

A SOCIAL AND MILITARY HISTORY
OF THE 1/8TH BATTALION,
THE ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT,
IN THE GREAT WAR

by

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Introduction

The Problem

This work examines the social and military development of the 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, in the Great War. It covers the period from the unit's formation, in 1908, to the end of the war and will embrace both a sociological analysis of the unit's members and an operational analysis of its tactical evolution.

Extensive use has been made of both archival and published sources. The former include letters and diaries held in public collections, as well as the war diaries, medal rolls and service papers held at the Public Record Office (PRO), Kew. Local newspapers have also been widely consulted.

One of the major problems in approaching a work such as this has been the validity of studying a single battalion. The battalion was the unit to which its members most closely related. They knew in which battalion they were serving and the names of their senior officers. They may also have known the brigade and division to which their battalion belonged; the relevant corps and army, however, would have meant little to the individual soldier. In truth these latter two were organisations that existed mainly on paper; in reality, they amounted to little more than a commander and his, surprisingly small, staff. Armies and corps held a portion of the front line with a degree of permanency. Divisions were rotated

into, and out of, these formations with regularity. Divisions and brigades of the Territorial Force were built upon regional allegiances, many of them predating the formation of the force itself. There were links between many of the battalions within a division and there was a pride in the achievements of those units. By the summer of 1916 many men began wearing divisional badges, thereby increasing their knowledge and pride.

The division was the basic fighting unit in the Great War. It had its own infantry, artillery, engineers, cavalry, pioneers, medical units and supply organisation. The brigade was an intermediate level of command that created flexibility and relief. In action, units fought as part of a division. The battalion was simply a part of the division; its importance was never more than simply being a part of the division. Battalions of various brigades could fight side by side, or one brigade could support another of a different division. Battalions could be split, by company, some fighting, some resting, some supporting another battalion or brigade. The permutations were endless. This leaves the study of the battalion in a precarious position. Is the fighting efficiency of the battalion being studied, or is it a part of a division?

At the start of the war whole battalions, four rifle companies supported by two machine-guns, could, and would, be committed to attack or defence. During the course of the war the army, and with it, the battalion, evolved considerably.

The number of men in a battalion was reduced; specialists were posted into machine-gun companies and trench mortar batteries; others became bombers, rifle grenadiers or Lewis gunners. Increasingly, the battalion as a whole became less important, tactically, as the importance of the company and platoon increased. The firepower available to a company, or platoon, commander in 1918 far outweighed that of the battalion commander of 1914.

One point needs emphasising at this stage. The infantry did not fight the war alone. Most importantly, from a tactical point of view, was the artillery. During the course of the war the Royal Artillery increased in size to such an extent that, in 1918, there were as many officers in the corps as there had been in the whole of the Army of 1914. They served a number of guns and fired a quantity of shells that were unimaginable to the army of 1914. The artillery's technical prowess progressed to the point that, in 1918, it was a highly efficient and professional, killing machine. Technological advances, wedded to professional development allowed the artillery to deliver the infantry safely onto a dazed enemy without rendering useless, or impassable, the enemy's positions. Any study of the infantry, in isolation, does not give the deserved attention to the role of the artillery.

The problem, therefore, is one of scale and degree. Whilst the men were part of a battalion and, no doubt, took pride in it, when they were deployed in

action it was a different story. Increasingly they were scattered, used in smaller packets, separated in time and distance from their colleagues. On balance, the justification for the study of a single battalion lies in the fact that, no matter how well planned an operation, no matter how well supported, the crucial moment of attack depended upon the discipline of the members of the battalion. A poor battalion could ruin the best of plans. A good battalion could rescue a weak plan. It may well be that the ability of the men to perform, and to do so successfully, under such conditions is a more fitting testimony to the ability and esprit-de-corps of the battalion as a whole.

Archive Sources

Crucial to this work has been an examination of war diaries, from corps level to the battalion, held in the PRO, in class WO/95. All of them suffer from the same, inherent, problem. The purpose of the war diary was, firstly, to record the work of the unit on a day-to-day basis and, secondly, to record matters of intelligence. Compilation of the war diary was the responsibility of the adjutant. At the start of the war the adjutant was a senior officer, often the most senior captain. In a Territorial battalion the adjutant was an attached, regular, officer. Remarkably quickly, that responsibility frequently fell to a junior subaltern.¹

¹ Prior to the war Captain G.C. Sladen, The Rifle Brigade, was adjutant to the Battalion. By the summer of 1916 Second Lieutenant S.H. Anstey held the post. He had only been commissioned from the ranks in January 1916.

Each adjutant approached the task differently. Some recorded everything, others very little. When units were busy the war diary was often left to one side, to be completed later. When casualties were high there was, very often, more important work to be done and so the war diary was again left. More significantly, high casualties often meant there was no one in a position to provide the necessary information. War diaries are, therefore, an unknown quantity, ranging in quality from a veritable gold mine to a turgid listing of postings.

Despite this weakness, the war diaries remain an important source. Many items are to be found in them that are not found elsewhere. Each level of command adds something to the information, either in interpretation, or fact. The different levels of planning are clearly evident in orders and appendices. No two units ever appear to have kept copies of the same document. By examining them all, a clearer picture usually emerges.

When looking at the men of the Battalion there are a number of sources that provide background information. The most accessible are the registers of the dead from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It is harder to discover information about the survivors and it is, therefore, necessary to consult wider sources. For this, newspapers are a rich source, often providing biographical information. The rolls of the Absent Voters' List, prepared in

February 1918 for the general election later that year, supplement this with details of addresses of soldiers. Occasionally, the *London Gazette* gives incidental information about an individual, such as town of residence.

The medal rolls, drawn up after the war, are an important source of information. They not only evidence entitlement to medals but can also show the history of a soldier's service. The number of battalions, or even regiments, in which a man served can be ascertained from this source. The 1914, and the 1914-15, Star rolls also detail dates of landing in France as well as a date of death, discharge or disembodiment. The Silver War Badge confirms date of, and reason for, discharge, as well as enlistment. Information from these rolls can also be cross-referenced with the information in the indices of the Field General Courts Martial. Statistical analysis of the data provided from these sources allows work to be completed on survival rates and discipline levels, for example.

The bare facts of a man's service can, therefore, often be collected. More personal details can be found in letters and diaries. The archives of the Imperial War Museum and the Regimental Museum at Warwick have been used for this purpose. During the Great War, men were writing home at an unprecedented rate. Disappointingly, much of what they wrote is impossible to use, concentrating as it does on peripheral subjects and being designed, on the whole, to reassure those at home. Understandably, men did not want to burden

their loved ones with the horrors and problems of the war, and so sought to divert attention by concentrating upon trivia. By these means, the men also kept a part of their lives separate from the war, immersed in the minutiae of home life.

Another major source at the PRO is the collection of officers' service records. The records, which are incomplete, are a veritable lucky dip. Consisting, as they do, of letters and reports that were filed together because there was nowhere else for them to be filed, they consist chiefly of medical board reports, the execution of wills and post-war letters seeking some form of redress. Their usefulness, in the context of this thesis, can, therefore, be quite limited.

Published Sources

Since the end of the Great War a debate has taken place concerning both the competence of the British commanders and the soldiers they led. Immediately following the war a large number of histories appeared concerning the service of both battalions and regiments, though the latter were more common. Examples of these are the anonymous *History of the 1/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* (1922) and the *History of the Post Office Rifles* (1919), together with Charles Carrington's *War Record of the 1/5th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* (1922). These tended to be straightforward narratives of the events in which the relevant battalions were involved. Frequently, they contained lists of the fallen, as well as of those who were decorated for gallantry.

These records served a purpose in acting as memorials for the fallen as well as informing relatives, and the public at large, of what had been done.

At the same time as these histories were being produced the *Official History* started to appear. In all, fourteen volumes of text were produced on the history of the Western Front alone. These volumes continued to be produced after the Second World War. They are an essential source, although they have to be used carefully. There are frequent contradictions between the *Official History* and the relevant war diaries, especially over times and extents of advances. The reader is frequently left wondering where some of the information came from.

In the dark, hard days that followed the euphoria of victory, the mood of the times changed and books such as Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* (1929) appeared. The competence of the higher command began to be questioned. In recent years this debate became polarised between those such as Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (1961), and Denis Winter, *Haig's Command* (1991) and John Terraine, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (), *The Smoke and the Fire* (1980) and *White Heat: the New Warfare 1914-18* (1982). In the former books the abilities of the officers, especially Haig, was called into question. Winter even went so far as to suggest that Haig doctored his diaries to hide the truth. Terraine championed the cause of the officers arguing that technology had

proceeded at such a pace as to make the leader's task very difficult indeed. Haig, though, had learned valuable lessons and led the Army to ultimate victory. This debate has continued to the present with the recent publication of Brian Bond and Nigel Cav'es *Haig. A reappraisal 70 years On* (eds) (1999). This collection of essays tends towards the revisionist point of view.

Other debates have emerged in recent years, one of them concerning which troops were the most successful, 'Colonial British', or 'Imperial British', troops and how far each of them had contributed to success. The former are championed by Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground* (1987) and *How the War Was Won* (1992). He argued that the British troops showed a reluctance to learn and to adopt to modern, technological, warfare and that the High Command did not play a large part in securing victory. Shane Schreiber, in *Shock Army of the British Empire* (1997), argued that the Canadians played a significant part, whilst admitting that the nature of their force allowed them to do so. These advantages included the fact that it was a comparatively large, homogenous force that was well led. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, in *Command on the Western Front* (1992), examined the role of the Fourth Army commander, Sir Henry Rawlinson. They concluded that he did not always learn the correct lessons from his battles and that by the end of the war higher commanders were playing a smaller role, becoming more like co-ordinators than leaders.

These authors have been countered by others such as Andy Simpson. In *The Evolution of Victory* (1995), he examined the increasing sophistication of planning in the British Army as well as the British use of weaponry. He contended that the British were not as far behind the Germans as some would allege. These views were taken up and expanded by Paddy Griffith in *Battle Tactics of the Western Front* (1994) and *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (ed) (1996). Griffith argued that the British Army, as a whole, was more than willing to embrace new technology and that it also pioneered stormtroop tactics, rather than learning from the Germans. Peter Simkins, also in *British Fighting Methods in the Great War*, put forward the view that many British divisions enjoyed as good a fighting record as the Dominion troops and, therefore, played as large a role in victory. They achieved this by highly co-ordinated all-arms attack, and small unit tactics.

Whilst this debate had been raging, other themes have emerged over the last few years, one of these being the personal accounts of the participants. Led by Martin Middlebrook in *First Day on the Somme* (1971), this approach is best typified by the works of Lyn Macdonald, including *They Called it Passchendaele* (1978) and *Somme* (1983). This approach has proved very popular, especially with the 'Pals' series of books, as typified by Terry Carter's *Birmingham Pals* (1997). These latter books offer a wealth of information about the men who joined locally raised battalions, backed up by lots of photographs and personal

reminiscences. By including evidence of the soldiers' backgrounds they thereby tap into another vein of work, the sociological histories. These books look at the social background of the British Army and its individual men, rather than tactics and command. Its exponents are Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson in *A Nation in Arms* (1990) and Peter Simkins in *Kitchener's Army* (1988).

During the last ten years there has been a great deal written about the men, almost exclusively of the middle-class, who enlisted in the heady days of September 1914 into the locally raised battalions of the midlands and north. These men were recruited on the promise that, as they either lived or worked together, they could serve together. The units they formed became known as Pals battalions. To a large extent they have come to symbolise what the public at large would refer to as the lost generation. They represent the waste and the futility of the whole conflict. Their sacrifice, especially in the summer of 1916, encapsulates all that was wrong with the British Army.

That this view is fundamentally wrong can be shown by reference to the fact that it excludes the Regular Army, the Territorial Force and the New Armies. The men who joined these units were of a different character from the Pals.

Overwhelmingly, the men of the Regular Army were of the lower working class, what John Baynes has termed, the real low class. These men could not

find regular employment and turned to the Army for want of anything better. To a large extent the same sort of men initially joined the Service Battalions being formed as a result of Lord Kitchener's appeal. It was their patriotic and timely response which shamed other classes of society in those early days of 1914.

Different again, were the men of the Territorial Force. The majority of these men came from settled, skilled employment. These men had a regular wage, social stability and social responsibility. These were the men who, long before the call to arms, gave up their time to train for just such an eventuality. It is worth pointing out that Lieutenant Colonel Sir John Barnsley, chief recruiting officer to the City of Birmingham, and a leading Territorial, issued a call directly to the working class men of the city to join the second-line Territorial units then being formed in 1915. These men were to show the middle-classes that they could also do their bit.

One of the major sources regarding the social background of the Battalion was Carl Chinn's *Homes for People* (1991). This book is a history of council-provided housing in Birmingham. It contains much information on the growth of the city, the type of housing in the suburbs and the sociological problems present at times in the city's history. It is not a political history but it does concentrate on the conditions facing the city's inhabitants. It enables a view to

be formed, based upon the home districts of the soldiers, as to the social standing of the men of the Territorial Force. For the politics surrounding the expansion of the city, it is necessary to turn to Asa Briggs' book *A History of Birmingham* (1952). The second volume of this work deals with the political battles, both national and local, which surrounded this issue. Inevitably, there is a great deal of attention paid to the role of the major families of this era, especially the Chamberlain dynasty.

Another useful source in this context is W.H. Bowater's *Birmingham City Battalions' Book of Honour* (1919). Ostensibly, this book was written to honour the Pals battalions, yet over half the work is dedicated to the rolls of honour of many local companies whose men served. The drawback is that many of the men do not have their regiment credited in the text. It is, therefore, necessary to cross-reference the entries with lists of men who served. It is an unexpectedly useful source, providing a large amount of information on the men's social background.

Newspapers have also been consulted. The *Birmingham Daily Post* and its Saturday sister, the *Birmingham Weekly Post*, enable useful biographical details to be obtained about the men who fought. These details were provided by family members, so, whilst the information regarding them as people can probably be relied upon, the same cannot be said of the facts about them as

soldiers. A certain amount of scepticism has, therefore, to be exercised about parts of the entries.

Related to the above sources are the printed diaries. There are two such sources of direct relevance to this work. Firstly, *The Fateful Battle Line* (1993), edited by Michael Glover, is the work of a schoolteacher who enlisted in the 1/7th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Henry Ogle served in the ranks and recorded his experiences in both text and sketches. In truth, it is a disappointing work, in terms of a lack of writing about battle and other specifically military detail, but does contain some pithy comments about how low the Territorial soldier felt his status to be. More importantly, Edwin Vaughan's *Some Desperate Glory* (1985), is an excellent source that reveals the life of a junior subaltern in an infantry battalion. Vaughan seems to have been remarkably candid, revealing how bad a state his own reputation was within the battalion. He also confesses that, frequently, he did not have a clue as to what was expected of him, or what he was supposed to do. He portrays the horror of commanding men in battle, but also gives excellent insights into how the tension was relieved off duty, with copious references, not only to drink, but also to numerous practical jokes. Of strategy and tactics there are none, but there is much on the personal responsibility of the junior officer.

For the chapter on discipline, the works available are rather limited in scope in that they all concentrate on the emotive issue of the death sentence. Anthony Babington started the work in this field with his book *For the Sake of Example* (1985). He examined the trials of those men executed and raised doubts as to the validity of some of the proceedings. His work was later expanded by Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes in *Shot at Dawn* (1989). They named all the executed men, for the first time, and again cast doubt on the conduct of the trials. Not until the recent publication of the works by Gerard Oram, *Death Sentences* (1998) and *Worthless Men* (1998) has the debate been expanded in any way. Oram's first work included all those men who were sentenced to death, and not just those who were executed. He has tried to find reasons for the high number of proceedings, claiming firstly that death sentences increased greatly prior to the launching of offensives and, secondly, that the Irish and social misfits suffered disproportionately. Until now, no work has been carried out on the vast number of courts-martial where a death sentence was not passed.

There is an even greater paucity of work on the subject of gallantry. There are many catalogues of the various awards but little, or no, work appears to have been conducted into the reasons behind the awards.

It appears to be taken for granted that the war was fought by young men, boys even. David Ascoli, in *The Mons Star* (1981), paints a picture of the 1914 army being very young yet, at the same time, remarks that nearly two-thirds of some units going to France consisted of reservists. By their very nature, reservists would not have been young. The Official Historian also remarks that the army of 1918 was young. However, once again, little specific work appears to have been done to test these statements. Colin Fox and his colleagues at the University of Reading do, at least, address the issue in the final volume of their work on the Kitchener battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, *Their Duty Done* (1998). They examine the ages of soldiers who died, by rank, by year and by battalion. They, too, conclude that the army of 1918 was young.

A recently published book is Peter Caddick-Adams' *By God They Can Fight!* (1998). It is unusual in that it is the history of a brigade, in this case, the 143rd. This gives a different perspective on unit histories of the Great War as well as containing much work on the origins of the Battalion and the strenuous exertions of its commander, Walter Ludlow. At the top of the hierarchical scale comes M. Kincaid-Smith's *The 25th Division* (1920). This is a superbly detailed history. Its descriptions of battles give due regard to the performance of individual battalions and, importantly, contain sections on the work of all the supporting arms in the division. In addition, the author provides details, albeit brief, of virtually all awards for gallantry to the men of the division.

K.W. Mitchinson's *Gentlemen and Officers* (1995) is the story of the elitist, London Rifle Brigade. With unparalleled access to original battalion documents, the author is able to chart accurately the demise of the territorial nature of this battalion. He examines the effect that the battles had on the composition of the battalion and how the survivors strove to maintain morale and the esprit-de-corps. It is particularly interesting to note how the newcomers to the battalion were willing to adopt regimental traditions, although they would have meant very little to them. It suffers, however, in that the author so obviously has intimate knowledge of the men about whom he is writing; it occasionally happens that he assumes the same level of knowledge in his readers.

In vogue at the moment are collections of essays and this work makes use of three such compilations. One comes from the partnership of Peter Liddle and Hugh Cecil, *Facing Armageddon* (1996); another from Peter Liddle alone, *Passchendaele in Perspective* (1997). Both volumes are thematic and contain some excellent pieces of work. The latter, obviously, concentrates on many aspects of the Third Battle of Ypres. Another collection comes from Paddy Griffith, in the form of *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (1996). If anything, the volume is badly named as only part of it is concerned with such material. Once again, though, the contributions are of great value.

Structure

The thesis is divided into three parts and eight chapters. Of the eight chapters three deal with the performance of the battalion in action. The first of these covers the period up to, and including, 1 July 1916; the second from 2 July 1916 until 15 June 1918; and the final one, from September to November 1918. There is one battle chapter in each of the three parts.

The structure of the first battle chapter is based upon the ideas of Tony Ashworth and his 'live and let live' system, in *Trench Warfare* (1980). This allows a view to be obtained about the level of activity of a battalion, to see whether it was prepared to accept passively the status quo, or whether it actively engaged the enemy and took the fight into, and across, No-Man's-Land. The activities of sniping, gathering intelligence and patrolling, raiding and taking part in battle are examined.

The second battle chapter follows a similar pattern to the first, examining the themes of drafts, training and working parties, patrolling and raiding and battle. This enables the full life of a battalion in France to be examined. How its time was divided up, how often it performed certain tasks and how it prepared for the next attack. It thereby gives due credence to the fact that battle was only a small part of a soldier's life.

The final battle chapter uses the methodology of Peter Simkins when he looked at the success of the British divisions in the Hundred Days of 1918. Therefore, failed attacks, unopposed success, limited gains and opposed success are the headings under which this chapter has been organised. These three approaches ensure that there is no chronological narrative; despite the fact that the last chapter of this type seems to have been written in a chronological order, this was not the case.

The remaining five chapters are thematic in nature. The first deals with the roots of the battalion in the Volunteer Force and the raising of the Battalion in 1908, comparing the experience in Aston and Birmingham with that of the rest of the country. It explores the background of the men joining the Battalion through an examination of the growth of the city of Birmingham and the sociological makeup of the various suburbs. The chapter concludes with research into the type of man posted to the Battalion during the course of the war, based on casualty details and medal rolls, and how the Territorial element was greatly diluted.

The disciplinary record of the Battalion is examined by using the courts-martial records. These have been compared to the remainder of the regiment, the brigade and another line regiment. The records have been used to ascertain the seriousness of breaches of discipline, their frequency and whether there were

links between such breaches and the Battalion being in action. The issue of different levels of discipline between Regular, New Army and Territorial battalions has also been examined.

In Part Two, the gallantry record of the Battalion is examined. The numbers of awards are looked at and compared with the record of the Regiment and the rest of the Army. It is, therefore, possible to examine how successful the Battalion was. The citations for the various awards have been examined to identify themes in the manner of awards. Thus, different types of gallantry have been identified, whether based upon a one-off example of bravery or the consistent display of good work and courage over a longer period.

The age of soldiers of the Regiment is investigated, by examining the age at which soldiers died. This has been compared to the age at death of another regiment. Various trends are examined in which the average ages in each year of the war are compared to gain a picture of the ageing of the Army. The issues of the effect of conscription are looked at, with particular reference to the last year of the war. The arrival of the very young soldier in 1918 is also examined, together with the lesser-known fact that conscription also brought older soldiers to the front in 1918.

The final chapter deals with the fate of the original men who sailed to France in March 1915. Much has been written about how the Old Contemptibles of 1914 fared; of how they were wiped out and how the 'cream' of the British Army was lost in a few, tragic weeks. This chapter follows the progress of the Territorials to see how their level of sacrifice compared. Noted too, is the pace at which the turnover within a battalion occurred, with obvious consequences for training and efficiency.

Chapter One

“To the Sound of the Rolling Drum”

On 1 January 1906 R.B. Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, issued his ‘Preliminary Memorandum’ in which he stated that an adequate reserve was necessary to reinforce an Expeditionary Force. One month later he had the first tentative idea that led to the creation of the Territorial Force.¹ In April 1906 he issued his ‘Fourth Memorandum’ in which he stated that he wished to move on from the home defence basis of the Volunteers, to a partially trained second reserve for the Expeditionary Force. This reserve would have its training intensified in the first few months of a war, safe behind the shield of the Royal Navy.² In May he held meetings with Volunteer and Yeomanry leaders, who, although they did not initially welcome the proposals, were soon won over.³ By November, Haldane was talking of a force of 300,000 men.⁴ By 25 February 1907 the matter had been introduced to Parliament in the Army Estimates, quickly followed by The Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill of 4 March 1907: the Militia was to be scrapped, being replaced by seventy-four battalions of Special Reserve and the creation of the Territorial Force. However, a crucial change had occurred in the final week: now, the Territorial Force was to be a home

¹ P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army. The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-16* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 9.

² Ibid, p. 10. In the event he got a mixture of the two; a partially trained home defence force that could, and did, volunteer to serve overseas after training.

³ Ibid, p. 11.

⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

defence force, whilst at the same time allowing individuals to volunteer for foreign service.¹ The Bill received Royal Assent on 2 August 1907 and the force was to come into being on 1 April 1908. “At the end of the day the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act, like the creation of the expeditionary force, was shaped as much by political expediency as by foresight or clear and scientific thought about military requirements.”²

“To the sound of the rolling drum, the shrill call of the fife and all the pomp and circumstance of military ceremonial, England’s volunteers passed out of action last night, and the new Territorial Army was born.”³ Thus the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, came into being on 1 April 1908, in the Victoria Hall, Aston, with the passing of the Volunteer Force. It was not, however, a completely new force, wholly devoid of military experience. Of its eight companies, two had been transferred from the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Regiment when this unit became the 7th Battalion. Of these companies, one was based at the Dunlop Rubber Company and the other at St Peter’s College, Saltley, a teacher training college that was to give the Battalion a slightly different complexion from that which its otherwise working class character would suggest.

¹ Ibid, p. 14.

² Ibid, p. 16

³ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 April 1908.

The Battalion was to draw its recruits from Aston, Erdington, Sutton Coldfield and Castle Bromwich. Aston and Erdington were not to become part of Birmingham until 1911; Sutton Coldfield had always sent its volunteer soldiers into the 1st Volunteer Battalion, The South Staffordshire Regiment, until this unit was disbanded, upon the formation of the Territorial Force. Indeed, feelings in Sutton Coldfield ran very high over this issue and the *Birmingham Daily Post* carried the following story on 1 April:

The disbandment of the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment was marked by an unofficial ceremony at the Drill Hall, Handsworth, last night, when a dummy warrior representing a member of the regiment was buried with full military honours...at the close the "Last Post" was sounded and a volley fired over the grave.¹

The 8th Battalion was therefore of a slightly different character from its sister battalions in Birmingham, the 5th and 6th Battalions, based at Thorpe Street. Aston Town Council was very proud of having its own military unit and did its utmost to support it, though obviously not unanimously:

At yesterday's meeting of the members of the Aston Town Council the resolution adopted the previous evening at the Territorial Army meeting in the Victoria Hall came up for consideration...This resolution requested the Council to give consideration to the important question of allowing a fixed number of employees of the Corporation an extra week's holiday if they enlist in the 8th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment without any deduction of salary or wages for the time they are occupied in their military duties in the annual camp...Eventually the resolution was carried.¹

The task of raising the new battalion fell to Colonel Walter Ludlow, a surveyor from Solihull, who had been Commanding Officer (CO) of the 1st

¹ Ibid.

Volunteer Battalion for many years. As the 8th Battalion's original CO, Ludlow obviously wished to recruit up to strength as quickly as possible. The meeting at the Victoria Hall was an impressive start, "So eagerly did men press forward to enrol their names that the officers charged with the duty of registration had a task of the utmost difficulty."² Ludlow employed as many different means of recruiting as possible: parades were held when the men, in their walking out uniforms, marched through the streets with colours flying; social evenings were held but, most importantly, he cajoled the employers of the area to do their bit for the cause.

Ludlow introduced the idea to the town council of giving paid leave to its employees to attend camp and persuaded them to adopt it. He wrote to employers extolling the virtues and benefits of allowing their workforce to join: "the Force could instil into their workers the virtues of discipline, drill, duty, diligence, perseverance and patriotism".³ It is interesting to note that the Trades Union Congress urged its members to boycott the Territorial Force, in response to a belief that management was using the force to bolster traditional values of deference in the workforce.⁴ Evidently, the appeal went unheeded.

¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 April 1908.

² *Ibid*, 1 April 1908.

³ M.D.Blanch, *Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class 1899-1914*, (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1975), p. 261.

⁴ *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 6 September 1909.

Ludlow began planning for the future from the very start. He created a cadet section for approximately 400 boys. He acquired cadets from some unusual sources: three troops of boy scouts joined, en masse, following a rupture within the Scout movement in Birmingham. The split emerged over whether Scouts were civil or military in nature. These three troops evidently saw themselves as military.¹

Conditions of service for the Territorials were rigorous compared to the Volunteer Force. Recruits had to be aged between seventeen and thirty-five years and enlisted for a four-year term, at the end of which they could either leave or re-enlist; they could leave earlier on payment of £5. During their first year recruits had to attend forty drills, with twenty in successive years, in addition to at least one week of the two week summer camp.

