the Western Front. 1918 was to be the last year of the war. It was to see them involved firstly in the desperate fighting which countered the German Spring Offensive, and later in the 'Advance to Victory' which culminated in the Armistice of November 1918. Yet these four first-line battalions were not the only Dukes Territorials that had seen active service in 1917 for their second-line battalions had crossed the Channel in early 1917 for active service in France and Flanders. The story now leaves the first-line Dukes at Ypres to look at the second-line battalions.

THE SECOND-LINE BATTALIONS

Stepping back two years to 1915 finds the yet untested Dukes second-line Territorial battalions training under trying conditions:

"The West Riding of Yorkshire is almost a county in itself, attracting and creating in the different industrial centres, different types of men. And as one Commanding Officer said 'The stranger coming amongst them found new and strange variations of the English language peculiar to the small districts from which the units were recruited.'"

"The 2/2nd Infantry Brigade (afterwards the 186th Infantry Brigade) consisting of the 2/4th, 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, was largely formed of men who had hitherto spent most of their lives in the local woollen and worsted cotton mills: the 2/4th from the area around Halifax, the 2/5th from about Huddersfield, the 2/6th of men from the Skipton district, and the 2/7th from Colne Valley as far as the borders of Lancashire, near Todmorden. A fair number of men of these battalions came also from stone quarries, engineering works and offices in their representative districts."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

Each battalion had a nucleus of experienced Territorials. But many quite inexperienced men had to be promoted to fill the junior rank structure - in the event they were not to be found wanting. Major-General Sir James K Trotter KCB was appointed as the first commander of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division TF. By February 1915 he was encountering difficulties in preparing his division for war:

"The troops were not all provided with uniform. They were without equipment; the Infantry had no arms, except a few demonstration-purpose rifles; the Artillery no guns; the Mounted Troops, Artillery and Engineers no horses, and the Transport nothing but a few hired carts. But the most sorely felt was that of the young, active, trained NCO to instruct and to give life to the movements of the young soldiers. Competent instructors were not to be had. Every available NCO was taken up by the 1st Line Territorials and the New Service Army, and the Division was at this time left to its own very limited resources."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

It must be remembered that the War Office's decision to form 'Kitchener Battalions' now resulted in two separate organisations forming two 'armies', the Territorial Force and the New Army. Thus the second-line West Riding Territorials had to compete for equipment. They eventually received well-used Japanese rifles, each with 200 rounds, but they had no equipment and the ammunition had to be carried in the men's pockets.

The West Riding Artillery was equipped with French 90mm guns, vintage 1878, whose range scales could not be understood and for which no manuals existed. No ammunition was available for practice until December 1915, and then in very limited amounts. Despite all this, the second-line battalions were also ordered to supply reinforcements to their respective active-service first-line battalions from as early as March 1915. Command of

the 62nd Division passed to Major-General W P Braithwaite CB in December 1915. It was quite understandable that the Territorials who had remained at home to raise the second-line would be the 'mature' officers. Indeed not a few had gallantly returned from retirement gladly to serve the old battalion in some way. Yet Braithwaite recognised the rigours of the coming active-service, and identified that some old hands had by now done their bit:

"The Battalions were commanded mostly by Territorial Force officers of a certain age and standing, with personal knowledge of the men in their units, and with experience, in many cases, of Territorial Force conditions as they existed before the war, but, naturally, with no experience of war as it was being waged. The material was excellent but all that was lacking was to adapt it to the conditions obtaining at the Front."

(*West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.*)

This resulted in the division applying to the War Office for 'battle-experienced' officers to fill the appointments as Brigade Majors in the infantry brigades, together with one or two commanding officers making way for younger men who had either been wounded or invalided from France. Such experience was welcomed, indeed essential, if the second-line West Riding Territorials were to be ready for battle. From formation the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had remained in England from where the four second-line battalions had sent out a steady flow of reinforcements to their first-line battalions. They had also themselves trained-up ready for the front-line. Their 62nd Division eventually moved to active service in France in January 1917 to spend a month under instruction in a quiet sector of the front.

BEAUMONT HAMEL

Early 1917 was to witness the number of Dukes Territorial battalions on active service rising from four to eight as their second-line battalions landed in France. The 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had concentrated in the area between Conche and Authie by 18th January, all that is except Skipton's 2/6th Battalion, which was detained at home due to an outbreak of scarlet fever, and which did not arrive until 9th February. Comfort and peace are relative qualities. For if the first-line 1/4th, 1/5th, 1/6th, and 1/7th Battalions welcomed the relative peace of a 'quiet sector' the identical prospect rightly daunted their yet untried second-line Territorials. On 13th February the four second-line Dukes battalions, which together formed the 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade, moved to a more active part of the front-line at Beaumont-Hamel. It had been in this area that their senior first-line Dukes had dug out the tunnel mines for the great Somme offensive of 1916:

"The Beaumont-Hamel sector, which this newly-arrived [62nd] West Riding Division had taken over, was little more than a line of posts and shell-holes situated in the midst of a slough and quagmire which beggars description. The continual shelling to which the line had been subjected had reduced the trenches to a state which can only be described as appalling....A horrible and loathsome place in which to live and fight."

(*The West Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1923.*)

The sector was subjected to enemy artillery, machine-guns and snipers both by day and night. It was a savage introduction to trench warfare. Although these second-line Territorials had by now served together for over two years they were now on active service; lessons could from now on only be learnt the hard way. Second chances rarely came to new arrivals in the trenches:

"A Whizz-Bang was a shell fired from a German field gun. When the gun fired there was a whizzing sound as the shell left the barrel of the gun, and then a bang as it landed and burst. Hence the name Whizz-Bang; all this happened very quickly in about one second of time."

Bramwell Mitchell, 2/4th Battalion

THE HINDENBERG LINE

Manpower was not only an Allied problem, for the Germans also had difficulty in manning their front-line, and made careful plans to resolve the problem. They spent the previous winter digging a shorter defensive trench system in a relatively safe area well to the rear of the front. The system was built upon ground of their own choice, and was carefully designed as a network of reinforced machine-gun posts protected by deep belts of barbed wire. This apparently impregnable 'Siegfried Stellung' or 'Hindenberg Line' [17] was the new line into which the German armies methodically withdrew during the Spring of 1917 starting on February 23rd in the Bapaume sector. Although the Germans voluntarily gave up 1,000 square miles of captured French territory, they also shortened their own front lines by some 32 miles. The German withdrawal to the Hindenberg Line allowed the 62nd Division to leave their forward trenches and cross the former 'No-Man's Land'. The division steadily advanced forward over ground which had been systematically laid waste under the codeword 'Alberich', the name of the malicious dwarf in the Nibelung saga, during the carefully staged German withdrawal:

"But the 62nd Division during the whole of its service in France, had not a more difficult task than in following up the enemy's retirement during those hard days of March, 1917. For as the troops advanced the roads had to be rebuilt, which necessitated the accommodation of large numbers of working parties close up to the front line. At night-time it was impossible to find shelters for all of them, and many had perforce to sleep in hastily erected shelters, which in many places consisted of tarpaulins stretched above excavations in the muddy ground, or over piles of stones: some men were in tents."

"But the stout Yorkshiremen were equal to the occasion; their hardy lives in the north of England had well fitted most of them for their tasks, whilst two years of training had produced that spirit which refuses to be depressed even under the most depressing circumstances."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The Division's advance was led by Huddersfield's 2/5th Battalion, as the diary of one of the battalion's officers records:

"There were many fires burning when we occupied the village (Gomiecourt) and as they were still burning we tried to put them out. The junctions of every road in the village had been mined and blown up and everything of value had been destroyed. All fruit trees had either been pulled down or an incision made around the barks so that the sap could not rise. All wells had been blown in and one had been poisoned with arsenic, so the Royal Engineers' officer told me. The only buildings left standing was the Chateau and the billets with fifty beds in it. The Chateau had been mined, but the charge had failed to explode fully and the only damage done was that the entrance hall had a big hole in the floor and the first stairway had fallen in. The Royal Engineers with a party of our men took 700 pounds of unexploded charge out of the cellars of this place."

(Ibid)

It should be remembered that, although the infantryman bears the brunt of the close-quarter battle, the man in front of him is often a member of the Corps of Royal Engineers, that gallant band of 'sappers' who open closed doors for the infantry by carrying out often nerve-wracking tasks despite hostile fire. The division at last arrived in front of the German Hindenberg Line. Their advance patrols brought back reports of the thick barbed wire, and strong skillfully sited defensive positions, that their enemy now occupied:

"The enemy's position in front of the Brigade (and the Division) was extremely powerful. The Hindenberg Line was a prepared position which the enemy could be counted upon to defend with the utmost stubbornness. His trenches were deep and dry; his machine-gun positions were strong and three thick belts of [barbed] wire, each from ten to fifteen yards deep, in No Man's Land prevented surprise. All approaches could be swept both by frontal and enfilade fire. So thoroughly had the Germans devastated the area evacuated during the retreat to the Hindenberg Line that Ludendorff had calculated many weeks must pass before the Allies would be able to attack his new positions.....He was wrong."

(The West Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1923.)

The 62nd Division's advance was hardly a bloodless victory for no less than 35 officers and 300 soldiers were killed, wounded or missing during the advance to the Hindenberg Line between 1st and 31st March 1917.

BULLECOURT

The second-line Dukes now had to build a completely new front-line in full view of a well dug-in enemy before any further offensive operations could be carried out. New supply, support and communication trenches had to be dug if men and supplies could reach the front-line. The village of Bullecourt was at first reasonably intact having previously been well to the rear of the old German front-line. The ensuing systematic bombardment by the division's guns steadily reduced its buildings and roads, but the shells had little effect upon the deep belts of barbed wire and heavily entrenched German positions:

"The men fell asleep whilst working the guns. For nine or ten weeks now they have worked without rest, and it is a question of whether human endurance can go much further. They fire day and night, and when not firing they are struggling through the mud carrying up ammunition: they have no shelter except what they can dig in the ground, and no sooner than they have dug a resting place than the batteries have to move to fresh positions. And the weather is beyond words abominable. If it is not raining, it's snowing, and it's impossible to keep anything dry: nothing but cold, squallor and hideous discomfort. And yet they stick it out with the utmost courage and cheerfulness and fight splendidly."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

By this time, attacking infantry could rely on the relatively new technique of the artillery 'creeping barrage' which had been progressively refined by the Royal Artillery since mid-1916. The creeping barrage was pre-arranged and co-ordinated at divisional, and sometimes corps, level. The gunners' high-explosive shells were by now fitted with a new '106' fuse which burst the shell instantaneously on impact, whereas previous fuses had allowed the shells to penetrate the ground before exploding. These new fuses allowed the shells to cause damage without creating heavily cratered ground which had so hampered advancing infantry, moreover they caused greater damage to barbed wire entanglements having more of a cutting effect. As well as high-explosive, shrapnel was added with smoke-generating shells which masked the infantry's advance and screened flanks from the view of enemy machine-gunners.

The creeping barrage was a wall of shellfire which moved at a pre-determined speed behind which the assault waves closely followed. The rate of the barrage's advance varied, depending on the terrain, somewhere between two minutes and eight minutes per hundred yards. The moving fire zone could be up to 2,000 yards deep with several walls of fire within it. The fire nearest to the infantry was mainly provided by the division's own 18 pounder and 4.5" field guns with depth provided by the Corps' medium and heavy guns. The creeping barrage would remain static at set phases during the attack, for example at trench-lines; more complex barrages included 'back barrages' when the deeper lines of fire moved backwards and forwards within the fire zone to break up enemy counter-attacks and likely reinforcement routes. In addition, creeping barrages were supplemented by co-ordinated fireplans by the division's own trench mortar and medium machine-gun companies firing in co-ordinated close-support roles.

Offensive operations commenced on 10th April 1917 when the 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) and 2/8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalions, The West Yorkshires assaulted the enemy positions around the fortress at Bullecourt. Their attack was doomed from the start, for nobody told the Leeds Rifles that a vital supporting attack by the flanking Brigade had been cancelled. This resulted in their assault waves being swamped with enemy machine-gun fire from the German positions on the flanks. Supporting waves and resupply could not get through to the newly-captured trenches. The 62nd Division again attacked Bullecourt. 'Zero Hour' was 3.45am on 3rd May and all of its three infantry Brigades were in the leading waves:

"At Zero hour the creeping barrage opened on the enemy's position and the assaulting troops began to move forward immediately. But now an unexpected difficulty presented itself: the warm weather had baked the ground hard and as the shells fell, churning it up, clouds of dust filled the air, and with the smoke from the guns, and some bombs, the objectives were hidden from the advancing troops and there was much loss of direction."

"On the left of the 185th [West Yorkshire's] Infantry Brigade, the 186th [Dukes] had accomplished only part of its task. The 2/5th Duke of Wellington's found the wire cut and no difficulty was experienced in reaching the second German trench of the first objective. Here touch was obtained with the left of the 185th Brigade, and maintained for several hours. But the 2/6th Duke of Wellington's found the wire uncut and their attack was held up. Hostile shell-fire, and the rear waves closing in on the leading waves, added to the confusion and all that could be done was to occupy some shell holes in front of the enemy's wire. An attempt was then made to cut the second belt of wire from the north, but the enemy's activity with bombs frustrated this endeavour and finally the shell-holes were established as posts."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

'B' Company of the 2/5th Battalion fought their way up the slope on the ridge to the left of Bullecourt:

"A devastating machine-gun fire and a terrific barrage of high explosive and shrapnel were suddenly opened on the advancing company, while hidden concrete emplacements protected the enemy guns. The survivors gallantly rallied, and pressed on into the Hindenberg Line through a tornado of bullets. Lieutenant O Walker was killed at this point, as he was charging at the head of his platoon, rifle in hand, through the German wire. Two enemy machine-guns were captured, and their crews killed by our bombers. Captain J Walker MBE, Commanding the Company, with a mere handful of men, still pushed on and forced a broken way to the next strongpoint of hidden emplacements. Here the little party held out for three days and nights. They had no water and only their iron rations, and they were bombed and shelled all the time."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

Despite repeated attempts the West Riding Territorials were unable to penetrate the Hindenberg Line on the 3rd May:

"Just after five o'clock in the evening orders from Divisional Headquarters to the three Infantry Brigades contained instructions to the Brigadiers to make every effort to reorganize their battalions on the line of their original fronts, in their own sectors: the 7th Division was to take over the front held by the 185th Infantry Brigade as soon as possible. The failure of the 62nd Division to capture

Bullecourt was due largely to a fault which certainly cannot be charged to the gallant troops who stormed the village and the Hindenberg Line in the vicinity. Neither could the Divisional Staff, which had laboured to make all arrangements as complete as possible, be blamed. It was due principally to an error in tactics which had so often failed in the earlier years of the war - notably at Festubert in 1915. The Australian Division on the right of the 62nd Division did not launch its attack side by side with the 2/6th West Yorks, the flanking battalion of the [62nd] West Riding Division. There was a gap - a fatal gap - between the Colonials and the Yorkshiremen."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The 62nd (West Riding) Division's casualties at Bullecourt on 3rd May 1917 were 116 officers and 2,860 soldiers either killed, wounded or missing. The 62nd (West Riding) Division's final assault on Bullecourt commenced on the 12th May when the West Yorkshire battalions of its 185th Brigade assisted the 7th (British) and 5th (Australian) Divisions by attacking a strongpoint known as the 'Crucifix'. The 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion at first captured and held the 'Crucifix'. But they were isolated and the enemy first methodically surrounded the battalion and then over-ran its forward companies. A further attack was ordered for 3.40am the following day when the 2/7th Dukes was tasked with the recapture of the 'Crucifix':

"But the capture of Bullecourt was imperative, and at 3.40am on the 13th [May] still another attack by the 7th Division was ordered against the village. The 2/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regt. [186th Brigade] under the orders of General Officer Commanding 185th Brigade, set out again to attack the Crucifix, the forming-up operations being carried out under the personal supervision of the Brigade Major. But the enemy interposed a very heavy barrage between the Dukes and their objective and progress was again impossible. So throughout the remainder of the 13th the situation in Bullecourt still remained obscure. Contact patrols reported that there were still many posts in the village held by British troops, but pockets of the enemy still existed amongst these posts and vigorous bombing was taking place. Throughout this period casualties were very heavy, the losses in officers being especially severe; and in some of the Battalion's Companies were so weak that they had been amalgamated."

(Ibid)

Heavy fighting was to continue around Bullecourt, which was eventually captured by the British 58th Division. Yet the 62nd Division had played a significant part in its reduction, but its casualties during the May 1917 fighting were 163 officers and 3,284 soldiers killed wounded or missing.

On the 14th the 2/7th was relieved by the 2/5th Dukes who were similarly unable to fight their way into the Bullecourt defences. The 62nd Division was relieved on the night of the 28th/29th May when the Dukes 186th Brigade thankfully withdrew to a rest area at Achiet Le Petit:

"Very tired and greatly reduced in numbers by the loss of many valuable lives, but still in fine fettle, the 62nd Division set to work to train and re-organize. The first essential was to rest the men after their exhausting efforts. Their first set battle had indeed given them a gruelling, but they had learned many lessons and had emerged from the battle with a greater understanding of what was required of them: in their own Yorkshire fashion they had taken the measure of the enemy."

(Ibid)

'At rest', however, was not to mean exactly what the term implied:

"For a little over three weeks the Division was out of the front line. Throughout this period training was carried on. Particular attention being paid to musketry, for which purpose existing ranges were improved and new ones constructed by the Sappers assisted by large working parties from the three infantry brigades. Special ranges on which to carry out the 'Bayonet assault practice' combining the use of rifle, bayonet and bullet were also constructed."

(Ibid)

By the 29th June 1917 the division was at the Noreuil-Lagnicourt sector, slightly to the south of Bullecourt. The second-line Territorials were about to serve their apprenticeship in trench warfare, for no action of outstanding importance was to take place before the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917. These trenches were relatively new having been constructed in the previous three months during the German withdrawal into their Hindenberg Line. But they were nowhere near as formidable as were the enemy's positions that faced them across No Man's Land:

"The enemy's attitude showed little aggressive action. The hostile troops facing the Division belonged to the 1st Garde Reserve Division, which consisted of three infantry regiments. This Division had but recently arrived in the line having been brought down from Messines, where it had been very roughly handled in the Flanders offensive. Thus, for a few days the line was comparatively quiet,

By this time, attacking infantry could rely on the relatively new technique of the artillery 'creeping barrage' which had been progressively refined by the Royal Artillery since mid-1916. The creeping barrage was pre-arranged and co-ordinated at divisional, and sometimes corps, level. The gunners' high-explosive shells were by now fitted with a new '106' fuse which burst the shell instantaneously on impact, whereas previous fuses had allowed the shells to penetrate the ground before exploding. These new fuses allowed the shells to cause damage without creating heavily cratered ground which had so hampered advancing infantry, moreover they caused greater damage to barbed wire entanglements having more of a cutting effect. As well as high-explosive, shrapnel was added with smoke-generating shells which masked the infantry's advance and screened flanks from the view of enemy machine-gunners.

The creeping barrage was a wall of shellfire which moved at a pre-determined speed behind which the assault waves closely followed. The rate of the barrage's advance varied, depending on the terrain, somewhere between two minutes and eight minutes per hundred yards. The moving fire zone could be up to 2,000 yards deep with several walls of fire within it. The fire nearest to the infantry was mainly provided by the division's own 18 pounder and 4.5" field guns with depth provided by the Corps' medium and heavy guns. The creeping barrage would remain static at set phases during the attack, for example at trench-lines; more complex barrages included 'back barrages' when the deeper lines of fire moved backwards and forwards within the fire zone to break up enemy counter-attacks and likely reinforcement routes. In addition, creeping barrages were supplemented by co-ordinated fireplans by the division's own trench mortar and medium machine-gun companies firing in co-ordinated close-support roles.

Offensive operations commenced on 10th April 1917 when the 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) and 2/8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalions, The West Yorkshires assaulted the enemy positions around the fortress at Bullecourt. Their attack was doomed from the start, for nobody told the Leeds Rifles that a vital supporting attack by the flanking Brigade had been cancelled. This resulted in their assault waves being swamped with enemy machine-gun fire from the German positions on the flanks. Supporting waves and resupply could not get through to the newly-captured trenches. The 62nd Division again attacked Bullecourt. 'Zero Hour' was 3.45am on 3rd May and all of its three infantry Brigades were in the leading waves:

"At Zero hour the creeping barrage opened on the enemy's position and the assaulting troops began to move forward immediately. But now an unexpected difficulty presented itself: the warm weather had baked the ground hard and as the shells fell, churning it up, clouds of dust filled the air, and with the smoke from the guns, and some bombs, the objectives were hidden from the advancing troops and there was much loss of direction."

"On the left of the 185th [West Yorkshire's] Infantry Brigade, the 186th [Dukes] had accomplished only part of its task. The 2/5th Duke of Wellington's found the wire cut and no difficulty was experienced in reaching the second German trench of the first objective. Here touch was obtained with the left of the 185th Brigade, and maintained for several hours. But the 2/6th Duke of Wellington's found the wire uncut and their attack was held up. Hostile shell-fire, and the rear waves closing in on the leading waves, added to the confusion and all that could be done was to occupy some shell holes in front of the enemy's wire. An attempt was then made to cut the second belt of wire from the north, but the enemy's activity with bombs frustrated this endeavour and finally the shell-holes were established as posts."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

'B' Company of the 2/5th Battalion fought their way up the slope on the ridge to the left of Bullecourt:

"A devastating machine-gun fire and a terrific barrage of high explosive and shrapnel were suddenly opened on the advancing company, while hidden concrete emplacements protected the enemy guns. The survivors gallantly rallied, and pressed on into the Hindenberg Line through a tornado of bullets. Lieutenant O Walker was killed at this point, as he was charging at the head of his platoon, rifle in hand, through the German wire. Two enemy machine-guns were captured, and their crews killed by our bombers. Captain J Walker MBE, Commanding the Company, with a mere handful of men, still pushed on and forced a broken way to the next strongpoint of hidden emplacements. Here the little party held out for three days and nights. They had no water and only their iron rations, and they were bombed and shelled all the time."

(West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.)

Despite repeated attempts the West Riding Territorials were unable to penetrate the Hindenberg Line on the 3rd May:

"Just after five o'clock in the evening orders from Divisional Headquarters to the three Infantry Brigades contained instructions to the Brigadiers to make every effort to reorganize their battalions on the line of their original fronts, in their own sectors: the 7th Division was to take over the front held by the 185th Infantry Brigade as soon as possible. The failure of the 62nd Division to capture

Bullecourt was due largely to a fault which certainly cannot be charged to the gallant troops who stormed the village and the Hindenberg Line in the vicinity. Neither could the Divisional Staff, which had laboured to make all arrangements as complete as possible, be blamed. It was due principally to an error in tactics which had so often failed in the earlier years of the war - notably at Festubert in 1915. The Australian Division on the right of the 62nd Division did not launch its attack side by side with the 2/6th West Yorks, the flanking battalion of the [62nd] West Riding Division. There was a gap - a fatal gap - between the Colonials and the Yorkshiremen."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The 62nd (West Riding) Division's casualties at Bullecourt on 3rd May 1917 were 116 officers and 2,860 soldiers either killed, wounded or missing. The 62nd (West Riding) Division's final assault on Bullecourt commenced on the 12th May when the West Yorkshire battalions of its 185th Brigade assisted the 7th (British) and 5th (Australian) Divisions by attacking a strongpoint known as the 'Crucifix'. The 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion at first captured and held the 'Crucifix'. But they were isolated and the enemy first methodically surrounded the battalion and then over-ran its forward companies. A further attack was ordered for 3.40am the following day when the 2/7th Dukes was tasked with the recapture of the 'Crucifix':

"But the capture of Bullecourt was imperative, and at 3.40am on the 13th [May] still another attack by the 7th Division was ordered against the village. The 2/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regt. [186th Brigade] under the orders of General Officer Commanding 185th Brigade, set out again to attack the Crucifix, the forming-up operations being carried out under the personal supervision of the Brigade Major. But the enemy interposed a very heavy barrage between the Dukes and their objective and progress was again impossible. So throughout the remainder of the 13th the situation in Bullecourt still remained obscure. Contact patrols reported that there were still many posts in the village held by British troops, but pockets of the enemy still existed amongst these posts and vigorous bombing was taking place. Throughout this period casualties were very heavy, the losses in officers being especially severe; and in some of the Battalion's Companies were so weak that they had been amalgamated."

(Ibid)

Heavy fighting was to continue around Bullecourt, which was eventually captured by the British 58th Division. Yet the 62nd Division had played a significant part in its reduction, but its casualties during the May 1917 fighting were 163 officers and 3,284 soldiers killed wounded or missing.

On the 14th the 2/7th was relieved by the 2/5th Dukes who were similarly unable to fight their way into the Bullecourt defences. The 62nd Division was relieved on the night of the 28th/29th May when the Dukes 186th Brigade thankfully withdrew to a rest area at Achiet Le Petit:

"Very tired and greatly reduced in numbers by the loss of many valuable lives, but still in fine fettle, the 62nd Division set to work to train and re-organize. The first essential was to rest the men after their exhausting efforts. Their first set battle had indeed given them a gruelling, but they had learned many lessons and had emerged from the battle with a greater understanding of what was required of them: in their own Yorkshire fashion they had taken the measure of the enemy."

(Ibid)

'At rest', however, was not to mean exactly what the term implied:

"For a little over three weeks the Division was out of the front line. Throughout this period training was carried on. Particular attention being paid to musketry, for which purpose existing ranges were improved and new ones constructed by the Sappers assisted by large working parties from the three infantry brigades. Special ranges on which to carry out the 'Bayonet assault practice' combining the use of rifle, bayonet and bullet were also constructed."

(Ibid)

By the 29th June 1917 the division was at the Noreuil-Lagnicourt sector, slightly to the south of Bullecourt. The second-line Territorials were about to serve their apprenticeship in trench warfare, for no action of outstanding importance was to take place before the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917. These trenches were relatively new having been constructed in the previous three months during the German withdrawal into their Hindenberg Line. But they were nowhere near as formidable as were the enemy's positions that faced them across No Man's Land:

"The enemy's attitude showed little aggressive action. The hostile troops facing the Division belonged to the 1st Garde Reserve Division, which consisted of three infantry regiments. This Division had but recently arrived in the line having been brought down from Messines, where it had been very roughly handled in the Flanders offensive. Thus, for a few days the line was comparatively quiet,

even the enemy's guns selecting only a few points along the front of the [62nd] West Riding Division, for slow concentrated fire."

(Ibid)

They now set-to and improved their positions. Regular patrols were sent out with the aims of dominating No Man's land and the identification of enemy posts and machine-gun emplacements:

"In the summer of 1917 it was (as far as France was concerned) a young division, and experience is only gained in taking and giving hard blows. But these Yorkshiremen were fast becoming proficient: these men from the moors and the towns and cities of that great northern county of England were of a breed which could not be discouraged by failure on one occasion. And at the end of July, after a month of active patrol work, a Brigadier of the Division wrote to the Commanding Officer of one of his Battalions expressing his pleasure at 'the dash and soldierly qualities displayed by all ranks.....your patrols have proved conclusively that the Bosche does not dominate No Man's Land."

(Ibid)

After several weeks of trench warfare the 62nd Division had handed over this sector to the 3rd Division, by the 3rd October 1917, and moved back to the rear areas in order to train for the coming attack on Cambrai.

[17: Named after General Paul Hindenberg (1874-1934), who was recalled from retirement in 1914, and was appointed to command the German Armies on the Western Front in 1916.]

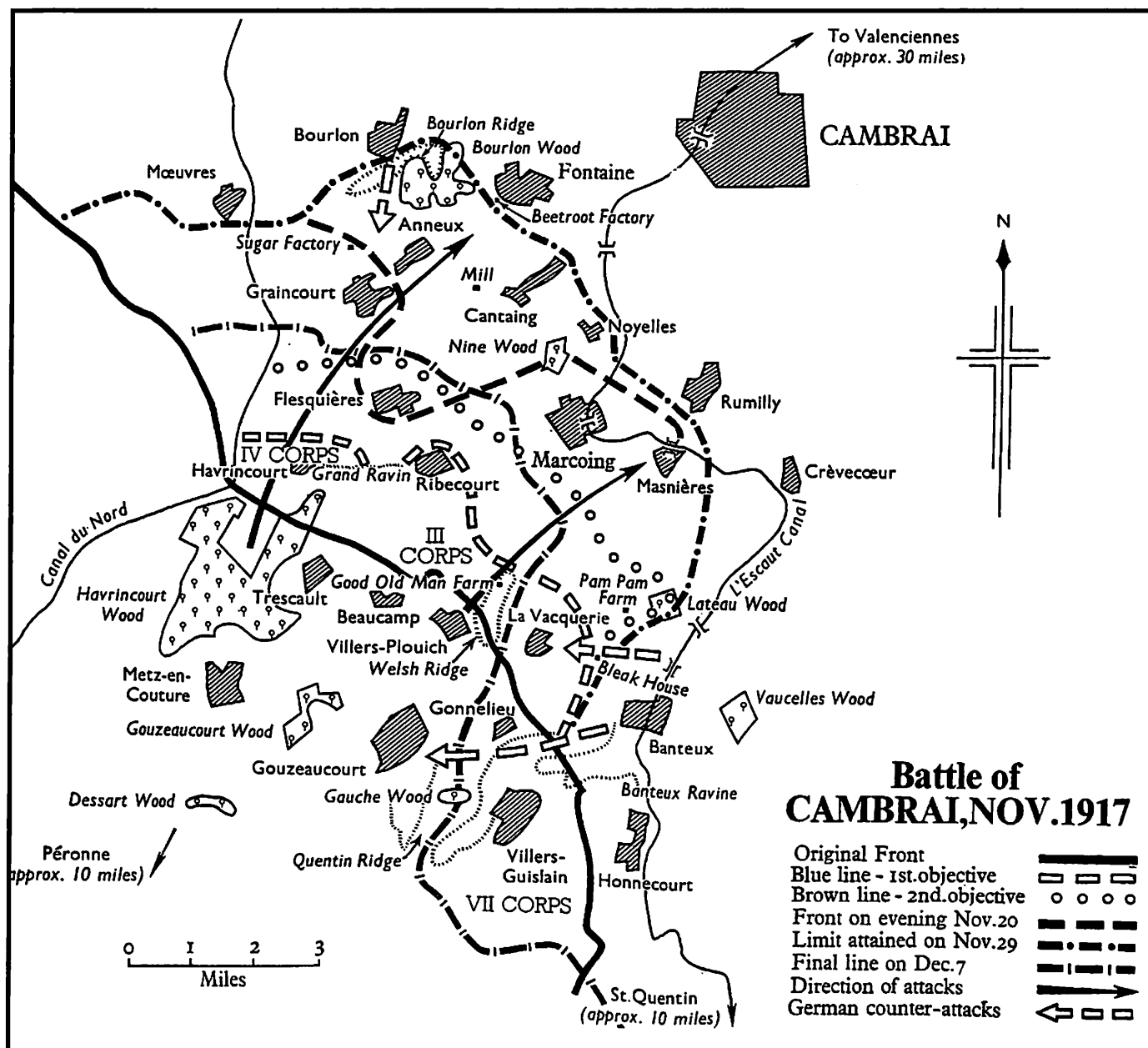
CAMBRAI 1917

The tank was a very new weapon in 1917. Its arrival in large numbers at Cambrai, a sector of the German Hindenberg Line, in late 1917 was cloaked in secrecy. Just one year before, a small number of British tanks were first in action on the 15th September 1916 when the 6th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry had become the first British infantry to go into action supported by tanks. The tank attack of 1917 at Cambrai is regarded as a landmark in military history for it was the first time that massed armoured tanks were used in battle. 'Cambrai Day' was thereafter to be celebrated as the Regimental Day of the Royal Tank Regiment. The tank used at Cambrai was to be the Mark IV, an improved version of the Mark I first used in 1916 through the addition of better armour and a more powerful engine. It weighed 26½ tons, was 26½ feet long and over 8' high, containing a crew of an officer and 7 men of which two were needed to steer it. The 'male' tank mounted two six pounder guns and four machine-guns, and a 'female' tank mounted six machine-guns. It should be remembered that the first three years of war had witnessed only the infantryman on foot in the forward trenches and No Man's Land of the Western Front - vehicles simply could not operate there. Most cavalry had long since been dismounted and were fighting as infantrymen. Nor had the Territorials, or indeed anyone else, experience of working with tanks, indeed few people had actually seen them. It is also of note that these tanks mounted two 6 pounder guns. In the years following the war tanks only mounted machine-guns or 2 pounders, no British tank was so heavily armed as these until 1942 when tanks regained a by then desperately needed 6 pounder main gun.

IV Corps contained two Territorial Infantry Divisions, the 51st (Highland) Division and the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division. The Corps had the task of taking Brouillon Ridge supported by the 1st Tank Brigade which was composed of 'D', 'E' and 'G' tank battalions under the command of Brigadier General C D'A B S Baker-Carr. The 51st (Highland) Division was to attack on the right with the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division on the left. Whilst these attacks took place the 36th (Ulster) Division was to attack east of the Canal du Nord as the 62nd Division advanced to the east of the canal. The 36th (Ulster) Division were already familiar with West Riding Territorials having received the support of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division at Thiepval on the Somme, both on the fated 1st July 1916, and in the weeks which followed. The 62nd Division's plan of attack placed its 185th Brigade on the right and the 187th Brigade on the left to capture the first two objectives to a depth of 1,500 yards. Once these had been captured, the Dukes 186th Brigade was to pass through and secure further objectives to a total depth of 3,000 yards, after which the cavalry was to break out to capture Cambrai and Brouillon Wood. The 62nd Division's attack on the villages of Flesquieres and Havrincourt was to be supported by tanks from 'G' Battalion and one company of 'E' Battalion. The 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade came out of the front-line in October 1917 to spend an intensive period in training:

"On 30th October a move was made to the Fosseaux area, west of Arras, where a special course of training with tanks was begun on 2nd November, in preparation for the Cambrai operations. Each battalion carried out two days' training with the company of tanks with which it was to fight, the steel monsters inspiring the greatest confidence amongst all ranks of the 62nd Division."

(Ibid)



On the 10th November 1917 command of their 186th Brigade passed from Brigadier General FF Hill CB CMG DSO to Brigadier General Roland Boys Bradford VC MC who had been promoted to command the brigade at but 25 years of age, then being the youngest Brigadier in the British Army. He was promoted straight from Lieutenant Colonel in which rank he had commanded the 9th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TF), a Territorial Battalion in the 151st (Durham Light Infantry) Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division. He was awarded the Victoria Cross whilst commanding the 9th Battalion for his actions on the Somme during October 1916. The West Riding Territorials' part in the battle was due to start on 20th November 1917, and the role to be played by their supporting tanks had been carefully planned and rehearsed:

"Turning now to the tank plan, the problems were to gain surprise, to cross the wide and deep obstacle of the Hindenberg Line and to ensure co-operation between the infantry and tanks for their common security. Careful organization and the absence of a preliminary bombardment contributed to the accomplishment of the first object. The difficulty presented by the Hindenberg Line was overcome by devising super-fascines, huge bundles of brush wood which were carried on the nose of each tank and released on reaching the edge of the Hindenberg trenches; the tanks working in sections of three, had thus the power to cross three successive obstacles."

"Thirdly, a strict attack drill was worked out and practised by which in each section an advanced-guard tank moved about 100 yards ahead of the two main-body tanks, keeping down the enemy's fire and protecting the main body as they led the infantry forward. The infantry, moving in flexible file formations, followed immediately behind the main body tanks. While the tanks cleared a way for

them through deep belts of enemy wire and subdued the hostile machine-gun fire, the infantry acted as 'moppers-up' to the tanks and were also ready to protect them from the enemy's guns at close quarters."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

The Dukes 186th Brigade was not to be required until the second phase of the assault:

"The four Battalions of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, forming the Brigade, spent a comfortable night in billets in Bertrandcourt, and, at 5.20am on the 20th, moved forward to their assembly positions in Havrincourt Wood. At 8am the Brigade was assembled ready to move forward on receipt of orders. All four Battalions were disposed in artillery formation facing north-east."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

Until then, the infantry assault was invariably preceded by a planned artillery bombardment designed to disrupt the enemy positions and supply-lines. But the battle plan for the attack upon Cambrai included no such preliminary bombardment in the hope that its absence would aid surprise. Scores of tank crews removed their tank's camouflage, and then moved out ready for the attack - as recalled by Captain D G Browne of 'G' Tank Battalion:

"Section after section, company after company they crawled forward in long columns that split up after a while into smaller ones, and then again into twos and threes, until toward five o'clock the whole were deploying into a single line six miles long - a threatening, silent, curving line that faced and corresponded to the larger salients and re-entrants of the Hindenberg trenches. So silently had this approach been carried out that many of the infantry, assembling behind the gaps in our own wire, heard no tanks at all, and inquired with some anxiety if they had arrived. A few had broken down, and were replaced at once from the mechanical reserve. Upwards of 350 were in position."

(The Tank in Action. D G Browne.)

The 6.20am 'Zero Hour' saw the 62nd Brigade's two leading Brigades, 185th and 187th, moving into the assault:

"Protected by smoke barrages from the enemy's artillery observers, the steel monsters rolled on across the German trenches, smashing up the enemy's machine-guns and driving his infantry into their dug-outs or forcing them to surrender. Dazed and demoralized, the Germans had little time to recover before the British troops were upon them, and soon the clashing of bayonets, intermingled with the cries and groans of the wounded and dying, were added to the awful din of battle."

(The West Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1923.)

It was soon clear that the Division's two first-phase brigades were experiencing notable successes. It was decided that the Dukes 186th Brigade should exploit this success by passing through them, even though 'mopping-up' had yet to be completed. All the surviving tanks, two artillery brigades and the 201st Machine-Gun Company was to cover their attack timed for 11am:

"In fact it was realized that this was no time for half-measures. The 186th Infantry Brigade, therefore, was to keep moving gradually forward so that when the Brown Line was captured, it would be ready to advance in line with the 51st [Highland] Division to the capture of the third objective. All Battalions moved at first by Companies in columns of fours, deploying subsequently into artillery formation. The 2/6th Battalion, after leaving 'T' Wood, came under shell fire from Flesquieres, which had not been captured by the 51st Division. But in spite of this all four Companies continued to advance across country to their forming-up positions"

"At 11am the Battalions attacked the enemy. Heavy machine-gun fire from a point in the Hindenberg Support Line, about 500 yards north of the Brown Line, held up the attack for a while, but on the arrival of the first of the 2/7th Battalion on the right of the [leading] 2/6th Battalion, and a little later the 2/5th in the area of Hughes Switch and Support Trenches, the 2/6th pressed on and bore down on all resistance."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

On the left of the 2/6th Battalion, 'D' Company of Huddersfield's 2/5th Battalion pressed forward undeterred:

"But again opposition was encountered. Heavy machine-gun and rifle fire met the Battalion from the direction of K4 d.i.5 where the enemy strong point evidently existed. A subaltern took forward a platoon to deal with this point and very soon a miniature battle was in full progress. A tank had 'ditched' in a particularly deep part of the Hindenburg Support Line, near the enemy's strong point. The tank was being bombed fiercely by the enemy who, however, was unable to leave his strong point, as the tank commander and his crew were defending the tank from the outside. The platoon

then worked round the point, rushed it and killed five Germans and captured three more; the rest of the garrison ran off towards Graincourt, but being caught by Lewis-gun fire before reaching the village, again suffered casualties."

(Ibid)

Huddersfield's 2/5th Battalion then encountered stiffer resistance:

"Preceded by tanks, 'D' Company of the 2/5th then attacked Kangaroo Alley, which was captured without much opposition and consolidated. The remaining Companies, 'A', 'B', and 'C', then passed through 'D' Company and advanced towards their objective, the enemy's trenches north of and running parallel with the Cambrai-Bapaume Road. 'B' Company had a stiff fight with an enemy strong point, but it fell eventually and two more machine-guns, two officers and forty-nine other ranks were captured. 'C' Company captured a strong point near Lock 6, taking two officers and sixty-four other ranks. The remainder of the garrison with true Teutonic arrogance refused to leave their dug-outs; a 'P' bomb was therefore thrown into it and the dug-out with its occupants was destroyed."

(Ibid)

The 62nd Divisional artillery barrage had given them great confidence as recounted by Sir Walter Brathwaite, GOC 62nd Division:

"After the battle I asked a private in 187th Brigade, what he thought of the barrage and he replied - 'It was perfect: just in the right place. I could have stroked it as it rolled along in front of me.' I think (continued the General) the idea of a private soldier in the middle of the battle walking along behind the barrage, stroking it, is too good to be lost."

(Ibid)

The Dukes continued fighting even as darkness fell, about 5pm, until 10 pm that night. It had been a remarkable achievement as the Official Despatches recorded:

"This attack of the 62nd West Riding Division constitutes a brilliant achievement in which the troops concerned completed an advance of 4½ miles from their original front, over-running two German systems of defence and gaining possession of three villages."

(Ibid)

The tank support enabled them to sweep forward, and steadily to bomb and bayonet their way through the extensive German defences. Many were killed, and the line of advance was marked by an ever growing stream of German prisoners being escorted to their rear. The attack was a complete success. The 62nd Division had advanced 7,000 yards - the record for any one day up to that date in the war:

"The tank attack of the 20th November was a great success; it had demonstrated that, working in conjunction with infantry, the steel monsters had a most demoralising effect on the enemy, and that in the capture of strong points and machine-gun nests they were invaluable."

(The West Yorkshire Regiment, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1923.)

Thus by 4pm the use of massed tanks with infantry had broken the hitherto impenetrable German Hindenberg line and created a wide gap in their defences. But 179 tanks had become casualties on the first day - 65 by direct hits, 71 due to mechanical defects, and 43 by 'ditching' and other causes. Moreover those still mobile needed refuelling, ammunition, and maintenance if they were to be battle-ready:

"This should have been the moment when the cavalry poured through the gap and took up the advance, thus setting the seal upon the tanks' spectacular victory. Unfortunately this was not to be. For a variety of reasons the cavalry arrived late and were then cut to pieces by enemy fire as they tried to advance, their horses were killed or wounded so that they were reduced to fighting as infantrymen. They gained nothing and next day the battle reverted to the normal static dogfight. Over the next few days the situation went from bad to worse until, on 30th November, the Germans launched a major counter-attack. The tanks had all been withdrawn by then, back to the railheads, but some were quickly rounded up - in some cases taken off the railway flat cars, patched up and sent off to battle in small groups."

(Tank Commanders, Knights of the Modern Age. Lt Col G Forty. 1993.)

At 7pm on 20th November the 62nd Division received further orders from IV Corps that the advance would be continued on the following day. The division's task was to capture the enemy positions on the high ground west of Bournon Wood and Bournon Village. The IV Corps attack also involved the 51st (Highland) Division,

which was to attack Flesquières at dawn, and the 36th (Ulster) Division which was to attack on the left of the 62nd Division.

It was to be the four Dukes battalions of the 186th Brigade which were detailed with the capture of the Bourslon area and all the surviving tanks attached to the division together with a regiment of cavalry were allotted to their brigade. Zero hour was set at 10am. The night of 20th/21st November was therefore a busy one, each battalion had to reorganise and resupply following their day's battle and then be in position for a fresh attack across unknown ground. The division's artillery also had to move forward to support them and the gunners experienced great difficulty in crossing ground which was churned up by shellfire, criss-crossed with trench systems, and littered with the appalling debris of battle. Not least this was made worse by ground now grown muddy with rain and all to be done in the dark over unfamiliar ground in which friendly positions were not clearly defined. The passage of orders inevitably took time. Particularly as units were by now in unfamiliar positions and were unfamiliar with the precise locations of other units and headquarters in the division.

It was not until 10pm that Headquarters 62nd Division was able to issue orders for the next day's attack, and not until 2am that Headquarters 186th Brigade issued orders to its battalions and supporting arms. By this time commanding officers had themselves to appraise their respective tasks and break them down into company tasks. At all levels tired commanders were roused from sleep to ensure the passage of essential orders. Companies and platoons in turn had also to prepare and give orders to ensure that every man knew his part in the plan. It is therefore not surprising that battle preparations, and the passage of orders added to the need to man their defensive positions inevitably results in few infantrymen getting any rest when such large attacks are planned at short notice.

By this time the supporting tanks, with their exhausted crews, had withdrawn to refuel, replenish ammunition and carry out essential maintenance. Their brigade headquarters too did not receive orders until 5.30am, with tank crews only being briefed at 8am for an attack due to start two hours later some distance away. The Dukes' task was first to capture the line of the Bapaume-Cambrai Road, just south of Bourslon, with the 2/5th Battalion on the left, the 2/7th centre, and the 2/4th on the right to capture Anneux. Once this was captured, the 2/6th was to pass through and complete the capture of Bourslon.

Many of the massed supporting tanks that had supported them on the previous day had been bogged down during the previous day, others had been knocked out or needed repairs. The great morale boost that the apparently invincible tank had given them was tempered by the reality that they were no more than machines manned by men and needed rest and preparation. The Brigade orders therefore lacked certainty as to whether tanks would arrive in time, and even then they were not to be the massed tanks whose shock arrival had virtually guaranteed the previous day's successes:

"Orders issued by 186th Infantry Brigade were therefore in this strain: 'It is hoped that Tanks will act as follows at Zero'. Then followed details of the co-operation hoped for, which briefly may be stated: six were to advance through Anneux at a slow rate, up to the enemy's trench east of the village; they were then to turn left and advance along the objective given to the 2/4th Dukes. Four Tanks were to advance from the Cemetery just north of Graincourt, on to the objective laid down for the 2/7th Dukes. Four more were to move along the trench detailed as the objective of the 2/5th Dukes, and, finally, four Tanks were to move on Bourslon."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

Nor were the Germans inactive, for Ludendorff had immediately ordered several divisions, then at rest, immediately to reinforce the Cambrai sector of the Hindenberg Line, and Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria had also been asked to provide additional troops. At 6.15am Territorials of the 51st (Highland) Division had captured the Flesquières area and were in a position to support the 62nd Division's attack. The 2/4th Dukes' zero hour was slipped to 10.20am as its six supporting tanks had encountered difficulty in getting forward through Graincourt. Long before zero hour two squadrons of King Edward's Horse had reconnoitred the ground between Graincourt and Anneux, captured soldiers of the '52nd Brandenburgers', and discovered that the Bourslon Wood objective was held by the 52nd and 224th Brandenburgers of the 107th Division which had left the Russian Front on the 13th and detrained at Cambrai on the 18th. The sharp end of the 2/4th Battalion's attack on Anneux was formed by three platoons and six tanks:

"Resistance was first encountered south of the village, where enemy in considerable strength still held to his trenches and opened a heavy machine-gun fire on the men of the West Riding. As the two companies of the 2/4th drew near the trenches, however, the enemy's defence partly collapsed. Some of the enemy surrendered speedily, but others, showing a better spirit, fought on grimly until utterly wiped out. The two Tanks on each side of Anneux passed on to the enemy's trenches east of the village, whence heavy machine-gun fire was now coming. The two Tanks detailed to go through Anneux, however, followed closely by infantrymen, entered the village and were soon engaged in clearing the enemy from the houses, at the windows of which many Germans had stationed themselves

in order to snipe the troops as they passed through. Here also grim fighting took place. The Lewis gunners, on this occasion, fired their guns as the German infantry had fired their rifles at Mons in 1914, from the hips."

(Ibid)

Firing a Lewis gun 'from the hip' is no mean feat for a heavily laden infantryman for the gun alone weighed over 32 pounds with one magazine on, and the gunner, in addition to his normal load, had to carry a magazine which despite weighing an additional 4½ pounds only held 47 rounds. The 2/4th Battalion's attack was eventually stopped short of its objective by insuperable enemy machine-gun fire. But the battalion had made a substantial gain, as well as capturing over 300 prisoners and 13 machine-guns.

Milnsbridge's 2/7th Battalion at first made a rapid advance until it was held up by the same enemy machine-guns that had stemmed the 2/4th Battalion to their right flank. The tanks supporting Huddersfield's 2/5th Battalion did not arrive and they were unable to force a way through the thick belts of uncut barbed wire which protected the enemy positions:

"Strong enemy reinforcements were now pouring down the trenches from the direction of Mœuvres and further progress was impossible. But about 3.30am the Adjutant found a Tank which had lost direction and easily persuaded its commander to assist the 2/5th in getting forward. Entering the Tank, the Adjutant personally directed it towards the point where the Battalion was held up. All four companies then attacked with the Tank and captured the enemy's trench system as far as E.21.b.5.7. and E.21.b.6.0. As the Tank moved forward ahead of the 2/5th, it stumbled on a Battalion of troops being formed up for a counter-attack. The steel monster dashed at this battalion and dispersed it. The position was then consolidated - 'C' Company being on the left, 'A' Company left centre, 'B' Company right centre and 'D' Company right. At 5pm the enemy, having meantime re-assembled, counter-attacked but was driven off by Lewis-gun and rifle fire."

(Ibid)

Although the Dukes had not captured the planned final objective, they had made an advance of over 2,000 yards:

"What had happened ? The Tanks, which had started fresh and filled up with supplies on the morning of 20th, found it increasingly difficult to refill as the line advanced. No one was to blame; the Tank was on its trial and had fulfilled all its inventor had claimed for it. But there were still difficulties to overcome and refilling was one of them. Until this battle it was not fully realized that the strain on the crews, shut up all day inside the Tanks and subjected to exhaustion, was so great that, for a two-day battle fresh Tanks must be kept in reserve for the second day, or, the Tanks must be withdrawn to a rallying point where the crews could rest and the Tanks be refilled and refitted."

(Ibid)

It must be remembered that both days' work had demanded a tremendous physical effort, the fighting had been heavy, the marching heavy, and the 'going' heavy. They had little sleep either on the 19th/20th or the 20th/21st, and there is a limit to human endurance. In two days the four Dukes' battalions of the 186th Brigade had captured 1138 prisoners, 34 field guns and 38 machine-guns plus one trench mortar, as well as inflicting substantial casualties whilst gaining a record amount of ground. The division had captured Havrincourt, Graincourt, Anneux, and the high ground west of Bourlon Wood which had been taken by the Dukes' brigade. All this whilst fighting through the 'impregnable' Hindenberg line:

"On the left wing the 62nd Division had been aided in its renewed advance by eighteen tanks of 'G' Battalion (1st Tank Brigade). Four of them drove into Anneux that morning followed by an infantry company, while others helped to extend the advance further left. In the afternoon some of the tanks penetrated into Bourlon Wood but the infantry failed to follow them up, after being halted by machine-gun fire. It was unfortunate that so little weight and energy were put into the IV Corps attack on this second day, for German accounts state that there was a gap three miles wide between Moser's Corps covering Cambrai and its right-hand neighbour."

(The Tanks, the History of the Royal Tank Regiment, 1914-1945. Capt B H Liddell Hart. 1959.)

By 2am on the 22nd November the West Yorkshire Territorials of the 185th Brigade had relieved the Dukes in the front line. By now the decision had to be taken whether to go on or to stop and hold on to the ground gained. In the early planning stage Sir Douglas Haig had placed a forty-eight hour time limit upon Lieutenant General Sir Julian Byng's attack on Cambrai, and this time limit had now expired. Not only were enemy reinforcements being rushed to the area, but some had already arrived and were taking part in the fighting. The positions that the British had captured however were tenuous for they remained under the domination of untouched German positions on the Bourlon Ridge which dominated the area. Either Bourlon Ridge had to be captured or the British must withdraw to the Flesquières Ridge.

The British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, decided to advance even though the critical element of surprise had been lost and the fact that the troops who had taken part were battle-weary and needed essential rest before they could go on with the attacks. This resulted in the 62nd Division being relieved by the 40th Division who were now tasked with continuing the attack. On the night of the 22nd November the 62nd Division began to be relieved by the 40th Division, and this was completed during the night of the 23rd November. During the 62nd Division's operations between 20th and 23rd November its infantry alone had sustained a total of 1,678 either as casualties or missing. Even as they withdrew to rest and lick their wounds, a contrast in Britain was that the church bells, which had remained silent to act as an invasion alarm, rang out across the nation as a celebration of the British victory at this Battle of Cambrai.

Thus the first phase of the Battle of Cambrai was completed as the Dukes moved back to rest in shacks at Havrincourt Wood. Here they were met by Major General the Earl of Scarbrough who was the Director-General of the Territorial and Volunteer Forces, as well as being chairman of the West Riding Territorial Force Association. The Earl had been busy for he had already visited their sister 49th (1st West Riding) Division in the trenches at Ypres on the previous day. Even as this took place preparations for their next part in the battle were being made:

"The Divisional [Artillery] Ammunition Column which, when the battle opened on the 20th, had a dump near Clayton Cross in the north-west corner of Havrincourt Wood, had, by the 22nd, formed its forward dump at Havrincourt. Owing to the state of the ground the DAC had a most strenuous time and most of the carrying was done by means of pack animals, which were invaluable. The Field Companies, Royal Engineers, had been ordered to pay special attention to the clearing of the tracks, the filling in of shell holes and the making of deviations round craters. The battered and wrecked roads were to be made good, special wire-cutting parties formed, while each man was ordered to carry two sandbags. In all these things the Sappers did their part well. The Signals Company responsible for communications throughout the operations recorded that poles and wires held well, but unpoled wires were constantly broken by shell fire. Communications by means of runners and wireless were adequate and pigeons were also used with marked success."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

Late on the night of 24th November Headquarters 62nd Division received orders from Corps Headquarters for them to relieve the 40th Division on the following night, and a 'warning order' was sent out to its brigade headquarters at midnight. Thus with less than 24 hours' respite the Dukes' 186th Brigade was yet again summoned to battle. Between 1pm and 2pm on 25th November their 186th Brigade crossed the Canal du Nord, near Graincourt, and took post on the right flank of the 62nd Division's sector with the 187th Brigade to the left, and the 185th Brigade in a reserve position near Graincourt. Even as they moved forward all four Dukes' battalions came under heavy enemy shellfire as they marched away from Graincourt towards Bournon Wood where they were to relieve two Guards battalions which were temporarily attached to reinforce a depleted 40th Division:

"Just as we had left the road with its throng of walking wounded going in the other direction (I remember particularly one big Guardsman with a streaming head wound) we encountered a stiff barrage which the Germans were raining down on the approaches to Bournon Wood. We shook out in artillery formation, and sheltered in shell holes till the fury abated. We then moved on in short rushes and got clear of that belt of shell fire. It was not quite dark, and I took interest in watching from our shell hole how one house after another was toppling to pieces in Graincourt. Our progress through the barrage was carried out in parade ground fashion, a splendid manoeuvre, and I don't think we had a single casualty, which was wonderful. The next job was to get across the Bapaume-Cambrai road."

(The Iron Duke, Volume VII, Number 19, June 1931.)

It was dusk when the relief commenced and the 2/4th Battalion arrived at a quarry to relieve the 4th Battalion Grenadier Guards only to find that the Guardsmen had no orders to handover their sector. This resulted in a two-hour delay before the handover was confirmed during which the 2/4th Dukes lost 40 casualties due to enemy shellfire on the battalion which was left unprotected in the open.

186th Brigade completed the relief by about 10pm with 187th Brigade to their left and the 2nd Guards Brigade to their right. The night of the 25th/26th November found the Dukes under intermittent enemy sniping and machine-gun fire together with enemy shell-fire:

"A number of the late occupants were scattered about in and around the trench. I was examining one with my torch (he was not wearing a steel helmet, only a round forage cap), and, by his high cheekbones, and slit eyes, seemed to have come from the Eastern side of Prussia, a real Slav, when the Company Commander interrupted my investigations by calling out 'Chuck out that stuff'. We explored the dug-out. The shaft down was a long slope (not stepped) with thin laths nailed across to prevent one from slipping from top to bottom. Like all the dug-outs in the Hindenberg Line system that I went down, it was too deep according to our idea. Indeed, the deepness of the dug-outs proved

to a large extent to be the undoing of the occupants. When surprised, they never got up top in time. More 'stiffs' had to be removed from here."

(Ibid)

On the morning of the 26th November a small hut in the grounds of Havrincourt Chateau held Sir Douglas Haig, Lieutenant General Sir Julian Byng (commanding the Third Army), General Sir Charles Woolcombe (commanding IV Corps), General Braithwaite (62nd Division), together with the other commanders and staffs of the Allied divisions involved in the fighting for Cambrai. It was at this meeting that a decision to continue the attack was made. This resulted in a plan involving the Guards and the 62nd Divisions, supported by tanks, to attack the German defensive line of Bourlon Village to Bourlon Wood to Fontaine Notre Dame. 'Zero Hour' was set for 6.20am the following day. The plan was not well received by the GOC Guards Division who put his reservations about it in writing to the Corps Commander.

The 62nd Division's part was to attack Bourlon Wood and Bourlon Village on a two brigade front with the Dukes 186th Brigade on the right, and the 187th Brigade on the left. 185th Brigade was to supply one battalion to supplement each of the two attacking brigades. The remainder of the 185th Brigade was to form a reserve together with the 2nd Mounted Brigade in the dismounted role. This dismounted use of the cavalry was somewhat ironic for the initial concept of battle for the 20th was that they were to dash through the gap made by the infantry and tanks to exploit the break-in. However the critical need to capture the vital high ground now directed they fought as infantry. Only twenty tanks were made available, of these sixteen went to support the 187th Brigade's planned attack on Bourlon Village, with the remaining six tanks to the four Dukes battalions.

Five artillery brigades were made available for the 62nd Division's attack. But they were unable to carry out a preliminary bombardment of Bourlon Village due to the fact that three companies of the Highland Light Infantry, of the 40th Division, which had attacked the village in previous days, were thought to be still holding out in the ruins. In the event, this lack of artillery support was seriously to affect the attacks by the two West Riding Brigades.

The assault took place in a heavy drizzle after a snowy night. The Dukes and their tanks advanced in the dark promptly at 6.20am, and the Germans immediately responded with a heavy barrage on Bourlon Wood. It was very difficult to move forward as the eastern portion of Bourlon Wood was full of dense undergrowth which was so thick that it was not possible to see more than twenty or thirty yards. The 2/5th Battalion experienced particular difficulty, not only due to the impenetrable cover, but also because of clusters of hostile machine-gun posts. It was not until early afternoon that the battalion managed to fight its way to the northern wood edge. By this time the Guards, to the battalion's right, had already withdrawn to their original jumping-off positions.

Skipton's 2/6th Battalion fared little better for it also had difficulty in keeping direction in the woods. Despite meeting heavy opposition the battalion eventually fought a way through to the edge of Bourlon Village. Here no further progress could be made as the ruins were heavily defended and the battalion was unsupported on either flank. They remained in place until 5pm when, still unsupported, the battalion withdrew to a crest line in Bourlon Wood from where the enemy positions in the village could be overlooked. The day's work had cost the 2/6th Battalion 173 killed and wounded.

The 2/7th Battalion passed through the 2/6th Battalion, as planned, to capture buildings alongside the main road for which it was supported by two additional companies from the 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion, 185th Brigade. They also met tremendous enemy machine-gun fire which made any further advance impossible:

"Throughout the remainder of the day, until about 4.30pm, the situation remained unchanged. But at that hour a strong counter-attack, accompanied by heavy shelling of the positions occupied by 186th Infantry Brigade along Bourlon Village Road, forced the gallant troops, who had gained and held this position all day long, back to the centre of the [Bourlon] Wood, to a line a short distance in advance of the original line held in the morning. The line on the right, however, remained unchanged."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The concurrent attack by the Guards Division on Fontaine had been supported by eleven tanks, and they had at first succeeded in breaking into the village. Three Guards battalions had reached their objective on the far side of the village but at a tremendous cost in guardsmen and tanks which for the first time were engaged in street-fighting. But the guardsmen were absolutely exhausted and were soon enveloped by a large German counter-attack which drove them back to their starting line. Of the 1,500 guardsmen who attacked less than 500 returned at the end of the day.

It should be remembered that tank tactics were in their infancy, and it was the shock of their appearance, as much as their destructive power, that had brought these early successes. Lieutenant Colonel J F C Fuller, a senior tank officer, had spent three weeks thinking through the probabilities of the tank attack at Cambrai. The resulting destruction of the tanks and guardsmen at Fontaine had never entered his appreciation, for it did not

occur to him that 'infantry commanders' would thrust tanks into street-fighting such as that at Fontaine. For in Fontaine the Germans overcame their initial fear of tanks and fought back as one German officer later reported:

"Armoured vehicles have entered the village [Fontaine]. It is found that they are able to conquer ground but not hold it. In the narrow streets and alleyways they have no free field for their fire, and their movements are hemmed in on all sides. The terror they have spread amongst us disappears. We get to know their weak spots. A ferocious passion for hunting them down is growing. We tie several grenades together and make them explode beneath the tanks."

(*First World War. Martin Gilbert. 1994.*)

The Dukes 186th Brigade was relieved by elements of the 2nd Dismounted Cavalry Division by 11pm on the 27th. The relief took place without incident and they moved back into the relative safety of Bourlon Wood, a further relief took place on the night of the 28th/29th November when the 47th (London) Division took over the 62nd Division's reserve positions, despite a concentration of enemy gas shells being fired into Bourlon Wood. By the afternoon the division moved back again to reserve areas with the Dukes occupying Bertincourt. Losses of the 62nd Division for the period between 25th and 28th November totalled 1,638 bringing the division's total for the whole battle of Cambrai to 3,322. The lack of Allied success in capturing the Bourlon feature resulted in an order to end the attack on Cambrai. However, the Allies had gained vital positions on high ground which dominated German positions to the north and were therefore in future able to attack them with artillery, and even to plan future offensives. The Commander of the German Second Army, von der Marwitz, responded with a Nelsonian order to his troops on 29th November:

"The English, by throwing into the fight countless Tanks on November 20th, gained a victory near Cambrai. Their intention was to break through; but they did not succeed, thanks to the brilliant resistance of our troops. We are now going to turn their embryonic victory into a defeat by an encircling counter-attack. The Fatherland is watching you, and expects every man to do his duty."

(*West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.*)

The German counter-attack was set for the 30th November and included preparatory fire using 16,000 gas and high-explosive shells on the Allied positions in Bourlon Wood. The ensuing German attack pushed the Allies back three miles during which they captured 6,000 British prisoners and 158 guns before the Allies could stem their advance.

During this counter-attack the Dukes 186th Brigade was ordered to move forward on the afternoon of 30th November to the area east of the Canal du Nord. But they did not take an active part in stemming the German counter-attack for the 2nd and 47th (London) Divisions succeeded in beating off repeated German attacks. The Dukes were however subjected to enemy shellfire and one of the casualties in the Dukes 186th Brigade was the young Brigadier General R B Bradford VC MC, who was killed by shellfire on 30th November and whose place was then temporarily taken over by Lieutenant Colonel H E Nash, CO of the 2/4th Dukes.

Thus Cambrai had brought a glimpse of the possibilities of open attacking warfare, but matters now reverted to the stalemate of fixed trenches. Allied casualties at Cambrai were considerable, being 44,000 British and Canadian killed and wounded; German casualties were some 53,000. On the morning of 3rd December 1917 the 62nd Division received orders to move by train the next day to a rest area in the Arras-Bailleul area. However the division's West Riding Artillery brigades remained behind to support the 47th (London) Division in countering the German attacks on the Bourlon Salient, but by 29th December they too had joined their division at rest. Here time was spent refitting and training as the old year passed to the new. The Battle of Cambrai had brought many lessons to the Territorials of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division:

"Back in the rest area, west of Arras, the [62nd] Division began a month of reorganization, refitting and training. Many valuable lessons were learned during the Cambrai operations, but the one which transcended all others was the effectiveness of the 'attack in depth'. Had a fresh division been available to push through the 62nd on the first day of the Battle (20th November), instead of troops who were only able to take over the fighting from their wearied comrades, much more might have been accomplished. Constant support from behind to give impetus to the attack was shown to be an absolute necessity. The formation adopted by the Division had been excellent; the careful training in the use of rifles, which the infantry had received during the period out of the line immediately before the Battle, was of the greatest value and the men went into action fully confident in their prowess as marksmen; the work of the Lewis gunners and machine-gunners and their training in holding up hostile counter-attacks had borne good fruit. Other items, such as the value of pack animals, the unsuitability of light trench mortars for open warfare, and the manner in which both tanks and infantry worked together in close liaison, were only a few of the many lessons learned during the Battle."

(*A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.*)

Thus as 1917 drew to a close the West Riding Territorials had two complete divisions serving in France and Flanders, 49th (1st West Riding) and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisions. These Saturday Night Soldiers had already paid a tremendous price, for their casualties to 31st December 1917 numbered 44,049 of which nearly 6,000 had been killed in action.

1918

1918 was to see the prize of final victory at first swing towards the Germans during their Spring Offensive, and then, finally, to the Allies during the 'advance to victory'. The year was also to see three members of the Dukes Territorial battalions being awarded the Victoria Cross.

Whereas the British Army of 1914 held between 20-25 miles of front-line, it was to rise to 123 miles in 1918 when the British Army on the Western Front stood at 1.75 million men. By 1918, the British Army had experienced an ever-rising casualty toll, particularly in the infantry. It was becoming increasingly difficult to provide infantry reinforcements. As a result, all Infantry Brigades were reduced from four to three infantry battalions. In the 49th (1st West Riding) Division, Huddersfield's 1/5th Battalion (147th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade) had some personnel transferred to other Dukes battalions in the brigade as reinforcements, the remainder were transferred to the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and amalgamated with its second-line 2/5th Battalion to form the 5th Battalion, (186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade). The 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade's reduction to three battalions was then achieved by the disbandment of Skipton's 2/6th Battalion, and the drafting of its personnel to the three other Dukes battalions in the brigade. Thus at the start of 1918 - the first-line 49th Division had the 1/4th (Halifax), 6th (Skipton) and 1/7th (Milsbridge), together forming the 147th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade; and the second-line 62nd Division the 2/4th (Halifax), 5th (Huddersfield), and 2/7th (Milsbridge), together forming the 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade.

New Year 1918 found the Dukes of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division completing their first period of the defence of the newly-captured Passchendaele Ridge, east of Ypres. Rest periods were taken at Ypres in Brigade Reserve at Infantry Barracks, a pre-war barracks of the Belgian Army. Whilst in reserve the Dukes were kept hard at work constructing elaborate new trench systems and tunnels in the Ypres Salient which had been enlarged since the capture of the Passchendaele Ridge. It was hard work, and not without risk for working parties occasionally came under enemy shellfire. The 49th Division's arrangement was for one brigade to be on these working parties whilst the remaining two were resting and training. On 20th February 1918 the General Officer 22nd Corps inspected the Dukes whilst at training:

"Great preparations were made for his arrival and a scout, posted at a useful point of observation along the road, gave early warning of his approach. His entry upon the training field was greeted with a volley of rifle grenades (not at him); Lewis guns and rifles opened rapid fire on the miniature rifle range, the marksmen all being arrayed in small box respirators; while a platoon, with many lurid epithets and a most unusual amount of energy, attacked rows of sacks with bayonets. It is hoped that the GOC was suitably impressed. At any rate he ought to have been. But his only comment after this great display of the Battalion's offensive spirit was 'How are the men's boots?'. Later in the day he presented medal ribbons, at a ceremonial parade, to a number of officers and other ranks of the 147th Infantry Brigade."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The following day the 49th Division moved into the Reutel Sector, east of Polygon Wood, of the Ypres front line. Back in 1914 it was about here, on the Menin Road, that the German attack had been halted by the British Expeditionary Force. At that time The Northumberland Hussars became the first Territorial cavalry unit to be in action during the Great War when they had been rushed forward from Hooze to support 2nd Battalion The Warwickshire Regiment who had been fighting continuously for four days when the Territorial Hussars arrived. Returning to 1918, this was the first time that the 49th Division had held part of the line with three-battalion brigades. The division's left sector was held by the West Yorkshires of the 146th Brigade which had one battalion in the front at any one time. The right sector was alternately held by the Dukes 147th Brigade which interchanged with the KOYLI and York and Lancaster's of 148th Brigade inter-relieving every eight days. The sector was taken over from a New Zealand division which had not only been active in the offence but had also done a remarkable amount of work to maintain the trench systems. However little could be done to drain away the inevitable swamp that was typical of the Salient. The Dukes continued the New Zealander's offensive spirit with harassing machine-gun shoots, patrols and raids. Sniping was very active, for the enemy had no continuous front line and could be seen at most hours of the day. One particular German at a low pill-box near Juniper Wood was a particular target:

"Here there was one little German who became very well-known to everyone. He was bald-headed, and something of a sportsman. Many men spent hours trying to snipe him, and he was only too ready

to retaliate. He fired over the top of the pill-box, but was careful not to show himself too often in the same spot. A man watching for him would see a rifle barrel slowly appear over the top, followed by a bald head. Sometimes he might succeed in getting a shot; at other times, the bald head would disappear too quickly. Then the situation would be reversed; the little German would be up first, and it would be the turn of the British to duck quickly. And so things went on day after day, with little execution on either side, and 'honours even'."

(Ibid)

As always they were subjected to hostile artillery fire including 'Blue Cross' gas shells which had not been encountered before, these were however comparatively harmless causing only violent sneezing. Days were also spent practising wearing the new 'box respirators'. To this was added the constant need to maintain the trenches, find carrying parties, carry out patrols and raids:

"From the start, the flanking sections went well and reached their positions without difficulty; but the section under the direct command of the platoon commander, whose special objective was the pill-box, was delayed by the short firing of one of the barrage guns. In the meantime, about twenty of the enemy got out of a trench in rear of the pill-box and tried to escape. They were heavily fired on by the flanking sections and many were brought down. As soon as the barrage lifted off the pill-box, two of the enemy mounted a light machine-gun on the top; but both were shot down before they could open fire."

"By this time the centre section had got forward, worked round the pill-box, and captured one or two prisoners in rear of it. The pill-box itself was then attacked. A Mills bomb was inserted through a loophole and a M.S.K. grenade was dropped down the ventilation shaft. The latter immediately had its effect, about thirty Germans coming out with their hands up. How so many had been able to crowd into so small a space cannot be conceived. A Stokes shell was thrown into the pill-box and then, about 7.20am, the withdrawal was ordered. A few minutes later the raiding party, with the exception of two dead near the pill-box, and some wounded still in No Man's Land, was back in its own lines."

(Ibid)

Three enemy machine-guns and 37 prisoners were taken in this raid, as well as the numerous dead and wounded Germans. Much to the Dukes' amusement they discovered that amongst the prisoners was the bald-headed sniper. The Germans were allowed to recover their many wounded from around the pill-box under the cover of a white flag. Whilst the German white flag was up the Dukes started to recover their wounded, but, whilst this was in progress, the Germans completed retrieving their wounded and dropped the white flag, immediately opening fire upon the stretcher bearers. In spite of this act, all those wounded in the raid were eventually retrieved to their own lines. As February became March the days which followed brought a marked increase in enemy shellfire, perhaps as retaliation, but also to hold British troops in the Ypres sector whilst German assault troops were built up elsewhere ready for the imminent offensive:

"The period which followed was one of anxious expectation. For the last month signs had been accumulating of the imminence of a great enemy offensive. It was known that many of his best divisions had been brought over from the Russian Front, and that his armies had never been so strong in the West before. In the early months of the year attack training had been carried out on an unusually large scale. And now information obtained from almost every prisoner pointed to a great attack in the very near future. Every possible precaution had been taken in the Second Army to meet an attack, should it come on that front, and all were anxiously awaiting for the enemy to make his first move."

(Ibid)

1918: THE GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVE

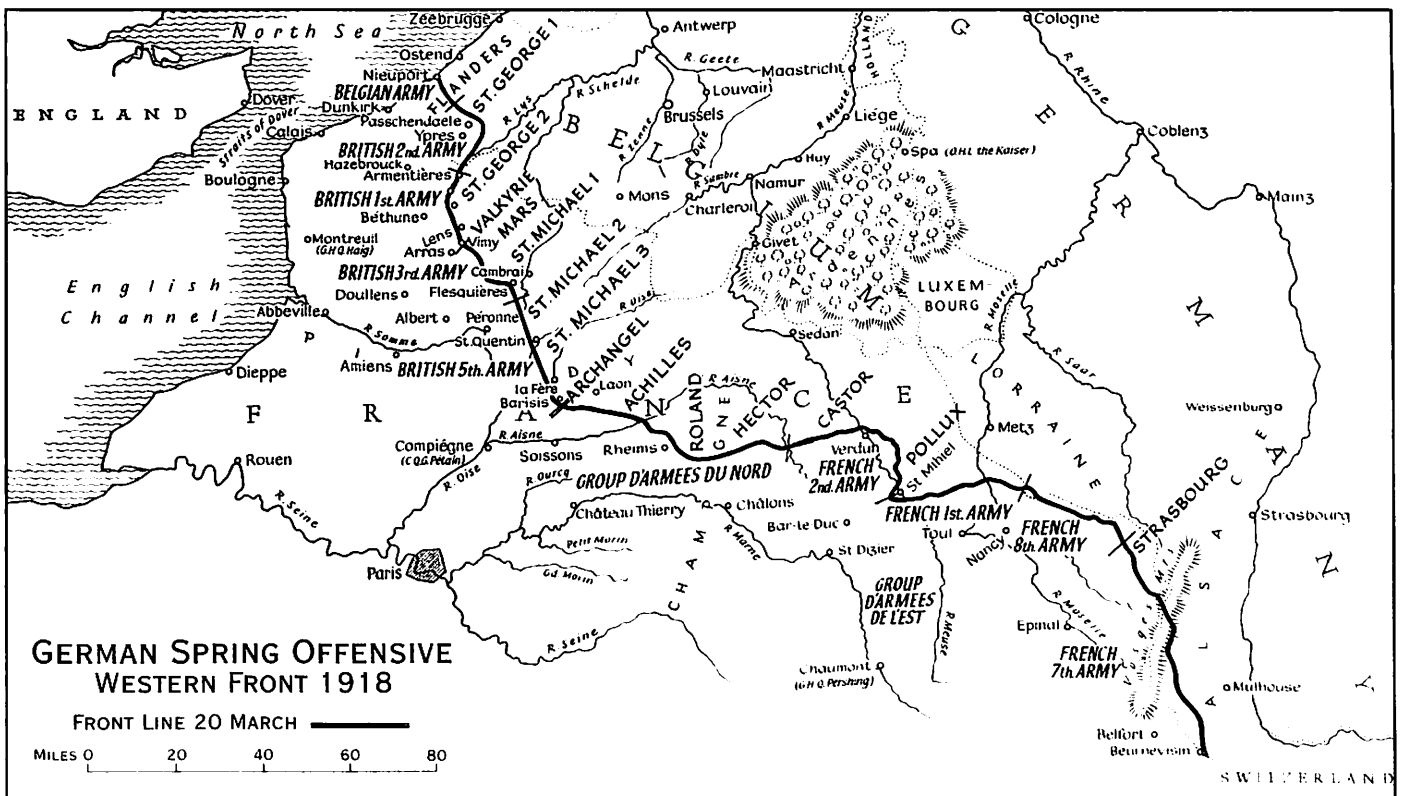
1918 saw the completion of a substantial rise of the German strength on the Western Front. Their timely withdrawal to the shorter Hindenberg Line in early 1917 had placed a smaller demand for front-line infantry. All hostile action between Germany and Russia had already ceased following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed on 9th February 1918. Germany no longer had to fight on two fronts. The collapse of the Russian Army on the Eastern Front allowed the Germans rapidly to transfer a massive number of Divisions to the Western Front using the excellent rail networks Germany had developed. In the three and a half months following November 1917 Germany moved twenty-eight infantry divisions from the Eastern Front, and a further six infantry divisions from the Italian Theatre. By 21st March 1918 Germany had amassed a total of 192 divisions on the Western Front, an increase of 46 since November 1917, comprising the German Seventeenth, Fourth and Sixth Armies. The 21st March 1918 was a key date in the Great War. It saw the opening of a great German offensive in which 76 German divisions made three consecutive attacks on the Allied Lines at the Somme, the Lys and the Marne. This was to

become known to the Germans as the *Die Kaiserschlacht* - the 'Emperor's Battle'. Ludendorff's objectives were for his German Armies to drive the British from the Somme and the French from the Aisne in order to capture Paris. Opposing the 76 German divisions Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig only had 34 divisions, formed in two Corps each of 17 divisions.

German artillery specialists had by now realized an important fact. However effective massed artillery was, in both preparatory bombardment before an attack, and creeping barrages during the assault, it could never be capable of wholly destroying the deep defensive positions that had progressively developed during the war. One German artilleryman, Colonel Bruchmiller, developed a technique of 'neutralisation fire' on the Eastern Front during 1917. Its main purpose was not to kill defenders or destroy the defences, but to produce artillery fire of such ferocity that it temporarily numbed the most determined defender to the point that he could not put up any resistance. No hint of such neutralisation fire was given in advance. German gunners were not permitted to range-in on targets beforehand, except as part of routine shoots. Pre-determined concentrations of guns, stockpiled ammunition, and troops were carefully concealed until the moment of the assault. This technique produced an avalanche of gas and high-explosive shells which completely stunned and disorientated defenders so 'neutralising' them for long enough for the assaulting German infantry to completely break through their deep defences.

In addition, selected groups of *Sturmabteilung* (Stormtroopers), armed with light machine-guns, light mortars and flamethrowers, were tasked with carrying out deep infiltration with the aim of bypassing the main defences, leaving them for the following waves, especially to attack command headquarters and artillery gun-lines. As will be seen the German Spring avalanche did not succeed, but the artillery lessons were well learned and employed by the Germans twenty years later as 'blitzkrieg' tactics. The German attacks were overwhelming in numbers, and nearly successful. Their defeat was only brought about by the dogged defence put up by the British Tommy.

Facing the first German assault was the British Third Army which was reasonably strong. But the British Fifth Army was understrength and holding poor positions; this Army had also been recently required to take over an additional twenty-eight mile sector from the French Army. It was therefore thinly spread over a 130 miles wide front resulting in a lack of depth to its defensive posts. On the whole the British Army was stretched to its limit. Both from the heavy fighting of 1917, when it had been required to take pressure off the French Armies, and now with the additional strain of taking over yet more frontage from the French. Nor had the wholesale disbandments and reorganisations in order to reduce infantry brigades from four to three infantry battalions done much for their morale, for, although necessary, these changes were greatly resented by the infantry. The Dukes Territorials were about to be actively engaged in three of these German offensive. In the first, the second-line battalions were to be fighting on the Somme at the defence of Bucquoy. Just three weeks later the first-line battalions were battling to hold the line on the River Lys, also on the defensive. With these two undoubtedly successful defensive battles behind them, the Dukes were then switched to counter-attacking when the second-line battalions moved to the Rheims' sector.



21st MARCH 1918 - THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

The German attack on 21st March 1918 was heralded by a five hour bombardment across a forty mile front from 6,000 heavy guns and 3,000 mortars. During the first two weeks the Germans were to fire two million gas shells at the Allied positions. The first day was to see the Germans advancing up to 4½ miles in places, taking 21,000 British soldiers prisoner, as well as inflicting a further 17,000 British casualties. Winston Churchill happened to be visiting a front line headquarters when the barrage began, he was only just able to escape before the Germans over-ran the position. The German assault was of a terrible ferocity:

"Tons of steel and high-explosive fell with shattering force upon the [British] forward positions and the Battle Zone. As the men crouched deafened and dazed in their trenches or staggered drunkenly towards control points, the ground rocked and heaved under them, the surrounding fog coiled and twisted then sweetened suddenly with the sinister taint of lethal lachrymatory gas. Shocked, cursing with anger yet sick with fear, those who survived the first few seconds pulled on their gas masks and listened despite themselves for the sound of their own deaths rushing near. In the Battle Zone, gun positions, battery and brigade headquarters, telephone exchanges and road junctions collapsed or split apart under the weight of fire. Ammunition dumps blew up in towering mushrooms of flame and destruction, the laboriously laid signal wires were ripped apart, and cannon were pounded into unrecognisable masses of bloodstained metal - some before they had fired their first rounds. For forty miles the eastern horizon was a line of leaping red flame, with a dulled reflection beneath the sheet of fog which covered the British positions."

(1918: *The last Act*. Barrie Pitt. 1962)

Overwhelming numbers soon began to force the British Army back towards the Channel Ports. Reinforcements were desperately needed. On the 21st March 1918 the Dukes in the 147th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade, 49th (1st West Riding) Division, were in the Ypres Salient, still occupying the Reutel sector. They had little indication of the large German offensive that was taking place to their south. Their sector was virtually normal apart from an unusually heavy enemy bombardment on their front line at 7.30am. They were to remain holding the Ypres Salient during this first phase of the German offensive. To the south their second-line battalions were quickly drawn in to stem the German tide.

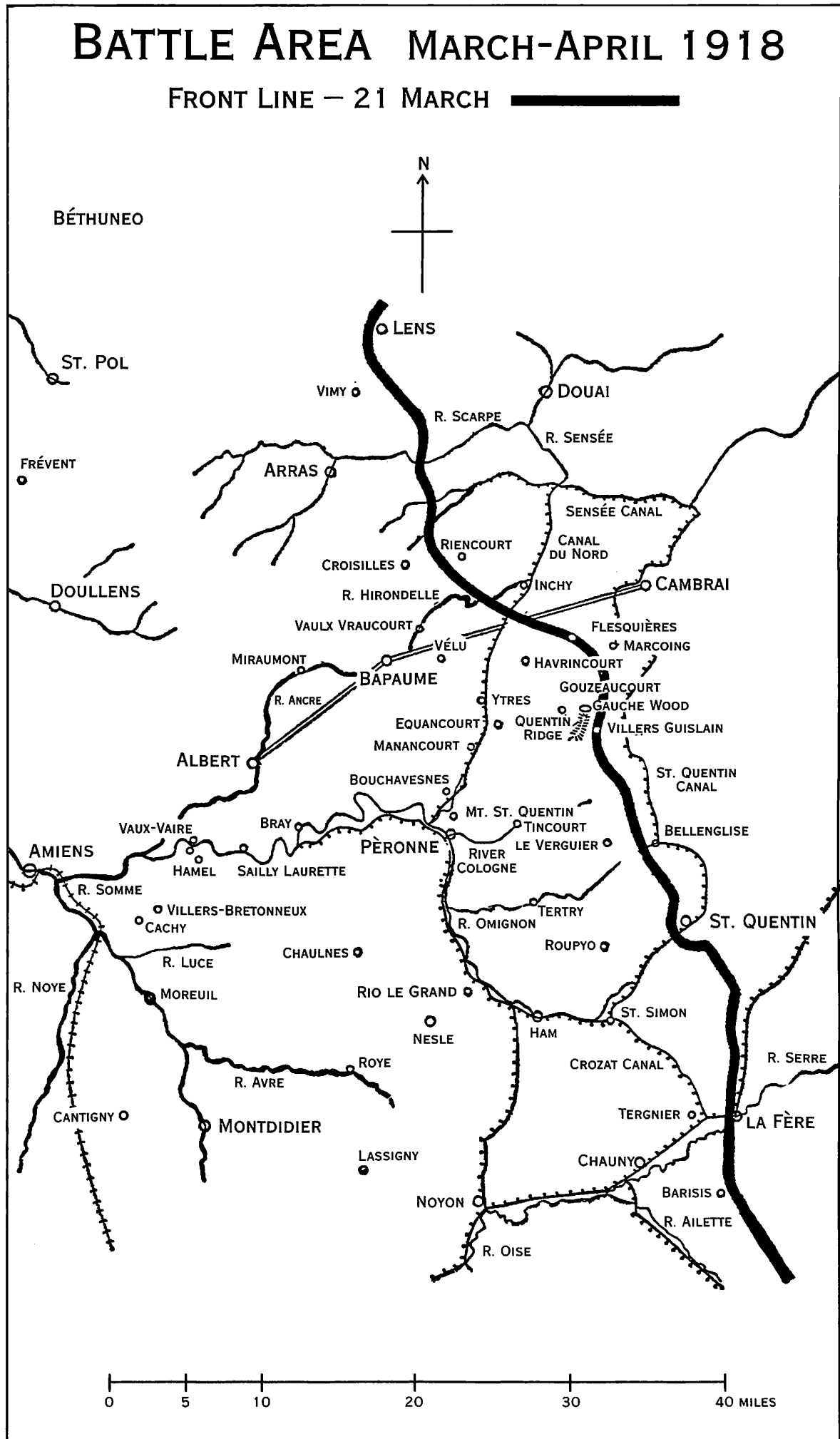
THE DEFENCE OF BUCQUOY

The second-line Dukes in the 186th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, were at Arleux, north of the River Scarpe, a short distance away from the first offensive. They experienced heavy enemy shellfire between 4.45am and 10.30am but the barrage was not followed up by a ground attack on their sector. During the day of the 23rd the 62nd Division was relieved by the 3rd Canadian Division and moved back to Lancaster Camp and at Mont St Eloy. Here the division's 187th Brigade was immediately detached with orders to move forward and join the 17th Corps for future operations. Throughout this time wild and exaggerated rumours of German successes filtered through. Official news soon followed that the British 5th and 3rd Armies were being hard-pressed by murderous enemy artillery fire and overwhelming numbers of enemy troops. On the 24th March the Germans crossed the River Somme. This threatened to drive the intended wedge between the British and French Armies. Field Marshal Haig urged Pétain to send French troops to assist the British Army, but he declined, fearing that the Germans were about to launch an attack to the south in Champagne.

At midnight on the 25th March the 62nd Division received orders from Third Army Headquarters for it to move with its remaining 185th and 186th Brigades to Alette, north of Bucquoy, there to come under the orders of 4th Corps:

"Before leaving Arras all surplus stores and kit were dumped in the town; it was as well, for as the troops moved southwards the roads became ever more congested - guns and transport, despatch riders, staff cars and supply lorries and ambulances encumbered the highways and progress was tedious and slow. Through the dark hours of the night the 185th and 186th Infantry Brigades trudged on towards Alette, hoping to go into the line east of that place, but they were doomed to disappointment for, on reaching the village, the staff officer who had been sent to 4th Corps Headquarters brought orders that the [62nd] Division was to push on immediately to Bucquoy. Before reaching Alette numbers of French peasants, who had returned to their farms during the summer of 1917, were encountered about Adinfer; they had packed up and were once more fleeing westwards before the oncoming enemy."

(*A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1918*. Everard Wyrall. 1920)



At Bucquoy British forward divisions had already been engaged in constant fighting during which they had driven the enemy back with great loss. It was almost impossible for the two fresh West Riding Brigades to get forward to support them, the roads were terribly congested with all types of transport. Once at Bucquoy they were instructed to grab a meal but to hold themselves ready for a move at short notice. It was about 2pm and one Dukes Commanding Officer recorded the situation thus:

"If one had any doubts about the seriousness of the situation they were settled here; the whole area was a mass of guns of all types, limbers, ambulances, ammunition and transport and, moving at the rear, limping and worn-out men, many of them wounded, of the 41st, 19th, 25th, 42nd and 51st Divisions, seeking their units too tired from heavy fighting and lack of sleep to have any idea what was happening in front - no news, no orders, and yet no panic."

(Ibid)

The Dukes were called forward to the east of Bucquoy there to defend Achiet le Petit. The Brigade marched off to their new positions in 'artillery formation' with battalion bands cheerfully playing 'Colonel Bogey'. On arrival they deployed into hasty positions on the railway line with Huddersfield's 5th Battalion on the right, Milnsbridge's 2/7th Battalion left, and Halifax's 2/4th in reserve. The 5th Battalion met with little shellfire and no opposition and discovered an abandoned divisional camp from which the men salvaged extra blankets and other comforts. Thus by 5pm on 25th March the 62nd Division was guarding Achiet le Petit with the Dukes 186th Brigade on the right, and the West Yorkshires of the 185th Brigade on their left. Whereas the division's left flank was secured by the Territorials of the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, the flank on the right was 'in the air'. It was not long before their improvised positions became the new front line for, as evening fell, the remnants of the divisions which had been fighting to their front began to withdraw through them. Once this was completed the 62nd Division's line at Achiet le Petit became the 4th Corps front line.

It was clear to the West Riding Territorials that they would soon be in contact with the enemy. Little time was wasted and they rapidly prepared defences and cleared fields of fire. 187th Brigade was now released back to the division and, by midnight, had occupied a position to the rear. 9th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TF) [9 DLI] had been transferred to the 62nd Division from the 50th (Northumbrian) Division as part of the recent reorganisation. This battalion had been on active service since April 1915 in the infantry role but was now acting as the 62nd Division's pioneer battalion. 9 DLI now reverted to their infantry role and was moved onto the 5th Dukes right to cover the division's open flank. Further support came from the division's machine-gun companies, as the diary of the 62nd Battalion Machine-Gun Corps records:

"The machine-guns of all three [machine-gun] Companies holding strong and carefully selected positions from which good fields of fire, sweeping the valley and spurs were obtained. The situation was now obscure, the positions of our own troops and those of the enemy being inaccurately known. The position was a strong one, but both flanks were 'in the air' as far as could be ascertained. Little hostile shelling had been met with so far, a few 4.2s and 5.9s had, however, disturbed the apparent peace. All night long sounds of transport moving in Bucquoy could be heard. By midnight the (machine) gun teams had dug themselves in and were as safe and comfortable as a very cold and clear night would permit. The men and officers had no coats and were very tired after a long and tiring march. The men's spirits were good and they were confident of their ability to hold on in their present position."

(Ibid)

Matters were moving quickly at higher levels even as the Dukes prepared for the onslaught at Achiet le Petit. At 11pm on the 25th the Corps Commander had instructed Headquarters 62nd Division that the division must withdraw because of its open right flank and because 4th Corps, on the left, was also pulling back. It would otherwise result in the 62nd Division being unsupported on both flanks and inevitably result in its firstly being bypassed, then attacked on the flanks and inevitably being over-run by overwhelming numbers of German assault troops. But the poor state of the roads and traffic congestion did not permit brigade headquarters to receive these orders until 2 or 3pm. As a result several companies did not begin their withdrawal until dawn had broken. The night of the 25th/26th was, however, relatively quiet for the Dukes except for the 5th Battalion which came in contact with the enemy:

"About 11pm [25th March] the 5th Duke of Wellington's (the extreme right flank of the Divisional front line) noticed a large fire, evidently lit by the Germans to denote the flanks of attack. Shortly after, the Battalion outposts came into contact with a hostile outpost and fighting ensued. Several prisoners were taken and other Germans killed. 'The prisoners were well clothed and well fed and most optimistic - quite certain that the war was now over and that they had won'. Unfortunately for the enemy there happened to be someone even more optimistic than he was - the Yorkshireman!"

(Ibid)

They only had to withdraw about 3,000 yards west where the Dukes 186th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier J G Burnett, was tasked with holding the high ground between Bucquoy and Puisieux. 185th Brigade was on their left, and 187th Brigade in depth as before. The withdrawal was almost wholly carried out in daylight with the 5th Battalion particularly, on the open flank, being followed by large numbers of enemy troops. Its 'B' Company encountered an enemy cyclist patrol armed with light machine-guns and opened fire on them with their Lewis machine-guns which dispersed the enemy, but one Lewis gun and some Dukes were captured during the action.

The withdrawal of all three brigades was completed by 8am on 26th March. They were now in new unprepared positions, battalions were neither sure of their own deployment nor those of adjacent West Riding battalions and brigades. This created a serious risk of an unco-ordinated defence open to encirclement and infiltration. Even as they arrived the enemy main attack started at 8am on 26th March. German troops in 'artillery formation' advanced from the direction of Achiet le Petit. They were soon engaged by the 185th Brigade which checked the advance about 400 yards from the main position. The 62nd Division's area soon came under heavy fire from light trench mortars and artillery, enemy machine-gun fire raked the trenches of both forward brigades. The 5th Dukes, on the right, had already carried out a fighting withdrawal. It was now in a most exposed position but was supplemented with a further four machine-guns from the division's machine-gun battalion. The guns were soon in action as the enemy started to infiltrate Puisieux on the open right flank. The Germans were trying systematically to fight forward but were held back by vigorous rifle and machine-gun fire:

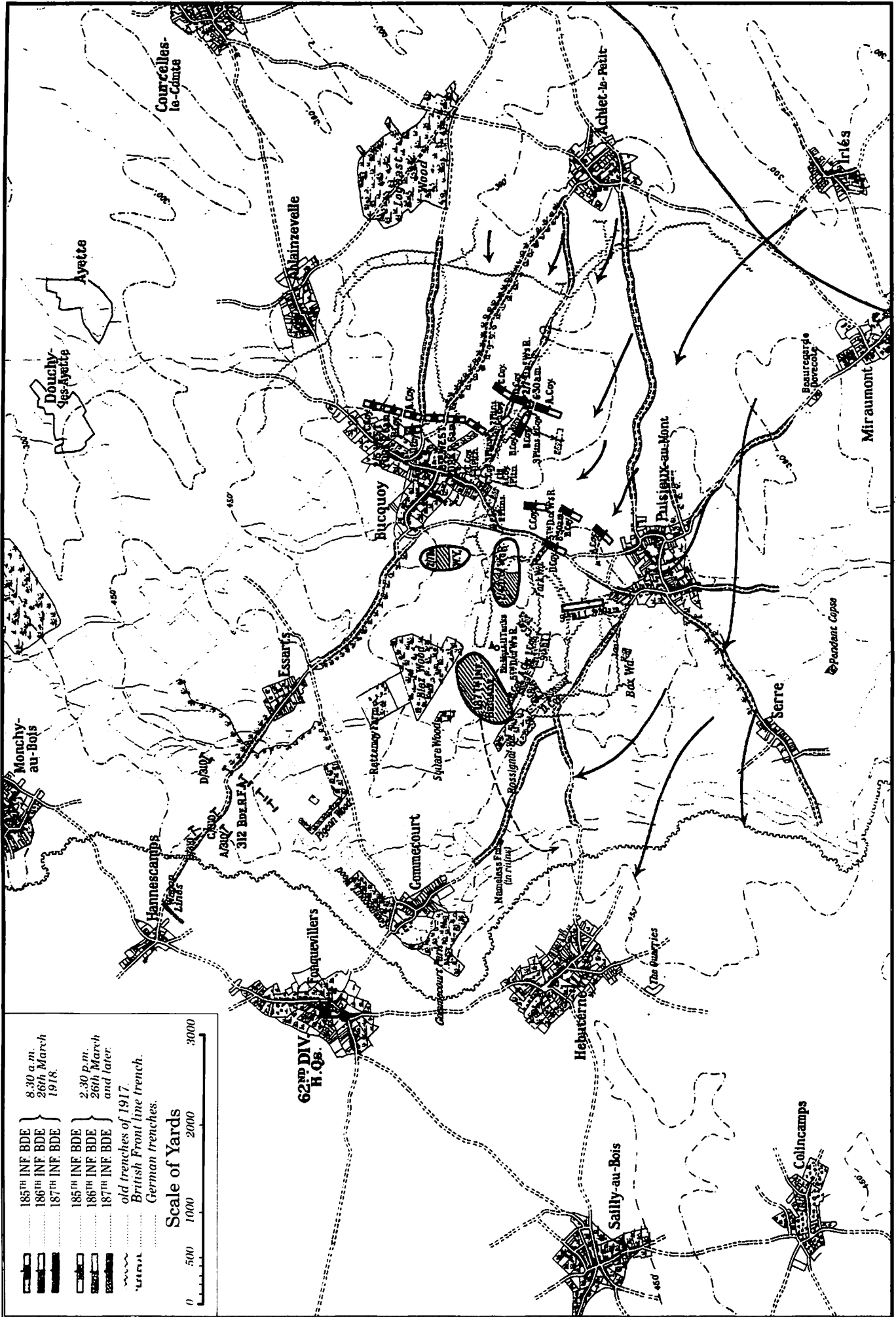
"The enemy's troops seemed countless, they came on unceasingly - Company after Company. Puisieux was full of them, while south of that place they could be seen advancing in great numbers westwards towards Serre, and it was not long before rumours were in circulation that he had reached Hebuterne. The 5th Duke of Wellington's held on as long as possible, frustrating a very determined effort about 11.30am to outflank the Battalion. But a move was imperative, and gradually, fighting all the way, Companies giving mutual support, the Battalion swung back its right and, in conjunction with D Company and the 9th Durham Light Infantry, took up a position just north of the Gommecourt-Puisieux Road from the south-east corner of Rossignol Wood, joining up with the left of the 2/4th Battalion [DWR]. All the while the left of the 5th Battalion had been out of touch with the 2/7th [DWR], whose whereabouts were unknown."

(Ibid)

Those British divisions which had doggedly fought the initial German onslaught were now well to their rear depleted in numbers and exhausted. The West Riding Territorials now faced a critical battle. They were on unfamiliar ground, facing overwhelming numbers of German infantry and the dispositions of the 62nd Division were unclear. Their flanks were vulnerable to enemy infiltration. Yet it was vital that this relatively fresh West Riding Division should now work with the Territorials of the East Lancashire Division if the Germans were not to burst through their final defensive line. They were to endure what were undoubtedly the most critical days of the Great War. Quite simply, if the Germans broke through it was very likely that they would quickly achieve their aims and win the war.

The 2/7th Dukes had also taken a heavy toll of the enemy as they passed south towards Puisieux, Lewis machine-gunners particularly caught the enemy in enfilade doing great execution. The battalion had no knowledge of the 5th Battalion which by now lay well behind the 2/7th's right flank. Attempts were made to deploy 'B' Company as a defensive right flank but there was a clear danger of German penetration and the Commanding Officer decided to carry out a controlled fighting withdrawal to a second position already selected at the south of Bucquoy. Even as this was completed he informed Brigade of his movement and was immediately ordered to re-take his former position which was by now occupied by the enemy. This was done with magnificent dash, particularly by 'A' Company which rushed and captured a number of machine-gun positions. Once in place the 2/7th Dukes managed to establish a link with the 8th battalion (Leeds Rifles), 185th Brigade, on the left, and the 2/4th Dukes which moved to close the gap between the 2/7th and the embattled 5th Battalion.

The 62nd Division's right flank lay on the boundary between its 4th Corps and 5th Corps. from 9am that day a huge gap of three to four miles had opened up. Rumours circulated that the Germans had penetrated through to Hebuterne, some four miles in their rear, but patrols found this to be untrue. The Germans too had lost large numbers of troops and were themselves exhausted. The next few days saw a last-ditch effort during which the Germans tried to force a wedge between the flanks of the 4th Corps (62nd Division), and the Vth Corps (12th Division), in a vain effort to penetrate the right Corps of the Third Army. Mid-day and the afternoon of 26th March witnessed massive German attacks pounding 62nd Division. The Germans were met by a veritable wall of machine-gun fire, without doubt the heaviest concentration in the whole war. This was not only generated by the West Riding Territorials but also from unexpected reinforcements. General Braithwaite, GOC 62 Division, was at his command post when a giant 6'6" General appeared in his doorway. The visitor was General 'Tiny' Ironside who commanded the British Machine-Gun School in France. "Have you any use for one hundred of the best machine-gunners in the world?", offered General Ironside, for he had been ordered to grab every available man and machine-gun and rush them to this most vulnerable point. "Have I not" responded General Braithwaite, "We went out there



THE DEFENCE OF BUCQUOY, MARCH 1918

and then I showed him the position I wanted him to occupy and was also able to show him some excellent targets, in fact targets that made many machine-gunners' mouths water". During the afternoon no less than five attacks were made upon the 62nd Division, all were bloodily repulsed. The machine-guns and rifles of the 2/7th Dukes caught the attacks on the West Yorkshires' front in enfilade and literally obliterated the German massed attacks. The last two attacks managed to reach the barbed wire, but here these too were shredded by a wall of fire from the determined Dukes. Only a few survivors crawled back to the German lines:

"It was amazing to see, 'said a CO of his Battalion', how cheerful all ranks were at this time of strain, partly because they could see the damage they inflicted, but mainly because of the sporting spirit that was in them; the more difficult and desperate the circumstances the more cheery and self-reliant they became."

(Ibid)

Dusk fell at about 5.30pm and the violent attacks on the 62nd Division died down. A heavy attack was made on the flank of the 5th Dukes at about 7pm but this was repulsed with the support of tanks. The Dukes had a busy time through the night of the 26th/27th with enemy sniper fire and patrols being sent out. They managed to capture prisoners from the celebrated German 'Cockchafers' of the 3rd Guards Division with whom they had already fought hand-to-hand battles in Bourlon Wood during the Battle of Cambrai. By nightfall the gap between the two Corps, on the Dukes' right, was partially filled by troops from the 4th Australian Brigade and elements from the New Zealand Division. As early as 7am on 27th March parties of enemy again resumed their attacks only to be immediately met by the West Riding's artillery, machine-guns and rifles. Yet again the machine-guns of 2/7th Dukes poured fire into the massed field-grey German ranks inflicting terrible slaughter as they tried repeatedly to force the gap. The fact that the Germans attacked in massed formation particularly resulted in their sustaining massive losses. Despite this volume of fire the enemy closed with the Dukes and engaged in a bombing contest in the old trench system at Rossignol Wood. Ammunition began to run low, and the battalion which had moved onto the 5th Dukes' right was driven back thus again exposing the vulnerable right flank. A dangerous gap again existed between the Dukes and the Australians. 187th Brigade, in reserve, now came into play with Sheffield's 2/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion and Doncaster's 5th KOYLI counter-attacking. They lost heavily in casualties during this battle during which the Commanding Officer of 5 KOYLI, Lieutenant Colonel Watson, gained the Victoria Cross for his actions.

The accounts of the fighting on the night of the 27th/28th are incomplete. No 'situation maps' were made, for it was a period of extreme stress and the keeping of records practically impossible. 28th March brought no respite with furious attacks made on the Dukes as eleven German divisions were hurled into the assault from Bucquoy to Avion. At 9am the 2/7th Dukes broke up a mass attack with long-range fire but the enemy continued massing and the 5th Dukes were swamped by a momentous enemy artillery barrage. An hour later, and with great strength and determination, massed waves of enemy again attacked the embattled West Riding Division. In the front of one Dukes' company alone some 200 German dead were readily seen. Time after time the Germans attacked right up to the 62nd Division's barbed wire but at no point did they pass. During the night of the 28th March the West Yorkshires of 185th Brigade counter-attacked to restore the gap between the Dukes and the Australians. The West Riding Territorials had achieved all that was asked of them in this epic battle. The line had held:

"Throughout the night no further attacks were made by the enemy; he had spent his fury, and had found the British Line unbreakable, not only on the front of the 62nd Division, but also on the whole front of attack astride the [River] Scarpe. The 26th, 27th and 28th March were days of which the 62nd Division might well be proud. The repeated attempts of the enemy to break through the line and roll up the flanks had nowhere succeeded. Gaps in the line had indeed been forced, but when the enemy attempted to exploit them his troops were caught in enfilade and were swept away ere they ever reached the wire."

(Ibid)

The tide eventually turned for the Allies on 30th March when the Germans were but eleven miles east of Amiens. They had in some places advanced up to 40 miles over-running all the Allied gains made on the Somme and had taken 90,000 Allied prisoners and 1,300 guns. The Germans made no further large attacks at Bucquoy, limiting operations to constant sniping, machine-gunning and bombing. Sniping was not all one way, with one 2/7th Dukes sniper claiming to have killed 31 Germans in a single day. The Dukes 186th Brigade was relieved on the night of 31st March/1st April by a brigade of the 37th Division. The remainder of the 62nd Division was relieved on the following day after which the whole division moved to a reserve area in the neighbourhood of Pas, Marieux and Authie. Here they set to work to reorganise and refit with all ranks being terribly exhausted after the epic Battle of Bucquoy. Here too to count the cost, for the 62nd Division had lost 92 officers and 2,084 other ranks killed, wounded and missing between 25th and 31st March. The German attack on the Somme was temporarily renewed on April 4th when, following a barrage from more than 1,200 guns, the Germans launched 15 divisions against 7 Allied divisions who held the attack. Ludendorff called off the Somme offensive on April 5th stating "The enemy resistance was beyond our powers". Prince Rupprecht also acknowledged that the German attack had

stalled - "The final result of the day is the unpleasant fact that our offensive has come to a complete stop and its continuation without careful preparations promises no success".

The period allowed for rest and reorganisation was at a minimum and the 62nd Division moved back to relieve the front line at Bucquoy, held by the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, on the night of 6th/7th April. Here April was to be comparatively quiet with time mainly spent on improving the shattered defences. By 25th April the division was moved back to the Authie area, at one hour's notice to move in Corps reserve, where they remained out of the line until 15th May 1918.

9th APRIL 1918 - THE LYS OFFENSIVE

No sooner than the first German offensive on the Somme had finished than another, codenamed 'Georgette', opened across the River Lys. Here the ground had experienced particularly dry weather in the first part of the year and encouraged a German attack. Their objective was first to cross the River Lys and over-run the southern sector of the Ypres Salient; then to seize the coastline between Calais and Dunkirk. It was to be launched between Armentières and the La Bassée Canal. The Flanders Plain east of Ypres is mainly flat and most of the key ridges no more than 50 feet high. Mont Kemmel and Mont des Cats, both 300 feet high, were in Allied hands, and therefore dominated the ground surrounding them.

The attack was planned as a 'pincer movement' by the German Fourth Army in the north, opposite Messines, and the Sixth Army to the south, opposite Neuve Chappelle. The sides of the pincers were to envelop Mont Kemmel and the Mont des Cats, the capture of which would require the British to abandon Ypres. This key area of the Allied line also contained the British reserves, supply depots and communications which were densely packed into a small area. Equally vital was the only lateral railway supply line network, apart from that on the coast, running through Hazebrouck which was very vulnerable, being only 15 miles behind the British front line. On the 9th April 1918, the German assault opened with 27 divisions which were reinforced during the offensive by a further 22 divisions. Of these 49 divisions only 9 had been involved on the Somme; the remaining 40 were fresh.

On the British side, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig had already employed 46 of his total force of 58 divisions to stem the German first offensive on the Somme. He therefore now had only 12 fresh divisions in France and Flanders to defend the threatened area from La Bassée to, and including, the Ypres-Comines Canal. In the 24 miles of front line between La Bassée and the Ypres-Comines Canal were six British Divisions. Of these six, five were 'New Army' (Kitchener) divisions which had recently moved to that sector on being relieved from the recent fighting on the Somme. The sixth was the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, a relatively fresh and experienced Territorial division placed to hold the southern flank.

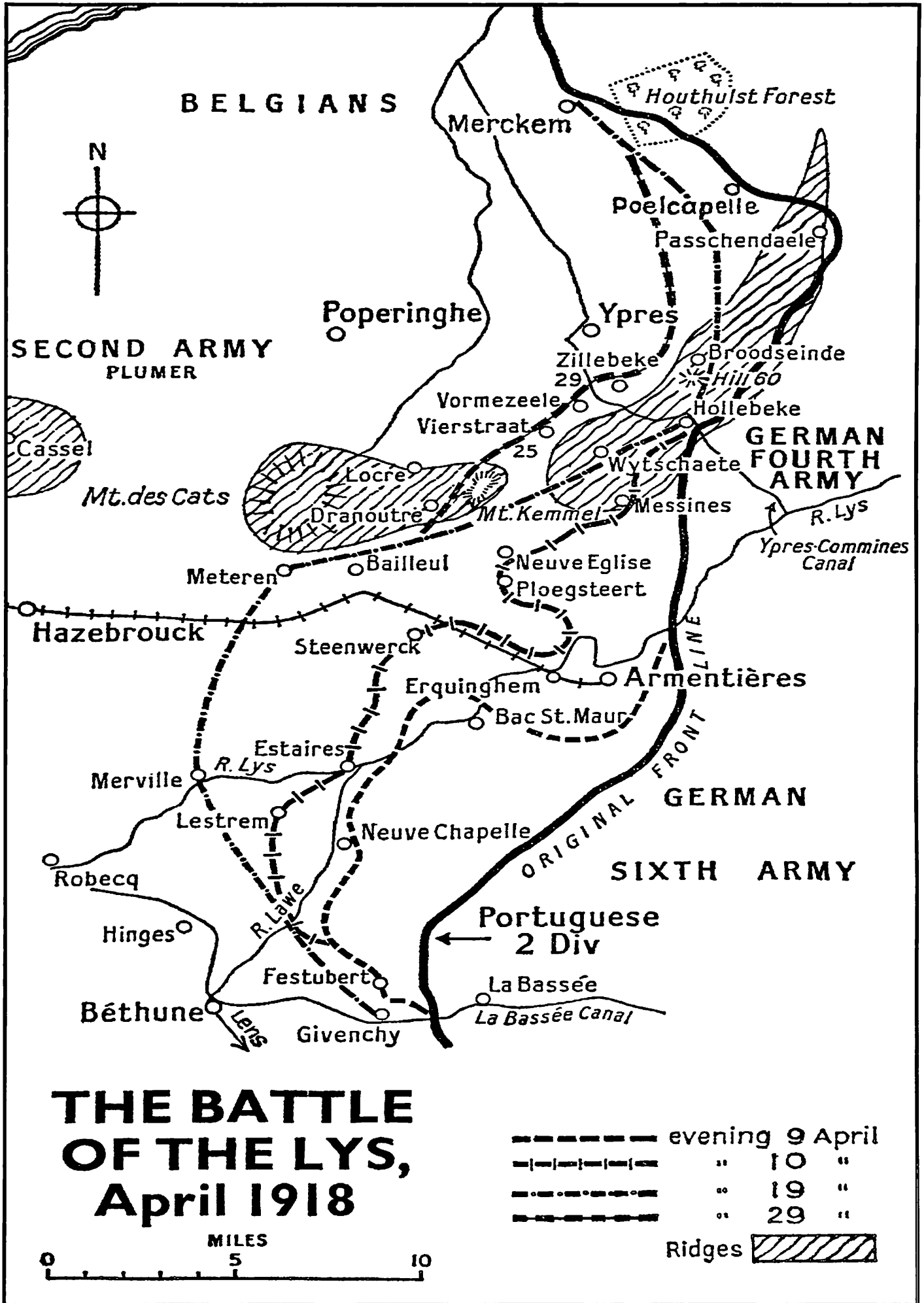
On the 55th Division's northern flank, holding the sector either side of Neuve Chappelle, was the 2nd Portuguese Division. These were the same Portuguese troops that had been attached to the West Riding Territorials for a period of instruction during 1917. The Portuguese had remained in this same relatively quiet sector since that time and had been experiencing ever-increasing demoralisation. For example, whereas their officers had been allowed home leave, the soldiers were allowed none. One of the Portuguese brigade commanders actually 'commanded' his front line brigade whilst staying permanently in Paris.

German preparations for this second offensive were not as well concealed as those for the Somme. As early as 31st March British aircraft observers reported German reserves and artillery moving north from the Somme by rail. On 1st April alone one observer reported 55 railway trains in a two hour period, all moving to the area facing La Bassée-Armentières. These warnings were confirmed by further reports but the British General Headquarters Staff ignored the signs believing that the true German intention was to continue the Somme Offensive. On the 7th and 8th April the Allied units flanking the German intended area of attack were bombarded by German gunners using mustard gas shells, thus attempting to neutralise them and indicating a major attack between the gassed areas:

"The reason that GHQ failed to profit by the warning lay in its belief that the enemy would adhere to his original plan, and that the next step in furtherance of his Somme offensive would be a renewal of his attempt to break down the Arras bastion. It would seem that Haig credited Ludendorff [the German Quartermaster General] with a persistency similar to his own at Passchendaele. Convinced that Ludendorff's correct course was to gain the key position of Vimy Ridge, even though it was the strongest part of his own front, Haig held fast to the idea that Ludendorff, despite his hard lesson on March 28th, was bound to try again."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart. 1930.)

Nor did General Horne, commanding the British First Army, accept the evidence of an impending attack on his front. The General therefore did not make immediate arrangements to relieve the Portuguese division, which



was both known to be shaky and directly in the anticipated line of attack. However his 'Q' Staff did believe that an attack was imminent and pressed General Horne to be allowed immediately to prepare special ammunition dumps well to the rear, on the grounds they would prove to be essential should the British front line be at first pushed back. General Horne refused, but his 'Q' Staff made the preparations anyway without telling him. In the event, these specially prepared ammunition dumps were undoubtedly to help save the day:

"That the relief [of the Portuguese] might come too late was indicated from the air. Throughout the morning of the 7th [April] air observers reported the main roads immediately opposite the Portuguese to be full of moving transport, and ground observers told of men carrying ammunition into the German support lines. The impression gained by the combined air and ground reports was that the tactical concentration was nearing completion."

(Ibid)

On the first day of the Lys offensive, 9th April, the three brigades of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division were too widely spread across the Ypres Salient for immediate combined action. The York and Lancasters and KOYLI of 148th Brigade, and Divisional Headquarters, were concentrated at Chateau Ségard; the West Yorkshires of 146th Brigade were in the Ypres front line astride the Menin Road; and the Dukes 147th Brigade was moving to rest at Reninghelst, west of Ypres.

This wide deployment of the 49th Division was to result in the West Riding Territorials fighting as separate brigades, rather than as a complete division, in the coming battles. The West Yorkshires of 146th Brigade at first stayed holding the Ypres Salient, and then fought at the battle for Mont Kemmel, as well as sending its 1/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion to support the 62nd Infantry Brigade at the battle for Messines. The Dukes of 147th Brigade were at first attached to the 34th Division then took part in the battle for Mont Kemmel. The KOYLI and York and Lancasters of 148th Brigade were attached to the 25th Division for operations around Neuve Chappelle. The 49th Divisional artillery remained covering the Ypres Salient. To the British civilian at home news of the German Spring offensives of 21st March and 9th April presented an image of German invincibility and a spectre of a British defeat and brought a sickening suspense and anxiety. Yet the Territorials of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division took the opposite view:

"To the infantryman in the Ypres Salient the news of the battles further south brought a sense of relief. This may appear almost incredible till we understand the infantryman's point of view. For over three years the war had been an affair of trenches or 'limited objectives'. The man in the line knew that sooner or later he was bound to become a casualty. He could calculate his chances with almost mathematical accuracy. In spite of what he read in the papers or was told in official despatches, he knew that the allied offensive towards Passchendaele in 1917 had been too costly, and that with similar methods and sacrifices victory could never be won. Therefore when in April, 1918, the whole battle line seemed to be shaking, and armies were on the move, the infantryman felt that the long nightmare of siege warfare was over. The future was full of excitements. Fighting in woods and villages and on highways, where advances or withdrawals were measured by kilometres seemed more interesting, and could not be more deadly than fighting in shell holes and trenches, and reckoning an advance in yards. The 'war of attrition' had ended, and every man felt that the battles which remained to be fought would be decisive in history."

(A History of the 1/6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1926.)

THE BATTLE OF THE LYS

The story of the Dukes Territorials now leaves their second-line battalions, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, recuperating after the epic battle for Bucquoy. Events move north to find the first-line Dukes Territorial battalions with their 49th (1st West Riding) Division which had remained doggedly holding the Ypres Salient. These first-line battalions had stayed in the Ypres Salient following the first German attacks, to their south, on 21st March. Yet the 'Grey Avalanche' progressively drained British manpower. The divisions holding Ypres were steadily drawn away to reinforce the battle-weary British divisions in the south on the Somme. The reorganisation of all British infantry brigades now found the Dukes Territorials fielding the 1/4th, 6th and 1/7th Battalions of the 147th Brigade. They were about to write what is one of the finest pages in their history.

The River Lys runs at the very southern extent of the Ypres Salient and they were about to be engaged in critical fighting on its banks just north of Armentières. On the 3rd April 1918 the Dukes had been relieved in the Salient's Reutel sector by 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment, 9th Division. This regular battalion had been badly cut up in the recent fighting on the Somme, and its soldiers brought first-hand accounts of the fighting:

"Some of the remnants of divisions who had been 'through it' were now up in Flanders, and we heard many tales of the fighting. Most of us had been soundly trained for open warfare in the early days

the war, and that training had been constantly refreshed during periods of rest from the line, but years of trench warfare had made some of us think that open fighting was all very well in theory, but of little practical value for this war. Now we saw officers whose kits had been captured by the Boche [Germans], and heard stories of subalterns commanding battalions, of transport men defending their limbers with their own rifle fire, of advance and rearguard actions, and lines of men advancing and retiring in the prescribed Field Regulations manner."

(The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt D P Grant.)

The Dukes had a short rest, after which they received orders to relieve their own West Yorkshires of 146th Brigade astride the Menin Road on April 9th. These orders were, however, cancelled, for, on April 8th, they received new instructions that 147th Brigade was to march to camp at Reninghelst, well to the west of Ypres, on the following day. On 9th April the German offensive opened at 4.45am with a 4½ hour artillery bombardment in which 2,000 tons of mustard gas and phosgene were dropped on British positions. After this fourteen German divisions advanced on an eleven-mile frontage towards Neuve Chappelle. As the Dukes marched westwards they could hear to their south a dull and continuous roar of gunfire such as they had not heard since being involved in the battle for Passchendaele Ridge. Something was happening much nearer than the River Somme - but none knew what. Heavy firing continued throughout the day as they marched to an ever less likely rest period.

Towards the end of the day news came that the Portuguese 2nd Division had collapsed in the face of the enemy onslaught. The Portuguese troops had paused only long enough to remove their boots before fleeing. Some made greater haste for they stole the bicycles of the British 11th (Hampshire and Berkshire) Yeomanry Cyclist Regiment (TF) which had rushed forward to close the gap. Within three hours of the German offensive starting the Portuguese had crumbled leaving a 1,000 yards wide gap. On the southern flank of the Portuguese division the British 55th (West Lancashire) Division (TF) held its ground and broke the German attack so totally that no further attempt was made to dislodge them. Had the Germans waited another day they would have met much sterner stuff in the form of the Territorials of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division which was due to relieve the 2nd Portuguese Division during 9th April.

By evening three already weary British divisions were fighting hard to hold 25 miles of front against sixteen German assault divisions which had advanced between three and five miles since the morning. Hardly had the Dukes arrived at Reninghelst before their Brigadier warned them that they were urgently needed. They were roused at midnight and were soon mounted on motor-buses which hurried them south towards Neuve Eglise where, after a short march, they arrived at 4.30am and took shelter in huts and barns at Le Veau there to await developments:

"All along the roads was witnessed one of the most pitiful sights of warfare, common enough in the early days of 1914, but never before seen by the battalion. Everywhere civilians were leaving their homes and flocking to the rear; old people, women and young children, some driving an odd cow or two, others pushing a few of their most valued household goods in barrows, plodded wearily along. Fortunately the enemy was not shelling the road, so the troops were able to advance without hindrance, except for one low-flying aeroplane."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The brigade was by now west of the River Lys just north of Armentières. Slightly to the south the German advance had already over-run the 12th Suffolks (40th Division) at Fleurbaix, that 'quiet sector' in which the then newly-arrived 49th Division had experienced their baptism of fire exactly three years before. It was a short rest too, for at 6.30am, on 10th April, packs were dumped and the brigade was moving by 7am towards the River Lys, there to take up a position of readiness at the disposal of the 34th Division. This New Army Division had been fighting on the Somme when it sustained over 3,000 casualties. It had a link with the 49th Division's present GOC, General N J G Cameron, who had commanded one of its brigades earlier in the war. The 34th Division had been in the front line when the Germans attacked and had already been fighting hard to stop the advance of the Saxon 19th Corps. By the time the Dukes arrived the 34th Division had been pushed back from their original front line to the extent that Equinghem was now its front but had originally been the position of its reserve brigade. The 6th and 1/7th Battalions took up positions east of the village of Nieppe about 1,200 yards west of the river. Further south, and nearer the enemy, the 1/4th Battalion began to dig in at Erquinghem astride the Lys:

"Enemy shells were already bursting around, and several direct hits were made on the road. The numbers of wounded who were streaming back showed only too clearly how severe the fighting was. Yet quietly and in perfect order, the companies marched down to the River Lys by platoons. The main bridge was destroyed, but B Company, which was leading, succeeded in crossing by a wooden bridge near by, though this was also badly broken and only possible for men in single file. All the other companies crossed by a wooden bridge near the church."

