

LEEDS AND THE AMATEUR MILITARY TRADITION:

THE LEEDS RIFLES AND THEIR ANTECEDENTS, c.1859 - 1918

VOLUME II

by

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PART III : THE CITIZEN SOLDIER AS SOLDIER : THE LEEDS RIFLES  
TERRITORIALS AT WAR

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## PART III

THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER AS SOLDIER : THE LEEDS RIFLES TERRITORIALS AT WARCHAPTER 8. MOBILISATION and TRAINING

"Taunted for staying at home when our Regular comrades are fighting overseas, howled at when we offer ourselves for active service, expected to be fit for service, while we are vigorously debarred from ever seeing any, though our Colonial brethren are freely accepted, we have need, indeed, of all the patience at our command, and can only wait for the time when the war may come nearer home, knowing that then, at least, the country will go down on its knees to us to help" (Lt. Col. Eustace Balfour, extract from the Editorial of the London Scottish Regimental Gazette, Vol. IV, November 1899, pp.163-4).<sup>1</sup>

8.1. August 2nd - August 9th : Mobilisation

Due to the fact that the Regiment had for the first time been allowed to choose both the dates and the venue and due also to the bounty and to the fact that special trams, hired out of regimental funds, were to be run from outlying districts like Kirkstall and Pudsey to pick up men en route, an unusually large percentage of the strengths of both battalions (7th: 85.71% of officers, 81.25% of OR; 8th: 95.23% of officers, 91.6% of OR) had contracted to attend the 1914 Annual Camp.<sup>2</sup> The Leeds Rifles mustered at Carlton Barracks at breakfast-time on Sunday, 2nd August, amid rumours of imminent embodiment and of postings to a war station. An atmosphere of "tense anxiety rather than of excitement" and "a sense of impending crisis" prevailed in the city.<sup>3</sup> Continental Europe was in the grip of war fever : hostilities had commenced between Austria-Hungary and Serbia and between Germany and Russia, and newspapers were feverishly speculating whether Great Britain would be able to remain aloof from the conflict. The Leeds Mercury of 30th July asked "Is it Armageddon?" The Special Service Section of the Territorial Force had been called up the previous week. On October 1st 1913 this force had numbered 157 officers and 3,998 other ranks who had agreed to serve in case of emergency for one month on defence duties before the TF as a whole was embodied in return for an annual retaining fee of 10 shillings, plus a calling-up gratuity of £5.<sup>4</sup>



Absent from the muster were the 30-40 GPO employees, whose leave had been stopped by the Government, the bank clerks, and the officers who were stock-brokers or employed in banking.<sup>5</sup> The crowd of spectators assembled inside the barracks to watch the parade was well above the average size of recent years. Wags called out the customary remarks such as "England's last hope", "Why should England tremble?"<sup>6</sup> Many people lined the streets to the railway station and many accompanied the Territorials there to bid them a "more than ordinarily heartfelt" goodbye.<sup>7</sup>

On arrival at Scarborough Racecourse the usual routine of a Sunday in camp was followed, but no training programmes for the following day were announced. The only order issued was to "Stand fast and await orders." Reveille the next morning was sounded at 4 am. After what seemed like an interminable period of waiting, instructions were received to return to Leeds and there await further orders. 1294 Bugler Alexander Latto, 8th, blew the call to Strike Camp, and the rest of the day was spent packing up and waiting for the railway company to inform the Regiment that the special trains, which included cattle trucks for the Transport sections, were available.<sup>8</sup>

It was late in the evening before the Regiment was able to march off to the station, the bands playing patriotic airs. Despite the lateness of the hour, huge crowds of holiday-makers, "cheering wildly",<sup>9</sup> amongst whom were many wives and children of Riflemen who had gone to the resort for their holidays, lined the entire route to give the Territorials "a magnificent send-off":

"... they encountered crowds so dense as to make their progress difficult. They were cheered to the echo by this dense throng, who waved flags, handkerchiefs, and threw hats and caps into the air with such enthusiasm as if the soldiers had been troops who had just relieved the town from a long siege... This remarkable demonstration had its effect upon the soldiers, too, who were in the highest spirits. They sang as they marched and swung along proudly with the air of regulars."<sup>10</sup>

Relatives gave their menfolk sweets and fruit: 1679 Charles Lonsdale, 7th, was given a capful of green apples by the little daughter of his Colour Sergeant, Ernie Powell. The men were kept waiting on the platform until the early hours and were strictly forbidden to leave the concourse. 1327 Walter Garnett, 8th, and his pals, however, surreptitiously climbed the station walls to fetch comrades fish and chips.<sup>11</sup>



Unknown to the men, the Government had announced that night that the Army Reserve would be called out and the Territorial Force embodied the following day.<sup>12</sup> As they waited at Scarborough to return to headquarters, the men did not know what to think:

"... few of them believed in the possibility of their being wanted, war or no war. But they were excited and not a little elated, for they felt that the talk of war and their khaki uniforms lent them an unaccustomed importance in the eyes of their fellows."

Bandsman Edward Bennett, the wag of the 8th Bn military band, jocularly declared that the Government would never call upon the Leeds Rifles, as too many men in the Regiment were suffering from "Duck's Disease", a gibing reference to the low average height of the bulk of personnel. The men did not know what was going to happen to them, or where they would be sent; all they knew for certain was that, to use a local expression, "NOW had come". Some entertained frankly romantic notions, obviously culled from the pages of popular fiction. An 8th Bn bandsman called out to a friend in the 7th: "Goodbye, Tom, I'll meet you on the battlefield." "On the bottlefield, you mean," retorted his chum.<sup>13</sup> 534 Thomas Dickinson, 8th, whose engagement had just been broken off, wrote to his ex-fiancée after embodiment: "I will be at the front fighting the Germans when you read this."<sup>14</sup>

Back in Leeds, anxious relatives of local Territorials had besieged railway officials all day with enquiries as to the expected arrivals of the various special trains; large crowds had thronged the New Station to welcome the 15 Territorial troop trains that arrived between noon and 7.30 pm.<sup>15</sup> The Leeds Rifles' trains began to arrive about 4 am on Tuesday, 4th August, and the battalions marched up to Carlton Hill "with bugles blaring and bands playing."<sup>16</sup> The men were dismissed after breakfast so that they could return to their homes and attend to their personal affairs, with an order to return as soon as the Mobilisation Notice was posted. However, "many of the men were so eager that they would not leave, but waited around all day, and that despite the fact that they had been hard at work since four o'clock yesterday morning." During the day, there was "a great rush of time-expired men" anxious to re-enlist, as well as a number of recruits<sup>17</sup> who included respondent 2096 Charles Cameron, eager to join his elder brother Colin.<sup>18</sup> Next day the local papers carried prominent advertisements in large type



asking all ex-Territorial soldiers willing to rejoin the Colours to report themselves without delay,<sup>19</sup> and "large numbers" immediately presented themselves at Carlton Barracks.<sup>20</sup> The morning papers of 4th August had carried notices asking Leeds National Reservists Class II to volunteer for service with all local TF units (except the ASC); a £5 gratuity and pay and separation allowances at Army rates were offered.<sup>21</sup>

It was the Leeds holiday week. On 4th August "A big crowd waited all day in City Square and watched with interest the movements of the returned Territorials... [who] waited about in expectation of the orders to mobilise."<sup>22</sup> With so many men in uniform on the streets, Leeds "presented the appearance of a military town rather than a busy commercial city."<sup>23</sup> The Royal Proclamation embodying the Territorial Force was received between 6 pm and 7 pm; large numbers of men reported themselves at Carlton Barracks during the evening and were told to parade in marching order at nine o'clock the next morning.<sup>24</sup> On his way through City Square, Bandsman Sanderson saw a long queue of men outside the GPO: "reservists representative of nearly every unit in the British Army, waiting to draw their railway warrants and the 3/- travelling allowance."<sup>25</sup>

"Tremendous excitement prevailed at night in the centre of the city... Uniformed Territorials who from time to time passed through the crowds were the objects of demonstrations."<sup>26</sup>

"The rumour gained currency that the Territorials were going to leave during the evening, and large crowds gathered to see them off. Three or four thousand people assembled in City-square, and Boar-lane was lined from end to end with excited people. Nothing was talked of but the war, and the spectacle of Territorials in all the streets, and officers rushing about in powerful motor-cars accentuated the electrical atmosphere... Crowds of people assembled outside the Territorial barracks, and Chapeltown-road was thronged with people awaiting the departure of the Royal Field Artillery (Regulars)."<sup>27</sup>

"At the Empire and the Hippodrome Music Halls... various items of war news and orders to Territorials respecting embodiment were thrown on to a screen at each house..., and were received with enthusiasm by large audiences."<sup>28</sup>

At several picture palaces and theatres similar notices were shown to the patrons, and men who immediately got up to leave were loudly cheered and applauded.<sup>29</sup>



The embodiment notice was due to expire on 5th August at noon. "The men were not only willing but eager, and were in many cases at their headquarters long before the appointed hour."<sup>30</sup> The Evening News reporter (probably retired Lance-Sgt A. Bond, (formerly of the 8th Bn)<sup>31</sup> was admitted to Carlton Barracks to interview the men: "The men are in high spirits over the prospect of being sent on active service, and such remarks as 'I don't care where I'm sent so long as they send me where the fun is' are common enough."<sup>32</sup> Crowds waited outside the various barracks "for the greater part of the day" and hundreds of people congregated in Boar Lane and City Square, the approaches to the two main railway stations, "in the expectation of seeing the Leeds 'Terriers' depart"; "...judging by the enormous crowds that thronged the streets little work was being done in the offices and workshops."<sup>33</sup> Both Territorials and public were to be disappointed: after kit inspections, medical inspections - every man who presented himself medically fit when the TF was embodied was entitled to a bounty of 5 guineas<sup>34</sup> - and issue of field dressings and identity tags, the Riflemen were dismissed to their homes, since arrangements for billeting had not yet been completed. A sergeant and eight men were retained by each battalion to remain on guard and Bandsman Sanderson, who lived in Castleford, volunteered for this duty.<sup>35</sup>

Billeting took place next day, the 7th in Carlton Barracks itself (in the large drill hall and in bell tents erected at the far end of the extensive parade ground which had a dirt and cinder surface)<sup>36</sup> and in Blenheim Council School, about 300 yards away, and the 8th in two newish Council Schools, Green Lane and Whitehall Road, situated in New Wortley in the battalion's recruiting area. The march of the 8th Bn from the barracks to billets "attracted great crowds, and there was much enthusiasm."<sup>37</sup> "Their march through the city created no little excitement, many of the people thinking the battalion were moving out of the city." The Yorkshire Evening Post reported "extraordinary enthusiasm" and "stirring scenes" from all over the West Riding as local Territorials moved off to their training areas.<sup>38</sup>

The Regiment was given 5 days to mobilise:<sup>39</sup> this entailed getting the men fully kitted out with clothing and equipment, assembling the War Establishment Transport Sections which, according to Webster, consisted, for an infantry battalion, of 25 vehicles, 9 pack animals, 5 draught horses and 24 heavy draught horses (but which, according to Magnus,



consisted of 10 officers' chargers, 16 pack animals and 31 draught horses, in addition to "necessary" vehicles), and getting the battalions each made up, as far as was possible, to War Establishment of 31 officers, 53 staff sergeants and sergeants, 16 buglers and 1016 other ranks.<sup>40</sup> The two Transport Sergeants and their men went round the city requisitioning animals and vehicles according to the lists that had already been made up against such a contingency.<sup>41</sup> The horses were tethered in a portion of the parade ground. The regimental recruiting office at the Barracks was open from 9 am to 9 pm daily. Every day the office was besieged by men, the majority old hands seeking re-enlistment.<sup>42</sup>

For the rank and file of the 8th most of each day's work consisted of drill. They were formed into squads, under Regular instructors, and to their great mortification, had to commence with recruit drill which the "Trained Men" found "very humiliating", particularly as they regarded themselves the equals "in every way" of the Kaiser's men. The band instruments were taken away; 16 of the bandsmen, together with the Band Sergeant, were appointed stretcher-bearers, whilst the remainder had to go into the ranks as riflemen. The bandmaster himself had to revert to sergeant, although he was later promoted Colour Sgt and then CSM. The 8th furnished guards for Greenwood and Batley's works in Armley Road which, being situated on the canal bank, was thought to be vulnerable to attack by saboteurs. The school gates were guarded 24 hours a day and no individual member of the 8th was allowed outside, except on official business, during the five days spent there. Bandsman Sanderson strongly resented being penned in like the criminals in nearby Armley Gaol.<sup>43</sup> The men of the 7th at Blenheim School seemed happy enough "although no one will be sorry when the order comes for a move to some centre of greater excitement." They slept on the wooden class-room floors with a waterproof sheet and one blanket, using the kitbag as a pillow: the Evening Post was careful to emphasise there were no feather beds. They were obviously in high spirits: although Lights Out was at 10.15 pm the air was "rent with the singing of comic songs" every night until one or two am.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the war, there were still those whose pleasure was to jeer at the erstwhile "Saturday Night Soldiers". Bandsman Sanderson heard a man in the crowd at Scarborough Railway Station on 3rd August say loudly, "They're sending 'em home because they've no time to bother



with 'em now they've got the real soldiers to think about."<sup>45</sup> "Special Correspondent" reported a lame excuse made by an eligible young man asked to give the reason why he had not enlisted in the Leeds Pals: "...his reply was that he did not want a holiday. If he did he would join the Territorials, who do nothing but lounge about."<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, it was obvious that the Territorials who, as a body, had been cold-shouldered, neglected and over-criticised in the previous year or so (see Chapter 7), had become wonderfully popular with the general public overnight. The Leeds newspapers, since the weekend before the war broke out, had been at least as enthusiastic and as warmly supportive as they had ever been in the palmy days of 1908-9. Territorials were, of course, once more headline news. The Mercury, for instance, published a photograph of a young Territorial on guard outside his HQ with the caption "Ready, Aye, Ready,"<sup>47</sup> one of the two traditional mottoes of the Volunteer Force. When Lord Kitchener asked the TF to volunteer to go overseas, one enterprising London printer rushed out a patriotic postcard bearing a photograph of a young Territorial of the London Rifle Brigade and the following verse:

"Bravo! Territorials  
There's none can say you lag,  
In answering your Country's call  
To rally round the Flag.  
Each one of you has proved himself  
A Briton staunch and true,  
Determined that the whole wide world  
Shall see what you can do."<sup>48</sup>

## 8.2 War station : Selby

"Amid scenes of great enthusiasm", the Leeds Rifles, seen off by the Lord Lieutenant and Chairman of the WR County Association, Lord Harewood, left the city "on active service" on 10th August,<sup>49</sup> bound for their Brigade's war station, Selby. The Regiment's departure

"was witnessed by large crowds, and as the men marched through the centre of the city they were greeted with hearty cheers at many points. The men themselves seemed in very high spirits, and they responded enthusiastically to the good wishes shouted to them. There were a number of pleasing incidents on the way. As one of the lieutenants was leaving the barracks a Catholic girl went up to him, and taking off her rosary she handed it to him with the remark 'Wear these. They'll bring you good luck.' The officer, who was greatly touched by the girl's sincerity, accepted the beads and slipped them on his neck underneath his tunic."<sup>50</sup>



The departure was marred by a tragic accident. Rfm Tom Beckwith, aged 37, of the 7th Bn Transport section, a man with 14 years' service, was thrown from his horse just outside the barrack gates and fatally injured. The animal was one that had been recently commandeered<sup>51</sup> and was unused to the crowds, the noise and the bands.

As it was the school holidays the local children, for several reasons, were extremely sorry to see the 7th depart so soon. A public footpath ran alongside the parade ground and the children had spent every spare moment sitting on the wall watching the proceedings with avid interest and particularly enjoying the entertainment provided by the antics of the Transport horses which frequently kicked down the fences and posts to which they were tethered, broke free and stampeded. The boys would run errands for the Riflemen and they made a steady income by keeping the penny deposit on the bottles of lemonade they fetched.<sup>52</sup>

The Leeds Artillery and the 1st WR Field Ambulance accompanied the 1st WR Infantry Brigade to Selby. As they were horsed units they marched the whole distance. The Artillery, whose 3rd battery was raised in Hunslet, took their route through that area:

"Everybody turned out to see us off. The crowds were terrifically enthusiastic. We felt very proud."

