



**HISTORY OF
THE SERVICE BATTALIONS OF
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S
(WEST RIDING REGIMENT)
IN THE
GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918**



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Author's note: Apart from the sketch maps, all maps and illustrations have been obtained from the Archives at RHQ and their provenance is not known. It is regretted therefore that it is not possible for correct and proper acknowledgement to be made.

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THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S
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IN THE
GREAT WAR 1914 - 1918**

*Major General D E Isles CB OBE DL
Colonel of the Regiment 1975 - 1982*



Brigadier His Grace The Duke of Wellington KG, LVO, OBE, MC, BA, DL.
Colonel-in-Chief The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding)

FOREWORD

by

Brigadier His Grace The Duke of Wellington

KG LVO OBE MC BA DL

Colonel-in-Chief, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding), 1974 - 2006



PARK CORNER HOUSE

HECKFIELD

HAMPSHIRE

RG27 0LJ

I am delighted that Major General Donald Isles has written a history of the Service Battalions of the Regiment. We are now 90 years away from the events described in this book. It is sobering to read of the willingness of those young men from the West Riding to join, many of whom later perished.

General Isles's book is an important part of the Regimental story which hitherto has been untold. I am very grateful to him for writing a very clear and well-written account of the Service Battalions, which can stand as a memorial to those who fell in the Great War.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'The Duke of Wellington', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

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INTRODUCTION

by

Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter

KCVO OBE

Colonel, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding), 1999 - 2006

This book is a valuable addition to the Regimental library and it is a story which should have been told years ago. General Donald Isles has done a tremendous job by extracting all available material from war diaries, often very bare, and the few personal accounts and turning them into a coherent story. Its careful editing and frequent explanations of the operational context have contributed to this excellent account of the Service Battalions.

As an enthusiastic historian I have much enjoyed being involved with this project which has come at a time when the name of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment is in danger of fading from people's minds. This book will remind us all of the contribution to World War I made by young men from the West Riding.

Walking the ground where many of these actions, so well described in the book, took place one cannot but reflect on the qualities of the men involved. All those who rallied to join the Service Battalions in 1914 and 1915 were born in the reign of Queen Victoria and represented the values of the Edwardian era in which they grew up. Those values were related to strong religious beliefs, allegiance to the British Empire and duty towards both. To the two-and-a-half million young men who volunteered duty meant a debt to mankind without expectation of reward or gratitude. These notions are not as well understood today as they were then; so much has changed in society in the intervening years. The pages of this book describe in great detail what duty meant on the ground and it is humbling to read.

Today there is an increasing curiosity surrounding World War I and the children of today are encouraged to learn about the 'unequal sacrifice' that their great grandfathers made. They came from all backgrounds and professions driven by that sense of duty. Military life did not suit many but by that continuation of leadership and discipline they went forward to the trenches to defend or attack. A vast majority did not disappoint and it is this that surprises today's generation. How could it have happened that Battalions, Brigades and Divisions went over the top with the certainty that casualties would be more than every other man? Not just once but time after time.

It is also true that today's generation with different values but trained by an Army with a very similar understanding of what makes men fight is producing a standard of soldier that those veterans of the Great War would recognise. What we see on our television screens in Iraq and Afghanistan bears witness to this.

This book, which is eminently readable, describes in a matter of fact way, the routine and the inevitable and frequently confused actions. The several well-drawn maps ensure that at least the reader is not confused. It is a fitting memorial, as the Duke of Wellington has pointed out, and perhaps I can conclude with two verses from Laurence Binyon's poem, *The Fallen*: one is familiar to us all; the other is hauntingly descriptive of the young men who joined the Service Battalions of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment).

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against all odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Fvelyn Webb · Carter
— — —

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish first to express my gratitude to our former Colonel in Chief, Brigadier His Grace The Duke of Wellington, for his kind Foreword and to the President of the Regimental Association, formerly our Colonel of the Regiment, Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, for equally kindly writing the Introduction to this History of our Service Battalions in the Great War of 1914-1918. Sir Evelyn has also, with his specialised knowledge, provided me with much important detail.

Secondly, my thanks are due to General Sir Charles Huxtable, Brigadiers Dick Mundell, John Greenway and my son Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Isles for reading my drafts and providing much wise comment and important suggestions as to their content.

I am grateful to Mr Scott Flaving who, in addition to commenting on the text, has also carried out the formidable task of compiling the admirable Index and also to my old comrade in our 1st Battalion, Mr Cyril Curling, who carried out much valuable research for me as well as commenting knowledgeably on the drafts. Majors David Harrap and Bob Heron of Regimental Headquarters together with Messers Cyril Ford and Richard Harvey have also helped greatly in the production of this History.

Notwithstanding all this assistance any errors remain my sole responsibility.

D.E.I.

PREFACE

It is now almost ninety years since 1918, the end of World War I, and although the Regiment possesses three fine histories detailing the part played by its Regular and Territorial Battalions in this conflict, nowhere is there to be found a comprehensive account, record or history of the activities of the Regiment's seven Service Battalions raised during this war. For some time this lack has been a cause of concern, but more particularly, now that the Regiment has had its identity submerged into the new Yorkshire Regiment, the need for an authoritative account has become more pressing. Thus, it was at a Regimental Council Meeting early in 2006 that I was encouraged and given approval to write this history.

Service Battalions came into being as the result of a decision by Lord Kitchener on his becoming Secretary of State for War in 1914. It will be remembered that he immediately stated that the nation must be prepared for a war lasting three years and that an Army of some seventy divisions would need to be raised. So, in August 1914, a campaign was started to recruit an additional 100,000 men between the ages of 19 and 30. The response was overwhelming and this first 100,000 had been recruited within a few days. Further, by the middle of September, 500,000 men had enlisted. In recruiting and organising his 'New Army' Kitchener made no use of the Territorial Army organisation and its county associations. Instead he was certain that the New Army must be formed round the Regiments and personnel of the peacetime Regular Army. No new regiments were raised and instead, existing two-battalion Regiments were expanded to thirteen, fourteen, fifteen battalions. More than five hundred New Army Battalions were raised during the course of the war primarily as part of the existing Infantry Regiments of the Line and, later, by converting some Yeomanry Regiments into Infantry. These infantry battalions were numbered consecutively after the existing regular and territorial battalions in the regiments and were distinguished by the word 'Service' in brackets after their number. Thus there came into existence the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th (Service) Battalions of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)¹.

The Service Battalions raised in August and September 1914 formed three New Armies: the First (9th to 14th Divisions), Second (15th to 20th Divisions) and the Third (21st to 26th Divisions). The three new armies were sometimes abbreviated to K1, K2 and K3. The 8th Dukes was in K1 in the 11th Division, the 9th Dukes was in K2 in the 17th Division and the 10th Dukes in K3 in the 23rd Division. Another series of service battalions was formed in the autumn of 1914 to form the original Fourth Army (30th to 35th Divisions) known as K4² and in which was the 11th Battalion of the Dukes. However, in May 1915 the 11th Battalion, in company with other new units of K4, was turned into a Reserve Battalion in order to train and send out drafts to the units of K1, K2 and K3 at the front. It was disbanded on 31 October 1916 owing to a change in training and drafting policy.

The 12th Battalion was raised as a Labour Battalion on 10 March 1916 and ceased to exist in April/June 1917, becoming the 24th and 25th Labour Companies. The 13th Battalion existed only from 1 February to 30 September 1918 while the 14th Battalion had an even shorter life from 7 July to 3 November 1918. Here it has to be remembered that in January 1916 the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, introduced the first Military Service Bill for compulsory attestation of men or, in other words, conscription had become necessary in order to ensure adequate reinforcement of the armies in France and Flanders. The second Service Bill, introduced on 16 May, extended conscription to married men. Thus, because of the high rate of casualties, the original volunteer composition of the Service Battalions was significantly changed. Not that this, in any way, diminished the bravery, extraordinary spirit and achievements of all these Battalions.

The 8th, 9th and 10th Service Battalions endured the brunt of the fighting by the Service Battalions raised for the Great War, though in the latter half of 1918 the 12th and 13th Battalions also saw front line service. All these five Battalions were serving when the Regiment was awarded thirty-four of its Battle Honours³.

Because of the somewhat incomplete information on these Battalions in the Regimental Archives and the sad fact that no-one is now alive who served in them this history has, perforce, to be a somewhat brief account of their doings; indeed, at times it is no more than a chronological record of day-to-day events. However, I trust that it does adequate justice to the record of our Service Battalions in the Great War.

Donald Isles
Denton, 2007
Lincolnshire

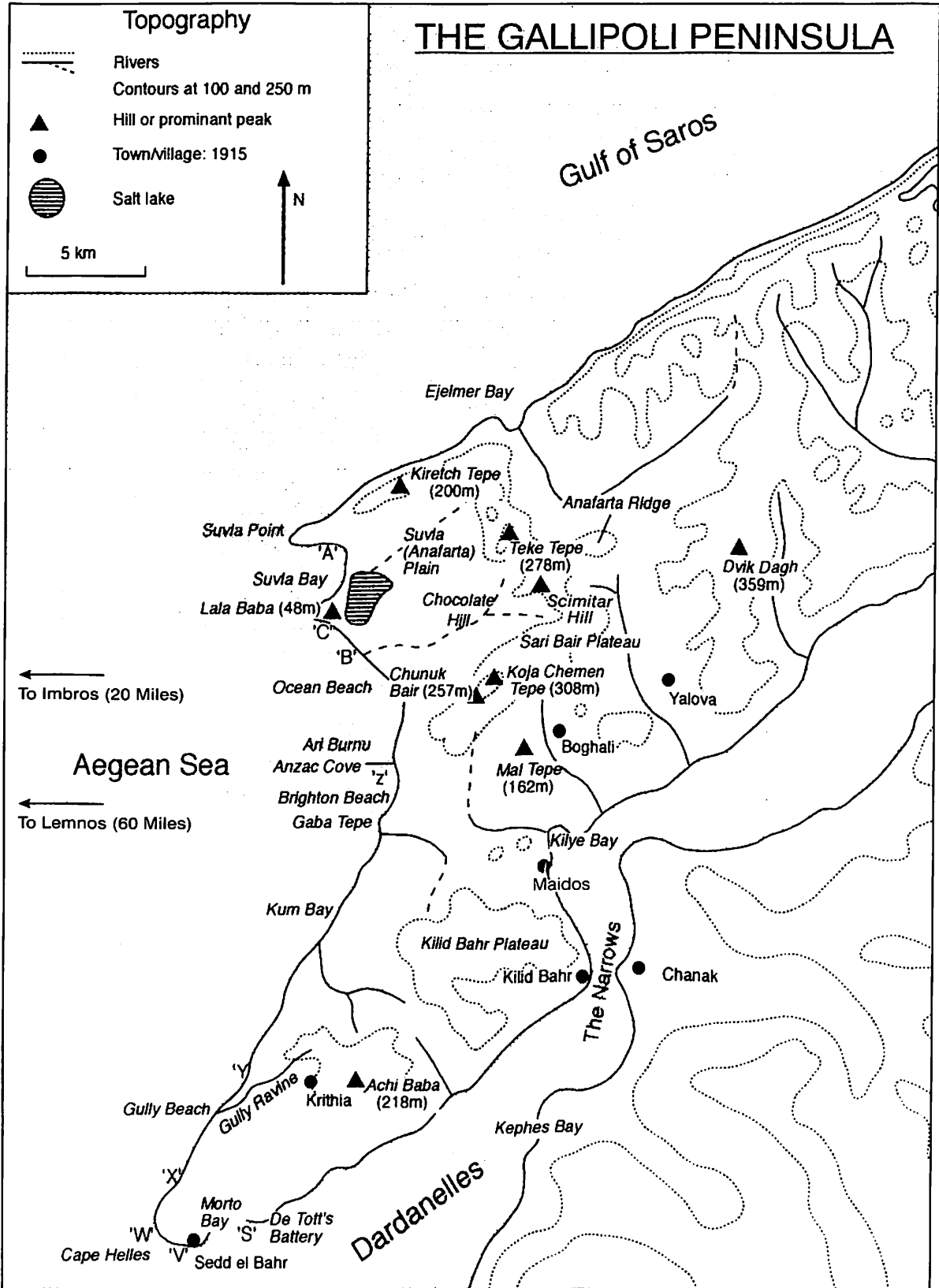
¹ Mention should be made here that frequently the Regiment was described simply as The West Riding Regiment - in official documents, in press reports of the time and in common usage. Similarly, the battalions of the Green Howards were described by their auxiliary title of the Yorkshire Regiment.

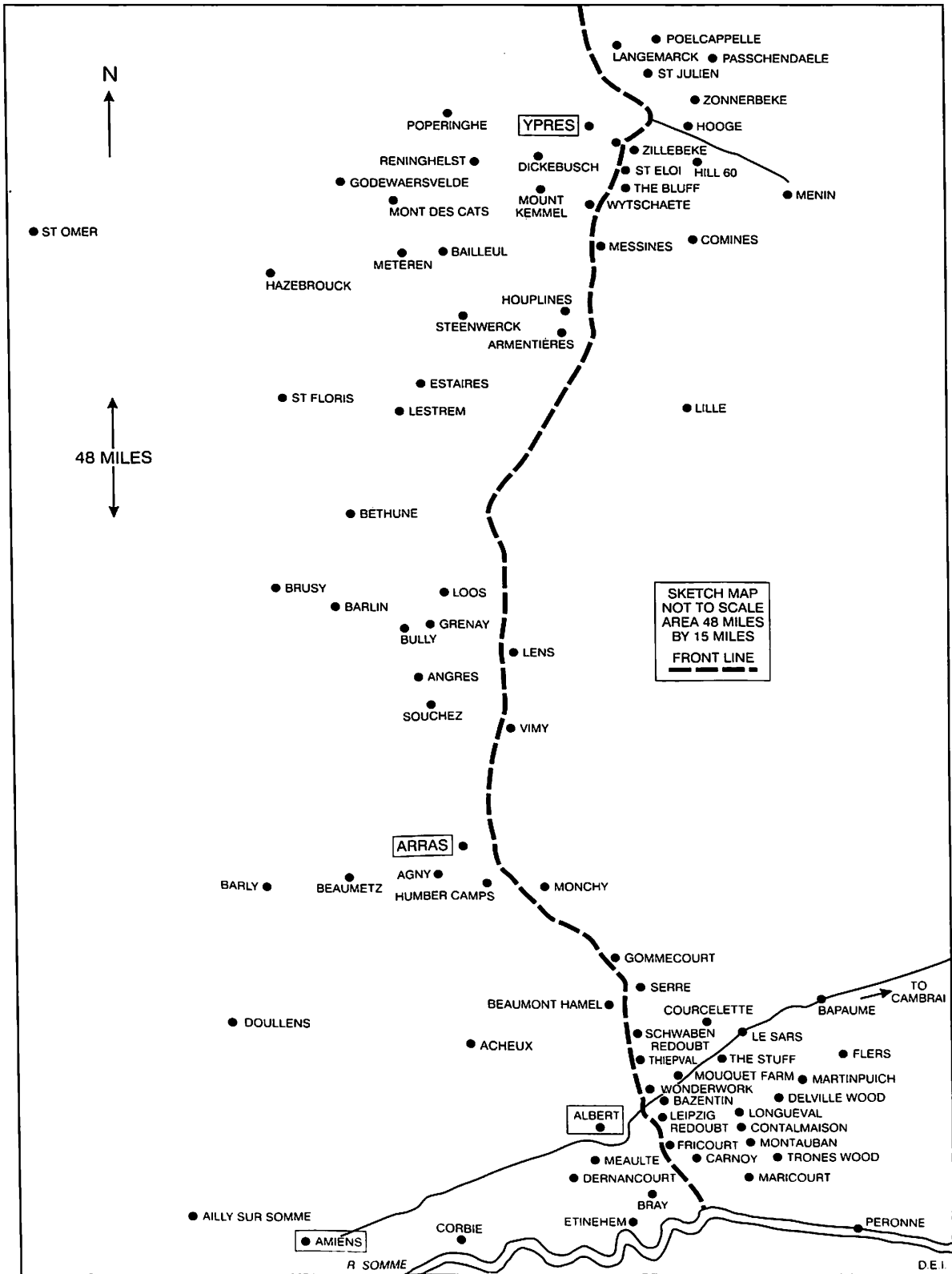
² At the same time as K1 to K4 armies were being raised a number of Service Battalions were being raised by committees from cities, towns, organisations and individuals, the expenses being met by the committees until reimbursed by the War Office. These locally raised battalions had an additional title in brackets showing their connection with the area, town or organisation that raised them (commonly known as the Pals' Battalions). They supplied most of the infantry to form the new Fourth Army. Although the 12th (Service) Battalion KOYLI (Pioneers) is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the Halifax Pals there was no Pals' Battalion raised in the town of Halifax.

³ See Appendix I

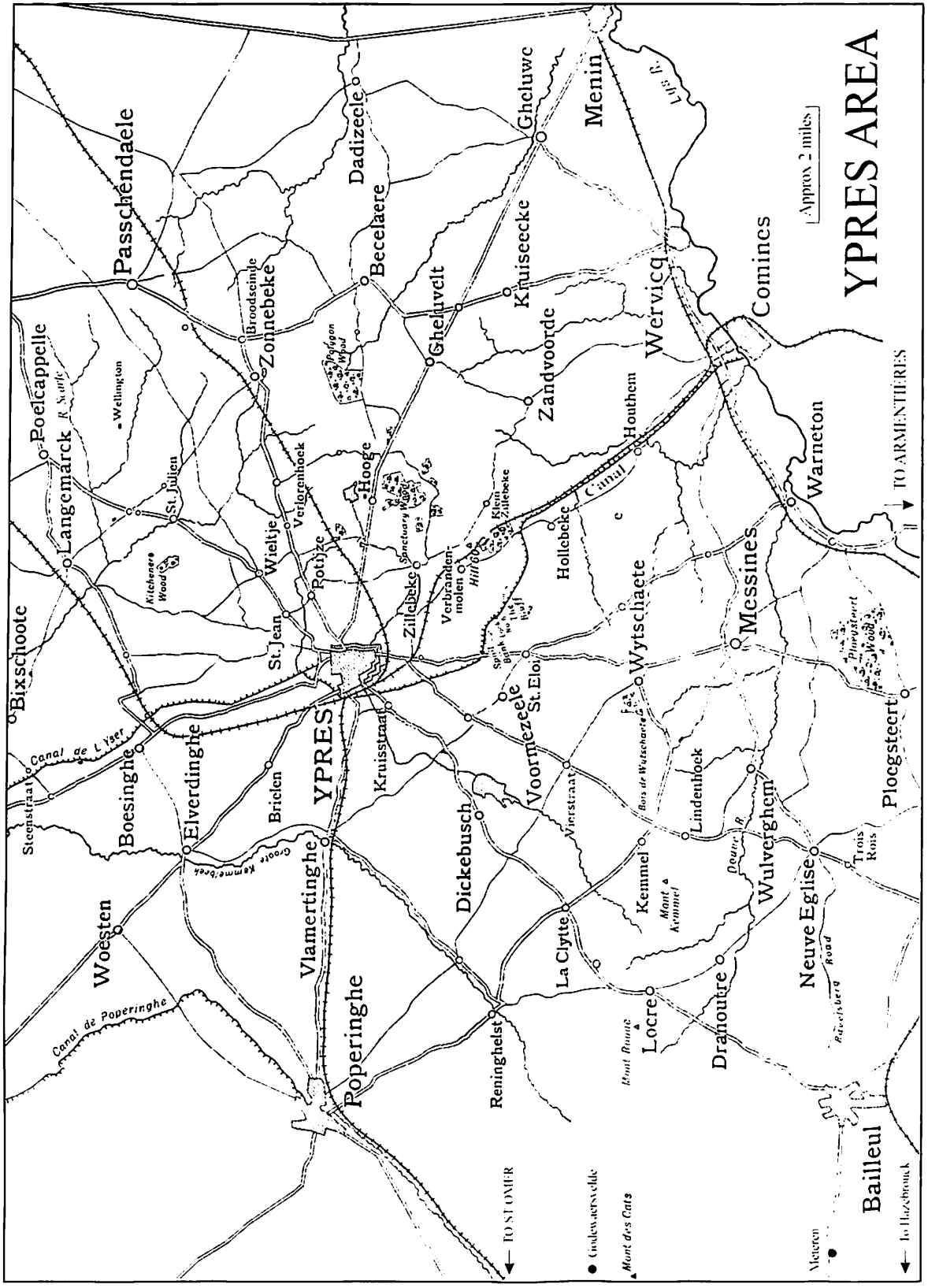
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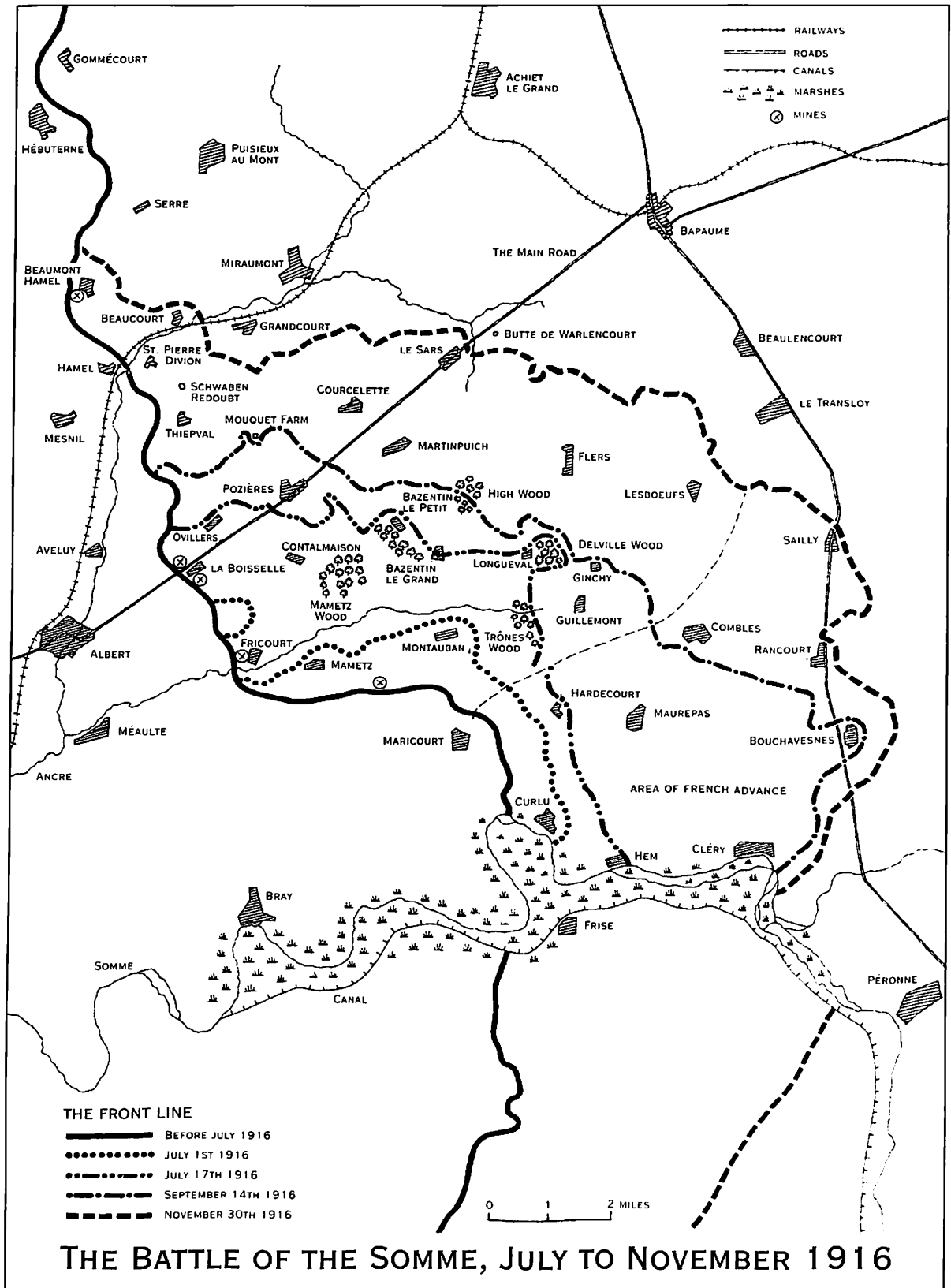
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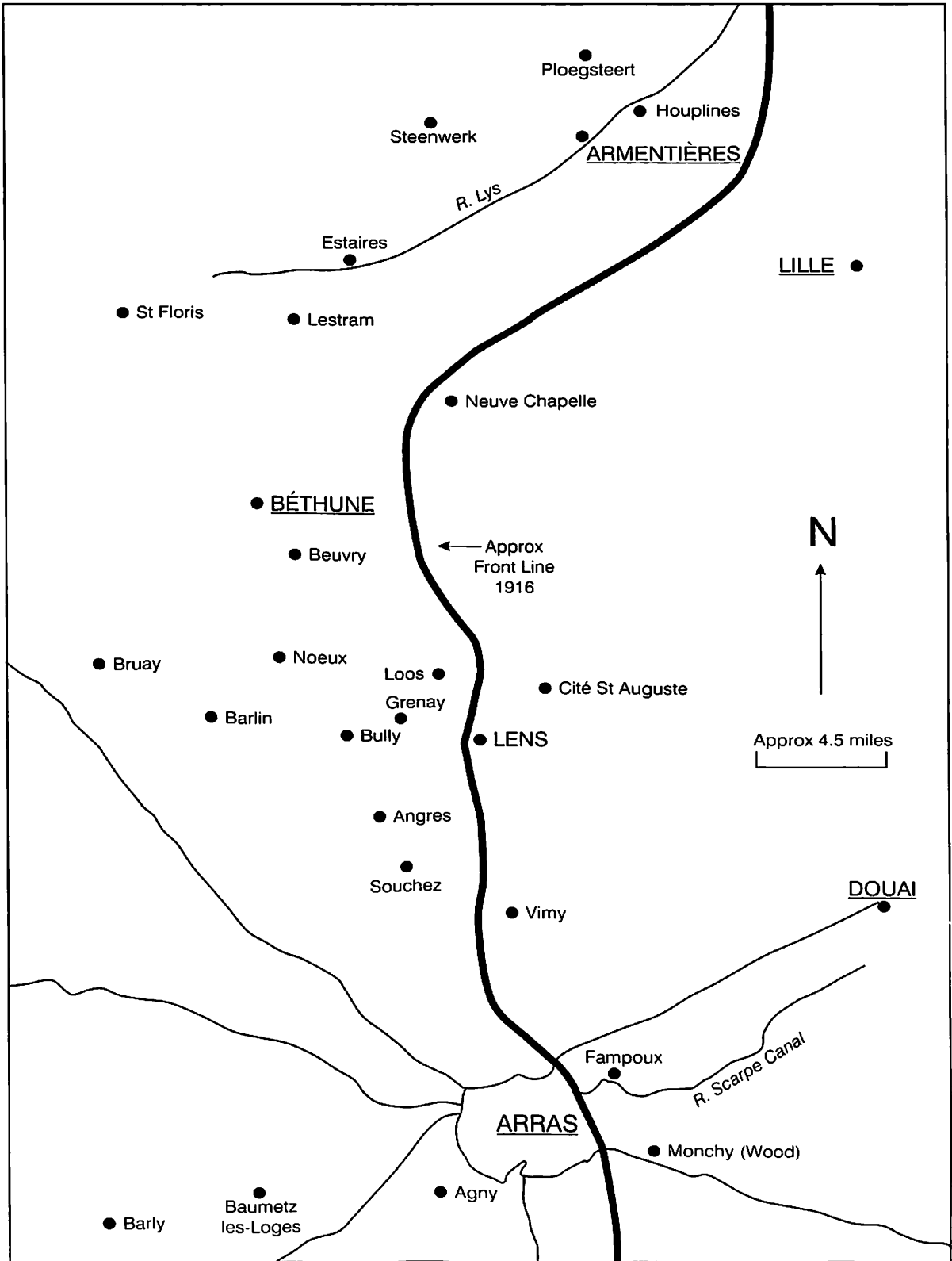




THE WESTERN FRONT BEFORE JULY 1916

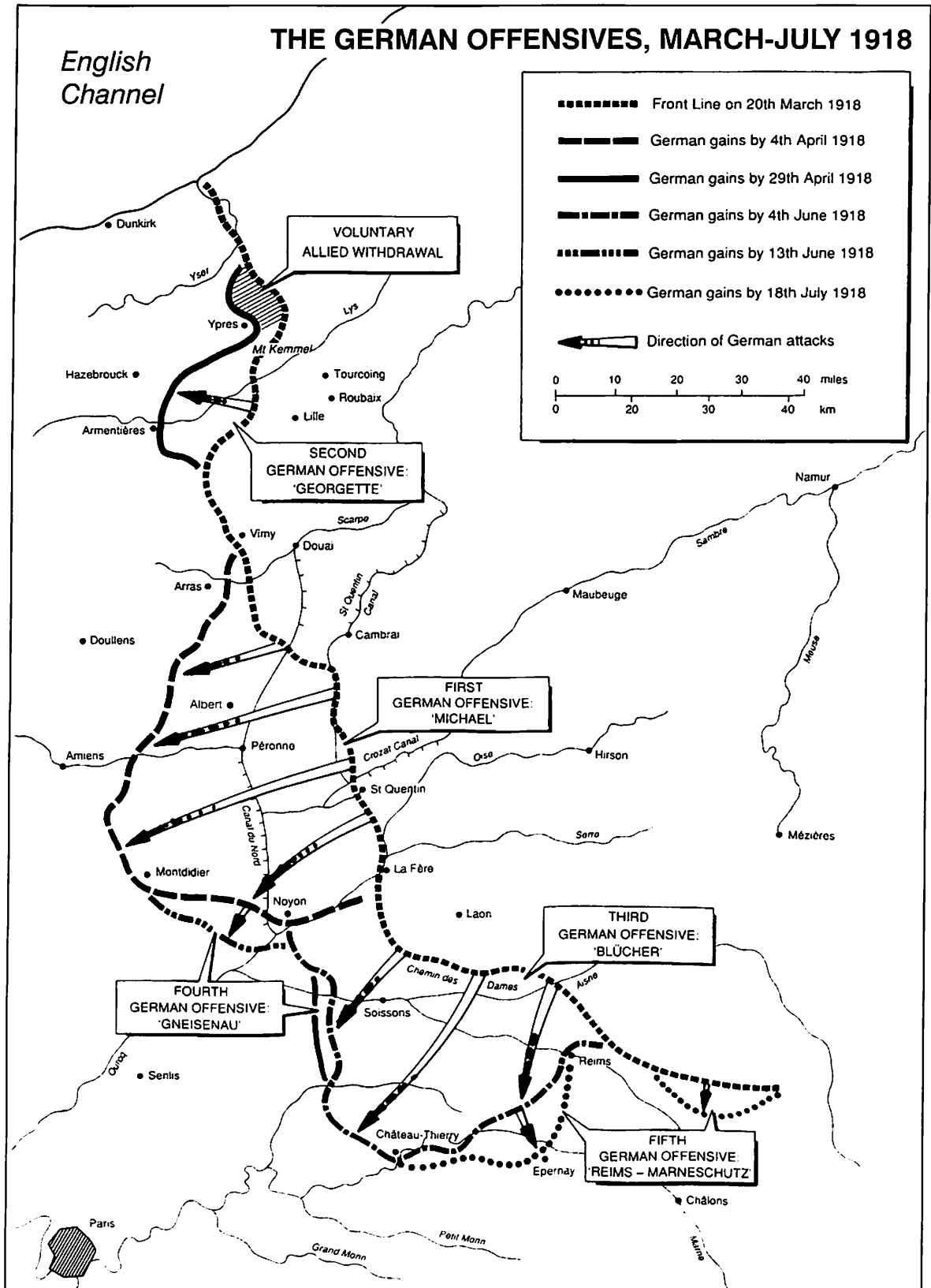


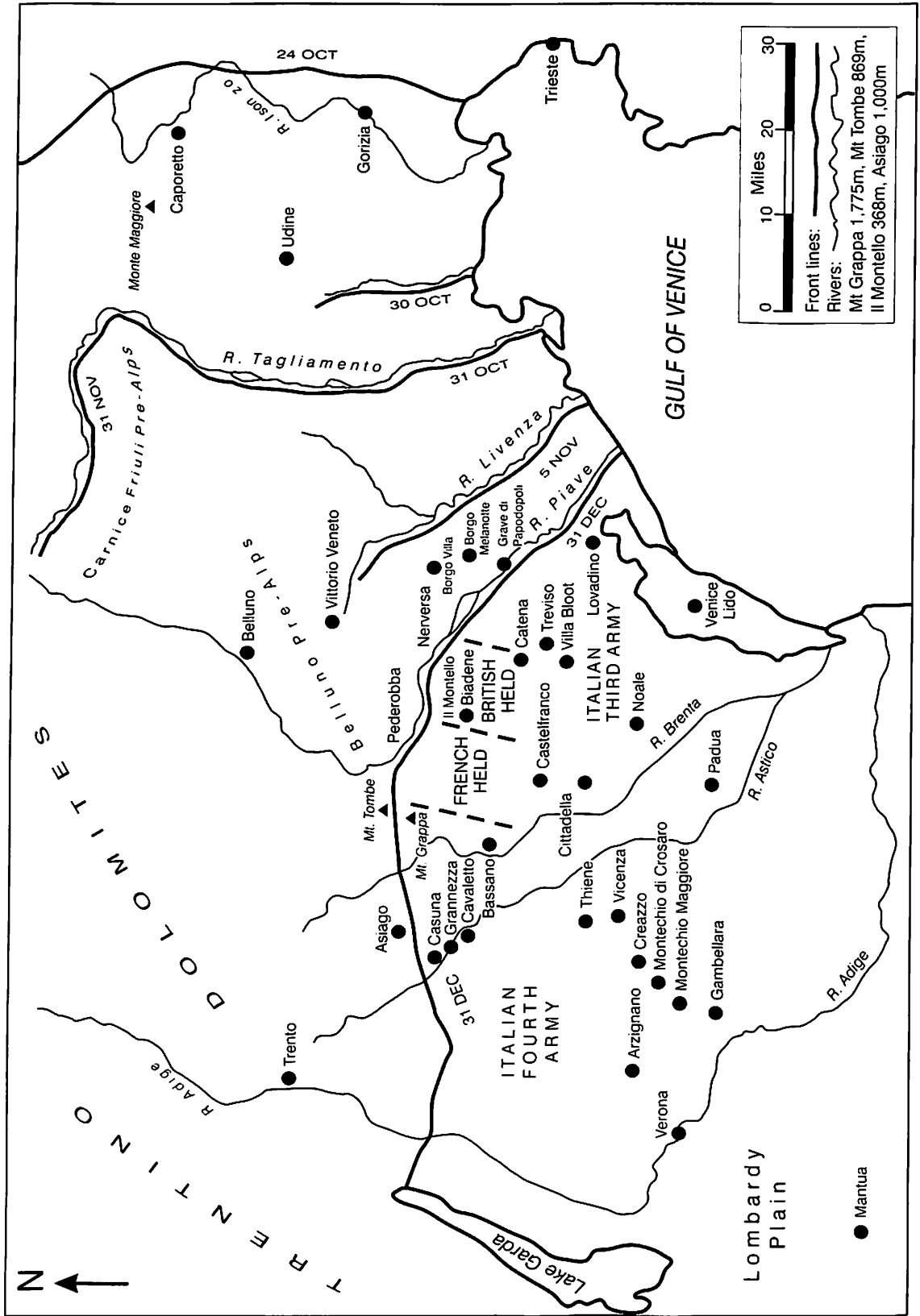




SKETCH MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OCCUPIED BY SERVICE BATTALIONS

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES, MARCH-JULY 1918





Italy, October 1917 - January 1918

CHAPTER I

8th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

The 8th Battalion, one of the first of many units formed from Lord Kitchener's first 100,000 volunteers, assembled at the Regimental Depot in Halifax in August 1914, from where, in September, it moved to Grantham in Lincolnshire where it joined the 32nd Brigade of the 11th (Northern) Division consisting of:

- 9th (Service) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment
- 6th (Service) Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment
- 6th (Service) Battalion The York & Lancaster Regiment
- 8th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

The other two brigades in the Division were:

33rd Brigade:

- 6th (Service) Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment
- 6th (Service) Battalion The Border Regiment
- 7th (Service) Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment
- 9th (Service) Battalion The Sherwood Foresters

34th Brigade:

- 8th (Service) Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers
- 9th (Service) Battalion The Lancashire Fusiliers
- 5th (Service) Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment
- 11th (Service) Battalion The Manchester Regiment

On Easter Monday, 1915, the Battalion marched to Rugby, some 62 miles, and from there, by train, it went into camp at Witley three miles from Godalming where it remained until 23 June. Intensive infantry training around Hindhead, including being inspected by HM King George V, finished when it entrained for Liverpool and boarded SS Aquitania on 2 July bound for an unknown destination, although khaki drill and solar topees had been issued and information given that the future address would be BMEF (British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force). On 4 July during the voyage the Aquitania was attacked by a hostile submarine, the torpedo missing by only some eight feet.

It is from this date, July 1915 that the Battalion's War Diary commences. But, as with many such diaries, it is often a staccato recital of the vital day's happenings, moves, casualties, rations and such like, so the Regimental Archives are indeed fortunate to possess a copy of the personal Diary maintained by CSM E Miles who served with the 8th Battalion throughout the war until he was demobilised on 22 January 1919. His Diary is thus a most valuable record of the fortunes and vicissitudes of the Battalion, first in its service at The Dardanelles and later in France and Flanders. From this source we are able to follow a coherent, comprehensive and colourful picture of the war and the fighting.

1915 GALLIPOLI

The background to the 8th Battalion's embarkment on the SS Aquitania was that in January 1915, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, had devised a plan to relieve German pressure on the Western Front (and also to help Russia) by means of a diversionary operation on the Turkish Gallipoli peninsula. The Dardanelles is the narrow stretch of water that links the Sea of Marmara to the Aegean, separating the continents of Europe and Asia. This waterway, which provides the vital Mediterranean outlet for the Black Sea, via the Bosphorus, has Turkish territory on both shores. The tongue of land that forms the northern shore is the Gallipoli Peninsula. Churchill's main objectives were the forcing of the Dardanelles Straits and the capture of Constantinople, thus removing the Turkish threat to the Suez Canal and Egypt and, at the same time, relieving the Russian armies that were heavily embroiled in the Caucasus. Churchill at first wanted a purely naval operation but, when this failed, it was decided to mount a land attack on the peninsula. General Sir Ian Hamilton was given command of a force consisting of British, Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC), and Indian troops.

The initial landing at Cape Helles and Anzac Cove, on the southern end of the peninsula, was made on 25 April 1915, but despite desperate fighting little impression was made on the Turkish defences and by July there was stalemate. Hamilton therefore planned a new landing in order to sever the Turkish lines of communication with Constantinople, with the aim of clearing the way for the fleet to pass through the Dardanelles. In July, IX Corps consisting of three divisions of reinforcements, all men of Kitchener's Army without experience of active service, began to arrive, staging first at Lemnos Island and then moving to Imbros Island. One of the divisions was the 11th (Northern) consisting of the 32nd, 33rd and 34th Brigades. Lieutenant Colonel H J Johnston DSO¹, a veteran of the Boer War, commanded the 8th Battalion, in the 32nd Brigade². Sir Ian's plan was to make a feint attack at the southern end of Gallipoli under cover of which IX Corps would be landed at Suvla Bay. It was then to advance inland as rapidly as possible to capture the high ground overlooking the bay before the Turks could react. On 6 August the landing took place as planned and was virtually unopposed but, soon after landing, the 8th with 32nd Brigade was pushed on in support of the 34th Brigade which was held up by an outpost of the enemy on Hill 10 (northeast of Chocolate Hill). As they got level with Hill 10 it grew light enough to see and the enemy began to

shell. In the attack on Hill 10 Captain Lethbridge³ led his company with great bravery and skill. At this stage no senior officer appeared to take over command of the two brigades (32nd & 34th) in order to launch them in a concerted attack. Consequently there was confusion and hesitation. This hesitation now encouraged the Turks to counter-attack but they were driven back in disorder over Hill 10. The list of wounded on 7 August included Major Behrend, Captain Kynoch and Captain Gardiner DSO⁴. Soon after, desperate fighting took place during the night and continued on the 8 and 9 August in the attempt to take Anafarta Ridge but "owing to hesitation and lack of cohesion on the part of commanders any advantage that might have been secured was nullified owing to the tremendous reinforcements which the Turks were allowed to march on Suvla". The War Diary records heavy losses, with the Commanding Officer reported wounded and missing and a contemporary account, probably written by Captain Clarke, describes the 8th Battalion's actions and experiences:

"On 6 August we set sail to land at Lala Baba on the ill-fated shores of Suvla Bay. With tautened nerves and suppressed excitement we advanced into unknown country; daylight saw us fairly well advanced in scrubby country but our ranks a little mixed. We had lost a good many of our comrades but still went forward all this day; here we experienced the tortures of thirst in tropical heat and heavy equipment. That night we were withdrawn to the beach for a reorganisation of our thinned ranks and to take up a new position in the line. This proved the calm before the storm and on Monday 9th August we advanced to meet the heavily reinforced Turks who proceeded to take toll of our officers. The CO and all company officers being casualties besides Other Ranks; after trying in vain to make progress we were finally withdrawn to take up a well entrenched position on Chocolate Hill."