(Ibid)

The 34th Division's line at Erquinghem had been seriously breached. The situation was critical:

"Just at this moment, when once more it seemed as if success was to crown the Boche's effort, the situation was changed by the appearance on the scene of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 'B' Company, which, under Captain Farrar, quickly pushed through the village [Erquinghem] and, supported by 'A', held the western end from Rue du Moulin to the Lys. 'C' Company, under Captain Luty, supported by 'D', pushed out to the south and lined the railway. These positions were gallantly held until orders to withdraw were received five hours later. The enemy made constant attacks, and about 1pm enfiladed 'C' Company at close range. The losses were very heavy. A platoon of 'A' Company, which pushed forward to fill a gap, was almost destroyed, and the few survivors were surrounded and captured. But the enemy was kept out of Erquinghem. All round and in this village the fighting was very fierce."

(The 34th Division, 1915-1919. Lt Col J Shakespear. 1921.)

The 1/4th Battalion fought through the village, restored the gap, and then gallantly held on despite repeated attacks and savage machine-gun fire. One of 'A' Company's platoons suffered particularly from enemy in a farmhouse about 100 yards away. Careful inspection through binoculars revealed a large dump of Stokes and Mills bombs in an outhouse against the farmhouse and a few minutes sustained Lewis gun fire had the desired effect for the dump blew up destroying completely the enemy post. Even as they arrived the men of the 1/4th Battalion learned that German troops had already penetrated the village and that it was to send two companies to close a gap forced between the 16th (Service) Battalion (2nd Edinburgh) The Royal Scots and 11th (Service) Battalion (Cambridgeshire) The Suffolk Regiment. 'C' and 'D' Companies were moving by 10am, and these took the brunt of the attack being forced to crawl forward to their position under heavy fire. Losses were heavy and fighting very fierce, but the line was held. By 1.30pm less than 20 of 'C' Company remained unwounded. About 3pm the 101st Brigade, to which they were temporarily attached, received orders to withdraw as the German pincer movement was threatening to cut off all troops south of the Lys:

"The enemy had made a succesful attack on the troops on our left, and by midday on 10th [April] had gained Ploegstreet Village and Messines. Thus at that hour General Nicholson's [GOC 34 Division] forces were in the grip of a pair of pincers, one point of which was at Ploegstreet and the other close to Steenwerck; only a little more than five miles apart; the bulk of them still being south of the Lys, and two whole brigades in the front line over five miles in an air line from the line joining the pincer's points. Truly a precarious situation."

(Ibid)

About mid-afternoon the 11th Suffolks, on the Dukes' left, began to withdraw in keeping with written orders. The 1/4th Battalion's 'C' Company, commanded by Captain Luty, stayed put having no such orders, and being unaware that the runners carrying them had become casualties before they could deliver them. But before too long enemy were seen advancing rapidly both to their south and west. Heavily reduced in numbers, and unsupported on both flanks, their position was clearly hopeless:

"A withdrawal was ordered. Sec-Lieut F D Chippindale went forward to warn No. 9 Platoon, which was lying out in front; a hail of machine gun bullets was sweeping the ground, and he had barely given the order when he was struck down [killed]. The few survivors of this platoon were surrounded and captured. The rest of C Company made a dash for the railway, but only about twelve reached it. One by one they rushed across, suffering two more casualties before all were over, and then made for Erquinghem. Many wounded were collected on the way, practically every man of the party assisting one along."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

'C' Company had comprised 5 officers and 139 soldiers when it crossed the Lys six hours before, it was now no stronger than a section. 'D' Company fared slightly better but had still suffered considerably from heavy artillery and machine-gun fire. The situation of 1/4th Dukes was by now quite grave. Even as the battalion fought over the Lys the enemy was already behind them at Le Veau looting their dumped packs and fighting with the men of 'B' Echelon. Enemy machine-gun fire to their rear increased. Large numbers of troops threatened to cut them off. The 1/4th Battalion formed the rearguard for 101st Brigade which was steadily pressed back by the advancing Saxons. It was necessary to destroy some of the bridges over the river to prevent them from falling into enemy hands and this resulted in a whole platoon of 'C' Company being surrounded and captured.

It was during this time that Private Poulter of 'C' Company carried on his back ten wounded men under fire and also gave first aid under fire to over forty casualties. He was later seriously wounded whilst attempting another rescue in the face of the enemy. Private Arthur Poulter, of Wortley near Leeds, was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions. Having withdrawn, 'A' and 'B' Companies reported to the 147th Brigade headquarters at Nieppe. Almost at once they were gathered up by Major A L Mowat, the battalion second-in-command, with orders to counter-attack Le Veau and expel the enemy in its farms and enclosures. Progress was easy until they were within 600 yards of Le Veau when they came under very heavy machine-gun

fire. Some progress was then made by section rushes but this got them no closer than 300 yards. However two platoons of 'D' Company arrived on the left and advanced meeting scant opposition. This allowed them to outflank the enemy, and enabled the position to be recaptured. This completed, the 1/4th Battalion dug-in for the night. It had lost nearly 200 men since leaving Le Veau that morning.

By the morning of 11th April the 1/4th Battalion was holding the railway-line between the Nieppe station and the Steenwerck road and had become 147 Brigade reserve. The 6th and 1/7th Battalions held the Nieppe trench system to the east of the town. By now the Germans were well-established across the river Lys. Further withdrawals carried out during the night now found the Dukes holding the outpost line. On their west flank Rotherham's 1/5th York and Lancaster's, 148th Brigade, made a successful counter-attack at Steenwerck which both held-up the German advance and secured the main road from Nieppe back to Bailleul. The security of this road was critical both to allow the Dukes to be resupplied, and also as a possible withdrawal route.

About mid-day strong attacks developed on the 6th and 1/7th Dukes front requiring companies of the 1/4th to be sent forward to support them. Masses of enemy were mown down by their rifle and machine-gun fire. Hard fighting continued until late evening but the Dukes held. Despite holding against almost overwhelming odds, new orders came instructing them to start withdrawing at 7.30pm. The Germans had that day launched an attack against Wytschaete. This created a real danger that the Dukes positions around Nieppe were about to be cut-off. Runners just managed to get this information through as the forward companies began to be surrounded. The Dukes now withdrew under heavy fire towards a new position at Bailleul:

"Of vehicles there were practically none, but the whole road was crowded with men hastening to the rear. It was an army in retreat. But the crowd of men was not disorderly; there was no panic. As each one reached his allotted station he quietly fell in, ready to hold a fresh line. Mercifully the enemy, for some unknown reason, scarcely attempted to shell the road. Had he done so the casualties must have been awful, for no shell dropped amongst those masses of men could have failed to hit many. One gruesome spot, where a 15cm shell had burst among a number of Royal Engineers, gave the passer-by an idea of what might have been. All along the left of the road the enemy flares, approaching nearer and nearer, showed how near the British troops were to utter disaster. But they escaped. And never again had the enemy such an opportunity."

(Ibid)

By 11pm the battle-weary Dukes 147th Brigade was digging yet another new line just to the south of Bailleul and patrols were despatched along the main approach roads. The rest of the night passed reasonably quietly and work on the new positions could be continued until about noon the following day, 12th April. This was a crisis point, for the German strike on the Lys now placed their forward elements within five miles of the strategic Hazebrouck railway junction. Sporadic enemy shelling had occurred during the morning and this increased at 1pm when a heavy bombardment fell upon the new positions. At 4pm news came that the enemy had broken into Bailleul behind them; company fighting columns were quickly sent out to counter-attack but the report was false.

As evening drew on the remaining advanced British troops began to pass through their positions heading for the rear, as were a number of stragglers from various units who were gathered in to reinforce the Dukes now depleted numbers. About this time enemy shellfire switched onto Bailleul itself. The open flank to the Dukes west, near Steam Mill, was filled by the 22nd Corps Reinforcement Battalion; it is a measure of the seriousness of the situation that this was a hastily gathered battalion made up by the simple expedient of collecting all the men at the Corps reinforcement camp. Serious fighting took place around Bailleul on the 13th making it necessary to contract the defensive perimeter:

"A serious attack was launched at about three-thirty pm. It fell chiefly on the right of the 11th Suffolks, the 16th Royal Scots, and 6th and 7th Duke of Wellington's. For some time no impression was made, but finally weight of numbers told, and the line was forced back from two to five hundred yards. There was severe fighting, but finally a firm line was established."

(The 34th Division, 1915-1919. Lt Col J Shakespear. 1921.)

Although they had not, as yet, penetrated the perimeter it was clear that the Germans fully intended to capture Bailleul. A heavy enemy bombardment on Bailleul and the Dukes line came with the afternoon of 14th April. Large numbers of enemy infantry were seen massing to their front with the clear intention of carrying out an assault. It quickly came at 4pm and the 22nd Corps Reinforcement Battalion gave way with little resistance thus seriously threatening the Dukes flank. Companies were despatched to hold the open flank and, at 5.30pm, the 1/7th Dukes counter-attacked. This succeeded in wholly capturing the 22nd CRB's positions but the enemy held on to Steam Mill in some strength. By 7.30pm Headquarters 147th Brigade received reports that the embattled Dukes line was again quiet. Bailleul was now burning furiously and, at midnight, the welcome news came that they were to be relieved by Territorials of the 59th (2nd North Midland) Division which was already on the way. The relief was successfully completed but not without difficulty for the Dukes responsibilities had now stretched to occupy a substantial area.

A march two miles north of Bailleul brought them to a temporary rest area at St Jans Cappel. But this apparent relief was tempered with instructions to be at thirty minutes notice to move. The 1/7th Battalion occupied the area in and around St Jans Cappel, with the 1/4th and 6th Battalions on a taped line about 1,000 yards south of the village. They were exhausted and depleted in number. All now looked forward to a well-earned period of unbroken sleep. Hardly had they arrived before all prospect of rest disappeared, for at 4.30pm Headquarters 147th Brigade instructed that they were at once to start digging on the taped out lines. It was said that this line would be the front-line by morning. By now shovels were in short supply which necessitated local farm implements being gathered up for digging to take place using the district's unfamiliar long-handled shovels. The new deployment found the 6th Battalion entrenching forward, on the east side of the Bailleul to St Jans Cappel road, with the 1/4th Battalion on the west side. The 1/4th Battalion's right flank was wide open for a full 700 yards except for a few machine-guns manned by members of a Tank Corps unit. The 1/7th Battalion formed a reserve around St Jans Cappel.

With the order to dig-in came instructions to all ranks that a withdrawal from these positions must not take place without written orders from Headquarters 147th Brigade. By now the hard-pressed 1/4th numbered but 326 all ranks and had to bring forward all its B Echelon men simply to cover the half-mile of line they had been given. It was virtually a 'last ditch, last round, last man' situation. This predicament was made even more depressing, at 8.30pm, when the news came that the 59th Division was about to withdraw through the Dukes' positions. The message was unnecessary for, even as it came, men of the 176th Brigade were already withdrawing up the main road. Most of this brigade passed through, but many of the 5th Battalion The Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire Regiment) (TF) stayed behind to assist the Dukes. It was clear that Bailleul, which the Dukes had held for three days at great cost, had fallen to the enemy. The Dukes immediately pushed out patrols to locate the enemy advanced elements, and continued to dig in earnest whilst Territorial sappers of Sheffield's Field Company Royal Engineers placed barbed-wire to cover their trenches.

By dawn on 16th April quite a good defensive position had been produced, but enemy patrols were soon in evidence and, before long, enemy troops were yet again massing within 600 yards. Desultory enemy shelling came in the early afternoon. At 4pm the Dukes' positions were swamped by enemy shellfire and very large numbers of Germans began to attack. The attack was met by a hail of bullets. In some places the enemy infantry did not manage to leave their assembly areas before being mown down, and at others the attack was brought to a standstill 300 yards from the Dukes' trenches. The German infantry was cut-down in heaps for nowhere did they get nearer than 300 yards of their hastily prepared line. Within 30 minutes, of the German Regiment which had attacked, nothing was to be seen except a small group of prisoners moving to the rear and score upon score of their dead in front of the Territorials' guns:

"During the 16th the enemy put down several very severe barrages, and made several probing advances, which were dealt with by the artillery and machine guns; but it was not until four-twenty pm that a serious infantry attack was launched from the lunatic asylum against the 1/4th and 1/6th Duke of Wellington's, accompanied by a very intense barrage along the whole line. The infantry attack was met by our counter-barrage from heavy and field artillery and machine guns, and being counter-attacked by the two battalions of Duke of Wellington's it failed completely. The enemy suffered very severely. Over one hundred bodies were subsequently counted on a very limited front. 'A' Company 6th Duke of Wellington's took thirteen prisoners and three machine guns out of the buildings in a counter-attack. According to the statements of prisoners, this attack was made by a complete regiment in two waves, and the attack was covered by the elements of another regiment on the right, which advanced against the 74th Brigade [25th Division], but was also repulsed, the 74th capturing ten prisoners and a machine gun. The losses of the regiment which attacked the Duke of Wellington's were estimated to have reached fifty per cent."

(Ibid)

Though they did not then know it, this was to be the last major German attack on the Dukes during this offensive. The line they had begun to dig on 15th April, and defended so successfully the next day, was to remain the British front-line until the victorious advance later that year. But at that time the Dukes knew nothing of this. The days which followed were anxious ones for they were depleted in numbers, exhausted and battle-wary. The Dukes battalions were dangerously weak, particularly, for example, Halifax's 1/4th which had lost 406 killed, wounded and missing of their 147 Brigade's 767 casualties in just over a week. The gallantry of the 34th Division and the attached Dukes was especially singled out by the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig:

*"To the 34th Division,
My thanks are due to General Nicholson [GOC 34 Division], to the 34th Division, and to the troops which, during the recent fighting, have been attached to General Nicholson's command for the many gallant actions fought by them round Armentières and Bailleul. The carrying out successfully of their withdrawal from Armentières in circumstances of exceptional difficulty and heavy fighting of the*

subsequent days called for a high standard of efficiency, discipline, and courage on the part of both officers and men. Please convey to General Nicholson and all ranks who served under him the expression of my appreciation."

(Ibid)

The strength of the 34th Division had again been severely reduced in the fighting and this resulted in all its gallant New Army battalions being reduced to cadre establishment. The Division's good name was retained, for its original battalions were immediately replaced by Territorial battalions. The West Riding Territorials were destined to meet the 34th Division again when it took over a sector from the 49th Division on 21st August 1918. That they had held back the enemy for so long is remarkable, but, however determined and willing, it was clear that they could not realistically expect to withstand any further large-scale attacks without a period for reorganisation and rest. On 17th April further attacks developed against the sector but these were ably held-off by the regular 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders which had relieved 5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment. By 20th April the 147th Brigade was placed in reserve, and long before dawn on 21st April the Dukes were marching towards a huddled camp on top of Mont des Cats. Here they were at last allowed to sleep until the middle of the afternoon and thoroughly enjoyed the first real rest since they had been hurried into battle nearly a fortnight before. But by late afternoon they were marching towards Poperinghé. On the way the Dukes passed the General Officer Commanding IXth Corps who had especially come to look at the Territorials who had served him so well:

"Ragged, unshaven and unkempt, with nothing clean about them but their rifles, bayonets and ammunition, they were yet a body of veterans whom anyone would have been proud to command. Thrown into the battle when the enemy was flushed with success, they had fought and beaten him time after time. It was a proud boast of the Battalion that it had never withdrawn without definite orders to do so, and that the enemy had never won from it an inch of ground."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

Once at Poperinghé no training was attempted and all took as much rest as possible. Large reinforcement drafts arrived but these were still not big enough to bring the battalions to full strength. Here 147th Brigade again came under command of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division, as did the 148th Brigade.

THE BATTLE OF MONT KEMMEL

The Dukes soon discovered that their respite at Poperinghé was to be short. The Germans had already captured the low hills around Neuve Eglise. It soon became clear that they intended to seize the critical high ground of Mont Kemmel. On the morning of 25th April the Dukes 147th Brigade was yet again placed on thirty minutes notice to move. Mont Kemmel had been stoutly defended by British troops during the offensive, including by the West Yorkshires of the 146th Brigade which had been detached to reinforce the area. On 18th April the British positions were relieved by a French Division except for some of the West Riding Division's trench mortar batteries which remained in place. The French were attacked by German storm-troopers on 25th April and at once retreated allowing the enemy to seize the high ground:

"Shortly after 6am, the first Storm Troop attack was launched, and as early as 7am the French were streaming to the rear, leaving some of their compatriots beleaguered on top of the hill together with the crews of a few British trench-mortar batteries which had, unfortunately, been loaned to the French. Except for these isolated groups, which held out until the evening, Mont Kemmel was in German hands by 10am, and Anglo-French relations, which had not been markedly cordial of late, were further strained."

(1918, The Last Act. Barrie Pitt. 1962.)

Meanwhile the Dukes were moving by motor-bus to Ouderdom where they arrived at 8.45am on the morning of the attack on Mont Kemmel, 25th April. A great battle was clearly taking place to their south, and it was suspected that Mont Kemmel had been lost but no certain news came. They took up positions in old trenches a little to the north of Millekruise village, which was itself about two miles north of the village of Kemmel and the Mont Kemmel feature.

West Riding Territorials had already been heavily engaged here in the form of York's 1/5th and Bradford's 1/6th Battalions The West Yorkshire Regiment of the 49th Division's 146th Brigade. Indeed as the Dukes arrived the West Yorkshires were already involved, just a short way to the Dukes east, in the desperate fighting to hold the flank of the Kemmel feature whilst attached to the 25th Division. The West Yorkshires bore the brunt of the fighting. By the end of the 25th April they had sustained over a thousand casualties with many of their forward companies standing firm and fighting until, surrounded and out of ammunition, they were over-run.

At about 2.30am orders came that 147th Brigade was to attack Kemmel in conjunction with the 25th Division, a New Army formation. Zero hour was set for 4.25am when a creeping barrage was planned to support them. It was fraught with difficulty. The Dukes did not know the ground over which they were to attack, the attack was to start before dawn, and their companies were now well below strength. The Dukes nevertheless managed to fight their way into Kemmel village despite enemy machine-gun fire which, although heavy, caused few casualties in the heavy morning mist.

But at 6am the 74th Brigade's battalion on the right flank began to withdraw, thus leaving the Dukes flank exposed. By now the morning mist had cleared allowing the enemy to make better use of their machine-guns enabling them to start to counter-attack. The Dukes were further imperilled by the open flank which allowed the German to try to cut off their line of retreat. A number of casualties were caused by accurate sniping; amongst the wounded was Private Poulter who had recently gained a Victoria Cross. Further support on the open flank came via the 6th Dukes who moved to cover it. About 1.30pm a message came from Headquarters 25th Division advising that a battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment was advancing to support them. Ammunition was by now in desperately short supply and could only be replenished by the efforts of the Dukes HQ batmen who crawled across bullet-swept ground carrying fresh bandoliers:

"During the afternoon the enemy made a further attempt to work round the right flank. Considerable numbers of them were seen moving along the side of a hedge, but the situation was satisfactorily dealt with by C Company. Second Lieutenant T T Gilroy had seen them himself. He quickly got two Vickers guns into position, and when the enemy appeared at a gap in the hedge, so heavy a fire was opened at close range that the party was almost wiped out. This was the last attempt to advance that the enemy made that day."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

It was soon night, the promised South Lancashire battalion had not appeared. The Dukes realized that their counter-attack on Mont Kemmel had failed, through no fault of their own. The higher authorities then instructed the Dukes to withdraw at 6.30am back to their start-line of the previous day. By this date Lieutenant Gilbert Howcroft, now with a Military Cross to reward his service, had transferred from his 1/7th Battalion to act as Intelligence Officer at headquarters 147th Brigade. Front-line positions were uncertain and he was sent forward by the brigadier to gain accurate information:

"He told me therefore to check whether the crossroads given as one of their [1/4 DWR] posts was correct, or should it be the one further back. And he would be glad of any further information of the situation, especially to the left of the command. So I picked up two runners and set off on the road which went up to the two crossroads in doubt. The answer to the first question was easy. I came, in about two miles, to the first crossroads, only of farm roads, which was not the one the battalion had reported. There was a house at the crossroads, and there had apparently been some fighting - a German officer lay there, apparently almost dead. I looked out from an upper window and saw about 100 yards to my right, in the middle of a field, a post was being actively excavated by a dozen men in blue uniform, but then I realized it was blue-grey! I walked to see what else there might be. The men digging in the post went on with their digging but a man in a hedge on the other side of the field fired five shots at me, firing much too high. I went through my hedge to walk back to the crossroads and found another rifleman who, like the first, fired five badly aimed shots. What a contrast to the German shooting at Ypres of 1915. You had only carelessly to expose your cap to get a bullet through it."

(The First World War, 1914-1918 - Remembered by a Yorkshire Territorial. Col G B Howcroft. 1986.)

Unfortunately for Gilbert Howcroft German marksmen still existed and, within a few minutes, he was shot in the arm by a machine-gunner. His three years of active service were over thanks to a then admittedly welcome 'Blighty' wound and he was safely evacuated home, there to recover.

No attacks were made for the next two days, but German artillery was very active particularly at the village crossroads. There was little doubt that the enemy spent the period between 25th and 29th April replenishing their ammunition and preparing for renewed attacks. Some help came on the 27th April in the shape of the remnants of The West Yorkshire Territorials from their sister brigade in the 49th Division. These three battalions had been shredded during the recent fighting, for example the 1/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion mustered but 100 all ranks. To their credit they were still capable of fighting on and the three West Yorkshire Territorial battalions had formed into being '146 Brigade Composite Battalion' and moved to occupy Ouderdom as the Dukes brigade reserve battalion. The respite was short-lived, for at 3am on the morning of 29th April the whole line was set ablaze by a massive German bombardment. The whole of 147th Brigade's front was swamped with gas and high-explosive shells:

“After two hours of this bombardment, the German infantry advanced in great numbers to the attack. They gained nothing. Caught by the British barrage, mown down by Lewis gun and rifle fire, they suffered enormous casualties. It is said that, on one part of the front, they were so demoralised that they put out a white flag and tried to come in, but could not pass through the barrage. On the whole front attacked they could only gain a footing in the allied line in two places, and from both of those they were ejected almost immediately by counter-attack. All this time the barrage continued.”

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington’s (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The 1/7th Dukes were heavily attacked but held their positions. By 9am even more enemy troops were massing in front of them and the 1/4th Dukes sent reinforcements. But they were not needed, for the enemy were again beaten to a standstill. Indeed the whole German assault on the Lys had ground to a halt as recalled by General Kuhl, Chief of Staff to Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria:

“The whole ‘Georgette’ operation was finished. The Fourth and Sixth Armies had exhausted their offensive powers. The attack had not penetrated to the decisive heights of Cassell and the Mont des Cats, the possession of which would have compelled the evacuation of the Ypres Salient and the Yser position. No great strategic movement had become possible, and the Channel ports had not been reached. The second great offensive had not brought about the hoped-for decision.”

(1918, The Last Act. Barrie Pitt. 1962.)

The Dukes continued to fortify the Millekruise defensive line despite enemy shellfire but no further enemy attacks were launched. On the night of 3rd/4th May the Dukes were relieved by French troops of the 3rd Battalion 80th Infantry Regiment, 32nd French Division:

“Never before nor since did the men fight so continuously, nor against such overwhelming odds. They faced the enemy in the full flush of his successes on the Somme, when his morale was at its highest. They fought him again and again, and never yielded an inch of ground in battle. They taught him that he was no match for the British soldier, either in attack or in defence. They helped to pave the way for his crushing defeat a few months later.”

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington’s (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

No less than the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Haig, applauded their outstanding work:

*“Dear General Cameron,
I desire to express my appreciation of the very valuable and gallant services performed by the troops of the 49th (West Riding) Division since the entry of the 147th Infantry Brigade into the battle of Armentières. The courage and determination shown by this Division has played no small part in checking the enemy’s advance, and I wish to convey to General Cameron and to all officers and men under his command my thanks for all that they have done.”*

(Ibid)

1918: THE YPRES SALIENT - AGAIN

The Dukes of the 147th Brigade were to be out of the line for nearly a month following their experiences on the Lys, time was mainly spent in camp near St Jans ter Biezen. Whilst here a number of lightly wounded men returned, together with drafts of young soldiers that had been hurried out from England to make up their heavy losses. Days were spent in necessary reorganisation, but the Dukes organisation had not been broken down and there remained a solid framework on which to build. On 14th May their brigade moved to St Martin au Laert for four days’ shooting:

“Tents were pitched about a mile from the town, and, as the weather was gloriously fine, a very enjoyable time was spent there. St Omer was within easy walking distance of the camp, and the rather unusual experience of having a large town at hand was thoroughly enjoyed. Enemy bombing planes were common at night, but they restricted their activities mainly to Arques, and never troubled the camp.”

(Ibid)

Following this, a number of days were spent labouring on the East Poperinghé sector. Parties paraded early in the morning before being taken to work by light railway. These days were long and allowed little time for recreation. In May one of Halifax’s original pre-war officers, Lieutenant Colonel R E Sugden, now commanding the 1/4th Battalion, was recalled from a short leave and promoted Brigadier to command the 151st Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division (TF). Another pre-war Territorial, Major A L Mowat MC, was promoted to command

the Battalion. The battalions had steadily lost their pre-war Territorials, and the recent fighting had not allowed them to celebrate the anniversary of their arrival on active service in 1915. The opportunity was now taken to celebrate with a typical Dukes battalion still managing to muster four officers and 114 soldiers of the old originals. Though smaller in number, they had become the battle-hardened backbone of their battalions. It was the old hands' experience which permitted the battalions so often to be rebuilt when losses were suffered.

After this period of reorganisation, a warning order came advising that the division was again to return to the Ypres Salient. But the Dukes were to discover that the Salient was a dramatically changed place. For as the Dukes' Brigade had previously left Ypres to fight on the Lys, they had left behind the West Riding Territorials of the division's 146th Brigade. Even as the Dukes had been marching towards St Jans Cappel, on 15th April, the serious situation of the British Army was clearly signalled by events in the Salient to the north. Manpower shortages aggravated by the recent fighting meant that it was impossible for the British to hold the land jutting out from the Ypres Salient. To keep the line intact, a deliberate withdrawal was ordered by Sir Douglas Haig. The West Riding Territorials of 146th Brigade therefore had a tragic duty to perform on 15th April as they steadily withdrew from the Passchendaele Ridge.

In early June 1918 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division returned to the Ypres Salient it had left behind in April. Here it took responsibility for a 3½ km sector, between the Zonnebeke Road and Zillebeke Lake, placing two brigades in the front line and one in reserve. It had fallen to the Territorials of York's 1/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment to act as rearguard, one which was done on the third anniversary of the 49th Division's embarkation for France. To keep secrecy, the men were told that an ordinary relief was taking place but that the occupying unit would not take over until they had marched off. Thus the bitterness of the withdrawal was not realized until the Territorials had marched out of the line:

"At last the command to retire to the old 1915 line close to Ypres was given, and we walked away from the enemy without firing a shot; all the ground given up without a struggle, for which 250,000 men had given their lives in 1917. The feelings of all concerned cannot be portrayed in words. Only those who took part in its capture could realize what it meant to give it up. The work which had been put in to make the ridges impregnable, was all left. It was hard not to lose one's pride, difficult to keep heart, to be cheerful. We destroyed our concrete emplacements. It was a sad ending to the self-sacrificing victory won by the British Army during the War."

Lieutenant C G Maufe 1/6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TF)

(History of the 1/6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1921.)

Although smaller in size, the new front line did not mean less work. Each brigade had two of its three battalions in the front line and one in reserve. Brigades therefore had to do sixteen days in the front line followed by eight in reserve. There were now only three battalions in each brigade, and of these one had to do a continuous sixteen days in the front line. The withdrawal into Ypres had brought some benefits for the Dukes battalion headquarters which was now located in the Ypres Ramparts, one near the Lille Gate, the other at the Menin Gate. These were both spacious and well-appointed having until recently been for two divisional headquarters. The soldiers' trenches were however on low ground and would have readily flooded but for the dry weather. No communication trenches existed at first and all movement was across open ground covered by accurate sniper fire. However the sector was particularly quiet in that the German 1st Landwehr Division opposing them was found to have poor morale and discipline. Apart from snipers the only hazard was German artillery fire, but this mainly used 'Blue Cross' gas shells which caused violent sneezing but were practically harmless. No Man's Land was covered with thick green grass which made it ideal for patrolling by day and night. Patrols were sent out regularly, not so much in order to identify the enemy, but to keep him occupied so that the German commanders would not risk taking troops out of the line. During this period the Dukes also carried out several raids on enemy trenches. Although a relatively quiet period, the experience of the front line coupled with raids and patrols did much to integrate the younger soldiers who had arrived with the reinforcement drafts, whilst allowing the veterans to enjoy a relatively peaceful routine.

Regular seven day periods were spent out of the line to a well-practised formula. The first day was spent in bathing and on 'internal economy', that essential time needed to recondition clothing and equipment, and even receive some pay. The following three days were spent on training, with the remaining three as working parties on the many defensive positions in the Salient. Periods out of the line also allowed a little relaxation:

"The main form of relaxation was dancing. For this the Battalion band was in nightly demand, and the absence of ladies did not interfere with the enjoyment. The first dance hall was an old ammunition store, the floor being covered with a large tarpaulin. When this store was pulled down, the band was ejected from a wooden platform which had been built for it near the orderly room, and had to perform on the bare earth while the dancers monopolised the floor. All ranks took part; the Regimental Sergeant Major could usually be seen affectionately encircling the waist of a signaller, while the Medical Officer and others have been known to grace the floor."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

Back in the line the relentless demands of actively manning trench systems, patrolling and occasional raids eventually put the Germans on the alert. Patrolling became more and more difficult. Any movement towards the German wire invariably brought a hail of machine-gun fire and bombs. What with shelling, sniper-fire and patrol actions holding the line in this 'relatively quiet' period still cost the Dukes Territorials 300 casualties. In July 1918 more greenhorns arrived at the front line to be initiated into the mysteries of trench warfare under the tuition of the veterans from the West Riding. They were the long-awaited Americans, in this case from the American 30th Division which had been raised in North and South Carolina and Tennessee:

"Some of its companies boasted continuity from units of the Confederate Army in the American Civil War, and many of the officers and men had fought under Lee and Jackson; indeed, the Intelligence Officer of one of the regiments of this division was a grandson of General Robert E Lee. Physically the men were very fine, and the standard of education among them was very high. They were mostly recruited from agricultural districts, and were magnificent rifle shots....They proved themselves very keen to learn, and the Battalion got on well with them."

(Ibid)

The American 30th Division was a National Guard formation, the counterpart of Britain's Territorial force. The young National Guardsmen who arrived in 1918 were only too well aware of the suffering that the British soldiers and citizens had endured in the previous four years of trench-warfare. When they arrived in France a persistent, but unfounded, rumour circulated in the 30th Division that American troops were to become intermingled with the British Army. The rumour was reinforced when the Americans were required to hand in their distinctive 'campaign hat' and web gaiters in exchange for British steel helmets and puttees. They also had to part with their 'best friend', their Springfield rifle:

"There was considerable grumbling for a time; the British Enfield rifle was awkward, and the snappy 'manual of arms' performed with the perfectly balanced Springfield rifle had to be practised all over with the shorter, clumsier British gun. This dissatisfaction did not last long, however, and the word 'Tommy' - at first used slightly contemptuously in referring to the British soldier, became a term of comradely affection."

(*The Thirtieth Division in the World War. Elmer A Murphy and Robert S Thomas.*)

America had declared war against Germany in April 1917 but she was militarily unprepared. It was not to be until mid-1918 that any American troops arrived in France and Flanders and they were even then few in number. American units were first in action on the French sector of the Marne in June 1918. Equally the long-heralded American entry had provided the Allies with the morale-boosting potential of limitless manpower, a threat which had caused the Germans to launch their 1918 spring offensive with the aim of seizing victory before the Americans arrived.

The worth of the Americans was clearly known to the Yorkshire Territorials who had themselves by now experienced forty months of front line warfare:

"It would be safe to say that the moment our men realized the help America was giving, they never doubted their own capacity to win the war. All signs of pessimism and despondency disappeared. In one sense it is excusable to say that 'America won the war'. She gave such strength and confidence to the French and British soldier as nearly doubled the fighting value of the Allied Divisions. Compared with this moral accession to the Allied troops already holding the line, the actual fighting aid of the American Army was almost negligible. This is a truth which no-one would have agreed to more readily than the average infantryman in the Ypres Salient during June 1918."

(*History of the 1/6th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment. Capt E V Tempest. 1921.*)

The routine of trench warfare found the Dukes Territorial Battalions of the 147th Brigade regularly interchanging duties and giving each other mutual support of the most practical kind. Sectors of front-line were allocated to Brigades whose battalions alternated between manning the forward and support trenches, acting as reserve, or supposedly 'at rest' where carrying party duties and training made life equally busy. As such the battalions in the Brigade knew each other well. They met under the same hostile shellfire, and experienced the same trenches. Officers in all battalions of the Brigade often interchanged to fill key posts in depleted battalions. Their wounded lay side-by-side in the same field-dressing stations, their dead lay in the same war cemeteries. Their long service together in the Ypres Salient forged a common bond which lasted long after the war.

It had not been exclusively a human effort, for the large part of army transport was horse-drawn. The day after the outbreak of war other Tetley's workers at the Leeds-based brewery were mobilised in addition to the city's two 'Leeds Rifles' battalions. Twelve Tetley's dray horses were called-up to serve with the Leeds Territorial Force 1st West Riding Field Ambulance. All twelve survived the war, two being evacuated wounded, and the remaining ten being on active service for four years and two months. Tetley's dray-horses were not forgotten. In 1984 The Leeds Rifles celebrated 125 years since being raised. Part of the celebrations included exercising the

Freedom of the City of Leeds. Two dray horses ('Mild' and 'Bitter') were adopted by The Leeds Rifles to commemorate Tetley's link with the Regiment. In mid-August 1918 the 49th (1st West Riding) Division left the Ypres Salient for the last time some forty months after the division had first entered it. Few divisions, if any, spent so long holding this infamous sector. Perhaps a soldier of Bradford's 1/6th Battalion speaks best for all those Territorials of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division who served at Ypres:

"Ypres will always occupy a great place in the Battalion story. It had been a training ground and a testing place for soldiers and an opportunity for heroes. Men who had played their part in defending Ypres will forever feel bound together in an unforgettable brotherhood."

(Ibid)

The Ypres Salient had played a large part in the service of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division. It was at Essex Farm, on the Yser Canal, that the divisional memorial was to be erected after the war. The Menin Gate memorial was also erected at the exit to Ypres. Its walls and columns bear the names of the 54,896 British soldiers who were killed at Ypres, between October 1914 and mid-August 1917, who have no known grave. The stonemasons were still completing the list of names upon the memorial when German forces captured Ypres in 1940, and the masons escaped to England for the duration of the war. Nearby at Passchendaele the Tyne Cot memorial was erected to honour a further 34,388 British soldiers who fell between August 1917 and the end of the war at Ypres, and have no known grave.

27th MAY 1918 - THE AISNE OFFENSIVE

March and April 1918 had seen two massive German offensives. First on the River Somme and then on the River Lys. They then turned their attentions to the southern part of the Allied flank on the River Marne, near Rheims, which protected the approach to Paris. General Ludendorff's aim was to threaten this area under a battleplan, codenamed Blicher, in the hope that the French units which had gone up to Flanders would be drawn back south. Having achieved this, Ludendorff then intended again to attack along the Lys to secure his long-intended goal of the Channel ports. At that time the French Rheims sector was a quiet one. So much so that five British infantry divisions which had been severely ravaged in both German offensives had been sent there, as the British 9th Corps, to hold a quiet line whilst they rebuilt themselves. This was champagne producing country blossoming in early springtime. The green countryside was a marked contrast to the desolate war-torn battlefields that the British soldier was used to.

Hardly had the battle-weary British arrived before Ludendorff's hammer-blow fell upon a thirty-six mile front then held by four French and three British front-line divisions. Twenty-five German divisions attacked; even more deadly was the volume of artillery fire which accompanied it. At 1am on 27th May 3,719 guns caused the Allied line to erupt under thousands of high-explosive and gas shells. In the very front line, on the Chemin des Dames, fate struck the cruellest blow against the Territorials of Yorkshire's East and North Ridings. Amongst the defenders were the Territorial Green Howards and East Yorkshires of the 150th (York and Durham) Brigade, 50th (1st Northumbrian) Division. They had been sent to the French sector to rest, but the German offensive resulted in their Brigade being massively outnumbered, and completely overwhelmed. The momentum of the German attack steadily ground to a halt, not least due to the vast stocks of champagne they looted which resulted in numerous units being reduced to uncontrollable drunkenness. Nevertheless French concern increased, for the German armies were now within forty miles of their capital, Paris. But Ludendorff's plan did not result in the required diversion of attention from the Lys. In many ways the twelve mile advance made by the German Armies was too much of a success:

"In their victorious onrush, the Germans had taken some 65,000 prisoners, but whereas this human loss was more than made up by American reinforcements, strategically the Germans' success had merely placed themselves in a huge sack which was to prove their undoing less than two months later."

(A History of the First World War. B H Liddell Hart.)

Now turned the tide of Allied fortunes in the Great War. The Aisne offensive was to be the last great German success. After this the Allies first stemmed the German grey avalanche, and then began a campaign which was to conclude in a final victory in November 1918. Faced with the German onslaught the French requested, on 11th July, that four British divisions be sent to aid the French Armies; two days later the request increased to eight. Field Marshal Haig agreed immediately, sending six divisions, whilst temporarily holding the other two until a conference to be held two days later.

Nor was Ludendorff inactive for he now planned his next attacks to be launched on 15th July. These he optimistically christened 'Friedensturm', or Peace Offensive, in the belief that they would result in the Allies begging for terms. Forty-nine German divisions, in two armies, were to attack the French sector on both sides of Rheims. To the north Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria held another 31 divisions poised to attack again down

the River Lys. The Rheims attack at first succeeded, notably against the French General Berthelot's Fifth Army. It penetrated the line of the valley of the River Ardre but here their attack stalled as it did along the whole French front. They had placed themselves into an even bigger sack, ripe for choking at the neck.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE

Our story now returns to the Dukes of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division who had been engaged in the policy of 'active defence' in the Bucquoy sector since encountering the Somme offensive of 21st March. Here both sides shelled each other without mercy, but, apart from one or two 'minor actions', there were no large-scale attacks on or by the division. Yet it was not without toll, for in May alone the West Riding division took 473 casualties.

On 1st June news came that two more battalions in the division were to be reduced to being training cadres and that their men were to be reinforcements for their respective brigades. This affected the 2/7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment in 185th Brigade which was replaced by the Territorials of the 2/5th Battalion The Devonshire Regiment. A blow also fell upon the Dukes as their 2/7th Battalion, 186th Brigade, was similarly reduced to cadre and replaced by the Territorial 2/4th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment. Severe shortages of infantry reinforcements led to the 5th Dukes receiving men who had been wounded or sick and were still not well enough for active service, as recalled by Private Arthur Sunley [18] who had until then served with the 9th Dukes before entering hospital:

"On May 25 I was sent, with others from hospital, before the medical board. Although I had been pronounced by a specialist unfit owing to defective vision this was not taken into account at this examination. With much punching about the chest and ribs I was pronounced fit in about two seconds and, on June 20, was sent up to 62nd Division in charge of a draft of 20 men. Some of these had veritably been kicked out of hospital; they experienced great difficulty in marching and half a dozen of them fell out through sheer fatigue. On arrival [at the draft depot] I was severely strafed by the depot adjutant but I was indifferent about the business knowing that the men would eventually arrive. This they did, straggling into camp at all hours during the evening."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, Number 119. January 1961.)

For the first time the second-line Dukes no longer formed a complete 186th Brigade, for out of its four original Dukes Territorial battalions only Halifax's 2/4th and Huddersfield's 5th remained:

"Bitter indeed was the pill to swallow, for both battalions had fought gallantly from the very time they landed in France in January 1917. But the training of new troops was essential, and the cruel blow suffered by the 2/7th West Yorks [Leeds] and 2/7th Duke of Wellington's Regiments was somewhat softened by the knowledge that, having fought well and achieved much, they were now to be used in preparing fresh arrivals in France to take their places in the front line."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The newly-arrived Arthur Sunley at last found himself back with the Dukes, albeit not his former 9th (Service) Battalion, where he was pleased to discover that the 5th Dukes at least took more than a little care for their soldiers wellbeing:

"One thing that struck me in the 5th Battalion which was that the men's messing was very carefully supervised and I am sure that no battalion could have been better fed. Every day a menu was posted on the cookers; two platoons would have one dish and two another, changing about the following day. This no doubt accounted for the health of the men and their good esprit de corps."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, Number 119. January 1961.)

On 24th June 1918 the 62nd Division was relieved by the 37th Division and it was then passed to General Headquarters Reserve with instructions to be on nine hours' notice to join the British 22nd Corps. The division remained at the 4th Corps rest area at Pas:

"To the joy of all, the [West Riding] gunners were with them. Rare indeed are such occasions, for usually long after the tired and exhausted infantry had been withdrawn from the line to rest, the guns remained behind to 'carry on'. A more unselfish existence it is not possible to imagine. But on this occasion, to the unbounded satisfaction of all ranks, the sorely-tried gunners had been relieved, and therefore back in the Rest Area the Division not only set to work to train hard, but also to play hard. Comfortable billets and glorious summer weather, drill and parades in the morning, sports in the afternoons, performances by the, now famous, 'Pelican Troupe', which played to crowded houses in the evening, all combined to make this rest period one to live in the memory. And with death their constant companion in the front line trenches, how men lived and laughed away from them!"

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

After a fortnight of rest rumours came of a move to join the French Fifth Army on the Marne. These rumours were quickly confirmed by orders. The British 22nd Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir A Godley, was originally to be of four divisions - 15th, 34th, 51st and 62nd. In the event the 15th and 34th each went to separate French Corps. The British 22nd Corps was therefore to fight on the Marne composed of two famous British Territorial Divisions - the 51st (Highland) and the 62nd (2nd West Riding).

Not for the first, or last, time Territorials of the West Riding and the Highlands joined together to write history by their deeds. Indeed these two Territorial divisions had already fought side-by-side during the tank attack on Cambrai in November 1917. An embattled French Fifth Army needed urgent help, and called upon the British Army to supply much needed reinforcements. On 14th July 1918 the 51st (Highland) Division and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division were ordered to the Marne to act as a counter-attack force there to relieve a hard pressed French Army. Forty trains, each of forty coaches, were needed to move the division south, and the West Riding's 'entrainment' started at 4am on 14th July. Even as their trains started events took a turn for the worse many miles to the south as the Germans launched 'Friedensturm'. Momentous events took place in the 38 hours it took to move the Dukes down to the Marne.

The salient into the Allied lines caused by the German offensive was east of Compiègne and north of Rheims with Chateau Thierry at the centre. The 51st and 62nd Division were to join and fight alongside the French Fifth Army, commanded by General Berthelot, which was to counter-attack on the right flank with the aim of pinching-off the enemy-held salient. The French General Berthelot was a large corpulent man with the eccentricity of continuing to wear his nightshirt during his working day. He was also an optimist, for back in mid-September 1914 he predicted that the French Armies would be crossing Germany's Rhine border by the end of that month. Now four years later, and a long way from Rhine, on the left flank a concurrent counter-attack was to be carried out by the French Ninth, Sixth, and Tenth Armies; whilst Berthelot's Army attacked on the right flank along the Ardre. The ground was totally unlike the muddy wreckage they were used to, as the area was as yet unspoiled by war:

"The valley of the Ardre varied from 2,000 to 3,000 yards in width. Much of it was gently undulating corn land, with the crops ripe for cutting, and of sufficient height to afford excellent cover for attacking or defending troops. The villages of Marfaux, Chaumuzy and Bligny lay on the slope to the river, bounded by steep ridges and spurs, and thickly wooded crests. Fighting of a kind vastly different from anything they had previously gone through now faced the West Yorkshiremen, and the 62nd Division generally. It could hardly be called open warfare for the attack would, in places, have to be made through thick forests, and even to take up their assembly positions the attacking troops had to move up through almost impenetrable woods, in which the enemy still lurked. Guerilla warfare was a more appropriate term."

(Ibid)

By the 17th July the 62nd Division had moved and concentrated on the Marne, and on the 18th French units made a successful counter-attack between Chateau Thierry and Soissons. The British 51st (Highland) and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisions prepared for their attack planned to start at 8am on 20th July and therefore moved forward to assembly areas behind the allied 2nd Italian Corps, then holding a line Serniers to Hautvillers. The plan for the two British divisions was to attack and penetrate some 4½ miles up the valley of the River Ardre, with the river as the inter-divisional boundary, with the 51st Division on the left and the 62nd Division on the right.

Whilst plans were being made at a much higher level Arthur Sunley with the 5th Dukes was making his own preparations for the coming battle:

"We bivouacked in a wood during the night, ready to move out in the early morning to get into position for an attack. On hearing the news that we were 'going over the top' I had a queer feeling in the bread-basket. Looking round at the chaps, I noted their serious faces while they were busily writing postcards and letters to be left for the transport to post. I, too, left my diary with the Quartermaster Sergeant to send home if I was unlucky in the attack."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, Number 119. January 1961.)

The 62nd Division's plan for the first phase placed the 185th Brigade left, the 187th Brigade right, with the Dukes 186th Brigade in reserve. As soon as the 185th and 187th Brigades had captured the high ground around Bligny Ridge, the Dukes were to pass through them and continue the attack. At first the 186th Brigade deployed in the rear of the two leading brigades with all three of its battalions forward. Just before 8am on 20th July the 185th and 187th Brigades stood ready to attack. The men of the assault brigades were already weary having endured a long night approach march along steep rough tracks and through pitch-black dense forests as recalled by an officer of the 8th West Yorkshires:

"Our guide implored us to double, but this was just a little beyond us, as we could scarcely limp along. But the fears of our guide were justified for the road began to be heavily shelled Once more we plunged into the horrors of those forest depths and in the early hours of the morning these dark woods,

with their muddy paths and their foul stench of gas and decaying bodies of horses, began to tell on the energy and spirits of the men. I walked, or rather stumbled, along in a kind of mental haze, a pestilential blackness with a hazy moonlight above the trees, we stumbled on and on, through trees, over trees, into trees. When I could think, it was about our attack at dawn. There is no energy left for grim jokes or curses, and the only sounds are the sobs of some youngster who has found his load of rifle, ammunition, pack, rations, bombs, equipments, one or two panniers and other impedimenta almost too much for his boyish strength."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

It was planned that they were to be supported by a creeping artillery barrage laid down by French and Italian artillerymen on positions 1,000 yards ahead of their forming-up positions. Their own indomitable West Riding gunners had not, as yet, arrived for they were still struggling through the densely packed roads in the rear areas. Brilliant sunshine flooded the countryside as the leading West Yorkshiremen advanced through the cornfields but these were quickly found to be stuffed full of enemy machine-gun nests. The French/Italian barrage soon proved worthless for it had been dropped too far ahead thus leaving countless strong enemy positions untouched in the intervening space. 185th Brigade's West Yorkshires and Devons were completely held-up by a wall of enemy fire. They also came under devastating enfilade fire from a wood on the other river bank in a sector which had been missed by the 51st Highland:

"It was not long before the enemy's machine-guns joined their barking to the scream of the shells of the French barrage passing overhead. And soon men began to fall rapidly. Cross-fire, from the edges of the woods high above the right flank, and from Cuitron and Marfaux villages, swept the front of the attack and it was very evident that the barrage had affected the enemy not at all, for everywhere his machine-guns poured a perpetual hail of bullets into the waves of advancing Yorkshiremen. And the worst of it was that these guns could not be located; they were very skilfully hidden amidst trees and corn. 'It was an invisible foe we were pitted against', said an officer of the battalion, 'and very few of us ever caught sight of a Bosche.'"

(Ibid)

By 11am it was clear that the by now decimated 185th Brigade, on the left flank, could advance no further that day. Indeed the adjoining brigade of 51st Highlanders, to their left, also encountered impenetrable machine-gun and artillery fire, and were similarly unable to advance further. General Braithwaite, GOC 62nd Division, decided not to continue the 185th Brigade's left flank attack and accordingly instructed that brigade to consolidate its gains. For the next phase his new plan was to use the Dukes 186th Brigade, then in reserve, to attack through his 187th Brigade which had made a little progress towards the villages of Marfaux and Cuitron. These villages were in the open ground between the north bank of the river Ardre and the dense woodland called the Bois du Petit Champ to the north. This wood was on higher ground and clearly packed with enemy troops whose guns could pour a wall of fire upon the villages and down to the river, indeed across the division's complete line of advance. It was clear to General Braithwaite that the Bois du Petit Champ had to be secured before any hope of a successful attack on the villages could be made. Orders were therefore sent to 186th Brigade headquarters, Brigadier J G Burnett, for his brigade to attack through the flank and rear of these woods. However it was found out that the events of earlier that day meant that this could not be done. The two Dukes and one Hampshire battalion had, as ordered, followed up the assault brigades that morning:

"As the [186th] Brigade moved forward, the Marfaux-Pourcy Valley and the Bois de Rheims were under heavy fire from hostile artillery. A little later, as the battalions drew near the firing line, the whole country over which the advance had to be made was swept by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire. The deadly machine-gun nests, hidden in the standing corn or admirably concealed in bushy banks, covered the whole approaches to Marfaux and Cuitron."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

It was soon realized that their comrades in the forward brigades were encountering unexpectedly stiff resistance from very large numbers of Germans, many untouched by the Allied artillery fireplan. The 5th Dukes was in an obscure position and became split into two double-company groups, one assisting the 185th Brigade, the other with the 187th. They encountered heavy hostile fire resulting in two companies suffering 25% casualties in a matter of minutes. Arthur Sunley's 'A' Company was amongst the first to be deluged by the enemy's fire causing terrible casualties:

"One of the first was the company commander, (Captain Sykes from Huddersfield) who was very popular and respected by the men. We steadily advanced through a cornfield and, arriving at the top of the ridge where it ended, were subjected to heavy machine-gun and rifle fire. We dropped down, but, seeing that men were being hit as they lay, I dashed forward and down the other side of the ridge. In doing so I was hit on the head, falling flat. I gingerly took off my helmet and rubbed my hand over my head but could find no blood. I then found that there was a dent and groove on the side of my

helmet, caused by a bullet. I suppose if I had been stationary it would have gone straight through but the action of running caused it to ricochet. Creeping forward 25 yards I saw a large shell hole into which I immediately got with the knowledge that when the Battalion advanced it was bound to come this way."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, Number 119. January 1961.)

Huddersfield's 5th Battalion remained split up during the 20th, and did not come back as a group until the following day, 21st July. The 2/4th Hampshires also came up on the embattled 185th Brigade and attempted to assist in the attack on Marfaux and Cuitron but enemy fire also decimated their advance. Small numbers managed to get into Marfaux but, being unsupported, had to withdraw and dig-in about 500 yards to the east:

"The 2/4th Duke of Wellington's also met with serious opposition on the left flank of the attack. The Battalion, on clearing the Ferme de Courtagnon, broke into company artillery formation - two companies in the front line and two in support. On approaching Pourcy, machine-gun bullets from the direction of Cuitron, swept the advance, and the Companies in extended order. Nothing could be seen of the 51st Division on the left and, on the right, the 2/4th Hants, owing to the nature of the ground, had been forced for a time to follow up in the rear of the 2/4th Duke of Wellington's, had not yet come up on the right flank; both flanks were thus in the air. Eventually, however, the right of the Battalion came up with the 185th Infantry Brigade, then about 600 yards from Marfaux. At this point the two waves on the right, ie the two right Companies, seem to have merged into one and joined units of the 185th Brigade, with which they made another attempt to go forward in the direction of Marfaux."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

Some of Halifax's 2/4th Dukes also managed to fight their way into Marfaux but again the enemy was found to be too strong and the battalion withdrew 200 yards, there to consolidate a defensive line. Thus by 3am on 20th July the 62nd Division's attack had practically ceased. Dead tired, but nevertheless unbeaten, the Dukes set to and reorganised to hold onto the ground gained. Not least they acknowledged that the machine-gun crews were undoubtedly the bravest German soldiers, for once they gave up, the remaining German defenders were relatively easy to overcome, but they rarely gave up:

"Quite unlike anything the Division had hitherto experienced in France, was the desperate fighting which took place on the 20th July. The enemy clung tenaciously to all his positions. Everthing was in his favour - his machine-guns were skilfully concealed and well handled, and his snipers were everywhere where vantage ground could be made use of. The barrage which, had it come down on the right positions, must have shaken him, was wide of the mark. And yet, the Yorkshiremen, fighting under extraordinary disadvantages and difficulties, clung equally tenaciously to every foot of ground attained. Their pluck and endurance were inspiring. Prisoners (three officers and fifty other ranks) had been taken from four German Divisions, ie 103rd, 123rd, 50th and 86th, which showed that the enemy was as strong, if not stronger, than the two British Divisions opposed to him."

(Ibid)

On the next day the Hallamshires, 5th KOYLI and 9 DLI put in a further attack on the Bois du Petit Champ. Both made brave, but unsuccessful, assaults which were again met by a perfect inferno of enemy fire. The reports from these by now veteran battalions advised of literally hundreds of enemy machine-gun positions. Although they did not clear the wood it was later discovered that this attack caused the Germans to withdraw their 103rd and 123rd Divisions due to casualties and replace them with Regiments of their 50th Division. No fresh troops being available, General Braithwaite ordered the attack broken off and ground consolidated. It became increasingly clear that the Bois du Petit Champ held the key, until this was captured nothing else was worth the cost:

"It was a most infernal place and had defied all efforts of the French and Italians. The plan for its capture, which was entirely successful, was General Burnett's and, I think, must stand for a long while as an example of forest fighting conducted admirably."

[General Braithwaite]

(Ibid)

General Braithwaite ordered an attack in two parts over the following consecutive two days. On the first day the 186th Brigade was to clear the Bois du Petit Champ in order that Marfaux and Cuitron could be entered on the next day. 186th Brigade was also to attack the Bois on the next day, 22nd July, and received welcome additional help in the form of New Zealanders from the Corps Cyclist Battalion which was placed under the command of Brigadier-General Burnett. Fighting in dense woodland against a numerous, well-concealed enemy equipped with plenty of machine-guns now called for new tactics as recorded by Huddersfield's 5th Battalion:

"The Battalion received orders to capture the Bois du Petit Champ, part of the Bois de Rheims, as far west as the track between Courmas and Chaumuzy - the idea of the attack being for A and D

Companies to advance along the north, and for B and C Companies along the south, limits of the objective, on a one-platoon front of 50 yards. The leading platoons to endeavour to push forward to the furthest limit of the objective, one platoon to be dropped from the rear of the attacking columns at distances of 30 metres. These platoons to form strong points capable of all round defence. After the strong points had been established by platoons, the latter to send out patrols to search the wood for any enemy posts or personnel between themselves and adjoining posts."

(Ibid)

This attack was to clear a narrow front inside both edges of the wood. All available artillery, including French 75's, was to fire a creeping barrage to move at 100 yards every ten minutes. In addition, heavy artillery was to bombard selected areas, and the 62nd Divisions' own machine-gun battalion was to sweep the southern slopes of the wood. Zero Hour was set for 12.15pm when a supporting artillery barrage came down 250 yards in front of the existing front line, and rested there for ten minutes before creeping forwards. There then began a deadly game of hide and seek in the forest, the 5th Dukes 'A' company met opposition as soon as it entered the wood:

"It was, however, soon overcome and the first prisoners taken. Advancing cautiously, the Company pressed on and had got 250 yards into the wood when, suddenly, it bumped up against a strong point, held by a party of twenty Germans, with four machine-guns. Then ensued a desperate struggle, but here again resistance was broken down and the garrison and the machine-gun post were captured. Again, A Company pushed on through the thick trees and undergrowth and a further 200 yards had been covered when another strongpoint made itself evident by a sudden burst of machine-gun and rifle fire. But this second post shared the same fate as the first and six more machine-guns and a party of from thirty to thirty-five Germans were added to the list of captures. D Company had taken a hand in this capture, for A had become weakened by casualties."

(Ibid)

Systematically fighting forward the Dukes steadily overcame a skilfully concealed network of machine-gun posts. Nor were the German defenders inactive for they soon mounted a counter-attack which threatened to envelop the 5th Battalion's 'C' Company:

"Hard and bitter fighting then ensued. With fixed bayonets, the Germans charged the two remaining posts of the Company. A Lewis gun was brought into action and the enemy was bloodily repulsed. For a little while he retired, obviously shaken. Presently, however, he came on again, using stick bombs freely and got so close and was in such superiority in numbers that the position became untenable. With fine courage, Captain J B Cockhill withdrew his few remaining men to a shell hole in the open, on the southern edge of the wood. Here the gallant survivors were not only subjected to a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the wood but also from the valley of Cuitron. To make matters worse, a shell burst in the shell hole, putting the Lewis gun out of action. There was no other course open, but to retire still further in a westerly direction, followed closely by the enemy. At length, after a running fight, two officers and six other ranks reached B Company's posts and the enemy, evidently contented, gave up the pursuit."

(Ibid)

As night fell the 5th Battalion consolidated its line within the deadly forest; the day's fighting had cost it 155 casualties. The strength of the enemy opposing them being indicated by the 208 prisoners of the 53rd Prussian Regiment, 50th German Division, together with the 41 machine-guns they had captured. The 2/4th Battalion had also been engaged during the day, albeit on a smaller scale, by pushing patrols out towards Marfaux. But here the enemy was found to be very strong in numbers and on the alert. On reaching sight of Marfaux the Dukes patrols encountered a vicious resistance which caused 50% casualties and forced them to withdraw under heavy fire by crawling through the dense cornfields.

The German counter-attack on the forward elements of the 5th Battalion had succeeded in recapturing a critical spur of wood from which they could still protect their village garrisons using enfilade machine-gun fire. By now the 5th KOYLI, 187th Brigade, had pushed forward its left flank in the wood to link up with the 5th Dukes newly gained positions, but it remained imperative that the key spur of wood was captured before Marfaux and Cuitron could be attacked. The plan for 186th Brigade's attack on the following day, 23rd July, was therefore amended by the addition of two companies of the 8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion West Yorkshires, from 185th Brigade, who were to clear the vital wood in the Bois du Petit Champ. All the 62nd Divisional artillery, less one 18 pounder and one 4.5 howitzer batteries, were directed onto the enemy in the woods. In the event, the two Leeds Rifles' 'companies' were a muster of the complete battalion for, even with newly-arrived reinforcements, that was the full strength recent casualties would permit.

The attack began at 6am, 23rd July, and the second Leeds Rifles' company almost immediately sustained severe casualties, including losing all its officers in the first thirty minutes. Command of this company was taken up by one Sergeant Horner who led them and, after more stiff fighting, finally succeeded in clearing the edge of the

wood thus allowing the attacks on Marfaux and Cuitron to start. Now that the lethal enfilade fire was disposed of, both villages were taken following desperate fighting by the 9th Durham Light Infantry and the New Zealanders of the Corps Cyclist battalion. During the last five days the 62nd Division had been in almost continual contact with the enemy and its casualties had amounted to a dreadful total of 98 officers and 3,053 soldiers; as ever, most of these were infantry. The division had captured 453 Germans and many more now lay in the dense woods either killed or wounded.

That night further operations by the Leeds Rifles succeeded in capturing deeper strongpoints in the woods and the 187th Brigade advanced to link up with this depleted but determined battalion. The 24th July was comparatively quiet although the enemy heavily shelled Marfaux and Cuitron and carried out night aircraft bombing raids on the district. The Corps front was now shortened. This enabled the 62nd Division to reorganise its brigades whose units had progressively intermingled to meet the various threats of the last six days. 187th Brigade was moved into the division's reserve, with the 185th Brigade going into support, there to reorganise. This left the Dukes 186th Brigade which took over responsibility for the new front line.

A Corps conference was held on 25th July which addressed the fact that no further advance should be made up the valley of the Ardre without first capturing the German positions on the high ground from which they commanded the whole area. The Corps Commander wished immediately to attack but his Divisional Commanders strongly advised that a day's rest and reorganisation was essential if any attack was to succeed. This was agreed and the date was set for 27th July when the 51st and 62nd Divisions were to make a combined assault. To the south of the River Ardre the 51st Division and one brigade of 62nd Division were to advance on a three-brigade front; this plan placed the Highlander's 153rd and 152nd Brigades on its left and right flanks with the Yorkshiremen of 187th Brigade between them. North of the river the front was held by the Dukes 186th Brigade whose attack orders simply instructed that they should throw forward its line in keeping with the southern advance. The start-line was crossed at 6am on 27th July after which the Hallamshires, 187th Brigade, were met by a weak enemy barrage and intermittent machine-gun fire as they advanced. Unknown to them Ludendorff had instructed a general withdrawal of German forces along the whole front and this had taken place on the previous night. The 'insisted on' day for rest and reorganisation had unintentionally saved numerous British lives. The Dukes and Hampshires of 186th Brigade similarly advanced north of the river with 185th Brigade moving close behind in support. They also met sporadic enemy fire but this was methodically dealt with and did not slow their steady advance forward. Indeed the advance went so well that the unheard of happened and the Corps cavalry was passed through the infantry. However the cavalymen soon encountered stiff resistance when they arrived at the Montaigne de Bligny (Bligny Ridge) which was heavily defended and where they were joined by the Dukes who consolidated the new line.

At 10.30pm headquarters 62nd Division issued orders for the advance to be continued on the next day, 28th July. 186th Brigade was to clear the village of Bligny whilst 185th Brigade captured Bligny Ridge, a high piece of ground on the other side of the river which commanded the valley of the Ardre. If a further advance was necessary 187th Brigade was to pass-through and continue the attack. The 186th's brigade orders placed the 2/4th Hampshires on the left, the 2/4th Dukes right and the 5th Dukes in support; zero hour was set for 4.30am. Twelve hours later, at 4pm, the Hampshires had captured their objectives by the method of discarding all surplus equipment, crawling forward using all possible cover so keeping under the line of intense enemy fire, and enabling the whole battalion to get forward relatively unscathed. Lieutenant Colonel P P Wilson's 2/4th Dukes had a more trying experience:

"Meanwhile the 2/4th Duke of Wellington's, dead-tired from their previous day's operations, had, at 4am, taken up their assembly position between the Bois de Dix Hommes and the Bligny-Chaumuzy Road. In this position they were much exposed and suffered heavily from an intense bombardment and from machine-gun fire coming from the Bois de Dix Hommes, Arbre de Villers and the high ground north of the old French line. 'The men were suffering from extreme exhaustion', said Colonel Wilson, 'And the advance became most difficult.' But no one thought of giving in. The men forced themselves along and by sheer perseverance and dogged determination one platoon, having marched round by the Bois de Dix Hommes, managed to reach the objective. At this period touch was not established with the French on the right but the position gained was held. Another platoon, by creeping forward first round the eastern and then the northern exits of Bligny, reached its objectives also. No further movement was possible until dusk, when the 2/4th Dukes, as a whole, advanced and consolidated the old French line - their objective."

(Ibid)

To their left the 8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion West Yorkshires' attack was led by their commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel N A England who was formerly a Dukes officer. Their role was to capture the strategic Bligny Ridge from which a determined enemy could dominate the whole area with fire and view. The battalion soon became involved in very stiff fighting and, due to its recent heavy losses of officers, a large part of its battle was most effectively conducted under the leadership of sergeants and corporals. The efforts of this West Riding

battalion were especially recognised by the French who subsequently decorated the Leeds Rifles with the Croix de Guerre avec Palme en Bronze, the medal ribbon of which has been worn with great pride by its Territorial Army successors to the present-day.

During the night of 28th/29th July the Dukes 186th Brigade moved into divisional reserve when its positions in Bligny village were handed over to the 187th Brigade. At 4pm on the afternoon of 29th July headquarters 62nd Division received a warning order from 22nd Corps Headquarters advising that the Corps was to be withdrawn and moved by train to another area. The 62nd Division completed handing over and withdrew from the line during the night of 30th/31st July. General Berthelot, the grateful Commander of the Fifth French Army, insisted upon reviewing the West Riding Territorials who had so effectively reversed the previously desperate situation of the French Army on the Marne:

"On 31st July, after we had gone out [of the line], General Berthelot said he would like to review as many of the troops he could, just outside Moreuil. There was, as can be imagined, great preparation. We had only come out of the line the night before, but were determined to show our allies a clean brigade. The review was to consist of one Brigade from the 51st [Highland] and one Brigade from the 62nd, General Berthelot, commanding the Fifth French Army, taking the salute. The 186th Brigade represented the 62nd Division, and the way the 186th were helped during the night to make themselves and their transport clean and smart by other troops, which were not taking part in the review, is worthy of mention, as showing the 'esprit de Division' which existed amongst all ranks. An amusing part of the show was, as there was not time to clean everything thoroughly, that the Brigadier had all the brass hubs of the wheels on the side General Berthelot would stand, polished up to the nines, the hubs on the other side remaining in the state that ten days' continuous fighting had made them."

[General Braithwaite]

(Ibid)

The successful Allied counter-attack on the Marne concluded the collapse of the German Spring Offensive of 1918. The bold German plan had failed. The efforts of the Highland and West Riding Territorials had regained the old French line around Bligny and between them they had captured 2,100 prisoners from no less than seven different German divisions. But the 62nd Division's casualties alone amounted to 4,126 during the ten days fighting, 20th-30th July 1918. Having more than achieved their task the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division left the Marne on 31st July 1918, and moved back north to the British sector between Amiens and Ypres. The remainder of 1918 was to see the Allied advance to victory in which the Dukes battalions, and both West Riding Divisions, were to play an active part.

[18: Private Arthur Sunley first enlisted with the 9th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), a 'New Army' battalion which was raised on 9th September 1914, later disbanded on 13th February 1919. He sailed for France with the Battalion on 15th July 1915 remaining with it until posted to Headquarters 17th Infantry Brigade as a clerk as a medical board had declared him unfit for further front-line service. He was later 'combed-out' as a reinforcement draft to the 5th Battalion with whom he served until the end of the war. After the war Arthur Sunley had a civil and military tailors in Trinity Street, Huddersfield.]

THE ADVANCE TO VICTORY

Five days after the successful counter-attack on the Marne, the British, French and American allies held a conference to prepare offensives in their respective sectors. The British contribution was to be a series of attacks towards St Quentin and Cambrai. These were planned to threaten the lines of communication which centred on Maubege, through which alone the German armies facing the French in the Champagne sector could be supplied and reinforced. Similar operations to seize vital railway lines were to be carried out by the French and American troops to the south. By August 1918 the British Army was ready to counter-attack. A hundred days later the war was to be over, the British Army had at last produced a winning combination finally to defeat the Germans:

"Infantry, artillery, machine-guns, tanks, aircraft and wireless telegraphy all functioned as parts of a single unit. As a result of meticulous planning, each component of the offensive was integrated with, and provided maximum support for every other component. Here, more than anywhere else, was the great technical achievement of these climactic battles. It was not that the British had developed a war-winning weapon. What they had produced was a 'weapons system'; the melding of the various elements in the military arm into a mutually supporting whole."

(The Myriad Faces of War. Trevor Wilson. 1986.)

Soissons was already the scene of a German fighting withdrawal on 4th August. One consequence of this was that Corporal Adolf Hitler was decorated with the Iron Cross, First Class, to recognise his 'personal bravery and general merit', itself an unusually high award for a mere Corporal. Hitler wore it for the rest of his life despite the fact that his regimental adjutant who had recommended him for the award, Captain Hugo Guttman, was a Jew. On 8th August 1918, at 4.20am, British, Australian, Canadian and French troops attacked the German line from just south of Albert to Moreuil. By nightfall the advance had penetrated up to seven miles and the British alone had taken some 13,000 German prisoners together with three to four hundred guns captured. Fighting continued until 20th August resulting in twenty German divisions being heavily defeated by thirteen British infantry and three cavalry divisions. The attacks continued and British forces again advanced across ground they had first crossed during the German retreat to the Hindenberg Line, in early 1917, and which they had been pushed back over during the German Spring offensive of 1918.

Following their battles on the Marne, the Territorials of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had arrived in the British 4th Corps rest area at Pas on 5th August 1918. Their time until 12th August was spent in much-needed rest, reorganisation and training. News came on 8th August that yet another of the Division's original battalions was to be disbanded owing to a lack of reinforcements. This resulted in the City of York's 2/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment, 185th Brigade, having its personnel transferred to make up the depleted 8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion, 185th Brigade, and being replaced by another Territorial Battalion, the 2/20th (County of London) Battalion The London Regiment (Blackheath and Woolwich) (TF) which had recently arrived from Palestine.

The Battle of Albert ended on the evening of 23rd August. Earlier that day the 62nd Division received orders to return under command of the 6th Corps that night and to relieve the 3rd Division which was then east of Courcelles, north-west of Bapaume, on the following day. This was familiar ground, for the 62nd Division had already advanced across it, and later captured Bullecourt, in 1917, and recently defended it at Bucquoy during the German Spring Offensive. The West Riding Territorials were now to cross it again for the third, and last, time. From now onwards they were to attack ever eastwards towards the German border. Even as the division moved up, fresh orders came for it to relieve the 2nd, rather than the 3rd, Division. To their front its 5th Infantry Brigade was tasked with that night capturing the villages of Sapignies and Béhagnies, about two miles north of Bapaume. The Dukes 186th Brigade was moved forward to a ridge between Achiet le Grand and Gommecourt with instructions to support the 5th Brigade should their attack be unsuccessful. In the event, the 5th Brigade's attack was a success and the 6th Corps was ordered to continue the advance the following day, 25th August.

The Corps' plan placed the Guards Division left and the 62nd Division right. The 62nd Division's plan tasked its 187th Brigade with the capture of the village of Mory whilst on the right the Dukes 186th Brigade was to capture the old Third Army line, east of Sapignies and Béhagnies. Here they were faced by dense belts of barbed wire which had been erected by its previous British occupants but which the Germans had since turned to their advantage. For its capture each of the 62nd Division's brigades was to be led by one battalion with Sheffield's Hallamshires in front of 187th Brigade, and Huddersfield's 5th Dukes, (Lieutenant Colonel J Walker), leading 186th Brigade. To the rear of these two brigades came the 185th Brigade in close support.

At 9am the 5th Dukes' 'B' and 'C' Companies carefully advanced towards Béhagnies for they had not, as yet, received the news that the village had already been captured by the 2nd Division's 5th Brigade. However they soon passed through 5th Brigade's outpost line and advanced east towards the enemy-held old British lines. To the left and right the enemy held the fortified villages of Mory and Favreuil respectively, and from here German garrisons swept the advancing Dukes with heavy machine-gun fire on both sides. Despite the fire, the Dukes advanced and secured their first objective allowing 'A' and 'D' Companies to pass through and continue the attack. But the 5th Battalion's flanks became dangerously exposed to enemy enfilade fire and counter-attack. To the south the 37th Division, 4th Corps, had failed to capture the German fortified village of Favreuil, and to their north their own division's 187th Brigade had not yet captured Mory.

Earlier in the day, 187th Brigade had experienced severe difficulties relieving the 2nd Division's 99th and 6th Brigades which had become inextricably mixed together in the recent fighting. This had, in turn, made the 187th Brigade late for their zero hour. New orders to delay zero hour had not reached the Hallamshires, their assault battalion, who therefore advanced in keeping with their original orders. But the Hallamshires advanced alone, for the remainder of their brigade had the attack timed for one hour later, as did the Guards Division on their left flank. Despite the complete absence of an expected supporting barrage the Hallamshires nevertheless attacked. They pressed forward, despite an ever-rising toll of casualties and were in time supported by the 2/4th KOYLI and eventually captured Mory.

In the late afternoon the enemy swamped the 62nd Division's front with heavy artillery fire. This was closely followed by a powerful counter-attack, the heaviest part of which fell upon the 5th Dukes right flank where there was a gap between themselves and the adjacent 37th Division:

"About two companies of the enemy attacked frontally from the Vraucourt-Beugnatre road, coming down the slope of the hill towards C and A Companies of the 5th Dukes. Heavy rifle and Lewis gun

fire was opened on the advancing Germans who, as the bullets tore through their ranks, hesitated. A German officer was seen trying to get his men on, though his efforts were apparently in vain. Presently he dropped to the ground. The enemy's hesitation then turned to action and in a few minutes the remaining Germans were running helter-skelter for their own trenches. Thus the enemy's attacks on this part of the line failed."

"On the right flank of the [5th] Battalion, however, the situation was much more serious. A large force of the enemy, estimated at five Battalions, had concentrated in the thickly-wooded northern parts of Favreuil village. From this position he attacked the right flank of the 186th Infantry Brigade. Captain C G H Ellis, who commanded the right-flank Company (D) of the 5th Dukes, quickly realizing the danger, threw back his line slightly to face south-east, thus forming a defensive flank against the threatened attack. Met by an accurate rifle and Lewis gun fire, and being caught by the Divisional artillery in the northern end of Favreuil, the enemy suffered very heavy losses. The loud explosions of bursting shells and the sharp crack of rifles were punctuated by shrieks and groans issuing from the wood north of the village. Every attempt to advance by the enemy was broken up and finally the attack died down, and by 5pm Captain Ellis had resumed his former position."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The 62nd Division had made substantial progress. Statements taken from German prisoners indicated a totally demoralized German attacking force which had sustained up to 50% casualties, and the heavy British barrage had further added to their discomfort. The night of 25th/26th August was a busy one as parties carried forward the essentials of ammunition, water and rations to the Dukes in their new front line posts. Further attacks resulted in the 62nd Division breaking into the German defences in the old Third Army line. Over the next few days the West Riding Territorials carried out unrelenting attacks which saw them steadily fighting ever eastwards despite a persistent defence by the Germans who rained machine-gun fire and shellfire onto them at every step. On the 28th August command of the 62nd Division passed from Major General W P Braithwaite CB to Major General Sir Robert Whigham KCB DSO. General Braithwaite had commanded the West Riding Territorials since December 1915 and had taken them through the battles of the Ancre, Bullecourt, Cambrai, Bucquoy and on the Marne. He was made Knight Commander of the Bath in recognition of his leadership of the 62nd Division, and promoted Lieutenant-General to command the 9th Corps.

Yet despite such changes the relentless attacks continued with stiff fighting. Typical of this was that by two companies of the 5th Dukes, commanded by Captain C G H Ellis, which had been tasked with fighting through the enemy trench systems near Vaulx-Vraucourt:

"The organization of this attack is of interest. Two bombing platoons worked down each trench towards the trench junction, the first party to reach it firing three red lights, in order to prevent one party bombing the other. On each side of each trench a Lewis-gun team kept pace with the bombing platoons, forcing the Germans by their fire to keep their heads down and shooting Germans who attempted to get out of the trench. Two platoons, at a distance of 150 yards, in the rear of the bombing parties in each trench, followed for the purpose of establishing section posts about every 100 yards, to protect the flanks as the attack advanced. Two more Lewis-gun sections (four guns) of the Support Company, were distributed fifty yards north and south of each trench and 100 yards in rear of the leading company. As D, followed by A Company, advanced close on the heels of the barrage, the enemy at first put up a stiff fight, but the Lewis-guns disorganized his bombing parties who were unable to throw their bombs with any accuracy. And at bayonet work the Yorkshiremen were infinitely superior."

(Ibid)

Vaulx-Vraucourt proved a tough nut to crack. Enemy machine-gun posts were well dug in, carefully concealed, and the gun crews showed little willingness to give ground readily. The division participated in bitter fighting before it finally captured the area on 1st September. It became clear that the German intention was to carry out another methodical withdrawal into the Hindenberg defensive line which was even then being hastily strengthened. Equally the British commanders realized the danger of allowing the enemy to again consolidate itself in this daunting defensive position. It was therefore resolved that the advance must continue with all haste with an attack upon the enemy line between Drocourt and Quéant. Once this had been seized the whole German defence could be turned. But it was a formidable task, for the enemy held a complex maze of well-constructed trenches, protected by wire entanglements:

"The Hindenberg Line, so called by our troops, was neither Hindenberg nor a Line. As described and pictured by our great generals, it consisted of a series of defences, including many defended villages, and forming a belt, or fortified area, varying in depth from seven to ten thousand yards. It stretched from Lille to Metz, and among its extensions, or switches, was the famous 'Drocourt-Quéant Switch', which had held up our advance more than once. Within this system of barriers,

running through a stratum of deep cuttings, the enemy had prepared elaborate dug-outs, shelters, and gun-emplacements, all heavily fortified and wired."

(The West Riding Territorials in the Great War. Laurie Magnus. 1920.)

Both the 4th and 6th Corps were involved in this attack with the 62nd Division being tasked with capturing the village of Morchies, the 6th Corps' objective. The division's attack was to start on 2nd September and to be spearheaded by its 187th Brigade supported by eight mark IV tanks with the 9th DLI under command. Once it had seized the first objective a battalion from each of 185th and 186th Brigades were to relieve the 187th. This attack started promptly at 5.15am when the KOYLI and Hallamshire battalions followed the supporting barrage and at once came under heavy enemy fire from close range but these positions were quickly disposed of. The KOYLI then made steady progress until the enemy managed to work their way round the battalion's flank. As soon as the Hallamshires reached high ground the battalion immediately met stiff opposition from the enemy in the Vaulx trenches which poured fire from 77mm and machine-guns into its advancing ranks. The first objective was eventually secured but holding it was a different matter due to repeated enemy local counter-attacks and open flanks caused by the slow progress of adjacent divisions. But the West Riding Territorials would not be held back and a series of vigorous attacks eventually saw the capture of Vaulx trench and Vaulx Wood. By 5pm the new line was secured. What had, at some stages, looked like a dismal failure had been turned into a distinct success. At 3am on 3rd September the 6th and 99th Brigades, 2nd Division, passed through the 62nd Division's front line to press the attack eastwards, and the 62nd Division moved back into a Corps' support role. Its operations between 24th August and 3rd September had brought the capture of 1,467 prisoners, three field guns, a staggering 277 machine-guns, 55 trench-mortars and 35 anti-tank rifles. But, as always, there had been a terrible price to pay, for the division's toll of casualties numbered 2,423.

THE BATTLE OF HAVRINCOURT

The imposing enemy defence system at Havrincourt again faced the 62nd Division. This complex system had already been captured by the division on the 20th November 1917 but it had subsequently been recaptured by the Germans during their 1918 spring offensive. The 62nd Division was again ordered to capture it on 12th September 1918:

"The news spread quickly and soon all ranks were aware of the task allotted to them - Havrincourt - the most brilliant capture of the many captures which had fallen to the Division, re-occupied by the Germans during their great offensive and ever since held by them, was to be recaptured. In the officers' messes and tents occupied by the other ranks, the success of the previous year was debated with fresh interest..... Ten short months had passed since that dim November morning and yet how changed was the 62nd ! Time had laid a heavy hand on the Order of Battle of the Division; several units had ceased to exist, whilst others had joined. In personnel, scarcely a CO remained of those who commanded the gallant battalions when Havrincourt had been captured the first time. Brigadiers had left to take up higher commands and General Braithwaite was now a Corps Commander."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

This attack was to be quite different to the massed-tank attack of 1917. For the capture of the Havrincourt salient was to be the first part of a wider plan to force the enemy from the Canal du Nord and the Canal de St Quentin much further east. It was essential to the plan that Havrincourt was captured to enable the remainder of the Hindenberg Line to be broken. The 62nd Division's plan placed the 187th Brigade left and the 186th Brigade, with 9th DLI, on the right, both were to be supported by a powerful combined barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire from eight field artillery regiments and four machine-gun companies. The 186th Brigade deployed for the assault with the 5th Dukes on the right, the 2/4th Hampshires centre, and the 2/4th Dukes on the left flank. The country facing them was difficult, not only was it a maze of defensive works but it also included a large moat in the grounds of Havrincourt chateau.

The 11th September was taken up by careful preparations, assembly positions were made ready, routes were carefully marked out with tape, and communication cables were laid forward. A complex artillery fireplan was devised to orchestrate the twenty-four batteries of eighteen pounder guns and eight batteries of 4.5" howitzers which were supporting the attack. During the night of 11/12th September the Dukes moved forward to their assembly positions and these were gained for the loss of only one casualty. The supporting creeping barrage commenced promptly at 5.25am and the infantry advanced:

"Within a very few minutes, the enemy barrage fell heavily upon the line of Butler's trench, and although the leading ranks of D and B Companies of the 5th Dukes went forward quickly, the rear ranks suffered somewhat heavily. The ground over which the advance was going forward was covered by a thick scrub, which impeded progress, and direction was difficult to maintain."

Nevertheless, D Company, in spite of heavy machine-gun fire, gained the line of its first objective and the trench between Shropshire Spur Road and Knuckle Trench. The Company then began bombing its way down Kangaroo Avenue. Half-way along this trench a machine-gun and eight prisoners were captured. On reaching Swing Trench several hostile bombing squads were encountered and driven eastwards towards the Femy Lane, whilst a number of the enemy were seen retiring up the valley towards Havrincourt, where they were captured by the 2/4th Dukes."

(Ibid)

Thus the Dukes captured their first objective without serious loss and began to consolidate their new line. To their left the 187th Brigade also met stiff enemy opposition before capturing the objectives. Here the ground was also riddled with enemy strongpoints many of whose machine-guns were captured due to the exploits of Sergeant L Calvert MM, 5th KOYLI, who was later awarded the Victoria Cross in recognition of his gallantry that day. These successes now allowed the 2/4th Dukes to enter the fray having previously been advancing closely behind 5th KOYLI in shallow columns. 5th KOYLI now set out posts to protect the Dukes' next advance for which the battalion had to swing round in order to attack the chateau grounds on a two-company frontage.

The supporting barrage now switched, as planned, and began moving forward at a rate of 100 yards every six minutes. Close behind this advanced the Dukes, with 'D' and 'C' companies forward and 'B' and 'A' Companies close on their heels. Trenches were systematically cleared as the Halifax Dukes fought forward; once the first objective was secured 'B' and 'A' Companies passed through towards the Hindenberg Line itself. Here dense barbed wire and extremely thick undergrowth hampered the Dukes' attack and it took time systematically to fight through the stubbornly defended ground. Once the 2/4th had captured their objective the assault continued, when the 9th DLI took up the lead.

By now Havrincourt village had been secured and this allowed the new 'supply tanks' to come forward carrying much-needed supplies of small-arms ammunition, Lewis gun ammunition drums and bombs to create forward dumps of fresh supplies. This was the first time that supply tanks had supported the division and the caterpillar-tracked armoured monsters proved a great improvement on the previous system which relied on men and horse-drawn transport trying to haul forward supplies across shell-churned ground and old trenches, often under heavy enemy artillery fire. Trench mortars also moved forward behind the 2/4th Dukes. A series of loud thumps soon announced that these were lobbing shells into the numerous enemy machine-guns which continued to sweep the division's area with scythes of deadly bullets. At about 5pm orders came advising that the 186th Brigade was to reduce its length of front line by handing part to the 187th Brigade. As this relief was taking place, enemy aircraft flew over and bombed the trenches, whilst a rising hail of rifle and machine-gun fire came from the enemy positions. This was immediately followed by a determined enemy counter-attack put in by two complete battalions of the German 20th Division. These were met by a wall of fire from the 2/4th Hampshires and 5th KOYLI which was quickly supplemented by 'SOS' fire from the West Riding Artillery. The enemy attack was quickly broken up and the few Germans who bravely fought into Havrincourt were soon ejected. Thus for the second time the Territorials of the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had captured Havrincourt and, as on the previous occasion, it had captured large numbers of prisoners and their war materiel.

Far from feeling beaten the Germans responded at dawn the following day with a violent barrage of shrapnel on Havrincourt, lasting three hours, followed by a determined counter-attack which was vigorously repulsed by the 187th Brigade. On that same morning, 13th September, the 5th Dukes began the attack on the main Hindenberg front line where the battalion met stiff opposition. By 2pm it was decided to consolidate the ground they had gained in order to use it as a springboard for a further attack on the following day; this attack was subsequently successfully carried out by the 185th Brigade, and 15th September was a relatively quiet day. After its successful capture of Havrincourt and the adjacent forward part of the Hindenberg Line, the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division was relieved by the 3rd Division during the night of 15th/16th September. These battles of Havrincourt and Epéhy completed the first phase of the British offensives during which fifteen British divisions had defeated twenty German divisions which had lost 12,000 prisoners and 100 guns. For the next phase, the British plan was to continue the thrust eastwards to complete the breaking of the Hindenberg Line, and then to cross the heavily defended Canal du Nord and Canal de St Quentin.

THE BATTLE OF THE CANAL DU NORD

The Battle of the Canal du Nord found the British First, Third and Fourth Armies endeavouring to break through the Hindenberg Line, an achievement which would signal a decisive victory over the German armies. The Canal du Nord had been integrated into the main Hindenberg defensive system in order to afford cover to resting troops and to the garrisons of the main defence during heavy bombardments. The British 6th Corps' plan was to capture the Hindenberg 'support line' and the villages of Ribecourt and Flesquieres, (about 4,000 yards east of Havrincourt), then to advance east a further 4,000 yards to secure bridgeheads across the Canal de St Quentin

in the area of Marcoing village. The Corps' plan of attack put its 3rd and Guards Divisions seizing the first two objectives, with the 62nd (2nd West Riding) and 2nd Divisions following close behind ready to exploit the attacks.

In the event it was agreed that the 62nd Division would pass through the 3rd Division when Ribecourt was reached, whether captured or not, in order to maintain the attack's momentum. Two West Riding Brigades, 185th and 187th, were to lead with the Dukes' 186th Brigade moving close behind them, ready to exploit any success towards Marcoing. At this time the 186th Brigade's commander was on leave and command of the brigade temporarily came to the 5th Dukes' Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel J Walker. The Brigade was instructed to assemble west of Havrincourt and east of the Canal du Nord by zero hour plus 300 minutes, zero hour being fixed for 5.20am on 27th September:

"The night of the 26th/27th was wet and the ground muddy and slippery. One of those wretched nights in fact, which, if men are prone to depression, very soon affects their spirits. But where was the British soldier in all France and Flanders who was depressed at that momentous period? Where the British officer or man who did not know that the Germans in front of him were fighting desperately with their backs against the wall? That splendid spirit of readiness and willingness to seize every opportunity, which all along had been so integral a part of the 62nd Division, was at no time more keen than on that night in September 1918; that spirit indeed, which was to shine so brightly during the operations of the next few days, when again and again a critical situation was saved by the quick decisions of the commanders of small units, sections, platoons, and battalions."

(Ibid)

All through the night of the 26th/27th the guns and mortars of three armies poured thousands of shells into the enemy's positions driving them into their dugouts and tunnels, severing communication cables, shredding support and reserve trenches, and preventing rations and ammunition being brought to the German defenders. As dawn broke the 3rd Division advanced in the face of fierce opposition from the numerous enemy machine-guns and field guns which were liberally sprinkled in the deep defences. Their steady success was soon signalled to the the waiting West Riding Territorials as a growing tide of German prisoners began flowing back from the front lines, and hostile artillery-fire subsided as the British Tommies' advance over-ran enemy gun lines.

As planned, the West Riding's 187th Brigade soon took up the lead from the 3rd Division, its task accomplished, and passed into Ribecourt, with the division's 185th Brigade on the flank similarly pressing on towards Marcoing. The Dukes, still in reserve, followed up behind the main battle accompanied by Lewis-gun carts, pack animals carrying spare ammunition, and a supply tank bearing the division's reserve of trench mortars. They were untroubled by enemy fire as they progressively occupied ground when it was vacated by their comrades in the two assault brigades. Indeed the Dukes remained in reserve throughout the first day, as the brunt of the assault was borne by the division's 185th and 187th Brigades. But their imposed role as onlookers did not last long, for orders came for them to pass through the West Yorkshires of the 185th Brigade early next morning and then to begin the capture of Marcoing at 6.30am. This was to be in conjunction with the 187th Brigade which was to attack on the Dukes' right flank. Once through Marcoing the Dukes had to secure crossings across the canal and then advance 3,000 yards to capture the village of Rumilly, no small task for a day's work:

"Of all the hotly contested and fierce battles and actions in which the 62nd Division took part in France, none demonstrated more clearly the initiative and courage of the platoon commanders, NCOs and men, than the capture of Marcoing. Neither was there any operation in which the spirit of close co-operation, the willingness of one unit to assist another and that fine feeling of brotherhood, so essentially an attribute of this West Riding Division, shone more brightly than in the hard fighting which took place between 27th September and the 1st October 1918."

(Ibid)

Brigadier-General Burnett had by now returned from leave, enabling Lieutenant Colonel Walker to return to his 5th Battalion. The attack was to start with a creeping artillery barrage under which the 5th Dukes were to advance at zero hour and clear the fortified village of Marcoing up to the line of the Canal de St Quentin. Once this had been done the 2/4th Hampshires was to secure bridgeheads over the canal across which the 2/4th Dukes, (Lieutenant Colonel P P Wilson), would cross and capture Rumilly. But orders do not always survive the first shot, and a series of events were to display that by now the brigade was developed into being a well-oiled machine capable of flexibility under pressure. Whilst the Brigadier-General's orders were being given to Commanding Officers, their battalions were concurrently preparing for the attack by moving into place. The battalions sent guides to bring their Commanding Officers from Brigade Headquarters to the new locations, but they were unavoidably delayed by shellfire.

By now it was very dark, soldiers had to be fully briefed for the next day's dawn attack and Lieutenant Colonel Walker set out alone to find his battalion. The area was a tangled maze of trenches and barbed wire, for the West Riding Territorials were now in the very heart of the Hindenberg Line. Few landmarks existed, the trenches

switched this way and that, often passing through pitch-black tunnels. It is no surprise that Colonel Walker did not meet his battalion and was still lost many hours later. However the guides had found Brigade Headquarters and it was agreed that if the 5th Dukes did not meet zero hour then the 2/4th Hampshires were to take their place.

Thus a few minutes before zero the Hampshires discovered they were off early, hasty orders were given and they briskly stepped off just as the creeping barrage started. The Hampshires were fortunate for enemy fire was at first weak, resistance increased as they approached the canal but their determination soon found them in possession of the first objective. In the meantime the 5th Dukes, still without their Commanding Officer, had been stumbling forward in the darkness in a vain attempt to meet zero hour:

"Heavily laden and very tired with their previous exertions, the Companies set out to cross the maze of trenches of the Hindenberg Support Line. The men literally had to feel their way forward, and to keep a path was extremely difficult. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Battalion did not reach its jumping-off line until half-an-hour after Zero; ie 7am. By this time the men were almost exhausted. In 1918 it was no easy thing for a British soldier, with all his equipment, often augmented by extra ammunition, bombs, Lewis guns, etc, to carry out a two hours march in darkness across a maze of trenches and masses of barbed-wire entanglements."

(Ibid)

At the jumping-off point, doubtless no less tired, was Lieutenant Colonel Walker who resumed command of his battalion and led them through the victorious Hampshiremen. Although the Hampshires had captured Marcoing the battalion was still involved in 'mopping up'. Marcoing was a fortified village and the Hampshires began a lethal game of hide and seek amongst a rabbit warren of trenches in order to winkle out its remaining defenders. But this could not delay the 5th Dukes who were now faced with pressing on to capture the much needed canal bridgeheads and they reached its banks by 9am. The Canal de St Quentin posed a formidable obstacle to men. All bridges has been destroyed as part of a well-rehearsed German defence plan, the canal bank was exceptionally deep and to this was added the fact that the whole area was swept by hostile enemy rifle and machine-gun fire from cleverly sited defensive positions. Lewis-gunners were at once sent into the attics of houses on the canal bank from where their fire soon had an effect on the German defenders. A system of improvised plank bridges allowed the 5th Dukes to begin to trickle across the canal to seize a hold on the far bank. It was dangerous work, for seizing river crossings is probably one of the most difficult operations for infantry, one in which failure inevitably brings high losses. Great courage was displayed by the Huddersfield Dukes and that of Private Henry Tandey DCM MM [19] was subsequently recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross for his bravery and initiative during the day. Private Tandey's humanity was later to cause him regret:

"For several days I and my platoon had held up a large German contingent with our two small Lewis guns. The Germans had sixteen machine-guns, but one by one we picked off the members of the gun crews. Eventually we decided to polish these Jerries off, so I rigged up a plank bridge for the others to get across and charge them. Then we dashed across. Only nine of us made it. We were hopelessly outnumbered. So I told the boys to fix bayonets and charge. The Germans fled and we took about 37 prisoners."

"Those fleeing Jerries were led by a Corporal and I was going to pick him off but he was wounded and I didn't like to shoot a wounded man. [It later transpired the man was no less than Corporal Adolf Hitler]. But if I'd have known then who he'd turn out to be I'm damned if he'd have gotten off. I'd give ten years now to have had five minutes of clairvoyance then."

Private H Tandey VC DCM MM

(The Sunday Graphic. December 1940.)

Once across, the battalion encountered horrific fire from numerous enemy strongpoints and the arrival of their brigadier resulted in the conclusion that no further headway could be made that day. But the critical gain had been made and it was essential that the bridgehead held and crossings were added for the advance to continue. Now came forward the division's sappers of the 460th Field Company to rebuild the bridges but they were slaughtered needlessly as they tried to work under the heavy enemy machine-gun fire. It was decided to delay this work until dark.

The 5th Dukes were also in a tenuous position for they were the division's only battalion across the canal. Beyond them, in the east, German reinforcements were seen arriving by 'bus in large numbers at the village of Rumilly with the clear intention of mounting a counter-attack. The battalion was also threatened by German troops still holding the 'Marcoing Switch' in the north. It was vital that the bridgehead was secured and to do this Brigadier-General Burnett instructed that the 5th Dukes must capture the Marcoing Support and Marcoing Switch with an attack to start at 6.15pm that same day. Arrangements were ready by 6pm and the 5th Dukes launched their attack under a creeping artillery barrage. It proved to be a timely move, as the Germans were found to have been massing in their forward trenches at the Marcoing Switch ready to counter-attack a few minutes later.

But the Dukes seized the initiative and their ground attack and artillery barrage threw the packed Germans into confusion. The Dukes were nevertheless heavily outnumbered as they stormed into the enemy trenches, where they soon became engaged in vicious hand-to-hand fighting. The lead platoon of 'D' Company, just 40 strong, captured its objective together with 300 prisoners and nine machine-guns, and then held on when the remaining 50 members of the company joined them. Another platoon of 'A' Company, commanded by Lieutenant J W Lloyd, also successfully fought through to its objective but, on arrival, could see no evidence of their battalion on either flank:

"The platoon was surrounded and the situation desperate. So desperate, in fact, that there was only one way out of the difficulty; for the platoon to fight its way through, or die in the attempt. And to the honour of the regiment, the brave young subaltern decided to fight it out. Ordering his men to get out of the trench, an order which they obeyed rapidly, Lieutenant Lloyd next gave them the order to charge the enemy holding the trench in the rear."

"With vigorous shouts this tiny band rushed upon the Germans, many of whom, terrified by the sight of the furious Yorkshiremen, began taking off their equipment and throwing up their hands in token of surrender. Others of the enemy fled the trench back towards the Canal, where they were either killed or captured. Finally, after the platoon had extricated itself from its precarious position, it was found that thirty-eight prisoners had been taken, and many others killed or wounded. The spirit and élan of this single platoon was truly wonderful."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1919. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

In the centre the 5th Dukes 'B' and 'C' Companies experienced an equally tough battle. Both gained their objectives but then became increasingly isolated on both flanks when the enemy briskly counter-attacked. The battalion had already lost numerous casualties in the battle and this resulted in the large numbers of prisoners being escorted to the rear by a very small party. On seeing the temporary success of the counter-attacks these prisoners snatched up rifles and opened fire on the backs of the Dukes. This only caused temporary confusion for the Dukes' reserve platoons were already moving forward and restored the situation - *"the treacherous prisoners were adequately dealt with."*

The Huddersfield Dukes had successfully taken their objectives, this despite the fact that the battalion was few in number and had attacked an enemy in well-constructed defensive positions. Its soldiers had displayed quite remarkable determination and courage. In all, over 500 prisoners had been taken as well as twenty-five machine-guns; many more German dead and wounded littered the newly captured trenches. Just after 9pm headquarters 62nd Division instructed that its 186th and 187th Brigades were to continue the advance on the next day, 29th September, and capture the villages of Masnières and Rumilly. 185th Brigade was to remain in support with orders to advance and exploit should the enemy's line give way. As darkness fell the division's engineers again came forward and began to construct footbridges and repair road bridges over the Canal de St Quentin. 187th Brigade, on the right, prepared to take Masnières and 186th Brigade to capture Rumilly. Both of these villages, it will be remembered, had been the first days objective. 186th Brigade's attack was to be led by Halifax's 2/4th Battalion which had moved forward after the battle for Marcoing. As morning came the New Zealanders attack on the 62nd Division's right flank and it was learnt that they had met an extremely heavy enemy barrage.

A dense morning mist now hung over the battlefield which although it gave cover from view also made keeping direction extremely difficult for the 2/4th Dukes. But the mist allowed them to cross the canal unobserved and at 7.30am the 2/4th Battalion advanced on a two-company frontage just behind the creeping barrage. Its aim was to seize the Rumilly trench system, along the road from Cambrai to Masnières, with Rumilly village as its final goal. Fierce opposition was encountered as the Dukes fought a way into the trenches. Hostile trench mortars and machine-guns poured fire into the battalion's flanks as it fought forward. The trench system was captured but it was impossible to advance further due to hostile fire from flanking positions which were also holding up the advance of the 2nd Division on the left flank.

At midday a considerable number of Germans counter-attacked, drove in part of the 2/4th Battalion's flanks and re-established posts. Repeated attempts to bomb out the German posts were not successful and, as night fell, the brigade's 2/4th Hampshires advanced under heavy enemy shellfire to reinforce the line and to link up with the 2nd Division. Despite this set-back the West Riding division pressed on the following day when its 185th Brigade passed-through to secure more ground, but Rumilly remained stoutly defended.

The division now consolidated its gains and on 1st October the 3rd Division took up the advance and attacked Rumilly. In the operations between 27th September and 1st October the West Riding Territorials had captured 1,519 prisoners, 65 field guns, a staggering total of 358 machine-guns as well as numerous trench-mortars and anti-tank rifles. On relief the division withdrew to Havrincourt and was to take no further part in the battles which completed the breaking of the Hindenberg Line on 5th October. The first phase of the British final offensive is thus recorded in the Official Despatches:

"The enemy's defence in the last and strongest of his prepared positions has been shattered. The whole of the Hindenberg defences has passed into our possession, and a wide gap had been driven through such rear trench systems as had existed behind them. The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive. The threat to the enemy's communications was now direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of a wooded and well-watered country-side lay between our armies and Maubege."

(Ibid)

The 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division was to spend the period between 1st and 20th October in support, during which time it reorganised to allow for the 1,665 casualties it had sustained during the recent fighting. Just a very few miles to its north the veteran Territorials of their first-line 49th (1st West Riding) Division were also in action. They too were advancing eastwards towards the River Selle. Whilst the second-line Dukes enjoyed a well-deserved rest, their first-line comrades were about to experience one of their most tragic encounters with the enemy.

[19: Private Henry Tandey VC DCM MM was the highest decorated Private in the British Army 1914-1918. He had been transferred to the 5th Dukes from The Green Howards, his parent regiment, with whom he had served from 1914. Private Tandey was later featured in a famous picture, painted by Chevalier Fortunato Matania, which depicted 2nd Battalion The Green Howards holding the Menin Crossroads in September 1914. When Chamberlain, as Prime Minister, visited Hitler at Berchtesgaden Hitler pointed out Tandey on the Matania painting explaining: "That man came so near to killing me that I thought I should never see Germany again. Providence saved me from such devilishly accurate fire as those English boys were aiming at me."]

THE ADVANCE TO THE RIVER SELLE

Some six weeks before the first-line Dukes battalions of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division had marched away from the Ypres Salient for the last time. Their 147th Brigade had then enjoyed their first experience of training with tanks before moving to Camblain L'Abbé. At this time their Brigade Commander for the last two years, Brigadier-General C G Lewes CMG DSO, handed over to Brigadier-General H S Morant DSO, who had previously commanded a brigade in the 1st Division. A few weeks were then spent training for attacks and enjoying a well-deserved rest. On 13th September the 49th Division took over a front line sector immediately north of the River Scarpe. The Dukes' 147th Brigade remained in reserve for the ten days that the division was responsible for the sector. Having handed over to the Territorials of the 51st (Highland) Division the division moved to Feuchy:

"Accommodation was not of the best. Feuchy was in the middle of the country over which the battle of Arras had been fought in 1917, and the Battalion area was almost where the British front line had been for about five months of the summer of 1918; so good billets could hardly be expected. On the whole the weather was good, and the neighbourhood ideal for training. The River Scarpe, with its surrounding marshes, was useful, not only for swimming, but more than once for working out of bridge-head schemes. One night all officers and platoon sergeants carried out a rather intricate compass march which will not soon be forgotten, particularly by those who, at one point, found themselves sitting on horses' backs in a wide trench. Altogether the time at Feuchy passed very happily."

(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

News came through of the 62nd Division's successes, just a few miles to the south, on the Drocourt-Quéant Line, the Canal du Nord, and the eventual capture of the high ground east of Cambrai. It was no surprise on 6th October when orders came for the 49th Division again to join the battle. The Dukes marched through the newly-captured Hindenberg Line and there bivouacked still uncertain of their future role. By the morning of 9th October the news came through that Cambrai had finally fallen and it seemed as if the whole of the British Expeditionary Force was advancing eastwards as the Dukes moved forward. To their front the Canadian Division had reached the village of Iwuy where the River Seclin runs from north to south. About five miles further east, also running north to south, was the River Selle, and between these two rivers was a high crested ridge and the villages of Avesnes-le-Sec and Villers en Cauchies. The Canadian 4th Infantry Brigade was to try to capture this ridge during the night of the 10th/11th October, but if they failed the Dukes were to take it "at all possible costs".

The 7th Dukes were to attack on the left with the 1/4th Dukes on the right, and the 6th Dukes in close support; to their right two battalions of the 146th Brigade completed the 49th Division's two-brigade frontage. It was thought that the enemy was too shaky to put up much of a fight and the attack was therefore to be made without any supporting artillery fire.

The night was a difficult one and the Dukes marched into battle without rations as their supply limbers were held up on the congested roads. No time had been allowed for officers to look at routes or the ground over which they were to advance. The night move was difficult for the air was thick with mustard gas and, as both brigades were restricted to a single road, units inevitably became intermingled as they moved forward to their assembly positions:

"The bridge had been in enemy hands barely twenty-four hours before, but he had left too hurriedly to destroy it. Yet he had found time wantonly to destroy in his usual manner; the houses were full of furniture senselessly damaged - chairs broken to bits, feather beds ripped open, crockery and glass lying smashed on the floors. An occasional shell was still falling as the Battalion marched through the village. A halt was made by the railway embankment to the east of the village. Rifles were piled, hot tea was served, and the men lay down to get what rest they could. As darkness fell the scene was one never to be forgotten - the long rows of piled arms, the hundreds of men lying round sleeping or talking in whispers, the occasional glimmer of a light. It was a scene such as one sees in pictures of old-time warfare, and perhaps nothing showed more plainly that the long wearisome days of trench warfare were past. The stars shone brightly overhead and, to complete the picture, a small group of Canadian machine gunners sang song after song in the gloom."

(Ibid)

Heavy enemy counter-barrages swept the ground over which they moved forward next day, as the bad news came through that the Canadian's night attack had not succeeded. The Dukes were now faced with a slope rising up to the enemy held crest-line. The ground between was highly cultivated offering little or no cover to the Dukes' attack. It was therefore decided, at short notice, to put down an artillery barrage on the crest-line for thirty minutes after zero hour followed by a creeping barrage from the ridge moving at 100 yards every three minutes, but there was no time to warn the Dukes of this addition to the plan:

"At 9-0am, prompt to the second, the British artillery opened fire and the Battalion 'went over the top'. Never, either in action or at training, had it been done better. In artillery formation, with sections in file and keeping perfect intervals, the men went quietly and steadily forward. If there were a fault, it was that of over-eagerness. The leading troops advanced rather faster than had been expected, and they were on the top of the ridge before their barrage had lifted."

"Almost immediately the enemy barrage came down, consisting mainly of high explosive. Fortunately, the bulk of it fell just behind the assembly positions and did little harm. Then the enemy machine-guns opened, and these caused more trouble than the artillery. Sections were forced to extend in order to minimise casualties, but the advance was scarcely affected. Near the straw stack on the hill, Sergeant A Loosemore [20] VC DCM, of A Company, went down, shot in both legs; and the Battalion thus lost a magnificent leader who was liked by everyone and almost worshipped by the men of his platoon."

(Ibid)

By 10am the attacks by both West Riding Brigades seemed to be going to plan; the ridge was in their hands and the villages of Avesnes-le-Sec and Villers en Cauchies were within striking distance. News of their success quickly spread rearwards to the 148th Brigade, then further back to the division's rear echelon. This triggered a steady stream of the divisional transport as artillery and ammunition limbers began to follow-up the attack and motor-ambulances arrived and began to evacuate wounded. By now the Dukes were beyond the crest in open country in which they were well spread out across unfamiliar ground which offered little or no cover. Within a few minutes they were hit by a wall of machine-gun fire and the whole area was plastered with enemy shellfire. Germans began to counter-attack in large numbers supported by tanks whose machine-guns cut down the Dukes in swathes. They had not encountered tanks on the battlefield before, certainly not enemy ones. Valiant efforts were made as individuals tried to attack the armoured monsters but their rifles, bayonets and bombs had no effect upon them. The Dukes were absolutely helpless for it was only the division's field guns which could have destroyed the tanks, and these guns were the other side of the ridge and unable to provide the direct fire needed to penetrate armour. The 1/4th and the 7th Dukes were inevitably pushed back, leaving a trail of dead and wounded behind them, to the road from where they had started the attack two hours before. Here their depleted numbers were reinforced by Skipton's 6th Battalion and a new line was established as they watched the Germans re-occupy the crestline. The enemy tanks, however, did not appear forward of the ridge knowing that to do so would expose them to the West Riding Artillery's devastating firepower:

"Into the midst of this confusion the Commanding Officer threw himself. By his presence, personal energy, and utter disregard for danger, he quickly restored order. Time did not allow of separating the men into their proper companies, but officers and NCOs assuming command of whatever men were near to them, including men of other battalions, resolved confusion into order, disappointment into hope; and the Battalion was a fighting force again."

"Then it advanced to the attack once more. This second advance was not so orderly as the first had been, but, in some ways it was, perhaps, finer. Without a gun to support it, through a hail of machine-gun bullets, with men falling in scores, the line went forward. The Colonel led, his Battalion followed. 'The ridge must be taken at all costs.'"

(Ibid)

Thus without artillery to support them, and with their men falling in scores, the Dukes again attacked the ridge. It was not the tidy advance of earlier that morning for now sections advanced in short rushes across the open ground. The enemy at first held, sweeping the Dukes with murderously heavy fire, but then they gave way and retired. By 1pm the ridge had again been captured by the Dukes, but at a horrific cost, for most battalions had lost two men in every three as casualties. The rest of the day was relatively quiet and, apart from shell-fire, the enemy made no counter-attack. When darkness fell the new line had been established even though the Dukes' battalion strengths were by now well below the minimum for units to be regarded as operationally effective. Preparations were made for the following day when the 6th Battalion, until then in close support, replaced the 7th Battalion as an assault battalion. The West Riding Gunners now brought field guns forward to counter the possibility of enemy tanks, indeed the gunners gallantly passed through the infantry and took up forward positions ready to fire over open sights if needed. The advance was continued on the next day, 12th October, and it was discovered that the enemy had withdrawn, for the capture of the ridge had made their supporting positions untenable:

"At first the advance led over the ground which had been won and lost on the previous day. Everywhere was evidence of the stern fight that had been made. The tracks of the [German] tanks were clear in the grass, and the ground was strewn with the bodies of those who had fought and died. Only then was it realized how far the advance had, at one time, reached. The fate of many a man was cleared up. At one point a German machine-gunner was found sitting behind his gun, dead; by his side lay the man who had killed him, also dead, with his bayonet right through the German's body. The inevitable booby trap was also in evidence - a brand new German machine-gun, with a wire running from it to a spot a few yards away; but there was no time to examine the appliance. By noon the advanced guard was almost on the railway, but here the advance was again delayed for about half-an-hour. During the night the 51st Division had relieved the Canadians on the left, and was to have taken part in the attack timed for noon. Unlike the 49th Division its orders were not cancelled, and down came its barrage, promptly to time, a number of 4. inch howitzer shells falling about the area which the Battalion advanced guard had reached. However, about 12.30pm, the advance was resumed."

(Ibid)

The Dukes then advanced towards the River Selle where they encountered heavy enemy fire from Vordern Wood on its west bank. To their north, Sheffield's Hallamshire Battalion of the 148th Brigade were also attacking the Selle. Their information was that no enemy was west of the Selle and the artillery supporting the Hallamshires' attack had therefore only fired upon the east banks. But the west bank was in fact a labyrinth of German machine-gun positions whose machine-gunners, untouched by any artillery, slaughtered the Hallamshires and reduced the battalion from a strength of over 600 to 242 within a few minutes:

"The British infantryman had once more been ordered to do the impossible. He had gone over the top in broad daylight to attack Germans well entrenched and well supplied with machine-guns and artillery. His own artillery gave him no support of any value, for the orders were to fire at points a mile behind the Germans who were doing the damage. No Germans could have hoped for a better opportunity of slaughtering Englishmen."

(The 1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1914-1919. Capt D P Grant.)

More fire also fell upon the Dukes from the fortified villages of Haspres on the east bank and it became clear that the enemy had retired to hold the natural obstacle formed by the River Selle in some strength. As night fell the 1/4th Dukes began systematically clearing enemy positions in Vorden Wood. The 13th October saw the 6th Battalion passing through the 1/4th and attacking the River Selle positions, but to no avail for the Dukes came up against an impenetrable wall of enemy fire from the high ground east of the river. The Dukes 147th Brigade was relieved on the night of the 14th October by the West Yorkshires of the division's 146th Brigade. Their rest area was in the fields around Avesnes-le-Sec where the only shelter was in battered captured enemy trenches and dugouts:

"Accommodation was very poor, but at such a time no one was particularly fanciful. What all wanted was rest - the chance of lying down without the probability of being awakened in a few minutes to stand to. For five days and nights there had been little rest for anyone, and all were thoroughly done up. There were no parades and no working parties. Sometimes the enemy shelled the locality and a few casualties were suffered."

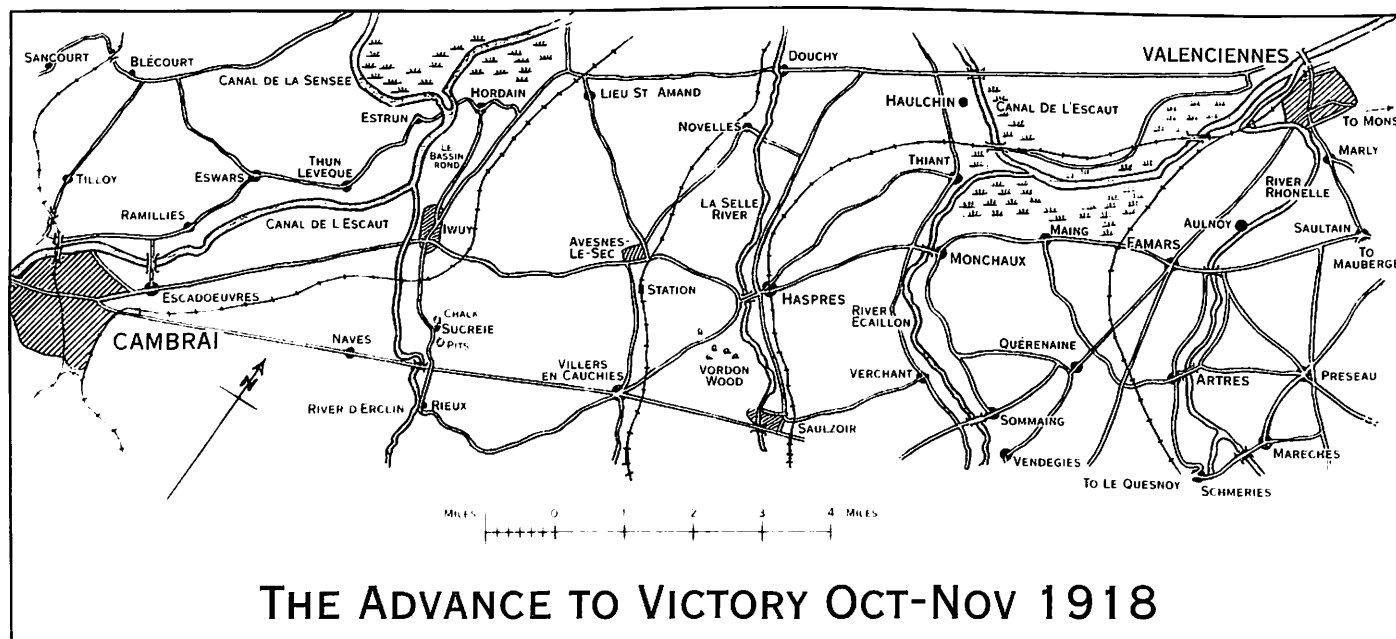
(The History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

The Dukes were back in the front line at Villers en Cauchies on the night of the 16th/17th October when their by now much reduced numbers resulted in thinly held trenches. Although it was a quiet two days the village was frequently shelled with gas resulting in uncomfortable box respirators being worn for most of the time. It was expected that, at any time, the enemy was again about to withdraw and all ranks needed to be alert so that any such withdrawal could be rapidly followed-up.

By the night of 19th October the 49th Division had handed over the Haspres-Saulzoir front to the 4th Division. The 1/6th Battalion at Saulzoir actually handed over their section to the 2nd Dukes, 10th Infantry Brigade, a regular battalion which had been on active service in France and Flanders since August 1914. On that same night the Germans withdrew from the River Selle and were at once chased by the 4th Division. Now at rest the Dukes took the opportunity to attend to the many of their number who had been killed in the desperate fighting on the fateful 11th October. The ridge was systematically searched and their dead recovered and buried at the crossroads at Rieux in a specially named 'Wellington Cemetery'. The Dukes also had a pressing need to reorganise, for it was probable that their 49th Division would soon be needed back in the fighting line. But by now no reinforcements were available, and this resulted in companies being of two, rather than four, rifle platoons. Many specialists had become casualties due to gas shelling and although some could be replaced there remained a deficiency. Small villages were found around the Canal de L'Escaut where the West Riding Territorials could recover from the mauling they had received:

"The houses were all filthy and full of debris. However, a few hours' work made a wonderful improvement. The material structure of most of the houses had not been injured, and many wire beds and stoves had been left behind by the previous occupants. Before long the Battalion was comfortably settled, and a very pleasant week was spent there. The canals were full of fish, and one of the most popular forms of amusement was 'fishing'. The Germans had been good enough to leave behind them a large dump of hand grenades, and many of their 'potato-mashers' came in very useful for this purpose. All the sportsman had to do was to drop a bomb into the canal and then select what he desired in the way of fish from those which came to the surface, stunned by the explosion. A fleet of small boats was collected, and, in the delightful autumn weather which lasted the whole time, many hours were spent on the water. A ferry was rigged up across the canal between Battalion HQ and the companies, and it became customary, when company commanders were due to attend at Orderly Room, for the Adjutant and his understudy to defend the crossing. It was seldom that one arrived without a splashing. The Germans had also left behind them a plentiful supply of fuel, and 'colliers' regularly plied on the deep between the local 'Newcastle' and the consumers on the other side of the water."

(Ibid)



Even as the Dukes were burying their dead from the attacks on the River Selle, their second-line battalions were now advancing towards the River Selle just two miles to their south. As the whole British Army advanced, the shortened front line now found both the West Riding's Territorial divisions closer than they had been during the whole war.

[20: Sergeant Arnold Loosemore gained his VC at Langemarck on 11th August 1917 with the 8th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment). He was later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for a further act of bravery on 11th July 1918, and died in 1924, aged 29, as a result of his wounds. In 1983 the Lord Mayor of Sheffield unveiled a plaque commemorating Sergeant A Loosemore VC DCM in Loosemore Drive, Gleadless Common, Sheffield.]

SOLESMES

The final battles in France and Flanders found the two West Riding Territorial Divisions advancing eastwards virtually side-by-side. Never before during the war had the first-line Dukes been in action so near to their second-line comrades. It was fitting that the Dukes Territorials of the 49th (1st West Riding) and 62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisions were to fight within four miles of each other as the war drew to a close. More so as they were both advancing towards Mons, that historic town around which the regular soldiers of the BEF, those 'Old Contemptibles', had fought their epic battles of 1914.

For over four years Germany had fought a mainly defensive campaign on the Western Front. Although America had yet to make a significant contribution on the battlefield, the future Germany now faced was the experienced British and French Armies being supported by seemingly unlimited numbers of fresh Americans. It had been to pre-empt this situation that the Germans had launched their 1918 spring offensive, but this had failed. The architect of Germany's western front battles, General Erich Ludendorff, was still endeavouring to stave off final defeat. He too was to become a casualty, for in late October this brilliant German soldier was to be sacked by General Hindenberg. Earlier that month Ludendorff was already well aware of the end:

"Now we were weaker and one Division failed after another. The men who fought in the front line were heroes, but there were not enough of them for the long line. They felt themselves isolated. We may be proud of those men who fought those heroic fights. Our losses, however, were heavy. Our best men lay on the bloody battlefields."

(My War Memories. Gen E Ludendorff. 1929.)

On the 6th October, following its fight for the Hindenberg Line, the 62nd Division had moved to become 6th Corps' reserve. Whilst in this role its 2/4th and 5th Dukes, 186th Brigade, had moved steadily forward behind the Corps' front divisions ready again to take the lead. By the 15th October the division was resting some four miles south-east of Cambrai. Whilst here it was learned that its 6th Corps was to capture high ground east of the River Selle on 20th October to secure passages across the Selle for the British 3rd Army. Thus, even as the 49th Division's 1/4th, 6th and 7th Dukes withdrew to rest after their epic battle for the Selle, their second-line 2/4th and 5th Dukes were now moving forward to take up the reins.

The 62nd Division was to capture the town of Solesmes together with high ground to its east overlooking the village of Romieres. Solesmes itself was protected across its front by the natural obstacle of the River Selle running through the village of St Python. The Germans had destroyed all bridges across the river; the only ford was just west of the town at St Python. Further to the south a collapsed railway bridge now formed a dam causing a 1,000 yard wide swamp. Civilians were still present in these fortified villages, which had for many years been in safe rear areas but were now the front line; their presence ruled out the use of heavy preliminary bombardments and creeping artillery barrages.