The Field Ambulance proceeded by way of York Road through what many people regarded as the roughest area of Leeds:

"Along York Road everybody came out to cheer us because they thought we were off to the front and those dreadful women all shouted - 'encouraging remarks', I'd better call them because I can't repeat them!"<sup>53</sup>

Like other Territorial war stations, Selby occupied a position of strategic importance: on the River Ouse which was navigable to the sea. The Brigade's task was to guard the road and railway bridges, the railway station and the Selby Magazine. A fortnight was spent there, during which there were many alarms and excursions and plenty of exciting and amusing happenings. There were far too many distractions to permit any serious training to be carried out. The men were in extremely high spirits: for instance, H Coy of the 8th and C Coy of the 7th were billeted in the same building, the former in the Museum and the latter in the Art Gallery. The men of H Coy knocked the stuffing



out of a stuffed gorilla while using it for unofficial sparring practice, while the men of C Coy painted a marble statue of a naked lady in "unmentionable places."<sup>54</sup>

The men were immensely keen and performed their military duties zealously. Capt. H.R. Lupton, 8th, recalled being challenged by a sentry on the railway bridge while engaged on a routine inspection:

"I was suddenly startled by a harsh voice close by in the darkness, 'Olt! Oo are ya?' I heard the click of the release of a safety-catch and felt the prick of a bayonet on my chest. 'Are you loaded?' I asked, after identifying myself. 'Aye, I am an' all, sir,' came the reply, 'fower in't tin, an' wun in't funnill.'"<sup>55</sup>

The men's zeal led to skirmishes with phantom enemies at dead of night when cows, making rustling noises behind hedges, failed to answer challenges,<sup>56</sup> and to the celebrated "Leeds Rifles' Naval Battle." One night about two o'clock the Alarm was sounded and all companies ordered to stand to. While the men of H Coy of the 8th were hastily dressing and buckling on their equipment, someone came in with the story that the Germans had landed on the coast and were advancing towards York, shortly followed by another man who excitedly informed them that there were German submarines in the Ouse. Some minutes later, however, the men were ordered to stand down and turn in. What had happened was this. There were currently big scares about spies, enemy saboteurs and coastal raids, and on that particular night strict orders had been issued that, as big troop movements were expected in the area, the road bridge must not be raised nor any boat whatever allowed to pass beneath the bridge under any circumstance. A largish coastal vessel, a tug or coal barge - reports are conflicting - carrying a fo'castle light in defiance of the strict black-out regulations was challenged five times by the sentries. As no reply was made and the vessel made no attempt to slow down, the Subaltern of the Day, Lt Walter Greenwood of D Coy, immediately called out the entire guard and ordered them to fire five rounds rapid at the boat, at the same time drawing his sword and "flashing it about wildly." The boat then stopped, its occupants, luckily unhurt, shouting and swearing vociferously. It was carefully searched, but nothing suspicious was found. It was not permitted to proceed. Next morning it was seen to be extensively, but only superficially, damaged, the funnel riddled with bullet holes.<sup>57</sup>



One invasion scare was so bad that the whole brigade was stood to arms, with trains in constant readiness at the station, their locomotives with steam up night and day. On this occasion 7th Bn C Coy Bugler, Jimmy Metcalf, was on duty at the Market Cross in the centre of Selby, waiting to sound the Alarm if and when the Germans landed. In order to calm his nerves, frayed by waiting, he kept popping into a nearby hostelry for a beer and was eventually discovered quite incapable on the steps of the Market Cross. Fortunately the Germans did not decide to invade Yorkshire that day.<sup>58</sup>

Shortly after arrival at Selby, the embodied men received their bounty. The mothers of 1987 Sydney Appleyard and 1726 Jack Barker, 7th, were only two of many women who were on the next train to Selby to collect it from their sons or husbands.<sup>59</sup> At about the same time, the War Office asked the two battalions to volunteer for Imperial Service. No figures for the numbers who volunteered exist. Histories and personal reminiscences of men of other Territorial regiments usually claim a figure in excess of 90%<sup>60</sup> for their particular unit. According to figures given in Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920, as at 26th September 1914, 77.72% of the officers and 72.28% of the other ranks of the TF had been accepted for Imperial Service.<sup>61</sup> (These figures may not include the number of men who volunteered in August but who shortly afterwards were found to be under-age or medically unfit.) 1485 Sgt Alfred Clarkson, 7th, estimated that 200 men of his battalion, i.e. roughly 25%, failed to volunteer;<sup>62</sup> no other respondent offered to challenge this figure. Most respondents from the 8th Bn were under the impression that no one in their battalion had failed to volunteer, but there must have been some, since 534 Thomas Dickinson was one of them; the Yorkshire Evening News of 21st September reported that 200 men of the 8th had not volunteered and that men of the Workers' Pals battalions could take their places if they wished.

Those who signed for Imperial Service were given a special badge to wear (though many recipients gave it to young ladies as a love token); those who declined were put into a special company (K Coy), in accordance with Lord Kitchener's instructions (see section 8.6 below). It was later alleged by Mr. Walter Long MP that some Territorial commanding officers had "divided their regiments into sheep and goats", those who had volunteered for Imperial Service and those who had not, and that the latter had in some cases been "told that they were acting in a way unworthy of their country,"<sup>63</sup> but no suggestion arose that any kind of



moral pressure had been applied in the Leeds Rifles. They had already been set an example by the Leeds Engineers who, being Army Troops, had been asked to volunteer for active service shortly after the outbreak of war, and had volunteered "to a man", (although not until after the special intervention of both the Lord Mayor and Ald. C. H. Wilson, a retired member of the corps.)<sup>64</sup>

During their stay at Selby, both battalions received a draft of Class II National Reservists. The Yorkshire Post of 13th August reported the strength of each draft as being 50 men, but the true number is likely to have been 100. The contrasting attitudes of respondents towards these old soldiers is of interest: officers and men who had been sergeants on embodiment, or who became sergeants shortly afterwards, thoroughly approved of them, using such phrases as "steadied the recruits", "stiffened the battalion."<sup>65</sup> Useful though they may have been in teaching recruits the parts of the rifle, say, or regaling them with innumerable tales of an inspirational nature,<sup>66</sup> respondents below the rank of sergeant in general held low opinions of these men, usually referring to them scathingly as "KBBs" ("King's Bad Bargains"), Army slang for worthless soldiers. A clue to this completely contrasting attitude is given in the following passage from the memoirs of Bandsman Sanderson, who was himself an ex-Regular soldier (Life Guards):

"they loudly expressed their disgust at finding themselves attached to a 'Territorial mob'. 'We've joined to fight', they would say, 'and this — mob'll never see any fighting.' They weren't long before they were getting all the fighting they wanted, and I am bound to say that, with one or two exceptions, they did not shine very well in comparison with the old 'Terriers' and the new recruits, both of whom they affected to despise so much."

The Regiment left Selby on 24th August for the Knavesmire race-course at York where training consisted mainly of practising entraining and detraining in the railway Goods Yard, both during daylight and at night.<sup>67</sup> A week later it departed to Strensall Common, a large Regular army training area on the other side of York, where serious training commenced.

### 8.3. Early difficulties

The lack of preparedness, already much in evidence before the war, came home to roost with a vengeance during August and September. Not only did it manifest itself in the matter of essential supplies, food,



accommodation, training instructors, etc, but also, in the case of the Leeds Rifles, in the inadequate instructions given to the recruiting staff, which may have arisen from the confusion regarding the regiment's future role as well as from the atmosphere of panic prevailing at the time. Nevertheless, heavy criticism must attach itself to both the enlisting of recruits and their medical inspection at Carlton Barracks. The recruiting sergeants appear to have been largely, if not solely, concerned with filling up the ranks as quickly as possible and were not too scrupulous in their methods. A number of men of dubious character, including some professional thieves well-known to the police and some youths from the local reformatory, were enlisted.<sup>68</sup> A man dismissed from the 7th for misconduct in 1910 joined the 8th, unnoticed and unsuspected, and became a member of No. 10 platoon, C Coy.<sup>69</sup> Far too many recruits both below and above the age limits of 19 to 35 were knowingly admitted: e.g. 2349 Harry Walton, 8th, gave his true age but when he eventually received his discharge certificate he saw his year of birth had been put down as 1894 instead of 1896; 2260 Edgar Taylor, 8th, aged 17, gave his age as 18 and watched the Colour Sergeant write it down as 19 - "They didn't seem particular about taking under-age boys," he commented. The chest measurement standard, as before the war, appeared to have been ignored altogether: 2657 William Laycock, 7th, was both under-age and under the chest standard of 34". Height measurements were not taken meticulously: Cecil Crowther, 2/8th, who had just been discharged under-age by the Leeds Pals, was under the height standard, but the recruiter put his finger under the measuring bar.<sup>70</sup>

Worse still, the medical inspection was performed in an extremely perfunctory manner; some respondents swore they had never been subjected to one at enlistment. 2222 William Horsman Reynard, 8th, who had been required to pass a stiff medical examination in order to obtain a job as a signal lad on the railway, was horrified to find that the eye-sight test consisted merely of a sergeant asking him to say how many fingers he was holding up; the remainder of the medical inspection consisted of a doctor clapping a stethoscope on his chest for a few seconds. Men who had been rejected by other units were passed as fit, e.g. 2371 Brian Armitage, 8th, who was later found to be suffering from a serious medical condition, had been rejected by the Leeds Artillery earlier that day, while 3227 Clarence Lazenby, 7th, had just been discharged from a Regular infantry regiment on account of a hammer toe.<sup>71</sup> Any registered medical practitioner who could spare the



time was pressed into service, examining recruits at 2/6d a time, both at the Regular Army recruiting office and at the various Territorial headquarters, and no doubt many doctors were unsure of the standards required, since this had been a frequent complaint since the turn of the century, but it soon became evident that many obviously unfit men had been passed into not only the Leeds Rifles, but also many other units. Scott reported that, after the war, Dr. H. de Carle Woodcock admitted to compiling a list of 167 patients of the Leeds Tuberculosis Dispensary that he knew had joined the Regular Army.<sup>72</sup>

The frequently derisory medical examination of recruits in 1914 was a national problem, one that was to have serious repercussions. Lt. Col. H. Clay, Chief Recruiting Officer, London District, gave evidence to the 1922 War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell Shock" on early army recruits:

"They were medically examined, I say it without fear of contradiction, in a most haphazard manner. 20 to 30 per cent of the men were never medically examined at all... I knew of one doctor who medically examined 400 men a day for ten days and he didn't work 24 hours in the day."

Sir James Galloway, late Medical Inspector of Recruiting, claimed that, as a result of what must necessarily have been very superficial examinations, "large masses of the male population entered the army with very little medical discrimination."<sup>73</sup>

The admitting of a considerable number of unfit men and men outside the age limits to both Leeds Rifles battalions caused much disorganisation and a great deal of extra and unnecessary work, not to mention expense, and interfered appreciably with training. This problem was widespread in the T F.<sup>74</sup> It could have had extremely serious consequences, since the battalions were liable to be called out at any moment.

After the Regiment had been accepted for Imperial Service, each battalion was required to weed out the unfit, the under-age and the over-age men. However, the weeding-out process itself was far from efficient, since, according to respondents, some of whom were personally involved, a number of all three categories, particularly of under-age youths, escaped detection altogether and embarked with the Regiment. It went on in a desultory fashion up to within three days of embarkation when last-minute drafts of volunteers were sent for from the reserve battalions. Large batches were weeded out during the



month following the Regiment's acceptance for Imperial Service: 1543 Harper Stott was one of about 50 men of the 8th returned to Leeds as unfit; 1688 Harry Slater one of about 30 under-age youths taken out of the 8th.<sup>75</sup> During the third week in September the 8th Bn inserted large advertisements in the Leeds newspapers announcing that 200 men were still needed at Strensall to complete its establishment; a majority of these vacancies may have been due to men failing to sign for Imperial Service,<sup>76</sup> however. In the first nine days of October a total of 184 under-age youths were returned to Leeds from the 1/8th, whilst on 10th October the 8th Bn Reinforcement Company was holding 102 men who had not been accepted for Imperial Service. Between 1st October 1914 and 12th April 1915 17 batches comprising a total of 491 men were sent back from the 1/8th.<sup>77</sup>

The under-age men who were pulled out fell into two categories: those pre-war enlistments who, according to regimental records, were known to be under 19, and those whose true ages had been disclosed to the commanding officer by their parents. The men weeded out in September and the latter part of August were put into a special company, L Coy. The men of K & L Coys were then returned to the Regimental Depot, Carlton Barracks, for disposal. Some went into the Reinforcement Company in training there and eventually into the reserve battalions, some went into a Provisional battalion that was employed on general duties in coastal areas. Over-age men and men in medical category C (fit for home service only) were sent to be orderlies in officer training schools, quartermaster's assistants in Army training establishments, guards in PoW camps, etc. Mothers who expected their under-age sons who had "made a mis-statement as to age on enlistment" to be discharged were disappointed. Youths in this category were retained in the Leeds Rifles (and presumably in the T F as a whole), but they were given a discharge from the army in at least one Kitchener unit, the 15th WYR (Leeds Pals).

Food supplies seem to have been adequate at first, although the cooking left much to be desired: "The cooks had very little idea - they gave us boiled sausages, for instance."<sup>78</sup> Once the Regiment left Leeds and joined the Brigade, the rations became inadequate and inferior in quality and many items which were supposed to figure daily in the diet often made no appearance for several days together. The arrangements necessary for the proper feeding of such large bodies of men seemed to be beyond the grasp of the commissariat, and contractors seemed to have



taken advantage of the chaotic situation. While at the Knavesmire, the 8th received a consignment of bloaters that were no longer fresh:

"They were threatening to make us eat the rest, so we decided to make a protest by burying the bloaters with full military honours - and got 7 days' CB [confined to barracks] as a punishment."

The men of A Coy each stuck a bloater on the end of his bayonet fixed to his rifle and paraded outside the Coy HQ to lodge an official complaint,<sup>79</sup> the proper procedure in such circumstances. While at Strensall there were many complaints about the lack of variety in the diet. One morning Lt. Col. Kitson Clark of the 8th trotted on to parade and said to his men,

"I'm very sorry that the rations have not been up to the mark lately, but I'm glad to tell you that we have now been able to get you some carrots. And I know they're good because Molly has eaten quite a lot."<sup>80</sup>

As Molly was his horse, this story immediately passed into the regimental folk-lore.

The outbreak of war had found the County Association, through no fault of its own, with insufficient essential supplies to mobilise and train a division. Few of the Leeds Rifles' recruits of 4th and 5th September received a uniform, although most received boots, a blanket and a waterproof sheet. Recruits without a service dress were issued with the white canvas fatigue suit that had been worn at camp in 1913; some were lucky enough to receive a green walking-out cap or forage cap. These unfortunates had to wait until October for their uniforms and greatcoats.<sup>81</sup>

Accommodation at Strensall camp was very poor. 1233 George A. Collinson, 8th, said the camp "was like a Wild West town - a few wooden huts and hundreds of bell tents." An Army tent was intended to accommodate 10-12 men. At Strensall there were 24 men to a tent: "We were cramped to death, all our equipment hanging on the tent pole. The tents had wooden floors which floated about after heavy rain." The camp now accommodated over 10,000 men, although in peacetime it normally held at any one time only a battalion or squadron. The ablutions and latrines and the arrangements for cooking were "very primitive and unhealthy"; water supplies were inadequate.<sup>82</sup> There were few social amenities:



"Beginning to find Strensall rather a dead hole." [wrote Sgt W.B. Burrell of the 1/8th] "No amusements except those made by ourselves. It is quite a common sight to see grown men playing marbles with the zest of school-boys. There is a picture house of sorts which is worth a visit to see and hear the antics and jokes of the audience."<sup>83</sup>

Middle-class recruits found conditions sordid beyond belief:

"It was frightful at Strensall. The tents were overcrowded and we were starved of all kinds of essential supplies, never mind kit and uniforms. I had to wear fatigue dress until I got my khaki. There were no tables to sit at at meal times, there was no cutlery and we got all our meal together in one go in one billy-can - stew, a hunk of bread, a lump of cheese, a dollop of jam, all mixed up together. I could not stomach it at all. It was all a terrible shock to someone like me, who had had such a refined upbringing with nice meals and a servant to put them in front of me."<sup>84</sup>

"The weather was consistently bad during our stay at Strensall, which lasted about seven weeks, but that was not allowed to interfere with our training, and it was almost a daily occurrence for us to return to camp soaking wet and up to the knees in mud, to find that the rain had invaded our tents to a depth of three or four inches, and we would have to set to work then and dig more trenches to run the water away."<sup>85</sup>

Towards the end of October sharp frosts were occurring which canvas walls could not exclude,<sup>86</sup> gale force winds had carried off the 1/8th nominal roll, never to be seen again, and heavy rain had put the greater part of the 1/8th's tent lines under water (132 Harry Thackray's tent was under 2 feet of water at one point).<sup>87</sup> The Regiment thankfully departed for York on 23rd October. The 1/7th was billeted in various large buildings in the centre of York, the 1/8th in the Workpeople's Dining Rooms of Rowntree's Cocoa Works.

#### 8.4. Training

Despite the life and death struggle taking place across the Channel, there was an atmosphere of boyish excitement, of playing at soldiers with real bullets, about the training of the early days of the war. At Strensall, however, the Riflemen found themselves

"worked almost to death. Physical drill, route marches of 20 and 25 miles, field training, ceremonial drill, musketry, night operations etc. etc., left us little time for social engagements or even for a reasonable amount of sleep. Our brigadier, Brig.-Gen. Macfarlan, told us he was determined to 'buck us up and make soldiers of us' and if he didn't succeed it wasn't for want of trying. We thought him very hard to please." <sup>88</sup>



Capt. E. V. Tempest of the 1/6th described the seven weeks' training as "hard and remorseless."<sup>89</sup> 2/Lt Jack Bellerby, 1/8th, complained that the need to avoid damage to hedges, fences, farm-gates and agricultural drains rendered the mock attacks "unrealistic."<sup>90</sup> The musketry courses trained the men up to the Regular Army "adequate" standard of 15 aimed shots a minute,<sup>91</sup> the qualification of the Third Class Shot. Training was slightly interrupted by the two inoculations. As no soldier could be inoculated against his will, a strong inducement was offered in the shape of two 48-hour inoculation leaves.<sup>92</sup> By the time the Brigade left Strensall, its training was getting well advanced, thanks to the Regular instructors (16 to each battalion), and each week Brigade field days and Divisional field days were held. The band instruments were brought from Carlton Hill and the two regimental military bands reformed so that they could lead the battalions to and from their training grounds.<sup>93</sup> Without the bands, the men marched along enthusiastically singing their favourite songs; local civilians lodged official complaints with Col. Kitson Clark about his men singing 'Whiter than the Whitewash on the Wall'. The men particularly appreciated the bands on long route marches.<sup>94</sup>

One of the first tasks of the officers and Regular instructors was the establishment and enforcement of Regular Army military discipline, since the Territorials, even the pre-war enlistments, were essentially civilians who had to be transformed into soldiers. The example of the 1/6th Bn was typical:

"A prevalent complaint was home sickness. Short leave to visit Bradford was given freely, and the mistaken kindness of relatives and friends made the crime of overstaying leave a popular one. I well remember one lad who was brought up in the orderly room for absence without leave and whose excuse was that he had gone to the station to see one of his friends off, and the sight of a train marked 'Bradford' had been too much for his budding sense of military discipline. These early difficulties were gradually overcome, and by the time that we were ordered abroad the battalion was composed of as fine and talented a body of soldiers as could be found in any regiment in the country."<sup>95</sup>

"Losing the last train" from Glasgow was a common, but the only, crime in the 5th SR.<sup>96</sup> "Missing" the last train from Leeds was by no means an uncommon crime in the 1/7th and 1/8th during their sojourn at Strensall, but it was not treated leniently: most offenders were sentenced to three days' imprisonment in York Castle Military Prison.<sup>97</sup> In some respects, the younger pre-war enlistments, used to the old free



and easy discipline of the Territorials, were harder to discipline than the recruits: e.g. 1788 John Allman, 1/8th, was put on a charge in August for leaving rifle practice in Gott's Park, Armley, Leeds, to go to buy an ice-cream sandwich, whilst 1327 Walter Garnett and eleven of his pals of the 1/8th went absent without leave for 4 days at the end of September because they did not want to miss Woodhouse Feast (the cultural highlight of the year in that working class district).<sup>98</sup>

During the early days at Strensall a daily defaulters' parade (known as being "on jankers") of a hundred men in each battalion was commonplace.<sup>99</sup> Many were being punished for venial offences to which recruits are particularly prone, such as being late on parade, being "improperly dressed" (e.g. collar not done up), or talking in the ranks. The sentences may have been 3-7 days' pack drill. This consisted of one hour's marching in full kit with rifle - in a sand pit at Strensall, up and down flights of steps at York - (2455 Norman James Mason, 8th, disclosed that there were 58 steps at Rowntree's factory), followed by answering to the bugle call of "Defaulters" every half hour after tea. Sometimes, an hour's "spud bashing" was substituted for pack drill. The punishment took place in periods when the rest of the battalion was off duty and was carried out under the supervision of the battalion Provost-Sergeant. In the 1/8th he was Sgt Charles Coxhead, a time-served ex-Regular NCO who had joined the battalion in 1908 as drill and physical training instructor. Naturally enough, he applied the harsh punishment methods in use during his own period of Army service and in consequence was much hated by those who had been in his custody: respondents used epithets such as "cruel", "sadistic" and "a bully".<sup>100</sup> Since the military police function could be obnoxious, Provost-Sergeants as a class were never popular.