The expansion of volunteer reserve armed forces necessary in Birmingham from 1 April 1908 was immense. There were to be three battalions of infantry; one battery of heavy artillery, Royal Garrison Artillery; one brigade of field artillery and its ammunition column, Royal Field Artillery; one section of the Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC); two sections of the Divisional Field Ambulance, RAMC; one company of the Mounted Brigade Transport and Supply Column, Army Service Corps (ASC); four companies of the Divisional Transport and Supply Column, ASC; one Clearing

¹ Blanch, op cit, p. 300.

Hospital, RAMC; one General Hospital, RAMC; and three Signal Companies, Royal Engineers.¹

It has been estimated that, of the 2,700 Volunteer Force infantry in Birmingham in March 1908, only 810 had transferred to the Territorial Force by 30 April 1908, leaving approximately 2,200 new infantrymen to be found.² An examination of the awards of the Territorial Force Efficiency Medal to the Regiment exemplifies how few was the number of men transferring. Up to the publication of the Army Order of 1 April 1911 only 150 such medals were issued: fifty to the 5th Battalion; forty-four to the 6th Battalion; forty-five to the 7th Battalion and eleven to the 8th Battalion.³ This medal, instituted in May 1908, was awarded for twelve years' efficient service; therefore, all 150 recipients must have served in the Volunteer Force.⁴

By January 1909 the strength of all the Birmingham Territorial units stood at 76 per cent of establishment; by May, the 8th Battalion was just 150 men short of its establishment;⁵ by June of that year, all such units were up to strength, giving an approximate total of 6,000 Territorials in Birmingham alone.⁶ The

¹ R. Westlake & M. Chappell, *British Territorial Units 1914-18* (London: Osprey, 1991), pp. 4-12. In these instances, 'the Division' refers to the South Midland Division.

² *Birmingham Daily Mail*, 23 June 1909.

³ Recipients of Territorial Force Efficiency Medal, on microfiche, Public Record Office.

⁴ J.M.A. Tamplin, *The Territorial Force Efficiency Medal 1908-1921 and The Territorial Efficiency Medal 1922-1930* (London: Spink, 1985), p. 1.

⁵ P. Caddick-Adams, *By God They Can Fight! A History of 143rd Infantry Brigade 1908 to 1995* (Shrewsbury: 143 Brigade, 1995), p. 13. Letter to local employers by Colonel Ludlow.

⁶ Blanch, *op cit*, p. 262.

achievement of the city in raising such numbers was exceeded, proportionately speaking, only by the city of Sheffield, which had to recruit far fewer men.¹ The London Rifle Brigade, part of the newly created London Regiment, got off to an extremely poor start, having only 332 men on strength by August 1908.² This “expansion of numbers in Birmingham in 1909 rested upon the enlistment of increasing numbers of labourers and factory hands”.³

The picture of relatively successful recruitment into the Territorial Force in Birmingham compares well with the experience nationally. The Territorial Force was born at only one-third of its establishment.⁴ Whereas the Volunteers represented 3.6 per cent of the male population, the Territorial Force accounted for 0.6 per cent and the Territorial Force Reserve, created in 1913, was deemed to be a failure because only 1,669 men signed up.⁵ To gain recognition from the War Office a unit had to recruit up to 30 per cent of its establishment. In less than five weeks this had been achieved by 174 infantry battalions out of 204, forty-eight Yeomanry regiments out of fifty-six, 287 artillery batteries out of 369 and sixty-nine engineer companies out of 117.⁶ On the face of it, reasonably

¹ Ibid, p. 262.

² K.W. Mitchinson, *Gentlemen and Officers, The Impact and Experience of War on a Territorial Regiment 1914-1918* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1995), p. 20.

³ Blanch, op cit, p. 250.

⁴ I. Beckett & K. Simpson, *A Nation in Arms, A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (London: Tom Donovan, 1990), p. 128.

⁵ Ibid, p. 129.

⁶ Simkins, op cit, p. 16.

successful, but the target was easily attainable. By 1 June 1908 the Territorial Force stood at 144,620 and by 1 July, 183,000.¹

The 8th Battalion, and indeed the rest of the Birmingham units, compared well with the national figures by June 1909: by this time the former was up to strength. Nationally the number of Territorials had reached 268,776, peaking in October at 270,000. One year later the figure had fallen to 267,096, well short of the target of 312,000.² By this time complaints were being received regarding the standard of training and musketry, delays in building drill halls and ranges and of soldiers seeking early discharge.

The decline in numbers continued. In September 1913 the Territorial Force stood at 245,779. This left the Force 1,893 officers and 64,778 men short of establishment. In addition, in 1913 alone 67,978 men left the service. The wastage rate was running at 12.5 per cent. However, the Regular Army and Special Reserve had their problems, too. The Regular Army wastage rate was 7 per cent. By May 1914 the Regular Army was 11,000 men below strength, or 6 per cent, whilst the Special Reserve never reached its target of 74,166. By Spring 1914 it was 13,699 under strength, or 19 per cent, whereas the Territorial Force had risen to 268,777, 14 per cent below strength.³ Clearly, there were problems with the state of the Territorial Force in the years before the Great

¹ Ibid, p. 16.

² Ibid, p. 17.

³ Ibid, pp. 17-19.

War, but they appear to be symptomatic of volunteer soldiering in general, rather than specific to the trials and tribulations of the Territorial Force.

What is clear is that, although the peak in Territorial Force strength came in October 1909, by the summer of 1914 numbers were once again picking up. Table 1 shows the state of units in Birmingham in July 1914.¹ There is evidence that the general turnover of personnel was as prevalent in the 8th Battalion as it was elsewhere. An examination of the numbers given to the men on enlistment shows that few of the original men, with numbers under 1000, went overseas on 22 March 1915. In fact, only twenty-nine of the 610 recipients of the 1914-15 Star, who have been traced, have numbers below 1000. A further eight with such numbers have been discovered who served overseas, but did not go abroad with the original contingent. Indeed only a further thirty-six men have been found with numbers up to 1500; 122 men had numbers from 1501 to 2000; 116 men with numbers from 2001 to 2500; 205 men with numbers from 2501 to 3000 and eight with numbers over 3001.²

¹ R.H. Brazier & E. Sandford, *Birmingham and the Great War* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1921), p. 43. Table 1 shows the same detail as Brazier & Sandford but set out in a slightly different format.

² Given that the Battalion was up to strength by the summer of 1909 and, assuming a wastage rate of 10%, the numbering system may have only reached 1500 by July 1914.

Table 1*Strength of Territorial Force Units in Birmingham, July 1914*

Unit	Strength	Establishment	%
Warwickshire Yeomanry	155	155	100
Royal Field Artillery	569	621	91
Royal Garrison Artillery	189	215	88
Royal Engineers	452	464	97
5th Bn, R Warwickshire R	1001	1027	97
6th Bn, R Warwickshire R	1003	1006	99
8th Bn, R Warwickshire R	963	1006	96
Army Service Corps	304	304	100
Royal Army Medical Corps	498	582	85
All units	5134	5380	95

Evidence shows that this situation was far from unique. The War Diary of the 1/4th Battalion, The East Yorkshire Regiment, contains entries which are indicative of the wholesale changes taking place in units prior to going overseas.¹ On 5 August 1914 this unit was only twenty-five officers and 680 Other Ranks (ORs) strong. Two days later, 190 recruits joined and by 11 August the unit was twenty-six officers and 913 ORs strong, of whom 65 per cent volunteered for Imperial Service on 27 August. In October, former members of the battalion started to re-enlist, fifty on 31 October and sixty-four on 4 November. The early part of November shows how radically battalions could change. The 114 recruits who had already joined were followed by another forty-three on 10 November and 150 on 12 November; on the same day 147 men returned to Hull for Home Service. Two days later another 121 men joined and 120 returned to Hull, again for Home Service. In all, in just fifteen days, a total of 775 men either joined or left the battalion, 75 per cent of its establishment.

The types of men who joined the Battalion can now be examined. The 8th Battalion had companies that were sponsored by firms such as the Dunlop Rubber Company, the Birmingham Corporation Gas Department, Ansells Brewery, the carpet trade and the jewellery industry. Thus, as many as five out of its eight companies were sponsored by major employers in the region. Additionally, 150 were allowed paid leave from Aston Town Council to attend

¹ War Diary, 1/4th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment. Unusually, but fortunately, this diary commenced on 29 July 1914, not on the date the unit landed in France.

camp. Finally, there was the company of students at Saltley Training College. It would appear, therefore, that the overwhelming majority of men in the 8th Battalion were men of the working class. They were not the same sort of men who joined the Regular Army. John Baynes states that the ORs in the 2nd Battalion, The Scottish Rifles, were the working class and the 'real low class' and they "were very much apart".¹ He continues:

*The working class, with steady jobs and a certain security, were able to feed reasonably well and were often big and well set-up. They were able to play a part in community life, to have ambitions and to think of bettering their lot. The real lower class on the other hand could barely exist and physically were generally stunted and unhealthy.*²

The 2nd Battalion, The Scottish Rifles consisted of 5 per cent lower middle class, 25 per cent working class and 70 per cent real low class.³ The latter were unskilled men who held jobs of a seasonal, or temporary, nature and spent large parts of their time unemployed. These were the sort of people referred to by Carl Chinn, who were the victims of the slum clearances of the 1860s and 1870s in Birmingham:

*This destruction by the developers improved the appearance of the city and rid it of unhealthy slums, but their motive was profit not concern for the plight of the poor. Neither they nor the council gave any thought to rehousing those made homeless by their schemes. The poor had to crowd ever more tightly into the swathe of slums which were emerging as a collar around the city centre.*⁴

¹ J. Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage. The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chappelle 1915* (London: Leo Cooper, 1987), p. 133.

² Ibid, p. 133.

³ Ibid, p. 134.

⁴C. Chinn, *Homes For People: 100 Years of Council Housing in Birmingham* (Exeter: Birmingham Books, 1991), p. 2.

Back-to-back houses had been built in Birmingham from the 1700s. They mostly had three rooms and they dominated the city's central areas. By 1914 there were 43,366 of them in 6,000 courts.¹ The areas of Birmingham that contained these slums were in the area now covered by the city centre, the oldest parts of Birmingham, known by the names of their parish churches: St Mary's, St Bartholomew's, St Stephen's and St George's, for example. The overcrowding in these areas was appalling. In 1908 the number of people in St Stephen's was 132.7 per acre; in St George's 162.1 per acre. The city averaged 44.2. What made it worse was that these areas were not solely residential. They usually also contained the factories which employed the residents. Consequently, in the eight acres of housing around Oxygen St, including Lister St, Adams St, Heneage St and Dartmouth St, 2,429 people lived in 589 dwellings: a population density of 272 per acre.² As time wore on these problems grew steadily worse.

Between 1896 and 1913 the number of houses in St Bartholomew ward decreased by 874 due to demolition. Similar decreases were recorded in St Mary's, Market Hall, St Paul's, St Thomas's, St Martin's, St Stephen's and St George's. The poor could not afford to move out so rents went up and overcrowding increased.³

¹ Ibid, p. 12.

² Ibid, p. 20.

³ Ibid, p. 21.

The effect on the health of the residents in such conditions can be imagined. Just one statistic will suffice: in 1915 the infant mortality rate in Bournville was 47 per thousand, in St Mary's 187. Bournville was for the "better-paid of the working class, those thought respectable and worthy".¹ It is quite clear where the 'real low class' of Birmingham lived prior to the Great War. It now remains to see where the working class lived.

There had been little expansion in the size of Birmingham until 1891 when Saltley, Balsall Heath and Harborne joined the central parishes and Edgbaston. Around the turn of the century, however, Birmingham became far more expansionist. In 1909 Quinton voted to join the city. By far the greatest increase in size and population occurred in 1911 when the boroughs of Aston, Handsworth, Erdington, Kings Norton and Yardley became part of the city. Aston, with a population in 1908 of 82,000, was "almost entirely a built-up area, covered with factories and business premises".² Handsworth had a population of 68,000; Erdington 29,000;³ Kings Norton 78,000;¹ and Yardley 60,000.² In addition to the districts already named the following became suburbs of the city following these changes: Moseley, Kings Heath, Cotteridge, Bournville, Selly Oak, Greet, Sparkhill, Hay Mills, Stechford, Hall Green, Acocks Green and Tyseley. Birmingham, as we know it today, had finally come into existence. The

¹ Ibid, p. 23.

² A. Briggs, *History of Birmingham - Volume 2, Borough and City, 1868 -1938*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 145.

³ Ibid, p. 146.

population of the city now stood at 850,000 and it became Britain's second city. The city had grown in size by 30,000 acres. The nature of this newly-acquired land can be judged by the fact that 24,000 of these acres were not fully developed.³

The Health Committee bought seventeen acres of land in Bordesley Green and in 1908 leased it to the Ideal Benefit Society. The Society had good quality houses built that were "too costly for the poor to rent".⁴ Unlike the three-roomed back-to-backs of the inner city areas, the new houses in Sparkbrook consisted of six rooms; each house also had a back garden and a toilet.¹ Sparkhill, developed by 1913, contained no more than eighteen houses per acre. The Housing Plan for Quinton, envisaged no more than twelve houses per acre, on a par with Harborne and Edgbaston. These schemes were quickly followed by similar plans for Saltley, Washwood Heath, Little Bromwich and Small Heath. Not one of these areas was to be built by the City Council, all were to be run by private landlords.²

The main difference between the Birmingham of 1911, and of 1999, is that the areas now given over to retail in the city centre were the preserve of the poor in their cramped, dirty and unhealthy slums. Many areas today looked upon as

¹ Ibid, p. 147.

² Ibid, p. 148.

³ Chinn, op cit, p. 25.

⁴ Ibid, p. 10.

centres of social deprivation, Saltley, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, Balsall Heath, Bordesley Green and Aston, were the residential suburbs of the working class, those in steady employment, earning more than 20 shillings per week. They were the ones who benefited from the less cramped housing, wider roads, more rooms and fresher air. From these areas came the men who were to volunteer to man the reserve forces. It was about this sort of man that Mitchinson has written that Britain had done a lot for them, that they led a comfortable life and that it was probably to defend this system that they volunteered.³

It is still unclear what made these men join. It cannot have been the money. As skilled, working men they would have earned much more than the poverty line 20 shillings per week; they certainly earned more than the average 1s 9d of the private soldier. Civil service clerks could expect to earn £116 per annum in 1911; a railway clerk £76; an engine driver £119 and a tram driver £107. Given that Territorials were paid it would be expected that men who did not earn much, or were not in regular employment, would be keen to join. This does not appear to have happened. As Beckett and Simpson pointed out, the Volunteers were skilled working class men who enjoyed high wages and good security.⁴ The Territorials appear to have picked up the same baton and ran with it. Blanch concurs in this view. He examined the make-up of the Volunteers

¹ Ibid, p. 18.

² Ibid, p. 27.

³ Mitchinson, op cit, p. 35.

⁴ Beckett & Simpson, op cit, p. 5.

in 1903 and found that 43.8 per cent were working class, 11.4 per cent lower middle class and 12.8 per cent casual or unskilled workers.¹ The reasons for this have never really been confirmed, and may never be. Maybe it was true that those with a stake in society felt a need to defend it. Jay Winter is certainly of the opinion that working class identity and patriotism were complementary.²

Undoubtedly, the prejudices of the officers would have had an effect. Ludlow was scathing about the “miserable cigarette-smoking monkeys’ whom he had seen squeezing into the music hall”.³ Officers tended to be the owners of wealth in civil life, men from the professions, or, at the least, managers in companies. Ludlow was a surveyor. He was succeeded to the command of the Battalion by Edgar Innes who owned a wines and spirits importing company. The 5th Battalion was commanded by Sir John Barnsley, who owned a building company and erected many famous buildings in Birmingham and sat as a senior magistrate. The 6th Battalion was commanded by Ernest Martineau, the Lord Mayor of Birmingham. Such was the calibre of the men who graduated from the Volunteers to the Territorials and subsequently rose to the top of their part-time profession. These men played a large part in the character of the individuals who enlisted into the ranks of their battalions, because they, through their junior officers, controlled the enlistment process.

¹ Blanch, op cit, p. 248.

² J.M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: MacMillan, 1986), p. 20.

³ *Birmingham Daily Post*, as quoted in Blanch, op cit, p. 251.

Although they may not have realised it at the time, many workers were probably swapping one set of disciplined, regimented, repetitive working conditions for another.¹ Whilst this can certainly be argued for the 1918 Army, it probably also holds true for the pre-war Territorials and could have been part of the appeal. Men would surely have felt secure in an environment where their foreman was their Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), their departmental manager was their company commander and their commanding officer one of the social elite of the city. This same ease and comfort to the skilled man could well have been the reason why the real lower class would not, or could not, join. They would have been amongst strangers, they would not have fitted in and, so the officers might have argued, they would not have been up to the discipline.

The battalion was also a social club, unashamedly so. The various messes had their own hierarchy and ran their own social and sporting events.² Working class life in the army was allowed to replicate the pattern of civilian life, conformity, community, celebration.³ This, too, would have reinforced the welcome to the man who truly belonged and, at the same time, alienated the outsider.

¹ J.M. Bourne, 'The British Working Man in Arms', in P. Liddle, & H. Cecil (eds), *Facing Armageddon. The First World War Experienced* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 1996), p. 345.

² It had always been the case. The 1st Volunteer Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment had its own Freemason's Lodge.

³ Bourne, op cit, p. 349.

Over 3,000 men have been identified who served in the Battalion during the war. Addresses or partial addresses, have been traced for 975. The overwhelming majority of the addresses are in Birmingham, which is not surprising as local newspapers have been consulted, together with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, Absent Voters' Lists and the relevant volume of *Soldiers Died in the Great War*.¹ Of the forty-seven officers whose addresses are known, twenty-seven are from areas inside Birmingham and the surrounding districts of Solihull and Sutton Coldfield. Of those soldiers with numbers below 3500 only twenty-four did not come from Birmingham; they came from places such as Beverley in Yorkshire or from Scotland. It is interesting that, occasionally, it is possible to find blocks of numbers relating to men from outside Birmingham. For instance, Private 4705 Frank Taylor came from Coventry, not until Private 5085 George Baker does another Birmingham man appear. Men who had numbers from 28602 through to 34036 came mainly from the east and north of England. Those men whose final number fell in the sequence beginning 305001 and ending with 306521 virtually all came from Birmingham.² There then follows a block of numbers beginning with 306528 and ending with 306753 which contains virtually no Birmingham men. Of those men with Birmingham addresses the majority came from the north of the city, from

¹ *Soldiers Died in the Great War - Part 11, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* (Polstead: J.B. Hayward, 1989)

² In 1917 all Territorial men were re-numbered. Each block of numbers related to specific battalions. Those men who had been posted missing prior to the date of re-numbering also received new numbers, even though they could be dead.

districts such as Aston, Erdington, Witton, Handsworth, Lozells and Nechells. This can be seen in Table 2.

Four distinct groups of men have been identified as having been posted into the Battalion from other regiments. The first of these were men from another Territorial unit, the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion. This particular battalion did not see overseas service, its members being posted to units on active service. Men from this battalion were posted to both Territorial and New Army battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Those who came to the 8th Battalion received numbers in a block starting at 307649 through to 307737.¹ It is relatively easy to date their arrival as sixteen of them were killed in action on 27 August 1916. They were obviously posted to the Battalion immediately after 1 July 1916.

The second group of men came from the 1/4th Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment, and they were allocated numbers from 29316 to 29634 and 325001 to 325103. The first of these men was killed on 15 August 1917 with more dying on 27 August 1917. It is clear, therefore, that the first two main groups of men posted into the Battalion came from Territorial units themselves. They would have helped to maintain the Territorial ethos of the Battalion.

¹ It has to be stressed that where number blocks are given, these may be incomplete. Earlier and later numbers than those quoted may have been issued.

Table 2*Home Districts of 8th Battalion Men, Birmingham area*

Acocks Green	1	Ashted	3
Aston	146	Balsall Heath	7
Billesley	2	Birchfield	2
Bordesley	3	Bournville	1
Brookfields	3	Camp Hill	1
Deritend	21	Digbeth	1
Duddeston	20	Edgbaston	36
Erdington	70	Gravelly Hill	1
Greet	1	Handsworth	32
Harborne	6	Hay Mills	1
Highgate	3	Hockley	17
Kings Heath	5	Ladywood	4
Lozells	23	Moseley	4
Nechells	30	Perry Barr	5
Saltley	16	Selly Oak	1
Small Heath	18	Soho	1
South Yardley	1	Sparkbrook	12
Sparkhill	7	Stechford	1
Stirchley	3	Vauxhall	5
Ward End	4	Washwood Heath	1
Winson Green	6	Witton	17
Yardley	1		
Sutton Coldfield	8	Solihull	12
Castle Bromwich	3		

The third recognisable group of posted men came from the ASC and they received numbers ranging from 33593 through to 33702. Just one of these men died in October 1917; the overwhelming majority died in 1918. They were posted to the Battalion on 9 October 1917 as their arrival was mentioned in the war diary.¹ It is not known whether these men were Territorials.

The last group is harder to pin down but can be proved to exist. All of the men enlisted in Wiltshire and they served only in the Battalion. They appear to have arrived in June 1916 as one of them was killed on 1 July 1916. In all, forty-one men have been identified, all of whom died. It is possible, therefore, that their draft numbered around 150, based on one death from every three soldiers. They have numbers ranging from 4857 to 5300 and from 306600 to 306863. The latter group can be very misleading as these numbers were only issued from 1917 and it has not proved possible to trace their earlier numbers. They do, however, stand out in *Soldiers Died*, due to their place of enlistment. Twenty-seven of them were killed by the end of 1916, all but five in the summer fighting.

The overwhelming majority of the men who served in the Battalion served only in this battalion. They would have been, until the summer of 1916, posted from England, from the 2/8th Battalion and then from the 7th (Reserve) Battalion.² Apart from those listed above, men posted in from other battalions

¹ War Diary, 9 October 1917.

² An amalgamation of the 3/7th and 3/8th Battalions.

came from a select few. The major ones identified are the 10th, 14th, 15th and 16th Battalions as well as the other Territorial battalions. A handful also came from the 11th Battalion. It cannot be stated with certainty that the men posted actually saw service in those other battalions. They may have done so, equally, they may have been posted to France as belonging to that other battalion but then posted to the 8th Battalion from the Infantry Base Depots.

The Territorial nature of the Battalion, therefore, was greatly diluted over time. The original members, and the original drafts, would have been Territorials. It is known that two drafts were received from Territorial battalions, but the numbers involved were small, just over 200, and these men would have been swamped by men enlisting for the duration. The turning point would have been 1 July 1916. After the losses on that day the majority of the replacements would not have been Territorials, but Derby men and later, conscripts. This is brought into focus by examining the place of origin, or residence, of the Battalion's casualties. This reveals that in 1915 ninety-eight per cent of the casualties came from, or lived in, its traditional recruiting area; in 1916 seventy per cent did so; in 1917 only forty-five per cent and, in 1918, only twenty-five per cent.¹ The chances of a replacement being from Birmingham, and being a Territorial, diminished greatly after the late summer of 1916.

Chapter Two

¹ *Soldiers Died in the Great War.*

“Warwickshire’s Butchers”: The Battalion in Action from March 1915 to 1 July 1916

At first glance the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, did very little during its first sixteen months on the Western Front. Its first taste of battle did not take place until the opening day of the Somme offensive. In comparison with many Kitchener battalions, which were ‘blooded’ that day, they may have been veterans, but they had seen precious little action. As Henry Ogle put it, “We settled down to a routine of In and Out of the breastworks, and as the war dragged on through 1915 and our division had taken no part in any serious battle, it became clear to us that we were not regarded as first-class troops”.¹ Yet, there was more to being in the frontline than simply taking part in set-piece battles. Manning a line could have a multitude of meanings: battalions could merely hold it and do no more, leaving the enemy alone and, in return, being left alone by the enemy; they could leave the enemy alone but thereby surrender control of No-Man’s-Land to a more bellicose opponent; they could, however, hold the line in an aggressive manner, mount patrols, gain intelligence, conduct raids, kill the enemy and take casualties. In short, they could either be passive or set out to dominate their adversaries.

¹ M. Glover, (ed), *The Fateful Battle Line. The Great War journals and sketches of Captain Henry Ogle M.C.* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993), p. 5.

The Battalion was mobilised having just arrived at its annual camp, in Rhyl. The troops boarded their trains again and headed back to Birmingham. They arrived home on Sunday 2 August and were embodied for the first time in their history, on Tuesday 4 August 1914. The following day they were back on a train as they headed to Weymouth, as part of their role, to guard the south coast. A few days later they marched to Chelmsford, where they were to remain until ordered abroad.

Little of what they did in the following months is known, as the battalion war diaries did not commence until a couple of days prior to departure for the front. It is known, however, that they dug trenches, went on route marches, undertook 'musketry' training and drill. As Private Frank Birkinshaw wrote, in an undated letter home from Coggeshall, "Today we were taken to the trenches and were told to go there and lie in them at the next alarm. Everyone was served out with 100 rounds of ball ammunition and those who have not got pouches have to carry them in their pockets."¹ This latter point highlights the fact that their equipment was poor, and certainly second-rate. They still used the Long Lee Enfield rifle and Maxim machine-gun. They did not receive webbing until the last week before embarkation:

During the past weeks stores have been coming in so fast that battalions have not had time to do anything but fit equipment, harness, etc. 1/5, 1/6 and 1/8 battalions have been issued with new webbing equipment, there has not been time to fit this properly

¹ Birkinshaw, Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum.

*or carry out any training in it beyond a short march in the afternoons.*¹

They appear to have made a very favourable impression on the inhabitants of Essex, upon whom they were billeted. Captain John Mellor wrote in his diary, "The accounts I have heard of the reserve battalions at Kelvedon, Tiptree, etc, are anything but complimentary, but our men seem to have made a great name. It is simply astounding the amount of correspondence that goes on between our men and the folk there."²

The final draft of recruits arrived at Coggeshall on 10 March 1915, followed four days later by the order to be ready to proceed overseas. From hereon, events moved swiftly. After months of waiting, wondering whether the war would end before they got there, the men were on their way. Within three weeks the Battalion would be taking its first casualties. On 22 March the Battalion travelled by train to Southampton and there embarked on a number of ships for Le Havre, where they arrived in the early hours of 23 March.³ Only six days later the men were introduced to a concept that was to be theirs for the next four years, for those lucky enough to survive: 'working parties'. For three days, parties of men, up to as many as 670, were employed digging trenches

¹ War Diary, HQ 143rd Brigade, 20 March 1915.

² J.L. Mellor, unpublished diary, 15 April 1915, Regimental Museum.