Allowing the Turks to be reinforced after the initial landings was a major mistake made by the Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stopford, as he issued no orders to urge the troops to move forward the further three miles necessary to drive out what was left of a small Turkish garrison and thereby gain positions on the high

¹ He joined the Militia Battalion of the West Riding Regiment as Sub-Lieutenant in 1886. Served in the Boer War 1900-02. Twice Mentioned in Despatches; received the Queen's and King's Medal with four clasps. DSO 1902. Captain in 1902 and Colonel 1908. CO 8th (Service) Bn DWR in 1915.

² In J J Fisher's 'History of the Regiment from 1914 to Dec 1917' is a photograph of some of the 8th's Officers who went to Gallipoli with Lt Col Johnston. They were: Majors Isles (no relation to DEI), Behrend and Travers; Captains Smith, Dyson, Chute, Town and Kidd; Lieutenants Wyatt, Whittam, Thompson, Hopewell, Jolly and Best; 2nd Lieutenants Elmhurst, Walker, Edwards, Morier, Harris and Carter. It is not stated where or when the photograph was taken.

³ Later to command 10th (Service) Bn DWR in France and Italy.

⁴ There is no mention of the award of the DSO in the War Diary but the citation in the LG of 29 Oct 1915 reads: "Harry Gardiner, 2nd Battalion Duke of Wellington's Regiment (W.R.R.) attached 8th Battalion. For conspicuous gallantry and determination during operations at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli Peninsula on 8 August 1915. He continued to lead his men forward after being twice wounded, and only gave up after being wounded a third time." Gazetted DWR 2nd Lieutenant 24 Feb 1904, Captain 23 Dec 1909. Served 2 DWR. War Service prior to 1914. Not in South Africa - so probably NW Frontier.

ground which were of decisive importance to the whole plan. CSM (then Sergeant) Miles' Diary adds colour to the battle on 6 August. After describing that the battalion embarked on a destroyer, some 500 strong, with men from each company being left behind to form first reinforcements, he adds that the Sergeants had a good feed in the Petty Officers' Mess, and that it was:

"As well we did for, personally speaking, I never had any more for four days after. Well, we steamed out at dusk steadily without a light. We slowed down at 9.30am roughly. We had all been huddled up on deck as there was not much room, so when we began to stretch our legs we were all very stiff. However, we soon wore all that off and as soon as the boats had slowed down to almost a standstill the order came to jump on the lighters that had silently come alongside. As we did, several stray bullets came whizzing along and we knew it was no surprise to the Turks and that we were up against it. However, nothing daunted, we quickly obeyed orders and, as the lighters became full, they quickly made for land that could now be seen quite plainly. When we were about 100 yards from shore a big shout of 'Altogether boys and at them' came from our company officer, Captain Lethbridge, and we know that the 'great game' had commenced. We soon got into difficulties as the Turks had laid barbed wire in the water; however, most of us forced our way through somehow, minus puttees, pieces large and small of clothing and much equipment. Of course, the main thing was to keep our rifles and ammunition dry, which we did, those that were tall enough by holding them above their heads. Well, we eventually reached the shore and immediately doubled up under cover of the hill. Mr Turk was retiring. Here we fixed bayonets and spreading out into a single line charged up the hill. We reached the top of the hill without much difficulty. My word! We knew all about warfare then; bullets were whizzing by, finding their billet in some poor fellow; land mines were exploding everywhere, blowing the unfortunate ones who trod on them 'sky high'. The Turks were throwing bombs at us and, altogether, we were having a very uncomfortable time. We were suffering heavy casualties, one of my chums receiving a bullet in the chest, another in the forehead, killing him outright."

Miles' Diary continues on 7 August:

"After scrambling up and down ditches and running across fields of stubble for a matter of six miles, daylight came and found me in a ditch with some 50 men (no officers). We surveyed the ground in front and saw dozens of Turks lying about, some dead and others wounded and, looking behind, we saw the same for our own poor fellows. I find also that the regiments have got a bit mixed up. There are Yorks, West Yorks, Yorks & Lancs and ourselves."

Sunday 9 August saw more heavy fighting and on 10 August, when the Anafarta Ridge was attacked by the 53rd (Territorial) Division, supported at a critical moment by the 8th Dukes and the 6th York & Lancasters:

"We learned afterwards that there were 90,000 Turks (sic) on that ridge, dotted about behind the huge rocks and fully prepared for us. We were about 9,000 strong at the most and had the great disadvantage of being at the bottom of the hill and no cover, absolutely out in the open. My word! But it was some scrap while it lasted. There was no

artillery they had not been allowed to land any yet owing to the Turks' heavy shelling. It was all rifle and bayonet work and what a noise! We never got far up the hill; in fact we had to fight hard to prevent the Turks driving us back into the sea". On 10 August the Welsh relieved the Division and "We retired to a large ditch where we partook of our first meal since landing. One meal in four days!"

From 11 to 21 August, but for two days on the beach, the Battalion remained in trenches facing the Turks on Chocolate Hill when casualties were light, despite being bombed by a Turkish aeroplane. CSM Miles writes of the occasional shelling and also:

"We amuse ourselves by picking the Turks off when going for water from a well about 900 yards in front of our trench. We can see them moving about quite plainly. Rations were fairly good with ample supplies of Bully beef, biscuits and jam. Flies are troublesome, causing some of the fellows to have dysentery while water is scarce with four gallons to be divided amongst 60 men and to last 24 hours."

But on Saturday 21 August CSM Miles opened up his Diary to describe his part in the battle of Anafarta/Scimitar Hill:

"I shall not forget this day in a hurry. Whilst waiting with fixed bayonets for zero hour to come round the 29th Division came right through us. The Worcesters came through our ranks and have just come from Cape Helles. At 3.00pm we left our trenches and advanced with fixed bayonets under heavy shell and rifle fire. It seemed impossible for a worm to live under such an onslaught. I am sure I must have had a charmed life for several times I found myself on my own, owing to my immediate neighbours being knocked over. Eventually, we reached the first line of Turkish trenches but did not stop there as the trench was full of dead and wounded Turks. As I was jumping over the trench I felt a sudden stab of pain in my knee and, glancing down, I saw a Turk in the act of stabbing me again. He had caught me with his bayonet. After dispatching him I hurried on, not thinking any more of it, but my leg was going weak so, bending down, I hastily put my field dressing round it. It was then dusk and we were still hurrying forward. My word! But that was some scrap while it lasted. I'm sure I went mad, for the next thing I remember was that I was lying with about four other men in the corner of a field, behind a bit of a hedge and in a small ditch about 200 yards (I discovered afterwards) in front of our own men and about 20 yards from Mr Turk. Of course, we were a bit scared, after so many hair-raisers one cannot wonder at it, eh? So we beat a hasty retreat. I am following up behind as my leg is beginning to get stiff, back to our own lines. Phew! That was a near shave. Our fellows started firing thinking we were Turks advancing but, by shouting and gesticulating, we managed to attract their attention and make them alive to the fact that we were one of themselves. I bet Johnny Turk could not make it out when he heard us running. Good thing it was pitch dark. There were about 50 men in the ditch to which we had just returned, under the command of a Colonel of the Yorks & Lancs Regiment, so we stopped there the night, digging ourselves in and preparing for any surprise attack."

CSM Miles continues on Sunday, 22 August:

"Next morning we received orders from Brigade Headquarters to consolidate where we were. We were not sorry either for we were absolutely exhausted and, I expect, the Turks were too, for things were fairly quiet during the day. We were suffering a good deal for want of water and it was pitiful to hear the wounded calling out for it but we dare not move to look for any. I could hardly bear the pain in my leg to look round and bending it was out of the question. I did kneel upon one leg to look round. My God! What a sight. Dead and dying everywhere while the smell was sickening. I bandaged as many as I could without exposing myself and gave them my water, what little I had. One poor fellow who volunteered to obtain water from a well, just over to our left had his leg nearly blown off (they were using explosive bullets) as he attempted to get out of the ditch and a Sergeant Major, who was next to me, and who knelt up to try and get a shot at the fellow who was responsible, was shot clean through the head and dropped on top of me without a moan. What a day that was! I was jolly glad when night closed over the ghastly scene and orders came to proceed to the beach, which we did after being relieved by the Manchesters of the 34th Brigade and after collecting up all the wounded round about. I know, in spite of a stiff leg, I carried one poor chap who had his leg shattered, right down to the beach, besides my rifle and what equipment I had left. You can guess I was exhausted by the time we reached our destination. Well, we threw ourselves down on the beach, not caring about the wet, or any covering, only with one desire, to sleep, and only too thankful that we were still alive and intact.

As soon as day broke (on 23 August) we called the roll. What a lot of specimens we looked! There were roughly 250 of us out of a total of about 900. In my Company alone we lost seven killed and 43 wounded, the majority of them died of wounds, I expect, and 23 missing out of a total of 29. We were not the only Regiment who had lost as heavily. The 6th Yorks were in the same sorry plight, In fact the 32nd Brigade had had a severe mauling, Our General Officer (commanding the 11th Division) was recalled but we had a dispatch from the Officer commanding the 9th Army Corps to the effect that 'Sir Ian Hamilton had mentioned our Regiment for steadiness and bravery under heavy fire and was pleased and proud of the way we upheld the traditions of the British Army'."

This was the last serious action in which the 8th Battalion was engaged at Gallipoli but it remained there until its evacuation on 19 December 1915. Perusing the War Diary alongside that of CSM Miles' shows what a continuing hard time the Battalion had and every day there were casualties, both during its time in the line and also when on working parties from its positions in reserve. In fact 'troubled by snipers' is constantly mentioned as a major cause of casualties. The weather too, in November, was a further hazard. Miles describes:

"We are in the same dugouts on Preston Ridges where we have now been for a month. The weather is intensely cold. Heavy snow falls and cold, penetrating winds cause several fellows to die of exposure and dozens are going into hospital with frost-bitten feet."

and the War Diary records on 28 and 29 November that a severe blizzard continues. It is a matter of interest to decide who was in command of the 8th during this time as the

War Diary is not at all definitive and Miles never mentions any Commanding Officer by name. However, for sure after the second Anafarta attack only one officer, Second Lieutenant R E Edwards (aged but 18 years) remained, who thus became temporary commanding officer, while on 9 September Captain F T Fletcher took over, only to be replaced by Captain R A Court of the 9th West Yorkshire Regiment on 4 November. It was Captain (Temporary Major) Court who commanded during and after the evacuation from the peninsula.

It is time now to look at the strategic position of the whole Gallipoli operation in order to appreciate the circumstances surrounding the actions of the 8th Battalion and to place them in context. Even by November it was apparent to HMG and the High Command that the Dardanelles' venture had failed and this despite the great gallantry shown by the British, ANZAC, French and Indian troops. Although the Cabinet did not authorise the evacuation until a meeting on 7 December, detailed planning had begun on 22 November. The November snow and blizzards made the evacuation more necessary and yet more difficult because, if the Turks attacked while the evacuation was taking place and succeeded in commanding the heights above the beaches, serious losses would be suffered. This was an important element in the meticulous adherence to the elaborate deception plans carried out during the month of December. CSM Miles on 17 December writes:

"We are preparing obstacles very thoroughly to prevent the Turks following us when we evacuate. We open all our Bully beef tins and put our entrenching tools through them to prevent the Turks from eating them (the air will turn them bad by the time the Turks reach it). We have lighted candles in the trenches, from which a trail of gunpowder leads to a few clips of ammunition. As the candles burn down, so the gunpowder is ignited and explodes the cartridges, making the enemy think we are still there. Petrol and paraffin is poured over the ration dump, ready to be set on fire by the Navy, who will drop shells on them after we leave the peninsula."

On 18 December the 8th Battalion filed silently down the beaches and embarked on an old German boat for the island of Imbros, disembarking at daybreak on the morning of the 19th.

In retrospect and with hindsight the withdrawal, ironically, was the one really successful operation of the whole campaign when set against the failure of Suvla, caused in the main by the overwhelming priority placed by Hamilton and his staff on secrecy. This in turn led to the inadequate briefing and lack of informed preparedness at almost all levels of command. The vital factor, however, was the incapacity of the Corps Commander, the sixty-one-year-old General Stopford, and of some of his Regular Army Brigade and Divisional Commanders and their staffs, to maintain an active, purposeful control over the advance from the beaches. The British official history tells us that:

"Most of the brigade and battalion commanders were well over fifty years of age and had been brought back out of retirement to command the new Kitchener Army of volunteers. Some were men who would never have attained command in times of peace and they lacked the power of inspiring the well-educated and enthusiastic young men who flocked into the Army at the first call to arms."

As has been recounted, this criticism cannot be made of the 8th Battalion for, after the loss of Lieutenant Colonel Johnston on 6 August, it seems never to have had a lieutenant colonel in command.

The total casualties sustained by the Battalion is not known exactly as the War Diary does not record all the casualties incurred in the battles of 9 and 21 August and describes them only as "heavy". It is known however that, in addition to Major Behrend, Captains Kynoch and Gardiner on 7 August, Major Travers⁵, was wounded and lost with no trace; Captain Dyson, who had previously served as a CSM in the 2nd Battalion, was wounded and taken prisoner; Lieutenant Wright was killed; Second Lieutenants Whittam and Thurlow were wounded, but Whittam died on board a hospital ship. After this date the Diary shows one officer killed and eight officers wounded, seventeen Other Ranks killed and one hundred and eleven wounded. These figures are plainly much too small, as reinforcements to the Battalion are recorded as being nineteen officers and six hundred and seven rank and file. Officer casualties by name were: Killed: 2nd Lieutenant B A Franks; Wounded: Lieutenant Colonel H J Johnston DSO (also missing)⁶, Captain V N Kidd⁷, 2nd Lieutenants DWL Daniels, W C Lavington, C C Gilbert, E C Bladen, J R Lister, Elmhurst (no initials) and Lieutenant J H Henderson. It is to be regretted that no correct casualty record can be found.⁸

Notwithstanding the strategic failure of Gallipoli the 8th Battalion gained for the Regiment the Battle Honours of "Landing on Suvla" - emblazoned on the Queen's Colour - in addition to "Suvla", "Scimitar Hill" and "Gallipoli 1915".

The Battalion remained in Imbros from 20 December until it sailed for Alexandria aboard HMT Empress of Britain on 3 February 1916 landing on 8 February and going into camp under canvas at Sidi Bishr, a suburb of Alexandria. On 12 March it entrained for El Ferdan on the Suez Canal, an hour or so distant from Port Said. The 11th Division was responsible for 'A' Section of the Suez Canal Defences and the 8th spent most of its time in preparing and improving the trenches and fieldworks against a possible attack by the Turks on the Canal.

⁵ "A gallant officer from the 2nd Battalion." J J Fisher's History.

⁶ His body found later. Buried Hill 10 Cemetery. Date of death listed as 7 August 1915.

⁷ Later awarded the MC for conspicuous gallantry in several engagements.

⁸ Records show: Gallipoli - buried or commemorated; 12 Officers and 203 Other Ranks; Greece - buried 7; Cyprus - 1 Other Rank buried; Malta - buried 13 Other Ranks. No record of those wounded.

1916

THE WESTERN FRONT

At the end of June, 1916 the Battalion, still as part of the 32nd Brigade in the 11th (Northern) Division, sailed for Marseilles aboard HMT Ionian and by the middle of July had moved into the line, as brigade reserve, at Agny south of Arras and had started to receive its first casualties. However, before describing all the Battalion's activities from now until the Armistice in November, 1918 it will be useful to set down in outline the operations of the 11th Division throughout the war in France and Flanders.

1916

BATTLES OF THE SOMME

14 September - Capture of the Wonder Work (II Corps, Reserve Army)

15-22 September - Battle of Flers-Courcelette (II Corps, Reserve Army)

26-28 September - Battle of Thiepval Ridge (II Corps, Reserve Army)

1917

11-19 January - Operations on the Ancre (IV Corps, 5th Army)

9-14 June - Battle of Messines (IX Corps, 2nd Army)

BATTLES OF YPRES

16-18 August - Battle of Langemarck (XVIII Corps, 5th Army)

19, 22 & 27 August - Fighting around St Julien (XVIII Corps, 5th Army)

26 September - 3 October - Battle of Polygon Wood (XVIII Corps, 5th Army)

4 October - Battle of Broodseinde (XVIII Corps, 5th Army)

9 October - Battle of Poelcappelle (XVIII Corps, 5th Army)

1918

THE ADVANCE TO VICTORY

SECOND BATTLES OF ARRAS

30 August - Battle of the Scarpe (XXII Corps, 1st Army)

2 & 3 September - Battle of the Drocourt-Queant Line (XXII Corps, 1st Army)

BATTLES OF THE HINDENBURG LINE

27 Sept - 1 October - Battle of the Canal du Nord (Canadian Corp, 1st Army)

8 & 9 October - Battle of Cambrai (Canadian Corps, 1st Army)

9 - 12 October - Pursuit to the Selle (Canadian Corps, 1st Army)

THE FINAL ADVANCE IN PICARDY

4 November - Battle of the Sambre (XXII Corps, 1st Army)

5 - 7 November - Passage of the Grande Honnelle (XXII Corps, 1st Army)

9 November - the Division established its outpost line beyond the Mons-Mauberge road and the high ground to the east of Havay was occupied before 1100 hours on the 11 November when the Armistice brought hostilities to a close.

Resuming our story of the 8th Battalion, the War Diary, in September 1916 records it practising "The Attack" prior to taking over from 6th Battalion The York & Lancasters on the 14th when, at night, it attacked to capture the Leipzig Salient, this being the last of the minor actions to be undertaken in the Battle of the Somme, with the object of preparing the way for larger operations to follow in the battle of Flers-Courcelette on 15 to 22 September and the capture of Thiepval, the Stuff and Schwaben Redoubts on 26 to 28 September. The attack was launched by the 32nd Brigade, fronted by two companies each of the 8th Battalion and 9th West Yorkshires and with 6th York & Lancasters in reserve. The major objective for the 8th was the so-called Wonder Work. The only intelligence available on this feature was that it was impregnable, as even the heavy artillery could make no impression on it. There was no doubt that it was a very strong position with its machine guns admirably placed. CSM Miles (somewhat melodramatically) records:

"...seven divisions have previously tried to take it. The 'Wonder Works' by the Germans is so-called because it consists of a revolving platform containing innumerable machine guns which disappear when our artillery starts to bombard but which quickly pop up again when our infantry commence to advance".

At 6.30pm the barrage began to creep forward, followed so closely by the troops that our own soldiers sustained casualties. The Wonder Work was taken successfully but at a cost of 8 officers and 250 Other Ranks. After repulsing counter attacks with heavy losses to the enemy, the 8th was relieved in the line by their fellow Dukes Territorials of the 1/6th Battalion⁹. It was from this newly captured line that, on 24 September, the 18th Division attacked and captured Thiepval. Thiepval was central to the Battle of the Somme. After the war a British memorial was built here containing 73,412 names of all whom were killed and who have no known grave. There are many Dukes' names here for the 147th Infantry Brigade (1/4th, 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/7th Dukes), of the 49th Division, was heavily involved in this Somme battle to the left of the 8th Battalion's 32nd Brigade. Again, on 29 September, the 8th attacked from positions adjacent to Mouquet Farm and the recently captured Stuff Redoubt, together with the 6th Yorkshires and the 9th West Yorkshires. By midnight the objective was partly held but was finally consolidated after the 8th had been reinforced by its reserve company, while at 6.00am on 30 September it made a bombing attack on a further strongly held enemy position which was captured and held. Casualties for these two days were heavy: 10 officers and 237 Other Ranks killed, wounded and missing. CSM Miles records:

"That same night (29th/30th), after a good rum issue, we went over on a bombing raid. It was a mad half-hour whilst it lasted. I know the rum must have got up into my head; I went over with a steel helmet full of bombs on my arm and I remember bombing the dug-out where the Germans were hiding but I can't recollect returning to the trench until I found myself shaking hands with my chum, who also got back safely."

Midday saw the 8th relieved in the line by the 8th Battalion of the South Lancashires and embussing for a rest period at Acheux.

From this date it is very difficult to describe the actions of the 8th, principally because the War Diary is very economical on facts. At this stage the Adjutant (Lieutenant Alex

B Garside) seems to have become acutely security conscious and, instead of places and objectives he uses map references on maps which, unfortunately are not held in the RHQ Archives. However, it is clear that, with the help of CSM Miles' Diary, the Battalion spent much of the month of October at, or in the near proximity of, Thiepval Wood in places such as Bouzincourt, Acheux, Candas, Maison Rolland and Domleger, some 15 miles from Abbeville. From 1 October to 27 November the Battalion was out of the line and incurred no casualties spending its time training and, without fail, holding a Church Parade every Sunday. On 28 October the 8th went back into the line relieving the 6th Lincolns and suffered 22 casualties before being relieved by the 9th West Yorkshires and taking position in the support trenches at Bois d'Hollande. During the months of December 1916 and January 1917 the Battalion remained in this area of the line with several periods spent in rest areas at Arqueves, north-east of Amiens and Beaumetz les-Loges. Casualties amounted to some forty-nine, including Captain J J Horsfall who died of wounds. 22 December was observed as Christmas Day at Arqueves, which CSM Miles clearly appreciated:

"...first Christmas in France, too. I have had two parcels and several letters from home. Well, we had a very enjoyable Christmas Day. Most of the lads had enough vin blanc and vin rouge to make them very merry We passed the time with a game of football in the afternoon and a quiet game of cards in the evening. It poured with rain at night."

The months of February and March 1917 passed quietly, training and fatigues occupying the time of the Battalion. At this stage it is to be regretted that the War Diary and that of CSM Miles¹⁰ differ, as the War Diary makes no mention of Miles' entry for 6 March:

"After a long journey passing through the recently captured village of Le Sars (captured by the Dukes 10th Service Battalion and where 2nd Lieutenant Henry Kelly was awarded the Victoria Cross) and Bapaume, a large town, we arrive at a little village called Hermies. Last night we took over a camp of the Australians. This village is just behind the firing line, which is just in front of Havrincourt. On our left is Bullecourt where our Territorial Battalion (2/5th Dukes of 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division) had such a rough time a few days ago. It seems fairly quiet here at present. The village is a heap of ruins. We relieve the Australians tonight."

⁹ "15 Sep 16. Busy morning. Weather hot. Orders to move came at 12 noon. At 2.00pm left Hedauville and marched via Bouzincourt, Martinsart Wood and Aveluy to trenches south of Thiepval. We relieved the 8th Bn Duke of Wellington's in trenches just captured, which included a fortified position called the 'Wunderwerk', deep dug-outs and tunnels which were little damaged by our heavy bombardment, though the trenches were flattened out. The relief was carried out during a heavy enemy bombardment. As soon as the Bn got into their new positions consolidation was commenced. I was amazed to see such safe and comfortable dug-outs in the enemy front line, immune from shell fire, as our own dug-outs were usually just shelters and only splinter proof. 16 Sep 16. The enemy shelled our positions heavily all day. Our surroundings presented a scene of utter desolation, every square inch had been ploughed up by intense fire". Diary of Private H C de Maine, 1/6th DWR.

¹⁰ In a note written on 22 January 1919 at the end of CSM Miles' Diary he states "Some of the names of villages may be wrong as I put them down after I was demobilised. I never named one town, village or regiment when I wrote this Diary for fear of the censor." It is therefore understandably possible that also some dates may be wrong and in conflict with those in the War Diary.

This significant advance forward of the 8th resulted from the attacks by IX Corps of the Second Army (GOC Sir Herbert Plumer) all along the front, which had caused the German armies to retire to the Hindenburg Line. Manpower at this stage of the war 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 had 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 the Germans' own choice and was skilfully designed as a network of reinforced machine gun posts protected by deep belts of barbed wire. This Hindenburg Line was the line to which the German armies withdrew during the spring of 1917, starting on the Bapaume sector. By so doing the Germans gave up about 1,000 square miles of French territory but shortened their own front lines by some 32 miles. It was this line, which now faced the 8th Battalion and the 11th Division.

23 April found the 8th at Reincourt-les-Bapaume, south-east of Bapaume and it moved that night into the front line after taking over from the 1st Battalion Australian Imperial Force and again began to receive casualties until relieved by the 6th Yorkshires on the 29th. It was here that Captain R A Court was killed¹¹ - it will be remembered that he assumed temporary command of the battalion at Gallipoli in September 1915.

From this date it is difficult to piece together a coherent account of the doings of the 8th as the War Diary is insufficiently detailed. However, with the help of CSM Miles' Diary it is clear that from June 1917 to 9 October the 11th Division, having moved north to the Ypres front, was involved in the following battles: Langemarck, the fighting around St. Julien, Polygon Wood, and Poelcappelle. Locations of the 8th, from the War Diary, are given as Lebuquière, Bailleul, Meteren, Wulverghem, Mont Kemmel, R.E. Farm and Canal Bank - the latter two of which locations were in the front line. On 8 June CSM Miles tells of supporting an attack by 33rd Brigade in the Battle of Messines on Wyttschaete, a village adjacent to Messines when:

"Between 2.00 and 3.00 pm (7th June) when the Messines¹² Ridge went up. What a noise! I thought it was an earthquake the way the ground trembled and swayed like a rough sea. This was the signal for the artillery to open up. Red, green, blue and white lights, in thousands, were going up as the different signals were given to the advancing infantry and the noise of the guns firing, and shells bursting, was ear splitting. We had to pass through a wood (High Wood, I think it was?) and I don't think there was a tree or bush that had not been struck by shellfire. Our Division took Wyschyte (Wyttschaete) and without suffering heavily, thanks to the effectiveness of the artillery preparing the way for us. We stayed in the line here until the 14th when we came back for a rest."

Unfortunately this account cannot be reconciled with the War Diary; however, on 10 June, it does record three officers wounded, three Other Ranks killed and ten wounded in a reserve line position and states the 8th was relieved by the 5th Dorset Regiment. Of note is that Lieutenant Colonel P H Wedgewood,¹³ the Commanding Officer, is now signing the entries in the War Diary.

August 1917 saw the start of the Third Battle of Ypres and, on the 10th, from a position on the I.Yser Canal Bank, two companies attacked enemy strong points in order

to establish outposts preparatory to the next push towards Langemarck. The positions were held until 4.00pm but the companies were then forced to withdraw owing to heavy MG fire, a large superior force of enemy and the sheer strength of their positions. Four officers were wounded (one by gas). That night the 8th was relieved by the 6th Yorkshires. CSM Miles:

“Back on the Canal Bank after one of the prettiest little stunts you can imagine. We advanced on the farm (Wellington) in extended order, but went too far ahead and had to retire to keep in touch with the companies on our left and right. It was then that a Lewis gunner of ours, named Loosemore, committed a very brave act; he certainly saved a very awkward situation. He stayed in a shell hole and covered our retirement with a Lewis gun. Well, this gun got put out of action but Loosemore hung on and kept the advancing Germans at bay with his revolver. When that gave out, he threw his disabled gun at the remaining German and fled back to where we had consolidated, a truly brave act. I reported the incident to the Company Officer, as did a number of other men, and he will get the DCM, if not a VC.”

On 27/28 August the 8th was involved in the attack on Pheasant Trench, south of Langemarck, when four officers: Captain J W Holt, 2nd Lieutenant Hamilton Cox, Lieutenant O D Marriot, 2nd Lieutenant D F R Jackson were killed¹⁴ and two: 2nd Lieutenants H Booth and W Scott were wounded, while Other Rank casualties were a sizeable thirty-four killed, seventy-six wounded with sixty-one missing. Complete success was achieved on the left but the right was held up by heavy machine gun fire and the 8th was relieved on the night of the 29th by the 6th Seaforths. CSM Miles:

“An officer, Lt Jackson of my company, got killed outright, and the strange part of it was that he had a presentiment that he was going under. When we were out at rest the last time he gave me his fountain pen, ‘as a memento,’ he said. When I asked him if he was going away, he said ‘No, but I shan’t come back next time we go into the line’. He seemed quite convinced about the matter. Well, we had not been in the line more than two hours before he was killed.”

The Battalion now remained out of the line until 28 September when it relieved the 6th Yorkshire Regiment in a line of trenches at Pheasant Farm but then moved on 2 October, to a position at No 4 Bridge on the Ypres (Yser) Canal, leaving on 3 October for billets at Houtkerque (north-west of Poperinghe), after relief by the 7th South Staffords and the 9th Sherwood Foresters of the 3rd Brigade. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel C S Worthington DSO and five Other Ranks were wounded with Lieutenant J Middleton and one Other Rank killed.

¹¹ Captain R A Court and 12 Other Ranks are buried in Hermies Military Cemetery.

¹² 19 mines, charged with a total of a million tons of high explosive. Gen Plumer had set in train this operation some six months before. Even in London the shock was distinctly felt.

¹³ Commissioned York and Lancaster Regiment. Served in South African war.

¹⁴ Only Captain Holt's body was recovered and is buried in Poelcappelle Military Cemetery. The remaining three officers, along with the majority of men killed on 27/28 August, are commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

On 4 September Lieutenant Colonel G T Bruce DSO of the 1st Glamorgan Yeomanry assumed temporary command. CSM Miles on 7 September:

"Pte Loosemore gets his VC. Hurray! It has just come through. He is only a young fellow and I hope it won't turn his head. I feel quite proud as this is the second VC in my Company and the third in the Battalion." (It is not understood why Miles should make the claim of three Victoria Crosses for the 8th, as Loosemore, by this date, was the only one awarded the decoration.)

The citation for Loosemore was gazetted on 14 September and follows closely the description by Miles of his brave actions but adds that he also brought back a wounded comrade under heavy fire at the risk of his own life.¹⁵

On 9 October the 8th took part in the attack on the village of Poelcapelle which, until it was relieved by The Buffs (7th Royal East Kent), saw 2nd Lieutenant A C V Smith killed and 2nd Lieutenant J C V Grundy wounded together with 24 Other Ranks killed, fifty-two wounded and six missing in action. CSM Miles:

"Well, we captured Poelcapelle alright, at least what remained of it (a heap of bricks and innumerable shell holes). There was once a church here but all that remains now is a bit of a cellar in which we make our Battalion headquarters. What a desolate spot this. I shan't be sorry when we get relieved. We have lost plenty of good lads on this last stunt and we have not had any reinforcements since we have been up here. There are not many of us left - 15 of us in my Company, including one officer, Captain Durrant."

From 12 to 28 October the Battalion occupied various rest areas around Holques and Noeux where much training was carried out, principally in bayonet fighting, bombing and musketry. As a distraction a Horse Show was held for the Battalion's transport and the RSM instructed all corporals in Guard Duties. But it was again in the line north of Cité St Auguste on the 29th, when it relieved the 9th Sherwood Foresters in the Reserve Line, moving the next day and taking over from the 7th South Staffords at the front. Lieutenant Colonel G T Bruce left the Battalion to take over command of the Lincolns and Major R R Willis VC¹⁶ of the Lancashire Fusiliers assumed command. However, Lieutenant Colonel C S Worthington DSO rejoined the Battalion on 3 November. While in the line, operations were confined to patrolling and providing working parties and, although the War Diary records no casualties, CSM Miles is reporting that 31 October finds him in 45th Field Ambulance Dressing Station:

"... having been silly enough to stop a piece of shrapnel in the knee - nothing serious and I expect I shall be out again in a few weeks."

November 1917 was a relatively quiet month spent in the Loos Sector, considered to be a relatively quiet sector, with activities confined to patrols but with the ever presence of gas and shelling. No casualties were reported, although periods were spent in the line, often in close support but from time-to-time providing working parties. From the 27th to the 30th the Battalion occupied the Hill 70 Sector. December also saw the Battalion occupying the Hill 70 Sector on two occasions but, again, the War Diary records no casualties and, on 23 December, was at rest in Contrainne in the Busnes area where it celebrated Christmas. CSM Miles:

"We have just finished the decorations in our billets and are now preparing for Christmas dinner. It is typical Christmas weather. There are about four inches of snow on the ground. We have just finished waiting on the men (we are having our dinner tonight). The Division and Brigadier Generals have been round just to wish us all a happy Christmas."

1918

The New Year of 1918 saw the 8th Battalion, in January and February, being in the line only twice - at Annequin from 21 to 25 January and, after relieving the 6th Yorkshires, from the 27th to 31st, when the Battalion went into billets at Beuvry (south-east of Béthune). There were no casualties reported while our friend CSM Miles was promoted to be RQMS.

On 3 February orders were received that the Battalion was to be disbanded, as a consequence of the decision to reduce to three infantry battalions per brigade¹⁷. Orders were received for postings to be carried out as follows:

- 2 DWR	:	10 Officers,	200 Other Ranks
- 1/4 DWR	:	2 Officers,	50 Other Ranks
- 1/6 DWR	:	5 Officers,	100 Other Ranks
- 1/7 DWR	:	5 Officers,	100 Other Ranks
- 9 DWR	:	12 Officers,	250 Other Ranks
<hr/>			
- TOTAL	-	34 Officers,	700 Other Ranks

CSM Miles on 4 February writes:

"The Battalion is being disbanded after three and a half years. What an inglorious ending! But it can't be helped. The Army Authorities have decided three battalions in a brigade, instead of four and, as we are the youngest, we have to go. Each company is going to a different battalion of the same regiment, so it is some consolation to know that we shall still be the good old Dukes."

¹⁵ Sergeant (as he became) Arnold Loosemore was later also awarded the DCM when serving with the 1/4th DWR. See Appendix 3.

¹⁶ Served with the Nile Expedition 1898 and was at the Battle of Khartoum. Egyptian Medal with clasp. VC at Gallipoli.

¹⁷ Sir Douglas Haig wanted more men but Lloyd George had made it clear that more men would not be forthcoming. Reducing to three battalions per brigade would ensure stronger, fitter battalions, better able to mount attacks and withstand assaults. But, of course, would still have to hold the same frontage, for three battalions would now have to do the work of four. Martin Middlebrook records: *"The process commenced at the end of January 1918 and was completed by 4 March. It was a remarkably swift and efficient piece of work, carried out while divisions continued to hold the line as normal. 115 battalions completely disappeared, thirty-eight more were amalgamated to make nineteen new battalions, and seven more became pioneers."*

Lyn Macdonald in her book 'To The Last Man' ¹⁸ writes:

"The disbandment of a long-established battalion like the 8th Dukes was not a simple process. There were a thousand loose ends to tie up, from inter-company football fixtures to be played off to the presentation of medal-ribbons - the DCM to the quartermaster of 'Y' Company for devotion to duty at Ypres, and the Belgian Croix de Guerre to Privates Padgett and Watmough for their service with the Brigade trench mortars in the same offensive. There were kit inspections, which induced near apoplexy in company quartermasters, for hardly a man had a full complement of kit and equipment and the deficiencies had to be supplied before the men marched off. There were hundreds of indents to draw up, excuses for lost items to be detailed, and hundreds of hours of pen pushing for the unfortunate quartermasters' clerks. 'Lost by enemy action' was the most popular excuse, and with mountains of paperwork to get through it was easiest to turn a blind eye and accept it. And there was a final spit and polish for the farewell parade at Beuvry. The Battalion was drawn up on three sides of a square, the Divisional General stood on a dais on the fourth side, and behind him detachments from the remaining three battalions of the 32nd Brigade were on parade to honour the departing Dukes. The General's speech was as fulsome and gratifying as any soldier could desire. The Battalion replied with three cheers for the General, and the General reciprocated by calling on the Brigade to give three cheers for the 8th Dukes. Over the next few days the Battalion slowly trickled away, but Headquarters staff had plenty to do. There were Battalion records to be collected and collated, mobilization stores to be handed in, and the surplus of men who had not been posted to be sent to reinforcement camp. The string orchestra, which was the Colonel's pride and joy, had been sent, at his request, to the 2nd Battalion, and almost the last piece of paper filed by the orderly-room clerk was a letter of thanks from that battalion's Colonel.

'Dear Colonel

Your string band arrived yesterday. It will be a great boon to us and we are all very grateful to you for sending the men and presenting the instruments to us. It is very hard on you being broken up but great luck for us to get such a fine draft.

Yours,

J. Walker,

2nd Duke of Wellington's Regiment'

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel C S Worthington DSO* of the Manchesters went off to command the 5th Dorsets. Miles himself was posted as Acting RSM to the 11th Machine Gun Battalion, and then subsequently spending the rest of the war as RQMS of the 10th Garrison Battalion, afterwards re-named as 15th (Service) Battalion KOYLI. He was demobilised early in 1919.

¹⁸ Published by the Penguin Group 1998. ISBN 579 10 864

Nominal Roll of Officers Serving with the 8th Battalion on 31 October 1917

Lieutenant Colonel C S Worthington DSO*

Major R R Willis VC

Major C M Durrant MC

Captain L G S Bolland MC

Captain L Shaw MC

LIEUTENANTS

W H Harriman MC

H Livesey

J Cutcliffe

J H Sharp

J Hart

D G R Bilham (Adjutant)

2nd LIEUTENANTS

W G Mackie

A T Evans (Assistant Adjutant)

H A Loudoun (Signals Officer)

E Suter (Transport Officer)

J S Eason

J Hinchley

F Charlesworth

F W Mace

G G Ashton

R W Lee

H Wells

W Barber

J Power

G S Lomax

H Farrar

C Parker

H H Wilbourne

W Coy

F Griggs

A E Coleman

S Webster

T H Burrell

F Nevey

A Morris

L Morris

Hon Lieutenant & Quartermaster T W Hay

Medical Officer Captain G M Cowper RAMC

Chaplain (Captain) G B Hardy

ON LEAVE

Lieutenant S E Farrance

2nd Lieutenant W Susman

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W G Mackie

A T Evans

W Susman

H Farrar

H H Wilborne

W Coy

F Griggs

A E Coleman

S Webster

T H Burrell

F Nevey

A E N Morris

L Power

G S Lomax

H A Loudoun

E Suter

C Parker

J S Eason

J Hinchley

F Charlesworth

F W Mace

G G Ashton

R W Lee

H Wells

J L Power

Hon Lieutenant & Quartermaster T W Hay

Captain G M Cowper RAMC

Source - War Diary entry for 31 December 1917

CHAPTER II

9th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

Along with the 8th and 10th (Service) Battalions of the Dukes, the 9th was formed at Halifax in September, 1914, and, similarly, was in one of Kitchener's New Armies formed from the first hundred thousand volunteers answering his call to arms. The 9th became part of the 17th (Northern) Division in the Second New Army and was in the 52nd Brigade consisting of the 9th (Service) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers the 10th (Service) Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, the 12th (Service) Battalion Manchester Regiment and the Dukes. The other brigades in the Division, both composed of Service Battalions, were:

50th Brigade:

- 10th Battalion The Prince of Wales Own (West Yorkshire Regt)
- 7th Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment
- 7th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment
- 6th Battalion The Dorsetshire Regiment¹⁹

51st Brigade:

- 7th Battalion The Lincolnshire Regiment
- 7th Battalion The Border Regiment
- 8th Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment
- 10th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derbyshire Regt)

From Halifax, the 9th moved south in September 1914, to the Wareham area of Dorset where the Division was assembling. In October it moved to Bovington Camp. For some time no uniforms were available for the rank and file, even blankets were scarce and for some time only a few old drill-pattern rifles were issued to the infantry together with machine guns represented by home-made dummy guns. The Artillery was in no better shape and the only *matériel* was a few limbers and wagons, together with some ancient and obsolete guns and two old French 90mm guns, dating from the war of 1870. Furthermore, it was found that very few of the recruits had ever ridden before or had any previous experience with horses. It was to be February 1915 before the first horses

¹⁹ Replaced the 7th York & Lancaster Regiment in 1915 which unit became the Divisional Pioneers.

arrived and April and May, respectively, for an issue of 18-Pounders and Howitzers. The infantry received supplies of the Lee-Enfield rifles and a generous supply of ammunition before the end of 1914 and were able to undergo elementary musketry instruction. March 1915 saw the full issue of service rifles and new leather equipment. Between 27 May and 1 June the Division undertook final intensive training for the field.²⁰

On 5 July 1915 the Division was ordered to embark for France and by the 17th the Division was concentrated to the south of St Omer and on the 19th it moved forward and came under V Corps, Second Army. For the remainder of the Great War the Division served continuously on the Western Front in France and Belgium. As a background to the operations of the 9th Dukes the major battles involving the 17th Division through the war were:

1915

9 August - Hooge (V Corps, 2nd Army)

1916

14 February and 2 March - The Bluff (V Corps, 2nd Army)

BATTLES OF THE SOMME

1-10 July - Battle of Albert (XV Corps, 4th Army)

2 July - Capture of Fricourt

1-12 August - Battle of Delville Wood (XV Corps, 4th Army)

1917

BATTLES OF ARRAS

12-14 April - First Battle of the Scarpe (VI Corps, 3rd Army)

23-24 April - Second Battle of the Scarpe (VI Corps, 3rd Army)

13-16 May - Capture and Defence of Roeux (XVII Corps, 3rd Army)

BATTLES OF YPRES

12 October - First Battle of Passchendaele (XIV Corps, 5th Army)

8-10 November - Second Battle of Passchendaele (XIV Corps, 5th Army)

1918

BATTLES OF THE SOMME

21-23 March - Battle of St Quentin (V Corps, 3rd Army)

24-25 March - First Battle of Bapaume (V Corps, 3rd Army)

THE ADVANCE TO VICTORY

SECOND BATTLE OF THE SOMME

21-23 August - Battle of Albert (V Corps, 3rd Army)

31 August - 3 September - Second Battle of Bapaume (V Corps, 3rd Army)

BATTLES OF THE HINDENBURG LINE

18 September - Battle of Epéhy (V Corps, 3rd Army)

8 and 9 October - Battle of Cambrai (V Corps, 3rd Army)

9-12 October - Pursuit to the Selle (V Corps, 3rd Army)

THE FINAL ADVANCE IN PICARDY

17-23 October - Battle of the Selle (V Corps, 3rd Army)

4 November - Battle of the Sambre (V Corps, 3rd Army)

When hostilities ceased on 11 November, 52nd Brigade (with the 9th Dukes), the leading Brigade of the Division had established outposts along the line of the River Solre (south-east of Maubeuge).