Not unexpectedly, the recruits eventually learnt from the National Reservists a few dodges for evading punishment. For instance, while at York, a Glee Club was formed by members of D Coy of the 1/8th. They spent a convivial evening each week in a private room in a public house near Lendal Bridge, and the time passed all too quickly. Town Piquets, comprising a sergeant and ten men, patrolled the city streets as military police each evening to keep order and arrest any soldier who was found after the 9.30 curfew without a pass. All units took it in turn to provide the piquet. The Glee Club took care to hold its meetings on the nights when the 8th Bn was providing the town piquet. When the meetings closed, getting on for ten o'clock, the members



would fall in outside in two ranks, one of the sergeants taking charge, and then march back to Rowntree's, the sergeant reporting, with a wink, "Returning Piquet" to the Guard Commander.<sup>101</sup>

The biggest headache for the Regular instructors was provided by the recruits who came from the lowest social class. These men had received the poorest of upbringings. Seldom, if ever, subjected to parental control and guidance, allowed to run wild since early childhood, thoroughly neglected, they had often grown up in an atmosphere of violence. Many possessed very little self-discipline. Albert Bowden, 1/8th, as a Lance-Corporal, was unfortunate to have a section largely composed of such recruits:

"Most of them were the biggest set of scruffs and roughnecks you ever saw in your life. Filthy dirty and like wild animals. We would never have dreamt of having fellas like them in the Volunteers. Some were sent to me and so was Grainger Rex whose father was a master builder in my home village, Garforth. He was a nice lad who'd been well brought up. When the food came up from the cookhouse, these awful roughs from The Bank went mad and grabbed the food like cannibals and never left any for poor Grainger who had to buy all his meals in the YMCA. I'm afraid these lads were beyond my control, but the two Regular sergeants who'd come to our Company to train us, put a stop to this behaviour. They were made to submit to discipline and fell into line eventually."<sup>102</sup>

Many of these men from the lowest class were totally ignorant of matters of personal hygiene, on high standards of which the Army insisted. After all other methods of education and persuasion failed, the CO of the 1/8th sentenced a man to be publicly scrubbed with carbolic soap in front of the whole battalion for "being lousy and absolutely filthy in his person."<sup>103</sup> It was traditional in the Army for men to be punished in front of their battalion in this kind of extreme case where it was necessary "pour encourager les autres". These men were also prone to irresponsible behaviour, not necessarily connected with drink. At York, in November or December, 3074 Ambrose and 2188 Crossthwaite of E Coy of the 1/7th, who both hailed from the slums at the bottom of York Road, were caught sneaking into their billet at midnight, stark naked: "They'd had a wager which involved swimming across the river, but Ambrose had duffed [dial.: "withdrawn fearfully"]. He got 7 days' CB and Crossthwaite a Severe Rep."<sup>104</sup>



Virtually the whole of the military offences committed during the training period were of a trivial nature. Only one court martial took place. This was of 1918 George W. Pemberton of the 1/8th, a Bramley Northern Rugby Union player and former Regular soldier, who was sentenced to 156 days in the Aldershot Detention Barracks (the notorious "Glasshouse") for striking Sgt Ralph Perry of D Coy. A comrade who knew him well, 1090 James Rhind, 8th, described him as "a rough and rather aggressive type, a violent sort of chap altogether with a nasty temper, hasty." When the sentence of the court martial was read out in front of the battalion, drawn up in a hollow square, Pemberton broke away from his escort and threatened both the CO and the adjutant with violence. As the prisoner was being led away, the adjutant remarked loudly, "I hope they teach that man to march at Aldershot Detentions", whereupon Pemberton whirled round and yelled "I'd learned to bloody march before you'd joined the bloody Army!"<sup>105</sup> Pemberton returned from Aldershot to a hero's welcome from the rank and file.

Training continued to progress well after the Regiment's move to York. Various details were detached for periods of two days at a time in order to escort German internees to the camp at Southend-on-Sea. On the return journey of the detachment of which Rfm 2222 William H. Reynard of the 1/8th was a member, one of the Riflemen chalked "Leeds Rifles" on the compartment windows. At one station they were visited by a delighted middle-aged stationmaster who proudly informed them that he had served in the Leeds Rifles himself when he was young.<sup>106</sup>

Much attention was paid, particularly in the 1/8th, to ceremonial drill, which is held to be invaluable for strengthening both morale and discipline and increasing steadiness in the ranks. Guard-mounting and beating retreat were carried out every night; the Territorials of Leeds were anxious to impress the inhabitants of this ancient garrison town. Inexperience naturally led to mistakes: one night the bugler of the "old guard" blew the Sick call instead of the General Salute; although these calls are remarkably similar, the unfortunate bugler was given seven days' CB.<sup>107</sup> The harshness of the punishment indicates the importance attached to the ceremony. Guards outside the various Company head-quarters and the Battalion HQ of the 1/7th were carefully instructed in the saluting of officers of field rank. On one occasion, 2668 L/Cpl Alwyne G. Atkinson saw a very splendid personage approaching who wore a gorgeous uniform lavishly trimmed with gold braid. He



ordered the guard to present arms, which they did with a great flourish, and he felt immensely proud of them until the next time he saw "his general", tearing the tickets at the picture palace down the street.<sup>108</sup>

On 19th November the 1/8th was "finally inspected 'as to fitness for foreign service'" by Maj. General T.S. Baldock, GOC of the Division. "It is rumoured that we have got an excellent report" wrote Sgt Burrell. The report was, in truth, "splendid" when it was published in Battalion Orders on 5th December.<sup>109</sup>

Since the early days at Strensall "active service scares" and "invasion scares" had been common. "Constant rumours reach us that the Bn will leave for France at an early date", wrote Sgt Burrell on 27th September; "Once again rumours are flying round - 'we are off to France this month'", on 2nd November; "Things seem to point to joining the Expeditionary Force within two months" on 12th November.<sup>110</sup>

"Two or three times during our stay at Strensall we were ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to proceed abroad. On these occasions we would have to pack all our belongings; officers' kits and all other impedimenta would be placed on the waggons; we were issued with emergency rations and other things necessary for a sea voyage; then, when we were quite ready, the order would be cancelled. Then of course 'the troops swore horribly' like Marlborough's men in Flanders. On one such occasion we were marched half-way on the road to York before being turned back and disillusioned of the idea that we were really off to the front at last."<sup>111</sup>

On 3rd November Burrell wrote

"What excitement! Order received at 10.0 am: 'Be prepared to move at short notice'. We heard unofficially that the German Fleet was off Lowestoft and that we were off to repel a landing. Everything was quickly packed and we awaited the 'Move' order. At 6.30 pm an order was received cancelling the move. Oh, the wailing and gnashing of teeth! We unpacked. Brought out of bed at 10.30 pm to repack - the move was on again! Stood by all night - only to have the move again cancelled. Too tired to swear."<sup>112</sup>

"The lads were saying that they would be crying Wolf once too often" recalled 1219 Arthur Fozard, 1/8th.<sup>113</sup>

At 8 am on 16th December two German battle cruisers emerged from the mist, sailed into Scarborough's South Bay and opened fire. The bombardment lasted for about half an hour during which time more than 500 shells fell in an area of four square miles, causing extensive damage and killing 19 people and injuring 80 others. Whitby and the



Hartlepoons were also shelled that morning. The gunfire was plainly heard at the Cavalry Barracks at York by Sgt (later RSM) Charles Harold Marshall, 17th Lancers, then a drill instructor.<sup>114</sup>

Of all the units available in the north-east of England, the 1/8th was selected to be sent to Scarborough.<sup>115</sup> Just after 10 am, as the battalion was marching into the fields off the Malton road where the day's field training was to take place, a motor cycle despatch rider roared up with orders to return to Rowntree's immediately. Lt J.B. Gawthorpe received the news at Strensall Range where he was waiting to instruct recruits. The "Stand by" order had been received. On arrival at the Dining Rooms the men were given a meal of sandwiches and issued with an emergency ration of bread and cheese, field dressings and extra ammunition. At 1 pm the order "Move" arrived and the entire battalion was paraded and informed that Scarborough was being attacked. "What a sensation this caused" commented Bandsman Sanderson. "The Bn nearly went mad with delight at the prospect of a scrap." "The men were in the highest spirits as we marched to the railway station, and the crowds who lined the streets to see us off went nearly mad with excitement." On arrival at the station, Rfm Reynard was puzzled to see a large crowd of women and children "in different stages of dress and undress", some without shoes or stockings, many women with their hair disordered, disembarking from a train. He did not realise then that they were refugees.

The train journey to Scarborough of  $42\frac{1}{4}$  miles took  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours and it was getting dusk when the battalion arrived. The station was littered with broken glass and debris, but the permanent way was undamaged. A shell had knocked a shunting engine off the line. From the station, Sgt Burrell could see little other evidence of damage, apart from a house with a big hole in the roof. The Riflemen had been under the impression that the Germans had been attempting to land troops, but when they found there was not a single German to be seen, they were at one and the same time both disappointed and relieved. Almost immediately, the battalion set off to march round the town. They received an extremely warm welcome. "'God bless you, lads' was heard on all sides as the people came crowding out of their houses, 'Oh, I wish you had been here this morning, lads', one old lady called out." Girls threw ha'penny buns at the Riflemen (who were only too pleased to have them) and threw their arms round and kissed the sergeants, who



marched apart. Sgt Burrell always told his family afterwards that he had never been kissed so much in all his life. "Thank God you've come" said one old lady to Bandsman Sanderson, "we've had nowt but Territorials here," a highly revealing remark in more ways than one.

It appeared to both Rfm Perry and Bandsman Sanderson that the 1/8th had been sent to Scarborough chiefly to pacify and to hearten the inhabitants. "Everybody seemed calm and there was no panic, only indignation." However, there is no doubt that there had been very considerable panic earlier that morning, both during and after the bombardment. 1159 Thomas Darbyshire, 1/8th, was actually an in-patient almost ready for discharge in Scarborough Hospital at the time of the Raid. He stated that the civilians outside, the nurses and the patients were terrified, shouting out over and over again, "The Germans are landing! The Germans are landing!" He put his uniform and equipment on and grabbed his rifle as he listened to the shells whistling overhead: "I did not feel apprehensive or excited. I just felt that the time I'd trained for had come and I was quite calm and quite prepared for anything that might have been going to happen." The entire West Riding Division was "stood to" that day, and the men in the Regular Army depots in York were also packed up ready to move.

The refugee problem at Scarborough that day had been of considerable proportions, for there had earlier been a "great exodus" from the town. "A tremendous rush - many of those taking part in it being only partially dressed - was made to the railway station, and trains leaving Scarborough were packed with refugees, making for Hull, York, Leeds, and elsewhere." The railway station was "besieged" most of the day. Others "secured motors and all kinds of horsed vehicles to take them away, but most of them had to be content with walking." The roads were "crowded with refugees as far as Seamer and beyond." Many of the refugees had left the town in a blind panic without making any kind of preparations and "with nothing more than they stood up in."<sup>116</sup> Small wonder that the civil authorities sent for the military, if only to restore order. If the bombardment had, in fact, been a preliminary to an armed landing, as the authorities seemed to have half-expected, the 1/8th would have been needed to keep the main approaches to the town and the railway station clear of refugees who, in both World Wars, considerably hampered troop movements.



At the conclusion of the march half the battalion went off to dig trenches in the gardens in front of the badly damaged Grand Hotel and on the cliff tops while the other half cleared up the railway station.<sup>117</sup> The men ate their haversack rations of bread and cheese and, as there was no accommodation, spent the night in the special train, trying to sleep sitting up, eight men, their rifles and full equipment, packed into a compartment. Before daybreak half the battalion went into the trenches; the men were told to load 5 rounds and put the cut-off on (so that no excitable man would loose off a shot prematurely). As the sky lightened the men saw a lot of women and children running down to the beach and on to the sands and wondered apprehensively what was happening. To their "surprise and relief", it soon became evident that they were the families of the lifeboat crew who had come to help the lifeboat ashore. When it was quite light, the trenches were vacated, and after breakfasting on bread and cheese, the battalion once again marched round the town "to advertise our presence and 'reassure the inhabitants'" that the authorities had the situation well under control. "This time we could see the damage that had been done and our blood boiled to think that our fair homeland could be so damaged and the cowards get away scot free." Much to the men's surprise the battalion returned to York that afternoon and resumed its normal routine.

As the German raiders, aided by bad visibility, had successfully escaped from the British 2nd Battle Squadron, which had endeavoured to engage them,<sup>118</sup> the Government decided that further raids on the North Yorkshire coast were likely. All leave for both battalions of the Leeds Rifles was stopped until further notice. This order was extremely unpopular. Some men of the 1/7th indignantly wrote to the Editor of the Yorkshire Evening News to complain about leave being stopped over Christmas and to point out how unfair it was when the men of other battalions were getting passes.<sup>119</sup>

The officers did their utmost to provide as good a Christmas as possible under the circumstances: "Grand concerts" were planned, slap-up dinners with "a plentiful supply of turkey, plum pudding, beef, beer, fruit"<sup>120</sup> were arranged. The concerts were to take place on Boxing Day. Officers of the 1/8th chartered a special train from Leeds so that wives and sweethearts could attend, and a knife and fork [i.e. "High"] tea was provided for them.<sup>121</sup> The men of the 1/7th were



each issued with one or two free railway tickets so that their relatives could attend and high tea was also provided for them; the expense was said to have been met by Capt. Stockwell who, according to 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, the 1/7th telephone switchboard operator, had recently inherited £80,000.<sup>122</sup>

The order to be in readiness to move, however, arrived on Christmas Eve and Sgt Burrell remarked, "Can't really say we are delighted." It did not spoil any of the festive arrangements, however, and the men were allowed a "special lie-in" on Christmas Day morning. Sgt Burrell was awakened about 7 am by "weird sounds" proceeding from the Band Room where "a select party of non-musicians" were endeavouring to play carols: the "concert" was brought to an abrupt close "by about 50 men, armed with boots and like missiles."<sup>123</sup> At the Christmas Dinners, the other ranks were waited upon, in accordance with a long-standing Army custom, by the officers. Every man in the 1/7th received a present of "a cigar, an apple, an orange, and a box of chocolate bearing the regimental crest,"<sup>124</sup> enclosed with which was a specially designed postcard depicting a benign Father Christmas handing a plum pudding to a delighted soldier wearing full marching order. The Quaker family Rowntree, who at the end of October had opened in their factory grounds "Cocoa Rooms" for their military lodgers, supplying refreshments at extremely low prices, games, and plenty of free writing materials,<sup>125</sup> amenities that were greatly appreciated, presented every member of the 1/8th with a large box of chocolates as a Christmas gift. Despite all these efforts, about 50 men of the 1/8th went absent, returning within two or three days of their own accord.<sup>126</sup>

Immediately after Christmas training resumed again with an eight-day musketry course at Strensall carried out under atrocious weather conditions, followed by more battalion, brigade and divisional training: "we began to despair of ever seeing any real fighting."<sup>127</sup> The Territorials' disillusion with the trivial nature of the duties assigned to them was expressed in the following verse:

"O sing, my muse, the stirring scene  
With martial ardour all aglow,  
We stand on guard lest traitors lean  
Against the GPO." <sup>128</sup>



Since the late summer the desire to be at the Front, to experience "the real thing", had dominated the thoughts of all ranks of the Leeds Rifles. It had been the chief topic of conversation:

"Like everybody else, I thought the war would be all over by Christmas and was worried in case I wouldn't get out there in time before I missed it. You know, we actually thought war was an exciting thing you couldn't afford to miss." 129

"In the early months there was a tension and a zest in life imparted entirely by anticipation of what was to follow. Naturally we became seized with eagerness to put the training to the final test. Subconsciously the majority of the new civilian force was becoming daily more impatient to prove themselves as soldiers; indeed, their only fear at that time was lest the war should end before they had crossed the Channel."130

"New Year came and we all of us thought that 1915 was to see some great changes and that we would not be long before we would be off to the front. We finished our course of firing and still there was no news of going out. How the men wanted to go out to the front. It was what they had joined up for, and they were awfully fed up as time went on and no signs of going yet."131

These sentiments seem to have been common throughout the Division, eg. Capt. P.G. Bales of the 1/4th DWR wrote:

"... in spite of everything there was much discontent in the Battalion, though one can hardly grumble at the cause of it. The men longed to be at the Front. Most of them had expected to go overseas very soon and, as the weeks dragged into months, some began to wonder whether they ever would get there."132

In September the Divisional Transport and Supply Column (the Leeds ASC) had offered itself to the War Office for immediate despatch overseas. This had soon led to rumours at Strensall and the men of the Leeds Rifles were frankly envious. One man of the 8th went as far as to desert in order to join this unit: "One of our officers recognised him at Brielin and had him placed under arrest. His defence at his court martial was that he was fed up of being kept waiting to be sent out to France."133 There was a similar occurrence in the 1/4th DWR: "One man actually deserted in order to enlist in another regiment, because he thought the Battalion was not going out. Another wrote direct to the Secretary of State for War to ask the reason for the delay and, of course, was well told off for his pains. Rumours were plentiful, but, as nothing came of them, they only served to increase the feeling of disappointment."134



By Christmas the majority of Riflemen considered they were fully trained. An employee of the Yorkshire Post serving with the 1/7th confidently informed his employers that "we are fit and ready to take our place in the field alongside any regiment of the line."<sup>135</sup> The favourite marching song in the 1/8th, as in the 1/6th, had become 'When the war is nearly over, we'll be there.'<sup>136</sup> A sense of deep frustration had pervaded the Regiment and the men became increasingly restive:

"We got very fed up because we thought the war would be practically over by the time we got there and we'd get done out of having a go at the Germans. We used to have what they call 'demos' nowadays. We used to march round with a banner singing, 'When the war is nearly over we'll be there'. We didn't get into trouble because the officers sympathised with us."<sup>137</sup>

After the Regiment had been mobilised for training for Haldane's period of six months, the military authorities decided that it had "arrived at such a state of proficiency that it is not considered fatal for 10% of the personnel to be away on 48 hours' leave at once... Wednesday and Saturday afternoons too are now holidays."<sup>138</sup> But, despite the more liberal leave and off-duty periods, general discontent increased further when it became known at the end of February that the North Midland Division had departed for France. Few of the officers and men could understand, or even guess at, the reasons for the delay in despatching the West Riding Division. Many, particularly the younger members of the Regiment, suspected unfair treatment of Territorials: "The Rifles were trained to a whisker, but we couldn't get the supplies we needed to go abroad. The Government discriminated against us because we were only Territorials. They showed favouritism to the Kitchener battalions and fitted them out before us."<sup>139</sup>

Clearly, employment would have to be given to the Leeds Rifles. The 1/7th were despatched to the icy, wind-swept wastes of the Lincolnshire coast, where they moaned about the local beer, patrolled the coast roads and beaches, shivered in slit trenches on the dunes, kept a look-out for hostile aircraft,<sup>140</sup> zealously reported mysterious lights and signals, mistook large flocks of seabirds on the horizon for zeppelins, and fraternised with the local civilians. 2148 Corpl Jack Hudson, A Coy, 1/7th, fell in love with the Postmistress at Saltfleet and married her;<sup>141</sup> he was killed in action. The 1/8th were sent to Gainsborough where the C O assumed command of the whole Garrison which comprised the 1/8th, 1/6th WYR, 1/3rd W R Field Ambulance and the



Divisional ASC. The men were billeted on private householders,

"four to each house and generally the inhabitants have cleared the front room of all furniture and everything spoilsable, putting mattresses on the floor. Rations are supplied by the Corps and cooked by the landladies. In nearly every case they do far more for the men than is legally required of them and if we came as uninvited guests we have at any rate been made welcome."