³ War Diary, 143rd Brigade. Fifteen officers and 474 men embarked on the *Brighton*; one officer and fifty men on the *City of Lucknow*; five officers and 180 men on the *City of Dunkirk*; and seven officers and 298 men on the *Marguerite*.

near Neuve-Eglise. On 2 April they received instruction from one officer and two NCOs of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, in what was to be a final, mad burst of training to get them ready for active service in the firing line. On 7 and 8 April the men underwent drill, bayonet fighting and rapid loading training whilst signallers, machine gunners and range-finders were sent on specialist courses. On 9 April there was a route march, except for a small group who went to Armentières to learn about bomb-throwing; this continued the following day. Two days later the Brigade took over the trenches of 10th Brigade, 4th Division, for the day. And that was it, for by 16 April the training was over; the Battalion was deemed fit to go into the line for real, taking over from their sister battalion, the 7th. The location was 1,500 yards in front of La Plus Douve Farm, near the Steenbeek, in the Ploegsteert sector, a much-used location for the initiation into combat.¹

'Live and Let Live'

In war the whole time is not spent killing, or planning to kill, the enemy. In a protracted war such as the Great War, which lasted for over four years, this was especially true. Uniquely in modern warfare, the two sides spent much of this time sitting opposite each other and some units tried to do just that, hoping that if they left the enemy alone, the enemy would leave them alone. Men reacted in

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion. The farm still exists, looking very much as it does in the photographs of G.C. Sladen, the Adjutant, whose album is in the regimental museum. The

different ways, and so did individual units. Consequently, conditions varied along the front, both in terms of time and distance; a relief of one unit by another could lead to a different method of conducting the war in the same locality; or, the topography of an area could dictate how the war was fought.

This is perhaps best described in *Trench Warfare 1914-18* by Tony Ashworth. He describes how there were quiet sectors and active sectors, just as there were quiet units and active units.¹ So, how the war was fought could vary in four basic ways: active units in active sectors; quiet units in active sectors; active units in quiet sectors; and quiet units in quiet sectors. This is doubled by the introduction of similar enemy units: active against quiet units in a quiet sector, etc.² It can, therefore, be clearly seen how varied the activity was on the Western Front. This, in turn, could lead to quite different experiences of war by individual soldiers.

Ashworth contends that trench warfare became more violent as time went by and that 1916 was the turning point in this process. In the early days the performance, or lack of it, of a battalion would very likely be determined by the hierarchy of that unit. They could carry out raids, undertake patrols, gather intelligence or indulge in sniping, as they saw fit. Individual battalions would be

farmyard contains the cemetery in which lie the early casualties of both the Battalion and the rest of the Brigade.

¹ T. Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-18* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 12.

² *Ibid*, p. 22.

motivated by honour, trust, paternalism, experience or values; from 1916, he argues, this ceased to be the case. Decisions were now taken by non-combatant officers with none of these ties.¹ From 1916 detailed, specific orders and new technology led to higher levels of aggression.² Not only did new weapons come to the front, but they came in ever greater numbers, so that whereas there had been one Vickers gun for every 250 yards of front line in 1915, by 1916, there was one machine-gun (either Vickers and Lewis) every 41 yards.³ Finally, Ashworth argues that the demand for more and more reports gave higher authority greater day-to-day control over subordinate units. Situation reports were constantly demanded, as often as nine per day.⁴ Such a high level of requirement forces people either to become consummate liars, with no regard for the consequences, or, more likely in a hierarchy such as an army, to strive to deliver the reports and, more importantly, the content. Nowhere, was this more apparent than in raiding. Raids developed from localised initiatives to gain intelligence, destroy property and kill people into one more form of the systematic war of attrition.

Sniping

Sniping was an activity that cut both ways: one side may have had a temporary advantage over the other, but the opponent would strive to reverse the trend and

¹ Ibid, p. 78.

² Ibid, p. 86.

³ Ibid, p. 62.

⁴ Ibid, p. 95.

so begin to inflict casualties on the enemy. More than likely, both sides would exact a slow, steady toll. In this period sniping was an activity that was frequently mentioned in the war diary, starting on the very first day, "Relief carried out without casualty. Continual firing and sniping went on all night."¹ A steady trickle of casualties, from unknown sources, ensued over the following month until 16 May when the Battalion was ordered to make "a demonstration". Snipers and especially active sentries harassed the enemy between 07.45 and 09.30; followed by two minutes' rapid fire. Between 10.00 and 11.00 trench mortars fired at selected points; between 11.30 and 12.00 machine-guns fired at support and communication trenches and, finally, between 13.20 and 13.30 there was slow fire all along the line, mixed in with occasional machine-gun fire. This scheme was designed to let the enemy know that the Battalion was not to be trifled with, or taken for granted. It was when the Battalion moved to the Somme sector, however, that the sniping war became more bitter.

Between September 1915 and May 1916 sniping was mentioned in the war diary on thirty separate occasions. Given that such entries were subject to the whims and vagaries of individual adjutants, it is contended that such a high rate of entry points to a similar level of activity. The period covered was nine months, or roughly 270 days. Consequently, this works out at one entry every nine days; when it is considered that some of the entries refer to sniper activity

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion, 16 April 1915.

being at a level that is higher or lower “than normal” then the sniper duel between the Battalion and its opponents must have been continuous and intense. Various entries were made in the diary regarding the number of kills claimed by the snipers; one cannot help but think of similar claims by fighter pilots in a later conflict to treat such remarks with scepticism. Given this, however, the beneficial effect of such work within the Battalion cannot be ignored. Men would be used to being harassed, and to seeing colleagues killed, by enemy snipers; the knowledge that their specialists were exacting revenge on their behalf would have been greatly appreciated.

There were a number of entries throughout the diary that give some indication of the intensity of this clash, as well as the long hours of patient observing and waiting; waiting until the opportunity presented itself to take a life. This was a very personal form of war, no doubt accompanied by the ever-present fear that this very act might itself bring instant retribution from a vigilant enemy.

Physical damage could also be caused to property that would hinder soldiers from carrying out their duty: one entry reported that the enemy snipers had been very active and, rather ominously, had been shooting “very accurately, damaging three periscopes”.¹ On the same day it was also reported that one man had been wounded by rifle fire, most likely that of a sniper. That the matter was not one sided is described in the following entry, “Enemy machine guns and

snipers more active than usual. One of our snipers hit a German who exposed himself above the parapet".² Later in the month there was a day which clearly typifies the tit-for-tat nature of this particular war of nerves. The Battalion snipers were active throughout the day, "apparently doing good work". The downside of this was that the Battalion suffered its first officer death of the war; the sniping officer Lieutenant Douglas Sarjeant was killed whilst observing and another man next to him was hit.³ Vigilance could obviously not be relaxed.

One day the Battalion decided upon a ruse to help the snipers, and whilst doing so, they attempted to kill two birds with one stone. It was decided to empty a sump of its contents, with the idea of attracting the enemy and so obtaining easier targets. This was done and a large quantity of mud was thrown into the air. Two Germans took the bait and the snipers shot one of them through the head.⁴ At the end of the month the enemy gained some measure of retaliation when Private Edward Smith was killed whilst on sentry duty.¹ The battle continued with claims for three dead Germans on consecutive days, 24 and 25 November. The last claim came before the Battalion was relieved at 10.30, suggesting that the deadly game was carried on to the very end. The duel continued through the bitter days of the first winter abroad, when the trenches were awash and men were forced to travel over open ground. Private Beard was

¹ Ibid, 17 September 1915.

² Ibid, 4 October 1915.

³ Ibid, 22 October 1915.

⁴ Ibid, 8 November 1915.

killed in what must have been a lapse of concentration, when shot by a 'fixed rifle'.² An unusual incident took place in February 1916 when, on a day of increased sniping by the enemy, a "hostile snowball party was successfully dispersed by our snipers". Quite what that entry related to will probably never be known.³

Numerous entries testify that it was not only in killing the enemy that the snipers could help to frustrate their endeavour, but in disrupting their work. Working parties were often dispersed and, in March, an enemy machine-gun was placed on the parapet but was hastily removed after a sniper opened fire.⁴ On 12 and 25 March the snipers claimed a further three kills but it was believed that revenge for Lieutenant Sarjeant was truly gained in May. Battalion snipers killed a man in the enemy second line, believed to be the Trench Mortar observer, as he had been seen there previously when the trench mortars had fired.⁵ Distance was no protector when such precise observation was employed. That it was planned for the battle to continue, after the Somme offensive, is shown by this entry: "Lieutenant Proctor and 5 men proceeded to Pont Noyelles for a weeks' course in sniping".⁶

¹ Ibid, 23 November 1915.

² Ibid, 3 December 1915.

³ Ibid, 27 February 1916.

⁴ Ibid, 9 March 1916.

⁵ Ibid, 3 May 1916.

⁶ Ibid, 13 May 1916.

It can clearly be seen, therefore, that the Battalion was active throughout this period in trying to establish control over the enemy. It is uncertain whether this was achieved. British casualties were rarely attributed to enemy sniper activity in the war diary, but what is certain is that it was an unrelenting battle, one that the Battalion did not shirk, and in which it had its successes.

Patrolling and Intelligence Gathering

Patrolling was an activity that led to a large number of benefits to the active unit, and as such there were different types of patrols. There could be standing patrols, listening posts or fighting patrols. The aims of these activities could be to gather intelligence, whether actively or passively; to reconnoitre for future activity or to fight, whether by means of seeking the enemy or protecting working parties from enemy patrols. The added bonus was the fight to assert dominance over No-Man's-Land and deny that area to the enemy.

There were twenty-seven instances of patrolling being mentioned in the war diary for this period. Unfortunately, most of these entries simply stated that there was nothing of importance to record, despite the fact that each patrol was an assertion of the power of the Battalion. Strangely, the very first mention of this type of activity was a successful one for the Battalion, one that led to the first decoration for gallantry, albeit at the cost of the Battalion's first fatal casualty.

The incident occurred on the night of 18-19 April 1915, on only the third day in the line, when a listening post was established just inside the British wire. This party observed two Germans attempting to make their way through the British wire. On their second attempt the NCO in charge, Bernard Shiel, grabbed a German and held onto him. The other fired at the party, killing Private Rainsford and made his escape. This incident was fully reported in the war diary and subsequently in the Brigade and Divisional diaries. Occurring so soon in the active service of the Division, it obviously caused great excitement and pride, showing as it did coolness and quick-thinking.¹ The sense of bravado can almost be sensed when, the following night, Captain Coxon went out in front of a listening post with another man. They were observed, shots were fired and the man went down. Coxon returned with another man to look for the body, but he too was hit. Returning a third time, one of the bodies was brought in. The third man, Lance-Corporal Wheeldon, received the DCM, but this was a high price to pay for information, if any was gained.²

¹ Ibid, 19 April 1916. Also, War Diary, HQ, 143rd Brigade when the account ended with the information, "The prisoner was sent with everything found on him as quickly as possible to Bde HQ as it was getting light. He was handcuffed and identity disc was round his neck." The unfortunate prisoner was Private Georg Lofolmr of the *5th Bavarian Regiment, 4th Bavarian Division*. Shiel received the DCM.

² War Diary, H.Q., 48th Division, 23 April. The Brigade diary makes no mention of the incident. Coxon made a fourth trip into No-Man's-Land, with Wheeldon, to look for the first man, but without success. The man's body was retrieved some weeks later and buried.

Over the next four months only one other instance of patrol work was deemed worthy of an entry in the war diary, and it was some months before another success was reported. On the night of 21 October an enemy working party was dispersed when the field artillery was made aware of their presence by a patrol.¹ This type of success was repeated in January 1916 when a patrol was sent out specifically for this purpose. This time, Lewis gunners were called into action.² It is clear from the diary that the majority of patrols came back with no information, even when directly tasked. In February 1916 the Battalion believed that the troops opposing them were new and patrols were directed to bring back a prisoner, by intercepting enemy patrols. Despite these patrols being very active they had no success.³ The evidence is that patrolling remained a high priority throughout the rest of the month, again with little success; this is not surprising given that there was one instance when the ground was so hard that patrols had great difficulty in moving quietly.⁴

On the face of it, therefore, the Battalion had few successes in their patrolling activities; the main point remains, that they were prepared to put in the effort and take the risks. There is another aspect to this activity: throughout this period the Battalion appears to have been greatly concerned with collecting information about the enemy and, presumably, reporting this back to higher

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion, 21 October 1915.

² Ibid, 23 January 1916.

³ Ibid, 6 February 1916.

⁴ Ibid, 25 February 1916.

authorities. During this period there were twenty instances of entries in the war diary concerning intelligence. There were two main subjects of interest: uniforms and transport. There were many entries regarding different styles of uniform, especially the colour and style of caps.¹ Another entry concerned the first sighting of the new steel helmet.² There were numerous entries regarding the hearing of enemy transport, whether it was motor or steam powered.³ An entry also showed that the Battalion was alive to what signals they gave to the enemy, when a patrol reported that they could hear the Battalion transport from the enemy wire.⁴

A great deal of speculation surrounded various finds: noisy transport was believed to signify a relief, a smooth bullet the fact that the barrels were worn and an increase in the number of periscopes the fact that the line was strongly held.⁵ These entries go to show that the Battalion did not merely go through the motions of holding a trench, but that they were out in No-Man's-Land, taking on the enemy, disrupting him, doing him damage and collecting information about him.

¹ Ibid, 17 September, 7 October, 10 December 1915, 12 and 16 April 1916.

² Ibid, 17 September, 7 October, 10 December 1915, 12 and 16 April 1916.

³ Ibid, 2, 4 and 5 October, 1915, 4 January, 25, 27 February and 27 April 1916.

⁴ Ibid, 20 December 1915.

⁵ Ibid, 28 February 1916 and 6 December 1915 give the entries for the bullet and the periscopes, respectively.

Raiding

On 22 March 1916 the Battalion carried out its first raid of the war. Its initial attempt, on 30 January, having been called off due to thick fog. This was a thoroughly planned enterprise, for which the men trained hard. Originally, fifty men from each company were selected, together with eight officers; of these, 187 men of all ranks took part. Training was dictated by the role that each party was to carry out on the night. By way of reconnaissance, the Battalion utilised the experience that it had gained over the last twelve months, which is in evidence in the above paragraphs. Telescopic observation, the study of maps and aerial photographs and patrol work on the ground, enabled the enemy's wire and trenches and the best approach routes to be carefully worked out.

The raid had a number of objectives: to capture prisoners; to capture a machine-gun; to bring back German smoke helmets; to obtain information about the enemy's trenches and system of defence; to kill the enemy and to do as much damage as possible.

A number of parties were formed to carry out the various tasks: a scouting and wiring party; a communication trench party to block the trench and escort prisoners; a 'Right' trench party; a 'Bridgehead' party; a 'Left' trench party; a

'Right' flank support party; a 'Left' flank support party; an 'Attack' HQ party; a Lewis gun team and stretcher bearers.¹

The raid was to be launched on the German positions to the north of Gommecourt Wood and Gommecourt Park, the latter being attacked by the 5th Battalion. The Brigade held the line between the villages of Hébuterne and Foncquevillers. It had been decided to attack the enemy front line at a junction with a communication trench; in addition, the maps showed a machine-gun post and three large dugouts nearby. The plan was to secure a bridgehead, have parties work out to right and left, and towards the second line, and then carry out the raid's objectives. It was believed that the point of entry would confuse the enemy and hinder reinforcements arriving.

Immediately before the raid started the officer and three men of the scout and wiring party led the way, laying white tapes as they went, followed by the rest of the team carrying bangalore torpedoes. They were followed by the officers and grenadiers of the left and right trench and bridgehead parties, with the remainder of their teams following close behind. Twenty-five yards behind this group came the other parties in single file. Field guns and howitzers then started a bombardment at which point the parties rapidly moved forward to the

¹ Ibid, 23 March 1916, post-raid report by Lieutenant-Colonel Innes. These parties consisted of: one officer and thirteen other ranks (ORs); one officer and fifteen ORs; one officer and fifteen ORs; one officer and twelve ORs; one officer and fifteen ORs; one officer and fourteen ORs; one officer and nineteen ORs; two officers and twenty-eight ORs; a Lewis gun team and two stretcher bearers respectively.

enemy wire.¹ Here, problems were experienced with the torpedoes; one was late in firing and the other refused to do so and recourse was had to wire cutters. The front line was rushed and sentries, who put up resistance, were overcome. The main attack parties then fanned out to right and left, bombing the dugouts as they went. The wiring party enlarged the gap and the bridgehead party then secured the point of entry whilst the flank parties moved out to protect their colleagues. After approximately ten minutes the enemy sent up flares and the raiding party sounded the 'retire' on klaxon horns. As the party left the German lines the enemy artillery opened up, without causing any damage.

So ended probably the most intense period of combat that the participants had endured to date. A large raiding party had crossed No-Man's-Land undetected, cut through the wire after a small amount of artillery preparation, entered the enemy front line, engaged in combat and returned at a cost of five men wounded. The enemy had been completely surprised, had taken casualties and lost equipment.

How did the raid measure up, in terms of achieving the objectives? Firstly, four men were captured, although, owing to continued resistance, three were killed before being brought back, leaving Gustav Appel as the only prisoner.

¹ Ibid, six field guns bombarded the enemy line for six minutes, except at the point of entry which was only shelled for three minutes. Selected strong points were shelled by three howitzers and the second line was shelled by two field guns until joined by two more after six minutes. The howitzers continued firing throughout.

Secondly, the Battalion failed to capture a machine-gun; the supposed position being found not to exist. Thirdly, German smoke helmets, rifles, grenades and items of uniform were brought back. Fourthly, much information was brought back concerning the state of the trenches, the dugouts, the fire-bays and the state of the opposing troops.¹ Fifthly, it was known that twelve of the enemy were definitely killed, though it was not known how many, if any, were killed in the dugouts. Sixthly, the enemy dugouts and trenches sustained damage by bombing. Therefore, of the six objectives five were achieved, making the raid a success. The men, their officers and the planners could all take pride in a job well done.

That it was a success can be judged by two reports of how the enemy responded, obviously with much anger. The 6th Battalion history states that, "The whole Brigade was delighted, and the spiteful notices posted in Gommecourt Wood only added zest to the general satisfaction."² Captain Mellor, of the same battalion, recorded, "Cyril's battalion had chief part in the raid. They must have fought like savages and have earned the name of *Warwickshire Butchers*. The Hun stuck up a notice board threatening terrible things if they catch any of our men."³

¹ Ibid. The report details dimensions and construction details of the trenches, armoured shelters in the trench walls and shelters in the fire bays. The dugouts, too, were described, ominously, as deep and strong. The men were described as young, well fed, of good physique and as having put up a good resistance.

² Anon, *History of the 1/6th Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1922), p. 21.

³ Mellor, unpublished diary, 30 March 1916, Regimental Museum. Interestingly, the 5th Battalion carried out a similar attack on the same night. Their battalion history records, "Though the raid

Battle

On 13 June 1916 the Battalion, together with the 6th Battalion, left 143rd Brigade and joined 11th Brigade, 4th Division, for the forthcoming offensive. On 1 July 48th Division was to be VIII Corps reserve and so 143rd Brigade detached the two battalions to bolster the attacking troops. VIII Corps formed the extreme left of the Fourth Army front and the attack would take place between the villages of Beaumont Hamel and Serre.

VIII Corps' position was not a healthy one: the troops would be attacking towards a series of ridges, from which the enemy could see them.¹ The *Official History* describes the position as being like an "amphitheatre" with "tiers of fire".² On the positive side, the wire was reported to be well cut and the German trenches heavily battered.³ 4th Division was to attack towards the northern edge of Redan Ridge, south of Serre.

11th Brigade was to secure the first objective for the division, with 10th and 12th Brigades pushing onto the final objectives. Within 11th Brigade, the first wave would gain the initial objectives,⁴ with the second wave advancing

had not succeeded, it had been a very severe test, under which all ranks had behaved with remarkable coolness." C.E. Carrington, *The War Record of the 1/5 Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1922), p. 19.

¹ The opposition were the men of the *121st (Old Wurttemberg) Reserve Regiment, 26th Reserve Division*.

² Sir J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War, Military Operations, France & Belgium, 1916 Volume 1* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1932), p. 425.

³ *Ibid*, p. 437.

⁴ Composed of the 1st Battalion, The East Lancashire Regiment; 1st Battalion, The Rifle Brigade and 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

through them.¹ For the Battalion, this meant taking the first four German lines of trenches. The second wave would push through, beyond Munich Trench, securing the first German position. The other two brigades would take the second German position, consolidating just beyond Puisieux Trench. The Division was allotted three and a half hours for this task.

On the night preceding the attack A and B Companies held the front line, whilst the other two came up from Mailly-Maillet. By 02.00 the Battalion was formed up in the assembly trenches. Disconcertingly, some of the front line had been damaged by enemy artillery. Ten per cent of the strength of the Battalion was to be left behind, after detailing 128 all ranks as Brigade carriers, and no more than twenty-two officers were to take part in the assault. The Battalion was to attack the enemy front line from just to the right of a strongpoint called the Quadrilateral, up to the junction with 31st Division on the left. The Battalion attacked with all four companies, each company having a frontage of one platoon (this four platoon front contrasts with the six platoon front of the other two battalions in the first wave) and there was to be one hundred yards between each wave of platoons. The Brigade operation order detailed what every man would carry into battle:

rifle and equipment...; no packs, no greatcoats; one bandolier of SAA, 170 rounds in all; 2 Mills grenades; 1 iron ration and 1 days' ration complete; waterproof sheet; cardigan jacket; 2 sandbags; smoke helmet. In addition to the above all infantrymen in assaulting lines, except Lewis and machine gunners and bombers,

¹ 1st Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment; 1st Battalion, The Somerset Light Infantry and 6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

will carry a pick or shovel, which will be carried on the back beneath the equipment braces. Every officer and NCO will carry 4 flares.

It is interesting to note what VIII Corps had to say about the forthcoming attack in a conference at Corps HQ on 21-23 June:

6. All units must push on resolutely. Every body of troops must push forward to its objective, irrespective of the progress, or otherwise, of the units on its flanks.

19. Cheering and doubling. Cheering should be avoided as it only warns the enemy that we are coming. Similarly doubling should not be allowed, as with the heavy weight men will be carrying, it is very exhausting except for the very shortest distances, such as 20 yards.

A previous conference in May had decided that the troops would advance in waves.¹ The picture that emerges of the attack, therefore, is one of battalions advancing in waves, heavily encumbered and at a slow, steady pace. That pace would have to accord with the artillery fire plan, as it moved forward in a series of lifts, from the enemy front line to the rear areas. The pace would be fifty yards per minute and, quite simply, the infantry had to keep up.² The Battalion was to advance across three lines of trenches before consolidating the fourth. The artillery was to lift off this objective just twenty minutes after Zero, making a distance of approximately 750 yards for the Battalion to cover.

Throughout the night the British artillery pounded the German lines with little reply. By 07.00, however, the artillery fire from both sides was described as

¹ War Diary, VIII Corps, May 1916.

² Edmonds, op cit, p. 428.

intense.¹ At 07.20 the men of the Battalion heard the mine at Hawthorn Redoubt explode; however, they had another 10 minutes before they went over the top. The Germans were now thoroughly alerted and, despite the troops having been assured that there would be no opposition, German machine-guns opened up on the parapet at 07.25:² the men of the Battalion must have then known that they were in for a rough time. At 07.28 they climbed onto the parapet and lay down. Zero Hour arrived at 07.30, the whistles blew and the men advanced into No-Man's-Land.

Lance-Corporal Williamson saw lines of men to his right and left advancing, "Just over the top the soldier helping me with the box stopped and fell dead...Lt Jones was the next officer I saw to fall, but then CSM Haines was calling for me, he had been wounded."³ Very quickly, the two left companies, C and D, came under intense machine gun fire from their left and took heavy casualties. It is known that they reached the German front line but little headway was made beyond that. Williamson noticed that the lines of men had disappeared; it would seem that advances were now made by a series of rushes. Lieutenant John Turner noted that "We went over first...followed by crowds of famous regiments. The 8th were splendid...past imagination...the regulars and the Generals cannot say enough for the dash and spirit of our onrush."⁴

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion.

² Ibid.

³ Williamson papers, Imperial War Museum.

⁴ Turner papers, Imperial War Museum.

The first two German lines were taken very quickly but casualties started to be taken from machine-guns in the third line, where the Battalion was temporarily halted, before taking it with a series of rushes.¹ From this point on, the fighting seems to have degenerated into a bomb fight along trenches, but the objective was reached and consolidation began. The 6th Battalion arrived but were too weak to advance further, having been decimated by artillery fire in No-Man's -Land. The remnants of the Battalion spent the day being bombed out of their final position and then bombing their way back in. When the grenades ran out the men were forced to pull back to the third line. There, the men foraged for British and German grenades and attacked the objective again, taking it once more, before again being forced out. Tellingly, the diary comments, "All through the action no troops were seen on our right or left."²

From the 11th Brigade diary it would appear that the foremost gains were lost by 11.00 but that troops were still in the third line by 15.35.³ Casualties were mounting from machine-gun and sniper fire. Williamson claims that he was still in the fourth line, with men of other regiments, at 17.30, but this is believed to be incorrect as German resistance had stiffened considerably by 11.00 when they began pushing forward with bombing attacks. By mid afternoon most of the British troops were concentrated around the Quadrilateral, though no doubt pockets of men still fought valiantly further forward, but, like the Ulster Division to

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion. This line of trenches was not as badly damaged as the other two.

² Ibid.

³ War Diary, 11th Brigade. Major Townsend, the 2ic, reported his presence here to Brigade.

the south-east, their very success secured their downfall. Lacking support and ammunition they were slowly picked off by the Germans. The failure of the Divisions to the right and left was causing enemy fire to fall on the Battalion from three directions, north, south and east.

As the men were pushed back their return journey was very different from that experienced a few hours earlier: Turner is quite succinct, "Oh that awful journey. The dead and the dying, lying, crawling along the ground...My God! dear God!"¹ Williamson reached the British front line at 19.30, "but the sight that met my eyes was terrible, hundreds of dead soldiers everywhere."²

Late in the afternoon 11th Brigade was pulled out and replaced by 10th and 12th Brigades, with the latter holding onto the few gains in the German lines. The following day Williamson recorded, "I discovered there were no 8/Warwick officers or HQ in the trenches...At 11.00 am I found them and was just in time for a roll call. I cannot describe my feeling when I discovered that only forty-five soldiers answered their names out of over 600 men of the battalion." Turner wrote home, "The 8th that you knew is a memory only".

No doubt, the men wondered just how much had been achieved. It is clear that of the units involved, the Battalion, together with the 1st Battalion, The

¹ Turner papers, Imperial War Museum.

² Williamson papers, Imperial War Museum.

Rifle Brigade, and the 6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, had pushed further forward than any other units. The third German line was certainly held and elements took the fourth line as well, for a time, thus capturing its objective. This was the right wing of the Battalion, the left not progressing much beyond the first line. All that had been achieved was a salient behind the Quadrilateral, which was eventually snuffed out. The Battalion was rightly proud of its achievements, however. They made more progress than most on this day, but suffered heavily for the failure of others. They had proved themselves the equal of their Regular counterparts, had displayed the ability to fight hard, and with success, in desperate circumstances and to adapt their tactics as the situation demanded.

Of 1,035 men in the Battalion,¹ 128 were detailed as carriers (though it is known that some of these men also became casualties); of the 907 remaining, approximately 100 were also left behind to act as a cadre upon which to rebuild the battalion. At most, 800 men went into battle. It is believed that 588 of these became casualties. At the time, the Battalion recorded eight officers killed, eleven wounded and two missing; fifty-seven ORs killed, 255 wounded and 251 missing; a total of 584 casualties.¹ After the battle Carrington recorded his reaction, "On Sunday at Church Parade the whole Brigade attended, and we

¹ War Diary, 143rd Brigade, 30 June 1916. A movement order of 28 July gave the Battalion a strength of 480 men.

were horrified to see how few were left of the two battalions which had 'gone over the top' on July 1st."² One of the few officers left, Second Lieutenant Anstey, wrote to the father of Second Lieutenant Brettell, who was the only Battalion officer to be taken prisoner that day, "As you say our regiment was roughly handled but thank god we did our duty and have made a name in the British Army which will never be forgotten. Please excuse this short work, reorganising the battalion is not an easy job and takes lots of time."³

¹ An examination of CWGC records reveal 232 men were killed on 1 July 1916. A further 13 men died before they next saw action.