The first phase of the attack involved the Dukes' 186th Brigade which was to capture the river crossing at St Python and then to capture Solesmes by encircling attacks from the north and south. That done, the second phase involved the West Yorkshires of the 185th Brigade capturing the high ground overlooking Romieres. The Hallamshire Battalion was to join the attack upon Solesmes, whilst the two remaining KOYLI battalions of their 187th Brigade formed the division's reserve.

The whole of the Dukes' attack was to take place in darkness, beginning at 2am 20th October. Each man in the brigade was issued with a white arm-band to aid identification; electric torches were issued to platoon and company commanders, and the password 'Pelican' (the division's emblem) given out. Care was taken to avoid confusion in the dark; local street directories and aerial photographs were issued so that each man knew precisely which streets they were to attack. It was further decided to support the assault with a shrapnel and

machine-gun barrage on the basis that, at night, the French population would be indoors and could shelter in cellars. The plan required the 2/4th Dukes first to clear the ground up to the Selle after which the 5th Dukes would pass through and capture St Python before seizing part of Solesmes. As soon as St Python was secured the 2/4th Hampshires, 186th Brigade, would also cross the Selle to capture part of Solesmes. To the south, Sheffield's Hallamshires, detached from the 187th Brigade, were tasked with a concurrent attack on Solesmes with the aim of linking up with the Hampshiremen. The West Riding Sappers were also closely involved in producing the many bridges that had to be thrown across the northern and southern river-crossing points for the infantry and for the preparation of the pontoons and trestle-bridges needed to get the division's field and heavy artillery across the river ready for the attack's second phase. All these had to be built, brought forward, and placed ready in the hours of darkness if secrecy was to be maintained. The night of the 19th/20th October was a busy one for all ranks of the 62nd Division:

"The 5th Dukes moved off from Quiévy by platoons at 8pm, and by 11pm had assembled amongst the houses of St Python, west of the Selle. The river at this point was a formidable obstacle, being about 25 feet wide, with a depth of from one to six feet, the bed of thick slimy mud. It was fordable at only one point. The crossing was well defended by enemy machine-guns, which kept up intermittent fire during the crossing and bridging operations which were carried out notwithstanding. Only one Company (A) of the 5th Dukes crossed by the ford, the men carrying five light ladders with which to scale the eastern banks of the river, which were steep and muddy. This Company got across in fifteen minutes and formed up 100 yards east of the river. With marvellous rapidity, though fired at by a persistent enemy sniper and hostile machine-guns, the 461st Company RE, in a very little while, had constructed no less than eight foot-bridges of cork floats and trestles, and the remaining three Companies of the Dukes, also carrying ladders to help them up the opposite banks, crossed over, reaching their assembly positions about 2 minutes before Zero Hour (2am). The Companies then lay down in orchards."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

For once the German infantryman's legendary vigilance was absent, for the very heavy rain and wretched conditions may have persuaded him that no attack was likely before dawn. But at 2am a sharp barrage supported Halifax's 2/4th Dukes who were able quickly to secure the bank of the River Selle, despite enemy shellfire. Now came the turn for Colonel Walker's 5th Dukes to attack the remainder of St Python, on the enemy-held east bank, where they were at first met by stiff opposition:

"This resistance was, however, speedily overcome and, splitting up into sections, the Company began to advance through the village. At two points in the main street the roadway was blocked by barricades and held by the enemy. At the first barricade some sharp hand-to-hand fighting took place but presently the Germans gave way and A Company passed on to the second obstacle. Here machine-gun opposition was met with, but again the Dukes broke down the enemy's resistance and passed on to take up a line of defence, running north from the south-east outskirts of St Python. At the latter point a hostile machine-gun post had to be rushed and the gun and team captured before a halt was called. This Company had had quite a formidable task in clearing the village and in the stiff street-fighting which had taken place, the men using bayonets freely, killing and wounding large numbers of the enemy who resisted capture."

(Ibid)

By 4am all the 5th Dukes' objectives had been captured together with 300 prisoners, 15 machine-guns and 4 trench mortars. To their rear the 2/4th Hampshires had also been fighting against troops who had been bypassed in St Python, and by 5.15am this battalion had passed through the 5th Dukes to clear the remainder of Solesmes where they linked up with the Hallamshires at 7.15am. The Hallamshires' southern attack had started with all ranks wet through to the skin having waded the River Selle to reach their assembly position. These Sheffield Territorials had experienced particularly difficult fighting during which the actions of Sergeant J B Daykins were later to be recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross.

Whilst the Dukes of the 186th Brigade had been fighting a way across the Selle, the Territorials of the 185th Brigade had found time for a hot meal, and even a short sleep, before their time came to pass through to commence phase two of the attack. But by 6.20am, 20th October, the brigade was stood ready to advance on the Solesmes-Valenciennes road, and promptly at 7am the West Riding gunners fired the barrage to support their assault. By 10am the 185th Brigade had captured their objective overlooking Romieres and had begun digging-in encouraged by heavy enemy shellfire. As always the two attacking brigades had welcomed the excellent support given by their West Riding Artillery, as recorded by Brigadier-General J C Burnett, commanding 186th Brigade, in a letter to the division's artillery commander:

"As I know that your people like to know what the infantry who attacked thought of the barrage, both the left attacking battalions and those that took the railway station, wish me to say that it was the most

accurate barrage which they have yet advanced under. Would you please convey our thanks to the men behind the guns, who so largely contributed towards the success."

(Ibid)

Thus the 62nd Division had succeeded in seizing the required bridgehead for the 3rd Army across the Selle. Whilst doing so the division had captured 669 prisoners, 71 machine-guns, 13 trench mortars and 4 field guns, in addition to the many casualties inflicted upon the enemy. The division's casualties totalled 10 officers and 442 soldiers of which 58 were killed in action. By 11am all objectives were consolidated and from that time throughout the night of 20th/21st October the enemy subjected the whole of the division's area to severe shellfire. The division remained holding these positions until the morning of the 23rd October when arrangements to get the remainder of the 3rd Army across the Selle were complete and the 3rd Division passed through the 62nd Division's bridgehead. This relief enabled the Dukes' 186th Brigade to withdraw to the Quiévy-Bevillers area. Here they took rest and were nightly entertained by the division's concert troupe, the 'Pelicans', who had commandeered a local cinema. During the day inter-unit rugby and football matches were organised.

VALENCIENNES

Even as the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division were resting at Quiévy, their comrades in the 49th (1st West Riding) Division had again been ordered forward, this time to attack the town of Valenciennes. It was at first to take place on 28th October, but delays resulted in it finally being planned for 1st November. Three divisions, one Canadian with the British 4th and 49th Divisions, were now tasked with forcing a passage across the La Rhonelle, a stream which was about 12 yards wide and 4-5 feet deep, and then carrying out flanking attacks upon Valenciennes.

To the 49th Division's front bare open fields sloped down towards La Rhonelle where the Germans occupied a cleverly prepared series of rifle and machine-gun posts running from the stream up onto the high ground beyond. The 6th Dukes, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A B Clarkson, was to lead the 147th Brigade's attack from a start-line south of Famars, then cross La Rhonelle, with an objective on the road to Préseau which ran south out of Valenciennes. By this time the 6th Dukes 'ration strength' was about 400 officers and men of which 320 were available to form the bayonet-power for the assault. In close support followed the 7th Dukes, with the 1/4th Dukes as brigade reserve. Although the Dukes battalions were depleted in strength, the advances that had been made in the co-ordination of supporting artillery since 1916 made a significant difference. Detailed pre-planning of the attack took place in great secrecy on the assumption that it was expected to take three hours to capture the final objective. This produced a plan for a carefully orchestrated three hour creeping artillery barrage, behind which the Dukes would advance, made all the more difficult to co-ordinate as the first hour of the attack was to be in darkness.

The amount of artillery allocated for the attack was staggering. The 49th Division already had its integral 245th (West Riding) and 246th (West Riding) Brigades each equipped with three batteries of 18-pounder guns and one battery of 4.5-inch howitzers. These were supplemented by a further seven artillery brigades, with the artillery divided into two groups for the attack. The 'Right Group', five brigades strong, was to support the 6th Dukes and was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel K Duncan DSO of Bradford's 246th (West Riding) Brigade. This Right Group employed 80 18-pounder guns, each with 500 rounds, and 24 4.5-inch howitzers, each with 325 rounds. The main gun line was out of sight some two miles behind the ridge but two 18-pounder batteries were tasked to move with the infantry to fire over 'open sights' as required, and then to provide an anti-tank defence once the final objective was secured. Even more firepower was supplied by the much heavier guns of the 34th Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery with its three 6-inch howitzer batteries and one 60-pounder battery.

The 6th Dukes were also supported by direct fire from 16 Vickers medium machine-guns of 'C' Company 102nd Battalion Machine Gun Corps who fired a machine-gun barrage for seventy minutes. The battalion's leading wave was made up by 'A' Company (Captain H Farrar) and 'B' Company (Lieutenant S E G Bilham) which was accompanied by a party of 48 men, in eight groups, of the 19th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers (Pioneers) carrying 20 foot long duckboard bridges ready to cross La Rhonelle. Once here, the artillery creeping barrage halted on a point 200 yards forward of the stream to allow time for the temporary crossing to be made. Once the ten minutes passed, the artillery barrage then advanced again before halting again on the intermediate objective to allow 'C' Company (Captain J H L Willink) and 'D' Company (Captain J Hart MC) to pass through and capture the final objective. It was vital that all commanders, down to section level, were fully aware of this complex series of timings and objectives. The careful integration of artillery and infantry that had been achieved by 1918 proved remarkably effective:

"At 0515 hours [80 minutes before sunrise] the barrage along a six-mile front broke with a colossal roar. Right Group's barrage came down with superb accuracy on a line 200 yards in front of 'A' and 'B' Companies' [6 DWR] jumping off line. The high-explosive shells lit up the darkness ahead like a

theatre stage. The Dukes had three minutes to run forward and form up about 50 yards behind the curtain of exploding shells, before the barrage moved forward at a rate of 100 yards per three minutes. They had 21 minutes to overcome opposition and reach the stream [La Rhonelle]."

"The Dukes soon came under machine-gun fire mostly from the other side of the stream but also on the nearside, particularly 'B' Company's right flank. All 'B' Company's officers were hit: Lieutenant Bilham, Second Lieutenant H E Cartwright (killed), and Lieutenant T P Brighthouse [21] (wounded in the right eye). CSM T Limmer DSM immediately took over and led an attack on the machine-gun posts, destroying them all. The stream was successfully crossed by 'A' and 'B' Companies, all but one of the six bridges being placed in position. The first five minutes of the stationary barrage was accompanied by a smokescreen put down by the 4.5inch howitzers, which was repeated for 15 minutes during the advance from the stream."

"Both 'A' and 'B' Companies seized their objective about 0700 hours. 'A' Company had the best luck, finding in their section of the sunken road many pack-horses carrying rations and about 100 enemy, who immediately threw up their hands. With great satisfaction, Captain Farrar and CSM A Cutler sent these Germans to the rear."

(The Iron Duke, Volume LI, number 175. April 1977.)

It was by now getting much lighter and the Dukes had also lost the element of surprise as 'C' and 'D' Companies duly passed through to take up the advance. The creeping barrage again began to move forward at the slower rate of 100 yards each five minutes to allow for the uphill route:

"The Germans, although pushed back, and heavily punished by artillery fire, were determined to put up a stiff resistance. Their machine-gunners had the advantage of magnificently clear fields of fire, for the ridge offered almost no natural protection whether hollows, hillocks or trees. A sudden burst of fire killed Captain Hart and several of 'D' Company's headquarters. 'C' Company on the left actually reached a section of the road forming the final objective, but they found themselves under heavy machine-gun fire from a thick wood on their right flank. Lieutenant W Spratt was now in command, Captain Willink having been wounded - mortally, as it turned out. At 0815 hours the barrage ceased and the [Dukes] attack stalled soon afterwards, as it also did with the flanking battalions. There was now a danger of a [enemy] counter-attack. Consequently, Colonel Clarkson, after inspecting the position at 0930 hours, ordered 'C' Company to fall back in order to make a shorter and more secure line."

(Ibid)

But the 4th Division's attack on their right had not gone so well for it had been heavily counter-attacked at Préseau by two regiments from a fresh German division. The 6th Dukes had already suffered heavy casualties and therefore took the precaution of securing the open flank by withdrawing to its intermediate objective there to dig-in where the battalion was reinforced by two companies of the 1/4th Dukes. Nevertheless the Dukes had been extremely successful, taking particularly large numbers of prisoners who now outnumbered them two to one:

"The first party to arrive at Battalion HQ was about 200 strong, and its size caused some uneasiness to the corporal and five men of the battalion, who were the only escort available. Really they had no cause to worry, for the prisoners were only too glad to be out of it and all they wanted at the moment was to get well away from the fighting. As soon as they were marched off they started running at such a rate that the escort had hard work to keep up with them. These prisoners were a very mixed lot. Some were fine-looking men, but the majority were of poor physique, and the proportion of quite young boys was considerable."

"Perhaps nothing showed more clearly the straits to which German man-power had been reduced than the poor specimens who were captured from the 6th (German) Division - one of the active divisions which had invaded Belgium at the beginning of August 1914, and which had been, throughout the war, one of the enemy's most famous assault divisions."

(A History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

A weak enemy counter-attack was made against the 6th Dukes that afternoon. Not only was this bloodily repulsed but the battalion then seized the opportunity further to advance the front line. That night the 6th Battalion was relieved by Huddersfield's 7th Dukes with Halifax's 1/4th moving into the support role. The 6th Dukes casualties were high, 29 had been killed, over 106 wounded and 12 missing, nearly half the attacking force. But over 300 enemy dead littered the battalion's line of attack and the 6th alone had captured over 600 prisoners. On 2nd November the 7th Dukes attacked to take the previous day's objective:

"At 5.30am on November 2nd the 7th Battalion attacked and easily gained its objective, which was not a distant one. Nevertheless, nearly one hundred prisoners were captured during the operation."

As soon as news of the success arrived, D Company was pushed forward into some old rifle pits behind the intermediate objective, to be ready to assist should the enemy counter-attack. About 1.30pm an urgent warning arrived - the RAF had reported that the Mons-Valenciennes Road was packed with transport and guns moving west, and that masses of troops could be seen in the neighbourhood of Saultain; a heavy counter-attack was expected. But nothing happened. The Mons-Valenciennes Road was crowded with columns; but the RAF had mistaken their direction. They were moving eastward, not westward. The enemy was in full retreat."

(Ibid)

That night the 56th Division passed through the West Riding Territorials and took up positions for the next phase of the Corps' attack. In the event the enemy withdrew and the 56th Division's advance the next day was to be "little more than a promenade". Thus the first-line Dukes were relieved to march back to comfortable billets in Haulchin during the night of 2nd November. Préseau was then occupied by the regulars of the 2nd Dukes on 7th November until 14th November 1918. After over four years of trench-warfare the battalion had managed to fight its way back to the ground upon which it had fired its first shot in August 1914.

Though they did not then know it, they had fought their final battle. In numbers these first-line Dukes of 1918 were now but a shadow of the 4,000 Dukes Territorials who had made up the 147th Brigade forty-three months before. Indeed by this time the Dukes' three-battalion brigade only numbered 400. The 49th (1st West Riding) Division's role throughout the war had, mainly, been that of sustaining a determined defence, often in the most dreadful conditions, during which time the old originals' numbers had been relentlessly ground down by death, wounds and sickness.

By November 1918 their spirits remained high and they were more than ready to rejoin the fight, if needed, as they had done so many times before. Without adequate reinforcements the gallant 49th Division was in reality completely worn-out. It had done its bit - and then some more. No more could, or should, have been asked of this quietly heroic band of West Riding Territorials who even then stood ready to fight again.

The Battle of the Selle had seen 24 British and two American Divisions capturing 20,000 prisoners and 475 guns from 31 German divisions. Although this was a significant victory it was clear that the German Army, whose infantry was even then not beaten to their knees, and should not be allowed to withdraw to a shorter front line enabling the Germans to continue the fighting through the winter of 1918/1919. To prevent a controlled German withdrawal pressure was to be kept up through an attack on the key German communications centre of Maubege at the beginning of November 1918.

ORSINVAL AND FRASNOY

The 6th Corps' preliminary attack on Maubege was to be led by its 62nd (2nd West Riding) and Guards Divisions with zero hour set for 5.30am on 4th November. The Dukes 186th Brigade was to attack on the right, with the 187th Brigade left and 185th Brigade in support. The 2/4th Hampshires led the 186th Brigade's assault on the villages of Le Quesnoy and Orsinval and were soon engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting before their objective was gained. Now came the time for the 2/4th Dukes to keep the pressure up on the determined German defenders:

"Bitter opposition met the advance of the left Company of the 2/4th Dukes and, on reaching the Rhonelle river, the Germans were found in strong positions on the eastern bank. A frontal fire from Lewis guns was therefore opened upon the enemy, whilst two platoons outflanked his position, a third platoon clearing the ground. In this way resistance was overcome; the Company then advanced on La Belle Maison. Here the enemy was strongly posted. Heavy machine-gun and trench mortar fire came from the buildings, whilst two hostile field guns, behind the house, were firing over open sights. The centre platoon of the Company, however, by working forward under cover of the walls, entered the house, capturing four machine-guns and killing a number of the enemy. The advance was then continued, and a number of Germans were next captured in the Sunken Road, running south-east from the house, whilst the two field guns in the rear were taken by the left platoon."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

By 10.15am the 2/4th Dukes had fought through and captured their objective allowing the 5th Dukes to take over the lead but they too met a wall of machine-gun and artillery fire. This was similarly overcome and the pace of the Dukes' advance was signalled by the fact that they had, by now, advanced to such a depth that they had captured eight 4.2" howitzers, a gun normally well behind the forward trenches:

"The attack had gone with almost clockwork regularity. Splendidly covered by the guns, whose shooting was never more accurate, or their support more effective, the battalions of the attacking

brigades moved forward and leap-frogged one another with fine élan, and when the 'Red Line' was finally reached the 62nd Division had again made a victorious advance of 7,000 yards. Two villages had also been captured and over 600 prisoners taken with much war material."

(Ibid)

Satisfaction on the day's fighting was further increased during the night of 4th November when the news came that Austria had capitulated. At 6am on 5th November 185th Brigade passed through the Dukes to maintain the momentum of the West Riding Territorials' attack:

"The guns have just commenced their barrage, and the horizon in the German lines has become a wonderful display of fireworks, red, yellow, white, golden rain, and so on. In a few minutes the Hun is retaliating; a few shells drop in our vicinity, one on the road just behind our Company, fortunately doing very little damage. A 5.9in. has dropped into a dump of Verey [sic!] lights which are throwing out their balls of fire in every direction."

(Ibid)

Yet, despite the pressure, the Germans had far from given in for they swept the attackers with machine-guns, but the Territorials pressed onwards to liberate villages, as remembered by an officer of the Leeds Rifles in 185th Brigade:

"A few civilians, very shaken, wave us onward singing the 'Marseillaise' and giving us apples; my pockets are full.... These gifts cannot last for ever, the poor French peasant has had all her cows etc taken, and the only thing left is a little coffee and a little bread, and a few apples, and the Lord knows she gives these away generously enough as long as they last. Many improvised bridges have to be made for our limbers over streams where the road bridges have been blown in to impede our advance. We reach a little village called the Cheval Blanc, billet the men in a barn and then partake of food which the French people give us, just a bit of bread, brown and unsavoury, a little coffee and a few pears. We give them in exchange a little white bread, at the sight of which one old woman nearly had hysterics, and a little corned beef. We can't spare much as we don't know when we shall get our next rations."

(Ibid)

185th Brigade continued the advance on the next day, 6th November, until noon when the 2/4th Hampshires and 2/4th Dukes took over the lead and advanced to the Pont du Sambre-Bavai road by dusk where they dug-in for the night. But the German infantryman was still fighting on for at 7pm he launched a heavy counter-attack. The 2/4th Dukes were ready and shot them down before they even drew close to their positions. The night of 6th/7th November was wretched, for it was extremely wet and the Dukes only had the scant cover afforded by their hastily dug trenches.

It fell to the 5th Dukes to continue the attack next morning which, despite meeting some resistance, continued until 4pm. By this time the enemy resistance was markedly hardening. The enemy's close-range artillery and machine-gun fire all along the front made it very clear that further ground could only be gained at the expense of excessively heavy casualties. Thus the division held on the line Vieux-Mesnil to Bois Delhaye. In four days the 62nd Division had driven the German lines back over twenty miles.

MAUBEGE

The strategic goal of Maubege was now within the 62nd Division's reach. Operations to seize it were planned for the 8th November. At 11.30pm on the night of the 7th November a peculiar wireless message in French was picked up at the division's headquarters which confirmed earlier information that a German deputation was expected to request to arrange peace terms:

"A message in French was picked up by our wireless from the enemy stating that no firing was to take place in a certain area east of Guise up to midnight, in order to allow the German Parlementaires to pass through the lines."

(Ibid)

The 62nd Division's final attack was to assault across the River Sambre then to capture Maubege on the east bank. It was to be led by its 187th Brigade with the Dukes' 186th Brigade in close support. Sheffield's Hallamshires and Wakefield's KOYLI battalions attacked at 6.30am in dim light with a heavy morning mist shrouding their movements. Although the mist made progress slow the opposition was light, for the enemy had finally lost their stubbornness in defence enabling the advance to continue until long after dark. By dawn on the 9th November the West Riding Division had secured a hold upon the outskirts of Maubege enabling the Hallamshires and KOYLI to fight their way into the town. Thus Maubege fell to the 62nd and Guards Division.

both claiming that they had been the first to enter it. But as the Guards had attacked from the north and the 62nd Division from the south the dispute was resolved by a 'shared honour'. Even as they captured Maubege the noise of battle to the north heralded the great Canadian assault upon Mons. It had been intended that the Dukes were to take over the attack on Maubege but the light opposition met by the KOYLI and Hallamshires made it unnecessary. The Dukes march to the Maubege suburb of Sous les Bois was therefore a relaxed affair:

"On the way, during one of the halts, we talk to an old man and his wife who bring out chairs for the officers to sit on. The CO calls all Company Commanders to pass down the news that the Kaiser has abdicated and that no signs of the enemy can be found in front of us. The old man calls out 'Vive les Anglais!', and the old woman bursts into tears of joy. The Battalion then moved on. We marched to the tune of 'Tipperary'."

"Strange that we should be covering the old ground of the Battle of Mons again, just as an Armistice is being declared. In the doorway of a little cottage stands a bearded, aged man at the salute. On his breast are medals, and in his cap are feathers such as children put in their paper hats when playing at soldiers. The old fellow is singing at the top of his voice, and our men begin to laugh when suddenly it strikes them that he is singing the 'Marseillaise'. The band carries on the strain and it is picked up by the men - and so we made our entry."

(Ibid)

The 10th November at Maubege was uneventful. Patrols were sent out which discovered large quantities of abandoned German stores and war material; the only enemy activity was some desultory shellfire. Wider-ranging cyclist patrols were sent further east on the next day, the historic 11th November 1918. But by 9am the West Riding Territorials knew that all hostilities were to cease at 11am that day. On the 62nd Division's front the battlefield was uncannily silent, broken only by the noise of savage firing in the north where the Canadians were still battling their way into Mons:

"A story was told of a German machine-gunner who, at one minute to eleven o' clock, fired off his last remaining belt of ammunition then, as the hour struck, jumped upon the parapet, removed his steel helmet, bowed and disappeared. There was no cheering and very little outward excitement, only a great and wonderful calm settling down over the closing scene of the greatest struggle in the world's history."

(Ibid)

By now, to the west, the first-line Dukes of the 49th (1st West Riding) Division were at Auby still fully expecting to be called forward at any time. Fighting was still in progress and few of them then realized how near the end of the war was. By this time the Dukes battalions were so understrength that companies were organised as two, rather than four, platoons. In fact the whole of the Dukes' 147th Brigade fielded less than half a complete battalion's normal strength. But they too learnt at 9am on 11th November of the 11am Armistice. The Dukes' bands turned out to parade in the streets and then their Brigade Commander addressed the 1/4th, 6th and 7th Dukes:

"Brigadier-General H H S Morant DSO was present and said a few words to the men; his pious wish that the armistice had been postponed a little, in order that he might again have seen the Battalions again in action, was greeted with many cries of dissent. Though, of course, everyone was glad the war was over, there were undoubtedly some who viewed the event with rather mixed feelings. To those who had lived for more than four years with the one great purpose of defeating the enemy, it seemed almost that the object of their lives had been taken away. And there is also a spirit of camaraderie and good-fellowship on the battlefield and in the trenches which no peacetime conditions can wholly reproduce."

(A History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

[21: Lieutenant (later Major) T P Brighouse enlisted in Skipton's 3rd Volunteer Battalion later with the 6th Battalion on the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908 and was commissioned whilst on active service in the First World War. Lieutenant Brighouse was returning home on leave when he heard that his battalion was to take part in a major attack and immediately returned to join it. His wounds rendered him wholly blind but after six months he recovered his sight in one eye. He rejoined the 6th Battalion in 1920 later serving as Battalion Second-in-Command. In 1920 a fire started in Skipton parish church and he managed to save one of the 6th Battalion's Colours from the flames, the other Colour was completely destroyed.]

JOURNEY'S END

The 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division had on formation, in 1915, adopted a Pelican with one foot raised as its symbol and the myth grew that it would only place its poised foot flat upon German soil. The myth was to become a reality for the division was to become the only Territorial Force division selected to enter Germany. It began its march to Germany on 18th November and, during the journey, was transferred from the 6th Corps to the 9th Corps which was appropriately commanded by its former commander now Lieutenant General Sir W P Braithwaite KCB:

"In fair weather, in rain, in snow, sometimes short of rations, but in great cheeriness, the [62nd] Division pushed on, crossing the [River] Meuse at Yvoir, through Spontin, where practically every other house had been burnt in 1914 by the enemy. At last, on 23rd December, Divisional Headquarters reached the Schleiden area, the destination of the Division. The 185th and 187th Brigade Group completed their march on the following day, but it was Christmas Day before the remaining units reached their final area and completed their march. Very bad weather was experienced during the final stages, for heavy rain fell almost without cessation from morning till night. Thus the march of the 62nd Division into Germany which had begun on 18th November from Sous le Bois, Maubege, had taken just over five weeks. On 15th December, the day on which the Division crossed the frontier, General Whigham with his staff and the GOC 185th Infantry Brigade, with his Brigade Staff, rode at the head of the main body and a 'Ceremonial Entry' into Germany was carried out in accordance with Army Orders."

(A History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division, 1914-1918. Everard Wyrall. 1920.)

The 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division remained in Germany for nearly three months before it was relieved by a Highland division and allowed to return its soldiers home to the West Riding.

The 49th (1st West Riding) Division spent over four months at Auby, near Douai, during which time its units were brought up to working strength by new drafts. Parties were despatched to the West Riding there to recover the four stands of Dukes colours which had been placed in the safekeeping of parish churches during the war. The last shot having been fired, army priorities quickly returned to centering upon high standards of dress and drill. Days were spent restoring the war-torn countryside, draining flooded land, removing trenchworks and the general detritus of war, yet death still lurked on the battlefield and some Dukes were to be killed and wounded whilst removing old shells. Christmas could now be celebrated with the prospect of a future to look forward to. The Christmas Day rugby match between the officers and sergeants found the Dukes officers wallowing, not least due to a most convivial dinner the night before, as always the cunning sergeants chose their moment well. The 'Army Education Scheme' provided for daily lessons in languages, mathematics and commercial subjects. Recreation and sport were organised with debating societies and entertainments for the evenings.

But all that people now wanted was to go home and in early January 1919 demobilisation began on a large scale. By 20th March the 49th Division was at Douai where the Dukes battalions were each reduced to a cadre establishment of 4 officers and 46 soldiers. But it was not until June that, one by one, the Cadres of the Dukes Battalions returned to their home towns. Indeed other Cadres were not so lucky, for example Bradford's 1/6th West Yorkshires did not see home until March 1920. [22]

Typical was the return of the Cadre of the senior Dukes Territorial Force battalion, the 1/4th, to Halifax which arrived home appropriately on 18th June 1919. Nearly five long years had passed since the town's Territorials had left for annual camp near Scarborough in the hot summer of 1914. On the railway platform to greet the cadre was that same captain who had led the Battalion's Special Service Detachment from camp, now Brigadier-General R E Sugden CMG DSO, and alongside Lieutenant Colonel H S Atkinson TD who had taken the battalion from camp to active service in France and Flanders. Another had been a captain commanding 'B' Company at the outbreak of war who had later transferred to be second-in command, and later commanding officer, of the 5th Dukes, Lieutenant Colonel J Walker DSO. And around them an ever-growing swell of the former Dukes Territorials of all ranks who had served their town's battalion and now welcomed them home. Led by the band, and arrayed in fours, the battalion marched to the Town Hall there to be welcomed home by the Mayor. Here the Mayor's welcome speech was responded to by the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel A L Mowat DSO MC, who had himself served with the battalion throughout the war. Who better to express the feelings of all the Dukes' Territorials as their battalions returned home to the West Riding ?:

"The Battalion will now pass to another command, and I take this opportunity of thanking the men for their loyalty to me, to the regiment, and to the town and district they have represented. Those of us who have been spared to come through this great conflict hold a very sacred trust. We must ever remember the comrades we have left lying on the battlefields of France and Flanders. Let us try to prove worthy of their sacrifice. They have died that we might live; and on our return to civilian life we must continue to serve our country, our town, and our homes in that same spirit of loyalty.

cheerfulness and trust that pulled us through four years of war. If you do that you can look to the future with happiness, certain that your great efforts of the last few years have not been made in vain."

(A History of the 1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), 1914-1918. Capt P G Bales. 1920.)

[22: The statistics for the Territorial Force 49th (1st West Riding) Division and the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division show that in these two divisions alone some 44,803 were killed in action, wounded or missing; and of these 7,993 were killed. These figures do not include a further 23,510 evacuated sick. It should be remembered that the infantry battalions bore a disproportionately high percentage of these casualties. For example, Halifax's 1/4th Battalion alone sustained 508 killed in action. Whereas, but no less tragic, the total number killed for both the West Riding Divisions' six artillery regiment was 220. Of the Dukes' eight Territorial Force battalions (in the 49th and 62nd Divisions) some 1,994 all ranks had been killed in action, 8,329 wounded and 937 posted missing, a total of 11,260, or 1½ times the establishment total of all the Dukes TF battalions which saw active service.]

CHAPTER 5

1919-1939: IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY

"Yet the time might come when the essential interests of the world demanded that this country should, once again, stand forth as a guardian of peace, justice and integrity. In such an event it would be the Territorial Army which would bear the heaviest burden of the nation's military need. Our small Regular Army could not do more than be the advance guard."

(The Defence of Britain.

The Council of County TA Associations, 1934.)

THE TEN-YEAR RULE

As early as 1919 the War Cabinet issued a 'Ten Year Rule' to cover defence spending which instructed that "It should be assumed for framing revised estimates that the British Empire would not be engaged in any great war for the next ten years, and that no Expeditionary Force is required for this purpose". In sum, the priority was reduced to Home Defence and the defence of the Empire with no provision made for a continental war. In the event the Ten Year Rule was to remain in force until 1932, and Army funding estimates were successively reduced in every year from 1923-1932. The Territorial Army was at 216,041 in 1922 but had been reduced to 184,161 by 1925/26, similarly the Regular Army fell from 231,000 in 1922 to 207,000 in 1932.

In 1922 Sir Eric Geddes and the Committee on National Expenditure waved the 'Geddes Axe' upon the regular army. This resulted in the disbandment of twenty-two regular infantry battalions and reduced the number of cavalry regiments by six. This low-profile low-budget defence policy was to have an effect upon the regular infantry battalions. The 1,000 strong regular infantry battalion establishment of the First World War had been progressively reduced to a 'small wars' establishment by 1920. This establishment provided for a Battalion Headquarters of 9 officers and 129 soldiers, with four 'rifle companies' each of 6 officers and 209 soldiers. Each Rifle Company was made up of four 'rifle platoons' now organised as a headquarters with two 'rifle sections' plus two 'machine-gun' sections equipped with Lewis light machine-guns.

Subsequent changes were made to regular infantry battalions; by 1921 they were reorganised with a 'Headquarters Wing'. The war-formed Machine-Gun Corps was disbanded in 1922 and this resulted in each battalion being issued with eight Vickers medium machine-guns. Mortars, however were not an infantry issue at this time having been withdrawn into 'Close Support Regiments' within the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Further changes were to come in 1928 when the medium machine-gun platoon was detached from the Headquarters Wing to become a company in its own right, with an increase to manning twelve medium machine-guns being found by compensating reductions in rifle company numbers. Also at this time each battalion received three small, tracked 'Carden-Lloyd' carriers, mounting Hotchkiss light machine-guns, for reconnaissance.

THE TERRITORIAL FORCE

On 30th January 1920 Winston Churchill, as Secretary of State for War, announced that the Territorial Force was to be reconstituted and that recruiting should start at once. But it should be remembered that Territorial Force units were still serving overseas, and that many had still to return home following war service. New terms of service required Territorials to serve overseas on mobilisation. Churchill had already met with representatives of the Territorial Force Associations in April 1919, to discuss post-war organisation. He gave the Territorials due praise for their contribution to the war effort, and recognised that their equipment, and employment after war was declared was badly managed. Churchill advised the Association representatives that:

"Had its organization been used to build up the War Army, as was originally intended and conceived by Lord Haldane, to whom we owe a great debt, we should have avoided many of the difficulties that confronted us at the outset, and we should have put a larger efficient force in the field at an earlier stage."

(*West Riding Territorials in the Great War. L Magnus. 1920.*)

The War Office also acknowledged that a mistake had been made in 1914 when it had raised Kitchener's 'New Army' rather than to expand the army upon the existing Territorial Force. As a result, the War Office announced that all future expansion in times of national emergency was to be based upon the Territorials. Although reconstituted under the title of the 'Territorial Force', on 7th February 1920, it was renamed the 'Territorial Army' on 1st October 1920. The organisation of the post-war Territorial Army was similar to that before the Great War. The fourteen pre-war all TF Infantry Divisions were re-formed on identical lines. The Yeomanry Cavalry, however, underwent a drastic change, for only the senior Yeomanry regiment in each of the fourteen pre-war Yeomanry Brigades was retained. The remaining Yeomanry Cavalry units were converted into either Artillery, or Infantry or Signals.

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISION

In 1920, the 49th (West Riding) Division was re-formed with headquarters at York under the command of Major-General N J G Cameron who had commanded it from October 1917 until 1919. Its three old Brigades were re-formed: 146th (1st West Riding) Brigade at York, 147th (2nd West Riding) Brigade at Brighouse, and 148th (3rd West Riding) Brigade at Sheffield. As before the war, their infantry battalions were, respectively, Territorial Army Battalions of The West Yorkshire Regiment (York, Bradford, Leeds [2]); The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (Halifax, Huddersfield, Skipton, Milnsbridge); The York and Lancaster Regiment (Sheffield, Rotherham), The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (Wakefield, Doncaster). The Division's three field artillery regiments also re-formed at Leeds, Bradford and at Sheffield. The former howitzer regiment at Otley and Ilkley reformed and was split-up passing one howitzer battery to each of the Leeds and Bradford gunners.

THE DUKES TERRITORIALS

All four Dukes battalions returned to their pre-war headquarters:- 4th at Halifax, 5th at Huddersfield, 6th at Skipton, and the 7th at Milnsbridge. The establishment was similar to that of regular battalions. For example, Huddersfield's 5th Battalion had 'Headquarters Wing' and 'A' (Machine-Gun) Company at Huddersfield with 'B' and 'C' Companies which themselves had platoon detachments at Holmfirth, Meltham and Kirkburton. 'D' Company had headquarters and all its platoons at Mirfield. The Dukes were not without experienced old hands to help rebuild the battalions. All four commanding officers were Territorials who had served with their respective battalions on active service, each decorated with the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

Halifax's 4th Battalion came under the command of Colonel J Walker CB DSO DL JP [1] who had commanded 'B' Company on the outbreak of war, later becoming second-in-command of the 1/4th then 1/5th Battalions before being promoted to command the 5th Battalion in 1917. Huddersfield's 5th Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel G P Norton DSO TD who had been its second-in-command in 1914. Skipton's 6th Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel C M Bateman DSO, and bar, TD who had commanded it during the war. The 7th Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert Tanner DSO whom we first met as second-in-command of the battalion at the outbreak of war and who had subsequently helped form the 2/7th Battalion before experiencing active service with the 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes. Amongst his officers were other veteran Dukes Territorials such as Captains Bob Taylor, as adjutant, and Gilbert Howcroft now fully recovered from his wound. Captain Taylor was later to command the 7th Battalion, after Colonel Tanner, from 1924-1928. Indeed for many years after the First World War the Commanding Officers of the Dukes' Territorial Army Battalions were found from officers who had served with them on active service. The titles of the Territorial battalions changed slightly, on 1st January 1921, in line with those of the Regiment, to *The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)*.

The war had ravaged the British economy. As a result the budget allotted to Regular and Territorial alike was inadequate. Little new equipment was available; that issued to the Territorials was, for many years to come, from old war stocks. The four Commanding Officers managed to attract a hard core of officers and soldiers back to man their battalions. By the summer of 1920, a small nucleus had been gathered which brought the 49th (West Riding) Division to a strength of 2,090 all ranks. This enabled the first post-war annual camp to be held. It was somewhat ironic that this first camp was held in the Scarborough area from where they were mobilised in 1914.

The early 1920s also produced further visible tributes to the services of the West Riding Territorials in the Great War. Representative parties returned to France and Flanders to witness memorials to their two Divisions being consecrated. That to the 49th (1st West Riding) Division stands at Essex Farm on the Yser Canal just west of Ypres.

That to the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division was unveiled in June 1922 and stands at Havrincourt near Cambrai. This monument is in the form of a fifty feet high granite pyramid at the centre of Havrincourt standing upon land granted by the Marquess d'Havrincourt. Left intact some thirty feet beneath the monument is one of the many deep German dugouts which surrounded the village. Although some years had passed, the returning West Riding Territorials, their families and widows discovered that grim evidence still lay round from the severe fighting:

"Here and there, as one progressed down or alongside old trenches, were the broken shrapnel-disfigured tin hats of both German and British, each telling its own sad story of the fate of the wearer. Dud trench mortar bombs, hand-grenades, eighteen-pounders and Jerry shells lurked everywhere in the luxuriant grass. Equipment, boots, and barbed wire were piled high in all directions. Pill boxes, some deserted and left as on the day they were evacuated; others converted into storage barns and fowl houses were also prominent in the landscape. These were the scenes which greeted the eye from Havrincourt as far as sight or legs could take one to the vicinity of the scarred and broken Bournon Wood. Nature, however, is making amends. Derelict trees are breaking out into

fresh greenness from limbs that are black and dead. Another year or two and the whole of war's ravages in this hard contested district will be camouflaged by the verdure and the out-growths. It was amidst scenes such as this that the 62nd Division marched to the commanding position overlooking the rolling countryside, which stretched as far as the eye could reach from the dense Havrincourt Wood to the gas-saturated Bourlon Wood where the majestic monument to the Division has been erected."

(The Leeds Mercury. 7th June 1922)

Also in 1924, on 30th August, Field Marshal the Lord Plumer GCB GCMG GCVO GBE unveiled the 5th Battalion's impressive War Memorial inside the Drill Hall at Huddersfield. And it was at this time that J Hodgson Loble's painting of the 1/5th Battalion at Ypres in 1915 was placed in the drill hall and unveiled.

The period between 1920 and 1935 was a difficult one for the Dukes, as it was for the whole of the Territorial Army. Their Battalions achieved a steady growth in numbers but, despite their best endeavours, they rarely achieved full strength. Indeed the whole of their 49th Division only numbered 8,446 by 1929. War Office funding and equipment was in short supply. Funding was so poor that in 1932 all annual camps for Territorial Army units were cancelled "in the interests of economy". Such parsimony had an impact upon retention, as reported by Halifax's 4th Battalion:

"Recruiting during the past month or so has greatly improved, but we are held back by the large numbers of men becoming time-expired. Only a small percentage of men are re-engaging for further periods of service, owing probably to the fact that the annual camps are not quite so pleasantly situated as they used to be. Our strength at the end of March [1931] was 18 officers and 495 other ranks, against 18 officers and 515 other ranks in March 1930. We hope, however, by the use of various means considerably to increase our strength before the Battalion proceeds to annual training this year."

(The Iron Duke, Volume VII, No. 19, June 1931.)

It was not until the mid-1930's that any real attempt was made to modernise the Territorial Army. For by 1933 Adolf Hitler had risen to become Chancellor of Germany and begun Germany's re-armament. In December Hitler directed that the German Army, whose strength was limited by the Treaty of Versailles, should now be trebled in strength. Again in 1935 German armed forces grew in number when Hitler introduced military conscription.

CHANGES IN ROLE

By 1935 the increased threat of air-attack on Britain was recognised by the British Defence Requirements Committee who expressed increasing concern about Germany's intentions and growing military strength. The Committee advocated that Britain should be ready to protect France and the Low Countries from which, if over-run, Germany could easily launch air-attacks against Britain. The threat of an aerial gas-attack was very real for the Italian Dictator, Mussolini, had already used aircraft to deliver poison gas against troops defending Abyssinia. The growth of the German airforce reinforced fears of a gas attack against Britain especially as many of the population were ex-soldiers who had experienced, and in many cases still suffered from, gas in the war. Although British priorities remained Home and Imperial defence first, the Government 'agreed in principle' to a limited liability for continental commitment.

This resulted in a new 'British Continental Field Force' being established which was to consist of one cavalry and four infantry divisions supported by two air-defence brigades; the force was planned to be reinforced by twelve Territorial Army divisions within eight months of war. But this was only a force 'in principle' and in reality the Government withheld all the funding needed to train and equip the force. It should also be pointed out that the regular first response element of the force was substantially smaller than the British Expeditionary Force created in 1908 which served with such tremendous effect in 1914. The mechanization of the British Army was not to start until ten years after the CIGS had announced it would be done. In the following year only £2 million was allotted and this mainly to be spent on lorries for the infantry.

As one result of the Brooke-Popham Committee the War Office decided that the Air Defence of Great Britain was to be wholly entrusted to the Territorial Army. This was to be achieved by converting some of the existing Territorial Army Infantry Battalions into 'Anti-Aircraft Brigades', within the Royal Regiment of Artillery. General Sir Frederick Pile (General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Anti-Aircraft Command 1939-45) later reflected on the early days:

"The Tompson Committee recommendations were accepted and the work of raising the Southern Division began. It had already been accepted that Territorial Army field units would have to be converted to an anti-aircraft role, and now units began to be chosen for conversion from infantry into AA [Anti-Aircraft]. These regiments were, naturally, greatly distressed at having to change their role

to what might be a less glorious though, no doubt, a very essential one. It will always redound to their credit that they entered wholeheartedly into their new task and reached a high standard of efficiency."

(Ack Ack. Gen Sir Frederick Pile. 1949.)

The changes were not to stop there. Within a few years further Territorial Army Infantry Battalions were to be converted to Anti-Tank Artillery and Armoured Tank roles. As can be imagined, the Territorials were very proud of their Infantry role in which they had served continuously, both in peace and two wars, since formation in 1859 and were understandably reluctant to change. It was announced that on the 10th November 1936 the '2nd Anti-Aircraft Division' was to be formed, with headquarters at Derby, to defend the industrial Midlands, and this was to affect Huddersfield's 5th Battalion. In May 1936 the 5th Battalion had already received news that it was soon to be converted to an anti-aircraft role. This news was, not surprisingly, received "*with consternation and mixed feelings*". On 10th December 1936 Huddersfield's 5th Battalion was redesignated as *43rd (5th DWR) Anti-Aircraft Battalion Royal Engineers (TA)*, and became part of the *31st (North Midlands) Anti-Aircraft Group* of the 2nd Anti-Aircraft Division. This new anti-aircraft group was to be wholly composed of converted Territorial Army infantry battalions being 5th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA), and, from the 49th (West Riding) Division, the 8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA), from Leeds, with Rotherham's 5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA).

In mitigation the 5th Dukes were permitted to retain their Dukes' cap-badge and buttons which were worn together with collar badges of the Corps of Royal Engineers. As may be imagined the change to the artillery role was not popular. Whilst the need for air-defence was understood, many felt that it lacked the glamour of the infantry role. However the War Office was keen to make the changes work, and therefore conceded that the Dukes gunners could continue to bear their infantry colours whilst serving as part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery. The 5th Battalion's place in the 147th Brigade was then taken by The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) which was based at Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield.

In theory each searchlight company was equipped with 24 wheeled searchlights and 24 Lewis guns. Territorial Army infantry battalions were not as yet mechanized and this large amount of equipment together with motor-vehicles brought a heavy demand upon the 5th Battalion's existing drill hall facilities. In 1936 the Huddersfield Drill Hall was modernised to meet the new anti-aircraft role, new lecture rooms, a dark room, garages and a miniature range were built. The Leeds Road Drill Hall at Huddersfield had additional offices and garages. Mirfield also had a new dark room and garages. A completely new drill hall was built at Holmfirth and, in 1938, the Mirfield Company opened a new drill hall at Penistone.

The 5th Battalion still maintained their link of continuous service back to the Rifle Volunteers of 1859 and on October 18th 1936 laid up their old Rifle Volunteer 'Colours' in Huddersfield Parish Church.

The need to build up the strength of the Territorial Army was recognised by an increase in the annual 'bounty' in 1936 when it was doubled to £3 with an additional 0.50p being paid for efficiency on the rifle range. At that time, daily rates of pay varied from 0.10p for a rifleman to 0.30p for a sergeant. Enlistment was open to physically fit men aged between 18 and 45, who could attend 45 drills in their first year, 20 drills in subsequent years, and attend a 15 day annual camp. This nevertheless left Territorial Army units still representing good value for money as shown by the 1936 Army Estimates. The 479 all ranks of a regular cavalry regiment had an annual cost of £80,000 whilst its smaller Yeomanry counterpart of 299 all ranks cost but £10,140. A mechanized regular field brigade of the Royal Regiment of Artillery cost £78,300 compared to the TA equivalent at £15,380. A regular infantry battalion's 791 soldiers cost £103,900 compared with the 613 in a TA infantry battalion at £13,860.

Further calls to increase the strength of anti-aircraft and coastal defences came with the Dowding Report of 1937. This concluded that 158 coastal anti-aircraft batteries and 197 searchlight companies were needed and that the TA manpower bill for these alone was a further 50,000 men. Britain's contemporary anti-aircraft defence equipment and guns were all of First World War vintage and were no longer effective against the much faster aircraft of twenty years later. The 3" anti-aircraft gun had a low muzzle-velocity, 'predictors' required six very skilled operatives to acquire targets. The sound-ranging equipment used to direct the searchlights were the same as those used in 1918. The role often demanded a wide deployment of detachments, for example a ten man searchlight detachment, commanded by a Corporal, could be sited anything up to twenty miles from company headquarters and up to two miles from the next section. Two men acted as spotters 50 yards either side of the projector lamp whilst a third all but lived 300 yards away permanently serving the lorry-mounted generator which powered the projector lamp, manned by two men. In the centre was the detachment headquarters with the telephone to section headquarters. The detachment also had a 'sound-ranging' crew which located the direction and bearing of aircraft so that the projector lamps could be correctly brought to bear on targets. These sound-rangers were no more than four metal and wood trumpets connected to stethoscopes worn by the 'listening numbers'. Two of the trumpets were used to identify the aircraft bearing and the other two the aircraft direction and were 'homed-in' by balancing the sound in each earphone. Calculations were then made to allow for the aircraft's speed before passing the data to projector lamp team who in turn illuminated the target for the anti-aircraft gunners.

The paper 'Continental Field Force' of 1935 was short-lived, for in December 1937 it was reduced to nil by the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, when he announced a new list of defence priorities. For the Cabinet had concluded that the 'Air Defence of Great Britain' was an urgent priority, together with the reinforcement of Imperial Garrisons; once these were fulfilled the next priority was the despatch of the Field Force to an eastern theatre. The continental commitment was placed last. The Territorial Army was seen as being central to the Anti-Aircraft role so that the production of all weapons was switched to anti-aircraft equipment, with serious consequences for all other types of weapon. This new policy of limited liability resulted in none of the units allocated to the Field Force being equipped for a continental war nor was there any provision for any reserves to reinforce it.

[1: Colonel James Walker DSO TD DL JP joined the Dukes 2nd Volunteer Battalion in 1906 later transferring to the 4th Dukes on the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908. He went to France with the 1/4th Dukes in April 1915 becoming commanding officer of 1/5th Dukes in September 1917. During his war service Colonel Walker was 'Mentioned in Despatches' six times, awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Bar, the Belgian Croix de Guerre and the Chevalier Legion d'Honneur. He commanded the 4th Dukes from 1920-1924. During this time he still used his wartime charger, named 'Rocket', who unfortunately broke a leg whilst in the horse lines at annual camp. Colonel Walker later presented one of Rocket's hooves mounted in the form of a bell to the 4th and 5th Dukes.]

THE MUNICH CRISIS

By 1938 war with Germany looked a distinct possibility. On 23rd September tension rose to the point that the Territorials who manned Britain's air defences were mobilised. On Monday September 26th the Huddersfield Dukes were called up on orders of the Secretary of State for War. The orders were received at 3.15pm and by midnight the same day almost all of the unit had reported for duty. Half the battalion manned thirty-two searchlight positions in the 'Air Fighting Zone' and the remainder manned Lewis machine-gun posts in the industrial areas:

"On Monday, September 26th at approximately 1300 hours the codeword to mobilise the Anti-Aircraft Defences of Great Britain was received, and at that moment one of the worst periods in the life of the Battalion was experienced. Men were notified at work. Taxis were sent for them and before midnight, only eleven hours after the receipt of the codeword, a convoy of 32 searchlights, fully manned, departed from Huddersfield and were deployed at their war stations in Northamptonshire at 8 o'clock next morning. Just before a Regular searchlight battalion arrived, having covered a similar distance of approximately 100 miles. This was indeed a great achievement when it is realised that a Regular unit has not to be called up on mobilisation, but it is also an indication as to the very necessary state of preparedness that is required of Anti-Aircraft units of the Territorial Army."

(History of the 578 (Mob) HAA Regiment RA (5th Duke of Wellington's) (TA). 1948.)

Those reporting received an 'Embodiment Gratuity' of £5. A clerical error actually resulted in all those who joined TA anti-aircraft units after embodiment receiving the £5 but the mistake was discovered and the money had to be paid back. It had been a strenuous thirteen days and the battalion disembodied at midnight on Saturday October 8th having had 98% of the battalion responding to duty. Although an apparent success, the Territorial Army's own newspaper, 'Defence', voiced concern about the state of equipment:

"Nearly 50,000 men promptly answered their call to man the anti-aircraft and coastal defences. How many of them, keen, well-trained and magnificently spirited, are wondering whether their patriotism is to be wasted? Inadequate guns, equipment which would not work, shortage of transport, missing supplies, these things are common knowledge now."

(Ack Ack. Gen Sir Frederick Pile. 1949.)

More changes to the Dukes Territorials came on 28th November 1938 when Halifax's 4th Battalion was redesignated as the 58th (4th DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA). Its four former infantry companies now became four anti-tank batteries, numbered 229 to 232, which had a particular role on the battlefield:

"The anti-tank batteries in attack have a dual role to play. In the first instance they must be prepared to stop an early counter-attack by enemy tanks, and in the second have Troops ready to advance close behind our own infantry, to assist in the consolidation of the newly-won ground, and secure that from enemy tank action "

"[In defence] It is unlikely that anti-tank guns will be in the forward zone. Much as the infantry would like to see them there, the fact that they would be in view to enemy artillery OPs would render them liable to extinction the moment that they disclosed themselves by opening fire. It is more likely that the forward guns will be behind the first ridge in rear of our own forward localities, ready to take on the tanks when they are at their greatest disadvantage, going slowly over the top of a hill, and into ground which they have not been able to reconnoitre beforehand."

(The Citizen Soldier. Maj D J Gordon Dickson. 1939.)

They were issued with the 2 pounders (1.57") anti-tank gun which fired a 2.4lb armour-piercing round, and had an effective range of 2,000 yards. It was a towed gun, with wheels which were dismantled to enable it to be fired from a tripod. Rifle platoons now became 'troops', each of four anti-tank guns, with three troops becoming a battery and the whole anti-tank regiment fielding forty-eight guns. On conversion, the 4th Battalion was replaced in the 147th Brigade by the 5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA) from York.

The threat steadily grew when, in 1938, Germany annexed Austria and in March 1939 took over Czechoslovakia. This resulted in Britain and France actively discussing a strategy for defence against German aggression. By February 1939, the Allied scenario was an Anglo-French alliance against Germany and Italy in a war caused by a German attack against France or the Low Countries. By March 1939 the Territorial Army's strength stood at 212,000 compared with its establishment of 228,989. Successive changes in the Territorial Army resulted in 40% of its strength being specifically committed solely as defensive artillery with 75,000 Territorials in the anti-aircraft role and a further 8,000 manning 9.2" coastal artillery.

DUPLICATION OF THE TERRITORIAL ARMY

The existing British defence expenditure policy was reversed on 22nd February 1939 when it was decided that the four infantry divisions and one armoured division of the Field Force should now be equipped for continental warfare, and that war equipment and reserves be provided for four Territorial Army divisions. Pressure on the Territorial Army was further increased on 29th March 1939 when the War Office announced that all Territorial Army units were to be brought up to war establishment. That done, each was then to raise a duplicate unit from 1st April 1939.

All the Dukes' Territorial Army units were involved except Huddersfield's 43rd (5th DWR) Anti-Aircraft Battalion which had already been required to carry out an expansion to fill the much bigger establishment required by their new role. Halifax's 58th (4 DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment, 229-232 anti-tank batteries, expanded to form the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment (Duke of Wellington's) with headquarters at Elland. The new unit's four anti-tank batteries, numbered 269 to 272, were respectively formed at Halifax, Todmorden, Elland, and Cleckheaton. The expansion created a high demand for key personnel and resulted in many officers receiving early promotion to fill the new vacancies. Former Territorials too were recalled from the reserve, such as Major G H Ackroyd [2] who returned to command 230 Anti-Tank Battery having previously served with the 4th Dukes from just after the previous war until he retired in 1935.

The two Dukes battalions which had retained the infantry role each raised duplicate infantry battalions. Skipton's original 6th Battalion now became the '1/6th' and raised the 2/6th Battalion with headquarters at Keighley. Similarly the 7th Battalion became the '1/7th' when it formed a duplicate 2/7th Battalion with headquarters at Springhead. At first the 2/6th and 2/7th Dukes were part of the 49th (West Riding) Division but, as in the first war, they became part of a mirror-image duplicate division designated the 46th (North Midland and West Riding) Division.

Additional reserve forces were created in May 1939 the Government introduced the Military Training Act which compelled all males reaching the age of 20 years to serve in the armed forces for six months, with a further period of 3½ months on the reserve. Those on the strength of the Territorial Army were exempt from this conscription, being required to serve for four years on a part-time basis rather than the six months full-time for the militia. This understandably increased TA recruiting. On the 15th July 1939 the first, and only, intake of these militia men of 35,000 was called up for the army and had completed basic training by the time war was declared.

It was at about this time that the old khaki service dress uniform, introduced in 1908, began to be withdrawn. 1938 signalled the end of the tunic as working dress when khaki 'battledress' was introduced. This uniform was in the form of a capacious blouse which stopped short at the waist, with trousers having a large pocket on the thigh for maps etc, and a pocket for a 'first field dressing'. The 1908 pattern webbing equipment was also replaced by the 'Braithwaite' 1937 pattern which was introduced to hold the larger ammunition magazines for the then newly introduced 'Bren' light machine-gun. Cloth 'puttees', worn wound from ankle to just below the knee, were replaced by webbing anklets. Brass regimental shoulder titles and collar badges disappeared, and were replaced by cloth shoulder titles. It was not long however before the drab khaki battledress became modified by the addition

of coloured regimental whistle-cords, regimental distinctions, and divisional badges. The 49th (West Riding) Division still wore the White Rose of York as its badge and, in time, the 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division adopted the Sherwood Oak.

In May 1939 Britain's anti-aircraft defences were permanently manned under the 'Couverture' plan. This produced a belt of 960 searchlights, 25 miles deep, from Newcastle, skirting London, to Portsmouth with 288 anti-aircraft guns manned by 1,000 officers and 22,000 other ranks. The annual camp commitment of TA anti-aircraft units was increased from two to four weeks in order to man anti-aircraft positions by rotation. The Huddersfield Dukes were embodied in June 1939 with two of the Battalion's four companies starting one month's training on the 18th June. Its remaining two companies were due to start their month's training in September 1939 but by then world events had overtaken plans.

Many Territorials had suffered financially when they were called out for the Munich Crisis and had received poor treatment from their civilian employers. Whereas Militia men were fully protected and generously recompensed, the Territorial was not, and General Pile expressed the greatest concern about the treatment of his Territorial gunners:

"Many men are seriously hit, both financially and in their domestic arrangements, by being called on to do a month. Those in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, normally earning from £3 to £5 a week, are badly out of pocket, since employers can hardly be expected to extend their existing concession in order to make good what the Government ought to provide. Household budgets, providing for hire-purchase of houses, furniture, cars etc, leave no margin for unexpected set-backs of this nature. In view of the very proper solicitude of the Government for the financial well-being of the conscripted militia men, there is a strong feeling that the voluntarily enlisted Anti-Aircraft Territorial, upon whom an unexpected burden has fallen, should also receive generous treatment of his difficulties."

(Ack Ack. Gen Sir Frederick Pile. 1949.)

Across the Channel the summer of 1939 resulted in Hitler's rearmament programme producing a German Army of 52 active divisions behind which were 51 reserve divisions, a total of 3½ million men.

By 1939 there were three types of infantry battalion of which the majority, including the Dukes, were 'Rifle Battalions'. The other two types were 'Machine-Gun Battalions' (equipped with 48 medium machine-guns), or the 'Motor Battalions' in the three new 'Territorial Army Motor Divisions', these were the 50th (Northumbrian), 55th (West Lancashire) and the London Divisions, each of which had two, rather than three, infantry motor brigades.

Rifle Battalions had an establishment of 780 in five companies. Headquarter Company had six specialist platoons - Signals, using lamps, flags, heliograph and line; Mortars with three Stokes (later 3") mortars; Anti-aircraft equipped with bren light machine-guns mounted on 15 cwt trucks; a Carrier platoon of ten carriers for reconnaissance; Administration platoon; Pioneer Platoon. There were four 'Rifle Companies', lettered 'A' to 'D', commanded by a captain, each of three platoons with three sections in each. Platoon Headquarters had one Boyes anti-tank rifle and one 2" mortar. Sections were equipped with one bren light machine-gun the remainder having Lee Enfield rifles.

Infantry Battalions now had integral motor transport, a total of 80 vehicles, but of these fourteen were motor-cycles, the majority being small 8cwt, 15cwt or 30 cwt trucks with a small Austin car provided for the commanding officer. Only two 3 ton trucks were available and these were allocated to the attached Royal Army Service Corps for rations, as well as the unit's two water-carrier trucks. Total weapons for the battalion were 734 rifles, 50 bren light machine-guns, two 3" mortars, twelve 2" mortars and twenty-two anti-tank rifles. A new 3" mortar was later introduced as an improved version of the 1916 pattern Stokes mortar. This fired a 10 pound (4.5kg) high-explosive or smoke bomb 1,600 yards (1,450 metres) and was issued to a scale of two mortars for each battalion.

Infantry Battalions also lost their Vickers medium machine-guns and Lewis light machine-guns which were replaced by the newly-introduced Bren light machine-gun. The Bren was designed in Czechoslovakia and later manufactured at Enfield, it was of 0.303" calibre and therefore used the same ammunition as the issue Lee Enfield rifle. It was fed by a distinctively shaped curved magazine holding 28 rounds, and was a much lighter weapon in its role as the infantry section's main firepower. Although relatively light and very reliable, the Bren's magazine-fed action did not enable it to produce the high volumes of sustained fire afforded by its belt-fed counterparts, the British Vickers or German Spandau. But it was to prove to be an excellent light machine-gun and was to be in the service of the British infantryman for more than 30 years.

Battalions were issued with the Boys anti-tank rifle, at a scale of one for each rifle platoon, which was introduced into service in 1939 being named after Captain Boys, the Assistant Superintendent of Design at the Enfield factory. This was a somewhat late British response to the tank threat to infantry for the Germans had in 1918 produced an anti-tank rifle, in the form of the 13mm T Gewehr, within a year of British tanks first appearing on the battlefield. This German anti-tank rifle fired special ammunition which could penetrate a

British Mark IV tank at 120 yards range but only if it hit the armour at right-angles. The Boyes anti-tank rifle weighed a substantial 38 pounds with a five round magazine and fired a high-velocity hardened bullet. It soon became redundant when it was found that it could not penetrate the thicker armour on German tanks. Nor was it popular with the Tommy, for the Boyes was heavy and cumbersome to carry and it had a kick like a mule when fired. But when it was first tested in 1938 the anti-tank rifle was thought to have good prospects:

"The 0.55 inch anti-tank rifle is proving surprisingly easy to handle. The mechanism for overcoming the recoil is very efficient and good shooting with the new weapon should not be difficult. It is one of the arms of the rifle battalions of our Mechanized Army, and is normally carried in an infantry truck, along with other arms, tools and comforts."

(The National Rifle Association Journal. March 1938.)

Within less than three years the four Dukes infantry battalions of 1936 had undergone a substantial change. By September 1939 Halifax's 4th Battalion now formed part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and deployed two anti-tank regiments, the 58th (1/4 DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment with its headquarters at Halifax, and its duplicate 68th (DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment with headquarters at Elland.

Huddersfield's 5th Battalion was now part of the Corps of Royal Engineers under the designation 43rd (5th DWR) Anti-Aircraft Battalion Royal Engineers, but within the year it was to be redesignated as a Searchlight Regiment as part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Skipton's 6th battalion had expanded into two battalions with its original, now 1/6th, Battalion at Skipton-in-Craven remaining as part of the 49th (West Riding) Division, and its duplicate 2/6th Battalion at Keighley similarly forming part of the duplicate 46th (North Midland and West Riding) Division. Milnsbridge's 7th Battalion had also duplicated to produce the 1/7th Battalion (49 Div) at Milnsbridge, and the 2/7th Battalion (46 Div) at Springhead.

Too much had to be done too quickly. A largely horse-drawn British Army had to be mechanized. Whereas Britain had led the world in tank warfare in the last war it had lost the initiative in post-war years, both by economy dictating lightly armed tanks and by cavalry regiments remaining mounted long after the horse was clearly obsolete on the battlefield. It was not until 1938 that Britain had formed a wholly armoured division, and even this was not ready for the first eight months of the Second World War. In the event, the only tanks that were to cross the Channel with the BEF were to be one battalion of 'Matilda' infantry support tanks, with four regular and three yeomanry regiments equipped with light tanks solely mounting machine-guns. The Matilda tank had a critical failing which reflected the view which was inherent amongst Britain's cavalry regiments. Its two-pounder gun only fired armour-piercing rounds in keeping with the concept that the cavalry would only fight other cavalry, tank against tank. But the real threat to tanks was the concealed anti-tank gun against which high-explosive, rather than solid shot, was needed. This was contrary to German philosophy which employed tanks against infantry and soft-skinned vehicles, anti-tank guns against tanks, and artillery against anti-tank guns.

Nor could Britain's weapons production keep pace with changes in policy. In June 1939 the Royal Regiment of Artillery needed 1,770 of the new 18/25 pounder field-gun but only 140 were expected by September 1939:

"The most important element of any army is its men. All regulars were superbly trained to unit level, their brethren in the first Territorial Divisions to reach France were similarly of a very high standard, but there were far too few of either. The Territorial Army was ordered to double in size in 1939 but little provision could be made to double the equipment and the training staff. The Regulars did all they could and this, allied to the enthusiasm and spirit of the Territorials led to remarkable results - but the German Army was ready for a major war and the British were not yet in that position."

(Against all odds - The British Army of 1939-1940. Brigadier K A Timbers. 1989.)

[2: Major G H Ackroyd joined 'B' Company 4th Dukes at Brighouse just after World War One and served with the Battalion until he retired in 1935. He was recalled in 1939 to command 230 Anti-Tank Battery of 58th (4th DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA), later being appointed as Commandant of the Anti-Tank Ranges at Lydd. He served as Honorary Colonel 382 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA) from 1952 to 1956.]

CHAPTER 6

1939-1940: THANK GOD WE HAVE A NAVY

"In the Army itself, and among those members of the general public who took any interest in military affairs, the Infantry was regarded as the least skilled arm. A robust constitution, a stout heart and ability to march long distances and handle a few simple weapons were regarded as all that was necessary. By the end of the war this attitude had completely changed. The highly trained infantrymen - who could fire rifle, Bren gun and mortar, prime and throw a bomb, lay or remove a mine, perform simple engineering tasks, drive a truck or Bren carrier, and who was at the same time a skilled tactician by day or by night, in desert, jungle or among mountains - was acknowledged to be the most skilled technician in the Army."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

In the First World War the Dukes Territorials had fielded eight battalions which served continuously as infantry in the Western Front trenches. The Second World War was to find the Dukes Territorials now serving in three roles in many different theatres of war. In company with the rest of the Territorial Army, the Dukes Territorials of 1939 were to be required to pay dearly for decades of under-funding and the ill-timed rapid expansion of the Territorial Army which started in the spring of 1939. Although fewer in number, the pre-expansion Territorial units had enjoyed high morale and were manned by key personnel who had enjoyed progressive training and consequent promotion. But the rapid expansion of 1939 had generated unbearable burdens with the doubling-up bringing in large numbers of recruits which demanded the accelerated promotion of experienced Territorials who were nevertheless spread thinly over the expanded units.

Through no fault of the Territorials, previously sound units were expanded to produce units which were inexperienced, ill-equipped and short on skill. When war was declared Halifax's 58th Anti-tank Regiment had not yet carried out any training other than a basic gunnery camp with their newly-arrived two pounder anti-tank guns. The duplicate 68th Anti-Tank Regiment had few, or no anti-tank guns and had a very high percentage of recruits. The first-line 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes had not only produced two duplicate battalions, but had also begun the process of mechanization which, when completed, still did not produce enough troop carrying trucks to lift the battalions by road. The 49th Division's three infantry brigades had not been allowed to carry out a single brigade exercise between 1920 and the declaration of war in 1939. The duplicate 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions' sole asset was the enthusiasm of a hard core of experienced Territorials; their uniform was in the main borrowed overalls sporting TA armbands and any weapons needed for training their large numbers of recruits had to be borrowed.

Halifax's 4th Dukes was now two separate anti-tank regiments, a front-line role which was to see them in close support of infantry. Their guns were destined to be in action at Calais in 1940, in Malaya in 1941, then 1943/1944 saw them in North Africa and Italy and, finally, in France during 1944. Huddersfield's 5th Dukes was to serve for the large part of the war in the anti-aircraft role until 1944 when, converted to infantry, they served in France.

Skipton's 6th and Milnsbridge's 7th Battalions remained as infantry and expanded to form the duplicate 2/6th and 2/7th battalions at Keighley and Springhead respectively. The 1/6th and 1/7th Battalions were eventually ordered to sail, as part of the 49th (West Riding) Division, for Norway in 1940, but events dictated that the Dukes' brigade did not sail. From 1940 to 1944 the 1/6th and 1/7th Battalions first served in Iceland, before returning to the United Kingdom to train and then take part in the invasion of Europe. The duplicate 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions were despatched to France in 1940 as part of the 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division and were soon in action when German forces invaded the Low Countries. After their evacuation from Dunkirk and St Valéry both battalions were converted into units of the Royal Armoured Corps and served as armoured delivery units until the end of the war.

EMBODIMENT

War with Germany became a reality for the Dukes Territorials in August 1939 when key men were embodied for war service. 'Z' Day came on 1st September when the Territorial Army as a whole was embodied. At 11am on 3rd September BBC Radio announced that a state of war existed between Britain and Germany.

Halifax's 58th Anti-Tank Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel H L Grylls, had spent early summer of 1939 in camp at Redesdale and taken the first opportunity to carry out continuous training in the anti-tank role they had adopted in November 1938. The Regiment was embodied on 28th August 1939 and remained in battery areas in the vicinity of Halifax. At the end of October 1939 the regiment moved to Ripley, near Harrogate, where it carried out intensive training throughout the severe winter of 1939/1940.

At Elland, the Dukes gunners of the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment had only been formed a few months when the regiment was embodied on 25th August 1939 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel S Smith TD. The regiment was immediately ordered to Bridlington where a week was spent digging trenches as part of a coastal defence system. After much hard work, a splendid system of trenches was produced. Typical military logic regarding trench-digging then came into play when orders came for the whole system to be completely filled-in again. This done, the regiment returned to its headquarters locations where guns, trucks and equipment slowly but steadily began to arrive and to enable them to train for the anti-tank role.

Huddersfield's searchlight regiment, Lieutenant Colonel J M Haigh TD, had already deployed two companies in the air-defence role before war was declared and was destined to spend the winter of 1939/1940 manning posts around Huddersfield and Halifax:

"Its role, though not spectacular, was a very important one, demanding a high sense of duty and good discipline under conditions which were mostly monotonous. For obvious reasons searchlights had, in the main, to be sited in places which were difficult of access and amenities of life and recreational relaxation were, therefore, at a minimum, especially during the early days of the war. One remembers during the winter of 1939/40, when passing over the hills south of Holmfirth, seeing a single tent near the road. On investigation it was found to be occupied by a detachment of the Regiment. There was about six inches of snow on the ground, but in spite of the intense cold the men were cheerful and in excellent spirits."

(Ibid)

The 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes formed part of the 147th Infantry Brigade, 49th (West Riding) Division, the third battalion in the brigade being York's 1/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA). The 147th Brigade had despatched units to guard key-points when war was declared, just as it had done in 1914. In October the division was on the Lincolnshire coast as part of an anti-invasion plan, later in the month moving to Catterick Camp in the North Riding. In November 1939 they again moved to the Malton area as a result of an intelligence report warning that the enemy were intending to land parachute troops on the east coast. At first the destination was misheard within 147th Brigade resulting in the soldiers thinking they were bound for Malta!

The 147th Brigade remained in the Malton district until April 1940 receiving mobilisation equipment, carrying out intensive training and receiving reinforcements. The 49th Division also had responsibility for the defence of a number of airfields in the East Riding and was allocated a motley selection of vehicles to carry out this role. It was not an unfamiliar experience for some of the battalion's Territorials who had also served in 1914. The Commanding Officer of Skipton's 1/6th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel J S Spencer OBE MC TD, had joined the battalion in 1914 and subsequently served in every rank from private to lieutenant colonel. Not far behind in service was the 1/7th Battalion's Lieutenant Colonel G B Howcroft MC TD who had also joined the Dukes Territorials in 1914 and served with the 7th Battalion until he was wounded in 1918, rejoining the battalion after the war.

Keighley's 2/6th Battalion and Springhead's 2/7th Battalion formed the 137th Brigade, 46th Division, with York's 2/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment producing the brigade's third infantry battalion. These three battalions had only been formed by the original battalions six months before from a nucleus of experienced Territorials many of whom had experienced accelerated promotion. The battalions had not even had a unit annual camp before war was declared as efforts had been concentrated upon training the many new recruits they had gained during the intensive spring recruiting campaign, as recalled by Lance Corporal Peter Walker, 2/7th Battalion:

"I joined just prior to the outbreak of war. Training nights were spent in a local gymnasium practising the aiming of our rifles, Bren gun drill, drill and marching. In August 1939 we went to a firing range where each man fired ten rounds with the rifle and fifteen rounds with the Bren. About the same time we received our first items of equipment - 1914 style webbing equipment. On the afternoon of 31 August I received instructions to report to my company immediately, with my webbing equipment and washing tackle. On arrival I was issued with a rifle and instructed to wait until the remainder of the company had assembled."

Lance Corporal P Walker, 2/7th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 222, Autumn 1993.)

The 2/6th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel E H Llewellyn MC embodied at the Keighley drill hall, later moving its headquarters to the Temperance Hall, and the 2/7th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel W A Hinchliffe TD, at the drill hall, Huddersfield. The 2/6th Dukes companies were dispersed along the Colne valley with 'A' Company at Heaton, 'B' Company at Bradford, 'C' Company at Skipton and 'D' Company at Saltaire. Accommodation was at first in old and disused premises lacking basic services, but these were gradually improved. Embodiment brought orders to supply numerous guards for airfields, railways and key-points such as the Standedge railway tunnel and Yeadon airport. Many of the battalion only had civilian clothing to wear and their sole military equipment was a rifle and outdated webbing equipment, as Peter Walker discovered:

"We were then embussed and driven off to an unknown destination. This turned out to be the railway station at Littleborough where we left company headquarters and two platoons. The other two platoons, mine included, got back into the bus and were driven off into the night. We ended up in a school in the middle of nowhere. It turned out to be Walsden and that our task was to guard Summit Tunnel, on the main line between Leeds and Manchester. The first night was chaotic. Sentries were posted in the dark as we tried to find a path from air vent to air vent by the light of a storm lantern. We did this guard duty for a month during which we gradually became more and better equipped with armbands, then bayonets to go with our rifles, then battledress and finally proper greatcoats."

LCpl P Walker, 2/7th Battalion

(Ibid)

The winter of 1939-1940 was particularly severe and much time was taken up in digging-out snowbound villages and helping the movement of military transport and trains:

"During the winter local help was provided lavishly. The Old Comrades of the 2/6th of the 1914-18 war presented the [2/6th] Battalion with a splendid set of drums and bugles. The generosity of local people was magnificent and the Battalion received an adequate supply of radio sets and sports equipment. The unit was fortunate to have a number of professionals in its ranks, and very soon teams for soccer, Rugby Union and Rugby League were forthcoming. The local theatres gave cheap seats to the troops; professional artists performed gratis at Battalion concerts and in consequence the units funds expanded to adequate proportions. The Women's Voluntary Service and the YMCA and other welfare bodies also gave of their best and in this way overcame much of the difficulty caused by the scattered nature of the unit."

(The history of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Clothing and equipment was to remain in short supply and it was to be some months before the two duplicate Dukes battalions even approached being reasonably well-equipped.

NORWAY 1940

Although Norway was a neutral country it was of equal strategic importance to Britain and Germany alike. The possession of Norway's ice-free ports was invaluable to any navy that wished to operate in the North Atlantic. Germany's war industries also needed to import twenty-two million tons of iron ore each year, and of these some nine million tons of Swedish iron ore came through the Norwegian port of Narvik. Although the country was much larger than Britain, Norway's population was less than three million.

In 1940 Norway insisted upon exercising its neutrality and iron ore laden ships bound for Germany escaped the Royal Navy by remaining in Norway's neutral coastal waters. Churchill had at first considered laying extensive sea minefields to prevent German vessels from getting through. By February the war between Russia and Finland began to go against the Finns and the possibility arose that Britain and France would send a 100,000 strong force to support the Finns. But both the Norwegian and Swedish governments were reluctant to allow such an Allied force to pass through their countries to get to Finland, and it became a question whether or not the allies would force a way through the Norwegian port of Trondheim.

The campaign in Norway witnessed the first shots being fired between German and British troops. Britain's efforts were to be plagued by a catalogue of mismanagement, poor staffwork and misfortune over which the participating British troops had no control. The 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes were to be committed to the Norwegian campaign as part of the 147th Brigade, 49th (West Riding) Division. Every single aspect of Britain's operations in Norway was grossly mismanaged to an almost unbelievable extent. In the event the Dukes' Territorials part in the campaign was to remain cooped up on board ships in Scotland whilst the fighting in Norway took place. But the experiences of their Territorial comrades so well illustrate the unreasonable demands placed upon Britain's Territorials in the early part of the war.

The 49th (West Riding) Division was selected for the task of peacefully occupying the critical Norwegian ports and, at first, received orders to move from Thirsk to Newbury on 1st March 1940. But these were cancelled, even as the battalion advance parties were about to move, for it became clear that Finland was beyond allied help. It was to prove one of the many orders and counter-orders in the campaign. Equipment which had been in desperately short supply now flooded in in vast quantities and battalions were inundated with a proper scale of transport. Vast quantities of winter clothing arrived to the extent that each soldier now needed three extra kit-bags in addition to his original one. Numerous plans were made for the peaceful occupation of Norway and it was finally agreed that the 49th Division's three brigades would be joined by the regular 24th Guards Brigade to seize four strategic ports. Norway still remained a free neutral and no opposition was expected.

On the 2nd April, formation and unit commanders were summoned to a conference at the War Office where they were informed that the Royal Navy was to mine Norwegian territorial waters on 6th April to enforce the blockade. After a pause, to test Norwegian and German reactions, the western Norwegian ports were to be occupied. In the meantime, troops were immediately to embark and await final instructions. This resulted in orders for the 49th Division to leave most of its transport and all of its artillery behind and that all peacetime stores, such as office equipment were to be taken. In the event British and German plans both chose 9 April for their arrival in Norway. But Germany's plan, Operation Weserübung, involved the use of seven well-equipped divisions. Even as the 49th (West Riding) Division was under starter's orders on board ships on the River Clyde, German troops seized the ports of Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik, as well as the capital Oslo.

A revised plan centred on the capture of the port of Trondheim by a pincer movement. In the first phase 49th Division's 146th Brigade was to land to the south at Namsos and push inland towards Trondheim. A concurrent landing was to be made by 148th Brigade to the north at Aandalsnes and also to push inland to Trondheim. A short time later the Dukes' 147th Brigade was to land at Trondheim itself and there to link up with the 49th Division's two pincer brigades. The 49th Division's three brigades were organised as three separate forces. Major General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart commanded 146th Brigade ('Mauriceforce') which was to land at Namsos, Brigadier H De R Morgan commanded 148th Brigade ('Sickleforce') which was to land at Aandalsnes, and Brigadier G Lammie commanded the Dukes' 147th Brigade ('Hammerforce') at Trondheim. Thus the infantry brigades were to be despatched to Norway and then be thinly dispersed over tremendous distances, Narvik to Trondheim being some 400 miles, and Namsos to Aandalsnes 200 miles. Between them lay high snow-covered mountains intersected by deep fjords. On the night of 16th/17th April Territorials of Sheffield's Hallamshire Battalion landed on Norwegian soil at Namsos, and were closely followed by Territorials of the 4th Lincolns and 1/4th KOYLI. Here they were met by a detachment of Royal Marines which had been landed by HMS Sheffield twenty hours before. The 146th Brigade was now faced with the 120 mile advance south to Trondheim; the countryside was covered with four feet of snow and movement limited to two roads and one railway line. The roads were themselves adjacent to the Beitstad and Trondheim Fjords (sea inlets) which ran all the way to Trondheim:

"The enemy had not only supremacy in the air, but also complete naval control of these two fjords. Besides having no artillery, no armour and no air support, the British part of the force [146th Brigade] had no transport of its own. It had therefore to rely entirely on requisitioned Norwegian lorries and motor cars. The snow on the roads was beginning to thaw, thereby making them very treacherous for driving and exceedingly tiring for marching. The enemy at Trondheim in contrast had a well-equipped force of all arms, of whom at any rate a proportion had been trained in ski-ing."

(The York and Lancaster Regiment, 1919-1953. Maj O F Sheffield. 1956.)

The 49th Division's 148th Brigade had similarly landed at Aandalsnes, south of Trondheim, where this 'strategic port' was discovered to consist of one 150 foot long concrete jetty and a 60 foot quay with a single five-ton crane. Nor was this a full strength brigade, for not only was it shorn of supporting arms, but it also comprised only two, rather than three, infantry battalions being the 1/8th The Sherwood Foresters (TA) and 1/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment (TA). Its only defence against the omnipresent Luftwaffe was the late addition of 168th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery which had hurriedly joined the force from Rosyth. After numerous false starts, the ships which carried this brigade to Aandalsnes were too small to carry even this small force and this had resulted in half the 1/5th Leicesters, all the brigade's trucks and motor-cycles, together with all the Forester's mortar ammunition being left behind.

In the north the 146th Brigade embussed in requisitioned vehicles and made a bold rapid advance of sixty miles southwards towards Trondheim. The Hallamshire Battalion then secured a defensive position to enable the 1/4th KOYLI and 4th Lincolns to leapfrog through by train. By the 20th April the Territorials of the 146th Brigade were over three-quarters of the way towards Trondheim and the planned link-up with the Dukes 147th Brigade frontal assault and the anticipated other half of the pincer provided by the 148th Brigade. By now 146th Brigade's three battalions were thinly spread over fifty miles of coastline and a spotter aircraft, nicknamed 'Henry the Hun', had tracked their advance and brought in numerous attacks by enemy aircraft which machine-gunned the columns.

Well to their south, Brigadier Morgan's 148th Brigade now had supplementary orders to capture Dombaas, to lay demolitions on railways, and to make contact with the Norwegian Army's General Headquarters "believed to be in Lillehammer". Thus his two-battalion brigade was expected also to move on Trondheim and to face south as well as north. It was an impossible task. Although the Norwegian Army's mobilisation had been severely disrupted by the German invasion it had managed to gather an ad hoc army which was involved in fighting around Oslo, to the south of 148th Brigade. The Norwegians fully expected large numbers of Allied reinforcements to come to their aid, and were fighting desperately to hold until they arrived. Even as Brigadier Morgan's 1½ battalions landed at Aandalsnes unopposed, the Norwegian Army was approaching breaking point. Royal Marines, who had landed in advance, had not only captured the German defenders, but they had also organised

trains to speed 148th Brigade to Dombaas. But the brigade had first to unload its ships. Leaving most to do this Brigadier Morgan took one company of Foresters to make a dash for Dombaas and prepare the town's defences. Here the Norwegians were fully expecting large numbers of British reinforcements and the appearance of a Brigadier with a single Territorial infantry company, with less than two battalions to follow, was, to put it mildly, a disappointment. The Brigadier's orders now changed to moving south to support Ruge, the Commander-in-Chief of Norwegian Forces, in the fighting around Oslo, in the hope that they could prevent German reinforcements moving north. By the small hours of 20th April the bitterly cold and weary Territorials of the 148th Brigade had arrived at Lillehammer. More than one Norwegian spectator was surprised how young they were; they had few Bren machine-guns, no heavy machine-guns, their only other weapon was the Boyes anti-tank rifle, and they had no ammunition for their mortars; all spare ammunition and all transport was still in a freighter on the other side of the North Sea.

Back in England the 49th Division's third brigade had been preparing for its attack on Norway even as 146th and 148th Brigades were struggling long distances through the snow. On the 9th April orders came that 147th Brigade was to move to Norway on 17th April. Those orders arrived at the same time that the news came through that German forces had invaded Norway. The Dukes' 147th Brigade eventually left Malton on 15th April and moved to Gourock on the River Clyde where the 1/6th Dukes and 1/5th West Yorkshires embarked aboard the Polish ship *Sobieski* together with a company of engineers and Brigade Headquarters. Major B W Webb-Carter [1], second-in-command 1/6th Dukes, later recalled the experience:

"The 1/6th Battalion entrained at Malton for an elaborately anonymous destination. It was, of course, quite obvious to even the most casual reader of the daily press that Norway was our objective. The [1/6th] Battalion moved in two train-loads and our first party - consisting of two rifle companies and elements of HQ Company - was under my command. Our departure could not have been more uninspiring. In pitch darkness, the troops shuffled through the streets to an even darker railway platform. We were fully dressed in 'Battle Order' which included having that ridiculous article, the gas cape, rolled up and balanced precariously on top of one's small pack. As a nameless voice, some distance away, called 'Here comes the Brigadier!' someone pushed violently by me and dislodged my gas cape. It fell somewhere in the dark amidst the soldiers' feet. I knew nothing of war but was sure it was essential to be, at least, properly dressed to meet its first impact. I fell on my knees and groped helplessly about on the platform."

Major B W Webb-Carter

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVI, Number 116. April 1960.)

Their unit's transport and the 1/7th Dukes similarly embarked aboard His Majesty's Ship *Orion*. It was now clear that they would be expected to carry out an enemy-opposed seaborne assault on Trondheim in Norway. The next few days were very active and were spent in lectures and studying available maps, even though several urgent requests to the War Office did not produce any maps of the high ground around Trondheim which was the Brigade's objective. Even as the 146th and 148th Brigades were in Norway, events in Britain were shaping their future as intelligence reports came through that Trondheim was strongly held by numerous German forces. The Dukes' 147th Brigade still remained on board ships in Scotland. Then several days were passed languishing on board ship, 'all dressed-up and nowhere to go'. Even then, on several occasions, orders came to sail for Norway but these too were cancelled at the last moment, sometimes even when the pilot had arrived on the ships' bridges. In the event the strength of the German defenders holding Trondheim resulted in the 147th Brigades frontal sea-assault on Trondheim being cancelled. By 20th April the 146th and 148th Brigades were intended to be pressing towards Trondheim and the planned rendezvous with the sea-borne Dukes. But nobody bothered to tell either brigade that the sea-borne landing by 147th Brigade on Trondheim had been cancelled. Thus even as they enjoyed a bloodless but chilly victory the Territorials were completely unaware that their labours were pointless and that events were about to take a turn for the worse.

Back in Namsos the brigade's carefully concealed stores were wholly destroyed by enemy bombers, and on 21st April the Germans made use of their naval superiority by entering the fjords and landing large numbers of troops behind the 146th Brigade's two forward battalions. The Hallamshire's frustration was further increased for they could clearly see German troops landing in the Beitstad Fjord but were powerless to attack them having no heavy weapons nor could they call upon the usual artillery, naval gunfire or air-support.

Both the KOYLI and Lincolns were now cut-off by large numbers of enemy troops and the 146th Brigade ordered the Hallamshires to pull back towards Namsos at Folling, and there to establish a defence through which the forward battalions could withdraw. Far from being over-run Wakefield's 1/4th KOYLI were giving a good account of themselves at Verdal Bridge whose approaches were strewn with the dead of the German 130th Regiment. Both battalions managed to extricate themselves by determined forced marches in deep snow in which some covered a remarkable 58 miles in 42 hours across a virtual snow wilderness. By Saint George's Day the Wakefield Territorials passed into the relative safety of the line held by Sheffield's Hallamshires. On the 26th April a further 200 men of the 1/5th Lincolns, who had been given-up for dead, passed into the Hallamshire's positions to rejoin their battalion.

On 28th April the Hallamshires were again withdrawn to Bagsund, some fifteen miles from Namsos, to act as rearguard for the 146th Brigade's evacuation. The Brigade began evacuating on the night of 2nd May with the Hallamshire's rearguard leaving in the early hours of the 3rd May. Last to leave was Lieutenant Colonel Robins, the Hallamshire's Commanding Officer, who slipped back into Namsos at dawn to make sure that nobody had been left behind. Even their convoy home was fraught with disaster for BBC radio had broadcast their evacuation even as it was taking place. The convoy was hit by heavy enemy air-attacks and many of the Hallamshires were killed when HMS Griffin was hit and sunk.

On 20th April Brigadier Morgan's 148th Brigade had been despatched forward some ten miles south of Lillehammer to counter a two-pronged German attack along the shores of Lake Mjosa. Here they were split-up into company packets alongside Norwegian units, whose language they did not understand, in terrain which demanded the use of skis or snowshoes, neither of which they had or knew how to use. German pressure increased and they soon came under heavy artillery fire, yet they stood their ground even though all they had to fire back were smoke-bombs on the grounds that "At least it showed willing". Ill-equipped and heavily outnumbered they continued to conduct a magnificent fighting withdrawal, even when news came through that the ship carrying all their ammunition had been torpedoed and sunk. By now German tanks had appeared and Brigadier Morgan's brigade numbered no more than 500 men who were tasked to hold Tretten to enable the Norwegians to move to new positions. By then they only had rifles and a few Brens left:

"Having isolated the forward infantry by their thrust along the road, the tanks and the supporting AFVs turned themselves into mobile pillboxes. They brought fire to bear on the Foresters' flank and rear while small parties of assault troops infiltrated through the widely spaced positions on the slopes. These aimed their attacks at the support lines to the north, while the field guns and mortars that followed in the wake of the armour dropped a curtain of shells upon the village itself. Thus the defenders, denied mobility from the beginning, were divided into three separate penny packets. By six pm the end was near. By seven pm the 148th Brigade was staging its fourth, and last, retreat. By the following dawn it had for all practical purposes ceased to exist. All that remained of it were some 300 men, exhausted, nerve-shattered men.....men into whose souls had eaten the iron of defeat."

(The Saturday Night Soldiers. A V Sellwood. 1966.)

By this time the 15th Infantry Brigade had been diverted from France to support them. The regular 1st Battalions of The Green Howards, The York and Lancaster Regiment and the KOYLI first moved to protect 148th Brigade's lines-of-communication, then fought magnificent covering battles at Kvam and Otta to allow the 148th Brigade and the Norwegian Army, to withdraw. The campaign closed as both brigades were evacuated from Aandalsnes.

Whilst all this had been taking place in Norway, the Dukes' brigade was kept on board ships in Scotland, probably as a security measure to cover the intended evacuation from Norway. Orders were given and almost immediately countermanded. Instructions to transfer to cruisers and armed motor-vessels came, but these too were cancelled. Both ships began to run out of food and water and on 23rd April moved up the Clyde to King George Docks to take on stores. Major Webb-Carter later recalled the Dukes long wait:

"About HT Sobieski, life was far from dull. Piles of fantastic winter clothing which rendered us quite immobile were issued. The poor mountain warfare experts showed us, on coal heaps in the docks, how to 'picket the heights'. The Colonel went ashore every day and returned looking gloomier each time: a landing in Trondheim from a cruiser, an opposed landing in open boats at Narvik, a landing from destroyers at Namsos. In rapid succession plan after plan was made and discarded. At last, after 10 days, our immediate future was decided by an outbreak of meningitis on board the Sobieski. Our file in the War Office was removed from the 'Immediate' to the 'Too Difficult' basket and we disembarked. We had all the sensations of going to war but, fortunately for us in this instance, we had been spared the consummation."

Major B W Webb-Carter

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVI, Number 116. April 1960.)

On 27th April several cases of meningitis were discovered and evacuated to local hospital. The next day the fiasco ended when both ships disembarked their passengers and the whole brigade moved under a cloak of secrecy to Glasgow's Exhibition Hall and Bellahouston Camp where they were isolated as a security measure. A further move found the Dukes at Hawick where the remainder of the 49th (West Riding) Division was eventually to concentrate on return from their part in the Norwegian Campaign.

Whilst the 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes were at Hawick, the Germans began their drive into Holland, Belgium and France and orders were momentarily expected that the 49th Division would be joining the BEF. But the 49th Division was destined not to see active service until 1944 and the 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes had a long wait ahead of them. The fighting in Europe in 1940 was to fall to their 2/6th and 2/7th Battalions and the Dukes' anti-tank gunners, and indeed their regular 1st Battalion.

NORTH-WEST EUROPE 1940

By March 1940 six months had passed since the 2/6th and 2/7th Dukes had embodied for war at their Keighley and Springhead drill halls. In March orders came that their 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division was ordered to France for six months where it was to guard lines-of-communication and to carry out further training. These orders stemmed from general unrest amongst the duplicate Territorial Army units who were still not fully equipped, but were nevertheless fed-up after languishing for so long at their home stations. On 26th April the Government despatched three of the newly-formed duplicate Territorial Army infantry divisions to France to act as labour divisions, 12th (Home Counties) Division, 23rd (Northumbrian) Division, and 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division.

This was the plan which took Keighley's 2/6th Dukes, Springhead's 2/7th Dukes and York's 2/5th West Yorkshire Regiment to France as part of the 137th Infantry Brigade, 46th Division. The 2/6th and 2/7th Dukes were therefore regarded as 'lines-of-communication troops' and, as such, not expected to take any part in the forward battle. They were neither armed nor equipped for the front-line. The division's artillery was left behind in England and took over Sheffield district. Each infantry battalion only had three thirty-hundredweight lorries and eight fifteen-hundredweight trucks, each rifle platoon had one, rather than three, bren guns, and each battalion had four 2" mortars without ammunition; there were no armoured bren-carriers or signals equipment. Even basic equipment such as binoculars, compasses and lightweight entrenching tools were not issued. However the War Office decreed that their pioneer role required all office equipment and the like, to which the Dukes added mess stores and their band instruments.

The Dukes embarked at Southampton on 28th April 1940, and sailed for Cherbourg, France, to cheers and cries of "Bring 'em back alive" from the dock workers. By this time the 2/6th Dukes were still commanded by Lieutenant Colonel E H Llewellyn MC with Lieutenant Colonel G Taylor TD assuming command of the 2/7th Battalion earlier that month. Whilst at Cherbourg the only serious military offence of the campaign was committed by a Dukes Territorial who was arrested for posting an uncensored letter in the civil post. A nineteen-hour rail journey in cattle-trucks brought to 2/7th Dukes to Blain, an old town thirty miles north-east of the port of St Nazaire. The 2/6th Dukes camped about a mile from St Nazaire on the banks of the River Loire on a site used by American troops during the First World War. At this time neither the Allied nor German ground forces had exchanged shots:

"France, in May 1940, was not an uncomfortable country. Living was cheap, and the people friendly. If the light beer hardly rivalled Burton Special or Tetley's Dynamite, it was nevertheless only fourpence a litre. Egg and chips in the local estaminets made up for any failure of the Army cooks, who were still unversed in the many variations that can be performed with a tin of stew or bullybeef. The French people rested content in the impregnability of the Maginot Line - no one will forget the endless rings and trinkets with representations of the Line and the motto - They shall not pass."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

137th Brigade was given three tasks. One battalion was to unload ships and carry out labouring duties at the port of St Nazaire whilst the second battalion worked on ammunition dumps and patrolling the adjacent forest; the brigade's third battalion was to train in the area of Blain. The duties were more suited to labourers than soldiers, as the 2/6th Dukes discovered:

"The troops settled down at once to very hard work; it consisted mainly of heavy and arduous navvying in the hot sun with all ranks stripped to the waist; manhandling heavy ammunition at the docks, road-making, laying railway lines, erecting huts, digging trenches at aerodromes, discharging frozen meat from ships to refrigerators and improving the defences of St Nazaire. All work came alike to the men; they took a lively interest in everything. In the work of improving the defences of the port the Dukes filled countless bales of sandbags in record time. Shortly after the arrival of the [1/6th] Battalion the northern French ports were subjected to a severe hammering from the air and, in consequence, the officer commanding St Nazaire drew up hurried plans to lessen his own vulnerability. This work involved the erection of thick sandbagged emplacements on the docks, jetty ends and other vulnerable points along the river. The work was carried out in record time by the 2/6th, and its completion, after working night and day, received well-merited praise from higher command."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

This was still the 'Phoney War' when, although Germany and the Allies faced each other, no shots had been fired by ground troops. The Dukes enjoyed an atmosphere more akin to a continental annual camp than that of a world war. Their bands were in great demand throughout the 46th Division to give concerts, and they regularly beat retreat in various French towns in the district. But the Territorials' tour as labourers was to be short-lived for the German High Command had other plans.

MAY 1940

By May the British, French, Dutch and Belgian allies had some 3,750,000 men in 136 divisions facing Germany, of these ten divisions made up the British Expeditionary Force. The German forces they faced composed some 134 divisions but their different organisation produced smaller numbers of 2,760,000 troops. Whereas the allies were notably stronger in tanks and artillery, the German Luftwaffe had nearly three times the number of aircraft. On the 10th May 1940 the European 'phony war' ended. For the invasion of the Low Countries the Germans planned to compensate for their numerical weakness by using speed and 'Schwerpunkt' - the concentration of strength at the decisive point.

The German plan 'Fall Gelb', (Operation Yellow), employed three German Armies. In the north 'Army Group B', of 28 divisions including three armoured, commanded by General von Boch, was to advance through Holland into Belgium with the intention of drawing allied reserves up from the south. In the centre 'Army Group A', of 37 infantry and 7 armoured divisions, commanded by General von Runstedt, was the crucial part of the plan having the aim of bursting through the Ardennes, then held by nine French divisions, to cut the Allied lines into two. To the south 'Army Group C', of 17 infantry divisions, commanded by General von Leeb was to stand on the defensive holding the sector south of the Maginot Line to the Swiss border.

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was, at first, not to play a significant part in countering 'Army Group A's initial thrust through the French-held Ardennes sector. On the 10th May, at 1300 hours, the BEF was ordered to advance north into the path of the German 'Army Group B'. At this time the BEF was composed of ten divisions, five regular and five Territorial Army, compared with the 28 German divisions advancing towards them. By the 11th May the British 1st and 2nd Corps had taken up forward positions on the River Dyle, from Louvain to Wavre, with the Belgian Army on their left flank, and the French First Army on the right. The British 3rd Corps, of two TA divisions, held the River Escaut, and the 50th (Northumbrian) Division (TA) was detached from 2nd Corps to hold the River Dendre. On 14th May the BEF had its first encounter with German forces and on the next day had successfully repulsed the first German attacks. But by evening all Dutch forces surrendered and the Allied flank on either side of BEF was 'fluid' forcing BEF to fall back on River Dendre.

The 46th Division at first remained in St Nazaire where it increased alertness by manning anti-aircraft positions and in preparing to repel attacks by enemy parachute troops. On the 17th May the Dukes' officers were at dinner with Brigadier J B Gawthorpe, commanding 137th Brigade. He was urgently called to the telephone to speak to the division's commander Major General H O Curtis who informed the brigadier that on 12th May he had offered the 46th Division's services in a defensive role to the Commander-in-Chief, General Viscount Lord Gort VC, (General Curtis's prior telegram to Lord Gort was optimistically worded "*The 46th Division is willing and fit to fight*"). Curtis's offer had at first simply been noted but he had now received orders that the 46th Division, which was the furthest from the fighting, was now called to the front line. Orders were immediately given for the division's brigades to prepare to occupy defensive positions on the next day. Dinner was rapidly concluded and within the hour stores and equipment were being loaded at railway stations. By 1800 hours on 18th May the Dukes' motor vehicles had been despatched north to Bethune, near Arras. The remainder of the 137th Brigade, 2/5th West Yorkshires and 2/6th and 2/7th Dukes, drew rations and 'entrained':

"On the evening of 18 May the [2/7th] Battalion, headed by the band and drums, marched to the station through streets lined with French people shouting encouragement. The Battalion entrained with one Bren gun per company, instead of three, each with only two magazines (without magazine loaders), no mortars, no anti-tank guns and one day's rations."

Lance Corporal P Walker, 2/7th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 222, Autumn 1993.)

A shortage of coal caused a delay of several hours before the division's trains left their sidings on a circuitous journey to Bethune. Progress became slower and slower as enemy bombing disrupted the French railway system. By the 19th May the BEF had taken up a defensive position on the River Escaut with the 1st and 2nd Corps forced back onto this 3rd Corps line. To their south the German 'Army Group A' pushed westwards through a disorganised French defence thus cutting the BEF's supply lines and laying open BEF's right flank.

Enemy air activity continued to disrupt the Dukes' progress causing continual stoppages. Streams of refugees were seen as were full trains carrying Belgian troops in the opposite direction. Passing through Eu, on the 20th May, rail tracks were severely damaged and large bomb craters were in the adjacent fields. By now they had become a column of four trains with 137 Brigade headquarters and 2/5th West Yorkshires in the lead train, which was followed by a train carrying 2/4th KOYLI, 138th Brigade. The last two trains carried the 1/7th and 1/6th Dukes. They finally came to a halt about one mile from Abbeville, near the Channel coast, from where fire and smoke caused by incendiary bombs was seen rising high in the sky. The trains were then bombed and the Dukes Territorials fired their first shots of the war as they manned their anti-aircraft machine-guns. A patrol down the track only went a short way before discovering that the other trains had disappeared and that enemy machine-gun posts blocked their way to the north.

The cause of the halt was that the German XIX Panzer Corps had broken through to the sea near Abbeville thus cutting the Allied defensive line in two. Its commander, General Heinz Guderian, had been the inventor of the German blitzkrieg tactics, ('lightning war'), which now enjoyed so much success. Guderian's armoured column had advanced over 56 miles in a single day from the Canal du Nord to the sea leaving a German armoured spearhead over 100 miles long. This attack had occurred just as the 46th Division's trains were heading north on the coastal railway line and had cut-off the Dukes in the rear trains. This resulted in the 2/6th and 2/7th Dukes with the 2/4th KOYLI being cut-off from the main body of their 46th Division which continued north and, in time, was evacuated from Dunkirk. In the lead train the 2/4th KOYLI, some distance up the track, met a French officer who informed them that German tanks were about to enter Abbeville. Their train urgently needed more water, and left to collect some with an assurance from the driver that he would return, he did not. The 2/4th KOYLI then immediately set off westwards for Dieppe on foot and reached Eu by nightfall the following day. Both the Dukes' trains were also desperately short of water:

"Operation orders were given in the corridor of the train; no maps were available; there was no communication with any other unit or HQ and no one was certain where we were and we could only guess at the presence of the enemy from the sound of nearby gunfire and the crump of shell and bomb ahead of the train. Precise orders could not be given other than to detrain, take up defensive positions and look to our fronts. It soon became apparent that we were in a ridiculous situation with no field of fire, no position from which to observe the enemy and the nearby roads, as far as we could see, chock-a-block with refugees and retiring allied troops."

"The order, sensibly, was given to retrain and we backed up the line to a better position. The movement was fraught with difficulty; the French railway drivers had to be persuaded to remain with the trains; the trains had to be coupled together and the couplings kept breaking; there was a shortage of water for the boilers and we were bombed once more - again without casualties."

Captain J P Knight, 2/6th Battalion

(*The Iron Duke, Number 219, Autumn 1992.*)

Both battalions spent the night of 20th/21st May in positions of all-round defence near St Mard. By now these ill-equipped units were out of touch with any other units, were without transport and supplies, and suspected that the rest of their brigade had been captured. Their area was subject to intermittent enemy air-raids and small-arms fire could be heard from several directions. Patrols were sent out during the night but no firm information could be discovered. It was vital that contact was made with higher command, as recalled by Lieutenant Colonel G Taylor, commanding the 2/7th Battalion:

"Early in the morning [21st May] the two Dukes units were joined by the 271st Field Company Royal Engineers, under Major King. The pioneers, by breaking up trucks, constructed ramps by which they cleverly unloaded two utility vehicles. In one of these Captain Gerrard [2] and the French Liaison Officer, M Stelebourn, left for Eu to contact higher authority, and Lieutenant K Smith, accompanied by Second-Lieutenant G W Smith of the 2/6th, left in the other to reconnoitre Abbeville. Unfortunately the latter party ran into a machine-gun position occupied by the Germans on the outskirts of Abbeville; Lieut. K Smith was killed and others in the vehicle had very narrow escapes. During the afternoon enemy air activity increased, and, as the railway line was completely blocked, it was decided to withdraw to some wooded country which could be seen some three miles to the rear."

(*The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.*)

As the Dukes waited near St Mard on the 21st May, a British counter-attack was launched to their north, at Arras, to impose delay by attacking the vulnerable flanks of the German armoured spearhead. The British force sounded substantial being the 5th and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions and the 1st Army Tank Brigade. In reality the attacking element was a very small force being the 151st Brigade, of three Durham Light Infantry TA battalions, supported by seventy-four Matilda tanks, of which 58 were Mark I's armed only with machine-guns. Through no fault of the Durham Territorials, events proved that this force was too weak to exploit success or to hold ground won. It should also be remembered that the Durham Light Infantry Territorials had not worked with tanks before, nor indeed had many regular units. A further disadvantage was that the infantry could not speak to the tanks by radio and there had been little time to issue proper orders before the attack started:

"Speed was vital; there was no time to prepare a quick meal or to issue haversack rations and within an hour of the Commanding Officer issuing his orders the [8th] Battalion was on the move. The squadrons of German aircraft overhead fortunately did not pay any attention to the advancing infantry and the 8th [DLI] first came under fire near Maroeuil. German gunners were ranged onto the village and the odd shell came whining over. Maroeuil was also under small-arms fire which delayed the assembly of the column and the tanks [7 RTR] moving off too soon disappeared in the

distance. That was the last the rest of the column saw of them. Contact was lost with the officer commanding the tanks and his liaison officer with the Battalion was unable to get in touch with him at any period during the battle."

(Into Battle with The Durhams. Majs. P J Lewis and R C English. 1949.)

But the counter-attack was a shock for German High Command who had been riding high on success but who now realized their armoured thrusts were very weak on the flanks. It caused alarm bordering on panic amongst the German units of 'Army Group A'. The 7th (Ghost) Panzer Division, commanded by Major-General Erwin Rommel, lost heavily in men and equipment and reported an Allied attack by "*hundreds of tanks and following infantry*". The Arras counter-attack was significantly to benefit the Dukes, as it did the whole BEF. For it exposed the extreme flank vulnerability of blitzkrieg which produced an armoured spearhead on a narrow front. Although hastily put together, the attack by the Durham TA battalions [3] supporting two regular tank regiments resulted in Rommel's 25th Panzer Regiment alone losing 30 tanks. The shock waves even reached Hitler who became very concerned that the German panzer divisions would in future be cut-off and destroyed before their supporting infantry could race forward and close up with them. This brought an overnight change in German strategy resulting in a cautious approach which, coupled with a heroic defence of Calais, bought enough time for the British Expeditionary Force to be evacuated from Dunkirk.

The troubles of the 2/6th and 2/7th further increased for they now had little food left except chocolate and biscuits; water also was in very short supply. It was plain that further rail movement north was impossible and the two Dukes commanding officers agreed to march their battalions in the direction of Dieppe and Neufchâtel. The soundness of this decision was confirmed later that day when a Dukes patrol to the south returned. This patrol had managed to find a working telephone and gained orders for the Dukes to fall back upon Dieppe. They set off with the 2/7th Battalion moving on the west side of the railway line and the 2/6th to the east side. The 2/6th started out almost at once in company groups which soon lost touch with each other in the close terrain:

"We were warned that the enemy AFVs could be expected on the roads. No maps or compasses were available, nor were there any radio-sets, neither were we familiar with the terrain and at that time I, personally, had no notion how far or where Rouen might be. I then led A Company down the railway track, back the way we had come. The track supplied both a sense of direction and, I supposed, some protection against tracked vehicles. Thus began A Company's great trek and, as it turned out, hunger march."

Captain J P Knight, 2/6th Bn

(The Iron Duke, Number 219, Autumn 1992.)

They had no maps or binoculars and their sole aids to the correct direction were the railway line and the sun. The only source of information was a copy of 'Bradshaw's Railway Guide to Central Europe' which, although of small scale, gave details of main line railways stations en route. Marching by day and night, in separate company groups, the 2/6th Battalion eventually reached Neufchâtel through the night of the 22nd/23rd May. Here 'A' and 'B' Companies were immediately taken for emergency duties which involved loading ammunition onto trucks and digging-in stockpiled ammunition against air-raids. 'C' Company had managed to reach Dieppe and 'D' Company, acting as rearguard, was still closing in and had also gathered in stragglers from other units en route. By the evening of 25th May the 2/6th Battalion again moved to St Etienne du Rouvray as recalled by Lieutenant Colonel E H Llewellyn MC, commanding the 2/6th Dukes:

"The force [2/6th] arrived at St Etienne du Rouvray at 2am on 26th May and the men were accommodated at the infantry base depot at Le Madrillet. They spent the day in working on ammunition dumps and improving the anti-aircraft defences. St Etienne du Rouvray was in the Rouen defence and here the rearguard joined up with the main body of the Battalion; the companies had reached the area at various times, having brought their men considerable distances, mostly without food or transport, with no maps to guide them and steering across country by compass. Fortunately they had met with little opposition, though low-flying enemy aeroplanes had caused a certain amount of trouble."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

It was here that the 2/6th Battalion was eventually re-united with their long-lost motor transport which was discovered in the brigade rendezvous and retrieved. Then followed a strenuous period improving the defences around Rouen, and later round Rennes, and providing parties for other special duties. The 2/7th Battalion experienced a no less difficult journey from St Mard before it managed to reach Dieppe on the morning of the 27th May. Leaving later than the 2/6th Dukes the battalion had arrived at Fressenville station there to be greeted by a mass of newly wrecked trains, one containing the horses of a French cavalry regiment, but no troops, another full of French wounded:

"From that time the Bandmaster, who was acting as medical sergeant, used a fine grey mare to carry himself and his medical pannier. The hospital train was filled with French wounded, and we promised to do all we could to evacuate them. Behind this train two others were telescoped, and thrown into the tender of one was a dead man still holding his dog by the lead. The dog was jealously guarding the body of its dead master. Later it decided to adopt the Battalion and remained with us till the end of operations."

(Ibid)

It was a hot day as the battalion took up a defensive position in nearby woodland from where patrols were sent out to find desperately needed water. One of these patrols came across a French railway engineer who, on being told about the trains, promised to send out a breakdown train equipped with a crane. Leaving one company in an anti-aircraft role, the Dukes set-to to help the crane restore the hospital train to the tracks and to re-lay damaged lines, despite being interrupted by persistent enemy bombing.

During this time a patrol, led by Captain Gerrard, returned with the news that they had gained orders for the 2/7th Battalion to move west to Dieppe, some 50 miles away, and there to take up defensive positions along the River Bethune. Another patrol, that had been foraging for supplies, returned laden with food having discovered an evacuated hospital. This provided the very hungry men with a novel menu which included invalid jelly and chicken breasts in aspic. By this time the hospital train was again ready to move, and the delighted French railway engineer offered to save the Dukes their fifty mile tramp to Dieppe if only they could manage to pack the battalion into a very few cattle trucks nearby. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor was sure that he could:

"We made the grade, packed like herrings; few trains have driven more frantically. On two occasions men fell out going round corners, and at one point the floor of a truck was pulled completely out. The driver of the train was running no risk of being overtaken by the Germans; he drove as if he was on the footplate of the Flying Scotsman."

(Ibid)

By the 6th June most of the British Expeditionary force north of the German breakthrough had been evacuated from Dunkirk. Well to the south the 2/6th Dukes were warned that they would be needed for operational duties at short notice. At this time the men were very tired from the exertions of the previous nineteen days. They were still short of essential supplies but some time had been taken to train on firing their anti-tank rifles and bren light machine-guns. The 2/6th Dukes and 2/4th KOYLI now formed the hastily improvised 'C' Brigade of the newly-formed 'Beauman Division', which consisted of all troops not caught up in the Dunkirk pocket, and was commanded by Major General A B Beauman former Commander of the North Lines-of-Communications. The 2/7th Dukes, at this time, remained separated from the 2/6th being tasked with defending the line of the River Bethune near Dieppe where the 152nd Brigade, 51st (Highland) Division (TA) had moved onto the 2/7th's right flank. The two Dukes battalions now became parted by their different tasks, the 2/6th were to become involved in fighting south of Rouen, whereas the 2/7th Dukes became attached to the 51st (Highland) Division in the battle of St Valéry.

VENABLES

On the morning of the 7th June Keighley's 2/6th Battalion entrained at Bruz for an unknown destination; the motor transport was ordered to Rennes for loading on railway flat-cars. The train made slow progress but by 2am the following day the battalion arrived near Rouen. By now enemy air-attacks were increasing and enemy ground forces reported to be not more than fifty miles away. 'C' Brigade was instructed to take up defensive positions along the River Seine with the 2/6th Dukes having French troops on their right and to their left the 2/4th KOYLI at Pont de l'Arche. The Dukes still had no field artillery, tanks or anti-aircraft guns to support them, and were allocated a twelve-mile stretch of the Seine, south of Rouen, between Les Andelys and St Pierre du Vouvray:

"The enormous front to be held by the [2/6th] Battalion made it extremely vulnerable. It would have been much easier if the bridges had been the only method of crossing the river [Seine], but unfortunately the front included large riverside villages, bridged to islands of considerable size in the river, and the country was densely wooded in places. The Commanding Officer [Lt Col Llewellyn] after making a personal reconnaissance of the front, came to the conclusion that the river could be crossed at any point with ease provided that infantry floats and similar apparatus were available. Furthermore river boats and punts abounded everywhere. During the reconnaissance the Les Andelys locality was heavily bombed from the air and a four-horse wagon, loaded with refugees and household goods, received a direct hit only a short distance from Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn's car."

(Ibid)

The River Seine runs between Rouen and Paris, and has a series of great loops and bends which more than double the distances between the towns. In the Dukes' sector the Seine was about 400 yards wide and, although deep and smooth, had a fast-running current. Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn deployed 'B' and 'C' Companies on the River Seine, at St Pierre Du Vouvray and Les Andelys respectively, with 'A' Company just behind the river line at Venables and 'D' Company at Fontaine Bellenger:

"The company [A] was to reinforce French troops already in position and I was to work to the orders of a French captain who was taciturn in the extreme, unable or unwilling to communicate and almost contemptuous of our presence, leaving me, I am glad to say, to my own discretion and disposition.....To maintain cover we moved cautiously down the inside of the wood and were surprised by a Jerry patrol within feet of our position. We froze, my intention being not to disclose our position and we were not seen. My right forward platoon was in a more exposed position but with a commanding field of fire and quite impossible to take by surprise. Unfortunately we had no entrenching tools or sandbags and it was difficult for the men to obtain personal cover."

Captain J P Knight, 2/6th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 219, Autumn 1992.)

Patrols went forward during the night of the 8th/9th June and contact was made with some French troops on the 2/6th Battalion's right flank. Small detachments of French troops were discovered to be interspersed through the battalion area and they had already prepared the main bridges for demolition, also placing just one French 75mm gun covering 'B' Company's bridge at St Pierre Du Vouvray. The battalion's patrols were unable to contact the 2/4th KOYLI on the left flank, being five miles as the crow flies from 'B' Company. At 4.30am on 9th June the KOYLI encountered three enemy light tanks with supporting infantry which appeared from the direction of Rouen to the north. The first enemy tank was soon in flames and the KOYLI's 'B' Company engaged the remainder of the force with small-arms fire.

This German force was one of the many advance guards which had been sent forward to seize bridges ahead of the main body and it did not press home an attack. These units were undoubtedly Rommel's 7th (Ghost) Panzer Division which then swung north, away from the 2/6th Dukes, and in time encountered the 2/7th Dukes on the coast. At 9am the 2/4th KOYLI's two river bridges over the Seine were blown-up by French engineers without warning, resulting in the majority of the battalion being stranded on the enemy bank. 'C' Brigade headquarters passed orders for them to be withdrawn but the Light Infantrymen had 1,300 yards of open ground between their positions and the river:

"B Company had a most difficult task. They were in close contact with the enemy who had a perfect field of fire over the ground that the Company would have to cross on their way back to the river. If the Germans followed up, the crossing of the river itself would be a most dangerous operation. The withdrawal was carried out by platoons and sections making their way back to the river and in consequence the company became considerably dispersed. As the Yorkshiremen came into the open they came under fire from enemy machine-guns and rifles and the men began to fall. They reached the river bank only to find there were no boats and so were faced with a swim of between four and five hundred yards."

(The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1919-1942. Lt Col W Hingston. 1950.)

The KOYLI managed to withdraw despite the very heavy enemy fire, and those who had then to swim the wide river had little choice but to abandon most of their weapons and equipment. 'C' Brigade passed orders for the 2/4th KOYLI to withdraw to Bernay, some 30 miles away, where on arrival some 160 [4] members of the unit were found to be missing. Some five miles along the Seine the 2/6th Dukes at least received timely warning that the French were about to blow their bridges thus enabling the battalion to withdraw all its companies to the home bank. That done, and the bridges duly blown, the battalion took up new positions. Having checked his deployment Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn recalled the situation he found when he returned to his headquarters:

"On returning to Battalion Headquarters once more I found a message had been received under the code-word 'Nora' to the effect that the Dukes were to withdraw after dark to Bernay via Neuberg. This message worried me considerably, as it seemed to me that, after so much time had been spent preparing a defensive position, a withdrawal of such depth (about twelve miles) seemed very bad tactics, especially as no contact with the enemy had been made so far on our own front. Number 19 Platoon [originally the Brigade Anti-Tank platoon] had, however, reported the movement of large numbers of the enemy. The code-word 'Nora' conveyed nothing and the signature was indecipherable. I suspected fifth-column activities and tried to get in touch with higher command. The Adjutant got on the telephone at the nearby Fontaine Bellinger post office and received a reply in German. The intelligence section took over the instrument and several suspicious-looking individuals in the village were arrested and taken over by the French."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn eventually managed to report the suspicious order to the French sector commander and advised him that his 2/6th Dukes intended to stay put. This was confirmed, and the French Commander advised him that he was sending more French artillery units in to support the Dukes. During the next morning increasing numbers of German armoured vehicles appeared on the battalion's flank at Les Andelys and opened fire on 'B' Company's positions. 'B' Company then withdrew its exposed troops to the home river bank enabling the French engineers to destroy the bridge:

"Coinciding with the explosion a terrific barrage from enemy trench mortars and machine-guns had crashed down on 'B' Company's positions. So accurate was the fire that it appeared obvious that all movements of the company during the withdrawal had been watched from close quarters - probably from riverside bungalows which adjoined both banks and were no doubt sheltering a number of infiltrated enemy personnel. Every light machine-gun except one belonging to 'B' Company was knocked out, and the intense barrage was followed by a concentrated attack from low-flying enemy planes. Both 'B' Company and the French troops in the area suffered severely, and being forced out of their positions, took up a defensive line in the vicinity of Bernières, astride the main road."

(Ibid)

'B' Company took up positions at Bernières. By 2pm French troops were withdrawing, and the Germans passed troops in large numbers on several crossing points over the Seine. Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn now closed his 2/6th Dukes onto a narrower frontage to pre-empt 'B' Company being outflanked by the ever-increasing enemy. By evening 'A' and 'B' Company had a more manageable front of just under two miles but they were pinned down in their positions endeavouring to hold-off determined attacks made by enemy infantry who, unlike the Dukes, had ample support from mortar and artillery fire. Matters were not improved when it was discovered that the battalion's positions spanned the junction of two French Sectors, one of which was withdrawing:

"During the whole afternoon the troops at Venables continued to hold a determined and persevering enemy. The German infantry approached time and again, crawling through the corn, armed with tommy-guns which they used to great effect. The men were instructed to fire at movements in the corn, savouring of the method of shooting rabbits in happier times. Time and again the Germans approached to within 30 yards, but the Dukes' line held and the enemy were forced back by accurate rifle and machine-gun fire. An attempt was made to knock out the trench mortars of the enemy with anti-tank rifles, but this was not successful. At dusk the enemy withdrew, but intermittent shelling continued throughout the night. Casualties were evacuated with the coming of darkness. There were no ambulances and the wounded men were got away two at a time by means of stretchers in company trucks."

(Ibid)

Although active patrolling was carried out by the Dukes throughout the night of 9th/10th June the Germans managed to use the hours of darkness to bring up much more light artillery over the river, and to infiltrate the Dukes' area with machine-gun detachments. By dawn on 10th June the 2/6th Dukes' position was tenuous, 'C' Company was outflanked on both sides by enemy infantry and came under extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire. Despite withdrawing 1,000 yards to a new position attempts to link up with Battalion Headquarters were made impossible by enemy machine-guns. By this time all the French artillery had been knocked-out by enemy aircraft; some of the Dukes' companies only had two light machine-guns and one anti-tank rifle to supplement their Lee-Enfield rifles.

Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn asked the French General Maillard for immediate reinforcement by French tanks and for French mobile machine-gunners known to be in reserve. But this was turned down on the grounds that no troops were available with a suggestion to contact Colonel Watteau, the French Sector Commander. The Commanding Officer drove to the French Sector Headquarters and discovered that they were completely out of touch with the Dukes' predicament and could not offer any French troops to their aid. But a chance meeting on the journey with a British Brigadier commanding a force of mixed tanks brought Colonel Llewellyn's embattled battalion an offer of help. Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn returned to his battalion and found 'C' Company fighting a stiff rearguard action as it withdrew towards Louviers, and his Headquarter Company desperately fighting to hold on to its position. Heavy casualties were inflicted upon the Germans by 'C' Company, particularly by the welcome arrival of British tanks, as Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn recalled:

"The Dukes' wounded were evacuated under close-contact covering fire. Suddenly the tanks, like a Buffalo Bill story of Wild West rescue, appeared near the positions occupied by Headquarter Company and immediately went into action. The men had seen considerable action since the break-through further north. Their presence had an immediate and marked effect on the enemy and I was now quite confident that, apart from the isolated 'C' Company, the line would hold."

(Ibid)

The battalion fought on throughout that morning clinging on to their positions with the aid of two British light tanks despite the deluge of enemy machine-gun, mortar and artillery fire. By 1.30pm 'D' Company, on the right flank, was reporting that its position had been bypassed on the open flank by enemy armoured fighting vehicles which were even then attacking the company from the rear and causing many casualties. Venables now came under intense bombing and machine-gunning by German aircraft, and within a few minutes reports came that the French forces were falling back:

"In the afternoon a number of French army vehicles drew into the village and the French Commander informed me that his men were withdrawing. I asked him for orders. These were both laconic and dramatic, if not helpful - 'You stay here and die for France' were his exact words. My company orderly, Private Grimes, who was standing by my side raised his rifle and would have shot him had I not pushed his rifle muzzle down. Many years later when I recounted this experience to the adjutant of the Battalion, Captain Maurice Hutchinson, he said the same words had been used to him when another detachment of French troops pulled out of the area of Battalion HQ."

Captain J P Knight, 2/6th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 219, Autumn 1992.)

After contact was made with the French Sector Commander the 2/6th Dukes were instructed to fall back to a new position to the south of Fontaine Bellenger, about three miles away. A request for support during the withdrawal was made to the 10th Hussars at Laviere who willingly produced three troops of tanks which protected the Dukes throughout the movement. But within ninety minutes Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn learned that large numbers of German troops were to the south behind his battalion's new position. General Maillard advised that all his French troops were now moving away to the south and that all British troops were at once to move to join the British Command west of the River Eure. The 2/6th Dukes managed to withdraw, successfully breaking off all contact with the enemy by 5pm, and, after marching through the night, reached Bernay in the small hours of 11th June. Without doubt the sustained support given by the 10th Hussars successfully countered the Germans and enabled the Dukes to make a clean break.

Once across the River Eure the Dukes moved on arriving at Evreux that evening and marched on to the next defensive line for an opportunity to rest. Once in the grounds of Bernay Chateau the Dukes enjoyed a well-earned days rest, however the Commanding Officer and Company Commanders were not allowed respite for they went off to reconnoitre Beauman Division's new positions on the River Risle between Pont d'Ateau and Brionne. This took late into the night of the 11/12th June, one of torrential rain during which the exhausted Dukes endeavoured to sleep out in the open.

Although they were due to again take up front-line positions on the 12th June the Dukes were routinely visited by Beauman Division's Senior Medical Officer who, not surprisingly, decreed that they must have three day rest before they would again be fit for battle. Despite this pronouncement, and even as they settled in barns, a call came for five officers and 100 men to take up a position on the River Risle. A volunteer party quickly came forward, under Captain D A Rostron, but in the event they were not needed until 14th June. This group carried out active patrolling throughout the night of the 14th/15th June and, although no contact was made with the enemy, casualties were sustained due to intermittent enemy shelling.

In the meantime the main body of the 2/6th Battalion had been ordered into billets at Sees where it was re-united with its volunteer company which returned in the morning of the 15th June. By now the capitulation of France was imminent and a change of direction of the German advance created time to enable the Dukes to be evacuated. Travelling by road the 2/6th Battalion reached Cherbourg and St Malo on 17th June and crossed the Channel landing safely at Southampton on the following day:

"This ended the battle career of the 2/6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment. Inadequately trained for active operations, and without modern weapons and equipment, they had been sent to France in an administrative role. Almost at once they became involved in fighting with a highly mobile enemy armed with tanks and other equipment of the most modern design. Nevertheless, under Lieutenant Colonel E H Llewellyn's leadership, the Battalion fought with gallantry and skill - in contact with the enemy for days on end. A fine episode in the history of the Dukes."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The German IV Corps, which had fought the British Expeditionary Force throughout the campaign, reported:

"The English Soldier was in excellent physical condition. He bore his wounds with stoic calm. The losses of his own troops he discussed with complete equanimity. He did not complain of hardships. In battle he was tough and dogged. His conviction that England would conquer in the end was unshakeable."

(Against All Odds - The British Army of 1939-1940.)

[1: Major B W Webb-Carter DSO, a regular officer commissioned in 1921, was Second-in-Command of the 2/6th Dukes, and later commanded the 2/7th Dukes from 1941-1942. He commanded the 1st Dukes from April 1943 to September 1944, and again from February 1947 to July 1948. He was appointed Brigadier in July 1948 to command the 150th Infantry Brigade (TA). In 1951 Brigadier B W Webb-Carter DSO and Bar OBE was Commandant of The School of Combined Operations (Amphibious Warfare) until retiring in 1954.]

[2: Captain R A H Gerrard, a regular officer formerly of the 1st Battalion DWR, was commanding 'W' Company 2/7th Battalion, and was killed in action on 13th June 1940.]

[3: 151st Infantry Brigade's three DLI TA battalions subsequently saw active service in North Africa, and Sicily before taking part in the 'D' Day Landings and subsequent fighting in North-West Europe. Their 50th (Northumbrian) Division returned to England in late 1944 and the 8th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) moved to Keighley where the battalion remained from December 1944 until October 1945 when the battalion moved to Harrogate.]

[4: Of the 160 members of 2/4 KOYLI who were at first missing in the withdrawal over the River Seine 120 managed to rejoin their battalion. 2/4th KOYLI took up various covering positions before being evacuated from Cherbourg on 17th June.]

ST VALÉRY EN CAUX

When the 2/6th Dukes and 2/4th KOYLI had moved south of Rouen along the line of the River Seine the 2/7th Dukes had remained defending the line of the River Bethune, which runs from Dieppe, north of Rouen. The River Bethune had now become the reserve line to all the troops of the 'Beauman Division', those troops cut off from Dunkirk. The 2/7th strengthened their defensive line by laying anti-tank mines at road-blocks coupled with vigorous patrolling both by day and night:

"In Dieppe the Battalion rested for a short period before taking over the hurriedly constructed defences from a miscellaneous force comprised mainly of AMPCs and the patients of a VD hospital. The town was heavily bombed almost daily. We found an old friend in Major J P Huffam VC [5], who was DAPM. A detachment of the sister Battalion arrived, rested and moved on. The evacuation of the medical base personnel and stores proceeded, and the Battalion came under command of an impromptu Division. A few other battalions arrived and a Brigadier came from England. The town and docks were bombed and machine-gunned almost daily. Our own MT was found in Rouen, still safe and sound, in spite of bombing near the Somme."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XVII, Number 48, February 1941.)

When the BEF completed its evacuation at Dunkirk Germany's attentions turned to the south and Beauman Force. By the 5th June enemy aerial activity in the 2/7th Dukes area markedly increased; there were constant reports of German paratroops, but the German main body was initially held on the line of the River Somme, to the Dukes' north.

On the 7th June Lieutenant Colonel G Taylor [6], commanding the 2/7th Dukes, assumed command of the Dieppe defences. On the same afternoon he was visited by the commander of the 152nd Infantry Brigade, 51st (Highland) Division who advised him that his brigade was taking up a defensive position along the River Bethune to the 2/7th's right. This was not the first time that Dukes Territorials had fought alongside the Territorials of the 51st (Highland) Division, the last time being in 1918 when they had fought at the Battle of Tardenois. In 1940 the 51st (Highland) Division, a first-line Territorial division, had not been with the British Expeditionary Force before Germany's invasion but had been well to the south stationed at Saar holding a twenty-mile sector of the 'Maginot Line' attached to the French Army. The Highland Division was therefore also cut off by the German attacks and had moved towards the River Somme there to fight alongside General de Gaulle and his French armoured division. On the 5th June the Highland Division remained north of the River Seine to cover the 'Beauman' and 1st Armoured Divisions' withdrawal towards Le Havre. Now, two days later, the Highlanders again stood on French soil side-by-side with the Dukes. Together they were to fight a rearguard battle as vastly superior German forces pressed them west along the Channel coast from Dieppe to St Valéry en Caux.

Lieutenant Colonel Taylor now withdrew his forward companies behind the River Bethune and the Dieppe docks as these both created natural anti-tank obstacles. Three companies were placed forward, 'Z' Company on the right, 'W' Company in the centre on the Champs de Course and 'X' Company on the left on the docks crossing. 'Y' Company was in close support in the Château Rosendal Woods, Headquarter Company deployed mobile platoons which were kept busy rounding-up enemy parachutists. To strengthen the defence, and an indication of the grave situation, the Dieppe airfield was ploughed-up and all its stores destroyed.

On the 9th June the 2/7th Dukes received orders that it now was to become part of the famous 51st (Highland) Division, commanded by Major General Victor Fortune, and that the division was to withdraw through the Dukes' line. Once completed, the bridges over the River Bethune were to be blown and the Dukes were to be relieved by the 2nd Battalion The Seaforth Highlanders. This done the 2/7th Dukes and 4th (Ross-Shire) Battalion The Seaforth Highlanders (TA) were to act as the 51st Division's rearguard as it withdrew towards Le Havre. The Highlanders of the 152nd Infantry Brigade were engaged in heavy fighting throughout the night of the 9th/10th June and early in the morning news came that the bridges over the Somme had been blown.

Refugees passing through the Dukes' lines reported enemy armoured fighting vehicles at Neuville, near Dieppe, where the River Bethune runs into the sea. At 3pm leading enemy patrols began to probe the Dukes forward positions and by this time the 51st (Highland) Division had withdrawn all its troops over the River Bethune, and blown the bridges. The 2/7th Dukes were now ordered to hold on to their positions until midnight, 10th/11th June:

"The Battalion was now brigaded with the 4th Seaforths and 2nd Black Watch, with Colonel Ian Barclay active as Brigadier. The enemy could be seen moving into his forming up positions, but no general attack developed. At midnight on 10th/11th June the withdrawal to motor transport at Petit Appeville took place without incident. To lessen the prospect of enemy interference the route back followed second and third-class roads; the truck drivers had been taken over the route twice to make sure they knew the way, and as an extra precaution guides were placed at each turning. This preparation paid a good dividend. As rearguard we were the last battalion to leave Dieppe, but were the first to arrive, at dawn the following morning, as a complete unit at Veules-les-Roses. The drivers and guides had done a grand job."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Veules-les-Roses is on the coast just east of St Valéry and it was here that the Dukes took up a new defensive position at dawn with some French Alpine troops on the left flank and the 4th Seaforths on their right flank. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor's account continues:

"The roads were now packed with traffic from the 51st Division and many French units. The enemy had reached Yvetot, some 20 miles to the south, and, pushing north, was driving all Allied troops through the defensive position. A heavy air-raid on Veules-les-Roses at noon, in which incendiary and high-explosive bombs were dropped, added to the confusion. The day was extremely hot; the village, well named, looked very beautiful with most of the houses covered with rambler roses."

(Ibid)

A Brigade conference was held at 4.30pm where the news that their perimeter had been surrounded was made only too clear when several German tanks, of Rommel's 7th (Ghost) Panzer Division, passed them two fields away. Orders were given for the evacuation of the 51st (Highland) Division by sea from St Valéry. All surplus stores and motor vehicles were to be destroyed before embarkation. 152nd Infantry Brigade was to withdraw at once, with the 2/7th Dukes tasked with holding the line until dusk, now coming under the command of 153rd Infantry Brigade. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor's journey back from the conference was made difficult by enemy troops and he arrived back to find his battalion themselves closely engaged with the enemy.

The Dukes' defensive positions were being subjected to a hail of fire from heavy machine-guns and artillery, together with aircraft which dropped delayed-action bomblets. The Germans fired large quantities of tracer ammunition which set fire to houses, barns and haystacks and the smoke from these combined with large clouds of dust caused by shelling further to obscure the ground. Armed only with rifles, a few Brens and even fewer anti-tank rifles the Dukes were outnumbered by a strong well-equipped enemy which enjoyed air-superiority:

"Some 35 to 45 tanks were now attacking the Battalion front. The Dukes had no artillery or machine-gun support, though they had been lent two 20-millimetre anti-tank guns. Each gun fired one shot and when the tanks replied there were no 20-millimetre guns. The French cavalry on the left were also heavily attacked, but on the right of the Dukes there was much less activity. About 1700 hours Z Company reported that they were being heavily engaged with enemy infantry, and shortly after, following a mortar bombardment, a number of light and medium tanks made an assault on the Dukes' front. During this attack air activity and long-range machine-gun fire increased in the vicinity of Battalion Headquarters, making communication with companies quite impossible. The forward companies dealt heroically with the tank attack and the enemy withdrew, leaving five or six tanks which had been put out of action."

(Ibid)

The Territorial's victory was only too brief, for within the hour a violent artillery barrage was coupled with a massed attack made by some 200 armoured fighting vehicles of the German 7th (Ghost) Panzer Division:

"The whole ground was literally sprayed with incendiary and tracer bullets from the main body of the enemy Panzer Division. Reserve Company and Battalion HQ positions were methodically bombed by the enemy 4-inch mortars till darkness, while the forward companies were over-run by a wave of enemy tanks 'en masse'. As darkness fell the tank units moved through towards St Valéry leaving armoured patrols only in our positions. Not a single [enemy] infantryman was encountered."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XVII, Number 48, February 1941.)

The Dukes put up a heroic resistance but the German armour inevitably pierced their three forward rifle company's positions and pushed on towards the 2/7th Battalion's Headquarters:

"The Dukes suffered severe casualties during this action, but their pluck and determination won the respect of the enemy. A German officer told a platoon commander whose position had been overrun - 'You are a very brave Regiment.' The armoured cars did not reach Battalion Headquarters owing to road-blocks, and the vehicles swung left towards St Valéry en Caux along the main road south-west within the bridgehead. In accordance with the orders he had received the Commanding Officer issued instructions that companies were to withdraw to the beach at St Valéry as soon as darkness arrived. He realized that the harbour there might now be occupied by the enemy, and the presence of the destroyer off the beach at Veules-les-Roses was a comforting thought. As a last desperate measure it might be necessary to try and contact it."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Veules was now being very heavily shelled and many of its buildings were burning furiously. The Dukes still had the dog rescued from the train crash with them, since named 'Lucky' and in the care of a Sergeant. However the dog now went his own way, Lucky, it may be said, ran out. The officers split the men into small groups which withdrew independently towards the beach. A young Dukes' Territorial from Slaithwaite, twenty-five year old Private Fred Dearnley, recounted his experiences to the local 'Examiner' of his journey to the beach, with several companions, when they heard voices ahead in the dark:

"We were determined not to be taken prisoner and we intended to sell our lives dearly if we met the enemy. In the darkness we later found ourselves in a graveyard surrounded by a prickly hedge, and as we were unable to find our way out again we had to help each other over the hedge. It was no easy task. We came to a village which was blazing and in ruins. There was nothing to be seen but a mass of debris and abandoned cars. We had been told that the Germans were in that part of the place, but we saw nothing of them.....As we reached the promenade we saw some figures approaching, and at first we did not know whether or not they were some of our soldiers or Germans, so we prepared for a fight, but they turned out to be men of our own unit and transports."

(The Huddersfield Examiner. 1940.)

Once at the beach boats came from the many vessels out at sea to evacuate the battalion. Enemy artillery began to harass the withdrawal as the morning mist lifted but the German guns were swiftly neutralised by Royal Navy warships. German small-arms fire swept the beaches causing heavy casualties amongst the waiting Dukes. In the event 75% of the 2/7th Dukes were taken to safety as recounted by Private Fred Dearnley:

"As we were getting into the boats German planes came over and machine-gunned us. They also dropped some bombs. I had had no sleep for three or four days and when I got into the boat I fell fast asleep. When I woke up I found that the ship had been shelled, though fortunately it was not seriously damaged. There was a hole through the funnel. I can only say what others have already said - thank God we have a Navy."

(The Huddersfield Examiner. 1940.)

Lieutenant Colonel Taylor was not so fortunate when he made his way forward to make sure that his forward companies safely withdrew from their final positions. Whilst doing so he and his staff became surrounded by a large enemy force and this courageous officer and his staff were captured. Amongst these forward companies was Peter Walker [7] whose short military career was about to come to a conclusion:

"On the night of 10 June we were taken to Veules les Roses where we arrived at dawn the next day. We took up positions around the town. Towards nightfall we were attacked by what seemed to be hundreds of tanks though there were probably no more than twenty or thirty. For only the second time in our lives as soldiers we fired our weapons. We were soon over-run. About a hundred of us were taken prisoner, myself among them. Having been slightly wounded by shrapnel I was taken to a German field hospital."

Lance Corporal P Walker, 2/7th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 222, Autumn 1993.)

Lieutenant Colonel Taylor was later recognised by the award of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and his 2/7th Battalion was honoured by the award of the battle honour St Valéry en Caux. The Territorials of the 51st (Highland) Division [8] were not as fortunate for the whole division was surrounded and, after desperate fighting whilst greatly outnumbered, the large part of the division was captured. After St Valéry, neither Keighley's 2/6th Battalion nor Springhead's 2/7th Battalion were destined again to see active service as infantry battalions. Once brought back up to strength both battalions were engaged on coastal defence duties first in Scotland, then at Norfolk and the south coast during 1941 and 1942.

In mid-1942 their 137th Brigade was withdrawn from the 46th Division and converted to become the 137th Armoured Brigade. Both battalions then became armoured delivery regiments as the 114th and 115th Regiments Royal Armoured Corps (DWR) (TA). The Brigade was later reorganised to form the 2nd Armoured Delivery Regiment as part of 21st Army Group. Some connection with the Dukes was retained with squadrons being authorised to retain their Dukes badges and buttons and the distinctive scarlet regimental whistle cord. The Dukes armoured delivery squadrons did sterling service with the British Army of Liberation from D Day 1944 until 1945.

[5: Major J P 'Jock' Huffam VC, as an officer of Huddersfield's 5th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF), had gained his Victoria Cross whilst serving with the 2nd Battalion in 1918 at St Servin's Farm.]

[6: Lieutenant Colonel George Taylor DSO TD DL. Lieutenant Colonel Taylor joined the Army during the First World War, being too young for active-service he attended the Cavalry School in Ireland. After the war he joined the Territorial Army. He was appointed Second-in-Command of the 2/7th Dukes when the battalion was formed in 1939, soon after being promoted Lieutenant Colonel to command the battalion on the retirement of Lieutenant Colonel Hinchcliffe. His outstanding gallantry whilst commanding the 2/7th Dukes at St Valéry was recognised by the award of the Distinguished Service Order and a Mention in Despatches. He was taken prisoner-of-war at St Valéry and was in 17 different prisoner-of-war camps from which he made repeated attempts to escape.]

[7: Lance Corporal Peter Walker was taken prisoner, subsequently escaped but was recaptured and remained a prisoner until his camp was liberated.]

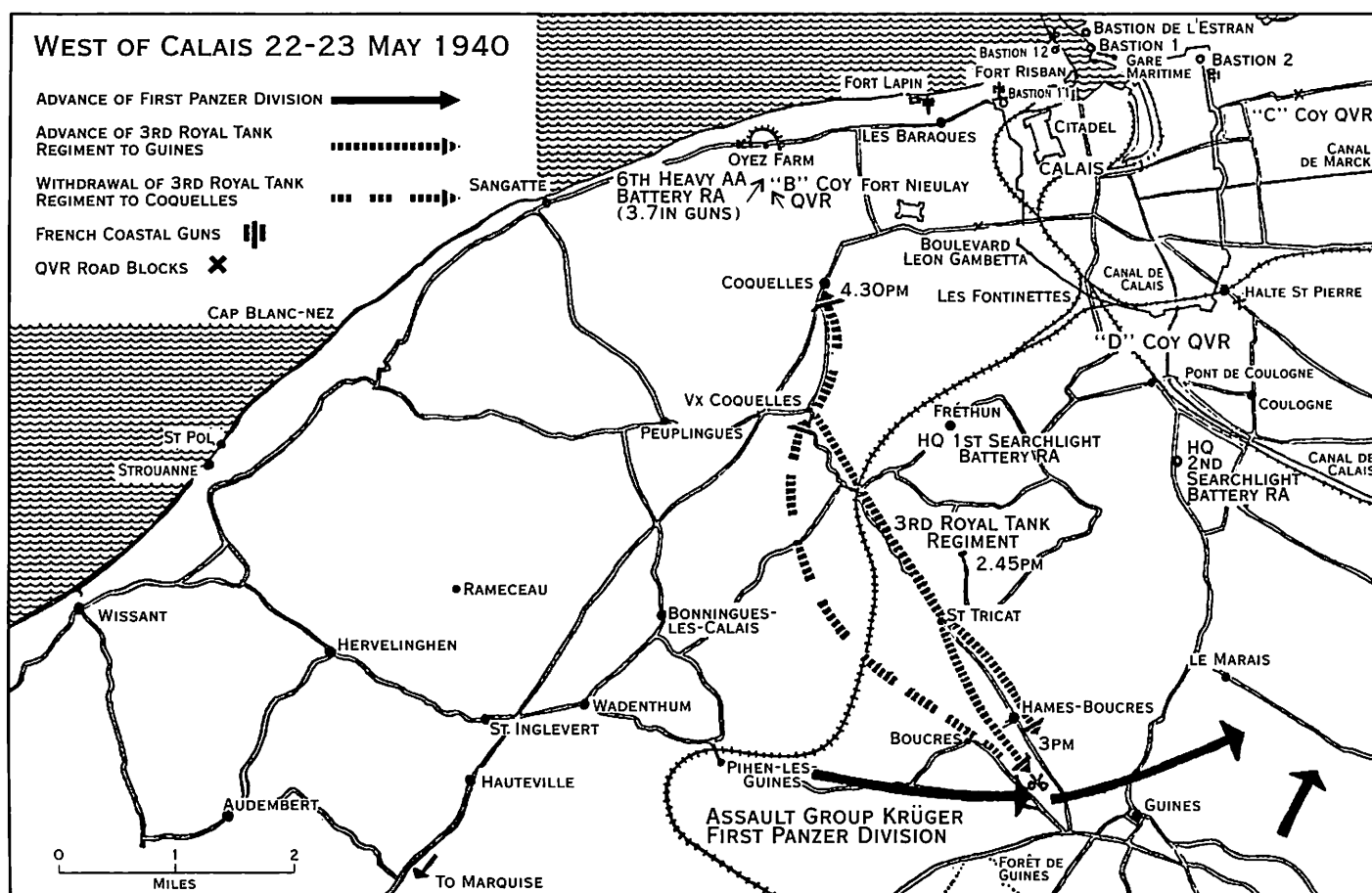
[8: In time the 51st (Highland) Division was reconstituted using many of the original division's duplicate Territorial Army battalions together with some regular battalions. After distinguished service in North Africa, this division landed in France four years later on 7th June 1944. Field Marshal Montgomery issued strict orders in 1944 that no-one but the 51st (Highland) Division was to be allowed to retake St Valéry. In the event the 51st (Highland) Division was the first to liberate St Valéry as part of I Corps and it was appropriate that the Corps's other division, on the left flank, was the 49th (West Riding) Division and its Dukes Territorials. The main street of St Valéry was renamed the Rue d'Ecosse (Scotland Road) after the war in honour of the 51st (Highland) Division.]

THE DEFENCE OF CALAIS

The Halifax Dukes anti-tank gunners had spent the first nine months since mobilisation carrying out home defence roles, training or 'standing-to' for various operational roles, none of which had materialised. In March 1940 Halifax's 58th (4th DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H L Grylls, formed part of the 49th (West Riding) Division's artillery and had moved from Harrogate to Larkhill, on Salisbury Plain, for training. The regiment was composed of four anti-tank batteries, 229-232 Batteries, each of three troops, equipped with two-pounder anti-tank guns towed by 15-hundredweight 4x2 trucks. Whilst stationed at Larkhill 231 Battery was mobilised for Norway and embarked at Glasgow on 18th April. However once at sea the situation in Norway markedly deteriorated, and 231 Battery was turned back and rejoined the remainder of the regiment at Bordon.

By May 1940 the German armoured spearhead had thrust across the Low Countries to the Channel coast at Abbeville. This resulted in the key Channel ports of Calais and Boulogne being between the German forces and the British Expeditionary Force's line of communication through Dunkirk. The BEF itself was now faced with the imminent collapse of the French Armies, it was vital the Channel ports north of the River Somme were immediately secured to allow the BEF to be evacuated from France. Calais had at first solely acted as a supply port for the BEF, and was therefore only lightly defended. Once the decision was taken to evacuate the BEF it became vital that these defences were quickly reinforced with a garrison that could hold off a German ground attack on the Dunkirk area. This requirement resulted in an *ad hoc* force being assembled. Locally available troops moved at once, and on 20th May Calais was reinforced by the 6th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery RA and the 172nd Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (58th LAA Regiment) together with the 1st and 2nd Searchlight Batteries. These Territorials were far from being well-equipped having only a few Lewis guns, bren guns and anti-tank rifles, nor had they been trained as infantry. Nevertheless, they performed remarkably in the coming days.

Further reinforcement for the Calais garrison was hastily despatched from England. On the same day the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment [9] began moving from England to Calais where they were greeted by French policemen who, at first would not allow them to land without identity cards. The infantry element was furnished by the 30th



Infantry Brigade which was detached from the 1st Armoured Division supplemented by the 1st Battalion Queen Victoria's Rifles (TA) [10], and ordered to move at once from England to hold Calais. The 30th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier C Nicholson [11], was a 'motor brigade' and was therefore only established with two regular battalions being 2nd Battalion The King's Royal Rifle Corps and 1st Battalion The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own).

The Queen Victorias' received orders on 21st May to sail a full day ahead of the 30th Brigade. This battalion's 'mobile motor-cycle reconnaissance' role was set aside for it was ordered to sail without its 141 motor-cycles, scout-cars or any type of vehicle including wireless trucks. They were instructed to leave their 3" mortars behind and could only take 2" mortars which only had smoke ammunition. In addition, their role produced a battalion of only three rifle companies, rather than four, in which one-third did not have rifles being armed only with revolvers. The battalion sailed on the 'City of Calais', and landed at Calais on the early afternoon of 22nd May where it was at once tasked with forming a base for offensive operations for the 30th Brigade which was due to arrive the next day. The Queen Victorias immediately deployed on an outer perimeter to block the principal roads into Calais with companies taking up positions three miles outside the town. It was an enormous frontage to cover, particularly for a unit without vehicles and signal equipment. Many of the roads were blocked solid with refugees which had to be turned back. Amongst the refugees were a number of snipers who, with 'fifth-columnists' [12] subjected their posts to intermittent rifle fire.

Forward of the Queen Victoria's posts the Territorials of the searchlight and anti-aircraft units manned an outer cordon which, although ill-equipped to fight tanks, could at least give warning of the enemy's approach:

"Throughout the night of 22/23 May and the whole of the following day all approaches from the south and west were congested with British and Allied soldiers and with refugees pouring into Calais, some in vehicles and some on foot, some in formed bodies but most of them drifting in a continuous stream, up to six abreast. Control at the road-blocks proved very tiring to our [QVR] troops, who could get little rest. Orders were issued on 23 May to refuse admittance to unarmed allied troops and to refugees."

(The Annals of The King's Royal Rifle Corps.)

By this time Hitler had directed a more cautious approach, especially following the previous day's British counter-attack at Arras. Even as the Queen Victorias deployed, on 22nd May, Major-General Heinz Guderian's XIXth Corps began to drive east along the coast to Dunkirk, taking particular care to deploy additional units to guard the armoured spearhead's flanks. The 1st and 2nd Panzer Division's were given the objectives of Boulogne and Calais, with the 10th Panzer Division as reserve and flank guard.

Apart from anti-aircraft units, 30th Infantry Brigade had no supporting medium or field artillery. As such the garrison faced three divisions of German 'panzers' with only one regiment of tanks and the Boyes anti-tank rifles which were the largest anti-tank weapons then issued to the infantry. This shortfall in anti-tank capability resulted in the Dukes 229 and 232 anti-tank batteries being earmarked for the garrison. 229 Battery arrived at Dover after a 36 hour journey at 4.45am on 21st May. The Battery, commanded by Captain H F R Woodley, was loaded onto the 'SS Autocarrier', but this was already part full due to some wireless-trucks destined for another unit.

The 'SS Autocarrier' was due to sail at 10.30am and Captain Woodley was ordered to load only 'A' and 'C' Troops with the assurance that 'B' Troop would follow twelve hours later. Within a few miles of Calais the ship carrying 232 Battery, SS Trainferry, was turned back. But 229 Battery had sailed on 22nd May in company with the 30th Brigade staff and this battery, less one troop was landed at 1pm on Thursday 23rd May. At this time Captain Woodley still only had eight of his twelve anti-tank guns. In the event the battery's remaining four guns were never landed as the dock's cranes were destroyed later that day.

THURSDAY 23rd MAY

Brigadier Nicholson, and his 30th Brigade staff, stepped ashore to be faced with an alarming situation:

"From the moment of arrival it was plain that the battle for Calais was on. A movement control officer and a few khaki-clad figures were only there to handle the warps and one or two short gang-planks. Broken glass from the station and hotel buildings littered the quays and platforms, in which many bomb craters were visible besides overturned and bombed trucks on the lines. As he stepped ashore, the Brigadier was informed by the movement control staff officer that all telephone communications at the quay with England and France were cut by fifth columnists and Germans; that the town was full of snipers; that the location of BEF Headquarters, last heard of near Hazebrouck, had not been known for some time and could not be conjectured; and that German armoured columns were already operating between Boulogne and Calais."

(The Rifle Brigade Chronicle. Maj A W Allan. 1945.)

Even as the Brigade landed the anti-aircraft units on the outer perimeter were already in action at Coulogne, a few miles south of Calais, against General Kruger's 1st Panzer Division. One troop of these Territorials only had a scant collection of rifles, Brens and anti-tank rifles but, through sheer determination, held-off the German tanks for over three hours before being surrounded and forced to surrender. Other Territorial gunners made an equally stout defence of Orphanage Farm and delayed an attack by the 10th Panzer Division, thus buying time to enable the 30th Infantry Brigade to land. 3rd RTR was also in action and was experiencing stiff fighting against the 8th Panzer Division:

"The next few hours were harrowing ones for Nicholson. Scarcely had he digested the fact that the 3rd Tanks were in action almost on Calais's doorstep than he was handed a report from the Queen Victoria's Rifles. Their patrols had clashed with enemy light forces some five miles east of the town and the Territorials expected more to come. With considerable anxiety the Brigadier attempted to make contact with Boulogne [held by 20th (Guards) Brigade]. There was no answering signal. Instead came rumours, culled from locals, that the port had already fallen."

"But the biggest and most depressing impression of all was conveyed by the reappearance of the liaison officer who had insisted on the tanks trying again for St Omer [13]. He had returned badly wounded and with his car riddled with bullets. The tank detachment had met elements of the 1st German Armoured [Panzer] Division and, pressing on, had been outgunned and destroyed."

(The Saturday Night Soldiers. A V Sellwood. 1966.)

It was clear that German ground forces were much closer to Calais than the Brigadier had been led to believe at his London briefing. In light of this, Brigadier Nicholson disregarded all previous instructions, and took steps to provide for the close defence of Calais with the two regular battalions making use of the existing ramparts and ditches which formed part of the town's ancient defence works centring on the Old Citadel:

"At 1600 hours the Brigade Commander [Nicholson] issued his orders. These briefly were that 2 KRRC and 1 RB were to hold the perimeter formed by the ramparts and the moat, a front of about eight miles, with 1 RB left, and 2 KRRC right. 1 QVR and 3 RTR would continue to hold the outer perimeter for as long as possible. On withdrawing, companies of 1 QVR would come under command of the [regular] battalion whose front they were covering. The guns of 229 Anti-tank Battery RA were deployed, with one gun covering each main road entering the town."

(The Annals of The King's Royal Rifle Corps.)

Apart from tanks, the Dukes two pounder anti-tank guns presented the brigade's only anti-armour capability and Brigadier Nicholson instructed Captain Woodley to post one gun, with the respective infantry elements, at each of the eight roads leading out of Calais. This hardly provided the customary network of an interlocked anti-armour defence in which each gun's arc overlapped and was supported by infantry anti-tank rifles. But the German panzers were knocking at the many doors to Calais and it was essential that they were delayed whilst the inner defences were put in place by the two regular infantry battalions. The three officers and eighty soldiers of the Dukes anti-tank battery were soon in action. In the first phase the eight guns were rapidly deployed to defend the outer perimeter to supplement the infantry's Boyes anti-tank rifles. These orders found one of the Dukes' guns with a detachment of Queen Victoria's:

"At the road block on the Boulogne road, Captain Munby's Scout Platoon and No 6 Platoon had been turning back all refugees and unarmed Allied troops who were seeking to enter Calais. Captain Munby writes: 'The Germans were reported to be only some ten miles away and it was a heart-rending business to have to turn back car-loads of refugees, mostly old men, women and children virtually into the arms of the enemy.' A battery of French 75s deployed in a field on the left but withdrew into Calais the same afternoon. A gun of No. 229 Anti-Tank Battery RA was covering the road some 500 yards behind."

"At about 1615 hours, following a visit by Lieutenant Colonel Ellison-Macartney [CO 1 QVR], Captain Munby went up to Fort Neuilly to see its French commander, with a view to moving his troops into the fort. After telephoning his headquarters, the French captain agreed, on condition that the British troops acted under French orders and that they should not retire from the fort after having once entered it. To this Captain Munby agreed and he moved his troops in at about 2100 hours."

(Swift and Bold (KRRC 1939-45). Maj Gen Sir Hereward Wake, Maj W F Deedes. 1949.)

All around the Calais perimeter the Dukes' gunners were soon in action, for example within the first hour one of the Dukes' anti-tank guns had knocked-out seven enemy tanks. By the afternoon of 23rd May they had fired all their stocks of ammunition, and had to wait until more could be delivered by a navy destroyer the following day. Whilst his troops were hastily deploying, Brigadier Nicholson received a rapid succession of contradictory orders which ordered him west to support the Guards at Boulogne. Then by War Office instructions to escort 350,000 rations loaded on ten-ton lorries east to Dunkirk, despite the fact that his brigade's defence was ill-prepared. The War Office insisted this was to be regarded as a priority 'overriding all other considerations' as the Dunkirk garrison was on half-rations. German batteries now began to shell Calais from the south-west but Brigadier Nicholson could not use his tanks which had been ordered away on this escort.

By dusk on 23rd May Krüger's 1st Panzer Division reported that Calais was strongly held and that a surprise attack was impossible. Thus the capture of Calais was entrusted to the 10th Panzer Division, with the 1st Panzer Division being instructed to press on eastwards towards Gravelines and Dunkirk. Colonel Goldney's anti-aircraft units had by now more than fulfilled their role and were tasked as reserve to the Green Jackets. That same day the situation along the coast at Bolougne was even more critical. Fighting was fierce as the 2nd Battalions of the Irish Guards and Welsh Guards fought a stiff battle to hold a six-mile long perimeter against the whole of the German 2nd Panzer Division. By dusk the Guards had been ordered to evacuate Bolougne, and were so hard-pressed during the embarkation that Royal Navy destroyers were firing at German tanks, artillery and machine-gun positions as the Guards made a controlled evacuation across the beaches. The Calais garrison now stood alone, and all available assets were drawn together to present all all-round defence:

"Early in the morning a French 75mm arrived at the Dunkirk Gate, where a gun detachment of 229 Anti-Tank Battery RA, had reported the evening before. Both guns were posted to cover the Dunkirk road, the bridge being blocked with a tram and two lorries. Three French anti-aircraft guns came into action on the lateral road in rear of the ramparts, to the left of [2 KRRC] Headquarter Company."

(Ibid)

FRIDAY 24th MAY

At 3am on 24th May the War Office signalled an order that all non-combat troops were to be evacuated from Calais with the advice that "it had been decided in principle to evacuate 30th Brigade from Calais". At 4am 3rd RTR made an attempt to deliver the rations and open the road to Dunkirk. The tanks were escorted by two companies of The Rifle Brigade. It was bad tank country being criss-crossed with dykes and sunken lanes, against them the Germans were well-equipped with concealed 88mm and anti-tank guns. After a battle lasting two hours the British column had no choice but to withdraw having lost 12 light and 14 cruiser tanks. The 3rd RTR now only had left nine A9 cruiser and twelve light tanks of the forty-eight that had landed at Calais. The road from Calais to Dunkirk was clearly well-blocked by enemy forces. On the Boulogne side of Calais matters were no less serious for the Queen Victoria's:

"At dawn a series of the now familiar yellow-red flashes lit up the low hills and heralded an intense German barrage. Minutes later, tanks and infantry of the Wehrmacht's 10th Armoured Division launched the first of a series of determined attacks: the riflemen stood firm. The Germans tried again and then again: each time they were repulsed, but the thin line of defenders was increasingly weakened and they, unlike their opponents, had no reserves to draw on."

(The Saturday Night Soldiers. A V Sellwood. 1966.)

This assault fell upon the Queen Victoria's 'D' Company on outpost at Les Fontinettes and shortly after on the Anglo-French garrison holding Fort Neuilly, on the Boulogne road. The 10th Panzer Division's plan of attack was to advance from the high ground west of Calais at Loquelles. A hundred tanks of the 90th Panzer Regiment (equivalent to British tank brigade) were to advance along the main road supported by the 86th Rifle Regiment and an artillery battalion. On the right flank the 69th Rifle Regiment was to assault from Guines, in the south, to the centre of Calais:

"During the afternoon, shelling increased and enemy pressure built up on all fronts. Fort Nieulay, which was defended by a French company supported by a detachment of QVR under Captain A N L Munby, was surrounded and forced to surrender. Fort Lapin was evacuated after the guns supporting it had been spiked. In the south, the enemy had gained a foothold inside the defences from which they could not be dislodged. All but two of 229 [Anti-Tank] Battery's guns had been knocked out."

(The Annals of The King's Royal Rifle Corps.)

But the two German panzer divisions were reporting that they had achieved little or no success against the remainder of the Calais garrison. At 7pm the 10th Panzer Division (General Schaal) reported that a good third of his division's equipment and half his tanks were casualties since 10th May, and that his assault troops were worn out.

In addition to the pressure on his forward defences, Brigadier Nicholson was also hampered by the fact that Calais was a main route between France and Britain. In the docks he inherited a hospital train carrying over 600 casualties. These had been wounded in the northern battles and had since endured a terrible railway journey during which the train was subjected to numerous re-routings and delays. A number of casualties had already died and the Port Control staff were understandably concerned that they should be shipped to hospitals at home as a priority. This was done but the ship, the 'City of Canterbury', still had most of the Rifle Brigade's vehicles and weapons on board when it sailed at 8.30am. Both the Queen Victoria's and the Rifle Brigade were now desperately short of ammunition and had to resort to retrieving it from the bodies of their dead comrades. The Dukes gunners supporting 'B' Company of the 2nd KRRC, commanded by Major J S Poole, were hard-pressed to hold Bastion 9 on the west side of Calais:

"In the centre, 'B' Company of the 60th [2 KRRC] were fiercely attacked all day. At noon, German tanks appeared north of the Boulogne road. They moved towards the 60th positions but were engaged by three light tanks of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment and made no progress. An hour later, German light tanks again attacked the 60th in the south-west. Two of them were set on fire with anti-tank rifles and destroyed. The Germans did not continue the attack. These successes heartened the defenders but soon shells and mortar bombs fell more heavily around the Pont Jourdan railway bridge. Telephone wires, broken glass and paving stones littered the Boulevard Léon Gambetta. Two companies of infantry on either side of the Boulogne Road were seen preparing to attack but they were forced to scatter by accurate shell-fire from French '75s'. They reformed and with ten tanks advanced along the Boulogne road. But 'B' Company with one anti-tank gun of 229 Battery were able to hold them for the time being."

(The Flames of Calais. Airey Neave. 1972.)

Further to the south, other Dukes gunners were deployed with D Company 2 KRRC. During the night Captain Bower, 2IC to Lord Cromwell, brought back the remaining anti-tank gun to assist in defending three bridges over the canal barring the way to Calais-Nord:

"When Cromwell [D Company 2 KRRC] was joined by Captain Bower, he brought with him the only anti-gun left to the Battalion. The remaining three attached to the 60th had already been destroyed. These two pounders had little effect on heavy and medium German tanks but they were better than nothing."

(Ibid)

Throughout the night of the 24th/25th May the 30th Brigade's perimeter was contracted to a new line of defence. This was in compliance with a succession of contradictory signals from the War Office in London:

"At about 1900 hours [24th May], Brigadier Nicholson was told by the War Office that the decision to evacuate had been confirmed, but that the final withdrawal of the fighting troops would not take

place until 0700 hours the next morning. Accordingly, he decided to shorten the perimeter and ordered a withdrawal to the old town and the line of the Marck and Calais Canals. There was no explosive available to blow the bridges and these were left intact. Shortly before midnight, a further message was received from the War Office: - 'In spite of policy of evacuation given you this morning, British forces in your area now under command General Fagalde [14] who has ordered no, repeat no, evacuation. This means you must comply for sake of Allied solidarity.' The task was to hold on as long as possible and as the harbour was now 'of no importance to the BEF, select best position to fight to the end.' Ammunition was being sent but no reinforcements. The message ended: '48th Division [15] started marching to your assistance this morning.'

(*The Annals of The King's Royal Rifle Corps.*)

The earlier order to evacuate had been immediately personally countermanded by Winston Churchill, then the newly appointed Prime Minister. Yet another party of Dukes gunners returned from the QVR barricade on the St Omer Road; they brought in only one gun for the second had been knocked out by enemy fire earlier that day. Of the Dukes' eight anti-tank guns most had now been knocked out in the close-quarter *melée* with an overwhelming number of German tanks. By dawn on 25th May the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment was down to three tanks and of the Dukes only two anti-tank guns remained in action, as recalled by the Brigade Major of the 30th Brigade:

"I am of the impression that about half the guns were out of action by nightfall on 24th May, not without doing a great deal of good work, and causing a considerable amount of loss to German tanks. I'm afraid that a proportion of the gun's crews must have been casualties."

(*The Iron Duke. Volume XVII, Number 48, February 1941.*)

Now on the inner perimeter the Dukes manned their two remaining guns whilst the other gunners took up rifles to fight as infantry. German pressure on the garrison was powerful and relentless. Large parts of Calais were in flames as pockets of defenders, Riflemen mixed with Queen Vics and gunners clung on, even as ammunition ran desperately low. Heavy enemy air attacks and artillery fire pounded the brigade's positions in the old part of the city. The inevitability of the defenders' plight was recalled by the Reconnaissance Troop Commander of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, Sergeant Bill Close, who had been tasked with driving Brigadier Nicholson in his Daimler Dingo armoured car:

"On the morning of the 25th Close drove Nicholson to the French HQ in the Citadel, parked the Dingo tight against a wall in the courtyard and wondered how long the bombing and shelling would go on. Catnaps apart, he had been without sleep since leaving Dover. Navigating through oil-smoked gloom by day and by baleful glare at night, his sense of time had evaporated."

"He felt tremendous admiration for the infantry barricaded in houses or dug in at roadblocks. Weary as they were, they always managed to find him a cup of tea as he hung about waiting for a passenger. At the Citadel itself troops were dug into the ramparts on which the German guns fired relentlessly between Stuka [dive-bomber] raids. A stream of casualties was carried to shelter but the survivors hung on. At some stage in this surrealist existence, Close was sent for by the Brigadier and found him studying papers in the corner of a room full of people. He looked tired but spoke calmly: 'I don't think you can do much more here Sergeant, and Colonel Keller [CO 3 RTR] doesn't want you. If you want to make it to the docks it's all right by me. I shan't be needing the Dingo again'. An English gentleman could have been giving his chauffeur the day off. Close could think of nothing to say except he would try to get away. He wished the Brigadier good luck, saluted and left."

(*Panzer Bait, With the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment 1939-1945. W Moore. 1991.*)

In the morning the Mayor of Calais, M. Andre Gerschell, had been sent to see Brigadier Nicholson by General Schaal, commanding the German forces, to seek the garrison's surrender. Nicholson declined. Again at 3pm General Schaal sent in Lieutenant Hoffman, of the German 69th Rifle Regiment, with a demand that the embattled garrison surrendered and marched out. Although critically short of ammunition, water and food, Brigadier Nicholson again declined with the explanation that "The answer is no, as it is the British Army's duty to fight as well as it is the Germans". By the night of the 25th May all the Dukes' anti-tank guns had been knocked-out. Now without any guns Captain Woodley and his remaining men were fighting as infantry with the Rifle Brigade:

"The 229th Anti-Tank Battery had lost all eight guns. Captain Woodley and the surviving gunners were fighting with the Rifle Brigade. There were no British tanks left in action. Infantry battalions were down to about 250 men each. It was evidently too late to land reinforcements."

(*The Flames of Calais. Airey Neave. 1972.*)

By now the Rifle Brigade had lost its commanding officer wounded and a large part of its headquarters was destroyed. But the battalion area remained defended by small groups of riflemen, Victorias and gunners who

ignored the German confetti of air-dropped leaflets which urged them to surrender. Radio communication became increasingly difficult, often impossible; hot days and the dust and dirt of battle further aggravated the severe shortage of drinking water and ammunition levels only allowed a few rounds, if any, for each weapon. Detachments were systematically surrounded and overwhelmed; infantry small-arms alone, however gallantly manned, could not stop German tanks.

On this last night Brigadier Nicholson visited the Rifle Brigade and made final arrangements for the evacuation of wounded only by the Royal Navy early on the 26th May. That done, the Brigadier repeated his message that Calais must be held to the last. But ammunition was desperately short. The 1st Rifle Brigade had by now used all its ammunition as well as a further 20,000 rounds that had been brought in by the Royal Navy:

"There was, besides, a grave shortage of weapons available for the next day's battle, a shortage more serious than man power, which in itself, so far as the Battalion was concerned, was now serious. Expectations of an enemy dawn attack on the 26th were fortunately not realized. Apparently the two defeats suffered by the enemy on Friday and Saturday imposed on the enemy Corps Commander such caution that he decided to relieve his forward troops (probably for the second time) and stage a new full-dress attack with more extensive artillery preparation, continuous dive-bombing attacks and heavy mortar and machine-gun support - certainly a compliment to the tired defenders. Subsequent accounts of German origin made much of the resources called upon. Artillery of a complete corps was stated to have been in action since early on the 24th, and a lot was made of the fine supply effort which replaced their ammunition expenditure."

(The Rifle Brigade Chronicle. Maj A W Allan. 1945.)

The 1st Rifle Brigade, and attached Dukes gunners, now deployed to new positions, placing its least tired troops forward, taking as much advantage as possible from crossfire positions. The very few remaining Bren light machine-guns and rifles were thoroughly cleaned in an attempt to rid them of sand which had persistently clogged all weapons throughout the battle. The battalion's last remaining mortar rounds were fired to good effect during the morning as the Germans pressed home their final assault:

"That some positions became, as the day drew on, untenable goes without saying, but on no occasion was a withdrawal made of more than a few yards, and more than once the original position was retaken. The spaces between the portions of the defence on the Battalion's front entailed great difficulty of control and communication, and distances between sub-units were greatly increased by battle obstacles. In this kind of fighting a man often knows nothing of what is occurring within ten yards of him."

(Ibid)

By 4.30pm, or thereabouts, on the 26th May the last ammunition was fired and organised resistance ceased. Apart from those evacuated wounded, and a few who later escaped, the exhausted survivors were marched into captivity. Only six members of the Dukes 229th Anti-Tank Battery managed to get back to England, the remainder faced five years as prisoners-of-war. In time, 229th Anti-Tank Battery was reformed on 'B' Troop that had not got to Calais. Even as the Calais garrison was overwhelmed, the first British troops evacuated from Dunkirk began to be landed at Dover; by 4th June over 330,000 had been evacuated. The gallant defence of Calais played no small part in the successful evacuation from Dunkirk.

[9: The 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Keller, had already lost a third of its trained personnel, to form new units, a few days before and had them replaced by training regiment drafts. Twenty-one of the regiment's tanks were 6-ton light Mark IVs which only had machine-guns and were lightly armoured, another twenty-seven were 14-ton A9 Cruisers equipped with the 2 pounder gun which was very effective but the tank's armour was very thin.]

[10: The Queen Victoria's Rifles had a long volunteer tradition having been raised as 'The Duke of Cumberland's Sharpshooters' in 1803 and had continued to serve without pay when the Napoleonic Volunteers were disbanded. The unit became 'The Royal Victoria Rifle Club' in 1835 and were accepted as a corps when the Volunteer Force was formed in 1859. In 1859 the Huddersfield Rifle Volunteers (the 5th Battalion's forebears) had, on formation, adopted the QVR pattern of uniform. The Most Noble Arthur Duke of Wellington (the second Duke), as Lieutenant Colonel, commanded the 'Victoria Rifle Corps' from 1853 to 1870 (London Gazette, 4th August 1853). The 'Queen Vics' fought alongside the Dukes when they supported an attack by the 2nd Battalion on 'Hill 60' in April 1915. 35 years later they were to work alongside Halifax's Dukes Territorials who were serving in the anti-tank role. By 1940 the Queen Victorias had also changed roles, for in August 1937 they had been converted to 'motor-cycle reconnaissance' to act as the eyes and ears of the regular 1st Armoured Division.]

[11: Brigadier Claude Nicholson, (late 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers), was taken prisoner-of war at Calais and died in captivity in Germany in 1943.]

[12: 'Fifth-Columnists' were enemy spies or non-uniformed fighters. The phrase originates from a Spanish General in the Spanish Civil War, when marching to attack Madrid with four columns of troops, who said he had a 'fifth-column' of supporters within the city.]

[13: St Omer was the location of Rear General Headquarters British Expeditionary Force in 1940.]

[14: The General Fagalde commanded the French XVIth Corps at Dunkirk.]

[15: This order for the 48th (South Midlands) Division to march to Calais seems to have been an hallucination by the War Office, as there is no record of any such order being given to, or received by the 48th (South Midlands) Division which was at that time heavily engaged in Flanders.]

CHAPTER 7

1940-1943: A TRICK OF WAR

"It is a trick of war that singles out one battle in the scheme of history, while others, perhaps better fought or distinguished by greater gallantry, live largely in the memory of those who fought them."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

ICELAND 1940-1942

Back in Scotland the 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes and 1/5th West Yorkshires of 147th Brigade, commanded by Brigadier G Lammie MC, had been patiently awaiting the return of the 49th (West Riding) Division's two brigades that had been fighting in Norway. By 3rd May 1940 the 147th Brigade had moved to Dumfries and, after further orders and counter-orders, returned to Glasgow's King George Docks on 14th May. Here the Brigade embarked on HTs Franconia and Lancastria and, at 4pm, the convoy sailed for an unannounced destination escorted by destroyers HMS Havant and Foxhound. Only when at sea was it announced that the 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes were now bound for Iceland. Ahead of them Royal Marines had landed on 10th May, from the cruisers HMS Glasgow and HMS Berwick, with instructions to round up German Consulate staff and other German nationals. The remainder of the 49th (West Riding) Division was to follow on as soon as they had reorganised on return from Norway. Maps of Iceland were quickly consulted, but they only showed an outline of Iceland's coast, two towns and one glacier. Denmark had been overrun by the Germans, and at this time Iceland was a Danish possession, and was to remain so until 1944 when it became an independent republic.

The evacuation of Norway, and imminent collapse of France, left German naval forces controlling the whole continental coastline facing Britain from Norway to the French-Spanish border. German submarines, supported by aircraft, now closed all sea supply routes to Britain except one through the Western Approaches round the north of Ireland. Should Germany establish naval and air-bases on Iceland then Britain's sole remaining supply line would be severed. Britain was now the sole military force standing against Germany. It was therefore of strategic importance that Britain speedily denied Iceland to the enemy and the 49th (West Riding) Division was selected to occupy Iceland and then to defend it against any German invasion. The Icelanders resented being invaded by foreigners. Britain announced that the 49th (West Riding) Division was coming to save Iceland from Nazism, but this was received with cynical humour for in 1940 it seemed unlikely that Britain, now alone, could defeat Germany. Equally the realistic Icelanders recognised that without the British in Iceland the Germans would certainly occupy it. In May 1940 there were only thirteen divisions left at home to defend Britain under the 'Julius Caesar' contingency plan. And of these thirteen the 1st Armoured Division was already en route for France leaving only the 2nd Armoured Division for the whole country. The remaining eleven infantry divisions were not all available, for of these three were training divisions and four were committed as aid to the civil power.

Thus in May 1940 the ground forces available to defend Britain were one armoured division and four infantry divisions of which one was very weak in numbers:

"The decision to send troops from this country was most courageous. Every one of the few trained men was most urgently required for defence against invasion [of Britain]; weapons were so short that men were being armed with shot-guns and even pikes; the victorious German armies and vast air forces were only just across the Channel. To send trained and equipped divisions abroad showed enormous faith in victory. Some of these troops were sent to Iceland to prevent the loss of the war, while others were sent to Egypt, the only place from which the war might eventually be won."

(The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1919-1942. Lt Col W Hingston. 1950.)

The northernmost part of Iceland just touches the Arctic Circle and, at 40,000 square miles, is roughly the same size as Ireland, but in 1940 only had a population of 150,000 which was far smaller than some of the West Riding's smaller towns. There were only two towns of any size. The capital Reykjavik with about 30,000 inhabitants, and Akureyri with about 8,000. The countryside is especially wild and barren with only one small wooded area of stunted birch trees less than ten feet high, otherwise there were no trees in Iceland. Barren mountains, some capped with permanent snow, rose steeply above deep gorges and valleys. Flat rock-strewn plains, heather moors, and fields of lava were almost impossible to cross, even on foot. Geysers spouted hot water and streams ran bright with yellow sulphur and too hot to touch. As a result farming was virtually impossible, resulting in Iceland's interior being thinly populated, with most Icelanders earning a living on the coast by sea-fishing, or processing and preserving fish.

The 49th (West Riding) Division already had its 146th and 148th Infantry Brigades tied up following their fighting in Norway. The division's three artillery regiments had been detached before the Norwegian campaign and were in time attached to its duplicate 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division. This resulted in only the Dukes 147th Infantry Brigade being at first available to form the new British 'Alabaster Force'. Their

task was to defend seven ports and, in time, a naval base. 147th Brigade concentrated on the defence of the south-west with the 1/6th Dukes around Reykjavik and the Reykjavik Peninsular, now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel J C Lawlor, formerly the Brigade Major. The 1/7th Dukes, Lieutenant Colonel J W N Haugh, deployed in the area south and south-west covering Kaldadarnes, Sanskeid and Hafnafjordur, and the 1/5th West Yorkshires north-west at Akranes and Brauterholt. Being without the 49th Divisional Artillery, a section of 3" naval howitzers which had landed with the Royal Marines remained to support 147th Brigade. The Icelanders were far from enthusiastic to see the Dukes' Territorials arrive:

"The reception of the troops by the Icelanders could not have been described as cordial. In fact it was very much the reverse, and landing parties were greeted with cold and stony stares by the crowds gathered on the quays. The Icelanders had many cultural ties with Germany. They had been left undisturbed in their remote northern fastness for a thousand years and did not relish the thought of their island becoming a battleground for the European powers."

(*The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.*)

It was a massive area to defend. As well as the prospective enemy, the Dukes found that the hostile countryside and weather was also against them. Most units had to be communicated with by sea, but this route would of course be denied should the Germans invade. Battalion locations were anything up to 150 miles from Brigade Headquarters and the only communication was by civil telephone which had already proved vulnerable in Norway.

It was vital that sound defences were quickly prepared. Beaches were blocked with barbed wire and covered by machine-guns which were readily hidden in terrain which aided good concealment. Roads, such as they were, were cratered and barrels full of oil mixed with petrol were deployed as improvised incendiary devices. Even complete cliffs were mined so that they could be blown to shower thousands of tons of rock down on potential invaders. Although there were no usable trees on the island to build defence works, foraging parties could readily retrieve timber from the beaches which had floated over from Norway and Russia. Having little or no artillery, the soldiers built dummy gun positions using telegraph poles and protected them with manned barbed wire enclosures. These 'guns' were made even more convincing by carrying out simulated firing using 3" mortars together with decoy charges:

"The digging of defences was very difficult. Picks and shovels made little impact on solid rock and, in many cases, we had to build up cover with sandbags, making very obvious targets for any attacker. Another hazard was the rows of fish that the Icelanders hung up to dry in lines stretched between poles, under which our defences and the unfortunate occupants were sited. The smell was awful. It was then that the generic name for Icelanders became 'FEBs' - fish eating bastards."

Second Lieutenant J R Allan [1], 1/6th Battalion

(*The Iron Duke, Number 227, Spring 1995.*)

The 49th Divisional Headquarters and 146th Infantry Brigade joined the Dukes' Brigade on 26th May complete with Major General H O Curtis DSO MC as the new divisional commander. 146th Brigade took up positions with the Hallamshires and 4th Lincolns at Akureyri on the north coast, and 1/4th KOYLI widely spread across Seydisfjordur, Reydarfjord and Eskifjordur on the east coast. It was at this time only a two infantry brigade division as the 148th Brigade, which had suffered heavily in Norway, had been disbanded.

Other units began to arrive to swell Alabaster Force's numbers from June 1940. A Canadian Infantry Brigade arrived and one of its machine-gun battalions provided detachments to stiffen the island's defences. These were supplemented by detachments from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force together with army logistic units and hospitals. This increase in manpower allowed the Dukes periodically to be withdrawn from defence duties to carry out training.

In August 1940 the first issue of the 49th Division's newspaper, 'The Midnight Sun' appeared and upon it the division's new polar bear symbol. Quite why a polar bear is not known; it would certainly have deceived the enemy for there are no polar bears in Iceland. The division's first Polar Bear [2] was shown in typical stance with head downwards as though peering into an ice-hole hunting fish. Since 1908 all members of Territorial units had also worn distinctive brass letter 'T's on their uniform and took great pride in being seen as volunteers, neither regulars nor pressed men. But in 1940 the wearing of these Territorial distinctions was forbidden for the rest of the war and the proudly worn badges removed. Only the Army so submerged its volunteers. Both the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (the Wavy Navy) and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve continued to wear distinguishing badges.

The 49th (West Riding) Division remained with only two infantry brigades until October 1940 when the 70th Infantry Brigade arrived to replace 148th Infantry Brigade. This was also a Territorial Army Brigade being composed of the 1st Tyneside Scottish, 10th Battalion and 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, and the 143rd Field Regiment Royal Artillery. They now faced the harsh Icelandic winters which were unlike anything that the Territorials had encountered. Gales of up to 130mph and heavy frosts came before Christmas and became

really severe in January. No sun was visible from mid-November to mid-February with a few weeks being in nearly complete darkness. Improvised shelters came in the form of 'Nissen' huts, a few of which had electric light, but cold weather regularly froze the generating turbines solid. For lighting most relied on hurricane lamps and the majority used candles. Snow could drift anything up to eighty feet deep and this resulted in sledges being improvised from corrugated iron to carry the 3" mortars and toboggans being fabricated to haul stores and equipment where they were needed. The weather became another enemy and lives were lost whilst on training, and even when carrying out routine duties, such as delivering rations to outposts in severe weather. It was not all routine and the Dukes' stay was often enlivened by visitors:

"Another welcome visitor was a destroyer commanded by Alfred Harper, a local lad from Skipton. We had a party on board where the innocent soldiers were made to play a game called Torpedoes. One by one we were led, blindfold, into the wardroom, laid face downwards on a blanket on a table, with two sailors on each side. 'We are firing a torpedo, fire'. At this the blanket and the victim were lifted up and hurled forward until stopped by hitting his head on the steel bulk-head. A second reason for having a very sore head the morning after."

Second Lieutenant J R Allan, 1/6th Battalion

(Ibid)

The Dukes handed over their locations to the 70th Brigade in March 1941 resulting in the 1/6th Dukes moving to establish a camp at Baldurshagi, seven miles east of Reykjavik, and the 1/7th Dukes to Alafors, twenty miles from Reykjavik. In May 1941 both battalions assisted with a round-the-clock building scheme of a new Reykjavik airfield, a task which was to continue until 1941:

"This was done on some level, marshy ground close to Reykjavik, supervised by Royal Engineers' construction units and with the labour provided by infantry battalions. The principle was that of a floating raft. Forty-gallon oil drums, cut in half vertically, were laid hollow side down on the marshy land, side-by-side, and end-to-end, to form the base, onto which was tipped volcanic ash, then concrete was poured on top of that. We worked twelve hour shifts, six till six day and night. When completed the landing strip was virtually a concrete raft floating on a bog. While we were doing this, Colin Hill, HQ Company Commander, and his men were constructing a Nissen hutted camp into which we moved before the worst of the winter, and he also masterminded the building of another for Brigade Headquarters."

Second Lieutenant J R Allan, 1/6th Battalion

(Ibid)

The 1/6th Battalion had by now turned Baldurshagi into a hutted home but, as always in the army, "once comfortable it's time to move" and in July 1941 a battalion of the American Marine Corps took over the camp resulting in the 1/7th moving to a primitive camp near Reykjavik:

"Every effort was made to make the Americans welcome, and the [1/6th] Battalion, having made Baldurshagi Camp as comfortable as a Nissen hut camp in Iceland could be, was required to move out to a tented camp on a bare hillside at Geithals, there to start building a new Nissen camp for itself. However, the Marines were duly grateful and the Battalion was pleased to play a part in the welcome to our future allies. The relations between the Battalion and the Marine Corps were most cordial during the whole time they were together in Iceland."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, visited Iceland on 16th August 1941 whilst on his return from a visit to America where he had signed the Atlantic Charter with President Roosevelt. Churchill suggested that the 49th Division should be trained as a Mountain/Arctic Division. This resulted in a Winter Warfare School being set up at Akureyri with Norwegian instructors:

"Apart from the normal infantry role, we were trained as mountain troops, using the glaciers and winter weather to learn to ski, build igloos and snow holes, and generally to survive and fight in arctic conditions. A winter warfare school was set up on a glacier near Akureyri in the north, then a Battalion school on a glacier nearer home where Jack Clough and his ski platoon took one infantry platoon at a time for a two week course in skiing and survival. We all, including the Colonel, were impressed when Jack established his Icelandic girlfriend (Svena) as chalet girl at his camp - another instance of enterprise and self-help to make life bearable in Iceland."

Second Lieutenant J R Allan, 1/6th Battalion

(The Iron Duke, Number 227, Spring 1995.)

Although the West Riding Territorials never fought as a mountain division, the new role gave the Territorials a fresh incentive and greatly developed their physical fitness, self-reliance and endurance, qualities which were in time to serve them well on the battlefields of Europe. In December 1941 Brigadier E R Mahoney was appointed to command 147 Brigade, which he was to do until 4 July 1944. By April 1942 more American troops had arrived

to garrison Iceland, indeed these reinforcements had already enabled the 70th Infantry Brigade to return to Scotland in December 1941. The 1/6th Battalion handed over their 'Waterloo Camp', at Geithals, to the American 2nd Battalion 11th Infantry Brigade, and the 1/7th Dukes handed over 'Colne Valley' camp to the American 3rd Battalion 11th Infantry Brigade, and sailed from Iceland in late April. By late April 1942 the 1/6th Dukes had moved to Pontypool and the 1/7th to Abergavenny:

"This stay in Iceland was not an exciting time. It was a time of, at times, great discomfort, anxiety, and impatience. The eternal waiting for the Germans to arrive, a possibility that seemed daily to grow less, probably provided as trying a period as any undertaken in the whole war. Waiting while invasion of England was daily expected, waiting while England was bombed, waiting while units were gaining glory in North Africa, waiting while other units were being sent out of England to who knew where. Waiting for something that never happened. It may have seemed to some that these two years were wasted; the stay of the 49th Division in Iceland may not have won the war, but it certainly ensured that Britain would not lose it."

(The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1919-1942. Lt Col W Hingston. 1950.)

[1: Later Captain J R Allan who served with the 1/6th Battalion in North-West Europe during 1944]

[2: The origin of the Polar Bear design is revealed in the contemporary 'Battalion Routine Orders' of Sheffield's Hallamshire Battalion which asked that any soldier who had a Fox's 'glacier mint' wrapper, with polar bear logo, should present it to the Battalion Orderly Room so that it could be sent to divisional headquarters as a pattern for the new badge. The new badge was of cloth and depicted a white Polar Bear on a square black background and was at first worn with the division's original White Rose of York badge, but the Rose was made of brass with a fixing stud which had the habit of puncturing the wearer's arm and it was later discontinued. On 30th April 1943 Major General E H ("Bubbles") Barker assumed command of the 49th (West Riding) Division and took a dislike to his division's badge when he wrote - *"That Bear is too submissive. I want a defiant sign for my division, lift up its head and make it roar"*. A new badge was therefore issued with the Polar Bear's head raised in an aggressive snarl.]

MALAYA AND SINGAPORE 1941-1942

Nor had Halifax's duplicate anti-tank unit experienced active service by 1941. The 68th Anti-Tank Regiment had spent the early part of the war in receiving new equipment, training and in coastal defence. In March 1940 a hundred men had been despatched to Hull where they were split into pairs, armed with bren light machine-guns and posted to trawlers in the air defence role. Most of these gun teams were, at some time, in action, with at least two enemy aircraft being shot down. Their success was marked by the Merchant Navy who presented the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment with a Red Ensign. The fall of France in 1940 heightened the invasion threat and the regiment reverted to the infantry role to defend airfields and man road-blocks around West Hartlepool. By early 1941 however the invasion threat had receded and the regiment reverted to anti-tank

On 23rd July 1941 272 Anti-Tank Battery, commanded by Major J McD Slater, was ordered to mobilize with instructions to be ready to sail for the Far East in fourteen days. The detached battery, together with other batteries, was to form a new 80th Anti-Tank Regiment [3]. On 28th August the 141 members of 272 Battery sailed with their new regiment for South Africa and then sailed on to Singapore arriving on 5th November. As soon as they arrived Lieutenant Colonel Napier, commanding 80th Anti-Tank Regiment, was ordered to detach a battery to be sent to northern Malaya. This resulted in the Dukes anti-tank gunners leaving Singapore at once. Two days later they were in Taiping attached to the 9th Gurkha Rifles, part of the 28th Indian Division. Life was pleasant, for the Dukes were the first British soldiers to be stationed at Taiping and the residents were particularly kind to the Yorkshiremen.

On the 4th December the 272 battery left Taiping by train for the State of Kalantan, and on the following day took over the lines of the 2nd Baluch Regiment, near Gong Kedah aerodrome, where the battery came under command of 8th Indian Brigade. That afternoon the battery was informed that the Japanese were expected to land in the early hours of the following morning. Not all the battery's gun tractors had arrived from Taiping and impromptu arrangements were made to tow their two-pounder anti-tank guns behind stores trucks requiring the majority of the battery's stores having to be burnt. At 0230am on 9th December the Japanese landed at Kota Bharu. The battery's lines were bombed at 8.15am by 25 Japanese bombers resulting in one truck and one gun being knocked out. Further raids that morning resulted in one man killed and another truck destroyed. But at midday the bombers returned and literally blew the camp to pieces, most of the men lost their personal equipment and the remaining regimental stores were destroyed. The last air-raid came at 5pm and this was followed by orders for the battery to withdraw to Sungai Petai where it parked in a rubber plantation:

"The 9th to 18th December was one long withdrawal down the State of Kalantan, and it was a great relief when the Battery was told to take its guns to the station at Kula Krai, when it entrained for Kuala Lipis at 2300hrs the same night. This town was about 160 miles due south through dense jungle, the railway being the only means of communication. The infantry had to make most of this journey on foot."

Major J McD Slater

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

By 26th December the battery had re-equipped and ordered to Port Swettenham, there to defend twenty-two miles of coastline. Apart from regular air-raids and the sinking of two junks, which unfortunately proved to be Chinese, the period was a quiet if not tense one. But on the 15th January the Japanese landed to the north of Port Swettenham and on the 18th the battery received order to retire to Labu. After a two day stay the battery moved to Tampin but almost immediately discovered themselves to be up to four miles ahead of the infantry positions. A hurried withdrawal was made. The battery now took up a new role of acting as rearguard to various infantry brigades as a steady withdrawal was made from Malaya to Singapore. One volunteer troop of guns, commanded by Lieutenant J P D Hoyle, acted as rearguard to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who were the last troops to pass over the causeway joining Singapore to Malaya:

"On 25th January the Battery was at Kluang. Here Lieut. Moser and his troop were in action against the Japanese. From 27th to 29th January the Battery retired on Johore - where it remained until 11th February. On that day the unit moved to the outskirts of Singapore where it was detailed to guard Headquarters III Corps. During this move Lieut Moser, whilst withdrawing his troops under heavy Japanese fire, was killed and five of his men were seriously wounded. At 1300hrs on 15th February a troop of guns, under the command of Lieut Fosbery, were ordered to help in the withdrawal of a Malay volunteer battalion. During the heavy action which ensued Lieut Fosbery was killed. L/Sgt Tuck was later awarded the Military Medal for his bravery in bringing back the remainder of the troop. At 2000hrs on 15th February all British forces capitulated to the Japanese."

Major J McD Slater

(Ibid)

The fall of Singapore witnessed the surrender of the largest force in British military history. The 80th Anti-Tank Regiment was assembled by their Japanese captors and eventually marched to Changi Camp some sixteen miles from Singapore. Men soon began to suffer dysentery from their new rice diet. This heralded long years as captives of the Japanese. Three officers and five soldiers had been killed in action, but another officer and thirty-three soldiers were destined to die whilst prisoners of the Japanese. In May the battery began to disintegrate as the Japanese split the prisoners up into working parties which were despatched to Japan and Siam, whilst other remained in Malaya.

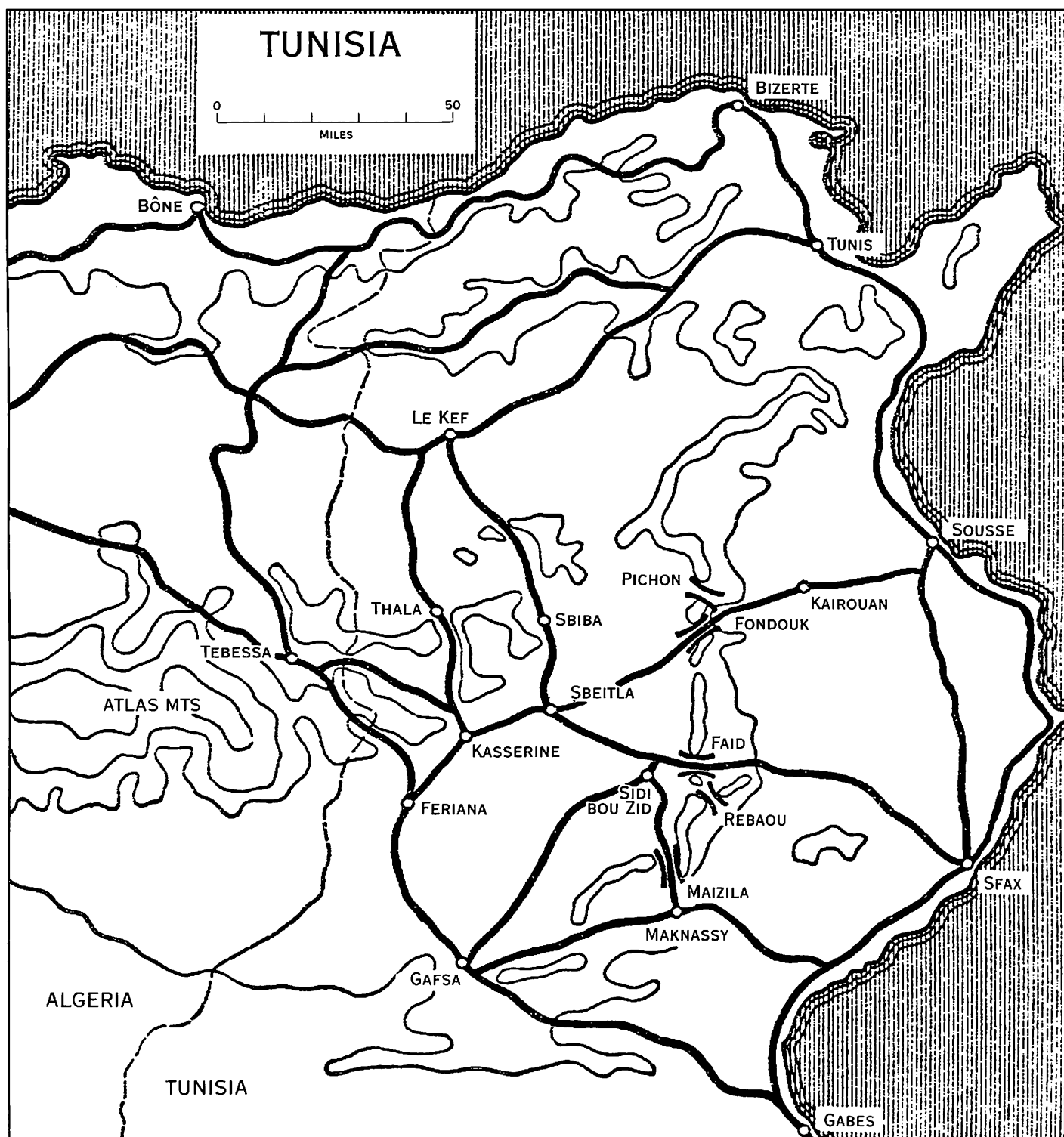
[3: 80th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery formed new at Hitchin 20th July 1941 with 2 Anti-Tank Battery from 13th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery; 215 Anti-Tank Battery from 54th (The Queen's Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA); 272 Anti-Tank Battery from 68th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA). Lost in Malaya 15th February 1942.]

NORTH AFRICA 1943

Since the declaration of war, Halifax's 58th Anti-Tank Regiment had remained in England at Bordon. Except for its 229 Anti-Tank Battery's exploits at Calais, the Regiment had not yet seen active service. In August 1941 command of the regiment came to Lieutenant Colonel H F L Tugwell MC RA, a Territorial Army officer. In 1942 the Regiment's four anti-tank batteries were reorganised as three batteries, (229, 231 and 232 Batteries), each of four troops. In autumn the regiment mobilized for North Africa. The two-pounder anti-tank guns that had been issued on conversion from infantry were withdrawn and replaced by the improved six-pounder anti-tank guns, together with a few larger seventeen-pounders. The new six-pounder (57mm) anti-tank gun was a great improvement on the two-pounder and capable of better armour penetration than its German counterpart. At this time two-thirds of the men were still from the original Territorial battalion, with the remainder mainly being members of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had joined the regiment in late 1940 [4]. Of the key officers, the second-in-command, and two of the three battery commanders, all now majors, had been pre-war officers of the regiment.

In late September/October 1942 Field Marshal Montgomery's Eighth Army had fought the battle of El Alamein, and then successfully struck westwards along the North African coast from Egypt against the Axis forces commanded by Erwin Rommel. As well as the Eighth Army's threat from his east, Rommel's forces were also threatened by a fresh attack to his west carried out by Anglo-American seaborne landings, (Operation Torch), in French North Africa. This Allied move had the aim of advancing eastwards to trap and destroy the Axis forces in Tunisia. The hastily-formed British 1st Army made a spectacular dash eastwards over hundreds of miles in an attempt to seize Tunis and Bizerte before the enemy could reinforce the area. In the event the attempt failed just twenty miles short of their objectives and a break in the weather brought heavy rains, which cancelled any hope of a further advance. Rommel still held Tunis in late 1942. To his west the British First Army was tired and under-strength for it only consisted of the 78th Infantry Division, part of 6th Armoured Division, together with several Commandos and some Parachute troops, to his east was Montgomery's confident Eighth Army.

The Dukes' anti-tank gunners were part of the 46th (West Riding and North Midlands) Division which sailed for North Africa to reinforce the British First Army in December 1942. The voyage to North Africa was relatively uneventful, although four of 231 Battery's guns were lost when a transport was sunk by a German



submarine. Although 229 Battery, commanded by Major J W Fenny, arrived at Algiers on 3rd January 1943 it was not until 6th February that the complete regiment had assembled at Bone, Algeria. About this time Lieutenant Colonel C Davidson RA assumed command of the Regiment. Now static, the British First Army's line in west Tunisia ran southwards from near the coast, around Beja, to link up with the French XIX Corps to their south. To the south of the French the line was held by the American II Corps.

By the beginning of February 1943 Rommel had some 74,000 German and 26,000 Italian troops available to him in Tunisia. It was estimated that the German/Italian enemy forces had about 300 tanks including a number of the awesome 60 ton 'Tigers' which mounted the now legendary 88mm gun. These were supported by fighters and light-bombers operating from local airfields, together with a thousand long-range bombers operating from the Axis bases in Sardinia, Sicily and southern Italy. The Axis bombing attacks came at any time of the day or night, and the Dukes gunners quickly learned to dig slit trenches as soon as they arrived in a new area:

"The enemy moreover, had almost a monopoly of the air. Our fighters were few, and their aerodromes far to the rear. 'Gert' and 'Daisy' [two German Messerschmitt aircraft] were a daily sight. They made it dangerous to move on the road in daytime, and the enemy's commanding ground positions imposed a necessary caution on our forward troops."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

The 46th Division's front was lightly held with its three infantry brigade groups deployed on each of the three roads that led to enemy-held Tunis and Bizerte. To the north only small horsed patrols of French Corps Franc D'Afrique covered ten miles of hills between the 46th Division and the sea. To the 46th Division's south was 11th Brigade, 78th Division, holding Hunt's Gap and the Beja road but again there was a twelve mile gap of unmanned hills between these two divisions. The 58th Anti-Tank Regiment's headquarters deployed at Beja, together with 232 Battery, Major V P Miller, in reserve. 231 Battery, Major R Smith, moved to Hunt's Gap in support of the 128th Infantry Brigade [5], and 229 Battery deployed at Sedjanane in support of the 139th Infantry Brigade [6]. Apart from spasmodic enemy air activity, the front was comparatively quiet until Rommel commenced a general offensive.

Although Rommel's forces holding Tunis were seemingly trapped between two Allied Armies he had the option to use his combined force to attack on either front before the other could respond. Rommel's plan was first to attack the American II Corps, which included some French troops, which was stretched over 90 miles of front but concentrated on three main routes through the mountains to the sea. If Rommel could first crumple up the Allies behind him, he could then turn his attentions east to the British Eighth Army whose lines of supply had been stretched in their advance from El Alamein. At the end of January the veteran 21st Panzer Division made a surprise attack on a poorly-armed French garrison and seized the Faid Pass to act as a base for subsequent attacks on the American II Corps. This Axis counter-offensive, codenamed 'Operation Frühlingwind' (Spring Wind), was intended to strike through the French and Americans to seize the port of Bone, behind the 46th Division, thus encircling the British 1st Army.

THALA

The German panzers forced a way through the Sbiba Pass:

"At this moment a new threat appeared in the south: Rommel, in command of the southern front, attacked and routed the Americans at Faid Pass on February 14, with 10th and 21st Panzer Divisions, while a third composite German and Italian armoured force, called Afrika Korps Group, captured El Guettar and Gafsa. The two Panzer divisions then brilliantly outflanked and destroyed the American forces at Sidi Bou Zid behind the Faid Pass. 10th Panzer Division swung northwards towards Sbiba, and the Afrika Korps Group headed for Feriana and the Kasserine Pass. The Americans, exposed for the first time to Blitzkrieg, were thrown into complete chaos. The whole southern [American] front was crumbling; Allied airfields at Tebessa, and administrative centres at Tebessa, Le Kef, and even Souk Ahras were in danger. It was now a question of rushing every possible reserve down to the area to plug the gaps."

(17th/21st Lancers 1759-1993. Col R L V French Blake. 1993.)

To counter this threat to the southern flank, the British 46th Division was instructed immediately to assemble a composite force to go to the Americans' aid. As a result the 2/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment (TA), (139 Infantry Brigade), 450 Field Battery [7] and the Dukes 229 Anti-tank Battery were hastily despatched south the 150 miles from Sedjanane to Thala arriving on 20th February. Here the Americans had tried to stem this advance by the German 15th and 21st Panzer Division at the nearer end of the Kasserine Pass, but had been pushed back in some disorder and confusion towards Thala. Once out of the Kasserine Pass Rommel's panzers were on rolling plains which stretched from the mountains to the sea. The enemy's route to Thala was hastily

screened by the British 26th Armoured Brigade's [8] lightly armoured Valentine tanks of the 17th/21st Lancers and the 2nd Lothians and Border Horse Yeomanry (TA):

"Some miles behind the armour the Leicesters dug furiously on a ridge covering Thala. The Germans were slow to start their attack - exasperatingly slow both to Rommel and to Brigadier Charles Dunphie Commanding 26th Armoured Brigade, who could do nothing but sit and wait, since his artillery was out of range behind the Leicesters' position. At 3.30pm the German formation, a mass of some 30 tanks, 20 self-propelled guns, and 35 half-tracked carriers, started to advance. 26th Armoured Brigade, hopelessly outgunned in the open country, fought back bravely, withdrawing from ridge to ridge under cover of smoke. The Valentines and Crusaders were picked off one by one."

(Ibid)

Outgunned and without cover, they fought a gallant but costly withdrawal against the German 10th Panzer Division, commanded by General Fritz Freiherr von Broich. Brigadier Charles Dunphie, commanding the British armour, chose to fight this unequal battle in order to gain time for the Territorials' composite force to prepare positions covering Thala behind their armoured screen, as an American account records:

"Dunphie's [8] tankers, protected by skins of armour too thin to withstand the enemy shells, their guns outranged, tried to use the shelter of each wadi, each fold in the ground, each cactus patch for concealment, hoping they could remain hidden until the Germans came close enough for them to come out and inflict a wound."

(Rommel's Last Victory, The Battle of Kasserine Pass. M Blumenson. 1966.)

Rommel had spent much of this day on the main approach road closely watching his panzers' attempts to press forward to capture Thala, and he became increasingly disillusioned with General Broich's leadership. At 4pm Rommel [9] personally took charge of 10th Panzer Division and pushed them on regardless of the 26th Armoured Brigade's efforts to stop him. Even as the tank battle raged to their front, the Leicesters and the Dukes' gunners hastily dug their defences on rising ground covering the plain. All afternoon American transport and tanks streamed through their positions towards the rear. Towards dusk the British 26th Armoured Brigade completed their delaying action and the few remaining tanks [10] passed through with Brigadier Dunphie's command tank at the very rear. These battle-worn British tanks were seeking to harbour in a hollow beside the road just behind the Leicesters' and Dukes' positions. Hard on their heels came a British Valentine tank, clearly a straggler. But it was a ruse, and the Germans broke through the protective minefield before it could be closed. Whereas more experienced infantry would have been alert to the possible threat, the green Leicesters paid dear for their lack of battle-proven experience:

"They [the Germans] came in led by a captured Valentine [11], and their crews were sitting on the turrets smoking. They were in amongst the three forward Leicester companies before the hoax was realised. Follow-up infantry overran the surprised Leicesters. Some German tanks got as far as the twenty-five pounders [450 Field Battery], and the tank gunners fired up the road from their laagers. The leading German tank was hit, and the flames lit up the rest."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

German Mark IV tanks and lorried infantry swept through the minefield gap and quickly fanned out behind the surprised Leicesters' forward companies. German vehicle-mounted loudspeakers blared out and quickly confirmed their worst suspicions "Come out Englishmen, Hands Up! Surrender to the panzers, you haven't a chance". Not surprisingly many of the Leicesters, who had not fought a battle until now, had little choice but to surrender. Fortunately, just behind the Dukes anti-tank gun lines the veteran 17th/21st Lancers were just about to replenish their tanks with fuel and ammunition before, hopefully, grabbing some much-needed sleep. Even before this had time to start, German Mark III and Mark IV tanks, led by their Valentine, slipped into the Leicesters' positions announcing their true identity by destroying one of the Lancers' ammunition trucks. The 17th/21st Lancers Adjutant, Captain George Ponsonby, at once leapt back into his tank and joined the counter-fire by the Dukes' gunners, his tank alone accounting for three panzers. After desperate fighting, the battle died down by midnight:

"The enemy gave up for the night. It was a tiny force left in front of Thala. After a night's confused fighting only two anti-tank guns were left in action; twenty tanks remained; there was little more than two companies of infantry. Only the two field batteries were intact."

(Ibid)

At dawn the Lothians again attacked with their ten remaining tanks to recapture a hill on the left side of the position from which the enemy could overlook the whole defences at daylight. The Lothians were successful even though they ran straight into the German's overnight tank leaguer. Lieutenant Colonel R L V French-Blake's gallant band of Lothians surveyed a desolate scene:

"Now French-Blake's antiquated tanks pushed even further up a ridge, the only sound the clatter of their own tracks. The going became steeper. Everywhere in the pale light of the false dawn, there

was a litter of battle; wrecked infantry bren-gun carriers; charred, holed Mark IVs; shells and shellcases; cans of compositions; abandoned equipment - and the dead. The dead were everywhere, the khaki-clad bodies of those of the Leicesters who had not surrendered but had fought it out with the panzers. Crumpled in wild, eloquent postures, they seemed all boot: those big clumsy British ammunition boots with the regulation thirteen studs and the instep still polished black, 'bull' still lingering and triumphant in death. 'Ten forty-tuos' they were to a man - called up in 1942 and given the serial number of that year - trained and drilled for one long year to die out here in this barren waste at a place whose name they had not been here long enough to learn. But they had not surrendered."

(First Blood, the Battle of the Kasserine Pass. Charles Whiting. 1984.)

Despite the Lothians' advance, the position of the Thala garrison now seemed hopeless. Outnumbered, battered, and outgunned the Lancers, Leicesters and Dukes braced themselves for the inevitable final German assault, but it never came. The stout defence at Thala may have deceived the Germans, for despite intense enemy shellfire only one further insignificant attack was made at midday. The Thala position had held and the panzers' probing attack through the Americans halted.

By evening the much depleted Territorial garrison, which had been pushed back 1,000 yards, was reinforced by a Guards' battalion supported by American guns which had driven over 800 miles from Casablanca. The next day the enemy forces in front of Thala had gone. In this first battle the 2/5th Leicesters had lost more than 400 men. Major Fenny's [12] 229 Anti-tank Battery had inflicted heavy damage on the enemy, but they too paid dearly with 50 casualties and only two anti-tank guns still in action.

58th Anti-Tank Regiment had endured its baptism of fire in North Africa under less than perfect circumstances. Rushed 150 miles into action onto unfamiliar terrain, the gunners had built hasty defences whilst under fire and in sight of the enemy's armoured spearhead. Within a few hours they had their first experience of the weight of a German panzer attack, inflicted heavy casualties and held on despite their perimeter being penetrated. These Dukes' gunners had every reason to be proud of the part they played in their first desert battle. But Rommel's efforts were unrelenting, for as 229 Battery licked its wounds, Major Smith's 231 Battery, well to the north, was also drawn into the fray.

HUNT'S GAP

Further north, in 46 Division's Beja sector, the 5th Hampshires (TA), 128 Infantry Brigade [13], together with two troops of 155 [14] Field Battery were holding an advanced outpost at Sidi Nisir on the Tunis road some twelve miles from Hunt's Gap. The long road leading to Sidi Nisir was regularly mined by German roving patrols causing supply difficulties for this outpost. On the morning of 22nd February a Hampshire patrol clashed with three German companies preparing to attack Sidi Nisir. Despite being outnumbered and surrounded, this platoon fought on until it was overrun, thus breaking up the intended attack. The Germans then contented themselves with subjecting the Hampshires' positions to heavy mortar and machine-gun fire. This German force was under the command of Colonel Rudolf Lang with the 47th Panzergrenadier Regiment, 334 Infantry Division and supported by an armoured force of German Mark III and Mark IV tanks together with some of the newly-arrived 'Tigers'. Rommel then launched 'Operation Oschenkopf', (Oxhead), a multi-pronged counter-offensive with the aim of encircling Medjez.

At dawn on the 26th February a long line of German tanks, half-tracks and enemy infantry advanced down the Tunis road towards Sidi Nisir under a canopy of air support. This armoured force was now two complete Panzer Battalions enhanced to a strength of 77 tanks of which 14 were Tigers. The British gunners were firing over open sights at 200 yards range to knock out the seemingly endless stream of 88mm Tigers and Mark IV tanks. One by one the field guns were knocked out as the panzers breached the Hampshire defences, where their two-pounder infantry anti-tank guns also engaged tanks at ranges as close as thirty yards. At dusk overwhelming numbers of German infantry swamped the depleted Hampshiremen's positions. At midnight the remnants of the 5th Hampshires began to withdraw to Hunt's Gap. They arrived dishevelled and weary the following morning, when it was found that less than 200 men had got back out of the whole Sidi Nisir force. But the twenty-four hours delay they had imposed on the enemy, coupled with a night of heavy rain, proved invaluable to the subsequent defence of Hunt's Gap. The German armour could only approach Hunt's Gap down a road lined with hills on either side. Heavy rains had turned the rich soil of the valley floor into thick mud in which tanks bogged down as soon as they drove off the road. German tanks back at Sidi Nisir were locked in a long hold-up of vehicles bedded into the mud.

On the 27th February the 46th Division had the 128th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier M A James VC DSO MC, covering Hunt's Gap with the 1/4th and 2/4th Hampshires, and with the remnants of the 5th Hampshires, now organised as two companies, holding the hills astride the road. Here too were the remaining members of the 2/5th Leicesters, who had fought at Thala, now holding Montagne Farm. The whole force was supported by the field

artillery of 153 and 154 batteries [14] together with the medium guns of 5 Medium Regiment and some Bofors anti-aircraft guns of 457 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery. Here too were the Dukes of 231 Anti-tank battery, commanded by Major R Smith, with their six-pounder, and one solitary 17 pounder, anti-tank guns. The Dukes deployed some of their guns near 'B' Company, 2/4 Hampshires, as the rifle company commander recalled:

"Also came six-pounder [anti-tank] guns of the 58th A/Tk Regt. RA placed in enfilade positions on the right of my Company the night before, plus a single seventeen-pounder A/Tk gun placed in the centre of my Company and behind my own forward command post. This gun was very new and heavily camouflaged that it might surprise the Germans by its range and power. Such was the secrecy that I was not told of its arrival or initially allowed to see it. The very secrecy with which it surrounded itself by excessive camouflage netting was to be its undoing."

(The Battle for Beja. Maj Richard Sawyer.)

This amount of artillery was not enough to counter the strength of the German tank threat. Some days earlier the infantry had been treated to a demonstration of the new secret 'PIAT' [15] infantry anti-tank weapon, but they still as yet had to rely on their Boyes 0.55 inch anti-tank rifles whose penetrating power was very poor. There was therefore little in the way of the anti-tank weapons needed to stem the German armour. Two hundred miles away, Churchill tanks of The North Irish Horse [16], had already started a forced march towards Beja and driven through the night in heavy rain across treacherous roads to take up supporting positions:

"B Squadron, on the right, occupied a locality to the west of Djebel Munchar, and A Squadron took up a position in 'The Loop' just to the north of the Ksar Mezouar station. This latter proved to be the key to the defence of Beja; it blocked the defile which was formed by an anti-tank obstacle and mines extending to the south as far as Djebel Munchar and by hilly and mined country to the north. If the enemy had succeeded in forcing a way through this gap, their armour would have debouched into the rolling country to the north-east of Beja and nothing would have saved that town. If Beja had fallen it would probably have meant a withdrawal of the allied line to a distance of over fifty miles. During the afternoon of 27th February both the [NIH] squadrons took stock of their positions and liaised with the infantry. A Squadron were mortared a little bit, and in moving a troop in at the infantry request so as to have a Besa [machine-gun] shoot, Serjeant Allen's tank was hit in the engine by a shell from an anti-tank gun or tank and was knocked-out; another tank was hit on the track, which was broken. There were no casualties. After last light the squadron withdrew to harbour near Sidi Mimech. B Squadron harboured in their own locality."

(The North Irish Horse. Unit Author. 1946.)

The enemy relied upon armoured attacks on the first day, 27th February, although some infantry could be seen moving in the hills and some on the road in half-tracks. It seemed that the enemy was building up for a co-ordinated assault whilst concurrently trying for an immediate opportunistic armoured breakthrough. The armour made little progress as it floundered through the muddy fields, or in single file down the road, and the gunners picked off eleven German tanks. But on the next day, 28th February, the attack was renewed using both tanks and supporting infantry bringing the Dukes' anti-tank guns into the fray:

"At 1400 hours the enemy put in his real attack and advanced along the easterly road of the 'Antlers' with the object of forcing his way through the defile. This attack was met by our [NIH] tanks, the [Dukes] anti-tank guns in the area and the heavy artillery fire and was decisively defeated, several enemy tanks being set on fire and knocked out. Shortly after this Captain Griffith [A Sqn NIH] proceeded to headquarters 2nd/4th Hampshires and on his return reported a number of German tanks in the valley out of range of our six-pounders. The location of these tanks was given to the medium artillery who put down a concentration [of fire] for about thirty minutes, and when darkness fell Captain Evans RE went forward and found one disabled German tank which he blew up."

(Ibid)

231 Battery's lone 17 pounder became an early casualty for its camouflage netting was set on fire and it then became an easy target for the German tanks. Its 'E' and 'F' troops were particularly closely engaged and destroyed three enemy tanks, including a Mark VI 'Tiger', on the first day, and a further two tanks 48 hours later. Of these, one gun alone accounted for three tanks resulting in its 'Number One' later being decorated with a Military Medal:

"Their leading Tiger, finding itself without support, withdrew and, to our good fortune, in recrossing the minefield lost a track and was immobilised. For three hours the panzers were subjected to heavy and continuous artillery fire. Two further panzers received direct hits and were disabled, and without infantry support the attack was called off at 4 o'clock. The crews of the disabled tanks abandoning them scrambled out and sought shelter in other tanks. As the column hastened away it was seen one man was left behind, and he was running across a nearby field seeking shelter from the artillery when he was fired on by my snipers. Attempting to return to his tank he collapsed into the

roadside ditch. By then the column, harassed all the way, had reached 'The Corner' but continued to withdraw beyond our artillery range. The enemy had been repulsed by the accurate, concentrated and continuous fire of the artillery. The only shot fired by my ['B'] Company was at the running away German."

(The Battle for Beja. Maj Richard Sawyer.)

By 1st March the Germans had suffered so heavily that the position at Hunt's Gap was secured. However, the Regiment's recently appointed Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Davidson, was killed by a sniper whilst visiting the gun positions. Command of the Regiment then came to its second-in-command, Major W S F Tetlow [17] who was promoted Lieutenant Colonel, and was to remain in command of the 58th Anti-Tank Regiment until the end of the war. 231 Battery remained in the Hunt's Gap position until mid-April 1943, during which time its positions were subjected to heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire, but no further ground attacks developed:

"The defence of Hunt's Gap, for most of the men engaged their first battle, was far-reaching in its effect. The [46th] Division was later to fight harder and possibly more skilful battles, but never one where its own action had such great significance regarding the success of the whole campaign. It is a trick of war that singles out one battle in the scheme of history, while others, perhaps better fought or distinguished by greater gallantry, live largely in the memory of those who fought them."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

By the end of March the 46th Division was taking part in the Allied offensive eastwards towards the Axis forces trapped in Tunisia. This began with its 138th [18] Infantry Brigade attacking and capturing Sedjanane. It was a period of intense and bitter fighting for the infantry battalions, for example Sheffield's 6th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment made no less than eight bayonet charges to clear a determined enemy from the hills. Early April witnessed the Hampshiremen of 128th Infantry Brigade attacking and capturing Pichon. In mid-April the 46th Division assaulted and captured Bou Aradia, held by fanatical troops of the German Herman Goering Division, thus enabling the 1st and 6th Armoured Divisions to exploit success towards Goubellat Plain to the north.

During this sustained offensive one anti-tank battery from the Dukes' 58th Anti-Tank Regiment was attached to each of the division's three infantry brigades. But the operations largely required infantry attacks, and although the Dukes' gunners moved closely in support of the infantry no enemy armoured counter-attacks developed which required the guns to be brought into action:

"Only 231 Anti-Tank Battery, attached to the [128th] Hampshire Brigade, which was detailed for mopping-up operations in the area of Tunis, was destined to reach Cape Bon to witness the remarkable sight of the final German surrender. The enemy came in in trucks or marched in orderly ranks, along the crowded roads to give themselves up to the first British soldier they saw. It was a blazing hot day and there was little shade in the sandy desert; but still the prisoners poured in - 250,000 in all."

"For a few days the German prisoners had to act as their own keepers, being fed from their own food dumps; but soon the cages were ready and organisation rapidly superseded chaos. The Germans maintained much of their normal discipline and had a pathetic belief in the ultimate triumph of their own forces. They knew nothing of the events in Russia and were certain they would be set free by German troops advancing from Oran and Tangiers. The Italians fulfilled expectations: they were a disorganised rabble."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

On the 20th May 1943 a detachment represented 58th Anti-Tank Regiment at a large victory parade held in Tunis. Two days later the Regiment moved to Hamman Lif, near Tunis, to rest and refit. The pace stepped up on 18th June when the Regiment moved again to Bou Farik to commence training, and a month later batteries were again attached to the division's three infantry brigades for All-Arms training. At this time the Regiment reverted to having four anti-tank batteries, each of three troops, by the formation of 325 Anti-Tank Battery within the Regiment by taking one troop from each of the existing batteries. Whilst these preparations were taking place plans were already in hand for the Allied invasion of Europe by the softening-up of Sicily and Italy ready for an Allied invasion.

[4: RHQ* Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders believe these soldiers came from the 5th (Renfrewshire) Battalion and 6th (Renfrewshire) Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's) (TA).]

- [5: 128th Infantry Brigade, (46 Division), comprising 1/4th, 2/4th, 5th Battalions The Hampshire Regiment (TA).]
- [6: 139th Infantry Brigade, (46 Division), comprising 2/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment (TA), 5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (TA), 16th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry.]
- [7: 450 Field Battery formed part of Sheffield's 71st (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA), 'The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers'.]
- [8: 26th Armoured Brigade, (Brigadier C A L Dunphie), comprising 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers, 17th/21st Lancers, 2nd Lothians and Border Horse Yeomanry RAC (TA).]
- [9: This was not the first time that Erwin Rommel had stepped in to lead his forward troops whilst a general officer. In May 1942 he personally led the assault on the British 150th Infantry Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division, at the Gazala 'Box' in a desperate attempt to restore his line of supply or face immediate surrender. The 150th Infantry Brigade was composed of three Yorkshire TA infantry battalions - 4th Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment, 4th & 5th Battalions The Green Howards.]
- [10: At this time the 17th/21st Lancers only had twelve tanks left, the commanding officer (Lt Col Dick Hamilton-Russell) had three tanks shot from under him during the engagement.]
- [11: This Valentine, nicknamed *Apple Sauce* by its former British owners, had just been captured from the 17th/21st Lancers and had since been overpainted with German markings. It was later found knocked-out with its German crew dead around it. The Germans had already used the same ruse at Sbiba using a Sherman captured from the 16th/5th Lancers.]
- [12: Major John Warford Fenny, Officer Commanding 229 Anti-Tank Battery, was later severely wounded by mortar fire during the battle of the River Vietri Gap and died from his wounds a few days later on 18th September 1943.]
- [13: 128 Infantry Brigade commanded by Brigadier M. A. James VC DSO MC comprising 1/4th, 2/4th, 5th Battalions The Hampshire Regiment (TA).]
- [14: 153, 154, 155 Field Batteries comprising 172nd Field Regiment Royal Artillery.]
- [15: The 'PIAT' (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) was a hand-held individual infantry anti-tank launcher whose projectile was fired by a spring-loaded spigot. It was introduced to replace the Boyes anti-tank rifle which could not penetrate improved German armour.]
- [16: The North Irish Horse (Supplementary Reserve), part of 25th Armoured Brigade together with 51st (Leeds Rifles) Royal Tank Regiment (TA) and 142nd Regiment Royal Armoured Corps. The Territorial Force system did not extend to reserve units existing in Ireland in 1908 thus The North Irish Horse were then a 'Special Reserve' (later 'Supplementary Reserve') unit. In 1947 the Territorial Army was extended to Northern Ireland and The North Irish Horse was reconstituted as a TA unit.]
- [17: Lieutenant Colonel W S F Tetlow TD was a pre-war Territorial officer of the 4th Battalion, and later of 58th (4 DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment. Promoted major on 17 July 1939, and appointed second-in-command in September 1942. Lieutenant Colonel Tetlow returned as commanding officer when the unit reconstituted in 1947, and died suddenly soon after.]
- [18: 138th Infantry Brigade, (46 Division), comprising 2/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) (Dewsbury), 6th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA) (Lincoln), 6th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) (Sheffield).]

CHAPTER 8

1943-1944: TOO MUCH ASKED OF TOO FEW

"Sometimes too much had to be asked of too few. Why was it necessary to battle on with forces which were barely more numerous than those of the enemy? The answer was that our Russian Allies were still under great stress, that a Second Front in the West had not yet started, and that it was essential to continue the strongest possible pressure in Italy, the only front where the Western Allies were in a position to fight the Germans."

Lieutenant General Sir Richard McCreery KCB KBE DSO MC
Commanding The British 10th Corps (of which 46th Division formed part)

ITALY 1943-1944

Whilst the Dukes' anti-tank gunners were resting in North Africa, Allied pressure was being maintained across the Mediterranean when Allied forces assaulted Sicily in mid-July. By August all enemy resistance on the island had ceased. This preparatory attack to secure Sicily now cleared the way for a full-scale invasion of Italy. General Montgomery's Eighth Army was to be the first to land on the 'toe' of Italy. A few days later the American General Mark Clark's Fifth Army was to land at Salerno, on the 'shin' of Italy south of Naples, with the aim of cutting the lines-of-communication to the enemy forces opposing the Eighth Army. The largely American Fifth Army had been stiffened by the addition of the British Tenth Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Richard McCreery, which consisted of the 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) and the 56th (London) Divisions.

SALERNO

The seaborne assault on the Gulf of Salerno was to be carried out on 9th September 1943 by the two Territorial Divisions, with the 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division, on the left, and the 56th (London) Division on the right, together with the American 34th Division. Once they had secured a viable beach-head, the plan was for the British 7th Armoured Division, the famous 'Desert Rats', to drive forward and to capture Naples. Not only did this plan involve all the logistic problems of a seaborne attack, but in addition the hills around Salerno gave the German defenders a distinct advantage in dominating the narrow coastal plain. Italy was also a country with rugged central mountains and narrow coastal plains criss-crossed by numerous river valleys, terrain which gave a distinct advantage to the defender. The 46th Division was now commanded by Major-General J L I Hawkesworth CBE DSO [1] who had succeeded Major-General H A Freeman-Attwood DSO CBE MC on 26th August. General Hawkesworth was to become acknowledged as one of the most skilful and competent divisional commanders in the British Army. General Sir Richard McCreery, who later commanded the Eighth Army, described him as *"a master of infantry tactics, he varied his methods and was always ready to encourage surprise, a silent night approach and fieldcraft"*. Under his command the 46th Division was to have a battle record second to none, almost always in the thickest of the heaviest fighting, it seldom failed to secure its allotted objectives.

Orders for 'Operation Avalanche' directed that the division first secured the beach-head between the rivers Pincetino and Asa, a front of just over one mile, to secure the hills which dominated Salerno and then to capture the port. Once this had been done, the division then had to capture the northern corridors to Cava and Sanserverino. The landing was planned on a one brigade frontage on 'Red' and 'Green' beaches led by the Hampshires, 128th Infantry Brigade, with the task of overcoming local defences and capturing the hills overlooking the Salerno Road. 138th Infantry Brigade followed close behind with the task of advancing to capture Salerno and there linking up with British Commandos [2]. 139th Infantry Brigade was at first placed in reserve. A reminder of the division's Shire Oak shoulder-flash featured prominently in the response to the password "Mailed Fist" which was "Hearts of Oak". The Dukes 58th Anti-Tank Regiment supported the infantry brigades with the specific role of being ready to counter enemy armoured counter-attacks. 231 Battery landed with 128 Infantry Brigade [3] on 'D' Day as did 232 Battery with 138 Infantry Brigade [4]. 229 and the new 325 Batteries landed later. By the 7th September the 46th Division's convoy was moving out to sea, and the late afternoon of the 8th, with the convoy now under enemy bomber-attack, brought surprising news:

"At dusk, over the ships' speakers, came the startling BBC announcement of Italy's unconditional surrender, which came to accord strangely with the falling bombs. But it was midnight before General Hawkesworth received the official notification of surrender, which added that covering fire on the beaches was to proceed as planned, but that the coastal batteries were only to be engaged if they opened fire (these were manned by Italians). Shortly afterwards the coastal guns did open fire, and were engaged by the Mendip, Brecon and Blakeney. Hopes of easy success began to wane. With the

crash of guns overhead the assault boats began to move shorewards in steady lines. The first wave was exactly to time. In the faint moonlight it was impossible to distinguish any of the landmarks that had been studied on the aerial photographs. The rocket ships opened up for the final five minutes on Red and Green beaches. Eighty-eights were joining in the incredible uproar. For the men of 46 Division it was the central moment of the war. Behind lay North Africa's early losses and eventual, sudden victory; ahead were unknown battles in a new country."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

At 3.30am on 9th September the Hampshiremen assaulted across beaches raked by enemy machine-guns and shellfire, with lethal 'S' mines liberally interspersed across their path. This area was held by two battalions of the German 69th Panzer Grenadier Regiment in strong defensive positions supported by coastal batteries, armour and self-propelled guns. Succeeding waves were landed causing men and vehicles to pile up on the narrow beach-heads as there was no room to move forward. Further confusion had been caused when part of the 46th Division was mistakenly landed on the beach of the neighbouring 56th Division.

As the sun rose, enemy observers in the surrounding hills directed accurate shellfire on the discharging landing ships, and further disembarkation was temporarily suspended until the beach-head could be expanded. The Hampshires managed to fight a way progressively inland but the KOYLI and Lincolns were heavily counter-attacked as they prepared to advance. Difficult and confused fighting ensued as they held on to and tried to expand their positions which were only three hundred yards from the waterline. By late afternoon the enemy began to withdraw, giving General Hawkesworth a chance to consolidate his division's minimal foothold. On the left sector 'B' Squadron of the division's Recce Regiment, supported by Engineers, raced off to Salerno closely followed by the 6th York and Lancasters who later secured Salerno and the high ground covering the Sanserverino road. By late afternoon 139th Infantry Brigade was also ashore and unloading the division's vital equipment and supplies had begun in earnest. As yet, the Dukes' anti-tank gunners had not come into action. Some six German divisions were to be drawn into the attempt to push the Allies off the Salerno beach-head. The opposition generated intense and bitter fighting as the division fought to expand its tenuous grip on Italian soil. On 12th September a general enemy offensive was launched which pushed back both the Americans and the 56th (London) Division, and this was only stemmed when every available man was thrown into the front-line. A determined defence of the beaches had been put up by the German 16th Panzer Division whose aggressive counter-attacks had kept the Allies pressed close to the shoreline, and gained valuable time for further German reinforcements to arrive.

On the 14th September 231 Anti-Tank Battery had taken up positions inland guarding the valley running east of Pontecagno, about a mile east of the village. The battery was continually in action throughout the 15th and 16th and knocked-out three Mark IV tanks on each day, increasing this tally with two armoured cars on the 16th. Further north, in the area of Vietri Gap, 229 and 232 Anti-Tank Batteries were also in action and were heavily engaged in holding determined enemy counter-attacks. The division's positions held, but it was a close-run thing in which one 17 pounder anti-tank gun was over-run and captured. 229 Battery's Major J W Fenny was also severely wounded by mortar fire whilst visiting his gun teams, and died a few days later. Captain Kershaw was then promoted major and assumed command of the battery.

By 22nd September the German defenders had taken such a severe battering that they were forced to withdraw, particularly as the Eighth Army was also advancing up Italy threatening to cut them off. This partial withdrawal allowed the 46th Division to implement its second phase by opening up the routes to the plain of Naples thus enabling the armour to breakout of the beach-head. The infantry had a particularly tough fight through steep rocky terraces sprinkled with isolated villages. It was very much an infantryman's battle during which much of their equipment and supplies could in many cases only be got forward by porters. During these mainly 'mountain warfare' operations the Dukes' anti-tank batteries followed up in support, but no major actions requiring their guns developed as the German defenders grudgingly yielded every piece of ground. On 28th September the 46th Division secured San Martino, and the 7th Armoured Brigade was at last passed through. Three days later Naples was captured:

"In an effort to force a crisis within the city [Naples], which would distract Allied attention from the urgent prosecution of the campaign, the retreating Germans had destroyed the aqueduct which supplied most of the city's water. Guards had to be put on the few remaining hydrants. Electricity installations had been wrecked, and the sewage system disrupted. Not content with this, they left time bombs in public buildings and places likely to be occupied by troops. One such, in Naples Post Office, took a terrible toll of civilians."

(Ibid)

The soldiers of the 46th Division had been under continuous enemy fire for about three weeks, and all were grateful for a few days rest in the unspoiled vineyards and orchards around Naples.

CROSSING THE VOLTURNO

It was a short respite, for on the 5th October the 46th Division moved 20 miles north of Naples with orders to cross the River Volturno. This was to be one of the numerous opposed river-crossings that were a particular feature of the fighting in Italy. The whole riverline, from Capua to the sea, was held by two notable units, the 15th Panzer Grenadier and the Herman Göring Divisions. Both these divisions held the few feasible crossing points in strength and had deployed reserves of infantry and tanks ready to counter-attack. The Volturno's banks were steep and heavily wooded and the river wide and difficult to cross, German patrols were deployed along the length of the river to give early warning of advancing forces.

Within the 46th Division's area only two essential roads led to the river, one about a mile inland at Castel Voltura, and another five miles inland at Cancelllo. These obvious routes were both held by the enemy in great strength and the division's plan was heavily to bombard these two points with artillery whilst making a silent assault crossing between them. In addition, landing craft and DUKW's were to carry a squadron of 40 RTR's tanks, two troops of the 58th's anti-tank guns, and supplies by sea around the river mouth to land them on the north, enemy, bank under the protection of naval gunfire. The silent crossings had to be covertly done before the enemy realized that the artillery barrages were not followed up by an attack in those areas, and this required the infantry to carry their assault boats quietly to the water's edge for more than a mile:

"The crossing commenced at 2100hrs on 12th October, a lovely starlit night with no moon. Silently the troops crossed over on the six-mile front from Capua to the sea. In the face of very great difficulties 229 Battery succeeded in getting their guns across the river just west of Cancelllo and were followed shortly after by 232 Battery."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

It was essential that the tanks and anti-tank guns were across the river as soon as possible if the lightly-armed infantrymen were to have any chance of securing the enemy bank. As with the seaborne assault at Salerno, the main fear was that the initial landing force would be knocked off the beach by a quick counter-attack, as the Forester's at Cancelllo found:

"A counter-attack at dawn with infantry and three tanks, drove back one company with the loss of fifty men. The tanks were engaged by our artillery, but remained unpleasantly close. Six-pounders [anti-tank guns] were being dismantled for ferrying in an effort to thicken the anti-tank defence. Between ten and eleven o'clock frontal attacks on the reduced bridgehead were beaten off. Two strong patrols trying to fight their way to the other companies were forced back with heavy losses."

(The Story of 46 Division, 1939-1945. Unit Author. 1946.)

Heavy fighting to seize crossing points continued and the urgently needed Dukes' anti-tank guns were hastened across the river to support the hard-pressed infantry:

"During the week which followed the various batteries were engaged in the hardest fighting they had so far experienced. The country was heavily mined and covered with water obstacles; all crossings were heavily shelled by the enemy; tanks and infantry were constantly counter-attacked and low-flying enemy 'planes were continually strafing the forward troops. The batteries of the 58th were constantly in action during this period. In spite of the severity and weight of the counter-attacks of the enemy, the British troops in the main held grimly on to their positions, though casualties were extremely heavy. On 17th October the weather broke turning the tracks into a sea of mud, but immediately decreasing the activity of the German tanks. Very gradually the initiative passed to the British troops, and by 23rd October the crossing had been established and patrols were being pushed forward in the canal zone to test the defences further north. By this time, however, it had been decided to exploit success along Highway 7 which had been gained with less loss of life."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The Volturno crossings had been defended by a determined, aggressive enemy who had made excellent use of the terrain. Cancelllo was by now a battered shell, filled with putrid dead bodies and rats. The whole area was littered with clever booby-traps and lethal mines. This low-lying ground was churned into a sea of mud liberally sprinkled with the last of the autumn's mosquitoes and the filthy detritus generated by heavy fighting. The 46th Division was not sad to see the last of this God-forsaken area where it had sustained so many losses for so little gain. By 29th October the 46th Division had redeployed on Highway 7 having taken over from the 7th Armoured Division. At dawn the next morning 139th Infantry Brigade, with 229 Anti-Tank Battery in support, crossed the River Teano and was followed by 138th Brigade, with 232 Anti-Tank Battery, later that day. The Dukes' gunners moved forward with their respective brigades, and although always at the ready no major enemy offensive developed which saw the gunners engaged in a major action:

"The enemy were retiring slowly, hitting back with shell and mortar fire whenever opportunity occurred; but taking great care that his flanks were always secure, retiring whenever they were threatened. The operations consisted of a series of difficult river crossings. Occasionally the rivers were dry; in other cases rafts were used if the current was not too swift; oxen were used on more than one occasion and Bailey bridges were sometimes available, but not often. Normally a bridgehead had to be formed on the far side before the Bailey bridges could be erected, and the batteries had to move with the advanced infantry to be ready to deal with tank attack if it developed. In this way seventeen rivers were crossed before the middle of December and still no Jordan was in sight. The Garigliano had been reached and the weather had gradually deteriorated. Shortly before Christmas the snow came down and the operations became gradually static."

(Ibid)

At this time the Allied Fifth Army had a strength of just six infantry divisions and their numbers, particularly in the infantry, had been depleted by casualties and exhaustion during the stiff fighting since the Salerno landings. The Allies were outnumbered by the German XIV Panzer Corps which had by now been reinforced to seven divisions which also enjoyed the significant advantage of holding a strong natural defensive position in the mountainous terrain. It was therefore no surprise when General Mark Clark, commanding the Fifth Army, called a temporary halt to the Allied advance on 15th November in order to rest, regroup, and to establish lines-of-supply which would allow the advance to continue.

The Italian winter coupled with the steep mountains imposed the severest of hardships on the 46th Division, and none suffered more than the infantry perched on exposed mountains 2,000 feet above sea level. Here simply surviving the conditions was no less a hazard than the enemy which opposed them. Infantrymen huddled in greatcoats and leather jerkins for warmth in the scant shelter of boulders stacked up to form defensive sangars. Getting supplies by vehicle to these forward troops was impossible. This meant that all supplies and ammunition had to be carried forward by porters and mule trains [5] along narrow slippery mountain tracks. Supply problems imposed a strain on the logistical capacity of forward units; in the infantry battalions the few headquarter company staff were simply exhausted by the demands of manhandling basic stores forward.

Thus for a time in December the gunners of the 58th Anti-Tank Regiment were employed in the essential work of road-building and moving supplies to the forward mountainous outposts over the Ramino feature. Tracks had by now deteriorated to the point that mules could not get through, and night after night large parties of Dukes manhandled rations and ammunition forward in the most atrocious weather through knee-deep mud to the frozen infantrymen. It was tough work, though well received when the gunners dropped their burdens at the forward posts before turning back for the valleys. However tough their role as porters, most of the gunners were nevertheless grateful that they at least did not have to remain holding positions in the desolate wintry mountains in full view of a particularly aggressive enemy.

Four days into 1944's New Year found the 58th Anti-Tank Regiment concentrated in the Roccamonfino area, five miles east of the River Garigliano, with the batteries deployed in nearby valleys in a vain attempt to gain shelter from the severe weather. At this time the 46th Division was preparing to cross the river in the direction of San Ambrogio and, to support this move 232 Anti-Tank Battery was pushed over the River Deccia. Here the battery deployed its guns on the riverline of the Garigliano, remaining in close proximity to the enemy until the end of January. During that time enemy mortars and artillery pounded the Dukes' positions, but the Germans made no attempt to counter-attack and the anti-tank guns were not brought into action.

All through this time the infantry remained clinging to an outpost line on isolated hilltops whilst enduring the most appalling weather conditions and privation. Despite superhuman endeavours, this was causing a high wastage rate amongst the infantry battalions which could not be matched by reinforcement drafts. This manning shortfall led to the 58th Anti-Tank Regiment being instructed to form an infantry company to hold the sector of the line near Roccadevandro. The company was commanded by Major A S McDonald and was manned by those personnel from 231 and 325 Anti-Tank Batteries with infantry experience. It moved into the line on 6th February and was quickly involved in defensive measures which included night patrolling. One such patrol, on the night of 24th/25th February, ambushed a German patrol, killing one and capturing three, without any loss. Later rotations eased the strain when 325 Battery personnel were replaced by 232 Battery. Major McDonald was not so fortunate being severely wounded by mortar fire on 16th February, and dying of his wounds on the next day.

The 46th Division had by now been in continuous action for nearly six months, in difficult terrain, and often in dreadful weather, and was therefore withdrawn to rest in the Near East. As 231 and 232 Anti-Tank Batteries withdrew from their temporary infantry role in March the Regiment's two other batteries had already left Naples for Suez. It was not until 20th April that the Regiment was again consolidated at Nathanya, Palestine. Training commenced in May with batteries again redeployed with respective infantry brigades in Syria until the middle of June:

"On 26th June 1944 the Regiment embarked at Port Said, with memories of some intensive battle-training in the scorching heat, and more pleasant ones of short leave in Cairo with its well-stocked shops, affluent Egyptians, cabarets, and a background of insistent clamour of motor-horns."

"The news from Italy was good. Rome had fallen and consequently there would be no more battles in the well-known hills which flanked the Garigliano. The Normandy landing had been firmly established, and the whole [46th] Division to a man hoped they were destined to reinforce the British Army of Liberation in North-West Europe. But it was not to be, and on 3rd July the troops arrived at Taranto. The Division spent two days in crowded cattle-trucks, reached Capua and then moved northwards through the rubble of Cassino. Thence through Rome to the rolling country around Bevagna where intense training was once again the order of the day."

(Ibid)

THE GOTHIC LINE

By August 1944 the Germans had been forced back into the natural defensive line formed by Italy's Apennine range of mountains which barred the Allies approach to the plains of Northern Italy. The Allied plan was to hold in the west and secretly concentrate the Eighth Army on the Adriatic Coast to break through the Po valley and the enemy's defensive positions called the 'Gothic Line'. On its return to Italy the 46th Division had been transferred to the Eighth Army. The 23rd August found the division covertly moving forward as the German 71st Division, about 15 miles to its north, withdrew across the River Metauro into the Gothic Line. The 46th Division's first objective was to secure the 1,415 feet high Monte Gridofco just beyond the River Foglia.