1915

THE WESTERN FRONT

It is now time to return to the 9th Battalion and to take up its story from when it left Bovington Camp and embarked for France from Folkestone on 16 July, landing at Boulogne. In following the actions of this Battalion throughout the remainder of the war RHQ is fortunate to be in possession of a copy of the highly detailed War Diary. Also in the Archives are several personal accounts and diaries describing first-hand experiences that greatly assist the task of writing this history.

Thus, arriving in France:

*"Many old members of the 9th Battalion will remember the arrival of the 17th Division in France and, for we quickly reached the forward areas, the excitement of the first few days. After two painful days of marching with full packs over the Flemish cobbles we arrived at Mont des Cats. There never was a more beautiful view from the hill of Godewaersvelde (better known as 'Gerty-wears-velvet') of the whole of the British battle area. There was the great flat plain of Flanders reaching the sea, where the yellow sandhills of Dunkirk and Ostende could be dimly seen. The wooded hills of Kemmel, Mont Rouge and Mont Noir lay to our right, and beyond them the great city of Lille. In front were the red roofs of 'Pop' and farther there was a dark mass of woods amongst which were the shattered towers of Ypres. The Battalion was to see much service there, and on the next 19th December, a tragic day, many were to die beneath its walls. If we had had the eyes of a prophet we should have looked there and south to Armentières and Arras, and over the chalk hills towards the Somme and seen something of the sorrows, and joys too, of the future. It was a memorable sight to see the line, shown by the captive balloons and, at places like Hooge, by the bursting of shells and after dark, picked out by the Very lights".*²¹

²⁰ Some five or so days of "intensive" training would seem, these days, grossly insufficient preparation for the launching of a division into war.

²¹ Contemporary account (unknown author) RHQ Archives.

The Battalion was, indeed, to see much service in and around the Ypres Salient and, in fact, fifteen days later the Battalion was in the line, taking over the sector of trenches at Vierstraat-Dickebusch, having previously, platoon by platoon, been instructed on trench routine by both the Royal Fusiliers and the Royal Scots Fusiliers from whom they then took over. This move into the Ypres Salient, where the 9th was to remain until the end of February 1916, gave the Battalion its first taste of trench warfare. However, it was only by a narrow chance that the 9th missed an early fighting engagement for, only a few days before this, the first and only "*Flammenwerfer*" attack of importance on the Western Front was made by the Germans on the 14th Division at Hooge and, for two days, the Battalion lay at Kruisstrat, just outside Ypres, in readiness for a counter-attack. Prior to this the Brigade had been inspected by Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Plumer (Colonel, York & Lancasters 1917-32), commanding the Second Army and, on 17 September, he inspected the Battalion on its own when at rest in La Clytte. "*The old general turned up quite punctual for an inspecting officer!*".²²

Positions occupied by the 9th during September 1915 to February 1916, included Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Hooge, The Bluff and St Eloi, all the scene of fierce fighting in the Salient. On 9 August the Battalion put in a diversionary demonstration in support of the successful divisional attack on Hooge to recover the trenches lost on 29 July. Mention is made that some seven hundred guns were deployed against the eight hundred yards frontage of the Hooge position. At this time Lieutenant Colonel F A Hayden DSO²³ the Commanding Officer was ordered away on sick leave and Major B A Johnstone assumed command.

Until 18 December the War Diary depicts the typical way of life in the trenches and the multitude of tasks carried out by the Battalion are described - wiring parties, fatigue parties, digging and improving trenches, patrolling, bombing raids, handovers and takeovers in and out of the line. While at rest, as soon as the men have bathed and re-kitted, much training is carried out (PT, bayonet fighting, musketry and grenade throwing). Important entries during this period are the visit by HM King George V when a platoon of the 9th under the Adjutant, Captain A E Miller²⁴ represented the Battalion. On 20 October Lieutenant Colonel Hayden returned to command and, on 11 and 12 October, a full scale practice of "The Attack" was carried out under the eye of the GOC 17th Division, Major General T D Pilcher CB²⁵. One entry causes a wry smile and brings back memories of the "Quick Trains" so familiar to Dukes soldiers of the Cold War era:

"Battalion tested unexpectedly in assembling from billets in order to march complete with transport."

There was clearly much activity and reports of heavy shelling, but the Diary surprisingly fails to record in detail the attrition rates of what must surely have been a steady trickle of casualties. However, evidence of particular casualties is found in the many accounts made by members of the Battalion.

Some flavour of going into the line on 30 October is recorded by Lieutenant Russell:

"We packed up for the trenches. Besides my pack, I take three full sandbags of belongings with me - an overcoat, mackintosh, blanket, two woolly waistcoats, a complete change of

clothing and a new pair of Lotus boots I bought off Fletcher, too big for him but I can wear them with two pairs of socks, a useful dodge in winter out here. Had a jolly tedious march and got settled into our new quarters at Sanctuary (or Sanitary as the men called it). It is quite a peaceful spot except when an attack is on. It is Hades then, as shells burst in from left, right, front and back.. At present the Boche only shells when he sees people moving, so we have to keep quiet in daytime. I am in a dugout with Savory, since some of 'D' Company are with us. We are toppingly comfortable."

Still in the line on 4 November Russell writes:

"Rather a bore being the only subaltern in the company! Out with fatigue party from 8.30 to 2.30. Then went for a walk with Bengy and CSM Green to see if we could see the aeroplane we brought down this morning. Couldn't see it but had a small HE shell landed about 20 yards off us when out in the open. I'm certain these little things are bad for my poor nerves."

Out of the line on 14 November he hears an account of the trenches at Hooge into which the 9th is to take over:

"According to the tale the trenches are up to the waist in sludge, one long series of crump-holes, parapets and parados all tumbled down, arms and legs 'without any meat' on them sticking out all over the place, the Hun only 15 yards away! A cheerful account, terribly exaggerated probably."

Perhaps the most serious action of the year 1915, in which the 9th took part was on 18/19/20 December when, to paraphrase from the War Diary:

"Moved up to Ypres in support of the Northumberland Fusiliers in left section of 52nd Brigade area and of the Lancashire Fusiliers in right section of area. 300 men sent to Canal Line. Working party returned at 4am 19th. At about 5am, a very heavy bombardment was heard and a smell of gas noticed. The intensity of bombardment did not slacken for some hours but the gas at once became unbearable. The Battalion put on smoke helmets and stood to arms. Orders were received from 52nd Brigade to move out to positions as follows: Two companies and Bn Grenade Platoon to RS 1.2.3.4.²⁶ Two companies, and Machine Gun Section with two guns to the Zillebeke Switch. The other two guns being to the order of CO Northumberland Fusiliers. The two companies and

²² Diary - Lieutenant J W B Russell, 9th DWR - killed in action, 1916. Joined the 9th Battalion in January 1915 from Oundle School and had just been elected a scholar of University College, Oxford.

²³ Colonel Hayden commanded 2 DWR from 1908 to 1912. He is the author of the valuable "Historical Records of the 76th 'Hindoostan Regt' 1787-1881". By coincidence, also in 52nd Brigade, was 12th Battalion, The Manchester Regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel E G Harrison CB DSO, who also commanded 2 DWR for a short period in 1914.

²⁴ The father of Majors 'Dusty' and David Miller of the Regiment.

²⁵ He was relieved on 12 July 1916 being accused by his Corps Commander, Lieutenant General H S Horne, of "not driving his division hard enough". He handed over to Major General P R Robertson CMG, who commanded the Division until the end of the war when he was Knighted.

²⁶ Regrettably no relevant trench maps held in the Archives.

Grenade Platoon moved off at 6am following the Ramparts and going out of the Menin Gate along the Menin Road as far as the trench connecting Union Street with the Road. Then along Union Street to R.S.5. arriving there at 8am. This party moved quickly and therefore did not feel much ill effect from the gas, which in the Ramparts and the streets of Ypres was very bad, but was not lying after about 300 yards from the City Walls. Practically all the losses sustained by this party happened in the streets of Ypres and going through the Menin Gate, this place being very heavily shelled; very little losses being experienced once clearing the city. The second party for the Zillebeke Switch moved out through the Sally Port where the gas was very bad indeed and here the Commanding Officer (Major Carey-Barnard DSO),²⁷ (taken over from Hayden who left on 3 December to take command of a Young Officers Training School at Poperinghe) was hit, as also was the Adjutant (Captain Miller).²⁸ Just outside the Sally Port Lieutenant Inchley was killed and Lieutenant Hawkes²⁹ wounded. This party then proceeded across the open under cover of the ridge to the Zillebeke Switch reporting to Brigade HQ on arrival. A party of one hundred men was then dispatched to Captain Wannell who now commanded the Battalion in R.S.2.3. & 4. About 120 men who had become detached from their companies were collected at Ypres and reported to Captain Wannell. Water and rations were sent up to the men in support trenches and a signal station opened though great difficulty was experienced during the day in keeping up communications, nearly all of which had to be done by runners. At about 4am (21st) the Battalion was relieved in the Ramparts Ypres by the 7th York & Lancasters."

This report is augmented by Lieutenant Russell's Diary entry for 22 December (he was on leave in UK during this action):

"Met Huxtable³⁰ and Cunningham at our transport lines. They told me on 19th December the Battalion had been rushed up in support against the gas attack and lost over 100 men and five officers - the new CO, Captain Miller, Hawkes and Stewart wounded, while poor old Inchley³¹ was killed; awful bad luck, he leaves a wife and two kiddies. It makes one feel an awful slacker to have missed it."

Christmas Day found the Battalion in the line at Hooge with:

"A light bombardment by our guns with retaliation by the enemy of about the same weight. Large fires lighted in the enemy trenches and singing was heard from behind their line - obviously keeping Christmas Day. No attempt whatsoever was made to fraternise and the day on the whole very quiet." 30 December "Battalion paraded for inspection by the Brigadier General at 11 o'clock. Whilst on parade an enemy aeroplane dropped a bomb that fell about 20 yards from the nearest company and killed two horses. The aeroplane proceeded southwards and dropped another bomb near the Orderly Room killing one man and wounding six others, including the ORQMS, the Orderly Room Corporal and the RQMS. Afterwards the Brigadier inspected the Battalion and spoke to the men telling them of his satisfaction at their behaviour on the 19th December."

1916

1916, the start of the third year of war, and the year in which the great Battles of the Somme took place, found the 9th at rest, first at Ouestmont and then, a short distance away, at Éperlecques, some five miles north-east of St Omer. A canteen was opened in a barn and all ranks were ordered to polish buttons and badges, to take down and grease all equipment and to see that all kit and arms were complete and in perfect order. An officer proceeded on leave and arranged for drums (the originals having been lost) to be purchased, with the Officers subscribing for this purpose. Football kit was bought with the £20 profit from the old Brigade canteen. Tubs were purchased for bathing and permission applied for to sell beer in the canteen. All ammunition was collected in, with only the Guard having loaded rifles. Route marches, church parades, bayonet fighting and musketry practice took place in an adjacent quarry; arms drill and instructions for guard mounting under the RSM took place and, somewhat quaintly, all bicycles were overhauled. On 18 January the Band was paraded and Retreat beaten.

On 5 February the Battalion completed this period of rest and on the 6th moved again into The Salient, taking over the trenches in front of St Eloi where, unknown to them at the time, the men were to remain for some sixteen days, followed, after one day out of the line, by a further nine days at the front in the adjacent Reserve Wood. This first period in the line saw the Battle of the Bluff, one of the larger battles fought by 17th Division. From the St Eloi trenches the Mound could be seen with a large crater in its side, which formed a much-coveted salient in the German lines. The land rose gently to the front line from the Ypres-Dickebusch road, and a broad panorama, including Wytshaete and the Messines Ridge could be seen to the right with Voormezeele and its ruined church just behind the trenches, with Ypres in the far background. On the left, a mile or so away, was a long, low embankment largely made of clay thrown up when the Ypres-Comines canal was made. This was the so-called Bluff, a name given because it ended abruptly in a steep slope in front of the German lines. On 14 February, just when the 9th was expecting to receive news of its relief, the War Diary records.

"During the morning everything quiet and normal until about 3pm when enemy furiously shelled the village of St Eloi with light guns, paying particular attention to the unheld support lines some hundred yards to the rear of the 9th. Convent Lane was also heavily shelled with much heavier stuff, apparently 4.5in howitzer. At the same time the enemy opened a most intense bombardment of International Trench and the Bluff."

²⁷ Born 11 August 1876. Served South Africa with Lumsden's Horse. Queen's Medal with three clasps. 2nd Lieutenant Wiltshire Regiment 27 October 1900. Served West African Regiment. Became Temporary Brigadier General, commanded 68th Infantry Brigade in Italy. Base Commandant Taranto 1919. CMG, DSO and Bar. Awarded his first DSO for this action.

²⁸ His wound caused his leg to be amputated. Awarded MC for this action. Previously twice Mentioned in Dispatches.

²⁹ Postwar joined Boosey & Hawkes (his brother) the popular music and brass band firm.

³⁰ Father of General Sir Charles Huxtable KCB CBE DL - Colonel of the Regiment 1982-1990. First joined Inns of Court Officers' Training Corps, also served 2/7th DWR. Wounded see p36. Later wounded seriously. Invalided and on half pay. Retired from the Regiment 1925.

³¹ Aged 33 years he is buried at Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

Later the 9th learned that on the other side of the canal a German attack had been launched and part of the Bluff taken and, in front of it, a company of the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers had been trapped in the International Trench and had been destroyed:

"That night, and almost every night for a week, we watched sudden bombardments on the Bluff itself, wreathed in white smoke clouds, revealed by orange flashes, while giant tea trays were banged all round. These heralded night attacks, made by various units of our Division, (6th Dorsets attacked on night 15/16th and had reached the Bluff but were unable to hold it) and all we learned were unsuccessful; highly coloured reasons for the failure of which Dame Rumour was always willing to supply."³²

On 21 February the 9th was relieved by the 7th East Yorkshires and marched back to Reninghelst only to be ordered back to the line on the 23rd, with the rest of 52nd Brigade, to relieve the 76th Brigade of the 3rd Division. The new trenches were the old support trenches on and around the Bluff:

"The days that followed were full of excitement and casualties. The Germans in their newly captured trenches were full of nerves and 'wind'. Our own artillery, we thought, was a great deal too prodigal with their 9in shells, which made the most horrible gaps in our own defences. At the last we left the Bluff, but only to sidestep a few hundred yards to the right, in front of one of the most famous spots of the war, Hill 60. We were relieved by the Northumberland Fusiliers but we had hardly had time to settle down in our new trenches before the most unpleasant preparations began to be made. Several 60-pound trench mortars made their appearance and began to register on the German lines. A new and most mysterious invention, afterwards well-known to fame as the Stokes gun³³, was installed with great secrecy, and what seemed wonderful to us, a section of 18-Pounder field guns was brought up within 100 yards of the front line."

On 1 March the Brigade Major, Major W T Congreve VC,³⁴ of 76th Brigade visited the 9th and explained the plan of attack onto the Bluff to be made by 76th Brigade. Then:

"At half-past three all the witches in hell began to scream, and for more than half-an-hour every kind of thing was thrown by us at the Germans and very little returned. When the din ceased we were left to speculate in quiet, and just as the eastern sky began to lighten we saw against it strings of men crossing No Man's land on the right. A German counter-attack - the 76th Brigade repulsed? No. German prisoners in scores! Our attack had been timed for a German trench relief. Into our trenches the grey gentlemen came, escorted by the strutting Gordons. Then the turn of the Germans began. All the well-registered batteries in the Salient, it seemed, were turned on the Bluff and its neighbourhood. Trenches dissolved in dust, bomb stores went up in smoke, forward guns were destroyed. So the day wore on, our own shell fire (as well as the Germans') being so heavy that no counter-attack proved possible. Then when night fell we heard that we were to be relieved. It was, however, many hours before the Borderers of 51st Brigade came up, and a long time before we got clear. The Lewis Gunners of the Battalion, who had had perhaps the hardest time of all, were the last to go and, as they got out of the communication trench behind Battalion Headquarters, a shell burst in the middle of them, wounding many and one, Wilfred Rhodes³⁵, so badly that he could not be brought

in, but lay there suffering terribly till he died. Then when all were through the woods at the back of the Bluff, so full of death, the long, long way back to Reninghelst had to be faced. And so the Battalion arrived back in camp, after a tour of practically thirty days in front line trenches, ending up with an attack that though not made by us, caused us 200 casualties³⁶. In Haig's next dispatch the 9th Battalion was cited as one of a select list of New Army battalions that had proved their worth. We supposed that this was a consolation prize for having endured a good deal of the beastliness of an attack without the glory of having made it ourselves."

On 16 March the London Daily Chronicle published an article by Philip Gibbs, its Special Correspondent at British Headquarters, under the title of 'Men Who Hold On'. It runs:

"In a previous dispatch I have described the recapture of that little bit of hill called the Bluff, and of the trenches on the bank of the Ypres-Comines Canal which the enemy had taken from us by sudden assault. After a great artillery bombardment on 2nd March the position was stormed and by the splendid courage of these men (76th Brigade) the attack was a complete success. The price of success had to be paid by the grim endurance of men when the enemy's guns retaliated with fury, and the greatest heroism was shown not in the hour of the first assault but in the days that followed when they had to hold on to the ground under intense bombardment. I knew some of these men (of the 9th Battalion) and their officers for I had been with them when the news came that they were to fight again after a spell of rest. 'The trenches' says one of them 'were unspeakable'. The daily bombardment which we had concentrated upon this position for two weeks after its capture by the Germans had ploughed up the ground with great shell holes, smashed down parapets and trench walls and made all the neighbourhood of the Bluff a hideous turmoil of wet earth. What remained of the trenches was deep in water and filthy mud, where the bodies of many dead Germans lay under a litter of broken sandbags and in the holes of half-destroyed dugouts.

He goes on to describe the return from the line back to Reninghelst by the Padre of the 9th:

"Two hours passed, then at last, the first men appeared. They came along at about a mile an hour, sometimes in groups, sometimes by twos or threes, holding on to each other, often one by one. In this order they crept through ruined villages in the falling snow that lay thick upon the masses of fallen masonry. There was a profound silence about them, and these snow-covered men were like ghosts walking through cities of death.

³² Iron Duke account by F.A.P. who was present. Name unknown in Archives.

³³ Fired 20lb bomb, 3ins calibre. Range 50 to 430 yards, later extended to 700-800 yards. Royal Artillery had calibres of 4 and 6ins.

³⁴ The son of Lieutenant General Sir W N Congreve VC, GOC-in-C XIII Corps.

³⁵ Listed as Harry Rhodes. His name is on the Menin Gate - Panel 20.

³⁶ Sergeant Haigh DCM was one of those killed on 2 March 1916. He had served and won the DCM with 1 DWR in South Africa where he had been the Commanding Officer's Bugler. He is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial.

They were walking like old men, weak-kneed, and bent under the weight of their packs and rifles. What is extraordinary is that our men, who are very simple men, should 'stick it out' with that grandeur of courage which endures all things without self-interest and without emotion. They are unconscious of the virtue that is in them,"

Extracts from Lieutenant Russell's Diary for 1, 2 and 3 March add, if it were possible, extra poignancy to these accounts:

"Beastly artillery strafe again, nothing too close to us. About 4pm some Scotch officers arrived from the Gordons. Our guns gave the Hun terrible beans; at a given hour we all cheered and showed our bayonets over the parapet and fairly put the wind up him. The Jocks had supper with us; they had come to cut the wire when it got dark, a ticklish job. Half-way through supper a message arrived from HQ 'Detail six men to go at 9am to-morrow as a grave-digging party'. This message much amused the Jocks, they asked us to wrap their bodies up nice and tight in a clean mackintosh sheet. Considering they were for it those two Jocks were cheery! On 2nd March we all stood to. We were on the left flank of the attacking battalion but had strict orders not to 'go over' with the attacking Jocks. Suddenly rapid fire started, then our guns hell-for-leather. As it grew light we could see the Jocks going forward in small squads, and some Germans running forward holding their hands up. Then old Cunningham took some of our bombers along a trench and captured eighteen Bosche. Then other prisoners started to go along our trench towards HQ. They were in a terrible state, trembling from head to toe, shifty eyes, expecting to receive blows with blood-stained bandages on, all murmuring 'Mercy camerade'. Poor beggars they were shattered wrecks. We then consolidated the re-captured trench. About 9am the Germans started to strafe us and gave us absolute hell for an hour and a half. We simply crouched at the bottom of a trench and shuddered. Suddenly a green flare went up. Cully³⁷ fairly rose to the occasion, rallied the Company toppingly and got all the bays manned. But the counter-attack came against the Scotties, who drove them off easily and took more prisoners. During a slight lull for an hour after this we got down some bread and marmalade and hot tea. Then the Hun artillery started again, not so intensely as before, but we all began to cringe, and it was the longest day any of us spent. At 3pm we got a message we were going to be relieved - pretty thankful.

Poor Beckenson³⁸ (a new arrival) got killed instantaneously. He had behaved splendidly all the day, walking up and down the trench, perfectly steady right through the worst of the strafe, more than we had the guts to do. The day wore slowly to a close. At last in late evening we started for home. When a mile clear of the trenches we had casualties again, including dear old Maxwell-Stuart who was killed by a whizzbang. God it's dreadful he was such a top-hole fellow, only joined our Company lately, but we had come to know each other awfully well in our midnight watches. 11pm to 3am is a wonderful time for learning to know a fellow. 3rd March we got back to camp about 8am, done to the world, but tremendously thankful to be out of it. The longest and worst 24 hours I ever had."

For this action the 9th Battalion won a special mention in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch:

"For excellent work during the period mentioned in carrying out or repelling local attacks and raids."

In this, the first of Sir Douglas Haig's dispatches after becoming Commander-in-Chief, the 9th was one of very few Service Battalions that gained a mention.

After this fighting in the battles of the Bluff the Battalion occupied various positions in the front line at Armentières and Houplines. During this period Major G E Wannell DSO was promoted and took over command. It will be remembered that as a captain he took over command in December 1915 when the then CO was wounded. He was to remain in command until April 1918 and, with such a remarkably long period in command, was clearly a most successful Commanding Officer.³⁹

A fierce action took place on 26 April at Houplines when, at 8pm, the enemy attacked and reached the 9th's trenches but were repulsed at once. On 5 May Lieutenant Russell records:

"Yes, we were in the thick of it on 26th April. 'C' Company in reserve had no casualties but 'D' caught it very badly. Savory and Mallinson both wounded. The stunt started about 5pm. Savory did awfully well, he was early wounded by shrapnel in the shoulder, but hung on to his job. While going up a battered trench he suddenly met a German raiding party, the leader fired and hit him through the lung. Savory fired back and knocked the Bosche out, some nerve after two wounds. Mallinson had a gash right across his jaw and bled profusely. He was bound up and put in a dugout, having fainted, but was next seen with a man's rifle at a bombing bay, where he stolidly did sentry for three hours, till Benjy⁴⁰ came along from the right and ordered him back, even then he flatly refused at first. Benjy himself did splendidly and helped to organise the right of 'D' (who lost 46 men) as well as keeping 'B' well in hand. He deserves some decoration if ever a man did. Another message of praise and thanks in Brigade Orders."

The War Diary for the next two months May and June, describes the last fortnight in the trenches at Houplines when the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Wellington Battalion (New Zealand) and the three days' march back from Armentières to Moule⁴¹, near to St Omer, where the 17th Division was being trained for the Somme battle planned by Sir Douglas Haig for 1 July 1916. Here intensive training of snipers, signallers, Lewis Gun teams, bombers and rifle companies took place.

³⁷ Lieutenant F J F Cullinan - Joined the Battalion 1914.

³⁸ Aged 19 years buried at Reninghelst New Military Cemetery.

³⁹ 2nd Lieutenant Bedford Ycomanry and 18th Hussars 1900. Served South African War - Queen's Medal five clasps, King's Medal two clasps. Attached Indian Cavalry 1904-05, resigned commission 1905 then commissioned West Australian Light Horse. Joined 9th DWR October 1914.

⁴⁰ *"Captain Benjamin commanding 'B' Company, had been killed by a sniper. He was a Jew and there was a natural prejudice against him in the early stages of the war but this was quickly dispelled by his tact, fearlessness and bravery. He was a grand fellow. He knew every man in his company by name and though a strict disciplinarian was most considerate for their welfare and was, in turn, beloved and spoken of as 'Good old Benjy' by all."* Diary entry for 7 July 1916 of Private Arthur Sunley. He is buried at Gordon Dump Cemetery, Ovivillers La Boisselle.

⁴¹ *"In view of the long march great care had to be taken of the men's feet. New boots were issued a week ago and a special issue of dubbin made. Only two men fell out on the march and on 18 May the Battalion marched through the Square in Morbecques exceedingly well."* War Diary.

Trench to trench attacks were practised, as were night operations. All men not inoculated against paratyphoid were paraded at the Field Ambulance with few objectors and those who did object were sent on a route march! Both Brigade and Divisional Field Days were held in fighting kit and much study was devoted to individual loads carried by the men. Finally, having moved to Poulainville, a lecture was given by a General Staff Officer from Division on the forthcoming operations and on 18 June, being Waterloo Day, there were sports in the afternoon and a Church Service held in the morning. After this, on 30 June, the 9th marched to a Brigade Concentration area in Bois de Tailles, south of Albert 'with all ranks in a state of readiness to resume operations at once'. But it was not until 3 July that the 9th started their part of the great Somme offensive when the Battalion moved up to Fricourt (having two officers wounded whilst reconnoitring around this place). On 4 July orders were received to push forward to the front line at Shelter Wood and to establish themselves in Peake Wood but the wood was strongly held and it was 4.30am on the 5th, after a determined attack by the enemy, before the enemy was driven off (with the assistance of a party from the 10th West Ridings⁴²) and Peake Wood attacked and secured. The War Diary for this period covers some three pages describing the most confused fighting that took place until the 9th was relieved by 'units of the 51st Brigade' and went into billets at Méaulte. Casualties were 14 Officers and 251 Other Ranks, amongst whom was our diarist Lieutenant Jack Russell:

*"... who was killed on 7th July in the third of three hopeless attacks (ordered by Corps back at Heilly) on Quadrangle Support Trench leading his beloved 'C' Company. Surely no officer was ever better loved by all ranks of a Battalion. His body was never recovered."*⁴³

Private Arthur Sunley describes the attack on Quadrangle Trench on 5 July:

*"On the evening of 4 July the Battalion moved up to the attack at Quadrangle Trench, passing very slowly through the front-line trenches in the midst of a heavy bombardment. Here, about midnight, I encountered a fellow townsman, Arthur Dawson from Holmfirth, with the quick remark 'It looks like going into hell-fire - what bloody chance have we!' I shook hands with him and wished him luck. And so we go over the top at dawn and are repulsed with many casualties, reorganise and have another go. Captain Petty and his battalion bombers reach Contalmaison, along with some of the Manchesters, but have to fall back for lack of support. It is raining very heavily and the ground is a quagmire and the troops over ankle deep in mud - rifles clogged up and machine guns useless. So, bitterly, we retire to the trenches. We had to pass through a trench where the wounded had been carried from the open. My God, what a fearful sight. The trench was full of wounded and it was difficult to pass without treading on them. Far better to be killed outright than to be wounded as some of these poor fellows were."*⁴⁴

From Méaulte the Battalion entrained to the Ailly sur Somme area and remained there until moving to Long on 17 July, when it again entrained to a bivouac location near to Dernancourt. From here, on 1 August it moved to the front at Longueval to take over from the 1st Norfolk Regiment but 'the guides provided by the Norfolks were useless and nobody knew where the line was at all'. As a result the relief resolved itself into finding men of the Norfolks in shell holes and small posts and relieving them. Even when all men

were got into position the situation was obscure. Contact was made with the battalions on the 9th's right and left, runners were exchanged and a system of a chain of orderlies was established to Brigade Headquarters. Three companies were up, with one in battalion reserve. After patrols had been sent out to Delville Wood, which was held by the battalion on the right, the so-called front line was found to be level with the 9th's support line. In fact it was a misnomer to refer to the positions as lines as they consisted chiefly of a series of shell holes, each man digging what cover he could. However, at 3.20am the 9th were able to report to Brigade Headquarters that all were in position. At this time the shelling was so heavy by both sides that patrolling was made very difficult and conditions were as bad as they could be; but there were no fears about the holding of the positions as the ground was badly cut up and any enemy advances were bound to be very laborious and slow. After much confusion the Sitrep at 6am to Brigade ran as follows:

"One platoon still holds Duke Street between Piccadilly and North Street with Post in advance held by bombers. One platoon with Lewis Gun on forward edge of wood between North Street and S.11.d.6.4. One Vickers Gun on new line and one in advanced position in a shell hole with screen of bombers and riflemen. Efforts are continually made to press forward but the shelling is so intense day and night that patrolling is very difficult and positions cannot be sited and men who attempt to dig in are caught in a barrage placed just in front of our lines, men getting exhausted and difficulties of getting up water and food very great."

At 4pm. *"Notice received that 12th Manchester Regiment will attack through us and on their left the 9th Northumberland Fusiliers. Arrangements made with them to make a forward dump, place upon it all Lewis Gun drums and tools we could raise. Also carry water up for them and provide guides at Piccadilly."*

The attack went in at 12.40am on 4 August but at 5.20am the attack had failed to reach its objective and a large number of the 12th Manchesters were in the front line of the 9th Battalion. Later they were ordered to return to their original positions and the 9th was detailed to clear all the Manchesters' wounded. A patrol was detailed to go out and find Captain Benton of the Manchesters, who was lying wounded in a shell hole. The 9th Northumberlands was also given the same task, but Benton was not found⁴⁵. At 9.15am it was reported that the enemy line appears to be like that of the 9th's, a series of posts in shell holes. The snipers get 'quite a number who try to dodge from post to post'. Later on the 4th all men of the Manchesters were clear of the 9th's lines and, by 10.00am on the 5th, the 9th was ordered to hand over to the 10th Sherwood Foresters.

⁴² 10th (Service) Battalion DWR in 69th Brigade, 23rd Division. See Chapter III pp 59-61 for the 10th Battalion's major part in this action.

⁴³ Unknown 'M.R' who edited Russell's Diary on his parents' behalf. Aged 19 years, his name is engraved on the Thiepval Memorial.

⁴⁴ Private Sunley's Diary.

⁴⁵ So says the War Diary but in fact, Captain Benton *was* found after he had lain for thirty hours in a shell hole without food, water or first-aid. He was badly wounded, one of his legs shattered by machine gun fire. *"It was a marvel that he survived those lonely hours of agony in No Man's Land"* 17th Division History.

During all this period of chaos and uncertainty Private Arthur Sunley, who had recently been made a Battalion Orderly or Runner had been attempting to deliver messages. Along with his friend, Wilf Thomas, he was trying to find both 'D' and 'B' Companies:

"We fell into some trenches and gave Captain Cunningham, OC 'D' Company the shock of his life. On perceiving who we were he stated emphatically that he would not accept the message. I am sure that Delville Wood got on the nerves of everyone. Leaving 'D' we carried out our search for 'B' Company and we found them at 5.00am. We verbally delivered our message to the effect that there was no continuous lateral communication between the front line battalions, companies on the right had to dig towards the left and vice versa to establish communication. There was a big gap between battalions. Arrived back at Battalion Headquarters thoroughly exhausted, we reported message delivered. It was a point of honour with the orderlies that they never failed to deliver a message if it was humanly possible. In difficult and dangerous positions the orderlies worked in pairs."

The War Diary has no entries from 6 to 17 August but Sunley's account tells of a rest period at Dernancourt, under canvas, with enjoyable bathing in the River Somme. From the 19th to the 27th the Battalion was again in the line in the Trenches and Bluff Dugouts and then in Divisional Reserve at Souastre Y Sector Trenches until 11 September. This was a relatively quiet period with the Battalion recording that it was 'very weak numerically,' but strangely, no report of reinforcements being received. Of interest is the release of poison gas by the British, taking place on 5 September from the front line trenches of the 9th's 'A' Company and the battalion to its left. The area affected by the gas was around the north of Gommecourt Park as well as to the south-east of the Park and appeared to cause some consternation to the enemy who released a flood of green and red Very lights together with some sporadic gunfire.

At this stage of the war, September 1916, it is useful to look at the Allied position on the Western Front and, in particular, to place the 9th Battalion's actions in context to General Sir Douglas Haig's great offensive in the Battle of the Somme. On 1 July at 7.30am, some 60,000 soldiers scrambled out of their trenches on the uplands north of the Somme River to begin the 'Big Push'. By noon almost 100,000 had been committed to battle, and by nightfall 57,470 were dead, wounded or missing. It was the first day of a battle that was to grind on until November, and by its close there were 418,000 British casualties. These were the best of the nation's volunteer manhood - Kitchener's New Armies.

From north to south of the front there was no consistent pattern to the attack. In the north, at Gommecourt, the 46th North Midland division were hewn down by machine gun fire while the 56th London Division fought its way into Gommecourt Wood but were swamped by the inevitable counter-attack. The story was the same opposite Serre, where the 31st Division left its strength on the German wire. Across the Serre road, elements of the 4th Division, including 2 DWR, took the Heidenkopf strongpoint on Redan ridge and briefly got some way beyond it. Further south, opposite Beaumont-Hamel, the 29th Division made no progress whatsoever. South of the River Ancre, the 36th Ulster Division attacked successfully the Schwaben Redoubt, but it was regained by the Germans late in the afternoon. Thiepval's houses had been demolished, but their debris covered deep

cellars and the defenders had tunnelled between them to create a position of enormous strength. To the south stood the Leipzig Redoubt and this was the only success for the 32nd Division when it attacked Thiepval. South of Thiepval the 8th Division attacked Ovillers and the 2nd Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment lost 623 of its soldiers, and whilst isolated parties of the 34th Division got as far as Contalmaison, they were subjected to unceasing and accurate machine gun fire and lost 6,380 men, including a Brigadier-General and seven out of its twelve battalion commanders.

At Fricourt, further south, the 21st Division made poor progress, but on its right the 7th Division took and held Mametz. The 18th Division pushed on to seize Montauban Alley, but the 30th Division did even better and took Montauban. To the south the French offensive made good progress. For them it was the first day of the Somme but also the 132nd day of Verdun and they had learned much by way of tactics. German losses for this day were put at a total of 8,000 against the above referred to 57,470 British. Thus, the Somme failed. However it was at Delville Wood/ Longueval, where the 9th Battalion was in action, that gave the British the furthest of ground gained along the whole front, albeit a mere two to three miles. For sure there was no breakthrough and Sir Douglas Haig's Cavalry Corps was again deprived of their anticipated pursuit of the enemy, although there was an opportunity, not taken advantage of, at High Wood on 14 July.

There was, however, one significant factor in the offensive and that was the first employment of the tank in September. Assigned to the Heavy Branch of the Machine Gun Corps, the tank was expected to break through the German line to enable the follow-up infantry to exploit the gaps made. But the tank was not yet sufficiently reliable and its attacks, between Flers and Courcellette, helped the infantry to get forward some 3,500 yards but then, owing to mechanical failures and ditching in the shell holes, the advance ground to a halt.

October, and in November, when the Somme offensive was officially accepted as being over, were months of stalemate and the activities of the 9th Battalion reflect this. Reading the War Diary it is extraordinary to note how very many moves, entailing much marching, that the Battalion made during the last three months of 1916 and of January 1917. During this time the Battalion was either in the line or at rest. It is best to outline the various moves, although it is impossible to discern the motive behind them, except for those that involve the taking over of front line positions. Thus, from 11 September to 29 October the Battalion visited St Amand, Halloy, Barly, Montigny, Argenvillers, Hiermont, back to Barly and Halloy, Bouquemaison, Poulainville, Cardonette, Corbie and Sand Pits Camp (outside Méaulte). During this period no casualties are recorded but as well as route marching, considerable training was accomplished. The Diary is meticulous about the route marches in recording that 'no men fell out.' On 27 September all available officers and NCOs went to see the 'Tanks' manoeuvre in the afternoon and later in October the officers attended a lecture on the uses and limitations of tanks. Attacks were practised on enemy trenches with 'creeping barrages' and instruction was received on communicating with aeroplanes.

On 31 October, from Camp 'D' in the neighbourhood of Trones Wood the 9th took over the line from the 2nd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment with 'the men very exhausted on arrival in the trenches as the march for the greater part of the way being through badly crumpled ground and across country in the dark with several men being stuck in the mud for hours.' Intermittent shelling saw 2nd Lieutenants Armitage and Huntriss wounded and the next day Lieutenant Simpson was killed by a sniper. After only three days in the line the Battalion was relieved by the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers, but two days later, on 5 November the 9th were in the line again, taking over from the Fusiliers in the same positions. This was repeated on 8 November when the Fusiliers again relieved the 9th, and yet again on 10 November, the 9th went into the line. Clearly, this was a most desperate time - the trenches were in very bad condition, the cold and wet conditions were taking a great deal out of the men, and again men were continually getting stuck in the mud. Continuous shelling of Battalion Headquarters and companies resulted in 2nd Lieutenants Griffiths and Wood being wounded, with the latter afterwards dying. Very strangely, there is no record of casualties amongst the men, the more so because they must be presumed to have been heavy. The adverse conditions for the men were not alleviated when out at so-called rest in Camp 'D' which consisted of 'rough shelters in a sea of mud. There were no blankets.' This misery, endured by the 9th was partially put to an end when, by 8pm on 12 November, the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards.

From the 18 November until 6 December the Battalion was at rest in Ailly-sur-Somme then moving to Méaulte on the 23rd when it took over from the 10th Battalion The Rifle Brigade in the line, but remained there only until the 25th when the 12th Manchesters took over; yet, on the 29th it was in the line again, relieving the 10th Sherwood Foresters, in the same sector as before, at the Antelope Trench area, being relieved by the 12th Manchesters on 31 December 1916. There is, perhaps not surprisingly, no mention of having spent Christmas Day in the front line. Casualties of three killed and six wounded, all from 'D' Company, are recorded.

1917

January of the New Year, 1917 continues the now familiar pattern of front line duty and rest when there were 'only a few cases of trench feet with foot rubbing drill for one hour'. Two quiet short spells in the line resulted in one man only being slightly wounded until, on 1 February Captain Savory was wounded with ten Other Ranks killed and wounded, as a result of heavy shelling during a relief by the 7th Battalion The Border Regiment. Two men had been hit earlier by our own artillery dropping short. February again continues the practice with but two periods in the line and a long rest and training period from the 21st of the month to 8 April. Much marching was done as the Battalion had camps at La Houssoye, Contay, Beauval, Bouquemaison, Fontaine-L'Etalon, Sus-St-Leger, Houvin-Houvineul, Liencourt and Wanquetin and here each man in the Battalion was issued with two flares, two Mills bombs and three days iron rations. Six Very lights per pistol were also issued. The Author finds it difficult to comprehend why so much marching and change of station took place, as there appears to be no tactical

reason whatsoever. On 28 February and 30 April the War Diary is signed by Lieutenant Colonel M V le P Trench⁴⁶ but, most mysteriously on 31 March, by Lieutenant Colonel Wannell. There is no mention in the War Diary of why this change of command happened and it is not until 6 August that Colonel Wannell returns to command. By 30 June the Battalion is being commanded by Major D A Fairbairn.