Zeppelin hunting and spy chasing seem to have been the principal employments of the 1/8th during this period. On 4th March Sgt Burrell wrote:

"A little excitement today. A Zeppelin was reported as coming towards this place and we had parties out seeking its destruction. However it failed to appear. At present there is a regular spy scare raging. We are being continually ordered to look out for and arrest persons of certain descriptions and cars of certain makes and numbers. Several peaceful citizens have made the acquaintance of the interior of our Guard Room through displaying inquisitiveness regarding disposition of troops etc."

And on 5th April:

"... one of these phantom 'spy cars' has been seen in the neighbourhood, so was sent off in a motor in pursuit. Traced it beyond Retford, before having to give up the chase. If not successful as a spy hunt it was a big success as a motor trip. No speed limit when 'OHMS'!"<sup>142</sup>

On 5th April the longed-for news arrived at last: the Division was ordered abroad. Sgt Burrell wrote: "The Bn is now getting fairly excited, though several people are sceptical as to our really going this time."<sup>143</sup> The Regiment's destination was not immediately divulged and the majority of the 1/8th were said to have been initially convinced that they were bound for Egypt.<sup>144</sup> The documentation that accompanied the equipment and stores that shortly afterwards began to pour in was, however, headed with the magic words, "British Expeditionary Force."

#### 8.5. The Reinforcement Company and the Reserve Battalions

Up to and including 6th September, recruits to the Leeds Rifles were immediately sent forward to the active service battalions, but from 7th September recruits were retained at Carlton Barracks and trained there for 3-4 weeks in the Reinforcement Company, as it was called, before being sent to join their battalions. Only men willing to sign the General Service obligation were enlisted.



When the 7th and 8th Bns had left Leeds on 10th August, two retired officers had arrived to assume administrative command of their respective regimental depots at Carlton Hill: Major Walter Braithwaite, who had served in the regiment through all ranks from 1868 to 1904 and who was the father of Capt. E.W. Braithwaite of the 8th Bn, and Capt. Wilfred Law Illingworth, who had served from 1900-1903 and whose health now prevented him from seeking an active service commission. Lord Allerton's younger son, Captain the Hon. F.S. Jackson, the former England cricket captain, who had served in South Africa, was appointed to command the Reinforcement Company, and prewar Sgt-Instructor Lane was appointed its Sergeant Major.

The men of the Reinforcement Company had no uniforms, but were given green armbands to wear which entitled them to free tram travel between certain hours.<sup>145</sup> The hours were very short - 9 am to 4 pm - and recruits were nightly dismissed to their homes. Recruits who originated from outside Leeds were billeted on private householders in the Carlton Hill/Fenton Street area. The pay, which included a ration and lodging allowance and a clothing and boot allowance, came to 32/- a week; separation allowances were paid on top of this. It was discovered in March 1915 that the recruits of the Reinforcement Company had been overpaid by 3/- a week and this amount was then stopped from their pay until the arrears had been cleared. Training was carried out at Carlton Barracks and on Woodhouse Moor, about a mile away. Route marches went round city streets to attract recruits and thence to Roundhay Park and Otley and Ilkley. Frank Greenwood, the pal who persuaded 3257 George S. Yeomans to join him in the Reinforcement Company, described it as "money for old rope." 2715 James A. Eastburn, 8th, then 18 years old, considered it "just like an extension of going to work, but much more fun", since they appeared to an admiring public in march-outs and displays.

Lord Harewood had announced as early as 10th August that two officers (unnamed) had already undertaken to raise two additional Territorial battalions of 1,000 men each,<sup>146</sup> but this offer does not seem to have been taken up by the War Office. The two unnamed officers were likely to have been the previous commanding officers of the 7th and 8th Bns, Lt. Col. J.W. Stead and Lt. Col. W. Hepworth. It was Col. Stead who suggested the raising of the Leeds Pals battalion and he was appointed its first commanding officer. The Leeds Rifles were



ordered to form two new battalions to act as reserve battalions at the beginning of September, but since the Imperial Service battalions were at the time incomplete, no steps could be immediately taken to comply with this order. It was announced on 11th September, the day after recruiting opened for the two Workers' Pals battalions, that these units would act as reserve battalions to the 7th and 8th (Leeds Rifles) Bns West Yorkshire Regiment.<sup>147</sup> This was an excellent arrangement, since it solved the problem of the Leeds Rifles reserves and at the same time solved the problem of who was going to pay for the raising and equipping of the new battalions. The Government, evidently taking a leaf out of the book of the Government of the day of 1859-60 with regard to the Volunteer Movement, insisted that municipalities and patriotic individuals or groups wishing to raise a "Pals" or other unit having special affiliations should have the privilege of bearing the whole cost of clothing and equipping that battalion<sup>148</sup> (although recruiters were later reimbursed according to a fixed scale). The Lord Mayor, Mr [later Lord] Edward Allen Brotherton (a major benefactor of the University of Leeds), defrayed the cost of the Leeds Pals out of his own pocket.<sup>149</sup> Once designated as the reserve battalions of the Leeds Rifles, the Workers' Pals came under the aegis of the County Association and automatically became a charge on the Exchequer. They were designated the 7th (Reserve) Bn and 8th (Reserve) Bn respectively, but on 21st September, when County Associations were formally authorised to raise a second-line unit for every Imperial Service unit, became known officially as the 2/7th and the 2/8th, or second-line Leeds Rifles, and Major the Hon. F.S. Jackson and Lt. Col. Hepworth were appointed to command them.<sup>150</sup>

In the middle of September, the men of K and L Companies of the first-line battalions were returned to Carlton Hill. Accompanying them were officers and NCOs who were required as instructors for the new reserve battalions. The 8th Bn, for instance, sent Captains E.W. Braithwaite and F.A. Lupton, who were both qualified Instructors of Musketry,<sup>151</sup> Lt S.H. Elkington, ex-RQMS Walter Gardham (now commissioned Lt and Quartermaster), and Lt W. Greenwood who was considered too old and not sufficiently dashing for overseas service.<sup>152</sup> The majority of these officers and NCOs had, in fact, signed for Imperial Service. Col Sgt Chapman, for instance, the oldest man in the 8th Bn, with 30 years' service, who had volunteered for overseas service, transferred to the reserve battalion at his CO's request in order to give it "the benefit of his wide experience."<sup>153</sup> 833 Sgt Joseph W. Goldsack and Sgt Harry



Morris, men of six years' service, who had both volunteered, were sent back in charge of the 7th Bn's K & L Companies. They did not take kindly to the arrangement, having been given no say in the matter; "We were very fed up, not to say resentful. I was never happy in the 2/7th. I was always dying to get back to the 1/7th where the real soldiers were."<sup>154</sup> Ex-Regular Army NCOs, who had until recently been serving as policemen in the Leeds City and other forces, arrived as instructors, five for each reserve battalion; they included Albert Lake, aged 33, Charles Robinson, aged 32, and John Harper, aged 33, who all "rejoined the Army as Drill Instructors for temporary duty" on 11th September 1914.<sup>155</sup> Subalterns newly commissioned from Leeds University OTC and also retired subalterns, such as Norman Darnton Lupton, originally commissioned in 1900, and Ernest William Terrey, originally commissioned in 1908, and now newly re-commissioned, arrived. Major Reginald George Hann, Registrar of the 2nd Northern General Hospital, Beckett's Park, who had joined the Leeds Rifles in 1899 as Surgeon-Lieutenant, acted as RMO; two or three civilian doctors assisted him to examine recruits.

The under-age men and the medically fit men who had not signed for Imperial Service eventually found themselves in the second-line battalions, the former to be despatched abroad with the second-line West Riding Division, the 62nd, in January 1917, and many of the latter to be sent to Home Service units. At first it was commonly believed that the second-line battalions were for home service only, but all recruits were required to sign the Imperial Service declaration,<sup>156</sup> as were all recruits to the first-line battalions after 3rd September 1914. The third-line units, draft-finding establishments for the active service battalions, the 3/7th and 3/8th, were set up in July 1915 at Clipstone Camp, Mansfield, Notts.

#### 8.6. Kitchener and the Territorials

The Military Mail wrote as early as 9th October 1914: "Sufficient it is to say that when peace is declared the Territorials will have proved their value far beyond the limits originally anticipated or expected from the Force as a whole." The words proved prophetic. In fact, they had by the beginning of 1915 proved their value to Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Forces in France and Belgium who wrote:



"The Lords Lieutenant of the Counties and the Associations which worked under them bestowed a vast amount of labour and energy on the organisation of the Territorial Force; and I trust it may be some recompense to them to know that I, and the principal Commanders serving under me, consider that the Territorial Force has far more than justified the most sanguine hopes that any of us ventured to entertain of their value and use in the field. Army Corps Commanders are loud in their praise of the Territorial Battalions which form part of nearly all the brigades at the front in the front line."<sup>157</sup>

Later, in his book 1914 (1919) he paid tribute to the vital role played in the war by the Territorials:

"I say without the slightest hesitation that, without the assistance which the Territorials afforded between October, 1914, and June, 1915, it would have been impossible to have held the line in France and Belgium, or to have prevented the enemy from reaching his goal, the Channel seaboard."<sup>158</sup>

In a forward to the book by L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (1920), French's successor, Field Marshal the Earl Haig, referred to "the greatness of the debt due to the Territorial Force as a whole":

"The value to the state of the Territorial Force organisation at the outbreak of the war was immense. By volunteering freely for overseas service, the pre-war Territorials enabled the necessary reinforcements for the Army in the field to be maintained while the New Army was in the making. The gallantry of their subsequent performances should not be allowed to obscure the service they then rendered."

Peter Simkins wrote "Kitchener rightly viewed the existing military organisation [of the Army on mobilisation] as wholly inadequate for anything other than a war of limited liability, and on becoming Secretary of State he took immediate steps to expand the army."<sup>159</sup>

Both during his lifetime and after the war, when prominent public figures heaped praise upon the Territorial Force and its achievements, Kitchener was severely criticised for not basing his expansion of the army on the TF administrative framework (as originally envisaged by Haldane) and for not making proper military use of the Force itself. Much was made of his attitude to the Territorials, his contempt for and ignorance and distrust of the Territorial system. It was repeatedly claimed that "proper use" of the TF framework would have enabled expansion to be achieved in a more rapid and more efficient manner at a much lower all-round cost in effort and money, and there was much righteous indignation about the "unnecessary" waste and duplication of



effort involved in the method that Kitchener chose.<sup>160</sup> Critics have ignored the facts that the TF was an organisation whose members had no statutory obligation to undertake active service abroad and that if it had been swamped by masses of raw recruits it would have been rendered for a time incapable of carrying out its military function. When, on 2nd June 1916, Kitchener addressed a private meeting of MPs in order to answer some of the criticisms which had been made in Parliament of his policies and administration, he explained his decision to reject the Territorial organisation as the basis for the expansion of the Regular Army : he had considered it imperative to preserve the system intact and not to swamp it by imposing upon it such "a gigantic experiment." He told the MPs that "the Territorial garrison of these Islands had to be kept up to strength", that it was vitally necessary to keep "these Territorial Divisions intact and at their war stations in day and night readiness for an emergency", that in order to secure the release of the TF for overseas duty it had been essential to retain the capability of reduplicating it several times over "by means of Second Line Divisions and Third Line units which should act as recruiting depots to both lines," and that his problem in producing "a new army sufficiently large to count in a European war" had been "to produce a force independent of those forces which had formed a part of prewar calculations."<sup>161</sup>

Critics of Kitchener's military employment of the Territorial Force were many; some suggested he had been motivated by blind prejudice. The Territorials themselves, in both first and second lines, considered that they had ample grounds during the war for complaining of discriminatory treatment. Some War Office decisions caused widespread resentment among all ranks of the Territorial Force (see Chap. 12, section 12.4). One of the most insensitive examples of discrimination was the 1915 Territorial Forces Act which repealed a section of the 1907 Act and legalised the transfer of a Territorial from his own unit to any other in the British Army without his consent,<sup>162</sup> and which stirred up a veritable hornet's nest and created immense and enduring bitterness in the Territorial heart. Another which caused a huge outcry was an order of June 1915 ordering all TF battalions with a strength of 400 men or less to amalgamate with another.<sup>163</sup> According to writer John Ellis, "In at least two battalions there was something like a general mutiny."<sup>164</sup> A furore was caused in early 1916 when the 1/4th Cameron Highlanders of Inverness was placed under orders to be merged with the 1st Cameronians.<sup>165</sup>



The most serious form of discrimination complained of and which, if true, amounted to a major blunder on Kitchener's part, was the denial to the first-line divisions of the Territorial Force of the preferential treatment commonsense indicated they should have received in 1914. Received wisdom amongst the military hierarchy was that it took two years to train a soldier and a unit from scratch: this was the basis of the scathing criticism of Sir Henry Wilson and most senior generals of Kitchener's New Army Scheme.<sup>166</sup> It was also received wisdom that the Territorial Force would need only six months' full-time training to bring it up to the required standard. The West Riding's first-line Division was declared "ready" at the end of its six months' training, as we have seen. It was repeatedly alleged, however, by Territorials in both first and second lines, that Kitchener units received priority in the allocation of the limited supplies of arms, equipment and other essential stores available, and that ready but frustrated first-line Territorial divisions were kept hanging about for want of supplies; when Charles E. Carrington joined the 1/5th RWR, 48th Division, in November 1915 he found the more senior officers "extremely bitter against Kitchener."<sup>167</sup> A common claim was that TF divisions were being sent out to the Western Front equipped with the old Long Lee-Enfield rifle, while Kitchener formations were training at home with the short Lee-Enfield. Some, at least, of these complaints appear to have been untrue or exaggerated.<sup>168</sup> The question whether the favouring of the New Armies was such as to cause an unnecessary delay in strengthening the BEF must therefore be left open.

The bulk, if not the whole, of his policy which caused Territorial grievances arose from the two factors that dominated Kitchener's thinking: necessity, and what can be now recognised with hindsight as his obsessive fear of invasion (note, for example, the troop trains held at Selby in 24-hour readiness (section 8.2 above)). It cannot be claimed that Kitchener's treatment of the TF was motivated solely, or even chiefly, by prejudice. It was his duty to use the forces at his disposal in the best interests, as he saw them, of prosecuting the war. The serious reservations he had harboured of the Force appear to have been short-lived. He soon realised that he would be obliged to make use of the Territorials for foreign service and as early as 9th August he had decided that if any Territorial units volunteered en bloc for service abroad, he would accept their offer.



His plan for the Force, published on 15th August, was characterised by sound commonsense; his scheme neither altered the character of nor seriously dislocated the Force. He harboured

"no idea of asking the Force to volunteer en masse for foreign service. It would be a very unfair demand to make, for it was not enlisted for this purpose, and as there are many in it who cannot go abroad without extreme inconvenience it would be unreasonable to rush them into an obligation which they have never contracted."

He proposed to divide the personnel of the TF into two categories: those able and willing to serve abroad and those whose business or occupations absolutely precluded them for so doing; the two categories would be put into homogeneous units. Both categories would be needed, as a considerable home defence force would be required. He had no wish to break up the existing organisation, but asked for men of goodwill without home and family ties to step forward. With them he proposed to form at least two "waiting" divisions which could, if necessary, be used to supplement the oversea force after special training.

"There is no idea in Lord Kitchener's mind of flinging half-baked troops into the war furnace. He will keep a roster of units in which the place of each one will depend upon the degree of efficiency which it has attained, and those most efficient will be given the place of honour in the war. There will be a distinction in the degree of training to be given to those ready to serve abroad and to those who serve at home. The former will be thoroughly trained and will be raised as soon as practicable to the standard required for fighting with Regular troops, and the public must trust Lord Kitchener to look closely after the interests of these units and not to employ them abroad until they are fit to go."<sup>169</sup>

His communication to Territorial County Associations and commanding officers of units contained the following:

"The fact of a Territorial unit having volunteered for foreign service, and being, by this arrangement, full up with men who can give their entire time to the Service, does not imply that such units will be employed abroad until they reach a standard of efficiency which would enable them to do credit to the British Army on foreign service. Each of such units will be carefully inspected and reported on from time to time as to their efficiency for taking the field."<sup>170</sup>



On 31st August Kitchener issued an appeal to all former NCOs both in the Regular Army and in the Auxiliary Forces to come forward at once and offer their services at the nearest military depot, whether Regular or Territorial.<sup>171</sup> This was not the action of a man blinded with prejudice against Territorials.