The division crossed the River Metauro during the night of 26th/27th August with 231 Anti-Tank Battery supporting the 128th Infantry Brigade and 229 Anti-Tank Battery with 139th Infantry Brigade. Dawn brought a swift reaction from the enemy when heavy mortar and shellfire was brought down on those places where the ground obviously dictated an assault force must concentrate during a crossing. Although no enemy tanks materialised, the Dukes' gunners were constantly in demand to demolish positions occupied as enemy strongpoints:

"Following the crossing of the Metauro on 26th/27th August the Regiment was constantly in action till 21st October. During this period five rivers were successfully negotiated, with the enemy hitting back at every opportunity and making the passages as difficult as he possibly could, by bringing down a barrage of shell and mortar fire on all likely crossing places. Getting the guns across the rivers presented enormous difficulties under these conditions. Occasionally there was the luxury of a Bailey bridge, but more often rafts were used, and on at least one occasion oxen were employed. If everything else failed the weapons had to be manhandled by teams of 30 to 40 men. In this way the Conca and Marano Rivers were crossed. Then followed some heavy fighting on the Gemmano ridge, the advance across the state of San Marino, then the crossing of the Marrecchia and Rubicon Rivers."

(Ibid)

Attempts to further the advance across the River Fiumicino were held up for six days by more torrential rain. The enemy artillery and mortars systematically shelled the forward and rear areas thus delaying attempts to deploy the divisional field artillery in support of crossing operations. On the night of 12th October 'G' and 'J' Troops, of 231 and 232 Anti-Tank Batteries, slithered down the steep river banks towed by jeeps and tracked carriers, but on reaching the enemy bank could be moved no further. Here the guns remained, with the gunners soaked to the skin and under heavy enemy bombardments, struggling without any success to get the guns forward to support the advancing infantry. 58th Anti-Tank Regiment was withdrawn from the line on 21st October for nine days rest and refit.

In the previous two months the 46th Division had fought forward over sixty miles, crossing ten rivers, most of which had been stubbornly defended by a particularly determined enemy. It had been found that the Regiment's six-pounder anti-tank guns were far too cumbersome for the gunners to get forward to support the infantry due to the mountainous terrain, poor roads and marshy river bottoms. This resulted in 'Littlejohn' two-pounder anti-tank guns being issued as replacements. Respite was short-lived, for on 1st November the 46th Division was again attacking Forli, a large town with a strategic airfield. The gunners of 231 Anti-Tank Battery were soon in action and undergoing the unenviable experience of firing their new two-pounder guns for the first time at an enemy which was but 200 yards away. But this attack was also slowed down by more torrential rain, and had to be halted to allow much-needed tanks to be got forward in preparation for the anticipated street-fighting that was to come. Once over the River Ronco 231 and 232 Anti-Tank Batteries were continuously in action in dreadful weather conditions west of Forli, whilst 229 Anti-Tank Battery was engaged in the rapid crossing of the River Rabbi and capture of Forli itself. The River Marzeno was then crossed before the end of November, after which the division spent a short period consolidating its gains before pressing on towards the formidable obstacle presented by the River Lamone. About this time Major General Hawkesworth was promoted to command 10 Corps and command of the 46th Division passed to Major General C E Weir CBE DSO.

Incessant rain was as usual falling over the River Marzeno as the 46th Division's engineers erected a 100 ton Bailey Bridge to serve the only road forward between the Marzeno and Lamone Rivers. This main divisional route was far from ideal, for it was in places so narrow that it could only take one-way traffic, and its poor surface was soon crumbling under the weight of traffic and rain. Across the River Lamone the enemy-held hills rose steeply in which three German divisions, including the 26th Panzer Division, held a strong natural defensive position. The Lamone remained in full flood for a week due to the rains, and the division's battle-preparations were made no less difficult by enemy artillery which was accurately directed by observers in the hills onto the essential lines-of-communication.

As dark fell on 3rd December 231 and 232 Anti-Tank Batteries crossed the Lamone with the main assault troops. It was vital that the guns kept up with the infantry and the Dukes' gunners again encountered tremendous problems in simply getting the guns forward. Oxen were at first used but when these could go no further teams of between 30 and 40 men were needed just to drag each gun forward into position. Both batteries then spent days in the forward posts which were swamped with fire from enemy mortars and artillery, extreme wet, cold, and a shortage of food made conditions even more miserable. Only the minimum of supplies could be got forward, and the evacuation of wounded at night across difficult ground swept by shellfire demanded the greatest determination:

"The enemy was putting up a very stubborn resistance and shortly after dawn on the morning of 9th December he opened a bombardment of great intensity. This heralded a counter-attack by 90th Panzer Grenadiers, with the object of pushing the whole [46th] division across the Lamone. The batteries of the 58th were soon in action and did their full share in stemming the advance."

"232 Battery had particularly bad luck. A Mark IV tank, which had come into the arc of one of the guns, became obscured by a large tree which the detachment had been unable to demolish and the tank did not move until the gun had been knocked out. Encountering fierce resistance along the whole front, the enemy attack began to waver. British fighter-bombers from Celle came into action, and by 1100 hours the attack had petered out."

(Ibid)

On 11th December the 46th (North Midlands and West Riding) Division was withdrawn from the front line to rest. In the event the Territorials of the 58th (1/4th DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment were in time to learn that they had fought their last battle of World War 2. In January 1945 the division was transferred to Greece on garrison duties, but only two troops ('B' and 'G' Troops) accompanied the division, and these later rejoined the Regiment in Italy during mid-March. The Regiment was in Rome on 8th May when the war in Europe came to an end. As anti-tank artillery, the Halifax Dukes' role had remained close to their traditional infantry role in North Africa and Italy. It had not been without a tragic cost, for some two hundred [6] members of the Regiment had become casualties during the campaigns in North Africa and Italy.

[1: General 'Ginger' Hawkesworth, GOC 46th Division, was later promoted to command 10th Corps. An outstanding officer, Lieutenant General Sir J L I Hawkesworth KBE CB DSO set out for home after the Corps' last great battle in May 1945, but died suddenly before reaching home.]

[2: Captain The Duke of Wellington was serving with Number 2 Commando, on secondment from DWR, and was killed in action on 16th September 1943.]

[3: 128th Infantry Brigade, 46 Division), comprising its original two TA battalions the 1/4th and 5th, Battalions The Hampshire Regiment, but its original 2/4th Hampshires (TA), had been replaced by that Regiment's regular 2nd Battalion in May 1943.]

[4: 138th Infantry Brigade, 46 Division), comprising 6th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA), 2/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA), 6th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA).]

[5: The logistic problems encountered in Italy led to a Mule Corps of 30,000 mules being formed with animals from Italy, Sicily and South America. One day's ammunition and supplies for a Brigade Group required the services of 1,000 mules. As a mule could only cover 16 miles each day this meant that a mule-dependant brigade could advance no more than 8 miles each day if it was to be resupplied.]

[6: During the service of the 58th (1/4th DWR) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) in North Africa and Italy the Regiment suffered 7 officers and 35 soldiers killed or died of wounds; 10 officers and 112 soldiers wounded; 2 officers and 34 soldiers posted as missing.]

CHAPTER 9

1944: THE POLAR BEAR ROARS

"That Bear is too submissive. I want a defiant sign for my division, lift up its head and make it roar."

Major General E H Barker CBE DSO

On assuming command of the 49th (West Riding) Division. 30th April 1943.

NORTH-WEST EUROPE 1944-1945

Four Dukes' Territorial units saw active-service in North-West Europe during 1944/45 as part of the British Army of Liberation. Halifax's 68th Anti-Tank Regiment was to serve with the 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division. Huddersfield's Searchlight Regiment had spent the large part of the war as anti-aircraft gunners, but was destined to be converted to the infantry role towards the end of the war. Skipton's 6th [1] and Milnsbridge's 7th [1] Battalions served with the 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division. The Dukes 6th and 7th Battalions formed 147th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier E R Mahoney, together with the 11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers [2]. The 7th Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J H O Wilsey, who had assumed command in October 1943. The 6th Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel C F Tissington MC who was a pre-war 7th Dukes officer, later as second-in-command, before being promoted to command the 6th Battalion in 1942.

By 1944 Colonel Tissington had commanded for nearly two years and had brought his 6th Battalion to a high state of efficiency. But in early 1944 General Montgomery decreed that commanding officers of infantry battalions must be under 40 years old. This arbitrary ruling resulted in Lieutenant Colonel Tissington being required to hand over command just as his battalion was about to proceed on active service, this despite the fact that he enjoyed the affection and confidence of his soldiers and was as tough as blazes. This resulted in the Battalion receiving a new commanding officer in February 1944 in the form of Lieutenant Colonel R K Exham MC.

Their battalions had been reorganised in 1941, particularly with the issue of 'Number 18' manpacked wireless sets which enabled wireless communication between battalion headquarters and company headquarters. But on active service the radio sets were found to be far from robust as valves were often broken, even by the buffeting caused by supporting artillery barrages. This often resulted in commanders losing communications, often at critical moments.

The structure of infantry battalions had changed too, and a few new weapons had been introduced in an attempt to match German technology. Officers commanding rifle companies were now in the rank of major, rather than captain. The rank of Warrant Officer Class 3, for Platoon Sergeant Majors, also disappeared for by this time there were enough commissioned officers coming through the system. Rifle section strengths were slightly increased, each now commanded by a corporal, a Bren light machine-gun group of a lance corporal and two men, and a rifle group of six men.

The Dukes' basic weapon was the newly-introduced Mark 4 Lee Enfield rifle, but apart from a shorter bayonet it was little changed from its battle-tested predecessor. Although the section Bren proved to be an accurate and reliable weapon, it was, being magazine-fed, little more than an automatic rifle and could not produce the overwhelming weight of fire that the infantry needed, at a moment's notice, to saturate the battlefield. The Bren was to prove greatly outmatched by the German infantry's MG42, popularly known as the 'Spandau', whose belt-fed system produced 1,200 rounds a minute. The Dukes were soon to discover the difficulty of advancing towards German defensive positions containing carefully sited spandaus. To counter this they could only produce a relatively weak rate of fire from the British rifle company's nine Brens, which compared with a German company's sixteen spandaus. The rifle platoon's Boyes anti-tank rifle had been replaced by the 'Projector Infantry Anti-Tank', better known as the PIAT. The PIAT had a maximum range of 115 yards and guaranteed tank-kills needed to be at much closer ranges which demanded nerves of steel from the infantryman.

Headquarter Company shed its weapons to become solely a logistic organisation and a new 'Support Company' was formed in each battalion. The carrier platoon, now commanded by a captain, received an additional three Bren carriers; a new anti-tank platoon came into being and was equipped with 6 six-pounder anti-tank guns towed by carriers with a seventh carrier for the platoon commander. The Battalion's mortar platoon was now equipped with adapted Bren carriers, and their mortars had been modified with a stronger baseplate and barrel enabling them to fire their ten pound mortar bombs up to a range of two miles.

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISION

In 1942 the 49th (West Riding) Division returned home from Iceland. In the spring of 1943 the division became part of the British 1st Corps, with the 3rd and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions. It was designated as an 'assault division' for the anticipated Allied invasion of North-West Europe and spent the large part of 1943 in Ayrshire undergoing intensive training:

"There, in almost continuous rain, we learnt how to embark and disembark ourselves and our transport in landing craft and landing ships, until we felt more like sailors than soldiers. There followed various exercises with live ammunition, commencing at company level and terminating in a brigade exercise. Beaches had been skilfully made to resemble those on the northern coast of Europe, with wire and blockhouses to be breached and blown with Bangalore torpedo and Beehive charges. Moreover, the field firing areas inland of the beaches of Loch Fyne enabled us to carry out most realistic training, only bettered by that which we had later at Rothesay. Like other units we had our toll of accidents, but to make the training realistic, normal safety precautions had to be relaxed. This policy was well rewarded when we went into battle, as we were not unduly perturbed by the noise and danger of war."

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

The 49th Division was now commanded by Major General E H 'Bubbles' Barker [3] under whose leadership it returned to France in 1944. Major Paul Crook had been appointed as 147th Brigade Major in September 1942, and later recalled his first impressions:

"I knew all about mules and malaria and they were expert in snow ploughs and frostbite. Once again I was to live in a tent in mid-Wales in a wet September. The Division, 49 West Riding, was mainly composed of sturdy territorial soldiers from Yorkshire and as yet was very little changed after spending 18 months together in Iceland. My Brigade, 147 Infantry Brigade, was made up of a Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment [replaced by 11 RSF] and two Battalions of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. I had great friends in the artillery based on Maidstone, which is a great asset for an infantry brigade major. The Brigadier was a charming Irish Guardsman, Edmund Mahoney, an excellent infantry soldier with little interest in the capabilities of other units."

(Came The Dawn. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

In January 1944 the 49th Division was transferred to the 30th Corps and moved to Norfolk. General Barker had been far from happy with the division's Polar Bear badge on assuming command describing it as a "droopy, timid looking animal", certainly not in keeping with the image of a division tasked to take part in the invasion of Europe. He quickly had it changed for a Polar Bear with head uplifted roaring ferociously, and the General clearly made an impact upon the soldiers in his division:

"One Sunday morning General Barker gave us an address in the Odeon cinema along with the rest of 147 Brigade. He was both serious and humorous in his speech. We were going 'over there' to prove ourselves against the enemy. He was confident we would make a good show as we were a really efficient and reliable Division, having made quite a name for ourselves on the many exercises we had completed during our training period. He warned us of Boche [German] tricks and told us to make the Hun come to us and never go to him, when he was surrendering."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

The division's role in Operation 'Overlord' was again changed to being that of a 'follow-up division' when Montgomery [4] selected the 3rd and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions to be the assault divisions in Normandy. It must be said that this was an unpopular change for the West Riding Territorials who had spent a large part of the war garrisoning Iceland or training at home:

"There was some disappointment in the [49th] Division when we learnt that we were not to be the first troops ashore, but repeated re-assurances from 'higher authority' that the change was no reflection on the Division's state of training went some way towards repairing wounded pride. Meanwhile our revised role continued apace. In the event, the only difference that was apparent was that we no longer had to envisage the scenario of being the very first troops to storm ashore across the beaches. Instead, we would follow hot on the heels of 50 Div to join in the exacting task of fighting the battles to expand the beach-head, or Lodgement area as it came to be called."

(Battlefield Tour. G Barker Harland. 1987.)

Nor was it popular with the Territorials of the remarkable 50th (Northumbrian) Division who had already seen extensive active service in North-West Europe, North Africa and Sicily, and who had every good reason to think that their 50th Division had done far more than its bit. Facing them was an enemy which had already occupied

the Continent for over four years during which time they had constructed the strong coastal defence works which constituted Hitler's 'Atlantic Wall'. To defend this the Germans had fifty-eight divisions available, of which ten were panzer divisions. But these forces were required to cover some 3,000 miles of coastline which stretched from Holland to the Italian frontier, and over half the divisions were static ones. However, the remaining half were mobile divisions which, together with the panzer divisions, collectively had the capacity to produce a significant counter-attack force against any Allied landing.

Although the Allies had a substantial invasion force ready in Britain, the majority could only cross the Channel by sea. Only six divisions could be moved in the first seaborne lift and it would be a week before numbers ashore could be doubled. The Allied plan was for the two British Corps to land and draw against themselves the main enemy forces, especially the armour, and then to contain their attention by incessant attacks.

To do this the British 1st Corps [5] was to secure Caen as a pivot whilst the British 30th [5] and American 5th Corps attacked south to secure the high ground St Lô-Caumont-Villers Bocage. The Allied force for the invasion of Normandy [6] was a massive one involving the British 1st and 30th Corps, the American 5th and 7th Corps together with three Airborne Divisions, the British 6th and American 82nd and 101st. The 30th Corps was to land on 'Gold Beach', the westernmost beach of the 2nd British Army, which stretched between Le Hamel and la Rivière in Normandy, led by the Territorials of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, closely followed by the 7th Armoured Division, with the preliminary objective of capturing Bayeux. The 50th (Northumbrian) was to land on D Day, 6th June 1944. The initial plan was for the Dukes' 49th (West Riding) Division to land across the same Gold beach on D+1, but in the event weather was to delay them. On 5th June the 6th and 7th Dukes moved to their marshalling area at Wanstead Common, arriving at 4pm the next day as early reports of the D Day assault landings filtered through. The Dukes received their final briefings and they at last received a general issue of maps showing their objectives. Equipment for the sea passage was issued, including 300 light folding bicycles which, in theory, were a boon to infantrymen otherwise destined to an eternal route-march. Although fine for light-hearted races it was soon found that the battle-prepared infantryman, encumbered with all his accoutrements and pack, was unceremoniously dumped over the back of his light bicycle if he dared to ride upright. Each man was also issued with 200 French Francs, then worth £1, sea-sickness pills, vomit bags, and special ration packs. Now in sealed camps and with the invasion taking place, the long wait since embodiment in 1939 was over:

"The [7th] Battalion was well trained and hard. Battle-training for the assault, and later as a follow-up division to 50th Division, had been designed by the Divisional Commander, Major General E H Barker, with complete realism to prepare every unit to meet every battle situation. His leadership, energy, experience and wise guidance welded the Division into a fighting team of which every officer and man was conscious and proud."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

[1: The '1/6th' and 1/7th' Battalions had reverted to the former '6th' and '7th' designations in January 1943 when the duplicate '2/6th' and '2/7th' Battalions had been converted into units of the Royal Armoured Corps (TA).]

[2: 11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers, Lieutenant Colonel W H J Montgomery-Cunninghame, was a war-formed infantry battalion which had been transferred to the 49th (West Riding) Division, from the 76th Infantry Division, on 7th September 1942 to replace York's 1/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA).]

[3: Major General E H Barker CBE DSO MC had served with The King's Royal Rifle Corps in the First World War receiving the DSO, MC and two Mentions-in-Dispatches. He subsequently commanded a brigade during the withdrawal to Dunkirk in 1940, and later commanded the 54th (East Anglian) Division for two years before assuming command of the 49th (West Riding) Division.]

[4: General Sir Bernard L Montgomery, Commander-in-Chief 21st Army Group, when a major in 1923, had been appointed GSO2 49th (West Riding) Division.]

[5: British 1st Corps (Lieutenant General J T Crocker) comprising the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division, British 3rd Infantry Division, British 51st (Highland) Division; British 30th Corps (Lieutenant General G C Bucknall) comprising the British 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division, British 7th Armoured Division, British 49th (West Riding) Division.]

[6: Normandy is the largest province in France and its name derives from the Norsemen who invaded in the 9th Century. William the Conqueror, a Norman, invaded England in 1066 with the largest invasion fleet the world had seen. The link with William the Conqueror is recorded on the Bayeux memorial to the 1944 D Day landings, in the Latin inscription, which is translated - 'We once conquered by William have now set free the conqueror's native land'.]

NORMANDY - THE BOCAGE

At 7.25 in the morning on 6th June 1944 the Yorkshire Territorials of the 69th Infantry Brigade [7], 50th Division, became the first British infantry brigade to land on the Normandy beaches. The assault by these North Riding Territorials was appropriately supported by the Sherman tanks of a regular Yorkshire cavalry regiment, the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards. The division fought its way inland and, on the first day, Company Sergeant Major S Hollis, 6th Battalion The Green Howards, earned the only Victoria Cross awarded on D Day. By nightfall the 50th Division had carved a path inland and reached a point just short of its allotted objectives, nearly 25,000 men had landed across Gold beach for the loss of 413 killed, wounded or missing:

"In the centre the 50th Division had completed its D Day tasks with the clearing of Bayeux on the morning of the 7th, and on the left the Canadians and 3rd British Division were firmly established, though Caen, a D Day objective, had not been captured and was not, in fact, to fall for many a long day. On the extreme left flank the airborne troops had secured a bridgehead over the [River] Orne, and held a group of hamlets to the east of the river."

"From the enemy point of view the situation was critical but by no means hopeless. The best way to defeat an invasion, as the Germans doubtless appreciated, is to prevent the invaders from getting ashore. The Germans failed in this, and there is no doubt that they had reckoned with the possibility of such a failure. The real counter to 'Overlord' now lay in an attempt to contain our bridgehead, speedy concentration of armoured reserves, and a counter-attack to eliminate the bridgehead. The Allies' problem, on the other hand, was to expand the bridgehead as rapidly as possible and to build up reinforcements and supplies faster than the enemy."

(The Path of the 50th. E W Clay. 1950.)

The 49th (West Riding) Division's plan was at first that 146th Infantry Brigade [8] would land at 'Gold' beach on D+1, 7th June, quickly followed by its other two infantry brigades. In the event, bad weather and other reasons delayed the landing. By the morning of 9th June both Dukes battalions were embarked in His Majesty's Ship Cheshire at Southampton, then sailing and arriving off the invasion beach in the early hours of the next day. The crossing was uneventful, and apart from spasmodic enemy bombing, there was little evidence of the 50th Division, which was now fighting some miles inland, as the Dukes landed on 'Jig Green' beach just west of Arramanches. Heavily laden with their usual equipment and encumbered with the bucking bicycles the Dukes moved inland along marked infantry tracks. En route the only enemy interference was from one low-flying aircraft which bombed the tail of the 7th Battalion's 'D' Company, but caused no casualties. By late evening the concentration area at St Gabriel, some five miles inland, was reached; here the Dukes were reunited with their vehicles which had sailed in different ships:

"By 4pm the Battalion was concentrated in pleasant fields and was digging in. The 'Polar Bear' and the '62' (the Division and Battalion signs) were erected. The Battalion was on the edge of the battlefields. As darkness fell the night war over the beaches was seen in all its complex magnificence of colour. The German aircraft were heard and then the northern sky over the harbours erupted into the red fan of AA tracer and shell-bursts. The battalion remained at St Gabriel throughout the 12th and 13th June. There was little to do, but much was happening. On the Allied right the Americans were battling fiercely in preparation for the offensive against the great port of Cherbourg. 50th Division was pushing south from Bayeux against an enemy who was reinforcing rapidly, now that he had recovered from his initial surprise. Heavy fighting was in progress 4 miles south of Bayeux in the thick 'Bocage'. Further east the 3rd Canadian and 3rd British Divisions were meeting fierce opposition as they approached Caen, and further east again the 6th British Airborne Division was guarding the east flank of the bridgehead, with the 51st (Highland) Division concentrating behind them."

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The subsequent fighting in Normandy was to demand close co-operation between the infantry, artillery, air-power and armour. Not least important to the Dukes was to be tank support, but the imperative for sound infantry-tank co-operation had yet to be forged in battle:

"Despite many training exercises in the UK before Operation Overlord, infantry and tank co-operation in the field was, to put it politely, inconsistent. Most infantrymen disliked the sight of their large 'friends'. They were noisy, smelly, tin-can monsters which nearly always attracted incoming fire, not only on themselves but also on the nearby infantry. The PBI (poor bloody infantry) would not have a tanky's job for anything, and the reverse was also true. At dusk, when inevitably the tanks withdrew into 'laager' a mile or two behind the sharp end, the infantry felt a sense of abandonment, but the tank crews need to refuel, re-arm, rest and have meals was paramount. Also they had to stretch their legs after being cooped up from dawn to dusk in their Sherman, Cromwell or Churchill. At night, tanks are blind and vulnerable, and more or less sitting targets for prowling Panzer Grenadiers equipped with Panzerfaust [anti-tank rockets] or hand grenades."

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Most of the British tanks were 29.6 ton Shermans which were equipped with 75mm guns and had a maximum armour thickness of 50mm. The Sherman 'Firefly' variant was fitted with a 17 pounder (76.2mm) gun, but these were in short supply and only enough for one Firefly in each Sherman tank troop. Fitted with petrol engines the Shermans readily burst into flames when hit, and were ironically nicknamed 'Ronsons' or 'Tommy Cookers' by German anti-tank gunners - because they lit so easily.

The British tanks were to encounter German Mark IV's and Panther Mark V's, with 75mm guns, and a significant number of Mark VI Tiger tanks with the deadly 88mm gun. Too often the British tank gunners saw their basic 75mm armour-piercing shot bouncing off the much thicker armour of the German tanks which responded with 88mm guns which could knock out a Sherman at any visible range. The German Tigers were few in number but this 56 ton tank with 100mm thick armour wreaked havoc amongst the Allied tanks. Tigers could only be effectively destroyed by the Firefly, (or the equivalent 17 pounder anti-tank gun), and this resulted in the Firefly being a principal target for German gunners.

West of the Dukes' positions the 7th Armoured Division had already attempted to fight through to Villers-Bocage. But this Division had been mainly equipped for speed with Cromwell tanks, and very few Sherman Fireflies. Cromwells only had 75mm guns and were quite unsuited for fighting in the bocage. The 7th Armoured Division suffered severe losses when it encountered the Panther and Tiger tanks of the Panzer Lehr and 2nd Panzer Divisions, just north-east of Villers Bocage, and were forced to withdraw from this village that they had only recently captured. As 30th Corps advanced inland its frontage was expanding, thus spreading the forward troops too thinly in the dense 'bocage'. The Corps Commander now decided to move the 50th Division sideways to face Villers Bocage, thus bringing the 49th Division into the front-line as Lieutenant General Bucknall, commanding 30th Corps, later related:

"The two brigades of 49 Div could not prepare in time to be sent to Villers-Bocage to affect the fight there. They were destined in the Army plan in any event for the Fontenay [le Pesnil] front on the east flank of the Corps. Moreover 49 was a young Div with no recent battle experience and it was important to launch them nicely into their first fighting in a properly co-ordinated battle and not bundle them down helter-skelter into hot armoured scrapping like that around V-B and Amaye."

(Ibid)

The 49th Division's 146th Infantry Brigade therefore moved forward to Audrieu and took over from 69th Infantry Brigade, 50th Division, whilst the Dukes' 147th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier E R Mahoney, extended this line further east. Since landing on the beach the Territorials of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division had been heavily engaged in the fighting and gained the admiration of the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards:

"Our [8th Armoured] Brigade [9] now left the 50th (Northumbrian) Division with whom we had been operating since the initial landing. It had been a hard fight for the infantry, whose casualties were inevitably much higher than ours, and they had been so cut about that they were scarcely recognisable as the same people with whom we had landed. We left them with the greatest respect and admiration for the way they had followed up the initial dash in the prepared assault with day after day of heartbreaking slogging through the close Spandau-and-sniper-ridden Bocage country, suffering heavy casualties all the time, and even on successful days never advancing more than perhaps two or three miles. If we got disheartened as the slogging went on it must have been doubly difficult to keep the spirit of the infantrymen good, and all credit is due to them for the amount of success which they achieved in that vital initial period."

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countryside. The Spandau's distinctive high rate of fire produced an unforgettable noise, particularly when compared with the much slower sound of the Dukes' Bren guns. Whilst here the 6th Battalion came under intermittent enemy shellfire for the first time. Active patrolling was carried out through the 15th/16th June but no contact was made with the enemy. Milnsbridge's 7th Battalion was in brigade reserve in the area of St Croix, some 3,000 yards from the enemy lines. No fighting had taken place in this area in which the battalion remained until 17th June. 147th Brigade's third Battalion, 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, at first patrolled round Brouay [10] but later relieved 1/4th KOYLI.

The Dukes' 147th Brigade took over the division's static front-line positions to enable 146th Brigade to begin an advance in a southerly direction from Audrieu towards Cristot. This was part of the 49th Division's plan to capture the village of Fontenay-le-Pesnil from which the enemy held a vital ridge dominating the road from Caen to Villers Bocage. 146th Brigade's task was to secure a west-east line Audrieu-Cristot-Brouay. On 14th June Sheffield's Hallamshires began to clear enemy positions in Audrieu and the adjacent woodland. During these operations they found the bodies of Canadian soldiers, the Regina Rifles, who had obviously been lined up against a hedge before each was shot several times through the forehead. Local civilians reported that the atrocity had been committed by Russian soldiers in the German Army [11]. 4th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment, 146th Brigade, had taken over at Tilly sur Seulles from 6th Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment, (69th Infantry Brigade), on the night of 14th June. From here the Lincolns carried out patrols against enemy positions at Les Hauts Vents and Le Parc de Boislonde. On the 16th June the 10th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry [12] moved into the village of St Pierre and temporarily occupied it. Here accompanying sappers from Sheffield's 49th Divisional Engineers discovered another example of the black side of their enemy, as related by the Engineer Troop Commander, Lieutenant Little:

"We followed up and cleared the hamlet of St Pierre of mines and booby traps. Two medics came back to the halftrack. They wanted to move a wounded infantryman to the dressing station but he was lying close to a wounded German. They thought he was booby-trapped. The German was crying out 'Mutter, Mutter' for his mother. His arm was sticking out and a wire was attached to his wrist. I quickly stood on his wired arm and kicked him in the mouth with my other foot. Army boots can make a pretty awful mess. An 'S' mine, we called them 'Jack in the Box', was buried behind him - a pretty lethal weapon. He was a Hitler Jugend from the SS Panzer Lehr [13] Division and was wired by a comrade as a martyr to the Fatherland."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

CRISTOT

Wakefield's 1/4th KOYLI were tasked to carry out the 49th Division's first full-scale battalion scale attack on the village of Cristot, just south-east of Audrieu, on 16th June. They were not the first to experience the unique difficulties of Normandy's dense countryside when coupled with crack German panzer units which were equipped with outstanding tanks and anti-tank guns. It proved to be an extreme test for the British armour and infantry alike, just as it had also been for the Green Howards' 6th and 7th Battalions, who were at this time probably the most experienced infantry in the British Army. Both these Green Howards battalions had fought with particular distinction in North-West Europe in 1940 and were amongst the last to leave the Dunkirk beaches. From 1941 they had fought superbly for two years in North Africa and in Sicily before being withdrawn to prepare for 'D' Day. Yet even these veteran North Riding Territorials suffered appallingly whilst fighting in the bocage.

Only five days before the 1/4th KOYLI's planned attack on Cristot, Middlesbrough's 6th Battalion The Green Howards had also put in a quick attack on Cristot supported by the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards and the 24th Lancers. The Green Howards' attack was necessarily hastily planned, for their orders directed that speed was of the essence. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hastings, saw little sign of an enemy during his hasty pre-attack reconnaissance and the capture of Cristot seemed straightforward. The tanks first seized Point 103 from which piece of high ground they could 'shoot in' the infantry onto the objective. However the Green Howards' advance struggled to get through numerous thick hedges and ditches and was quickly outstripped by their tanks. Then the Green Howards were swamped by a devastating hail of fire. Enemy anti-tank guns, which had held their nerve to let the tanks pass their carefully concealed positions, opened fire and knocked out the tanks one by one. Only two out of nine 24th Lancers' tanks remained in action.

What had happened was that, in the small time between Lieutenant Colonel Hastings' recce and the attack itself, panzergrenadiers and tanks of the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend) had dashed in to occupy the Green Howards' objective. This rapid move by the panzers was at the personal intervention of Erwin Rommel [14] who had just inspected the German positions in this sector and recognised the strategic importance of this piece of high ground to his defence of the area west of Caen. Now pinned down by overwhelming firepower, and without tank support, the Green Howards attempted to outflank the German positions using the reserve

companies, but these too met an equally solid wall of fire. German tanks of the Panzer Lehr Division now began to attack the Durham Light Infantry and the 24th Lancers holding Point 103, and Lieutenant Colonel Hastings had no choice but to pull his battered Green Howards back to prevent his battalion being completely surrounded:

"It was hard enough to sit out in this blind country with a [by now numerically] weak battalion and few officers. It was an impossible position to remain there when there was every possibility that we would be cut off from our firm base by Mark IV tanks..... I am not sure that it is more difficult to decide to pull back than to go on. Such decisions are certainly much easier for others to criticise. It is easy to write off someone else's battalion for no particular object. You can say how well they fought. But when it is your own battalion you are apt to see it from a different angle."

Lieutenant Colonel R H W S Hastings DSO OBE MC [15]

(*British Army Journal*, No 1. Lt Col R H W S Hastings. 1949.)

The few hours fighting for Cristot had cost 6th Battalion The Green Howards alone nearly 250 casualties, including 24 officers, for no gain. The fight for Point 103, which had threatened the Green Howard's rear, was due to an attack put in by yet another German division, the II Abteilung (2nd Battalion) of the Panzer Lehr Division. With the boot on the other foot this crack German unit had similarly experienced the problems of attacking in the bocage. During the action the 24th Lancers, holding Point 103, came under attack from the II Abteilung's tanks led by their commander, Major Prince Wilhelm von Schönburg-Waldenberg:

"Six of our [24L] tanks were knocked-out in as many seconds. We withdrew west of the hill [Pt 103]. Hidden in the trees and orchards we sighted our guns on the advancing monster Tigers and Panthers. The order came to fire. The Shermans shook with the recoil of their guns; the commanders, glasses in position, watched their shots. Most of our armour-piercing shells were bouncing harmlessly off the enemy. This was serious. Quickly the few remaining tanks were called up, those that mounted the new enormous 17 pounder anti-tank gun [Sherman Firefly]. An ear-splitting crack, a vivid flash - and whoosh - the leading Tiger [16] stopped, smoked, and then burst into flames. The others caught in the open began to withdraw to cover.....The [German] infantry could hardly lift their heads from the ground without being shot. The firing became intense. The critical moment had come. We held."

Lieutenant K Wareham, 24th Lancers.

(*None Had Lances*. Leonard Willis. 1986.)

The 24th Lancers were back in action again on 16th June, now to support the 1/4th KOYLI's attack on Cristot. The 24th Lancers were part of the 8th Independent Armoured Brigade which had been in support of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division since D Day, but were now transferred to support the 49th Division:

"On the next day [15th June] we were suddenly switched to the command of 49 Division. This was the horror of belonging to an independent armoured brigade; one changed hands from day to day like a library book. The Regiment would be flung into battle at a moment's notice with infantry who never had experience of co-operating with tanks. Then, as soon as the infantry had been taught to work with us and everyone was beginning to enjoy the benefit, we would be moved off to support a different, strange formation. This day's attack was greeted by shelling which sent the infantry to ground; when they re-emerged they made no effort to contact the tanks again. It was all very disheartening, and drove one officer to remark that 'all infantry brigadiers look the same: middle-aged, rather grim, slow thinkers, and without any sense of humour.'"

(*The Sherwood Rangers*. T M Lindsay. 1952.)

In the event, 1/4th KOYLI's attack on Cristot was supported by a monumental volume of fire involving seven medium and four field artillery regiments and Royal Navy heavy guns as well as RAF fighters and fighter-bombers to neutralise the 400 enemy believed to be holding Cristot. By nightfall on 16th June 1/4th KOYLI had fought through and captured Cristot. In this battalion's previous five days in action it had suffered 66 casualties. The battalion sent out patrols onto the high ground to the south, but no opposition was met. They did, however, report six enemy tanks which were seen moving into Le Parc de Boislonde, a dense wood about one mile due south.

The 49th Division's preliminary fight at Cristot, on the division's left flank, and at St Pierre on the division's right, revealed that elements of at least two German panzer divisions sat between the division and its objective of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. Facing the 49th Division sat the Panzer Lehr Division on the right (west), and the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend) on the left (east). The 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend) was manned by Hitler Youth who had been recruited from the SS military fitness camps and personnel of Leibstandarte SS-AH. This armoured division was fully up to strength having some 177 tanks and 12 assault guns, and was supported by its own infantry in the form of the 25th and 26th SS Panzergrenadier Regiments. It was at first commanded by SS Lieutenant General Fritz Witt, but he was killed by Allied naval gunfire on 16th June. Command of the 12th SS Panzer Division then came to 33 years old Major General Kurt 'Panzer' Meyer, who was the youngest German divisional commander in 1944:

"Always in the thick of the fighting, a brave but fanatical Nazi, he was tall, handsome and totally dedicated to the Führer - 'You will hear a lot against Adolf Hitler in this camp' he told Milton Shulman when he interrogated him after the war, 'but you will never hear it from me.....he was and still is the greatest thing that ever happened to Germany'. Bold, tough, and arrogant, he was the archetypal Nazi stormtrooper."

(Tank Commanders, Knights of the Modern Age, Lt Col G Forty 1993.)

[7: 69th Infantry Brigade (50 Div) landed on the 'King' sector of 'Gold' beach opposite La Riviére. Middlesbrough's 6th Battalion The Green Howards (TA) landing on 'King Green', with Hull's 5th Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment (TA) on 'King Red', Bridlington's 7th Battalion The Green Howards (TA) landed shortly after.]

[8: 146th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier A Dunlop, comprising The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) (Sheffield), 1/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) (Wakefield), 4th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA) (Lincoln).]

[9: The 8th (Independent) Armoured Brigade, comprising the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards, 24th Lancers (to 29th July 1944), The Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers) Royal Armoured Corps (TA), 13th/18th Royal Hussars (from 29th July 1944), and 12th Battalion (Queen's Westminster's) The King's Royal Rifle Corps (TA).]

[10: Military maps then showed this village as 'Bronay' but it is now shown as 'Brouay'.]

[11: Some 40 Allied soldiers were murdered at Audrieu and, later, a War Crimes Court attributed the blame to the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend). Its commander, General Kurt 'Panzer' Meyer, was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to twelve years imprisonment.]

[12: The 70th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier E C Cooke-Collis, 49th (West Riding) Division, was the duplicate of the 151st Infantry Brigade, comprising 10th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) (Shildon), 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) (Chester-Le-Street), 1st Battalion The Tyneside Scottish, The Black Watch (TA) (Teams).]

[13: Panzer Lehr Division. Although 'Lehr' means 'training', the SS Panzer Lehr Division was a crack division used to give demonstrations to the German Panzer Corps, and was therefore equipped with the latest tanks and manned by the best personnel.]

[14: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, 'The Desert Fox', commanded the German Army Group 'B' in North-West Europe. He was commissioned into the infantry in 1912. Later commanding Hitler's Escort, and in 1940 commanded the 7th (Ghost) Panzer Division in North-West Europe. In February 1941 Rommel assumed command of all German troops in North Africa. Rommel was wounded in July 1944, and was later forced to commit suicide.]

[15: Lieutenant Colonel R H W S Hastings, commanding 6th Battalion The Green Howards (TA), was subsequently seriously wounded by mortar fire at La Taille Crossroads on 27th June 1944. He was succeeded as commanding officer by Lieutenant Colonel R K Exham MC DWR who transferred from the 6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA).]

[16: The leading II Abteilung's Tiger destroyed at Point 103 by the 24th Lancers' Firefly was that of Major Prince Wilhelm von Schönburg-Waldenberg, the German battalion commander, who was killed.]

LE PARC DE BOISLONDE

The 49th Division was now facing south and held a west to east line from Le Haut D'Audrieu through Les Haut Vents to Cristot; to the right was the 50th (Northumbrian) Division. To the 49th Division's south was the village of Fontenay-le-Pesnil, on the Caen road, with Tessel Wood and the village of Vendes beyond. Between the division's front-line and Fontenay-le-Pesnil, (on the road from Le Hamel), lay Point 102 and Le Parc de Boislonde. These two enemy-held features dominated any future attack the division chose to make on Fontenay-le-Pesnil and beyond. The plan was for the 6th Dukes to attack through the 1/4th Lincolns' position at Les Haut Vents and to capture Le Parc de Boislonde on 16th June. As soon as the 6th Dukes had consolidated, the 7th Dukes were to advance from the direction of Cristot and to capture Point 102. With Point 102 secure, the Hallamshires of 146th Brigade were to advance south to capture Fontenay-le-Pesnil and Tessel Wood.

On 16th June the 6th Dukes were relieved from their position at Loucelles in order to prepare for an attack the following day. Their objective was the Le Parc de Boislonde, a thick wood 500 yards west to east and 750

yards north to south, midway between Cristot and Fontenay-le-Pesnil. In the centre of the wood stood a large château on the ridge overlooking Fontenay-le-Pesnil. In support of his 6th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel R K Exham had 'B' Squadron 24th Lancers, 220 Anti-Tank Battery, 55th (Suffolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, and 'B' Company of the Kensingtons [17], who were equipped with medium machine-guns. Additional 30 Corps troops were attached in the guise of 234 Anti-Tank Battery, (73rd Anti-Tank Regiment) equipped with self-propelled 17 pounder guns. The Kensingtons' 6 and 7 medium machine-gun platoons were to protect the battalion's flanks by a direct shoot onto enemy positions in Tessel Wood, the 8 medium machine-gun platoon had the task of moving forward to consolidate the Dukes' position as soon as the objective was taken. Artillery fire support was to be provided by four field regiments, but air support was unavailable due to the bad weather. In the afternoon of 16th June Lieutenant Colonel Exham visited 4th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment's positions at Les Hauts Vents, a small cluster of houses, which had that afternoon just been occupied by the Lincolns' 'B' Company. Here pre-attack liaison was carried out with the Squadron Commander of the 24th Lancers, Major Roy Bennett, and later supporting artillery fireplans were arranged. The closed nature of the terrain made it virtually impossible to get clear sight of Le Parc de Boislonde before the Dukes' attack was put in. The 24th Lancers gave quite outstanding service to the 49th Division, but, as with other armoured regiments, keeping in touch with them during a fight was not always an easy matter:

"There were also many first hand accounts of the inability of infantry platoon or company commanders to contact their closed-down tank support. There was little they could do apart from clambering up on the monster and beating on it hard and noisily (usually during an incoming stonk). It took a lot of time and effort to persuade the tank commander to open up and communicate. Of course, depending on the character of the commanders, good, sometimes excellent, interdependant relationships were formed."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

During the night of 16th/17th June the 6th Dukes received a report that the enemy had withdrawn from Le Parc de Boislonde. Lieutenant D G Smith [18] was dispatched at dawn to confirm this but his patrol was unable to reach the objective due to the large number of enemy snipers in the area. The patrol also came across a very deep ditch 300 yards from Les Haut Vents which was subsequently checked by an officer of the 24th Lancers who decided that it did not present an obstacle to his Sherman tanks. The 6th Dukes had an early breakfast on 17th June and marched to the assembly area at Les Haut Vents, then covered by 1/4th Lincolns. Here the battalion's forming-up line had already been marked out by the Battalion Intelligence Section and protected by a platoon of 'D' Company. Whilst the battalion was moving into place Lieutenant Colonel Exham took his commanders forward and gave confirmatory orders on the ground.

The attack was to be led by 'A' Company on the right with 'B' Company on the left, each supported by a troop of 24th Lancers' tanks. Battalion and Squadron Headquarters were to follow behind with the remaining tanks, followed by 'C' and 'D' Companies in support. The battalion's flanks were to be protected during the advance by one tank troop, self-propelled anti-tank guns and the battalion's carrier platoon. The attack was to be covered by artillery fire from four field regiments, firing a barrage that moved a hundred yards every three minutes, as well as supporting fire from mortars and the medium machine-guns. The 6th Dukes crossed their start-line punctually at 1400 hours, 17th June, but it was not long before 'A' and 'B' Companies lost touch both with the tanks and the supporting barrage:

"At 2.00pm the start line was crossed with two troops up and the attack went well except that [Major] Roy Bennett, the Squadron Leader, said that neither he nor his Second-in-Command, Ian Kerr, could see their own [infantry]men and finished up leading the attack themselves, which was not according to the book, Roy wryly admitted. Little opposition was experienced until reaching the actual objective when pockets of stiff enemy resistance were met. It was estimated that at this preliminary stage the tanks had shot up well over fifty enemy infantry in a hedgerow. The left-hand troop of tanks worked round to the forward edge of the objective where they took up fire positions and fired high-explosive at the enemy retreating over the skyline. On the right the resistance was stiffer and our own infantry [6 DWR] had a heavy task in clearing the enemy out. When this had been achieved the left-hand troops got into position by the château facing east."

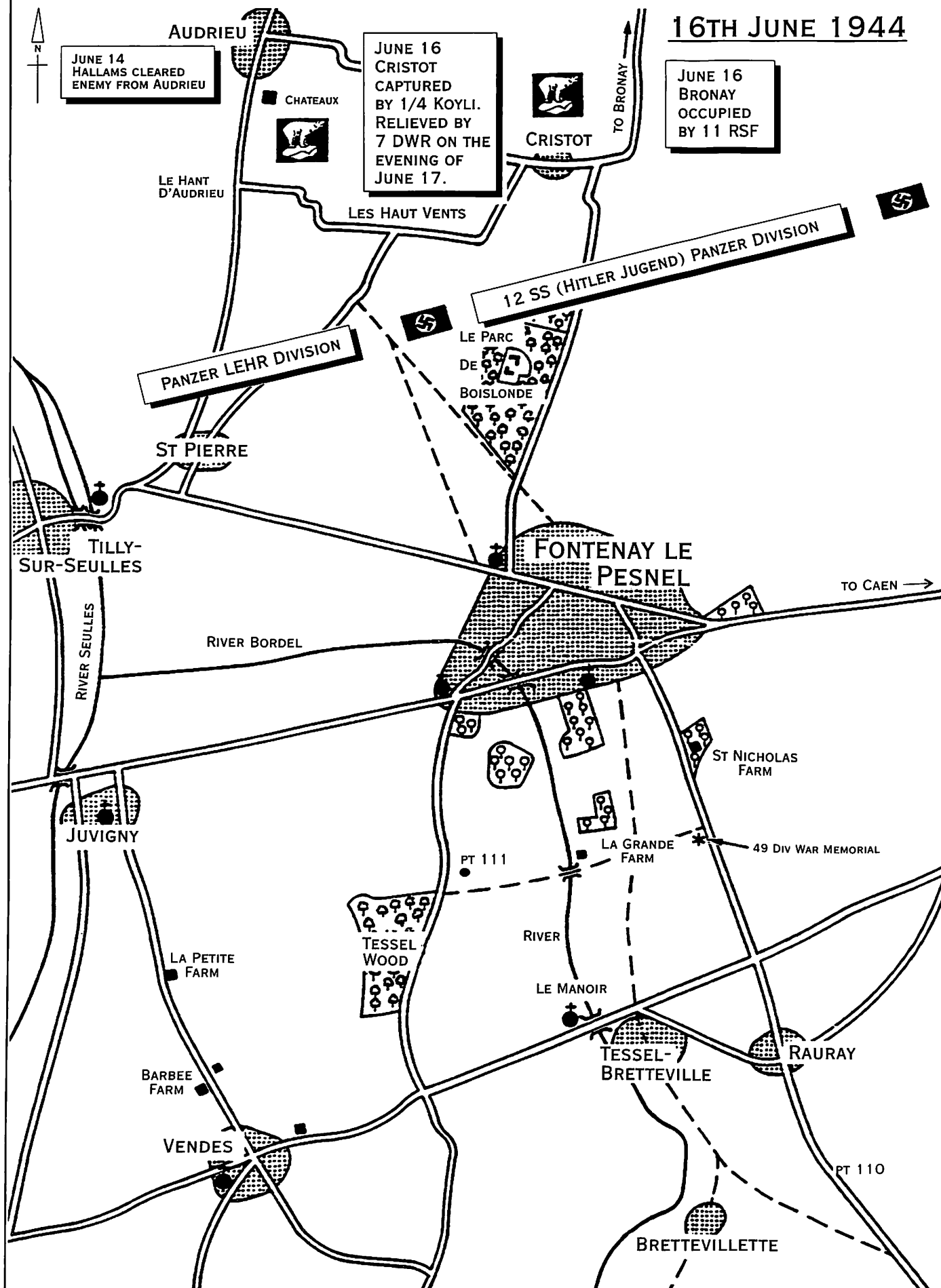
(None Had Lances. Leonard Willis. 1986.)

Despite being unwillingly divorced from their armour, the Dukes had nevertheless continued to battle through the thick country and soon closed with their objective:

"The country was very enclosed and in a short time the leading companies had lost the barrage and had become separated from the tanks. The defensive fire of the enemy soon began to take its toll and a number of snipers who had remained concealed until the tanks had passed, began to open fire on the infantry at short range. The wireless link to companies had broken down very early, and the Commanding Officer could only contact the tanks, who could give little information. Meanwhile

THE DUKES ATTACK LE PARC DE BOISLANDE

16TH JUNE 1944



JUNE 14
HALLAMS CLEARED
ENEMY FROM AUDRIEU

JUNE 16
CRISTOT
CAPTURED
BY 1/4 KOYLI.
RELIEVED BY
7 DWR ON THE
EVENING OF
JUNE 17.

JUNE 16
BRONAY
OCCUPIED
BY 11 RSF

PANZER LEHR DIVISION

12 SS (HITLER JUGEND) PANZER DIVISION

the leading companies, in the face of heavy mortar and small-arms fire, were pushing forward with great determination. Casualties were mounting fast and three of the carriers on the left flank had been blown up by mines. Shortly after 1500hrs A Coy's wireless suddenly came to life with the welcome news that they had reached their objective, and an hour later the wood had been cleared of Germans and all companies were consolidating their positions. The wood had been held with the equivalent of a strong company, reinforced by additional automatics of the [12th] SS [Division] Hitler Jugend, one of the crack German formations. The Battalion had carried out a fine operation, crowned with success."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

This attack had cost the 6th Dukes 3 officers and about 50 soldiers killed, and a further six officers and approximately 100 soldiers wounded. On occupying Le Parc de Boislonde welcome reinforcements came in the form of the Kensingtons' 8 Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant L H Jones [19], who brought forward their medium machine-guns:

"All four [medium machine] guns were sited in the infantry forward defended localities, and were mounted on the banks of hedgerows. None of them had a range of more than 150 yards, and in some cases high cornfields and the slope of the ground reduced the range even more. It was not an orthodox MG position, but the presence of the widely-separated [machine-gun] sections was welcomed by the infantry companies, who had suffered such a rough handling in their bloody passage through the wood, where British and enemy dead lay twisted under trees, or in the clearings where they had been caught by small-arms fire. It was a grim setting for the further struggle that was to come."

(The Kensingtons.)

Despite their success there was little respite for the Dukes as the Battalion redeployed and hastily began to prepare new defensive posts, as Captain J R Allan later reported:

"We dug in that afternoon and evening, and our gunners wielded the might at their command to keep the Boche as quiet as possible. There was a bit of harassing mortar fire most of the time and occasional shelling from the odd tank or so; unfortunately they popped off from behind a ridge and Chadwick's anti-tank guns were never able to get a crack at them."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

For the next two hours they were subjected to continuous fire from enemy mortars and artillery. Enemy mortar 'stonks' came completely without warning. Many were launched by the detested German 'Nebelwerfer', a multi-barrelled mortar whose bomb fins were fitted with sirens which generated a mind-numbing scream as they fell to earth. It was a devastating weapon which was to cause some 75% of the Allies' casualties in Normandy. A number of enemy snipers, who had lain quiet within the wood, also began to fire upon them and required ferreting out. Evacuating the large number of wounded was not without difficulties, as the only track to the wood had been liberally sown with mines by the enemy. This caused problems both for the attached section of the 160th Field Ambulance, and for the Dukes' Quartermaster's staff who needed to get essential ammunition, food and supplies forward. Whilst the Dukes dug their trenches 'B' Squadron's Shermans were equally busy:

"At about 6pm [17th June], five Tigers [German tanks with 88mm guns] were reported on the right flank, one of which was hit and brewed-up by the right-hand Troop Leader, Lieutenant Frank Fuller [20], at 100 yards. Three more were shot up by our own self-propelled 17 pounders. At 6.45pm, seven Tigers were reported on the left flank and the situation began to assume critical proportions as our own anti-tank guns were experiencing difficulty in getting into position. Two of our tanks were shot up with high explosive. All the crews got out safely except Sergeant Sidney Norton who was killed. By skilful manoeuvring of our tanks the enemy were prevented from entering the position. The situation was maintained until last telescope light, 10.00pm, when 'C' Squadron, who had lost two tanks on the way up, relieved them."

(None Had Lances. Leonard Willis. 1986.)

The 17th June had been a long day for the 6th Dukes. Any infantry capturing new ground cannot rest on their laurels, for much has to be done. Essential ammunition and supplies must be brought forward and redistributed. New defensive positions have to be carefully sited and trenches dug. Patrols must be rapidly pushed forward if warning of an enemy counter-attack is to be gained. All this now had to be done by a battalion which had lost a significant part of its rifle companies as casualties, casualties who also consumed essential manpower to arrange care and evacuation. Simply moving about the newly-captured position was a nerve-wracking experience. The whole area was sprinkled with carefully concealed enemy mines which could be trodden on at any time and exploded at waist height, reducing a man to tripe. Omnipresent snipers quickly picked off the careless. Ideally, such an overstretched battalion should have been anticipated in the overall Brigade plan which might have seen them relieved in the new position by another battalion immediately after last-light. Intermittent enemy fire continued throughout the night, but no counter-attack developed.

Whilst the 6th Battalion had been attacking Le Parc de Boislonde on 17th June the sound of their fight travelled north to Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey's 7th Dukes who had begun moving from their peaceful haven at St Croix, past Bronay and into the battle-scarred area of Cristot. Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey had driven ahead of his battalion in his tracked carrier to reconnoitre a route for the impending attack by 7th Dukes on Point 102, an enemy-held position between Crisot and Le Parc de Boislonde. His visit to the 1/4th KOYLI brought details of the sniper-infested countryside to the south of Cristot. Later Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey encountered the Hallamshire Battalion's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel T Hart Dyke, at Les Haut Vents where he too was checking the ground for an attack on Fontenay-le-Pesnil. The Hallamshires (146th Brigade) had already moved and deployed at their forming up position, which was near to Point 103 for which 6th Green Howards had fought so hard. The Hallamshires had already suffered casualties due to enemy mortar and shellfire, and the two Commanding Officers also discovered that the plans were not as they should have been, as recalled by Lieutenant Colonel Hart Dyke:

"Soon after, Felix Wilsey, commanding the 7th Duke of Wellington's and an old pal of mine at Sandhurst and later at the Staff College, came up in his carrier. He said he had been ordered to form up in the same place as my battalion, and that he was shortly to advance through the 6th Duke's, when they had captured the Parc de Boislonde. There had obviously been no tie-up between brigades [146th & 147th]. I ordered the Hallamshires to stand up, right turn and move 400 yards to the right. This worked like a dream and made Felix happy. Hardly had I done this when I received orders that the attack was off and we were to dig in where we were. I took the orders with a pinch of salt and got the battalion into a good position a little further to the west, with Battalion Headquarters on the main Audrieu-Tilly road. Here we dug in properly with good fields of fire."

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

By this time 7th Dukes had completed the move from St Croix to its concentration area, there being rejoined by Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey. It was patently clear that the dense countryside infested with enemy was unsuitable for the numerous bicycles which the War Office had thoughtfully issued:

"The 333 bicycles were still 'on charge' and the Commanding Officer decided that in such country they were a liability. They were dumped in an orchard, the location was reported back and thus unburdened and refreshed the Battalion took to footslogging with relief. The Battalion was unable to occupy the line Northing 70 as ordered, and as a result of reconnaissance it became apparent that any advance by 7 DWR and the Hallams on Fontenay was impracticable so long as the 6th DWR situation was obscure, and the Cristot-Point 102 area was held by enemy troops. It was with relief that at 1900 hrs the Battalion received orders cancelling the proposed advance and were ordered to take over the Cristot position from 4th KOYLI. The relief was completed just before dark and the Battalion found itself in close contact with the enemy for the first time. It was then heard that the 6th DWR attack had been completely successful, against strong opposition."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

To the south of the 7th Dukes, the 6th Dukes were still holding Le Parc de Boislonde where they had experienced a sleepless night regularly punctuated by enemy fire and the ever-present probability that the enemy would counter-attack. Dawn broke quietly on 18th June, and it at first seemed that the enemy would accept the status quo. But at 10am enemy gunners began to fire what were clearly ranging shots in preparation for a full-scale attack to recapture this vital position, with disastrous effect, as recorded by the division's historian:

"The Dukes had dug in insufficiently during the night and were without adequate overhead cover. Many casualties were thus suffered from shells bursting in the tree-tops and then the enemy followed up with a quick raid on the foremost positions."

(Short History of the 49th Division. Lt Col F K Hughes.)

About noon the whole of the Battalion's area was swamped by enemy artillery and mortar fire which was rapidly followed-up by a very large infantry force supported by tanks. The commander of the Kensingtons' medium machine-gun platoon was killed by the first salvo of mortar fire. Corporal Calland's [21] Number 1 section of the Kensingtons quickly spotted German panzergrenadiers coming silently through the grass and along the hedgerows in front of his medium machine-guns:

"The Section opened fire at close range, (one gun probably firing at not more than 70 yards and the other at about 200 yards) along the hedges and into the grass. Each gun fired approx 2,000 rounds so the German were pinned down in front of them firing back with spandaus and rifles, and some of them threw hand grenades. The Infantry in this position had by now withdrawn except for a few men and some wounded. Corporal Calland collected these together and continued to defend his position."

"Corporal Calland shot a sniper with his rifle and another sniper, who had climbed a tree behind them and started firing, was killed by a hand grenade thrown by Private Elliott. Corporal Calland,

although wounded, killed another German with a hand grenade, and then the entire section defended itself until the firing at random stopped. Corporal Calland then ordered the locks to be taken out of the guns, and his party made their way back through the woods to our own tanks which were in action in the north part of the wood."

(War Diary: 2nd Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment (TA). June 1944.)

In the face of this overwhelming attack the Dukes were, not surprisingly, forced back:

"During this retirement there were many examples of heroic conduct by large and small groups of men. A platoon of 'C' Company were isolated, but fought on till they were practically surrounded, and continued to do so after their officer was killed. A section of carriers dug in between the support companies, did excellent work, and continued to resist when completely surrounded; they were wiped out to the last man. Another officer, with two sections of anti-tank guns, hung on to the right flank and caused great destruction till he ran out of ammunition and had to retire. A private of the anti-tank detachment got hold of a 'PIAT' [a hand-held infantry anti-tank launcher], went forward alone and shot up a machine-gun nest which was causing a great number of casualties; when he returned he remarked laconically to his commander, 'That's capped em'."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

At mid-morning the 24th Lancers' tanks had been relieved by 'A' Squadron of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry who, as new arrivals, were therefore oblivious of the severe shredding the Dukes had received before their tanks were drawn into the fray:

"On the 18th [June] 'A' Squadron supported an infantry battalion in the Parc de Boislonde, north of Fontenay. The enemy greeted us with shelling and mortaring, and the infantry abandoned the wood at top speed, leaving their transport and equipment behind.....Sergeant Dring was spotting for the gunners. Major Peter Seleri [Squadron Leader] came up on the wireless: 'Aren't you under a misapprehension about the target - surely it is a cow? - over'. From Sergeant Dring's tank came the reply: 'I've never seen a cow with a turret on it before - Off.'"

(The Sherwood Rangers. T M Lindsay. 1952.)

In the Dukes' 'A' Company George Marsden had been attending to domestic matters when the first inkling of the enemy attack came:

"I joined the queue of 'A' Company for a hot meal when a lone German spotter-plane flew over. Shortly after there was tremendous and incessant shell and mortar fire that went on non-stop.....The enemy attacked and overran our positions. I finished up in an old bomb crater. The Dukes put up a terrific battle. Afterwards it looked like a World War 1 scene with bodies all over the trees and hedges blasted by the shelling. I was in a slit trench in a field with only about 20 men and one officer. He had to calm those who were shellshocked and prone to jump out of their slits every time the spasmodic mortaring dropped close by. After two nights four of us were sent across to join 'A' Coy 7th Dukes for the attack on Fontenay. I was unlucky in most of my service, although I still enjoyed being a soldier."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

Lieutenant Colonel Trevor Hart Dyke's Hallamshires saw the remnants of the 6th Dukes as they withdrew from Boislonde back into his battalion's lines near Audrieu:

"Meanwhile things were not going well with the 6th Dukes. They had lost many men during the attack, and the Boche then counter-attacked and drove all but one company out of the wood. Large numbers came through my [Hallamshire] battalion, rather shaken from this terrible ordeal in their first action. I felt very sorry for [Lieutenant Colonel] Roy Exham and his 2I/C, both very good chaps, and was glad to be able to offer them a nip of whisky, a cigarette and a snack before they reported back to their Brigadier [Mahoney]. Many of their [6th] men joined the 7th Dukes, who avenged this reverse the same evening and restored the [Boislonde] position. I felt very relieved that we had never been launched to the attack on Fontenay. Norbert, one of our French-Canadian Officers, had discovered from civilians that it was strongly defended and anyone who has seen the 1,000 yard open slope leading down to the village [of Fontenay] can visualise what would have happened to us if we had tried."

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

The 6th Battalion had lost a further two officers and 30 soldiers killed, and three officers and 30 soldiers wounded during the morning's action. The 49th Division's 185th Field Regiment's two-dozen 25-pounder field guns came into action at surprisingly short ranges to stem the enemy's attack:

“800 yards -open sights’. Our gun crews prepared to fire their limited supplies of armour-piercing shells directly at enemy tanks as soon as they appeared. Some of our infantrymen ran through the orchard looking fearfully behind them.....news came from the Observation Post that what had happened earlier that day had been a heavy mortar bombardment by the Germans on the newly deployed [6th] Duke of Wellington’s Regiment. The company that ‘A’ troop was attached to had been badly shaken by the accuracy and severity of the mortar fire and had suffered many casualties. When tanks and accompanying infantry of the Panzer Lehr Division had moved forward behind the mortar attack many of the British infantry fled. Captain Thomson and his carrier crew remained in position and brought down the fire of the Mike Targets [Divisional Artillery] until the attack was halted by our shell fire, our tanks, and dug in anti-tank guns.”

(Mike Target - 185th Field Regiment. J Mercer.)

In just over 24 hours the 6th Battalion, previously about 700 strong, had suffered a total of 16 officers and about 220 soldiers as casualties, and was therefore withdrawn to Le Haut de Audrieu to reorganise:

“The battle of Le Parc de Boislonde, a severe and testing initiation, was a sudden plunge into as searching an experience as war can offer. Besides the casualties in personnel, much equipment had been lost or destroyed and many vehicles burnt with all they contained. Reinforcements had to be assimilated, equipment had to be drawn and issued, and a general reorganization was necessary before the Battalion could again become an efficient fighting unit. It was therefore withdrawn into Brigade reserve at a small village called Bronay, where it was settled in the outbuildings and woods of a pleasant château, and turned to the task of refurbishing itself.”

(The History of The Duke of Wellington’s Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Whilst the 6th had been battling grimly in Le Parc de Boislonde that morning, the 7th Battalion remained waiting at Cristot with orders to advance through the 6th and then to carry out an attack on Fontenay-le-Pesnil later in the day. At 12.30pm on 18th June Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey, commanding the 7th, returned from a conference at 147th Brigade Headquarters. He had orders for his battalion to clear Point 102, a piece of high ground lying between Cristot and Le Parc de Boislonde, preparatory to a further attack south on Fontenay-le-Pesnil. The 7th Dukes were about to carry out a two rifle company assault supported by a squadron of tanks and artillery when their carefully laid plans were disrupted:

“Suddenly the general lull on the front was shattered by intense artillery and mortar fire which appeared to be directed on the 6th DWR in the Parc. Obviously a heavy attack was impending, or had been launched, on the 6th DWR. The 143rd Field Regiment, affiliated to the Battalion, picked up information on the wireless that a heavy German counter-attack had in fact been put in on the forward companies of the 6th DWR. Cristot and the [7th] Battalion area now began to be engaged by shell and mortar fire.”

“At 1330 hrs the squadron of tanks were ordered to move immediately in support of 6th DWR. It appeared from the scanty information trickling in that the forward companies of 6th DWR had been overrun. This was confirmed by the Quartermaster of the 6th DWR who, with some men of the 6th Battalion, arrived in the 7th DWR area. At this juncture the 7th Battalion was ordered to put in their attack on Pt 102 and to gain touch with 6th DWR. The situation had, however, changed materially since the original plan had been made. Little was known of the positions of 6th DWR and of the enemy. The squadron of tanks had been taken away and all available artillery was supporting the 6th DWR. In addition, the [7th] Battalion area was being subjected to accurate mortaring. Time was short, the situation in front and on the right flank was confused and consequently the plan had to be simple in the extreme.”

(Ibid)

This serious situation rapidly changed the intended attack by the 7th Dukes from being a carefully planned deliberate attack, properly supported by tanks and guns, into one requiring great haste. Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey received final orders from Headquarters 147th Brigade at 1.40pm that his battalion’s attack upon Point 102, and now also the northern edge of Le Parc de Boislonde, was to start at 3.15pm. Artillery fire for twenty minutes was made available from ‘Zero Hour’, 3.15pm, to support the two leading rifle companies, ‘A’ left and ‘B’ right. ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies were to act as reserve and follow 800 yards behind:

“The attack commenced punctually at 1515 hrs. The distance from the start-line to the objective was about 1,000 yards, slightly uphill through cornfields and hedges. The assault companies disappeared into a curtain of smoke and dust as they reached the areas where it was impossible to distinguish between our own artillery concentrations and enemy defensive fire. Enemy positions on the objective were quickly overrun, and all objectives were captured. The battle was over. It had lasted twenty-five minutes. Later an enemy counter-attack by infantry and tanks was caught by the Divisional Artillery and broken up.”

(Ibid)

This was the 7th Battalion's first experience of an attack:

"Major Hugh Cook, their second-in-command, said they gave a really splendid account of themselves. 'Moreover', he said, 'we did carry out an old-time bayonet assault. We did it on Waterloo Day. For us it will now be Hill 102 Day for ever. A little thing which shows the spirit of the Battalion is that the orderly room sergeant, who had no need to take part in the assault, followed me all the way up the hill. In fact quite a number of men, company cooks and so on, came into that assault who need not have done so."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey prudently decided that his 7th Battalion would not occupy the deathtrap of Le Parc de Boislonde and accordingly placed his defensive positions on the reverse slope. Le Parc de Boislonde was then dominated by two patrols, each supported by artillery observers and a troop of tanks. These patrols moved into the woods where they found grim witness to the 6th Battalion's battle, and the patrols reported back that the 6th's two forward companies had clearly put up a gallant resistance and been overrun almost to a man. No contact was made with the 6th Dukes. Nor had the 7th Battalion escaped its first attack unscathed, for it had suffered 5 killed, 65 wounded, and 18 missing. Private A L Peach, 'B' Company, became the first member of the 7th Battalion to be decorated during World War 2, receiving the Military Medal:

"The North of England troops showed splendid discipline under fire. Never was a section or sub-section without a leader. If an NCO dropped out there was a man to take his place. Pte Alfred Peach of Archer Road, Ely, who was in a forward platoon, had his Bren gun blown up and the second-in-command, who was next to him, was killed. Peach snatched up the second-in-command's Sten gun, gathered several men together, and led this scratch section 400 yards, mopping up any resistance he encountered."

(Ibid)

The 7th Dukes held the area around Point 102 and Le Parc de Boislonde between 18th and 22nd June, during which time it was subjected to spasmodic enemy shelling and mortaring, coupled with brisk patrol actions. One of these patrols went into Le Parc de Boislonde, on 19th June, and was accompanied by Major B S Gooch, Second-in-Command of the 55th (Suffolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, who went to discover the fate of 'M' anti-tank troop of 220 Anti-Tank Battery which had been alongside the 6th Battalion on the previous day:

"The place seemed horribly eerie and deserted. This feeling was enhanced when a civilian crept out of the château and, like a hungry rat, searched through the many abandoned trucks for food. The nearest of the 17 pounders was retrieved that evening by Captain Barton. It was learnt that a patrol was going down to the bottom of the wood on the next morning. Major Gooch and Lieutenant Wood arranged to join it in the hope of finding the [troop's] missing men. The patrol started off at 0830 hrs, and, after slow progress through the dense mass of branches, brought down by the bombardment, reached the two forward guns - nothing was seen or heard, until one of the patrol found a wounded man who proved to be Gunner Ibbotson. Gunner Ibbotson had lain since Sunday in a slit trench unobserved by the Germans, alone among his dead companions. A terrible ordeal."

(The Loyal Suffolk Hussars (55th Anti-Tank Regiment).)

Other Dukes patrols also extracted wounded from Le Parc de Boislonde, one rescuing some 40 French refugees from the château. On 22nd June the 7th Battalion was relieved from the Point 102 area by 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA), 70th Infantry Brigade, and withdrawn for rest and reorganisation into fields north of Cristot.

By the 20th June the remaining members of the 6th Battalion had settled into the woods and outbuildings of a château in the village of Bronay. Reinforcements, including quite a number from the 10th Dukes, had just arrived and were being integrated into the Battalion. All ranks had barely recovered from their shattering experience, and the feeling of general unease was not improved by an unexpected barrage of enemy shellfire. Much of their equipment had yet to be replaced and the battalion had been unable to dig the customary slit-trenches as emergency shelters. This shelling caused a further 20 casualties and was a decidedly unpleasant experience for the newly-arrived reinforcements. Further enemy shelling started at 5.30am the next day, continuing for 30 minutes, and causing a similar number of casualties.

Brigadier Mahoney, commander 147th Brigade, wished to address the 6th Battalion at 2.45pm and accordingly soldiers began to assemble for this parade in a small clearing in the wood to avoid concentration in the open. Suddenly, at 2.40pm, the assembly area was violently shelled, one 25 strong party from Headquarter Company were caught in the open and all but two were killed or wounded. When the parade was eventually held it brought the stunning news that their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel R K Exham [22], was departing at once to take command of another Battalion, as recounted by Major R W Powell:

"His departure was deeply regretted by the Battalion. By now, indeed, there were almost more 'non-Dukes' than 'Dukes' in the unit. Quite a number of the reinforcements, both officers and men, were from another Battalion of the Regiment. But for a few days a surprising variety of cap-badges and shoulder titles were on view. While these newcomers were given a warm welcome, the influx of so many aliens was nevertheless a sad sight to old Dukes."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

[17: 2nd Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment, The Middlesex Regiment (TA), (Hammersmith), was the 49th (West Riding) Division's Support/Machine-Gun Battalion having three medium machine-gun companies, and one 4.2" mortar company.]

[18: Lieutenant D G Smith, 6th Battalion, was killed in action on 18th June 1944. Brigadier Barclay's History of the DWR records Lieutenant D C Smith, but it is thought this is a misprint.]

[19: Lieutenant L H Jones, 2nd Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment, The Middlesex Regiment (TA), was killed by mortar fire at Le Parc de Boislonde on 18th June 1944.]

[20: Lieutenant F W Fuller, 24th Lancers, was later killed in action serving with the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry on 5th April 1945.]

[21: Corporal W Calland, 2nd Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment, The Middlesex Regiment (TA), was awarded the Military Medal for his actions. A later patrol discovered some 40 dead Germans in front of the section gun position.]

[22: Lieutenant Colonel R K Exham, Commanding Officer 6th Battalion, was temporarily succeeded on 21st June 1944 by Lieutenant Colonel A Warhurst, until Lieutenant Colonel A J D Turner MC, The Suffolk Regiment, arrived on 22nd June. Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) R K Exham was subsequently appointed to command Middlesbrough's 6th Battalion The Green Howards (TA), 69th Brigade 50th (Northumbrian) Division, on 28th June 1944. He was eventually wounded whilst commanding this battalion on 8th September 1944 during the assault crossing of the Albert Canal.]

FONTENAY-LE-PESNIL

By now the hitherto green soldiers of the 49th (West Riding) Division had been exposed to the rigour of war, in which perverse fortunes dictated that some units experienced a much gentler introduction than others. Nor had the test of battle been exclusively placed on the inexperienced, for even gallant veterans suffered as General Barker later recorded in his diary:

*"20th June The Boche is quite fanatical in front of us - they belong to the crack Panzers Divs but we have given them a hell of a pounding. Their six-barrelled mortars are the worst b****y things...I usually go to bed about midnight and then, if planning an operation, up about 5am, if not 6am, which gives me plenty of sleep."*

"21st June I have had a lot of worry about one of my senior Commanders [Brigadier Dunlop 146th Brigade] whom I eventually sent home. He had completely broken down and gone off his head. Its very tragic as he had a fine war record and got one of the best DSOs of the war. Luckily I have a splendid chap to replace him [Lieutenant Colonel J Walker, until then CO 4 KOYLI]."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

Severe storms lashed the English Channel between 18th and 22nd June causing significant damage to the 'Mulberry Harbour' and some 880 Allied ships. This markedly delayed the vital process of landing those stores and personnel needed to expand the Allies' tenuous grip on the Continent. These logistic problems caused supply shortages which imposed a delay on the 49th Division's next operation. Thus the Germans gained time to build up their defences, and Von Runstedt was able to deploy the reinforcements with which he intended to drive the Allies back into the sea. Overall, Montgomery's master-plan remained to draw the German divisions onto the British Second Army and Canadians which would in turn enable the Americans to breakout on the west flank. The big picture for the British Second Army saw 30th Corps, on the west flank, carrying out 'Operation Epsom' with the task of securing the line Rauray-Vendes-Juvigny. 30th Corps, which included the 49th and 50th Divisions, now faced an enhanced German opposition numbering seven [23] divisions of which six were SS Panzer Divisions.:

“As part of this plan, two major operations:- Operation ‘Epsom’ south-west of Caen in June (in which 49 Div played its part) and Operation ‘Goodwood’ south-east of Caen in July, succeeded in drawing Rommel’s Panzer Divisions into battle around Caen because he thought that the attempted breakout for the drive on Paris would come from this area and must be resisted at all costs. Our worm’s eye view was aware only that the Wehrmacht and the SS Divisions opposing us were tough, professional and dedicated soldiers, and that the Normandy battlefield in our neck of the woods was no place for the faint hearted.”

(Battlefield Tour. G Barker Harland. 1987.)

By the evening of 24th June, the 49th (West Riding) Division held a line from Tilly sur Seules in the west, adjoining the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, to the Canadians in the east holding Le Mesnil Patry. Opposite, and to the 49th Division’s south, the German main line ran from Juvigny, Fontenay-le-Pesnil to Cheux. Operation ‘Martlet’ [24] was to be its first major battle as a division and had the objective of securing the village of Fontenay-le-Pesnil and the key feature of Rauray Ridge to the south. Once the division had secured this ground, the newly-arrived 8th Corps was to pass through the British 49th and Canadian 3rd Divisions and attack behind Caen.

Opposing the 49th Division was the 26th Panzergrenadier Regiment which was thought to have a battalion in Fontenay-le-Pesnil, another in Tessel Wood as well as other forces north-east and south-east of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. These enemy infantry positions were supported by self-propelled artillery and anti-tank guns, together with the tanks of the 12th SS Panzer (Hitler Jugend) and Panzer Lehr Divisions, with further panzer divisions poised in the counter-attack role.

The 49th Division’s plan allowed for a four-phase attack from a start line in the St Pierre-Cristot area held by its 70th Infantry Brigade, which also acted as the divisional reserve. 146th Brigade led with the 4th Lincolns and Sheffield’s Hallamshires tasked with the capture of Fontenay-le-Pesnil, with Wakefield’s 1/4th KOYLI in reserve. As soon as this was complete, 1/4th KOYLI was to pass through and seize the north part of Tessel Wood. The remainder of Tessel Wood was then to be captured by an assault employing the Hallamshires on the left and the 7th Dukes on the right who were also to secure the crossroads north of Rauray. The final phase directed the capture of Rauray itself by such troops as were necessary. Zero hour was set for 4.15am on 25th June, being shortly before daybreak at 4.30am, to enable the leading infantry to cross a dangerous piece of open ground in the hours of darkness. In addition to an array of artillery, totalling some 250 guns, the attack was to be supported by air-strikes on enemy positions during the evening of 24th June, and onto the enemy’s flanks the following day.

As dawn approached on 25th June the whole battlefield was covered by a dense mist which disrupted the attacker’s command and control. Matters were also made worse when the enemy put down a heavy mortar and smoke barrage between the division’s start-line and the supporting barrage. This poor visibility ruled out tank support to the 146th Brigade by the 24th Lancers and the brunt of early battle for Fontenay-le-Pesnil fell very much on the the Hallamshires and Lincolns. In addition, 11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers, on advancing on the left flank came under extremely heavy fire from the area of the infamous Parc de Boislonde. Sheffield’s Hallamshires advanced from their forming-up place, just south-east of Les Haut Vents, with the objective of capturing the western portion of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. On their right flank the 4th Lincolns were to clear the positions to the west of the village, and on their left the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 70th Brigade, were to clear the eastern portion of the village. As will be seen, the division’s plan was an ambitious day’s work, and the Hallamshire’s preparations not untypical:

“Early on the 25th June I watched the soldiers moving silently into single file along the tape connecting the Assembly Area with the Forming Up Place (FUP). They were dim shadows in the darkness of the night, each holding onto the bayonet-scabbar of the man in front, so that the chance of losing the way was precluded. Occasionally one could see the white strip of towel under the haversack flap on their backs, worn to distinguish friend from foe in the dark. This was to be the first real test of many months of training and one hoped that everything possible had been done to ensure success. Early during the night the battalion Intelligence Section, protected by standing patrols placed well forward of the start line, had laid white tapes and shaded lamps on the battalion FUP, and, as soldiers filed forward, they were led silently by guides to their pre-arranged positions. The forward companies, ‘C’ and ‘B’, each had two platoons in extended order along the front white tape with the Company Headquarters and reserve platoons extended on another tape 25 yards behind.”

“Then came the battalion Command Post together with the Carrier Platoon dismounted, the Pioneer Platoon and a platoon of Royal Engineers. The role of the Carrier Platoon was to protect battalion headquarters, the nerve centre of the unit, while the pioneers and engineers had as their main task the clearing of mines and of a way through the rubble of the village for the passage of anti-tank guns and mortars to the forward area, once the objective had been captured. Behind these troops the reserve companies, ‘A’ and ‘D’, were formed up in a similar manner to those in front. On arrival at his post each man lay down and silently awaited the signal for the advance to commence.”

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

Under a roar of artillery the Hallamshires, Royal Scots Fusiliers and Lincolns advanced on Fontenay-le-Pesnil, but as it became lighter the fog descended and visibility fell to five yards. The Hallamshires' Battalion headquarters soon lost touch with its companies, and companies lost touch with platoons as they advanced carefully on compass bearings through the dense fog which was thickened by dust from the artillery barrage. Seemingly detached from their comrades and with an unknown enemy ahead it was an eerie business. Suddenly enemy machine-gun and tank fire opened on the Hallamshires from all directions as they encountered the 26th Panzergrenadiers and their hidden Panther tanks. Pressing on the Hallamshires fought through the village to secure its objectives. Whilst doing so, the battalion's anti-tank platoon used the new 'sabot' ammunition to great effect and knocked-out the division's first Panther tank thus earning the Divisional Commander's £5 prize. By this time the 4th Lincolns had also secured the western objective but the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers were still fighting a way into the eastern section of the village.

The plan for this phase was due to include the 24th Lancers, 8th Armoured Brigade. The Lancers had indeed reached their start-line in good time, but the mist at Zero Hour had been so thick that the tank crews literally could not see beyond the end of their 75mm gun barrels. Far from being able to support the infantry, the Lancers were at first reduced to patrolling between their tanks to ensure that they were not attacked by enemy tank-hunting patrols using panzerfaust rocket launchers under the cloak of the fog. However the Shermans eventually advanced on Fontenay-le-Pesnil where Lieutenant Bob Hart, 'A' Squadron, also encountered the deadly Panther tanks:

"My troop was sitting astride the Fontenay-Juvigny road facing east when the Commanding Officer [Lieutenant Colonel T Hart Dyke] of the Hallams came up to me and said that a Panther in the village was holding up his advance. I accordingly dismounted and went with him into the village where I saw this tank hidden by the wall of a house thus obscuring my view and preventing me from obtaining a good fire position. I went back to my tank and driving it into the village knocked down the wall which was hiding the Panther. At that moment, however, two more Panthers appeared just south of the road. I knocked one of them out and the other withdrew. Unfortunately, in the meantime, the original Panther had also withdrawn to a position behind some trees and I was unable to get a good shoot so I went back to my original position."

(None Had Lances. Leonard Willis. 1986.)

During this first day of the battle for Fontenay-le-Pesnil the Hallamshires alone suffered 123 casualties. As soon as they secured their objectives digging-in commenced apace whilst Wakefield's 1/4th KOYLI stood ready to pass through them to take Tessel Wood. The KOYLI were supported by Canadian artillery which mistakenly dropped fire both on them and the Hallamshires causing unnecessary casualties, and which continued to plague the KOYLI's attack on Tessel Wood:

"However, despite the clarity of the Start Line on the ground and on the map, when the barrage came down at H Hour (which was noon) there were once again shells on and behind the Start Line. This is discouraging for infantry soldiers who had enough to contend with without the additional hazard of shells from their own side. I was on the right in this battle and even when the barrage moved its statutory 100 yards leap forward, there was still one 5.5inch gun firing more than 100 yards short all the way up to Tessel Wood. At such a time it is impracticable to stop the whole barrage in order to find out which gun(s) is/are firing short."

(Battlefield Tour. G Barker Harland. 1987.)

A particularly honest account of the 1/4th KOYLI's experiences in this first major battle reflects this green division's teething problems. Problems which were probably not peculiar to the KOYLI alone:

"But we got to the FUP in time, plenty of time. Our 'H' hour postponed. Two members of the company couldn't stand it and shot themselves in the foot in quick succession. At last 'H' hour announced. The fire support, similar to or even greater than Cristot. More of it behind the start line than in front of it. No doubt about the position of the start line this time, it was the road. Off we go, the blast from a shell knocks me over, but only one little flesh wound. Up the hill, through the first hedge, binoculars torn away, trousers ripped. Where are the boys? Not here, I go back; 'come on'. Through the hedge again, still no boys. Back again 'COME ON'! They came. Through more hedges. Up to the edge of the wood [Tessel]. Bloody murder; people dropping dead. But, we're there. Send success signal. Hitler Jugend prisoners. Ominous looking bunker on line of advance held no enemy. I said there would be no false glamour in this account. During the attack one of my platoons ran away and were brought back at pistol point by Tug Wilson, my second-in-command."

Captain L B Keeble MC, 'C' Company

(Ibid)

By late afternoon the 49th Division had captured most of the phase two objectives except that 11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers, on the left flank, had not fully captured the eastern edge of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. But the Fusiliers too had problems; blast from the barrage had broken the valves in their portable radio sets cutting off all radio communications. Forward Fusilier companies were split into groups of two or three men advancing without the slightest idea of direction, some 60 or 70 losing direction so badly in the mist that they joined up with the Hallamshires on the far right flank. The Fusiliers were engaged in severe hand-to-hand fighting and casualties were heavy. After a fierce battle they established a firm hold around the Calvary at a cost of 201 casualties. The Fusilier's advance was short of their original objective which, when secured, was to have been the 7th Dukes start line from which the battalion was to advance further south through St Nicholas Farm towards Rauray on the high ground. Divisional headquarters deemed it imperative that all objectives were taken by midnight resulting in the Dukes gaining the additional task of clearing the eastern end of Fontenay-le-Pesnil.

At 5pm the 7th Dukes were called forward to a start line, just west of Le Parc de Boislonde, where the new plan was issued despite heavy enemy shellfire. Not least of the difficulties was that of contacting the 'supporting Arms' commanders, most of whom were already heavily involved in the battle. Zero hour was at first set for 1845 hours but this was changed to 2100 hours at which time the infantry assault was preceded by fire put down by the Divisional artillery and mortars, with the Kensington's medium machine-guns firing on the slopes beyond Fontenay as the Dukes passed through the battered Scots Fusiliers:

"Fontenay had now been under intense attack for sixteen hours. It was a village of disruption, confusion, smoke and dust. At 2100hrs B Coy attacked and quickly made their way into Fontenay. As B Coy advanced D Coy (Major A B M Kavanagh [25]) lay waiting ready to go through. It was slow, determined fighting. Within the hour B Coy sent their success signal and D Coy went in to bite still further into the stubborn defences. By 2300hrs both companies had secured their objectives and the reserves, A and C Coys, had gone forward into the night. But it was time to call off the tanks and AVREs. They had been in the thick of it with the Dukes but were now gravely handicapped by darkness. They withdrew and concentrated at the west end of the village. Reports from A Coy on the left and C on the right indicated stiff opposition on their objectives. Orders were therefore given to consolidate what had been gained and patrol forward. A lull fell on Fontenay after twenty hours of battle, but patrols reported the front strongly held by infantry and tanks."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

What had not yet been uncovered was the fact that the Fontenay-le-Pesnil area was the pivot of the German defence. The existing Panzer Lehr and 12th SS Panzer Divisions holding this key area had been reinforced in the late afternoon by a Kampfgruppe detached from the 21st Panzer Division, together with troops from the 2nd SS Panzer (Das Reich) Division. Major Barry Kavanagh, commanding 'D' Company, arrived on the objective just as dusk was about to fall:

"My company had the second sector and the attack on it was supported by artillery and tanks. We plunged into a wood and then into about fifteen houses and a church and emerged in an orchard on the other side. It was nearly dark and we still had a 100 yards or so to go. I peered through the edge of the orchard and gave my dispositions for the forward platoons to occupy - when I heard tanks and voices shouting. An immediate recce patrol established that Hun tanks and infantry were about 200 yards away, so we dug inside the orchard and tried to get the gunners on the wireless - unfortunately it failed and I could get neither Battalion Headquarters nor the gunners. All night we dug and by first light anti-tank guns and food arrived. A further recce patrol was sent out and, contrary to the book of words, destroyed four Huns with two machine-guns in a farm 200 yards away, thus regaining contact. There were no signs of enemy tanks barring one, apparently derelict, 150 yards away."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

Just after dawn on 26th June the Dukes 'A' Company cleared out troublesome spandau positions from a triangular wood to the east of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. The 7th Dukes now consolidated in the east part of the village but still had its original task of capturing St Nicholas Farm and the ground to its south. Patrols reported that the ground between Fontenay-le-Pesnil and the farm, about half a mile, was sloping upwards and completely devoid of any cover. At 0930 hours 'C' and 'D' Companies left their newly dug slit trenches at Fontenay-le-Pesnil and, supported by 'C' Squadron Sherwood Rangers and 143rd Field Regiment, advanced towards St Nicholas Farm:

"The enemy was waiting. Heavy fire swept across their front. C Squadron [Sherwood Rangers] immediately engaged targets, but were at once shot at by three concealed tanks. Three Shermans were put out of action. The enemy brought down intense defensive fire on the outskirts of the village, and it was impossible to manoeuvre more tanks in such an enclosed area or to deploy anti-tank guns through the enemy defensive fire. Both companies fought on with 2in Mortars, Brens and rifles, but were unable to make progress. At this juncture a German Panther tank came down the road towards No 14 platoon of C Coy. Its turret was open and its commander was giving the 'wash out' signal."

When it got near to No 14 Pl of C Coy it closed down and opened fire. With great courage and presence of mind LCpl E W Dodd immediately engaged it with the platoon PIAT and knocked it out at very close range. It was the Battalion's first Panther, and for this cool, brave action LCpl Dodd was awarded the Military Medal."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The massive German reinforcement of the area presented Lieutenant Colonel Wilsey with little choice but to withdraw his two companies back to the former positions in Fontenay-le-Pesnil:

"The platoons pushed on, using 2in [mortar] high-explosive and Brens, plus tank high-explosive and machine-gun fire - still the Hun kept on firing. Suddenly from the Hun machine-gun positions high-explosive and armour-piercing shells knocked out two tanks near to me, nearly blowing my right forward platoon off the ground. We had met Hun tanks! There was little one could do, machine-gun and high-explosive fire was now sweeping our front, so we withdrew out of the orchard, put out mines, and were about to send out tank hunting parties when the Commanding Officer stopped us and told us that an attack with full artillery and tank support would go in that afternoon at 3 o'clock."

Major A B M Kavanagh, Commanding 'D' Company

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

Most of the wounded were carried in except one who was lying in an exposed area very close to enemy positions. The Battalion Padre, Rev S H Chase, crawled forward despite the hazard and brought the wounded man safely in, for which deed he was subsequently awarded the Military Cross.

Nor was it just the 7th Dukes who ran into the strengthened enemy defences, for 'A' Squadron 24th Lancers and the King's Royal Rifle Corps, 8th Armoured Brigade [26], attacking from the west, met equally stiff resistance and was also forced to withdraw. A fresh attack was set for 1530 hours the same day now using the whole of the 7th Dukes, all the Division's artillery, and all the Sherwood Rangers. After a full twenty-minute barrage, 'A' and 'B' Companies advanced to capture St Nicholas Farm. The Sherwood Rangers again encountered the formidable panzers:

"Ten minutes before the attack was due to start the Colonel [Lieutenant Colonel S Christopherson MC] was in his tank in the main street of Fontenay talking to Brigade over the wireless. As it was raining he had draped a mackintosh over the turret. Major John Semken, commanding 'A' Squadron, came up from behind and just managed to squeeze his tank past the Colonel's in the very narrow street. But as soon as Major Semken got round the next street corner he came face to face with a Tiger. His gunner had one armour-piercing round up the spout and this was let off immediately followed by five more. They all bounced off the Tiger, but one shot hit the turret ring and the Tiger's crew bailed out. 'A' Squadron then went on from strength to strength and knocked out 13 enemy tanks. Reaching the outskirts of Rauray, they bumped German infantry dug so deeply into the ground that not even grenades would remove them. Lieutenant Ronnie Grellis, in one of the leading tanks, dismounted and dealt with the Germans on foot; as his wireless was switched to the wrong position this private war was broadcast to the whole Squadron instead of to his tank crew."

(The Sherwood Rangers. T M Lindsay. 1952.)

This time St Nicholas Farm was taken by 'A' and 'B' Companies after which 'C' and 'D' Companies took up the lead to secure the Dukes final objective [27], some 1,000 yards short of Rauray, by 1800 hours, 26th June:

"One incident during the day illustrates the craft of the Hun, in this case the 12th SS Panzer Division. The derelict tank mentioned earlier moved suddenly at 12.30pm and opened fire on us - the cunning devils had lain quiet through eight hours of daylight. However, we put paid to this with well-directed 17-pounder fire. The attack went well and more Huns were taken prisoner and killed. We took one only five yards away from a group consisting of the Commanding Officer, company commanders and gunner when a driver looking in a trench saw him. He lay in his funk hole on his back with his hands up quivering. Hardly a representative of the Master Race."

Major A B M Kavanagh, Commanding 'D' Company

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

At 2100 hours 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry passed through the 7th Dukes and advanced upon Rauray. The battle for Fontenay-le-Pesnil had cost the 7th Dukes some 120 killed or wounded.

The 6th Dukes had acted as the 147th Brigade's reserve battalion during 25th June and had simply moved forward to supporting positions. But by breakfast time the battalion was ordered to return to their positions in Bronay as their part in the attack was delayed by the heavy mist. Whilst at Bronay Lieutenant Colonel A J D Turner MC assumed command of the battalion, and on the next day the 6th Dukes were ordered to advance to take up a blocking position on a stream between Juvigny and Fontenay-le-Pesnil:

"Soon we came to a place where hedges and trees gave way to a great plain of corn dropping down to the valley of the stream which runs from Juvigny to Fontenay. On our left was the Parc de Boislonde - a sinister sight for us. Beyond it, in the valley, were the ruins of Fontenay; the glasses showed all the buildings gaping and roofless; here and there thin smoke rose placidly. Due south we looked over a pleasant vista of wooded hills as far as the high ground near Villers-Bocage. Our appreciation of the view was rather coloured by the fact that we knew we were looking at Boche positions, that from behind those hedges and trees he fired his infuriating mortars or hurled the rockets that came over groaning fanatically. But we saw no sign of him."

"From this vantage point we received our orders. It must be remembered that at his time there was much speculation and concern about the possibility of a major enemy counter-attack. So far there had been none, and it was felt that it must come soon. Just in the spot where such an attack might very well be expected there was a gap between positions just south of Tilly, at a place called Juvigny, and other positions at Fontenay-le-Pesnil. A stream ran through this piece of country, its valley thick with cover. Our task was to stop this gap. Of the Boche we knew little, save that he was in the woods beyond Juvigny."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

The move forward required the Dukes to advance through open cornfields on an exposed forward slope during which they were heavily bombarded by mortars of the 12th SS Panzer Division's Reconnaissance Battalion:

"C' and 'D' Companies went forward, and, being in full view, were well mortared as they moved. There were casualties, but the two companies had soon reached their positions. 'A' and 'B' Companies then advanced, and by carefully using the available cover, managed to reach the top of the bluffs unseen and unmolested. Here, however, they were spotted, with the usual result. A fairly heavy mortar concentration immediately came down on them, including the queer sighing bombs from the multiple mortars. A shallow ditch was the only cover, and the Boche tried his hardest for 45 minutes; but the shallow ditch sufficed."

"'A' Company had no casualties, though 'B' was less lucky. The two companies then pushed on to their objectives, still under mortar fire, but of a milder nature. 'B' on the right soon came under fire from Juvigny - rather a surprise this, because it had been understood that the bridge there was held by a patrol from the battalion on our right. 'A' Company reached there without difficulty. Uniforms bearing the skull and cross-bones badge were found lying about. It appeared that the Boche had left in a hurry."

(Ibid)

The Hallamshires too advanced south from Fontenay-le-Pesnil on 27th June to seize the high ground south of Tessel Wood from which patrols could be pushed into Vendes prior to a full-scale attack. Through the expedient of a rapid night move the Hallamshires achieved their objective, but subsequent patrols to the south and west found the area to be strongly defended. At this point on the ground the west flank of the 49th Division met the flank of the 50th Division whose advance southwards had not progressed due to fierce resistance at Tilly and Hottot. A further advance by the 49th Division's Lincolns and 1/4th KOYLI, through the Hallamshires, to secure the ground south of Vendes was therefore not attempted. By this time the Division's 70th Brigade had also experienced stiff fighting during which it had captured Rauray together with the high ground to its east and south:

"The Germans had by now realized that the Normandy invasion was the main allied attack and that our feints against the Pas de Calais were only a diversion. Monty's plan to defeat the German armies west of the Seine river then gradually materialised. The élite of Rommel's army, their Panzer and SS divisions, made desperate assaults on the British bridgehead, particularly on the River Orne and around Caen. West of Caen the British and Canadian Divisions pinned down the enemy by short advances while repulsing their counter-attacks. Thus the Americans, to the west, after the initial bloody battles on the beaches, were able to occupy the Cherbourg peninsular and to commence the encircling movement which eventually destroyed the German armies west of the Seine."

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

[23: The German divisions were, from west to east, Panzer Lehr, 9th SS Panzer, 2nd SS Panzer (Das Reich), 10th SS Panzer, 1st SS Panzer, 21st Panzer, 12th SS Panzer (Hitler Jugend).]

[24: 'Martlet' a heraldic bird, a swallow without feet. French 'Martelet' - a House Martin.]

[25: Major, later Lieutenant Colonel, A B M Kavanagh OBE MC was a regular officer who joined The Duke of Wellington's Regiment in 1939 later becoming adjutant of the 2/6th Dukes, and later as an armoured squadron commander with the unit. He was transferred to the 7th Dukes in 1943 and commanded 'D' Company, and was awarded the Military Cross whilst serving with the 7th Dukes at Rosendaal. He rejoined the 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment after the war, and commanded its 'C' Company in Korea during which time he was decorated with the Bar to the Military Cross for his actions during the Battle of the Hook. He was later appointed as second-in-command of the 3rd Battalion The Queen's Own Nigerian Regiment, which, as a Lieutenant Colonel, he subsequently commanded. Lieutenant Colonel A B M Kavanagh OBE MC then commanded 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment from 1962-1965.]

[26: The 8th Armoured Brigade paid dearly, in the first 25 days in action the Brigade lost 124 tanks and claimed 86 enemy tanks/self-propelled guns destroyed or captured.]

[27: The 7th Dukes' final objective on 26th June 1944, between St Nicholas Farm and Rauray, is today the location of the memorial to the 49th (West Riding) Division. In the cemetery at Fontenay-le-Pesnil are the graves of 460 soldiers of the division.]

RAURAY

Montgomery's broader strategy now placed the 49th Division spending some weeks defending an exposed position around the Rauray ridge, just south of Fontenay-le-Pesnil; as recalled by Major Barry Kavanagh:

"The [7th] Battalion now consolidated in this area which we got to call St Nicholas Farm area. The country was typical 'bocage' on our right and typical Salisbury Plain on the left. Altogether we remained there some ten days. There was a small farm in our company area. As permission had been given for troops to consume perishable foods of the country, and as our farm had 100 odd fowls, the company enjoyed the luxury, occasionally, of fried egg added to compo [composite ration] breakfast."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

At 7am on 1st July the key feature of Rauray, then held by the division, experienced the opening of the most determined and well co-ordinated German counter-attack of the whole campaign when the II SS Panzer corps attacked Rauray, near the junction between the 49th (West Riding) and 15th (Scottish) Divisions. The brunt of the assault, by an infantry battalion of the 2nd SS Panzer Division (Das Reich) supported by a tank battalion of the 9th SS Panzer Division (Hohen Staufen), fell upon the 70th Brigade's 1st Tyneside Scottish and the 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry supported by the stalwart 24th Lancers [28]. 70th Brigade held out against the fiercest of assaults, suffering heavily in bitter fighting which demanded that the beleaguered brigade must be quickly reinforced. The 7th Dukes, then north of Rauray, were hastily called into the fray:

"On 1st July the Hun felt strong enough to counter-attack with a view to breaking into Salisbury Plain. Another Brigade [70th] ahead of us bore the brunt of the day's fighting against Panthers and infantry and suffered heavy casualties. By 1100hrs our 'B' Company was ordered forward to the village of Rauray to fill a gap in the thick country. This they did with great success, losing only one casualty although they were in the front line all day. By 4pm 'C' Company had moved forward also, and by 9pm the whole Battalion had taken over in the line during an action to enable the [70th] Brigade ahead to form a composite Battalion from two of its battalions for a counter-attack. By 11pm the Hun attack had failed with the loss of some 30 tanks."

Major A B M Kavanagh, Commanding 'D' Company

(Ibid)

The division's Durham Light Infantry and Tyneside Scottish fought an epic battle. The Tyneside Scottish counter-attacked to the skirl of their bagpipes and clung on to the disputed Point 110 feature, but it cost a tremendous bill. The last fight of the day witnessed the 7th Dukes playing a significant part in the battle, as recorded by the history of The Durham Light Infantry:

"Bitter fighting continued throughout the day. Four fierce [German] attacks were delivered on Rauray, all of them unsuccessful. The last came from the direction of Queudeville early in the evening and was decisively repelled. By this time companies were curiously mixed. The Tyneside Scottish had one company and 1 1/2 platoons of the 11th Battalion [The Durham Light Infantry], while Lieutenant Colonel Hanmer [11 DLI] had three companies of the 7th Duke of Wellington's under his command - 'a proper Cox and Box', as he wrote at the time. Despite the casualties [29] suffered, however, at the end of the day 'C' Company of the 11th [DLI] and two companies of the 7th Duke of Wellington's were led by Captain W F McMichael, (11th), into a gallant counter-attack to

straighten the line and relieve a company of the Tyneside Scottish which, though reduced to twelve men, continued to hold on. The attack was a complete success; no-one had seen the enemy run so hard: and it enabled the [70th] Brigade to claim (with justice) that it occupied the same ground it had held when the German attack began."

(Faithful, The Story of The Durham Light Infantry. S G P Ward.)

Three days of severe fighting cost the 49th Division, especially 70th Brigade, dear, but the Germans too paid a price - 9th SS Panzer Division 1,145 casualties, 2nd SS Panzer Division 636 casualties, 12th SS Panzer Division 1,240 casualties. The relentless steady push forward by the 49th Division was not ignored by the Germans whose propaganda broadcaster Lord Haw Haw had already called them the 'Polar Bear Butchers' and complained that the SS tank crews had been murdered whilst trying to surrender. Lord Haw Haw's broadcast closed with a threat that any captured soldier wearing the 49th Division's Polar Bear badge would be shot without trial. No idle threat, for troops from the 2nd SS Panzer Division had taken but a few hours to massacre 642 civilians at Ordour-sur-Glane a few days before. Lieutenant John Lappin had only recently joined the 7th Battalion in Normandy as a replacement for 'D' Company's 16 Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Alexander, who had become a casualty during an attack upon an enemy post. Lieutenant Lappin soon felt at home:

"'Easy to Lead' was how Arthur Wellesley, the young Colonel of the 33rd Regiment, described his men, recruited mainly from the valleys of the West Riding. This was how I found them, and once I had gained their confidence and respect they certainly would follow gamely on any task we were set. There was a dour, but humourous side to the nature of those boys, many of whom came from East of the Pennines, but many from over the borders with Lancashire and Cheshire in the Oldham and Stalybridge areas. 'D' Company was known as the 'Cow and Gate' Company, as so many of them were between 18 and 20 years old, and they were led by a young OC in Barry Kavanagh, then in his late twenties."

Captain John Lappin MC

(The Iron Duke, Volume LIII, Number 183. August 1980.)

In the meantime, all was far from well with the 6th Dukes since their bloody advance on Fontenay-le-Pesnil. As well as in the rifle companies, Battalion Headquarters and Support Company had also sustained heavy casualties, particularly in the mortar platoon and regimental aid post. Within a twelve hour period the Battalion Second-in-Command, Major C H Forster, and then his successor, Major K E F Miller, became casualties. The 6th Battalion had been severely mauled in the attack:

"Casualties were mounting steadily, and it was becoming clear that the unit needed the time and opportunity for a thorough reorganization and rest. It had suffered an experience which would have tested even seasoned troops and the effect was proportionately greater on men in their first operation. Above all there had been no chance to do more than hastily patch up the fabric. Complete reorganization was essential if the Battalion was again to become an efficient unit. Since there was no room, and no facilities, for this purpose in France it was decided to bring the Battalion back to England to re-form. It was some time before this could be done. Whilst waiting to move back they went into Brigade reserve and dug three separate and complete Battalion positions in three days."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Their Brigade Major, Major Paul Crook, later recorded the cumulative effect on the 6th Dukes:

"Our first attack by the [11th Royal] Scots Fusiliers was succesful, but the next one by 6th Dukes, less so and they suffered severe casualties particularly among officers. This Battalion was singularly unfortunate and suffered casualties wherever it went, even during a pay parade which was hit by shelling when they were in reserve. In two weeks they lost 23 officers, and all the company commanders and 350 other ranks. They were subjected to a particularly vicious and efficient counter-attack by 12 SS Panzer Division which resulted in an unplanned withdrawal. By the end of June their morale was at rock bottom."

(Came The Dawn. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

This brisk disbandment of the 6th Battalion had been triggered by a brutally frank report written by the new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel A J D Turner, which had speedily reached the eyes of General Montgomery. Montgomery was furious and at once instructed that the 6th Dukes be removed from the 49th Division. He also wrote a letter to Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War, explaining that the unit was no longer fit for battle, adding in his own hand a condemnation of Lieutenant Colonel Turner - *"I consider the Commanding Officer displays a defeatist mentality and is not a proper chap"*. Field Marshal Lord Carver later suggested this may have been a way for Montgomery to criticise the standard of training of units being sent to Normandy, and to mitigate the lack of success in achieving a breakout. Lieutenant Colonel Turner's outspokenness certainly gained the wrath of the Army Commander. But those in the field knew his true worth for by 20th July he was appointed to command 1st Battalion The Hampshire Regiment, 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

The 6th Dukes place in 147th Brigade was filled from 6th July by a regular battalion, 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment. The remnants of Skipton's 6th Battalion arrived at Colchester in August 1944 and was not destined to return to active service [30] but it did supply reinforcements for its 7th Battalion:

"Finally they moved back by slow stages. The prospect of being in England again was bound to be exciting and pleasant. Yet the majority were saddened by the contrast between the [6th] Battalion as it had come to France, complete, well-equipped and confident; and the [6th] Battalion which went back, so much smaller and missing so many well-known faces. In all 19 officers and 350 men had either been killed or wounded."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Nor were the 6th Dukes the only casualties of the fighting in the Bocage:

"Early in July we changed commanders in addition to the replacement of 6 DWR by 1 Leicesters. Our Irish Brigadier [E R Mahoney, 147th Brigade] although physically brave as a lion could not mentally cope with the complexities of handling a brigade group and armour in action, and started to do some very strange things. Fearing for the safety of the soldiers, I had to report these to the GSO1 at [49] Division, Dick Jelf. The Brigadier [Mahoney] did in fact suffer a nervous breakdown and was abruptly invalidated home."

Major P Crook, 147th Brigade Major

(Came The Dawn. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

Command of the 7th Dukes' 147th Brigade then passed to Brigadier Henry Wood, who was destined to command the Brigade for the remainder of the war. Of the three brigade commanders who landed with the 49th Division, two had now changed leaving only Brigadier E C Cooke-Collis, 70th Brigade. Brigadier Cooke-Collis was no stranger to the Territorials having been Adjutant of Middlesbrough's 4th Green Howards for two years before the war, later commanding the 6th Green Howards (TA) - both battalions of the famous 50th (Northumbrian) Division, and later he commanded its 69th Brigade. Thus the 49th Division had experienced its first active service in Normandy. The Dukes' Brigade Major, Paul Crook, later gave witness to the toughness of the German opposition this initially green division had overcome:

"June was spent in tough but ineffectual fighting in the Bocage country against determined and brilliantly handled German troops. At one time we were up against the crack 12 PZ Division and later we fought against a 'stomach' [31] battalion whose fighting qualities were derided by the Intelligence staffs at higher HQ. All I can say is they should have come and fought against them themselves. They were well sited in positions from whence they could not leave as they would have been shot by their tough regular NCOs behind them. They remained firing at us from their dugouts until we literally trod on them, causing unnecessary casualties particularly amongst [our] leaders."

(Ibid)

The 49th Division, now widely known as 'Barker's Bears', clung to the Rauray ridge and remained static for a period holding the high ground south of Fontenay-le-Pesnil. The 7th Dukes moved to relieve the 4th Lincolns at Tessel Wood, on 10th July, then, after a short rest, to replace the Hallamshires on 16th July. Intermittent but savage enemy shellfire caused a steady flow of casualties even to troops in well-dug slit-trenches. Local attacks and aggressive patrolling became the order of the day to ensure that as many German troops as possible were tied down holding the area:

"We were in contact in thick country and we started offensive patrolling in a big way. It became necessary to obtain an identification. In no time we dominated no man's land which was some 2,000 yards wide here, but the Boche was difficult to catch in his rabbit warren. We came under a certain amount of shelling and mortaring and the Boche Spandau [machine-gun] teams were active and elusive. The Battalion lodged a battle patrol based on a platoon about 1,000 yards into no man's land, and through and around this firm pivot we operated mostly by night gaining a great deal of patrolling experience."

Major A B M Kavanagh, Commanding 'D' Company

(The Iron Duke, Volume XX, Number 59. October 1944.)

Despite Lord Haw Haw's threats the Dukes continued to harass the enemy with aggressive patrols. One patrol, led by Lieutenant John Lappin [32] on the 13th July, discovered that the SS Panzer Division had been withdrawn and replaced by Wehrmacht troops:

"By this time it was light: off we went by the same route and walked straight out of the corn into the trees in front of the house. There we found several weapon pits with signs of occupation, but the whole bloody lot were asleep. I dropped off a Bren gun there to cope with the occupants when they awoke, and went round into the house. That was easy - it was empty but in the back garden were three more Jerries in their dugouts. Simpson [33] got one with his Sten [sub machine-gun] and I got

two others with a grenade followed by Sten. Strangely enough I had no compunction about it. It just seemed the obvious thing to do. By this time the hullabaloo had roused the other Boche and the Spandau teams woke up on our right and started something. My right-hand Bren was outnumbered and so decided to withdraw but not before getting at least three Boche in the process. Simpson got another with his Sten and Wright bagged another with his rifle. [It was] getting too hot so we withdrew into the cornfield, made for base. Jerry firing wildly at us from the trees. None of my blokes were hurt."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

On the 19th July the 49th Division was relieved, and the 7th Dukes was withdrawn to Conde-sur-Seulles there to enjoy its first rest since landing in Normandy. But even this relief from the forward positions was not without danger:

"Tuesday 18th July: A black day for 'D' Company. Having been relieved, we had hardly settled down - having dinner - when the Hun shelled us with 88mm. The first shot whizzed past my HQ and exploded in front of Coy HQ. When the turmoil had subsided, I found Sergeant Downs with a nasty smack on the left shoulder. Webber the sniper was badly hit and 'Kev' [Major A B M Kavanagh] had a flesh wound in the arm. The CO ordered him back to the Regimental Aid Post. I took over until Charles [Captain C Hill] returned. A stretcher bearer told me Sergeant Murphy was also killed. Wednesday 19th: A morning of shocks. Two lads from 18 platoon killed by booby-traps."

Captain John Lappin MC

(Ibid)

Now slightly distanced from the battlefield, the Dukes had a few days in which to enjoy a period of relatively quiet safety in the peaceful meadows, streams and orchards they had fought so hard to capture. Amongst the aids to relaxation more than a few of the battle-worn soldiers discovered the delights of the local cider and Calvados brandy - some got very relaxed indeed !

Nor had the rest of the division been idle in the previous week, for it had been engaged in a major operation which had taken place around the River Seulles. At this time the 49th (West Riding) Division was flanked by the 50th (Northumbrian) Division on its right (west) flank, with the 53rd (Welsh) Division on its left (east) flank. By the 14th July elements of the 49th Division were preparing for 'Operation Cormorant' which required the Hallamshires and KOYLI, 146th Brigade, to press further south and capture Vendes and Barbée Farm concurrent with an attack by the 59th Division. Whilst 'Barker's Bears' did this, the 59th (Staffordshire) Division [33] was to pass through the 49th Division and then to capture the villages of Noyers and Missy some three miles south of the 7th Dukes positions in Tessel Wood. On the 49th Division's left flank the 15th (Scottish) Division was to pass through the 53rd (Welsh) Division and then to capture Evrecy.

The Hallamshires, with an additional company of the KOYLI, had no tank support for their attack as all tanks had been allocated to the 59th (Staffordshire) Division. These West Riding Territorials therefore had a tough battle and were quickly drawn into close hand-to-hand fighting. After a desperate battle they discovered that the attacks by the flanking divisions had sustained appalling losses and failed. Heavily outnumbered and surrounded on three sides, the Hallamshires [34] and KOYLI had no choice but to withdraw by walking back steadily under the protection of a box-barrage. Their attack nevertheless achieved its aim for that night the German defenders withdrew from Vendes and Barbée Farm.

Although the 7th Dukes were not engaged in this operation, it did draw another Dukes unit into the fray in the form of Halifax's 68th Anti-Tank Regiment (Duke of Wellington's) then serving with the 59th (Staffordshire) Division.

[28: The 24th Lancers, 8th Armoured Brigade, who had given such invaluable service to the 49th (West Riding) Division, were disbanded at the end of July 1944 on the basis that reinforcement tank crews were urgently needed for other armoured regiments. Of the 64 Sherman tanks (including 12 Firefly tanks) that had landed with the 24th Lancers some 28 had been knocked-out in action, and a further 21 damaged by enemy action but recovered and repaired. In June 1944 alone the 24th Lancers had knocked-out or destroyed 2 Tiger tanks, 25 Panther tanks, 4 Mark IV tanks, 10 self-propelled guns, 2 Anti-tank guns, 10 half-tracks and 8 armoured cars. No accurate records were made in July, but on 1st July alone the 24th Lancers knocked-out 9 Panther tanks and 3 self-propelled guns. The 24th Lancers were formed in December 1940 and the Regiment was not reformed after the war. The 24th Lancers' place in the 8th Armoured Brigade was taken up by the 13th/18th Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own).]

[29: 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, 70th Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hanmer, suffered over 200 all ranks as casualties in the German counter-attack on Rauray on 1st July 1944.]

[30: After the German surrender the 6th Dukes were converted into being an Infantry Primary Training Centre and, for a period, trained Dutch recruits.]

[31: 'Stomach Battalions'. A few German reserve units were composed of men either suffering or recovering from the same type of wound/illness.]

[32: One result of the 7th Dukes patrol on 13th July was that Lieutenant J Lappin was awarded the Military Cross and Lance Corporal J Simpson the Military Medal.]

[33: Some unit histories incorrectly describe this unit as the '59th (Lancashire) Division', but by this time it had been retitled as the '59th (Staffordshire) Division.]

[34: Sheffield's Hallamshire Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel T Hart Dyke, had by this time sustained 33 officers and 460 soldiers as casualties whilst fighting in the Bocage.]

68th ANTI-TANK REGIMENT (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S)

Even as the 7th Dukes were battling south of Fontenay-le-Pesnil yet another Dukes Territorial unit, (in the form of Halifax's 68th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery), was about to be drawn into the same battle. Indeed the Dukes were destined to fight virtually alongside each other, albeit in different divisions.

The 68th Anti-Tank Regiment had not experienced active service, although the Regiment's 272 Anti-Tank Battery had already been in action in Malaya and Singapore. After training in Northern Ireland, Kent, and Southern England, the Regiment prepared to take part in the liberation of Europe as part of the 59th (Staffordshire) Division [35]. 68th Anti-Tank Regiment was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J C Smith OBE RA who had assumed command in 1942. The Regiment retained three of its four original anti-tank batteries, (269, 270, 271). 272 Anti-Tank Battery, which had been lost at Singapore in 1941, had since been replaced by a new 298 Anti-Tank Battery which had been raised within the Regiment.

The Regiment's four batteries were each organised as three troops, each containing one 17 pounder and two six pounder [36] anti-tank guns towed by a tracked universal carriers. In action it was usual for an infantry division's anti-tank regiment to deploy one battery with each of the division's three infantry brigades, with the fourth battery remaining as divisional reserve. The anti-tank gunner's role in the attack was to follow closely behind the infantry, often near the battalion's reserve companies, and rapidly to deploy when a position was captured, then to provide an anti-tank defence against any enemy counter-attack. This resulting anti-tank screen would complement that provided by the infantry's own anti-tank platoons. The Dukes gunners only had towed, rather than self-propelled, guns which did not allow them closely to support the actual infantry attack. In the attack, anti-tank defence was afforded by the infantry's own PIAT hand-held anti-tank launchers, Firefly tanks, or by anti-tank guns mounted on a tank chassis to produce self-propelled anti-tank guns. As the tank regiments had already discovered, the six pounder gun had little effect upon the thick armour of the German Panther and Tiger tanks, unless the scarce new SABOT ammunition was available, which it rarely was. The newer 17 pounder gun was very effective, but the Germans were well aware of this and picked them out as primary targets. For too long Allied anti-tank guns had been greatly outperformed by their German counterparts:

"By 1944, Britain had done just that by introducing (very late in the day) the best Allied anti-tank gun of the war, the 17-pounder. It was lighter (and therefore more manoeuvrable) than the German 88, heavier than the Panther's 75 KwK 42, but with a velocity sufficient to penetrate most Panzer armour. The trouble was, typically, that no British tank turret had been designed big enough to mount it; secondly, unlike the German 'Rhinoceros' self-propelled gun, it was generally mounted to be trailed, muzzle pointing backwards. This was fine for fighting a defensive action, as had been all too many battles fought by the British Army since 1940, but not - as in all the battles since Alamein - on the attack."

(The Lonely Leader, Monty 1944-45. Alistair Horne/ David Montgomery. 1994.)

Unlike field artillery, who lobbed shells onto obscured targets often firing from the relative safety afforded by dead ground, the Dukes anti-tank gunner had to be able to see his target from the gun's position, often needing to hold opening fire until close range if their guns were to guarantee destroying the target. Not for them the protection of a tank's armour, or indeed the relative obscurity of a well-dug rifleman's slit-trench. Anti-tank gunners had no choice but to site their guns where good fields of fire could be achieved. This reality all too often meant that the anti-tank gunners had little protection from enemy counter-fire after they revealed themselves by opening fire.

OPERATION CHARNWOOD

The Dukes gunners formed part of the 59th (Staffordshire) Division which had sailed for Normandy on 25th June. By 1st July the large part of the division was completing its concentration between Bayeux and Creully as part of 1 Corps. After two days settling in, the divisional commander, Major General L O Lyne, gave out preliminary orders for their part in the battle for Caen - 'Operation Charnwood', this was to be the division's first taste of active service. The division was to attack due south with the aim of capturing the main part of Caen, west of the River Orne, including Carpiquet airfield, an area which had originally been the 3rd Division's D Day task. The 1 Corps' plan allowed for an attack by three divisions and placed the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division on the right, 59th (Staffordshire) Division in the centre, with the 3rd British Infantry Division on the right; H Hour was set at 0420 hours 8th July.

In preparation for the attack, the Dukes 269 Anti-Tank Battery moved forward in support of 177 Brigade [37] and relieved the 9th Infantry Brigade in the area of Cambes there to form a firm base and reserve for the 59th Division's attack. In the phase one assault waves 271 Anti-Tank Battery was grouped with 176 Brigade [38], which had orders to act as the division's left flank attack tasked with the capture of La Bijude three miles north of Caen. Similarly, 270 Anti-Tank Battery was with 197 Brigade [39] on the right flank to capture Galmanche. The enemy positions had been softened up by massive bomber raids, naval gunfire and artillery in advance, but enemy ground forces had determinedly resisted all attempts by patrols to locate their precise defensive positions. This inability to locate the enemy was to hide the strength of the defence this green division was expected to attack:

"Only subsequently was it known that the front line of the Germans was all part of Hitler's 'Atlantic Wall'. It had many underground positions, close lines of weapon pits with communication trenches, [barbed] wire, mines of all sorts, in places an anti-tank ditch, 88mm self-propelled guns, Nebelwerfers (Moaning Minnies), innumerable mortars and last but not least it was manned by Panzer Grenadiers and SS troops. In other words it contained the élite of the German Army."

(1/7th Bn The Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Normandy. Lt Col E J Jerram. 1946.)

At H Hour, 8th July, the Dukes gunners advanced closely behind their allotted infantry maintaining a moment's readiness to deploy their guns to form an anti-tank screen as soon as the objectives were taken. On the right 2/6th South Staffords (temporarily attached to 197 Infantry Brigade) quickly discovered that the guns had not neutralised the enemy, for they met stiff resistance from troops of the 12th SS Panzer Division (Hitler Jugend):

"At 0420 hours the [59th] division heard for the first time the roar of a full scale British artillery programme, and our leading troops crossed the start line. 2/6 S Staffords were faced by elements of 12 SS Panzer Division, and it soon became evident that our supporting artillery was leaving untouched important parts, hitherto unlocated by us, of the enemy defences. These consisted of a large number of light and heavy machine gun positions, linked by an elaborate trench system of pre-D Day vintage; the enemy's mortars were well sited and served; and his troops were imbued with a fanatical spirit of resistance. Our leading companies came under heavy fire within 200 yards of the start line, and though elements of one company entered the outskirts of Galmanche and a few tanks got round the village to the south-east, our attack on this flank came to a full stop. The infantry lost the barrage and remained in the open, suffering heavy casualties from mortar fire as they lay in the standing crops and from machine gun fire if they tried to move."

(The 59th Division, Its War Story. Peter Knight 1954.)