² C. Edmonds, *A Subaltern's War* (London: Anthony Mott Ltd, 1984), p. 30. This name was a pseudonym for C.E. Carrington.

³ Brettell papers, Imperial War Museum.

Chapter Three

Orders is Orders

One aspect of regimental life that is rarely, if ever, touched upon in histories of the Great War is discipline. Captain J.L. Mellor, of the 1/6th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, mentions it only once in his diary. His entry for 6 November 1916 reads, "I have been to a Court Martial. Just got soaked." That is the extent of his comment on the subject, the rest of the entry dealing with his belief that the men who survived would pay a high price in poor health for their years in the cold and wet.¹ Lieutenant Charles Carrington, of the 1/5th Battalion, does not mention it at all. Lyn MacDonald recounts a story concerning the 3rd Battalion, The London Regiment, in which the newly embodied troops found it hard to adapt to the rigours of regular, wartime discipline and, equally the regulars found it hard to adapt to the Territorial ethos:

*The men were no longer 'Saturday Afternoon Soldiers' and the happy-go-lucky attitude, the spirit of bonhomie that had bonded the battalion in peacetime simply would not do in time of war. It was a difficult message to get across. For all their enthusiasm and goodwill the Territorials were independent spirits...But if [an] order was flagrantly breached, it was not because the men were insubordinate, but because they were genuinely unable to see the sense of it...'But sir,' blurted one aggrieved soldier...on the heinous charge of strolling out of barracks with his brother, 'we sleep in the same bed at home!'*²

¹ J.L. Mellor, unpublished journals, Royal Warwickshire Regimental Museum, Warwick.

² L. MacDonald, 1915 *The Death of Innocence* (London: BCA, 1993), pp. 39-40.

Henry Ogle records something of a similar spirit. "To a man they were brave and willing and did their duty as soldiers...though not in the disciplined manner. What they did they did because they wanted to do it, not because punishment loomed."¹ Interestingly, Ogle recorded the execution of one man, believed to be Private Earp, and brought home the 'public example' nature of the whole business:

During a spell out of the line at Owillers, the brigade was drawn up in hollow square in a quarry. In the middle of the square was a small group of officers, NCOs and drummers and one figure who was already little more than a ghost...Now he stood deprived of badges and buttons and of all honourable military identity and was under sentence of death. He was to be shot at dawn the next day. Some sort of indictment had been read out to us on parade...I was one of many who sympathised but acquiesced, unable to think of a working alternative.¹

No doubt the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, endured other teething problems, but if so, they are lost in the mists of time. The histories written after the war were meant as celebrations and memorials to the deeds of the battalion and its men. The issue of discipline was not one that sat comfortably in such company.

Despite this, the public is all too aware that 'hundreds' of men were executed for deserting the service or for disobeying orders. This may be because the few books dealing with the subject of courts-martial during the war

¹M. Glover, (ed), *The Fateful Battle Line. The Great War journals and sketches of Captain Henry Ogle M.C.* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993), p. 37.

deal with those who were executed. Anthony Babington was the first to examine the papers concerning these trials and raised serious questions concerning the process in the courtroom.² Julian Sykes and Julian Putkowski followed on from Babington's work, naming each executed soldier and giving brief histories of each of the cases together with highlighting what they felt to be miscarriages of justice.³ Recently, Gerard Oram's work has been to catalogue all those cases where the sentence of death was passed, albeit not necessarily carried out.⁴

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the debate has concentrated on the central issue of the executions. It is an emotive subject and one which remains in the headlines today, both in the media and in Parliament. The issues concerning the overwhelming majority of those who came into contact with the army legal system have not been aired and are, therefore, little known. What this chapter will seek to do is to raise the level of knowledge of this matter by examining the level of indiscipline in the 1/8th Battalion, comparing it to other units of the same regiment, as well as battalions of another line regiment and, most importantly, to its fellow Territorials.

¹ Ibid, pp. 107-8. Ogle was detailed for the firing squad, 'two per battalion', but was promoted to corporal and moved to another company that night, so being spared the experience.

² A. Babington, *For The Sake of Example, Capital Courts Martial* (London: Paladin, 1985).

³ J. Putkowski & J. Sykes, *Shot at Dawn. Executions in World War One by authority of the British Army Act* (Barnsley: Wharnccliffe, 1989).

⁴ G. Oram, *Death Sentences passed by military courts of the British Army 1914-1924* (London: Francis Boutle, 1998).

During the Great War there was a total of 5,952 officers and 298,310 other ranks court-martialled for all offences.¹ Of that total 163,147 were court-martialled whilst abroad on active service.² During the same period twenty-seven officers and 998 Warrant Officers, NCOs and men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment were tried by Field General Court Martial (FGCM).³ To put it into perspective, this means that the Regiment accounted for merely 0.6 per cent of all active service courts-martial and the 1/8th Battalion 0.02 per cent.

The registers for FGCMs are held at the PRO and contain the barest details of the cases: name, rank, battalion, regiment, offence and punishment. Surprisingly, the registers do not contain the regimental number of the individual concerned. This omission can make it impossible to identify many men. The registers were updated daily when details of courts-martial were received in London from the various fronts, so they are roughly chronological, taking into account that reports did not always take the same amount of time to arrive, even from the same front.

Knowing how many men were tried by FGCM does not in itself give an indication of the true state of discipline in any given battalion. Many men were dealt with by their CO for minor offences and the records concerning these have

¹ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-20* (London: London School of Economics, 1992), p. 643.

² *Ibid*, p. 643.

³ Adjutant-General's Index of Courts Martial, WO/213, Public Record Office.

not survived. If a man felt that he had been unfairly or harshly dealt with by his CO then he could appeal to an FGCM and be tried there. The registers seem to show that this was an unusual occurrence: it is estimated that fewer than 2 per cent of all FGCMs originated from such appeals.¹ Even if it is accepted that FGCMs accurately reflect the proportion of more serious trials, we are still no nearer determining a unit's state of discipline. One battalion may have had a lenient CO who did his best to make sure his men were not tried outside the battalion, whereas another unit may have been led by an officer determined to make an example of his men. This situation would then be replicated by the company commanders, making a judgement even harder to achieve.

The validity of comparing battalions of the same regiment can be questioned. Usually, battalions of the same regiment did not serve together; only in the Territorial Force and New Army divisions did this occur. Perhaps the most valid means of comparison is to look at those battalions that served in the same brigade and division. This is possible as four Royal Warwickshire and three Gloucestershire Regiment battalions served in 48th Division, all four of the former serving in the same brigade. It is more likely that units serving under the same leadership, whether brigade or division, were required to exercise similar standards with regard to discipline.

¹ A random sample of pages examined at intervals throughout the war.

Table 3 shows the known total of FGCMs for battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Table 4 gives a comparison with time spent on active service.¹

Table 4 shows that the 1/8th Battalion had the third lowest number of FGCMs in the whole of the regiment and the lowest number of FGCMs per month on active service. More importantly, it shows that it had the lowest number when compared to its sister battalions in 143rd Brigade and that the disparity, when compared to the worst offending battalion, the 1/5th, was 1 FGCM per month. Indeed, there is a clear difference between the two Birmingham battalions and the Aston and Coventry battalions. It is not possible, however, to have a clear idea of how good, or bad, the regiment or its battalions were without comparing the results with another regiment. Table 5 gives similar data to Table 4, but this time relating to the Gloucestershire Regiment.

It is clear from comparing Tables 4 and 5 that the Royal Warwickshire Regiment had a poorer disciplinary record than the Gloucestershire Regiment. All battalions, whether they were Regular, Territorial or New Army, appear to have a higher number of courts-martial per month than their direct equivalent in the Gloucestershire Regiment. So, on the face of it, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment would appear to have had a higher rate of indiscipline than a comparable line regiment.

¹ E.A. James, *British Regiments 1914-1918* (London: Samson, 1978), pp. 48-9 & 72-3.

Table 3

Field General Courts Martial by Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Bn	FGCMs
1	143
2	162
1/5	72
1/6	50
1/7	39
1/8	32
9	67
10	86
11	72
14	38
15	52
16	37
2/5	22
2/6	41
2/7	32
2/8	18

Table 4*Royal Warwickshire Regiment Field General Courts Martial Over Time*

Bn	FGCMs	Months	FGCM/Month
1	143	51	2.8
2	162	49	3.3
1/5	72	43	1.7
1/6	50	43	1.2
1/7	39	43	0.9
1/8	32	43	0.7
9	67	38	1.8
10	86	39.5	2.2
11	72	30	2.4
14	38	36	1.1
15	52	34	1.5
16	37	35	1.1
2/5	22	20	1.1
2/6	41	28	1.5
2/7	32	28	1.2
2/8	18	20	0.9
All	998	580.5	1.72

Table 5*Gloucestershire Regiment Field General Courts Martial Over Time*

Bn	FGCMs	Months	FGCM/Month
1	133	52	2.6
2	85	47	1.8
1/4	39	43	0.9
1/5	26	43	0.6
1/6	41	43	1.0
7	90	40	2.3
8	71	40	1.8
9	17	38	0.4
10	51	30	1.7
12	62	35	1.8
13	5	26	0.2
14	35	24	1.5
18	6	3	2.0
2/4	13	21	0.6
2/5	25	29	0.9
2/6	19	21	0.9
Overall	740	535	1.38

Within 48th Division the four Warwickshire battalions all served in 143rd Brigade, two Gloucestershire battalions, 1/4th and 1/6th, served in 144th Brigade and 1/5th in 145th Brigade. It is believed that all three brigades would have received similar instructions from the divisional headquarters regarding matters concerning discipline. Once more, it is clear that the Royal Warwickshire Regiment battalions, generally, suffered a higher rate of courts-martial. The 1/5th had seventy-two men appearing before an FGCM, the 1/6th fifty, the 1/7th thirty-nine and 1/8th thirty-two. The Gloucestershire Regiment battalions had the following results: 1/4th thirty-nine, 1/5th twenty-six and 1/6th forty-one. It is apparent that the two Birmingham battalions had the worst record (interestingly, the two Bristol battalions had a worse record than the rural 1/5th Battalion within the Gloucestershire Regiment) whilst the other two battalions were on a par with their colleagues from the south-west. The 1/8th Battalion comes out creditably with the second lowest rate of all seven battalions. Thus, it can be seen that, by comparison with its peers, the Battalion enjoyed a good disciplinary record.

Table 6 gives a complete listing of all proceedings concerning the 1/8th Battalion. A study of the Battalion's record over time shows that in 1915 eight members appeared before a FGCM: one for being absent; two for quitting a post; two for sleeping at a post; one for being drunk, and two for miscellaneous offences. In terms of seriousness these offences were not at the higher end of

Table 6*Courts-Martial - 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment*

<i>Soldier</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Offence Code</i>	<i>Punishment</i>
Pte Coleman	22.4.15	1	3 years' PS - Com 2 years' HL
Pte Gregory	22.4.15	2	5 years' PS - <i>Not confirmed</i>
Pte Gregory	29.4.15	2	2 years' HL - <i>Quashed</i>
Pte Debar	10.5.15	1 & 9	5 years' PS
Pte Litherland	24.7.15	6	3 months' FP1
Cpl Stephens	31.7.15	3 & 6	3 months' FP2 & Reduced to Pte
Pte Hunt	22.8.15	9	2 years' HL - Com 3 months' FP1
Pte O'Rourke	22.8.15	9	18 months' HL - Com 68 days' FP1
CSM Haines	3.2.16	6	<i>Not guilty</i>
Pte Rees	6.3.16	9 & 12	60 days' FP2 (30 days remitted)
Pte Howell	6.3.16	S 40	6 months' HL - <i>Quashed</i>
Sgt Dudley	14.3.16	S 40	<i>Not guilty</i>
Pte Kent	15.3.16	2	8 years' PS - Com 3 months' FP1
Pte Mason	15.3.16	2	8 years' PS - Com 3 months' FP1
Pte Bradley	16.3.16	2	8 years' PS - Com 3 months' FP1
Pte Gray	16.3.16	2	8 years' PS - Com 3 months' FP1
A.Sgt Jones	21.12.16	3 & 6	12 months' HL (6 remitted)
Pte Walker	29.12.16	8	60 days' FP1
Cpl Shakespeare	28.6.17	10	Reduced to Pte
Pte Ware	28.6.17	9	3 months' HL - Com 30 days' FP1
Pte Taylor	26.7.17	6	60 days' FP1 - Com 30 days' FP2
Pte MacFie	7.11.17	3	7 days' FP1
Sgt Cotterill	13.11.17	3	3 months' FP1

Pte Neville	13.11.17	3	3 months' FP1 (1 remitted)
Pte Rooke	7.1.18	4	90 days' FP1
L/Cpl Weller	12.1.18	5	60 days' FP1
Pte Sneath	31.1.18	6	42 days' FP1 & 10/- - Com FP2
2/Lt Holland	1.3.18	3, 9 & 10	Dismissed
Pte Wheeler	29.4.18	3, 7 & 4	90 days' FP1
Cpl Hartill	14.8.18	9	<i>Not guilty</i>
Pte Wheeler	24.9.18	11	90 days' FP1
Pte Randle	26.11.18	9	35 days' Stoppages

Offence Codes

1	Sleeping at Post
2	Quitting Post
3	AWOL
4	Insubordination
5	Theft
6	Drunkenness
7	Striking Senior Officer
8	Threatening Behaviour
9	S 40
10	S 11
11	Escaping Confinement
12	S 18.2

Punishments

PS	Penal Servitude
HL	Hard Labour
FP1	Field Punishment Number 1
FP2	Field Punishment Number 2
Com	Committed to...

the scale. During the same period the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions had twenty-one and fifteen other ranks court-martialled respectively. In 1916 ten members of the Battalion were disciplined, again the most serious offence being a case of absence, but there were four cases of quitting a post. The 1/5th and 1/7th had fifteen cases each. In 1917 there were only six cases, three being for absence, whilst the 1/5th had fourteen cases. In 1918 there were eight cases, two being for absence; the 1/5th and 1/6th having twenty-two and twenty-six cases respectively. Throughout the war the 1/5th had six findings of desertion and four of cowardice; the 1/6th had two of desertion and one of cowardice; the 1/7th experienced a low level of problem both in terms of number and seriousness of cases, just like the 1/8th. The passage of time, and the increasing severity of the war, did not have a detrimental effect on the behaviour of the Battalion.

In terms of punishments, the three most serious awarded by FGCM were death, penal servitude and hard labour. In its first calendar year of warfare the 1/8th had one man sentenced to penal servitude and one to hard labour; the 1/5th had one and six respectively and the 1/6th two and three. In 1916 one member of the Battalion was sentenced to hard labour, compared with two in the 1/7th and one to death, one to penal servitude and six to hard labour in the 1/5th. 1917 saw no serious sentences passed against men of the Battalion, whilst the 1/5th had one man sentenced to death, one to penal servitude and two to hard labour. The final year of the war was, again, one of relatively minor offences for

the Battalion whereas the 1/5th once more had five men awarded the punishment of penal servitude and three of hard labour and the 1/6th one sentence of penal servitude. The picture that emerges is one of a low level of indiscipline in the Battalion. This contrasts with the fact that of the five men executed in the Regiment as a whole, two came from the 1/5th Battalion, one in 1916 and one in 1917.¹ In addition, three men of the 1/5th were sentenced to death but had their sentences commuted, all in 1916.²

During the whole of the war the Battalion had six other ranks found not guilty, compared to seven in the 1/5th, six in the 1/6th and nine in the 1/7th Battalions.¹ This means that the Battalion had an acquittal rate of 18.8 per cent of cases, or, to put it another way, a conviction rate of 81.2 per cent. The conviction rate for the 1/5th Battalion was 90.3 per cent, the 1/6th 88 per cent and the 1/7th 76.9 per cent. Within the Gloucestershire Regiment, the 1/4th Battalion had a conviction rate of 97.4 per cent, the 1/5th 92.3 per cent and the 1/6th 85.4 per cent. Only nine Territorials of the latter regiment were found 'not guilty' during the war. These figures could be interpreted in a number of ways. Units with a high conviction rate could merely have been better at collecting evidence and at presenting a case. Low conviction rates could indicate a greater willingness to put men on trial, rather than deal with them internally.

¹ Privates Earp and Britton.

² These death sentences were commuted only a matter of weeks before Earp was tried. It may well have been that Earp's offence was the 'straw that broke the camel's back' of the authorities' patience.

Table 7 gives a comparison of conviction rates, by rank, between the Royal Warwickshire and Gloucestershire Regiments. It is clear within the former that the private soldier, if subject to court-martial, stood a higher chance of being convicted than his colleagues holding any form of rank. This situation is not repeated in the latter regiment, though care has to be taken in both regiments as the numbers of warrant officers tried was very small.²

In the Army as a whole, the conviction rate was 86.9 per cent, a figure which once again separates the experience of the 1/7th and 1/8th Battalions from their sister units, the 1/5th and 1/6th, the two former being well below the Army figure.³ This tends to reinforce the belief, but on a greater scale, that the Battalion was well disciplined.

In the Territorial battalions of the Gloucestershire Regiment courts-martial totals remained in single figures for every year except 1918, when totals of twenty, thirteen and twenty-four were recorded for the 1/4th, 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions respectively. The 1/4th Battalion had a total of three offences of desertion, the 1/5th had three cases of cowardice and the 1/6th had no serious offences at all throughout the war. By way of punishment, the ORs of the 1/4th

¹ For this purpose findings of 'Not Guilty', 'Acquitted', 'Not Confirmed' and 'Quashed' have been added together.

² A total of 3 CSMs and 5 CQMSs in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment & 1 RSM, 1 RQMS, 4 CSMs and 5 CQMSs in the Gloucestershire Regiment. The CQMS was an NCO, not a Warrant Officer.

³ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, p. 645.

Table 7

Conviction Rates, by Rank, for R Warwickshire & Gloucestershire Regiments

Rank	% R Warwick	% Gloucester
RSM	0	100
RQMS	0	100
CSM	66.7	100
CQMS	80	100
Sgt	58.9	86.8
L/Sgt	50	60
Cpl	84.1	84.5
L/Cpl	82.9	93.8
Pte	89.5	87.8
Overall	88.1	87.8

were sentenced to penal servitude five times and hard labour four times; the 1/5th, one and three respectively and the 1/6th, two and three. No soldier of the Gloucestershire Regiment was executed at all during the war, though one member of each of the 1/4th and 1/5th Battalions received that sentence, only to have it commuted.

The picture that emerges, therefore, is that the Territorial battalions experienced a low level of disciplinary problems, with those cases that did come to court being of a minor nature. The major exception to this was the 1/5th Battalion, the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, which suffered the highest number of cases coming to court and the highest level of seriousness throughout both regiments. Caddick-Adams reinforces this point, in that he has identified very few soldiers from Territorial divisions who were executed. In fact, the disparity is quite startling: 119 soldiers from Regular divisions were executed; 179 from Kitchener divisions; and only thirty-three from the Territorials.¹ Although this figure could have been affected by the transfer of units of one type to a brigade or division of another, this can be shown not to have been the case. An examination of the unit of every executed infantryman, where the battalion is known, shows that 116 were Regular, 115 were Kitchener and thirty-three were Territorial. The Territorial, for whatever reason, appears to have been a well-

¹ P. Caddick-Adams, *By God They Can Fight! A History of 143rd Infantry Brigade 1908 to 1995* (Shrewsbury: 143 Brigade, 1995), p. 74.

disciplined soldier and in this, the 1/8th Battalion followed the general trend, rather than being exceptional.

A comparison of the timing of FGCM hearings and the Battalion war diary reveals one interesting fact: there appears to be no correlation between the use of the Battalion in action and the incidence of disciplinary problems. In fact, the opposite appears to be the case: disciplinary problems occurred when the Battalion was at rest.

Oram has charted the frequency of executions in the British Army and concluded that, as preparations for an offensive became more intense, the number increased.¹ Given that no member of the Battalion was executed, other breaches of the discipline code have to be examined to see if they follow the same pattern. The difficulty here lies in the fact that nowhere is it recorded how much time elapsed between the commission of an offence and the convening of an FGCM. The first instance of a court hearing occurs just six days after the Battalion entered the line on its own for the first time (this suggests swift justice), when two other ranks were court-martialled for sleeping and quitting (the quitting offence was the subject of a re-trial a week later) and two weeks later another sleeping at post offence was tried. It is easy to see here that the Battalion was under a strict regime in its first tour in the front-line and discipline was enforced rigorously.

¹ Oram, op cit, p. 14.

In March 1916 seven members of the Battalion were court-martialled, two on the 6th for offences contrary to Section 40 of the Army Act (the catch-all section, 'conduct prejudicial to good order'),¹ one on the 14th for an identical offence, and two on both the 15th and 16th for quitting their posts. The only connection with truly active service here is that the Battalion was preparing for its first taste of real action, a trench raid. There is a small possibility that these offences were committed to avoid having any involvement in that enterprise. There were no more courts-martial concerning the Battalion until after its involvement in the battle of the Somme had ended, the end of December to be precise. The next hearings were not held until the end of June 1917, with one in July and then three in November when all the cases were for absence. Once more there is no link with the build-up to a major offensive. Indeed, the latter cases may well not even have been reactions to involvement in the Third Battle of Ypres as the Battalion had been pulled out of that campaign after its October battles and moved to the quiet Vimy sector.

This link to discipline not being as strong in quieter times is further strengthened by the fact that January 1918 saw three FGCMs (for insubordination, theft and drunkenness) by which time the Battalion was safely ensconced in Italy, seeing no action. For the rest of the year there were only five more courts-martial, one in each of April, August, September, October and

¹ P. Scott, 'Law and Orders: Discipline and Morale in the British Armies in France, 1917', in P. Liddle, (ed), *Passchendaele in Perspective, The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper,

November. There were none in the aftermath of the Austro-Hungarian assault on 15 June and none around the period of the Battalion's return to France when a temptation to commit a misdemeanour so as to miss that return could possibly have been expected.

There can be little doubt that the soldiers of the Battalion knew the possible consequences of any breach of Army law. Executions were public and soldiers were informed of those involving other divisions. For a short period in 1916 the Part II Orders of the 1/7th Battalion have survived, slipped in amongst the pages of the war diary. These orders detailed the movement of personnel both into and out of the battalion, as well as internally. On 21 September details of the execution for desertion of a soldier of the Liverpool Regiment were published; on 23 October the execution was announced of a New Zealand deserter; Order No. 105 recounted how two men of the Royal Field Artillery were executed for striking a senior officer. On 30 October it was announced that a South Staffordshire Regiment soldier had been executed and an order of the Commander-in-Chief of 25 September was published:

In consequence of frequent cases in which soldiers posted as sentries had been found asleep on their posts, he would in future be obliged to confirm sentences of death passed by courts martial for such conduct. After a period during which the Army was immune from this most serious and dangerous offence it has again become regrettably prevalent and the C-in-C orders that the troops are to be informed that if there is any recurrence of this crime after the present warning he will have no alternative but to carry out the extreme penalty.

1997), p. 362.

And so it continued, details of the execution of a private of the London Regiment being published on 22 November.¹ That this had been a problem before is confirmed by one of only two entries concerning discipline in the war diary of the 48th Division Adjutant & Quartermaster-General. In June 1915 brigadiers were asked to clarify, in reports for FGCM, whether offences of sleeping at post were committed in the front trenches or the subsidiary line. It went on to state that in the last five weeks ten such cases had been recorded.²

It is strange that of the few surviving records concerning discipline two should be concerned with the offence of sleeping at post. Of all the death sentences passed for this offence, 449, only two were ever carried out.³ It has to be wondered why such a fuss was made when there appears to have been little will to carry out the threatened retribution. It cannot have escaped the attention of the men that though colleagues were tried for the offence none was executed, despite the exhortations of their commanders. Only two members of the 1/8th Battalion were tried for this offence and both of these were in the first three months of active service.

¹ War Diary, 1/7th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Public Record Office.

² War Diary, Adjutant & Quartermaster-General, 48th Division, Public Record Office. The other matter was concerning self-inflicted wounds on 17 May 1915.

³ Oram, *op cit*, p. 15. They were Privates Robert Burton and Thomas Downing, both of 6th Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment on 19 February 1917 in Mesopotamia.

“Certainly no unit with good morale has continual cases of bad discipline,” stated Baynes.¹ For him, morale was a mixture of discipline and confidence that manifested itself in good appearance, the domination of No-Man’s-Land and the ability to endure.² Scott agreed, stating that military morale was affected by self-respect, self-control and self-discipline; and by way of peer pressure, authority and discipline.³ Both agreed that the systems of command and discipline were more important than the concept of justice. This would appear to show that, by Scott’s yardstick, morale was good in the Battalion.

The disciplinary record of the Battalion appears to have been good. It was one of the best in the Regiment, was certainly the best in 143rd Brigade and stands comparison with peer groups in other brigades of the same division. The onset of battle does not seem to have created a state of indiscipline and neither does the period after battle. Indeed the most dangerous period, as far as the Battalion was concerned, was during times of inactivity. This would suggest that self-discipline was strongest when it was needed most and when lives depended upon it. In action.

¹ Baynes, op cit, p. 95.

² Baynes, op cit, p. 98.

³ Scott, op cit, p. 353.

Chapter 4

In Pursuit of the Barrage: The Battalion in Action from the Somme to the Piave

After the fighting on 1 July 1916 the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was shattered, literally, and had to be rebuilt. The Battalion was about to embark upon the hardest period of the war that it was to endure. Having been re-equipped and with new men posted to it, the Battalion was going to have to fight its way through the remainder of the Battle of the Somme and then be transferred to Belgium for the Third Battle of Ypres.

The performance of the Battalion will be analysed in terms of its abilities in the arenas of patrolling and raiding; working and training and, finally, in the heat of the set piece battle. Firstly, an examination will be made of the drafts of men received in the Battalion, to give an indication of how many men were posted in over this period.

Drafts

With roughly 600 men of the Battalion having been made casualty on 1 July, the urgent need afterwards was to rebuild it. From this period onwards drafts could be expected from any quarter. The War Office was acutely aware of the social problems that could be caused by large numbers of casualties in locally-

recruited battalions and therefore wished to spread the risk by posting men to any unit in need of reinforcement. It was not always popular, as men who had recovered from their wounds did not return to their parent unit. "A heavy price had to be paid for the consequent, if temporary, deterioration in the fighting efficiency of many battalions".¹ The issue of drafts occurred frequently in the war diary for much of this period. Between July 1916 and October 1917 there were twenty-eight references to drafts. Outside this period there were virtually no references.