On 9 April, Easter Day, the Battalion marched to Arras, arriving at 10.30pm, with the weather being very bad, snowing and a cold wind. The men had no blankets or greatcoats as it was expected that *'The Battalion would go through on the heels of the cavalry'*. This day was, of course, the opening of Haig's Arras offensive by the Third and First Armies designed as a subsidiary to the much heralded French attack in the south, on the River Aisne, under the newly appointed French Commander-in-Chief, General Nivelle⁴⁷. However, Nivelle's plan was upset by the German withdrawal to the Hindenberg Line, some 25 miles to the east of the countryside that had been the Somme battlefield. By 9 April the Germans were in their new defences consisting of a belt of fortifications, six to eight thousand yards deep, based upon concrete machine gun posts covering wire obstacles, usually in three belts, each ten to fifteen yards wide. Behind them they left a desert of cratered roads, destroyed buildings, torn-up railway lines and polluted wells. All the French civilians had been evacuated from the zone and the whole was well peppered with booby traps. It was an early example of 'scorched earth'.⁴⁸ 1916/1917 had been the worst winter of the century and the assaulting troops advanced through blinding snow and sleet. The main thrust of Haig's armies was directed against the German forces just north of the Hindenberg Line, on either side of the River Scarpe, with the objective of driving towards Cambrai. After three weeks of wire cutting by the artillery and a five-day bombardment by 2879 guns, one to each nine yards of front, the first day was a huge success. The highlight was the capture of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians and the 51st Highland Division but after three days the German resistance stiffened and by 3 May the result of Haig maintaining his pressure cost the British 160,000 casualties. All this was against the failure of the French, all their advances being stopped by the massed German artillery. But Nivelle persisted in his attack, with such appalling losses that he was sacked by the French Government and replaced by Petain.⁴⁹ The Arras offensive is generally considered to be one of Haig's greatest errors.

Against such a perspective it is no wonder that the 9th Battalion did not advance as was expected. Instead it moved into the front line trenches by the Scarpe Canal and remained there until 19 April, enduring much enemy shelling (including gas shells),

⁴⁶ Lieut Col Trench had fought at the Battle of Paardeberg when a Second Lieutenant with 1 DWR in the Boer War. He had left 1 DWR in India in 1915 to seek action in France. He was invalided home from France after commanding 9 DWR and as a Brevet Colonel commanded the Regimental Depot from 1919 to 1922.

⁴⁷ When the war began he was a colonel of artillery. He had rapidly risen to high command and by his successes at Verdun had become the popular hero of France. It was even suggested that he might be given the supreme command of both the French and the British armies on the Western Front.

⁴⁸ "Plumer, The Soldiers' General" by Geoffrey Powell (late The Green Howards). ISBN 1 84415 039 9.

⁴⁹ This caused the collapse of morale in the French Army resulting in mutinies and for some months the French Army could not be considered as either reliable or effective.

troublesome snipers and atrocious weather with the trenches being in very bad condition. 2nd Lieutenant Rowland and fourteen Other Ranks were wounded and four killed.

From billets in Arras the Battalion again went into the front line on 23 April, around Triangle and Orange Hill trenches only to receive orders to move on the 24th to occupy trenches at Monchy Wood, with a view to advancing through the Northumberland Fusiliers and attacking towards Keeling Copse in the afternoon. This period, until relieved on the night of the 25th, was to be one of the 9th's worst experiences and calls for extensive use of extracts from the War Diary:

"24th April. No trenches could be found in Monchy Wood so Battalion withdrawn to Orange Hill with 'B' and 'C' companies remaining near Monchy. At 9.00pm the Battalion moved up to the front line trenches held by 7th East Yorks ready to make an attack on Rifle Trench. Verbal orders were given to the Company Commanders with Letters 'A' and 'D' companies to assault Rifle Trench extended in two lines at twenty paces distance. 'B' company will follow in support with tools for consolidation extended over the whole Battalion front. 'C' company will take over the left of the East Yorks' line trench and will remain in reserve under orders of the CO.

25th April. The Battalion advanced from their positions at 3.20am with riflemen and bombers in the first line and Lewis Gunners and rifle bombers in the second line and one bomb squad from 'B' and 'C' Companies joining 'A' and 'D' companies respectively. The advance was steady and our artillery barrage opened at 3.55am - five minutes before the time arranged. At 3.37am (sic) the enemy barrage opened, shells falling over and just short of our front line trench and a terrific machine gun and rifle fire barrage opened on our advancing troops. The advance still went on steadily till we were about one hundred yards from the enemy trench when whistles were blown and machine gun and rifle fire grew even worse and our men were forced to return back to our own trench where they were reorganised and sent over again but met with the same reception and again retired. For the third time they went over but had to retire, then two platoons of 'C' Company of our reserve went in to strengthen them, but failed to reach the trench except on the right of the line where the fire and opposition was not so heavy. Sixteen men got in at this point and held their trench all day, by throwing up a bombing stop, but had to retire at night. 4.00am. OC our Reserve Company reports that men of our 'A' 'B' and 'D' Companies had retired back to his trench and state that they got three-quarters of the way but were driven back by heavy machine gun fire. 4.45am. OC Reserve Company reports the men who had retired had gone over again in good style. 5.00am. OC Reserve Company reports that party of our men again retired saying they had been stopped by MG fire and shells. 5.45am. The East Yorks report that our attack had been blotted out in places and that their bombing party is in touch with some of our men. 8.00am. Our situation was not quite clear but it appeared that we had got into Rifle Trench on the right of our front only. The East Yorks had failed in their bombing attack in conjunction with our own attack and we were back in our original positions. Dawn was breaking after our fourth attempt was tried and the CO thought that any further attempt would be useless. Our casualties were heavy, having four officers wounded: Captain Molyneux, Lieutenant Huxtable, Second Lieutenants Selway and Driver and three officers missing: Second Lieutenant

Hatherall⁵⁰ (believed killed), Second Lieutenant Smith (believed wounded), Lieutenant Chapman (believed killed) and 210 Other Ranks. The Battalion came out of the trenches at night and proceeded to Arras."

The battles at Arras during April and the first half of May are recorded by the 17th Division as the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe and regarded, somewhat dubiously, as victories. Certainly, Sir Douglas Haig classed them as such, even though his policy of attrition showed a negative balance sheet. The battles brought no respite for the 9th for in the month of May it was back in the line twice - the first time as early as 3 May when it took over the reserve position at the Railway Cutting. But, prior to this, while at rest, two accidents occurred when bombs were being issued to the men and twenty-four soldiers were injured. Very necessary reinforcements arrived with six officers and 171 Other Ranks, being inspected by the Brigade Commander. Rather delightful to read 'the Band played in the village square of Sus St Leger'. One of the main duties when in reserve seems to be the providing of fatigue parties. Two such parties on 4 May consisted of one officer and fifty men and three officers and two hundred men respectively with a similar party of three officers and two hundred men on 6 May, the nature of their duties not being disclosed. On 9 May the 9th relieved the 11th Royal Scots of the 9th Division at the front, suffering casualties of 2nd Lieutenant Griffiths (just joined on 27 April) and 22 soldiers wounded and killed. On 14 May, relieving the Northumberland Fusiliers, saw the 9th back in the front line when three patrols, one per company, went out up to the enemy wire and found it plentiful but old and tangled. One of the patrols drove one German into one of the 9th's trenches. 'This German was shot by one of the sentries'. Aeroplanes, both friendly and hostile, were very active on 19 May with the enemy 'Circus' several times flying over the line. Thus after the 28th and 29th in the front line the 9th went out to rest at Coullement. Here the Battalion stayed until 20 June; a most welcome rest period despite having to endure an inspection, in full marching order, by the Brigadier-General. Church parades were held for all denominations; all rifles were inspected by the Armourer Sergeant; subaltern officers and NCOs practised squad and arms drill under instruction; all gas masks were inspected by the Brigade Gas NCO; a sports meeting was held, clearly to good effect, as in the Divisional Meeting the Battalion gained an easy victory by 48 points to the next Regiment's 32 and, as further light relief, the whole Battalion attended the Divisional Horse Show at Mondicourt. On 16 June the Brigadier-General was back again inspecting 1st Line Transport, and on this day, Captain G H Molyneux⁵¹ and Major Robertson were each awarded the Military Cross and Military Medals went to Sergeant Kettlewell, Privates No.11195 Smith and No.28795 Mullarky, with Lieutenant Giles, Sergeant Galvin and (posthumously) Private Shorrocks being Mentioned in Dispatches.

For the period 20 June to 7 July the 9th were back on the Arras front and occupied both the Gabrielle and Chemical Works trenches and also the Cuthbert and Cod Front

⁵⁰ No trace of 2nd Lieutenant Hatherall's grave but Lieutenant Chapman is buried at Feuchy Chapel British Cemetery, Wancourt.

⁵¹ After the war the eminent designer of fashion.

Line sector. It was, by contemporary standards, a routine occupation with bombardments by both sides causing the 9th the familiar run of casualties; three or four on the 23rd, one officer and several men, of whom two killed, on the 26th mentioned specifically but with a total of three officers and twenty soldiers quoted as a result of this tour.⁵² Air activity had increased and on 4 July:

"Hun aircraft over our line practically all day" and "four of our triplanes came near of whom one attacked one of the enemy for a few seconds but nothing developed."

On the 7th: *"Our aircraft very busy over enemy lines."*

A further spell in the line followed from 15 to 20 July when the tour was completed without any casualties. For this tour Major J H M Kirkwood DSO,⁵³ of the Household Battalion,⁵⁴ took over command and remained until Colonel Wannell returned on 6 August, when the battalion was at rest in Hull Camp, St Nicholas near to Arras. However, on 20 August, Colonel Wannell takes over command of the Brigade while the Brigadier-General goes on leave; Major D A Fairbairn assumed temporary command of the 9th.

The picture of life in the line at this time is quite clear. Artillery and snipers were practically never silent, patrols were out in front of the line every night, and heavy bombardments by artillery and trench mortars, of one or both sides, took place daily in various parts of the line. At this time there was seldom a day when enemy aircraft were not busy reconnoitring, photographing and observing fire. In short, a steady and continuous fight was going on. One form of minor activity which was particularly prominent was the raids, made at least two or three times a week. Usually they consisted of brief, sharp night attacks with some special objective - a section of trench or the capture of a prisoner - and invariably they involved hand-to-hand fighting and bombing. In August, 2nd Lieutenant A S Ford was lost on one such patrol and when a 'D' Company patrol was sent out to find the state of enemy wire it encountered a party of enemy and Sergeant Adamson⁵⁵ was killed by a bomb.

On 21 August: *"Our patrols have undisputed control of 'No Man's Land'" and "Prisoners of the 464th Regiment captured by 'B' Company, very youthful looking, aged 20 years."*

Again back in the line, on Greenland Hill, the enemy commenced a hurricane bombardment with trench mortars and completely shattered the main communication trench. Lieutenant Plumb⁵⁶ was wounded and later died of his wounds and the 9th was moved to complain that our artillery did not retaliate to the enemy's bombardment. The 12th Manchester Regiment carried out a raid through the 9th's position, but was only partially successful on 8 September but the second raid, on 16 September was reported as being a success. Relieved by the 6th Dorsets on 17 September, the 9th was out of the line until 7 November when the Officers took the time to dine together in the Officers' Club at Arras and the whole Battalion attended the Divisional Cinema on the 21st. Training was concentrated on a new method and formation in attack and was demonstrated to the Brigade Commander. Again, on 29 October, the 50th Brigade practised the attack before the Divisional Commander, to be followed later by the 9th carrying out a practice attack with the rest of 52nd Brigade. It was rehearsed again on

31 September and then, on 5 November, demonstrated before the Divisional Commander and General Sir Hubert Gough, GOC-in-C Fifth Army. But, contrary to the forebodings of the Battalion, no immediate attack took, or was, to take place and on 7 November the 9th went back into the line at Olga Houses and Eagle Trench with the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Wannell, being slightly wounded on the way up. He was away until returning to the Battalion on 13 December when it was at rest at Mouille. During his absence the Battalion had been commanded by Major Wilkes MC, of the Manchesters, who now returned to his own 12th Battalion. The next serious spell in the line was from 22 to 27 December, when the Battalion occupied the trenches at Flesquières, taking over from the 2/4th Leicestershire Regiment. Here 2nd Lieutenant J B Slater and ten men carried out a most successful fighting patrol when it accounted for five of the enemy, but Sergeant Cryer did not return and was believed hit during the encounter. Immediately after the patrol returned a heavy enemy barrage was put down to be followed later in the day by gas shells both lachrymatory and phosgene (and, it was thought, mustard). One officer and three ORs got a slight dose and were sent to hospital. On Christmas Eve the Battalion side-slipped to its right and extended its frontage, taking over from the 7th Loyal North Lancs. All was quiet for the Battalion's third Christmas Day⁵⁷ in the line but, as a sort of present, a deserter from the enemy's 107th Infantry Reserve Regiment was captured, but unfortunately, would not give any information concerning the tactical dispositions of his battalion. On 27 December the Battalion moved back to the old British front line in front of Albert and became Battalion in Divisional Reserve, housed in bivouacs and dugouts, which were decidedly uncomfortable.

1918

January and February of the New Year, 1918, continued to entail much front line service for the Battalion and both months were extremely cold, wet and with frost and snow during early January. 2nd Lieutenant C Burrows led a patrol of eighteen NCOs and men in an attack on an enemy post with Zero hour being 5.00am on 7 January.

⁵² With such incomplete information in the War Diary it has to be assumed that separate casualty lists were compiled accurately in the Battalion Orderly Room for onward transmission to Brigade Headquarters.

⁵³ 7th Dragoon Guards; Captain, Royal North Devon Hussars; Major Household Battalion. Served South Africa 1899-1901. Dispatches, Queen's Medal three clasps, King's Medal two clasps. France - served 4th Dragoon Guards, Household Battalion & Royal Irish Rifles. Conservative MP for South-East Essex 1910-1912.

⁵⁴ Household Battalion. Formed in September 1916 as an infantry battalion with personnel from the Household Cavalry Reserve Regiments. In France November 1916 in 10th Brigade, 4th Division. Disbanded February 1918 sending drafts to the Household Cavalry and Foot Guards.

⁵⁵ Buried at Brown's Copse Cemetery, Roeux.

⁵⁶ He is buried at Duisans Military Cemetery, Etrun.

⁵⁷ "For Christmas fare the transport brought up Daily Mail plum puddings. They would have made jolly good hand grenades!" - Private Arthur Sunley.

Whilst the patrol successfully drove the enemy down his trench and established a new stop, the position could not be consolidated. Owing to heavy trench mortar fire and bombing it had to withdraw. Two further attempts were made by replacement soldiers but, again, the fighting party had to return to its original position. It was subsequently discovered that the enemy had an underground tunnel connecting his main trench with a gun pit adjacent to the stop from which he was able to carry out his bombing. On 13 February a further patrol, of one officer and twelve soldiers, went out to occupy 'Reindeer', a forward trench, for one day and encountered a party of enemy, killing one German officer and three men. If anything the providing of fatigue parties dominated these two months, although of course the artillery of both sides was most active. Very large fatigue parties were deployed daily: typical examples being a night party of three officers and one hundred and fifty Other Ranks 'carrying for the Royal Engineers'; two hundred and fifty men being supplied to the Royal Engineers all day; tunnelling fatigue of one officer and thirty soldiers every eight hours during the first three weeks of February. On 26 February an organised shoot by rifles and Lewis guns, assisted by Rifle Grenadiers,⁵⁸ took place at 7.00pm with the only recorded result being the enemy's very active reply by trench mortars.

Reading between the lines of the War Diary and the Diary of Private Arthur Sunley it can be discerned that a German attack was in the offing and that preparations were being made to resist it. On 16 March the Battalion carried out a test for a 'Turn-out' in case of enemy attack while Private Sunley, now a clerk at the Headquarters of 17th Division wrote:

"On 4th February I was due for home leave but, unfortunately, all leave was cancelled as a German offensive was expected. It was generally known that a German attack was to be expected at any time; every Brigade and Division had to draw up a special defence scheme. Examining the map in Divisional Headquarters I thought our divisional defences round Hermies looked impregnable. On 21st March at 4.00am I was suddenly woken from sleep to the fact that something exciting was happening. A terrific bombardment had commenced. Hastily dressing I ran across to the office to learn that here was Jerry's offensive at last. Jerry's main attack was on the 51st Division on our left and on the division to our right. This forced our 17th Division, in the centre, to retire, otherwise it would have been isolated and surrounded. The old 9th Battalion was in the front line when the attack started. They received orders to retire and went back as far as Contay."

The War Diary explains in great detail this highly dangerous German offensive that, at first, had the potential to decide the war in Germany's favour. Because of the onrush of the German forces between St Quentin and Arras, threatening the important railhead of Amiens, Sir Douglas Haig replaced Sir Hubert Gough, giving Sir Henry Rawlinson Gough's Fifth Army, together with his own Fourth and making him responsible for the subsequent defence. The Fifth Army had been over-extended and had fallen back in considerable disorder. It is against this background that the War Diary is written:

"London Trench, 21 March 1918. Great enemy bombardment commenced along the whole front. Great quantities of gas shells used. Gas masks worn by all ranks for five hours. At 8.30am the companies at Yorkshire Slag Heap moved forward through great

enemy barrage and took up defensive positions in Jermyn Street and London Trench with the two companies in London Trench moving forward and taking up position in Lock Trench and Shop Trench. At 1030am Hughes Trench was heavily bombarded by trench mortars and entered by the enemy on a front of two hundred yards. At 12 noon London Trench was again heavily shelled by HE and gas. At 4.00pm owing to weakness in the position at HUNT two platoons from 'A' Company had to be moved forward to reinforce the front line that was now Carey Trench. During the evening enemy made a further attack on our platoon in Carey Trench but were repulsed by our rifle and Lewis Gun fire.

22 March. Owing to the enemy having driven back divisions on our flanks we received orders to move back at 1.00am to City Trench and defences of Havrincourt leaving two companies under Major Wilkes of HUMBLE⁵⁸ to act as Outpost line in Jermyn Street and London Trench. At 10.00am enemy made repeated attacks on our bombing stop in London Trench. Each time he was driven back without making any headway leaving many dead in the trench. At 4.00pm information was received that the 50th Brigade on our left had withdrawn leaving our left flank in the air so outpost line was compelled to withdraw to Clarges Avenue and Knightsbridge. At 6.00pm information was received from HUMBLE that they were being heavily attacked. A great concentration of fire was directed against the oncoming enemy by our rifle and Lewis guns and the enemy's attack was successfully broken up without reaching our line.

23 March. At 2.00am orders were received to withdraw to Yorkshire Slag Heap where the Battalion was in support to HUNT and HUMBLE. At 8.30am accompanied by intense bombardment the enemy made a determined attack on Hermies, a great hand-to-hand struggle took place and the enemy was driven off leaving hundreds of dead in front of the wire. At 10.30am the Battalion received orders to withdraw to the defences of Royal Court and afterwards working in conjunction with divisions on our flanks received orders to withdraw to Rocquigney at 6.00pm. Though tired and hungry the Battalion was ordered to man the trenches in front of Rocquigney, acting as reserve to the battalions of the 63rd and 2nd Divisions in front.

24 March. During the morning the 2nd and 63rd Divisions withdrew through our line and the 50th Brigade took up a position about four hundred yards in front of us, with the 7th East Yorks on our left. During the afternoon the 47th Division reported they were heavily attacked and that two battalions had been compelled to withdraw. Later the 7th East Yorks withdrew leaving our left flank in the air. The position was now desperate, the enemy was fast advancing on our flank and it looked as though we should be cut off. A hurried consultation with HUMBLE on our right was arranged and on receiving orders to withdraw, arrangements were made to protect our flanks and the withdrawal was proceeded with. The enemy now pushed forward in full view, a battery of light guns proceeded to harass our retreat; with heavy MG fire pouring in on both flanks and the

⁵⁸ Equipped with SMLE rifle discharger cups for firing the Mills bomb.

⁵⁹ The War Diary does not make clear, exactly, what HUMBLE and HUNT were. However, from the context, it is clearly a combination of a defensive position garrisoned with some form of fighting force.

enemy rapidly advancing on our front, the Battalion was faced with overwhelming difficulties. The morale of our men was fine - the withdrawal was masterfully carried out - the companies alternatively acting as rearguard to each other. The withdrawal was carried out successfully through Le Transloy and Guerdecourt where artillery formations were arranged and eventually a position in front of Flers was formed in conjunction with the other battalions of the Brigade. At 11.00pm enemy patrols were found in Flers on our right and the Brigade withdrew and took up a position near Martinpuich.

25 March. At 4.00pm the Brigade was relieved by a brigade of the 63rd Division and proceeded towards Pozières where after a brief rest proceeded to La Boisselle. Reports of enemy activity in the vicinity were received and the Brigade was ordered to take up position in front of Fricourt. The day and evening were rather quieter and except for small patrol encounters there was little happening on our immediate front. At 11.00pm orders were received to withdraw to Hénencourt at 1.30am.

26 March. At 1.30am the Battalion withdrew through Méaulte and Millencourt to Hénencourt and took up temporary quarters. At 2.00pm information was received that the enemy had broken through at Hébeturme. The whole Division moved to Senlis with tanks. After a brief rest of half-an-hour the Battalion along with the other battalions of the Division moved across the open in artillery formation and took up a position south of Millencourt.

27 March. News having been received that the enemy was held up the Battalion moved back into billets at Hénencourt. Rumours of another enemy attack were received and positions for defence of Hénencourt were taken up. The 'wind' having died down, the Battalion moved back into the Hénencourt billets.

28 March. Battalion engaged in clearing up. No particular activity reported on our front.

29 March. Nothing unusual happened during the day. Millencourt was heavily shelled during the morning. At 8.30pm Battalion relieved 7th Lincs in support in front of Millencourt.

30 March. Enemy aircraft very active during the morning. Occasional shelling by enemy of Millencourt. Situation otherwise quiet. Trench line dug 400 yards in front of present position.

31 March. Weather wet - trenches occupied by troops were very muddy- troops were consequently very wet and muddy. Situation remained quiet, except for a short patrol encounter by Hunt.

1 April. Aerial activity on both sides. Millencourt shelled at intervals during day. Weather showery. Night was quiet.

2 April. Weather raining. Trenches very wet and muddy. Battalion relieved by 7th Norfolk Regiment and proceeded to Contay.

3 April. Roll Call - lists of casualties compiled.⁶⁰

4 April. Weather very bad - raining heavily. Battalion left Contay at 8.30am and marched to Villers Bocage."

The War Diary gives a comprehensive account of the part the 9th Battalion played in the German offensive of March 1918. Although not at all evident from the entries, the enemy advance on the Somme was beginning to lose its momentum from about 27 March. Evidently the leading German infantry divisions were approaching exhaustion. Yet, paradoxically, the problems encountered in transporting their ammunition were causing the German infantry to outrun their artillery support. Further, consequent upon the decision to employ storm troopers as the spearhead of costly, if successful, offensive operations, the enemy had lost many of their best men. And, from 27 March, further progress must, for the Germans, lie across the inhospitable wilderness of the old Somme battlefield. Other factors on the German side lightened Sir Henry Rawlinson's task. By 28 March the main German effort was not being made on his front. Ludendorff, in keeping with his refusal to set strategic objectives ('Don't talk to me of strategy. I hack a hole, the rest follows'), was allowing the advance of his 18th Army to become directionless. Thus, he attacked in the south against the French so widening still further the front of attack and also shifting the axis of the German advance away from Amiens. Bewilderingly, on the 28th Ludendorff swung his main effort to his right, against the British Third and First Armies at Arras. Consequently there were simply no German divisions available to maintain the momentum of the advance against Rawlinson's Army, including the 9th Dukes.⁶¹

However the battle went on throughout April and into the month of May and the 9th spent much of the intervening time holding the line, but with no further desperate action, although always subjected to heavy enemy bombardments. Positions occupied by the Battalion after Villers Bocage included Haverna, Toutencourt, Forceville and Englebelmer when, on 30 April it was in Brigade Reserve. On 11 May Lieutenant Colonel Wannell DSO left for England and Major E M Huntriss MC⁶² took over command, being promoted during June to Lieutenant Colonel. (During April it is perhaps interesting to note two 'naval' occasions, when the Battalion relieved the Hawke Battalion of the 63rd Division at Toutencourt and on 8 May was relieved by the Royal Marine Light Infantry at Forceville). On 16 May the V Corps Commander inspected the Battalion, after cleaning up in the morning and having had Battalion Sports and been to a YMCA concert on the day before. A constant theme of the Diary is the amount and diversity of training accomplished in addition to the normal heavy load of fatigues. It is surprising also to see how very much drill, including ceremonial, was performed. Although the German offensive had been halted, it did not mean that the front was devoid of activity, or that the Germans had given up any hope of capturing Amiens, the threat of which was responsible for the dispositions of the Battalion throughout May and June. Sir Henry Rawlinson's plan for his 4th Army was to build up and improve the defences of the front and on the 13 June he was to record in his Diary that 'We are ready'.

⁶⁰ Figures not given in War Diary.

⁶¹ See 'Command on the Western Front - The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson 1914-1918'.

⁶² Award of MC not mentioned in War Diary but was awarded in New Year's Honours List 1918. 2nd Lieutenant in 1916 and now Acting Lieutenant Colonel in 1918.

Meanwhile by 25 June the Battalion had relieved the 6th Royal West Kents in Beaumont Trench, and on the 26th endured enemy shelling from 6.00am to 9.00am with 105mm guns and 4.2in, so-called 'whizz-bangs'. July saw the Battalion in and around the same areas of Beaumont-Hamel, Acheux Wood and Auchonvillers.

Sir Henry Rawlinson launched his Fourth Army attack on the Amiens front on 8 August but it was not until 24 August that the 9th was again to see action with the Third Army. On this day the Battalion crossed the River Ancre and formed up in the vicinity of Mouquet Farm where it was in Brigade Reserve. On the 25th the War Diary records:

“At 3.45am the Battalion moved forward in support of the attacking battalions of 52nd Brigade whose objective was Martinpuich. At 7.30am the right front battalion reported that the division on their right flank was exposed. Two companies were then sent up in support of the 12th Manchester Regiment and became heavily involved in fighting around High Wood, one company making three attempts to take the position. Battalion Headquarters and the remaining two companies moved up in support of the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers who were held up in Martinpuich. The Lancashire Fusiliers withdrew on account of heavy shelling and one company of the Dukes took up a position and remained there until the Lincolns on their left and the Lancashire Fusiliers reformed and moved forward once more. Battalion Headquarters and these two companies moved to a central position where they were joined by the two companies that had supported the Manchesters. At 10.45pm orders came that the Manchesters had established a post and the Battalion would line up and attack. At midnight the Battalion moved up.

26 August. At 2.40am the Battalion attacked from the forming up line and at 3.45am the two attacking companies were held up by a strong enemy line. At 5.00am in conjunction with battalion on left and right they endeavoured to continue the advance towards Flers but were again held up by heavy MG fire. 10.00am seeing that the 12th Manchesters were working round the right flank of the enemy, 'A' Company attacked and captured the enemy position together with seventy prisoners and six machine guns, afterwards advancing and gaining the ridge west of Flers. The Battalion was again held up by machine gun fire. At 2.10 pm in conjunction with the Manchesters on right the attack was again resumed, the sunken road east of Flers was the objective. The centre company succeeded within five hundred yards of Flers, the other three companies were held up. At 8.00pm instructions were received that the Battalion would be relieved, casualties during the day being heavy. Lieutenants Chipenel and Cutcliffe being killed and Lieutenant Tabbot, 2nd Lieutenants Marshal and Best wounded.

27 August. After a quiet night the 10th West Yorkshires moved through the Battalion to attack Flers. The battalion remained in the same position until 8.00pm when it moved by companies to bivouacs south of Eaucourt L'Abbayes.

28 August. Camp shelled during night. Two casualties. Day spent in reorganisation. Enemy shelled camp at 8.00pm. 2nd Lieutenant W P Barry was killed⁶³. Lieutenant Colonel Huntriss, Captain Beaumont, RAMC and Lieutenant Thompson wounded. Major A Driver MC assumed command at midnight.

29 August. Lieutenant Colonel Huntriss returned and took over command at noon. Battalion moved at 2.30pm to valley north-east of Flers and remained there for rest of the day.

30 August. Enemy shelled camp at dawn, otherwise quiet. Received orders at 8.00pm to relieve 10th Sherwood Foresters.

31 August. Moved off at 12.30am and took over the line west of Le Transloy with 10th Lancashire Fusiliers on left and 38th Division on right. Relief reported completed at 5.00am. At 4.45am companies who had been relieved endeavoured to advance but patrols were held up by machine gun fire from Le Transloy and Morval Ridge. Artillery bombarded these positions but the Battalion had to remain in the position all day. At 8.30pm orders received that the Battalion would attack at dawn forming up by midnight on road running north and south five hundred yards in front of present positions. The Battalion unable to get to forming up place.

1 September. In spite of heavy shelling the Battalion attacked at 5.40am with Bapaume-Peronne Road objective, but were held up by heavy machine gun fire after gaining 250 yards. Lieutenant Colonel Huntriss MC being wounded, Major A Driver MC assumed command. At 10.00am gap having occurred on right, the two supporting companies were ordered to move south and fill in this gap. One company pushed well forward capturing one field gun and thirty prisoners, but suffered heavy casualties by MG fire from Le Transloy, Captain Harriman being killed and 2nd Lieutenants Milner and Midwood being wounded. Received orders at 4.00pm to occupy trench running east and west one thousand yards of Le Transloy. This was completed by 6.30pm. Received order 8.00pm that the Battalion would attack 5.00am following morning, the same objective as previous day, forming up on a sleeper track.

2 September. Battalion forming up completed at 2.00am. Forming up position heavily shelled during night. At 5.00am under cover of an artillery barrage Battalion attack with 12th Manchesters on right and succeeded in getting astride Bapaume-Peronne Road, immediately south of Le Transloy, capturing about seventy prisoners and several trench mortars and machine guns. Owing to unit on right being held up, and heavy machine gun fire from Le Transloy the Battalion was unable to advance further. At 3.00pm orders received to make a further attack. At 5.00pm under cover of an artillery barrage the Battalion attacked and captured objective, trench line seven hundred yards east of main road, with no opposition. Battalion remained in same position all night. 2nd Lieutenant Barker was wounded during the early morning attack, casualties to Other Ranks slight.

3 September. Quiet night. 50th Brigade having taken up the pursuit orders received at 9.30am for the Battalion to concentrate near Bapaume-Peronne Road. This was completed by 11.00am and remainder of day was spent in reorganisation. Two officers and eighty-six OR joined at 8.00pm.

⁶³ Buried at Adanac Military Cemetery Anraumont.

4 September. Moved at 7.50am to trench line north-east of Rocquigney where the Battalion remained all day. Draft of four officers and one hundred OR joined.

7 September. East of Canal du Nord. 12th Manchesters having advanced, the two companies moved forward to trench line west of Dessart Wood. At noon the other two companies and Battalion Headquarters moved forward to this position the other two companies moving to trench running east and west immediately north of Dessart Wood. The Manchesters being unable to advance further, the Battalion remained in this position the rest of the day. Orders were received at 9.00pm to relieve the Manchester Regiment and become Advance Guard Battalion to the 17th Division. Owing to guides not being available until midnight the Battalion did not move off until 11.30pm.

8 September. East of Dessart Wood. Relief completed 4.15am. Two companies endeavoured to advance at 5.00am. The right company was held up by machine gun fire after advancing five hundred yards (capturing one officer and thirteen OR and one machine gun). The left company gained one thousand yards but owing to heavy machine gun fire was forced to withdraw to line two hundred and fifty yards in front of original position. Captain Roebuck was killed ⁶⁴ and 2nd Lieutenant Smart wounded. Orders received that Lancashire Fusiliers and Manchester Regiment would attack at 4.00am forming up in sunken road five hundred yards in front of right front company. The right front company ordered to secure this position which they succeeded doing by 10.00pm.

9 September. At 3.45am order received to attach one company to the 10th Lancashire Fusiliers who had had heavy casualties. 'A' Company was ordered to move forward behind the 10th LF at 10.00am. The LFs and Manchesters having been held up in African Support the Battalion was ordered to send forward one company to reinforce. At 11.00am another company was ordered forward with instructions to get in touch with the 21st Division on the right. At noon message having been received from 'A' Company that they were in touch with the LFs the two forward companies were ordered to bomb northwards up African Support and get in touch with New Zealand Division on left. These companies succeeded in gaining five hundred yards but were held up by enemy posts. At 5.30am 'A' Company attached to the Lancashire Fusiliers had endeavoured to peacefully penetrate into African Trench (West of Gouzeaucourt) but without success. At 6.45pm our two forward companies were counter-attacked. The attack was driven off by LG fire. At 7.00pm orders were received that the Brigade would be relieved by the 50th Brigade. Two companies were relieved by 11.30pm.

10 September. Owing to units of 50th Brigade misunderstanding orders the remaining two companies were not relieved until 11.00am. The Battalion formed up and occupied trenches immediately east of Vallulart Wood and remained there during the rest of the day."

At this time it is necessary to take stock of the situation on the Western Front so that the actions of the 9th may be seen in the context of the bigger strategic picture. On the Fourth Army front, to the south of the 9th Battalion in General Byng's Third Army, Sir Henry Rawlinson had countered the German offensive and convincingly won the Battle of Amiens. But his troops were exhausted and Sir Douglas Haig, in view of this, rested

the Fourth Army and switched priority onto the Third Army that had now, with the fine assistance of the 9th, won the Second Battle of the Somme, consisting of the Battle of Albert and of the Second Battle of Bapaume. However, the 9th still had much hard fighting to do and, on 17 September, from positions in Vallulart Wood, it received orders for an attack at 5.20am on the 18th but, at 3.00am just before Zero Hour, the enemy launched a raid on the right front company but were driven off by Lewis Gun fire with two prisoners captured. The War Diary recounts this action:

“The Battalion attacked at 5.20am under cover of an artillery barrage - objective Chapel Hill, Chapel Redoubt and Cavalry Trench. All objectives were captured by 6.00am though strong resistance was met with in Chapel Redoubt, especially by two MGs, the teams of which held out until they were bayoneted by Captain R S Sinclair, MC⁶⁵ and Sergeant Clarkson. Three Half companies, after capturing the first objective, went forward and surrounded and captured Vaucelette Farm in conjunction with the Dorset Regiment. When the Dorset Regiment had taken over this position our advanced troops withdrew to the first position and assisted in consolidating. In the evening we were ordered to take up new positions on east side of Railway Embankment and in Cavalry Trench. Lieutenant Dennison killed, 2nd Lieutenant Clarke wounded. 229 prisoners, 24 MGs, 11 TMs, 1 Anti Tank rifle.

19 September. Positions around Railway Embankment heavily shelled all day. In the afternoon the Battalion received orders that it would be relieved by the 33rd Division and would then take over positions occupied by the 38th Division in Heather Trench, as far north as the Fins-Gouzeaucourt Road - at the same time one company forming a defensive flank south of this road in conjunction with the 10th LFs. Reliefs were completed by 4.00am.

20 September. Quiet day. Received orders to side slip and relieve remainder of 38th Division in African Trench and African Support. Two companies relieved 38th Division in African Trench with two platoon posts in posts north of Fins-Gouzeaucourt Road, joining up with the 10th LF. Relief complete at 4.00am 21st inst. Remained in same position. Captain Sinclair MM, MC⁶⁶ (sic), 2nd Lieutenants Wood and Bird wounded.”

25 September found the Battalion at Les Boeufs moving forward to Rocquigny on the 27th. Here the War Diary gives a summary for the month of September:

*“Casualties: 3 Officers killed, 9 wounded. 290 Other Ranks (not specified)
Reinforcements: 12 Officers. 496 Other Ranks
Prisoners: 7 Officers. 469 Other Ranks
Machine guns: 24
Trench Mortars: 11.”*

⁶⁴ Buried at Metz-en-Couture Communal Cemetery, British Extension.

⁶⁵ See Note 66 below.

⁶⁶ London Gazette dated 12 February 1918 “T/2nd Lieut J Sinclair MM awarded MC.” *Not known with which unit he was serving at the time of his award. We have to presume that, because of their different initials, there were two officers by the name of Sinclair serving together in the 9th Battalion.*



'D' Company 8th DWR NCOs, 1915.



Private H. Kirby, 8th DWR, on the Somme.



The Veldhoek Bugle.



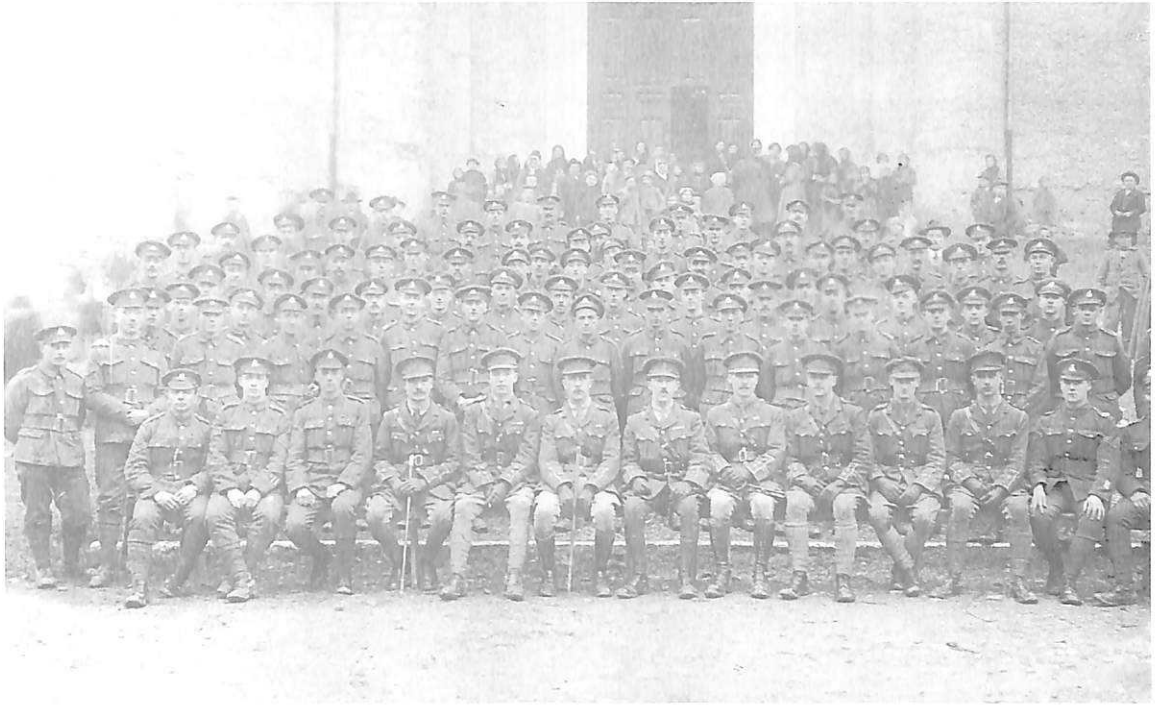
Jack Airey, 1914, 10th DWR.



Lance Corporal B Holdsworth,
10th DWR, with Long Enfield rifle.



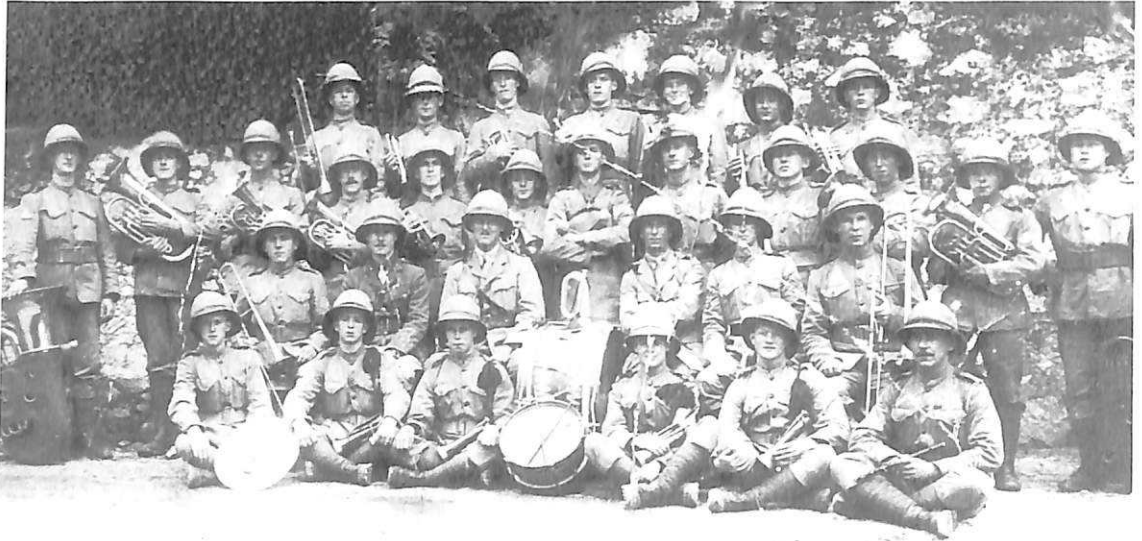
9th Battalion DWR in Wareham, Bovington, Dorset, for training after joining 69 Brigade, November 1914.



'D' Company 10th DWR, 1918.



10th DWR. Regimental Smithy, 1915.



The Band 10th DWR in Italy.



MG Detachment 11th DWR, September 1915.



9th DWR Embarkation Parade, July 1915.