Although the 6th North Staffords managed to break into La Bijude they were at once met by a spirit counter-attack by troops from the 12th SS Panzer Division which drove them out. On the left Galmanche had also been toughly contested by 111 Battalion, 25 Panzergrenadier Regiment. The two division's on each flank were making progress however, and it became essential for the 59th Division's attack also to move forward despite the unexpectedly heavy opposition. Thus the second phase started at 7.30 am with 176 Brigade continuing to press onto La Bijude whilst 197 Brigade pushed further south of Galmanche towards Malon and St Contest. Here the 1/7th Royal Warwicks pressed forward mistakenly believing that their flank in Galmanche had been captured and held by 2/6th South Staffords:

"From the start line, as the dawn broke, the battered top of St Contest church could just been seen over the corn, nearly 3,000 yards away. The roar of gunfire coming down already on Galmanche and to the left was stupendous. The men got up and thrust forward with terrific gusto. The [supporting] artillery fire was to last for one hour and at a rate of 100 yards in 3 minutes. We all had to move at the best possible pace through the corn. The roar of noise was terrific. It was quite impossible to hear any one gun or shell or another man speak; there was just a surging roar and the whole landscape was blotted out in smoke and dust. Simultaneously the same sort of thing was going on in Buron with the Canadians. German mortar bombs were coming back, bullets apparently from all directions with an occasional 88mm shell passing like an express train."

(1/7th Bn The Royal Warwickshire Regiment in Normandy. Lt Col E J Jerram. 1946.)

Soon matters began to go wrong for the 1/7th Warwicks. The forward companies disappeared in the smoke, dust and confusion of battle with reports coming back of companies reduced to 18 men led by a sergeant and no sign of the others. Fire was coming in from the area thought to be held by the Staffords, radio communications had broken down and one company commander reported that he had entered St Contest alone and he was now searching for his rifle platoons. Companies dug in as best they could and found themselves amongst a maze of enemy trenches, minefield and barbed wire entanglements all concealed in the dense cornfields:

"The fog of war seemed to have descended. Red flares were ordered to be fired over the village orchards and, within a few minutes of the signal, was answered by [RAF] rocket-firing Typhoons, but as they fell too close to our own troops they were ordered to stop."

(Ibid)

All throughout the battle the Dukes were close behind the assault wave struggling to keep touch with their infantry. It was a thankless task, and no less dangerous for enemy mines, mortars or shells did not discriminate in the dark. The roar of their carrier engines was drowned by the momentous noise of battle as they struggled to haul the guns forward. Their route was hampered by dense cornfields, hedges and ditches through which routes had to be hacked and along which a daunting stream of wounded groped a way in the dark to the relative safety of the rear areas. Little news came back, for the infantrymen were far too busy fighting their own battle in the dense countryside. As St Contest was taken M10 tracked anti-tank guns [40] and Sherman tanks clattered forward to support the newly-held objective. Close behind, the artillery forward observation officer's carrier and one of the anti-tank battery's carriers and six pounder were blown up as they ran into an anti-tank minefield north of St Contest. Already the 1/7th Warwicks had sustained 134 casualties that day. The Dukes' 298 Anti-Tank Battery was called forward to deploy its guns in order to consolidate the tenuous grip on St Contest:

"After this a second barrage was put down on the enemy positions, medium bombers, at the same time, attacking objectives in the German defences in the vicinity of Caen. Phase II of the attack had as its objective the line St Contest-Epron and, moving forward directly behind the forward troops, the 68th [Anti-tank Regiment] were soon in action on captured objectives. By 0900 hrs 298 Battery [Major Marsh] had reached the northern part of St Contest and were soon engaged in repelling determined counter-attacks by German Tiger [41] tanks. The struggle was very bitter in this area and although several enemy tanks were disabled, J Troop was overrun, losing all its guns and suffering thirty-six casualties. Meanwhile 270 Battery [Major Boag] was deployed in the area around Galmanche and 271 Battery were in action around Epron and Auberge."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

8th July had witnessed the Halifax Dukes in action for the first time in a battle which had thoroughly tested their skills as anti-tank gunners, but the new experience had been at a terrible price for twenty-one members of the Regiment had been killed and many more wounded or missing. The anti-tank batteries held onto their positions, despite enemy counter-attacks, until 11th July when they withdrew with the remainder of the division to a rest area near Ryes.

OPERATION POMEGRANATE

By 14th July 68th Anti-Tank Regiment's all-too-short rest at Ryes was terminated as it moved to a new area when the 59th Division concentrated around Loucelles-Cristot-Fontenay. Even as they moved plans were already in hand for the division to take part in an attack on Noyers, as part of 30 Corps, known as Operation Pomegranate.

H Hour was set at 0530 hours on 16 July and found the division placed between the 43rd (Wessex) Division on the left and the 49th (West Riding) Division on the right. The division's task was to destroy all enemy forces up to the line Landelle-Noyers-Missy by 1800 hours that day. They were now about to experience fighting in the bocage where the Regiment's anti-tank guns could only be got forward after engineers had blasted routes through the numerous thick hedges and steep banks:

"The attack was made on a two-brigade front with 197th Infantry Brigade on the right, 177th on the left and 176th in reserve. 298 Battery was under the command of the 197th Brigade and 269 under 177 Brigade. Heavy fighting took place the whole way and as each objective was successively taken, the batteries deployed to meet the expected counter-attack. Progress was very slow, the enemy fighting savagely and hitting back at every opportunity. At dusk that evening only intermediate objectives had been gained and a precarious hold on these was maintained throughout the night. Heavy mist on the following morning held up the attack til 1200 hrs; but half-an-hour later 197th Brigade reached Quince, and advancing steadily, our troops occupied the general line Le Manoir-Le Semerrere-Noyers Station-Haut des Foyes by dusk. Enemy tanks had been seen throughout the day, but no concerted attack by these had developed. Throughout the night there was considerable enemy

air activity on positions which had been won. 298 Battery (Major Marsh) had by this time received a severe hammering and had only six 17-pounders and no six-pounders left. It was therefore relieved by 270 Battery (Major Boag)."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

They had again overcome stiff opposition, this time provided by 276 and 277 Infantry Divisions supported by elements of 2nd and 9th SS Panzer Divisions. These divisions were manned by Austrians, Russians, Poles as well as Germans and proved to be skilful and determined fighters. The 59th Division then spent a long period in active patrolling to which the enemy responded with heavy mortar fire which caused casualties to the forward troops as they went about routine duties, placing them under constant strain.

On 20th July the Regiment came out of the line to rest and absorb reinforcements, whilst on 28th July 298 Battery supported a successful attack on Landelle by 197 Infantry Brigade. The 59th Division had already become part of 12 Corps, on 23rd July, who now had the task of capturing Villers-Bocage, west of Caen, then exploiting towards the River Orne with the aim of seizing a bridgehead. By 3rd August there were signs of a considerable enemy withdrawal across the Corps' front and 59th Division was ordered to advance through Villers-Bocage thence on to Noyers. These areas were cleared against relatively light resistance and the division soon reached the banks of the Orne.

The 68th Anti-Tank Regiment started the operation by passing through Fontenay le Pesnil where the 6th and 7th Dukes had already fought an epic battle:

"On 4th August 176th Brigade, passing through the Villers-Bocage position, advanced to the bridge over the Orne, stormed it and, on the night of 5th/6th August, established a bridgehead over the river. Moving up at dawn 271 Battery took up positions on the west bank of the river, their field of fire commanding roads on the opposite side. 269 Battery was in positions on their right flank. E Troop, which had crossed to the east of the Orne, were heavily engaged by enemy Tigers [tanks] which in spite of receiving a heavy hammering came on with determination, and supported by a strong force of infantry, pushed our troops back to the immediate vicinity of the bridge. On 7th and 8th August our hold on the bridgehead was precariously maintained. L Troop, on the west bank, came under intense fire, but was successful in destroying one Tiger [41] and destroying others. By the evening of the 9th the enemy's counter-attack had been definitely halted, and on the following day 270 Battery supported 177th Brigade to form a firm base for an attack by the 53rd Division."

(Ibid)

In the week that followed the Dukes anti-tank gunners steadily advanced in close support of the infantry. The batteries constantly redeployed their guns as new ground was seized, but no enemy counter-attacks materialised. Despite success on the battlefield other factors had already begun to determine the fate of the 59th (Staffordshire) Division, for by 17th July 1944, the 21st Army Group's casualties had stood at 37,563 representing a 60% increase since the figures at the end of June. These casualties were not borne evenly across all Arms, for 80% had, not surprisingly, been sustained by the infantry. At that time only 6,654 all ranks were available as reinforcements, for after years of fighting neither Britain nor Canada had large pools of reinforcements left. On 14th August, the day of the breakout, Montgomery sent an urgent cable to the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir Alan Brooke:

"Regret time has come when I must break up one infantry division. My infantry divisions are so low in effective rifle strength that they can no.....repeat NO - longer fight effectively. The need for this action has been present for some time but the urgency of the present battle operations forced me to delay the decision."

(The Lonely Leader, Monty 1944-1945. Alistair Horne/David Montgomery. 1995.)

This secrecy of this decision was not without significance, for it signalled the British Army's parlous state of reinforcements, and it was essential that the Germans did not discover the enforced disbandment. On 19th August the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment (Duke of Wellington's) received orders that the 59th (Staffordshire) Division was to withdraw to Grand Auney from where the whole division was to be disbanded by the end of the month:

"The exigencies of the service made this essential. Casualties in Normandy had been heavy and troops were required to fill the depleted ranks of other units. Since landing in France 3 officers and 56 other ranks of the [68th Anti-Tank] Regiment had been killed in action. It was a sad blow that the 59th Division had to go, after its long and varied training at home and after only two months' fighting. The men of the 68th were drafted to other anti-tank units and many of them saw the war through to its victorious conclusion in Germany. The disbandment of the Regiment was completed on 31st August 1944."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

[35: The 59th (Staffordshire) Division was formed in 1939 as the duplicate of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division. Whereas most Territorial Army duplicate divisions' units mirrored the original division the 55th and 59th chose a different method. On duplication the 55th (West Lancashire) Division took Lancashire's original and duplicate TA units, and the 59th (Staffordshire) Division took the original and duplicate Staffordshire units. To add to the confusion, the 59th (Staffordshire) Division later included the 197th Infantry Brigade, comprising the 1/5th, 2/5th Battalions The Lancashire Fusiliers (TA) and the 5th Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment (TA). The 59th (Staffordshire) Divisions badge represented a 'Pithead and Slagheap'. In 1944 the division was commanded by Major General L O Lyne, and comprised 176th Brigade - 7th Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment (TA), 7th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA), 6th Battalion The North Staffordshire Regiment (TA); 177th Brigade - 5th, 1/6th and 2/6th Battalions The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA); 197th Brigade - 1/7th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (TA), 2/5th (Bury) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers (TA), 5th Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment (TA).]

[36: The 68th Anti-Tank Regiment (Duke of Wellington's) was issued with two pounder anti-tank guns when the Regiment was formed. In October 1942 the two pounder gun had been handed on to infantry anti-tank platoons and the Regiment issued with the six pounder anti-tank gun. These had later been supplemented with a few 17 pounder anti-tank guns which, although an excellent weapon, was in short supply.]

[37: 177th Brigade - 5th, 1/6th and 2/6th Battalions The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA).]

[38: 176th Brigade - 7th Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment (TA), 7th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA), 6th Battalion The North Staffordshire Regiment (TA).]

[39: 197th Brigade - 1/7th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (TA), 2/5th (Bury) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers (TA), 5th Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment (TA).]

[40: The M10 tracked anti-tank guns supporting the 59th (Staffordshire) Division came from 248 (M10) Anti-Tank Battery 62nd Anti-Tank Regiment.]

[41: Although contemporary accounts refer to German 'Tiger' tanks there were very few of them, and were more likely to be the formidable 'Panther'.]

CAEN

Shortly after the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment first moved into the bocage on 14th July the bocage veterans, the 49th (West Riding) Division were about to leave it behind. On 23rd July the 7th Dukes advance party was ordered to join others of the division and moved about fifteen miles east to Cagny, south-west of Caen. Here the division joined the British 1st Corps, (which it remained with until the end of the war), which was then part of the 1st Canadian Army:

"Under cover of darkness we left the pastoral surroundings of the Bocage country south of Bayeux, and as dawn broke we passed through the zone around the Orne bridge where the Airborne gliders had crash-landed on 'D' Day. The gigantic debris created by the lifeless carcasses of the now empty aircraft created an eerie atmosphere as we passed by in the morning mist. It made us wonder how so many landed and discharged their human loads intact and in fighting condition. The landing area was crowded with derelict gliders in all sorts of grotesque attitudes."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(*The Iron Duke*, Volume LIII, Number 183. August 1980.)

Montgomery's original intention was for the British 3rd Division, (which he had commanded in 1939), to capture Caen on the first or second day of the invasion. In the event the Germans too recognised the significance of Caen and, despite many weeks of heavy fighting, Caen had not yet fallen. At this time 1st Corps was holding the extreme east of the Allied flank. Here the 49th (West Riding) Division took over from the 3rd Division and the 51st (Highland) Division - a Territorial division which the 2/7th Dukes Territorials had fought alongside with distinction at St Valéry en Caux in June 1940 [42]. The 49th Division's new task was to hold key ground which was to be the main hinge for the imminent Allied breakthrough. All the division's positions were in a gigantic dust-bowl, and many were overlooked by strong German defences. The Dukes' 147th Brigade moved to Frénoville-Cagny, on 25th/26th July, an area which formed a salient into the enemy lines. On arrival the 7th Dukes occupied positions east of the village of Cagny with the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers forward of the village. At many points the enemy forward positions were very close to the Dukes' trenches which were also under constant observation from enemy artillery observers on high ground to the south-east. Whilst here they discovered that their enemy was not as fortunate as they thought:

"The village had been a prime target for air and ground bombardment, and in our area we found many remains of Wehrmacht [German Army] transport, which had sought protection from the buildings. My hungry youngsters soon found what was left of a horse-drawn ration waggon from which they unearthed packets of 'knackebrot' (ration biscuits) and various unattractive-looking sorts of tinned food. One consisted of what looked like a full tin of fat with a few lumps of lean here and there."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(Ibid)

The 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment, which had replaced the 6th Dukes in 147th Brigade, moved in to defend Frénouville on the Brigade's left flank. Little movement in the forward areas took place whilst the Allies simply held firm to allow the build-up of personnel and materiel necessary for the breakout. Any moving vehicle quickly generated a tell-tale plume of dust which automatically drew accurate fire from enemy mortars or 88mm guns. All along the roads military police had erected large warning signs proclaiming 'Drive slowly - Dust brings Shells'. Even some friendly activities at first caused alarm:

"Added to this, we had the nerve-racking experience of being rocketed by RAF Typhoons, and got a taste of what it must have felt like at the receiving end. Fortunately their target was on the other side of the village, but we didn't realise that when, after watching them approach, they peeled off and seemed to dive towards us, but fortunately went straight over our heads, and released their rockets at the enemy positions."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(Ibid)

The Dukes carefully dug shelters for all their vehicles, and took care that movement was, wherever possible, restricted to the hours of darkness:

"We dug in at Cagny and were bombarded by some flying creatures as big as bumble bees which flew into our faces. So we wore a mosquito net suspended from our helmets. One night we had a meal of Spam, jam and some smelly [Camembert] cheese sandwich with a mess-tin of lukewarm tea. I reached up in the dark for a sandwich, found something soft, lifted it down close to my face. It was three fingers attached to half a human hand."

Private George Marsden, 7th Battalion

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

Their trenches received constant attention from the German Luftwaffe, which made low-flying raids, and German artillery and mortars which regularly bombarded them. Platoon positions were steadily improved with sandbags and thick overhead cover in preparation for the breakout:

"The [7th] Battalion at this time was holding a 1,000 yard front - about three or four fairly large flat fields with hedges and trees and the odd smashed farm building. The enemy line was about 300 yards away. But the 'line' did not mean the unending deep trench of the last war: it was an imaginary line drawn between a series of two-man positions, grouped into sections and platoons in depth. Sometimes one caught a glimpse of the Germans in daylight when one worked building up the defences - but mostly both sides worked and slept by shifts in the sun and only moved in the open at night."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The 49th Division could no longer be regarded as 'green' for its initial training was by now enhanced by hard gained experience under fire. For example, the division's support battalion, the Kensingtons, had developed an effective system to deal with the ever troublesome German multi-barrelled mortars which made a distinctive sound when firing. With the Kensingtons' mortar and medium machine-gun platoons being deployed across the division's area, on a common radio network, their separate platoons passed the code-word 'Poppycock' followed by the compass bearing of the sound of the mortar firing. A number of these bearings were then co-ordinated at the Kensingtons' Headquarters and the location thus revealed immediately plastered with fire. The success of this ploy was soon confirmed in a captured intelligence report which complained of a new British counter-mortar weapon which locked on to their mortars however quickly they were moved.

Not least of a nuisance were the swarms of mosquitoes which liberally infested the area and descended upon the infantrymen imprisoned in their fire-trenches, particularly at dusk. Their thick woollen battledress tunics afforded no protection and various creams and potions to ward them off were issued by the 7th Battalion's Regimental Medical Officer, but these did little to alleviate the innumerable bites suffered by all. Some Dukes reacted so badly to bites that their grossly swollen limbs or eyes required temporary evacuation and medical treatment to reduce the swelling. But not all enemy air-raids were quite as hazardous:

"At night we had other novelties when enemy aircraft flew overhead, bombing, machine-gunning, and dropping anti-personnel mines, and it came as a bit of an anti-climax when we emerged from our slits"

after morning standto to see bits of paper littering the area. On inspection we were amused to find they were the latest Nazi propaganda weapon, telling us that while we were fighting a hopeless rearguard action with our backs to the sea, the latest 'V' weapons were pounding our homes to ruins."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(The Iron Duke, Volume LIII, Number 183. August 1980.)

The 49th Division's initial role in the general attack on Caen was to simulate an offensive on its front whilst the 3rd and 51st (Highland) Divisions attacked. The attack on Caen by the 3rd Canadian Division used false moonlight, created by anti-aircraft searchlights shone onto the clouds which was nicknamed 'Monty's Moonlight'. The attack also brought an innovation for the infantry who had, until then, experienced great difficulty in keeping up with tanks in the attack and who had sustained tremendous casualties in the assault, especially now due to anti-personnel mines. The infantry were now transported in armoured personnel carriers called 'Kangaroos' which were Canadian-built Sherman tanks, called 'Rams', with the turrets removed to accommodate ten fully-equipped infantrymen. Within twenty-four hours the Americans, on the extreme west flank, began their sweeping advance - the Allied break out had begun. But it was not a success, for the Canadians too met an old enemy of the 49th Division:

"By dawn the Canadians had penetrated three miles, but in the course of the morning another disastrous own goal took place, with the B17 Flying Fortresses [bombers] of the US 8th Air Force dropping the bulk of their bombs on the Canadians. The headquarters of the 3rd Canadian Division was hit, and Keller [the General] badly wounded. The Canadian armour ran on to a line of [ninery] 88s, flak guns which had been removed from the air defences of Caen. On the 9th, the Hitler Youth of the 12th SS Panzer Division, so hated by the Candians for the atrocities committed in the early days of the campaign, battered but still deadly, managed to knock out forty-seven tanks - almost the entire strength - of the British Columbia Regiment."

(The Lonely Leader, Monty 1944-1945. Alistair Horne with David Montgomery. 1995.)

As the Canadian tanks ran into the 12th SS Panzer Division on 9th August the 7th Dukes joined in, at 2000hrs, when the Battalion attacked towards Vimont supported by a squadron of tanks. This village, due north of Falaise, was in orchard country on the River Muance near the main railway line to Caen held by the German 344 Infantry Division. Enemy mortars and anti-personnel mines took a heavy toll on the Dukes as they advanced. Amongst the many casualties was 'D' Company's newly-promoted Major Hill who was killed. On the next day the pressure was maintained by the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 147th Brigade, which attacked Vimont at 6.40am, 10th August. The Fusiliers too experienced severe difficulties, for six of their supporting tanks and their own Bren carriers were immobilised when they also ran into belts of innumerable enemy anti-tank mines. By 9am the Fusiliers' two leading companies were holding ground across the river, but were unable to advance further due to numerous carefully concealed enemy machine-gun posts. By this time it had become clear that Operation Totalize was not succeeding, but large numbers of Von Kluge's [43] troops had become trapped in the Falaise Gap where they were pounded to pieces by the Allies. After holding the 'hinge' for over two weeks the breakout from the Caen sector began to bear fruit as recalled by Major Crook:

"The morale of the Canadians became low, but under our splendid GOC, 'Bubbles' Barker, we were not aware of this. Eventually the dam burst and the hinge of which we formed part creaked open. We visited the edge of the Falaise Gap and saw for ourselves the gruesome evidence of an army in defeat, bodies of men and horses everywhere, equipment, vehicles, guns abandoned, buildings destroyed and hedgerows scarred."

(Came The Dawn. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

The push was continued on 14th August when the 1st Canadian Army, (of which 49th Division formed part), commenced Operation Tractable. This was actively to involve the 49th Division from 16th August in fighting against a determined enemy rearguard which held skilfully-sited defensive positions. As part of the preparations a patrol, commanded by Lieutenant H R Smith of 'A' Company, went out on 15th August to locate enemy positions north of Vimont, but unfortunately Lieutenant Smith was killed and four soldiers posted as missing. But by 17th August it was clear that the enemy had made a substantial withdrawal and the Dukes were able to advance a further six miles troubled only by the omnipresent German mines.

A further move came on 19th August when the Battalion was transported to an area west of Le Mesnil Mauger there to take over positions from 10th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA), 70th Brigade. This was no routine relief for the gallant Territorials of the 70th Brigade who then discovered that their brigade was to be disbanded and replaced in the 49th (West Riding) Division by the 56th (Sphinx) Independent Brigade [44]. The reason given was that reinforcements were needed, and this resulted, in the main, in drafts being sent from the 70th Brigade's three infantry battalions to the 50th (Northumbrian) and the 51st (Highland) Divisions.

THE ADVANCE TO THE SEINE

The Battalion did not remain at Le Mesnil Mauger for long, for at 0430hrs on 21st, in heavy rain, the Dukes attacked Les Trois Pois which was taken without any opposition. The Division's role was to pursue to the Seine all those enemy troops which had escaped devastation in the Falaise Pocket. The 49th Division's 4th Lincolns discovered that this new phase of the war had its compensations:

"The following days saw new villages, little touched by war; garlands of flowers, apples, bottles of sweets, home-made cider and cheering villagers. Yet often the cheerful and familiar cry of 'les Boches Kaput - fini' was but the prelude to a shower of mortar bombs or a burst of Spandau [machine-gun] fire from German rear parties. As the troops moved through the smiling country side on cycles, trucks or tanks, a new expression 'swanning' was born, and since it aptly described the operations then in progress it came eventually to receive semi-official sanction."

(The History of the Tenth Foot, the Lincolnshire Regiment. L C Gates & I A A Griffin.)

Yet another move on 23rd August brought the Dukes to St Gratien on the River Touques, where the other two battalions of 147th Brigade had already crossed the river. That night 'C' Company safely crossed to fill a gap between the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers and the 1st Leicesters. On the next day, 24th August, the 7th Dukes passed through to take up the lead and advanced to the River La Vallette but could not get across as the approaches had been mined and the bridges destroyed. At this time the Allied Armies were advancing at speed meeting only minor, but sometimes obstinate, opposition:

"After the bridgehead had been established, at about 2200hrs, a German Volkswagen, containing one CSM and four other Germans, approached at high speed down the road leading into 'C' and 'D' Companies' position. Private Buckley, Number 13 Platoon 'C' Company, opened fire and put the crew out of action. The Volkswagen was almost undamaged and was put into service as the [7th] Battalion's post truck. After a 12-mile advance that day, the Battalion had a firmly established bridgehead. During the night and the following day some mortaring and machine-gunning was experienced and a few prisoners taken. Yet another embussed move to Terrier on the 25th brought the Dukes into position for another attack between Campienny and Le Vieville. Once again the position was taken without opposition."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

All along the line of advance the enemy hampered progress; bridges had been blown, roads mined, booby-traps set, and the dreadful debris of battle littered the Dukes' way forward. But Lieutenant Lappin discovered that the Lincolns were not the only ones honoured as liberators as they advanced through St Laurent Dumont and Cambremer to receive:

"Our first real civic welcome, [the] whole village, men, women and children out to welcome us. Two local gendarmes [police] giving away cider which flowed freely. From OUILLY-le-Vicomte to St George-du-Champs [on the 24th]. We looked like the Battle of the Flowers as we had flowers in our tin hats and the trucks were festooned on the way to Cormeilles. A little battle was in progress at the bridgehead of La Villette. 'B' Company waded across further down from the main bridge. 7 platoon had a good day's work, advanced about 12 miles, forced a bridgehead, and took 12 prisoners-of-war."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

During the night of 26th August the Dukes' carrier platoon, commanded by Captain J K Illingworth, patrolled on foot into the village of La Reulles which, when discovered to be empty of enemy, was at once secured by the Battalion. The complete division now leap-frogged forward in motor-transport covered by its own 49th Reconnaissance Regiment and the 7th Armoured Division. To the division's left flank the 6th Airborne Division also advanced as did the 51st (Highland) Division on the right. It was an unrelenting advance in which the division encountered a number of obstacles which kept the Dukes' Brigade Major, Paul Crook, very busy:

"We carried out three night river-crossings in five days. Although enemy resistance was very slight we could never take this for granted. Thus, at each river, patrols had to be sent out to locate the enemy and then a full-scale night attack with its supporting fire plan arranged, assault boats allocated, the crossing made and then the bridging equipment brought up. All this required a great deal of active staff work at [147th] Brigade Headquarters all through the night and one hardly slept for a week. Dawn was spent anxiously awaiting reports from the troops across the river. We were lucky enough to liberate a Benedictine monastery and the delighted monks were gracious enough to give us a liberal stock of their lovely liqueur."

(Came The Dawn. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

As a strong enemy response could be expected at any moment, the division's artillery were deployed to give constant protection, as later explained by Major Eric Bowring, the 143rd Field Regiment:

"Once the advance was under way we changed gun positions daily and sometimes two or three times in a single day. We occupied 14 positions in 10 days. These were an exciting and breathless ten days, full of the welcome of the civilians with their Calvados and cider. Alternatively Forward Observation Officers supported the [49th] Recce Regiment, tank squadron and advance guard battalions and some good shooting was enjoyed during brief but fierce encounters with enemy rear-guards on the rivers Vire, Touques and Risle."

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

The division's final task in this phase was to destroy all enemy forces remaining between the rivers Risle and Seine, before finally clearing the Fôret de Bretonne, a huge forest of some 42 square miles just to the south of the Seine. By this time 'D' Company's Lieutenant Lappin was enjoying an all too temporary period as a captain:

"Sunday 27th [August]. Corneville sur Risle. This was the first pukka scrap I'd been in and I thoroughly enjoyed it throughout. We had accounted for 10 dead, 15 prisoners-of-war - all pukka Germans. Our casualties were 7 wounded, unfortunately I lost 2 NCOs. A bitter blow. I got a Schmeisser machine-pistol in place of my 'lost' Sten. A word about the [French] partisans. Their information was very valuable but they would get mixed up in the fighting. It was really incredible to see them going round our boys during a scrap offering 'un peu de cidre' [a drink of cider]. Three of the local lads insisted on joining us. We armed them with a captured rifle, a Schmeisser and a Spandau. Thank goodness they had no chance to fire them! 28th [August]. Outside Pont Audemer. 50 or 60 Jerry prisoners marched back to the cage. We got a whiff of that unmistakable smell as they passed. Lack of soap I suppose. Rest area - billets, a bath of hot water in the school-master's kitchen - a good lady did my laundry; a folding bed, sleeping in sheets. Heaven!"

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company.

(Ibid)

On the 30th August John Lappin's week as a captain again saw him revert to lieutenant due to the arrival in the 7th Dukes of Captain Ellis leading a reinforcement draft from the South Staffordshire Regiment from the recently broken-up 59th (Staffordshire) Division. On the next day, at the other end of the promotion scale, General Montgomery was elevated to Field Marshal. Despite the strong German panzer element the Dukes had encountered, much of the Wehrmacht transport was still horse-drawn. Many thousands of German army draught-horses had been abandoned as the enemy withdrew across the Seine leaving these animals roaming the countryside. With typical military logic, Headquarters 49th Division laid their collection on their anti-tank unit who qualified on the basis that they were, after all, *The Loyal Suffolk Hussars Yeomanry*.

Having lifted thousands of mines to clear the 49th Division's path, made good supply roads, and crossed seven rivers in two weeks, the 49th Division's Engineers at last reached the River Seine. Here General Barker surveyed his division's next task, one which found the 7th Dukes crossing the Seine for the attack on the port of Le Havre:

"On 3rd September the Dukes moved at dawn in two columns, one the marching portion and the other the transport, to cross the Seine. Marchers are supposed to be slow, but on this occasion, they beat the wheels and trucks by a handsome margin, thanks to the DUKWs [amphibious trucks], which carried the marchers over the Seine in one flight, in a space of fifteen minutes. The delay to the transport column was caused by the high priority for the essential supplies for the VIII Corps advancing on Holland via Brussels. The [7th] Battalion halted at Trouville en route from Rouen to Le Havre. It was here that they heard that a flag of truce had been taken into Le Havre demanding the surrender of the town and that the Germans had refused."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

[42: A large part of the original mainly Territorial 51st (Highland) Division had been captured following its encirclement at St Valéry-en-Caux in 1940. In time the 51st (Highland) Division was reconstituted using many of the original division's duplicate Territorial Army battalions together with some regular battalions. After distinguished service in North Africa, this division landed in France four years later on 7th June 1944. Field Marshal Montgomery issued strict orders in 1944 that no-one but the 51st (Highland) Division was to be allowed to retake St Valéry. In the event the 51st (Highland) Division was the first to liberate St Valéry as part of I Corps and it was appropriate that the Corps' other division, on the left flank, was the 49th (West Riding) Division and its Dukes Territorials. The main street of St Valéry was renamed the Rue d'Ecosse (Scotland Road) after the war in honour of the 51st (Highland) Division.]

[43: Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge had assumed command of the German Army Group 'B' on 17th July when Field Marshal Rommel was wounded. He was relieved of command by Hitler on 16th August and replaced by Field Marshal Walter Model. Both von Kluge and Rommel committed suicide soon after.]

[44: The 56th (Sphinx) Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier M S Ekin, had landed in Normandy under command of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, the brigade later coming under command of the 7th Armoured Division for its attack on Tilly. After this attack it returned to the 50th (Northumbrian) Division for a period of six weeks, but on 8th August the brigade was again switched to the 59th Division for its attack upon Thury-Harcourt. On 19th August the 56th (Sphinx) Infantry Brigade became part of the 49th (West Riding) Division and comprised three regular battalions - 2nd Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment (Lt Col Butterworth), 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment (Lt Col G G Elliott), 2nd Battalion The South Wales Borderers (Lt Col Barlow).]

LE HAVRE

Whilst the 7th Dukes' 147th Brigade were crossing the Seine, on 3rd September, their 49th Division's 146th Brigade was on the enemy bank and already engaged in stiff fighting in an attempt to break into the outer defensive perimeter of Le Havre. Other Allied divisions were also streaming across the River Seine. Inland, some forty miles to the 49th Division's south-east, the 43rd (Wessex) Division had seized a bridgehead across the Seine at Vernon. This in turn enabled the Guards, 7th and 11th Armoured Divisions to advance to liberate Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. Within a few days Paris was liberated as well as most of northern France and Belgium.

This general advance intentionally left behind the 49th (West Riding) and 51st (Highland) Divisions with the task of capturing Le Havre, a substantial port at the mouth of the River Seine. This port was essential to the Allied plans for a general advance onto the Rhine. Supply lines were now greatly stretched over the many hundreds of miles back to Cherbourg where the temporary Mulberry harbours could not be guaranteed to withstand the coming winter's seas. Nearer ports, such as Le Havre, were therefore urgently needed. However Colonel Eberhard Wildermuth commanded a German garrison of some 11,500 troops around Le Havre whose defences were supplemented by a network of concrete bunkers housing a lethal diversity of artillery. Despite his formidable defences, Colonel Wildermuth's garrison was by now all but surrounded. To his north the 51st (Highland) Division had recaptured St Valéry-en-Caux thus avenging the division's epic battle of 1940 in which the Dukes Territorials had played no small part. To his south-east, the 49th (West Riding) Division's 146th Brigade was starting to break into his defences, whilst the Royal Navy's heavy guns dominated Le Havre from the sea.

General Barker, commanding 49th Division, quickly recognised the potential waste of human life that any attack would cost, not least to the many thousands of civilians still in the town. He therefore arranged for invitations to surrender to be broadcast by loudspeaker from 146th Brigade's positions which gave timings of lulls in his artillery fire which would permit the safe passage of any German envoys. This produced two German officers arriving under a flag of truce at the location of 'C' Company 1/4 KOYLI's positions. They explained that the garrison would not surrender as Colonel Wildermuth had received instructions personally from Hitler that the Le Havre garrison must "*fight to the last soldier and the last round*". This reply certainly had echoes of the dedication to a soldier's duty similarly expressed by the British Calais garrison in 1940 which had involved the Halifax Dukes. Faced with such a statement General Barker's reply was "*I wish you good luck and a Merry Christmas*". After which the German envoys were granted 15 minutes to return to the safety of their bunkers before the divisional artillery resumed the bombardment. The preliminary attacks by the 146th Brigade had already identified a complex German defensive system which merited a full-scale deliberate attack needing a week of elaborate preparations:

"The port of Le Havre was a formidable place to attack, being one of the strongest fortresses of the Atlantic Wall. Three sides were protected by water, the Seine estuary, the sea and a flooded area. The approach from the east was made difficult by a flooded valley dominated by high ground, whilst a minefield and anti-tank ditch barred the approach from the north. There were many concrete strong-points manned by infantry guarding the anti-tank ditch as well as gun positions in concrete casements. The strength of the garrison was estimated to be at least 8,000 including 4,000 artillery and anti-aircraft personnel and some 1,300 Naval personnel of doubtful fighting value. It was clear to both sides that the attack had to be made from the north. To carry out the assault we were greatly strengthened by detachments of Flails (minefield clearing tanks), Crocodiles (tanks equipped with flamethrowers), Kangaroos (armoured infantry carriers) and assault engineers. It was the biggest collection of armoured 'funnies' ever assembled in one place."

Major P Crook, Brigade Major 147th Brigade

(*Came The Dawn*. Brig P Crook. 1989.)

The capture of Le Havre, codenamed 'Operation Astonia', employed the 51st (Highland) Division carrying out an attack from the north, which would link up with the 49th Division's 56th and 147th Brigades also attacking from the north. 146th Brigade was to attack from the east and clear Harfleur then the southern sector

of the town and the port. It was supported by a new form of armoured siege train provided by the 79th Armoured Division, commanded by the legendary Major General Sir Percy Hobart, whose specialised tanks, the 'funnies', had the devastating destructive power to break the minefields, concrete bunkers and anti-tank ditches of defensive positions which the Germans had spent four years in preparing. The 49th Division was reinforced with an impressive amount of armour comprising the 34th Tank Brigade, the 22nd Dragoons with mine-clearing tanks, a squadron of 141st Royal Armoured Corps equipped with flamethrowing Crocodiles, and forty-four Kangaroos manned by Canadians. As if this wasn't enough the 51st (Highland) Division also had a similar amount of invaluable armoured support - such was the emphasis placed upon the capture of Le Havre.

In the two days before the land attack took place Royal Air Force bombers carried out a series of attacks on the city, each lasting two hours, which culminated in nearly 5,000 tons of bombs being dropped in the final ninety minutes before the assault commenced. A week of intensive preparation found the 7th Dukes, now 894 all ranks strong, training intensively in the unfamiliar task of streetfighting through a large built-up area. A phase of war which was, on past experience, expected to cost heavy casualties, particularly amongst leaders. Large quantities of ammunition, especially hand-grenades were issued in anticipation of fighting from house-to-house. The Battalion second-in-command, Major Hugh Cook, was succeeded by Major C D Hamilton [45]. Patrols went out to gather information and these, together with information from the French Resistance, enabled scale models to be produced from which commanding officers were carefully briefed on their objectives. Throughout this week of preparations an orchestrated bombardment by Allied guns and bombers steadily reduced Le Havre to rubble.

At 1745hrs on 10th September the newly-joined 56th Brigade led the 49th Division's attack as it advanced to seize strongpoints in the north and then bridges across the River Lezarde. Intensely heavy rain had turned the ground into a sea of mud, which degraded the flail-speed of the 22nd Dragoon's mine-clearing tanks from 1,500 to 900 rpm. This had the result that many of the deeper mines were not exploded and vehicles following through the 'cleared' lane were blown-up. However the Gloucesters and South Wales Borderers, mounted in armoured 'Kangaroos' passed through the gaps supported by flamethrowing Crocodiles whose jets of flame caused understandable terror to the German troops. Some 29 flail tanks were knocked out, mostly by mines but a few by anti-tank guns. After a tough battle three bridges were captured intact and an ever-growing flow of German prisoners began to stream to the rear as the Gloucesters pushed into Le Havre. To the south the 1/4th KOYLI, 146th Brigade, secured the high ground south of Harfleur, enabling the Hallamshires and 4th Lincolns, supported by the 9th Royal Tank Regiment, to fight through Le Havre towards the docks.

The plan now required 147th Brigade to pass through the 56th Brigade and then capture ground overlooking Harfleur. The Brigade's attack was led by the 1st Leicesters at 2300hrs, 10th September, but they soon found their route heavily mined and progress was exceptionally slow. Mine-clearing tanks could not be used effectively as their guidance system needed setting up in daylight. However by noon on the next day the Leicesters had secured their objective, and a vital bridge leading to the port, with a further 450 prisoners-of-war being added to the division's bag. 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers now advanced to clear the southern flank, again hampered by mines, resulting in a further 600 prisoners being captured. The Brigade's attack was supported by the 4.2" mortars of the Kensington's whose mortar-crews fired continuously for 3½ hours, during which the many thousands of rounds fired caused the mortar barrels to overheat. The Kensington's heavy machine-guns also deployed near a ravine to cover the 147th Brigade's attack, where they discovered that not all Colonel Wildermuth's forces wished to fight to the last, or even the first, round:

"Machine-Gun platoons were in action throughout September 10th and the morning of September 11th, when Harfleur Hill was occupied, without a single shell, bullet or mortar bomb being fired at them. When, however, the leading tanks and infantry troops reached the ground on the other side of the ravine, they were amazed and a little staggered to see German troops, only a few hundred yards from the [machine-]gun lines, running out of bunkers and trenches to surrender. Had these [German] troops been more aggressive, they could have inflicted heavy casualties on the machine-gun platoons, and that they did not do so is an indication of the extent to which they had been shaken by the previous bombing and shelling."

(The Kensingtons.)

Whilst this had been taking place the 7th Dukes had been spending an uncertain night waiting to pass through the 56th Brigade:

"The [7th] Battalion operation order issued on 10th September gave the objective as the high ground behind Le Havre, which dominated the town and docks. But like so much in war the unexpected always happens. The planned attack never went in, and during the night of 11th September, when the assault was going so well, it became necessary to change the role four times. Part of the [7th] Battalion's objective on the southern plateau was captured by the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, who found little opposition on their own front."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The Dukes moved through Montvilliers to the bridge captured by the Leicesters where 'A' and 'C' Companies advanced through the 56th Brigade straight through to the centre of Le Havre. 'B' and 'D' Companies were given another task, but this was again changed by orders to mount their newly-arrived Kangaroos and secure Point 85:

"Things were going well - the General eager to get into Le Havre decided to push the Dukes forward into the town on armoured troops carriers [Kangaroos], 'D' Company leading, my platoon in front. We tore down the road towards the town. The Canadian Kangaroo crew kept us amused. Two Kangaroos struck mines and were disabled, but only two casualties. The General and the Brigadier took a look at our catastrophe and decided to pull us out of the battle. We sat down in the suburbs and had the unpleasant job of watching the Glosters going in to do our job for us. They seemed to have a whole regiment of tanks in support."

Captain John Lappin MC, 'D' Company

(*The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.*)

Later that evening the Dukes were ordered to occupy a built-up area and seize some enemy strongpoints, a task which met little opposition and which was completed by 2200hrs. By this time the German garrison commander, Colonel Wildermuth, had been wounded and had surrendered somewhat oddly attired in pyjamas and medals. Certainly Le Havre had been taken but much of the city had been reduced to rubble and, worse still, the civilian population had paid a dreadful price; 5,000 French civilians lay dead in the smoking rubble. The newly-liberated citizens of Le Havre had few garlands for their liberators:

"The [7th] Battalion stood-to at 0630hrs on the 12th September amidst a heap of rubble, once a well-planned modern housing estate. There was much trouble from civilians searching the wreckage of their homes, and not a little from looters. A stretcher-bearer from 'B' Company (Private Walker) was killed whilst attempting to give first aid to a French civilian, and Lieutenant Lambert and two men were wounded. The atmosphere of devastation was depressing and the unco-operative attitude of the civilians, although understandable, was clearly affecting the morale of the liberating troops. Colonel Wilsey, therefore, wisely withdrew the [7th] Battalion back to St Martin du Manoir for a night's rest."

(*The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.*)

A total of 11,300 German prisoners were captured of which 200 officers and 6,700 other ranks were taken by the 49th Division whose casualties were 19 killed and 282 wounded. Amongst the more unusual items captured by the division Sheffield's Hallamshires took, in addition to 1,005 prisoners, three German Dornier flying-boats and a submarine. Despite the power of devastating air and artillery it was, as always, the infantryman who had actually fought through onto the objectives. General 'Bubbles' Barker was rightly pleased with his division and issued a special order of the day on 12th September:

"Today has been a memorable day for 49 Div. After an attack against very strong defences, in a matter of hours the Div, supported by the armour, has broken through and relieved the port of Le Havre, which is most essential for the maintenance of the American Army. I should like to congratulate all ranks for this magnificent performance, and to thank them for the effort which has been made by everyone in their own spheres to produce this remarkable success with such relatively light casualties."

Major General E H Barker

(*The Kensingtons.*)

Le Havre was so badly damaged that it was of no practical use to the Allies until 9th October. The 49th Division quickly moved out of Le Havre to reorganise and refit. Not least of a problem was the fact that the whole of the division's transport was quickly withdrawn which wholly immobilised the 49th and 51st Divisions. The 49th Division was moved on to Dieppe where it remained until 21st September. During this time the Polar Bears saw massive waves of aircraft, many towing gliders, flying northwards. These were later discovered to be carrying the British Airborne forces on Operation 'Market Garden', the bold enterprise to seize the Rhine which, if successful, would have shortened the war.

The large part of the 21st Army Group was by now 200 miles to the east and had advanced much further than the pre-D Day planners had anticipated. Its supplies still came many hundreds of miles by road from Cherbourg, where the temporary Mulberry Harbours were not expected to function through the winter. Supply problems were further aggravated because ports which were expected to have been captured by this stage in operations still remained in enemy hands. The civilians of the newly-liberated towns also urgently needed supplies, all of which had to come by road. To cap it all, the main supply-carrier was the Leyland lorry and the fleet of 1,400 vehicles constantly broke down due to defective engine pistons.

THE ANTWERP-TURNHOUT CANAL

The German forces which had escaped across the River Seine now formed a new line of resistance along the Dutch-Belgian border. To the east of Antwerp Operation 'Market Garden' had already produced a carpet of airborne landings which seized crossings at five major obstacles using two American and one British airborne divisions and the Polish Parachute Brigade.

Ground troops from the British 2nd Army were then to force a way through to link-up these bridgeheads with the aim of breaking into the industrialised Ruhr. The Guards Armoured, 43rd (Wessex) and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions were tasked with forming the spearhead which would race forward to relieve the British Airborne Division and Polish Brigade who had parachuted in at the deepest extreme and were already engaged in desperate fighting at Arnhem.

To the west of the British 2nd Army, the 1st Canadian Army was given the task of opening the port of Antwerp, (which had just been captured by the British 11th Armoured Division), clearing the Scheldt estuaries and the area of south-west Holland. Within the 1st Canadian Army, the British 1st Corps was now composed of the 49th (West Riding), 2nd Canadian, 4th Canadian Armoured and the Polish Armoured Divisions. Its objective was to secure Antwerp and accordingly units began taking over the area from the British 2nd Army on 17th September. The 49th (West Riding) Division now had a new role which was to act on the right of 1 Corps and widen the 2nd Armoured Division's corridor towards Nijmegen and Arnhem. On 18th September the division completed its period of reorganisation, following its battle for Le Havre, and began a 200 mile journey from the Dieppe area taking three days to move north to a position some ten miles south of Antwerp where it took over from the 7th Armoured Division, the famous 'Desert Rats'.

From here the 49th Division's advance northwards was led by its 49th Reconnaissance Regiment [46] which, on discovering that the Germans were withdrawing, pressed forward and liberated Herenthals, some 14 miles east of Antwerp, on 23rd September. On the next day the Regiment again advanced north and reached the Antwerp-Turnhout canal where all the crossing points were found to have been destroyed by the enemy. It was a difficult obstacle to cross, especially as it was heavily defended, for the area around afforded little cover and bends in the canal permitted the German defenders to fire into the attacker's flanks. German positions were, as always, skilfully sited and made best use of the canals, dykes and flooded areas. The 7th Dukes first moved into the line at Boekel, a small village on the southern bank of the Leopold Canal, where it took over positions from the 1/7th The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) (TA), 131st Brigade. Local civilians here reported that the enemy were in the process of withdrawing, thus enabling the Dukes to put patrols across the canal to capture several prisoners which were later identified as the German 719th Infantry Division. On 24th September the Dukes crossed the newly-liberated canal at Herenthals and occupied Turnhout:

"The welcome was tremendous. It was raining, the Boche held the canal on the north of the town, and yet the greatest difficulty was experienced in passing through the streets blocked by amazed and rejoicing people. War produces some strange situations, and in Turnhout the forward companies in contact with the enemy were found dug in on the north bank of the canal, whilst [the 7th's] Battalion Headquarters and the reserve companies in the town, 800 yards to the rear, found the greatest difficulty in getting about their lawful occasions owing to the cheering, hand-clapping crowds of townfolk, all intent on welcoming, without stint, the appearance of 'Tommy'. This unique situation lasted for two days."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

In pouring rain, on the night of the 24th/25th, 146th Brigade led the division's assault across the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. The 4th Lincolns managed a surprise crossing north of Oostmalle and within a few hours the division's engineers had thrown two bridges, named Plum 1 and Plum 2, across the canal opposite Rijkevorsel. These bridges were not only needed to get the 49th Division across, but also to allow the Polish Armoured Division across and then to exploit northwards. The Hallamshires had also attempted to force a night crossing but had been met by a veritable wall of fire forcing it to withdraw to the home bank. Here the Brigade Commander cancelled further attempts by the Hallamshires on the grounds that the bridgehead could be expanded through the 4th Lincolns. It was by now essential to expand the bridgehead before the enemy could counter-attack, which they did repeatedly over the next three days. Even as the Lincolns were consolidating, the 1/4th KOYLI advanced at 0645hrs and fought a way into the village of Rijkevorsel, about 1½ miles north of the canal, supported by Wasps. These 'Wasps' had a savage sting, being flamethrowers mounted upon universal carriers. A contemporary report of the 4th Lincolns records the effect they had on the enemy:

"With the aid of one of the Battalion's Wasps and well supported by artillery and mortars as well as by the rest of the Battalion, 'C' Company made a vigorous assault and, despite strong resistance, captured the building and an officer and forty-one other ranks as prisoners. The enemy commander confessed that, when the wasp came into action, the morale of his men dropped to zero; they would face bullets and shells, but not the prospect of being burnt to death."

(The History of the 10th Foot, The Lincolnshire Regiment. L C Gates and I A A Griffin.)

By 4pm that day the Light Infantrymen had secured a tenuous grip on Rijkevorsel. This battalion had killed or wounded at least 100 enemy at a cost of one killed and fourteen wounded. Now the South Wales Borderers, 56th Brigade, crossed the canal to reinforce the north-west flank of the bridgehead. It was essential rapidly to secure the east flank and, to do this, Sheffield's Hallamshire battalion moved across with the task of exploiting east towards Merxplaas. This, in turn, would then allow the Polish Armoured Division to cross the canal and exploit further north. Led by a squadron of the 49th Reconnaissance Regiment the Hallamshires advanced eastwards to the sound of enemy shellfire plastering the KOYLI to their north in Rijkersvorsel.

The Hallamshires at first met no opposition. But this was not to last for long, as the Recce Regiment's leading vehicle was destroyed by an anti-tank gun concealed in a farm. Here their route was found to be dominated by the Depot de Mendicitié a substantial building which served as the local workhouse, prison and lunatic asylum. The whole was a mile square and surrounded by a substantial moat and high earth bank which combined to produce a formidable defensive position. After a brisk fight it became clear to Lieutenant Colonel Hart Dyke, commanding the Hallamshires, that not only were the enemy resisting stubbornly, but they were also about to counter-attack. The 49th Division was still battling hard to stabilise its newly gained bridgehead against determined enemy counter-attacks. In view of this, the Hallamshires were instructed to dig-in an all-round defensive position and then to secure assembly areas for a larger operation which would clear the Depot de Mendicitié.

The 7th Dukes were ordered to cross the Antwerp-Turnhout Canal. The Second-in-Command led the advance party to the crossing point manned by the 1/4th KOYLI, where they discovered the Wakefield battalion heavily engaged with German Tiger tanks. In view of this precarious situation the relief was temporarily cancelled, but the Dukes soon crossed again to relieve the 2nd Gloucesters. It was now vital that the Depot de Mendicitié was captured and, on 29th September, the Dukes' 147th Brigade was tasked with supporting an advance by the Polish armour north onto Merxplaas, whilst the Hallamshires were to open the route by attacking the formidable Depot de Mendicitié. The Hallamshires had a stiff battle whose success hinged upon the actions of Corporal Harper, 'C' Company, whose gallantry at a critical point in the battle brought success. His leadership cost Corporal Harper [47] his life, a deed which was subsequently recognised by the award of the 49th Division's only Victoria Cross of the Second World War.

The capture of the Depot de Mendicitié enabled the Polish armour to advance north on Merxplaas on the next day, even though the Poles' style of soldiering startled the 7th Dukes who were tasked with their support:

"The Dukes supported the Polish Armoured Division forward through Merxplaas and Zondereigen. The Polish infantry disobeyed all conventions by attacking in greatcoats, and suspended operations everytime their food arrived. But of their courage and skill there was always abundant evidence. Seven unpleasant days were spent in the close pine-clad country north of Poppel."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

The Dukes remained in the front-line for some weeks, but at least relaxation could be found in Turnhout where the civilians seemingly insatiable demand for cap-badges led the Battalion Quartermaster to submit optimistic claims for losses 'as a result of enemy action':

"From the night the Dukes crossed the canal and took over a bridgehead position in a sandy waste, until 19th October, they operated to the north but within easy reach of Turnhout. A spirited battle was fought, the honours going to 'A' and 'D' Companies, commanded by Majors J Jameson and A B Kavanagh; 40 prisoners were taken and 50 enemy killed - mostly by 'A' Company, who broke up a counter-attack by mortar fire. There was a welcome rum issue to celebrate the victory and to keep out the rain and wind".

(Ibid)

Whilst the Dukes were fighting to expand the Antwerp-Turnhout bridgehead, it quickly became clear that Operation Market Garden, well to the north, was failing. Of the relieving ground forces, only one infantry battalion was pushed across the Rhine in an attempt to link-up with the beleaguered 'paras' holding Arnhem. This was the 4th Battalion The Dorset Regiment (TA), 43rd (Wessex) Division, whose ill-fated attempt was doomed even before it was made. On 26th September the last survivors of the 1st British Airborne and 1st Polish Parachute Brigade were withdrawn from Arnhem. It was to be some months before Arnhem was liberated, and then it was to be at the hands of the 49th (West Riding) Division.

[45: The 7th Dukes new second-in-command, Major C D Hamilton, had until then been a Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) which had been disbanded along with the 70th Brigade's other two battalions. He was no stranger to the Territorials having been commissioned into The Durham Light Infantry (TA) in June 1939.]

[46: The 49th Reconnaissance Regiment Royal Armoured Corps was formed within the division in September 1942. Its role was to act as the division's eyes and ears for which it was equipped with armoured cars and tracked universal carriers.]

[47: Corporal John William Harper VC, The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA), was born on the 6th August 1916 and lived in Doncaster, working as a peat cutter until joining the army on 18th April 1940.]

THE SCHELDT ESTUARY

In mid-October the 2nd Army took over the Tilburg sector from the 1st Canadian Army and was reinforced by the British 52nd (Lowland) and the American 104th (Timber Wolf) Divisions. This grouping produced a concentration in strength on either side of Antwerp in order quickly to complete the clearance of the Scheldt estuaries and south-west Holland.

As a result, new orders arrived at Headquarters 49th (West Riding) Division on 16th October shortly after Brigade Commanders had dispersed after receiving General Barker's orders for a fresh attack north towards Tilburg, which was at once cancelled. Once relieved by 2nd Army units, the division retraced its steps to its old bridgehead at Rijkevorsel. Here the division was retasked with attacking north-west towards Wuustwesel and Roosendaal, some twenty miles away, supported by 34th Tank Brigade [48]. The assault was led by the division's 56th Brigade supported by flails and Crocodiles, who broke through and reached Wuustwesel the same day. On the next day, 17th October, the German 245th Infantry Division counter-attacked at Wuustwesel, and encountered the 1st Leicesters who were moving up to take over north of the town. After desperate fighting, in which both sides lost heavily, the Leicesters held firm and on the next day were joined by the remainder of 146th Brigade.

By 20th October a general advance by 1 Corps found the Polish Armoured Division on the right flank advancing on Breda, whilst the 49th (West Riding) Division, in the centre, advanced onto Roosendaal and the Canadian 4th Armoured Division, on the left flank, moved on Esschen and Bergen-op-Zoom. Part of the division's preparations included handing over their sector to the American 104th (Timber Wolf) Division, a unit which had yet to be blooded in battle. Lieutenant Colonel Hart Dyke, commanding the Hallamshires, later described the wide gulf between the newly-arrived Americans and the experienced West Riding division, when he witnessed the result of the American 1st Battalion 613th Regiment's attack on the next day:

"I heard next day to my horror that they had advanced over the open plain and had lost heavily in their first taste of battle. I was sorry to hear when I arrived that the [American] Commanding Officer [1st Bn 613th Regt] had been wounded, and to see wounded still being attended to by their stretcher bearers. I was told that their Divisional Commander had said 'Nothing can stop the Timber Wolf Division', and that they gallantly advanced across the open plain like our troops on the Tugela River in the Boer War in 1899. The enemy had reserved his fire and caught the defenceless battalion in the open with everything he had. I could only express my regret for their most painful experience, and thank God that 'Bubbles' Barker [commander 49th Division] always saw that our fire support was such that this sort of thing could never happen to us. Moreover, it would be contrary to our training to advance across 3,000 yards of open ground without the friendly cover of either smoke or darkness. As I motored sadly back I saw the pattern of enemy mortar bomb craters in the open ground over which the Americans had advanced, and thought how many gallant lives had been unnecessarily wasted."

(Normandy to Arnhem, A Story of the Infantry. Brig T Hart Dyke. 1966.)

The 49th Division's attack commenced with 56th and 147th Brigades as assault brigades whilst its 146th Brigade [49] concentrated in Westmalle. The division had a stiff fight through the German 245th Infantry Division's defences which were honeycombed into the numerous hedgerows and banks. Throughout the advance the 7th Duke's 147th Brigade worked with 34th Tank Brigade to form 'Clarkeforce', commanded by Brigadier Clarke, which had the role of exploiting any breakthrough made by 56th Brigade:

"For ten days the 7th pushed on with 34th Tank Brigade, (Clark Force). It was an interesting operation, in which the [7th] Battalion carried out a variety of offensive and defensive roles, sometimes with and sometimes without tank support. This phase of operations ended with a night advance to the outskirts of Roosendaal. A few days later they moved back to Nieumoer for a few hours' rest; but almost immediately moved back to Roosendaal to occupy the line of an anti-tank ditch in the vicinity of the town."

(The History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1953. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

Esschen, astride the Dutch-Belgian border, was captured by 1/4th KOYLI supported by elements of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division enabling the 49th Division to pass through for an assault upon Roosendaal, a large city which was an important road and railway junction. In the first phase of the division's assault the Hallamshires, 146th Brigade, supported by the 9th Royal Tank Regiment captured the outlying villages of Vinkenbrock and Boeink to the west of Roosendaal. The main attack was then made by the 1st Leicesters on the left with the 7th Dukes on the right. Close behind followed the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers and 1/4th KOYLI (146th Brigade) in readiness to pass through to capture the main part of the town. Their approach was blocked by a substantial enemy anti-tank ditch which was covered by fire from numerous carefully sited enemy posts harbouring all types of weapon. The 7th Dukes attacked under terrible difficulties which required them to advance across open fenland often crawling through water:

"Friday 29th [October]. [1st] Leicesters were attacking a strong point to cover the advance forward by the Polish Armoured. We acted as flank protection. Up at 0300hrs, Move 0430hrs. 'D' Company were 1,000 yards ahead of us. We moved up in the dark with the battle raging ahead of us. Jerry tried to reach us with mortars but missed by several hundred yards. When we came into the open in front of our objective we started to get it good and heavy from the Spandaus [German machine-guns]. The troop of Shermans [tanks] came up in support and blasted away with machine-guns and 75mms whilst we moved up the ditch beside them. The Boche opened up with anti-tank guns. One tank was hit several times - and an unlucky shot put it out."

Lieutenant John Lappin MC

(The Polar Bears. Patrick Delaforce. 1995.)

Lieutenant Lappin prudently pulled back into a plantation where he assessed the state of his platoon:

"Pte Preston was wounded in leg and arm. Godley was slightly wounded with a bullet and a shell wound. Walt Horne's [50] platoon was sitting right on the enemy's doorstep and taking everything. The Leicesters were in a very tight spot 200 yards to our left. 'D' Company were on our right. During the afternoon the German Commander asked for a truce to evacuate the wounded. A ridiculous situation for an hour. The Red Cross flag went backwards and forwards, and one just walked up and down in the open. Jerry could see where we were. We could see him. The Leicesters and 'A' Company had a number of casualties coming out through us. Back to the battle as before. About 1500hrs the smoke cover dropped. The Leicesters - poor blighters - they'd certainly caught it."

Lieutenant John Lappin MC

(Ibid)

Early on the next morning, 30th October, the Hallamshires and 1/4th KOYLI passed through the Dukes and Leicesters position under the cover of a mist to attack Roosendaal [51]. By this time the German defenders had become exhausted and had begun to withdraw from the town which was quickly cleared. The West Riding Territorials received a warm welcome from the local population who were waving the distinctive orange-coloured flags that were to mark their progress through Holland. Also by 0600 hours the 7th Dukes had completed the occupation of the town. Even though the enemy had left, the area was still liberally sprinkled with mines which caused a number of casualties; Major Smallwood [52], 'B' Company, had a very lucky escape when he stepped on an 'S' mine which clicked but failed to explode.

With Roosendaal secured the division continued its advance northwards with the 56th Brigade [53] forcing a crossing over the River Mark. The objective was Willmstadt, a medieval fortress town, surrounded by moats, on the south bank of the Hollandch Diep. The town held several thousand Dutch civilians and was surrounded by flat open countryside which dictated that the division's attack would require heavy bombing by the RAF and a large artillery barrage on the town. Hoping to avoid civilian deaths General Barker sent his ADC forward under a flag of truce on 7th November to demand the German garrison's surrender or, at the least, time to evacuate the civilian inhabitants. Surrender was refused but transport was allowed forward to evacuate the civilians.

That night the 4th Lincolns attacked only to find that the Germans had gone, the garrison had evacuated across the river whilst the civilians were moving out. The very wide estuary now stopped any further advance north by the 49th (West Riding) Division and several days were spent in rest and reorganisation.

[48: 34 Tank Brigade comprising 9th Royal Tank Regiment, 107th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (late 5th Battalion The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster) (TA), 147th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (late 10th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment.)]

[49: 56th Infantry Brigade: 2nd Battalion The South Wales Borderers, 2nd Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment, 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment. 146th Infantry Brigade: The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA), 4th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA), 1/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA). 147th Infantry Brigade: 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA), 11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers, 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment.]

[50: 'D' Company's Major A B M Kavanagh and Lieutenant W Horne were subsequently awarded the Military Cross.

[51: A fine memorial to those members of the 49th Division who were killed in the battle stands at Roosendaal, and is in the form of a carved stone column surmounted by a white Polar Bear.]

[52: Major G M M Smallwood MC had joined the 7th Dukes on transfer from a battalion of The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA) which had been broken up to provide reinforcement drafts on the disbandment of the 59th (Staffordshire) Division in August 1944.]

[53: About this time command of 2nd Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment (56th Infantry Brigade) passed to Lieutenant Colonel R N Bray DSO, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment. Later as General Sir Robert Bray GBE KCB DSO he was Colonel The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1965-1975.]

CHAPTER 10

1944-1945: PAID IN FULL

"It was fitting that it should be a British formation, the 49th West Riding Division, that should take Arnhem at long last and write the words 'Paid in Full' across another page of British history. Last September the world stopped breathing to watch this town. If the British Army had been able to link hands with the British 1st Airborne which had landed at Arnhem, the Rhine would have been turned while the German armies were disorganised and the armoured divisions would have poured into the plains of Hanover and Westphalia."

Matthew Halton, broadcast for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 16th April 1945

On completion of its work in the Scheldt estuary the 49th (West Riding) Division came temporarily under command of the 2nd Army and was moved eastwards to Venlo, on the Belgian-Dutch frontier. After less than a week of fighting the German garrison withdrew into a smaller front-line enabling the division to hand over its sector to the 15th (Scottish) Division. In the last days of November orders came through for the 49th Division to return under command of the 1st Canadian Army and move to the area north of Nijmegen to relieve the 50th (Northumbrian) Division. The Territorial 50th (Northumbrian) Division had a remarkable war record for it had seen extensive active service in North-West Europe during 1940 and then in North Africa, Sicily and Italy before taking part in the 'D' Day landings through Normandy to Arnhem. The 50th (Northumbrian) Division's [1] war record, was equalled by few and excelled by none, and it was now to be broken up to provide much needed reinforcement drafts.

Major General E H 'Bubbles' Barker CB CBE DSO had commanded the 49th (West Riding) Division since April 1943 and was now promoted to command the British 8th Corps; Major General G H A MacMillan CBE DSO MC was duly appointed to command the division on 30th November. A few days later the 7th Dukes' Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel J H O Wilsey [2], assumed temporary command of the division's 56th Infantry Brigade and the battalion second-in-command, Major C D Hamilton, commanded the 7th Dukes in his absence.

THE ISLAND - 1944

Montgomery's airborne operation 'Market Garden' had managed to seize Nijmegen and the key bridge across the River Waal. But the 1st Airborne Division's objective of Arnhem, twelve miles to the north, had not been captured and was now heavily defended by an enemy who threatened the eastern side of the Allied corridor between Eindhoven and Nijmegen. The ground between Nijmegen, on the River Waal, and Arnhem, on the Neder Rijn (the 'Lower Rhine'), formed an 'Island' [3], bounded by the River Rhine which divided into two seven miles east of Arnhem. It was flat agricultural land containing fields and orchards criss-crossed with high banked water dykes to prevent flooding. The eight mile long island was below the water level of the Rhine whose waters were held back by a high earth bank, the 'bund'.

Both the towns of Nijmegen (in British hands) and Arnhem (in German hands) were on low hills which dominated the disputed area of the Island. When the 49th (West Riding) Division arrived on the Island the Germans had already flooded the whole area between the River Neder Rijn and the Rijn Wittering - a deep dyke which bisected the Island. The 49th (West Riding) Division spent the next four months in the dangerously uncomfortable work of holding this critical area. It was a role central to the overall Allied strategy. For it was first intended that the area was held in order to protect the rear of an attack by the 1st Canadian Army into the Rhineland planned for December, but which was delayed by the German Ardennes counter-attack. Vigorous activity on the Island was also intended to lead the Germans to believe that an attack on Arnhem was imminent thus turning the German defence of the Ruhr. Finally, the railway and road routes between Nijmegen and Arnhem formed a vital main supply route for the planned Allied offensive on the Rhine. Major C D Hamilton, acting commanding officer 7th Dukes, later recorded his first impressions:

"The Island - the salient of the bridgehead over the famous Rhine or Dutch Waal river - has enshrined in it the destinies of more divisions than any other battlefield in this war. It was across this narrow strip of fertile low-lying dyke country, with orchards of every fruit, that General Horrocks' XXX Corps dashed to link up with the 1st Airborne Division. Every field has its scars of graves, smashed vehicles and signs of such divisions as 43rd (Wessex), 53rd (Welsh), 51st (Highland), Guards Armoured, 101st American Airborne, and the great 50th (Northumbrian) Division. The 43rd Division actually reached the river north-west of Elst, the town in the centre of the Island, four miles from Nijmegen and Arnhem."

"The apple and cherry picking of the autumn had given way to smashed ruins, 1914-1918 mud and the slashing rain of the winter, when our recce parties arrived on 31st November. Slit trenches were flooded and there was hardly one brick standing on another anywhere. There was talk of spending the winter here. The Commanding Officer of the Dorsets [4] talked of sinking obsolete tanks in the mud to make strongpoints. We trudged up a filthy track that night in the darkness towards the right of the line at Haalderen, once a pretty village on the Rhine, all of us I think with an impending feeling of some future destiny around the scarred orchards, the unbelievable ruins of the street and church."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXL, Number 61. June 1945.)

It was in circumstances not unlike those of their forebears who had first marched into the Ypres Salient thirty years before, that 147th Brigade now occupied the new salient on the Island at Haalderen. Nor were they the first Yorkshire Territorials to be in action here. The three Territorial battalions that made up the 69th Brigade, (5th East Yorks, 6th and 7th Green Howards), had fought to capture Haalderen on 26th September in the fight to relieve the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem. In the event, the 69th Brigade had been unable to capture the village in a battle which turned out to be its last major engagement of the war.

The 147th Brigade now moved to take over the Haalderen-Bemmel sector, two miles north of the River Waal; the division's 56th Brigade was on the left flank around Elst. Here they found infantry positions which had originally been sited two months before when the ground was relatively dry and firm. But it was now winter, and the trenches they took over were well-used and the water was steadily rising. Extreme winter weather brought a rise in the water level which flooded the Dukes slit trenches, and new shelters had to be constructed by reinforcing ruins and cellars with sandbags and barbed-wire to form strongpoints. On 3rd December the Germans blew several holes in the bund causing the Rhine's waters to flood into the Island and to swamp several of the Dukes' forward posts. Concern grew that the flooding would result in evacuation and a plan, appropriately code-named 'Noah' was drafted.

By now the 7th Dukes were holding a 3/4 mile wide front in the salient and in most places were in close proximity to the enemy. 'A' (Lieutenant C Fox) and 'C' (Major S V Fancourt) Companies were sited in thick woodland. It was extremely difficult to move between company positions during the hours of daylight due to the deeply flooded fields and the enemy's advantage of positions on higher ground from which fire was directed onto the slightest movement. The Dukes sent their customary patrols out on the night of 3rd/4th December and found their enemy to be active. Lieutenant K M Evans, commanding 18 Platoon, led out his routine patrol about 400 yards in front of his trenches to some houses in No-Man's land where one of his patrol was killed and another wounded by a landmine. The enemy immediately opened fire with machine-guns and Lieutenant Evans, having noted their dispositions, helped by the unwounded member of his patrol, Lance Corporal M Bell, then carried his wounded man back in through the minefield. It was to be the start of a very busy night for 18 Platoon.

Without warning, at 0315 hours 4th December, heavy fire from enemy mortars and machine-guns swamped 'D' and 'C' Company's forward positions when elements of the élite German 116th Parachute Regiment attacked 'D' Company's (Major A B M Kavanagh) forward posts. Major Kavanagh immediately called down the mortars and artillery onto pre-arranged defensive fire tasks. His 18 Platoon's positions were well forward and bore the initial brunt of the German parachutists' assault:

"The commander of 18 Platoon [Lieutenant K M Evans] reported by 'phone that two sections of his platoon were being overwhelmed by at least a platoon and probably more Germans, and that, for the moment, he himself had been by-passed. A few minutes later he said that at least a company had got through, and thought more were following. Considerable casualties were being caused by the platoon headquarters and section still fighting on. A minute later all communication with him was lost, and it was thought that he, too, had been overrun by the sheer weight of numbers of the enemy on a narrow front."

"From [7th] Battalion Headquarters confused fighting was heard in the village [Haalderen] and runners reported that Boche had got into the village centre and were moving left towards Battalion Headquarters having captured the school 200 yards away. OC 'A' Company (Lieutenant C Fox) who commanded the central immediate reserve of three carrier sections and one platoon 'A' Company, reported that the Germans were passing between him and his platoon. In actual fact, the Boche were in the next house."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Slightly further back was Lieutenant J Le Cornu's 13 Platoon, 'C' Company, which immediately opened fire on their attackers:

"A voice then shouted in perfect English: 'Stop that bloody Bren. We've got a wounded man here'. Some stretcher-bearers could be seen together with men carrying equipment not properly identified in the dark. The platoon commander [Lieutenant J Le Cornu] stopped his firing, but, on hearing a German voice, reopened his fire and the Boche toppled like ninepins, many diving into the two ponds where they drowned. The platoon commander kept this fire up all night until his ammunition was gone, resisting all attempts at capture. The Boche fired bazookas and spandaus at his post killing and wounding a few men."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Major Kavanagh, 'D' Company, now reported that a strong attack was in progress against his right-hand platoon, but that it was being held with small-arms fire and grenades which were causing heavy casualties amongst the German parachutists. To prevent enemy reinforcements exploiting the gap the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, now had a heavy barrage of mortars, artillery and medium machine-gun fire brought down in front of the 7th Dukes positions:

"Later the Brigade Commander gave targets to the mediums [5.5" guns] on deeper assembly areas. All fire was quickly brought down and must have caused immense damage to the reserve [enemy] companies who, it was found from prisoners afterwards, were waiting in the target areas for the success signals. There was indescribable confusion in the village [Haalderen] - spandaus, Brens, rifles, stens and grenades being freely used in between houses and across the street. Boche cries in good English of 'stop that firing' were frequently heard and ignored. Though [telephone] line had failed to 'C' Company, the 18 [radio] set worked perfectly, and OC 'C' Company (Major S V Fancourt) was ordered to use one platoon and his section of carriers to counter-attack and regain 18 Platoon position and close the gap, but not to prejudice his own company position in doing so. This was speedily carried out by 15 Platoon (Lieutenant D Siddall). OC Support Company (Major B V Thomlinson) in the meantime had managed to make a stop in the village at the road junction east of the school, and all available men were gathered together."

"The Commanding Officer ordered one section of carriers to work round the orchard next to Battalion Headquarters and seal off further penetration west of the school, and 'B' Company [Major Smallwood] were ordered to send a patrol from their right platoon to draw German attention northwards. No further attacks developed, and by dawn the reserve company ('D' Company 11th RSF) [commanded by Major A L Rowell] was concentrated in the orchard behind the 'stop-line' in the village, and the company commander was told to stand by to clear the houses down the street and to link up with the sealing off forces."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Just before dawn the Germans began to withdraw under harassing fire from the Dukes who had held firm to their posts. Even company cooks joined in by showering the enemy with grenades from upstairs windows. Heavy fire now came down on Battalion Headquarters from an enemy party lodged in an adjacent house using spandau machine-guns, and several of the Dukes were killed in a vain attempt to winkle them out. Orders were issued for an anti-tank gun and Wasp flamethrower to be brought forward to deal with this enemy pocket. But at this time a report came that a party of sixty German parachutists had surrendered and were being marched down the village street with their hands up. The sight of this surrender, coupled with a carefully aimed PIAT anti-tank round which set fire to the roof, encouraged the defenders to run up a white flag. Six spandau machine-guns were later found inside the house. 'D' Company 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, which had moved from the the brigade reserve position 1,000 yards away, now began mopping-up 18 Platoon's area where they also released a number of anti-tank gunners and Dukes who had been captured. They also relieved the platoon commander, Lieutenant K M Evans, who was still stoutly holding his platoon headquarters against the enemy despite having all but run out of ammunition.

By 1100 hours the Dukes had consolidated their former positions. A map trace found on the body of a German company commander later revealed that the parachutists' intention was to capture the main Nijmegen bridge so that a German engineer company could be brought in to destroy it. The determination of the enemy attack, coupled with the quality of the troops employed, clearly demonstrated that the 49th (West Riding) Division was achieving its task. Some 110 Germans were taken prisoner and 54 had been killed within the Dukes battalion perimeter. Many more German casualties were caused by the division's supporting mortars, medium machine-guns and artillery in the areas forward of the Dukes positions. The 7th Dukes had sustained 10 killed, 19 wounded and two missing believed drowned, with the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers losing one killed and two wounded. The Dukes' Commanding Officer later summarised the reasons for the battalion's success:

"The obvious lesson is the principle of defence - if every man stays in his position the attack can be defeated. Communications were perfect. The Commanding Officer was never out of touch with any company commander, and the 18 [radio] sets working perfectly when [field telephone] lines were cut. He was thus never out of control throughout the morning. [Field telephone] lines had been laid to platoons and lateral lines between companies (great use being made of captured 'phones - each company had five) so that information was exchanged between neighbouring platoon commanders. Thirty-eight [radio] sets were also used when platoon [field telephone] lines were out of action. 'D' Company commander forward gave a running commentary on the battle in his cookhouse near Battalion Headquarters. Other points were:

- (a) Platoon positions should be well stocked with small arms ammunition.*
- (b) Beware of ruses.*
- (c) Trip flares are not infallible and 2" mortars should be held ready to fire illuminating flares to light up the battlefield.*
- (d) On dark nights illumination can be provided on the front of the forward defended localities by searchlights if a flank position can be found.*

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Defeating the determined attack brought no immediate respite to the Dukes and the next few days were spent constructing anti-flood defences with the large part of their supplies having to be delivered using Mark III assault boats. The increased water level now found most of the Dukes occupying buildings which they fortified into pillboxes, movement between them could, in most cases, only safely take place at night. Demands for aggressive patrolling continued, and Private Reg Dunkley [5] later recalled the strong impression made by an unknown soldier encountered on patrol:

"I remember one in December 1944 when we saw the 'hump'. A crisp cold night with a brilliant moon. We had donned white camouflage with our rifles wrapped in old sheets and we went out along the main railway line between Nijmegen and Arnhem. It was easier to make progress there than on the frozen ground, by stepping from sleeper to sleeper as we went forward up the track. In some places the embankment was down, only the rails spanned the gap, and occasionally we had to go up the embankment. We were doing this when the patrol leader held up his hand indicating 'Stop'. We waited. Then he whispered back: 'Somebody or something is lying in the middle of the track'. The patrol leader crawled forward and beckoned for the rest of the infantrymen to come out."

"There they crouched in the brilliant moonlight with the wind howling eerily across the snow and stared at the hump. It was a body, but of what nationality we couldn't tell. It had no headdress, no boots and was lying face downwards on the tracks. As it was frozen stiff to the tracks we couldn't turn it. Out of respect for the dead we didn't want to disturb him. We didn't know if he was a British paratrooper, an American soldier or a German.....No marks on the back, head not smashed, feet in good condition - we couldn't see where he had been hit."

(Bounce the Rhine. Charles Whiting. 1985.)

By this time the Island's garrison, 49th (West Riding) and 51st (Highland) Divisions, had been christened the 'Nijmegen Home Guard'. As Christmas Eve came 'Lord Haw-Haw' and 'Mary of Arnhem', two Nazi radio broadcasters, announced that the 'infamous Polar Bear butchers' would be wiped out before the end of the year. The 7th Dukes spent a further 14 days holding the Haalderen sector before being withdrawn into billets in Nijmegen two days before Christmas:

"The Sergeants opened the festivities with a Christmas Eve dance which went with a great swing and led to many an empty breakfast seat next morning. The Brigadier came in just at the end to tell of the first of the decorations [6] for the Haalderen battle - the MC to Kenneth Evans whose platoon headquarters held out throughout the middle of the attack on 'D' Company, and Private Stimpson who kept his Bren in action in 'C' Company for four hours after being wounded. The Christmas meal rivalled the best of spreads in England - a feast of turkey, pork, plum pudding, mince pies, fruit, beer, cigars and sweets. Each company had its own dining hall. The only war-like scene was the guard outside - we were still in the throes of the parachute flap which accompanied the Ardennes push [in the American sector]."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXL, Number 61. June 1945.)

[1: Although the 50th (Northumbrian) Division returned to the United Kingdom to become a 'training division' many of its soldiers, particularly in the infantry battalions, were sent to reinforcement holding units from where they were posted back to active service units in North-West Europe, including to the 49th (West Riding) Division.]

[2: Lieutenant Colonel J H O Wilsey, Commanding Officer 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in recognition of his service whilst commanding the Battalion.]

[3: Roman soldiers called the area the 'Island of the Batavians' after its inhabitants.]

[4: 1st Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment then part of 231 Infantry Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division.]

[5: Private Reg Dunkley, 7th Dukes, was severely wounded, losing a leg, in the battle for Arnhem in April 1945.]

[6: For the action at Haalderen, 3rd/4th December 1944, Major C D Hamilton, acting commanding officer, was awarded the Distinguished Service Order; Lieutenant K M Evans, commanding 18 Platoon 'D' Company, Lieutenant L Le Cornu, commanding 13 Platoon 'C' Company, and Lieutenant W A Hodge, OC Carrier Platoon, were awarded the Military Cross; Private C T Baker and Sergeant H Simpson were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal; Lance Corporal M Bell, Lance Corporal G Guest, Lance Corporal W L Hawkins and Private P Stimson were awarded the Military Medal.]

THE ISLAND - 1945

The flooded areas of the Island had turned into ice when the 7th Dukes moved back into the line at Elst, wellington boots and the daily rum ration again became essential to survival. Lieutenant Colonel J H O 'Felix' Wilsey DSO was promoted Brigadier to command a brigade in another division. As a result, the Battalion second-in-command, Major C D Hamilton DSO, was promoted Lieutenant Colonel to command the 7th Dukes:

"On 6th January we again returned to the Island - this time at Elst, where for a month never a night went by without at least one officer patrol. These patrols were as nerve-wracking as walking across the tight rope over Niagara. They moved feeling their way over ice which at any time might give way, pulling a ladder behind the patrol for negotiating the un-iced ditches, crunching through the frosted snow and trying their skill at rushing a house defended on all sides by [barbed] wire."

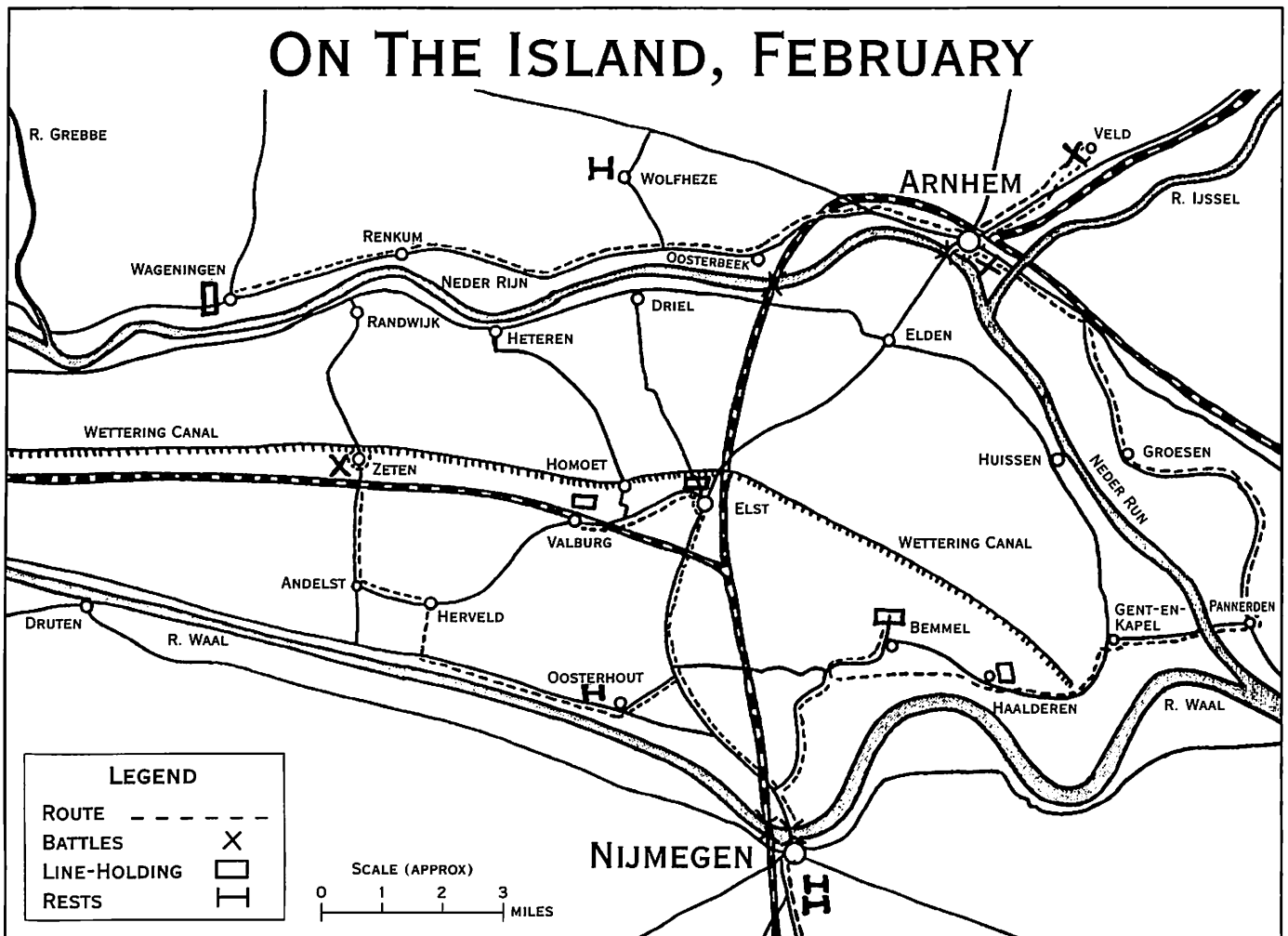
"At the end of February we had another six-day break off the Island at Druten, where a taxi service of V1 bombs overhead made a rest period more harassing than usual. I wonder if General Headquarters realise that in a 'rest' period, as they are so charmingly called, one works twice as hard. It was about this time that we discovered that 220 days of the 250 since 'D' Day had been spent in the line. I know most people believe the European campaign has been the most strenuous yet - for the Infantry at least - here lies the answer. We also found we had taken more Boche prisoners than we had lost in casualties, and since 'D' Day had travelled almost 700 miles"

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXL, Number 61. June 1945.)

Conditions were harsh and extremely uncomfortable with ice, snow, rain and floodwaters hampering even the simplest of tasks. Nor were the German Parachute and Dutch SS [7] units opposing them inactive, for raids and counter-raids were frequent; as were persistent attacks on the vital Nijmegen bridge [8]. Winter frost continued until early February 1945 when on the 8th the British 2nd Army commenced its operations to clear the Rivers Maas and Rhine. This brought an order for the division to increase greatly its patrol activity towards Arnhem to make the enemy believe that an attack on Arnhem was imminent and thus draw off his reserves. By now both sides had spent over three months refining their defences and carefully siting weapons to hold what was a particularly difficult battleground. In March the 7th Dukes returned to their former battleground of Haalderen. This sector of the Island had become the least popular with all Polar Bears, as described by Lieutenant A A Vince, 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment (56th Brigade):

"We agreed that it was the worst sector to look after. On the right ran the River Waal well above ground level and contained by a 'bund'. The only road was under small arms fire and approach had to be made by the Jeep track made out of rubble from the destroyed houses. Whether the ground was frozen or feet deep in black mud, it was impossible to dig and one had to fight from the ruins of buildings and from cellars."

"Not a house remained whole and almost every room was fortified with sandbags and chests filled with dirt. In the small slits where windows used to be, there was a weapon of some kind with the safety catch permanently at fire and a finger always on the trigger. The few houses not defended were mined



and the unwary patrol from either side, rarely left such a building in one piece. Contact with the enemy was as little as 100 yards. The whole Battalion area could be, and was, swept by Spandaus and other weapons."

(The Pompadours, The History of 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment. Capt A A Vince.)

At one time orders came through for the Dukes to be prepared to take part in the battles for the Reichswald, but these came to nothing. Towards the end of the Dukes' tour at Haalderen plans were laid for the battalion to be at twelve hours readiness to break into the enemy defences. But, as with many such plans at that time, these too were cancelled:

"We were still to be the Nijmegen Home Guard - far more straining than actual fighting. How well the [7th] Battalion stood it - not a man was lost as a prisoner - how few were on sickness casualties - speaks well for the Battalion's discipline and the wonderful standards of man-management and alertness of its officers."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXL, Number 61. June 1945.)

In March 1945 the floods gradually began to subside, and revealed the bodies of the numerous dead who had lain undisturbed under the winter's icy blanket. Signs too of the relentless advances of German technology when the new German ME262 fighter, the first operational jet to fly in the world, swooped low over their trenches. On 27th March 1945 Major General MacMillan handed over command of the 49th (West Riding) Division on being transferred to command the 51st (Highland) Division, (whose GOC Major General T G Rennie, had been killed in action), and was succeeded by Major General S B Rawlins CBE DSO MC, former CCRA 30th Corps.

ARNHEM 1945

Plans were now made for the capture of Arnhem - a prize which had eluded the Allies for nearly six months. The preparatory operation was for 147th Brigade to clear the south-west corner of Arnhem by attacking from Haalderen and clearing as far east as the river line. 146th Brigade was then to pass through a bridgehead

established by 147th Brigade between Hevendorp and Oosterbeek, after which 56th Brigade was to enter Arnhem itself. In the first phase the 49th (West Riding) Division was to clear the Island under 'Operation Destroyer'. The 7th Dukes' 'H' Hour came at 0600 hours, 2nd April, after a heavy supporting barrage from the massed guns of five field regiments, four medium and two heavy regiments was fired on the objectives at 5.10am. Just as the Dukes advanced, British artillery rocket projectors fired each laying a 'mattress' of 360 high-explosive rockets each with the equivalent power of a 5.5" artillery shell. Additional ground support came in the form of tanks, crocodile flamethrowers and mine-clearing flails:

"Because of the dykes it was quite impossible to employ armour, and the Battalion attacked on its feet through the minefields towards German strongpoints six months in the building. We had greater support than at El Alamein, over 200 guns on our front. The three leading companies made short work of the opposition, 63 Boche were taken prisoner, 20 killed and everyone moved past the objective to chase the rest in full flight across the Lek [Rhine]."

"For five hours we had no vehicles until sappers cleared the mines. It was sweet revenge for many of us who had been in both Haalderen parties - and I hope Haalderen becomes a Battalion battle honour [9]. Scattered about the Island since, we have seen many graves of other Germans killed on the 4th December by our DF fire. And now our plans are ready for further advances. As yet we are not a broad arrow in the Daily Express - but we soon will be. The long strenuous winter in the line was not wasted - we trained our new NCOs and studied mobile warfare again."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Following this successful operation the Dukes received a message of congratulations on their speed and efficiency from their divisional commander, Major General S B Rawlins. Further heavy fighting involved 4 KOYLI and the Lincolns forcing a bridgehead over the Rijn Wittering. This allowed Sheffield's Hallamshires to pass through and become the first battalion to cross the Neder Rijn, thus enabling the Polar Bears their first good view of Arnhem. By the 3rd April the 49th (West Riding) Division's Operation Destroyer had succeeded, for the whole of the long-contested Island was at last secure in British hands.

The Second Army had already crossed the Rhine in March and the task of the Canadian Army was now to drive to the North Sea in order to cut-off the 100,000 strong German Fifteenth Army in northern Holland. Montgomery's first intention was that the assault on the northern Rhine was to have a bridgehead south-west of Arnhem which would swing to attack Arnhem from the west, whilst additional forces pushed further east to take pressure off the Second Army. Now that the division held the whole of the Island, plans were made for its attack upon Arnhem. Headquarters 147th Brigade instructed that the 7th Dukes 'O' Group, (the executive group of Commanding Officer, Company Commanders and supporting arms officers), was to go well forward to reconnoitre its launching site and objectives for the capture of Arnhem. The Dukes' objective was to be the famous Hartenstein Hotel, where the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division had made their last stand in the previous September. Smoke generators were permanently deployed on the Rhine to mask the build-up of forces from the enemy and these were cut off at a pre-arranged time to allow the Dukes to see their goal from observation posts in trenches previously used by the paras. Despite these careful preparations not all went to plan, as later recounted by Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton:

"Obviously Fate was not to be tempted in such an orthodox manner. To start with, the smoke stopped whilst we were halfway down the bank side. Everything from Spandaus to a far-away railway gun opened up on us. Barry Kavanagh [OC 'D' Company] ran the fastest 100 yards I'd ever seen. Leaving the 'O' Group to test the marksmanship of the Hun gunners a bit longer, I dashed for the retaining wall of the Rhine and then crawled along the 'home' side until I joined two Canadian snipers in the gable end of a boat house at the water's edge. For an hour I watched half a dozen Boche across the water in some section post on our objective pointing every time they saw one of my 'O' Group move. But this sort of entertainment became boring after two hours when there was neither sound nor smell of the smoke screen resuming, while the Huns became more and more jumpy at the spectacle of dozens of officers marooned on the river opposite them, all flashing vast map boards and Duke of Wellington's cap badges (among other regiments). The Boche were clearly puzzled by this perfect battle school example of how not to reconnoitre. I took advantage of the extra time to get the 'O' Group to crawl up to me and one by one to study the heights of Arnhem opposite. Eventually to relieve this suspense a thin haze of smoke started drifting over and we decided to make a run for it across the 2,000 yards of completely open flooded potato fields."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXI, Number 62. October 1945.)

Not only did this reveal their intentions to the enemy, thus losing the essential pre-requisite of surprise, but the west of Arnhem was also dominated by German positions well sited on higher ground against which any

assault river crossing would be particularly difficult. Within 24 hours fresh orders came that the 49th (West Riding) Division was to change flanks and attack Arnhem from the east. However to deceive the enemy they were to continue to make reconnaissance on the western flank as part of an overall deception plan. The division's attack on Arnhem, Operation Quick Anger, was opened by the 56th Brigade which made a night crossing on 12th April. The Gloucesters later secured a bridgehead over the River IJssel, allowing the 2nd South Wales Borderers and 2nd Essex to pass through at 0300 hours and advance into Arnhem itself:

"Searchlights [10] cast an eerie light over the night of the assault. Rocket firing Typhoons of the West Riding Squadron [11] of the RAF joined the artillery barrage and salvoes of ground rockets fired 350 at a time. Sweating gunners kept up the last ten minutes at five rounds a minute. Buffaloes manned by the Royal Armoured Corps and stormboats came in to ferry the attackers across the fast flowing IJssel. The navy joined in too and disembarked a whole battalion from landing craft in Arnhem itself."

(A short History of the 49th Infantry Division. Lt Col F K Hughes. 1957.)

By nightfall the South Wales Borderers were in the city centre claiming the privilege of being the first battalion into Arnhem. But the 56th Brigade had endured more than a fair share of problems during its attack. Their amphibious Buffaloes and assault boats should have been easy to launch as the plan included the preparatory blowing of gaps into the river bank, but the explosives failed to go off. Also, the Gloucesters' boats had proved to be defective. As a result what should have been a single assault wave of four rifle companies was reduced to a trickle as companies were ferried singly thus reducing the impact of their attack. Second across were the South Wales Borderers whose boats were swept away from the intended landing points by strong currents. The Borderers were swept onto a different point where steep banks jammed the unloading ramps and the fully-laden infantrymen, then under heavy enemy fire, had to jump down twelve feet simply to get ashore.

Thus the 56th Brigade was well behind schedule and this did not bode well for its supporting tanks. For the 5th Canadian Armoured Division were ready early to cross the river using 'Gremlin', a prefabricated bridge thrown across the river by the engineers in the face of the enemy. With the tanks being ahead of time, and the Gloucesters behind, there was a risk that they would not marry up on the enemy bank as planned. Without infantry the tanks were unacceptably vulnerable to carefully concealed German infantry armed with the very effective Panzerfaust anti-tank grenade. With literally one minute in hand the Gloucesters arrived in position to guard the leading part of the Gremlin bridge as engineers guided it out of the mist onto the enemy bank. Within 30 minutes the engineers had secured the vital bridge enabling the Shermans of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division and the flamethrowing Crocodiles of the British 79th Armoured Division to begin to roll towards Arnhem to support the embattled British infantry.

On the morning of Friday 13th April 146th Brigade also crossed newly-deployed Bailey bridges over the river and advanced into Arnhem where it also encountered a determined German defence, as the brigade was engaged in hand-to-hand fighting to clear its allotted sector. But to the Dukes, waiting in their assembly area five miles west of Arnhem for the signal to commence the intended third phase, it seemed that their services would not be required:

"After all the preparation, the inner steel of nerves, the tension of the pre-battle situation, the men of the [7th Battalion] Duke of Wellington's Regiment now feared that it had all been for nothing. As the regimental history puts it: 'It looked doubtful if the Battalion was to play any active part in the operation'. Then it was learned that the attack of the South Wales Borderers had bogged down on the other side. The Duke of Wellingtons would have to go to their aid and help them open up a vital set of roads. That night [13th April] they would cross the river, infiltrate through Arnhem, and link up with the Borderers to the south of the railway station. A training manual of those days maintained: 'For night attacks one requires hours, if not days, of preparation. The troops must be rested and properly briefed. If possible, there should be a rehearsal over similar ground.'"

(Bounce the Rhine. Charles Whiting. 1985.)

But the Dukes were permitted little or no time to prepare for this new operation. After a short brief from the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, the 7th Dukes 'A' Company (Captain B Kilner) at once moved off into the darkness of Arnhem to form a hasty firm base for the Battalion's imminent task. The change of plan demanded quick thinking as their Commanding Officer briskly moved forward to liaise with Headquarters 56th Brigade:

"We missed a bit of the German mortar hate as we crossed the bridge. A mile further on I lay with the commander of 146th Brigade under his armoured car and, with the aid of the most treacherous torch yet devised, heard the latest form - and then moved on to play hide and seek with the headquarters of 2nd South Wales Borderers [56th Brigade] among the workers' tenements. The South Wales Borderers were not where everyone expected them to be - even when I found them I was not sure of the exact street and it was obvious that my plan was either going to need a lot of modification or a lot of luck."

"For once the wireless refused to pick up Brigade. By the time I had come out from under the wireless scout car the South Wales Borderers had vanished again. Just in time - as the house crashed into the street - did I spot their wisdom. Then a sound of tramping feet - 'A' Company at last, I thought. Instead Hugh Le Messurier [12] appeared leading my 'rear' company, 'B' Company. 'A' Company's route had been blocked by the detonation of an ammunition truck [13] of the machine-gun battalion [Kensington's] and would be at least an hour late. Anyhow Hugh did not raise an eyebrow when I told him to capture our original start line (perhaps his eyebrows had all been singed, as everywhere in Arnhem was burning). Twenty minutes later he signalled his success, and the Sappers started clearing away a gap under the bridge for the rest of the [7th] Battalion."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXI, Number 62. October 1945.)

Arnhem was now a blazing inferno liberally dotted with enemy strongpoints amongst a maze of streets and rubble. Eventually, by using street-plans and road signs, the Dukes worked their way through the town, and by dawn the bottleneck of roads, Arnhem station and the first high ground were in the Dukes' hands. This allowed the whole brigade to maintain the pressure upon the enemy:

"At 1000 hours we joined in a concerted Brigade movement to secure all the high ground, and thus allow a start to be made on the big bridge which was to span the Rhine alongside the ruins of the old Arnhem bridge, for which the [1st] Airborne Division had fought for so long. As I have seen more than one battalion literally wiped out in earlier days by counter-attacks in street fighting, we pushed on that day carefully, watching our flanks. The Boche were completely out of the picture. Little parties of them would come down the street to reinforce positions captured hours before."

"By 1600 hours we had cleared all but the last day's objective - a large series of cross roads on the highest point outside Arnhem [14]. Barry Kavanagh and 'D' Company and Hugh [Le Messurier] with his 'B' Company had been told hours before that this would be their task. We decided to infiltrate up to the feature but with our fingers on the guns of the tanks and artillery in case anything happened. It did."

"Number 18 Platoon (Ken Evans) drew blood on the left, so Barry pulled him back and made a new plan with the Company and was soon on the feature after a copybook attack. There were 20 prisoners here and a number of dead. The Boche reaction was confusing. He first plastered our area unmercifully for half an hour in which brave Company Sergeant Major Fellows of 'A' Company was killed. Just before nightfall he sent in a company of infantry [Dutch SS] supported by three French [built] Renault tanks to reoccupy the cross roads. Prisoners said they had no idea we were there. 'D' Company made short work of the complete outfit"

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

The night of the 14th April passed without incident and on the morning of the 15th a Canadian armoured division passed through to drive the German positions even further back. This allowed 'C' Company to occupy Arnhem Zoo. An inspection of the zoo by 'A' Company's Commander, Major Fancourt, brought an interesting find and resulted in his offering 147th Brigade Commander, Brigadier H Wood, a fully-grown live Polar Bear in exchange for the small wooden Polar Bear in the Brigadier's caravan, needless to say the offer was declined. By now the long-contested city of Arnhem was a mass of wreckage as reported by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio reporter, Matthew Halton:

"I drove in [to Arnhem] from the south today, past powerful German forts and redoubts which had been shelled and bombed and burnt out by thousands of our rockets firing hundreds at a time. The town was a deserted burning shell. I visited a British regiment, and saw about 200 German prisoners. Fires were blazing. Machine-guns chattered from the high ground north of Arnhem, and two or three German shells whistled into the town. An airplane engine, that had fallen from some British bomber, disintegrating high above, lay in a little park beside a canal. The whole thing was a dreary, disheartening sight - another of the destroyed towns of a beautiful continent. A lone Dutchman, the first civilian we had encountered, came slowly down a lone street - 'You have come back', he said quietly. Just that. The British had come back, as they always do. I drove away."

(War Report, From D-Day to VE-Day, Radio Reports from the Western Front.)

Operation 'Quick Anger' had been a complete success, for the division had taken Arnhem at a cost of 62 killed and 139 wounded, some 1,600 prisoners were captured. 147th Brigade was now ordered to capture Ede, about ten miles north-west of Arnhem, in an operation codenamed 'Dutch Cleanser'. The village of Ede was thought to be held by about three companies of the 83rd SS Grenadier Regiment, 34th SS Division.

The advance therefore continued at 0500 hours 16th April, when the Dukes followed the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers, supported by tanks of the Canadian Calgary Regiment, westwards out of the town towards Rotterdam. By midday half the village of Ede had been taken and, riding on tanks, 'C' Company led by the 7th Battalion's Carrier Platoon, pushed a further six miles south to the Rhine, thus capturing the 56th Brigade's objective, as later recalled by the Commanding Officer:

"I had a very cool reception from the commander of 56th Brigade when he arrived at Wageningen that night. Jack Illingworth, the carrier platoon commander, was blown up on a mine, and one of his crew killed, but injured and shaken he carried on. He won a Military Cross. Another readjustment that night brought us back to Ede and the most fantastic situation this war. We dug in around houses while the inhabitants celebrated inside."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXI, Number 62. October 1945.)

The 49th (West Riding) Division continued the advance westwards as part of the Canadian Army's Operation 'Dutch Cleanser' to cut-off the 120,000 German forces in western Holland. Enemy opposition was confined to small rearguard actions, but numerous enemy mines and sporadic shellfire remained ever present hazards. The Germans had already flooded large areas of Holland to slow up the Allies' advance, and they now threatened to flood the whole Dutch countryside west of Utrecht. In the face of this unthinkable threat the 49th (West Riding) Division's advance was halted on 17th April. By 27th April it was holding positions facing the line of the River Grebbe where the Germans had constructed a series of strongpoints with the apparent intention of making a stand:

"The Boche had gone back five miles to the Grebbe line, and our starting advance was halted while negotiations opened for the passage of food convoys through the Boche lines for the starving [15] people of north-west Holland. We eased a little closer to Klomp, held by a [enemy] section according to the Intelligence boys but actually two companies, and it was in the small holdings here that we heard the final surrender news."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Food convoys now streamed through the Dukes forward positions and passed almost at once through the German front-lines. New and surprising orders now came through. The whole division was now to stand fast, no offensive patrols were to be sent into No-man's land and harassing artillery shoots were suspended:

"Those were strange days. It was clear that Hitler's Germany was collapsing into utter defeat. From the main Allied fronts, tremendous news came fast: the Americans, the British and Russians linked up, Berlin fell, and Hitler went to his squalid self-inflicted death. The end was a matter of days; yet in Western Holland the Canadian Army, of which 49 Div was part, still faced a compact, unbroken German Army. Would it surrender or fight with its back to the sea?."

('The Kensingtons', Princes Louise's Kensington Regiment. Regimental Author.)

The answers to the many questions posed by the Polar Bears were to be seen in Wageningen on 4th May when a flurry of staff cars appeared in the small square outside the hotel. Amongst them was the unmistakable grey-green of a German staff car flying a flag of truce. Here General Bedell Smith, (Chief of Staff to General Eisenhower), Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, and the Canadian Army Commander received an unconditional surrender of all German troops in north-west Germany, Denmark and western Holland from Field Marshal Blaskowitz, commander of the German Army in Holland. The surrender took effect at 5am the next day, and brought a stand-still order for the 49th (West Riding) Division whilst the division's commander, Major General Rawlins, liaised with the commander of the German 88th Corps. On 6th May Headquarters 49th (West Riding) Division issued orders for the division, as part of 1st Canadian Corps, to implement the concentration, disarming and guarding of all enemy forces in western Holland. By the next day the division was moving into German-held north-west Holland to the area around Utrecht and Hilversum; with the 1st Canadian Division on its left around The Hague and Rotterdam. This had entailed the 7th Dukes again passing through Wageningen into German-held Holland, then along routes lined with cheering Dutch who 'kidnapped' the crews of any vehicle which slowed down. Despite the high spirits of this momentous event, the Dukes were alarmed to see hundreds of fully-armed German soldiers clustered in groups as they sped past.

Their new task was to disarm the three German divisions which had been holding the Grebbe line between Hilversum and Utrecht. By coincidence the Dukes were allocated to the German 6th Parachute Division whose soldiers had unsuccessfully assaulted the battalion's positions at Haalderen in the previous December. Contemporary reports had it that word must have spread amongst the German paras that the 'Dukes were coming' and, in light of this, their undoubtedly brave former opponents gave not the slightest trouble. Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton now turned his attention to dealing with a whole enemy division:

"The Germans first passed completely equipped through our 'sausage machine'. They dumped personal small arms, binoculars and watches in one house with 'A' Company; then passed on to the open fields where their larger weapons, steel helmets, anti-gas kit and all the other multitudinous impedimenta of the division was stacked. For two days roads were blocked by hundreds of horse-drawn carts - the platoon trucks of one of the crack German divisions !. Afterwards the Germans marched into a large wood, where we guarded them for a week as they made themselves fit for the long march back to prison camps in Northern Germany. I had one exhausting day inspecting every unit of two brigade groups. It had its compensations - the vast German entourage of commanders and staff officers in jackboots and greatcoats was reduced to one officer at the end of the day. The commander had fallen straddling a dyke and the jackboots of his staff pinched their toes too much."

Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXI, Number 62. October 1945.)

On VE Day, Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton sent a message to the Colonel The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding), Colonel C J Pickering CMG DSO:

"From Lieutenant Colonel C D Hamilton DSO, Commanding Officer
7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment
on VE Day, 7th May 1945"

"The officers and men of the Battalion serving in the British Liberation Army have asked me today, VE Day, to forward to our Colonel our greetings and an expression of loyalty to the Regiment for whose traditions they have fought so well in the last year."

"The Battalion has never in this campaign lost a battle. It has never given an inch of ground. No man has ever felt that the Germans were on top at any time. We know that man for man the Germans have been thoroughly whacked whenever we met them."

"We have had to pay the price in killed and wounded for this record. We honour their memory today. Those who have taken their place have carried on manfully the traditions of valour of the Battalion so well established in the battles of Normandy last June and July. The fact that these reinforcements have all fought so well, whatever their regiment, has been adequate tribute to the name and record of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment."

"Today we have completed the disarming of an old enemy, the German 6th Parachute Division. How long our stay in Germany will last, and what our future will be, I don't know, but whatever our destiny, this Battalion will always honour their Colonel and their Regiment. I hope that the Regiment will have a vigorous Old Comrade's Association in which the comradeship established throughout all Battalions by very many gallant companies of men will be further maintained."

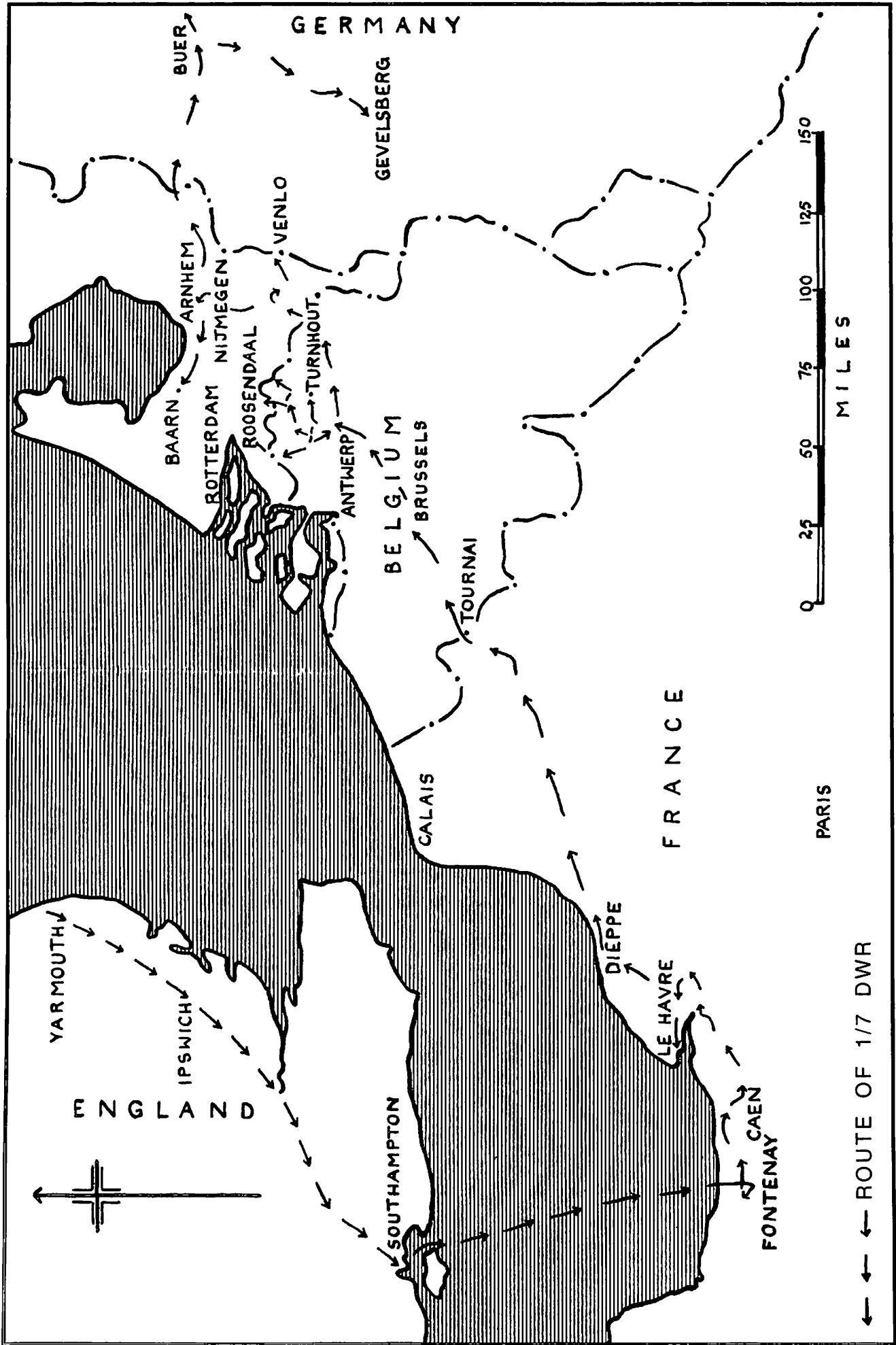
(Ibid)

The 49th (West Riding) Division held a church parade in Utrecht Cathedral [16] on 12th May. This was followed by a divisional march-past with Lieutenant General C Foulkes CBE DSO, commander 1st Canadian Army, taking the salute from a parade in which the commanding officer, three officers and sixty men represented the 7th Dukes. Later, on 30th May, the Dukes provided a contingent of six officers and 180 soldiers for the 1st Canadian Army's parade in The Hague where the salute was taken by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Urgent indents for ammunition, petrol, water and rations, the sinews of war, were now substituted as the Dukes requested 'Brasso', 'Blanco' and boot polish. A dirty cap-badge now became the most severe of crimes - unless the badge had become one of the many 'lost due to enemy action' through the hospitality of the local people. Thus scrubbed clean of battle, polished and ironed, the war was over for the gallant 7th Dukes.

[7: There was a certain irony that the 49th (West Riding) Division was required to fight Dutchmen serving the in SS Nederland Division in order to liberate Holland. 15% of the Dutch population joined the Dutch Nazi Party in 1940, and 50,000 Dutchmen volunteered to join the German SS.]

[8: The Germans employed various means in other unsuccessful attempts to destroy the Nijmegen bridge, using midget submarines as well as mines/explosive shells which were tied to logs and floated down the river, all were detected and destroyed.]

[9: In the event, Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton's wish for Haalderen to be granted as a battle honour was not fulfilled. Only one battle honour in the area was approved by the War Office Battle Honours Committee during the period that the 49th Division held 'The Island'. This was 'Zetten', (18th-21st January 1945) which



NORTH WEST EUROPE 1944-45

was subsequently granted to The Leicestershire Regiment, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, The Gloucestershire Regiment, The Essex Regiment, and The Kensingtons. The Dukes Territorial 7th Battalion was granted three battle honours for the period between landing in Normandy and VE Day - Tilly sur Seulles (14th-19th June 1944), Odon (25th June - 2nd July 1944), Fontenay le Pesnil (25th-27th June 1944); and two campaign honours - 'North West Europe 1944', 'North West Europe 1945'. By comparison, Sheffield's Hallamshire Battalion was granted eleven battle honours and two campaign honours for the same period; (Odon, Fontenay le Pesnil, Caen, La Vie Crossing, Le Touques Crossing, Foret de Bretonne, Le Havre, Antwerp-Turnhout Canal, Scheldt, Lower Maas, Arnhem 1945, North West Europe 1944, North West Europe 1945.) The other battle honours awarded to the Dukes Territorial Battalions for the Second World War are 'St Valery en Caux' (2/7th Battalion 1940), 'North West Europe 1940' (2/6th Battalion and 2/7th Battalion). St Valery en Caux and Fontenay le Pesnil were subsequently selected by The Duke of Wellington's Regiment amongst the maximum of ten Second World War honours permitted to be emblazoned upon the King's Colour.]

[10: The anti-aircraft units shone their searchlights on the clouds in order that the reflected light would light the attacker's way forward - known as 'Monty's Moonlight'.]

[11: '609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Squadron' Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR) was formed as an Auxiliary Air Force (later designated RAFVR) squadron at Yeadon, near Leeds, on 10th February 1936, when it was commanded by Squadron Leader Harald Peake (later an Air Commodore) formerly an officer in the Yorkshire Dragoons Yeomanry; with Rt Hon the Earl of Harewood as Honorary Air Commodore. At first the squadron was equipped with Mark I Spitfires on mobilisation. By 1944 the Squadron was converted to rocket-firing Typhoons which carried out ground attacks in the Normandy campaign during which, for example, the squadron flew 461 individual sorties into the Falaise Gap, destroying 42 enemy tanks and 83 other transports. 609 Squadron reformed at Yeadon in 1946 when it was equipped with Mosquito aircraft, later converting to Gloster Meteors. 609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Squadron RAFVR was disbanded in March 1957.]

[12: Captain H S Le Messurier, a regular officer, later became the 7th Dukes' adjutant when the battalion was reconstituted in 1947.]

[13: This ammunition truck was in fact one of several which was resupplying a supporting mortar platoon, 12 Platoon of The Kensingtons, whose ammunition trucks and stockpiles of mortar bombs had received several direct hits. The Kensingtons lost several casualties due to severe burns, 1,700 mortar bombs and four vehicles, in addition to several Royal Army Service Corps ammunition supply vehicles.]

[14: The high ground and crossroads above Arnhem captured by the 7th Dukes were held by the 83rd (Dutch) 55th Regiment.]

[15: The people of Holland, especially in the towns, were indeed starving at this time. Some 25,000 Dutch civilians had already starved to death and thousands of others were close to it. By the spring of 1945 an individual's daily ration was only 230 calories - about a quarter of that allowed by the Germans to inmates of their notorious concentration camps.]

[16: A war memorial to the 49th (West Riding) Division in the form of a Polar Bear mounted on a plinth in white stone was later erected in Utrecht.]

DUNKIRK 1945

The 7th Dukes contribution to the 49th (West Riding) Division's operations in Holland had enabled the British Army to fulfil its pledge to liberate Arnhem. Yet another famous name, that of Dunkirk, had already passed into wartime legend and here too a Dukes Territorial unit played a part in its liberation.

Huddersfield's 43rd (5th DWR) Searchlight Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) [17] had spent the war deployed as part of the Air Defence of Great Britain at first to Swillington, later moving to the York area where its searchlights stiffened the anti-aircraft defences against the German 'Baedeker raids'. Early in 1943 the Regiment moved to Lutterworth where it also took part in the preparations for D Day.

In early 1944 the Regiment was transferred from Anti-Aircraft Command to 21st Army Group and mobilised as a mobile searchlight unit, after which it spent a period in battle training before deploying to Tenby and occupying posts in South Wales. Following a move to Bude, in August 1944, training culminated in a five-day infantry battle-exercise on Dartmoor and Exmoor, the Regiment at this time having a strength of 40 officers and 1,200 soldiers.

Across the Channel the 21st Army Group pressed the German armies back to the German border and bypassed the two large German garrisons holding the Channel ports of Calais and Dunkirk. By this time the 21st Army Group was desperately short of infantry reinforcements and was unable to deploy any front-line troops against the Calais and Dunkirk pockets. Because of this, on 14th October, the Regiment, now commanded by Lieutenant

Colonel F A Carline OBE TD, was advised that it was to cease being a searchlight unit and was immediately to convert as an infantry unit ready for overseas service. This also brought a change in title when the unit was redesignated as 43rd Garrison Regiment Royal Artillery (5th DWR) (TA), but this was again changed on 1st November to 600th Regiment Royal Artillery (5th DWR) (TA). This change in role saw the Regiment move to Easthamstead Park Camp at Wokingham where its strength was reduced to the permitted 28 officers and 676 soldiers [18] who then underwent an intense five-week training period. The Regiment embarked in November 1944 and, after a period of training in Belgium, was placed under the command of the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group which was holding the enemy pocket around Dunkirk:

"Much has been written about Dunkirk 1940, but little about Dunkirk 1944. When we arrived there were 11,000 Boche in Dunkirk together with about 500 civilians who had elected to stay inside at the time of the truce for the withdrawal of the 15,000 civilians, and about 100 Allied prisoners, mostly Canadian, British and American Air Force. The German garrison was a mixed bag of naval and military officers and men with foreign elements, such as Austrians, Poles, Alsations [from Alsace] and Russians who had been conscripted into the German Army. The garrison commander was a naval officer, Admiral Frisius, a slight dapper man, sixty years old and half-disliked, half-respected for his strictness."

"The perimeter of the German defences was some 45 miles long, enclosing the beaches from which the British evacuation took place in 1940, and which were still littered by debris of that army, though crowned with powerful fortifications constructed since then by Germans as part of the Atlantic Wall. The enemy controlled the lock gates of the numerous canals which ran into Dunkirk, and to reduce the perimeter had flooded vast areas of ground to the south of Dunkirk to a depth of 10-12 feet."

Lieutenant Colonel F A Carline, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXII, Number 64. June 1946.)

The perimeter was held by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Czech Armoured Regiments, fighting dismounted using their tanks as close artillery support, a Czech Motor Battalion and a Czech Anti-Tank Regiment also fighting as infantry. These were supported by one British Heavy and two light anti-aircraft units, firing in the ground role, with a British searchlight unit providing ground illumination. The whole sector was liberally riddled with mines and the containing force was completely out-gunned by the German garrison which, fortunately, conserved its ammunition except when attacking. The Dukes first took over the western sector with a French Company under command:

"To avoid an international crisis I will not give you my views on the efficiency of these French troops: suffice it to say that in an enemy attack on a two battalion front the French Company failed to hold their ground. In this sector we held a succession of strong points in the shape of isolated and ruined farmhouses anything up to 800 yards apart, necessitating frequent patrolling by night. Battalion Headquarters was in a reinforced concrete bunker - which I regret to say bore a red cross on the outside - known as the Iron Lung. The enemy were in the built-up area which made it simpler for them to get through our lines than for us to get through theirs. The Boche were quite active in this sector: the favourite way out was along the beach, a wide expanse of sand at low tide with continuous obstacles in the sand providing sufficient cover for a battalion on a dark night - this was always one of the problems. In this sector we came across our old friends 2/7th DWR who were then an independent squadron RTR, equipped if I remember rightly with Churchills and in support of the Battalion. They left Dunkirk later to re-equip as a troop-carrying squadron and did some fine work after the crossing of the Rhine."

Lieutenant Colonel F A Carline, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

The 5th Dukes later moved to the eastern sector at Ghyvelde where the ground enabled them to construct a succession of mutually supporting positions. Here again the main requirement was for patrolling in order the counter enemy attempts to exit through the flooded area. Improvisation also enhanced the Dukes arsenal:

"We soon organised a mortar platoon equipped with German and French mortars which, after slight modification, can be made to fire the standard British 3-inch bombs: there were sufficient of these weapons for each company to have its own 3-inch mortar detachment in addition to the mortar platoon which was under the able command of L/Sgt Skinner Barclay. We also had a number of 0.5 Brownings, Spandaus (rather disconcerting not knowing whether one's own troops or the enemy are firing) and a German 20mm gun. Our most impressive weapon was the German DO mine, a type of rocket throwing 200 pounds of explosive a distance of 4½ miles, and which made the most frightening noise at the dispatching end and a most satisfying explosion at the receiving end: these DO mines were in plentiful supply, highly inaccurate and a source of intense satisfaction to those who fired them."

Lieutenant Colonel F A Carline, Commanding Officer

(Ibid)

Other 'weapons' were present in the guise of an attached 'Psychological Warfare Section' which laid out miles of wire, and speakers to enable them to broadcast propaganda to the German garrison at Bunkersdorf. Despite their varied efforts, not one German surrendered:

"At the end of March [1945] a truce was arranged with the enemy for the purpose of delivering food parcels to Allied prisoners-of-war in Dunkirk. As a result of this truce, some very interesting facts concerning conditions were given by enemy officers while the parcels were being handed over. The enemy were quite reconciled to the ultimate defeat of the German Army, but prided themselves on the magnificent fight they had made. In their opinion, the soft life their soldiers had enjoyed in France for four years was solely responsible for their inability to stand up to the rigours of war which burst upon them with the landings in Normandy. Food was short, and that was the main reason for desertions. Many of their troops had been conscripted into the German Army and had fought in Russia, Italy and finally in the retreat from Normandy, and in consequence their morale was very low. The Germans stated they had little difficulty in locating the defensive localities occupied by the French at night, owing to loud talking and the glow from lighted cigarettes."