Not mentioned in the war diary was a draft of men who had all enlisted in Wiltshire. These men did not arrive from another regiment. It is unclear how many men there were, but there could have been up to 150. Unfortunately, not all of their original regimental numbers have survived, making firm identification difficult. Only one of their number was killed on 1 July 1916, but many more were killed by the end of the year.

The first draft mentioned came into the Battalion on 21 and 22 July and consisted of 249 men, a considerable number. It is highly likely that these included men of the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion. The personnel of this battalion were dispersed across a number of regiments but a great many of them found their way into The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, especially the

¹ W. Miles, *History of the Great War, Military Operations in France & Belgium, 1916 Volume II* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1938), p. 147.

Birmingham City and Territorial battalions. Charles Carrington stated that these men constituted probably the finest draft his battalion, the 5th, ever received.¹ These were followed on 30 and 31 July by a further seven officers and sixty-five men. Brigade, however, made its view of the drafts quite clear with the scathing comment, "The Brigade remained in rest billets, reorganising, training and receiving drafts, the latter all arrived from England with very insufficient and superficial training and many were of poor physique, quite unfit to serve with an infantry battalion in the field".²

During August, a further twenty-three men were recorded as having arrived, followed by two officers and 275 men in September. In October, thirty men arrived and, by the time the Battle of the Somme ended in November, another sixty-two men had arrived. The number of men posted into the Battalion, therefore, during the battle was considerable. Of these, only one identifiable draft can be discerned, those from Huntingdon. The rest were posted in from infantry depots in England, or from Infantry Base Depots in France and the Battalion was their first home. More troops arrived throughout 1917: sixty-one in January; six officers and fifty-one men in May; ten men in June; 244 in July and 100 in October. The last group is particularly interesting, in that the diary recorded that they came from the ASC. This group can also be recognised from their regimental numbers in the volumes of the War and Victory Medals. The

¹ C. Edmonds, *A Subaltern's War* (London: Anthony Mott Ltd, 1984), p. 91.

² War Diary, 143rd Brigade, 1 August 1916.

standard of this draft can be judged by the special mentions they received in the diary concerning the extra training they needed.

Training and Working Parties

From the period of July 1916 to September 1918, a total of twenty-seven months, there were 218 entries in the war diary of the Battalion being engaged in training; on a further 100 occasions, the Battalion is listed as being involved in working parties. On average, therefore, the Battalion spent eight days per month involved in training and four days in working parties. The former figure represents a high proportion of time devoted to one activity. Unfortunately, many of the entries merely state the Battalion was involved in training, with no further detail. There are some entries, though, which do reveal greater detail.

October 1916 saw the start of a period when the Battalion was heavily used for hard labour. On 27 October the whole Battalion was used for road repairs, work which continued until 31 October. Early in November, a similar strength was committed to other fatigues, large numbers of men also being involved from 5 to 8 November (150 men daily), 9 November (300 men), 3 December (200 men) and 15 December (100 men). In what appears to have been an attempt to reduce the effect on the fighting strength of so much work, a new company was formed.¹ W Company, commanded by Second Lieutenant

¹ War Diary, 5 December 1916.

Richards, was formed with eighty men. The idea was that these men would do nothing except work, whilst the remainder of the men were free for fighting and improvement of the trenches. This would seem not to have been a Battalion scheme, but rather instigated by Brigade, as it received its orders directly from the latter. The company was used between 10 and 12 December, but later entries refer to other groups of men, under different officers. This serves only to highlight that the amount of work was too great even for a dedicated team.

The last large scale commitment of men to working parties occurred between February and May 1917. The last few days of February and the beginning of March saw between seventy-five and 100 per cent of the strength committed to road building, as well as the construction of a Corps line of resistance. Other projects included building rifle ranges and baths, carrying ammunition and rations, wiring and improving billets.

Of greater importance to the development of the Battalion as a fighting unit was its commitment to training. This could take many forms with the Battalion undertaking platoon or company training, work on physical fitness, specialist training, brigade or divisional schemes. Only rarely does the war diary go into any great detail, and both brigade and divisional diaries hardly mention training.

August 1916 saw a large amount of time devoted to rebuilding the Battalion. This involved a great deal of training, with especial emphasis on bombing, musketry and sniper work.¹ Drill was also undertaken and the poor shots received extra tuition. Another entry gives a further insight into what soldiers had to do, with a programme of training that comprised: aiming instruction, trigger pressing, bomb throwing, judging distance and bayonet fighting.² The Battalion would appear to still have been working on the basics of the infantryman's trade; this continued into September. By 8 September, companies were carrying out trench attacks and firing rifle grenades. Three days later the development of tactics was furthered when the Battalion carried out a routine move "in artillery formation and proved very valuable instruction".³ By the end of the month a divisional tactical exercise had been undertaken. Despite thirty-six days being devoted to training in this period some more basic work had still to be done, when bombing instruction was given to those from earlier drafts who had not yet thrown live grenades.⁴ Most of the rest of the year was devoted to working parties, although the specialists were not forgotten. One officer and 100 ORs were sent to Fourth Army Musketry School, eight ORs went to III Corps Lewis Gun School and five ORs went on a III Corps Stokes Gun Course.⁵

¹ Ibid, 17 August 1916 details musketry, bombing, Lewis gun and judging distance work.

² Ibid, 24 August 1916.

³ Ibid, 11 September 1916.

⁴ Ibid, 7 October 1916.

⁵ Ibid, 29 December 1916.

Early 1917 saw time devoted to company and specialist training, whilst April and May saw over 100 men undergoing Lewis Gun instruction on eight separate occasions. The early summer saw a shift in the emphasis. Brigade tactical schemes were followed by company training and then platoons practised the "Platoon in the Attack".¹ This pattern was repeated three times. Intriguingly, training on 2 July followed XVIII Corps training instructions, sadly the content has not survived. This period sees the first pattern to emerge in the training programme, with large scale exercises followed by small scale training, with the whole being repeated.

Although training was not neglected in the latter half of 1917, the next important period occurred in 1918. In February, the officers took part in the Brigade Advanced Guard Scheme, with special emphasis on communications. This was repeated later in the month.² Once again, details of the composition of this training have not survived, but was obviously of an offensive nature. In addition to the usual training, highly specialist instruction was also undertaken in hill-fighting, obviously pertinent to the region in which the Battalion then found itself.³ Other interesting items on the agenda included lectures and practice in

¹ Ibid, 25-28 June 1917 and 5 July 1917.

² Ibid, 2 and 23 February and again on 8 April 1918.

³ Ibid, 1 March, 4, 5 and 6 April, as well as 11 and 13 April 1918.

the 'phases of the attack'.¹ Of particular importance to the Battalion, though they did not know it, were lectures delivered on recent fighting in France.²

It is clear that training was highly organised and developed over this period into sophisticated schemes. The men became used to practising tactics in small groups and then transferring that to large scale exercises. Training evolved that was pertinent, whether in terms of role or location. Most importantly, there exists evidence that ideas were transferred from one front to another.

Patrolling and Raiding

This was an activity in which the Battalion had proved proficient in its early days on the Western Front. There were long periods of time when there was little scope for this activity, the summer of 1916 and spring and autumn 1917, for example. When not engaged in battle, the Battalion would appear to have reverted to active patrolling and raiding to exert its will. Patrols were a regular feature of frontline life during this period. These would appear to have been fighting, as well as reconnaissance, patrols. The policy of the division was clearly laid down in that there was to be constant reconnaissance from observation posts by day and by patrols at night. Any enemy advanced post in No-Man's-Land was to be destroyed by local offensives.¹ The Division was clearly to be active and belligerent.

¹ Ibid, 26 and 27 March 1918, respectively.

² Ibid, 22 May 1918.

It is known that the Battalion mounted five raids, these occurred on 16 and 21 June 1917 near Quéant, in the sector to the west of Cambrai; 28 and 29 April 1918, in front of Asiago against *1st Battalion, 24th (Honved) Regiment*, and 9 August 1918 at Ave. Of the five, the first reached its objective but found it unoccupied; the third, five sections strong, reached its objective and took prisoners; the fourth again found the positions unoccupied and the last failed. The objective in the latter was to enter the enemy line, as part of a series along the Allied line, to discover what enemy intentions were. Owing to heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, the line was not reached.² The most successful was the second raid, conducted on 21 June 1917. Two companies took part, the objective being to seize, and hold until daylight, a copse and to kill, or capture, Germans. The opposition consisted of men from *9th (2nd Pomeranian) Grenadiers of 3rd Guard Division*.

An advance party left early to secure a crossroads in No-Man's-Land. Once secured, all troops moved forward to await the barrage. Zero was at 01.00 when the barrage commenced and A Company, on the right, moved up to the wire. Here, they were held up by machine-gun fire. The wire was cut by bangalore torpedo and part of the copse taken. There was no further resistance. B Company, on the left, was attacked by a hostile patrol whilst forming up, but the attack was driven off. At Zero, the wire was cut by hand and the rest of the

¹ Divisional Operation Order No. F 85, War Diary, 48th Division, 21 May 1917.

² Divisional Operation Order No. 33, War Diary, 48th Division, 6 August 1918.

copse seized. Germans were found defending dugouts in a quarry, some were killed and two taken prisoner. The copse was held until dawn when the troops withdrew. Information was brought back concerning enemy emplacements. The result was a successful raid, but it has to be admitted that it had easily-accomplished targets. The cost was one officer, who died of wounds, one OR killed and sixteen wounded, for six enemy killed and two captured.¹ It is of significance that 48th Division were told to reduce the number of raids at this time, as stated in Operation Order No. F 92:

1. With the less fine weather we have lately had it is necessary not to let our raiding interfere too much with our work on the front line, intermediate line, etc. The raids therefore should be reduced in number so that during each unit's tour in the trenches it only has to give up one night's regular work for the execution of a raid.¹

Battle

During this period the Battalion took part in four battles, one on the Somme, two near Ypres and one in Italy. The latter was quite unique, in that it represented the only time that the Battalion fought a defensive battle. In addition, the Battalion also played a major role in the advance to the Hindenburg Line, but this did not involve the fighting of a battle, more a series of engagements with rearguard forces. In this respect, it can be contrasted with the advance of autumn 1918. In a comment directed at Fifth Army in the earlier period, but equally applicable to Fourth Army, the Official Historian commented, "They were

¹ War Diary, 48th Division, 22 June 1917. The prisoners were from 9 Grenadier Regiment.

soon to have brought home to them the difficulties of breaking down the resistance of rearguards, specially equipped and carefully organised for their task.”² The cautious, methodical approach of Fourth Army in 1917 compares unfavourably with that in 1918.

The first battle was that of 27 August 1916, near Ovillers. As part of II Corps, Reserve Army, this attack was part of a series to capture Pozières and Mouquet Farm. Up to this time, the Battalion had only been involved in bombing attacks, with mixed results.³ The plan for this attack was for two companies to assault the enemy line at Zero (19.00), when the shrapnel barrage commenced. The barrage would lift off the objective at Zero plus four minutes. Three platoons of each company were to carry out the assault, which was to advance 300 yards, the fourth platoons being used to dig a new communication trench. There would be three waves, each of two platoons, the third wave carrying tools, grenades and engineering stores. Covering all of this, would be a machine-gun barrage on the enemy fire and communication trenches. The assaulting troops would be carrying as little as possible; 120 rounds of ammunition, two Mills bombs and two sandbags. This was not a complicated attack plan and should not have taxed the abilities of the Battalion. The artillery support plan was not comprehensive, however, lasting only four minutes and the number of troops amounted, in fact, to only one company. It did not go according to plan.

¹ Ibid, 20 June 1917.

² Sir J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War. Military Operations France and Belgium, 1917, Volume 1.* p. 97.

³ War Diary, 26 and 27 July 1916.

The troops went over on time and kept up with the barrage, unfortunately they lost direction. There were no landmarks to guide them and their objective, trenches, had virtually ceased to exist by the time they arrived.¹ The troops on the right went too far to the right. In addition, they ran into their own barrage and sustained many casualties. They occupied some trenches but were thrown out of them some hours later. Only one officer survived. Those troops on the left got lost and went too far to the left. They overran their objective and advanced to the standing barrage. Expecting this to lift they went into it. Suffering heavy casualties, they were forced to withdraw. 145th Brigade, attacking on the left secured its objectives without too much trouble.¹

The Battalion had performed poorly. It mattered not that all objectives were quickly taken, as they were all lost, and few of the troops knew they had taken them. Officer casualties had occurred early and left the troops with no clear idea of their role. They could recognise nothing, due to the state of the ground and advanced to the wrong places and misread the nature of the barrage. In all, 150 casualties were sustained, out of 250 for the whole division. It is hard to ignore the view of Brigade regarding the calibre of the troops who were drafted in, as well as the fact that the training regime was dealing with basic skills, immediately prior to this attack.

¹ War Diary, 48th Division, 27 August 1916. The trenches had been softened-up for some days prior to this attack.

The next major attack took place exactly one year later in the region of Langemarck/Gheluvelt, near Ypres. The flank divisions, 61st on the right and 11th on the left, were also to attack. As part of 48th Division's attack 143rd Brigade were to be on the right and were to take firstly, the line between Winnipeg and Springfield strongpoints, followed by an advance to the southern portion of the Langemarck - Gheluvelt Line, with 144th Brigade on the left. Zero was to be 13.55, with an artillery and machine-gun barrage, the latter of sixty-four guns, lifting at Zero plus twelve minutes and advancing at the rate of 100 yards every twelve minutes, later speeding up to 100 yards every eight minutes. All surrounding high ground was to be wreathed in smoke and bombarded with shrapnel and gas for three hours. Four tanks were allotted to the Division, although their main task was to secure the advance to the final objective.² 145th Brigade was to pass through both Brigades at Zero plus five hours to secure the final objectives. The Battalion was to attack on the left of the Brigade, with three companies, supported by two of 1/7th Battalion, with Springfield as its first objective.³ Crucially, the troops were to be in position by 04.00 and to ensure that there was no movement during the hours of daylight.⁴

¹ War Diaries, 48th Division and 143rd Brigade, 27 August 1916.

² War Diary, 48th Division, 25 August 1917.

³ War Diary, 143rd Brigade, 26 August 1917.

⁴ Ibid.

The distance to be covered in this advance was in the region of 800 yards. It was, however, the third attack to be launched by the Division to take the strongpoint of Springfield. Early in the morning it appeared as if the weather was going to be favourable, but yet more showers occurred allowing the ground no opportunity to dry out.¹ Edwin Vaughan records the scene just after midnight, "The rain had stopped for the time being, but the ground was utterly impassable being covered with water for thirty yards at a stretch in some parts".²

The attack went badly from the start and the barrage was lost instantly, "every gun spoke, dozens of machine guns burst into action...Instantaneously the enemy barrage crashed upon us".³ Ominously, the troops were pinned down by machine-gun fire, suggesting the smokescreen was not effective. Prior to the attack they had struggled to the assembly positions and then stood for ten hours in the mud and rain, which cannot have left them in good condition.

Progress was pitifully slow, after only five minutes Vaughan recorded that "our lines had wavered, broken, and almost disappeared".¹ By 16.20 a report had been received at Brigade that Springfield had been taken, but this was later contradicted. Not until 17.00 was its capture confirmed, but even this was shrouded in mystery. 144th Brigade reported that the 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment had captured the strongpoint, a claim apparently

¹ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion, 27 August 1917.

² E.C. Vaughan, *Some Desperate Glory. The Diary of a Young Officer 1917* (London: MacMillan, 1985), p. 220.

³ *Ibid*, p. 221.

confirmed by 143rd Brigade.² The truth appears to lie somewhere in between, as evidenced by the words of Lieutenant Vaughan who was ordered to take it. He led his small group of men forward on the only hard track left. “Several wounded men of the 8th Worcesters and 7th Warwicks jumped out of their shell-holes and joined us.” He attacked from the front, as another party attacked from the rear and Springfield finally fell.³

After five hours half of the first objective had been taken, with the line now running just east of Springfield and 100 yards west of the Winnipeg - Springfield road.¹ This represented a total advance of 200 yards; the rest of the Brigade managed even less. In some respects, though, it was quite a feat, given the conditions and the fact that they were under fire from the very start. Casualties amounted to one officer and sixty-five ORs killed.

Ypres had not finished with the Battalion yet. On 4 October they were to participate in another attack, this time to capture a series of farms, long since converted into strongpoints. 143rd Brigade was to attack with the 1st New Zealand Brigade on the right and 34th Brigade on the left. Within the brigade the 5th Battalion was on the right, the 6th in the centre and the 7th on the left; the 8th Battalion was in Brigade reserve. There was to be a specific unit told off to deal

¹ Ibid, p. 222.

² War Diary, 48th Division, 27 August 1917.

³ Vaughan, op cit, p. 225.

with every strongpoint and emplacement.² The Battalion's contribution was to be two companies that were to be used to counter enemy counter-attacks only "and on no account to reinforce the line".³

Once again, the attack was to be covered by artillery and machine-gun barrages, but the pace set was staggering: fifty yards every two minutes at the start, slowing down to every four minutes later on. The final objectives were to be reached at Zero plus four hours fifteen minutes. Zero was at 06.00 and the two companies moved into their assembly positions. They, and the other two companies, together with Battalion HQ, were heavily shelled in these positions. At 13.00 one of the designated, and one of the support, companies were handed over to the CO of the 6th Battalion for an attack on Burns House and Vacher Farm. These were defeated by machine-gun fire. Matters were becoming desperate, for at 14.00 D Company was hurriedly told to stop carrying ammunition and to move forward. At 15.30 the Battalion was to collect as many stragglers from the rest of the Brigade as possible to attack and seize Burns House, Oxford House, Vacher Farm and Berks Houses.¹ The barrage was to commence at 17.00. It proved impossible to collect the men in time, and when they were together there was no time to appraise anyone in detail, brief information instead being given to company commanders. In the event, three

¹ War Diary, XVIII Corps, 2 November 1917 lists the Corps results (11th and 48th Divisions) as unsuccessful.

² War Diary, 48th Division, 30 September 1917.

³ War Diary, 143rd Brigade, 2 October 1917.

companies and half of another, together with a few men of the 6th Battalion went forward. It was a fiasco. The barrage commenced beyond the objectives, which were strongly held, and the men came immediately under fire. Heavy rain then fell with the Battalion making no appreciable move over the current front line. Four officers and thirty-three ORs were killed, leaving the Battalion about 300 strong.²

In his report to Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Hanson acidly commented that a lesson learned was “the impossibility of carrying out a successful attack unless sufficient time is available to explain the details to officers and NCOs concerned”.³ The ability of the Battalion, if not the Brigade, has to be questioned over this attack. XVIII Corps recorded that 11th Division gained all objectives and that 48th Division gained most of their objectives.¹ It would appear that 143rd Brigade were the only ones to fail. It cannot simply be blamed on the weather, as it did not rain solely on 143rd Brigade. Undoubtedly, the artillery preparation was poor in that fire was directed beyond the objectives. These facts played a part, a further reason may well have to be the quality of the men. Immediately prior to this campaign, the Battalion received over 200 reinforcements. They underwent a comprehensive training programme in the late summer and yet were still found wanting.

¹ Ibid, 17 October 1917.

² War Diary, 48th Division, 5 October 1917.

³ Ibid.

In November 1917 British and French divisions were sent to Italy to bolster the Italian Army, following the massive defeat at Caporetto.² There was one major engagement in which the Battalion had to take part. The Battle of Asiago, fought on 15 June 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian Army launched an assault.

The Allies were, in fact, planning an assault of their own when news was received that an enemy assault was imminent. On 14 June a Divisional conference was held, at which the matter was discussed at length. It was not expected that the infantry assault would extend to 48th Division but an extensive artillery bombardment was fully anticipated.³ If an attack did take place the plan was to withdraw the outposts and institute defence in depth. This was just as well, as the Divisional position was not strong and neither was the fighting strength of the infantry. 145th Brigade had a total fighting strength of 2,081 men, 143rd Brigade, 1,645 men and 144th Brigade, 2,169 men.¹

145th Brigade held the right sector, 143rd Brigade held the left and 144th Brigade was in reserve. In 143rd Brigade sector, the 5th Battalion held the frontline, whilst 8th Battalion had one company in the Cesuna Switch (this ran from the extreme left of the Divisional front in a right echelon back to a central

¹ War Diary, XVIII Corps, 2 November 1917. The report gives the results of six attacks, 11th Division were successful on four occasions, 48th Division twice.

² Edmonds, *op cit*, p. 352. These were 23rd, 41st, 7th, 48th and 5th.

³ War Diary, 48th Division, 17 June 1918.

position) and one platoon at the northern end of the switch. The remainder were ready to reinforce the company in the Switch. The Battalion was the strongest in the Brigade with 450 men. These figures, though, do not adequately reflect the true situation, in that the army was hit by trench fever, a form of flu, and many men were back with their battalions after getting over the worst, but were still not in best condition.

The frontline ran for a mile through woods, which extended well into No-Man's-Land, and then ran into open, but broken ground. The final 100 yards was again in woods.² This meant that nowhere did the men have an adequate field of view or fire. Enemy infantry would be on top of them before being seen. Little could be done about this due to there being no depth to the British position on the Asiago plateau, simply because of the size of the plateau, and because the trenches ran through solid rock. Prompt action would be needed to halt an attack.

The enemy bombardment began at 03.00 on 15 June. It had been arranged that British SOS barrages would not be fired until enemy infantry had been seen, this was due to the fact that the bombardment was expected but ammunition was not to be wasted unless the infantry attacked.³ Unfortunately,

¹ Ibid.

² Sir J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War, Military Operations, Italy* (Nashville: Imperial War Museum & Battery Press, 1991), p. 197.

³ G.H. Barnett, *With the 48th Division in Italy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1923), p. 40

the enemy barrage severed most telephone lines quite early on. When the infantry did appear the forward troops had no means of signalling their presence. The enemy attacked in strength. The *6th Austro-Hungarian Division* attacked 143rd Brigade; this comprised four regiments, the *81st*, *127th*, *17th* and *27th*. Each regiment attacked with two battalions with one in reserve.¹

The Brigade line was breached on the right, where it joined 145th Brigade, with 5th Battalion taking the brunt of the attack. Indicative of the fighting was the action by Regimental Sergeant-Major Townley MC, who won the DCM for holding out at Battalion HQ, with a motley assortment of cooks and clerks for many hours. The lack of notification of the presence of enemy infantry undoubtedly played a large part in the early successes enjoyed by the Austro-Hungarians, especially as they therefore escaped a retaliatory barrage. This led to delays in the 6th Battalion moving forward, as well as two companies of the 8th Battalion, who had to move to hold the Cesuna Switch. In part remedied by Captain Bridges, who intercepted the movement order and promptly advanced, before Battalion HQ received the order, even he was not quick enough to stop the southern portion of the Switch falling. Contact was thus lost with 145th Brigade. This represented an advance of the order of nearly 2,000 yards by the enemy.

¹ War Diary, 143rd Brigade, 16 June 1918.

The Official Historian goes to great lengths to explain why the Division lost so much of its line; G.H. Barnett defends his division for its performance and nobly supports the Divisional Commander, who was quickly dismissed. They all point to the re-taking of the positions the next day and the fact that such an eventuality had been planned for. The 7th Battalion had twice practised counter-attacks prior to the assault and, on the day, launched a perfect example of the real thing. This battalion certainly saved the day. Where the Division failed was in its ability to detect the attack quickly enough and the failure to relay that message promptly to relevant headquarters. It took one hour, twenty-five minutes for this news to reach Divisional HQ.¹

Enemy penetration was halted by noon on this first day and the lost ground and guns were retaken early the next morning, yet no other division suffered in quite the same way. The Battalion held the northern part of the Switch and was also diverted to fighting in the village of Cesuna, another 1,000 yards in the rear. Its part was relatively small and yet, it too, suffered as it failed to hold on the right. In part, they were overcome by numbers, as was the rest of the Brigade, but they appear to have been poorly served by the lack of proper advance planning.

¹ War Diary, 48th Division, 17 June 1918.

Chapter Five

“For Conspicuous Gallantry...”

For conspicuous gallantry on November 4th, 1918, during the attack on Landrecies. The attack commenced in a fog, resulting in many hostile machine-gun nests not being ‘mopped up’ by the leading troops. This NCO with his section, having lost touch with his company, attached himself to another company which was held up by heavy machine-gun fire and carried out the following deeds of gallantry:- i) On his own initiative he led his section to attack a machine-gun nest in the face of heavy fire. With great bravery he forced the garrison to retire to a neighbouring farm, finally causing them to capitulate and capturing about 50 prisoners and several machine-guns. ii) Later, single-handed, he attacked a hostile machine-gun post, situated in a farmhouse. Exposed to heavy fire he advanced unhesitatingly, killed two of the garrison and drove the remainder into a cellar until assistance arrived. iii) Again, later, and unaided, he attacked a chateau in Faubourg Soyers, which was strongly held and holding up the line of advance. With determination and disregard of personal safety he rushed the chateau, killing two Germans and holding up the remainder until reinforced. This gallant action was instrumental in the capturing of a further twenty prisoners and cleared away the last of the opposition in this sector. Throughout the day the conduct of Lance-Corporal Amey, in the face of such opposition and danger was of the highest type and beyond all praise. The work done by him not only resulted in clearing up a critical situation, but was instrumental in saving many lives.

The above citation appeared in the *London Gazette* on 31 January 1919 and represented the epitome in gallantry in the British Army. Lance-Corporal William Amey of the 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, had won the Battalion’s only Victoria Cross (VC). His was one of only five VCs awarded to the

Regiment in the Great War. Of the five, one went to a Regular, two went to Service battalion men and two to Territorials.¹

Table 8 shows the number of VCs awarded to British infantry in the Great War. This table shows the Foot Guards, the Infantry of the Line and those Territorial Regiments that were awarded a VC. Interestingly, only one regular regiment failed to win a VC during the war, the Dorsetshire Regiment. The table shows that the Royal Warwickshire Regiment was just above average when judged by VCs per active battalion; it was also just above average with five VCs for the Regiment, compared to 4.55 for those listed as a whole. By this standard, the 1/8th Battalion would appear to be an excellent battalion in an above average regiment.

There were, nevertheless, other awards made during the Great War and these are listed in Table 9. It is fair to say that the issue of awards for gallantry during the Great War was unprecedented. For example, the 25,000 awards of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) contrasted with 2,000 awards during the Boer War and was seven times the number of awards between 1855 and 1909.¹ The 120,000 awards of the Military Medal (MM) contrast with only 16,000

¹ Lance Corporal Arthur Vickers, 2nd Battalion, 25 September 1915; Captain Robert Edwin Phillips, 9th Battalion, 25th January 1917; Captain Julian Royds Gribble, 10th Battalion, 23 March 1918; Private Arthur Hutt, 1/7th Battalion, 4th October 1917.