The Battalion was in action again after moving forward to Inchy as part of the Support Brigade and on 12 October were fifty yards south-west of the River Selle:

“At 0500 hours⁶⁷ Battalion attacked in conjunction with the 12th Manchesters. Object being the high ground. Battalion crossed River Selle successfully and reached the road. Here great MG opposition was encountered from Railway and from south-east of village of Neuville. All senior officers were casualties. Lieutenant Colonel Driver slightly wounded and Captain & Adjutant B Dacre killed⁶⁸. Lieutenant Frampton assumed command of the Battalion until Major Thompson of the 12th Manchesters took over at 1200 hours. At 0900 hours enemy attacked Div on right forcing them back over River Selle, thereby leaving our right flank in the air. Position of Support Right Company changed to guard right flank. Lewis guns from HQ were placed on the right flank. Half company of LFs placed to fill gap to division on right. One company of LFs protected our left flank to prevent enemy attacking through village. At 1600 hours enemy attacked 12th Manchesters and drove them back slightly. During these two attacks we were heavily shelled but held our position across the river. At 2300 hours we received orders that the 7th Lancashire Fusiliers would relieve us.”

On 14 October Lieutenant Colonel Driver returned from hospital and resumed command of the Battalion, while the summary for October's actions showed three officers killed, six wounded, one died of sickness and Other Rank casualties were 195. Reinforcements consisted of nineteen officers and 254 Other Ranks. Prisoners taken were five Other Ranks. One machine gun was captured.

From 1 October, Lieutenant Colonel Driver led the Battalion through Amerval and Inchy to Poix-du-Nord where, on 26 October, it relieved the 7th Leicestershire Regiment returning to Amerval before moving back to Poix-du-Nord to relieve the 6th Leicestershire Regiment of the 21st Division. The next day, 3 November, the 17th Division received orders to attack on 4 November:

“... the 52nd Brigade was detailed to take the first objective, the remaining brigades leap-frogging through them. Orders were received from 52 Brigade that Brigade should attack and capture the village of Futoy and form an outpost line 300 yards east of the village. The attack was to be made with three battalions in line - 10th LF on left, 9th DWR in centre and 12th Manchesters on right. Jumping off place was the Ghissigrees-Englefontaine Road. The battalion frontage was 700 yards. Orders of attack for the battalion were 'B' and 'C' Companies front wave and 'D' and 'A' Companies second wave. Battalion moved up from Poix-du-Nord at 1930 hours and was in position by 2300 hours. On the way up 'D' Company was caught in the enemy's fire and suffered casualties to the number of one officer killed, 18 OR killed and 23 wounded. Time for attack was 0500 hours 4 November.

4 November at Futoy. Zero Hour was 0500 hours. From the quickness of the enemy's reply to our barrage it is evident that the enemy expected our attack. The attack was highly successful and objective was captured and consolidated by 0730 hours. The battalion was unlucky in losing thirteen officer casualties (five killed and eight wounded).

Two companies were entirely without officers one hour after the attack started, and the remaining companies had only one officer each. Total casualties for the Battalion were 5 officers, 56 OR killed and 8 officers and 173 OR wounded⁶⁹. The Battalion captured 150 prisoners, 56 MGs and 8 Trench mortars.

5 November. The 21st Division attacked through our Division at 0300 hours. The Battalion retired to billets in Futoy and was engaged in reorganising and collecting salvage

7 & 8 November. Battalion moved forward to Berliamont and then marched to Aulnoye. At 1630 hours orders were received that the Brigade should relieve the 51st Brigade at Limont-Fontaine and attack and capture the village of Beaufort. Major Perry MC was in command of the Battalion, which left Aulnoye at 2230 hours.

9 November. Battalion arrived at a position 400yards west of the village at 0200 hours where it halted to await orders from the Commanding Officer who had previously gone forward to receive final orders. It was ascertained that the enemy had retreated many miles back and the arranged attack was therefore cancelled. The Battalion relieved the 10th Sherwood Foresters in Lipton-Fontaine as support battalion of the Brigade with orders to move forward at 0500 hours. Battalion moved forward and occupied positions in Beaufort, supporting 10th LF and 12th Manchesters who were occupying an outpost 500 yards east of village. Though the enemy was rapidly retreating the Brigade had orders to stand fast. A troop of cavalry was ordered forward to ascertain position of enemy and to act as scouts. At 1400 hours the Battalion withdrew to billets in Beaufort.

10 November. Battalion engaged in cleaning up. Baths.

11 November 1918. At 0800 hours orders were received that the Armistice had been signed and would come into operation at 1100 hours when all active operations ceased. The Division was relieved by the 21st Division. Battalion withdrew and marched to Berliamont starting at 1230 hours arriving 1600 hours, occupying billets vacated by the 1st Wiltshire Regiment”.

With the war over the Battalion, after much marching, including from 8 to 12 December, some eighty miles, ended up at Metigny, west of Amiens, where it remained until the spring of 1919 by which time it had been reorganised into two companies. The first company was composed of recruits and the men who were to form part of the Army of Occupation and the second company consisted of men to be demobilised.

⁶⁷ From this date the War Diary ceases to use ‘am’ and ‘pm’ to denote time and changes to the modern usage of ‘hours’ in the 24-hour system.

⁶⁸ Buried at Montay-Neuvilly Road Cemetery, Montay.

⁶⁹ “The fighting strength of the Battalion was reduced to two officers and 200 Other Ranks. “That the final objective was reached successfully by those reduced numbers reflects highly on the determination of all ranks” says the diary of operations. 17th Division History.

The Battalion was not idle during the few months after the war. Comprehensive programmes of education were conducted on a daily basis, much sport was played and also much routine and traditional training was carried out. But, of course, all the while men were being demobilised ⁷⁰ and recruits were joining. Notably, on 4 December the Battalion, amidst great excitement and cheering, lined the road for the visit of HM King George V. On 26 February Captain Cullinan gave a lecture to the Battalion on 'Prospects for men re-enlisting for two, three or four years' and surely this must have been aimed at the new recruits?

The last entry in the War Diary is, somewhat delightfully, on Sunday, 31 March 1919:

"Route March from 0915 to 1200 hours. Whist Drive in the evening." (!)

The 9th Battalion was finally disbanded in April 1919. ⁷¹

⁷⁰ *"Demobilisation was to be a long process, longer indeed than the first formation of the Division in those far-off autumn months of 1914. It was part of an army of millions, and these could not be dispersed by the stroke of some magic wand."* 17th Division History.

⁷¹ *In the Regimental Chapel in Halifax Parish Church is a memorial dedicated to those 748 members of the 9th (Service) Battalion who lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-1918.*

CHAPTER III

10th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

As with the 8th and 9th Service Battalions of the Dukes, the 10th was formed at Halifax in the autumn of 1914. Similarly, all the men were volunteers answering Lord Kitchener's call to arms and the 10th was in the new Third Army (K3). It took its place in the order of battle in the 69th Brigade, 23rd Division along with:

- 11th (Service) Battalion The West Yorkshire Regiment
- 8th (Service) Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment ⁷²
- 9th (Service) Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment

The other infantry brigades in the Division, composed of Service Battalions, were:

68th Brigade:

- 10th (Service) Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers
- 11th (Service) Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers
- 12th (Service) Battalion The Durham Light Infantry
- 13th (Service) Battalion The Durham Light Infantry

70th Brigade:

- 11th (Service) Battalion The Sherwood Foresters
- 8th (Service) Battalion The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
- 8th (Service) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment
- 9th (Service) Battalion The York and Lancaster Regiment

Divisional Pioneer Battalion:

- 9th (Service) Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment

On 18 October 1915 the 70th Brigade was transferred to the 8th Division and was replaced by the 24th Brigade (all regular battalions):

- 1st Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment
- 2nd Battalion The East Lancashire Regiment
- 1st Battalion The Sherwood Foresters
- 2nd Battalion The Northamptonshire Regiment

⁷² The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire)

In July 1916 the 70th Brigade returned to the Division when the 24th Brigade went back to the 8th Division.

1914

During September 1914 the 23rd Division began to assemble near Frensham in the Aldershot area. Many difficulties had to be overcome in the early days. At first there was a great shortage of officers; and no trained clerks joined with Divisional Headquarters, consequently orders had to be issued verbally to adjutants until clerks, typewriters and stationery could be collected. Trained cooks were also non-existent and the messing for the troops was undertaken by a catering firm. The civilian clothing in which the men joined was in rags by the time that emergency blue clothing was issued in the middle of October and 20,000 suits of underclothing and pairs of boots had to be purchased in Yorkshire.

During October, 100 old Lee-Metford rifles were issued to each battalion for drill; in November 8 SMLE service rifles and 400 sets of old buff equipment arrived for each battalion and, in December, old pattern water bottles and white haversacks were received.

In November, the Divisional Artillery also began to form at Mytchett Camp. At first each Artillery Brigade ⁷³ was commanded by a 2nd Lieutenant and it was fortunate that at this time the command was merely nominal. The first armament received was the French 90mm gun. The 18-Pounders and 4.5in Howitzers were not issued to the Division until the middle of 1915. The Division was commanded by Major General J M Babington CB CMG, ⁷⁴ who had the singular record of remaining as GOC of the Division for over four years, until October 1918 when he took over XIV Corps in Italy from Lord Cavan. Aged sixty-one he had seen considerable service. Joining the 16th Lancers in 1873 he had later commanded that regiment and been its Colonel. He had served in the Bechuanaland Expedition of 1884-85 and in the South African War. After this war he had commanded the New Zealand Defence Force from 1902 till 1907. He had retired from the service in 1907.

“Captain Bathurst ⁷⁵ took the Battalion from Halifax to Frensham where he was joined by Colonel Crawford who took command with Tom Broadly as RSM. We slept 13 or 14 to a tent and, as far as possible, lads from one village or town were put together. At this time there were no Battalion cooks so arrangements were made with Lyons & Co to cater for the troops. I have read that this arrangement was very satisfactory. It might have been to the gilded staff. Ask the lads! We were rather a motley crew. One man was wearing a khaki tunic, blue trousers, brown boots and a bowler hat. A few had red tunics. Most men had come in old suits and they were soon in rags. Eventually order came out of chaos and we were issued with a blue serge uniform with a back-to-front cap and a white armband stating ‘Kitchener’s Man’. We looked like a lot of warders!” ⁷⁶

1915

On 22nd January 1915, after a move to Aldershot, the Division was inspected on the Queen’s Parade by Field Marshal Earl Kitchener, accompanied by M. Millerand,

the French Minister of War. On this occasion the troops paraded in blue serge uniforms and civilian greatcoats and the infantry had DP rifles. On 10 February the battalion allowance of wire and sandbags was doubled and stress was laid on the troops being taught to entrench and to construct obstacles at night. After moving to the Bordon and Bramshott area final intensive preparation began. On 16 August the Division was inspected on Hankley Common by Their Majesties The King and Queen and HRH The Princess Mary and the order to embark for France was received on the 20th.

“January 22nd. M. Millerand and Lord Kitchener came to inspect the Battalion. The Battalion paraded at 9am (for inspection, I think, at 2pm). When the Battalion got to the parade ground it was 4 inches thick with snow and then at noon it started to rain. What a day! If my memory serves me right, the inspecting officers were very late and never even got out of their cars. About this time Colonel Crawford was taken ill and surrendered his command. Major Mayer then commanded until Colonel Bartholomew (Worcester Regiment) came to take over.”⁷⁷

As with the 8th and 9th Battalions it will be useful to set down the battles in which the 23rd Division were involved during the Great War and these are shown below.

1916

4 - 11 July - Battle of Albert (III Corps, 4th Army)

10 July - Capture of Contalmaison

26 July - 8 August - Battle of Pozières Ridge (III Corps, 4th Army)

19 - 22 September - Battle of Flers-Courcelette (III Corps, 4th Army)

25 - 28 September - Battle of Morval (III Corps, 4th Army)

19 October - Battle of the Transloy Ridges (III Corps, 4th Army)

7 October - Capture of Le Sars

1917

7 - 14 June - Battle of Messines (X Corps, 2nd Army)

BATTLES OF YPRES

20 - 24 September - Battle of Menin Road Ridge (X Corps, 2nd Army)

28 September - 2 October - Battle of Polygon Wood (X Corps, 2nd Army)

12 October - First Battle of Passchendaele (X Corp, 2nd Army)

⁷³ An Artillery Brigade was equivalent to today's regiment and supported an Infantry Brigade.

⁷⁴ Later Lieutenant General Sir John Babington KCB KCMG.

⁷⁵ Commissioned DWR 4 September 1912. From 2 DWR. Awarded MC August 1917.

⁷⁶ Contemporary account - author unknown at RHQ.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

1918

BATTLES OF THE PIAVE

15 - 16 June - The Fighting on the Asiago Plateau (XIV Corps, 6th (It) Army)
26 October - 4 November - Battle of Vittorio Veneto (XIV Corps, 10th (It) Army)
Night 26/27 October - Passage of the Piave
29 October - Passage of the Montecarno

RHQ is also fortunate to possess in the Archives a comprehensive Memoir of the 10th Battalion (written by a now unknown officer) compiled at the request of the Old Comrades Association of the 10th and of which a copy was sent to RHQ on 25 May, 1953 accompanied by the letter shown opposite. All that follows is largely based on the War Diary, supplemented by the entries in this Memoir.

The 23rd Division completed its concentration on 31 August around Tilques (north-west of St Omer) with the 10th Battalion in its first French billets at Nort-Leulinghem. The following officers sailed with the Battalion from England:

Lieutenant Colonel H J Bartholomew DSO ⁷⁸ - in command

Major L E Buchanan - 2IC

Captain C Bathurst - Adjutant (from 2 DWR)

'A' Company

Major H R Hillyard
 Captain H G Tunstall
 Lieutenant R Bolton
 Lieutenant R S S Ingram
 2nd Lieutenant H Harris
 2nd Lieutenant F H L Redington
 2nd Lieutenant F Hird

'C' Company

Captain J Atkinson
 Lieutenant G R C Heale (Int Offr)
 Lieutenant H L Waite
 2nd Lieutenant C Snell
 2nd Lieutenant A K Laverack (i/c Bombers)
 2nd Lieutenant C E Merryweather

'B' Company

Captain H M S Carpenter
 Captain A P Harrison (i/c Guns)
 2nd Lieutenant R C Perks
 2nd Lieutenant A Glover
 2nd Lieutenant W A L Kerridge

'D' Company

Captain R Harwar Gill
 Captain J C Bull
 Lieutenant A O'D Pereira
 Lieutenant L N Phillips
 2nd Lieutenant H Foster
 2nd Lieutenant G S Hulburd

Lieutenant R Hammond - Transport Officer
 Lieutenant & Quartermaster - D W P Foster
 Reverend (Captain) W L Henderson - Chaplain
 WO1 M Kearns - Regimental Sergeant Major

⁷⁸ Born 29 December 1871. 2nd Lieutenant. Worcestershire Regiment 5 December 1891. Served South African war 1899-1902. DSO, Dispatches, Queen's Medal with three clasps, King's Medal with five clasps. AA & QMG Lines of Communication in France 1916-17. Mentioned four times. CMG 1919.



10th. (SERVICE) BATTALION THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT
OLD COMRADES' ASSOCIATION.

10 Willowfield Crescent, Highfield Road, Bradford, 2.
May 25th., 1953.

Major J. H. Davis,
O.C. The Depot, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment,
Wellesley Barracks, HALIFAX.

Dear Major Davis,

After many - far too many - years, we have managed to secure a copy of the "story" of the 10th. (Service) Battalion during the 1914-1918 War compiled by an officer who was with us practically all the time and through the good offices of one of our men in Bradford we have had some copies typed so that the history of our Unit shall never be lost.

As the best means of ensuring that what the Battalion did in the First World War is not forgotten - and we won a V.C. and were alone responsible for the Battle Honour "Vittorio Veneto, 1918" being among the Regiment's exploits - my Committee decided that one copy should be sent to you with a request that you would kindly arrange for it to be preserved among the Regimental records and archives.

I am, therefore, sending you a copy for this purpose and should be grateful if you would be good enough to let me know whether our suggestion meets with your approval.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

George H. ...

(Honorary Secretary).

Replied in Many Receipt sent.

J. H. Davis

By 12 September the 10th had their first experience of active service. 'C' and 'D' Companies, followed by 'A' and 'B' Companies the next night, went into the southern line of Ypres 'under instruction' from the 1st Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders of the 81st Brigade, 27th Division and, by the 15th, the whole Battalion was in the line in the Bois Grenier Sector having taken over from the Argylls and, because of their good strength, part of the line held by the 9th Royal Scots and the 2nd Glosters. For the first day or two there was trouble from snipers but the Argylls had left excellent loopholes and several enemy were picked off, causing the snipers to desist. Dawn on 25 September saw the 8th Division attacking on the Battalion's right with supporting rifle and machine gun fire from the 10th, with the retaliatory enemy barrage causing fifty-five casualties. The 8th Division's attack, aimed to support the Loos offensive further south, was successful, as indeed was the advance forward of the III Corps which in turn was a small part of a larger advance by French and English troops. Interestingly, an 18-Pounder field gun built into the parapet on 'D' Company's front fired sixty-five shells in half-an-hour without being spotted by the enemy. Relieved by the 11th West Yorkshires the Battalion moved to Brigade Reserve at Gris Pot. Prior to this the Battalion received a delightfully quaint order from its Brigade Headquarters:

"69th Infantry Brigade Order No. 3 - 23.9.15

There will be a false alarm tonight as follows:

At 8.00pm the Brigade Grenadier Officer will fire rockets. The men in the front trenches will cheer and wave their bayonets as if about to attack. Having got the enemy to man the parapets there will be one round of Gun Fire throughout the Corps against the hostile parapet.

*D R Hannay, Capt
Bde Maj 69th Inf Bde"*

Early October found the Battalion again in the Bois Grenier line during which time it received a draft of 60 NCOs and men from the 11th Battalion⁷⁹ whose physique was described as very good and which contained many men who had served out in Flanders with the 2nd Battalion and with the 8th Battalion in Gallipoli. The draft brought the Battalion's strength up to 29 Officers and 982 Other Ranks. Later in the month the Battalion was attached to the 20th Division and moved into its Divisional Reserve, taking over from the 1st Worcesters on 30 October in the Wangerie area.

"In all the moves the Battalion has undergone the transport has proved the difficulty" complains the War Diary. "If each battalion were given four motor lorries the whole of the work would be done more easily and quicker. Although the initial outlay would be heavy, in the end it would be cheaper than the present system in that it would save forage for some fifty animals. Also it would relieve about forty men for the front line trenches."

It was at Wangerie, having taken over from the 11th KRCC in front line trenches that Lieutenant Bolland, leading a working party, was harassed by the enemy and his covering group was nearly cut off, with two men killed, but he, with great courage and coolness, got the covering group safely back, himself carrying one of the hit men on his shoulder.

He received two bullets through his coat. For this action he was awarded the Military Cross. (At about the same time a soldier was wounded accidentally by discharging his own rifle and was tried by a Field General Court Martial and awarded one month's imprisonment, later commuted to one month's Field Punishment No1)⁸⁰. On 14 November the Battalion left the 20th Division and re-joined the 69th Brigade and went into the trenches at Rue Marle, on the south side of Armentières, and although heavily shelled a great number of the shells failed to explode. The weather began to get very cold and the danger of frostbite and trench foot came to the fore necessitating the frequent changing of socks and the application of whale oil. Some 20 degrees of frost was registered and each man was issued with a fur jacket. The Battalion remained in the Armentières Sector until the end of January 1916, sometimes in the Bois Grenier Sector and sometimes in the Chapelle d'Armentières, Brigade Reserve at Armentières and Divisional Reserve at Dormoire.

1916

The major activity by the Battalion in the New Year was an unsuccessful raid upon the enemy trenches opposite its position. The raid was commanded by the Second-in-Command with three officers and sixty Other Ranks, but was thwarted by meeting a strong hostile patrol of about twenty enemy, which prevented them from reaching the gap in the wire. On its return, a further patrol of thirty men was sent out by the Battalion in the hope of contacting the enemy but met no Germans. The War Diary, signed (in exasperation?) by the CO, reads "I am of the opinion that the failure of the raid was due to excessive caution on the part of our wire cutters who should have evaded the hostile patrol." At the end of the month the 34th Division arrived in the theatre and the Battalion had two companies of the 16th Royal Scots attached for a week to be educated in the art of trench warfare. February was passed in holding the line, with much attention from the German artillery, in particular from 'Whizzbangs'⁸¹, a singularly unpleasant experience as, owing to their high muzzle velocity, no warning of their firing could be heard. By 16 February the Battalion had left the line and had marched to Steenbecque, entraining from there on the 29th to Calonne Ricquart before marching via Bruay to billets at Hesdigneul. It was in this month that the Battalion replaced its old long rifles with the Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE), the rifle that was still in use for the whole of World War II.

⁷⁹ 11th Battalion. See Preface and Chapter IV - now in its role of training and providing drafts to the units at the front.

⁸⁰ Field General Courts Martial. In RHQ Archives is a list of 21 men of the Regiment who were sentenced to death by FGCM. By Battalions the numbers were: 1 each from the 1/4th, 1/5th, 2/5th and 8th; 2 from the 9th; 3 each from the 1/6th and 1/7th; 6 from the 10th and 3 from the 2nd. All the death sentences, except one, were commuted to either Field Punishment (1), Hard Labour for 2 years (4), or Penal Servitude varying from 5 to 15 years (15). Only one man, Pte F Stead of the 2nd was executed after being sentenced to death by two FGCMs, each time on a charge of desertion, first on 21 Nov '16 then again on 11 Jan '17. He was executed on 12 Feb '17. In Nov 2006 he, along with 305 other British and Commonwealth soldiers, was pardoned by Act of Parliament.

⁸¹ Nickname for shells fired by the German 77mm Field Gun.

After the 69th Brigade had been inspected by the IV Corps Commander, Sir James Wilson KCB, the Brigade marched south, via Bois-de Bouvigny, to the Angres Sector (north of Souchez) and took over a portion of the 17th (French) Division line in trenches adjacent to the village of Ablain. The weather was bad, snowing with a very cold wind, and the trenches in very poor condition. 'In fact the front line can scarcely be called the Trenches since they consist of shell holes joined by shallow ditches.'

"9th March. More snow. During the day enemy continually bombarded us with Trench Mortars, aerial torpedoes⁸² and shells of every calibre. The centre section of the trenches, manned by 54 men and one officer of 'C' Company, suffered considerably. One killed and 18 wounded. Early in the day the Medical Officer (Lt John Wilson⁸³) was killed in performance of his duty dressing the wounded. The under named officer, NCO and man were awarded the Military Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal, respectively for their gallantry and good bearing whilst in action under severe conditions: Lt G R C Heale, 11988 Sgt K Earnshaw, 15537 Pte J Hawkridge."

On 10 March the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Northants, with the 24th Brigade relieving the 69th, and arrived in billets at Bois-de-Bouvigny, moving by march route to Bruay on 13 March. Whilst in the Angres Sector it is recounted that the following letter was sent from the German lines in a rifle grenade of the 10th's that had failed to explode:

"Dear Englishmen,

Enclosed you will find one of your unexploded and see that these things can do us nothing. Tell your manufacturer to do powder in the same. We wish to tell you that we have taken 40,000 French prisoners at Verdun and the fort of Kut-al-Amara with 13,000 of yours. Here too we are quite well up and have plenty to eat therefore you can't get us by this. It is nothing with your fliers too. Our Lieut Boelche has got his 15th aeroplane and Immelmann his 26th. Splendid fellows aren't they?"

On 18 March the Battalion relieved the 2nd Oxford & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry of the 5th Brigade, 2nd Division in the Arras Sector trenches and remained there until relieved by the 9th Yorkshires on the 25th, only to relieve the same battalion in the same trenches on the 30th. During these periods in the line the Battalion was much troubled by the firing of rifle grenades by the enemy, losing two officers and fourteen Other Ranks wounded with five Other Ranks killed.

In April, Lieutenant Colonel S S Hayne⁸⁴ of the Northamptons took over command from H J Bartholomew who was invalided home, as was the 2IC, Major Buchanan, he being replaced by Major G Galbraith Buckle, also of the Northamptons. This month was relatively quiet and was spent in and around Fosse10 and Bully, although the Battalion was still much troubled by enemy rifle grenades. On the 14th they were informed that their 69th Brigade was to be relieved by the 5th Infantry Brigade of the 2nd Division, and by 19 April, the Battalion had moved south and was in billets at Beaumetz.

"The march to Beaumetz was 16 miles distance and the men marched well. There were 12 cases of men who were unable to keep the pace with the Battalion and were consequently allowed to place their packs on the 1st Line Transport. These cases were investigated by

the Medical Officer in charge and were found to be genuine. The rain was constant throughout the day."

May also did not give cause for much comment in the War Diary except, perhaps, for a description of a formidable artillery duel starting at 9.00pm on 19 May:

"..... when our artillery commenced a bombardment on the enemy lines. It began just to the left of the Arras Road and was confined to a small portion of the front and continued for half-an-hour. The portion bombarded was ablaze with Very lights. The bombardment was then extended to the left and became most intense. The enemy replied with some weight. About 10.00pm it decreased in violence and developed into a big gun duel; our machine guns sending a few shots probably with the intention of harassing work, the smaller guns sending salvos at irregular intervals. As far as can be judged the duel is over a 2 to 3 mile front. The operation continued until midnight though occasional shots were exchanged throughout the night."

From the Memoir we read its version of this month with the ominous mention of the expected Battle of the Somme:

"After one tour in the Angres sector we were again at rest, this time near Pernes. Here there was a football ground and a platoon competition was played which was won by 14 Platoon captained by 2nd Lieutenant G S Hulburd. When next we went into the line we were rather further south close to Souchez. This sector contained two notorious saps - Sebastopol and Solferino where we were within 50 yards of the Germans. There was a good deal of trench mortar activity here where we had a part of the 63rd Royal Naval Division (just arrived in France) in our trenches for instruction. We were relieved by the 47th (London) Division and marched back to Enquins les Mines where we had a further period training in anticipation of the Somme battle."

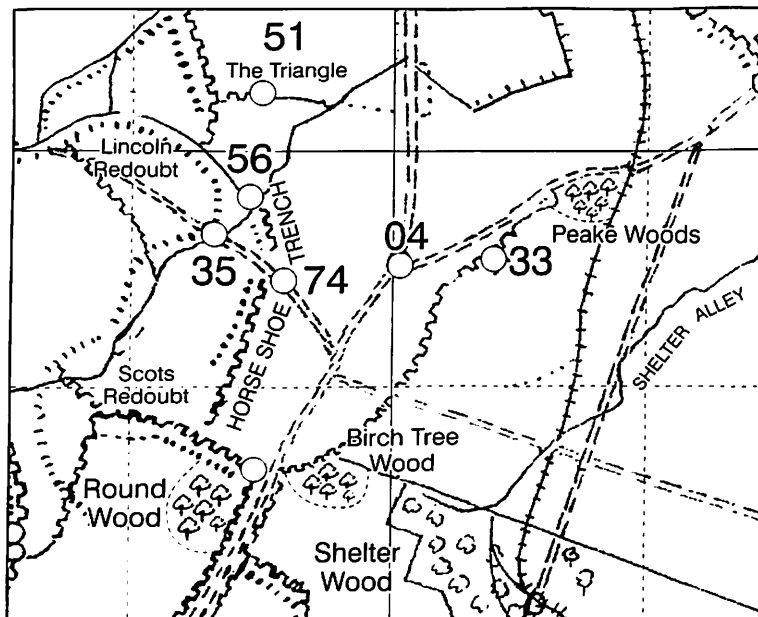
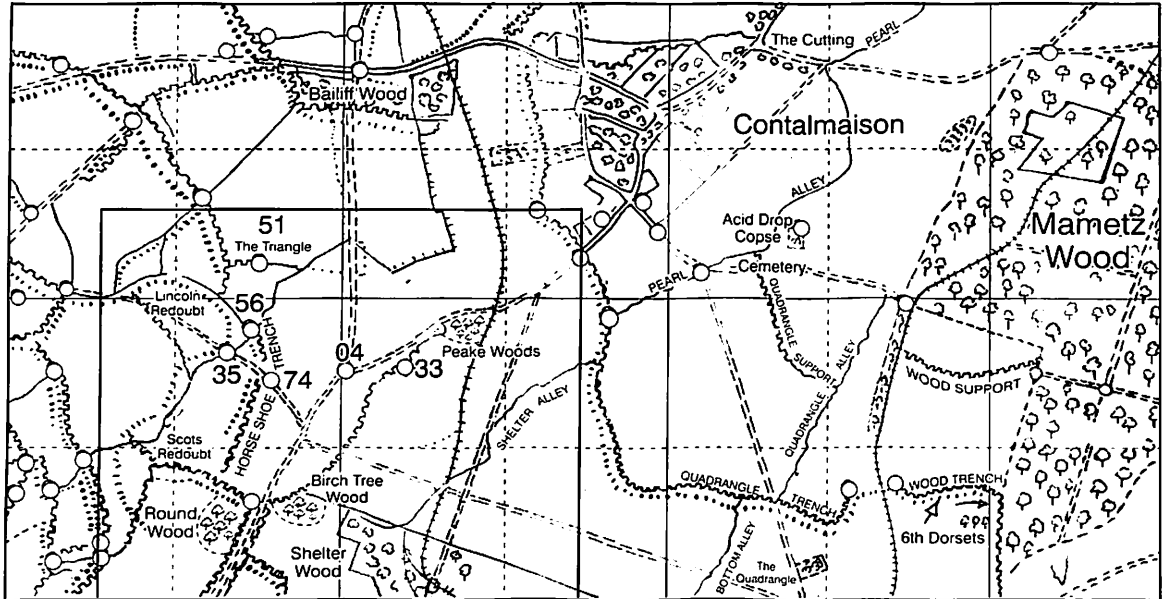
July was dominated by the opening of the great offensive on the Somme on 1 July. On 25 June the Battalion had travelled by march route and train from Enquins les Mines through Amiens to Longeau whence, at 9.00am on the 26th, it arrived at Fremont. Here the Battalion found the 9th Battalion was in the vicinity. On 2 July it marched to Baizieux and on 3 July it moved into Bécourt Wood. Still in Bécourt Wood on 4 July the Battalion received orders to attack Scots Redoubt on the right of the 9th Yorkshires who, together with the remainder of the Brigade, was already engaged in this attack. Since the great opening attack on 1 July this Redoubt had changed hands several times and now absolutely stopped any further advance to Contalmaison until it had been re-taken. It is worth relating the events of these few days of action for the Battalion and also because they illustrate both the confusion and type of operation on the Somme which was more the norm after 1 July.

⁸² Not sure what type of missile this is!

⁸³ Buried at Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez.

⁸⁴ Born 26 Jan 1882. 2nd Lieutenant Northamptonshire Regiment 5 Jan 1901. Served South Africa. Dispatches, DSO.

The area in question between Scots Redoubt and Peake Woods was the German 3rd Line criss-crossed with their communication trenches, with many running south to north. The site of Scots Redoubt commands the high ground between Bécourt and Contalmaison and was typical of the redoubts on the Somme, built with re-enforced concrete and with several underground chambers. At the time of the 10th Battalion's attack during 5/6 July it was in the hands of 11th West Yorks.



10th DWR
Action of 5 - 6 July 1916

Scale: 1,000 yards
 per square

At 8.30am on 5 July two companies, 'C' (Captain J Atkinson) and 'D' (Captain R H Tunstall), marched to Round Wood, a feature on the reverse slope. They approached up the sunken road between Fricourt and Contalmaison giving them cover from view and fire. On arrival they found that the 9th Battalion of the Regiment⁸⁵ (17th Division) was being counter-attacked and being pushed back from Peake Woods towards them. At the same time as the 9th Battalion was withdrawing a German group was attacking from the east. 'C' Company must have moved up the communication trench that went between Round Wood and Peake Woods. From there on the flat terrain the German attack from the right into the flank of the 9th Battalion pulling back would have been very apparent. Lieutenant Hammond from 'C' Company, got out of the communication trench and assaulted the Germans with the help of a Lewis gun. Sadly he was shot through the heart in the process; 2nd Lieutenant Snell was also wounded at this time and evacuated to London where he died four days later⁸⁶; but a block *was* established at Point 33 (See Sketch Map) and this stabilised the situation for the moment. However, the enemy had taken back Peake Woods. The Commanding Officer then reinforced 'C' Company and sent 'D' Company up the Horse Shoe Trench where they encountered the enemy just south of Point 74. They were driven back but the Company immediately and vigorously counter-attacked across the open and down the trench. Both Lieutenant Laverack and 2nd Lieutenant Taylor were killed before a block was established in the Horse Shoe Trench. By now, at 2.45pm and another vain attempt was made to advance up the trench, but despite this failure, the temporary block held. There was another pause until the next morning when the Commanding Officer sent up 'A' Company to assist and 'B' Company was put on stand by. On 6 July at 9.00am the 11th West Yorks on the 10th's left was forced to pull back into Scots Redoubt and the Commanding officer sent 'A' Company to support them from a position just forward of Scots Redoubt. At this stage 'C' Company is blocking at Point 33 with 'D' Company in Horse Shoe Trench and 'A' Company forward of Scots Redoubt.

At 12.30pm orders came that the 23rd Division was to attack Contalmaison from its current positions supported by an artillery bombardment. All Companies attacked: 'C' Company on the right re-took Point 33 and, eventually, with the support of a Stokes gun took Peake Woods. By 5.30pm 'C' Company turned back to recapture the track junction at Point 04 and then drove the Germans down towards Point 74.

'D' Company meanwhile failed to make further progress up the Horse Shoe Trench but 'C' company coming up from Point 04 took the Germans in the rear and 73 prisoners were taken. On the left the 11th West Yorks, having suffered heavy casualties, was unable to attack one of its objectives, Point 56 so, during the afternoon, the 10th Battalion sent 'A' Company up from its Scots Redoubt position to take it, but only got as far as Point 35 by 4.30pm. An artillery bombardment was then arranged to cover 'A' Company's attack on Point 56 that went in at 5.45pm. Within ten minutes the attack was successful. The Battalion had now established a line from Point 51 to Peake Woods, a frontage of some 500 yards.

⁸⁵ See Chapter II, page 30.

⁸⁶ He is buried in the UK at Wandsworth Cemetery.

During this activity over the period 5/6 July the Battalion had advanced just 500 yards at the cost of four Officers and thirteen Other Ranks killed with two Officers and sixty-six Other Ranks wounded. On the credit side 141 prisoners were taken. The Battalion was shortly relieved by the 8th Yorkshires and returned to Bécourt Wood.

Writing in the War Diary the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant S S Hayne, recorded:

"This is the first time that the Battalion has been employed on attack and it is a great pleasure for me to say that all ranks worked magnificently. The Battalion is composed of real material. The men worked well under the guidance of their officers. Many deeds of valour were performed by both officers and men. Our casualties read as follows: 4 officers killed, 2 officers wounded. 13 OR killed, 66 OR wounded. Discipline played an important part in the operations and the training of the past 10 months in this country has not been in vain. The u/m officers were lost to the Battalion and are greatly missed - they were popular with all ranks. Killed - Captain H M S Carpenter, Lieutenants A K Laverack and L Hammond, 2nd Lieutenant W D Taylor⁸⁷. Wounded - 2nd Lieutenants C Snell and Merryweather."

There was much more fighting to be done by the 10th and on the evening of 7 July it bivouacked in Shelter Wood in close support to the 24th Infantry Brigade, which had been given the task of capturing Contalmaison. On the 8th the Brigade succeeded in entering the village but was unable to consolidate and were driven out by a unit of the Prussian Guards. (Meanwhile Major Buckle went off to command the 2nd Northhamptons on promotion and Major R H Gill became 2IC of the Battalion.)

The War Diary:

"9th July. At about 6.00pm 'C' and 'D' Companies were fitted up with all requirements for an attack and, accompanied by about 50 of the R.E.'s, proceeded to the front line system of trenches to the left rear of Peake Woods. 'A' and 'B' Companies moved to the right of Sunken Road and dug themselves in.

10th July. About 6.00pm 'A' and 'B' Companies moved up to the trenches occupied by 'C' and 'D' Companies and just at this point the enemy placed a heavy barrage on the ridge and heavily shelled the now crowded trenches causing many casualties. 'C' and 'D' Companies advanced on Contalmaison and were followed later by 'A' and 'B' Companies. The attack on the village by the 69th Brigade was a great success.

11th July. About 3.00am our machine guns were in action against a small party of the enemy, who it is thought was coming in to surrender. Our men did not leave anything to chance, as the light was bad, their intention could only be assumed. They (the enemy) however returned. The artillery worked magnificently. They were called upon to make a great effort and responded to it. It is impossible to speak too highly of that branch of the service. The Battalion moved into a field north-west of Albert and bivouacked for the night."

In his report to Brigade Headquarters made on 14 July, the Commanding Officer opines that:

"The behaviour of all ranks during these operations was magnificent and I wish to bring forward the following names of Officers, NCOs and men who specially distinguished themselves."

There follows this list: Captain Bull, 2nd Lieutenant Kelly, Captain Atkinson, 2nd Lieutenant Redington, 2nd Lieutenant & Adjutant Lester, 2nd Lieutenant Perks, Sgt Edmondson, Cpl Wragg, Privates Wragg, Pankhurst, Gill, Atkinson, Sutcliffe, Burns, Rhodes, Hawkridge and Rawnsley, L/Cpls Davis, Fretwell and Sgt McCrill - all with separate citations of their actions and bravery.

The Battalion was again in serious action on 26 July. When in trenches in front of Bécourt Wood it was ordered to move into the front line at the recently captured trench system at Contalmaison. Unfortunately, the page of the War Diary detailing the subsequent events is missing and it records only the severe casualties sustained. However, the Memoir relates:

“Towards the end of the month we marched back to what was practically the same sector. The British line had not advanced more than about 1,000 yards beyond Contalmaison. On the 28th ‘B’ and ‘D’ Companies took over what had been the old German Support Line behind Contalmaison. On our left was an Australian Division that had at one time made considerable progress along a trench called Munster Alley. The Germans contested every yard of this trench and casualties in the neighbourhood had been very heavy indeed. Our fortune was to be somewhat similar. ‘D’ Company was detailed to attack along Munster Alley by a bombing attack. We advanced a few yards but a vigorous enemy counter-attack prevented any further gain and we formed a block in the trench. During the night the enemy attacked four times. The last and most desperate was at dawn; this was rather protracted as the morning was foggy. During this Lieutenant Perks⁸⁸ greatly distinguished himself. Though wounded four times he continued to fight on. For his gallantry he received the DSO. 2nd Lieutenants Kelly and Stafford did very good work also. An attempt by ‘B’ Company to advance was a failure as they came under heavy machine gun fire. 2nd Lieutenants Hird and Brinsley-Richards⁸⁹ were killed and all officers became casualties. The following day was quiet and ‘C’ Company, which was deputed to carry on the advance, made considerable progress with very little opposition that evening. Our reserve companies were very heavily shelled however. ‘A’ Company also made progress along Butterworth Trench and the enemy apparently decided to give up this piece of ground without further opposition though it gave us command over most of the ground to Martinpuich.”

Casualties for this month of July 1916, amounted to seven Officers killed, eight wounded in action, one Officer shell-shocked, four Officers wounded at duty, one Officer missing to a total of 21. Other Ranks killed in action were 55 with 284 wounded in action, two wounded at duty, 35 with shell-shock and 43 missing to a total of 419.

⁸⁷ All buried at Bécourt Military Cemetery.

⁸⁸ I.G. Citation: “For conspicuous gallantry during operations. When leading a bombing party he was wounded in the face and rendered insensible. On recovering he again took part in the attack. Whilst throwing bombs he was twice wounded in the hand and foot, but continued to lead his men till rendered unconscious by a further wound to his face.”

⁸⁹ Both names are engraved on the Thiepval Memorial.

Military Medals were awarded to L/Cpl C Leigh, Sgt B McAvan, Pte J W Atkinson and L/Cpl M Kenefick while L/Cpl A Simpson was promoted to the rank of Sgt for gallantry in the field.

Despite the appalling casualties of July, the War Diary makes no mention of the necessary essential reinforcements required to make the Battalion up to strength, yet they must have been received, for the month of August sees the Battalion functioning as was normal for those days both in and out of the line. After the last action around Contalmaison the Battalion returned to Albert for a few days rest and there received orders to entrain for Belgium, first to Bresle and then to the Abbeville area, but moved after four days to Bailleul, being billeted between Meteren and Mont des Cats. From Meteren the Battalion relieved the 32nd Royal Fusiliers in the reserve trenches of Ploegsteert on 18 August. Here orders were received to dig a new trench commencing at Prowse Point and leading south for a distance of 400 yards. By doing so this would enable an advance of between 250 and 300 yards and bring the enemy into closer contact. On the night of the 21/22 August the party of 350 Other Ranks and twelve Officers successfully accomplished the task by 3.30am on the 22nd without alarming the enemy. However, casualties were three Other Ranks killed and five wounded, all being due to stray bullets. The trench was named '**The West Riding Trench**' and on 25 August, was occupied by elements of the Battalion. Both Brigade and Divisional Headquarters sent congratulations to the Battalion for this excellent piece of work. On the 29th the Battalion should have carried out a raid on the enemy's trenches in conjunction with a gas attack, but the wind was unfavourable and the release of gas was delayed until the next day and the raid cancelled. Gas was liberated at 1.30am and went straight to the enemy's lines and was apparently successful. However, the gas released from the Battalion's right passed over the new trench and caused three casualties, one of whom subsequently died. This happened, as the War Diary explains, in spite of the most rigorous precautions - gas helmets inspected in the morning and all ranks having had their helmets adjusted. Casualties in Ploegsteert amounted to two Other Ranks killed, two died of wounds, twenty-one wounded and two accidentally wounded. It is salutary to be reminded of this steady rate of attrition and the calm and cool manner in which they were accepted as a fact of life in the trenches, whether in the front line or, just as vulnerably, in reserve and even at rest. Nowhere was safe from enemy shells.