Kitchener had already demonstrated in South Africa that he was a master of expedients, the master improviser,<sup>172</sup> and he soon turned to the Territorials to plug the gaps in his Regular Army, Old and New. In 1914 and during the first half of 1915 he pursued a policy of "milking" the TF Divisions of not only infantry and yeomanry, but also every other kind of unit. Only one first-line division, the 46th, escaped unscathed to be sent out complete to a theatre of war, and only this division and one other, the 47th, were not raided by the non-infantry arms of the Regular Army.<sup>173</sup> (Territorial RE, RAMC and ASC units, it will be recalled, had been widely praised before the war, and many fell little short of Regular Army standards). As soon as the West Riding Casualty Clearing Station (Leeds) reported complete in October 1914, it was immediately appropriated by the RAMC and ordered to proceed to France. By 6th November it was installed in Poperinghe dealing with the wounded of 1st Ypres.<sup>174</sup> In addition to the CCS, the West Riding Division lost the Heavy Battery RGA to the Regular RGA as "Corps Troops", the Royal Horse Artillery Battery to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, and the Mounted Brigade ASC to the Regular ASC, while the 1st Field Companies RE were sent to the 29th Division.<sup>175</sup> No squadrons of yeomanry were taken, though seven were taken from southern divisions as reinforcements for the cavalry, one, the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, being the first Territorials to make contact with the enemy, on 5th October 1914. The master-of-expedients did have one blind spot which did not go unnoticed by his critics, e.g. Sir J.E. Edmonds:<sup>176</sup> he employed high-status Territorial battalions, full of potential officers, as combatant units.

Although the milking of the TF divisions was heavily censured,<sup>177</sup> it was an expedient born of necessity. It very quickly became evident that the Expeditionary Force would have to be enlarged as soon as possible. French was urgently pressing, imploring, for whatever TF regiments of yeomanry or infantry were ready and available to be sent out at once.<sup>178</sup> Thanks to a suggestion believed to have been made by Walter Long MP,<sup>179</sup> Kitchener decided to use Territorial battalions to



relieve Regular garrisons in various parts of the Empire in order that these Regular troops could be formed into new divisions. These became the 27th, 28th and 29th Divisions, which had all-Territorial artillery. Six infantry battalions were sent to Gibraltar and Malta and the East Lancs. Division to Egypt at the beginning of September, followed by the two Wessex and the Home Counties Divisions, bound for India, in October.<sup>180</sup> Not a few Territorials at home gained the impression that they would be shortly sent out to guard an outpost of the Empire: five respondents who joined the Leeds Rifles in September claimed that they did so in response to persistent rumours that the Regiment would shortly embark for India or Egypt.

It was also vital that infantry battalions of the BEF engaged on non-combatant duties, the Lines of Communication troops, be released as quickly as possible to reinforce the front-line troops. Since the French L of C troops were Territorials, an obvious solution was to send for "the Army Troops" of the Territorial Force which, as noted in Chap. 7, section 7.3, included RE companies, the Honourable Artillery Company, the Artists' Rifles and 23 other infantry battalions, together with all cyclist corps and all General Hospitals, and on which the Commander-in-Chief was entitled to call in time of need. This can be the only explanation of the apparent paradox involved in the action of a man prejudiced against amateur soldiers who had rejected the Territorial system as the basis for the raising of his New Army, nevertheless despatching 7 squadrons of Yeomanry, 9 Field Companies of Territorial Engineers and 23 Territorial infantry battalions to join the BEF before the end of 1914.

Unfortunately, very few of the Army Troops were sufficiently strong and efficient in September 1914 to be sent to the Western Front and substitutes had therefore to be sought. The first of the Army Troops to be sent, landing in France on 20th September, was the HAC, but it was not the first Territorial unit to go. This honour went to the London Scottish (14th London Regt) which embarked four days earlier, and which was the first of the substitutes since it did not belong to the Army Troops at all. It was a natural first choice as a substitute: it was almost certainly the strongest and most efficient infantry battalion in the entire TF, since it had been consistently over-subscribed since 1908; its members, exclusively drawn from the middle classes, were, to judge by photographs, exceptionally well set-up young men of fine



physique. Up to the end of December only five infantry units of the Army Troops could be sent: the HAC, the Artists' Rifles, 6th Welch Regt, 8th Royal Scots, and the 5th Border Regt. This last named unit had been at full-strength in both officers and other ranks on embodiment (which implies it was virtually 100% "efficient"), and the officers were "considered well-trained in all branches of infantry work."<sup>181</sup>

The country was evidently scoured for other substitute battalions with a sufficiently high standard of efficiency in order to make up the magic number of 23. The two strongest battalions in the Lowland Division, the 5th SR and the 9th HLI of Glasgow, were summoned from their war stations, hastily kitted out (the 5th SR Quartermaster and his staff did not have a wink of sleep for four days and three nights) and despatched to France before they had had time to catch their breath.<sup>182</sup> The 5th SR's selection was ascribed to the fact that the Inspector of Infantry, Gen. Capper, had informed the Adjutant during the 1914 Annual Camp (fortunately held during the Glasgow Fair holidays of July) that it was one of the best TF units he had inspected.<sup>183</sup> The 5th SR was the 8th infantry battalion to be despatched, but by the time the 16th of the 23 battalions, the 4th Suffolk Regt, embarked at the end of November, the bottom of the barrel was evidently near. Five members of this battalion at embarkation kindly supplied information about the circumstances of their regiment's selection. The 4th Suffolk was said by them to be considered the best infantry unit in the East Anglian Division; three of the respondents thought the unit had been chosen because of the keenness and efficiency of its officers; two considered the unit was not sufficiently trained to be sent out. The battalion that embarked contained under-age soldiers, like L.V. Gibbs, and recent recruits, like L.S. Paskall, who had not yet fired their musketry course (which was completed in France "by firing at snowballs over a ravine").<sup>184</sup> Neither battalion of the Leeds Rifles would ever have been considered for selection, since, in addition to their large proportion of recent recruits, they had not completed the 1914 Annual Training and, in view of the prewar range difficulties, it is extremely doubtful whether all the prewar enlistments who volunteered for Imperial Service had been returned as "Trained Men", i.e. fulfilled all the conditions for efficiency.



These battalions were intended to be employed on Lines of Communication duty, and the 5th Border Regt and 6th Welch Regt were retained on this work until the summer of 1915, but most of them, after their preliminary course of training at St. Omer, soon found themselves in a Regular brigade as reinforcements, forming the 5th or 6th battalion of that brigade.<sup>185</sup> A good many, including the 5th SR, came under fire before 23rd November, and thus qualified as "Old Contemptibles." The battalions brigaded with Regulars took their share of trench duty, thus enabling reliefs to be made more frequently than would otherwise have been the case, and sometimes took duty as labour battalions. Many of them remained in Regular divisions for the remainder of the war. The experiment of brigading Territorial battalions with Regulars was so successful that the remainder of the infantry battalions of the original 1st London Division and the remaining battalions, with the exception of one brigade, of the West Lancs. Division were sent for on an individual basis at the beginning of 1915, and many of them played prominent parts in various engagements in the spring and summer of 1915. The West Lancashire and 1st London first-line divisions were not re-assembled (as the 55th and 56th Divisions respectively) until the beginning of 1916.

Kitchener, and indeed the Government, worried constantly about the threat of invasion.<sup>186</sup> The 1912 and 1913 naval manoeuvres had demonstrated that England's east coast was vulnerable to invasion;<sup>187</sup> Kitchener most certainly did not share Haldane's conviction that the risk was negligible.<sup>188</sup> In October 1914 he had created the Central Force for home defence,<sup>189</sup> comprising seven divisions and nine mounted brigades of the Territorial Force, all raised in the eastern half of the country.

The three divisions that had been consistently the strongest before the war, the West Riding, the East Lancs. and the West Lancs., might reasonably have expected to be sent out first as complete divisions, particularly the Lancashire divisions which, thanks to the timing of the Wakes Weeks, had been able to complete Annual Training before the outbreak of war. As already indicated, the East Lancs. division (complete) and the infantry battalions of the West Lancs. division (on a piecemeal, individual, basis) were, in fact, sent out early on. It was easy for the men of the West Riding Division to imagine themselves ill-used and discriminated against, as they saw the Lancashire men,



then the North Midland, 2nd London, and the South Midland divisions sent out and still no orders for them in sight. They were unaware that their division was an essential component of the Central Force and that it, and the Northumbrian, Highland, Lowland and East Anglian Divisions, even though their second-line divisions had been completed (but not trained), could not be released for overseas service while the threat of invasion was thought to exist. It was not until the beginning of April that it became apparent that the Battle of the Dogger Bank on 24th January had effectually quelled all enterprise of the German Admiralty in the North Sea and throughout Home Waters in the foreseeable future.<sup>190</sup>

The Central Force remained the linch-pin of the Government's home defence policy for the remainder of the war. This fact may have been at the root of the problems and difficulties experienced in training the 62nd Division,<sup>191</sup> particularly with regard to the provision of rifles and artillery guns, since, according to Kitchener's plan for the Territorials, home defence formations were to be equipped to a lower standard than foreign service formations. In October 1914, for instance, the 2/8th Leeds Rifles were issued with the Mark I Lee-Metfords introduced in 1889 and discarded as obsolete even by the TF in 1910, and until April 1915, when 1914-pattern equipment arrived, had to wear the old leather equipment discarded by the 8th Bn in 1909. Training of the 62nd Division was hampered by (a) the reserve battalions' function of supplying drafts to the first-line (taken over by the third-line in the autumn of 1915), and (b) the apparently overriding considerations of home defence. In January 1915 companies had to be reorganised so that D Coy contained "all home service men and all who have fired musketry courses, so that they may be used on coastal duties." Coastal detachments were continually furnished until June 1916 when the Division was moved to the Suffolk coast in order to construct trenches around and between Lowestoft and Yarmouth. The fact that it was a constituent division of the Central Force was undoubtedly the reason why the 62nd was retained, and in East Anglia, until January 1917, despite three times receiving orders in 1916, in April, in July and in October, to hold itself in imminent readiness to embark.<sup>192</sup> Disappointed Yorkshiremen wrote to complain to the Editor of John Bull, Horatio Bottomley, who christened the 62nd "The Forgotten Division."<sup>193</sup> Three second-line divisions of the Central Force, the Lowland (65th), the Home Counties (67th) and East Anglian (69th), were retained in the UK to the end of the war.<sup>194</sup>



An evaluation of Kitchener's military employment of the TF is outside the scope of this study. It can be said, however, that there is no guarantee that his use of the Territorial framework as the basis of Army expansion would have produced better, or even the same, results as the method he chose.<sup>195</sup> The splitting up of the Force into training cadres<sup>196</sup> would have inevitably resulted in serious damage to, or even the destruction of, the TF's most precious military asset, "The Territorial Spirit." As it was, Kitchener incorporated the Force into the national army without dislocating it or destroying its original character, and thus enabled it to go on to play its vital role in the war.

#### 8.7. A note on the Kitchener battalions

The huge expansion of the Army in 1914-15, largely the result of the raising of the New Regular Army, popularly known as Kitchener's Army, in a nation that seemed to regard itself as anti-militaristic, and without resort to conscription was a paradoxical phenomenon that can excite only wonder. It is arguable that it was the prewar presence in society of the Territorials and their predecessors the Volunteers, with their long-standing tradition of amateur soldiering and patriotic service to the state, by providing a climate of opinion in which a new Regular Army composed of citizen soldiers (though now professional instead of amateur) could be raised without resort to compulsion, that made this immense expansion possible. A Government spokesman, the Marquis of Lansdowne, had no hesitation in stating that it was the Territorial Spirit which had been responsible for "the great number of recruits which we have been able to obtain during recent months and which has infused into our Army the extraordinary spirit of enthusiasm which now pervades it, and which leads every village in England to take a keen interest in the performance of the troops connected with that particular part of the country."<sup>197</sup> The leader writer of the Leeds Mercury put forward this view over a month earlier on 30th April 1915.

The Territorials had a much greater influence on Kitchener's Army than has hitherto been realised. It was no coincidence that the methods of recruiting and hence the social composition of Kitchener battalions often bore a close resemblance to those of corresponding units in the Territorial Force, since, just as the early Volunteers had modelled themselves on their Hanoverian predecessors, and the Territorials on



the Volunteers, so did the Kitchener units, particularly the Pals battalions, having only local military traditions to guide them, consciously model themselves on the Territorials from the beginning. General A.S. Wynne started raising the 6th KOYLI in Doncaster and district in August 1914. He wrote: "Each company is being organised so as to assemble men according to the district in which they reside, thereby insuring close comradeship, and local interest in their welfare."<sup>198</sup> This was the gospel of recruiting policy according to the Territorials. Many Kitchener units had companies or platoons whose entire membership was drawn from one employer, one trade, one locality, one cricket, football or athletic club, one church or chapel; for example, the 1st Liverpool Pals had a platoon recruited from clerks employed at Cunard's and another from employees of the P & O Line. Pals battalions aimed to be, like the Leeds Pals, "as much a social club as a regiment."<sup>199</sup> Young professional and businessmen were invited to join and bring or send their friends so that they could "serve shoulder to shoulder with their friends and colleagues in civil life."<sup>200</sup> Pals battalions, noting the local patriotism that nurtured the Territorials, called themselves after the town in which they had been recruited.

Retired Territorial and Volunteer officers were prominent amongst those recruiters raising Kitchener units, particularly Pals battalions. For example, in addition to Col. Stead in Leeds, there was Col. George Herbert Müller, the first CO of the 6th WYR, who raised both battalions of the Bradford Pals (16th and 18th WYR) and who was the first commanding officer of each in turn. Col. J.R. Shaw of Purston, near Pontefract, is said to have directly and indirectly recruited 4,000-5,000 men, including the entire 2/5th KOYLI of the second-line West Riding Territorial Division, which he commanded himself.<sup>201</sup> He suggested to his fellow-members of the West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association that they raised and equipped at their own expense "The Miners' Battalion" (12th KOYLI), and at the beginning of 1915 they raised a Brigade of Artillery with Ammunition Column.<sup>202</sup>

Pals battalions whose first commanding officer was a retired Territorial officer were likely to resemble a Territorial battalion in many respects. For example, in the Leeds Pals the RSM was RSM Arthur Yates who had been Benny Farrar's predecessor as RSM - instructor of the 8th Bn (and who was succeeded by RSM Harry Preston, former sergeant-instructor in the Leeds Rifles), the RQMS was ex-Col. Sgt



R.A. Tannam who had served for nearly 30 years in the Rifles,<sup>203</sup> while the four company sergeant-majors were all retired Colour-Sergeants of long service in the Rifles, and Signalling Sergeant James Hullah was a former signaller in the 7th Bn. Among the rank and file of the Leeds Pals was a not inconsiderable number of former members of the 7th and 8th Bns, some attracted no doubt by the social cachet attached to the new battalion, others perhaps by the fact of Col. Stead being the commanding officer. The first Battalion Orders of the Leeds Pals<sup>204</sup> reads for the most part like Col. Stead's Camp Orders for the 7th Bn in 1909, many passages actually being identical, even the printer, the type-face and the lay-out being the same.



NOTES

1. Quoted by I.F.W. Beckett, 'The English Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1974, p. 306.
2. See Yorkshire Post, 27 July 1914; Leeds Mercury, 31 July 1914.
3. Yorkshire Post, 3 August 1914.
4. Ibid., 4 August 1914.
5. Ibid., 1, 3 August 1914; Leeds Mercury, 3 August 1914.
6. Sanderson Memoirs. These phrases had often figured in the prewar conscription debate.
7. Yorkshire Post, 3 August 1914.
8. Sanderson Memoirs; testimony of Bugler 1294 Alexander Latto, 8th.
9. Sanderson Memoirs.
10. Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 August 1914.
11. Testimonies of 1679 Charles Lonsdale, 7th, and 1327 Walter Garnett, 8th.
12. Yorkshire Post, 4 August 1914.
13. Sanderson Memoirs.
14. Oral testimony.
15. Yorkshire Post, 4 August 1914.
16. Leeds Mercury, 5 August 1914.
17. Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 August 1914; Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1914.
18. Oral testimony.
19. For example, Yorkshire Evening News, 5 August 1914.
20. Yorkshire Post, 6 August 1914.
21. Ibid., 4 August 1914.
22. Leeds Mercury, 5 August 1914.
23. Yorkshire Evening News, 5 August 1914.
24. Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1914.
25. Sanderson Memoirs.
26. Yorkshire Observer, 5 August 1914.
27. Leeds Mercury, 5 August 1914.
28. Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1914.
29. Yorkshire Observer, 5 August 1914.
30. Yorkshire Post, 6 August 1914.
31. Testimony of Lt J.B.Gawthorpe, 8th.
32. Yorkshire Evening News, 5 August 1914.
33. Ibid; Yorkshire Post, 6 August 1914; Leeds Mercury, 6 August 1914.
34. The figure given in F.A.M. Webster, Britain's Territorials in Peace and War (London, 1915), p. 93. £5 is the amount given in H. Baker, The Territorial Force, A manual of its law, organisation and administration (London, 1909), p. 187. Respondents unanimously insisted that the embodiment bounty was £5.



35. Sanderson Memoirs.
36. The barrack site extended to some 5 acres.
37. Yorkshire Post, 7 August 1914.
38. Yorkshire Evening Post, 6 August 1914.
39. Yorkshire Post, 6 August 1914.
40. F.A.M. Webster, op. cit., p. 111 ; L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (London, 1920), p. 32. The 1/8th embarked with 74 horses and mules, 2 machine-gun limbers, 6 GS [General Service] wagons, 13 limbers, 2 water carts and 1 medical cart : 1/8th Bn War Diary, 15 April 1915, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], War Office, WO 95/2795.
41. For further information on procedures, see Report of the Committee appointed to consider and advise what steps should be taken in England and Wales to secure an adequate supply of Horses suitable for Military Purposes; 1914-16 Cmd. 8134, xxxix, 477.
42. Burrell Diary ; Leeds Mercury, 8, 12 August 1914.
43. Sanderson Memoirs.
44. Yorkshire Evening Post, 8 August 1914.
45. Sanderson Memoirs.
46. Leeds Mercury, 11 September 1914.
47. Ibid., 11 August 1914.
48. Postcard in the private collection of P.M. Morris.
49. Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 August 1914.
50. Leeds Mercury, 11 August 1914.
51. Yorkshire Evening Post, 13 August 1914.
52. Testimony of Edward C. Ellis, one of the boys concerned, whose sister's brother-in-law was Bugler Freddy Atkinson of the 7th, and who joined the 7th himself in due course.
53. Testimonies of Sgt Arthur Hawkins, 3rd battery, Leeds Artillery, and 1764 Arthur G. Illingworth, 1st WR Field Ambulance.
54. Testimonies of 1294 Bugler Alexander Latto, 8th, and 2010 Isaac Harry Butcher, 7th.
55. Oral testimony.
56. Testimony of 1310 William Gill, 8th.
57. Sanderson Memoirs; testimonies of 1327 Walter Garnett, 1460 George Crowther, both of D Coy, 1543 Harper Stott, C Coy, 8th.
58. Testimony of 1854 Bugler Clarence Baddeley, 7th.
59. Testimonies of 1987 Sydney Appleyard and 1726 Jack Barker, 7th.
60. For example, W. Hall, 'The Lone Terrier', mimeographed for private circulation 1969, p. 1; I.S. Munro, Youth of Yesteryear : campaigns, battles, services and exploits of the Glasgow Territorials in the last Great War (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1939), p. 24.