Table 8*Number of Victoria Crosses Awarded to Regiments*

Regiment	Victoria Cross	Active Bns	VCs per Bn
Grenadier Gds	7	4	1.75
Coldstream Gds	7	4	1.75
Scots Gds	5	2	2.50
Irish Gds	4	2	2.00
Welsh Gds	1	1	1.00
R Scots	6	22	0.27
RW Surrey	4	13	0.31
E Kent	1	10	0.10
R Lancaster	8	12	0.66
Northumberland F	5	31	0.16
R Warwickshire	5	16	0.31
R Fusiliers	12	21	0.57
Liverpool	6	24	0.25
Norfolk	1	13	0.07
Lincolnshire	3	11	0.27
Devonshire	2	15	0.13
Suffolk	2	15	0.13
Somerset LI	1	11	0.09
W Yorkshire	4	19	0.21
E Yorkshire	4	12	0.33
Bedfordshire	7	8	0.87
Leicestershire	3	11	0.27
R Irish	1	4	0.25
Yorkshire	10	12	0.83
Lancashire Fus	17	21	0.80
R Scots Fus	4	11	0.36
Cheshire	2	19	0.10
R Welsh Fus	8	23	0.34
S Wales B	6	12	0.50
K.O.S.B.	4	9	0.44
Scottish Rifles	3	15	0.20
R Inniskilling Fus	7	9	0.77
Gloucestershire	4	16	0.25
Worcestershire	8	12	0.66
E Lancashire	4	11	0.36

¹ R.W. Walker, *Recipients of the Distinguished Conduct Medal 1914-1920* (Birmingham: Midland Medals, 1981), p. vi.

E Surrey	7	11	0.63
D.C.L.I.	1	9	0.11
W Riding	5	13	0.38
Border	5	11	0.45
R Sussex	3	16	0.18
Hampshire	3	18	0.16
S Staffordshire	3	9	0.33
Dorsetshire	0	6	0.00
S Lancashire	4	13	0.30
Welsh	3	23	0.13
Black Watch	4	15	0.26
Ox & Bucks L.I.	2	11	0.18
Essex	1	19	0.05
Notts & Derby	9	19	0.47
LN Lancashire	3	19	0.15
Northamptonshire	4	8	0.50
R Berkshire	2	8	0.25
RW Kent	3	12	0.25
K.O.Y.L.I.	8	12	0.66
Shropshire L.I.	1	9	0.11
Middlesex	5	28	0.17
KRRC	7	16	0.43
Wiltshire	1	7	0.14
Manchester	11	27	0.40
N Staffordshire	4	9	0.44
Yorks & Lancs	4	14	0.28
Durham L.I.	6	24	0.25
H.L.I.	7	20	0.35
Seaforth H	7	11	0.63
Gordon H	4	13	0.30
Cameron H	3	8	0.37
R Irish Rifles	3	13	0.23
R Irish Fus	2	7	0.28
Connaught R	1	4	0.25
A&S H	6	17	0.35
Leinster	4	4	1.00
R Munster Fus	3	6	0.50
R Dublin Fus	3	7	0.42
Rifle Bde	10	19	0.52
H.A.C.	2	2	1.00
London	9	62	0.14
Hertfordshire	2	3	0.66

Total	351	1033	0.33
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Table 9

Honours in the Great War, August 1914 - May 1920

Honour	Awarded	1st Bar	2nd Bar	3rd Bar	Total
VC	578	2	0	0	580
DSO	8981	708	71	7	9767
MC	37081	2983	168	4	40146
DCM	24591	472	9	0	25072
MM	115577	5796	180	1	121554
MSM	21963	4	0	0	21967
MiD	141082	-	-	-	141082

VC	Victoria Cross
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
MC	Military Cross
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
MM	Military Medal
MSM	Meritorious Service Medal
MiD	Mentioned in Despatches

such awards during World War Two,¹ and it has to be borne in mind that the medal was not instituted until 1916. Table 10 shows the same awards, as made to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and Table 11 shows the percentage of all awards made to the Regiment. The latter table indicates that the Regiment would appear to have been above average in its awards of the VC, the Military Cross (MC), the DCM and the MM; it was below average in the number of awards of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) and mentions in despatches (MiD). In the case of the MiD, this would appear to have been the worst performance of the Regiment, with a figure only half that of higher awards.

It is relatively easy to obtain details of awards to regiments during the Great War. The *London Gazette* gives this information and also often provides details of any attachments to other regiments. What it generally does not supply, is the identification of sub-units, such as battalions. At the start of the war it was relatively easy to identify a unit. As the Army in France grew larger and the number of units proliferated so identification became harder. For reasons of security, precise detail was not given, though officers were often identified as being 'SR' or 'TF', Special Reserve or Territorial Force. Only after the end of the

¹ E.C. Joslin, *Spink's Catalogue of British and Associated Orders, Decorations and Medals* (Exeter: Webb & Bower, 1983), p. 72.

war, when the *London Gazette* was trying to catch up with the publication of awards, did the number of the battalion appear.

Table 10

Honours in the Great War, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Honour	Awarded	1st Bar	2nd Bar	3rd Bar	Total
VC	5	0	0	0	5
DSO	53	6	0	0	59
MC	328	29	1	0	358
DCM	204	3	0	0	207
MM	958	36	0	0	994
MSM	122	0	0	0	122
MiD	694	-	-	-	694

Table 11

A Comparison of Honours in the Great War

Honour	Awarded	R War R	% R War R
VC	580	5	0.86
DSO	9767	59	0.60
MC	40146	358	0.89
DCM	25072	207	0.82
MM	121554	994	0.81
MSM	21967	122	0.55
MiD	141082	694	0.49

It has, therefore, been necessary to cross-reference data from the *London Gazette* with data taken from medal rolls to tie awards down to a particular battalion; even here, care has to be taken where a man transferred from one unit to another and it must be accepted that, in some instances, it may never be known in which unit a man was serving when he was rewarded for his gallant conduct.

Table 12 records the number of different awards that can be identified as having been awarded to the Battalion. Table 13 shows those awards compared to the rest of the Regiment and attempts to show just how many they should have won, based upon the amount of time spent on active service. The 'target' column has been arrived at by dividing the total number of awards to the Regiment by the number of active battalions. This crude measure is unfair to those second-line Territorial units of 61st Division that did not arrive in France until May 1916, two of which were disbanded in February 1918; by the same token, it is also very generous to the Regular battalions, for they saw more service than any of the others. However, this measure does show that the 1/8th Battalion appears to have been a successful battalion: it obviously did well with the award of the VC; it obtained nearly twice as many DSOs than this measure should suggest, the total being 10 per cent of all awards to the Regiment; it

gained a significantly higher number of MCs, again obtaining 10 per cent of awards to the Regiment; it was on target for the DCM; significantly over target

Table 12

Honours in the Great War, 1/8th Bn., The Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Honour	Awarded	1st Bar	2nd Bar	3rd Bar	Total
VC	1	0	0	0	1
DSO	6	0	0	0	6
MC	33	3	0	0	36
DCM	13	0	0	0	13
MM	82	4	0	0	86
MSM	9	0	0	0	9
MiD	51	-	-	-	51
Foreign Awards	12	-	-	-	12
CB/CMG	2	-	-	-	2
Commissioned	1	-	-	-	1

Table 13

Honours in the Great War, The Battalion Compared to The Regiment

Honour	Regiment	Battalion	Target	% to Battalion
VC	5	1	0.3	20.0
DSO	59	6	3.7	10.2
MC	358	36	22.4	10.0
DCM	207	13	12.9	6.3
MM	994	86	62.1	8.6

MSM	122	9	7.6	7.4
MiD	694	51	43.4	7.3

for the MM and just over for both the MSM and MiD. All in all, these figures represent a very successful and creditable rate of reward for the battalion.

There remains the question as to what sort of acts led to honours being awarded. The opening paragraph of this chapter gives the citation for one award, that being the highest award that this country can bestow on an individual. It is, therefore, atypical. A study of the citations enables us to identify the reasons why awards were made. Unfortunately, there are only a limited number of awards for which citations are available. There are none for either the MSM nor the MM.¹ That leaves the DSO, MC and DCM. For the latter, citations are available for every award. The DSO and MC, however, are not always accompanied by the publication of a citation. There were many such awards gazetted in the New Year and Birthday Honours' Lists and these were given under a general citation, "For meritorious service in France and Flanders", for example. The majority, though, do have a citation.

When examining only one battalion, the number of citations available is relatively few. There are only three citations for the DSO to members of the 1/8th Battalion; there are twenty-three for the MC and fifteen for the DCM. What is

¹ There is, in fact, one known citation for the MM to the Battalion. This is for the award to Private Sidney Crow, gazetted on 23 July 1919. The citation appears in M. Kincaid-Smith, *The 25th Division in France & Flanders* (London: Harrison, 1920), p. 393.

interesting is that there are no citations for any awards that were gazetted in 1917. This would tend to suggest that no awards were made for the period covering the end of 1916 to late in 1917. It is a matter of speculation as to whether this reflects the Battalion's performance in action. As the war progressed, the time delay between the act of gallantry and the gazetting of any subsequent award became greater: it took until the end of December 1919 for the publication in the *London Gazette* of the awards of October and November 1918. By comparison, the award of the DCM to Corporal Bernard Shiel took only two months: the act occurred on 19 April and the citation appeared on 30 June 1915. An examination of the existing citations can, however, reveal certain facts about the type of incidents for which gallantry honours were awarded.

The three citations for the DSO are all different. The first award was to Major John Wilson-Charge and was gazetted on 22 September 1916. The citation details two acts of gallant conduct in which the officer was exposed to personal danger. His ability as a leader and as an inspiration to his troops, is also apparent,

For conspicuous gallantry during operations. He organised a bombing attack which gained 220 yards of enemy trench. After he left it the bombing party was driven back. He returned and had succeeded in capturing some of the lost ground when he was wounded.

Here, the officer quite clearly exercised the responsibility of his position, inspired his troops and was wounded. On 20 October 1916 Captain Cecil Martin had his award gazetted

For conspicuous gallantry in action. He led his company in the attack with great dash, repelled bombing attacks and displayed great courage in endeavouring to consolidate the position.

Again, the officer had been in a position of danger and had led his troops, but in an unsuccessful action, an unusual element for this battalion. The final award of the DSO to the Battalion was of an altogether different character. It was gazetted on 10 December 1919 and was for the same action in which Lance-Corporal Amey won his VC:

For gallant leadership during the crossing of the Sambre-Oise Canal and the capture of Landrecies on the 4th November, 1918. His battalion fought their way down to and across the canal against heavy opposition and helped to take Landrecies, capturing over 200 prisoners, some guns and many minenwerfer and machine-guns, he did fine work.

This citation reads as though the gallantry that was displayed for this award was that of his men, and that Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Whitehouse was rewarded for his leadership of such men. Such differences in the style of an award are as apparent in the awards of the MC. Here, there is a greater number of citations and the different types are easier to pick out.

The different types of gallantry can be roughly summarised as follows: specific incidents of great personal courage in the heat of battle; good work over

a period of time; the gaining of information; the restoration of an awkward situation; and exposure to danger. Quite often a citation contains elements of more than one type. A few examples of the alternative types of citation will suffice.

The first award of an MC to the Battalion occurred on 24 July 1915 when Captain Herbert Davies was rewarded

For conspicuous gallantry and resource. On many occasions when on patrol duty in front of the trenches. Notably on the night of 20th/21st June 1915 when he carried out a very daring reconnaissance close to the river Douve. From his knowledge of German he obtained very valuable information from the enemy's conversation after passing over ground lit up by flares and constantly swept by machine-gun fire.

Captain Davies obviously went out on many patrols, but distinguished himself on this one particular occasion. He was at risk of injury, but not in the same way as standing up and charging into a hail of bullets. Nevertheless, he was able to bring back valuable information. Second Lieutenant Arthur Procter exhibited that special, one-off example of courage, during a raid, "He guided the raiding party, cut the wire, and then ran along the enemy's parapet, bombing".¹ A bad example of a citation is that of the only award to a Warrant Officer of the Battalion, with a citation, "For consistent gallantry and good work in the face of the enemy".² Second Lieutenant Harold Gough did not fare much better,

¹ *London Gazette*, 16 May 1916.

² *Ibid*, 19 August 1916.

especially when it is considered that his citation was for gallantry over a period of time, as well as for a specific occasion:

For conspicuous gallantry and good work on several occasions. Notably when he successfully blew a gap in the enemy's wire with a torpedo, previous to a raid. On another occasion he did similar fine work.¹

Second Lieutenant George Bowerman displayed a fine ability to stay cool under trying circumstances, inspiring his men by seeming not to notice danger:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty while in charge of an advanced outpost line. Under most trying conditions and under continuous shellfire he visited his posts continually, cheering up and encouraging his men. He personally helped to dig out some men who were buried in the mud and organised stretcher parties, collecting many wounded in full view of the enemy.²

This officer would have been a great example to his men. He clearly shared their dangers, physically worked hard, to help them and still had the wherewithal to remain calm and get matters organised; not a bad feat for a subaltern. Captain James Bridge exhibited another characteristic of the officer, initiative, the ability to act without specific orders. Whilst in the ranks he had been awarded the MM and it is easy to see why:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an enemy attack. After having first received orders to stand-to he intercepted a brigade message ordering the battalion forward and at once pushed forward and took up his alarm positions. In the enemy attack which followed his company was severely involved but he coolly and skilfully handled his men with such good effect that the enemy suffered heavily and his advance was held up.³

¹ Ibid, 26 September 1916.

² Ibid, 7 March 1918.

³ Ibid, 24 September 1918.

He quite clearly saved a poor position and, by his acting upon orders not originally meant for him, he saved a great deal of time and materially helped to defeat the enemy. On the same day that Bridge's MC was gazetted, so too was another to an officer commissioned from the ranks. Second Lieutenant Albert Lucas had been commissioned from a Territorial battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment and clearly exhibited the ability to plan, act with calmness and lead from the front:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty while leading a raid. He had made five reconnaissances of the ground and possessed the confidence of his men. On reaching the machine-gun post he personally shot the sentry and obtained the first identification. He then made a fine attempt to carry away the machine-gun and only withdrew after seeing that it was permanently put out of action.¹

A slightly different citation appeared for the attack on Landrecies on 4 November 1918. This rewarded the officer's organisational skill and leadership and was thus the only one of its type to the Battalion. The citation indicates that this was a case where an individual affected the outcome of a battle, not by his presence in the front line, but by the application of his organisational skills just behind it.

The officer was Major John Griffin and the citation read:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when in charge of the leading companies during the attack on Landrecies on 4th November 1918. In the face of heavy fire he pushed forward many times and got back with very valuable information and all through the day he rendered invaluable assistance in reorganising the

¹ Ibid, 24 September 1918.

companies and his untiring energy and skilful leadership helped considerably in the bringing of the operation to a successful issue.¹

The citations relating to the award of the DCM are of an altogether different nature. Once again, certain categories can be identified and these are: rescuing wounded comrades, or attempting to do so; taking the initiative, or taking command; good work over a long period of time and one display of courage in action.

The first DCM awarded to the Battalion was as a result of the very first time that the Battalion held the line on its own. It was awarded to Corporal Bernard Sheil and there is more than a suspicion that the award may have owed a great deal to the desire to motivate the men and boost their morale:

For conspicuous courage and resource displayed on the night of 18th-19th April 1915, at Steenbecque, near Wulverghem, when, while forming one of a listening party of four men, on encountering a listening patrol of the enemy, he seized one of the latter and made him prisoner. The enemy's patrol immediately opened fire, killing one of our men.²

This incident may have been a good example of quick thinking by the individual concerned, but it is hard to see that it merited such a high award, except for its motivational factor. The second award followed very quickly and was of a type that brought three such awards in the early days, but then ceased to be a factor in such matters. The recipient was Lance-Corporal H Wheeldon, who was also awarded the MM:

¹ Ibid, 10 December 1919.

² Ibid, 30 June 1915.

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty displayed at Steenbecque, near Wulverghem, on the night of 19th-20th April 1915, in going, with an officer, to the assistance of Private Holman, who lay mortally wounded close to the enemy and whom they carried in. Lance-Corporal Wheeldon then returned with the officer and searched, without success for another man who had been shot at the same time.*¹

Without doubt, Wheeldon displayed great courage in twice going into No-Man's-Land, especially when he was unused to its dangers. Private J. Farmer won the DCM for being the second man to attempt to bring in a wounded comrade, the first being killed in the act, and doing so successfully.² The feat was repeated a few months later by Sergeant Oliver Summers, but his citation was terse in the extreme, containing just twelve words, and no such citation was gazetted again for the rest of the war. The clue may lie in the second citation, in that rescuing wounded men could be an expensive, as well as hazardous, occupation.³

Corporal C. Herrick received his DCM for continuous good work, although it would appear that he was frequently on patrol.⁴ The only other example of this sort of award of the DCM to the Battalion occurred in the award to Company-Sergeant-Major Sidney Merrick:

For conspicuous gallantry and continuous good work during a long period of active operations, when by his great courage and example he kept his men under thorough control under trying and difficult circumstances, thus rendering valuable assistance to his commanding officer. Whether in action or not, he always showed

¹ Ibid, 30 June 1915.

² Ibid, 11 March 1916.

³ Ibid, 21 June 1916. "For conspicuous gallantry when bringing in a wounded serjeant under heavy fire."

⁴ Ibid, 11 March 1916. "For conspicuous gallantry and good work on many occasions on patrols. Corporal Herrick invariably displayed coolness and courage in the performance of his duties. He has recently been wounded."

*marked ability, and produced a high state of efficiency in his company.*¹

This sort of DCM seems to have been the exception, it being far more common for the award to go to men who displayed initiative and who took control when the situation arose, often totally unexpectedly. This does raise the question as to whether it was the exception for men to display such qualities; if they did so, then they were rewarded. Two examples of the display of these qualities will suffice.

The first was to Lance-Corporal J. Berriman:

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. When his company were advancing to take up a line of outposts he was reconnoitring with one other man, and came upon a gun-pit occupied by the enemy. He shot a sentry and took the remainder prisoners. He showed great fearlessness and initiative.*²

The second was to Regimental-Sergeant-Major Charles Clarke:

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an enemy attack. He collected battalion headquarters and established them in a good defensive position. He then made a personal reconnaissance to ascertain the situation and dispositions of the enemy. During the attack he spared no effort throughout the day in organising and keeping going a continuous supply of ammunition to the front line, where it was greatly needed.*³

The first is a good example of a man carrying out a task and coming across the unexpected; the second is of a man in a position of responsibility but who then finds himself in unfamiliar territory, he reacts well and is then able to fall back on

¹ Ibid, 21 October 1918.

² Ibid, 26 January 1918.

³ Ibid, 30 October 1918.

the qualities that took him to that position. Both reacted as the army and the regiment would have wanted.

There is little evidence that the criteria for the awarding of any decoration changed significantly over time. It is known that instructions were issued to stop awarding the DCM for good administrative work behind the lines.¹ It has been noted already that the award of the same medal for bringing in wounded soldiers appears to have ended during the war, but that may be limited solely to this battalion, or be coincidental.

What is clear is that the Battalion enjoyed a good record in that it appears to have earned a higher proportion of gallantry awards than would have been the case had they simply come up with the rations.

¹ Walker, *op cit*, p. viii. Commanders were told on 1 January 1917 that awards were to be limited to conduct 'under fire or in action'.

Chapter Six

A Very Young Army?

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that went to France in August 1914 was a regular, professional body of men. Its ranks were full of soldiers who had signed up to complete seven years with the colours and five with the reserve, some of whom decided to stay on and make the army a lifelong career. To bring it up to war strength battalions were filled with Reservists and Special Reservists.

In 1915, with a large proportion of its original members dead, wounded or invalided out of the BEF, the ranks were filled with new recruits.¹ That year also saw the first of the Kitchener battalions deployed to France, following on the heels of the deployment of whole divisions of Territorials. 1916 would see a vast increase in the size of the BEF as large numbers of Kitchener and Pals

¹ P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army. The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-16* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 60 shows that the age limit was raised to 35 years for new recruits, 45 for ex-soldiers and 50 for ex-NCOs on 27 August 1914. On 18 May 1915 new recruits were taken up to 40 years, p. 127.

Divisions,¹ containing the bulk of the early volunteers of 1914, arrived. The Military Service Acts of 1916 would see the first use of conscription in Great Britain. Conscripts were accepted between the ages of 18 and 41 years.²

Based on the above statements, it would be reasonable to believe that the army of 1914 would be a relatively old one; that the army of 1915 would be younger, with a further decrease in 1916; the army of 1917 might see an increase in that age as the effect of the under-age volunteer diminished. To gauge the age of the army of 1918 would be a more difficult proposition, but, following the wisdom as enshrined in various works, it could be believed that the age of the BEF would fall to its lowest level of the war, as the army was brought up to strength with young boys, many straight out of school.

When the BEF mobilised in August 1914 there were only 4,192 men with fifteen or more years of continuous service; there were 46,291 with less than two years' service. After mobilisation of reserves 61.8 per cent of a unit's strength consisted of reservists. David Ascoli said that, "It was a very young army".¹ The Official Historian, Sir James Edmonds, stated that, in the last few weeks of the war, a pause was necessary between 25 and 31 October, not only to allow communications to be re-established and ammunition to be resupplied, but also

¹ All Pals battalions, raised by individuals or committees, became part of Kitchener's Army; but not all Kitchener units were Pals battalions.

² Ibid, p. 156. The first Act of 5 January 1916 called up unmarried men and widowers with no dependants aged 18 to 41 years. The second Act, of 25 May 1916, placed a liability on all men of those ages and even recalled/kept on Territorials whose term of service had ended, p. 158.

because the troops were tired. "They had been "on the go" since August with very little respite, bivouacking the whole time, and probably only very young troops - and the majority of "other ranks" were now very young - ...could have stood the strain."² So, two historians, writing about the start and the end of the Great War, tell us that the army was composed of very young troops.

Even in the early days of the war changes were made to the recruiting patterns that point to an older army being created. On 8 August 1914 the age range for recruits was changed from 19 to 30 years to 19 to 35 years.³ On 23 October the upper age limit became 38 years and in July 1915 it became 40 years.⁴

The average age of a soldier, of any rank, dying in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment was 25.8 years.⁵ The average age in the Gloucestershire Regiment was 25.5 years.⁶ The war was, however, a long one and there were many changes in the makeup of the Army during this period, so it is necessary to look at these figures in more detail. Table 14 gives the breakdown of average age of

¹ D. Ascoli, *The Mons Star. The British Expeditionary Force 5th Aug - 22nd November 1914* (London: Harrap, 1981), p. 8.

² Sir J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War, Military Operations France & Flanders, 1918 Vol V* (Nashville: Imperial War Museum & Battery Press, 1993), p. 386.

³ I. Beckett, & K. Simpson, *A Nation in Arms, A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (London: Tom Donovan, 1990), p. 8.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁵ Based upon the known ages of 6,631 out of the 11,693 who died in the service of the Regiment during the war. This represents 56.7% of the total. The figure is given as a decimal.

⁶ Based upon the known ages of 4,756 out of a total of 8,450 or 56.3%.

death for the two regiments for each year of the war. What is immediately noticeable about this data is that both regiments follow the pattern outlined above in that the average age drops from 1914 to 1916 and then rises in 1917. For the Gloucestershire Regiment this rise goes

Table 14

Average Age at Death, by year

Year	R Warwickshire	Gloucestershire
1914	28.0	26.8
1915	27.6	25.2
1916	25.0	24.8
1917	26.1	25.5
1918	25.0	25.9

above the figure for 1915, whilst it does not for the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. In 1918 the age drops again for the latter, but only back to, not below, the level for 1916; for the former it continues to rise and, in fact, records the second highest figure of the war for that regiment. For these two regiments, therefore, the data suggests that they do not conform to the statements put forward by Ascoli and Edmonds. For both regiments, 1914 saw the highest age at which soldiers died in the whole of the war; in neither regiment was the figure for 1918 the lowest of the war.

The sources for this data are of two types. Firstly, the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). This information was supplied by the next-of-kin after the war. Some gave only basic information: name, rank and number. There is no pattern to the type of people who gave extra information. Mothers and widows of officers were just as likely to provide no data as the dependants of dead privates. Working-class parents were as likely to provide extra information as those of the middle-class. For example, the widow of Lieutenant Colonel Innes, the CO of the Battalion, killed on 1st July 1916, provided no additional information whatsoever. For that information it is

necessary to turn to the pages of the *Birmingham Weekly Post*. Published every Saturday, the paper printed brief biographies of soldiers sent in by relatives, often with photographs, sometimes giving details such as school attended, occupation, age, address and details of family members. This is the second source used for the ages. It is true that sometimes the two sources differed; in that instance, the records of the CWGC have been taken as the more reliable source.

There is a need to see how the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, fits into this. Table 15 gives the data for each year and this shows that the model of the Gloucestershire Regiment is followed and not that of its parent regiment. The lowest level is again reached in 1916, rising in 1917 and continuing to rise in 1918. Once more, the view of the young army of 1918 is not reinforced.

The average age in all three instances given so far has remained within a narrow band, between 25 and 28 years of age. Table 16 gives the average age of death for each battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment for the whole of the war. This table shows some interesting data. Firstly, some of the ages are outside the narrow band described above. The 2/7th Battalion, for example, has an average age of 23.9 years. Secondly, distinct groups of averages are discernible. Regular, Territorial, Kitchener and Pals battalions, with just a couple of exceptions, appear to be in similar bandings. Thus the Regular battalions are

much of a muchness, as are the Territorials, both first and second lines; but, more strikingly, so are the figures for the three Pals battalions. It may be that the social composition of each type of battalion is in part responsible for

Table 15

Average Age at Death, by year, 1/8th Battalion

Year	Age
1915	26.5
1916	24.7
1917	26.2
1918	26.6

Table 16

Average Age at Death, by Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Bn	Type	Age
1	Regular	27.3
2	Regular	27.5
1/5	Territorial	25.7
1/6	Territorial	25.1
1/7	Territorial	24.5
1/8	Territorial	25.6
9	Kitchener	27.1
10	Kitchener	25.4
11	Kitchener	27.6
14	Pals	24.9

15	Pals	24.8
16	Pals	24.7
2/5	Territorial	24.4
2/6	Territorial	24.0
2/7	Territorial	23.9
2/8	Territorial	25.0

this effect, but it is no doubt worthy of further research to try to discover the reasons for this.

Given that the data for the 1/8th Battalion appears not to fall outside the parameters of the two regiments examined, it is productive to examine each of the years of the war in more detail. Tables 17 and 18 show data on a monthly basis, where the total number of casualties, where ages are known, exceeds fifty. The information given is that of total casualties, the extremes of ages, the average age of death, the number of under-20s who died and finally, the latter figure expressed as a percentage of the total casualties.

These tables are necessary as the aggregate for a whole year flattens out the figures. Given the huge variations in what might happen in a year, both in terms of frequency of active service and in terms of the number of units deployed, a more volatile picture emerges, when examined month by month.