September was a relatively quiet month with the Battalion moving again back to the south of the old Somme battlefield and the 23rd Division taking over from the 15th Division. This saw the Battalion relieving the 8/10th Gordon Highlanders in the support trenches of the line on the 18th, where it was found that there was little dugout accommodation and the Battalion was in a comfortless position, but 'much good work was done to improve during our stay in the trenches.' On the 30th of the month the Battalion moved up to Gourlay Trench⁹⁰, north of Contalmaison from where it moved to huts in the area of Shelter Wood, north of Fricourt. Here it was warned that it would be involved in the attack on Le Sars. On 2 October the Battalion received orders to relieve the 8th KOYLI of the 30th Brigade. Colonel Hayne's account of the events of 4-8 October is given in the War Diary:

“On the evening of 4th October orders were received for the attack on OG 2⁹¹ and at 6.03pm the attack was launched by two companies in three waves 80 yards distance between waves. The advance waves went forward right under our barrage but on the barrage lifting it was found that owing to the wet state of the ground the progress was exceedingly slow. The enemy therefore were enabled to bring an intense MG and rifle fire on to our troops, with the result that a few men only were enabled to reach the enemy’s trench. The enemy then launched an immediate counter-attack that was repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy. The two companies which took part in the attack behaved with the utmost gallantry, 6 out of the 8 officers becoming casualties but, owing to the state of the ground and the enemy’s wire being uncut in several places the task was impossible. The Battalion was relieved on the night of the 5/6th and proceeded to Martinpuich.

On the evening of the 6th the Battalion was ordered to proceed to 26th Avenue, 70th Avenue and Destremont Farm on the following morning to support 11th West Yorks in the attack on Le Sars. The Battalion was in position by noon and was heavily shelled on the way to take up its position. Orders having been received by the Brigade, I placed one company at the disposal of 11th West Yorks from 1.00pm. The first attack on OG 2 having failed this company was ordered up to OG 1 by OC West Yorks to be prepared to launch a second attack. Shortly after this company was in position, the enemy finding himself taken in flank and rear, surrendered to a bombing attack on 11th West Yorks and enabled my company to occupy OG 2 without opposition. CO 11th West Yorks having notified me that he required further companies in the front line I ordered this to be done immediately and moved my reserve company to Destremont Trench establishing my HQ in the Destremont Line. I then took over command of the line from OC 11th West Yorks and finding that there were only 61 of the 11th West Yorks remaining in the trenches I sent up a further two platoons of my Battalion and applied to Brigade HQ for two companies of the York and Lancs to be sent up to 26th Avenue and 70th Avenue in support. I then ordered Major R H Gill to proceed to the front line to clear up the situation and inform me as soon as possible of the position.”

More details of this important battle, resulting from research and with the aid of the Memoir, are as follows.

On receiving orders to take over from 8th KOYLI on 2 October the Battalion moved up in daylight going via Contalmaison Villa, dropping off handcarts with baggage on their way. The troops were still carrying a great deal, 200 bombs per company, two sandbags per man, and 170 rounds SAA each. There was a great deal of congestion moving up to the front line trenches at OG 1 since the Battalion formed part of a two divisional attack by the 47th and 23rd Divisions. As explained, OG 1 and OG 2 are the Old German Lines 1 and 2 and are sometimes referred to as FLERS 1 and FLERS 2. OG 1 being the nearer and being held by the 8th KOYLI and OG 2 only some 100 yards distant being held by the Germans.

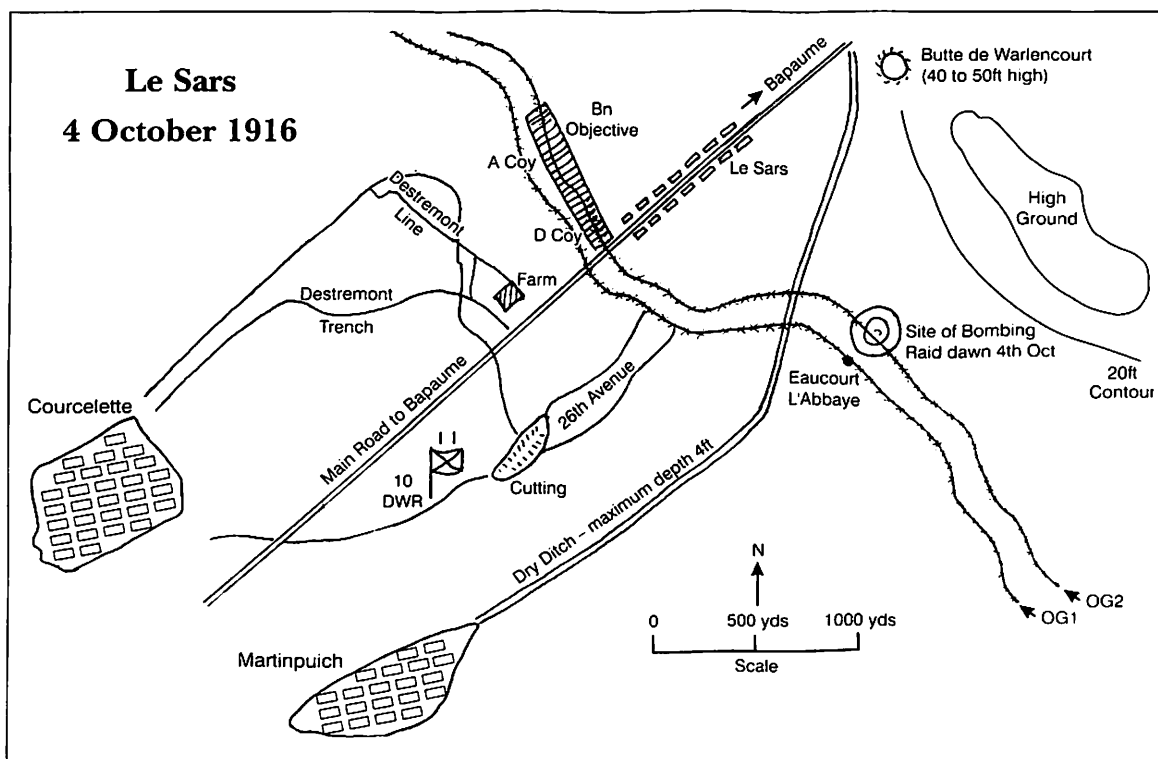
⁹⁰ Gourlay Trench was part of the German third line of defence. It ran from Mametz to Mouquet Farm and was a substantial field defence.

⁹¹ OG 1 and OG 2 were the fourth German lines of defence.

'A' (Lieutenant Harris) and 'C' Companies were placed in OG 1 facing the Le Sars whilst 'B' Company went into Destremont Farm and Trench while 'D' Company (2nd Lieutenant Kelly) was well placed as a reserve in 26th Avenue.

At dawn on 4 October, in another battalion's area in the 47th Division, to the east of Le Sars two strong bombing parties came off badly in their attempt to penetrate OG 2. It was clearly very strongly held with the wire between the lines being intact and would need cutting by hand. The approach was gently uphill and very broken with shell holes. The enemy trenches were deeply dug and evidently strengthened with MG positions and snipers had been spotted in the ruins of Le Sars. Artillery was clearly required for such a strong objective but so deep and well prepared were the defences that 18-Pounders would have been insufficient and the proximity of the enemy to our own troops made it too dangerous for the mediums. The result was that the enemy trench was left unbombarded. This must have been demoralising to the men who would have realised the consequences. If this were not enough the ever present Butte de Warlencourt overlooked the position and afforded excellent observation to German artillery and machine gun observers.

On the evening of 4 October - as a preliminary to the main divisional attack - orders were received for two companies to attack OG 2 between the two points shown on the map below. 'A' and 'D' Companies were given the task. At 6.00pm the attack went in. The Germans had little difficulty in repulsing the assault and all the officers of both companies except 2nd Lieutenant Kelly became casualties. Lieutenant Harris and 2nd Lieutenants



Stafford and Graham ⁹² were killed. But 2nd Lieutenant Kelly, CSM O'Shea of 'D' Company with three or four men made it into the German trench, a remarkable feat.

For some hours this small party held off the enemy, but two of them were soon wounded, including CSM O'Shea. Kelly, once realising that he had little chance in his beleaguered position, decided to return to his own lines and carried CSM O'Shea back. By now it was dark and he was able to return to bring back another three wounded men. The Battalion and the remains of 'A' and 'D' Companies withdrew back to Martinpuich. For these great acts of gallantry 2nd Lieutenant Henry Kelly was awarded the Victoria Cross.⁹³

Two days later on 6 October the Battalion returned to the same sector by the same route to attempt another assault on Le Sars, but this time its role was to support 11th West Yorks. In the afternoon success was achieved including a Dukes Company making it to OG 2. By now the 11th West Yorks was very weak and the 10th took over its newly won position. By 4.00am on 7 October, with the help of two companies of the York and Lancasters the Battalion consolidated on its original objective of two days before. Some Germans had got back into OG 1 adding to the confusion in the dark. But, despite this, and a strong German attack on the Canadian Division on the Brigade's left, the Battalion held its ground. The battalion was soon relieved by the 6th Cameron Highlanders after a frantic twelve hours and tramped back to Round Wood, not far from Shelter Wood, along the same route they had marched at the beginning of this operation on 2 October. The Battalion later marched to billets in Albert where it heard that it was to return to the Ypres Salient, never to return to the Somme. For sure, few will have regretted this fact.

Recorded in the War Diary for this action: Three Officers killed, four wounded, thirty-eight Other Ranks killed, 107 wounded, ten missing and one Officer and twenty-one Other Ranks were evacuated with shell shock. In addition to Kelly's VC Sergeant Scott and Private Thompson received the Military Medal who also, later, was awarded the French *Médaille Militaire*.

On 12 October the Brigade was inspected by General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Commanding the IVth Army while on 30 October Lieutenant Colonel R R Raymer DSO for the second time, took over command of the 10th from Lieutenant Colonel S S Hayne. From 13 October the Battalion was transferred to the Ypres Sector in the Salient and spent much time in improving the dugouts and making them in a 'winterable' condition. Patrols went out but had nothing to report. Overall a very quiet time was had with no casualties. The new Box Respirator was issued entailing daily instruction in its use and, on 29 October, the Battalion was relieved by the 11th West Yorks and went back into billets at The Barracks, Ypres.

⁹² Lieutenant Harry Harris, aged 21, is buried in the ADANAC Military Cemetery at Miraumont. Both 2nd Lieutenants Stafford, aged 21, and Graham, aged 26, are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

⁹³ See Appendix 2. Notice discrepancy in the date of this action with the History of the 23rd Division recording that this action took place on 3 October 1916. However it seems clear that 4 October is the correct date.

18 November was the official ending of the Battle of the Somme but the Battalion was once again operating in the Salient when much emphasis was directed to improving the trenches that were in bad condition, much rewiring was also carried out while at the same time vigorous patrolling by night was necessary as the enemy could be heard working on their trenches. More importantly, on the night of 20/21 November a major raid was embarked upon, led by Henry Kelly (promoted now to Captain) with the object of capturing as many of the enemy as possible. But, despite meticulous attention to detail in the orders the attack was unsuccessful. Captain Kelly's raiding party included three officers and forty soldiers with assistance from 128th Company Royal Engineers who were to blow a Bangalore Torpedo to cut the enemy wire. Fire support was provided by 18-Pounder Field Guns and one Howitzer Battery, Royal Field Artillery, also by one medium trench mortar, two Stokes guns and two Lewis guns of the 11th West Yorkshires. Unfortunately, the Bangalore Torpedo failed in its task and did not cut a sufficient length of wire, leaving some eight feet of wire still standing. Although trying to cut it by hand, and with the enemy reacting by bombing, Captain Kelly had to call off the raid at 11.30pm. The Dukes had one officer (2nd Lieutenant F W Millward) severely wounded and ten Other Ranks wounded whilst the group from 11th West Yorkshires had lost two killed and two wounded from trench mortar fire. Apparently the point of the torpedo had stuck on the rim of a shell hole and been prevented from traversing completely under the wire. In his report the CO highly commends 2nd Lieutenant Cope of the Sappers for his courage and determination in carrying out a difficult task.

The Battalion continued in the Salient for the whole of December, a fairly quiet month, despite one soldier killed and eight wounded, but much occupied in improving trenches and wire and in providing fatigue parties for the Royal Engineers. Major A A St Hill took over as Second-in-Command and on 23 December the Battalion was inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig. Both in the War Diary and the Memoir Christmas Day merits no mention, even though, being in the line, it would have been difficult to celebrate appropriately.

1917

"1st to 4th January, 1917. The Battalion was the right battalion of the right brigade on the 23rd Division's front in the Salient. Three companies were in the front line and one company in support. Between 5.00pm and 6.30pm the enemy opened heavy Trench Mortar fire on the front line and artillery fire on the trenches behind. All telephone wires were cut. The trenches were badly damaged and the Battalion suffered a few casualties. On the 2nd, Lieutenant Colonel R R Raymer took over temporary command of the 69th Brigade and Major A A St Hill was left in command of the 10th. Lieutenant H W Lester was awarded the Military Cross in the New Year's Honours List. From the 2nd to the 4th the enemy was fairly quiet except for a little trench mortar fire on the front line. The Battalion was relieved on the evening of the 4th by the 11th West Yorkshires and went into billets at Ypres."

Thus began the New Year for the Battalion and again the Salient was its location for the month with two periods in the front line resulting in eleven Other Ranks being killed and 35 wounded, all by shell fire. Two drafts of reinforcements were received to a total of 158 Other Ranks. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, 'The two new drafts were given instruction in arms drill.'

February also, still in the Salient, was quiet with very little recorded in the War Diary and the Memoir remarks only on the intense cold. However, on the 18th, a fighting patrol went out from the Zillebeke Bund under 2nd Lieutenant PH Morris and twelve Other Ranks in an attempt to take a prisoner. They encountered a large party of enemy and after a bombing fight returned to the line without suffering any loss but it was thought that several casualties were caused to the enemy. Relieved by the 12th Royal Sussex the Battalion marched to Bollezeele arriving on the last day of the month. Even though a quiet month the casualties amounted to three Other Ranks killed, with thirteen wounded, and gives some further idea of the steady rates of attrition endured by the Battalion.

The month of March occupies but half-a-page in the War Diary and records that the GOC 2nd Army, Sir Herbert Plumer, inspected the Battalion on the 28th and that one soldier died of bronchial-pneumonia. April saw a change of tempo:

"Scottish Camp and later the Verbranden-Molen Sector (Hill 60 Sub-sector) when the Battalion took over from the 8th York & Lancasters who had been badly raided by the Germans on Easter Monday. The line was very badly knocked about and there was practically no shelter. The left of our line was not continuous and held only by posts."

Casualties for this month were one officer (2nd Lieutenant Crocker) wounded, one soldier killed and seven wounded (one accidentally). Private A Foster was awarded the Military Medal for bravery during a bombardment with gas shells at Ypres in February. May was noted for the impending apprehensive feeling that a British offensive was imminent, but also for providing a fatigue party of no fewer than 500 officers and men in the construction of a water pipeline from Zillebeke Bund and Dickebusch Lake towards the front line and also on GHQ 2nd Line Trenches. Work clearly destined for the planned forthcoming offensive. But the Battalion also had a hard time in just holding the line when one officer (2nd Lieutenant B O Hunt)⁹⁴ died of wounds and fifteen Other Ranks were killed and thirty-one wounded. These casualties were ascribed to enemy retaliatory fire for our own heavy bombardments. At this time the CO, Lieutenant Colonel Raymer became ill, and Major Bathurst took over command with Captain Bull as Second-in-Command. When out of the line, training concentrated on the attack with the aid of model trenches of the enemy lines opposite the Battalion's position on Hill 60.

June 1917 was an eventful month of action for the Battalion (although it must be recorded that at the Divisional Horse Show at Mont des Cats both Captain Lester and Major Bathurst won several jumping events). On the night of 5/6 July it relieved the

⁹⁴ Buried at Lijssenhock Military Cemetery.

10th Northumberland Fusiliers in the Railway Dugouts in the right sector of the right brigade, on the 23rd Divisional front, being delayed in its relief by an enemy gas attack. At 2.30am on the 7th the Battalion was formed up ready for the attack on 'Portion of Hill 60 Sub-Sector' in the great Battle of Messines. Zero Hour was at 3.10am when the 'Mines' would go up. The attack was carried out on a two company front, supported by a third wave consisting of two platoons and, after the explosion of the huge mines under Hill 60⁹⁵ and the Caterpillar, the Battalion had gained all of its objectives by 3.45am and was totally successful. At 7.45am the 9th Yorkshire Regiment passed through the 10th's positions and carried on the attack according to the planned programme. The Memoir relates:

"With Major Bathurst in command early in the morning we went over the top following the explosion of the mines under Hill 60 and the Caterpillar. Our attack was brilliantly successful. On our right was the 47th Division and on our left the 8th Yorkshire Regiment. Within forty minutes of the start of the attack we were consolidating all along the front of our final objective. Our casualties were not heavy owing to the excellence of the barrage and of the fine training of the men. 2nd Lieutenant Tetley was killed⁹⁶ and Captains Bull and Harrison, 2nd Lieutenants Davis, Mossis and Milligan were wounded. Captain Henderson CF, who was acting as a stretcher bearer, was also severely wounded."

Despite the above, almost complacent account, casualties for the month were, indeed, serious. Killed in action two officers, thirty-five Other Ranks. Wounded in action six Officers 159 Other Ranks. Died of wounds sixteen Other Ranks. Wounded and missing three Other Ranks. Missing ten Other Ranks. Not mentioned by name in the War Diary, along with the above six officers wounded, is Lieutenant Arthur Halstead, nor is the fact that he was awarded the MC for his part in this action. Even a more surprising omission from the Diary (and the Memoir) is the fact that the next month he lost his life in a grenade accident that earned him the Albert Medal (Gold)⁹⁷. Mentioned in Dispatches in the London Gazette of 22 May 1917 were: 2nd Lieutenant C F Wolfe, Cpl J Bailey. L/Cpls J Hudson and S Gravy while presented with the Military Medal, by the Corps Commander, were Sgt W E Gibson and Pte H Smith.

In July and August there is surprisingly little of note to report and the War Diary consists of a series of moves and reliefs in and around the Salient. On 31 July the Passchendaele offensive was launched but the original objective was not merely Passchendaele - it was part of a greater plan to wrest the Belgian ports from the enemy's hands. But it had not worked like that. The Ypres Salient was a tough nut to crack, the bad weather set in, the ground turned to mud and the troops, including the 10th, barely inched up the Salient. Between 4 and 11 July the Battalion, while in the Steenvoorde area, received 'several big drafts of men.' In the line on 16 July there was much heavy shelling and a fighting patrol went out on the night of the 18/19th but failed to find any enemy. Casualties for July were Lieutenant D L Evans wounded, one Other Rank killed and twenty-five Other Ranks wounded in action. August was notable for the Battalion being inspected by the 2nd Army Commander, Sir Herbert Plumer, at Acquin in the Boisdingham area and also, most significantly, by Lieutenant Colonel F W

Lethbridge, taking over command of the 10th from Colonel Raymer, who was invalided home. Colonel Lethbridge⁹⁸ came from the 8th Battalion and his actions as a Company Commander in Gallipoli are well described in Chapter I. Under his command in September the 10th, together with the 8th Yorkshire Regiment, took part in a formidable attack as part of the Passchendaele offensive, or the Third Ypres Battle, starting from the Railway Dugouts in the Salient against the so-called Green Line. This attack lasted from the 19th to the 24th of the month and Colonel Lethbridge's comprehensive report to Brigade Headquarters on the battle of Menin Road is contained in some three pages of the Annex to the War Diary. With much paraphrasing it reads:

"REPORT ON ATTACK OF VILLAGE OF VELDHOEK AND GERMAN LINES IMMEDIATELY EAST OF IT AND THE SUBSEQUENT HOLDING OF THE GREEN LINE BY THE 10th DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S AND 8th YORKSHIRE REGIMENT.

On 19 September. The Battalion moved after 9.30pm into trenches and dugouts in the Sanctuary Wood area. This was effected without loss but was carried out under most trying conditions in pitch darkness and heavy rain and with the area not being thoroughly reconnoitred owing to both parties that had been sent out to reconnoitre the previous day having been knocked out by shell fire. The way in which the Companies were handled by their Commanders and the behaviour of the men under the circumstances were most admirable. At about 3.00am (20 September) the Companies began to move up to their assembly positions. The Companies had been ordered to be in position so as to be able to go into their respective positions immediately on these being vacated by the 9th Yorkshires and the 11th West Yorkshires, but owing to a party of the 9th Yorkshires without an officer remaining, Major E Borrow⁹⁹, temporarily commanding 'A' Company for the battle, was unable to get into the trenches for a considerable time and the Company suffered severe casualties in consequence. A platoon under 2nd Lieutenant Hulburd, too, was late in getting into position owing to its Commander and Platoon Sergeant being badly wounded and this platoon suffered considerable casualties.

⁹⁵ Capture of Hill 60 in 1915, a German OP. Battle Honour gained by 2 DWR between 17 & 21 April. Casualties: 7 Officers & 8 wounded. Other Ranks killed 29, wounded 334, missing believed killed 43.

⁹⁶ Buried Railway Dugouts Burial Ground.

⁹⁷ L. G. 25 August 1917. "During an attack south of Hill 60 on 7 June 1917, although wounded in the knee, he personally led an attack with great bravery and promptitude against a hostile machine gun, capturing the gun and team of four men."

L. G. 1 January 1918. "On 31 July 1917, during instruction in the throwing of live bombs, a bomb was accidentally dropped. Lieutenant Halstead placed himself between the bomb and the soldier who had dropped it, in order to screen him, and tried to kick the bomb away, but it exploded, fatally wounding him. The soldier was slightly wounded, and there can be little doubt that Lieutenant Halstead's gallant action saved the soldier's life." Lieutenant Halstead died on 1 August 1917 and is buried at Longueness (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery. His family home was at Lee Mount, Halifax.

⁹⁸ Before the war Colonel Lethbridge had served in the 5th Gurkha Rifles retiring as a captain in 1901. He rejoined the army on the outbreak of the war. He died at Solignac, near Limoges, France on 24 April 1939, aged 72 years.

⁹⁹ Attached from the 13th Durham Light Infantry.

At 8.40am the Companies moved forward in columns of half platoons in file with 'A' Company followed by 'C' Company on the right - 'B' Company followed by 'D' Company in the centre and 'D' Company 8th Yorkshires on the extreme left. The latter Company moved up the northern side of Inverness Copse and got through to their jumping off point in good order having the good fortune to get very little barrage on them. The four Companies of this Battalion which had to go through Inverness Copse had a pretty heavy barrage put onto them and suffered considerable casualties and arrived at the jumping off point at about 9.10am with 'B' Company having lost all its officers except Lieutenant Anderson who, with his platoon, had lost direction somewhat and got to the right of 'A' Company, and who arrived in a somewhat disorganised state. But this was pulled together by Captain Payne and the whole line advanced punctually at about 9.53am about ten minutes after I had arrived with my HQ party at the Tower in S.P.1. From this time the advance could be watched from the Tower up to the time when our men disappeared over the ridge just behind the Green Line, though the smoke and dust of the shells made it difficult to see details but it was obvious all was going well. Northampton Farm on the left proved no obstacle to speak of but, just beyond, a line of over a dozen concrete dugouts and pill-boxes were heavily manned and armed with machine guns which, together with the enemy shells, caused a great many casualties to our 'B' and 'D' Companies. These dugouts were eventually cleared by the Battalion Companies, whilst others to the left were dealt with by the 8th Yorkshires and these companies took up a line in the dugouts with posts 75 to 100 yards in front which were well dug in within an hour. At the same time Captain Payne, finding no one on his right, formed a defensive flank with one platoon of 'B' Company reinforced by two Lewis Gun sections. Meanwhile there was some stiff fighting for some of the concrete dugouts in the village of Veldhoek but these were cleared by the fine manoeuvring of Major Borrow and 2nd Lieutenants Sparling and Anderson (whose platoon of 'B' Company had rather lost direction, but came on the scene just in time). As 'A' and 'C' Companies attacked the last line of concrete dugouts on the Green Line CSM Parker, observing that the dugouts on the left front of the 13th Durham Light Infantry were holding them up, attacked from the flank and rear and captured them. This completed the capture of all our objectives and everywhere the troops dug in energetically and by noon our new line was secure."

Although successful, there continued much activity on 21 September causing Colonel Lethbridge to call for one of the Brigade's reserve companies. An enemy counter-attack was feared when considerable bodies of the enemy were observed massing in front. However, the threat was nullified by our artillery promptly laying down a barrage and this attack did not materialise. However, in the evening, some 150 of the enemy appeared in front of 'A' and 'C' Companies but were wiped out by the SOS artillery fire together with that of the Lewis guns and riflemen. On the night of the 22/23 September the Battalion was relieved by the 11th Sherwood Foresters and the 9th Yorkshires. Casualties during the course of this action were three officers and forty Other Ranks killed, six officers and 244 wounded. Fifty were missing "many of whom I fear will be found to be killed or wounded and certainly none are prisoners".¹⁰⁰ Casualties for the month added up to a sad total of five Officers and fifty-one Other Ranks killed, seven Officers and 326 Other Ranks wounded.

The number of missing had thankfully dropped from fifty to twenty-one Other Ranks. Major Borrow of the Durhams was amongst the wounded, while Captain A O'D Pereira, one of the original officers of the 10th was killed¹⁰¹. The Battalion captured about 190 prisoners and buried 146 dead enemy while sending back some seventy enemy badly wounded. The report estimates the number of enemy casualties as about 450 and much enemy *matériel* was taken. On the 25th the Battalion was thanked for its work by both the Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General T S Lambert, and the Divisional Commander, Major General Sir J M Babington. Colonel Lethbridge and Major Borrow were each awarded the DSO.¹⁰²

Still in the Salient during the whole of October, there were two serious excitements for the Battalion. On the 1st, in Canal Bank Dugouts front line, 'D' company plus one Platoon of 'B' Company attached to the 9th Yorkshires, saved a critical situation by repelling a strong German counter-attack, supported by ground-attack aircraft, when the flank of the Company on their left had been turned. Unfortunately the War Diary gives no further details but on 10/11 October the Division relieved the 7th Division in front of Polygon Wood, nor, other than mentioning it, does the Memoir give any description. Secondly, on the night of the 17/18 October, 'B' Company repulsed a German raid while in the line at The Butte de Polygon. Again there are no details. Earlier in the month the Battalion was attached to 2nd Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops and came under orders of the II Anzac Corps whilst engaged in work on the construction of a light railway near to Ypres. It had not been exactly an easy month, for casualties included A/Captain H Sparling MC wounded, 27 Other Ranks killed in action, 48 Other Ranks wounded, four Other Ranks died of wounds and six Other Ranks were missing. The Honours awarded during the month were, as already mentioned: DSOs for Colonel Lethbridge¹⁰³ and Major Borrow¹⁰⁴, as well as the MC and Bar to Captain J E L Payne; the MC to A/Captain H Sparling and 2nd Lieutenant E K Waite. DCMs went to CSM Parker, Pte Kelly and a Bar to the MM for L/Cpl W Hoyle. Most significantly, the Military Medal was awarded to no fewer than 32 Other Ranks. All these awards reflected the great gallantry, ensuring the success of the operations from 19 - 24 September.

¹⁰⁰ Colonel Lethbridge in his report.

¹⁰¹ Buried Hooge Crater Cemetery.

¹⁰² The Memoir relates: "Two interesting souvenirs were acquired as a result of taking Veldhoek: one of them was 'Fritz' a particularly fine specimen of the Alsatian Sheep Dog who had been trained as a messenger dog by the Germans. He was found in a German dugout and became the Battalion mascot. The other was a silver bugle presented by the Lady of the Manor of Veldhoek. This was inscribed with the Regimental crests and the Battle Honours of the Battalion." See photograph. It has to be wondered where it is now - certainly not in RHQ!

¹⁰³ Citation: L.G. of 27 October 1917 "*He was successful in leading his battalion through heavy fire to attack, capture and hold the furthest objective. By his presence in the front line, both during the attack and subsequent counter-attacks, the position was maintained and consolidated. His fine example imbued all ranks with enthusiasm.*"

¹⁰⁴ Citation: L.G. of 19 November 1917 "*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in an attack. When the leading troops were suffering severe casualties, he kept the men together by his splendid leadership. Though twice wounded, he led his men to the final objective, and stuck to his post until he collapsed from the effects of his wounds. His courage and inspiration were an inspiration to all ranks.*"

In November, along with four other divisions, much to the chagrin of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the 23rd Division received orders to move to Italy. Meanwhile, the Passchendaele offensive ground to a halt, with the official casualty figure of over 100,000 lives being lost for the mere gain of Passchendaele - an advance of but a mile or two. However, the last throw of the British Army took place at Cambrai when 500 tanks were deployed with the Infantry following triumphantly behind. It was a heartening conclusion to a disappointing year. At this time Sir Douglas was an unhappy man. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was refusing him more reinforcements, yet he had to take over more of the French Army's line¹⁰⁵ despite losing five divisions for Italy. Also, he was forced to sack Brigadier General Charteris who was widely blamed for feeding false and optimistic intelligence to him; his Chief-of Staff, General Kiggell also had to go. Even The Times newspaper under Lord Northcliffe, his one-time ally, had turned against the Field Marshal and, to add to his unease and discomfort, Lloyd George, with the connivance of General Sir Henry Wilson, had mooted and forced through the creation of a Supreme War Council on which all the Allies would be represented. By so doing Lloyd George hoped for a fresh strategic look at the conduct of the war.

1917 - 1918

ITALY

Italy's entry into the war happened as a result of hard political bargaining with both sides. At the outset she was still nominally a member of the Triple Alliance, the secret treaty of 1882 directed against France and hatched in collusion with the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires. A growing sympathy with France and fear of Austria, her traditional enemy, with which was combined greed for territorial expansion in the Trentino and Trieste areas, brought Italy into the war in 1915 on the Allied side, the formal Pact of London having described in detail the help to be given to Italy and the subsequent carve-up of territorial booty. With Russia close to defeat and most of northern France and Belgium in German possession, and likely to remain so, Italy's politicians could perhaps have chosen a better moment to enter the war!

Except for a six-mile coastal strip near the Adriatic, the entire 375-mile frontier between Italy and Austria was guarded by the high Alps and their rugged foothills on Italy's eastern border. Geography favoured the Austrians. The Venetian province east of the River Adige formed a dangerous salient, vulnerable to any Austrian offensive out of the Dolomite Mountains of the Trentino. However, the main Italian Army faced its eastern frontier, and, at the start of the campaign, pushed forward to the deep gorge of the River Isonzo, on either bank of which high limestone ridges towered 200 feet or more over its rushing blue waters. For the next twenty-nine months the two armies grappled with one another in this rugged and inhospitable country, each at times carving small mountainous salients out of one another's lines, but always at prodigious cost. In what became known as the eleven battles of the Isonzo, the Italians took the offensive on eleven separate occasions. In proportion to the total of population, the half-million Italian war-dead was to match exactly that of the white races of the British Empire.

The eleventh Italian offensive along the Isonzo cost 166,000 casualties in August 1917, almost double the Austrian losses. It was small wonder then that the morale, both on the Italian home front and in the army, neared breaking point. What the Allied leaders had feared then came about. Despite the British pressure at Passchendaele, the collapse of Russia allowed Ludendorf to release his small general reserve of six divisions (later reinforced by a seventh) to prop up the shaky Isonzo front. On 24 October, in what was intended to maim rather than destroy the Italian threat, the now combined German and Austro-Hungarian forces launched an offensive along the entire length of the Isonzo, its main thrust in the Caporetto area, a quiet part of the line held by IV Italian Corps. Panic resulted from a gas attack, against which the Italian respirators were largely ineffective, and from the isolation felt by the poor-quality troops among the strange mountains. Through the resulting gaps in the front of IV Corps, the Germans wormed their way, their infiltration tactics decisive in their results. A certain Captain Erwin Rommel greatly distinguished himself as a member of one of these effective German units, winning the *Pour la Mérité*, the German equivalent of the Victoria Cross. Amid the increasing confusion, General Cadorna, the Commander-in-Chief, on 26 October ordered his armies to pull back behind the Tagliamento River but, by then, his Second Army, of which IV Corps formed a part, was disintegrating, the consequence of poor orders, inadequate supervision and faulty dispositions, rather than treachery or the reluctance of soldiers to fight. A brief halt was made on the Tagliamento, but the enemy crossed the river on the night of 2 November, and Cadorna was forced to order a further retreat to the River Piave. There the pursuers were forced to call a halt, the unexpected speed of their advance having outrun their supply services. Throughout the Italian retreat the Duke of Aosta's Third Army, on the right of the Second, had pulled back in good order, and it now became the mainstay of the defence of this new Piave front, 100 miles shorter than that of the Isonzo.¹⁰⁶

The principal cause for concern in mid-November 1917, was the possibility of the enemy breaking out from the Dolomites to take the Italian defenders in the rear. Indeed, the first such attack was launched on 10 November, but was halted after six days of heavy fighting when the German and Austrian divisions had suffered many casualties. Nevertheless, it was essential that both the French and British divisions were got up to the front to bolster the Italian defences. And so, on 9 November, the 10th Battalion entrained (in two trains) at Arques in France and reached Mantova in Italy on the 14th. The journey to Italy is delightfully described in the Iron Duke under the title 'To Italy with the 10th Battalion' by one 'W.N.T' who was with the 10th at the time and whose initials correspond to Major W N Town. The sheer relief of leaving behind France and Flanders is so evident in the account:

¹⁰⁵ Because of mutinies in the French Army.

¹⁰⁶ Extracted from 'Plumer - The Soldiers' General' by Geoffrey Powell. ISBN 1 84415 039 9 published by Leo Cooper.

"TO ITALY WITH THE 10th BATTALION

CAPORETTO, name of tragic significance to all Italians, meant a momentous change in life of the 10th Battalion. Less than a week, and the 23rd Division is under orders for Italy; less than a fortnight, and the 10th is entraining at Arques, near St Omer. Then followed that memorable railway journey of 106 hours. Elaborate orders were issued as to the exercising of the men, PT, etc; the possibility of detraining and exercising the horses was even hinted at. Far different was the reality. Always were we behind time at the 'halte répas', always there was a rush to issue rations and change the guard. Nonetheless, all ranks enjoyed it. No parades, no sight or sound of war, passing through ever-new and ever-changing scenery. Through Calais, Abbeville, Amiens, skirting Paris by the Girdle Railway what time the morning trains brought the businessmen and girls from the suburbs to their daily labours. Then by devious ways to keep the main lines clear, through Troyes, Les Laumes and Macon, and beside the still, full waters of The Saone to Lyons. Then followed a bitter night down the Rhone Valley with the Mistral penetrating every crevice of the none too wind-proof French rolling stock. Early morning found us outside Marseilles. A change of engine and away we go, back into summer again along the Riviera, with peeps of blue sea and palms all bathed in golden sunshine. A brass band had been started only a very short time before, and indeed, half the instruments only arrived two days before we left France. One of the officers went to London on one day's leave. He hied¹⁰⁷ himself to Hawkes & Sons, one of whose partners had served in the 10th¹⁰⁸, and guided by their advice, brought back large and brazen forms. He was a Scotsman, one of the persistent sort. Surely none other could have got those great packing cases past the RTO at Victoria, on to and off the ship and into a motor 'wangled' for the occasion. Anyhow, the band practised in the train, and when the left half Battalion caught up with the right half at Les Arcs all the Frenchmen in the station were ecstatic at its rendering of the 'Marseillaise'. Puffed up by this it essayed the Italian National Anthem a day or two later at Parma, and had to run after the train, which was leaving without it. Possibly the railway people did not recognise the air.

But, alas for the leisurely pace of troop trains! Before we reached the well-known centres, Cannes, Nice, Monaco, etc, darkness had fallen and only the lights were seen. Still, that did not hinder the large English colony in each place coming to welcome their own men, with coffee, cigarettes, and, best of all, a hearty English Godspeed. Morning saw us at Savona, and as the train crept along the Italian Riviera, with the blue sea on one side and green hills on the other, the inhabitants turned out to welcome their Allies and offer fruit and flowers, postcards, and Italian National rosettes. Just outside Genoa the Commandant had sent a staff officer to bid us welcome.

Then northward, and the summer faded away behind. Up through the Ligurian Appennino, past that dreary spot, Arquata Scrivia, where the valley lies open to the north and receives all the storms like a funnel, destined even then to be the British base. Through Piacenza and Parma in the gathering gloom, and at 2.30am we reached our detraining station, Marcaria, near Mantua. Here a high platform for detraining vehicles was ready, and, lighted by pine torches held by Italian soldiers, we detrained. A march of some dozen miles brought us to Sacca, and we enjoyed then for the first time the hospitality of Italian

billets, of which we have many happy recollections. The inevitable training programme was called for and rifle ranges were prospected, but in four days' time the 23rd Division began its historic march of 100 miles across the Italian plain. No one knew quite what the situation was, nor how far the Italian retirement would go. So we were detrained far back where there was no possibility of interference, and where our mechanical transport, which had gone by road, could join us. Even as it was, we were short of many things and had to depend in part upon Italian rations. None who took part in that march will ever forget it. On the second day we marched through the streets of historic Mantua, the home of Virgil, one of the fortresses of the Austrian Quadrilateral, with its two lakes and encircling the River Mincio. We were received as if we had won the war rather than just arrived. Chrysanthemums, postcards, cigarettes, etc were showered upon us; the Italian flag was waved in the faces of restive horses; Vivas resounded, and the stimulus to the Italian morale, which was no doubt one reason for our march was manifest. We marched for seven consecutive days, and the long railway journey was no good preparation, loaded too as the men were with steel helmet, box respirator or P.H. helmet¹⁰⁹ and one blanket. The Battalion marched magnificently as, indeed the 'Dukes' always do and very few indeed fell out. As we crossed over the Adige we met groups of the broken Italian Army moving back, without rifles, without much discipline. One could not help wondering what they thought about things. One thing which greatly impressed the Italian populace was the clean and smart turn-out of the 23rd Division. 'These troops must have come straight from England' they said, 'They can't have come from the fighting in France.' A couple of short marches took us to the top of Il Montello, a curious hill - from a distance a long whale back; close to a steep hillside pitted all over with hollows like giant shell holes, hollows with no outlet and yet no water lying in them and 1,000 feet¹¹⁰ above sea level."

After this journey the Battalion was, as described by W.N.T., on 1 December in the support positions of the right Brigade on the 23rd Divisional front on Il Montello, where the Division was situated in between the French, on its left, and the Italians on its right.¹¹¹ (Il Montello was at the hinge of the front where the mountains met the Piave and was an isolated and commanding flat-topped hill, some seven miles long and four deep, overlooking the river). The Battalion occupied itself in making dugouts, a 300 yards rifle range and a bayonet course. From 16 - 31 December the Battalion was moved from the support lines up to the front line on Il Montello itself and happily experienced a very quiet period with no casualties. According to the Memoir:

"Il Montello was covered with trenches, dug by the Italians, generally well-wired but often poorly sited. There were two or three miserable cottages that were selected for Headquarters, all full of rats whose numbers easily rivalled those of Flanders. Officers and NCOs reccied the front line and a certain amount of training in hill warfare was accomplished."

¹⁰⁷ OED - "hie" - verb, archaic, 'to go quickly'. Old English - strive, pant."

¹⁰⁸ Also in the 9th? See page 25, note 29.

¹⁰⁹ Earlier form of respirator - P.H. Phosgene/Hexamine.

¹¹⁰ 368 metres.

¹¹¹ By this time there were five British and four French Divisions in Italy.

The Austrian gunners fired a great many shells one morning but did no damage and, whenever the weather permitted, our guns registered and engaged any possible target. The Italian papers at this time had headings such as 'Eighth day of Piave Battle' - 'British still holding on with great gallantry'. In reality we were undergoing a rest cure. In the front line the men were in dugouts and Italian tents in small wooded gullies close to the River Piave. The weather was very cold and there was snow on the ground all the time. We had many visitors including General Plumer and the Prince of Wales.¹¹² The 69th Brigade was particularly congratulated by the Corps Commander (The Earl of Cavan) on the good work done on the defences and dugouts and all other units were told to copy our methods. Various attempts were made to cross the Piave by boats but the current was very strong and the river's channels altered amazingly. The Austrian line was mostly in the woods and undergrowth along the opposite side of the river and patrols could collect practically no information. Nights were very cold. While we were in this sector the Austrians displayed a large placard lettered 'Armistice signed with Russia.'