61. (London, 1922); calculated from Table (vii), Section 5, p. 139. In his forthcoming book on Kitchener's Armies, Peter Simkins notes that not a few parents of minors in the TF were opposed to them volunteering to serve abroad (Chap. 2, Kitchener and The Call to Arms, section III). This factor may have been important in the Leeds Rifles, even though it did not emerge from the interviews (in which the most popular reasons advanced for failure to volunteer were selfishness and pusillanimity). Two respondents, 1485 Alfred Clarkson and 167 Charlie Young, 7th, however, reported that their parents had been opposed to their joining the prewar Regular Army because of the long periods of foreign service involved. Others considered that such parents were essentially opposed to losing the wages of the son's civilian job, and this was frequently given as an important reason for the widespread support given to the prewar TF by the Respectable working classes.
62. Oral testimony.
63. 71 HC Deb. 5s. 27 April 1915, col. 613.
64. Yorkshire Evening Post, 12 August 1914; Col. W. Boyle, History of the Second West Yorkshire Royal Engineers Volunteers; The Northern Telegraph Companies, Royal Engineers (Army Troops); The 49th (West Riding) Divisional Signals, 1861-1936 (Leeds, 1936), p. 53.
65. Compare L. Magnus, op. cit., p. 32.
66. Testimony of 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 7th.
67. Sanderson Memoirs.
68. Some men in D Coy of the 1/7th refused to appear on group photographs in case copies should fall into the hands of the Leeds City Police (testimony of 2290 CSM Joseph Carter); 2122 Robert Vine's best friend in No. 5 platoon, B Coy, 1/7th, was a professional pick-pocket; 2158 Harold Dean, 1/8th, stated that one of his tent-mates at Strensall had a prison record; 2455 Norman J. Mason, 1/8th, stated that several men in his platoon were full-time professional criminals (oral testimonies).
69. Testimony of 2221 George A. Fletcher, 8th.
70. Oral testimonies.
71. Oral testimonies.
72. W.H. Scott, Leeds in the Great War 1914-1918 : A Book of Remembrance (Leeds, 1923), pp. 18, 19.
73. Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock', pp. 41, 42, 44; 1922 Cmd. 1734, xii, 759; see also Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (London, 1945), p. 166.
74. See 77 HC Deb. 5s. 22 December 1915, col. 564; also the complaints of Lt. Col. the Hon. F.S. Jackson, MP (Leeds Rifles), 80 HC Deb. 5s. 15 February 1916, col. 18.
75. Oral testimonies.
76. Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 September 1914; Yorkshire Evening News, 21 September 1914.
77. 2/8th Bn War Diary, October 1914 - April 1915, PRO, WO 95/3082.
78. Testimony of 1610 Thomas Doran, 8th.
79. Testimonies of Sgt Albert Bowden, 1803 Alfred Kennedy Owen, D Coy, 1310 William Gill, A Coy, 8th.



80. Testimony of 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, 7th.
81. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
82. Testimonies of 1233 George A. Collinson, 8th; 2815 Harry Richmond, 7th; 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
83. Burrell Diary, 3 October 1914.
84. Testimony of 2371 Brian Armitage, 8th.
85. Sanderson Memoirs.
86. Burrell Diary, 20 October 1914.
87. Testimonies of 1233 George A. Collinson and 132 Harry Thackray, 8th.
88. Sanderson Memoirs.
89. History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol. I. 1/6th Battalion (Bradford, 1921), p.9.
90. Oral testimony.
91. Testimonies of 2222 William H. Reynard and Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th.
92. See Burrell Diary, 9, 20 October 1914.
93. Sanderson Memoirs.
94. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
95. Col. H.O. Wade, 'Reminiscences of the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment,' The Heaton Review, IV (1931), 51.
96. Lt. Col. R.M. Benzie et. al., The Fifth Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 1914-1919 (Glasgow, 1936), p.6.
97. Testimony of 2221 George A. Fletcher, 8th.
98. Oral testimonies.
99. Testimony of 2158 Harold Dean, 8th.
100. Testimonies of 2455 Norman J. Mason, 8th, and many others.
101. Testimony of 2460 Ernest W. Kirkland, 8th.
102. Oral testimony.
103. Testimonies of L/Cpl Albert Bowden and 1294 Bugler Alexander Latto, 8th.
104. Testimony of 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, then their lance-corporal. 1854 Bugler Clarence Baddeley, however, maintained that each received the punishment of 21 days' "jankers".
105. Testimonies of 1090 James Rhind and 1788 John Allman, 8th.
106. Testimonies of 1677 George H. Strickland, 7th, 2460 Ernest W. Kirkland and 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
107. Testimony of 2891 Bugler Charles E. Hannan, 8th.
108. Oral testimony.
109. Burrell Diary, 19 November, 5 December 1914.
110. Ibid., 27 September, 2, 12 November 1914.
111. Sanderson Memoirs.
112. Burrell Diary, 3 November 1914.
113. Oral testimony.



114. Oral testimony.
115. This and the following two paragraphs were compiled from extracts from the Burrell Diary, entry for 16 December 1914; from the Perry Memoirs; from the Sanderson Memoirs; and from the testimonies of 2222 William H. Reynard, 1159 Thomas Darbyshire, Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th; Sgt Charles Harold Marshall, 17th Lancers; and Mrs Evaline Burrell.
116. Yorkshire Post, 17 December 1914.
117. This paragraph was compiled from extracts from the Burrell Diary, entry for 17 December 1914 ; from the Perry Memoirs ; from the Sanderson Memoirs; and from the testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard.
118. W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1918 (London, [1939] new edn.), Vol. I, pp.419-30.
119. Yorkshire Evening News, 21 December 1914.
120. Sanderson Memoirs.
121. Yorkshire Post, 26 December 1914.
122. Testimonies of 1987 Sydney Appleyard and 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, 7th.
123. Burrell Diary, 24, 25 December 1914.
124. Yorkshire Evening Post, 28 December 1914.
125. Burrell Diary, 2 November 1914.
126. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
127. Sanderson Memoirs.
128. Quoted H.A. Taylor, article 'The Poet's Battle-Call : When Verse Stirred the Nation', Yorkshire Post, 4 August 1964.
129. Testimony of 1778 John Allman, 8th.
130. Memoirs of 2/Lt J. R. Bellerby.
131. Perry Memoirs.
132. The History of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919 (Halifax and London, 1920), p.7. See also E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918 (London, [1924]), Vol. I, p. 52.
133. Sanderson Memoirs; testimony of 1090 James Rhind, 8th.
134. Capt. P.G. Bales, loc. cit.
135. Yorkshire Evening Post, 28 December 1914.
136. Testimony of 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby; see also Capt. E.V. Tempest, op. cit., p. 13.
137. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th.
138. Burrell Diary, 17 February 1915.
139. Testimony of 2865 Harry L. Yeadon, 7th.
140. Knowles letters, 3 March, 28 February 1915.
141. Testimony of 2290 CSM Joe Carter, 7th.
142. Burrell Diary, 27 February, 4 March, 5 April 1915.
143. Ibid., 5 April 1915.
144. Sanderson Memoirs.



145. This paragraph was compiled from the testimonies of 2880 William Arthur Bywater, 2554 Claude N. Pepper, 2952 Lawrence Tallant, 2715 James A. Eastburn, 8th, and 3257 George S. Yeomans, 7th; and from information given in the Knowles letter of 16 March 1915.
146. Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 August 1914.
147. Yorkshire Post, 4, 11 September 1914.
148. Ibid., 22 September 1914.
149. Leeds Mercury, 3 September 1914.
150. Yorkshire Evening News, 21 September 1914.
151. Army List, October 1914.
152. Testimony of Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, Asst. Adjutant.
153. Yorkshire Post, 9 October 1914.
154. Testimony of 833 Sgt Joseph W. Goldsack, 7th.
155. West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police, Leeds, personnel archives.
156. Yorkshire Post, 28 September 1914.
157. Fifth Despatch, 2 February 1915, quoted L. Magnus, op. cit., p. 43; see also Lord Hankey's diary entry for 4 April 1915, quoted in his The Supreme Command : 1914-1918 (London, 1961), Vol. I, pp. 298-9.
158. (London, 1919), p. 294.
159. 'Kitchener and the Expansion of the Army' in I. Beckett and J. Gooch, eds., Politicians and Defence : Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy 1845-1970 (Manchester, 1981), p. 97.
160. W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1918, Vol. I, pp. 191-2, 299-302; Churchill's address to representatives of County TA Associations, Times, 3 April 1919, 10a-c; F.M. Viscount French of Ypres, 1914, pp. 292-3; Major-Gen. Sir F.B. Maurice, Haldane 1915-1928. The Life of Viscount Haldane of Cloan (London, 1937), 2 vols., pp. 357 ff, esp. p. 361; J.A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith (London, 1932), Vol. II, pp. 132-3; R. Pound, The Lost Generation (London, 1964), pp. 61-2; Philip Magnus, Kitchener : Portrait of an Imperialist (London, 1958), pp. 303, 333-4, 346-8; Sir J.E. Edmonds, History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations, France and Belgium, Vol. IV, 1915 (London, 1928), preface, p. viii; Professor Spencer Wilkinson, The Sunday Times, 1 June 1919; Sir Charles Harris, letter to the Times, 28 August 1928, 13e. The criticism of Major J. Stirling in his The Territorial Divisions 1914-1918 (London, 1922), p. 15, of the despatch of 3 TF divisions to India in late 1914 is difficult to answer. For an examination of the possible motives behind Kitchener's decision to by-pass the TF organisation, see Simkins' forthcoming book, Chap. 2, Kitchener and The Call to Arms, section III, and his article, 'Kitchener and the Expansion of the Army', pp. 97-8.
161. Speech to Members of Parliament, 2 June 1916. The text is quoted in its entirety in Sir George Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener (London, 1920), Vol. III, pp. 326-42.



162. 71 HC Deb. 5s. 27 April 1915, cols. 613-622.
163. Leeds Mercury, 2 July 1915; 19 HL Deb. 5s. 1 July 1915, cols. 182-193.
164. Eye-Deep in Hell : the Western Front 1914-18 (London, 1976; 1977 Fontana paperback edn.), p. 196.
165. 81 HC Deb. 5s. 22 March 1916, col. 315; 2 May 1916, col. 2591.
166. Major-Gen. Sir C.E. Callwell, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson : His Life and Diaries (London, 1927), Vol. I, p. 178.
167. Personal communication. A typical Territorial complainant is novelist Dennis Wheatley, 2/1st City of London Bde RFA : Officer and Temporary Gentleman, 1914-1919 (London, 1978), p. 44.
168. See P. Simkins' forthcoming book, Chap. 11, Uniforms and Equipment, section III.
169. C. àC. Repington, article, 'Lord Kitchener's Plan', Times, 15 August 1914, 7f-8ab.
170. Times, 15 August 1914, 8b.
171. Yorkshire Post, 1 September 1914.
172. George H. Cassar, Kitchener : Architect of Victory (London, 1977), pp. 360, 197, 201.
173. Major A.F. Becke, History of the Great War : Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2A: The Territorial Force Mounted Divisions and the 1st-Line Territorial Force Divisions (42-56) (London, 1936), pp. 66.
174. L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War, pp. 33-4.
175. Minutes of the West Riding Territorial Force Association, Vol. II, 27 January 1919; Leeds City Archives, Acc. 1469.
176. Loc. cit.
177. The milking of the divisions sent to Gallipoli of both infantry and non-infantry units (see Major A.F. Becke, op. cit., pp. 111, 113, 119, 127) prior to embarkation was particularly regrettable (see, for example, Major J. Stirling, op. cit., p. 126).
178. 1914, p. 291.
179. J.K. Dunlop, The Territorial Army Today (London, 1939), p.68.
180. Ibid.
181. Testimony of Capt. E.W. Green, 5th Border Regt, a ranker on embodiment.
182. Testimony of Col. Sgt Archibald L. MacKellar, 5th SR.
183. Lt. Col. R.M. Benzie et al., op. cit., p. 6.
184. Testimonies of L.D. Paskall, B.L. Tweed, F. Kidby, W.G. Peck and L.V. Gibbs, 1/4th Suffolk Regt.
185. J.K. Dunlop, op. cit., p. 70.
186. See P. Simkins' forthcoming book, Chap. 2, section III; Lord Hankey, op. cit., Chap. XX, passim.; Sir E.L. Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918 (London, 1967), pp. 36-7.
187. J. Luvaas, The Education of an Army : British Military Thought 1815-1940 (London, 1965), p. 308.
188. Major-Gen. Sir F.B. Maurice, op. cit., p. 357; Lord Hankey, op. cit., pp. 215-6; G.H. Cassar, op. cit., pp. 257 ff.



189. G.H. Cassar, op. cit., p. 258.
190. W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1918, Vol. I, p. 575.
191. See L. Magnus, op. cit., Chap. VI, passim; Capt. E.C. Gregory, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. Vol. II. 2/6th Battalion (Bradford and London, 1923), pp. 5-6, 7-8, 18-19, 34, 40-1, 51.
192. 2/8th Bn War Diary, October 1914, January, April 1915, May 1915 - July 1916, October 1916, PRO, WO 95/3082.
193. Testimonies of 2657 William Laycock, 2/7th and others; Capt. E.C. Gregory, op. cit., p. 46.
194. J.K. Dunlop, op. cit., Appendix, p. 77.
195. The view of, among others, Lord Esher (cited J. Terraine, Douglas Haig, the Educated Soldier (London, 1963), p. 78).
196. Though an attractive proposition on paper, at least to civilians, it was hardly practicable. At the outbreak of war the TF was much under strength, the majority of its personnel had not undergone annual training, while a substantial number had not passed the musketry test. It is worth noting that the new German divisions raised in August 1914 on a nucleus of approximately 22% "old hands", i.e. fully trained soldiers (Army Quarterly, January 1942, 362-7, quoted Sir J.E. Edmonds and Lt. Col. E. Maxwell-Hyslop, History of the Great War Based on Official Documents ; Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. V (London, 1947), note 4, p. 591), were the Kindermord divisions of 1st Ypres.
197. 19 HL Deb. 5s. 1 July 1915, col. 196.
198. Letter to Editor, Yorkshire Post, 29 August 1914.
199. G. Stowell, The History of Button Hill (London, 1929), p. 283.
200. Ibid; card of Sheffield University and City Special Battalion (Sheffield Pals), reproduced in M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), p. 34; Telegraph and Argus, 12 August 1981, quoting The Bradford Daily Telegraph of September 1914.
201. Obit. notice, Yorkshire Post, 6 November 1916. The examples of Stead, Müller and Shaw, and many others, show that the tradition of granting commissions and commands to gentlemen for their having raised a body of troops in the Sovereign's service, which had a lengthy history, certainly extending back to the 17th century, was clearly not dead. The tradition was itself a legacy of the Tenure by Knight service of the Norman feudal system, abolished by the 1660 Tenures Abolition Act.
202. See West Yorkshire Coal Owners' Association Minute Book No. 4 : 3, 15, 18 September 1914, pp. 293-306; 15 January 1915, p. 324, Leeds University Library, Special Collections, MS 148/4.
203. Leeds Mercury, 18 September 1914.
204. Copy in Leeds City Reference Library, Local Collections.



CHAPTER 9.    IMPACTS OF WAR:    THE FIRST-LINE BATTALIONS, APRIL-JUNE 1915

"... it is gratifying to learn from various official and unofficial sources that they have behaved, as we always knew they would behave, with gallantry, coolness, and courage... those who talked sneeringly less than a year ago about 'Saturday night soldiers' must hide their heads in shame. All sorts of slurs were cast upon the Territorial Army before the war. We were told that the men were only playing at soldiers, that they would be a danger rather than a help in the field, and that the work they were doing was useless for purposes of real warfare" (from the Leeds Mercury leader of 30th April 1915 on the Yorkshire Territorials).