For the Royal Warwickshire Regiment the average age in 1914 was high, peaking in December at 30.5 years, at the same time the percentage of under-20s was well below 10 per cent. In 1915 the average remained in the mid to high

twenties, whilst the percentage of under-20s varied wildly from less than 10 per cent to just over 20 per cent. Throughout 1916 the figures changed little,

Table 17

Monthly Analysis of Age at Death, Royal Warwickshire Regiment

	10.14	11.14	12.14	4.15	5.15	8.15	9.15	4.16	6.16	7.16
Casualties	89	52	74	168	88	103	119	124	137	970
Extremes	17-49	19-49	18-51	18-48	16-47	17-49	18-58	16-46	17-51	15-52
Average	27.0	26.8	30.5	29.2	26.5	25.1	28.4	25.6	24.2	24.6
Under 20	5	1	6	10	12	22	11	21	30	142
% Under 20	5.6	1.9	8.1	6.0	13.6	21.4	9.2	16.9	21.9	14.6

	8.16	9.16	10.16	11. 16	1.17	2.17	3.17	4.17	5.17	6.17
Casualties	268	276	127	105	62	79	74	209	233	63
Extremes	16-45	17-58	17-42	17-49	18-45	17-47	18-44	18-44	17-47	18-48
Average	25.6	24.9	24.7	26.0	27.6	26.8	24.4	26.0	26.6	27.4
Under 20	39	42	22	13	4	6	10	31	22	6
% Under 20	14.6	15.2	17.3	12.4	6.5	7.6	13.5	14.8	9.4	9.5

	7.17	8.17	9.17	10.17	12.17	3.18	4.18	5.18	6.18	7.18
Casualties	58	244	163	506	92	129	279	103	133	54
Extremes	18-43	18-54	18-44	18-44	18-44	18-48	18-48	18-44	18-42	18-56
Average	26.4	25.9	25.7	26.0	25.5	26.9	25.0	25.5	25.1	25.8
Under 20	8	35	21	61	13	21	64	27	37	14
% Under 20	13.8	14.3	12.9	12.1	14.1	16.3	22.9	26.2	27.8	25.9

	8.18	9.18	10.18	11.18
Casualties	185	240	234	108
Extremes	17-44	18-53	18-41	18-40
Average	23.8	24.8	24.1	25.0
Under 20	70	65	83	18
% Under 20	37.8	27.1	35.5	16.7

Table 18*Monthly Analysis of Age at Death, Gloucestershire Regiment*

	10.14	11.14	5.15	8.15	9.15	10.15	4.16	6.16	7.16	8.16
Casualties	67	57	135	153	130	99	53	72	473	200
Extremes	17-52	16-43	16-48	17-50	16-45	17-47	16-43	17-47	15-47	14-51
Average	26.9	26.9	26.3	25.0	24.9	24.4	25.0	25.5	24.1	24.7
Under 20	8	7	24	21	21	18	8	10	75	38
% Under 20	11.9	12.3	17.8	13.7	16.2	18.2	15.1	13.9	15.9	19.0

	9.16	10.16	11.16	12.16	2.17	4.17	5.17	7.17	8.17	9.17
Casualties	199	54	113	86	81	136	121	62	226	68
Extremes	17-45	18-41	17-41	19-41	18-46	18-46	18-67	18-44	18-45	19-40
Average	24.7	25.4	25.2	25.4	24.4	25.8	26.5	25.8	25.2	23.7
Under 20	22	6	15	11	4	13	8	9	25	18
% Under 20	11.1	11.1	13.3	12.8	4.9	9.6	6.6	14.5	11.1	26.5

	10.17	11.17	12.17	3.18	4.18	5.18	6.18	8.18	9.18	10.18
Casualties	285	55	125	151	260	64	129	95	146	136
Extremes	17-41	17-54	18-40	18-39	18-43	18-41	19-41	18-43	18-44	18-46
Average	25.2	26.0	26.3	26.5	25.5	24.6	26.6	24.8	25.9	25.6
Under 20	23	7	10	11	45	15	12	20	21	17
% Under 20	8.1	12.7	8.0	7.3	17.3	23.4	9.3	21.1	14.4	12.5

	11.18
Casualties	100
Extremes	18-41
Average	27.0
Under 20	5
% Under 20	5.0

with a drift down in the average age to the mid-twenties, whilst the percentage of under-20s rose to around the 14 per cent mark. In 1917 the average age rose only slightly whilst the figure for the under-20s appears to dip. In the last year of the war there is little significant change in the average age but the percentage of under-20s underwent a definite change. At the beginning of the year the percentage of such soldiers dying started at 16 per cent and quickly rose to over 20 per cent, by the early summer it stood at 27 per cent and by August it peaked at 37 per cent and then began to drop. So, 1918 does see the emergence of significant proportions of soldiers under the age of twenty being killed, far higher than at any other time of the war; but, at its peak only one soldier in three who was being killed was aged under twenty. Assuming that reinforcements arriving from March 1918 onwards were under twenty years is still a large, and I believe erroneous, assumption to make. I find it inconceivable that if young soldiers were arriving in large numbers then they were not killed, also in large numbers. The conscripts would, by definition, have been inexperienced and would have stood a greater, not lesser, chance of being killed than their colleagues. Given that even at its peak one in three soldiers was under twenty when killed, this still means that their older colleagues were dying at twice the rate, which leads to the

conclusion that the reinforcements must have contained older soldiers as well as younger.

The army of 1918 contained more young men than any army that preceded it, but it was not a very young army. It is clear that the Military Service Acts brought many young soldiers into the Army; it is equally clear, though less well known, that it brought many older men too. This number cannot have been insignificant. As the proportion of under-20s reached its peak near the end of the war and yet the average age either dropped only slightly or increased, then the number of older soldiers must have been significant. The soldiers who won the battles of the Hundred Days contained a higher proportion of youngsters than those of any other year of the war, but, by definition, they must also have contained plenty of older men too. Table 18 confirms what is written above, but with the important proviso that the Gloucestershire Regiment was even older in 1918 than the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The proportion of under-20s was always lower in the former and peaked in May 1918 at 23 per cent, less than one in four of the casualties.

As soon as the 1/8th Battalion arrived back in France in September 1918 they began to take casualties, yet the under-20s are conspicuous by their absence. In early October Sergeant Arthur Atkinson was killed, aged 39 years, Sergeant Charles Waghorn, aged 36, Private Thomas Gibson, aged 34. Four

days later Private Francis Parkins was killed aged 21. Not until the battle fought on 23 October do we find the real youngsters being killed: Privates Harry Palmer and Ernest Hancocks, aged 19; Private Richard Lander, aged 18, and Private Edward Lancaster, aged 19. They were killed on the same day as Privates Charles Eversden, aged 36, and Alfred Owen, aged 38. The Battalion's last major action, at Landrecies on 4 November, brought death to twenty-two men. Only one, Private Leslie Jones is known to have been under twenty years of age. Two men, Privates Alfred Parker and Thomas Rance, are known to have been thirty years or older. The majority were in their twenties.

The youngest known soldiers to have been killed on active service with the Battalion were all killed in 1916. Privates Percy Alcock, Octavius Liddington, Arthur Fisher and Alfred Jackson were all killed on 1 July, aged seventeen. The young boys killed in the war are to be found in the graves of 1916. Nine men of forty years of age and over are known to have been killed or died of wounds on active service with the Battalion. Six died in 1916, one in 1917 and two in 1918.¹

The only other known source on the subject of the age of the soldiers is that of the work of Colin Fox.² The work of Fox and his colleagues is important in that it reinforces the work already outlined here. Their work differs slightly in that

¹ The oldest known are Privates Albert Finlayson and Frederick Spreadbury, both aged forty-five years.

² C. Fox, et al, *Their Duty Done, The Kitchener Battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment 1918* (Reading: The University of Reading, 1998), pp. 105-6.

the issue of age has been approached from a different angle. For example, they have recorded the number of casualties by year in age bands, 17 to 19 years of age, 30 to 34 years of age, etc. Their work shows the '17-19' year category having between thirty and fifty casualties in the early years but 162 casualties in 1918. The '20-24' year band rose in 1916, decreased slightly in 1917 and remained static in 1918. The '25-29' year band increased dramatically in 1916 but dropped almost as sharply in 1917 before rising slightly in 1918. The '30-34' year band rose in 1916 and 1917 and decreased back to 1916 levels in 1918. The '35-39' year band increased sharply in 1916, remained static in 1917 and then dropped in 1918. The authors conclude that, "By 1918, if the Royal Berks is typical, the B.E.F. was much younger."¹ However, an examination of their figures shows that the '17-19' year band accounted for 19.7 per cent of all casualties in 1915; 12 per cent in 1916; 9 per cent in 1917 and 35 per cent in 1918. Therefore, by 1918 one in three casualties was below the age of twenty, virtually the same percentage as discovered by the work above. So, although the number of under-20s increases dramatically in 1918 they still only provide a relatively small proportion of the total casualties. As Fox and his colleagues have not followed exactly the same methodology as here, it is not possible to draw strict correlation between their findings and mine. However, on a general level they appear to have come to similar conclusions, albeit they are stated differently.

¹ Ibid, p. 105.

Chapter Seven

“A Very Satisfactory Day”:¹ The Battalion in Action in the Hundred Days

Following the major battle of the Piave, in Italy, on 15 June 1918, that front had once again settled down to a quiet existence. This, together with the fact that the BEF was in need of experienced men and that the politicians wanted to reduce numbers in Italy, meant that battalions were recalled. Divisions in Italy were still composed of twelve infantry battalions, compared to the nine in British divisions in France and Belgium. The decision was therefore taken to reduce the former to nine. Conveniently, this meant that all of the battalions returned to France could be formed into a new division. The 25th Division, having previously been reduced to cadre status, the decision was taken to reconstitute this division with the ‘Italian’ battalions.² The 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was brigaded with two fellow 48th Division units to

¹ Sir J.E. Edmonds & R. Maxwell-Hyslop, *Official History of the Great War, Military Operations France and Belgium 1918, Volume V*, (Nashville: Imperial War Museum & Battery Press, 1993), p. 177.

² A.F. Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 3A. New Army Divisions* (Newport: Ray Westlake), p. 139.

form the new 75th Brigade.¹ The other two brigades were the 7th and 74th.² The Battalion left Italy on 14 September and had arrived in France by 19 September. It then underwent three days' training, with special emphasis on Lewis gun work.³ It is not known how the decision was taken to select the units returned to France; however, both the Battalion and the 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment were the junior battalions in their brigades.

In the last one hundred days of the Great War there were sixty active 'British' divisions; of these, ten came from the Dominions.⁴ There is debate over which of these divisions contributed most to the ultimate victory; whether the Dominions were the powerhouse and the British had a supporting role, or whether the inputs were more balanced.⁵ The Dominion divisions are believed to have had numerous advantages upon which to base their claims for superior performance: their divisions still had twelve battalions; wounded men returned to their original units after treatment; they were homogeneous; they had stable leadership and, certainly in the case of the Canadians, they possessed greater

¹ The other units were 1/5th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment and 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment.

² They were composed of 9th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment and 20th and 21st Battalions, The Manchester Regiment in 7th Brigade, all from 7th Division; 9th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, 11th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters and 13th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry in 74th Brigade, from 23rd Division. All of these were Kitchener battalions.

³ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion, 25 September 1918.

⁴ Five Canadian, four Australian and one New Zealand.

⁵ See P. Simkins, 'Co-Stars or Supporting Cast? British Divisions in the Hundred Days, 1918', in P. Griffith (ed), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

firepower than their British counterparts.¹ Yet, Peter Simkins provides interesting statistics and views, upon which he bases his claim that the best of the British divisions were as good as, if not better, than their colleagues from overseas. Simkins argues that despite the obvious advantages enjoyed by the troops of the Dominions, British units performed as well, whether or not any of those benefits were present in British divisions. Therefore, he states that belonging exclusively to one Corps throughout this period produced no tangible benefit; that having a number of commanding officers had little impact and that of the best British divisions, one in three had seen one-third of their battalions replaced at some stage.¹

Simkins has analysed all of the 1918 battles for each division and categorised their performances: whether their attacks were successful or unsuccessful; whether they were opposed attacks or unopposed; and whether they achieved only limited gains. These categories are to be used to analyse the performance of the 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment in its actions of those final six weeks.

The 25th Division went into the line as part of XIII Corps of the Fourth Army and was used in the later stages of the battle for the Beaurevoir Line, the last well-prepared defensive position available to the Germans. This position

¹ S.B. Schreiber, *Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War* (Westport: Praeger, 1997).

was a system of two lines of trenches with concrete emplacements every 200 - 300 yards, behind which were scattered numerous machine-gun emplacements in depth.² Previous attacks had captured parts of this line, but the area around Bearevoir and Guisancourt Farm had still to be cleared to enable artillery to be brought forward and prepare for further advances.³ This was the situation into which the Battalion was re-introduced to the Western Front after an interval of nine months.

Failed Attacks

The Battalion would appear to have been involved in two failed attacks. On 5 October 74th Brigade was warned to attack Bearevoir and Guisancourt Farm, two miles to the northwest, pushing on to capture the high ground to the north and east of the village. The Battalion was ordered forward to support this Brigade. At 11.00, A and C companies, together with the 11th Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters, attacked the farm. Despite having been attacked earlier in the day by the latter battalion, it still held firm. The farm was on the crest of a ridge, surrounded by open ground and manned by machine-gun detachments, supported by artillery, against which the men could not advance. Bearevoir had not fallen either, despite the artillery barrage, deemed to be “not sufficient” by the H.Q. of 74th Brigade, even though it lasted for 80 minutes.⁴ B and D Companies

¹ Simkins, op cit, p. 59.

² Edmonds & Maxwell-Hyslop, op cit, p. 158.

³ Kincaid-Smith, op cit, p. 314.

⁴ War Diary, 74th Brigade, 5 October 1918.

were in support to 9th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, in its attacks on the village. Again, the latter battalion had failed in earlier attacks, owing to intense machine-gun fire. Sufficiently weakened by these attacks, 74th Brigade was to be passed through that evening by the two remaining battalions of 75th Brigade and the two remaining companies of the Battalion. At 18.15 a barrage opened on the position at Beaufevor which lasted until the infantry attacked at 18.30. Presumably, the extra weight of numbers, and all of the guns of the 100th Battalion, The Machine Gun Corps (MGC), as virtually another brigade was thrown against the village, for what was the third attack in two days, was decisive.¹ The village was finally taken and with it the high ground.

Guisancourt Farm held out until the early hours of 6 October, when yet another attack upon it was launched, this time by A and C Companies, together with A and D Companies of the 11th Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters. The attack was to be preceded by a ten minute bombardment.² The fighting here was not straight forward. The Battalion attributes much of the credit for the success of this operation to Second Lieutenant Brown who, together with two sections, rushed a portion of the defences and succeeded in taking three machine-guns, killing and capturing many men.³ Even then he had to hold on for many hours, against repeated counter-attacks, before the position was secured.

¹ Edmonds & Maxwell-Hyslop, op cit, p. 177.

² Ibid, p. 177.

³ War Diary, 1/8th Battalion, 7 October 1918. The date is believed to be wrong as, in this part of the diary, the days appear to be one day out.

After two days in action the Battalion had succeeded in helping objectives to be taken, albeit after initial failures. The events of 5 and 6 October only went to show that the enemy, despite being in retreat now for two months, could, and would, put up a stout resistance. If the artillery preparation were defective, and if the position was one of significance, then the enemy artillery and machine-guns would punish the attacking troops. If anyone believed this advance would be a cakewalk, they were sorely disabused.

Unopposed Success

At 18.00 on 8 October verbal orders were issued for the operations of the following day, the written orders not being completed until the early hours of the following day. The Brigade was to advance from the crossroads between Serain and Prémont, following the line of the Estrées to Le Cateau road, to capture Marez. 74th Brigade was to then push through and capture Honnechy.¹ The Battalion was to be on the right of the attack, taking and holding the line near Trou aux Soldats, to the east of Marez and south of the road, facing Butry Wood. The artillery barrage was to come down on Marez at 05.20, lifting at 05.28.² The barrage would then move forward at the rate of 100 yards every three minutes.³ The battalions moved forward through the mist in artillery formation on a two

¹ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 8th October 1918.

² Ibid.

³ Kincaid-Smith, op cit, p. 322.

company front. In short, very little resistance was encountered and the Battalion reached its objective at 07.30, allowing 74th Brigade to pass through.¹

¹ War Diaries, 75th Brigade and 25th Division, 9 October 1918. Interestingly, 74th Brigade had a much tougher time from hereon. Stiff enemy resistance was encountered from the railway triangle southwest of Honnechy causing the advance to halt. A further bombardment was ordered, during which the enemy retreated, allowing an advance to the objective.

Limited Gains

On 10 October the Battalion went back into action at Le Cateau. It was to be the Brigade spearhead, which, in turn, was on the left of the Division. Each of the Brigades taking part was to be supported by its own brigade of field artillery. The objective was to be the high ground east of Le Cateau, with the troops attacking in a north-easterly direction. As the area had previously been reconnoitred by cavalry troops, serious resistance was not expected and the Battalion was to advance in artillery formation. In addition, there was to be no artillery preparation.¹ This latter fact probably explains the close support of the field artillery. The country over which the attack was launched was open and undulating, with very little cover. There was high ground to the north-west and south-east of Le Cateau, whilst the village of St Benin, two miles to the south of the town, was in a valley and bisected by a railway running north to south, on an embankment. The river Selle also ran north to south, just to the west of St Benin.

The initial advance ran according to plan, in that there was little opposition, but then resistance stiffened. The Battalion had advanced two miles when, at 08.00, the leading troops came under fire from the railway embankments and the ground to the west of the river. This opposition became sterner as the Battalion continued to advance and comprised heavy machine-gun fire as well as artillery firing over open sights; the latter being dealt with by the

¹ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 10 October 1918.

close support of the Royal Field Artillery. In all, the Battalion pushed forward another half mile, but increasingly found itself on low ground with higher ground to the front and flanks. The whole Brigade then dug in for some hours before St Benin was eventually taken by 74th Brigade. No further progress was made that day. Any attempt to move onto the higher ground to the west of the river proving fruitless, thanks to the machine-gun fire.

Once again the troops had found that advancing was not a simple matter. The Germans could still put up a strong resistance where the conditions were favourable, and therefore exact a high toll on the allied troops. The Brigade war diary made the observation that in the previous week it had advanced thirteen miles, captured over 300 prisoners, several machine-guns and three villages. The cost had been 573 casualties, of whom eighty had been killed.¹

Opposed Success

After having been briefly rested, re-organised and re-trained, the Battalion was, once more, ready to go back into action. On the evening of 17 October verbal orders were issued, confirmed in writing at 23.00, that 75th Brigade would attack the following day. Attached to 50th Division, the Brigade would pass through this division and take the village of Bazeul, to the east of Le Cateau, and establish a

¹ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 12 October 1918. The Battalion lost 186 men of whom twenty-three were killed. Fortunately, large numbers of reinforcements arrived at this juncture.

new line to the east of the village. The Battalion's role was to be in support to the other battalions.

The troops assembled on the railway embankment to the south of St Benin. One hour after Zero, at 06.30, the Battalion advanced under artillery support, but at the same time being subject to a heavy gas and high explosive barrage as well as strafing by low flying enemy aircraft. The advance progressed well, until pinned down by machine-gun fire from the eastern edge of the village. Progress here was also hindered by the slow progress of the American 27th Division on the right. In particular, fire from the orchards in front of the village, was very troublesome. Two companies of the Battalion, C and D, were detailed to clear these orchards. This task succeeded, the tactics used being to work around the machine-gun positions and then attack them from front and rear simultaneously.¹ As a result of this, the village was captured and the objective reached by 15.00.²

The war was now in its final stages and the Battalion was to be involved in only two more attacks. The first was to be part of the XIII Corps advance to take the Landrecies to Englefontaine road, about five miles distant on 23 October. This was on the western side of the Foret de Mormal, with Pommereuil, the

¹ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 18 October 1918.

² Kincaid-Smith, op cit, p. 353. During this attack the 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment captured a battery of howitzers that had been firing in the open at the brigade. Later

northern part of the Bois L'Eveque, Fontaine au Bois, Bousier and Robessart also being taken.¹ There was to be no preliminary bombardment, the artillery commencing a creeping barrage at Zero for four minutes. Once again the field artillery was to be in close support to ensure covering fire on the second objective.

As 7th Brigade was able to muster less than 700 fighting troops at this point, the Battalion was attached to this Brigade for the attack. The 7th Brigade objective was to advance across rising ground of an enclosed nature, cross the Richemont river, capture the village of Pommereuil and push on, taking the northern portion of the Bois L'Eveque. The Battalion was to be behind the centre of the attack. According to the Brigade order they were to be right behind the 9th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment, on a front of 800 yards, in artillery formation. Having crossed the river, the Battalion was to regroup immediately south of the village, advance through the village after its capture and then cross the first objective line, before advancing to the northern edge of the Bois L'Eveque. The forming up line for the Battalion was on the Bazeul to Le Cateau road and Zero was set at 01.20. The Battalion was due to cross the first objective, and therefore pass through 7th Brigade, at Zero plus three hours and reach its objective 90 minutes later. No doubt due to the nature of the ground,

that evening, the ammunition column for this battery was allowed to ride into the village and also be captured.

¹ Edmonds & Maxwell-Hyslop, op cit, p. 352.

the artillery barrage would advance at the rate of 100 yards in six minutes.¹ All in all, the Battalion was being asked to perform a great deal, especially if it became embroiled in the fight for the first objective.

The attack started well with all battalions moving forward on time and crossing the Richemont river, in fact little more than a stream. By 05.20, however, the progress of the operation, as well as that of the infantry had become very confused. There was by now a thick mist, which, together with the enclosed nature of the ground, led to the battalions becoming quite mixed up. As was usual for this period of the war, many machine-gun positions had been left by the attacking troops. This meant that the support battalions did not advance unopposed, but had to deal with them, which obviously caused a delay. In this particular instance this process seems to have gone one step further down the line, in that one of the first wave of attacking infantry, the 21st Battalion, The Manchester Regiment, was ordered to mop up these posts, in conjunction with the Battalion. A certain level of disorganisation seems to have set in, because, by 06.35 the three battalion commanders of 74th Brigade were ordered to send troops well to the rear to help mop up remaining enemy units.² Not until 09.00, was the commander of the Battalion able to report that all enemy units had been cleared across the whole brigade front.³ At this time about sixty men of the

¹ War Diary, 7th Brigade, 23 October 1918.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Devonshire and Manchester Regiments, together with D Company of the Battalion, began working towards the first objective.

With troops on the left flank pushing forward, the Brigade was well behind schedule.¹ The Brigadier, C.J. Hickie, decided that, upon reaching the first objective, the Battalion would push forward to an intermediate objective, that being a point effectively running across the middle of the wood. The first objective was not reached until 11.20, a full nine hours after Zero, and the Battalion continued the advance. Even this did not go smoothly, with the Battalion facing considerable opposition in the form of machine-guns. By 17.00 a further advance of 200 yards had been made, and not until 23.00 was this line eventually reached. By this time, the Battalion had been in action for twenty-one hours and forty minutes, advancing a distance of approximately four kilometres. Three times during this action the Brigade had had to call upon tanks to help with mopping up.²

There is little doubt, though, that the brigade's task was very difficult. Advancing uphill, through orchards and across streams, then taking a village, the final part of the advance consisted of taking half a wood, all of which were heavily populated with machine-guns. The Battalion, especially, became involved in much fighting far earlier than originally envisaged, and then had to secure the

¹ 18th Division reached its third objective by 09.15, albeit they were in open country, outside the wood.

² War Diary, 7th Brigade, 23 October 1918. By the end of the day 75th Brigade had passed through to the second objective, which was in fact level with the third objective of 18th Division.

advance to the first objective, push on another 2000 yards to an intermediate line and then end the day mopping up for their parent brigade as they moved to the eastern end of the wood. They spent much of the day flushing out machine-gun posts in time-consuming operations, in both open and wooded land.

The final battle in which the Battalion took part was the attack on the town of Landrecies, on 4 November 1918. Of all the Battalion's actions, this had many of the elements present which give it the feel of a Second World War battle. The task of the division was to advance 3.5 miles, on a two thousand yard front. The first 1.5 miles were to take them up to the Sambre Canal, this had to be crossed, the town immediately entered and taken, before the final line was established two miles to the east. The 75th Brigade objective was to secure the initial advance, the canal and the town.¹ The Brigade began its planning on 1 November. Aerial photographs, intelligence maps and plans of Landrecies were all studied. Alternative plans were also made for action, based on whether or not any of the bridges had survived. The Battalion was to be on the left of the assault, on a two company front and was to secure the west bank of the canal for the support battalion to accomplish the rest of the plan.² The barrage would advance at the rate of 100 yards every six minutes and would provide a protective curtain 300 yards southeast of the canal after four hours and eighteen minutes.

Because of the earlier problems, 74th Brigade was unable to advance to the western edge of the Foret de Mormal until the following day.

¹ It is interesting to note that only 74th and 75th Brigades were detailed for this attack.

² War Diary, 75th Brigade, 1 November 1918. 1/5th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, was on the right and 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment, was in support.

The Battalion's task was, again, not easy. The extreme left of its advance from Fontaine-au-Bois was to pass through a dense patchwork of small fields containing orchards, separated by thick hedges; on through the village of Faubourg Soyeres; across road and rail junctions and then drop down onto the canal to the west and north of the town. A description of the canal is particularly pertinent here. The banks of the canal were fifty-three feet apart at water level; the water was six feet, six inches deep; from the bottom of the canal bed to the top of the bank the depth was nine feet, six inches; each bank had a towpath and the banks sloped at an angle of forty-five degrees;¹ the top of one bank to the top of another was separated by a distance of seventy feet, though at locks this could come down to seventeen feet.² To all intents and purposes it was a formidable obstacle and, as XIII Corps recorded, "The capture of Landrecies was an operation beset with many difficulties which might well have absorbed the resources of a whole division to accomplish".³

The Battalion moved off at 06.15 with C Company of the 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment, in support behind the four companies of the Battalion. The first opposition was met with at 06.45 at a crossroads. Here, the enemy was defeated by the co-ordinated action of a tank and Lewis gunners; presumably pinned down by the latter and then disposed of by the former.⁴

¹ Ibid, 4 November 1918.

² Edmonds & Maxwell-Hyslop, op cit, p. 463.

³ War Diary, XIII Corps, 11 November 1918.

⁴ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 4 November 1918.

Further fire was directed at the advance from Faubourg Soyeres in the form of the ubiquitous machine-guns and minenwerfers. Here, the leading troops bypassed the strongpoints and pushed on, leaving the three support companies to deal with the problem. As the troops approached the village they found it to be very well defended and became pinned down. One of the support companies was called up and a firefight began to establish supremacy, continuing from 08.00 to 09.00, when the enemy fire began to slacken. By 10.00, the village had fallen and a number of minenwerfer had been captured, after receiving the help of a tank. By 11.00, the Battalion had reached the railway line, leaving them only a short distance from the canal and in sight of their objective.

The left hand company, which was to work round to the north of the town, saw a light wooden bridge still intact over the canal and headed for it. The right hand company headed for the main bridge and lock, to the north-west of the town, only to see the bridge blown up in front of them. The lock gate, however, remained untouched. At this point, a number of support options were brought into play and demonstrate the high level of firepower open to attacking units at this time. The artillery maintained their standing barrage 300 yards south-east of the canal; large numbers of machine-guns were brought up to cover the crossing of the canal by firing on the town and the high ground to the south and east of the town was doused in smoke shells. Finally, aircraft also dropped smoke bombs.¹

¹ Kincaid-Smith, op cit, p. 367.