January 1918. The New Year opened quietly enough. A battalion of the Middlesex Regiment attempted a raid on our right and got a few prisoners but they attempted to put 300 men across the river; a task that proved too much for them. Eventually, they captured four prisoners, two of whom were drowned while being brought across the river. On the fourth we were relieved and proceeded to billets at Biadene. Here we were able to have our delayed Christmas dinner. The Divisional Concert Party, 'The Dumps', gave a special show to the Battalion as part of our Christmas festivities and was much appreciated."

At the end of the month, with no casualties recorded, Sir Douglas Haig's dispatches dated 17 December 1916, were received and included Mentions for Colonel Lethbridge, Captain Bull, Lieutenants Evans and Edwards, CSM Davis and Sgt Jeckell - all for distinguished and gallant service and devotion to duty in France. Also, at the end of January, Major J C Bull and Captain R Bolton were awarded the Military Cross with Military Medals for L/Cpl F. Wood and Pte H Nason, announced in the same December dispatches.

After various moves in the month of February, the Battalion was again, on the 28th, in the Il Montello sector having taken over from the 18th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps and the War Diary reports a significant patrol action on the night of 28 February/1 March. The object was to reconnoitre the enemy wire and, if possible, to reconnoitre Monte Pilonetto. The patrol consisted of three officers and twenty men split into three parties each led by an officer. Only the party led by 2nd Lieutenant A J A Carnley met any enemy:

"..... A man came slightly out of the shadow of the river bank. Not satisfied with what he saw he went back and came forward with a second man. They came to within four to five yards of the officer (Carnley) who fired his revolver point blank at the first man. This man although apparently hit in the stomach immediately closed with the officer while the remaining man ran back to give the alarm. Apparently they had not far to go as machine gun and rifle fire were opened in very quick time. The wounded man was apparently quite off his head and struggled with great vigour with the officer and a sergeant who was with him. Eventually he got away but not before his cap had been secured. The party then

collected and, after making a short reply to the fire aimed at them, returned without casualties."

The second and third parties, under 2nd Lieutenants M A S Wood and A Allen, respectively, located a post close to some trees behind the wire but were observed, whereupon a Very light and two shots were fired. The post was then heard running away so the patrol then inspected the wire and found it to be of an unusual make 'being made with the barbs fastened to a stiff wire of rectangular cross-section.' Going further forward more wire of the same pattern was found. All three parties returned by 10.30pm.

At the beginning of March 1918 the Battalion was transferred to the Asiago front and experienced another quiet month and again suffered no casualties. Locations given in the War Diary are Vengazzu, Castelfranco, Marola, Dueville and Thiene, ending up in Granezza, on the edge of the Asiago Plateau, on the morning of the 28th.

The only excitement in the months of April and May was on the nights of 14/15th, 15/16th and 19/20th of April when, on the first occasion, a Recce patrol went out and two Fighting patrols went out on the latter two occasions. On the 14/15th the patrol fell in with a strong patrol of the enemy and had to fight its way back. The enemy patrol afterwards attacked one of the Battalion's posts and was driven off with considerable loss. The two fighting patrols investigated an enemy strong point south of Ave but the enemy evacuated the position on both occasions. Casualties for the two months were seven Other Ranks wounded and, actually the only one recorded in the War Diary, one other rank due to a self-inflicted wound. Honours awarded were the Military Cross for 2nd Lieutenant A J Acarnely, the Military Medal for Cpl A Wallace and the Belgian *Croix de Guerre* for Sgt J T Machin and L/Cpl E Rhodes. (It is not clear from the War Diary but the Belgian awards are assumed to be for service in Flanders). Another kind of excitement during April was the second part of the Brigade Sports meeting, the first part having taken place in March when the Battalion came a good second to the 11th West Yorkshire Regiment in competitions such as Tug-of-War, transport and horse shows¹¹³. The Prince of Wales attended the second part.

On 15 June the Battalion should have relieved the 9th Yorks & Lancasters in the line in the Right Sector of the Divisional front but, owing to a strong Austrian attack along the whole front, remained in billets at Granezza. However, the enemy shelling was such that the Battalion had to vacate their huts at 6.00am and bivouac on the hillside. Because of the attack the Battalion stood to until 12 noon on the 16th. The Memoir wrongly describes this attack as being in July but has this to say:

"The Austrians were repulsed with great slaughter. They followed 40 minutes after their barrage and penetrated the front of the Division on our left to a distance of 1500 yards.

¹¹² The future King Edward VIII was a staff captain on the Earl of Cavan's Corps HQ. "Still fretting at being kept out of the front line."

¹¹³ "There was perhaps no direction in which the British Army more favourably impressed their Allies than in the matter of transport. Our heavy draught-horses were the subject of constant admiration; and our turnout, though not considered necessary in the same degree by the French and Italians, was a vanity which they openly admired." 23rd Division History.

However, they quite failed to take advantage of this and their attack was a complete failure. Major R Harwar Gill (10th DWR) attached to the 11th Northumberland Fusiliers gained the DSO for holding the flank of the Division so enabling the 48th Division to recover its position. On this occasion the 69th Brigade took no part in the fighting but remained on the hills above Granezza ready to move if required. On the 17th we went into the front line on the San Sisto Poslen sector. Here we had a great deal of clearing up to do and we brought in some 70 Austrians wounded from No Man's Land. We also buried nearly 200 Austrian dead."

Neither the War Diary, nor the Memoir, conveys the huge extent of this Austrian attack. Nor was it an attack confined to the British front. The history of the 23rd Division puts the action into context:

"The attack (on the British and French fronts) was only part of a vast offensive delivered on a front of seventy-five miles from the Asiago Plateau to the sea, in which over fifty divisions were employed. Though it is incontestable that the greatest concentration was made against the Franco-British front, opposite which no less than sixteen and a half divisions had been massed, the attack was pressed vigorously on the whole front, and had succeeded in establishing the Austrians on the right bank of the Piave on and below Il Montello. Having abandoned the attack on the mountain front, the Austrians were enabled to move their reserves to the plains with a view to exploiting this initial success. During the following few days they made considerable progress, and the situation seemed serious.

From the shape of the allied front, as surely as a withdrawal from the mountains would force a retirement from the Piave, so surely would the enemy's progress on the plains, by threatening the communications on the mountain front, necessitate the most difficult operation of a descent from the Asiago Plateau. The sense of security brought by the defeat of the Austrians on the plateau was succeeded by a feeling of suspense as the possibility of attack from the rear was realised.

Fortune, however, favoured the Allies. The Italians brought forward reinforcements for counter-attack and on 20 June the fickle Piave, rising in heavy flood, swept away such of the enemy's bridges as had escaped destruction by artillery or aeroplanes. The last hope of the Austrians had gone. But they realised it too late. Faced with the increasing pressure of Italian counter-attacks, their retreat cut off by the treacherous river, they became involved in disaster."

Italian official estimates placed the total Austrian losses in their ill-fated offensive at 56,000 killed, 240,000 wounded, 24,000 prisoners.¹¹⁴

On the night of 21/22nd June a very successful raid on Ave and the enemy trenches in the vicinity was carried out. The Brigade Commander's report to HQ 23rd Division makes good reading:

"REPORT ON RAID ON AVE CARRIED OUT BY 10th DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT NIGHT 21/22 JUNE 1918.

The raiding party, one Coy with two platoons in support under Capt H Kelly VC formed up without incident and the advance commenced at 11.30pm according to timetable.

Ave was found to be very lightly held (it is possible that the remainder of the garrison fled when the barrage came down) and was quickly mopped up. An Outpost or working party was also met with about 100 yards in front of the front trench. These were mostly killed, the remainder fled, and the advance was in no way delayed.

The enemy's front line was entered at 11.40 pm on a frontage of 200 yards E of the Guardinalti - Ave Road. The trench was found to be very strongly held, a Coy apparently being concentrated for relief.

The raiding party was thoroughly imbued with the 'spirit of the bayonet' and the greater part of the garrison was wiped out with cold steel after slight resistance. All dugouts were thoroughly bombed. There can be no doubt that the number of enemy killed was very high, even after making full allowance for the impossibility of obtaining really accurate figures. With some difficulty the officers of the party were able to ensure that 31 of the enemy were brought back alive for identification purposes, etc. All are convinced that this formed less than a third of the garrison of the trench.

One machine gun was captured in good condition. Another was captured but had been so damaged by artillery fire that it was not worth salvaging. One Flammenwerfer was also obtained.

The raiding party returned in good order through the enemy's barrage without incurring further casualties.

<i>Result of raid:</i>	<i>Prisoners</i>	<i>31</i>
	<i>Enemy killed, highest estimate</i>	<i>80</i>
	<i>lowest estimate</i>	<i>50</i>
	<i>M.Gs captured</i>	<i>2</i>
	<i>M.Gs destroyed</i>	<i>1</i>
	<i>Flammenwerfer captured</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Casualties:</i>	<i>Killed</i>	<i>1 Other Rank</i>
	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>1 Officer; 18 Other Ranks</i>
	<i>Missing</i>	<i>1 Officer; 2 Other Ranks.</i>

22nd June 1918

A B Beauman¹¹⁵

Brigadier Commanding 69th Infantry Brigade"

¹¹⁴ At the root of this failure of this great Austrian attack lay the enmity which existed between their two leading commanders - Field Marshal Conrad Von Hotzendorf and Field Marshal Boroevic Von Bojna, the former commanding the armies operating on the mountain front, the latter those on the Piave. Hotzendorf favoured attack on the mountain front while Bojna looked to attack on the Venetian plain as the surest means of success.

¹¹⁵ Succeeded Brigadier-General T S Lambert who had commanded 69th Brigade for over two years. "A young officer who had earned promotion by distinguished service in command of the 1st South Staffordshire Regiment in the 7th Division." 23rd Division History.

At the end of the month the total casualties had risen to 23 Other Ranks and the officers wounded and missing were "T/2nd Lieutenant A Allen and T/2nd Lieutenant L Tindall, MM¹¹⁶ respectively. Honours and Awards were:

T/2nd Lieut V Edwards	- Military Cross
CSM F Pattison	- DCM
Sgt J Wardman, MM	- DCM
Sgt M Busfield	- MSM
Sgt E Rigby	- Italian Bronze Medal for Valour

The following were mentioned in dispatches dated 18 April 1918:

T/Captain L N Philips MC
 Lieut C W Wildy
 T/Lieut S R Wilson
 Pte R C Chorley
 L/Cpl W Hoyle, MM¹¹⁷

July rates only half-a-page in the War Diary and starts with the Battalion being in the line again on the Asiago Plateau and finishes with it being located at Grumo & Ceredo from the 25th to the 31st suffering four Other Ranks wounded in action while holding the line. Further Honours and Awards were:

Lieut Col F W Lethbridge	- Italian Silver Medal for Valour
Pte J Formby	- Italian Bronze Medal for Valour
T/2nd Lieut K S Bain	- Italian <i>Croce di Guerra</i>
2nd Lieut W F J Thompson	- Italian <i>Croce di Guerra</i>

The month of August is remarkable for a formidably large raid carried out by the Battalion on the night of the 26/27th. No fewer than fourteen Officers and 350 Other Ranks were placed under the command of Captain J W Payne and the highly detailed Battalion's Operation Order Number 52 covers all of three-and-a half pages in the War Diary. As with the previous raid, carried out in June, the Brigade Commander's report to Divisional HQ gives the best indication and summary of all that happened:

"REPORT ON RAID CARRIED OUT BY 10th DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S REGIMENT ON THE NIGHT OF 26/27 AUGUST 1918.

- 1. The 3 raiding Coys formed up without incident about 300 yards from the enemy's line.*
- 2. At 10.40pm the barrage commenced and the raiding party advanced to the attack.*
- 3. The movements of the various parties were as follows:*

(a) Left Company - after some difficulty with the wire that was insufficiently cut, this Coy broke into the enemy front line at H.465.550. After mopping up an enemy post in the front line the Coy broke up into platoons with separate objectives. One platoon advanced and captured the railway cutting at H.460.583 and then proceeded to the road at H.462.586. About 12 large dugouts and shelters were cleared by this platoon,

many enemy being killed and captured. One platoon advanced and captured. One platoon mopped up the enemy front line as far as LITTLE SPUR, dealing with several enemy posts and a defensive flank was established at LITTLE SPUR. Subsequently the enemy attempted a bombing attack from CANOVE, but was repulsed with loss by Lewis Gun fire from the post. One platoon attacked the railway at H.470.580 but was met with strong machine gun fire and only a few men succeeded in reaching the objective. One platoon remained in support.

(b) Centre Coy - One platoon attacked and captured railway at H.470.580 and to road at H.490.590. This platoon cleared many dugouts, getting many prisoners and killing many more. One platoon took Quarry at H.485.576 in which only a few enemy remained alive. Two platoons attacked the railway cutting at H.493.573. This was very strongly held by riflemen and four machine guns. The first attack failed, both officers being wounded. The CSM then organised a second attack, which although pushed through with great gallantry did not succeed, the CSM himself being badly wounded. Eventually the two platoons took up a position in shell holes facing the enemy, and by rifle and Lewis Gun fire kept this position engaged.

(c) Right Company - All four platoons succeeded in reaching the trench and railway on POST SPUR. Several strong enemy posts were mopped up and prisoners taken, but the main body of enemy retired towards GAIGAN.

From here and from CODA SPUR a most intense machine gun fire was opened on POST SPUR and this suffered considerably.

4. At 10.50 pm the raiding party retired, removing all known casualties.
5. The raid was excellently organised by Lt Col F W Lethbridge and, except where the enemy's resistance proved too strong, proceeded exactly as arranged. The arrangements for forming up, evacuation of prisoners, withdrawal, etc, had been carefully thought out, with the result that in spite of heavy fire there was at no time any confusion.
6. The Artillery fired most accurately. The CRA and staff and Lt Col Badham-Thornhill DSO took an infinity of trouble over the artillery arrangements and not a single case of short shooting occurred. The number of Field Guns available, however, was rather too few for a raid on such a broad front.
7. The Machine Gun support was satisfactory.
8. The following points may be of interest:
 - (a) The enemy were fully prepared for the attack, and for the most part put up a determined and well organised resistance. Rifle fire and machine guns were most freely used.

¹¹⁶ The battalion had no idea of what happened to him until his grave was found by a burial party after the Armistice. Unfortunately there is no record in the CWGC register.

¹¹⁷ The letter 'T' has suddenly made its appearance in the War Diary entries denoting 'Temporary' rank.

(b) *The enemy swept not only his own front line, but a considerable area in rear of it with heavy enfilade machine gun fire, entirely disregarding his own posts in the front line.*

(c) *The following localities displayed troublesome nests of machine guns - CANOVE STATION & BELLCOHIO, GAIGAN & CODA SPUR. Trench mortars fired from the regions of CODA SPUR.*

(d) *The enemy barrage was heavy round VAISTER HOUSES and HILL 1002. Otherwise moderate.*

(e) *A Field Gun (Tank Gun?) is reported to have fired from the neighbourhood of EXETER TRENCH.*

(f) *The enemy's accommodation in the Railway Cutting consists of huts, shelters and some dugouts about 20 feet deep.*

9. Results of raid:¹¹⁸

Prisoners captured -5 Officers, 60 Other Ranks

Machine guns captured - 2

Enemy killed - at least 80 including 1 Officer

10. Casualties

Officers Wounded - 5 (including 1 at duty)

Missing - 1

Other Ranks Killed - 2

Wounded - 43 (including 3 at duty)

Missing - 5

27th August 1918

*A B Beauman, Brigadier General
Commanding 69th Infantry Brigade"*

Very little of any significance is recorded in the War Diary for the month of September, yet even so, one other rank was killed and nine Other Ranks were wounded, of which two died of wounds. The battalion was in the line, still on the Asiago front, three times - first at Cavaletto, secondly at Cesuna and lastly at Bydand Corner from where it was relieved by 49 Regiment (Italian) Parma Brigade and went into billets at Creazzo. October was a month of much movement by march route to (and through) Montecchio Maggiore, Gambellara, Noale, Villa-Bloot and then into the line at Catena preparatory to taking its place in an attack on the Austrian front line by the whole of the Tenth Army, in co-operation with attacks by other Armies, on the morning of the 27th. The objective was to force passage of the River Piave, via the island in the Piave of Grave di Papadopoli, to the River Livenza. The War Diary records:

"There was considerable shelling during the early hours of the 27th but only five men were hit until after the advance commenced at 0500hrs. The Battalion was in position for the assault by 0545hrs and at 0615hrs the advance began. Considerable difficulty

was experienced in crossing the northern stream of the Piave which proved much deeper than was expected, several men were swept away and drowned and many had to swim. The enemy first position on a frontage of 600 yards eastwards from C. Polesi had been stormed and captured by 0700hrs. By this time there was considerable MG fire and shelling but all ranks pressed on with the utmost determination, well supported by the artillery barrage, until the village of Borgo Melanotte was reached about 1200hrs - here the enemy put up a strong resistance having MGs well placed in the houses of the village but by the bravery of our Lewis Gunners, the village was captured together with a Regt Commander and his whole staff. At 1300 hrs the enemy made a counter-attack on the village and for a time obtained a footing there but on the approach of a Coy of the 11th West Yorks Regt, which had been sent up to reinforce, the enemy gave in and the village was occupied by us. An outpost line was taken up some 200 yds to the north of the village, which line was held throughout the night of 27/28th. During the day 1,400 prisoners were captured by the Battalion, two Field Guns, three Infantry Guns, 38 Machine Guns, two horses and stores of all kinds in large quantities. The night of the 27/28th passed quietly and at 0830 hrs the Battalion went into Bde Reserve and went into billets at Borgo Melanotte for the night of 28/29th. 'C' Company was attached to 11th West Yorks Regt during morning and afternoon of the 28th but returned by 1830hrs. On the 29th the Battalion marched to a point on the main road about half-way between Borgo Villa and Vazzola where BHQ and two Coys spent the night of the 29/30th. At 1250 hrs on the 29th two Coys were sent forward to be attached to the 11th West Yorks Regt, which Battalion was experiencing considerable opposition on the Monticano River. On the afternoon of the 30th the Battalion marched to billets at C.Dal. Cin where the two Coys which were attached to the 11th West Yorks Regt re-joined the Battalion."

Casualties for the month:

Captain R C Perks DSO,¹¹⁹ Lieutenant T Beattie,¹²⁰ Major St J Carr-West (attached from 12 DLI) and 22 Other Ranks killed in action.

Lieutenant J W Pontefract and 70 Other Ranks wounded in action.

5 Other Ranks missing.

1 Other Rank died of wounds"

From the Memoir:

"On the night of the 26/27th the Piave was crossed. The first stage was by boat to the island of Grave di Papodopoli from which at dawn the remaining channels of the river were forded. The water was much deeper than expected on the Battalion front and it was only by linking arms that many men were saved from being washed off their feet.

¹¹⁸ "This raid was the largest scale of any carried out by the 23rd Division. Delivered against a fully prepared enemy, it had been accomplished in detail as planned. The raiders might well congratulate themselves on the results when they returned to the hot tea and rum that awaited them in the British trenches." 23rd Division History.

¹¹⁹ Buried at Tezze British Cemetery, Italy.

¹²⁰ Buried at Tezze British Military Cemetery, Italy.

This was done under the Austrian barrage. The Battalion suffered about 100 casualties in the three days' operations. Captain R C Perks DSO who had re-joined us was killed. The 23rd Division together with the 7th (Division) did magnificent work. The Austrians were now quite demoralised and soon gave in."

After the successful crossing of the Piave there was still much fighting to be done by the Tenth Army and the Dukes of the 23rd Division but, by 3 November, the Tagliamento had been crossed with little opposition and bridgeheads secured by the Tenth Army. Elsewhere the Italian armies had advanced, carrying all before them. The 48th Division on the mountain front had crossed the Asiago Plateau and penetrated the Trentino. With her armies defeated and disorganised, and revolution threatened in the interior, the position of Austria had become hopeless. An armistice was signed on 3 November with the main stipulations that "All Italian territory is to be evacuated by Austrian forces within fifteen days and all Germans in Austria to be cleared out at once"- further, "Allied Forces will have the use of all roads and railways in Austria for an advance towards Germany."

Thus ended the last battle of the war in Italy for the Dukes, the 69th Brigade and the 23rd Division. It is named by the Italians as Vittorio Veneto, deriving from the main strategic objective of the attack, but which will always be connected in the minds of historians and the British troops who took part with the name of the Piave. Nevertheless, it is rightly recorded as Vittorio Veneto amongst our Battle Honours.

Surprisingly the entry in the War Diary for November makes no mention of the Armistice merely stating first, that the Battalion had marched from Montecchia to Arzignano, and was there in billets, with no casualties incurred in the month, and secondly, announcing some important Honours and Awards: A bar to the Military Cross was awarded to Captain H Kelly ¹²¹ VC MC and to Captain L N Phillips MC. L/Cpl W Robinson was awarded the DCM. A bar to the MM was awarded to two Other Ranks and eighteen Other Ranks were awarded the MM.

Again in December a paragraph only saying the Battalion moved to Moranda but also records more Honours and Awards: The MC to 2nd Lieutenant S B Farrant, the Italian Bronze Medal for Valour to Captain P J Sainsbury and the Italian Croce di Guerra to five Other Ranks. The Memoir has a bit more to say:

"Here we had a Victory Dinner followed by a performance of 'The Dumps' in the local theatre. We also held a very successful Battalion and Brigade Sports. The Educational Scheme was started here and quite a number of men attended. There was a ceremonial Guard Mounting in the Square. On 16 December the Battalion marched to Morania, where it remained until the New Year. A Christmas Dinner was provided and the Band performed in front of each billet in the morning. We won the Divisional Transport Competition. On the 22nd the first party for demobilisation left. It is interesting to note that when the Armistice was signed almost all the officers on the strength of the Battalion were decorated. These decorations included one VC, two DSOs, and four or five MCs and Bars. Among the Other Ranks there were many DCMs and MMs, several with Bars."

For the months of January, February and March the War Diary has very little to record to do with the activities of the Battalion and its 'Last Entry' is on 29 March 1919 saying that the Cadre of the Battalion proceeded to the Concentration Camp at Tavernelle to entrain for Le Havre. The officers of the Cadre were Major W N Town, Captain L N Phillips, Lieutenants R Ferguson and C E Agar. Yet more Honours and Awards are announced:

Bar to the Military Cross to 2nd Lieutenant E K Waite MC, the MC to 2nd Lieutenant G C Sugden; DCM to Sgt R Everson MM and the MSM to Cpl S Twine; the Italian Bronze Medal to Lieutenant N R Davis MORC, USA.¹²² There were Mentions in Dispatches for: Lieutenant Colonels F W Lethbridge and A A St Hill, Majors J C Bull MC and W N Town, Captains L N Phillips MC, J W Payne DSO MC¹²³, J W Paterson and Lieutenant V Edwards MC, Sergeants G R Goodchild, H Smith and J Walker MM.

The Memoir has a little more to say on these three months:

"January 1919. Demobilisation was now in full swing. We spent our time either at Arzignano or Monte di Crosara. The 'Dandy Dukes' concert party organised by Captain H W Todd MC (the Padre) did much to relieve monotony. In February the Battalion team, under Lieutenant Thompson MC, won the Brigade Football Cup. Three excellent race meetings¹²⁴ were held at Arzignano. These were largely attended. Le Soleil and Kaffir Chief, horses belonging to the Battalion won several races. Few men were left and little training was possible. The Italian Army of Occupation was formed and on the 20th we sent a draft of 80 men under Lieutenant E K Waite MC to the 8th York and Lancaster Regiment at Fiume. (After this draft left, the average ration strength of the Battalion was reduced to 120). March was spent at Montechia di Crosara and there were so few men that parades were dropped. Leave to Venice and Verona was freely granted. The Cadre (as related above) left for Le Havre, where at No.1 Rest Camp the Battalion was broken up."

On 3 April 1919 the Cadre arrived at the Depot, Halifax and handed over the trophies and documents of the Battalion.

¹²¹ See Appendix 2.

¹²² Believed to have been seconded to the US Army at one time. Post war documents show him as being awarded the MC.

¹²³ Although not recorded in the War Diary Captain Payne was awarded the DSO for "Conspicuous gallantry and fine leadership during operations when in charge of a large raiding party. Although the objective was continuously swept by enfilade machine gun fire, he carried out the operation successfully and withdrew his party in perfect order, capturing a large number of prisoners. He exhibited great coolness and ability to command". I.G 2 December 1918. It is presumed that this action took place during the raid of 26/27 August 1918, described on page 82, when Captain Payne was in charge of the raiding parties.

¹²⁴ "Racing started modestly in the New Year with point-to-point races, culminating in two first-class meetings. First came the lotteries, presided over by that sturdy veteran Lieutenant Colonel Lethbridge whose persuasive geniality was no less successful in disposing of horses with a 100-1 chance than it had been in leading his battalion in war against similar odds." 23rd Division History.

SINCE THE GREAT WAR - A POSTSCRIPT

Although not mentioned by name in the account of the 10th's service in the Great War, the well-known Yorkshire writer, J B Priestley, served in the Battalion. In his book *English Journey* he recalls his attendance at the 1933 Reunion Dinner of the Battalion held in a tavern in Bradford. In his inimitable prose, he describes his feelings, nostalgia and war-time recollections at this Dinner - nostalgia and thoughts which will be so familiar to all old soldiers when meeting again, after many years, their old war-time comrades. Again, looking through the *Iron Duke*, there is an article in the February 1947 issue, in which the Secretary of the 10th's Old Comrades Association writes of their reunion in October 1946 held in the Co-operative Café in Bradford. The very last time they had all met was in 1938 and there was much apprehension about the numbers who would attend but, out of a forecast seventy, actually no fewer than nearly twice that number attended. As it was some 27 years since the 10th disbanded in 1919, this was a remarkable number. *"It was extremely pleasant to see the 'old' faces again, but there were moments of regret when the Hon Secretary read the names of more than 30 ex-10th Battalion men who had died during the war years. They included Major W N Town (who succeeded the late Major R H Gill DSO as Chairman of the Association), Major C Bathurst¹²⁵ MC and, (amongst others), Sgt G E Smithams of Keighley, famous for his rissoles and the manner in which he always contrived to have a hot meal ready for the men when they came out of the line in France, Belgium or Italy, and usually managed to get hot food to them when actually in the trenches. There were officers and men from all parts of Yorkshire, some from Lancashire, others from Derbyshire and Warwickshire, and more from London, Hampshire and Surrey, including Major J C Bull MC and Captain H W Lester MC".* On the same page of the *Iron Duke* is recorded the death of Major W N Town in September 1946 in his 71st year. He joined the 10th after serving with the 8th in Gallipoli.

With this evocative description of the Reunion Dinner in 1947, it is appropriate now, to transcribe J B Priestley's account of his 1933 Reunion Dinner.

"The reunion dinner which had brought me here when I ought to have been continuing my journey elsewhere, was held at a tavern on Saturday night. The battalion was the 10th Duke of Wellington's of the 23rd Division, which did good work in France and then in the later stage of the war did equally good work on the Italian Front.

I was with this battalion when it was first formed when I was a private just turned twenty; but I left it as a casualty in the summer of 1916 and never saw it again, being afterwards transferred to another regiment. The very secretary who wrote asking me to attend this dinner was unknown to me, having joined the battalion after I had left it. So I did not expect to see many there who had belonged to the old original lot, because I knew only too well that a large number of them, some my friends, had been killed. But the thought of meeting again the few I would remember, the men had shared with me those training camps in 1914 and the first half of 1915 and those trenches in the autumn and winter of 1915 and the spring of 1916, was very exciting. There were bound to be a few from my old platoon. Number eight. It was a platoon with a character of its own.

¹²⁵ Major Bathurst, although it is not recorded in the 10th's War Diary at the time, must have left the 10th Battalion some time in 1916 as, in the 2nd Battalion records, he is shown as joining the 2nd Battalion at Méricourt on 29 October 1916 and then being re-posted to the 10th on 19 November 1916. His MC was gazetted on 25 September 1917.

When the battalion was swaggering along, you could not get Eight Platoon to sing; it marched in grim, disapproving silence. But there came a famous occasion when the rest of the battalion, exhausted and blindly limping along, had not a note left in it; gone now were the boasts about returning to Tipperary, the loud enquiries about the Lady Friend; the battalion whacked and dumb. It was then a strange sound was heard coming from the stumbling ranks of B Company, a sound never caught before; not very melodious perhaps nor light-hearted, but miraculous; Number Eight Platoon was singing. Well, that was my old platoon, and I was eagerly looking forward to seeing a few old remaining members of it.

Never have I seen a tavern stairs or a tavern upstairs so crowded, so tremendously alive with roaring masculinity, as I did that night. Most of the faces were strange to me, but here and there, miraculously, was a face that was not only instantly familiar but that at once was succeeded in recalling a whole vanished epoch, as if I had spent long years with its owner in some earlier incarnation. We sat down jammed together, in a dining room that can never have held more people in all its existence. It was not full, it was bursting. We could hardly lift the roast beef and apple tart to our mouths. Under the coloured paper decorations, we sweated like bulls. The ale went down sizzling. But we were happy, no doubt about that. We roared at one another across the narrowest of tables.

The toast in memory of the dead, which we drank at the end of the dinner, would have been very moving, only unfortunately when we were all standing up, raising our glasses and silent, there came from a very linny piano in the far corner of the room what sounded to me like a polka very badly played. I tried to think, solemnly, tenderly, about my dead comrades, but this atrocious polka was terribly in the way. I sat down, bewildered. "Damn fool played it all wrong", growled the major, our chairman in my ear. 'Should have been much slower. Regimental march y'know'. That little episode was just like my life; and I suppose that is why I am at heart a comic writer. You stand up to toast your dead comrades; the moment is solemn and grand; and then the pianist must turn the regimental march into something idiotically frivolous, and ruins the occasion.

I had arranged to meet, in a little ante-room, the survivors of my original platoon, and as soon as I decently could, I escaped from the press of warriors in the big room, to revisit my own past. There were about eight of us present, and we ordered in some drinks and settled down to remember aloud. I had not seen any of these fellows for seventeen years. I knew them all, of course, and they seemed little older. The difference was that before they had all been soldiers, whereas now their respective status in civilian life set its mark upon them, and now one was a clerk, another a tram-conductor, another a mill-hand, and so forth.

As figure after figure, comic and tragic, came looming up through the fog of years, as place after place we had been caught in the light again, our talk became more and more eager and louder, until we shouted and laughed in triumph, as one always does when Time seems to be suffering a temporary defeat. Frensham, Folkestone, Maidstone, Bully Grenay, Neuve Chapelle, Souchez - how they returned to us! Once again the water was rising around our gumboots. We remembered the fantastic places; that trench which ran in front of a graveyard, where the machine gun bullets used to ricochet off the tombstones; that first night of Vimy Ridge in the snow, like a mountain of despair. We recalled to one another the strange coincidences and dark premonitions; poor melancholy B, who muttered, 'I'll be lying out there tonight', and was a dead man that very night; grim Sergeant W, who said to the draft, 'This is where you can expect to get your head blown off', and has his own head shattered by a rifle grenade within three hours. And little Paddy O, who had always seemed

such a wisp of a chap, with everything about him drooping, who looked the same as ever, ready to drop at any moment though he never dropped and the Central Powers must have spent hundreds of thousands of marks trying to kill him, little Paddy, I say, came close to me, finished his beer and asked me, stammeringly as ever, if I remembered sending him from the front line for some water for the platoon on a summer evening in 1916. 'Nay' he stammered, 'I wasn't gone for more than t-ten minutes, and when I c-come back, where you'd been, Jack lad, there was n-nobbut a bloody great hole and I n-never set eyes on you again till to-night'. And it was true. I had sent him away on a ten minutes errand; immediately afterwards a giant mortar had exploded in the very entrance to the little dug-out where I was dividing up the platoon rations; I had been rushed away, and was gone before he returned; and it had taken us more than seventeen years to find one another again."

Writing in his book *'Margin Released'*, published in 1962, J B Priestley gives another account of this episode.

"Up in the line, what we did mind, what soon began to get us down, were the Minenwerfers, the big trench mortars; and at Souchez we always appeared to have the Minenwerfer specialists against us. Often we asked for their attention; not us, the ordinary infantry who had to stay in the front line, but the Brigade, the Division, the Corps, the Army. What happened all too often was that our own specialists would rush their Stokes guns up into the support trenches, blast away for quarter of an hour, and then hurry off with their infernal things to where their transport was waiting. Pampered and heartless fellows - this is how we regarded them - lunatic experts who had to interfere, off they went to some back area, to roofs and beds and estaminets, beer and wine, chips and eggs; while we poor devils, left behind in holes in the ground, now had to face the anger of the Boches they had been strafing. The Minenwerfer teams got to work on us. Up and down came those monstrous canisters of high explosive, making hell's own din when they landed, blasting or burying us. If there was any infantryman who was not afraid of these things, who was not made uneasy by any rumours they would shortly be arriving, I never met him. Perhaps because they were such short-range affairs, perhaps because if you were on the alert, looking and listening hard, you could just dodge them, perhaps because they made such a hellish row, they frightened us more than bullets, bombs, shells of all calibres. And in and around Souchez we crouched below a nest of them.

So one day it had to happen. It was June now, hot again, thirsty weather; a lot of chalk dust about, and we were in the front line on a beautiful morning. The platoon rations had just come up. I sent Private O'Neill down the communication trench to bring up some water - and sixteen years (sic) went by before we saw each other again. I helped a young soldier, who had only just joined us out there, to take the rations into a dugout, not a deep dugout but a small one hollowed out of the parapet. In this dugout I began sorting out the bread, meat, tea, sugar, tinned milk, and so on, to give each section its proper share, a tricky little job. I had done it many times before, hardly ever to anybody's complete satisfaction; but on this morning I suspect that it saved my life. After the explosion when everything had caved in, nobody was certain I was there, but several fellows knew that platoon rations were in there somewhere: the stuff would have to be dug out. There I was then, deciding on each section's share, when I heard a rushing sound, and I knew what it meant and knew, though everything had gone into slow motion, I had no hope of getting away before the thing arrived. Just as on earlier and later occasions when I have thought all was up, the first shrinking in terror was followed, as I went into the new slow time, by a sense of detachment. I believe from what I learned afterwards that the Minenwerfer landed slap in the trench, two or three yards away. All I knew at the time was that the world blew up."

CHAPTER IV

11th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

This Battalion was formed at Halifax in November 1914 as a Service Battalion in Lord Kitchener's Fourth New Army (K4). It was in the 89th Brigade of the 30th Division. From Halifax it moved to North Shields and later, at the beginning of 1915, went into station at Lichfield in Hampshire, remaining there until the 16 November 1915 when it moved to Brocton Camp at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire. It stayed in this location until disbanded on 31 August 1916.

Its brief history, as known at RHQ, is as follows. About May 1915 together with other units of the Fourth New Army it was turned into a Reserve Battalion for the purpose of training and sending out drafts as reinforcements to units serving in the front line overseas. Its new title in this role became 11th (2nd Reserve) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment). It duly carried out its new role until disbanded in 1916.

Having originally been raised in 1914 for service overseas it was with great regret and disappointment that the officers and men were thwarted in their desired aim to be a fighting unit as a result of being converted to a Reserve Battalion. Although, of course, many, if not most of the 11th, officers and soldiers, did see active service with other battalions. The following list shows some of the officers, now known, to have served with other battalions and it is salutary to see that they all paid the supreme sacrifice. Of course there must be many more of whom we have no records.

Gallipoli 2nd Lieutenant E C Bladen - 8th Battalion
Died of Wounds 4, November 1915

2nd Lieutenant B A Franks - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 24 October 1915

2nd Lieutenant J H Henderson - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action 7, November 1915

2nd Lieutenant J R Lister - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 15 December 1915

Lieutenant P J Skipworth - 5th Manchesters
Killed in Action, 7 August 1915

(2nd Lieutenant E Parsons - 1st Welsh. *Died at Salonika, 23 July 1916*)

- France** Lieutenant T Beattie - 10th Battalion
Killed in Action, 27 October 1918
- 2nd Lieutenant A J Ewart - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 28 September 1916
- Lieutenant C C Gilbert - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 28 September 1916
- 2nd Lieutenant R H Harris - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 28 September 1916
- 2nd Lieutenant I D Marks - 9th Battalion
Killed in Action, 10 July 1916
- Lieutenant V G Narey - 8th Battalion
Killed in Action, 15 October 1916
- 2nd Lieutenant H T Pickles - 9th Battalion
Killed in Action, 26 April 1916
- Lieutenant B J Tolhurst - RFC. POW
Died of wounds, 22 April 1917
- 2nd Lieutenant E W Wilkinson - 9th Battalion
Killed in Action, 7 July 1916
- Captain L F Reincke - 10th Battalion & RFC
Killed in Action, 17 August 1917

Very little is known of this Battalion but, fortunately, there is a photograph of the Officers in the April 1959 issue of the *Iron Duke*, taken at Lichfield in July 1915. At the Editor's request to readers for identification of the officers, some small correspondence was generated and a letter from Brigadier E W Rogers CIE ¹²⁶ is worth paraphrasing in order to add a little useful background to the 11th at this time:

FROM THE 11th BATTALION TO THE 1st

Commenting on the photograph – "I suppose most of them were drafted to other battalions of the Regiment, and some to other regiments; and I wonder what happened to them all. You see we were, when I left, about 70 or 80 officers, and I think we had a bare 200 men. Officers kept turning up but nobody got away.

Training wasn't very good - it couldn't be in these circumstances - and there was great impatience to get away.

My chance came in an extraordinary way. With the exception of one or two officers of the Reserve, passing through as it were, nobody had gone. Then, at the beginning of June, there came a demand for two officers to go to the 1st Battalion in India. There was a list of officers considered ready to be posted and the first four were: Reincke, Hoffman, Pidwell, Rogers. Reincke was machine-gun officer and couldn't be spared so Hoffman and Pidwell were detailed. Pidwell celebrated his 'release' a little incautiously one night in Birmingham and got into trouble with the Provost. And so another officer was detailed and of course it

was me - and I still have somewhere the somewhat cumbersome embarkation orders of those days: almost parchment, and I think the Mil. Sec. 'had the honour, etc,' with Pidwell's name struck out and mine inserted in red ink. The moving finger of the Orderly Room had writ and so it was that, on 22 June, Jack Hoffman and I sailed for India to miss the war altogether. Pidwell went to Gallipoli and survived."

The Author, himself, can personally add that on the photograph, the officer shown as ninth on the 3rd Row is one S E Baker ¹²⁷, or 'Sammy' as he was known. He was the Commanding Officer and Regimental Secretary at the Depot, Halifax for most of the Second World War and served Colonel C J Pickering CMG DSO, Colonel of the Regiment from October 1938 to November 1947. He had been a master at Sedburgh School. He was made MBE and given the local rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1947 when Colonel Jack Dalrymple was commanding at the Halifax Depot, when it was a Primary Training Centre for recruits, entitled 33 (PTC) DWR.

There is also another different photograph of the 11th Battalion's Officers, similarly taken on another occasion at Lichfield in 1915, in J J Fisher's history. Four of the officers shown above as being killed in action are pictured as is Captain L F Reincke, also killed, and who figures in Brigadier Rogers' account. The Commanding Officer on both photographs is Lieutenant Colonel W G Hatherall whose obituary notice is given, by coincidence, in the same *Iron Duke* issue of April 1959 as the first photograph in question was published.

"Colonel Hatherall died in January 1959 aged ninety-seven. He was one of the oldest officers of the British Army, having been commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1881 when he was twenty. He joined the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and later the Indian Army, in which he served until 1910. In 1914 he volunteered for further service and formed the 11th (Service) Battalion of the West Riding Regiment."

It is to be regretted that no more information on this Battalion is held in RHQ and that no other records appear to be in existence. However, a photograph of the Battalion's Machine Gun Detachment, dated September 1915 surfaced in the Archives and is shown in the illustrations. No names are given.

¹²⁶ I met Brigadier Rogers once in the 1950s. He spent the whole war in India and became the Indian Army equivalent of Assistant Master General of the Ordnance, responsible for running the Indian Ordnance Factories. He was honoured by being made CIE.

¹²⁷ His Sergeant Clerk used to run (obviously unofficially) the Depot 'Betting' liaison with the local Bookmaker. When Sheila's Cottage won the 1948 Grand National, at odds of 60 to 1, I collected £60 from Sammy's outer office. - Author.

CHAPTER V

12th (Labour) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

This Battalion of the Regiment was raised by Lieutenant Colonel H A Moore on 10 March 1916 at Marton Hall, near Middlesbrough. It had thus no connection with the Service Battalions of the New Army raised by Lord Kitchener in the early years of the war. Records in the Regimental Archives are sparse in the extreme, consisting of an elementary War Diary containing only the briefest of entries. It is from this document that the following notes are composed and the events related.