(The Duke of Wellington's Regiment 1919-1952. Brig C N Barclay. 1953.)

A succession of heavy attacks in the north-west sector were made by the enemy during the night of 3rd/4th April but these were defeated by artillery, tank and infantry fire. On 14th April 1945 the Dukes had returned to Loon Plage on the western sector with a company of the Czech Motor Battalion attached. Here they were tasked with an attack to recapture a factory and buildings across both sides of the canal that had been lost by French troops. The attack went in at first-light on 15th April. Both the Dukes and their Czechs suffered relatively heavy casualties, with the Dukes losing 2 officers and 15 soldiers killed, and 3 officers and 60 soldiers wounded, and the Czechs a similar number, enemy casualties were 100 dead and 75 prisoners. A few days later the Dukes went into reserve for a rest and refit:

"The Battalion was in at the surrender of the German garrison on 10th May 1945. It looked at one time as though there would be no surrender and that the enemy would fight it out. Admiral Frisius was all for fighting - it was said that he had lost his wife and family in a [air] raid on Hamburg and therefore had no interest in life beyond fighting the British - but at the last moment he discovered a plot engineered by his second-in-command to murder him so he dealt with his second-in-command and surrendered. When the disarming of the enemy had been completed we had the task of marching a large part of them through Adinkirk and Furnes to a prisoner-of-war cage 40 miles away. This was accomplished in one day under great difficulties: the difficulties were due entirely to the attitude of French and Belgian civilians in the villages we passed through. This attitude varied from brick and bottle throwing hostility, including robbery with violence, to attempted fraternisation: we were all glad when this nightmare was over."

Lieutenant Colonel F A Carline, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXII, Number 64. June 1946.)

Following this task the 5th Dukes moved to Bad Oeyenhausen there to take up duties guarding Headquarters 21st Army Group.

[17: 43rd (5th DWR) Searchlight Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) then with 370-373 Searchlight Batteries.]

[18: 600th Regiment Royal Artillery (5th DWR) (TA) was converted to equal a standard infantry battalion less a 'Support Company', ie without anti-tank guns, medium mortars or carriers. Despite many changes in title the Commanding Officer of the day (Lieutenant Colonel F A Carline) noted that they were always "5th DWR"]

CHAPTER 11

1946-1967: ONE GENERATION PASSES AWAY, ANOTHER COMES

"It is a very solemn occasion and the beginning of a new chapter in the history of a Regiment, for the Colours are the centre and the mainspring of its whole life. One generation passes away and another comes, but the Colours remain the outward and visible sign of the traditions of the Regiment, the records of its service and triumphs, and a memorial of all officers and men who have given their lives in the discharge of their duty to their Sovereign and Country."

HRH The Princess Royal CI GCVO GBE

On the occasion of the presentation of new Colours to the 7th Battalion

7th July 1957

THE TERRITORIAL ARMY

The Territorial Army was officially reconstituted on 1st January 1947, but recruiting did not actually begin until 1st May. The establishment strength for the post-war TA was nine infantry divisions and two armoured divisions, with the 25 yeomanry regiments formed into armoured brigades. The Territorial's commitment was a 15 day camp and 30 hours obligatory out-of-camp training. A further 30 hours out-of-camp training and a range course had to be completed in order to qualify for the £12 tax-free bounty:

"Some young Terriers had nearly seven years of full-time service, much of it in battle and discomfort. They had careers to resume and homes to rediscover. Why families allowed their menfolk to rejoin after being away for so long is a mystery. Perhaps the men were too steeped in making their own decisions to be dissuaded. But not only did they rejoin, many officers and senior NCOs came well down in rank to do so."

(Forward Everywhere: Her Majesty's Territorials. Stanley Simm Baldwin. 1994.)

THE DUKES TERRITORIALS

The post-war reorganisation of the Territorial Army brought many changes, not least the fact that four Dukes TA infantry battalions no longer formed a wholly Dukes Territorial infantry brigade. Indeed the West Riding's own infantry division too had been changed, for it was now the '49th (West Riding and Midland) Armoured Division' with headquarters undiplomatically moved to Nottingham. War Office policy for the post-war organisation of the infantry was that each regiment could only have one Territorial Army infantry battalion. At first the Dukes' 6th Battalion was selected, but this was changed by March 1947 to being the 7th Battalion. All four of the pre-war Dukes' Territorial Army major units were reformed, three as artillery and one as infantry.

Only the 7th Dukes at Milnsbridge reformed as an infantry battalion. Halifax's 58th and 68th Anti-Tank Regiments amalgamated and reformed as 382 (*Duke of Wellington's*) *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)*. The Huddersfield Dukes remained in the anti-aircraft artillery role as the 578th (*5th Bn DWR*) *Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* again occupying their traditional headquarters in St Paul's Street. Skipton's 6th Dukes were reformed, but with Headquarters moved to Arden Road Halifax, and changed to anti-aircraft artillery in a departure from their customary infantry role as 673 *Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)*.

The task of reforming the 7th Battalion fell to Lieutenant Colonel S R Hoyle MC TD who had gained the Military Cross whilst serving with the 2/7th Dukes in France during 1940, before transferring to the 2nd Battalion of the Regiment, as second-in-command, later commanding the '33rd Column' during service with the 'Chindits'. He was assisted by Captain H S Le Messurier, as Adjutant, a regular officer who had served as a company commander with the 1/7th Battalion in North-West Europe. The 7th Dukes also now found themselves in the famous 50th (Northumbrian) Division, in which the battalion formed part of the 149th (West Riding) Infantry Brigade [1]. The Divisional Headquarters was actually known as 'Headquarters Northumbrian District and 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division', and, from a headquarters at Darlington (later Catterick), was not only responsible for the Division but for all the troops, both regulars and territorials, in Northumberland, Durham, and the three Ridings of Yorkshire.

Despite failing health Colonel Hoyle managed to establish the framework of the 7th Battalion which by the end of 1947 mustered 18 officers and 82 soldiers. Nor was it shortages in manpower alone which affected post-war Yorkshire:

“Apart from the absence of battle and casualties, peace did not come up to the expectations of most of the British people. Returning Territorials found that rationing became worse: bread, never rationed during hostilities, could be bought only by courtesy of the coupon. There were children who had never seen an orange or a banana, let alone a pineapple. Tea would remain rationed until 1952 and it was not until 1954 that sweets and the last of the foodstuffs would be ration-free. Even then, restrictions in certain commodities, for instance, newsprint, continued. There were power cuts.

(Ibid)

In 1948 the 7th Dukes held its first post-war annual camp at Hornsea, near Hull, and in October the same year its colours were retrieved from the safekeeping of St Mary's Church, Greenfield, where they had been placed on the outbreak of war. Annual camp 1949 was again at Hornsea and that of 1950 at Stobbs Camp, Hawick. In November 1950 Lieutenant Colonel Hoyle handed over command and, due to failing health, died shortly after, he was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Sir Nugent H Everard Bt who had previously commanded the 5th Dukes 1945-1946.

The former 4th Dukes was revived in 1947, again as an anti-tank regiment, now designated 382 (*Duke of Wellington's*) *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* in its traditional headquarters at Halifax. It too was lucky enough to be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel W S F Tetlow TD who had commanded the unit, as 58th Anti-Tank Regiment, during the war. By great determination the unit quickly became a going concern, it was a great tragedy when Lieutenant Colonel Tetlow died suddenly in 1948, when he was succeeded by another former 4th Dukes officer, Lieutenant Colonel N T Bentley TD.

The 6th Dukes reformed, with Headquarters at Arden Road Halifax, in a new anti-aircraft role as 673rd *Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA)*, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dale Shaw TD, with its three anti-aircraft batteries at Halifax, Skipton and Ilkley. A change in role in 1949 found the unit becoming a 'Light' anti-aircraft regiment equipped with 'Bofors' anti-aircraft guns. In 1950 the Regiment absorbed Huddersfield's '538 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) (TA)' [2] which became the Regiment's new 'R' Battery, a change which required the Regiment's 'P' Battery to remain at Halifax whilst its existing 'Q' Battery at Skipton and former 'R' Battery at Ilkley amalgamated to form 'Q' Battery. Here too the task of recruiting a full establishment proved difficult, for by 1951 the Regiment could only muster 130 all ranks. Also in 1951 the Regiment was transferred from 69th Anti-Aircraft Brigade to become part of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

Huddersfield's 5th Dukes also reformed as artillery designated 578th (*5th Bn DWR*) *Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* at its Huddersfield drill hall, it too had a former 5th Dukes officer, Lieutenant Colonel R C Laurence TD, appointed as commanding officer, with the Regiment's three anti-aircraft batteries located in Huddersfield, Holmfirth and Mirfield. In May 1948 the unit held its first post-war annual camp in Wales and in 1949 Lieutenant Colonel D H Hirst MBE TD assumed command.

Nor did the Territorials forget their duty to their absent comrades, as commemorative plates and memorials added the names of the fallen to those of the War in South Africa and the First World War. In October 1950 the 5th Dukes impressive memorial at St Paul's Street was unveiled by General Sir A F Philip Christison Bt GBE CB DSO MC, Colonel The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, to display the addition of the names of the 56 officers and men who had died in the Second World War, together with the badges of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, the Corps of Royal Engineers and The Duke of Wellington's Regiment added, to place on record the 5th Dukes service in the anti-aircraft role. In December that year, the 7th Dukes also unveiled a memorial at Milnsbridge to record the 228 names of the officers and men who had died serving with the 1/7th and 2/7th Battalions in the Second World War.

Recruiting was, as nationally, very difficult especially as, for example, TA units in the Huddersfield area alone had an establishment for 2,500 soldiers. A national drive for recruits in 1948 saw a large TA recruiting display at the St Paul's Street drill hall, but the Huddersfield area reported a complete recruiting failure as none of its units subsequently experienced an increase in strength.

By 1949 the TA nationally was only recruited to 40% of establishment with Huddersfield even worse being barely 30% of its target strength. In simple terms, for example, Huddersfield's Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons, which should be able to deploy a full armoured squadron, could only man two armoured cars. Huddersfield's Dukes gunners could only man only two guns:

“On 1st May 1947, the TA was re-formed and Lieutenant Colonel R C Laurence TD was invited to accept the difficult task of forming the new 5th Dukes in the guise of 578 (Mobile) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (5th Duke of Wellington's) (TA), a third change of role in the Regiment's history. This task is now in progress but it is not meeting with the support which is necessary. It does not seem to be appreciated that it is a most urgent need that the Anti-Aircraft defences of this country are at all times in a fit state to defend the people against any attack that might be made. With the present numbers only two guns could be manned and this means that for every

one man enlisted a further 15 are required. The National Servicemen will not be posted into the Territorial Army until the end of 1950 and then only in very small numbers. It is therefore imperative that ex-servicemen in Huddersfield and District decide at once to give some of their spare time to ensure that the AA defences are secure. Remember The Need is URGENT."

(Souvenir Brochure - Territorial Army Huddersfield. 1949.)

Of course in 1949 the Huddersfield Dukes also had stiff competition for potential new recruits from local TA units in the form of The Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons (TA), Fitzwilliam Street, 538 (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA), based at Springwood Avenue, 270 Field Squadron Royal Engineers (TA) at Leeds Road, 21st Army Corps Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (TA) out at Kirkburton, and of course 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) at Fitzwilliam Street.

The threat of conventional war in Europe still seemed likely, with tension at a peak during the 1948 Berlin airlift. On the national scene, the wartime call-up system finished in 1948 even though Britain's global commitments left the British Army extensively stretched for manpower. This demand for manpower could not be filled by voluntary means alone resulting in compulsory National Service being introduced in 1948. In general, Britain's young men were compelled to complete two years' full-time service followed by three and a half years' compulsory service with the Territorial Army or the Army Emergency Reserve. This move brought the 'Non-Volunteer National Serviceman' being required to serve with his local Territorial Army unit in a commitment to attend annual camp and out of camp training. Many traditional Territorials certainly viewed with distaste this intrusion of 'pressed men' into what, in peacetime, had always symbolised the true volunteer spirit of service to one's country. But the National Serviceman, welcome or no, made a significant impact, for by 1952 they contributed 131,500 men to the Territorial Army's total strength of 198,500. This influx of the Non-Volunteer National Servicemen into the Dukes' TA units quickly brought them up to establishment strength and many of them volunteered to re-enlist when their obligatory commitment ended, later becoming valued members of their units.

Nor were these the only reservists to be forced to serve with the Territorials, for by the 1950's not only did the Cold War threat from the Warsaw Pact exist but Britain was also engaged in the Korean War. This resulted in some 'Z Reservists', those men who had served in the Second World War, being called back for training at the annual camps of 1951 and 1952. In the face of receiving 'Z' Reservists, in peacetime the 7th Battalion's Support Company took a more realistic approach:

"The vexed question of Z Reservists is at present a general topic in all our minds. We should have a good strong company at camp this year with them, the National Servicemen, Volunteers and Regulars all together ! It will certainly be a test of our administration. We believe in the TA as a volunteer body, and it is up to us to instil the volunteer spirit in the men who join us. We therefore urge the Company to welcome them and by their example to help to build up a strong united team."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXVII, No. 80. April 1951.)

Organisational changes in the British Army resulted in the anti-tank role being handed over from the Royal Regiment of Artillery to the Royal Armoured Corps. Thus in 1951 the Dukes gunners at Halifax, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J F Crossley MBE TD [3], were converted from anti-tank artillery to field artillery becoming 382 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA), and by 1952 they had handed in their anti-tank guns and received the self-propelled field guns and tanks for the new role. This required new garages to be built at Halifax, Cleckheaton and Brighouse to accommodate the new scale of 25-pounder self-propelled field guns, together with the 'Cromwell' tanks to be used as command vehicles. Even though they had served as gunners for twenty-four years, the advent of this role did not encourage them to forget that they were also Dukes:

"Our self-propelled guns have at last arrived and we have driven them through the main streets of Halifax to places where we never thought we would be allowed to go, and we have taken them on transporters to a weekend camp at Ripon, some 40 miles north. The weekend camp was a great success. We had an excellent attendance from TA and National Servicemen, and we were able to deploy an 8-inch gun battery for the first time since our formation. Meanwhile our light aid detachment enjoyed themselves with one of our Cromwell tanks, which they took on to the training area with the front end of its tank transporter following dutifully behind. Whenever the transporter wouldn't start the tank towed it, and between them they made an excellent road block. As soon as we got back from weekend camp we went into an orgy of painting and spraying for the parade in commemoration of the raising of the 33rd Foot and the centenary of the first Duke of Wellington's death."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXVIII, No. 85. July 1952.)

THE DISBANDMENT OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT COMMAND

In December 1954 it was announced that the Anti-Aircraft Command was to be disbanded, mainly as technological developments in air warfare rendered anti-aircraft guns obsolete. This brought a massive programme of disbandment and amalgamation to the many TA units which had been re-rolled to air-defence before the war, such as the 5th Dukes:

"This is a very sad occasion, for this may well be nearly the last (if not the last) time these notes will ever be written as emanating from 578 HAA Regiment RA, the Regiment which has carried on the noble history and tradition of the 5th Dukes since the reformation of the TA after the last war."

"The bombshell came in early December [1954] last, when the Government announced that the introduction of the atom bomb had altered the whole aspect of HM Forces, in particular, in defence; that many of our weapons had become obsolete; and that the RAF must be regarded as the Service of the future. Anti-Aircraft Command would be abolished and the heavy anti-aircraft gun was decried as useless."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXI, No. 96. April 1955.)

In 1954 Halifax's 382 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA) was converted into a 'Medium Regiment' Royal Artillery equipped with 155mm self-propelled guns of American manufacture. The disbandment of Anti-Aircraft Command in 1955 resulted in Huddersfield's 578th (5th Bn DWR) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) and Halifax's 673rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA) each reducing from regiment to battery establishment and to then become medium batteries of Halifax's 382 Medium Regiment. This produced three batteries each bearing the titles of a Dukes' TA battalion - P (4th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Medium Battery, Q (5th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Medium Battery and R (6th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Medium Battery.

Their uniform continued to reflect their lineage through wearing the cap-badge and buttons of the Royal Regiment of Artillery together with the collar badges and scarlet whistle cord of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment:

"On May 1st [1955] 578 (5th DWR) HAA Regiment was consumed in the fierce flames which marked the end of Anti-Aircraft Command, not, of course, without loud but quite ineffective cries of protest. In its place there emerged from the ashes like a faintly bewildered and puzzled Phoenix, a unit to be known as 'Q' (5th DWR) Medium Battery, which together with its equally bewildered brother, 'R' (6th DWR) Medium Battery now forms [part of] 382 Medium Regiment RA (DWR)."

"Cap-badges can at times promote quite a strong feeling and surprisingly conflicting loyalties. For the ex-578 HAA Regiment personnel the new order has meant a change of cap-badge from the Dukes' to the Gunners' badge. Obviously a discreet veil must be drawn over all the comment which this exchange has promoted, but as an example of how the problem can be over-simplified is interesting to record the conversation between two ex-578 members - 'Oh, well' said one, referring to the new collar dogs which are to be worn, 'at all events its' sort of softened the blow being able to put up my old Jumbos [4] again', 'Yes', replied the other thoughtfully, 'the blow was also softened in my case by being able to use my very first cap-badge again. The wheel', he said, 'still turns.'"

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXI, No. 97. July 1955.)

Throughout this period of change the serving Dukes Territorials benefitted from the stability afforded by the wider family of Dukes Territorials who gave support through their long experience of volunteer soldiering and detailed local knowledge. Such as through, for example, the succession of experienced Battalion Honorary Colonels when the 7th Battalion's Colonel W H Hinchcliffe TD DL handed over to another veteran Territorial Colonel G B Howcroft MC TD DL in early 1955:

"The appointment of Colonel G B Howcroft MC TD JP, as Honorary Colonel of the Battalion, meets with the general approval of all the older members of the [B] Company who have known him for so long. Does he not come from 'Over the hill' ? And have we not a detachment at Mossley - also 'Over the hill' ? I think we can be sure that a fatherly eye will be kept on our activities at the Company's No. 2 Drill Hall, and we wish him success and happiness during his tour of duty."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXI, No. 96. April 1955.)

All the Dukes Territorials were equally well served by their Honorary Colonels who enjoyed a wealth of experience. Such as Colonel K Sykes OBE MC TD JP who retired as 382 Medium Regiment's Honorary Colonel in 1956 after 42 years' continuous service. Colonel Sykes was commissioned into the 5th Dukes in 1914 and went with the Battalion on active-service. He was later promoted as the 5th Battalion's adjutant, and refused subsequent offers of promotion so that he could stay with his 5th Battalion in whose service he gained two 'Mentions in Despatches', the Military Cross and Bar, and the French Croix de Guerre. He rejoined the 5th

Battalion after the war in 1920 and was promoted and appointed its commanding officer in 1932. Being over the age limit for active-service he commanded a Home Guard sector throughout the Second World War, later being appointed at the 5th Dukes Honorary Colonel (then 578 HAA Regiment RA) in 1949. The bread and butter of TA service also continued with the established routine of drill nights, weekend training and annual camp, as 'C' Company recorded:

"The whole company, except for one or two to whom obviously army training on Sundays does not appeal, did some quite good marching under the eagle eye of our new CSM (and PSI) Nichols, whom we welcome to the Company, whilst that well-known old soldier - now CQMS - Stringer (TA), doing his thirtieth year's service with the Regiment, had a look at the stores. This was followed by a film show of the Canadians in a platoon attack. A superb luncheon served on a gleaming white tablecloth in the Depot dining-hall, catered for by Barkers (a local civilian caterer), made the new recruits' mouths water; perhaps they will think of joining the TA in 1957. We finished off with a shooting and weapon training circus. A good time was had by all, which augurs well for future week-end tactical training at Otley in June. It was good to see so many familiar faces, late of Korea and points East, ready to do a little bit more."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXI, No. 97. July 1955.)

Opportunities came for the Dukes' war service to be recognised in 1956 when the War Office published the list of battle honours. These honours had been dealt with on similar lines to those for the Great War, except that the greater number of theatres eventually produced a list of 633 [5] specified battle honours. The Duke of Wellington's Regiment accordingly convened a Regimental Committee, with each battalion represented, in order that the Regiment's claim for individual battle honours could be submitted to the War Office for consideration. Each battle honour was carefully defined by geographic location and dates, and to qualify it was not regarded as enough for a battalion to have been 'present at the action', it must also have taken 'an active and an honourable part in it'. As with the Great War, each battle honour was awarded to a specified individual battalion, and borne on the Regiment's entry published in the Army List.

The resulting twenty-three Second World War battle honours and theatre honours for The Duke of Wellington's Regiment were approved by the War Office in 1956. The Dukes Territorial Army infantry battalions had gained seven of these battle and theatre honours, three of them exclusively:- St Valery en Caux (2/7th Battalion), North-West Europe 1940 (2/6th Battalion, 2/7th Battalion), Tilly sur Seules (1/7th Battalion), Odon (1/7th Battalion), Fontenay le Pesnil (1/7th Battalion), North-West Europe 1944 (1/6th Battalion, 1/7th Battalion), North-West Europe 1945 (1/7th Battalion). The precedent of emblazoning selected battle honours on the King's Colour had already been established for the Great War honours, and Regiments were again permitted to select up to ten Second World War battle honours to be emblazoned on the Queen's Colours of the Regiment.

The battle honours system did not of course make any grant to those Dukes Territorial Army units which served as units of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, (although the units that remained were authorised to bear their infantry colours), on the customary basis that artillery was omnipresent on all battlefields and as such were not granted battle honours. The one permitted exception was that TA infantry units who were converted and saw active service as artillery could, when reconverted to infantry again, claim to be considered for the grant of an 'Honorary Distinction badge of the Royal Regiment of Artillery' with year dates and scrolls bearing active-service theatres, to be emblazoned upon their battalion's Regimental Colour.

Nor was ceremonial ignored, for on 7th July 1956 new Colours were presented to the 7th Battalion, then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel T Haighton TD, by HRH The Princess Royal CI GCVO GBE at a ceremony held in Green Park, Huddersfield. The battalion was the first Territorial Army infantry battalion to parade with colours bearing the newly-awarded battle honours for the Second World War. Thousands of spectators watched the ceremony in the park, with more again lining the streets as the battalion exercised the Freedom of Huddersfield. Yet the resting place for the Old Colours brought to the surface disputes from 'over the hill':

"It is estimated that approximately 8,000 people watched the parade in the park, and that there were as least as many lining the route when we marched through Huddersfield exercising our rights as Freemen of the Borough. We were delighted to have with us on parade the Old Comrades from the Huddersfield Branch, Old Comrades Association, and also our own Cadet Battalion. The Old Colours were laid up in Huddersfield Parish Church, on the Sunday morning, and although the ceremony was kept as simple as possible it was very inspiring indeed, and in his address the Vicar of Huddersfield, The Rev Canon Horan, made it quite clear that Huddersfield was the right and proper place in which the Old Colours should rest, and he settled once and for all certain arguments that had been raised as to why the Colours were being laid up in this town and not the Colne Valley."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXII, No. 102. October 1956.)

The West Riding Battalion TA

To Lt Colonel F R Gadd and All Ranks
The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment

All Ranks of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, past and present, send you their warmest greetings on the occasion of the formation of the new West Riding Battalion (TA).

The new Battalion is an amalgamation which brings together, once again, into the Regimental family all four of our original Territorial Army battalions. Once more we cover the whole of our Regimental area and are back again in our old drill halls where local ties and loyalties are so strong. The customs and traditions of these famous old battalions, with their splendid fighting record, will be preserved and fostered in the new West Riding Battalion which will now go forward with pride in its past origins and confidence in the future.

The formation of the new Battalion has brought many changes in organisation and these have personally affected many individuals. The cheerful and unselfish way in which these changes have been accepted is in the very best tradition of the Territorial Army and will sustain and strengthen the spirit of comradeship within the Battalion.

We all send you our best wishes for the future and look forward to hearing of your activities and achievements.

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, No. 121. July 1961.)

1963 found the West Riding Battalion in annual camp at Fingringhoe. Whilst at camp the battalion's newer members continued to display the kindly bluntness which personifies the West Riding's soldiers, and the Sergeants' mess members too continued other customs:

"In leisure and peace (everyone on leave) your correspondent (blistered feet, sore head and swearing to resign) will try to remember what has happened at camp (the printable bits). The first thing that springs to mind is the 'friendly recruit' who, when asked by the Commanding Officer, which company he was in, said - 'Company, and proud of it, and which company are you in?'. And the other recruit who, after getting M&D [medicine and duties] three mornings running, said to the Medical Officer - 'and what do you do in civilian life, Sir?' In fact it was one of those camps: good weather, 2,240 pints drunk in the sergeants' mess, and a most remarkable battalion exercise which so exercised the Battalion in the facets of war that Major 'Sam' was quite bemused by the pace of it all. Never had one company done so much in so little time - the whole Korean War was compressed into 24 hours."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXIX, No. 130. October 1963.)

Familiar faces in the Battalion's life also changed. Their Honorary Colonel, Colonel N T Bentley, retired and was succeeded by Colonel J B Sugden TD JP DL in late 1964. Colonel Sugden had joined the 5th Dukes in 1930 with 'D' Company at Mirfield, was commissioned in 1931, promoted captain in 1938 and embodied with the unit in 1939. When 578 (5th DWR) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment RA (TA) reformed in 1946 he rejoined as a major, later commanding the unit from 1951 to 1954. 1965 also saw the Battalion lose one of its few remaining wartime officers when the second-in-command, Major D R Siddall MBE TD, retired having served continuously since joining the 2/7th Dukes in 1938.

By this time the regular soldier had dispensed with the battledress that had been in service since 1939 and was issued with the new 'combat dress'. This khaki drab coloured cotton uniform was a great improvement, being much warmer, waterproof and with numerous capacious pockets. The longer tunic eliminated the persistent draught enjoyed by all battledress wearers who, try as they may, could not prevent the joint between blouse and trousers gaping open at the slightest exertion. Issues of combat dress to the Territorial Army were, as always, behind the regulars, and for the time being their quarters remained tainted by the omnipresent smell of invariably damp woollen battledress drying out.

Yet another new issue saw the departure of a tried and tested friend - the Lee Enfield .303" rifle which had served the Dukes Territorials so well in peace and two World Wars. It was succeeded by a new 7.62mm (.300") self-loading rifle (SLR) introduced both to improve the infantry's firepower and to comply with the NATO standard small-arms ammunition. In time, the Territorial's long-served .303" Bren light machine-guns were also withdrawn and modified to fire 7.62mm, whereas the regular soldier was issued with a new 7.62mm belt-fed 'general purpose machine-gun', the GPMG. As may be expected, the arrival of the 'SLR' was accompanied by heated debates amongst those who extolled the virtues of the tried, tested, and familiar Lee Enfield Number 4 rifle compared to this strange-looking rifle of Belgian origin:

In 1957 the Government decided to phase out National Service by 1960. This in turn created a manpower shortage in the regular army, especially for the 64 single regular battalion regiments which could no longer be filled through voluntary enlistment alone. The proposal was to reduce the Infantry of the Line by seventeen regular battalions. In effect, this directed losing seventeen regiments by either disbandment or amalgamation. By 1958 it was agreed that fifteen pairs of regular infantry battalions would amalgamate to form single regular battalion regiments within fourteen new administrative brigades. Within the new *Yorkshire Brigade* the five Colonels of the Yorkshire Infantry Regiments eventually agreed to implement their share of reductions by the amalgamation of 1st Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment with 1st Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment to form 1st Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire. Although they had been reduced to single regular battalion establishment a decade before, the remaining Yorkshire Regiments remained unchanged as 1st Battalions - The Green Howards, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, The York and Lancaster Regiment.

In 1958 all the regular infantry battalions of The Yorkshire Brigade lost their prized regimental cap-badges when they were instructed to wear a common brigade cap-badge, whilst retaining their individual regimental appointments such as collar-badges, whistle cords and shoulder-titles. The new cap-badge design was The White Rose of York ensigned with the Crown, and a scroll bearing the title 'YORKSHIRE'. This enforced rebadging was not a popular decision:

"The ponderous procedure, officially described as the reorganisation of the Army, grinds slowly on. The Brigade cap-badge was assumed by the 1st Battalion [DWR] and the Depot on April 24th [1958]. Its design - harmless, if uninspired - was marred by extraordinary shoddiness of production. Its reception by all regiments of the Yorkshire Brigade was uniform and was summed up - in a masterpiece of understatement - by the War Office as 'not being accepted with universal approbation'. We understand the further issues will be of better manufacture. The setting up of a Brigade Depot at Strensall recedes into a haze of ambiguity."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVI, No. 109. July 1958.)

These changes however only affected the regular battalions, in that York's 5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA), Leeds' 7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA), and Hull's 4th Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment (TA) all retained their traditional regimental titles, and all the TA infantry battalions administered by The Yorkshire Brigade [9] retained their regimental cap-badges. There were of course reasons for celebrations, such as the Territorial Army's Jubilee of 1958, with Lieutenant Colonel Davidson, commanding the 5th/7th Dukes, striking an optimistic note:

"This is the year for the resuscitation of the TA as a full-strength force of young men bound together by the volunteer spirit, and to this end a crescendo of publicity has been building up since early March. Advertisements are now to be seen wherever one looks in shops, buses, cars and cinemas, and the character of these become more precisely related to the Jubilee as the time draws near. Already the drift of recruits to the [5th/7th] Battalion is becoming a steadier flow, and this year's figures now top the 30 mark. The cynic may say 'Short time int' Mill', but that is not the reason; the new men have work aplenty and are as good as we have seen from many walks of life."

(Ibid)

The post-war cycle of relentless change and disruption continued in 1961 when it was learned that 382 Medium Regiment and the 5th/7th Dukes were to be reduced in strength and amalgamated to form a single infantry battalion. Yet another change was coped with through a positive attitude, as the Sergeants' Mess commented:

"Amalgamation is once again in the news for us, and we are very happy that once again we have remained intact and that 382 Medium Regiment RA will be joining us. It will make an excellent amalgamation and we will then be the only TA battalion of the 'Dukes', and will represent the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions of old. It seems likely that we shall change the title of the units, as it would be awkward on parade shouting '4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions The Duke of Wellington's Regiment'."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XXXVII, No. 119. January 1961.)

THE WEST RIDING BATTALION

The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) was formed on 1st May 1961 by the amalgamation of Halifax's 382 Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (DWR) (TA) with Huddersfield's 5/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA), as such the new battalion maintained the traditions of the former 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th TA Battalions. Headquarters remained at St Paul's Street, Huddersfield with its four rifle companies being deployed across the area of its four constituent battalions. The Colonel of The Regiment, Major General K G Exham CB DSO [10] expressed confidence in the new battalion in a 'Special Order of the Day':

The West Riding Battalion TA

To Lt Colonel F R Gadd and All Ranks
The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment

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"At the time of writing these notes we are in the midst of Annual Classification [11] - this year, for the first time, with the self-loading rifle. Fortunately, we were able to spend a full day zeroing and getting the feel of the new weapon, but it is obvious that we need a lot more practice, particularly for the old hands who were brought up on the Number 4 rifle."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XL, No. 133. July 1964.)

By the summer of 1965 it became increasingly clear that the Territorial Army was yet again to be subjected to reorganisation. At that time Yorkshire's Territorial Army infantry battalions in The Yorkshire Brigade had been amalgamated into five:-

- 3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA)
- The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA)
- 4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (TA)
- The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA)
- The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) [12]

The Labour Government was looking to find substantial savings in the Defence budget, but without cutting the regular army. This produced a plan to axe the Territorial Army made in virtually secret sessions, there was no consultation with the Territorial Army Council or the General Officers Commanding the Home Commands. Denis Healey, then Defence Minister, brought out a plan to save £20 million by cutting the Territorial Army from 121,000 to 51,000 which also involved reducing the number of drill halls from 1,200 to 240. Details were not announced by the Government until the day before the House of Commons rose for the summer recess. The scale of the reduction was substantial and advocated that, in the infantry alone, the Territorial Army's existing eighty-six infantry battalions were to be amalgamated and reduced in strength to form sixteen new *Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve 'Volunteer Battalions'*. Similarly drastic cuts were to be concurrently made to all the other Arms of the Territorial Army. When the House of Commons debated the proposal the Labour Government won - by just one vote. The Government hoped that the heated debate generated by these cuts would subside before Parliament returned from recess.

This bombshell certainly daunted the Dukes who yet again faced amalgamation and a reduction in strength. With speculation rife, it was at first thought that a 'Yorkshire Battalion TR' was to be formed, with headquarters at Sheffield, by amalgamating Yorkshire's five TA infantry battalions into a single new battalion strength regiment. The probability that the Dukes Territorials would disappear once and for all arrived as they returned from annual camp:

"When the Adjutant first took over his job he was told not to be too disheartened if the attendance figures dropped suddenly on return from camp. 'Just routine, it always happens', he was told. But this time there was speculation as to whether they would rise again to the same standards as before the announcement. 'Business as usual' was the order from the Commanding Officer. We can safely and happily say that the figures are back to normal and, no matter what the powers that be have in store for us in the future, it is indeed very much 'Business as Usual' for the West Riding Battalion."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLI, No. 138. December 1965.)

The Government's hope that the outcry would subside when Parliament returned from recess was not fulfilled. The Territorial Army Council had not been consulted about the scale of the cut-back and, led by its Director General, Major General Sir James d'Avigdor-Goldsmid Bt CB OBE MC [13] mounted a strong campaign which resulted in the Government reconsidering. The form of reprieve was that an additional group of TAVR III was authorised which would comprise the 'Territorials' to be formed in addition to the new 'Volunteers'. This allowed The West Riding Battalion to contribute to the Yorkshire Volunteers TAVR II as well as forming The West Riding Territorials TAVR III:

"As we expected we are to raise a company of 5 [officers] and 110 [soldiers] with an AVR II commitment which is very similar to our TA one. This company will also include a proportion of SAVR with the same commitment as our present Ever-Readies (14). In addition to the AVR II Company we are to provide a battalion of AVR III which, believe it or not, will be known as 'Territorials'. This battalion, which will have a smaller training commitment than at present, will deploy with Battalion Headquarters and two companies in Huddersfield and one company in Halifax, which will also have the AVR II Company. We are, needless to say, delighted that after all the rumour and speculation of the past twelve months, the West Riding Battalion will survive as a unit, keeping, we hope, its name to carry on the traditions of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment Territorials in the West Riding of Yorkshire."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLII, No. 140. July 1966.)

[1: In 1947 the 149th (West Riding) Infantry Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division, comprised 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA), 5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA), 4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA).]

[2: 538 (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA ("The Huddersfield Gunners") were formed as a Territorial Army battery in 1920 as 214 (2nd West Riding) Medium Battery Royal Artillery TA, equipped with 6-inch howitzers, when the unit was housed at Fitzwilliam Street Drill Hall, before moving to Springwood Avenue in 1936. In 1939 the TA was 'duplicated' in strength and the battery expanded to form 63rd (West Riding) Medium Regiment Royal Artillery TA which subsequently saw active service in North-West Europe during 1940 and again in 1944/45. The Regiment reformed in 1947 in the light anti-aircraft role equipped with Bofors 40mm guns and served as such until being absorbed by the 6th Dukes in 1950.]

[3: Lieutenant Colonel (later Colonel) J F Crossley MBE TD JP DL was commissioned into the 68th Anti-Tank Regiment (2/4 DWR) in 1939 and was later transferred with the Regiment's 242 Anti-Tank Battery to Malaya as a major, Battery Commander. He was taken prisoner-of-war by the Japanese and was later Senior British Officer responsible for 500 prisoners-of-war working in forced labour copper mines. During this time he made a stand against his Japanese captors in order to improve the conditions of his men. Following his release from imprisonment he gave evidence against his captors at War Crimes Trials later being awarded the MBE and a Mention-in-Dispatches for his war service. He commanded 382 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA) from 1951 to 1955 when he retired with the honorary rank of Colonel. He was later President of the Halifax and District Far East Prisoners of War Association.]

[4: "Jumbos" - The Elephant pattern of regimental collar-badge then worn by The Duke of Wellington's Regiment. The 'Elephant' was granted as an honorary badge in 1807 to the 76th Regiment of Foot in recognition of its good conduct and exemplary valour in India. The 76th Regiment of Foot was amalgamated with the 33rd Regiment of Foot in 1881 to form The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).]

[5: The War Office Battle Honours Nomenclature Committee defined the 633 Second World War Battle Honours in 1956 - Special Army Order Numbers 1 & 2 dated 28th January 1956. Battle Honours were subsequently granted to The Duke of Wellington's Regiment under Army Order Number 149 dated 31st October 1956.]

[6: In 1956 the number of TA Infantry Divisions was reduced to ten - 42nd (Lancashire) Infantry Division (TA), 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division (TA), 44th (Home Counties) Infantry Division (TA), 49th (West Riding and Midland) Infantry Division (TA), 50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division (TA), 51st (Highland) Infantry Division (TA), 52nd (Lowland) Infantry Division (TA), 53rd (Welsh) Infantry Division (TA), 54th (East Anglian) Infantry Division (TA), 56th (London) Infantry Division (TA); and 44th Independent Parachute Brigade (TA), 107th Ulster Independent Brigade Group (TA), 22nd Armoured Brigade (TA), 23rd Armoured Brigade (TA).]

[7: *The Yorkshire and Northumberland Brigade* formed 1948, Army Order Number 61 of 1948. Renamed *The Yorkshire Brigade* in 1957.]

[8: Lieutenant Colonel B W Webb Carter DSO, CO 1 DWR, served as second-in-command of the 1/6th Battalion in 1940.]

[9: The Territorial Army Infantry Battalions of *The Yorkshire Brigade* in 1957 were 5th Battalion *The West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)* (TA) - York; 7th *(Leeds Rifles) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)* (TA) - Leeds; 4th Battalion *The East Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of York's Own)* (TA) - Hull; 4th Battalion *The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment)* (TA) - Guisborough; 5th/7th Battalion *The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)* (TA) - Huddersfield; *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment* (TA) - Sheffield.]

[10: Major General K G Exham CB DSO, The Colonel of the Regiment, had commanded the 1/7th Battalion in 1943, and also the 1/6th Battalion in 1944.]

[11: 'Annual Classification': A set series of live-firing rifle shoots during which each individual was tested to ascertain their individual class of skill (Marksman, First-Class shot, Second-Class shot, Fail) in order to qualify as 'efficient']

[12: 3rd Battalion *The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire* (TA):- Headquarters at York, Successor to 5th Battalion *The West Yorkshire Regiment* (TA) and 4th and 5th Battalions *The East Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of York's Own)* (TA); *The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire* (TA):- Headquarters at Leeds, Successor to 7th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion and 8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion *The West Yorkshire Regiment* (TA); 4th/5th Battalion *The Green Howards* (TA):- Headquarters at Scarborough, Successor to 4th Battalion and 5th Battalion *The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment)* (TA); *The West Riding*

Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA):- Headquarters at Huddersfield, Successor to 4th Battalion, 5th Battalion, 6th Battalion, 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA); *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA):-* Headquarters at Sheffield, Successor to The Hallamshire Battalion [4th], 5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) and 5th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA).]

[13: Major General Sir James d'Avigdor-Goldsmid Bt CB OBE MC had practical experience of Yorkshire's Territorials for, as a major, he commanded 'A' Squadron 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards which closely supported The Green Howards Territorials during the 'D' Day Landings, 6th June 1944, and during the subsequent advance inland.]

[14: In 1962 the pressure on the regular army resulted in the Territorial Army Emergency Reserve being formed on the 2nd April. The establishment of these "Ever-Readies", as they became known, was 15,000 and those volunteering for its higher commitment received a £150 bounty in addition to the standard £15 Territorial's bounty. An Ever-Ready could be called out for six months' service anywhere in the world, for which they would be paid regular army rates of pay and allowances and receive a £50 tax-free sum on call-out. Some of them were called out for service in Aden during 1965.]

CHAPTER 12

1967-1999: TRADITIONS TO BUILD UP AND MAINTAIN

"We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form teams we would again be reorganised. I was to learn only later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganisation, and a wonderful method it can be for creating an illusion of progress whilst producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation."

Gaius Petronius

A Roman Centurion AD 66

THE TERRITORIAL AND ARMY VOLUNTEER RESERVE

On 1st April 1967 the Territorial Army was reorganised as the *Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve* [1] in which units were classified into one of four categories. The Government's original proposals created the 'Volunteers', in categories TAVR I and TAVR II, which were intended to create a much smaller but better equipped force in direct support of the Regular Army. TAVR III, the 'Territorials', was reluctantly authorised following the protest against the Government's original cuts, and formed by the existing TA units to act in a Home Defence role. TAVR IV units were Bands and the University Officer Training Corps.

The number of TAVR II (the Volunteers) units was very small, for example, including only thirteen infantry and three parachute battalions. Of these sixteen [2] infantry battalions, ten were formed as new Volunteer Infantry Regiments with new regimental titles. Supporting arms were also few in number with only one Yeomanry regiment, two medium artillery regiments, three light air-defence artillery regiments and one parachute light battery being formed. Categories I and II, (with establishments of 1,600 and 50,800 respectively), produced anticipated savings to the Defence budget of £20 million by 1969/1970. TAVR III (the Territorials) was formed by the redesignation of most of the existing Territorial Army units. But the units had a greatly reduced establishment strength and a reduced training commitment in the Home Defence role. The infantry was organised as 81 battalions divided across the 27 Civil Defence regions.

Funding stressed the Government's emphasis on the 'Volunteers', (TAVR I & II). Volunteers could qualify for a £20 'commitment' bounty and a further £60 'liability' bounty. The Territorials (TAVR III) fared less well, they were not entitled to any bounty and their much reduced commitment was one eight-day annual camp, not more than four days out of camp training and eighteen drill nights. The establishment of TAVR III was limited to 20,300 for which a small budget of £3 million was allocated.

One significant overall change was the disappearance of the wholly Territorial Army infantry divisions and brigades which had been formed when the Territorial Force was created in 1908, thus the 49th (West Riding) Division was disbanded. The single formation to survive was 44 Parachute Brigade (Volunteers) of the three TAVR II parachute battalions.

On 1st April 1967 change came to the Yorkshire Brigade's five Territorial Army infantry battalions when they were reorganised to form new TAVR II and TAVR III units. All, except one [3] battalion, contributed towards the county's TAVR II Regiment, the Yorkshire Volunteers, as well as each producing a TAVR III unit.

THE WEST RIDING TERRITORIALS TAVR III

In keeping with all other TAVR III units Yorkshire's five 'Territorial' infantry battalions [4] were poorly equipped. Their self-loading rifles were withdrawn and replaced by .303" bolt-action Lee Enfields. Many, if not all, of these were old stocks from the Second World War and in a condition much worse than the well cared for rifles returned to store but three years before. The TAVR III battalion establishment allowed three, rather than four, rifle companies and did not include support weapons; specialists were limited to small signal, assault pioneer and reconnaissance platoons. Some replacement vehicles were issued but, in the main, they were old and unreliable. No approval was given for them to retain their well established bands and of the five bands only The Leeds Rifles Band survived as *The Yorkshire Brigade (The Leeds Rifles) Band TAVR*.

Undaunted The West Riding Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel C Barnes TD, set about reorganising as *The West Riding Territorials TAVR III*. The former Headquarter Company became 'A' Company at Huddersfield, a new 'B' Company was formed at Huddersfield from the former 'B' and 'D' Companies, with 'C' Company at Halifax from 'A' and 'C' Companies. The reorganisation required the Dukes Territorials to march-out of drill halls which had been their traditional homes in places such as Mossley, Mirfield and Keighley. But at least the Dukes had survived the most dramatic cuts that the Territorials had yet experienced:

"All of us who have served in the TA over the years have put in a lot of time and no little effort. We have all had a lot of fun out of it and will look back with nostalgia on the days, weekends and camps

of the past. Most of us feel that, with the same effort and enthusiasm put into the new Volunteer and Territorial units, there will be a lot to be got out of them. April 1st sees not the end of a story but the beginning of a new chapter."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLIII, No 143, April 1967.)

The West Riding Territorials were preparing for their first TAVR III camp. After transferring personnel to the volunteer company the Territorial Battalion strength was 100, but a recruiting campaign increased the strength to 140 by May 31st. Although this markedly increased numbers the Dukes recognised that the battalion had a long way to go before it again became a viable unit. The 1967 Annual camp was at Beckingham where 'internal security' training was carried out as part of the battalion's new role.

Almost immediately on return from camp the West Riding Territorials paraded to receive the Freedom of Mossley on 8th July 1967. On what was perhaps a unique occasion the Honorary Colonel, Colonel J B Sugden TD JP DL accepted the Freedom of a Lancashire town bestowed upon a battalion of a Yorkshire Regiment. The townsfolk of Mossley had been sterling friends of its Territorial Battalion, the commanding officer later recorded the moment that the Dukes' Colours were uncased:

"I felt this to be the most moving part of the ceremony. I could see nothing but the crowd of good-natured onlookers, most of whom were unknown to me, with our wives and friends in the foreground, but I sensed the whole parade stiffen up when the Colours began their fluttering challenge. Further from the parade ground, together with the proud and stalwart members of the Mossley Old Comrades, their flashing medals and firm steps adding further glory to the parade, and led by that grand Commanding Officer of the 7th Battalion, our ex Honorary Colonel, G B Howcroft, the whole parade, Colours flying, Drums beating and Band playing, marched through the streets of the town with what must have been the entire population lining the route - a fitting end to what many felt to be their best camp ever."

Lieutenant Colonel C Barnes TD, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLIII, No 145, October 1967.)

Optimism rose as an active recruiting campaign quickly saw the battalion achieving 80% strength and rising to second in the Yorkshire District recruiting table. But the optimism was short-lived for on 26th January 1968 the Prime Minister announced that TAVR III was to be reduced to a 'care and maintenance basis. This veiled announcement did not at first reveal the future but the Dukes Territorials suspected, rightly, that it would involve scant care and minimal maintenance. From 1st April 1968 all pay, allowances and funding ceased and the battalion soldiered on without pay, even planning a voluntary annual camp for those able to attend. It was eventually revealed that The West Riding Territorials TAVR III was to be reduced to a Cadre, to be commanded by Major B N Webster TD, of three officers and five soldiers and, in company with the other four cadres of the Yorkshire TAVR III infantry battalions, placed under Yorkshire Volunteers for administration. Despite their very best efforts it seemed that, for the moment, the Dukes Territorials would solely continue through the volunteer company:

"When this is read, the Battalion, which has maintained the traditions of generations of part-time volunteer soldiers will have disbanded and all that will remain will be a cadre of eight all ranks to carry on the name of The West Riding Battalion, DWR. It would be easy to fill this space with bitter thoughts and to indulge in a tirade against the short-sightedness which has dealt such a blow to the volunteer spirit which has stood the country in such good stead in two world wars, but it is felt that to do so would be contrary to the spirit of the Territorials. Rather let us look to the future in the hope that there will come a time when it is realised that Territorial soldiers have, indeed, a part to play within the defence structure."

Lieutenant Colonel C Barnes TD, Commanding Officer

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLV, No 149, April 1969.)

YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS TAVR II

The Yorkshire Volunteers also formed on 1st April 1967 as one of sixteen new TAVR II infantry battalions. The Battalion had an establishment for 27 officers and 529 soldiers with the whole of the county as its recruiting area. Battalion Headquarters were located at Lumley Barracks, York, and Lieutenant Colonel G T M Scrope [5] appointed as commanding officer. 'Command and Administration Company' was at York, and the four, soon five, rifle companies were raised by the former Territorial Army battalions and based in their traditional drill halls.

Care was taken to ensure that the new volunteer companies retained their traditions and each was authorised [6] to bear the Royal Honour Title of its constituent TA battalion. The rifle companies so formed were 'A' (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company [7] at York, (Colliergate), 'B' (The Green Howards)

Company [7] at Middlesbrough, 'C' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company [7] at Halifax, and 'D' (Hallamshire) Company [7] at Sheffield, and shortly after 'E' (The Leeds Rifles) Company [7] at Leeds. Yorkshire Volunteers' dress was very similar to their regular counterparts with the new Regiment adopting the cap-badge of The Yorkshire Brigade - the White Rose of York, worn on a dark blue beret. Khaki combat dress with 1937 pattern webbing was issued as working dress, although by this time the regular had received 1958 pattern webbing. At first battledress, with YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS cloth shoulder titles, was worn as parade dress until number 2 service dress was issued. On formation each company was allowed to retain their former collar-badges and whistle cords but these were to be replaced by a Yorkshire Volunteers pattern in 1970.

The new Regiment had an 'airportable' NATO role and its rifle platoons were equipped with the 7.62mm self-loading rifle. Bren light machine-guns, converted to 7.62mm, were at first issued as section level, but these were soon replaced by the 7.62mm general purpose machine-gun (GPMG). Each rifle platoon was also equipped with one 2-inch mortar and one 84mm recoilless anti-tank launcher. The battalion had two support platoons, the mortar platoon with the 81mm mortar, and the anti-tank platoon equipped with towed 120mm WOMBAT recoilless anti-tank guns. Unlike most British infantry units earmarked for BAOR the Yorkshire Volunteers were not issued with tracked armoured personnel carriers but had to rely on outdated Bedford 3-ton [8] 4x4 trucks as transport, both for personnel and stores. For command, signals and anti-tank vehicles a mixture of Land Rovers was issued with 1 tonne Land Rovers for the mortar platoon.

The Battalion was entitled to a number of regular officers to carry out the duties of Training Officer, Adjutant and Quartermaster as well as a regular Regimental Sergeant Major. Regular 'Permanent Staff Instructors' were also posted to assist with the quartermaster's department, transport, signals and the support platoons as well as three regular permanent staff instructors at each rifle company together with one civilian clerk to help with administration.

'C' (THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT) COMPANY

Also forming up on 1st April 1967 was the Dukes Company of the Yorkshire Volunteers, commanded by Major R C Curry [9], at the traditional Prescott Street Drill Hall in Halifax under the designation 'C' (*The Duke of Wellington's Regiment*) Company [10] *Yorkshire Volunteers*. Major Curry's first task was to recruit a full company which would maintain proudly inherited traditions:

"On April 1st, we shall be there at Prescott Street, Halifax, the home of the Dukes, and the old West Riding Volunteers. To a day, the formation date is 59 years after the raising of the Territorial Army [sic! Force] from the old Volunteers, but the political publicists seemed to have missed that one. To help us find our feet, the last three Battalion weekends have been based on AVR II training, and it seems that the Volunteers have now got the idea of the slightly changed role and formation. It is quite clear that everyone is determined to make the 'Dukes' Company of the Volunteers a unit to be proud of and to be reckoned with in quality. We hope that the [Duke of Wellington's] Regiment will continue to take an interest in us as 'Dukes' as we are so anxious to remain part of the regimental family, although we have our own Volunteer Battalion traditions to build up and maintain."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLIII, No 143, April 1967.)

The volunteers were keen to ensure a strong Dukes company by the time that the Yorkshire Volunteers held its first annual camp. The West Riding Battalion had already made a significant contribution, long before April 1st, not just by identifying key personnel but also through a positive attitude towards its new volunteer company. The company, with an establishment for 115 all ranks, immediately mounted a recruiting campaign which brought in thirty new recruits and by June it paraded 90 soldiers for weekend training. It was a busy period, for not only had new recruits to be trained for the rifle platoons but existing personnel also needed training on the unfamiliar 81mm mortars and 120mm anti-tank guns with which their support weapons detachments were equipped. Following a sterling effort, and only three months after formation, 'C' Company paraded 91 strong at Halifax ready to set off for annual camp at Stanford PTA, Norfolk. It should be remembered that the Yorkshire Volunteers was an amalgamation of Yorkshire TA battalions who naturally enjoyed a longstanding rivalry:

"One notable point about this first Volunteer camp was that everyone worked together as one unit. We are all very proud of our Regimental traditions but these are providing no more than friendly rivalry between companies. It is quite evident that the Yorkshire Volunteers will work well as a unit. It is already building a reputation and more is the pity that in future the companies will train separately. Everyone is working hard for success and if the integration in the officers' and sergeants' messes is repeated we should have few real problems."

Major R C Curry, Company Commander

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLIII, No 145, October 1967.)

In 1968 Lieutenant Colonel G T M Scrope was awarded the OBE and handed over command of the Yorkshire Volunteers to Lieutenant Colonel E M P Hardy, a regular Dukes officer. The Regiment was also honoured when Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent was appointed Honorary Colonel Yorkshire Volunteers a few months later.

THE KING'S DIVISION

Nor was it only the Territorials who had faced tough decisions in 1967. Further cuts in the regular army's defence budget required that each administrative brigade was to be reduced by one regular infantry battalion. Until then most of the regular infantry regiments were represented by a single regular infantry battalion. The move to satisfy defence cuts again demanded that well-established traditional regiments had to be amalgamated or disbanded. Some brigades elected to amalgamate all their battalions to form large regiments, such as *The Light Infantry*, in which one battalion was disbanded. The Colonels of the four Yorkshire Regiments now considered the options of forming a large 'Yorkshire Regiment', or amalgamating two regiments, or disbanding one regiment. All the proposals were given serious consideration and it was concluded that *The York and Lancaster Regiment*, being the junior regiment, would be disbanded. This resulted in three Yorkshire Regiments remaining - *The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire*, *The Green Howards*, and *The Duke of Wellington's Regiment*. Another change was that The Yorkshire Brigade was disbanded in July 1968 when the Infantry of the Line was reorganised into administrative divisions, and the Dukes thereafter formed part of The King's Division [11]. The demise of The Yorkshire Brigade enabled the regular Yorkshire Regiments to discard the Brigade cap-badge and to return to their traditional regimental cap-badges [12]. This rebadging left the Yorkshire Volunteers alone wearing the White Rose of York as their regimental cap-badge from July 1968.

EXPANSION OF YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

The West Riding Battalion Cadre changed commanding officers on November 1st 1969 when Major B Webster TD handed over to Major K M McDonald TD. Much of the Cadre's time had been taken up with administration and the formation of an association, but the prospect of joining the volunteers at camp in Germany also required members of the Cadre to refresh their weapon handling and radio voice-procedure. 1970 was to witness members of the volunteers routinely training overseas as a unit for the first time when Yorkshire Volunteers' companies were attached to various regular units for exercises. 'C' Company was attached to 1st Battalion The Green Howards, then based in Germany.

Having just about settled down since the 1967 cut-back of the Territorial Army, a change to a Conservative government also brought the decision to expand the Territorial Army. As a result of this, Yorkshire Volunteers was authorised to expand from one to three infantry battalions from 1st April 1971. This was actively supported by the Prime Minister, himself a former Territorial Army officer:

"10 Downing Street
Whitehall

16th April 1971

"Now that recruiting for the new units of the T&AVR has begun, I want to send all T&AVR Associations, and through them all members of the TAVR, a personal message of encouragement."

"I want to make it clear the Government's conviction, as well as my own, not only as Prime Minister but also as a former Commanding Officer of the Honourable Artillery Company (TA), the value of service in the volunteers."

"I am sure the country fully appreciates the vital part which the T&AVR plays in Britain's contribution to the security of Europe. While existing T&AVR units are tailor-made for a role in support of NATO, the new units which are now being formed will create a much-needed flexible reserve ready to deal with any situation. It is to meet this need that we have authorised this expansion."

"I wish you every possible success in your worthwhile task."

Edward Heath [13]

Prime Minister

The expansion of the Regiment found the original 'Yorkshire Volunteers' battalion being numbered as the '1st Battalion' on the 1st April 1971. By this time, command of Yorkshire Volunteers had changed, in October 1970, when Major I G Norton TD [14], second-in-command, was appointed commanding officer to succeed Lieutenant Colonel E M P Hardy who was appointed GSO1 (Training) at the Royal Military Academy. The resulting vacancy saw 'C' Company's commander, Major R C Curry TD being transferred to York and appointed battalion second-in-command. The battalion remained committed to NATO.

The new 2nd and 3rd Battalions Yorkshire Volunteers were raised as Home Defence battalions with the 2nd Battalion and the 3rd Battalion in the east and west of the county respectively. Their formation was based upon existing drills halls, the 2nd Battalion with headquarters at York and the 3rd Battalion's headquarters at Huddersfield. The companies were based upon existing units when the Cadres of the five [15] Yorkshire TA infantry battalions and three TA artillery regiments were each authorised to expand to form companies. As when the 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers was formed in 1967, each company was authorised to bear the Royal Honour Title of the cadre which formed it.

The Huddersfield drill hall had remained occupied by the Cadre and a detachment of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers, since the reduction of The West Riding Battalion in 1969. Activity now markedly increased when the drill hall was earmarked to become the new 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers headquarters and Headquarter Company, as well as the Cadre forming a new 'C' (*The Duke of Wellington's Regiment*) Company based at Huddersfield.

The new 'C' Company quickly flourished, soon having over 90 Territorials on strength and by December 1971 achieved a recruited strength of 103 towards its establishment of 123. The 3rd Battalion's other rifle companies were 'A' (*The West Riding Artillery*) Battery at Bradford and Keighley, 'B' (*The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers*) Battery at Rotherham and 'D' (*Hallamshire*) Company at Barnsley. Shortly after the units designated as 'battery' became 'company'.

As well as an increase in strength for the Yorkshire Volunteers, 1971 also brought other benefits as the volunteers came into line with the regular's dress and equipment. The long-served 1937 pattern of webbing equipment was replaced by the improved 1958 pattern. This also ended the need for infantrymen to improvise a weatherproof bed, using blankets held together with large safety-type pins and protected by the issued gas-cape, by the introduction of a very welcome waterproofed sleeping bag. The new equipment also included the S6 pattern respirator, (gas mask), a significant improvement on the World War 2 pattern which was both uncomfortable and readily steamed up. This was coupled with an issue of protective oversuits, boots and gloves to meet the threat of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare posed by the Warsaw Pact forces. This new equipment was quickly followed by the withdrawal of the original khaki combat suit which was replaced by an issue in camouflaged, disrupted pattern, material.

The ubiquitous leather-soled ammunition boot, each with requisite metal studs and metal heelplate, that had faithfully served the infantryman for so long, was replaced by the rubber direct moulded sole (DMS) ankle boot. This sadly severed the long association that a soldier built up over many years of trusted service for, unlike the repairable ammunition boot, the new boot had to be discarded when the moulded rubber sole wore thin. Gone too was the sudden excitement as steel-tipped leather soles encountered slippery patches or ice resulting in infantrymen unwillingly skating along. The new boot also saw the demise of 'anklets web', commonly mis-termed gaiters, which were changed in favour of khaki woollen putties. These fortunately only had to be wound to cover just above the ankle, and not to just below the knee like the pre-1937 pattern long puttees.

The 3rd Battalion's Dukes Company also received an issue of specialist radio sets in keeping with their Home Defence Role:

"We are steadily receiving more and more kit. The latest items are our wireless sets (Pye Westminster) - no longer will we have trouble netting in; one just selects the appointed channel. However, as in all things, there are snags - one is, how does one know when a battery is fully charged? Whilst very sophisticated these new sets are by no means soldier-proof."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLVIII, Number 158, April 1972.)

The formation of the Yorkshire Volunteers, as a new regiment, in 1967 had already been formalised by the wearing of regimental badges and accoutrements. This status was further affirmed on 18th September 1971 when Colours were presented to the 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers at Imphal Barracks, York, by Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent, Honorary Colonel Yorkshire Volunteers. Halifax's 'C' (DWR) Company, then commanded by Major T D Tetlow TD, was kept very busy:

"Saturday, the sun shone brightly. We were up at 0530 hours to hand in our bedding and accommodation. The CQMS and drivers not on parade, whilst not getting the glory, certainly deserve praise for their efforts, whilst the rest of us went off to Imphal Barracks for the Colour Presentation. 'C' [DWR] Company provided the majority of Number 3 Guard, but a few were to be seen elsewhere."

"Lieutenant J J Hall received the Queen's Colour from HRH The Duchess of Kent, to whom Captain P J Mortimer was ADC. Corporal Hollis was on the Escort to the Colours, and Private Ashcroft lent his able services to the Corps of Drums. Meanwhile, off parade but in the public eye, was Sergeant Carey and our Company Clerk, Corporal Byrne, who was 'NCO I/C The Press.' After we had proudly marched off our Colours we joined our families and friends at the Company tent."

There we were visited by HRH who, after a few formal presentations, circulated amongst the men of the Company and their families. The sun continued to shine, our Honorary Colonel was as usual warm and radiant, and it was for all of us a most enjoyable and memorable occasion."

(The Iron Duke, Volume XLVII, Number 157, December 1971.)

Further ceremonial in 1973 found both Dukes Companies on parade when the City of York conferred the Freedom of the City upon Yorkshire Volunteers. But despite these high profile public events, and many publicity campaigns, the majority of the public still mistakenly believed that the Territorial Army no longer existed following the severe reorganisation of 1967. Up until 1973 the 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers had trained overseas in Germany, Cyprus, Gibraltar and Canada; but only as separate company groups. 1974 required the complete 1st Battalion to be tested in its NATO role on exercise and the Halifax Dukes were keen to ensure a full-strength company for this major event:

"Our big effort this year is planned to coincide with the national television and newspaper campaign in February. Against this background our plan is to get out onto the streets, very smart in our brand new DPM combat kit, and convince the people that the TAVR really does exist (because many think that the Reserve Army died in 1967 when the old TA was abolished) and that it is an up-to-date 'with it' organisation."

(The Iron Duke, Volume L, Number 164, April 1974.)

Nor was recruiting just a priority for the Halifax Drill Hall, also that year 'C' (DWR) Company of the 3rd Battalion found its 9 platoon detachment at Keighley being transferred within the Battalion to 'A' (The West Riding Artillery) Company which at that time had its headquarters at Bradford's Belle Vue Barracks. This too required a vigorous recruiting campaign:

"With the loss of 9 Platoon our main effort recently has been recruiting. One young officer - no names, no pack drill - wrote a story for the press in which he quoted (quite falsely) the Company Commander as saying - I'll eat my old khaki hat if I can't get all the recruits I need in the next two months. The Company Commander has been making everyone recruit hard to avoid indigestion and there is no truth in the rumour that certain members are standing outside the door turning recruits away so that they can watch the indigestible meal being eaten. In fact, we have enlisted nearly 40 new members and are very pleased with the response."

(The Iron Duke, Volume L, Number 165, August 1974.)

The year also found 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers serving abroad for the first time as a battalion when it took part in Exercise Bold Guard, as part of 24 Airportable Brigade, in the Schleswig-Holstein area. As an airportable battalion the volunteers were largely airmobile, using Puma helicopters to carry out their tasks as bridge demolition guards on the Kiel Canal:

"It was a very successful exercise and of tremendous value to 1 YORKS, and a great deal was learned at all levels. It was unique in our TAVR experience to see the German Army at close quarters and co-operate with so many of our own supporting arms and services. To have a Regiment of German artillery, a troop of tanks, a forward air controller and artillery forward observation officers (German), Pumas, Sioux, demolition firing parties, liaison officers, a section of 24 Field Ambulance and a Royal Corps of Transport troop under command or in support all at the same time was great stuff. Finally, we consider that we were extremely fortunate to have been chosen to take part in exercise 'Bold Guard'. Both officers and soldiers now have a much better understanding of their role in NATO, and are confident that they can carry out their allotted tasks on mobilisation."

(The Iron Duke, Volume L, Number 166, December 1974.)

The Dukes Company of 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers was thereafter regularly to play its part as NATO forces committed to the British Army of the Rhine. Exercise Bold Guard was closely followed by Exercise Spearpoint in 1976 which was the largest BAOR exercise for nine years and saw 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers as the only TAVR unit participating in the 2nd Armoured Division's operational role. At this time the national strength of the TAVR infantry was a shadow of its forebears. The NATO committed battalions, such as 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers, had an establishment strength of 10,500, and those committed to Home Defence as 'General Reserve', such as 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers, an establishment of 8,000.

Yet another change in organisation came to the Yorkshire Volunteers in 1977 when it was announced that the 2nd Battalion, until then a Home Defence Battalion, was to be converted into a NATO committed infantry battalion. This required the 1st Battalion's 'E' (The Leeds Rifles) Company, at Leeds, to be transferred to the 2nd Battalion to meet the increased establishment strength. Within a few months, 1978 again found the 1st Battalion's 'C' (DWR) Company again in Germany on Exercise Gryphons Galore as part of 5 Field Force. By 1980 both the 1st and 2nd Battalions Yorkshire Volunteers were together in Germany on Exercise Crusader 80.

The Shapland Committee was established in the late 1970s to address personnel wastage in the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve, on the basis that 30% of its soldiers left every year. As a result of the Committee's findings the title 'Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve' was abandoned in 1979 and replaced by the more familiar title *Territorial Army*.

Before this report a Territorial's annual bounty was in two parts, a 'Liability Bounty' and a 'Training Bounty', both being paid providing that satisfactory attendance and training standards had been achieved by the recipient. This was merged into a single new bounty, of increased value, from 1st April 1979. Subject to satisfactory attendance and training standards new payments were made, with the aim of improving retention, of £100 for all Territorials in their first year, £200 in the second year, and £300 in the third and subsequent years of service. Other recommendations of the Shapland Committee included a simplification of the enlistment process, a minimum three-year engagement and more opportunities for overseas training.

As always, the serving West Riding Territorials were supported by a strong association of its former members. 1985 marked the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and former members of the 7th Dukes [16] revisited their former battlefields in Holland. The highlight of the visit again found the veterans gathered in Wageningen, a town which the 7th Dukes had liberated on 7th April 1945:

"Then followed the main parade through the town where every veteran was astonished by the tumultuous welcome given by the Dutch people.....the children with outstretched hands, the adults clapping and cheering incessantly and, perhaps the most moving of all, the tall old man standing on the side of the road with tears streaming down his cheeks. Towards the end of the march the salute was taken by Princess Margriet, representing her father Prince Bernhard who was in hospital at the time. Later that afternoon three representatives from the [7th] Battalion went to the hall where the official party had assembled. Walter Downs carried the Battalion wreath while John Pyrah and Howard Riley shook hands with the Princess. Howard Riley, the only member of the carrier platoon in the party, had been one of the very first British troops in Wageningen, and John Pyrah was presented as representing the Territorial Army in which he had served for so many years."

(The Iron Duke, Volume LV, Number 198, August 1985.)

FURTHER EXPANSION

The Government announced a further expansion of the Territorial Army in 1986 with plans to increase its establishment to 90,000 by 1990. This authorised the Yorkshire Volunteers to expand from three to four infantry battalions in a reorganisation which produced four tighter battalion areas [17] each at the Cardinal Points of Yorkshire. The three existing Battalion Headquarters remained at York (1st and 2nd), Huddersfield (3rd) with the Headquarters for the new 4th Battalion being located at Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield, with the 1st Battalion's existing 'D' (Hallamshire) Company. 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers was consolidated in the North Riding and the battalion expanded a number of its existing detachments to company strength to permit the redeployment of existing Yorkshire Volunteers' companies to the other battalions.

Reorganisation was completed by 1st January 1988 and found two Dukes Companies in the 3rd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion's Headquarters and Headquarter Company remained at St Paul's Street, Huddersfield, with 'A' (The West Riding Artillery) Company at Keighley and Bradford, 'B' (The Leeds Rifles) Company at Leeds - from the 1st Battalion, 'C' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company at Huddersfield and 'D' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company at Halifax - from the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion's former 'B' (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company at Rotherham and 'D' (Hallamshire) Company at Sheffield were transferred to the new 4th Battalion on 1st January 1988. Annual Camp of 1990 enabled the 3rd Battalion, which had inherited two NATO-roled companies in the reorganisation, to consolidate:

"The main training theme of 1990 has been on the development of company skills and identity. This theme was continued at Annual Camp, which took place at West Down on Salisbury Plain. The period at camp was split into two separate packages. During the first week company commanders were able to concentrate on training their companies in mastering the basic skills of map-reading, patrolling and minor tactics. After one day's R&R, taken on the middle Saturday, we launched straight into Exercise Wiltshire Rose, a battalion run and co-ordinated Key Point defence and Mobile Reaction Force exercise. Unfortunately, experiencing some of the knock-on effects of Operation Granby [18], we lost our support helicopters and the expertise from the NBC School at Winterbourne Gunner. Even so, we managed to scrounge some air support which added to the overall effect of the exercise. For many of the commanders and soldiers alike this had been the first opportunity to put into practice many of the complex and unfamiliar skills of home defence."

(The Iron Duke, Volume LIX, Number 214. Winter 1990.)

Expansion was however shortlived for the collapse of the Soviet Iron Curtain brought further pressure for the reduction of Britain's Armed Forces. This led to demands being made on the Conservative Government's Secretary of State for Defence to create a 'Peace Dividend' through further cuts in the defence budget:

"Over the last two years the European security environment has been transformed. There has been a dramatic reduction in the conventional forces facing the West; the Warsaw Pact has been dismantled; and Germany has been united. As these events began to unfold, the Government conducted an assessment of their likely impact upon our defence needs in Europe as well as how our wider national interests might also be at risk in the 1990's."

(Britain's Army for the 90's. HMSO.)

As a result, in April 1992, the 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers was amalgamated with the 4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers to form the 3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers. The 3rd/4th Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J Fox, was to have its headquarters at Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield, the home of Sheffield's famous Hallamshire Battalion, which had become part of the Duke's Regimental area in 1968 on the disbandment of The York and Lancaster Regiment.

The 3rd/4th Battalion's Headquarter (Hallamshire) Company was co-located at Endcliffe Hall, with 'A' (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company at Barnsley, 'B' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company at Halifax, and 'C' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company at Huddersfield. The amalgamation also found the battalion, in common with all other Territorial Army infantry battalions, reduced from four to three rifle companies as an economy measure.

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

Yorkshire Volunteers had now experienced five difficult years of rapid expansion and contraction. If nothing else the experience proved the responsiveness of a large Territorial Army County Regiment which readily employed its single cap-badge flexibility to address the divers whims of change. A further Ministry of Defence study entitled "Options for Change" now advocated that the three Yorkshire Volunteers Battalions should be separately rebadged to the three remaining County Infantry Regiments, which at that time had one regular infantry battalion each. This proposal generated heated debate and was not at first accepted by the Yorkshire Volunteers who understandably felt that they had built a successful Regiment which produced effective units whilst serving the best interests of Yorkshire's Territorials. Despite this view, the Ministry of Defence elected to impose rebadging on the three Volunteer Battalions. The Yorkshire Volunteers Regimental Council was disappointed that its case to retain Yorkshire Volunteers as a regiment was not accepted by the Ministry of Defence. Despite this, the Regimental Council took a realistic decision based on the best interests of its soldiers:

"Following the formal announcement on 8th September 1992 that the Yorkshire Volunteers is to disband and that each of the three Battalions are to re-form as Territorial Battalions of the three Regular Yorkshire County Regiments, your Regimental Committee has discussed at length the implementation and implications of the decision.....In our desire to ensure a smooth transition we may appear to relish the prospect, but it is in fact with considerable sadness and some apprehension that we plan for the future. Some say that we are planning this with unseemly haste but at times such as this, the well-being of the Battalions and the morale of our soldiers must be the paramount consideration. The battle against disbandment has been long and hard but we have lost it and must now do all in our power to help the Battalions make the transition with the least possible damage and to ensure that we go out in good order."

(Yorkshire Volunteers Regimental Council. 2nd November 1992.)

The Regiment chose the 25th April 1993, being nearest to Saint George's Day for the rebadging ceremony which was presided over by their Honorary Colonel, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent. Rain sluiced down in abundance through Catterick's overcast skies as the three battalions [19] marched onto parade as Yorkshire Volunteers and, after due ceremony, marched off to those Regimental Quick marches that have for so long formed part of their proud volunteer history for over a hundred years. Once more a Battalion of Dukes Territorials were back as the 3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)(Yorkshire Volunteers) again took up the proud tradition.

On formation the new 3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (Yorkshire Volunteers) was fortunate to retain the Honorary Colonel of 3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers then Colonel Hugh Neill CBE TD JP, Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire. Colonel Neill was succeeded later that year by Major General Michael Walker, then Commander 2nd Eastern District but who was soon to be knighted and promoted to be General Sir Michael Walker KCB CMG CBE ADC (Gen). Lieutenant Colonel Julian Fox TD remained as commanding officer following re-badging and thus enjoyed the unique distinction of commanding the same battalion under three different titles, 4 YORKS, 3/4 YORKS and 3 DWR, during his three-year tour of command.

The 3rd Battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters/Support Company remained at Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield, with 'A' Company at Barnsley with a detachment at Rotherham, 'B' Company at Prescott Street, Halifax, with a detachment at Keighley and 'C' Company at St Paul's Street, Huddersfield. This found the Dukes Territorials again deployed throughout their traditional West Riding area. To this area was added the bonus that they could now recruit in South Yorkshire, formerly the Regional District of *The York and Lancaster Regiment* [20]. Brigadier Mundell, the Colonel of the Regiment, was determined first to establish the Dukes' links with South Yorkshire and then markedly to strengthen them. South Yorkshire very soon became 'Dukes country' wherein the regiment is now well known and widely accepted. It was with great pride that the Regiment took over the privilege of the Freedom of Barnsley, on its being formally transferred at a civic parade in 1995, from The York and Lancaster Regiment.

In 1994 Lieutenant Colonel T C S Bonas, Welsh Guards, assumed command of the 3rd Battalion, making his mark with an arduous and difficult annual camp at Arlon in the Ardennes, Belgium. Some twelve months later the 3rd Battalion was assigned to the *Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps* for its wartime rôle whilst remaining under the command of 15 (North East) Brigade at York in peacetime.

1995 saw the 50th Anniversary of 'Victory in Europe' Day when the 3rd Battalion joined with the 1st Battalion to take part in parades in Skipton, Barnsley and Halifax. Annual Camp that year took place at Lydd and Hythe but also involved the battalion in a battlefield tour of Normandy studying the wartime actions at Fontenay le Pesnil of the 6th and 7th Dukes and The Hallamshire Battalion.

Lieutenant Colonel A H S Drake MBE took over command in 1996 and his was to be a particularly busy tour of command. The regular army was overstretched resulting in the TA being required to provide numerous individual reinforcements. As a result the 3rd Battalion found 25 personnel to serve with various regular units in theatres as diverse as Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Canada. This trend continued in 1997 when, in addition, the 3rd battalion provided a team to Latvia to train members of their Home Guard.

Annual camps were held at Garelohead in 1996, which the Colonel in Chief, Brigadier His Grace The Duke of Wellington visited; in 1997 at Sennybridge which was a divisional concentration of some 2,500 troops, including a company from the Czech army and, in 1998, the 3rd Battalion conducted a 'split camp' trial, when the winner of the skill-at-arms prize was Lance Corporal Peace - the first female Duke to win such a prize.

THE STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW

In 1997 the new Labour Government initiated the 'Strategic Defence Review' whose first conclusions were announced in July 1998 just as Lieutenant Colonel G A Kilburn MBE arrived as the 3rd Battalion's new commanding officer. The Review cut the establishment for Territorial Army infantry units in half bringing a correspondingly heavy impact upon the number of TA major infantry units in the West Riding.

As a result the *East and West Riding Regiment* was formed by the amalgamation of three major units - *3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (Yorkshire Volunteers)* and the *3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (Yorkshire Volunteers)* and *The King's Own Yorkshire Yeomanry* [21]. Each of these three constituent major units was reduced in strength to form two rifle companies of the East and West Riding Regiment.

The charter for the new regiment ensured that the focus for the TA infantry companies was to their parent regiments (LI, PWO, DWR) with operational rôles linked to their respective regular infantry regiments. A further casualty of the Strategic Defence Review was that the new Colours planned for presentation to the 3rd Battalion, the design of which had already been approved by Her Majesty The Queen, were no longer to be presented. Fortunately, production of the new Colours had not been started.

The reorganisation today finds the Dukes Territorials serving in *Ypres Company* at Huddersfield with a detachment at Keighley, and *Fontenay Company* at Barnsley with a detachment at Sheffield. Both companies continue to wear the Dukes cap-badge and are very well placed to keep the Dukes in the public eye and to ensure that the Regiment continues to be known throughout the West Riding. Deputy Honorary Colonels have been appointed for both companies with Colonel Julian Fox TD DL for Fontenay Company and for Ypres Company Charles Dent, the son-in-law of John Taylor, Lord Ingrow, who served with the 6th Dukes.

Despite such a sweeping change, and the fact that the 3rd Battalion was in existence for only six short years, it is hard to rock the solid foundations laid down by the 140 years of continuous service which today's units proudly represent. The units which are joined together as the *East and West Riding Regiment* collectively are the successors of those West Riding Rifle Volunteers and Artillery Volunteers who later formed the Territorial West Riding Divisions which served the country with such distinction in peace and war.

The history of the Dukes volunteer and territorial battalions is a turbulent one, not only on the battlefield but also in peacetime when their establishment strength has all too often been imprudently cut back as an easy budgetary option. It is truly remarkable, and to the great credit of all the Dukes Territorials, that their morale, enthusiasm and good Yorkshire professional standards remain high throughout. Their history is still being written by those who serve today, not least by the ever-increasing of their number who volunteer for full-time TA service with regular units. Both Ypres and Fontenay Companies may rightly be proud of their past 140 years of Volunteer and Territorial soldiering. They will carry forward these traditions coupled with confidence and professionalism into the 21st century for they are true Dukes.

- [1: The Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve Order, Army Order Number 5 dated 28th January 1967.]
- [2: The sixteen TAVR II infantry battalions formed on 1st April 1967 were:- 5th (Volunteer) Battalion The Queen's Regiment, 5th (Volunteer) Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment, 4th (Volunteer) Battalion The Royal Green Jackets, 4th (Volunteer) Battalion The Parachute Regiment, 10th (Volunteer) Battalion The Parachute Regiment, 15th (Scottish Volunteer) Battalion The Parachute Regiment, Fusilier Volunteers, 51st Highland Volunteers, Lancastrian Volunteers, Light Infantry Volunteers, 52nd Lowland Volunteers, Mercian Volunteers, North Irish Militia, Welsh Volunteers, Wessex Volunteers, Yorkshire Volunteers.]
- [3: As there were two TA battalions of *The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire*, The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA) did not, at first, form part of the Yorkshire Volunteers, but in 1968 'E' (The Leeds Rifles) Company was formed.]
- [4: The Yorkshire Brigade's five TAVR III infantry battalions formed on 1st April 1967 were:- *The Prince of Wales's Own Yorkshire Territorials* (late 3 PWO); *The Leeds Rifles Territorials* (late LEEDS RIFLES PWO); *The Green Howards Territorials* (late 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS); *The West Riding Territorials* (late WR BN DWR); *The Hallamshire (Territorial) Battalion* (late HALLAMS Y AND L).]
- [5: Lieutenant Colonel G T M Scrope, a TA officer, had until then commanded 4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (TA).]
- [6: Sub-Unit Royal Honour Titles were authorised under Army Order Number 14 dated 7th February 1967.]
- [7: A Company formed by 3 PWO, B Company formed by 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS, C Company formed by WR BN DWR, D Company formed by HALLAMS BN Y AND L, E Company formed by LEEDS RIFLES PWO (1968).]
- [8: The issued Bedford RL 4x4 GS truck was at that time classified at 3 tons, but was later reclassified as a 4 ton vehicle.]
- [9: Major R C Curry OBE was commissioned into The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) in 1952 and seconded to The King's African Rifles. He later served as a Territorial Army officer with 7th DWR (TA), 5th/7th DWR (TA), The West Riding Battalion DWR (TA) and Yorkshire Volunteers before retiring from the Territorial Army in 1977.]
- [10: Army Orders authorised the new volunteer company title as 'C' (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company, however for some time The Iron Duke published the title as 'C' Company (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment).]
- [11: 'The King's Division was formed in July 1968, Army Order 34 of 1968, and administered both the Regular Army and Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve battalions of the following regiments:- The King's Own Royal Border Regiment, The King's Regiment, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, The Green Howards, The Royal Irish Rangers, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, The York and Lancaster Regiment (disbanded in 1968), as well as the wholly Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve 'Yorkshire Volunteers'.]
- [12: On the disbandment of The Yorkshire Brigade both The Green Howards and The Duke of Wellington's Regiment were able immediately to revert to their traditional cap-badge. However The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire could not being formed by amalgamation whilst part of the Yorkshire Brigade and had to design a new cap-badge .]
- [13: The Prime Minister, Edward Heath, served during the Second World War finally as a major. He commanded the 2nd Regiment of The Honourable Artillery Company (TA) 1947-1951; then became Master Gunner within the Tower of London.]

[14: Major I G Norton TD, a volunteer officer, had previously served with The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) before transferring to Yorkshire Volunteers.]

[15: The Cadres which amalgamated to form Yorkshire Volunteers were The West Riding Regiment Royal Artillery (TA); The Humber Regiment Royal Artillery (TA); The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers Royal Artillery (TA); 3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA); The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA); 4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment) (TA); The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA); The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA).]

[16: In 1991 a memorial in the form of a cross was erected by Mr Walter Horne MC TD, and dedicated by the Vicar of Huddersfield, 1000 feet above the Standedge Railway Cutting near Marsden in the Colne Valley in memory of the 214 men of the 1/7th and 2/7th Battalions who gave their lives in the Second World War.]

[17: The reorganisation of Yorkshire Volunteers into four infantry battalions was completed on 1st January 1988 and accompanied by the addition of supplementary battalion titles:- 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (Cleveland), 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (Yorkshire and Humberside), 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (West Yorkshire), 4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (South Yorkshire), which were approved by the Ministry of Defence on 17th January 1989.]

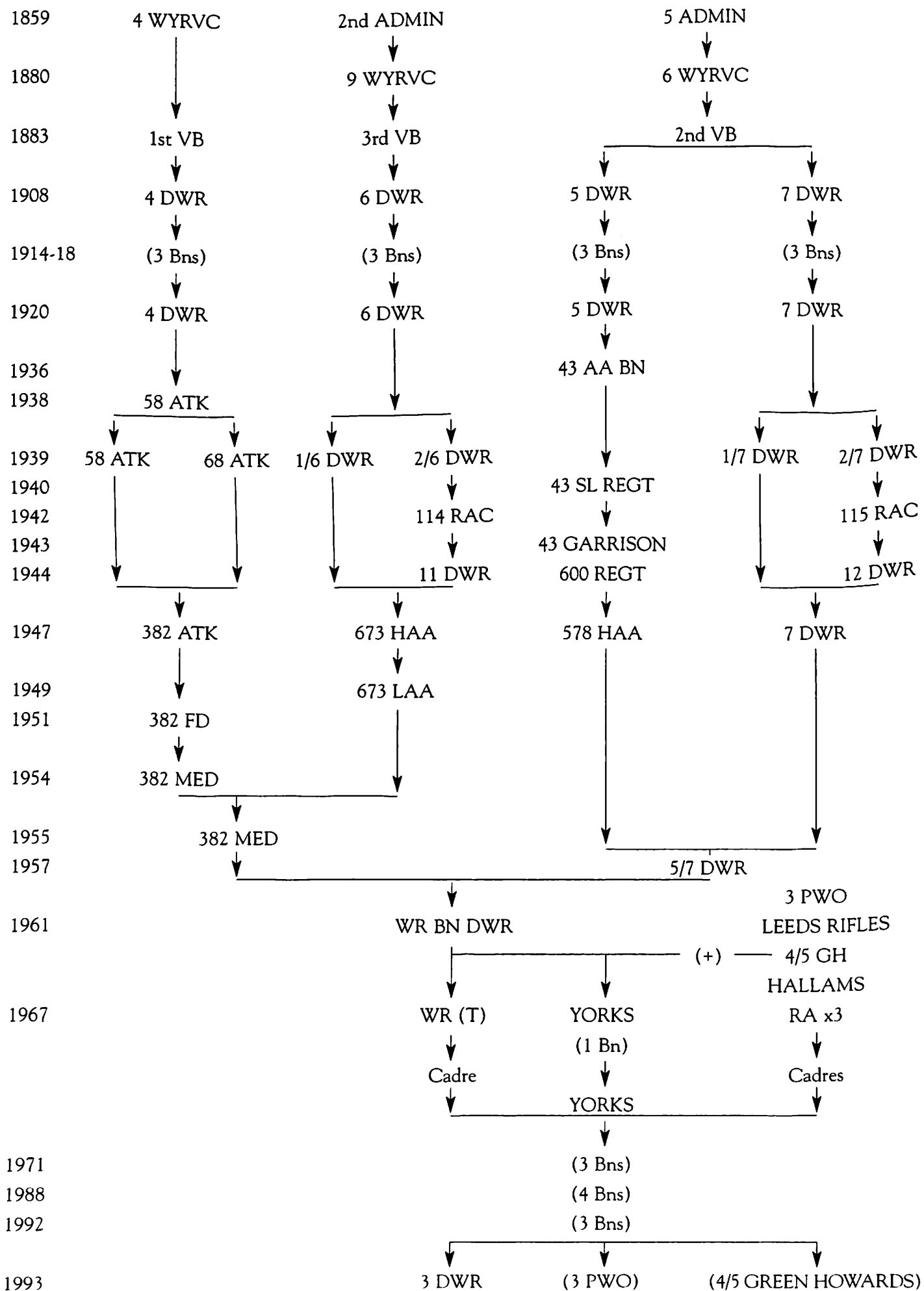
[18: Operation Granby entailed preparations for the impending Gulf War.]

[19: 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers became *3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own West Yorkshire Regiment (Yorkshire Volunteers)* with Headquarters at York; 1st Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers became *4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment)(Yorkshire Volunteers)* with Headquarters at Middlesbrough; 3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers became *3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)(Yorkshire Volunteers)* with Headquarters at Sheffield.]

[20: The York and Lancaster Regiment was disbanded in 1968 but had retained its Regimental Headquarters and Museum at Endcliffe Hall Sheffield. The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) had been amalgamated into Yorkshire Volunteers on formation in 1967 and had been succeeded by 3/4 YORKS. On re-badging 3 DWR not only succeeded *The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA)* but also *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)* and two artillery regiments *The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers Royal Artillery (TA)* and *The West Riding Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)*.]

[21: *The King's Own Yorkshire Yeomanry* was formed as a 'National Defence Reconnaissance Regiment' on 1st April 1996 by the re-rolling of *8th Battalion The (Yorkshire) Light Infantry (Volunteers) (8 LI)* which had headquarters at Wakefield. 8 LI itself represented the former *4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA)* and (in part) *The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA)*.]

APPENDIX A: FAMILY TREE 1859-1993





**3rd BATTALION
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING)
(YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS)**

Redesignated: 25th April 1993

Battalion Headquarters: Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield.

Formed by the redesignation of *3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers* - see page 253.

COMPANIES:

25th April 1993: Headquarters/Support (Hallamshire) Company @ Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield.
A Company @ Barnsley, Wakefield Road, with detachments at Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Street, and Barnsley, Eastgate. B Company @ Halifax, Prescott Street, with detachment @ Keighley, Lawkholme Lane.
C Company @ Huddersfield, St Paul's Street.

Successor unit to:

3rd/4th Battalion
Yorkshire Volunteers (TA)
(see page 253)

and

The West Riding Regiment
Royal Artillery (Territorials)
(see page 254)

and

The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers
Royal Artillery (Territorials)
(see page 254)

and

The West Riding Battalion
The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (Territorials)
(see page 255)

and

The Hallamshire Battalion
The York and Lancaster Regiment (Territorials)
(see page 262)

YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Regiment formed : 1st April 1967.

Regimental Headquarters : Imphal Barracks, York.

Formed by the amalgamation of Territorial Army major units:

THE HUMBER REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TERRITORIALS)

Headquarters @ Hull, P (East Riding) Battery @ Hull, Q Battery @ Grimsby, R (5th Battalion The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment) Battery @ Scunthorpe, S Battery @ Hull.

THE WEST RIDING REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TERRITORIALS)

Headquarters @ Leeds, P Battery (West Riding Artillery) @ Leeds, Q Battery (West Riding Artillery) @ Leeds, R Battery (West Riding Artillery) @ Bradford.

THE SHEFFIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS ROYAL ARTILLERY (TERRITORIALS)

Headquarters @ Sheffield, P Battery @ Sheffield, Q Battery @ Sheffield R Battery @ Doncaster.

3rd BATTALION THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN REGIMENT OF YORKSHIRE (TA)

Headquarters @ Hull, A Company @ Hull, B Company @ Beverley, C Company @ York, D Company @ Tadcaster.

THE LEEDS RIFLES THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN REGIMENT OF YORKSHIRE (TA)

Headquarters @ Leeds, A Company @ Leeds, B Company @ Leeds, C Company @ Castleford, D Company @ Leeds, Reconnaissance Platoon @ Selby.

4th/5th BATTALION THE GREEN HOWARDS (ALEXANDRA, PRINCESS OF WALES'S OWN YORKSHIRE REGIMENT) (TA)

Headquarters @ Scarborough/ Whitby, A Company @ Guisborough/ Richmond/ Middlesbrough, B Company @ Malton/ Pickering, C Company @ Bridlington/ Driffield, D Company @ Redcar/ Loftus, Support Company @ Middlesbrough.

THE WEST RIDING BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Headquarters @ Huddersfield, A Company @ Halifax, B Company @ Huddersfield, C Company @ Keighley/ Skipton, D Company @ Mossley/ Holmfirth.

THE HALLAMSHIRE BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT (TA)

Headquarters @ Sheffield, A Company @ Sheffield (Middlewood Road), B Company @ Barnsley, C Company @ Sheffield, D Company @ Rotherham.

1st BATTALION YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Battalion formed 1st April 1967 with Battalion Headquarters @ York, Lumley Barracks, and 'Comd and Admin Coy' @ York and four Rifle Companies @ York, Middlesbrough, Halifax, Sheffield. 1971, 1st April: Designated '1st Battalion'. 1989, 17th January: (*Cleveland*) authorised as secondary title. 1992, 4th April: Battalion reorganised with Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters/Support Company and three Rifle Companies. 1992, 15th December: Battalion Headquarters moved to Coulby Newham.

1993, 25th April: Battalion redesignated *4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment) (Yorkshire Volunteers)*.

COMPANIES:

Headquarters/Support Company formed as 'Command and Administration Company' on 1st April 1967 @ York, Lumley Barracks, ex 3 PWO TA. 1969: Redesignated Headquarter Company. 1992, 4th April: Redesignated Headquarter/Support Company @ Lumley Barracks, York and detachment @ Middlesbrough, Coulby Newham. 1992, 15th December: Company moved Headquarters to Coulby Newham.

A (The Green Howards) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Scarborough, Coldyhill Lane with detachments @ Whitby and Guisborough by redesignation and amalgamation of 'D' (The Green Howards) Company 2nd Battalion (@ Scarborough & Whitby) and 'B' (The Green Howards) Company 1st Battalion (@ Guisborough).

B (The Green Howards) Company formed 1st April 1967 @ Middlesbrough, Stockton Road, and detachment at Scarborough, Coldyhill Lane, ex 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS TA. 1969: Formed detachment @ Guisborough, Park Lane, ex 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS TA. 1971, 1st April: transferred Scarborough detachment, Coldyhill Lane, which, with 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS TA cadre, formed 'D Coy' 2nd Battalion. 1986: Transferred Guisborough detachment to form new 'G Coy' 1st Battalion. 1986: Transferred personnel to form new 'K Coy' 1st Battalion @ Middlesbrough, Coulby Newham. 1992, 4th April: No change.

C (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Harrogate, Hildebrand Barracks with detachment @ Northallerton, Thirsk Road, by redesignation of 'D' Coy.

FORMER COMPANIES:

A (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company formed 1st April 1967 @ York, Lumley Barracks, ex 3 PWO TA. 1969: Moved to Colliergate Drill Hall, York. 1971, 1st April: Supplied personnel to form part of 'Headquarter Company 2nd Battalion'. 1977, December: Transferred to 2nd Battalion and redesignated A Coy of that Battalion with detachments @ Northallerton, Thirsk Road, and Selby, Armoury Road.

A (The Leeds Rifles) Company formed 1st December 1977 @ Leeds, Carlton Barracks, by redesignation of E Coy. 1979: Reconstituted detachment @ Harrogate, Commercial Street. 1986: Transferred Harrogate detachment to form nucleus of new 'H Coy' 1st Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Transferred to 3rd Battalion and redesignated 'B Coy' of that Battalion.

A (The Green Howards) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Guisborough, Park Lane, with detachment @ Loftus, West Road, by redesignation of 'G Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Company absorbed by D Coy 2nd Battalion and became detachment of 'A' Coy 1st Battalion.

C (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company formed 1st April 1967 @ Halifax, Precott Street, with detachment @ Keighley, Lawkholme Lane, ex WR Bn DWR TA - see page 255. 1973: Withdrew from Keighley Drill Hall in favour of 3rd Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Transferred to 3rd Battalion and redesignated 'D Coy' of that Battalion - see page 253.

C (The Green Howards) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Middlesbrough, Coulby Newham, by redesignation of 'K Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: became detachment of 'HQ' Coy 1st Battalion.

D (Hallamshire) Company formed 1st April 1967 @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall, and detachments at Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road, and Barnsley, Eastgate, ex HALLAMS Y and L TA - see page 262. 1975, 1st April: Withdrew from Rotherham and Barnsley in favour of 3rd Battalion. 1978: Reconstituted detachment @ Sheffield, Middlewood Road. 1987, 1st January: Transferred to 4th Battalion and redesignated 'D Coy' of that Battalion - see page 253.

D (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Harrogate, Hildebrand Barracks (initially @ Commercial Street) with detachments @ Harrogate, Commercial Street, and at Northallerton, Thirsk Road, by redesignation of 'H Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Redesignated C Coy 1st Battalion.

E (The Leeds Rifles) Company formed 1st December 1969 @ Leeds, Carlton Barracks, with detachment @ Castleford, Maltkiln Lane, ex LEEDS RIFLES PWO TA. 1973, 1st April: Withdrew from Castleford in favour of 2nd Battalion. 1977, December: Redesignated 'A Coy' 1st Battalion.

E (The York and Lancaster Regiment) Company formed 1st April 1978 @ Doncaster, Danum Road, from detachment 'B Coy' 3rd Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Transferred to 4th Battalion and redesignated 'C Coy' of that Battalion.

G Company (interim designation) formed 1986 @ Guisborough, Park Lane, from detachment of 'B Coy' 1st Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Redesignated 'A Coy' 1st Battalion.

H Company (interim designation) formed 1986 @ Harrogate, Commercial Street, from detachment of 'A Coy' 1st Battalion; together with detachment @ Northallerton, Thirsk Road, from 2nd Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Redesignated 'D Coy' 1st Battalion.

K Company (interim designation) formed 1986 @ Middlesbrough, Coulby Newham, from personnel of 'B Coy' 1st Battalion. 1988, 1st January: Redesignated 'C Coy' 1st Battalion.

2nd BATTALION YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Battalion formed 1st April 1971 with Battalion Headquarters @ York, Colliergate, Headquarter Company @ York, five Rifle Companies @ Hull (2), Castleford, Scarborough, Wakefield. Battalion Headquarters later moved to Grange Garth, York; then to Worsley Barracks, York. 1989, 17th January: (*Yorkshire and Humberside*) authorised as Secondary title. 1992, 4th April: Battalion reorganised with Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters/Support Company and three Rifle Companies.

1993, 25th April: Battalion redesignated *3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (Yorkshire Volunteers)*.

COMPANIES:

Headquarters/Support Company formed as 'Headquarter Company' on 1st April 1971 @ York, Colliergate, in part from 'A Coy' 1st Battalion and from elements of 3 PWO TA cadre. Later moved to Tower Street, York; then to Worsley Barracks, York. 1978: Reconstituted detachment (Mortar platoon) @ Beverley, Norwood Far Grove. 1992, 4th April: Redesignated 'Headquarters/Support Company' with Headquarters @ York, Worsley Barracks, and detachment @ Beverley, Norwood Far Grove.

A (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company formed 1st December 1977 @ York, Colliergate, and detachments @ Northallerton, Thirsk Road, and @ Selby, Armoury Road, by redesignation of 'A Coy' 1st Battalion. 1987, 1st January: Transferred Northallerton detachment to 'H Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Headquarters @ York, Colliergate, and detachment @ Goole ex detachment 'C' Coy 2nd Battalion. Selby Drill Hall closed. 1992, 15th December: Company elements @ Colliergate moved Headquarters to Lumley Barracks, York.

B (The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Hull, Londesborough Barracks ex 3 PWO TA cadre. 1977, December: Absorbed A (The Humber Artillery) Company 2nd Battalion @ Hull without change in title. 1992, 4th April: Headquarters moved to Mona House.

C (The Leeds Rifles) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Leeds, Carlton Barracks, and detachment @ Castleford, Maltkiln Lane, by transfer and amalgamation of 'B' Coy 3rd Battalion (@ Leeds) with 'C' Coy 2nd Battalion (@ Castleford). 1992, 2nd December: Company elements @ Carlton Barracks moved to Harewood Barracks, Leeds.

FORMER COMPANIES:

A (The Humber Artillery) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Hull, Wenlock Barracks, ex The Humber Regiment RA TA cadre. 1977, December: Company amalgamated with 'B Coy' 2nd Battalion and consolidated @ Hull, Londesborough Barracks, as 'B Coy' 2nd Battalion.

C (The Leeds Rifles) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Castleford, Maltkiln Lane, ex LEEDS RIFLES PWO TA cadre. 1980, October: Formed new platoon detachment @ Batley, Intake Lane. 1986, 15th January: Batley detachment transferred as nucleus of 'C Coy' 8 LI (V). 1986, April: Formed new platoon detachment @ Goole, Pasture Road. 1992, 4th April: Company amalgamated with B Coy 3rd Battalion and redesignated 'B' Coy 2nd Battalion; detachment @ Goole transferred to HQ Coy 2nd Battalion.

D (The Green Howards) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Scarborough, Coldyhill Lane, with detachments @ Whitby, Hagersgate, and Bridlington, Swindon Street, ex 4/5 GREEN HOWARDS TA cadre. 1992, 4th April: Transferred to 1st Battalion and redesignated 'A' Coy of that Battalion. Less Bridlington Drill Hall - closed.

E (The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Wakefield, George Street, with detachment @ Pontefract, ex 4 KOYLI TA cadre. 1975, 1st April: Transferred and redesignated as C (KOYLI) Company 7 LI (V).

E (The Humber Artillery) Company reformed on 1st April 1991 @ Hull, Mona House, from within 2nd Battalion (together with some personnel of 129 (*East Riding*) *Field Squadron Royal Engineers (V)*). 1992, 4th April: Company absorbed by B Coy 2nd Battalion.

3rd/4th BATTALION YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Battalion formed 4th April 1992 by the amalgamation of 3rd Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (West Yorkshire) with 4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers (South Yorkshire) to form 3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers. Amalgamation producing Battalion Headquarters, Headquarter/Support Company and three Rifle Companies.

1993, 25th April: Battalion redesignated *3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (Yorkshire Volunteers)* - see page 249.

COMPANIES:

Headquarters/Support (Hallamshire) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Endcliffe Hall, Sheffield by the amalgamation of 'HQ Coy' 3rd Battalion, 'HQ Coy' 4th Battalion and 'D Coy' 4th Battalion.

A (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Barnsley, Wakefield Road, with detachments at Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Street, and Barnsley, Eastgate by the amalgamation of 'A Coy' 4th Battalion with 'B Coy' 4th Battalion.

B (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Halifax, Prescott Street, with detachment @ Keighley, Lawkholme Lane, by the amalgamation of 'D Coy' 3rd Battalion with 'A Coy' 3rd Battalion.

C (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company formed 4th April 1992 @ Huddersfield, St Pauls Street, by redesignation of 'C Coy' 3rd Battalion.

3rd BATTALION YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Battalion formed 1st April 1971 with Battalion Headquarters @ Huddersfield, St Paul's Street, four Rifle Companies @ Bradford, Rotherham, Huddersfield, Barnsley. 1989, 17th January: (*West Yorkshire*) authorised as Secondary title. 1992, 4th April: 3rd Battalion (less B Coy) amalgamated with 4th Battalion and redesignated *3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers*. B Coy transferred to 2nd Battalion.

COMPANIES:

Headquarter Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Huddersfield, St Paul's Street, ex personnel of WR Bn DWR TA cadre - see page 254. 1992, 4th April: Battalion Headquarters & Headquarter Company disbanded. Personnel to Headquarter Company and C Company 3rd/4th Battalion.

A (The West Riding Artillery) Battery formed 1st April 1971 @ Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks, with detachment @ Keighley, Lawkholme Lane, ex WR Regt RA TA cadre - see page 254. 'Battery' later redesignated 'Company'. 1975: Company Headquarters moved to Keighley, Lawkholme Lane, retaining Bradford as a detachment. 1992, 4th April: Company amalgamated with D Company and redesignated B Company 3rd/4th Battalion.

B (The Leeds Rifles) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Leeds, Carlton Barracks, by transfer and redesignation of 'A Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Company transferred to 2nd Battalion and redesignated 'C' Coy of that Battalion.

C (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Huddersfield, St Paul's Street, ex WR Bn DWR TA cadre - see page 254. 1992, 4th April: Redesignated C Coy 3rd/4th Battalion.

D (The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Halifax, Prescott Street, by transfer and redesignation of 'C Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Redesignated B Coy 3rd/4th Battalion.

FORMER COMPANIES:

B (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Battery formed 1st April 1971 @ Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road, ex SAV RA TA cadre - see page 254. 'Battery' later redesignated 'Company'. 1988, 1st January: Transferred to 4th Battalion and redesignated 'B Coy' of that Battalion.

D (Hallamshire) Company formed 1st April 1971 @ Barnsley, Eastgate, ex HALLAMS Bn Y and L TA cadre - see page 254. 1988, 1st January: Transferred to 4th Battalion and redesignated 'A Coy' of that Battalion.

4th BATTALION YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEERS

Battalion formed 1st January 1988 with Battalion Headquarters @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall, and four Rifle Companies @ Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster, Sheffield. 1989, 17th January: (*South Yorkshire*) authorised as Secondary title. 1992, 4th April: 4th Battalion amalgamated with 3rd Battalion and redesignated *3rd/4th Battalion Yorkshire Volunteers*.

COMPANIES:

Headquarter (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company formed 6th April 1986 @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall. 1992, 4th April: Amalgamated with 'HQ Coy' 3rd Battalion and 'D Coy' 4th Battalion and redesignated 'Headquarters/Support (Hallamshire) Company 3rd/4th Battalion'.

A (Hallamshire) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Barnsley, Eastgate, by transfer and redesignation of 'D Coy' 3rd Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Amalgamated with 'B Coy' 4th Battalion and redesignated 'A (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company 3rd/4th Battalion'. Company Headquarters moved to Wakefield Road Drill Hall (ex 8 LI), detachments at Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road, and Barnsley, Eastgate.

B (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Street, by transfer and redesignation of 'B Coy' 3rd Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Amalgamated with 'A Coy' 4th Battalion and redesignated 'A (The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers) Company 3rd/4th Battalion'. Company Headquarters moved to Wakefield Road Drill Hall (ex 8 LI), detachments at Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road, and Barnsley, Eastgate.

C (The York and Lancaster Regiment) Company formed 1st January 1988 @ Doncaster, Danum Road, by transfer and redesignation of 'C Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Company transferred to '8th (Yorkshire) Battalion The Light Infantry (V) and redesignated 'C Coy' of that Battalion.

D (Hallamshire) Company formed 1st January 1987 @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall, with detachment @ Sheffield, Middlewood Road, by transfer and redesignation of 'D Coy' 1st Battalion. 1992, 4th April: Amalgamated with 'HQ Coy' 3rd Battalion and 'HQ Coy' 4th Battalion and redesignated 'Headquarters/Support (Hallamshire) Company 3rd/4th Battalion'.

T&AVR111 Major Units - 1967-1969

THE HUMBER REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Hull, Wenlock Barracks.
By the redesignation of 440 (*Humber*) *Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA*.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery @ Hull; P Battery @ Hull; Q Battery @ Grimsby (with some personnel from 594 Ambulance Squadron Royal Corps of Transport TA); R (5th Battalion The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment) Battery @ Scunthorpe.
31st December 1968: Regiment commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE WEST RIDING REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Leeds, Carlton Barracks.
By the redesignation of 249th (*The West Riding Artillery*) *Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 266.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery @ Leeds; P Battery (The West Riding Artillery) @ Leeds; Q Battery (The West Riding Artillery) @ Leeds; R Battery (The West Riding Artillery) @ Bradford.
31st December 1968: Regiment commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE SHEFFIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS (TERRITORIALS) T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.
By the redesignation of 271 (*Sheffield Artillery Volunteers*) *Light Air Defence Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 272.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery @ Sheffield; P Battery @ Sheffield; Q Battery @ Sheffield; R Battery @ Doncaster.
31st December 1968: Regiment commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN YORKSHIRE TERRITORIALS T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Hull, Londesborough Barracks.
By the redesignation of 3rd Battalion *The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire TA*.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Hull; B Company @ Hull; C Company @ York.
31st December 1968: Battalion commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE LEEDS RIFLES TERRITORIALS T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Leeds, Churchill Barracks.
By the redesignation of *The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire TA*.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Leeds; B Company @ Leeds; C Company @ Castleford.
31st December 1968: Battalion commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE GREEN HOWARDS TERRITORIALS T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Middlesbrough.
By the redesignation of 4th/5th Battalion *The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment) TA* and absorption of 252 *General Headquarters Provost Company Royal Military Police TA*.

COMPANIES: A (Cleveland) Company @ Guisborough; B (Teeside) Company @ Middlesbrough; C (Scarborough) Company @ Scarborough.
31st December 1968: Battalion commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE WEST RIDING TERRITORIALS T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Huddersfield, St Paul's Street.
By the redesignation of *The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) TA* - see page 255.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Huddersfield; B Company @ Huddersfield; C Company @ Halifax.
31st December 1968: Battalion commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE HALLAMSHIRE (TERRITORIAL) BATTALION T&AVR111

Redesignated: 1st April 1967. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.
By the redesignation of *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment TA* - see page 262.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Sheffield; B Company @ Rotherham; C Company @ Barnsley.
31st December 1968: Battalion commenced reduction to Cadre establishment, reduction completed by 31st March 1969. (Unit succeeded by Yorkshire Volunteers)

THE WEST RIDING BATTALION

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

By amalgamation: 1st May 1961. Headquarters: Huddersfield, St Paul's Street.

Formed by the amalgamation of *5th/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA)*, - see page 258, with *382 Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA)* - see page 257.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company @ Huddersfield; A Company @ Halifax; B Company @ Huddersfield with detachment @ Mirfield; C Company @ Keighley with detachment @ Skipton; D Company @ Mossley with detachment @ Holmfirth.

1st April 1967:

Almalgamated with *3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA)* and *The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA)* and *4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (TA)* and *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)* to form the *Yorkshire Volunteers T&AVR 11b* - see page 251; and to form *The West Riding Territorials T&AVR III* - see page 254.

4th YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: 24th February 1860. Headquarters: Halifax.

* Numbered '7th' until 27th April 1860.

COMPRISING: 7th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed 13th October 1859; 8th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed 13th October 1859, renumbered 4th April 1860; 13th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed October 1859; 14th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed October 1859, redesignated 4th Y(WR)RVC 4th April 1860: Fifth Company formed @ Sowerby 1st January 1861; 10th May 1861 Companies formed @ Brighouse, Hebden Bridge and Upper Shibden Hall.

1880: *West Yorkshire Brigade Bearer Company RAMC (Volunteers)* formed within establishment @ Halifax, Carlton Street.

1st VOLUNTEER BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT)

Redesignated: 1st February 1883. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES:

DETACHED: 1st April 1908, *West Yorkshire Brigade Bearer Company RAMC (Volunteers)* to become 'B' Section, *Yorkshire Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance RAMC (TF)*.

4th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT) (TF)

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Halifax; B Company @ Halifax; C Company @ Halifax; D Company @ Brighouse; E Company @ Cleckheaton; F Company @ Halifax; G Company @ Elland; H Company @ Sowerby Bridge.

The Great War 3 Battalions

4th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/4th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 27th June 1919.

2/4th Bn Formed 28th September 1914; Absorbed 53rd (Service) Battalion *The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)* 22nd April 1919; Disbanded 17th October 1919.

3/4th Res Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed 3/5th Res Bn 1st September 1916; Disbanded 6th July 1919.

4th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES:**58th (4th DWR) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)**

Redesignated: 28th November 1938. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES: 229 Battery; 230 Battery; 231 Battery; 232 Battery.

1st April 1939: Unit expanded to form two units - 58th Atk Regt RA and 68th Atk Regt RA.

58th (1/4th DWR) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES: 229 Battery; 230 Battery; 231 Battery; 232 Battery.

293 Battery formed within Regiment 28th July 1941 and transferred to 64th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery TA* on 12th October 1941; 230 Battery disbanded 11th August 1942 - one troop to each of other Batteries; 325 Battery formed within Regiment 1st July 1943 - one troop from each of other Batteries.

Suspended animation 1st February 1946: 229 Battery, 231 Battery, 232 Battery, 325 Battery.

68th ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Elland.

* Title (*Duke of Wellington's*) authorised 17th February 1942.

BATTERIES: 269 Battery @ Halifax; 270 Battery @ Todmorden; 271 Battery @ Elland; 272 Battery @ Cleckheaton.

272 Battery transferred to 80th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery* 23rd July 1941; 298 Battery formed within Regiment 28th July 1941; 270 Battery transferred to 85th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery* 24th November 1941; 305 Battery formed within Regiment 30th July 1942 - 305 Battery (less HQ & 1 Troop) transferred to 53rd (*Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry*) *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)*, remainder of Battery absorbed within Regiment 11th August 1942; 270 Battery reformed within Regiment 25th June 1943.

Suspended animation: 19th October 1944: 269 Battery, 270 Battery, 271 Battery, 298 Battery.

Disbanded 1st January 1947.

382 (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES:

* Redesignated 1st March 1951: 382 *Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA)*.

382 MEDIUM REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT) (TA)

Redesignated: 1st October 1954. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES:

10th March 1955: Amalgamated, without change in title, with one Battery of *578th (5th Bn DWR) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* - see page 258; and *673 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA)* - see page 259.

BATTERIES: P (4th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Battery; Q (5th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Battery; R (6th Duke of Wellington's Regiment) Battery.

1st May 1961:

Amalgamated with *5th/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA)*, - see page 258, to form *The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) TA* - see page 255.

4th YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: 24th February 1860. Headquarters: Halifax.

* Numbered '7th' until 27th April 1860.

COMPRISING: 7th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed 13th October 1859; 8th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed 13th October 1859, renumbered 4th April 1860; 13th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed October 1859; 14th Y(WR)RVC @ Halifax formed October 1859, redesignated 4th Y(WR)RVC 4th April 1860: Fifth Company formed @ Sowerby 1st January 1861; 10th May 1861 Companies formed @ Brighouse, Hebden Bridge and Upper Shibden Hall.

1880: *West Yorkshire Brigade Bearer Company RAMC (Volunteers)* formed within establishment @ Halifax, Carlton Street.

1st VOLUNTEER BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT)

Redesignated: 1st February 1883. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES:

DETACHED: 1st April 1908, *West Yorkshire Brigade Bearer Company RAMC (Volunteers)* to become 'B' Section, *Yorkshire Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance RAMC (TF)*.

4th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT) (TF)

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Halifax; B Company @ Halifax; C Company @ Halifax; D Company @ Brighouse; E Company @ Cleckheaton; F Company @ Halifax; G Company @ Elland; H Company @ Sowerby Bridge.

The Great War 3 Battalions

4th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/4th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 27th June 1919.

2/4th Bn Formed 28th September 1914; Absorbed 53rd (Service) Battalion *The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)* 22nd April 1919; Disbanded 17th October 1919.

3/4th Res Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed 3/5th Res Bn 1st September 1916; Disbanded 6th July 1919.

4th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Halifax.

COMPANIES:**58th (4th DWR) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)**

Redesignated: 28th November 1938. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES: 229 Battery; 230 Battery; 231 Battery; 232 Battery.

1st April 1939: Unit expanded to form two units - 58th Atk Regt RA and 68th Atk Regt RA.

58th (1/4th DWR) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES: 229 Battery; 230 Battery; 231 Battery; 232 Battery.

293 Battery formed within Regiment 28th July 1941 and transferred to 64th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery TA* on 12th October 1941; 230 Battery disbanded 11th August 1942 - one troop to each of other Batteries; 325 Battery formed within Regiment 1st July 1943 - one troop from each of other Batteries.

Suspended animation 1st February 1946: 229 Battery, 231 Battery, 232 Battery, 325 Battery.

68th ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Elland.

* Title (*Duke of Wellington's*) authorised 17th February 1942.

BATTERIES: 269 Battery @ Halifax; 270 Battery @ Todmorden; 271 Battery @ Elland; 272 Battery @ Cleckheaton.

272 Battery transferred to 80th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery* 23rd July 1941; 298 Battery formed within Regiment 28th July 1941; 270 Battery transferred to 85th *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery* 24th November 1941; 305 Battery formed within Regiment 30th July 1942 - 305 Battery (less HQ & 1 Troop) transferred to 53rd (*Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry*) *Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)*, remainder of Battery absorbed within Regiment 11th August 1942; 270 Battery reformed within Regiment 25th June 1943.

Suspended animation: 19th October 1944: 269 Battery, 270 Battery, 271 Battery, 298 Battery.

Disbanded 1st January 1947.

382 (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S) ANTI-TANK REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Halifax.

BATTERIES:

* Redesignated 1st March 1951: 382 *Field Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA)*.

2nd ADMIN BATTALION YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: June 1860. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

COMPRISING: 12th Y(WR)RVC @ Skipton-in-Craven formed 8th February 1860; 15th Y(WR)RVC *North Craven Rifles* formed 17th November 1859, moved to Settle 1871; 23rd Y(WR)RVC @ Burley formed 20th February 1860; 25th Y(WR)RVC *Guiseley Township Corps* @ Guiseley formed 5th March 1860, disbanded August 1876; 26th Y(WR)RVC @ Ingleton formed 21st March 1860, disbanded January 1874; 35th Y(WR)RVC *Airedale* @ Keighley formed 27th October 1860; 42nd Y(WR)RVC @ Haworth formed 9th April 1866; 45th Y(WR)RVC @ Bingley formed 30th June 1875.

9th YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Redesignated 3rd September 1880. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

* Numbered 12th from 3rd February - 3rd September 1880.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Skipton-in-Craven; B Company @ Settle; C Company @ Burley; D Company @ Keighley; E Company @ Keighley; F Company @ Keighley; G Company @ Haworth; H Company @ Bingley.

3rd VOLUNTEER BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT)

Redesignated: 1st February 1883. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Skipton-in-Craven; B Company @ Settle; C Company @ Burley; D Company @ Keighley; E Company @ Keighley; F Company @ Keighley; G Company @ Haworth; H Company @ Bingley.

DETACHED: 1st April 1908: C Company @ Burley to become Battery of *4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* - see page 270.

6th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT) (TF)

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Skipton-in-Craven with detachment @ Barnoldswick; B Company @ Skipton-in-Craven; C Company @ Guiseley; D Company @ Keighley; E Company @ Keighley; F Company @ Settle with detachment @ Ingleton; G Company @ Haworth; H Company @ Bingley.

The Great War 3 Battalions

6th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/6th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 27th June 1919.

2/6th Bn Formed 17th September 1914; Disbanded 31st January 1918 and personnel transferred to 2/4th Bn, 5th Bn and 2/7th Bn.

3/6th Res Bn Formed 23rd March 1915; Absorbed 3/7th Res Bn 1st September 1916; Disbanded 31st March 1919.

6th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company @ Skipton-in-Craven; A Company @ Barnoldswick; B Company @ Bingley; C Company @ Skipton-in-Craven; D Company @ Keighley.

1st April 1939: Battalion expanded to form two units 1/6th Bn and 2/6th Bn.

1/6th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A Company, B Company, C Company, D Company.

* Redesignated 6th Bn January 1943.

Suspended animation: 31st October 1946.

2/6th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Keighley.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A Company, B Company, C Company, D Company.

* Redesignated 20th July 1942: 114th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (DWR) TA.

* Redesignated 7th February 1944: 11th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) and placed in suspended animation.

673 HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (DWR) (TA)

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

* Designated 322 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (DWR) (TA) from 1st January to circa 1st March 1947.

BATTERIES: ?

**673 LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT
ROYAL ARTILLERY (DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT) (TA)**

Redesignated : 1st January 1949. Headquarters: Skipton-in-Craven.

BATTERIES: ?

30th June 1950: Regiment absorbed 538 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) (TA) - (Unit previously formed as 38 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) @ Bradford 28th August 1939; Reconstituted 1st January 1947 as 538 LAA Regt RA (TA).)

10th March 1955:

Amalgamated with 382 Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA) to form 382 Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's Regiment) (TA) - see page 257.

1st April 1908 formed from 2nd Volunteer Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) - see page 258.

7th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S (WEST RIDING REGIMENT) (TF)

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Milnsbridge.

COMPANIES: (Formed from a nucleus of three companies ex 2nd Volunteer Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)) A Company @ Milnsbridge; B Company @ Milnsbridge; C Company @ Slaithwaite; D Company @ Marsden; E Company @ Upper Mill; F Company @ Mossley; G Company @ Lees; H Company @ Mossley.

The Great War 3 Battalions

7th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/7th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 27th June 1919.

2/7th Bn Formed 1st September 1914; Reduced to Cadre 18th June 1918 and absorbed into 29th (Service) Battalion The Durham Light Infantry.

3/7th Res Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed into 3/6th Res Bn 1st September 1916.

7th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Milnsbridge.

COMPANIES:

1st April 1939: Battalion expanded to form two units - 1/7th Battalion and 2/7th Battalion.

1/7th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Milnsbridge.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A Company, B Company, C Company, D Company.

* Redesignated January 1943: 7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA).

Suspended animation: 10th October 1946.

2/7th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Springhead, The Drill Hall.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, W Company, X Company, Y Company, Z Company.

* Redesignated 20th July 1942: 115th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (DWR) TA.

* Redesignated 7th February 1944: 12th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) and placed in suspended animation.

7th BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT (WEST RIDING) (TA)

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Milnsbridge, The Drill Hall.

COMPANIES: Milnsbridge; Slaithwaite; Mossley; Springhead; Uppermill; Sowerby Bridge; Elland; with detachment @ Halifax, Wellesley Barracks.

20th May 1957:

Battalion amalgamated with 578th (5th Bn DWR) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) to form 5/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) - see page 258.

2nd YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING (HALLAMSHIRE) RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Formed: 22nd December 1859. Headquarters: Sheffield, Nos. 75 & 19 Eyre Street.

* Title The Hallamshire Rifle Volunteer Corps 22nd December 1859 - 24th February 1860.

* Title (Hallamshire) sanctioned 24th February 1860.