9.1. Embarkation

Excitement mounted as the Expeditionary Force stores poured in and new clothing and equipment were issued. A "Bank holiday" or "party" spirit pervaded all ranks. A reporter who spent the day with the men of the Leeds Rifles described them as "the most light-hearted, red-faced, clean-built set of fellows who got prepared as if for a holiday picnic."<sup>1</sup> The commanding officers had arranged for Leeds City to come to play Gainsborough Trinity on 10th April, the Saturday before Embarkation. The tiny ground was crammed to overflowing with Riflemen and other Leeds soldiers who cheered their home-team to the echo and laughed uproariously at the droll antics of Rfm Joe Ball's pet monkey, who swung on the cross-bar and tried to steal the corner flag.<sup>2</sup>

At the following morning's parades, the men were informed they would leave for France on Thursday. The Great Northern Railway Company, who had already received this intelligence, ran three special excursion trains at a return fare of 2/9d from Leeds to Gainsborough for the benefit of relatives, friends and sweethearts.<sup>3</sup> They left packed to the doors, and the relatives of Rfm 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, were among the many left behind, and they chartered a motor charabanc.<sup>4</sup> A further excursion train was running on Wednesday afternoon. 2381 Joseph Perry, C Coy, 8th, millwright, of Horsforth, then aged 21, later recalled in his Memoirs:

"When the time came for the visitors to go back, there were some heart-rending scenes at the station. There was weeping and wailing all over the place, and the men were looking sick. Nothing upsets a man more than a lot of women weeping and sobbing. You can bet the men were glad when the train moved out of the station."<sup>5</sup>



Last-minute rejections on the grounds of age or unfitness, looking the picture of misery at the prospect of parting from their friends and missing all the fun, were despatched by train to the second-line battalions at Doncaster. There, heart-broken 2006 George N. Elliott of the 8th, only 17, cried himself to sleep.<sup>6</sup>

After these rather sad interludes, the "party" atmosphere soon returned. It was traditional in the British Army for troops to drink to excess immediately prior to embarkation for a foreign station: this reaction to anticipatory anxiety was popularly known in both American and British Armies in World War II as "gang plank fever". According to L/Cpl 2430 John Espin, B Coy, 8th, time-served engineer, of Woodhouse, aged 22, the Riflemen were celebrating on the eve and on the day of embarkation: "Everybody is drunk, also myself, the first time in my life."<sup>7</sup> (Espin was a Wesleyan). Rfm Perry wrote:

"... everybody was in the best of spirits, and our platoon (No. 10) were feeling elated... Nearly all the landladies were much upset as we had been great favourites<sup>8</sup> at Gainsboro'. And so we marched to the station and entrained [at 5.35 pm] amid cheers and waving of handkerchiefs... our spirits were extraordinary and there was a lot of singing and carrying on. We might have been going on a picnic, instead of which we were embarking on the greatest adventure any man has ever been called upon to undertake."<sup>9</sup>

The streets of Gainsborough were "thronged with people to bid them farewell." The enthusiasm which marked the Leeds Rifles' departure was, however, tainted "by a tinge of sadness", as many of the men's relatives had come to see them off and

"some affecting scenes were witnessed. Still on the whole the men were in high spirits and looked fit for anything. The Leeds Rifles have been very popular troops, and the townspeople were unaffectedly sorry to part with them, a feeling plainly reciprocated by the troops who have made many strong friendships in Gainsborough... Mr. J.A. Little, J.P, chairman of the local Council, on behalf of the townspeople, requested the officers commanding to convey to the men hearty good wishes for their welfare and safe return and bade them 'God Speed'. The Railway platform was closed to the public, but the approaches to the station were thronged with people, who heartily cheered the troops, who loudly replied, and as the trains passed away they packed the windows of the carriages, shouted 'Good old Gainsborough! Goodbye and Good Luck!'"<sup>10</sup>

Some men of the 7th gave Gainsborough an "uproarious farewell", throwing missiles at the grinning platelayers along the line as the train picked up speed.<sup>11</sup> Other units were in equally high spirits: the 1/4th DWR



refused to let the train taking the first half-battalion from Doncaster move off until the "Advance" had been blown on the bugle.<sup>12</sup>

The boyish, jubilant mood was by no means universally shared. Those leaving behind wife and children or a young bride must necessarily have had mixed feelings, 2024 Christopher Wall, B Coy , 7th, dyeworks clerk, of Horsforth, aged 24, serious-minded and a devout Baptist, wrote "The people of Gainsboro' gave us a real good send-off and we did not feel anything great."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps his thoughts were fixed on the coming ordeal; perhaps it was that, as a confirmed teetotaler, he was stone cold sober.

As the troop trains sped south, Rfm Perry and his comrades sang or talked, much too excited to sleep.<sup>14</sup> On arrival at Folkestone, the Riflemen, under orders to keep silent and refrain from showing any lights, embarked without delay on the two waiting civilian packet steamers, the 7th on the SS Onward, the 8th on the SS Invicta. As they filed on board, the men of the 7th were considerably startled when a searchlight beam from the destroyer escort waiting outside the harbour suddenly stabbed out and caught them in its glare. None of the 7th except officers was allowed on deck. Below, there was insufficient room to lie down; some managed to sit down, but many had to stand throughout the crossing.<sup>15</sup> On the Invicta, some men were accommodated on deck. The entire boat was in darkness and complete silence was ordered; no talking, smoking or moving about was permitted.<sup>16</sup> Perry wrote:

"Off to a foreign land in the dead of night. Not a cheer, not a flag. What a difference this is to the Boer War! But we didn't care a rap for this. All we wanted was to be across and up into the fighting."<sup>17</sup>

As they disembarked, everyone was imbued with the romance of it all. 1712 Bandsman John William Sanderson, A Coy, 8th, colliery shot-firer, of Normanton, aged 28, spoke for many: "Everybody was in the highest spirits, and felt the importance of the occasion. We were really on French soil, on active service at last. Our Great Adventure had begun."<sup>18</sup> Everyone took the keenest interest in his surroundings: "It seemed very queer when we got to Boulogne to see the railways in the street and the French sentry on the wharve, the searchlight playing in the air for miles, on the look-out for any craft which might be about."<sup>19</sup> Perry thought that the sentry, dressed in blue greatcoat and red trousers, "looked as though he had just stepped out of a French play." It was too



dark to make out much of their surroundings: "the only things we became acquainted with being the awful roadways made of small round cobbles and the hills leading out of the town."<sup>20</sup> The Regiment was marched off to a so-called "rest" camp, St. Martin's Camp, situated about three miles away on the top of a lofty hill overlooking the town. The men wondered why such an inaptly described camp had to be located on the top of such a dragging steep hill.<sup>21</sup> The singing of the nightingales accompanied the cursing of the heavily-laden men as the regiment toiled upwards.<sup>22</sup> 2/Lt Jack Bellerby, 8th, an 18-year-old Leeds University undergraduate, was conscious of an air of mystery as they tramped over the hollow-sounding cobbles; even the stars were concealed by cloud.<sup>23</sup> Even though it was the middle of the night, French youths and boys ran beside the marching men, begging for cigarettes and "souvenirs" and touting for their female relatives.<sup>24</sup>

The Regiment remained at the camp until the evening of the 16th. Fatigues occupied the greater part of the time. The rations were Army biscuits and bully beef; this was the first time the Riflemen had experienced either. No other food was available, for in England the dockers were on strike. The Riflemen were greatly amused to see the French Territorials who guarded the large wireless station opposite the camp and who leant "negligently against their sentry-boxes with pipe in mouth and hands deep in trousers pockets, their rifles standing in a corner" and, unbelievably, allowed the Tommies to pick up their rifles to examine them.<sup>25</sup>

The two Advance Parties, comprising the Transport Sections and Quarter-master's Stores, had crossed from Southampton to Le Havre. Their trains, each made up of a few carriages for the officers and cattle trucks, labelled "Chevaux-8, Hommes-40", for the men, set off in the afternoon of the 16th for Port du Briques to pick up their battalions. 8th Bn Orderly Room Sgt 1951 William Barnard Burrell, assistant company secretary and accountant, of Horsforth, aged 23, and his five fellow-sergeants had sneaked into a truck on their own, leaving the doors open wide, so as to be able to savour every new experience to the full:

"Our rate of travelling was very slow... At nearly every village we passed through the inhabitants turned out to give us a shout and in many cases threw flowers into our carriages - I apologise, trucks. Quite a triumphal progress in fact. Also at our various stops we tied our tongues in terrible knots trying to converse with anyone near the train..."



About 8 pm we were getting too tired to be interested in anything, so closed up the truck and got into our straw."<sup>26</sup>

The battalions were awaiting the trains with some impatience "after two hours' march and one hour's sarcastic remarks about French railways."<sup>27</sup> The French authorities had provided an inadequate number of trucks and most were overcrowded: there were 46 in Wall's truck<sup>28</sup> and well over 40 in Perry's, complete with packs, rifles etc.<sup>29</sup> 3112 Philip G. Standley, D Coy, 7th, printer, and his comrades had a brazier belching fumes in their truck.<sup>30</sup> 1726 Jack Barker, C Coy, 7th, mill-worker, of Woodhouse, aged 18, recalled that his train travelled at an average speed of only 5-10 mph, fortunately for one of his comrades, 1815 Louis Clayden, who fell out of the truck unnoticed during the night while asleep.

"The train kept stopping for some unexplained reason, but it didn't stop for meals. We could only eat what we had with us. Whenever the train did stop, some of us ran up and mashed tea with boiling water from the engine's boiler."<sup>31</sup>

Perry's account of the journey well conveys the general air of excitement at seeing "the Continong" at the Government's expense, the wonderment engendered by the exotic surroundings, and the feeling that a romantic and glamorous adventure had been embarked upon. Not more than a handful of members of the Regiment had been abroad before, indeed, only those from better-off working-class and middle-class families had even been out of the Leeds area before they enlisted.

"I awoke with a start and it was daylight. We pushed and struggled and at last got the doors open and a few of us sat on the edge with our legs swinging outside. That breath of fresh air was like heaven and we began to look round with interest... And then further up the train and down, other doors opened and heads and swinging legs appeared and the old cry rang out on the quiet morning air - 'Are we downhearted?' and then a thunderous 'NO!' Then there was much singing and laughter. Here and there we passed a railway crossing and there was a few people waiting, at almost each one, to cross the lines. The jokes and jests at the peculiar dress of these people caused roars of laughter and they stared at us in amazement. 'Bonjour' was heard time and time again and they would answer with 'Bonjour, Monsieur' and a wave of the hand... Once a Red Cross train passed us and the old, old cry was bellowed forth 'Are we downhearted - No!' and then from the hospital train came 'But you damn' soon will be', and we stared at each other, amazed.<sup>32</sup> After this, the picnic or waggonette trip air seemed to be slightly strained and we gradually quietened down as the novelty of the scenes began to wear off... We viewed everything with interest and much comment and a large amount of criticism."<sup>33</sup>



At last the battalion trains arrived at their destination, Merville, a few miles behind the British front line.

"Rifles and packs were handed out and we started to compare notes. Everybody was talking about what we had seen coming along. Then somebody spotted an aeroplane and such things were a novelty to us then. Those who had field glasses had them out in a tick and everybody was gazing heavenward with much interest." <sup>34</sup>

(C Coy of the 8th contained a very large element from comfortably-off middle-class families.) Artillery fire could plainly be heard and one 8th Bn wag called out "Tell 'em to keep the war going while [Dialect: "until"] we get there."<sup>35</sup> Leaving behind two platoons per battalion to unload the Transport and stores,<sup>36</sup> the men were marched by companies to their billets in farm buildings on the outskirts of the town, where they thankfully laid themselves down, having had little or no sleep for over 48 hours.<sup>37</sup> Four days later the 7th moved to Estaires, the 8th to La Gorgue.

On arrival at Merville, the West Riding Division, now part of Rawlinson's IV Corps, went into Corps Reserve. The men were excited and keen for adventure. They could hear gunfire and at night could see in the distance the star-shells over No Man's Land.<sup>38</sup> The Division, however, was to be introduced to the art of war by a very gradual and gentle process. The daily routine consisted of long route marches, physical drill and inspections of arms, ammunition, emergency rations, and feet. The M O gave the 8th dire warnings concerning the two Demons, French women and French wine; 2222 William H. Reynard, C Coy, trainee railway signalman, of Cross Green, aged 17, could not understand what he was talking about, for he was a teetotaler and had never had anything to do with girls, like so many of his age-group in the Regiment. According to Reynard, the authorities had included in the acclimatisation programme a not very subtle, yet highly effective, form of morale-boosting propaganda, perhaps aimed at the younger soldiers. Hanging on the wall of C Coy's barn was a cavalryman's bandolier alleged to have belonged to a trooper who, in the early days of the war, had been "the last man to defend the farm and was killed for his bravery while doing so." Reynard later discovered that every farm for miles around had apparently been defended to the last man by this same heroic cavalryman and his comrades.<sup>39</sup> (On their way up to the war zone, the men of George Coppard's unit, the 6th Queen's Royal West Surrey Regt, a Kitchener battalion, were told a similar heroic tale.)<sup>40</sup> Inside the local cemetery



British rifle bullets had been placed in the form of a cross on the ground and it was given out that "it was the grave of a deserter shot there for cowardice." The younger men, at least, swallowed these stories.<sup>41</sup> One wonders whether the story which so amused Sgt Burrell was yet another piece of morale-boosting propaganda: "We are much cheered by the farmer's assurance that two dead Germans were thrown in [i.e. into the farm's duckpond] to save time."<sup>42</sup>

Although they longed to be off to the firing-line about 10 kms distant, the men were enjoying themselves in their new milieu and finding much to interest them and a great deal to criticise. Their mood is well-exemplified in a letter written on 18th April by bank clerk Sgt S.C. Myers of the Divisional Cyclists' Company, formerly of the Leeds Rifles, cousin of Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th:

"Here we are at last within sound of the guns, and expect shortly to be in at it. Were it not for the fact that our visit here is for such a grim purpose, it would be a grand picnic, of course, as it is, we are not by any means gloomy; in fact, quite the contrary, and it is a long time since we have had such good fun as we are having here in the billets, passing off our 'pigeon' [sic] French." <sup>43</sup>

3300 Joseph Herbert Knowles, C Coy, 7th, bookmaker, of Kirkstall Road West, aged 33, wrote to his wife: 'You would laugh to see us foraging round farm houses for bread, gesticulating etc, but we get through somehow. If you saw me you would think I was tick-tacking.' The birds and wild flowers interested many, but the aeroplanes, which were as common as motor-cars had been back in Leeds,<sup>44</sup> and the soldiers of different regiments and nationalities in the area held a universal fascination. They were especially keen to converse with Regular troops and in particular with the "Hindoo" soldiers they had heard so much about. The enormous and never-ending traffic on the roads excited and over-awed them. While Reynard's platoon was billeted in an estaminet in La Gorgue, the Lahore Division and a Regular Army Division marched through the village. As a division on the march occupied 15 miles of road, it took them all day to pass. <sup>46</sup>

During the first days in France the rations were inadequate. L/Cpl Espin continually complains in his diary entries of having no bread, no cigarettes and no blankets. Men who wanted bread or any other food not supplied had to buy it from the local people with their own money. Many houses and farms exhibited notices offering for sale "Oeufs et pommes



de terre frites." The men were paid 5 fr. each before proceeding on trench instruction. Back in England the Riflemen had been lionised and petted by civilians and generally treated as potential heroes. They had found it easy to cadge food, chocolate and cigarettes from them. The attitude of the French civilians was not at all what they had been used to. "I thought I shouldn't want any money out here", wrote Knowles, "but I have found out different. The French people are very good, but you can't tap them."<sup>46</sup> This letter, dated 20th April, was his first and, not surprisingly concerns itself with creature comforts and includes a request for a food parcel.

On the 19th pulses quickened as the first batches, comprising officers and senior NCOs only, went for 24 hours' trench instruction. Burrell wrote: "The trench party who returned about 8.0 pm have been besieged by a large party anxious to know what things are like in the first line."<sup>47</sup> They did not have long to wait in order to find out for themselves. Platoons started going up to the line for instruction every night from then on. Reynard's platoon was the first one to set off for the trenches - he claims it as the first in the entire 49th Division - but it went, not for instruction, but as a working party<sup>48</sup> for the soon-to-be-hated Royal Engineers.

Sgt Burrell, to his immense disappointment, never got his trip to the trenches as he was ordered to proceed to the 3rd Echelon GHQ, Rouen, where he was to be employed, as was every other unit's Orderly Room Sergeant, in making duplicate records of the military career of every man in his unit and thereafter keeping these records up to date. His diary entry for 22nd April, when the battalion moved closer to the line, contains an interesting sentence:

"I felt keenly disappointed as I watched them march off, to know I was probably seeing them for the last time before meeting them again in England and that I was not going along with them now the actual work was to commence."<sup>49</sup>

Sgt Myers had referred to "our visit here"; Burrell's statement appears to imply that the 49th Division's stay on the Western Front was intended to be merely temporary. The last two lines of a poem written by Pte Calton of Wakefield, a member of the 1st/2nd WR Field Ambulance, on 21st December 1915 to mark the German gas attack on the 49th Division, run:

"They will soon be leaving Flanders and coming o'er  
the foam,  
So prepare a good reception, when the boys come marching  
home."



Several respondents were of the opinion that the Territorials had been sent to the Western Front purely as a stop-gap measure pending the arrival of the New Army troops, when they would then be withdrawn and sent out East. (On February 1st 1916, when the two battalions entrained for the Somme, their destination was unknown. The 1/8th officers thought it was Marseilles, en route for the East.<sup>50</sup> The 46th Division was, in fact, withdrawn at the end of 1915 and ordered to Egypt.) More than one considered that GHQ entertained doubts considering the military worth of Territorial divisions and wished to have them transferred to a less arduous and less crucial theatre of war. Somewhat illogically, they cited the Egypt rumour in support! Even if the men of the 49th in general and the men of the Leeds Rifles in particular had known, or believed, themselves to be temporary stop-gaps in the British line on the Western Front, it appears to have adversely affected neither their level of morale nor their determination.

Meanwhile, unknown to the men of the Leeds Rifles, their relatives were growing frantic with worry. The families of men in the other Leeds units, the Artillery, ASC and Field Ambulances, had received the news of their safe arrival in France promptly, but, for some reason, no mail was received from the Leeds Rifles until 29th April. The Yorkshire Evening Post of 28th April refers to "considerable anxiety" being shown in the city regarding the welfare of the 7th and 8th Bns and states that "there have been rumours during the last day or two that the Leeds Rifles have been in action, and have suffered many casualties." The newspaper was obliged to state categorically that there was no foundation in any of these rumours, the most distressing of which was that the boat carrying the 7th to France had been torpedoed and every man lost. The situation was not helped by the Leeds Mercury of 30th April whose leader was headed "Yorkshire Territorials in action" and whose headline on the main news page ran "Yorkshire Territorials save a Critical Situation: General's Thanks." The Mercury had leapt to the conclusion that the official communiqué referred to the 49th Division, though it actually concerned the 50th (Northumbrian) Division which included the troops of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire. The local newspapers were alarmist on several occasions. The first Leeds Riflemen reported killed appeared under special headlines in the Yorkshire Evening Post of 10th May and the Mercury of 12th May. The headline of the Yorkshire Evening News of 17th May over soldiers' letters was "Leeds Men Under Fire". The Yorkshire Evening Post of 19th June expressed anxiety about the Leeds



Rifles in view of "recent stern fighting" in the Ypres sector.