The Battalion, in very quick time from its foundation, found itself in France, embarking at Southampton on 1 April 1916, entraining at Le Havre on 3 April and proceeding to Hazebrouck in the rear area of the Somme, where it divided: 'HQ', 'Y' and 'Z' Companies going into billets near Proven and 'W' and 'X' Companies near Bergues.

Working from both ends of the line, the Battalion was set to work, helping to build the new railway line from Bergues to Poperinghe (including branch lines), and this work continued for three months until 8 July when 'X' and 'Y' Companies were ordered to proceed to the Somme front to work on the Méaulte - Maricourt Line. 'W' and 'X' Companies and Battalion Headquarters joined them on 12 July. During the months of July and October the Battalion was re-deployed for work on various portions of the following railway lines: Méaulte to Trones Wood, Méaulte to Fricourt, Fricourt to Longueval and Albert to Aveluy

This work was far from being without danger. Between 16 July and 31 October 1916, the Battalion suffered ten men killed; three officers, forty men wounded and five men gassed. The majority of casualties, twenty, occurred on 23 October, and were caused by a German aeroplane bombing Bernafay Wood ¹²⁸ where 'X' Company was encamped and asleep at the time.

During the month of November three Companies were engaged on the Bazentin-Longueval railway and one company worked on the broad and narrow gauge lines in the neighbourhood of Trones Wood. Also in this month, two drafts of men amounting to a total of 71 were received, including a Sergeant who had served in the Dardanelles. The first draft included two Corporals and a Lance Corporal, all three of whom had not more than ten weeks service, and to whom exception was taken by the Battalion that they should be put over men who had seven months' service in France. Official advice was asked for on the predicament, but no reply was received until 1 December when the Battalion was notified that, as all were in acting rank only, they could be 'dealt with' by

the Battalion. (It is supposed that even in a theatre of war such niceties were of no small consequence.)

On 21 November fourteen men, whose ages varied from 47 to 61 years, were sent home for employment in England. On the 18th Lieutenant Colonel H A Moore, the Commanding Officer, was evacuated to hospital, sick, and soon afterwards was sent to England. As no Second-in-Command was allowed on the Battalion's establishment, command devolved on the senior captain, Captain B J Rooney. In this month two other officers were posted away leaving the Battalion very short of officers. Battalion HQ and three Companies were at Mametz Wood with Captain B J Rooney, Captain C N Logan, Captain and Adjutant T Drury, and 2nd Lieutenant R G Jeffrey, together with the Medical Officer and the Quartermaster. With the detachment at Trones Wood were 2nd Lieutenants M Kelly and Weatherdon.

Other happenings in this month included the allotment of twenty-five Nissen Huts to the Battalion, to be erected by the men, with a promised issue of nineteen more; 'X' Company Office at Trones Wood was struck by a shell, happily there were no casualties, but by a happy coincidence, ninety of the Company's Army Forms B.122 were destroyed! Casualties in the month were two men wounded by shell fire and the average strength of the Battalion was a sizeable 950. Leave home to England was obviously a matter of some importance and concern, hence *"The battalion has now been in the country eight months, during which time two officers and six men have had special leave. No ordinary leave has been allotted to the Battalion."*

On 7 December Major R B Clifton¹²⁹ of the Dukes assumed command of the Battalion while the work during the month employed two companies on the Bazentin - Longueval - Flers railway and one company on the broad gauge line Trones Wood - Ginchy. Three officers joined and Captain C N Logan went on leave to England. *"This was the first officer of those who came out on 31 March 1916 to get ordinary leave."* Two men were killed and four wounded while at work, all by shell fire. No work was done on Christmas Day.

¹²⁸ Two Dukes killed in this air raid were Captain E C Harris (mistakenly shown in the War Diary as wounded and not killed) and 21230 Private William Young. Both are buried at Bernafay Wood British Cemetery.

¹²⁹ Major R B Clifton joined 1 DWR in South Africa in 1901 having previously served in the Yeomanry in the South African War. He served with the West African Field Force prior to 1914. He served in Egypt, France and Belgium. After command of the 12th Battalion he commanded No 40 Labour Group retiring in 1920 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He died on 27 June 1926. In 1917 Lieutenant Colonel A G Horsfall DSO then CO 2 DWR met him and left this account: *"I was out on the same job and lunched with Clifton of ours, he commanded a Labour Battalion of the Regiment and, when that ceased to exist, was made Commandant of a group of Labour Companies. He is an extraordinary sight, he stands over 6ft and I think the fattest man I ever saw. He is quite unable to walk any distance. Fortunately he has a big car to get about in and visit his various companies. He gave us a magnificent lunch - Welsh lamb, hors d'oeuvres, curry, lobster salad, new potatoes, excellent cream cheese, very good coffee and liqueurs. I had never met Clifton before though he had belonged to the Regiment for years, but he has always been away in West Africa, Egypt, etc. He has always been stout but has only grown to this enormous size recently. He was in his short sleeves all the time and seemed to feel the heat. I should think that though unfit for active work he is a good organiser. His surroundings are wonderful. Every officer in a most beautiful got up furnished hut, walls and ceilings painted. An enormous vegetable garden chock full of vegetables all planted in rotation to allow for the next 6 months ahead, etc. They do live in luxury!"*

In the New Year, January 1917, Battalion Headquarters and three companies were still at Mametz Wood continuing work on the same railway lines as in December. One man was wounded whilst in camp by shell fire and the Battalion moved back on 10 January for a rest in the area of Arqueves but, on the 13th, it was split up into platoon working parties employed on railway maintenance duties. This same maintenance work was continued in February. A draft of 96 Other Ranks arrived from England. All ordinary leave was stopped until further orders (no reason given).

During the first half of March the same railway work was continued but on the 11th the detachments began to close in, preparatory to a move to the Third Army area. The move was carried out in two stages by route march. On arriving in the Third Army area it was found that Headquarters VIIth Corps was unaware that the Battalion was a semi-skilled railway battalion and, to their dismay, the men were at first utilised for loading ammunition, etc. This was brought to the notice of the Deputy Assistant Director of Labour (DADL) and put right so that, by the end of the month the whole Battalion was again at railway work. 'W' company was at Arras and Battalion Headquarters with 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' Companies at Milly, working on railway construction work under 110th Company, Royal Engineers. Meanwhile the Battalion received a draft of fifty Other Ranks from the 25th Durham Light Infantry and a leave allotment of eleven places per week was granted to the Battalion.

In April, still under the Royal Engineers, the Companies at Milly had the main task of constructing a large station yard there while the Company at Arras was engaged mainly on the reconstruction of the Arras-Douai line under the 287th Company, Royal Engineers. Administration of the Battalion was under VIIth Corps Troops and then, later, XVIIIth Corps Troops. Leave is still a factor - the leave allotment of eleven places per week was rapidly reduced and by the end of the month had become nil as the eleven places per week had to be shared by all unskilled labour in VIIth Corps. During the month the Battalion had been allotted only thirteen places

The final entry in the skeleton War Diary is to record the arrival of a draft of twenty-two men from the 34th Infantry Base Depot. Between April and June 1917, the 12th Battalion ceased to exist and became the 24th and 25th Labour Companies.

CHAPTER VI

13th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

In the summer of 1918, some twenty or so Garrison and other battalions were renamed Service Battalions. They were desperately needed to provide some of the infantry for the reconstitution of the 14th, 16th, 40th and 59th Divisions in France, divisions that had been reduced to cadres after sustaining exceptionally heavy casualties in the 1918 German offensive. These battalions had no connection with the Service Battalions such as the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions of the Regiment, raised in 1914 in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for volunteers.

Between 7 and 10 May 1918, the 59th (2nd North Midland) Division reduced its Infantry battalions, Brigade Trench Mortar batteries, Pioneer battalion and Machine Gun battalion to a training cadre establishment based at St Omer. All surplus men of the Division were sent to the Base or drafted to other units. The Division then moved to Hestrus and was reconstituted as a 2nd Line Division (*with Battalions of a low medical grade*)¹³⁰ and was made up to strength with Garrison Guard battalions. Until mid-June the reconstituted Division was employed on the construction of rear defences. Later, the Division became a Garrison Division. As such, it underwent training to enable it to hold a sector of the front line. On 25 July the Division took over the left sector of the line held by VI Corps, Third Army and on 21 August the Division once more became engaged in active operations. These operations were:

THE ADVANCE TO VICTORY, SECOND BATTLES OF THE SOMME

21 and 22 August 1918 - Battle of Albert (VI Corps, 3rd Army)

**2 October to 11 November 1918 - The Final Advance in Artois & Flanders
(XI Corps, 5th Army)**

With this detail as a background, the 13th Battalion was formed on 27 May 1918, from the 3rd Provisional Garrison Guard Battalion at Vielfort, France, and was part of the 176th Infantry Brigade in the 59th Division. However, from its very formation it was temporarily attached to the 177th Infantry Brigade but on 16 June, it was transferred to the 178th Infantry Brigade and remained in it for the rest of the war.

¹³⁰ 59th Divisional Records.

At first it was known as the 13th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The West Riding Regiment. Then, according to War Diary entries, it became known as The 13th West Riding Regiment in July, and it remained as such until the end of the war, when it was known thereafter, as the 13th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, until disbanded on 18 September 1919.

On the Division being reconstituted the Order of Battle for the three Infantry Brigades was:

176th Brigade:

25th TF Battalion The King's (Liverpool)

4th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The Royal Welsh Fusiliers
(became 26th (Service) Battalion in July 1918)

17th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The Royal Sussex
(became 17th (Service) Battalion July 1918)

177th Brigade:

11th Battalion The Somerset Light Infantry

15th TF Battalion The Essex Regiment

13th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The West Riding Regiment -
attached from 176th Brigade - To 178th Brigade in June.

25th Battalion The King's Royal Rifle Corps
(became the Pioneer Battalion)

2/6th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The Durham Light Infantry

178th Brigade:

36th TF Battalion The Northumberland Fusiliers

11th Battalion The Royal Scots Fusiliers

13th (Garrison Guard Battalion) The West Riding Regiment

On reorganisation, the Battalion changed the titles of its companies from 848, 866, 894 and 935 Area Employment (Garrison Guard) Companies to the conventional 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies. The Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Colonel J C Tabor of the 8th Essex Regiment, and his officers made up a rare mix from many regiments (Royal Scots, KOSB, Bedfords, Bucks, A & SH, RFA, KRRC, DLI, and Camerons, six officers from the Labour Corps and even one from the RNVR. The MO was from the Canadian Medical Corps)¹⁹¹. Its strength was some twenty-four Officers and 684 Other Ranks.

1918

From its first day the 13th Battalion was employed digging the trenches of a new Reserve Line under supervision by the Royal Engineers and also doing a minimal amount of training in the areas of Bois Vielfort and Bois du Hazois, near to Bruay. Casualties came straight away with three men being killed and two wounded as the result of a hostile aircraft dropping five bombs (one dud) in the vicinity of the camp.

During June (and also in July) the Battalion was examined by Lieutenant Colonel Prescott, who was the Inspector of Drafts and whose task was to weed out unfit men - for example, those unable to march eight miles or handle arms. On 25 June this inspection resulted in forty-nine Other Ranks of Medical Category BIII and BII being returned to base as unfit for duty in the line. Their replacement consisted of fifty-eight men of BI category, while nine officers (six from The Yorkshire Regiment) joined, all Category 'A'¹³². June was a difficult month for the Battalion preparing to go to war, for it suffered from a malignant fever, appearing to be an epidemic, which resulted in sixty-three men being evacuated to hospital. The Battalion also came in for some pretty high-powered inspections by the Brigade (H A Fulton DSO), Divisional (Sir R D Whigham KCB DSO), and Corps (Sir W E Peyton KCB KCVO DSO) Commanders.

On 1 July the 13th Battalion marched to Fontain-Les-Boulane with an establishment of thirty-nine Officers and 877 Other Ranks, and there took on strength; ten Limbered wagons (four in lieu of field kitchens), eight HD¹³³ Horses and twelve LD Mules, but had immediately to hand over one HD Horse to the 2/6th DLI of the 177th Brigade. Meanwhile the Inspector of Drafts, together with the Divisional ADMS, was still busy with his examination of men unfit to go into the trenches in a quiet part of the line; he found 234 men to be classified as B2 and forty men as B3. As a result, weeding out continued and, on 17 July no fewer than five Officers and 271 Other Ranks, with another twenty-five men on the 23rd, were returned to the Base. In compensation, a draft of 280 Other Ranks arrived from the Divisional Reception Camp on the 28th but, yet again, the ADMS examined this new draft, plus six Officers. Clearly, getting the Battalion together, fit to fight, was a serious problem, and thankfully not one taken lightly by the hierarchy. At this point, when the Division came under command of VI Corps, Lieutenant Colonel Tabor handed over command to Lieutenant Colonel P H Stevenson of the 2nd Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers.

On 1 August the Battalion, now at Barly, and with a strength of thirty-two Officers and 903 Other Ranks, was inspected by the VI Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Haldane KCB DSO. The next day, six Officers and forty-four Other Ranks were returned to the Base, at the same time as the Battalion moved to Bellacourt and took over the billets of the 11th Somerset Light Infantry. The Battalion was in reserve for the Brigade that was in the right section of the Divisional front, but subsequently moved to the Brickfields System of support trenches, taking over from the 36th Northumberland Fusiliers on the night of 13/14 August. Significantly, as the War Diary records, this was the first time that the 13th had been in the trenches since its formation. It was recorded as a quiet night despite the noise of a raid by 1st Guards Brigade on an enemy post, which was accompanied by twenty minutes of our own artillery fire.

¹³¹ On 1 June an officer reported for duty "*This officer is suffering from severe shell shock and is being kept under observation by the MO for a few days.*" He was evacuated to the CCS on 4 June.

¹³² Medical categories: 'A' - fit for service anywhere. 'B' - Fit for service abroad, but not general service. 'B1' - In garrison or provisional units. 'B2' - In Labour units or on garrison or regimental outdoor employment. 'B3' - On sedentary work as clerks or storemen only.

¹³³ HD and LD - presumably Heavy Duty and Light Duty?

The Battalion's second stint in the line was on 21 August when the 1st Grenadier Guards of 3rd Guards Brigade was relieved on the right flank of the Divisional front at Saulty. An enemy attack at 5.00am on the 22/23rd on this same right flank was repulsed while, simultaneously, the Battalion was harassed by gas shells and trench mortar fire; and, also later, when being relieved by the 4th London Regiment of the 56th Division. Embussing from Molinghem on the 27th the Battalion went into the line at St Floris relieving the 15th Essex of the 177th Brigade. Perhaps surprisingly, on the 29th a fatigue party of experienced farm hands, totalling sixty, was employed under the Divisional Agricultural Officer in harvesting crops in the forward area. On the same day the Brigade Commander held a conference on the subject of an advance in the event of the enemy withdrawing on the Brigade front. The Battalion occupied a series of shell holes from L'EpINETTE to Medrillon in support of the 177th Brigade on 1 September but, moving quickly through Lestrem, it was in the line at Pont Rochon by 1.00am on the 3rd. Here it was to support an attack by the 19th Division on Richebourg St Vast and by the 36th Northumberland Fusiliers on Eton, Harrow and Charterhouse enemy posts. After the capture of these posts, the Battalion was to move forward onto the objective of the Estaires-La-Bassee Road. In conjunction with the 61st Division on its left the Battalion pushed forward against machine gun opposition and reached the objective by 12noon. It was then ordered to take the second objective of La Flingue Post. But, owing to the exhausted condition of the men and machine gun opposition, it was found impossible to gain this line and the line rested on Le Dumez. Casualties were three Other Ranks wounded by shell fire. The move forward was continued the next morning when the Battalion gained a line east of Laventie and then went further forward, being relieved by the 25th Kings Liverpool Regiment who took up a line in front, with the 13th Battalion occupying shell holes behind in support. One man was killed and three wounded.

The Battalion remained in the area of Laventie and Bout Deville until the end of the month with periods in the line and undergoing (by Western Front standards) but few casualties. At the end of the month the strength of the Battalion was thirty-six Officers and 674 Other Ranks. Also, at this time Lieutenant Colonel P H Stevenson DSO handed over command to Lieutenant Colonel P S Hall of the West Yorkshire Regiment. By 8 October the Battalion had marched to Fleurbaix where it paraded for the presentation of Military Medals to Corporal E Henry and Private E J Price. These awards had been gained for gallantry and devotion to duty on the advance to Laventie at the beginning of the month.

In the Bois Grenier area of the line the Battalion had to endure some heavy shelling and lost two men killed and one wounded on 11 October and saw some serious action when it sent out fighting patrols at 0500 hours on the 14th to raid the Radingheim Ridge, south-west of Wez Macquart, a position that was successfully taken with seventeen prisoners and one machine gun before noon. More prisoners of the Kaiser Karl Regiment were also taken but the Battalion had insufficient men to be able to send them back. Unfortunately, in the face of strong opposition by the enemy the men had to withdraw to their old positions after being counter-attacked three times. Casualties were serious and included Captain A Fairbairns¹³⁴ and Second Lieutenant J A Lamb¹³⁵ and

four soldiers killed and nineteen Other Ranks wounded. Second Lieutenant H E L Priday and five Other Ranks were missing. Second Lieutenants G W Fricker and W Rosie with four Other Ranks were gassed. The War Diary records that *"the enemy appears to be withdrawing and four fires were observed near Lille."*

From 16 October the Battalion continuously moved forward through Le Belair, La Madeline and Flers, Forest Lille, Wilheems and Templeuve arriving there at 6.00pm on the 20th, undergoing shelling all the way but with no casualties reported. Having moved from Templeuve to Farm 'G' the Battalion remained here until 1 November taking part in training and also supplying fatigue parties for repairing, clearing roads and the filling in of shell holes. Singing and Boxing competitions were also held. Clearly, active service for the 13th Battalion was winding down and the awards of a Military Cross to Lieutenant W Fielden (later to be awarded a Bar), a DCM to Sergeant Turner and Military Medals to eleven Other Ranks on 6 November, prior to a move to the Chateau, when patrols reported the front clear of the enemy, was acknowledgement of the Battalion's part in the final advance to Victory.

On the signing of the Armistice the Battalion was at Velaines where the 59th Division was astride the Schelde to the north-east of Tournai. Between 15 and 21 November the Division moved to the south and south-east of Lille, moving again in December to the Noeux les Mines - Béthune area. On 10 December the Battalion, as part of the 178th Brigade, was transferred to Dunkirk to provide fatigue parties for the building of a Demobilisation Camp. This work continued until 13 September 1919 when the Battalion returned to England and was disbanded. Before this date two changes in command took place: on 1 May Lieutenant Colonel Hall handed over to Lieutenant Colonel A B Wayte DSO who, on 14 August, gave way to Lieutenant Colonel R J Colson¹³⁶ of the Hampshires, and it was he who took the 13th into its disbandment. From the Armistice to this date it is interesting to note that the Battalion received significant drafts from our Dukes' Battalions: 1/6th (212) on 11th December; 1/7th (two Officers and eighty-eight) on 11 February; 1/4th, 1/6th, 1/7th (248) on 28 February and finally thirteen Other Ranks from the 2nd Battalion on 13 April 1919. With the size of these figures it must be true to say that on disbandment the 13th Battalion would have been solidly manned by good Yorkshiremen from our own West Riding.

¹³⁴ A barrage was put up at 2000 to 2030 hours for the purpose of patrols bringing in bodies. Only Captain Fairbairns' was recovered. He was attached from the Yorkshire Regiment and is buried at Rue-David Military Cemetery, Fleurbaix.

¹³⁵ Attached from West Yorkshire Regiment. Buried at Ration Farm Military Cemetery, La Chapelle-D'Armentières.

¹³⁶ From the Iron Duke. *"On taking over command in 1919 Lt Col Colson discovered that a small boy aged about ten was attached to and living with the Battalion. He was a sort of Regimental mascot dressed up and called Sgt Major George Nicholson. Being faced with the alternative of leaving the boy with the French authorities dealing with lost children, or taking him home to England, Colonel Colson chose the latter course. On disbandment of the Battalion the boy was found a home with the parents of a Duke, named Trenholme, living at Thirsk. A fund was raised called the 'Mascot Nicholson' Fund and the boy was helped to become a naturalised British subject. He subsequently became a keen soldier in the Territorial Army (Green Howards)."*

CHAPTER VII

14th (Service) Battalion The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

This Battalion of the Regiment was in existence during the First World War only for a very short period of time - from 7 July 1918 to its disbandment on 3 November 1918. It was stationed at Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. No Diary or other records are held at RHQ, nor is it known what was its role.

It was formed from the 8th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment that had served in France with the 110th Brigade, a brigade composed entirely of Service Battalions of the Leicesters. The 8th Battalion and the other Battalions had been badly cut-up at the Battle of The Aisne in May 1918 causing, on 28 June, the 8th Battalion to be reduced to a Training Cadre. It was transferred to the 25th Division at Boulogne and then returned to England on 7 July. It was at that time officially re-designated the 14th Battalion West Riding Regiment. Correspondence with RHQ The Royal Leicestershire Regiment throws no light on this change of title and so the logic of such a radical re-designation from the Leicesters to the West Riding remains both unknown and can only to be wondered at!

CHAPTER VIII

Epilogue

Immediately after the Armistice was signed, on 11 November 1918, Field Marshal Earl Haig, Commanding the British Forces on the Western Front, obtained the consent of His Majesty The King and the approval of the Army Council for the presentation of Colours to each battalion under his command not already possessing them, in recognition of their services during the war. The issue was approved for the whole army, and owing to the expense involved, it was decided to issue a single silk Union flag. The War Office confirmed this in July 1919 with regulations for issue, at public expense, of a Silk Union flag:

“His Majesty The King has been graciously pleased to approve of the presentation of a Silk Union Flag to each Service, Young Soldier, Graduated and Garrison Battalion of the Regular Army; to each second and third line Territorial Force Battalion, to each Territorial Force unit which had served as Infantry, and which under its normal organisation is not entitled to a guidon or colours, and to each Battalion of Overseas Troops, Rifle Battalions excepted, which has served abroad during the War.”

These Silk Union flags are not regarded as Colours. The design was a simple one, being the Great Union with the regiment's territorial designation on a crimson circle, with the Royal or other title within, the whole surmounted by the Imperial Crown, the number of the battalion, in Roman numerals, to be placed in the upper dexter canton. To expedite this large-scale issue, the Silk Union flags were machine-made, and not handmade as is customary for issued Colours. Regiments were permitted to have their regimental distinctions embroidered upon them at regimental, rather than public, expense.

The pikes, as issued, were the old 'spear top' pattern rather than having the Sovereign's Crown on top, with a further economy being achieved by having no brass shoe cap. It was, however, made clear that they should be consecrated and be granted all the salutes and compliments to be paid to colours. As all the Service Battalions were disbanded at the end of the War it was required that the Silk Union flags should be laid up in an appropriate place relevant to the Battalion.

Silk Union flags were issued to the 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th and 13th (Service) Battalions; but not the 11th and 14th Battalions, as they had each not served as a unit overseas. Those of the 9th and 13th (Service) Battalions were consecrated and presented whilst the Battalions were still in France. On Saturday, 24 July 1920, at a special parade held at the Depot Barracks, Halifax, the Silk Union flags of the 8th, 10th and 12th (Service) Battalions were consecrated by the Venerable Archdeacon How and presented to

representative detachments of the Battalions by Lieutenant General Sir Herbert Belfield KCB KCMG KBE DSO, Colonel of the Regiment¹³⁷. Following the ceremony these Silk Union flags, and those of the 9th and 13th (Service) Battalions were laid up in Halifax Parish Church.

Thus, the Regiment's Service Battalions passed into history. But, let us not forget that, as war loomed in 1914, the raising of the Service Battalions in answer to the call from Lord Kitchener to raise four extra Armies, was a remarkable and unique moment in British military history. It reflected the patriotism, sense of duty and hope of that time. The many thousands that instantly answered the call, from all walks of life, nearly overwhelmed the organisation. The initial shortages of equipment, weapons, barrack accommodation and the necessary time for training were compounded, at the start, by the initial acute shortage of officers and NCOs. Yet, these problems were all overcome and the Battalions were soon in the front line, and this, despite the fact that Britain, unlike its allies, had no need for conscription until 1916, the third year of the War.

The original optimism of the officers and soldiers, coupled with their spirit, fortitude, bravery and comradeship shines through all the harrowing experiences narrated in each of the Battalion's chapters. The Service Battalions' hard-fought successes are reflected in the sheer number of Battle Honours¹³⁸ awarded to them and here it is appropriate to record the words of the Colonel of the Regiment in his Conclusion to Brigadier-General Bruce's History of The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (1st & 2nd Battalions). After wishing to direct attention to the services of the fourteen battalions - eight Territorial and six Service - he referred to the Service Battalions in the following words:

"Without the 8th Battalion we could not have claimed the Battle Honours of Thiepval, Langemarck 1917, Suwla, Scimitar Hill, Gallipoli 1915, Egypt 1916, or the Colour Honour of Landing at Suwla. Together with the 10th Battalion they gave us Messines 1917.

To the 9th Battalion we owe the Battle Honours of St Quentin, Amiens and Ep  hy, and with the 13th and 12th Battalions respectively they allowed us to claim Albert 1918 and Deville Wood.

We are indebted to our 10th Battalion for the Battle Honours of Morval, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Vittorio Veneto, Italy 1917-18 and the Colour Honour of Piave. To it together with the 8th, as mentioned above, we owe Messines 1917.

As a Labour Corps the opportunities of distinction by the 12th Battalion were limited, for it was ordinarily employed in detachments of less than half its strength - the official minimum on which to base a claim for an Honour. But without it and the 9th we should not have acquired Deville Wood.

The 13th Battalion was overseas for a very short time towards the close of the war. To it, conjointly with the 9th Battalion, we owe Albert 1918.

I hope that these few words, quite inadequate though they are, may serve as a constant reminder of the debt the Regiment owes to those who served for only a short time in its ranks, but who added to its distinction and proved themselves well worthy of its great traditions."

To be sure, the proud and extraordinarily brave record of the Service Battalions is one that the Regiment will never forget.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Sir Herbert was Colonel of the Regiment from August 1909 to January 1934 just short of 25 years.

¹³⁸ See Appendix 1.

¹³⁹ It is appropriate here to record that the 8th, 9th and 10th Battalions also served in World War II. The 8th as 145 Regiment RAC (8th DWR) in North Africa and Italy; the 9th as 146 Regiment RAC (9th DWR) in India, Burma and Sumatra. The 10th remained in the UK as a training and reinforcement battalion for the overseas battalions.

APPENDIX 1

The Great War

Battle Honours of the Service Battalions of The Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)

(Colour Honours distinguished by capitals)

(Source - Bruce's History of the Regiment)

YPRES 1917	8th, 9th, 10th	PIAVE	10th
SOMME 1916	8th, 9th, 10th, 12th	Vittorio Veneto	10th
SOMME 1918	9th	Italy 1917-1918	10th
Albert 1916	9th, 10th, 12th	Suvla	8th
Albert 1918	9th, 13th	LANDING AT SUVLA	8th
Bazentin	12th	Scimitar Hill	8th
Delville Wood	9th, 12th	Gallipoli 1915	8th
Morval	10th	Egypt 1916	8th
Thiepval	8th		
Ancre Heights	8th, 10th		
ARRAS 1917	9th, 12th		
Scarpe 1917	9th		
Messines 1917	8th, 10th		
Langemarck 1917	8th		
Menin Road	10th		
Polygon Wood	10th		
Poelcappelle	8th		
Passchendaele	8th, 9th		
CAMBRAI 1918	9th		
St Quentin	9th		
Amiens	9th		
Bapaume 1918	9th		
Hindenburg Line	8th		
Epéhy	9th		
Sambre	9th		
France & Flanders 1914-18	8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 13th		

APPENDIX 2

Captain Henry Kelly VC MC*

The following account gives further detail to the background of when the Victoria Cross was awarded to Henry Kelly of the 10th (Service) Battalion.

On 2 October 1916 the Germans counter attacked the Eaucourt position and the British failed to hold onto the village of Le Sars. The British recovered Eaucourt l'Abbaye the next day and on the 4th, Second Lieutenant H Kelly was to win the VC for extreme bravery during an attack against Le Sars.

Flers Support Trench naturally ran alongside Flers Trench and they both went in a south-easterly direction of the German held village of Le Sars, in front of Eaucourt l'Abbaye towards Flers. The two divisions involved in the fight for Le Sars were the 47th to the right and the 23rd to the left. On 4 October the 47th Division captured the rest of Flers Support without much opposition and then pushed on towards a position to the north-west of Eaucourt l'Abbaye. The 23rd, to the left of the 47th endeavoured to carry the section of Flers Support to the north of the Bapaume Road. The 10th Dukes of the 69th Brigade relieved the 8th KOYLI (70th Brigade) on the afternoon of 2 October. The relief was very much delayed, owing to congestion in the trenches, and was not completed until dawn of the 3rd. The *Iron Duke*¹⁴⁰ suggests that the action for which Kelly was decorated actually took place on the 3rd and not the 4th October, stating that the action took place as part of a 'small operation, preliminary to the battle of Le Sars.' The history of the 23rd Division describes the action as follows:

"But as a preliminary to this big attack the GOC 69th Brigade determined to endeavour to improve his position by two small operations, designed to capture the portion of Flers 2 still held by the enemy, and a short length of Flers 1 to the south of the Bapaume Road, in which the enemy had obtained a footing.

On the evening of 3 October, following artillery preparations, two small companies of the 10th Duke of Wellington's attacked Flers 2 north of the Bapaume Road, while a party of the 8th Yorkshire Regiment carried out a simultaneous bombing attack against the enemy in Flers 1.

To gain their objective the Duke of Wellington's had but 100 yards to cross. But their advance lay across mud and mire of the most appalling description, and was met by a withering fire of rifles and machine guns. Following their leaders, among whom 2nd Lieutenants Stafford, Harris and Kelly were conspicuous in the example they set, the men pushed forward with the greatest gallantry and gained the enemy's wire. Here they were held up. To cross a greater distance in these conditions would have been scarcely possible,

¹⁴⁰ Volume VIII, No 23, October 1932 - pp 198-200

but the distance of the assembly from the objective had been insufficient to enable the artillery to deal effectively with the wire. Stafford and Harris were killed and the attack broke down. The citation for Kelly's Victoria Cross was published on 25 November 1916 and reads:

For most conspicuous bravery in attack. He twice rallied his Company under the heaviest fire, and finally led the only three available men into the enemy trench, and there remained bombing until two of them had become casualties and enemy reinforcements had arrived. He then carried his Company Sergeant Major, who had been wounded, back to our trenches, a distance of 70 yards, and subsequently three other soldiers. He set a fine example of gallantry and endurance."

Henry Kelly was presented with his VC by HM King George V, at Buckingham Palace, on 14 February 1917.

Henry Kelly was born in Manchester on 10 July 1887. He was the eldest of a family of ten children to be born to Charles Kelly of Dublin and Jane (formerly McGarry) of Manchester. He went to St Patrick's School Manchester and the Xaverian Brothers' College, Victoria Park, Manchester. His father died in 1904 and Henry was left as head of the family and became a sorting clerk at Newton Street Post Office in Manchester. He trained with the Manchester Royal Engineers Territorials and later left his home in King Street, Moston, Manchester and enlisted in the Cameron Highlanders as a Private on 5 September 1914. He was 27 years of age. He transferred to the Manchester Regiment and gained his first stripe before becoming a Sergeant Major two weeks later. He was commissioned on 12 May 1915 into the 10th Duke of Wellington's and went overseas to France in the same month. On 11 September 1916 he was made a Temporary Lieutenant. After he had won the VC in October 1916 his Corps Commander decorated him with the ribbon of the VC.

In 1917 he was present at the battle for Messines Ridge (6 June 1917) and at the Menin Road in September as part of the Third Battle of Ypres and was made a Temporary Captain on 21 September. In 1918 he was involved in the fighting in Italy at the Asiago Plateau and gained the Military Cross for his role in a raid on the enemy trenches during the night of 21/22 June. A few months later he gained a bar to his MC in an attack on the Austrian positions across the River Piave on 27 October.

By the end of the war Kelly was to become one of the most decorated officers of the war and in addition to gaining the Victoria and Military Cross he was also awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre and the French Médaille Militaire. He left the army in January 1920 having been promoted to the rank of Temporary Major. In 1936 he took part in the Spanish Civil War and was awarded yet another medal, the Grand Laurelled Cross of San Fernando. In World War II he served briefly as a Lieutenant in the Cheshire Regiment. He died on 18 January 1960 in Manchester after a long illness aged 73.

Truly an outstanding soldier of the Regiment.

APPENDIX 3

Sergeant Arnold Loosemore VC DCM

The details of the action in which Private Arnold Loosemore won his VC are sparse except, as recounted in Chapter I, it occurred during the 8th Battalion's contribution of a minor attack, preparatory to a further push onto Langemarck. However, this minor action was memorable for the courage and bravery displayed by the 21-year old Loosemore. It is now recognised that the action took place on 11 August and not 10 August as erroneously entered in the War Diary in a brief pencilled note:

"Attack by Y and Z Companies on strongpoints west of Steenbeck (Langemarck). Positions held to 4.00pm but forced to withdraw owing to heavy MG fire, a large superior force of enemy and strength of their positions."

The central figure in this attack (or 'stunt' as described by CSM Miles) was Loosemore, a Lewis gunner in 12 Platoon and one of fifty men from Y Company assigned the task of capturing a German blockhouse known as Wellington Farm. The attack went in at daybreak and CSM Miles recounted Loosemore's action to his company officer, 2nd Lieutenant E Wood, a Sheffield man like Loosemore, who gathered eye-witness statements to support the VC recommendation. Included among them was the testimony of Sergeant S L Ridgeway, another member of 12 Platoon, who described how Loosemore held off 'a great number' of the enemy, enabling the company to consolidate 'in front of the Boche wire':

"He displayed great courage when attacked by a party of German bombers who put his Lewis gun out of action. He then threw two German stick bombs at the said bombers and, using his revolver, he killed four Germans and when he came in to where our company had dug in under heavy machine gun fire he brought out a wounded comrade. During the day, while we still held to our new position, he sniped off five of the enemy's men."

To Loosemore's parents Ridgeway wrote: "He wrought havoc amongst them, scattering them right and left, saving many of our lives ... Not only has he proved himself a soldier, but one of England's bravest soldiers." Ridgeway was not alone in believing that Loosemore's stand had averted disaster. Sergeant A Rossiter wrote:

"The work which he did after having his machine gun blown up, and the number of men he had been able to account for, is simply marvellous ... everybody is extremely delighted with him. The officers from the commanding officer cannot praise him enough, and officers of other companies also think the world of him."

It was a view confirmed by 2nd Lieutenant Wood in a letter to Loosemore's parents, in which he described their son as "the bravest lad I have ever seen" and said "his magnificent gallantry undoubtedly saved the whole of his company." Such claims were

not exaggerated. After two members of his section had been killed beside him, Loosemore had fought with every means at his disposal - machine gun, bomb, rifle and revolver - to thwart a determined counter-attack that appeared to many as though it must succeed. He accounted for about twenty of the enemy, as well as a number of snipers. Miraculously he emerged unscathed from the episode.

On 14 September 1917 the *London Gazette* announced the award of the Victoria Cross to No. 15805 Private Arnold Loosemore. His citation read:

"For most conspicuous bravery and initiative during the attack on a strongly held enemy position south of Langemarck, Flanders on 11 August 1917. His platoon having been checked by heavy machine gun fire, he crawled through partially-cut wire, dragging his Lewis gun with him, and single handed dealt with a strong party of the enemy killing about twenty of them, and thus covering the consolidation of the position taken up by his platoon. Immediately afterwards his Lewis gun was blown up by a bomb, and three of the enemy rushed for him, but he shot them all with his revolver.

Later, he shot several enemy snipers, exposing himself to heavy fire each time. On returning to the original post he also brought back a wounded comrade under heavy fire at the risk of his life. He displayed throughout an utter disregard of danger."

He was decorated by HM King George V at Buckingham Palace on 2 January 1918 and the following day the people of Sheffield honoured him when a crowd of 2,000 gathered at the Town Hall for a civic ceremony. By this time Loosemore had been promoted to the rank of Sergeant and he was accompanied by his father and two of his six serving brothers. At the end Loosemore merely called on the crowd to 'give three cheers for the wounded and our fellows at the front.'

He went back to the 8th Battalion but when the Battalion was disbanded in February he was one of the two officers and fifty Other Ranks posted to the 1/4th Dukes in the 49th Division. In June the Battalion went into the line in the Zillebeke sector and it was here that Loosemore again distinguished himself. During a raid on the night of 19/20 June when 350 men rushed the enemy positions, resulting in bringing back eleven prisoners and a light machine gun, Loosemore was awarded the DCM for his part in the action. His citation read:

"When out with a fighting patrol he displayed conspicuous gallantry and powers of leadership when his officer was wounded and the platoon scattered by hostile bombs. He rallied the men and brought them back in order with all the wounded to our lines. On a subsequent occasion he handled his platoon with great skill and a complete disregard of his own danger under heavy machine gun fire, and it was owing to his determination and powers of leadership that the platoon eventually captured the enemy post which they were attacking."

It was later, while the 1 /4th Dukes were assigned the task of capturing a ridge in front of Villers-en-Cauchies, at the southern end of the Ypres sector, that Loosemore was seriously wounded in both legs. His life was saved, but it was necessary to amputate his left leg. It was a bitter end to an exceptional war record. A public fund was launched

by the Lord Mayor of Sheffield and £1,000 was invested on his behalf and he took up a photography business; this after a failed venture in chicken farming. The Rotary Club supplied him with a large hut at the rear of his house from where he worked. He married in 1920 but, by 1924 his health had deteriorated and he died of tuberculosis on 10 April 1924, aged 27. He was buried with full military honours at Eccleshall Church with crowds lining the streets. Some fifteen months later, his former Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel A L Mowatt DSO MC ¹⁴¹ unveiled a memorial tablet in St Andrew's Church, Sharrow, dedicated to the young soldier's memory.

Arnold Loosemore was a pupil of Clifford School, Psalter Lane, Sheffield and thus, when St Andrew's Church was condemned in 1998, his memorial tablet was presented to his old school at a ceremony in 1990 presided over by Lieutenant Colonel G A Kilburn MBE then the Commanding Officer of 3rd Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding) (TA).¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Served 1/4th Battalion from 1915. Wounded near Fleurbaix 1915. 2IC from October 1916 to June 1918. Commanded June 1918 to June 1919 when demobilised.

¹⁴² *Iron Duke* No 240, Autumn 1999 p 73. As a result of this ceremony it came to light that Loosemore had a son, then aged 77, also called Arnold, who had served in the Royal Engineers.

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Mr B P Gerke
Mr M Grainge
Brigadier J B K Greenway CBE
Ms J E M Gul
Brigadier N St J Hall
Mr P Hall
Major R J Hall
Mr R Hanson
Mr C M R Hardy
Major D L J Harrap
Mr G Hawkins
Dr E Heeley
Mr J Hemmings
Major R Heron
Mr G Hill
Lieutenant Colonel P T Hirst
Mr R Holroyd BEM
General Sir Charles Huxtable KCB CBE DL
Mr G C Irving
Mr M P Isles
Major General D E Isles CB OBE DL

Lieutenant Colonel T J Isles OBE
Major R H Jago
Mr G Kemp
Mr R P T Kendall
Mr A J Kenyon
Mr R N Kerry
Colonel G A Kilburn MBE
Mr C E Kilner
Mr D M King
Major S H Kirk MBE
Lieutenant Colonel H S Le Messurier
Captain P Lee
Colonel M A Lodge
Captain G Long
Lieutenant Colonel T D Lupton
Mr H Mann
Canon R I J Matthews TD
Major K M McDonald TD DL
Major C D Miller
Captain T Moore
Mr R Morgan
Mr D Mounsey
Brigadier W R Mundell OBE
Major J M Newton
Mr A Nicholl
Lieutenant Colonel T J Nicholson
Mr C North
Mr J North
Major R C O'Connor
Mr R Owers ISM
Mr T E Pardon
Mr R Parkes
Mr J Parkinson
Mr R C Percy
WO2 G Perrin
Mr K M Pickles
Mr C J H Quest
Mr F M Rawson

Dr J M Reddington
Mr P Redman
Mr D V Riley
Mr J R C Roberts
Major J W Roberts
Lieutenant Colonel W Robins OBE
Mr L W Rusby
Mr J E Sargeant
Captain The Lord Savile
Mr J Scroby
Mr B Searson
Mr C B Sherratt
Mr R Slater
Mr R J D Spence
Captain S J Stewart
Brigadier M J Stone
Mr M Strauss
Mr M C Sutcliffe
Major B W Sykes MBE
Mr D Talbot
Mr P F H Taylor
Mr P R Taylor
Mr S Thompson
Mr M Thomson
Lieutenant Colonel R A Tighe MBE
Mr J A Toplis BEM
Mr J Urwin
Mr J W Vaughan
Brigadier E J W Walker OBE DL
Major J R A Ward
Major General Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter KCVO OBE
Mr D I Whitehead
Captain J Wilson
Mrs V Wilson
Major M I Winspear TD
Major N M B Wood
Mr D Woolley