COMPRISING: 2nd Y(WR)RVC Hallamshire formed 30th September 1859, 4th Company formed 3rd December 1859 by John Brown & Co (Atlas Works), + Company formed 30th January 1860 by John Brown & Co (Atlas Works), + company formed @ Sheffield 1861; 3rd Y(WR)RVC @ Sheffield formed 30th September 1859, absorbed by 2nd Y(WR)RVC on 22nd December 1859; 4th Y(WR)RVC @ Sheffield formed 30th September 1859, absorbed by 2nd Y(WR)RVC on 22nd December 1859.

1st (HALLAMSHIRE) VOLUNTEER BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT

Redesignated: 1st February 1883. Headquarters: Sheffield, Eyre Street; 10th May 1886 to Hyde Park Barracks.

COMPANIES: A - H Companies @ Sheffield.

4th (HALLAMSHIRE) BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Sheffield, Hyde Park Barracks.

* Title (Hallamshire) authorised March 1909.

COMPANIES: A - H Companies @ Sheffield.

The Great War 3 Battalions

4th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/4th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 9th December 1919.

2/4th Bn Formed 21st September 1914; Disbanded 1st June 1919.

3/4th Res Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed 3/5th Bn 1st September 1916; Disbanded 31st March 1919.

4th (HALLAMSHIRE) BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall - bought 1914, occupied 1919.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A - D Companies @ Sheffield.

THE HALLAMSHIRE BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Redesignated: 30th January 1924. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A - D Companies @ Sheffield.

1st April 1939: Battalion expanded to form two units, *The Hallamshire Battalion and the 6th Battalion.*

THE HALLAMSHIRE BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A - D Companies @ Sheffield.

Suspended animation 1946.

6th BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company, A Company, B Company, C Company, D Company: Companies recruited @ Sheffield, Dinnington, Maltby, Wath-upon-Deerne.

Suspended animation 1946.

THE HALLAMSHIRE BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall, A Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall; B Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall; C Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall; D Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall.

New D Company formed @ Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road, 1st April 1958;

B (Barnsley) Company formed @ Barnsley, Eastgate, 25th February 1960 by transfer of R (5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment) Battery 271 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) - see page 272.

865 Anti-Aircraft Reporting Battery Royal Artillery (TA) @ Rotherham absorbed into Battalion, @ D Company, 25th February 1960 - see page 264.

New A Company formed @ Sheffield, Middlewood Road, 1st May 1961.

COMPANIES: (1st May 1961) Headquarter Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall; A Company @ Sheffield, Middlewood Road; B Company @ Barnsley, Eastgate; C Company @ Sheffield, Endcliffe Hall; D Company @ Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Rd.

1st April 1967:

Al amalgamated with 3rd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA) and The Leeds Rifles The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (TA) and 4th/5th Battalion The Green Howards (TA) and The West Riding Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA) to form the Yorkshire Volunteers T&AVR 11b - see page 251; and to form The Hallamshire (Territorial) Battalion T&AVR III - see page 254.

4th ADMIN BATTALION YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: August 1860. Headquarters: Doncaster.

COMPRISING: 18th Y(WR)RVC @ Pontefract formed 3rd March 1860; 19th Y(WR)RVC @ Rotherham formed 29th February 1860; 20th Y(WR)RVC *Great North Railway* @ Doncaster formed 5th March 1860; 21st Y(WR)RVC *Doncaster Burgesses* @ Doncaster formed 5th March 1860; 36th Y(WR)RVC @ Rotherham formed 19th October 1860, became part of 2nd Admin Bn February 1863; 37th Y(WR)RVC @ Barnsley formed 2nd November 1860; 40th Y(WR)RVC @ Hoyland Nether formed 19th March 1863 and became part of 2nd Admin Bn, moved to Wath on Dearne 1866.

8th YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Redesignated: 15th June 1880. Headquarters: Doncaster.

* Numbered 18th from 3rd February - 15th June 1880.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Pontefract; B Company @ Rotherham; C Company @ Doncaster; D Company @ Doncaster; E Company @ Rotherham; F Company @ Barnsley; G Company @ Wath on Dearne; H Company formed 1880 @ Barnsley; J Company formed 1880 @ Rotherham.

2nd VOLUNTEER BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT

Redesignated: 1st February 1883. Headquarters: Doncaster.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Pontefract; B Company @ Rotherham; C Company @ Doncaster; D Company @ Doncaster; E Company @ Rotherham; F Company @ Barnsley; G Company @ Wath on Dearne; H Company formed 1880 @ Barnsley; J Company formed 1880 @ Rotherham. K Company formed 1884 @ Doncaster; L Company formed 1900 @ Doncaster; Cyclist Company formed 1900 (50% @ Doncaster, 25% @ Rotherham, 25% @ Barnsley).

DETACHED: 1st April 1908: 5 Companies @ Doncaster and 1 Company @ Pontefract to *5th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) TF* - see page 276.

5th BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Rotherham, Wharncliffe Street.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company @ Rotherham; A Company @ Rotherham; B Company @ Rotherham; C Company @ Barnsley; D Company @ Wath on Dearne, by 1913, with detachments @ Wombwell and Mexborough; E Company @ Barnsley; F Company @ Rotherham; G Company formed 1st April 1908 @ Treeton; H Company formed 1st April 1908 @ Birdwell.

The Great War 3 Battalions

5th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/5th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 20th June 1919.

2/5th Bn Formed 3rd October 1914; Disbanded 3rd February 1918 and personnel transferred to 1/4th Bn, 1/5th Bn, 2/4th Bn.

3/5th Res Bn Formed March 1915; Absorbed by 3/4th Res Bn 1st September 1916.

5th BATTALION THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Rotherham, Wharncliffe Street.

COMPANIES: Headquarter Company @ Rotherham; A Company @ Rotherham; B Company @ Birdwell (1930 moved to Wath on Dearne); C Company @ Barnsley; D Company @ Rotherham.

**67th (THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT)
ANTI-AIRCRAFT BRIGADE ROYAL ARTILLERY TA**

Redesignated: 10th December 1936. Headquarters: Rotherham, Wharncliffe Street, 1938 to Fitzwilliam Road.

BATTERIES: 187 Battery @ Rotherham; 188 Battery @ Wath on Dearne (1939 to Mexborough); 189 Battery @ Barnsley; 67th Anti-Aircraft Machine-Gun Battery @ Rotherham - redesignated 198 Battery on 1st May 1937.

67th (YORK AND LANCASTER) ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Redesignated: 1st January 1939. Headquarters: Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road.

* Designated *Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment* 1st June 1940.

BATTERIES: 187 Battery @ Rotherham; 188 Battery @ Mexborough; 189 Battery @ Barnsley; 198 Battery @ Rotherham. 198 Battery transferred to *122nd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* 14th September 1941.

Regiment served in Infantry role from 6th October 1944 to 1st January 1945.

Suspended animation: 1st February 1946, 187 Battery, 188 Battery, 189 Battery.

**467th (THE YORK AND LANCASTER REGIMENT)
HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA**

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Rotherham, Fitzwilliam Road.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery @ Rotherham; P Battery @ Rotherham; Q Battery @ Barnsley; R Battery @ Mexborough.

10th March 1955:

Regiment amalgamated at Battery strength with *271st Field Regiment (West Riding) Royal Artillery TA* - see page 272.

25th February 1960:

R (*5th York and Lancaster*) Battery transferred from *271 (Sheffield) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA*, see page 272, to *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment TA* - see page 262.

1st January 1947: Formed as new Royal Artillery TA unit.

65 ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE CONTROL TROOP ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Formed: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Rotherham.

865 ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE CONTROL BATTERY ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Expanded to Battery establishment: 1st August 1955. Battery Headquarters: Rotherham.

865 ANTI-AIRCRAFT REPORTING BATTERY ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Formed by amalgamation: 30th September 1957. Battery Headquarters: Rotherham.

Formed by the amalgamation of *865 Anti-Aircraft Fire Control Battery Royal Artillery TA @ Rotherham* with *69 C&R Troop Royal Artillery TA @ Leeds*.

25th February 1960:

Battery absorbed by The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment TA - see page 262.

1st YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, ARTILLERY VOLUNTEER CORPS

Formed: 2nd August 1860. Headquarters: Leeds, Town Hall Crypt.

Formed from elements of *7th Yorkshire, West Riding, (Leeds) Rifle Volunteer Corps, (The Leeds Rifles)*.

BATTERIES: Additional Batteries formed @ Leeds on 6th August 1860; 1st November 1860; 4th January 1862; 10th February 1862; 17th February 1862. Eight Batteries by January 1866.

1st WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS

Redesignated: 1st July 1889. Headquarters: Leeds.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Position Battery; No. 2 Position Battery; No. 3 Position Battery; No. 4 Position Battery.

1st WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY (VOLUNTEERS)

Redesignated: 1st January 1902. Headquarters: Leeds.

BATTERIES: ?

1st WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Leeds.

BATTERIES: 1st (West Riding) Battery @ Leeds; 2nd (West Riding) Battery @ Bramley; 3rd (West Riding) Battery @ Leeds; 1st (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column @ Leeds.

The Great War 2 Regiments

1/1st WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Embodied 4th August 1914.

BATTERIES: 1/1st (West Riding) Battery; 1/2nd (West Riding) Battery; 1/3rd (West Riding) Battery; 1/1st (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column.

Redesignated *245th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* on 3rd April 1916. **Batteries:** A (1/1st West Riding) Battery; B (1/2nd West Riding) Battery; C (1/3rd West Riding) Battery; + D (1/11th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery transferred from *1/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* 1st May 1916. B (1/3rd West Riding) Battery transferred to *248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* (late 4th WR (How) Bde RFA TF), 1st May 1916. Absorbed half of *248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* 1st October 1916.

2/1st WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Formed as Second-Line unit circa September 1914.

BATTERIES: 2/1st (West Riding) Battery; 2/2nd (West Riding) Battery; 2/3rd (West Riding) Battery; 2/1st (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column.

Redesignated *310th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* on 1st May 1916. **Batteries:** A (2/1st West Riding) Battery; B (2/2nd West Riding) Battery; C (2/3rd West Riding) Battery; + D (Howitzer) (2/?th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery transferred from *2/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*, 1st May 1916; Right Section D (Howitzer) Battery of *311th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*, absorbed into D (Howitzer) Battery 18th January 1917.

69th(WEST RIDING) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Leeds, Fenton Street Barracks.

BATTERIES: (Numbered from 1921) 273 (1st West Riding) Battery @ Leeds *ex 1st West Riding Battery*; 274 (2nd West Riding) Battery @ Bramley *ex 2nd West Riding Battery*; 275 (3rd West Riding) Battery @ Leeds *ex 3rd West Riding Battery*; 276th (11th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery @ Ilkley *ex 11th West Riding Battery* - see page 270.

June 1924: *Battery designated Field Battery.*

69th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Redesignated: 1st November 1938. Headquarters: Leeds, Fenton Street Barracks.

BATTERIES: 273 Field Battery @ Leeds; 274 Field Battery @ Bramley; 275 Field Battery @ Leeds; 276 Field Battery @ Ilkley.

1st April 1939: *Regiment expanded to form two units: 69 (WR) Fd Regt RA TA & 121 Fd Regt RA (WR) TA.*

69th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Leeds, Fenton Street Barracks.

Formed from 273 Battery @ Leeds and 274 Battery @ Bramley.

BATTERIES: 273 Battery @ Leeds; 274 Battery @ Bramley.

448 Battery formed within Regiment 26th May 1941; 189 Battery transferred from 185th Field Regiment Royal Artillery 1st January 1943; 274 Battery transferred to 185th Field Regiment Royal Artillery 1st January 1943.

Suspended animation: 31st December 1946.

121st FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (WEST RIDING) TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Leeds.

* Title (*West Riding*) authorised 17th February 1942.

* Redesignated *121st Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) TA* 6th January 1944.

Formed from 275 Battery @ Leeds and 276 Battery @ Ilkley.

BATTERIES: 275 Battery @ Leeds; 276 Battery @ Ilkley.

486 Battery formed within Regiment 3rd February 1941 and transferred to *165th Field Regiment Royal Artillery* 2nd June 1942; 161 (Independent) Battery transferred to Regiment 20th June 1943, Battery disbanded 20th January 1944.

Suspended animation 1st April 1946: 275 Medium Battery; 276 Medium Battery.

269th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Leeds, Fenton Street Barracks.

(Reconstitution of *69th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA*).

BATTERIES:

321 HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Leeds

(Reconstitution of *121st Medium Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) TA*).

BATTERIES:

269th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: 10th March 1955. Headquarters: Leeds, Fenton Street Barracks.

Formed by the amalgamation of *269th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA* and *321 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA*.

BATTERIES:

249th (THE WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: 1st February 1961. Headquarters: Leeds, Carlton Barracks.

Formed by the amalgamation of *269th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* and *270th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* - see page 267.

* Field omitted from title 4th October 1961 - 18th March 1964.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery @ Leeds; P Battery @ Leeds; Q (The West Yorkshire Regiment) Battery @ Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks; R Battery @ Bramley.

1st April 1967

Redesignated *The West Riding Regiment Royal Artillery T&AVR III* - see page 254.

3rd YORKSHIRE (WEST RIDING) RIFLE VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: 24th February 1860. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

COMPRISING: 5th Y(WR)RVC @ Bradford formed 27th September 1859; 6th Y(WR)RVC @ Bradford formed 28th September 1859, additional two companies formed 21st February 1860, fifth company formed 2nd May 1860; 24th Y(WR)RVC @ Eccleshill formed as a Sub-Division 27th February 1860, at Company strength 27th September 1860, absorbed by 3rd Y(WR)RVC 9th October 1860. 39th Y(WR)RVC @ Bingley formed 8th April 1861 disbanded April 1875.

2nd VOLUNTEER BATTALION**THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN (WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT)**

Redesignated: 1st December 1887. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

COMPANIES: Nine companies.

6th BATTALION THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN (WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT) TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Bradford; B Company @ Bradford; C Company @ Bradford; D Company @ Bradford; E Company @ Bradford; F Company @ Bradford; G Company @ Bradford; H Company @ Bradford.

The Great War 3 Battalions

6th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/6th Bn March 1915; Disembodied 30th March 1920.

2/6th Bn Formed 12th September 1914; Disbanded 31st January 1918.

3/6th (Res) Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed by 3/5th (Res) Bn 1st September 1916.

6th BATTALION THE WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT (THE PRINCE OF WALES'S OWN) TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

COMPANIES:

49th (THE WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT)**ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTALION ROYAL ENGINEERS (TA)**

Redesignated: 1st November 1937. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

COMPANIES: 395 Company; 396 Company; 397 Company; 398 Company.

Companies designated Batteries from 1st August 1940; 397 Battery transferred to 63rd Searchlight Regiment Royal Artillery (Queen's) (TA) 23rd January 1942.

* Redesignated 1st August 1940: 49th Searchlight Regiment (The West Yorkshire Regiment) Royal Artillery (TA).

* Redesignated 16th October 1944: 49th Garrison Regiment Royal Artillery (The West Yorkshire Regiment) (TA).

* Redesignated 13th October 1945: 601st Regiment Royal Artillery (The West Yorkshire Regiment) (TA).

Suspended animation 4th February 1946.

584 (THE WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT)**(MOBILE) HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)**

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

* Circa 1948 (Mobile) deleted from title.

BATTERIES:

584 (THE WEST YORKSHIRE REGIMENT)**LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)**

Redesignated: 1st January 1954. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

BATTERIES:

370th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

By amalgamation: 10th March 1955. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

Formed by the amalgamation of 584 (The West Yorkshire Regiment) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) with 270th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) - see page 269.

BATTERIES: P (West Riding) Battery; Q (The West Yorkshire Regiment) Battery; R (West Riding) Battery.

270th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Redesignated: 29th February 1960. Headquarters: Bradford, Belle Vue Barracks.

BATTERIES: P (West Riding) Battery; Q (The West Yorkshire Regiment) Battery; R (West Riding) Battery.

1st February 1961:

Regiment amalgamated with 269th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) to form 249th (The West Riding Artillery) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) - see page 266.

2nd YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, ARTILLERY VOLUNTEER CORPS

Formed: 18th October 1860. Headquarters: Bradford.

BATTERIES: Formed as a Sub-Division; Increased to Battery strength 6th April 1861; Additional batteries formed on 21st May 1861; 8th July 1861; 1st November 1861; Battery formed circa June 1863 @ Bradford, Bowling.

1st ADMIN BRIGADE YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, ARTILLERY VOLUNTEER CORPS

Consolidation of independent corps: 1st March 1864. Headquarters: Bradford.

COMPRISING: 2nd Y(WR)AVC @ Bradford, 5 Batteries, formed 18th October 1860; 5th Y(WR)AVC @ Bowling, 2 Batteries, formed 1st March 1864 from Battery of 2nd Y(WR)AVC, disbanded November 1874; 6th Y(WR)AVC @ Heckmondwike formed 24th May 1867 from Battery of 2nd Y(WR)AVC, re-absorbed by 2nd Y(WR)AVC May 1875; 7th Y(WR)AVC @ Batley formed 24th May 1867 from No. 2 Battery 5th Y(WR)AVC, disbanded by July 1877; 8th Y(WR)AVC @ Halifax formed 19th May 1871.

2nd YORKSHIRE, WEST RIDING, ARTILLERY VOLUNTEER CORPS

Redesignated: 16th March 1880. Headquarters: Bradford.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Battery @ Bradford; No. 2 Battery @ Bradford; No. 3 Battery @ Bradford; No. 4 Battery @ Bradford; No. 5 Battery @ Heckmondwike; No. 6 Battery @ Heckmondwike; No. 7 Battery @ Halifax; No. 8 Battery @ Halifax.

2nd WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS

Redesignated: 1st July 1889. Headquarters: Bradford.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Position Battery; No. 2 Position Battery; No. 3 Position Battery; No. 4 Position Battery.

2nd WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY

Redesignated: November 1891. Headquarters: Bradford.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Battery @ Bradford; No. 2 Battery @ Bradford; No. 3 Battery @ Heckmondwike; No. 4 Battery @ Halifax.

2nd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Bradford, Valley Parade.

BATTERIES: 4th (West Riding) Battery @ Bradford; 5th (West Riding) Battery @ Halifax; 6th (West Riding) Battery @ Heckmondwike; 2nd (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column - A, B, C, D, Sub-Sections @ Bradford, E, F, Sub-Sections @ Halifax.

The Great War 2 Regiments

1/2nd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Embodied 4th August 1914.

BATTERIES: 1/4th (West Riding) Battery; 1/5th (West Riding) Battery; 1/6th (West Riding) Battery; 1/2nd (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column.

Redesignated 246th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF on 1st May 1916. **Batteries:** A (1/4th West Riding) Battery; B (1/5th West Riding) Battery; C (1/6th West Riding) Battery; + D (1/10th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery transferred from 1/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF, 1st May 1916. B (1/5th West Riding) Battery transferred to 248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF (late 1/4th WR (How) Bde RFA TF), 1st May 1916. Absorbed half of 248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF 1st October 1916.

2/2nd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Formed as Second-Line unit circa September 1914.

BATTERIES: 2/4th (West Riding) Battery; 2/5th (West Riding) Battery; 2/6th (West Riding) Battery; 2/2nd (West Riding) Brigade Ammunition Column.

Redesignated 311th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF on 1st May 1916. **Batteries:** A (2/4th West Riding) Battery; B (2/5th West Riding) Battery; C (2/6th West Riding) Battery; + D (Howitzer) Battery transferred from 2/4th (West Riding) Howitzer Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF, 1st May 1916. Left Section D (Howitzer) Battery transferred to 312th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF, 18th January 1917; Right Section D (Howitzer) Battery transferred to 310th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF, 19th January 1917; New D (Howitzer) Battery transferred from 517 Howitzer Brigade - 31st Division Artillery 25th January 1917; New C Battery by transfer of C Battery 308th Brigade Royal Field Artillery, 27th January 1917.

70th (WEST RIDING) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Bradford, Valley Parade.

BATTERIES: 277 (4th West Riding) Battery @ Bradford; 278 (5th West Riding) Battery @ Halifax; 279 (6th West Riding) Battery @ Bradford; 280 (10th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery @ Otley ex 10th West Riding Battery - see page 270.

June 1924: Battery designated Field Battery.

70th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Redesignated: 1st November 1938. Headquarters: Bradford, Valley Parade.

BATTERIES: 277 Field Battery @ Bradford; 278 Field Battery @ Bradford; 279 Field Battery @ Halifax; 280 Field Battery @ Otley.

1st April 1939: *Regiment expanded to form two units: 70 (WR) Fd Regt RA TA & 122 Fd Regt RA TA.*

70th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Bradford, Valley Parade.

BATTERIES: 277 Battery @ Bradford; 279 Battery @ Bradford.

449 Battery formed within Regiment 15th February 1941.

Suspended animation 12th July 1946. 277 Battery; 279 Battery; 449 Battery.

122nd FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (WEST RIDING) TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Halifax.

* Title (*West Riding*) authorised 17th February 1942, (Regiment not notified - lost @ Singapore).

BATTERIES: 278 Battery @ Halifax; 280 Battery @ Otley.

Suspended animation 15th February 1942.

Disbanded 1st January 1947.

270th (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Bradford, Valley Parade.

BATTERIES: Battery @ Bradford; Battery @ Bradford; Battery @ Otley with detachment @ Ilkley.

10th March 1955:

Regiment amalgamated with 584 (*The West Yorkshire Regiment*) *Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)* to form 370th (*West Riding*) *Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 267.

1st April 1908: Royal Field Artillery Territorial Force Regiment formed by transfer and conversion of existing Volunteer Force units - 'C' Company 3rd Volunteer Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment); 'H' Company 2nd West Riding of Yorkshire Royal Engineers (Volunteers); 'F' Company 2nd West Riding of Yorkshire Royal Engineers (Volunteers).

4th WEST RIDING (HOWITZER) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Formed: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Otley.

BATTERIES: 10th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery @ Otley ex 'F' Company 2nd West Riding of Yorkshire Royal Engineers (Volunteers); 11th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery @ Ilkley ex C Company 3rd Volunteer Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) - see page 259; 4th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Brigade Ammunition Column @ Otley ex 'H' Company 2nd West Riding of Yorkshire Royal Engineers (Volunteers).

The Great War 2 Regiments

1/4th WEST RIDING (HOWITZER) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Embodied 4th August 1914.

BATTERIES: 1/10th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery; 1/11th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery; 1/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Ammunition Column.

D (Howitzer) Battery transferred from CLXIV 32nd Division 16th February 1916.

Detached: 1st May 1916: 1/10th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery transferred to 246th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; 1/11th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery transferred to 245th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; D (Howitzer) Battery transferred to 247th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF.

Redesignated 248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF on 1st May 1916. **Batteries:** A Battery transferred from C (1/3rd West Riding) Battery 245th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; B Battery transferred from B (1/5th West Riding) Battery 246th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; C Battery from D Battery 247th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF.

18th October 1916: Brigade broken up - A Battery and Right Section of C Battery to 245th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; B Battery and Left Section of C Battery to 246th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF.

2/4th WEST RIDING (HOWITZER) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Formed as Second-Line unit circa September 1914.

BATTERIES: 2/10th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery; 2/11th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery; 2/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Ammunition Column.

Expanded to three Howitzer Batteries by May 1916 and one Battery transferred each to 310th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; 311th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF; 312th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF.

7th February 1920:

Batteries reconstituted. 10th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery reconstituted @ Otley and transferred to 70th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF - see page 268. 11th (West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery reconstituted @ Ilkley and transferred to 69th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF - see page 265.

4th YORKSHIRE (SHEFFIELD), WEST RIDING, ARTILLERY VOLUNTEER CORPS

Formed: 6th February 1861. Headquarters: Sheffield, Music Hall (Surrey Street) for first months then to Tudor Street. To West Street from June 1879. To Edmund Road, Norfolk Barracks, 1880.

* Sub-title (*Sheffield*) authorised 12th July 1864.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Battery @ Sheffield formed 6th February 1861; No. 2 Battery @ Sheffield formed 6th February 1861; No. 3 Battery @ Sheffield formed 2nd May 1861; No. 4 Battery @ Handsworth Woodhouse formed 1863; No. 5 Battery @ Howard Hill; No. 6 Battery @ Hallam formed 1863; No. 7 Battery @ Sheffield formed 1863; No. 8 Battery @ Chapeltown formed 1863.

4th WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS

Redesignated: 1st July 1889. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: No. 1 Position Battery; No. 2 Position Battery; No. 3 Position Battery; No. 4 Position Battery.

4th WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY

Redesignated: November 1891. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: Four Batteries.

4th WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE ROYAL GARRISON ARTILLERY (VOLUNTEERS)

Redesignated: 1st January 1902. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: 1st Heavy Battery; 2nd Heavy Battery; 3rd Heavy Battery; 4th Heavy Battery.

DETACHED: 1st April 1908: Battery to form *The West Riding Battery Royal Horse Artillery TF* - see page 274.

3rd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Redesignated: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: 7th (West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield - ex 3rd Heavy Battery and F Company 1st Yorkshire, West Riding, Engineer Volunteer Corps; 8th (West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield ex 2nd Heavy Battery & 4th Heavy Battery; 9th (West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield ex 1st Heavy Battery; 3rd West Riding Brigade Ammunition Column (A-F Sub-sections) @ Sheffield.

The Great War 2 Regiments.

1/3rd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Embodied 4th August 1914.

BATTERIES: 1/7th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 1/8th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 1/9th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 1/3rd West Riding Brigade Ammunition Column @ Sheffield.

D Battery formed within Regiment 19th April 1916.

Redesignated *247th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* on 13th May 1916. **Batteries:** A (1/7th West Riding Battery; B (1/8th West Riding) Battery; C (1/9th West Riding) Battery; + D (Howitzer) Battery transferred from *1/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*; Former D Battery transferred to *248th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*.

2/3rd WEST RIDING BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF

Formed as Second-Line unit circa September 1914.

BATTERIES: 2/7th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 2/8th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 2/9th West Riding Battery @ Sheffield; 2/3rd West Riding Brigade Ammunition Column @ Sheffield.

Redesignated *312th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* May 1916. **Batteries:** A (2/7th West Riding) Battery; B (2/8th West Riding) Battery; C (2/9th West Riding) Battery; + D (Howitzer) Battery transferred from *2/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*, May 1916.

Left Section D (Howitzer) Battery of *311th (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF*, absorbed into D (Howitzer) Battery 18th January 1917.

71st (WEST RIDING) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: (Numbered from 1921) 281 (7th West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield; 282 (8th West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield; 283 (9th West Riding) Battery @ Sheffield; 284 (12th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery @ Rotherham, Wentworth Woodhouse, ex *The West Riding Battery Royal Horse Artillery TF*.

June 1924: Battery designated *Field Battery*.

71st (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Redesignated: 1st November 1938. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: 281 Field Battery; 282 Field Battery; 283 Field Battery; 284 Field Battery.

1st April 1939: Regiment expanded to form two units 71 (WR) Fd Regt RA TA - see page 272, and 123 Fd Regt RA (WR) TA - see page 273.

71st (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.
Formed from 281 Battery and 282 Battery.

BATTERIES: 281 Battery, 282 Battery.

450 Battery formed within Regiment 14th January 1941.

Suspended animation 31st March 1946: 281 Battery; 282 Battery; 450 Battery.

271st (WEST RIDING) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.
(Reconstitution of *71st (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA*)

* 1953 Title (*West Riding*) deleted and (*Sheffield*) added.

BATTERIES:

271st (SHEFFIELD) FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: 10th March 1955. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

Formed by the amalgamation of *271st (Sheffield) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA* and *467th (The York and Lancaster Regiment) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 263.

BATTERIES: P Battery; Q Battery; R (5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment) Battery.

DETACHED: 25th February 1960: R (5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment) Battery transferred to *The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)* - see page 262.

271st LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: March 1961. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

Formed by the amalgamation of *271st (Sheffield) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA* with *323rd (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment TA*, - see page 273, and *884 Locating Battery Royal Artillery TA*, - see page 278.

* Title *Light Anti-Aircraft* deleted October 1961.

BATTERIES: P Battery @ Sheffield; Q Battery @ Sheffield; R (KOYLI) Battery @ Doncaster.

271 (SHEFFIELD ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS)**LIGHT AIR DEFENCE REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (TA)**

Redesignated: March 1964. Headquarters: Sheffield, Norfolk Barracks, Edmund Road.

BATTERIES: P Battery @ Sheffield; Q Battery @ Sheffield; R (KOYLI) Battery @ Doncaster.

1st April 1967:

Redesignated *The Sheffield Artillery Volunteers (Territorials) Royal Artillery T&AVR III* - see page 254.

1st April 1939: Duplicate unit formed by 71st (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA - see page 271.

123rd FIELD REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (WEST RIDING) TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Sheffield.

Formed from 283 Battery and 284 Battery

BATTERIES: 283 Battery; 284 Battery.

488 Battery formed within Regiment 14th January 1941.

* Redesignated 17th February 1942: *123rd Parachute Field Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) TA* until 5th September 1945 when reverted to original title.

Suspended animation 30th September 1946.

323rd (WEST RIDING) LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield.

(Reconstitution of *123rd Field Regiment Royal Artillery (West Riding) TA*).

BATTERIES:

323rd (WEST RIDING) LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: 10th March 1955. Headquarters: Sheffield, Manor Top.

Formed by the amalgamation of *323rd (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* and *553rd (King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 276; and *557th (King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 276.

BATTERIES: RHQ Battery and 2 Batteries @ Sheffield; 1 Battery @ Doncaster.

31st October 1956: Regiment absorbed R Battery of 629 (*The Cambridgeshire Regiment*) *Parachute Light Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 277.

March 1961:

Regiment amalgamated with *271st (Sheffield) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA*, to form *271st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 272.

1st April 1908: Battery formed by transfer of Battery from *4th West Riding of Yorkshire Royal Garrison Artillery (Volunteers)* - see page 271.

THE WEST RIDING BATTERY ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY TF

Formed: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Rotherham, Wentworth Woodhouse.

COMPRISING: 1 Royal Horse Artillery Battery; 1 Ammunition Column.

**THE WEST RIDING ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY BATTERY
5 LOWLAND BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF**

Redesignated: Circa 1914. Headquarters: Rotherham, Wentworth Woodhouse.

**C (WEST RIDING ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY) BATTERY
263 (LOWLAND) BRIGADE ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY TF**

Redesignated: 28th May 1916.

* Renumbered 264 15th September 1916; Renumbered 263 30th December 1916.

30th December 1916: Battery split up: 1 Section to A (*Hampshire Royal Horse Artillery*) Battery, 1 Section to B (*Essex Royal Horse Artillery*) Battery.

7th February 1920:

Battery reconstituted as *284 (12th West Riding) (Howitzer) Battery 71st (West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF* - see page 271.

1st YORKSHIRE (WEST RIDING) ENGINEER VOLUNTEER CORPS

Formed: 8th November 1860. Headquarters: Sheffield, School of Art, later @ John Street, Bramhall Lane.

1st (SHEFFIELD) YORKSHIRE (WEST RIDING) ENGINEER VOLUNTEER CORPS

Redesignated: 1884. Headquarters: Sheffield, Glossop Road (from 1884).

COMPANIES: A - G Fortress Companies.

DETACHED: 1st April 1908 - F Company to 3rd West Riding Brigade Royal Field Artillery TF - see page 271.

1st April 1908: Formed from part of *2nd Volunteer Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*, - see page 263, and part of *1st Volunteer Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)*.

5th BATTALION THE KING'S OWN (YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) TF

Formed: 1st April 1908. Headquarters: Doncaster, French Gate.

COMPANIES: A Company @ Pontefract - *ex 2nd Volunteer Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*; B Company @ Doncaster - *ex 2nd Volunteer Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*; C Company @ Doncaster - *ex 2nd Volunteer Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*; D Company @ Goole - *ex 1st Volunteer Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)*; E Company @ Normanton - *ex 1st Volunteer Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)*; F Company @ Doncaster - *ex 2nd Volunteer Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment*; G Company formed new @ Conisborough; H Company @ Castleford - *ex 2nd West Riding of Yorkshire Engineer Volunteer Corps*.

May 1909: E Company @ Normanton transferred to *4th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) TF*. Replacement E Company formed @ Featherstone.

The Great War 3 Battalions

5th Bn Embodied 4th August 1914; Redesignated 1/5th Bn March 1915; Amalgamated with 2/5th Bn and redesignated 5th Bn 30th January 1918; Disembodied 30th October 1918.

2/5th Bn Formed 16th September 1914; Amalgamated with 2/5th Bn and redesignated 5th Bn 30th January 1918.

3/5th (Res) Bn Formed 25th March 1915; Absorbed by 3/4th (Reserve) Bn 1st September 1916.

5th BATTALION THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY TA

Reconstituted: 7th February 1920. Headquarters: Doncaster, Scarbrough Barracks.

COMPANIES: Doncaster; Goole; Featherstone; Pontefract; Castleford.

5th BATTALION THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY (53rd LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT) TA

Redesignated: 1st November 1938. Headquarters: Doncaster, Scarbrough Barracks.

BATTERIES: 157 Battery; 158 Battery; 159 Battery.

DETACHED: 4th April 1939: Battery(ies) @ Castleford and at Pontefract to *96th Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA*.

1st April 1939 Regiment expanded to form two units: 53 LAA Regt RA TA and 57 LAA Regt RA TA.

53rd LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY (5TH BATTALION THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters: Doncaster, Scarbrough Barracks.

* Designated part of the Royal Regiment of Artillery 1st August 1940.

BATTERIES: 157 Battery; 158 Battery; 159 Battery.

Suspended animation September 1946.

57th (KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Duplicate unit: 1st April 1939. Headquarters:

BATTERIES: 169 Battery; 170 Battery; 171 Battery.

Suspended animation 5th January 1946.

553rd (THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Doncaster.

(Reconstitution of *53rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (5th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) TA*).

BATTERIES:

557th (THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY) (M) HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Doncaster (?).

(Reconstitution of *57th (King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA*).

1st January 1954: Designated *Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment*.

BATTERIES:

10th March 1955:

553rd (The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA amalgamated with *557th (The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* and amalgamated at Battery establishment with *323rd (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 273.

1st July 1938: Royal Artillery Territorial Army Regiment formed as a new unit @ Sheffield.

13 LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Formed: 1st July 1938. Headquarters: Sheffield, Hillsborough.

BATTERIES: 37 Battery @ Hillsborough; 38 Battery @ Hillsborough.

122 Battery formed within Regiment 3rd September 1939.

Suspended animation 15th February 1946: 37 Battery; 38 Battery; 122 Battery.

513 LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Reconstituted: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield.

* *Searchlight* added to title 16th March 1949.

BATTERIES:

R (SHEFFIELD) BATTERY

629 (AIRBORNE) LIGHT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

By amalgamation: 10th March 1955. Battery Headquarters: Sheffield.

Formed by the amalgamation of 513 *Light Anti-Aircraft/Searchlight Regiment Royal Artillery TA* with 629 (*The Cambridgeshire Regiment*) *Airborne Light Regiment Royal Artillery TA*.

R (SHEFFIELD) BATTERY

629 (THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE REGIMENT)

PARACHUTE LIGHT REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Regiment Redesignated: 27th July 1955. Battery Headquarters: Sheffield.

[31st October 1956: 629 (*The Cambridgeshire Regiment*) *Parachute Light Regiment Royal Artillery TA* redesignated as *1st Battalion The Cambridgeshire Regiment TA*.]

31st October 1956:

R (Sheffield) Battery 629 (Airborne) Light Regiment Royal Artillery TA absorbed by *323rd (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery TA* - see page 273.

1st January 1947: Royal Artillery Territorial Army Troop formed as a new unit @ Sheffield.

884 LOCATING TROOP ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Formed: 1st January 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield.

884 LOCATING BATTERY ROYAL ARTILLERY TA

Expanded to Battery establishment: May 1947. Headquarters: Sheffield.

March 1961:

Absorbed by 271st (Sheffield) Field Regiment Royal Artillery TA - see page 272.

ORDER OF BATTLE, 1914-1918

GENERAL NOTES

1. Territorial Force infantry divisions were named, but not numbered, when they were formed on 1st April 1908. The divisions, and their brigades, were numbered after the outbreak of the First World War.
2. This appendix lists divisions and brigades under the numbered designations they used during the war. The 'West Riding Division (TF)' was designated the '49th (1st West Riding) Division', and its brigades numbered, on 12th May 1915. The second line West Riding Division was designated '62nd (2nd West Riding) Division', and its brigades numbered, on 17th August 1915.
3. Infantry battalions are shown under their post-embodiment designations ie '1/7th' and '2/7th'. Battalions were composed of eight rifle companies, and were reorganised on a four rifle company basis (each of four platoons) shortly after embodiment.
4. 'Machine-Gun Companies' and 'Trench Mortar Batteries' did not exist on embodiment but were formed within divisions as the war progressed.
5. Pre-war infantry brigades contained four infantry battalions and remained at that strength until 30th January 1918 when a shortage of reinforcement drafts required infantry brigades to reduce from four to three battalions.

49th (1st WEST RIDING) DIVISION (TF)

CAVALRY

'C' Squadron 1/1st Yorkshire Hussars ⁽¹⁾

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY

245th (1/1st West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Leeds
246th (1/2nd West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Bradford
247th (1/3rd West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Sheffield
248th (1/4th West Riding) (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Otley/Ilkley

146th (1/1st WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

1/5th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (TF)	York
1/6th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (TF)	Bradford
1/7th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (Leeds Rifles)(TF)	Leeds
1/8th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) (Leeds Rifles)(TF) ⁽²⁾	Leeds

147th (1/2nd WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

1/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF)	Halifax
1/5th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF) ⁽³⁾	Huddersfield
1/6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF)	Skipton-in-Craven
1/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF)	Milnsbridge

148th (1/3rd WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

1/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TF)	Sheffield
1/5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TF)	Rotherham
1/4th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) (TF)	Wakefield
1/5th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) (TF) ⁽⁴⁾	Doncaster

CYCLISTS

1st West Riding Divisional Cyclist Company ⁽⁵⁾

PIONEERS

3rd (Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire) (Pioneer) Battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment (TF) ⁽⁶⁾
 19th (3rd Salford) (Service) (Pioneer) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers ⁽⁷⁾

FIELD AMBULANCE

1/1st West Riding Field Ambulance	Leeds
1/2nd West Riding Field Ambulance	Leeds
1/3rd West Riding Field Ambulance	Sheffield

MACHINE GUN UNITS

146th Brigade Machine Gun Company ⁽⁸⁾
 147th Brigade Machine Gun Company ⁽⁹⁾
 148th Brigade Machine Gun Company ⁽¹⁰⁾
 199th Machine Gun Company ⁽¹¹⁾
 254th Machine Gun Company ⁽¹²⁾

TRENCH MORTAR BATTERIES

146th Brigade Trench Mortar Battery ⁽¹³⁾
 147th Brigade Trench Mortar Battery ⁽¹³⁾
 148th Brigade Trench Mortar Battery ⁽¹³⁾

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL TRENCH MORTAR BATTERIES

'V' Heavy Trench Mortar Battery. ⁽¹⁴⁾
 'W' Heavy Trench Mortar Battery. ⁽¹⁵⁾

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL ENGINEERS (TF)

2nd West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF)	Sheffield
57th Field Company Royal Engineers ⁽¹⁶⁾	
2/1st West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF)	
West Riding Divisional Signal Company Royal Engineers (TF)	Sheffield

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL TRAIN ARMY SERVICE CORPS (TF)

463 Company Army Service Corps	3 @ Leeds, 1 @ York
464 Company Army Service Corps	
465 Company Army Service Corps	
466 Company Army Service Corps	

243rd Divisional Employment Company ⁽¹⁷⁾

1/1st (West Riding) Mobile Veterinary Section

49th (1st West Riding) Sanitary Section ⁽¹⁸⁾	York
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NOTES - 49th (1st West Riding) Division

- (1) Until 8th May 1916.
- (2) Until 30th January 1918 when transferred to 185th (2/1st West Riding) Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division, and amalgamated with 2/8th Battalion to form 8th Battalion.
- (3) Until 30th January 1918 when transferred to 186th (2/1st West Riding) Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and amalgamated with 2/5th Battalion to form 5th Battalion.
- (4) Until 30th January 1918 when transferred to 187th (2/1st West Riding) Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and amalgamated with 2/5th Battalion to form 5th Battalion.
- (5) Formed during concentration. 26th May 1916 to X Corps Cyclist Battalion.
- (6) From 2nd September 1915 to 9th August 1915.
- (7) From 7th August 1916.
- (8) Formed 27th January 1916.
- (9) Formed 26th January 1916
- (10) Formed 6th February 1916
- (11) Formed at Grantham, Joined division 19th December 1916. 29th October 1917 to 41st Division.
- (12) Joined division 26th November 1917.
- (13) Formed 12th June 1916 by amalgamation of No 1 and No 2 Trench Mortar Battery in each Brigade.
- (14) Formed 18th April 1916; Absorbed 'W' Battery 7th June 1917; 29th October 1917 to 41st Division.
- (15) Formed 17th May 1916; Absorbed by 'V' Battery 7th June 1917.
- (16) From 10th July 1915.
- (17) Formed within division by 16th June 1917; numbered 7th July 1917.
- (18) To X Corps Sanitary Area 2nd April 1917.

62nd (2nd WEST RIDING) DIVISION (TF)**CAVALRY**

Northumberland Yeomanry (Hussars):- HQ Squadron, 'B' Squadron, Machine-Gun Section ⁽¹⁾

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY

310th (2/1st West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Leeds
311th (2/2nd West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF) ⁽²⁾	Bradford
312th (2/3rd West Riding) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF)	Sheffield
2/4th West Riding (Howitzer) Brigade Royal Field Artillery (TF) ⁽³⁾	Otley/Ilkley

185th (2/1st WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

2/5th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment (TF) ⁽⁴⁾	York
2/6th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment (TF) ⁽⁵⁾	Bradford
2/7th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles)(TF) ⁽⁶⁾	Leeds
2/8th Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles)(TF) ⁽⁷⁾	Leeds
1/5th Battalion The Devonshire Regiment (TF) ⁽⁸⁾	
2/20th (County of London) Battalion The London Regiment (Blackheath and Woolwich) (TF) ⁽⁹⁾	

186th (2/2nd WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

2/4th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF)	Halifax
2/5th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF) ⁽¹⁰⁾	Huddersfield
2/6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF) ⁽¹¹⁾	Skipton-in-Craven
2/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF) ⁽¹²⁾	Milnsbridge
2/4th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment (TF) ⁽¹³⁾	

187th(2/3rd WEST RIDING) BRIGADE

2/4th (Hallamshire) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TF)	Sheffield
2/5th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TF) ⁽¹⁴⁾	Rotherham
2/4th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) (TF)	Wakefield
2/5th Battalion The King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) (TF) ⁽¹⁵⁾	Doncaster

CYCLISTS

62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisional Cyclist Company ⁽¹⁶⁾

PIONEERS

1/9th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (Pioneers) (TF) ⁽¹⁷⁾

62nd (WEST RIDING) MACHINE GUN CORPS ⁽¹⁸⁾

201st Machine-Gun Company ⁽¹⁹⁾
 208th Machine-Gun Company
 212th Machine-Gun Company
 213th Machine-Gun Company

62nd (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL TRENCH MORTAR BATTERIES

'V' Heavy Trench Mortar Battery
 'X' Medium Trench Mortar Battery
 'Y' Medium Trench Mortar Battery
 'Z' Medium Trench Mortar Battery

62nd (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL ENGINEERS

2/1st West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF) ⁽²⁰⁾
 2/2nd West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF) ⁽²¹⁾
 3/1st West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF) ⁽²²⁾
 1/3rd West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF) ⁽²³⁾
 2/3rd West Riding Field Company Royal Engineers (TF) ⁽²⁴⁾
 62nd (2nd West Riding) Divisional Signals Company

62nd (WEST RIDING) DIVISIONAL TRAIN ARMY SERVICE CORPS

525 Company ASC (TF)
 526 Company ASC (TF)
 527 Company ASC (TF)
 528 Company ASC (TF)
 62nd Divisional Motor Transport Company

FIELD AMBULANCE

2/1st West Riding Field Ambulance
 2/2nd West Riding Field Ambulance
 2/3rd West Riding Field Ambulance

Leeds
 Leeds
 Sheffield

2/1st Northern Casualty Clearing Station
 252nd Employment Company
 2/1st (West Riding) Mobile Veterinary Section
 Mounted Military Police
 62nd Divisional Traffic Control
 62nd Divisional Sanitary Section

NOTES - 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division

- (1) 18th April 1916 -26th March 1917.
- (2) Became Army Brigade early 1917.
- (3) Until May 1916 when howitzer batteries transferred separately to other three brigades in the division.
- (4) Until 13th-18th August 1918 when battalion broken-up and drafted.
- (5) Until 31st January 1918 when battalion broken-up.
- (6) Until 16th-19th June 1918 when battalion broken up and drafted to 8th and 2/5th Battalion.
- (7) 1st February 1918 absorbed 1/8th Battalion and redesignated '8th (Leeds Rifles) Battalion'.
- (8) From 6th June 1918.
- (9) From 1st August 1918.
- (10) 1st February 1918 absorbed 1/5th Battalion and redesignated '5th Battalion'.
- (11) 31st January 1918 battalion broken-up and drafted to 2/4th, 5th and 2/7th Battalions.
- (12) 17th/18th June 1918 battalion broken-up and drafted to 2/4th and 5th Battalions.
- (13) Joined Brigade 14th June 1918.
- (14) 3rd February 1918 battalion broken-up and drafted to 1/4th, 2/4th and 1/5th Battalions.
- (15) 2nd February 1918 absorbed 1/5th Battalion and redesignated '5th Battalion'.
- (16) Formed within division 23rd March 1915; 19th January 1917 to 18th Corps Cyclist Battalion.
- (17) From February 1918.
- (18) Formed 9th March 1918
- (19) Joined division 30th March 1917
- (20) 23rd June 1915 transferred to 49th (1st West Riding) Division.
- (21) 13th October 1915 transferred to 6th Division.
- (22) 31st January 1917 redesignated '461st Field Company'.
- (23) 31st January 1917 redesignated '457th Field Company'.
- (24) 31st January 1917 redesignated '460th Field Company'.

ORDER OF BATTLE, 1939-1945

GENERAL NOTES

1. This appendix lists brigades under the numbered designations used during the Second World War, together with details of units which served in the divisions during the war. It should not be regarded as complete.
2. The division was reconstituted when the Territorial Force/Army reformed in 1920 as the '49th (West Riding) Division'. Although infantry brigades had been reduced from four to three battalions in 1918 they were reconstituted in 1920 as four battalion infantry brigades.
3. In the period between 1936 and 1939 some TA infantry battalions changed to armoured or artillery roles. This progressively resulted in some battalions changing brigades within the division and eventually produced infantry brigades of three battalions.
4. On 1st April 1939 the TA was authorised to duplicate in strength. This resulted in the original units of the 49th (West Riding) Division producing duplicate TA units which themselves formed a duplicate TA division designated '46th (North Midland and West Riding) Division'. On mobilisation both these divisions were wholly composed of TA units.
5. Peacetime headquarters of Territorial Army units are shown, (where known).

49th (WEST RIDING) DIVISION (TA)

49th Reconnaissance Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (TA) (War formed)
 (formed Sep 1942 from 29th & 148th Independent Coy; to 31 Aug 1945)

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY

69th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 23 Jun 1940, 9 Sep 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	Leeds
70th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 8 Jun 1940	Bradford
71st (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 8 Jun 1940	Sheffield
74th (Northumbrian) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 30 Nov 1944 - 31 Aug 1945	South Shields
79th (Lowland) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 8 Jun 1940 - 23 Jun 1940	Ayr
80th (Lowland - City of Glasgow) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 8 Jun 1940 - 23 Jun 1940	Glasgow
143rd Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 26 Apr 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	Ashford
178th Field Regiment Royal Artillery 15 May 1942 - 28 Dec 1942	(War formed)
185th Field Regiment Royal Artillery 24 Dec 1942 - 29 Nov 1944	(War formed)
55th (Suffolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 26 Jul 1943 - 31 Aug 1945	Bury St Edmunds
58th (1/4th Duke of Wellington's) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 23 Jun 1940	Halifax
88th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA) 17 Jun 1942 - 23 Jul 1943	Andenshaw
89th (11th Buffs) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery 29 Dec 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	(War formed)
118th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery 7 May 1942 - 12 Aug 1942	(War formed)

146th INFANTRY BRIGADE	York
The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 31 Aug 1945	Sheffield
4th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 31 Aug 1945	Lincoln
1/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 31 Aug 1945	Wakefield
147th INFANTRY BRIGADE	Brighouse
1/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 7 Sep 1942	York
1/6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 6 Jul 1944	Skipton-in-Craven
1/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 31 Aug 1945	Milnsbridge
11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers 8 Sep 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	(War formed)
1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment 6 Jul 1944 - 31 Aug 1945	(Regular)
148th INFANTRY BRIGADE	Nottingham
1/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - Jul 1942	Loughborough
1/5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - Oct 1939	Derby
8th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - Jul 1942	Newark
70th INFANTRY BRIGADE (Second-Line brigade, duplicate of 151st Infantry Brigade)	
10th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 18 Oct 1944	Sildon
11th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 18 Oct 1944	Chester-le-Street
1st Battalion The Tyneside Scottish The Black Watch (TA) 3 Sep 1939 - 18 Oct 1944 (Designated 12th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry (TA) from 3 Mar 1939 - 1 Feb 1940)	Teams
56th INFANTRY BRIGADE (Brigade formed 15 Feb 1944)	
2nd Battalion The South Wales Borderers 2 Mar 1944 - 25 Apr 1945; 14 Jun 1945 - 31 Aug 1945	(Regular)
2nd Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment 2 Mar 1944 - 31 Aug 1945	(Regular)
2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment 2 Mar 1944 - 31 Aug 1945	(Regular)
7th (Mertonethsire and Montgomeryshire) Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers (TA) 28 Apr 1945 - 13 Jun 1945	Newtown
SUPPORT BATTALION/MACHINE-GUN BATTALION	
2nd Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment, The Middlesex Regiment (TA) As Support Bn: 7 Jun 1943 - 27 Feb 1944; As MG Bn: 28 Feb 1944 - 31 Aug 1945	Hammersmith

FIELD AMBULANCE

137 Field Ambulance	Derby
146 (West Riding) Field Ambulance	Leeds
147 (West Riding) Field Ambulance	Sheffield
160 Field Ambulance	?
187 Field Ambulance	?
16 Field Dressing Station RAMC	
17 Field Dressing Station RAMC	
35 Field Hygiene Section RAMC	

49th DIVISIONAL ENGINEERS (TA)

228 Field Company	Sheffield
3 Sep 1939 - 30 Sep 1939	
229 Field Company	Sheffield
3 Sep 1939 - 4 Apr 1940	
294 Field Company	
26 Apr 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	
756 Field Company	
26 Apr 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	
757 Field Company	
26 Apr 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	
231 Field Park Company	
3 Sep 1939 - 31 Aug 1945	
289 Field Park Company	
28 Apr 1942 - 31 Aug 1945	
23 Bridging Platoon	
1 Oct 1943 - 31 Aug 1945	

49th DIVISIONAL SIGNALS (TA)

460 Company Royal Army Service Corps	Leeds
482 Company Royal Army Service Corps	
483 Company Royal Army Service Corps	

49th DIVISIONAL ORDNANCE FIELD PARK (TA)

49 Mobile Laundry and Bath Unit	Sheffield
146 Infantry Brigade Workshops REME	
147 Infantry Brigade Workshops REME	
70 Infantry Brigade Workshops REME	
49 Divisional Provost Company RMP	

46th (NORTH MIDLAND AND WEST RIDING) DIVISION (TA)

46th Reconnaissance Regiment Royal Armoured Corps

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY

69th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Leeds
Replaced by 172 Fd Regt September 1942.	
70th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Bradford
71st (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Sheffield
172nd Field Regiment Royal Artillery	
58th (4th Duke of Wellington's) Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Halifax
115th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery	

137th INFANTRY BRIGADE (Replaced by 128th Brigade September 1942)

2/5th Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment (TA)	Leeds
2/6th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA)	Keighley
2/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA)	Springhead

138th INFANTRY BRIGADE

2/4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA)	Dewsbury
6th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment (TA)	Lincoln
6th Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)	Sheffield

139th INFANTRY BRIGADE

2/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment	Leicester
2/5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (TA) Redesignated '5th' Battalion February 1943.	Belper
9th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (TA) Replaced by 16 DLI November 1940.	Bulwell
16th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry From November 1940.	(War formed)

128th INFANTRY BRIGADE

1/4th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment (TA) Replaced by 2nd Hampshire May 1943.	Winchester
2/4th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment (TA)	Aldershot
5th Battalion The Hampshire Regiment (TA)	Southampton
2nd Battalion The Hampshire Regiment	(Regular)
1/7th Battalion The Middlesex Regiment (TA) Replaced by 2 RNF May 1943.	Hornsey
2nd Battalion The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers Replaced by 9 Manchester May 1944.	(Regular)
9th Battalion The Manchester Regiment	Ashton-under-Lyne

ENGINEERS

270th Field Company
271st Field Company
272nd Field Company
273rd Field Park Company

ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

520 Company (Infantry Brigade)
521 Company (Infantry Brigade)
570 Company (Infantry Brigade)
521 Company (Infantry Divisional Troops)

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

183 Field Ambulance
184 Field Ambulance
185 Field Ambulance
15th Field Hygiene Section

REME

128th Infantry Brigade Workshops
138th Infantry Brigade Workshops
139th Infantry Brigade Workshops
46th Division Light Aid Detachments
46th Light Recovery Section
46th Infantry Troop Workshop

RAOC

46th Division Ordnance Field Park
60 Mobile Laundry and Bath Unit

46th Divisional Signals
46th Divisional Provost Company

59th (STAFFORDSHIRE) DIVISION

(Order of Battle as at 1st July 1944)

59th Reconnaissance Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (TA)

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY

61st (North Midland) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Stoke on Trent
110th (Manchester) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Manchester
116th (North Midland) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Hanley
68th Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery (Duke of Wellington's) (TA)	Elland
68th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	

176th INFANTRY BRIGADE

7th Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment (TA)	Kings Lynn
7th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	Walsall
6th Battalion The North Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	Burton on Trent

177th INFANTRY BRIGADE

5th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	Walsall
1/6th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	Wolverhampton
2/6th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	Bilston

196th INFANTRY BRIGADE

1/7th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (TA)	Coventry
2/5th (Bury) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers (TA)	Ramsbottom
5th Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment (TA)	Burnley
7th Battalion The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (TA) (Divisional Machine-Gun Battalion)	Alnwick

ENGINEERS

257 Field Company Royal Engineers
509 Field Company Royal Engineers
510 Field Company Royal Engineers
511 Field Park Company Royal Engineers

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

203 Field Ambulance
210 Field Ambulance
211 Field Ambulance
27 Field Dressing Station
28 Field Dressing Station

ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

28 Infantry Brigade Company
 300 Infantry Brigade Company
 301 Infantry Brigade Company
 557 Divisional Troops Company

REME

176 Infantry Brigade Workshops
 177 Infantry Brigade Workshops
 196 Infantry Brigade Workshops

RAOC

59 Ordnance Field Park Company

 59th Divisional Signals
 59 Infantry Division Provost Company
 26 Field Security Section
 84 Cash Office
 59 Postal Section

ORDER OF BATTLE 1947-1957

49th (WEST RIDING AND MIDLAND) ARMOURED DIVISION

Reconstituted as an armoured division January 1947. 1956 converted to an infantry division.

Divisional Headquarters: Arnold, Nottingham

HEADQUARTERS ROYAL ARTILLERY

269th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Sheffield Leeds
270th (West Riding) Field Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Bradford
323rd (West Riding) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	Sheffield until January 1950
575th (6th Bn The Sherwood Foresters) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	from 1950
350th (The Robin Hood Foresters) Light Regiment Royal Artillery (TA)	from 1956
884 Locating Battery Royal Artillery (TA)	Sheffield

8th ARMOURED BRIGADE

45th (Leeds Rifles) Royal Tank Regiment RAC (TA)	York Leeds
The Yorkshire Hussars Yeomanry (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own) RAC (TA)	
The Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons RAC (TA)	
The Derbyshire Yeomanry RAC (TA)	
The East Riding of Yorkshire Yeomanry RAC (TA)	

147th LORRIED INFANTRY BRIGADE

The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)	Leicester Sheffield
7th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment (TA)	
4th Battalion The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment (TA)	
5th Battalion The Royal Leicestershire Regiment (TA)	
5th (Derbyshire) Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) (TA)	

DIVISIONAL TROOPS

106th Field Regiment Royal Engineers (TA)
 49th Armoured Divisional Signal Regiment

146th INFANTRY BRIGADE	(from 1956)
5th/7th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA) ⁽¹⁾	Huddersfield
4th Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (TA) ⁽¹⁾	Wakefield
The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA)	Sheffield

147th INFANTRY BRIGADE	(from 1956)
6th Battalion The North Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's) (TA)	
5th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (TA)	
5th Battalion The Royal Leicestershire Regiment (TA)	

148th INFANTRY BRIGADE	(from 1956)
4th/6th Battalion The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment (TA)	
5th (Derbyshire) Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) (TA)	
8th (Nottinghamshire) Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) (TA)	

Footnote

(1) Transferred from 149th (West Riding) Infantry Brigade, 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

24066 Private Arthur Poulter VC
1/4th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) TF
10th April 1918

For most conspicuous bravery when acting as a stretcher-bearer. On ten occasions Private Poulter carried badly wounded men on his back to a safer locality, through a particularly heavy artillery and machine-gun barrage. Two of these were hit a second time whilst on his back. Again, after a withdrawal over the river had been ordered, Private Poulter returned in full view of the enemy who were advancing, and carried back another man who had been left behind wounded. He bandaged up over forty men under fire, and his conduct throughout the whole day was a magnificent example to all ranks. This very gallant soldier was subsequently seriously wounded when attempting another rescue in the face of the enemy.

(Valley of the River Lys, 10th April 1918)

London Gazette, 28th June 1918.

Arthur Poulter was born on 16th December 1893 at Kilgrambridge, East Witton, and later lived at Florence Road, Armley. He died on 29th August 1956, aged 62, and was buried at Wortley Cemetery, Leeds.

Second-Lieutenant James Palmer Huffam VC
1/5th Battalion (attached 2nd Battalion), The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) TF
31st August 1918

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on August 31st, 1918.

With three men he rushed an enemy machine-gun post, and put it out of action. His post was then heavily attacked, and he withdrew fighting, carrying back a wounded comrade. Again, on the night of August 31st, 1918, at St Servin's Farm, accompanied by two men only, he rushed an enemy machine-gun, capturing eight prisoners and enabling the advance to continue. Throughout the whole of the fighting from August 29th to September 1st, 1918, he showed the utmost gallantry.

London Gazette, 26th December 1918.

Major J P 'Jock' Huffam was born at Dunblane, Perthshire, on 31st March 1897. On 21st February 1915 he joined the 1/7th Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers (TF), and served in France for two years, attaining the rank of sergeant. He was commissioned into the 5th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF) on 30th January 1918, later transferring to the Regiment's 2nd Battalion. He served as a regular Duke after the war, retiring in 1938, and was recalled to the Army in 1939. He again retired after the war when he was employed as an army recruiting officer at St Albans. Major Huffam died on 16th February 1968 with his funeral service being held at Golder's Green on 21st February 1968.

Number 9545 Private Henry Tandey VC DCM MM
2/5th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) TF
20th September 1918

For most conspicuous bravery and initiative during the capture of a village and crossings at Marcoing and the subsequent counter-attack on the 28th September 1918. His platoon was held up by machine-gun fire; he at once crawled forward, located the machine-gun with a Lewis-gun team and knocked it out. On arrival at the crossings, he restored the plank bridge under a hail of bullets, thus enabling the first crossings to be made at this vital spot. Later in the evening, during an attack, he, with eight comrades, was surrounded by an overwhelming number of Germans, and though the position was apparently hopeless, he led a bayonet charge through them, fighting so fiercely that thirty-seven of the enemy were driven into the hands of the remainder of his company. Although twice wounded, he refused to leave until the fight was won.

London Gazette, 14th December 1918.

Henry Tandey was born at Leamington, Warwickshire, and later worked at the Regent Hotel, Leamington. He joined The Green Howards as a regular soldier in 1910, and served with them in France from 1914. On 26th July 1918 he was transferred to the 5th Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) (TF), and within five weeks his conduct was recognised by the award of the DCM, MM and VC. He served as a regular with the Regiment until he was finally discharged in 1926 when he settled in Coventry working for The Standard Motor Company. Henry Tandey died at Coventry on 18th December 1977.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Accoutrements	British: Equipment worn in addition to uniform, ie waist-belt with ammunition pouch, bayonet frog &c.
Adjutant	A battalion's staff officer, usually in the rank of captain, (Latin - 'Adjuvare', to help.)
ADS	British: Abbreviation for Advanced Dressing Station. Battlefield location for forward medical services.
Ammo boot	British: 'Ammunition boot', issued ankle-boot with leather upper and sole; where the designation 'ammunition' used in older form meaning any type of military stores.
APC	British: Abbreviation for Armoured Personnel Carrier.
APDS	British: Abbreviation for Armour Piercing Discarding Sabot. A kinetic energy anti-armour round. A British invention. The projectile consisted of a hard tungsten-carbide core surrounded by a casing (the 'sabot') of plastic or light alloy to fit the gun bore. On leaving the muzzle, after firing, the outer casing disintegrated thus imparting increased velocity to the tungsten-carbide core.
Artillery	Generally crew-served weapons which fire explosive projectiles larger than small-arms, ie more than 20mm. (Old French - 'artillier', to equip with weapons.) British: (World War 2) Field: 18 pounder (3.3"), fired 18.5 pound high-explosive or shrapnel ammunition, maximum range 9,300 yards, horse-drawn, later version fitted with pneumatic tyres when mechanized. Introduced into service 1904. Superseded by 18/25 pounder. Field: 18/25 pounder (3.45"), fired 25 pound high-explosive shell, at a maximum rate of three rounds a minute, maximum range 11,800 yards - a 25 pounder gun fitted to the old 18 pounder carriage. Later 25 pounder version fitted to a tracked chassis as a 'self-propelled gun'. Field: 4.5" Howitzer, fired 35 pound high-explosive or shrapnel ammunition, range 7,000 yards - a World War 1 field howitzer fitted with pneumatic tyres. Field: 60 pounder (5"), fired 60 pound ammunition, range 16,400 yards - a modernised World War 1 medium gun with pneumatic tyres. Anti-tank: 2 pounder (1.57"), fired 2.4 pound solid-shot armour-piercing round, range 8,000 yards (2,000 effective range), same gun as fitted to British tanks. (See 'Littlejohn').
ARV	British: Abbreviation for Armoured Recovery Vehicle.
Assault Pioneers	An infantry battalion's field engineering and watermanship experts, usually at platoon strength and commanded by a Warrant Officer. It is the custom that the Pioneer Sergeant may wear a beard. (Spanish - 'peone', a labourer).
Assembly Area	Ground chosen in a pre-secured area of relative safety in which troops are marshalled immediately prior to an operation.
ATGW	British: Abbreviation for Anti-Tank Guided Weapon; ie Vigilant (Vickers), Swingfire (British Aerospace).
AVRE	British: Abbreviation for Assault Vehicle Royal Engineers. Usually a modified tank chassis fitted with specialist combat engineering equipment. World War 2 variants - (Churchill Mark IV based) ARK carpet-track layer, Crab mine-clearer, Crocodile flamethrower, Fascine-layer, Scissors bridge, Small box-girder assault bridge.
Axis	World War 2 alliance between Germany, Italy and Japan.
BAB Code	British: A system for encoding messages, (World War 1).
Balaclava	British: A knitted woollen hood covering the head and neck, often home-knitted and sent by well-wishers to the frontline troops.
Bailey Bridge	British: Pre-fabricated metal girder bridge capable of being rapidly deployed. Invented by D C Bailey, (1901-1985).
Ballistite	Smokeless ammunition propellant developed by Alfred Nobel, a Swede, in 1888 by combining nitroglycerine with gun-cotton. Also to describe a 0.303" rifle cartridge which has no bullet and is used to launch a rifle grenade or anti-tank round from a launcher fitted to the rifle's muzzle.
Bandolier	British: A shoulder belt with pouches containing ammunition. Either a uniform item made of leather or webbing, or a disposable canvas pattern in which small-arms ammunition was issued.
Bangalore Torpedo	British: An explosive demolition charge used to clear barbed-wire entanglements. Comprising tubes filled with explosive which could be screwed together and pushed under the obstacle.

BAOR	Abbreviation for The British Army of the Rhine, formed by the redesignation of 21st Army Group 25th August 1945.
Bar	British: A bar affixed to a medal ribbon (for gallantry or distinguished service) denoting that the wearer has been awarded the decoration more than once.
Battledress	British: Combat uniform comprising khaki coloured blouse and trousers introduced in 1938. Replaced by combat dress in 1960.
Battle Honour	British: A specific named battle or campaign, which is approved to be borne upon a regiment's colours (or guidons), and 'appointments', in recognition of a battalion of the regiment which took an active and creditable part in the named battle. Not all regiments present at an action necessarily qualified for the battle honour. A single named battle honour borne by a regiment may have been awarded to recognise separately more than one battalion of that regiment.
Battalion	British: An infantry major unit, composed of companies, commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel. 1,000 all ranks in World War 1, 650 in World War 2.
Bazooka	US: M1A1 2.36" smoothbore hand-held infantry anti-tank weapon which fired a 'hollow charge'. Developed by an American, Colonel Skinner, and named after a home-made trombone used by a US comedian, Bob Burns. Introduced in 1942 and used until the Korean War when its small charge was unable to penetrate Soviet built T34 tanks. 'Bazooka' also used as slang to describe any hand-held anti-tank weapon of a similar type.
'B' Echelon	The administrative elements of a unit, usually positioned out of contact with the main battle.
Beehive	British: An explosive shaped demolition charge used to create craters in roads, bridges etc, or to penetrate reinforced concrete. Named after its shape.
BEF	British: Abbreviation for British Expeditionary Force.
Besa	British: Nickname for Czech designed 7.92mm machine-gun manufactured by the British Small Arms Company (BSA), usually fitted to armoured fighting vehicles.
Bivouac	To form an improvised camp in the open, usually without tentage or buildings.
BL	British: Abbreviation for breech loading, (as opposed to muzzle loading).
Blanco	British: Brand name for block of compressed coloured powder used with water to maintain the appearance of a soldier's webbing equipment.
Blank	Training ammunition which has a small explosive charge to simulate firing but no projectile.
Blighty	British: Slang for a wound which necessitated evacuation to Britain - popular song 'Take me back to dear Old Blighty'. (Hindi - 'Bilayati', home country).
Blitzkrieg	German: Literally - 'Lightning War', term probably invented by Adolf Hitler.
Boche	British: Slang name for Germans, especially in 1914-1918 war, also 'Bosche'. (Possibly French origin).
Bounty	British: Payment of a lump sum (often tax-free) to individuals who qualify by completing specified training or attendance.
Boys	British: An infantry 0.55" bolt-action anti-tank rifle, with five round magazine, weighing 36 pounds, could pierce 15mm of tank armour at 250 yards with a steel-cored bullet fired at 325 feet per second causing tremendous recoil to the firer. Designed by Captain Boys, and later manufactured, at Enfield. Introduced into service in 1939 as an infantry platoon's anti-tank weapon.
Bren	British: A magazine-fed 0.303" (7.7mm) calibre light machine-gun, gas-operated, air-cooled, weighing 21½ pounds (9.75 kg) and capable of firing 500 rounds a minute, 30 round magazine normally loaded with 28 rounds to pre-empt stoppages, muzzle velocity 2440 feet/second (744 metres/second) introduced in 1938. Usually used as a section weapon in the light role, could also be mounted on a tripod weighing 26½ pounds (12kg), or on a tracked 'carrier' vehicle. Manufactured by Enfield, originally of Czechoslovakian design after the ZB26 machine-gun made by Zbrojovka Brno. Named 'Bren' after 'Brno' and 'Enfield'. Last version was adapted to fire NATO standard 7.62mm (0.300") ammunition, for use by light-scale units as an alternative to the 7.62mm GPMG.
Bren Carrier	British: 'Universal Carrier' - small tracked bullet-proof general purpose infantry vehicle introduced circa 1938 to carry five men, top speed 32 mph. Variants used for 'recce', signals, anti-tank, 'Wasp' flamethrower, and as section transport in a 'motorised battalion'. Over 35,000 built.
Brigade	(i) A formation composed of two or more infantry battalions, (and/or armoured regiments), commanded by a Brigadier (Brigadier-General until circa 1920). Two or more Brigades form a 'Division'. (ii) Designation of an artillery regiment (major unit composed of batteries) until circa 1920.
Brodie	British: Slang name for steel helmet issued in 1916 to replace the field service cap. Also 'battle-bowler', 'tin-hat'.

Browning	US: Manufacturer of small arms, many of which were 0.30 calibre, John M Browning, (1855-1926).
Buckshee	British: Slang for free-of-charge, (Persian - 'bakhshish' - to give).
Buffalo	American: LVT (Landing Vehicle Tracked) Mark II, tracked armoured amphibious vehicle designed to carry 24 infantrymen; Mark IV fitted with ramp to carry a jeep, bren carrier or a 25 pounder gun. Issued to the British 79th Division in August 1944.
Bugler	British: Misnomer applied to members of an infantry battalion's corps of drums who should always be referred to as 'drummers'.
Bully Beef	British: Tinned ration containing boiled beef, (French - 'bouilli', boiled.)
Burgher	Boer: A land-owning Boer citizen.
Butt	A raised earthwork barrier sited behind targets to arrest further travel of fired rounds.
Cadre	A small non-operational team established to maintain the basic administration and existence of a former unit. In 1969 TAVR III major units were each reduced to a cadre establishment of eight all ranks.
Carl Gustav	See 84mm.
Charger	(i) A riding horse used in battle. In the infantry officers of field rank, and the battalion adjutant, were entitled to chargers. Withdrawn in TA infantry battalions in 1938. (ii) A purpose-made clip containing ammunition enabling quick reloading, particularly with the Lee-Enfield rifle.
Churchill	British: Tank weighing 38½ tons. Mark 1 with a 2 pounder gun and a 3" howitzer as secondary armament, later marks with 6 pounder/75mm guns 95mm howitzer. Crew of five. Churchill Mark 1 was designed as an 'Infantry tank Mark IV' ('I' Tank). First in service 1941.
Colours	British: An issued pair of flags, termed 'colours' by infantry, and 'guidons' by cavalry. Each unit has a 'Queen's' (or King's as appropriate) colour and a 'Regimental' colour which bear the regiment's honours and devices. Both colours together being described as a 'stand of colours'. Colours were originally used to serve as a guiding marker on the battlefield and were also displayed to mark the headquarters when in bivouac. Colours, although now ceremonial in use, remain closely guarded by a unit.
Colour Sergeant	British: The highest non-commissioned rank in the infantry. Introduced in 1813 to reward exceptional sergeants.
Communication trench	British: Part of a defensive trench complex, particularly in World War 1. Trench giving cover from view and fire to enable movement to and from the front line trenches.
Company	British: A sub-unit of a battalion. Currently about 120 all ranks, commanded by a major. During World War 1 was 240 all ranks, commanded by a captain.
Cordite	British: Ballistite ammunition propellant independently developed in cord form by Abel and Dewar in 1889. Used in granular form for small-arms ammunition.
Corporal	British: Non-commissioned rank which is junior to a sergeant, usually one who commands a section within an infantry rifle platoon. (Latin - 'Corps', a body of men). Senior to a Lance Corporal. (Latin - 'lance', a veteran soldier).
Corps	British: A formation consisting of two or more divisions, commanded by a Lieutenant General.
Crab	British: A mine-sweeping tank based on an American Sherman tank which retained its main armament and was fitted with a rotary chain-flail, driven by the main tank engine. Used for clearing minefields at a speed of 1½mph exploding 'Teller' mines at a depth of 4-5".
Crocodile	British: A Churchill Mark VII tank fitted with a flamethrower in place of the hull machine-gun. Carried 400 gallons of jellified petrol, delivered under nitrogen pressure, for the flamethrower in a two-wheeled armoured trailer. Range 80 metres, trailer capacity allowed 100 shots. Also smaller 'Wasp' version fitted to the infantry universal carrier.
Cromwell	British: Tank weighing 27½ tons (Mark I), 28 tons (Mark VII), Marks I-III with 6 pounder gun, Marks IV-V with 75mm gun, Mark VI with 95mm howitzer, with twin 7.92 Besa machine-guns as secondary armament. Crew of five; tank powered by 600hp Rolls Royce Meteor engine. First in service 1943, later developed to become the 'Comet' tank.
Crusader	British: Cruiser tank weighing 19 tons with a 2 pounder (later 6 pounder) main armament. First in service 1941.
D Day	British: Military jargon for the day on which an operation commences.
DAK	German: Abbreviation for Deutches Afrika Korps. The mechanized element of Rommel's desert army.
Division	British: A formation composed of two or more brigades, commanded by a Major General.

Dixie	British: A metal camp-kettle, (Indian - 'Degshai', a cooking pot.)
Djebel	Arabic: A hill.
DLI	British Army: Abbreviation for The Durham Light Infantry.
DMS	British Army: Abbreviation for Direct Moulded Sole. Boot with rubber compound sole moulded directly onto the leather upper.
Driving Band	A band of soft metal around a shell fitted to ensure a gas-tight fit in a rifled barrel.
DUKW	American: World War 2 amphibious six-wheeled 3 ton troop-carrying vehicle. Maximum land speed 50mph, maximum water speed 6 knots.
Duplex-Drive	British: (DD) 'Sherman' tank fitted with two propellers, and a water-tight boat-shaped canvas flotation screen, to enable the tank to swim at a speed of 4 knots. Invented by Nicholas Straussler, a Hungarian-American.
DWR	British: Official abbreviation for The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding).
Echelon	The elements of a unit which provide logistic support.
Energa	British: Number 94 Grenade: a hollow charge anti-tank round which could be fired from a rifle fitted with a launcher, and using a special ballistite cartridge to propel it about 75-100 metres; designed and made in Belgium; an optimist's weapon.
Enfilade	British: Military jargon for firing into the enemy's side or flank.
Ensign	British: A junior commissioned infantry officer equivalent to second lieutenant, the officer who carries the colours. (Latin - 'Signum', a sign.) Cavalry equivalent rank - 'Cornet'. Both ranks abolished in 1872 when the rank of 'Lieutenant' introduced into the army.
Enfield	British: 0.577" (14.7mm) muzzle-loading, percussion-cap, 'three-band' rifle, weight 9 pounds, sighted to 900 yards, 55" long, sword-bayonet firing Minié bullet, muzzle velocity 1,000 feet/second (305 metres/second), introduced in 1853. Capable of grouping to 4" at 100 yards. In 1856 a shorter 49" 'two-band' version was introduced, in 1864 the rifle was modified to breech-loading by a 'Snider' conversion.
Enteric Fever	An intestinal illness, particularly typhoid/ paratyphoid.
Estaminet	French: A café/bar.
Equipment	British: An adjustable body harness composed of separate pouches/carriers for ammunition, bayonet, water bottle, entrenching tools, rations, gas-mask/respirators etc, to which haversack/knapsack could be added. Early versions made of leather, later webbing fabric, later plastics.
'F' Echelon	British: The units group of (F)ighting vehicles, vehicles required to fight the battle.
FFI	Abbreviation for French Forces of the Interior - the French Resistance.
Fascine	(i) Tank equipment: A bundle of compacted brushwood, or similar, (World War 1: 10' long and 4'6" in diameter), used to be dropped into ditches to assist crossing. More modern versions composed of plastic tubing bundles weighing 2.5 tonnes. (ii) Trench: Bundles of brushwood or twigs bound together to reinforce the sides of trenches.
Feu de Joie	French: A salute of rippled small-arms fire with each man firing his rifle in turn.
Field Dressing, First	British: A sterilised medical dressing issued to individuals as an initial first aid measure. First issued in the Crimean War.
Field Dressing Station	A battlefield unit located to give basic initial medical care, and arrange the evacuation of casualties.
Field Grey	German: 'Feldgrau', German Army uniform colour of World War 1 and later.
Field Officer	British: Military jargon for commissioned officers above the rank of captain but below General.
Fire-Step	A raised platform inside a trench from which weapons can be fired.
Flak	German: 'Flierabwehrkanone', anti-aircraft gun.
Flail	British: A large rotating spindle fitted with lengths of chain which, when spun, detonates mines in the path of the vehicle carrying it.
Flammenwerfer	German: Flamethrower. First used by German troops in 1915. An automatically ignited oil-jet propelled by compressed air.
FOO	British: Abbreviation for Forward Observation Officer. A fire controller, usually accompanied by his signaller, who is attached to forward units and controls artillery fire in their support. Usually a member of the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

Forage cap	British: Peaked cloth khaki cap introduced in 1898 to replace the 'Home Service Helmet'. Generally worn on active service until replaced by the steel helmet. Eventually replaced by the beret for working dress but retained in a coloured version for wear with service dress uniform.
Fumite	British: World War 1 incendiary hand grenade producing smoke.
Gas Cape	British: An issued 'poncho type' oilskin cape, originally intended to give protection against gas weapons but mainly worn as a waterproof garment.
GPMG	British: Abbreviation for General Purpose Machine-Gun; nicknamed 'Gimpy'. 7.62mm (0.300"), belt-fed, air-cooled, weight (light-role) 24 pounds (10.89kg), length 49.75" (1264mm), range 800 metres. Also mounted in 'sustained-fire role', as a medium machine-gun, when fitted with a tripod weight 29 pounds (13.2kg) and a dial sight, range increased to 1,800 metres. British made from pattern of Belgian Fabrique Nationale model 'MAG' (Mitrailleur 'Gaz).
Granatwerfer	German: World War 2 81.4mm mortar weighing 125 pounds, firing a 7½ pound bomb up to 2,625 yards, rate of fire 15 rounds/minute.
Grenade	Number 1 Grenade: A fragmenting grenade mounted on a 16" cane to assist throwing, and which exploded on impact. Number 2 Grenade: Copied from a pattern exported to Mexico. Number 3 & Number 4 Grenade: Marten-Hale rifle projected grenades with a range of 60 to 200 yards. Number 5 Grenade: Type 36M fragmentation hand grenade with integral time fuse (4 or 7 second delay) weighing 1 pound 13 ounces, could also be thrown using a standard rifle fitted with an optional launcher-cup together with special propellant rifle ammunition (ballistite cartridge). Developed from a Belgian pattern of 1915 by William Mills and manufactured by the Mills Munition Company, 75 million produced during World War 1. Number 94 Grenade: A hollow charge anti-tank round fired using a standard 0.303" Lee-Enfield rifle fitted with a launcher and propelled using a special ballistite cartridge. Incendiary grenades: see 'Fumite', 'P Bomb', 'Thermit'.
Guinea	Gold coin worth one pound and one shilling (£1.05).
Gun-Cotton	Explosive propellant developed in 1846 to replace gun-powder by C F Schonbein who added nitric acid to cotton producing nitrocellulose (gun-cotton).
Half-track	A combat vehicle, often used to tow guns or carry infantry, with standard road wheels at the front and caterpillar tracks at the rear.
Hallamshires	British: The Hallamshire Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment (TA) from 1924; previously designated '4th (Hallamshire) Battalion'. Raised in Sheffield in 1859 as The Hallamshire Rifle Volunteers taking its name from an ancient manor. Hallamshire Battalions served in the West Riding (TA) divisions in both World Wars. In 1967 the battalion was, with others, amalgamated to form the 'Yorkshire Volunteers', now represented by 3 DWR.
Haversack	British: Small canvas pack used to carry the day's ammunition or rations and forming part of a soldier's set of webbing equipment. (German - 'Hafer' 'Sack' - Oat Bag).
Heer	German: The Army.
Heinkel	German: Military aircraft manufacturer.
HEAT	Abbreviation for High Explosive Anti-Tank. A chemical energy anti-armour round which penetrates armour by generating a semi-molten explosive jet.
HESH	Abbreviation for High Explosive Squash Head. A kinetic anti-armour round designed to defeat thick solid armour by flattening on impact and causing large scabs of jagged metal to tear off the internal face of armour plate.
Home Service Helmet	British: Blue cloth-covered helmet introduced in 1877 to replace the shako helmet.
Honey	British: Alternative name for a 'Stuart' light tank.
Honorary Colonel	A non-executive appointment peculiar to the Volunteers/Territorials, appointed at the discretion of the commanding officer. Often a retired officer who acts as 'father' to the unit and takes an interest in its affairs.
HSF	British: Abbreviation for Home Service Force (TA). Formed in 1982 and composed of companies roled to defend UK key-points and vital installations. Age limits higher than existing TA units providing that individuals had military experience. Disbanded in 1992.
Housewife	British: A small pouch containing needles, threads and buttons issued to soldiers to enable them to maintain their clothing.

Howitzer	A large calibre artillery gun specifically designed to fire at high angles to enable shells to drop vertically into obscured targets.
Hull-down	Tank term. Siting a tank or armoured fighting vehicle behind cover so that only the turret (and main armament) is visible to the enemy.
Hun	Nickname for Germans. Originated from a statement made by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1900 when he likened the German troops sent to crush the Chinese Boxer Rebellion to Huns - "Just as the Huns a thousand years ago under the leadership of Attila gained a reputation by virtue of which they live in the historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinese will ever dare again look askance at a German." In reality the Huns were not German but Mongolians who invaded Europe in the 4th and 5th centuries. Attila was defeated on the Marne by a combined army of Romans and Goths (a tribe amongst Germany's forebears.)
Imperial Yeomanry	British: Yeomanry Cavalry units formed by volunteers for active service in South Africa 1900-1902 (Boer War).
Jack Johnson	British: Nickname for shells fired by German 15cm guns which exploded with distinctive black smoke. Jack Johnson was the Black American World Heavyweight Boxing Champion 1908-1915. Shells also nicknamed as 'coal-scuttles'.
Jagdpanzer	German: Tank destroyer (JgdPz).
Jerrican	British: A 4½ gallon metal container, painted different colours to identify contents - water, petrol, diesel. Originally adopted from German design used in the desert during World War 2 - hence 'Gerry' can.
Kangaroo	British: A 'Ram' tank (name for Canadian built Sherman) converted into an armoured personnel carrier carrying fourteen infantrymen by removing tank turret.
Khaki	British Army: Brown coloured uniform fabric. Originated as the uniform colour of the 'Corps of Guides' (British Indian Army) on formation in 1846. Distinctive khaki colour occurred when the regiment bought its first batch of fabric locally in India. (Urdu - dust-coloured).
King Tiger	German: See Panzerkampfwagen VI.
Kopje	Afrikaans: A hill or peak. (Subsequently used in post-Boer War Britain to name places as a mark of commemoration, ie 'Spion Kopje' - the Kop at football grounds).
KOYLI	British: Abbreviation for The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. An infantry regiment whose TF/TA battalions (4th and 5th) formed part of the West Riding Divisions. Later represented by 8th Battalion The (Yorkshire) Light Infantry Volunteers, in 1996 re-roled under the designation The King's Own Yorkshire Yeomanry.
Laager	Afrikaans: A defensive camp formed by placing ox-drawn wagons into a circle. Later adopted by British army as a 'leauger', being a similar defensive formation for vehicles, particularly in the desert during World War 2.
Land Matress	British: World War 2 multiple rocket-launcher firing thirty 3" rockets up to 6,000 yards.
LAW	British: Abbreviation for Light Anti-tank Weapon. A hand-held individual one-shot disposable 66mm rocket launcher, weight 2.37kg, of American origin. Maximum range 300 metres, will penetrate armour up to 300mm thick.
LAW 80	British: Replacement for 66mm. A hand-held individual one-shot disposable rocket launcher, weight 9.5kg, maximum range 500 metres, will penetrate up to 600mm of armour. Aiming aided by a built-in spotting rifle.
LCA	British: Abbreviation for Landing Craft Assault. An amphibious assault craft specifically designed to carry 35 troops in the assault (first) wave.
LCI	British: Abbreviation for Landing Craft Infantry. An amphibious assault craft capable of carrying 240 troops.
LCT	British: Abbreviation for Landing Craft Tank. An amphibious assault craft capable of carrying nine Sherman or six Churchill tanks.
LCT (R)	British: Abbreviation for Landing Craft Tank (Rocket). An amphibious assault craft capable of carrying batteries of 5" rocket shells fired in salvos.
Lee Enfield	British: The legendary Lee Enfield SMLE (Short Magazine Lee Enfield) 0.303" calibre rifle with 10 round charger-loaded magazine and bolt-loading action introduced in 1895 and weighing about 9 pounds, length 49½", sighted to 2,800 yards, muzzle velocity 2,440 feet/second (738 metres/second). Manufactured by BSA (British Small Arms). First models had a 17" long bayonet which became smaller with later marks, Mark 3 introduced in 1907. A skilled infantryman of the First World War could fire 15 aimed rounds a minute due to the feature of reloading using clips of five rounds in

	<p>'magazine chargers'. The first Mark 1 was found to be prone to jamming, a fault cured with the Mark 3. The last general issue being the Lee Enfield Mark 4 in service from 1941, although a Mark 5 short carbine version was issued for jungle theatres. A Lee Enfield Mark 11(T) was fitted with a number 32 telescopic sight for use by snipers. Later modified to fire NATO standard 7.62mm (0.300") ammunition as the 'L4A1 Sniper' rifle, muzzle velocity 2,750 feet/second (838 metres/second). Eventually superseded by the 7.62mm self-loading rifle.</p>
Lee Metford	<p>British: 0.303" calibre, bolt-action magazine rifle, sighted to 1,600 yards, ammunition used black powder propellant, introduced in 1887. Combined the 'Lee' bolt-loading magazine design with the 'Metford' design of rifled barrel. When cordite propellant was introduced the design of rifling was changed to that of Enfield resulting in the rifle being re-barrelled and re-issued as the Lee Enfield.</p>
Lewis Gun	<p>British: Air-cooled 0.303" light machine-gun with 'blow-back' feed mechanism, weight 28-30 pounds, firing 100 rounds a minute, magazine holding 47 rounds weighing 4½ pounds. Developed in 1911 from an American project-weapon, (introduced by Samuel MacLean), by Colonel Isaac Lewis, an American then working in Belgium. The armaments workers migrated to Britain as refugees in August 1914 to work in the 'British Small Arms' (BSA) factory in Birmingham. Adopted by British Army in 1915.</p>
Littlejohn	<p>British: Codename for the modified version of the 2-pounder anti-tank gun which introduced lighter, specially strengthened shot coupled with the addition of an unrifled muzzle attachment to increase hitting power. Littlejohn conversions were introduced as an emergency measure to upgrade the 2-pounder due to the delay in introducing the 6-pounder anti-tank gun.</p>
Livens Projector	<p>British: World War 1 flamethrower developed by Captain Livens, with a range of 70 metres or 30 metres for a semi-portable version.</p>
LST	<p>British: Abbreviation for Landing Ship Tank. An amphibious assault vehicle.</p>
LSW	<p>British: Abbreviation for Light Support Weapon. L86A1 0.556mm (0.223") 30 round magazine-fed, air-cooled section machine-gun, weight 11.9 pounds (5.4kg) length 34.43" (900mm), muzzle velocity 3,182 feet/second (970 metres/second). Developed from conversion of 'SA80' rifle by fitting a heavier, longer barrel. More of an automatic rifle than a light machine-gun.</p>
Luftwaffe	<p>German: Air Force, literally 'Air Weapon'.</p>
Lyddite	<p>British: Explosive propellant based on Picric acid, named after the Lydd military ranges where it was first fired.</p>
Maginot Line	<p>French: A line of permanent interlinked fortifications, each provisioned for seven months, which stretched from the Belgian border to Switzerland. Built by France in the 1930s and named after the French Minister of Defence. The Maginot Line was rendered useless in 1940 when German forces bypassed it by invading France through Belgium.</p>
M&V	<p>British: Abbreviation for issued tinned meat and vegetable stew.</p>
Martini Henry	<p>British: 0.450" calibre rifle with breech-loading action, sighted to 2,900 yards, weighing 8.57 pounds. Combined the 'Martini' design of a pivoted-block breech mechanism with the 'Henry' design of rifled barrel. Ammunition at first used black powder propellant, later converted to use cordite smokeless 0.303" ammunition. Introduced in 1871 to replaced the Snider Enfield rifle.</p>
Matilda	<p>British: Tank weighing 26½ tons with a 2 pounder gun and a crew of four. First in service 1939.</p>
Maschinenwehr	<p>German: Machine-gun 'Maschinenwehr 08' (introduced 1908), '08/15' (introduced 1915), 125 round drum magazine. Air-cooled 'Maschinenwehr 08/18' introduced at end of war, but prone to jamming.</p>
Mauser	<p>German: Manufacturer of small-arms (pistols and rifles). Mauser Gewehr '98' - a 7.92mm (0.31") rifle with 5 or 20 round magazine, length 49", weight 9 pounds (4.1kg), muzzle velocity 2,850 feet/second (870 metres/second). The principal German rifle of World War 1, shorter model in World War 2.</p>
Maxim	<p>British: Also known as the 'Vickers-Maxim'. Early pattern of crew-served, 0.45" (11.4mm) black-powder round, water-cooled, belt-fed medium machine gun with a range of 2,800 yards, ammunition in 250 round fabric belts, muzzle velocity 1,600 feet/second (488 metres/second), length 46" (1169mm), weight 60 pounds (27.22kg), mounted on a tripod weighing 15 pounds. Each gun was allocated 3,500 rounds with a further 8,000 in reserve. Named after its inventor Sir Hiram Maxim (1840-1916), and manufactured by Vickers. Nicknamed 'the Devil's paintbrush'.</p>
Mess dress	<p>Formal uniform worn by officers, warrant officers and senior nco's at mess events. Often designed to a style selecting pre-khaki patterns of regimental dress.</p>
Mess-Tin	<p>British: A pair of nesting metal containers issued to soldiers for cooking and eating.</p>
MG34	<p>German: 7.92mm (0.31") belt-fed, air-cooled light machine-gun, weight 26.7lb (12.1kg), length 48 " (1,220mm), muzzle velocity 2,480 feet/second (756 metres/second). Introduced in 1934 as a general purpose machine-gun, capable of being mounted upon a tripod, also drum magazine fed version for anti-aircraft role.</p>

MG42	German: 'Spandau' 7.92mm (0.31") belt-fed, air-cooled light machine-gun, weight 25.5lb (11.57kg), length 48 " (1,220mm) Introduced in 1942 as a more robust version of the MG34 and capable of firing 1,200 rounds/minute.
MICV	British: Abbreviation for Mechanised Infantry Combat Vehicle.
MILAN	NATO: Abbreviation for Missile Infantry Light Anti-Tank. Introduced as a replacement for towed 120mm WOMBAT/CONBAT/MOBAT recoilless anti-tank gun within infantry battalions. MILAN was developed by Aerospeciale and British Aerospace. A guided anti-tank missile capable of being manpacked and fired by an individual infantryman, can also be vehicle mounted. Maximum range 2,000 metres, guided by semi-automatic command to line-of-sight by wires. Will penetrate up to 352mm of armour, maximum time of flight 13 seconds. Probably to be replaced by TRIGAT (MR).
Militia	A conscripted part-time military force - not to be confused with the Volunteer Force. Became the 'Special Reserve' in 1908. (Latin, Miles - a soldier.)
Mills bomb	See Grenade 'Number 5'.
Minié	British: Rifle of 0.702" (17.8mm) calibre, with a muzzle-loading mechanism, firing elongated Minié bullets (rather than ball). Introduced in 1851 but began being replaced by the smaller calibre Enfield by 1853. Minié bullet design named after French Captain Claude Minié of the Musketry School at Vincennes.
Minnie	British trench-slang for German 'Minenwerfer' mortar which dropped bombs which moaned as they fell to earth - 'Moaning Minny'.
MOD	British: Abbreviation for Ministry of Defence. Formed 1st April 1964 by combining the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Air Ministry.
Mortars	British: Infantry battalions were issued with mortars (or 'Trench Howitzers') during World War 1 when trench warfare produced a requirement for infantry to be able to lob small bombs into enemy trenches whose close proximity would not permit the use of field artillery. Early examples were locally made by Royal Engineers from spent cartridge cases, some were even brought out of museums and pressed into service. The first patterns of mortars used gun-cotton propellant which was initiated by a ballistite cartridge in a Lee Enfield rifle breech firing mechanism.

World War One

The Vickers 2" Trench Howitzer was the first issued mortar and fired a 51 pound toffee-apple shaped bomb up to 400 yards. It eventually proved too heavy for the infantry to move about and was transferred to the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

The 4" Trench Howitzer barrel fired a 11½ pound bomb about 500 yards, it was the only British mortar with a rifled barrel being manufactured by converting naval armour piercing shells.

The 3.7" Trench Howitzer fired a 4½ pound bomb 350 yards.

The 3" Stokes Trench Mortar was introduced in 1916 and fired a 11½ pound bomb about 400 yards, with the innovation of being fitted with a percussion detonator. The bomb therefore self-fired when it was dropped down the barrel onto a fixed firing pin. The mortar was in three parts:- barrel (44 pounds), bipod (18 pounds), baseplate (29 pounds). It had a crew of three. It was designed by Frederick William Stokes, director of Ransomes Engineering Works.

The 4" Stokes Trench Mortar was produced in limited numbers for use by the 'Special Brigade Royal Engineers' to fire gas (phosgene), high-explosive, smoke or thermit bombs. It had a range of up to 500 yards, later increased to 1,500 yards.

The 9.45" 'Flying Pig' heavy trench mortar firing a 150 pound bomb up to 1,000 yards, a Corps asset.

World War Two, and later

A 2" mortar was introduced for rifle platoons in 1938 and weighed 10.5 pounds firing a 2½ pound high explosive bomb about 500 yards, smoke and illuminating rounds could also be fired. It remained in service until the 1980's when a 51mm mortar was introduced.

The 3" mortar was a direct descendant of the Stokes mortar, and was issued as a battalion's 'artillery' it weighed 112 pounds, firing 10 pound bombs up to 1,600 yards later increasing to 2,800 yards, maximum rate of fire 10 rounds/minute. It could fire high explosive, smoke, or illuminating rounds. It was eventually superseded by the 81mm mortar.

81mm Mortar. Developed from the 3" mortar, weight 36.7kg, maximum range 5,500 metres, high-explosive bomb weight 4.47kg. Manned by a three-man crew, fires high-explosive, smoke and illuminating rounds, maximum rate of fire eight rounds per minute.

51mm Mortar was introduced to replace the 2" mortar. Weight 6.27 kg, range 750 metres, fires high-explosive, smoke and illuminating rounds (approx weight 1 kg). Normally issued to a scale of one per rifle platoon.

MSK bomb	British: World War 1 grenade.
Mustard Gas	Nickname for toxic gas (dichlorodiethyl-sulphide) developed by two German scientists, Lommel and Steinkopf, during World War 1, code-named 'LOST' by Germans after its inventors. Nicknamed mustard gas by British troops due to its smell and the yellow cross marking on the shell canister.
Muzzle-loading	Weapon with a sealed breech which had to be loaded via the muzzle with separate powder charge and ball, rammed in tight with wadding using a ramrod.
NATO	Abbreviation for North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Brought into being in 1949 for mutual protection against a Russian (Warsaw Pact) threat.
Nazi	German: Abbreviation for 'Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (literally 'National Socialist German Workers' Party').
Nissen hut	British: An inexpensive pre-fabricated hut with roof and walls made from pre-curved corrugated iron sheeting, and brick-built end walls. Of distinctive 'swiss-roll' shape. Designed by Lieutenant Colonel Peter Nissen, (1871-1930).
NCO	British: Abbreviation for Non-Commissioned Officer. Being a Colour Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal, Lance Corporal (or equivalent ranks) - ie those ranking below 'warrant officers' but above 'privates'.
'Nebelling'	Slang: 'Nebelwerfer', a German multi-barrelled gun capable of delivering a salvo of a number of rounds to the same target area.
Nebelwerfer	German: Multiple-barrel guns/mortars. World War 2 versions:- 'Nebelwerfer 41', 15cm six-rocket gun, range 7,500 yards, all six rockets could be fired in 10 seconds, and three salvos fired every five minutes. 'Nebelwerfer 42', 21cm five-rocket gun, range 8,600 yards, all five rockets could be fired in 8 seconds, and three salvos every eight minutes.
'Netting'	British: Tuning all radio sets of a formation onto an identical frequency to form a common communications 'net'(work).
'O' Group	Abbreviation for Orders Group. Meeting of officers and commanders.
OKH	German: Abbreviation for Oberkommando des Heeres - Army High Command.
Old Contemptible	British: Nickname for soldiers of the 1914 British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Originated by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II on 4th August 1914 in his Order of the Day which directed the German Second Army to "exterminate the treacherous England, walk over General French's contemptible little Army."
'P' Bomb	British: World War 1, an incendiary hand-grenade containing phosphorous.
Panther	German: Tank with 75mm or 88mm main armament.
Panzerfaust	German: Hand-held recoilless infantry anti-tank weapon weighing 11½ pounds which fired a hollow shaped charge, which could penetrate up to 6" armour, up to 60 yards. The launcher was reloadable or disposable.
Panzer	German: Armour/Tank.
Panzerabwehrkannon	German: Anti-tank gun (PAK) of 3.7cm calibre.
Panzergrenadier	German: Armoured infantry.
Panzerkampfwagen I	German: Tank weighing 10 tons with a 20mm main armament, introduced into service 1939.
Panzerkampfwagen III	German: Tank weighing 15 tons with a 37mm main armament, introduced into service 1939.
Panzerkampfwagen IV	German: Tank weighing 25 tons, crew of 5, with a 75mm main armament, maximum road speed 38km/hour. Introduced into service 1936, but not in large numbers until the end of 1939 when the model 'E' made its debut. Numerically the most common German tank of World War 2.
Panzerkampfwagen V	German: 'Panther'. Tank weighing 44 tons, crew of 5, with a 75mm main armament, maximum road speed 55 km/hour. Introduced into service 1943.
Panzerkampfwagen VI	German: 'Tiger'. Tank weighing 57 tons, crew of 5, with an 88mm main armament, maximum road speed 38km/hour. Introduced into service 1942; 'Tiger 2' (Königstiger or 'King Tiger') weight 68 tons, maximum road speed 41km/hour, with an 88mm main armament. Introduced into service 1944.
Parapet	The rampart forming the front part of a protective fire trench.
Percussion Cap	Initiating charge for propellant in muzzle-loading weapons. A small copper cap filled with fulminate of mercury. Introduced to the British Army in 1838 with the Brunswick rifle.
Petard	British: A Churchill armoured assault vehicle fitted with a 90mm mortar for use by engineers to destroy obstacles/concrete emplacements.

PIAT	British: Abbreviation for Projector Infantry Anti-Tank. A hand-held anti-tank weapon, operated by means of a spring-loaded spigot which detonated the projectile. Invented by Lt Col S Blacker OBE TD (serving TA officer) who commanded 58th (Sussex) Field Brigade RA (TA).
Pillbox	British: A small fortified weapon emplacement, often constructed of reinforced concrete. Probably named after small drum-shaped containers for medicine.
Pip	British: Vulgar term for stars worn by officers as badges of rank.
Platoon	A sub-unit of a company, presently about 30 all ranks, commanded by a junior officer (2nd Lieutenant or Lieutenant).
Pom-Pom	A quick-firing automatically loaded gun firing explosive one pound shells - named after the noise made when firing. The one-pound shell weight being the smallest calibre of high-explosive round permitted under the Geneva Convention.
Pork and Beans	British: Derogatory nickname for Allied Portuguese troops who arrived on active service in 1917. Term banned by British GHQ Order - to little effect other than to popularise it.
Potato-Masher	British: Nickname for German stick grenade.
Predictor	British: An aiming device used by anti-aircraft artillery.
Private	British: The first infantry rank as a trained soldier, equivalent to 'trooper', 'rifleman' in other Arms. (Originates from 'Private Gentleman').
PSI	British: Abbreviation for Permanent Staff Instructor.
Puttees	British: Uniform - long strips of khaki coloured cloth, fastened by a tape, used to close the gap between boot and trouser bottoms of khaki service dress uniform. Wound from boot to just below the knee in World War 1, and after, until replaced by webbing anklets introduced with battledress in 1938. Short puttees re-introduced with the introduction of combat uniform and DMS boots. (Hindustani - 'bandages'). Became redundant when 'boots combat high' issued.
'Q'	British: Abbreviation/slang for 'Quartermaster' (supply) matters.
QVR	British: Abbreviation for The Queen Victoria's Rifles (TA).
Quartermaster (QM)	Officer responsible for arranging a unit's supplies. Often a commissioned senior warrant officer.
RA	British: Abbreviation for the Royal Regiment of Artillery.
RAP	Abbreviation for Regimental Aid Post. A unit's casualty-clearing centre.
Ranks	<p>British Army - Commissioned</p> <p>General: Rank structure above Colonel, later Brigadier. 'General', highest commander in the army usually as Commander-in-Chief, (originating from 'Captain-General'), 'Lieutenant General', commanding a Corps, or equivalent appointment; 'Major General', commanding a Division, or equivalent appointment; 'Brigadier General' commanding a Brigade, or equivalent appointment (After World War 1 rank designated 'Colonel Commandant' but this was thought too clumsy and rank then changed to 'Brigadier'.) (A Major General is junior to a Lieutenant General because the original rank was 'Sergeant Major General').</p> <p>Colonel: An officer with the army, rather than a regimental rank, immediately junior to a Brigadier (-General).</p> <p>Lieutenant Colonel: highest 'regimental' rank for an officer, usually commands an infantry battalion or equivalent major unit in other arms. (Latin - Colonna, head of a column of companies).</p> <p>Major: the lowest 'field rank', junior to a Lieutenant Colonel, usually command a company or equivalent sub-unit. The senior major in a battalion acting as second-in-command (Latin - 'Magnus', great).</p> <p>Captain: junior to a major, acts as second-in-command to a sub-unit commander or as 'adjutant' or as a specialist platoon commander. Commander of a company up to circa 1920's. (Latin - 'Caput', head).</p> <p>Lieutenant: Junior to a Captain, usually a rifle platoon commander.</p> <p>Second Lieutenant: The first grade of commissioned officer, a probationary rank. Introduced to the army in 1871 to replace the rank of 'ensign'.</p> <p>Ensign: The junior commissioned rank in the infantry until 1871 when 'Lieutenant' introduced.</p> <p>Subaltern: Second Lieutenants and Lieutenants are collectively known as 'subalterns', strictly not a rank.</p>
RIX	British: Abbreviation for Research Development Explosive. Explosive propellant used in shells, etc.

Recce	British: Abbreviation/slang for reconnaissance/reconnoitre.
Recoilless	A gun design which eliminates the breechblock (the closed end) of the barrel therefore reducing weight and recoil. Such weapons usually have an open 'venturi', in place of a solid breechblock, through which a large part of the propellant blast escapes and are therefore less powerful and also have a backblast signature making them easy to spot if badly sited.
Reconnaissance	Patrolling or similar activities to gain information about an enemy, usually by stealth without being detected. (French - 'reconoistre', to explore).
Retreat	British: The ancient ceremonial custom of using a bugle call at the end of each day to signify that all troops out of an encampment, or fort, should 'retreat' into camp for the night.
Reveille	British: Bugle call used to rouse soldiers from sleep. (French - to awake).
Rifling	A twisted groove inside the bore of a firearm barrel, which imparts spin to the projectile so increasing accuracy.
Royal Horse Artillery	British: (RHA) Light highly-mobile artillery with the role of supporting cavalry, or later armoured units.
RTR	British: Royal Tank Regiment. At first designated the 'Tank Corps', became the 'Royal Tank Corps' in 1923; the 'Royal Tank Regiment' in 1939.
SAA	British: Abbreviation for Small-Arms Ammunition.
SA80	British: L85A1 5.56mm (0.223"), gas-operated, 30 round magazine-fed rifle, weight 11 pounds 1 ounce (4.98kg), length 30.9" (785mm), muzzle velocity 3,084 feet/second (940 metres/second). Fitted with a 4x magnification L9A1 SUSAT sight (Sight Unit Small Arms Trilux). Manufactured by Royal Ordnance (Enfield) and introduced from 1985 as a replacement for 7.62mm self-loading rifle, see also 'LSW' variant.
SABOT	British: Abbreviation for Armour-Piercing Discarding Sabot. A kinetic anti-armour round developed in 1944 to combat thicker armour. A solid core shot encased in a larger driving band which broke up and discarded when round left barrel, thus imparting a high velocity to the solid core anti-tank round.
Saint George's Day	Feast Day celebrated on April 23rd annually. The Regimental Day of 3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (TA); and latterly of the 2nd Battalion.
Sam Browne	British: A leather waist-belt with cross-straps worn by officers, and some warrant officers, on which sword and revolver are carried. Discarded for field service in 1939. Invented by General Sir Samuel Browne, 1924-1901.
Sap	British: A trench dug from the front line towards enemy positions to afford listening posts, or to advance positions under fire, or to lay explosive mines under enemy trenches.
Sapper	British: A soldier of the Corps of Royal Engineers. From 'Sape' (French) a trench dug by engineers during siege-works. (French 'Sapuer'.)
Schmeisser	German: Standard issue sub-machine-gun.
Schu Mine	German: Anti-personnel mine fitted in a wooden case to counter mine-detectors.
Scorpion	British: Matilda tank converted for mechanical mine-clearing by the addition of a front-mounted rotating chain flail.
Section	British: When applied to infantry, the smallest formation under command within a battalion. Strength between 8-10, commanded by a Corporal with a Lance Corporal as second-in-command. A sub-unit of a rifle platoon.
Self-propelled gun	Gun mounted directly onto a self-powered tracked, or wheeled, vehicle. As opposed to a towed gun.
Sexton	Canadian: World War 2 self-propelled gun. Designed and manufactured in Canada. A British 25-pounder field gun mounted on the chassis of a Ram tank (a Canadian tank based on the American Sherman).
Shako	Uniform helmet, covered in coloured cloth with a peak.
Sherman	British: American tank introduced to the British Army in 1942. Weighing 31 tons, with a crew of five, fitted with a 75mm main armament (later 6 pounder or some 17 pounder 'Firefly'), maximum road speed 24mph. Introduced new tank technology in that the turret and hull were each cast as single pieces - rather than being fabricated from sections. At first fitted with twin diesel engines, later with petrol engines resulting in them being nicknamed 'Ronsons' by German anti-tank gunners - because they were so easy to light !

Shrapnel	British: An artillery shell which explodes and scatters numerous bullets either on impact or as airburst. Invented in 1784 by Henry Shrapnel, an artillery officer, introduced in 1803 and first used in 1808. Shrapnel was rendered obsolete by improved high-explosive ammunition in 1939 but the term 'shrapnel' still used to describe any shards of metal resulting from artillery fire.
Slade-Wallace	British: The 1888 pattern of 'valise equipment' used by the infantry to carry personal ammunition, bayonet etc, made of brown leather. Replaced in 1908 by webbing equipment.
SLR	British: Abbreviation for Self-Loading Rifle. L1A1 NATO 7.62mm (0.300") gas-operated, 20 round magazine-fed semi-automatic rifle, weight 9.5 pounds (4.31kg), length 41.5", muzzle velocity 2,800 feet/second (853 metres/second). Manufactured in Britain under license by the Royal Small Arms Factory/BSA from Belgian Fabrique National 'FAL' pattern (Fusil Automatique Lé Gère), but without 'burst-fire' facility of Belgian design. Replaced Lee-Enfield 0.303" Mark 4 rifle as standard service issue from 1957.
'S' Mine	German: Anti-personnel mine triggered by touching any one of three prongs which caused the mine to explode shrapnel at waist-height.
Smoking Concert	Entertainment for men only. Still used as the slang term 'smoker'.
Snapping	Musketry practice using percussion caps only, ie no propellant charge and bullet.
Snapshooting	Aimed small-arms fire at targets exposed for short periods.
Snider	British: An American design fitted to convert the 1853 pattern of Enfield rifle from muzzle to breech-loading with centre-fire cartridges. This eliminated the need for separate priming charge, powder, wadding and ball by replacing it with a complete brass-cased round. It enabled infantry to load much faster with consistent ammunition and the elimination of a ramrod enabled prone firing and the use of protective cover.
Sonderkraftfahrzeug	German: (SdKfz) 'Special Motor Vehicle'. World War 2 Half-track armoured personnel carrier, maximum road speed 50km/hour. 'SdKfz 250', open-topped half-track with two machine-guns and a crew of six, mainly 'recce' role. 'SdKfz 251', half-track mainly used as armoured personnel carrier, two machine-guns, weight 8.8 tons, to carry commander/driver/10 infantrymen - twenty-one 'variants' with divers roles.
SOS flares	British: A World War 1 system to enable front line troops to signal using pre-arranged numbers of coloured flares to call for artillery fire or to call reserves into action.
SS	German: Abbreviation for Schutz Staffeln. Nazi élite troops (Protection detachments.)
Spandau	German: Machine-gun - see 'MG42'.
Start-Line	A pre-determined imaginary line on the ground, and crossed by participating troops at the beginning of an operation.
Stand-to	The 100% manning of defensive positions, traditionally carried out at dawn and dusk.
Sten	British: 9mm (0.345") 32 round magazine-fed sub-machine gun with blow-back action, weight 7 pounds 5 ounces (3.27kg), length 32 1/2" (896mm), muzzle velocity 1,200 feet/second (365 metres/second). Designed in early 1941 by Major Shepherd and Mr Turpin and in production by June 1941. Named 'Sten' after Shepherd, Turpin, and Enfield.
Sterling	British: L2 9mm (0.345") 32 round magazine-fed, blow-back action sub machine-gun, weight 6 pounds (2.72kg), length 27.15" (690mm), muzzle velocity 1200 feet/second (365 metres/second). Originally known as the 'Patchett', replaced the 'Sten' in 1953.
Stokes Gun	British: An infantry trench mortar of World War 1 - see mortars.
Stonk(ing)	British: Slang for heavy artillery/mortar fire.
Strafe(ing)	(German/English slang) German bombardment by artillery or aircraft.
Sturmabteilung	German: 'Stormtrooper battalion'.
Stuart	US built reconnaissance tank weighing 15 tons with a 37mm main armament, first in service 1941.
Stuka	German: Abbreviation for Sturzkampfflugzeug. Junkers model JU87 dive-bombing aircraft.
Squadron	Sub-unit of cavalry or armoured regiment. (Also engineers etc)
T34	Soviet: Type of medium tank.
Tank	British: 'Tanks' gained their name when they were disguised as 'water tanks' when secretly delivered to the front during World War 1. British Mark 1 weighed 28 tons with a 105 horse-power Daimler engine, 26 1/2 feet long, 14 feet wide and 8 feet high, with a crew of one officer and seven men, maximum speed 3.7 mph on level ground. In two versions - the 'Destroyer', later called 'Male', with two six pounder guns and four machine-guns; the 'Man-killing', later called 'Female', armed with six Hotchkiss machine-guns. First in service June 1916, first in action September 1916.

Teller mine	German: Anti-tank mine.
Terrapin	British: Eight-wheeled load carrying amphibious vehicle introduced in 1944.
Thermit	British: World War 1 incendiary hand-grenade containing a high-burning mixture of aluminium and iron-oxide.
Tiger	German: Tank - see Panzerkampfwagen VI.
Toffee Apple	British: Nickname for distinctively shaped 60 pound mortar bomb fired by World War 1 Vickers 2" trench mortar.
Tommy Atkins	British: Nickname for any British soldier. Said to originate from the specimen signature 'Thomas Atkins' used on a War Office model sheet for soldiers accounts. The name Thomas Atkins was chosen by The Duke of Wellington in remembrance of one of his soldiers of the 33rd Regiment of Foot (later 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) when he was first in action in command of the Regiment. After the action he encountered one of his soldiers, in the Grenadier Company, who had been mortally wounded. The soldier is said to have detected Wellington's distress at his wounds and said "It's all right sir, its all in a day's work.", after which the soldier, Thomas Atkins, died. It was in remembrance of this soldier that the Duke, by then Commander-in-Chief, chose Thomas Atkins as the name of a typical soldier.
Tommy Cooker	British: Tommy's Cooker, originating in World War 1, an individual cooker issued to enable front-line soldiers to get hot meals when it was proving impossible to carry bulk rations forward from central cookhouses.
TNT	Abbreviation for Trinitrotoluene. Explosive propellant developed in Germany and adopted by them in 1902. Adopted by Britain in 1907 to replace lyddite.
Trench-foot	A form of frostbite caused by standing for long periods in cold water or mud. Condition aggravated by inability to carry out basic footcare under active service conditions.
Troop	British: A sub-unit of cavalry/engineers/artillery, equivalent to a platoon.
Typhoon	British: Hawker Typhoon fighter-bomber used for low level ground attack tasks, notably in Normandy. Could be armed with eight 50-pound rockets.
V sign	The English archers at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 originated the defiant 'two-fingered' gesture still favoured by soldiers. Their French opponents feared the English archer's skill with the long bow, and promised to cut three fingers off any captured archer's right hand - "so they may never presume again to shoot at man nor horse". This French threat was received with disdain by the English archers who taunted the French knights on the battlefield with a two-fingered gesture. Over five hundred years later, Winston Churchill adopted a two-fingered 'V' sign as a symbol of victory. Churchill was himself a noted historian, it is wondered if he was mischievously aware of its ancient anti-French origins.
V1	German: Vergeltungswaffe Eins - literally Revenge Weapon Number One. A pilotless rocket carrying 2,000 pounds of high explosive with a range of 200 miles.
V2	German: Vergeltungswaffe Zwei - literally Revenge Weapon Number Two. A pilotless winged bomb carrying 1,870 pounds of high explosive with a range of 150 miles.
Valentine	British: Infantry Mark III tank weighing 17 tons with a 2 pounder main armament, first in service 1940. Produced by Vickers-Armstrong, some 8,275 being built. Named when the design was submitted to the War Office on Saint Valentine's Day, 1938.
Very Light	British: Signal flare cartridges first adopted by the Royal Navy during the 1880s. Very cartridges were introduced in the army at the outbreak of World War 1 and were fired by a 1" signal pistol. They were of different coloured lights and the cartridges were embossed with a raised symbol to enable the firer to identify the correct colour in the dark. Very light signals were often fired by forward trenches to call 'SOS' artillery fire support, and pre-arranged combinations of colours were used to pass information.
Vickers	British: A .303" (7.7mm) calibre tripod-mounted medium machine-gun, fabric belt-fed, water-cooled, introduced in 1912, weighing 33 pounds (plus tripod weighing 50 pounds) and capable of firing 450-500 rounds a minute, with a maximum range of 4,000-5,000 yards, muzzle velocity 2,440 feet/second (744 metres/second). The machine-gun had a water jacket (which could be smooth or corrugated) holding 7 pints of water, to reduce water loss a condensing tube and water reservoir were used. Manufactured by Vickers as an improvement on the 'Maxim'. Became famous for its reliability and remained in service until the 1960's. (Also see 'Maxim').
Wadi	Arabic: A dry stream bed, often deep enough to afford infantry cover from view, and to be an obstacle.
Waffen SS	German. The military wing of the SS.
War Office	Predecessor government office to Ministry of Defence.

Warrant Officer	British: Rank structure between 'commissioned officers' and 'non-commissioned officers', a soldier holding the Sovereign's Warrant, introduced as a single grade in 1881. Later divided into Warrant Officer Class 1 (<i>ie</i> Regimental Sergeant Major) and Warrant Officer Class 2 (<i>ie</i> Company Sergeant Major). A Warrant Officer Class 3 grade was introduced in October 1938 to allow the appointment of 'Platoon Sergeant Majors' to command platoons to fill in for a shortage of junior commissioned officers but this was discontinued circa 1940 after which no further promotions to Class 3 were made.
Wasp	British: A universal tracked carrier equipped with a flamethrower, a smaller version of the Crocodile.
Waterloo Day	The 18th June annually to mark the battle of Waterloo in 1815 when Allied forces, commanded by The Duke of Wellington, defeated the armies of France's Napoleon Bonaparte. Since celebrated by the 33rd Regiment of Foot (and subsequently by its successor unit, 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment) which was present at the battle. Waterloo Day is sometimes mistakenly celebrated by other elements of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, but is neither their privilege or custom to do so. For example, the Regimental Day of the 2nd Battalion (regular) was always Saint George's Day annually in continuation of that celebrated by its respective predecessor the 76th Regiment of Foot.
Weasel	British: A fast lightly armoured tracked snow-mobile whose low ground pressure enabled it to cross over mines unscathed. Originally issued to the 52nd (Lowland) Division for mountain warfare.
Wermacht	German: Armed forces as a whole, (Kriegsmarine, Heer, and Luftwaffe).
White	US: M3 half-track armoured personnel carrier to carry 10 men, maximum speed 45mph, variants include a 'tank destroyer' carrying 75mm gun and mortar vehicle.
Whizz-Bang	British: Nickname for shells fired by German 77mm field guns.
Wipers	British: Slang name for the Belgian town of Ypres (Now 'Ieper').
WOMBAT	British: Infantry 120mm recoilless anti-tank gun firing HESH ammunition weighing 29.3 kg, with ranges of 1100metres (static targets), 750 metres (moving targets), muzzle-velocity of 452 metres/second. Aiming assisted by a 0.5" spotting rifle, (Browning 0.50"). Required a crew of three, most variants towed or carried upon 'portees'. Other variants 'CONBAT' 'MOBAT'.
Yorkshire Brigade	An administrative brigade for the Yorkshire infantry battalions between 1957-1968, which succeeded 'The Yorkshire and Northumberland Brigade', 1948-1957. Replaced by 'The King's Division' in 1968.
Yeomanry	British: Volunteer cavalry most raised circa 1794.
Zero Hour	British: The predetermined time at which troops cross the start-line at the beginning of an operation. 'H' Hour may be preceded by preparatory movement, artillery barrages etc.
33rd	The precedence accorded to The Duke of Wellington's Regiment within the British Infantry of the Line. Raised on 12th February 1702 as the Earl of Huntingdon's Regiment of Foot, thereafter known by Colonel's name until 1751. In 1747 ranked as the 33rd Regiment of Foot and designated by that number from 1751. On 31st August 1782 redesignated 33rd (1st Yorkshire West Riding) Regiment of Foot until 20th June 1853 when it was redesignated as the 33rd (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment of Foot. On 1st July 1881 it was again redesignated as 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment); at the same time the 76th Regiment of Foot became the 2nd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).
66mm	British: Anti-tank launcher - see 'LAW'.
81mm	British: Mortar - see 'mortars'.
84mm	British: Introduced in 1965 to replace the 3.5" rocket launcher. 84mm 'Carl Gustav' recoilless infantry anti-tank weapon requiring a two-man team. Ranges - static target 500 metres, moving target 400 metres, launcher weight 16 kg. Fires HEAT, canister and smoke rounds (approx weight 2.6kg), will penetrate up to 228mm armour, muzzle velocity 160 metres/second. Replace by LAW 80 in 1980.
88mm	German: World War 2 high velocity (810 metres/second) anti-aircraft gun with a range of 17,500 metres (AA role) firing a 20.7 pound shell. Rommel later deployed them in the desert campaign as anti-tank guns, capable of penetrating 60mm of armour at ranges in excess of 1,200 metres.

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