Under this tremendous level of cover both the attacking companies made a dash for the intact bridges.¹ The lock gates were utilised and the Royal Engineers immediately began to erect their pre-constructed trestle bridges. It is believed that some troops also crossed by means of rafts, constructed by the Royal Engineers. These were made from wood and petrol tins and were capable of carrying one man; they were carried up to the canal by teams of three men, both Royal Engineers and of the 11th Battalion, The South Lancashire Regiment, immediately behind the attacking troops.²

Assailed by the Gloucestershire Regiment from the south and the Battalion from the west and north, supported by the Worcestershire Regiment, the enemy in the town of Landrecies were quickly overrun. By noon, the objective had been reached and secured, only one and a half hours late. It only remained for the Battalion to send one company forward to reinforce the 1/8th Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment, on the second objective. The Battalion had achieved a great deal at a surprisingly low cost: captured were a complete battery of field guns, three minenwerfer, twenty machine-guns, a commanding officer and his staff and 230 soldiers; the price paid was fifteen killed, 110

¹ 172nd Tunelling Company rushed the lock gates and removed the explosives. The war diary of the division states that the all three battalions of the division crossed the canal simultaneously. Under the operational order the first two battalions had the option open to them to cross the canal and establish a bridgehead, thereby making the second phase of the attack easier.

² Edmonds & Maxwell-Hyslop, op cit, p. 472.

wounded and five missing.¹ XIII Corps paid its own tribute as to how such a difficult task had been achieved:

*Success was achieved with a single brigade and was due to the spirited leading of the officers, the bravery of the troops, and that element of good fortune that any well planned, boldly executed mission deserves.*²

Throughout this last campaign the maturity of the British Army can be seen. Attacks followed quickly, one after the other. They were planned in a hurry, the orders for them often not being complete until shortly before Zero, and yet they were planned properly. Zero itself occurred at any time of the day or night, allowing the attacker to maintain the initiative and keeping the enemy guessing. Units were not now preoccupied with what was happening on their flanks, although the progress, or otherwise, of such attacks were not ignored, they ceased to be paramount in the minds of commanders. Wherever possible, enemy strongpoints were bypassed and left to support troops; when they were confronted, flexible tactics in conjunction with Lewis guns, personal bravery and tanks overcame them. Above all there was the artillery. The artillery had by now perfected its ability to protect the infantry, enabling them to be delivered to their objective in much better shape. Having said all this, the enemy still maintained the ability to inflict localised defeats upon British troops and to disrupt British plans. The British had, however, learned and learned well. As Tim Travers has commented:

¹ War Diary, 75th Brigade, 4 November 1918.

² War Diary, XIII Corps, 11 November 1918.

*While the German infantry was generally poor in later 1918, the artillery and machine gun units remained the determined core of a dogged firepower defence, even in November 1918.*¹

By the time the Armistice came into force the Division had pushed forward sixteen and a half miles since 23 October, representing a considerable advance since its reformation. This advance had been performed across a series of ridges, with each new objective positioned on a crest. It was good attacking country, in that both attacker and defender had the same limited viewpoint, with neither having a greater field of vision than the other. The Division had performed well in its short existence and does not appear to have been handicapped by the fact that its component battalions had spent the previous year in Italy. The undeniable fact, as far as the Battalion was concerned, is that its performance in battle improved the more action it saw, culminating on 4 November. It is important that Simkins points to a number of notable actions in this period, one being 25th Division at Beaufort, the other being 75th Brigade at Pommereuil,² a remarkable achievement for a scratch unit from the backwater of Italy.

¹ T. Travers, *How the War Was Won. Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 157.

² Simkins, *op cit*, p. 64. He maintains that the key was small unit flexibility and all-arms attack. It is the author's opinion that the attack of 4 November by 75th Brigade should be added to this list.

Chapter Eight

At a High Price

Much has been written of how the 'Old Contemptibles' were destroyed by the time the first battle of Ypres ended in November 1914. Anthony Farrar-Hockley states that of the eighty-four battalions of infantry in the BEF on 1 November 1914 eighteen were at cadre strength (below 100 all ranks); thirty-one were very weak (100 to 200); twenty-six were weak (200 to 300); and nine were middling (300 to 450).¹ By the time of the end of the battle the example of the 2nd Battalion, The Highland Light Infantry, is used to illustrate the overall picture: "Out of all the officers and men mobilised at Aldershot a bare three months before, there were now scarcely thirty left."² The Official Historian says that "In the British battalions which fought from Mons to Ypres there scarcely remained with the colours an average of one officer and thirty men of those who had landed in August, 1914. The old British Army was gone beyond recall."³ Lyn MacDonald tells of a similar picture, but hints at the fact that many of the men, though wounded, would return, "By the end of 1914, the Army had suffered 90 per cent

¹ A.H. Farrar-Hockley, *Ypres 1914: Death of an Army* (London: Pan, 1970), p. 178.

² *Ibid*, p. 190.

³ D. Ascoli, *The Mons Star. The British Expeditionary Force 5th Aug - 22nd November 1914* (London: Harrap, 1981), p. 224.

casualties. Of course, they were not all dead. There were many...who were captured. Many of the wounded recovered...and in due course returned to the war.”¹

A typical infantry battalion of the early period of the Great War could well be the 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment. It was carrying out training at Rushmoor, Aldershot, when it was ordered back to its own station at Bordon on 1 August. As part of 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, it was much under strength, drafts having been made to the 2nd Battalion to keep it up to strength, as it was abroad; two captains, seven subalterns and 600 men were required to bring it back up to war strength.² By the early hours of 13 August the battalion was ashore in France, where it remained until the Armistice.

Of all the men who had landed by 14 August with the 1st Battalion 1,108 have been identified.³ Of these, 19 Warrant Officers, NCOs and men were commissioned, 302 were discharged due to the effects of wounds or sickness, 377 were killed or died of wounds, approximately 412 were demobilised at the end of the war and eight deserted. So, it would appear that in the region of 34 per cent of the original contingent of the Battalion were killed, 37 per cent survived the war and were demobilised, more or less intact, and 27 per cent were

¹ L. MacDonald, *1914* (London: BCA, 1987), p. 425.

² E. Wyrall, *The Gloucestershire Regiment in the War 1914-1918* (London: Methuen, 1931), p. 3.

³ The discrepancy between the dates of 13 and 14 August arises from the fact that all of the officers are shown as having landed in France the day after their men.

discharged due to wounds or sickness.¹ This does not present quite the same picture as some historians would have us believe. True, many of the men who were wounded in 1914 were sent to other battalions or regiments, often as NCOs, where their experience of active service was of vital importance. Many were not fit enough for active service and were posted to garrison battalions, performing such duties in many parts of the Empire, releasing fully fit soldiers for service at the fronts.² However, the image of the 1914 Army ceasing to exist by the end of the first battle of Ypres is not borne out by the facts. The Army may have been scattered, some may have been unfit to fight for some time but over one-third of the force was still fighting at the end of the war.

The data for the 1914 Star is relatively easy to obtain. Firstly, only the members of one battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment were eligible to receive it and all of the details are contained in one volume at the PRO. For the 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, it is not so easy. Entitlement to the 1914-15 Star was not limited to a small number of battalions. Indeed, the only battalions of the Regiment not eligible were the second-line Territorial units that did not go overseas until the early summer of 1916. The many volumes containing the names of the eligible men do not give one important detail, the

¹ Where the fate of a man is not known it has been assumed that he was demobilized. This is because it is positively known that he was not killed or discharged due to wounds or sickness

² 52 men are known to have been posted to such battalions of the Oxford & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, Royal Sussex and Royal Warwickshire Regiments.

battalion to which a man was posted when he went overseas.¹ What has to be done, therefore, is to cross-reference the entry in the 1914-15 Star roll with the entry in the roll for the British War and Allied Victory medals. To date, this has been done only for the 1/8th Battalion. Otherwise, the details have been extracted from the 1914-15 Star roll based on the date of departure from the United Kingdom. This means that all men with departure dates of 21st to 23rd March 1915 have been collated.

It is known that just over 4,000 men sailed to France with an up-to-strength 143rd Brigade, of these 2,871 have been identified from the 1914-15 Star rolls examined. Of those identified, 254 are known to have landed with the 1/5th Battalion, 319 with the 1/6th Battalion, 255 with the 1/7th Battalion and, because of the extra research undertaken, 610 with the 1/8th Battalion. A further 1,433 men have been identified but have not yet had their original battalion confirmed. This means that 70 per cent of all the original men have been identified to some degree. Their fate is contained within this roll as for the overwhelming majority of the men it is stated whether they were killed, discharged or disembodied.

Of the total number of men identified 6.8 per cent were commissioned, 29 per cent were killed or died of wounds, 31 per cent were discharged due to

¹ The exception being the rolls of the Machine Gun Corps. These give the battalion to which a man was posted when he earned the medal.

wounds or sickness and 32 per cent were disembodied at the end of the war. Table 19 shows a comparison between these figures and those given earlier for the men of the Gloucestershire Regiment who went overseas in 1914. For the

Table 19

The Fate of the Original Recipients of the 1914 and 1914-15 Stars

	Gloucestershire	143 Bde	1/8 Bn
Killed	34%	29%	43%
Discharged	27%	31%	30%
Disembodied	37%	32%	19%
Commissioned	1.5%	7%	9%
Deserted	0.7%	0.4%	0%

1/8th Battalion, however, there are some significant differences: 9 per cent were commissioned, 43 per cent were killed, 30 per cent were discharged and only 19 per cent were disembodied. For an 'Old Contemptible' of the Gloucestershire Regiment there was the probability that four in every ten men would come back either alive or not seriously disabled; for a member of 143rd Brigade the figures were roughly the same; for every ten members of the 1/8th Battalion waiting to board the *Brighton* at Southampton on 22 March 1915 only three men could expect to return in good order.

The picture that emerges, therefore, of the sacrifice of the original Territorials of 143rd Brigade is that they would pay an equally high price for their decision to volunteer, as the members of Britain's original army.

The cost to the battalion was high. It has yet to be seen, however, how this cost was paid and how this affected the make-up of the Battalion. Table 20 shows how the Battalion changed over time. The examination shows how three categories of men leaving the battalion have been identified. Firstly, there are those men who left through being killed; secondly, those who discharged through sickness or wounds; and, finally, those who were commissioned. We can see that the pace of change was slow, until the deluge of July 1916, by which time nearly one third of the original battalion had disappeared. From that time the number of soldiers leaving on discharge ran at twice the rate of those

Table 20*The Pace of Change in the 1/8th Battalion*

Month/Year	Killed	Discharged	Commissioned	Total
March '15	0	0	1	1
April '15	9	0	4	14
May '15	13	1	0	28
June '15	7	1	0	36
July '15	2	0	0	38
August '15	2	0	2	42
September '15	2	0	0	44
October '15	1	4	5	54
November '15	2	0	0	56
December '15	2	3	2	63
January '16	2	2	2	69
February '16	1	3	0	73
March '16	2	10	0	85
April '16	0	8	3	96
May '16	2	5	0	103
June '16	1	8	1	113
July '16	156	19	0	288
August '16	9	14	0	311
September '16	1	10	0	322
October '16	1	4	0	327
November '16	2	4	2	335
December '16	0	3	0	338
January '17	0	3	1	342

Month/Year	Killed	Discharged	Commissioned	Total
February '17	3	2	0	347
March '17	4	4	1	356
April '17	1	8	6	371
May '17	0	3	1	375
June '17	1	5	3	384
July '17	0	5	0	389
August '17	12	4	1	406
September '17	0	5	1	412
October '17	6	3	2	423
November '17	0	7	0	430
December '17	0	5	1	436
January '18	0	1	0	437
June '18	2	1	1	441
July '18	0	0	1	442
August '18	2	2	0	446
October '18	6	0	0	452
November '18	2	1	0	455

being killed. Of those men who were disembodied, thirteen did so from battalions other than their original, usually sister battalions in the Regiment and seventeen from the MGC. By November 1918 the number of original men left was, at most, 125.

This is not the total picture, however. The date of discharge is the date from which the soldiers were no longer a part of the army. That date was often a long time after the date on which the individual left the Battalion. Private Bert Schuck, for instance, was wounded on 1 July 1916. He was taken to a dressing station which was then hit by a shell and lost his right arm. He was not discharged from the army until June 1917. The rate of change was therefore much quicker than that suggested by Table 20. It cannot be ignored, though, that a large number of men still need to be traced. As only 610 of the original members of the Battalion have been identified, there were a further 400 men, who originally went overseas with them, who have yet to be identified. The roll of the 1914-15 Star was compiled of men who landed in France in March 1915 and were still serving with the regiment. When the MGC rolls are examined they are found to consist of men 'last serving' with that Corps. To track down the remaining men would require searching through all 1914-15 Star rolls to find those who transferred out of the Battalion, a massive undertaking, that is beyond the scope of this research. What is abundantly clear is that the 400 were not serving in the Battalion at the end of the war. If they had been their names would

have been on the medal roll. Of the 400 missing men, based on the experience of the data in Table 19, roughly 130 would have been killed, 100 discharged and 170 disembodied at the end of the war. It may never be known when these men transferred but their departure, too, would have greatly increased the rate of change in the composition of the Battalion.

Further evidence of how high the turnover of manpower was in a battalion of infantry can be gained from a study of the surviving Part II orders of the 1/7th Battalion. This unit did not have as high a number of men killed as the 1/8th Battalion, yet nevertheless displays a disturbingly high rate of change. The Part II Order for 18 October shows the variety of reasons for which men left a battalion, for however short a period of time: one officer joined as a reinforcement, together with six men; seventeen men went to hospital; one man went to England for munitions work; one man went to England for being under age; one man went to Third Army School; two men went to 143rd Brigade Trench Mortar Battery; two officers and two men went to Third Army Infantry School.¹ This gives a total of one officer and six men in, two officers and twenty-four men out. Other orders show similar figures, as Table 21 reveals.

Covering a period of only three months, and bearing in mind that not all the orders issued have survived, the figures make interesting reading. The period shows a net loss of six officers and 230 men. The basic statistics,

¹ War Diary, 1/7th Battalion.

Table 21

Part II Orders, 1/7th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Order	Officers in	Officers out	ORs in	ORs out
21.9.16	10	1	47	12
28.9.16	0	1	7	11
10.10.16	0	0	7	26
18.10.16	1	2	6	24
23.10.16	0	1	27	22
6.11.16	0	6	10	18
22.11.16	7	5	28	94
3.12.16	6	8	16	75
17.12.16	1	7	18	42
31.12.16	5	5	24	94
Total	30	36	188	418

however, conceal some quite disturbing facts: in three months the turnover of officers was equal to the officer establishment of the whole battalion; the turnover of men was nearly equal to two companies and the net loss of one complete company.¹ Taking into account that not all of the losses were permanent, that some of the individuals would come back, the process of managing such constant change must have been considerable, especially as these losses were in addition to battle casualties. It can only be presumed that all infantry battalions were undergoing such change.

¹ Based on 1914 establishment figures.

Conclusion

During the Great War a total of 1,051 British infantry battalions saw active service. Of these, 161 were from the Regular Army, 486 were from the Territorial Force and 404 were 'Service' battalions. The Royal Warwickshire Regiment provided sixteen of these, two Regular, eight Territorial and six 'Service'. It can be seen, therefore, that the Territorial Force provided more battalions of the British Army than any other source.

This work has examined just one of those battalions, recruited from the industrial heartland of the nation. The roots from which that battalion sprang, both military and social, have been examined. These show us that the battalion had a sprinkling of military experience within its ranks when it was born, just two of its sixteen companies having existed prior to April 1908. The overwhelming majority of its men were, therefore, new to military life.

Between 1908 and 1914 the Territorial Force underwent a 'rollercoaster' ride in terms of its success in recruiting and retaining its men. After the initial flush of excitement many battalions faced a hard struggle in reaching full establishment. In many respects, the City of Birmingham did remarkably well, its three infantry battalions soon reaching that target.

Having recruited these men, the problem soon became one of retention. Large numbers of men left the Force and dissatisfaction was expressed about equipment and facilities. This failure of the Territorial Force was not unique, however. Both the Special Reserve, also created in 1908 to replace the Militia, and the Regular Army suffered problems in keeping men. The former, especially, signally failed ever to reach its establishment. The period prior to the Great War can be seen as a period in which the principle of the volunteer army was sorely put to the test. It was the time when the National Service League repeatedly pressed for Great Britain to follow the continental lead and introduce conscription. All such attempts were doomed to failure in parliament. It is, nevertheless, interesting to note that a future commanding officer of the 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Edgar Arthur Innes, was the secretary of the local branch of the National Service League. Far from the two factions, conscription and volunteer, being irrevocably distanced from each other, some would appear to have taken the view that they had to volunteer to show that they were willing to do their bit.

Despite the reversal in fortunes of the Territorial Force, within Birmingham at least, there appears to have been a fillip to recruitment early in 1914. By the summer, and certainly before the outbreak of war, most units within the city were virtually fully recruited. Whatever the problems that had faced the Force men were still willing to volunteer in large numbers.

The Battalion was composed of largely working-class men in steady, and relatively well-paid, employment. One of its companies, however, was slightly higher up the social scale. Recruited from Saltley Training College, its members were trainee teachers. This company had been inherited from the 2nd Volunteer Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, when the Volunteer Force was disbanded. This battalion, centred upon Coventry, recruited its companies from the small towns and villages of the county and did not include Birmingham. Paradoxically, the existence of this company has had the effect of diluting the percentage of men from Birmingham within the Battalion. Once trained as teachers the men left the college and went into teaching jobs. Some stayed in Birmingham, some went into Warwickshire, whilst others dispersed throughout the country. When war broke out the existing members of the company were augmented by many men returning to Birmingham to re-enlist into the Battalion. This is made clear from the College War Memorial, now housed in St Saviour's Church near to the old college, which gives the dates between which the men studied.

Until very recently, a number of clichés, misconceptions even, have existed regarding the Great War British Army. Amongst these, have been the facts that the army that went to war in 1914 was a young army; as was the army that ended the war four years later. Colin Fox, and his colleagues from the University of Reading, have recently published the final volume of their history of

the Service battalions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. In this, they produce empirical evidence regarding the ages of the soldiers who were killed. This work takes that a step further forward. The ages of the soldiers who died, of two regiments, have been analysed. This analysis shows that the army of 1914 was decidedly older than in any of the years that succeeded it. The army of 1918, whilst it can be seen to be getting younger, in that an increasing proportion of those being killed were under 20 years of age, was not overwhelmingly younger than any other. One of the myths surrounding the issue of conscription is that it only brought youngsters into the army; it is clear from the evidence that older men came overseas for the first time, too.

The members of the British Expeditionary Force of 1914 suffered a high rate of wastage. It is well known that, by the end of the First Battle of Ypres, the 'cream of the British Army' had ceased to exist. As a collection of fighting units, manned by the original soldiers, it most certainly had. Although the casualties suffered by the original BEF had been dreadful, a surprisingly large number of men continued to serve. As wounded men recovered they returned to their units or were posted to another. An examination of the 1914 and 1914-15 Star rolls reveals that the sacrifice of the Battalion was greater than that of a comparable Regular battalion of the original BEF.

Once at war, the Battalion enjoyed a relatively quiet and gentle introduction to its new life. Not for them the baptism of fire of the London Scottish on 31 October 1914. As part of the Warwickshire Brigade, the South Midland Division, later numbered as 143rd and 48th, respectively, the Battalion saw service on the Ploegsteert sector and the Somme. It saw action, in the form of battles, on the Somme, at Ypres, in Italy and finally in France again between Bearevoir and Landrecies, to the south-east of Cambrai. This shows that it was not over-extended or over-used. In fact, it shows that it was a typical infantry battalion of the war. It was certainly not an élite unit, it was never chosen to spearhead a major operation and it tended not to be continuously re-cycled into, and out of, battle.

The work that the Battalion did occupied a great deal more time than taking part in a few set-piece battles. The true extent of the infantryman's lot is well documented in the history of this Battalion. The working parties and training sessions fully occupied their time, both in, and out, of the line. This is well evidenced in the war diary and is particularly noteworthy for the period between the battles of the Somme and the return from Italy in 1918. The men underwent musketry training, company and battalion training and also took part in Brigade schemes. In addition, specialists received training in their own sphere, though they tended to be spared the ammunition carrying, road digging, range constructing and wiring parties which bedevilled the men's rest. The volume of

work and training was immense, the only unfortunate fact being, that it has been impossible to discover the true content of those training schedules. In much the same way, little has survived detailing how the Battalion, and indeed the various brigades, divisions, corps and armies with which it served, actually fought in battle.

Although not overly used in battle, the full range of activities undertaken by the Battalion during the war, have been unearthed. It is to their credit that they appear to have been a battalion that took the war to the enemy. They do not appear to have been prepared to 'live and let live'. They raided the enemy's trenches, they disrupted his work, they observed him, they collected intelligence, they patrolled No-Man's-Land both to fight and listen; in short, they carried the fight to the enemy. For this, the men of the Battalion can be proud of their record.

The quality of their fighting record can be judged by the rewards that the army gave to the men. Of the many forms of distinction awarded during the war, the Battalion achieved an enviable record of reward in most of them. From the Victoria Cross to the mention in dispatches the Battalion won them all; they even received a battalion citation from Haig for their raid on the enemy line in the Spring of 1916.

Another method of examining the achievements of the Battalion is to look at discipline; how often, and for what reason, men of the Battalion fell foul of Army discipline. Apart from some work into the issue of the men shot by order of a General Field Court-Martial, recently expanded into an examination of the passing of the death sentence, no study has been made into discipline levels within the BEF. This has now been corrected.

The Battalion has been examined by comparing its level of indiscipline with those of sister battalions and other battalions within a different brigade of the same division. This helps to reduce the effect of different acceptance levels of offending between units. Quite unexpectedly, it was discovered that a higher level of indiscipline existed in units with city, as opposed to rural, backgrounds. Therefore, the 5th and 6th Battalions, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment and 4th and 6th Battalions, The Gloucestershire Regiment, had poorer discipline levels than their sister battalions. The 8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, enjoyed a low level of offending, both in terms of the seriousness of offence and its frequency.

There are still areas covered by this thesis that need to be researched further. The issue of the age of the soldiers is crucially bound up in any social study of the army. We need to know who these men were, where they came from, what jobs they had, prior to the war. It is, therefore, logical to want to know

how old they were. The conventional wisdom has to be either proved or disproved. It may well be that the issue has to be looked at regiment by regiment, corps by corps, owing to the immensity of the task. This work has raised the issue and suggested that the issue is not as clear cut as previously thought.

Discipline within the army is a subject that has been neglected and this thesis has spread the debate, taking it away from the sole area of interest, that of the death penalty. The number of men disciplined by the army during the war, the offences for which they were tried and the penalties which were meted out, are matters of crucial importance to the functioning of an army. This thesis has examined those issues for just seven battalions. One crucial theme has been identified, that of the disciplinary problem becoming more evident during quiet times, during times of rest away from the battle. It remains to be seen how localised this issue was.

Further work remains to be done into the awarding of honours for gallantry. A number of themes have been identified in this thesis which led to a reward. These are pertinent to the Battalion; more research may well reveal other themes. Work into the records of other battalions, regiments and corps will reveal whether those themes are isolated or whether they are common to the rest of the army.

The issue of training and performance in battle remain rich topics of further research. It may well be that the research undertaken into the formations with which the Battalion served was simply unlucky. However, very little factual evidence about the details of how units were trained has emerged. The names of training schemes are known, some of which obviously give clues as to the content, but the details of the syllabus are not. It is of crucial importance to know how men were trained, for that training dictated how men would act and react in battle. Similarly, it has also been noted that the fine detail of infantry tactics has not emerged in the study of war diaries and unit narratives of operations. A few examples have been uncovered, but the true extent of the development of infantry tactics cannot be recreated from the sources consulted. It may be that these details do not exist, adjutants may well have felt no need to record tactics simply because the men knew what to do and had been trained to do it; the matter may well have seemed unremarkable. The issue is, however, fundamental to our understanding of the army in action.

Bibliography

This bibliography is organised in two parts, archive sources and published sources. The archive sources have been further broken down into sub-sections, based upon the location of the source. The published sources are organised alphabetically, by author.

1 Archive Sources

1.1 Public Record Office

1.11 Unit War Diaries

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III Corps, General Staff	WO/95/675
VIII Corps, General Staff	WO/95/820
X Corps, General Staff	WO/95/851
XIII Corps, General Staff	WO/95/897
XIV Corps, General Staff	WO/95/4212
XVIII Corps, General Staff	WO/95/951-2
4th Division, General Staff	WO/95/1444-5
25th Division, General Staff	WO/95/2227
48th Division, General Staff	WO/95/2745-6,4244
48th Division, Adjutant & Quartermaster-General	WO/95/2747,4247

50th Division, General Staff	WO/95/2812
7th Brigade, HQ	WO/95/2242
11th Brigade, HQ	WO/95/1490
74th Brigade, HQ	WO/95/2245
75th Brigade, HQ	WO/95/2249
143rd Brigade, HQ	WO/95/2754,4248
1/6th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment	WO/95/2755
1/7th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment	WO/95/2756
1/8th Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment	WO/95/2756,4248,2251
1/4th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment	WO/95/2834

1.12 Medal Rolls to The Royal Warwickshire Regiment

1914 Star	WO/329/2426-2427
1914-15 Star	WO/329/2626-8
War & Victory Medals	WO/329/735-761
Silver War Badge	WO/329/3114-25
Territorial Force Efficiency Medal	

1.13 Medal Rolls to other Units

1914 Star, Gloucestershire Regiment	WO/329/2450
1914-15 Star, Machine Gun Corps	WO/329/2826-33

1.14 Officers' Papers

D.R. Adams	WO/374/239
R. Adams	WO/374/317
G.W. Arnell	WO/374/2275
H.N. Austin	WO/374/2830
R.A. Bloch	WO/374/7188
W.H. Bowers	WO/374/8070
A.A. Caddick	WO/374/11643
S.H.N. Coxon	WO/374/16190
G.C. Field	WO/374/24128
R.H. Fish	WO/374/24365
F.A.C. Fisher	WO/374/24398
F.B. Freeman	WO/374/25730
J.G. Fussell	WO/374/26109
C. Hoskins	WO/374/34858
E.A. Innes	WO/374/5741
W. Kentish	WO/374/39307
R.R.J. Laing	WO/374/40385
W.G. Laing	WO/374/40387
S.W. Ludlow	WO/374/43209
C.W. Martin	WO/374/46377
C.C. Middleton	WO/374/47559
S.W. Pepper	WO/374/53422

S.O. Richardson	WO/374/57370
D.L. Sarjeant	WO/374/60406
E.R. Shuttleworth	WO/374/62256
J. Teague	WO/374/67525
J.N. Townsend	WO/374/69302
J. Turner	WO/374/69915
E.S.C. Vaughan	WO/374/70442
F.W. Wareham	WO/374/71903
R.D. Whitehill	WO/374/73852

1.15 Registers of Courts-Martial

Officers	WO/92/3-4
Other Ranks	WO/213/1-27

1.2 Imperial War Museum

- Letters of F.A. Brettell
- Letters of F.T. Birkinshaw
- Letters of R. Mosedale
- Letters of S. Williamson
- Letters of J. Turner

1.3 Museum of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Diary of Captain J.L. Mellor

1.4 City of Birmingham Reference Library

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1.5 University of Birmingham Library

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