For some six or seven weeks, until they adjusted to the situation, many of the friends and relatives back home in Leeds lived in an atmosphere fraught with dread and worry. On 10th May the wife of 46 Herbert Fearnley, a platoon sergeant in B Coy of the 7th, was coming home from work when she suddenly heard a newspaper seller shouting "First Leeds Rifles killed! First Leeds Rifles killed!" She immediately fell to the ground in a dead faint. When she came round, she asked one of the passers-by who had come to her aid to show her the item in the paper. It concerned the 1/8th, and the name, Frank Almond, was quite unknown to her. She was so relieved, she fainted again.<sup>51</sup>

#### 9.2. Trench Instruction : The first time under fire

According to Charles Carrington, "Active service at a quiescent period is the best training ground for battle."<sup>52</sup> If this is so, the 49th Division had the best possible training, for it underwent trench instruction in the quietest parts of the front line near Laventie which was itself one of the more inactive stretches of the British front at that time, and then spent approximately two months in the same sector, taking a minor part in the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

Owing to the fact that, in this low-lying region, the water table often lay within inches of the surface of the ground, rendering digging practically impossible, the defences were not trenches as such at all. They consisted of bulwarks or breastworks built out of sandbags filled with earth and rubble. Six-yard fire-bays alternated with four-yard traverses, and shelters, mis-named "dugouts" by the troops, were constructed in the parados out of sandbags and sheets of corrugated iron: "They looked something like little pig styes, being only about three feet high inside, and no more shell-proof than a greenhouse,"<sup>53</sup> although their occupants were fairly well protected against bullets and rain. No Man's Land sloped gently up to Aubers Ridge and was thickly covered with weeds, grass and the previous year's unharvested corn crops and dotted with trees and bushes. It varied in width from 100 to 400 yards. In parts it was littered with the bodies of German, British and Indian troops killed in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. The blackened and bloated corpses, bursting out of their clothes, were the pasture of maggots, blowflies and wasps; rats were very little in evidence. An



officer of the 6th WYR wrote:

"... in front we have, between our own trenches and those of the Germans, hundreds of bodies (unburied) and rapidly decomposing, and therefore giving off a violent stench, which is not altogether appetising. Whenever the Huns fire on us, and our fellows do not reply, just for spite they put a bullet or two into these corpses and give us the benefit of the smell caused by the burst, so that one has to smoke profusely in order to get as little of it as possible."<sup>54</sup>

Communication trenches and reserve lines were virtually non-existent. This meant that relieving and relieved battalions and fatigue, ration and water parties had to cross open ground. When every man was carrying a heavy load, the pace was necessarily very slow, presenting the enemy riflemen and machine-gunners with easy targets. In many parts of the line it was expedient to enter and leave the firing trench at a run.<sup>55</sup> In such circumstances, a battalion often got more casualties "behind" than actually in the firing trenches themselves. 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, considered that working parties in this sector were considerably more dangerous than trench duty; his sergeant, 1476 William North, was killed in this way. An entry in the diary of 2010 Isaac Harry Butcher, B Coy, 7th, miner, of Inner Hunslet, aged 16, for 24th May reads: "2 pm go for water to ruined farmhouse. Under fire all the way."<sup>56</sup> 2407 Arthur Wainwright, A Coy, 8th, apprentice sheet metal worker, aged 19, of Bramley, was a member of a ration party on 6th May; he noted "under m/c gun fire all the way."<sup>57</sup>

As he approached the front line for the first time, the soldier inevitably wondered how he would stand up to the experience.<sup>58</sup> Some felt frightened at the prospect. 2554 Claude N. Pepper, A Coy, 8th, local government officer, of Wakefield, aged 21:

"Before going to the trenches for the first time I remember we were billeted at a farm during which time I can assure you that I was not looking forward to doing duty in the line. One or two persons went sick on the very day of departure from the farm. However, eventually I reached the trenches and endeavoured to shake off my personal fear and settle down to the necessary duties of service to my King and Country."<sup>59</sup>

2290 (later CSM) Joseph Carter, A Coy, 7th, local government officer, of Holbeck, aged 24, felt "strange and somewhat green" as he passed through an "empty, dead little village" on his way to the line:



"I was not alone - my chums were there, - but I had cause to fear when a guide of the Border Regiment was shot dead approaching the fire trench. I had been feeling upset ever since [2619] Jack Caufield, on leaving Folkestone harbour, had kissed the ground goodbye."<sup>60</sup>

(Caufield was a "roughneck" from the York Road slums; he was killed on 2nd July 1916).

The chief emotion of Bandsman Sanderson was the fear of being afraid,<sup>61</sup> a sentiment not infrequently encountered in the published literature.<sup>62</sup> He wrote:

"As may be expected, the order [to the trenches] caused our hearts to beat somewhat faster. What we had hoped for and yet dreaded, prayed for and yet feared, was come at last. We were really going into action! ... There was about eight miles to cover, and all the time I was thinking of what lay before us. The thought of getting killed or wounded never once occurred to me, but I felt greatly worried as to how I should behave under fire, and I don't mind confessing here that I was very much afraid I might do something to disgrace myself. In other words, now that I was getting near to the real thing, I didn't feel quite sure of myself, though previously I had been one of the most eager. My doubts were put an end to at last ... all at once we heard the rattle of a machine gun, and a storm of bullets sang over our heads. Some of the men ducked quickly, but I didn't feel the slightest inclination to do so, neither did the sound of the bullets produce within me the least sensation of any kind. I did experience a sensation afterwards, one of pleasure and satisfaction that my fears were, after all, groundless."<sup>63</sup>

Like all "green" troops, the Riflemen held naive, highly-coloured and wildly unrealistic pre-conceptions of trench warfare and trench life. Many found their first experience not at all what they had expected. Some were disappointed, others found it thrilling and immensely pleasurable. Many men find the act of overcoming fear by participating in dangerous pastimes, such as motor cycle racing, parachuting or mountaineering, is titillating. Psychiatrists Bartlett and Everth described the animal-like pleasure and the feeling of freedom in their new existence felt by many World War I soldiers on arrival in the trenches.<sup>64</sup> This is typified by 18-year-old 2/Lt Graham Greenwell writing to his mother to tell her how "tremendously" he had enjoyed his first trench experience:

"I have had a most ripping day. I can't remember ever having had so much pleasure and excitement, seeing so many old friends and experiencing such new sensations ... it is all so delightfully fresh after England that the unpleasant side of it does not strike me."<sup>65</sup>



Many of the sources show a similar reaction. It may be significant that all the men cited, except one, were aged under 24. 2728 Fred R. Wigglesworth, C Coy, 7th, yarn salesman, of Horsforth, aged 23:

"We went in the trenches for the first time on Monday. The worst part about it is getting in and out under fire more or less for about six hundred yards. Once you get in it is safe as houses. They send up star shells at night, and they light up the trenches. Then they fire on any of our men who may be mending the wire entanglements. We do the same. A good deal of sniping goes on from both sides... It is only 120 yards across. They didn't shell us at all. The trenches are too near for that, but they fired upon us from trench mortars, which shook the trench up a bit. I wish we had been staying a week or two - it's a birthday!' So long as you keep careful there is no danger at all except from a stray shot or so. Don't know when we are going in again, but hope it won't be long... I got rid of a few cartridges but do not know with what effect. Mother need not worry about me, it is the best thing we have struck so far. It's better than rabbit shooting by far... One of the men of the regiment we were with had a good smack at the Germans during the night. He sat on the top of a parapet with his machine gun and didn't half pepper them, shouting 'Allemand no bon.'<sup>66</sup> I can tell you I enjoyed it."<sup>67</sup>

Rfm Henry Pemberton, glasshouse pot maker, aged 18, of Inner Hunslet:

"At last I have been under fire. We went into the trenches on Sunday night for 24 hours, and I would not have minded if it had been for 24 days. It was quite exciting - my first time under fire, you know. I always thought the Germans were inferior riflemen, but I have changed my opinion now. Perhaps it was only a few special snipers, but they had the flashes from our rifles marked, and some of their shots came unpleasantly near my head. I think I fired about forty rounds altogether during the time I was there. But, despite the whining of the bullets, the whirring of the Maxims, and the green star shells at night, I could not realise, not even when the shells of the artillery, both ours and theirs, were whizzing overhead, that it was war. When the time came for us to leave it was the very deuce. They had got wind of it, somehow, and all the way down the communication trench, over two or three fields, and through a bit of a wood, we were peppered with rifle and Maxim fire, and to make it worse, we were loaded with blankets, oil-sheets, and cooking pots. When the star shells went up, we got it all ways, for some of the enemy's snipers tried to cut us up as much as possible. How they worked round I don't know. But, as the fellows all said, it was an Act of Providence that any of us got through. However, not one of us was hit, out of the two or three platoons which had gone in. I only wish that we were going in tonight again. Although I have a sore heel, I would get somehow."<sup>68</sup>



The second half of this letter describes a common phenomenon of trench warfare known to seasoned warriors as "one of Fritz's little spasms", or, more commonly, "a wind-up". These were short spells of firing, entirely speculative, and aimed at no specific target, which occurred for no identifiable reason at frequent intervals throughout the hours of darkness, but which seldom caused casualties. The extravagant sentiment of Pemberton's second sentence brought forth a complaint from Rfm Frank Ibbetson of the 7th, a married man with children, when he returned from his first tour of trench duty, one that lasted eleven days.<sup>69</sup>

Bandsman Sanderson, an ex-Regular soldier who, because he had been a member of the Sovereign's Escort, had never previously seen overseas service, later wrote:

".... after Stand-to and breakfast I was able to get a better idea of the surroundings. I was enjoying myself immensely. I had a feeling of elation at the thought that I was here, only two hundred yards or so from the German troops, and no one between us... we were relieved that night and marched back to our billets at La Gorgue in higher spirits than ever. We sang every song we could think of at the top of our voices. Were we not now real warriors, fighting soldiers proved and tried? In our ignorance we thought we knew all about warfare now."<sup>70</sup>

His personal reaction, and the reported reactions of the rest of his platoon, seem to have been quite typical. Rfm F. Luff, 7th, a married man previously employed in the Mercury machine room, wrote of the increasing noise of gunfire as his platoon approached the front line for the first time: "the nearer we got to it, the more delighted our men seemed to be."<sup>71</sup> 2/Lt George K. Will, a 21-year-old medical student from Harrogate, commander of No. 1 platoon, A Coy, 8th, on reaching the fire trench, shook hands "delightedly" with every one of his men.<sup>72</sup> Butcher wrote of his first experience:

"Continuous rifle and machine gun fire through the night of 28/29. Fired my first shot in the War 12.0pm [sic]. Fire from enemy for first time 8 o/c. Shells screeching overhead. No trace of nervousness."<sup>73</sup>

L/Cpl Espin wrote:

"Went into trenches at Fromelles with the 2nd Gordons near Laventie. Not a bad time, feel delighted."<sup>74</sup>



Capt. Douglas B. Winter, 1/4th DWR, wrote:

"Once there you are comparatively safe. It is the going in and out that is the sport. My feelings in the trenches were not at all as I had expected. I really enjoyed it. It is just like being in the butts when men are firing on the range... I crawled up a shallow trench to a listening post, which was about 50 yards in front of the trench, and as all seemed quiet I crawled out in front up to the barbed wire. Just then the enemy sent up a flare which lit up the ground all round. I admit that I felt a bit funkey, but I had been told to lie perfectly still, and there was very little danger of being seen unless I moved. However, immediately the flare died down I crawled back as hard as I could go. I then had a look at the machine-gun positions, and put up a flare to have a look at the German trenches. It was all very fascinating, and after the first hour you did not feel that there was any danger at all."<sup>75</sup>

Older men, like Knowles, could enjoy the new experience. He wrote to his wife:

"Just a few lines to let you know I am having my first spell in the firing line, under fire and returning it. Flares are sent up from time to time from our trenches and the Germans' during the night, and everything is as light as day, then the music starts... I cannot tell you where we are, but we are with a first class regiment that have been right through it. These are the most novel conditions I have ever written a letter [under]. I have just come off sentry and the bullets are whistling overhead and the guns booming, but there is very little danger... I am glad to tell you I am in the pink and right amongst it. We are not above 100 yards from the German trenches."<sup>76</sup>

The writers of letters published in the Leeds newspapers clearly found the experience both interesting and exciting. The majority, understandably enough, gave prominence to "the baptism of fire" and details of personal "narrow escapes";<sup>77</sup> respondent 2158 Harold Dean, C Coy, 8th, pupil industrial chemist, Grammar School educated, of Hyde Park, aged 21, wrote a long, detailed account which ended:

"of course you will think by this letter we had an exciting time, but you must remember that it was our first time in the trenches, and consequently each shot fired added greatly to the excitement. The chaps who have been here all the time think nothing whatever about it."<sup>78</sup>

Some Riflemen got more excitement than they bargained for. No. 5 platoon, B Coy, 7th, set off for the trenches on 24th April, but had to return "owing to French troops losing ground and Germans breaking through";<sup>79</sup> the front line was no place for tyros in these conditions. On 30th April, the four platoons of the 8th under instruction could



not be relieved owing to heavy shelling and a ration party sent to them could not get through "without risking a serious loss of life"; many of their comrades in billets spent a sleepless night worrying about their safety.<sup>80</sup> During Wainwright's trench experience, two men of the 2nd Gordons and one Royal Engineer were killed during a bombardment.<sup>81</sup> One man of the Regiment was killed during trench instruction: 2718 Francis Edwin Almond, C Coy, 8th, who foolishly climbed over the parapet at morning Stand-down to get a pickelhaube he had spotted.<sup>82</sup>

Others were disappointed to find that not only was the landscape deserted, but also that their hosts were busy at various tasks and that few were actually doing any fighting, i.e. firing at the enemy.  
1726 Jack Barker, 7th:

"The Scots Guards sergeant told me to look over the parapet. I was a bit leery about this, but he told me to go on and do it. I expected hundreds of bullets to come whizzing straight at me, but not even one did, and I couldn't see a single German. It was very disappointing."<sup>83</sup>

(It was ten weeks after first going into the front line before 2/Lt Greenwell saw his first German.)<sup>84</sup> Comrade 2992 George A. Walker, senior sales assistant in a city centre shop, of Woodhouse, aged 25:

"An officer told me to get on the firestep and look over. I couldn't see anything; I was disappointed."<sup>85</sup>

L/Cpl Fred Wright, 8th, son of a millwright, of Kirkstall, wrote:

"It seemed very queer to us all, and when I thought about it I could hardly realise that we were at last fighting 'somewhere in France.' I never once saw a German, although it was moonlight... There is always plenty of work to do in the trenches besides shooting."<sup>86</sup>

Rfm Perry:

"Things were getting warmer now and we began to feel a bit serious. We could hear the rap-rap of the machine guns and the ping of the rifles and the Verey lights or star shells were illuminating the countryside. At last we turned off the road to the left into a field in single file. Suddenly the bullets began to whistle round us and we knew we were in the thick of it: a hot corner. Zip-thud, ping-zip-thud, crack-crack, rap-rap-rap-rap. Can you imagine it? I cannot explain the medley of noises that go to make the horrible din of the modern battlefield. Then we broke into a double and glad we were, as this open country was very exposed and dangerous... [The night was comparatively quiet.]... Time passed on and dawn began to break. I was all eagerness to be looking over the top to see the German trenches but Scottie advised me not to yet. But I got impatient and so up I got.



I could see nothing just then as a mist covered the ground, but gradually the mist began to rise, so a little later I popped up again, and at last I saw them - the German trenches. They would be about 400 yards away and there was not a soul to be seen. Not a shot. The sun was shining and the birds were singing... Was this war?... There was very little doing during the morning. An odd shot or two. I was very interested in everything that took place... But there was nothing to be seen. It looked as though Fritz had gone to sleep... It was dark before we got out of the communication trench and we were beginning to feel done up as the excitement of the day passed off. Excitement, and yet it was nothing to what we had expected. We had been in the front line trenches, yes. We had stood between the cruel enemy and our homeland, ready to fight to the end in its defence if necessary; but it all seemed so commonplace. We had expected so much and had seen so little. Thank God we did see so little of the awful sights of war on that, our first 24 hours in the trenches."<sup>87</sup>

2/Lt Bellerby's experience fell short of expectations:

"The first bullet in fact was somewhat alarming... it was nightfall as we came within range of rifle fire. Our party was marching in file down a straight hard road running directly to the trenches; and if we expected anything at all it was that we should soon step down below ground level with solid trench walls on either side. No such thing happened. We went on marching... and shortly we were greeted by our first bullet, then another, then another, and then continuous reminders that our track was precisely known by those who would be glad to perforate us... There is no time to duck to a bullet, and anyone who ducks to ordinary rifle fire at night is known to be appearing at the front line for the first time. I don't remember whether any of the twelve of us showed this sign, but I do know that one in particular was exceedingly glad to be brought suddenly to a halt at a bulwark looming across the road, and to be told, 'This is the line'... We were greeted at the bulwark by a second lieutenant of the Gordon Highlanders, a veteran of some six or seven months' standing, very calm, courteous and apparently delighted to assume the role of tutor. He conveyed the impression that the routine to be explained was just another daily chore... [After being shown round he was taken into No Man's Land to visit a listening post.]... We scrambled over the parapet, found a gap in the wire, and then proceeded on hands and knees in the direction of the enemy. There were shrubs, not very tall, which impeded the view from time to time and set the imagination alight. After travelling a few yards my colleague took out his revolver. This could imply to me only one thing, and I followed suit. Promptly I was ordered to put my revolver back. I took an extremely dim view of this, for up to that time I had quashed any incipient fear of the unknown horrors of war by saying to myself, 'What one can do, another can.'<sup>88</sup> This maxim clearly lost validity if there were not equality in self-defence. However, it was my host's outing, and in some discomfort of mind I assumed the role of apparently neutral guest. We crawled forward into the gloom over what seemed an endless trail though it probably was only twenty or thirty yards, until by some miracle we arrived at the appointed spot, where my guide talked in undertones to



the two men at the stationary post. There was nothing to report, and as this was the only outpost on the subaltern's front we returned to the firing line and settled down for the night, he to stroll to and fro, on a duty in which time hung heavily for many hours, I to enjoy an excellent meal with other officers of the company and thereafter to sleep undisturbed... Half-an-hour after dawn the troops stood down... for two or three blissful hours peace reigned as though the whole world except the droning spotter-planes above were deep in the arms of Morpheus." 89

Lt A.G. Rigby, No. 4 platoon, A Coy, 8th, Cambridge undergraduate, of Headingley, aged 21, found no excitement on his instructional tour:

"We were all of us surprised to find trench warfare and trench life so different from what we had expected. We had none of us imagined that the trenches could be so comfortable or so entirely safe as we found them... We found out afterwards that our first impressions were a little too favourable as the trenches into which we first went were by no means representative, but considerably safer, more comfortable and cleaner than the ordinary."90

Lt Hugh Lupton's letter recording his initial impressions of the front line has unfortunately not survived.

On the subject of the men's reaction to trench instruction, the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary records the opinion,

"We can only say that their behaviour was excellent."91

An unnamed 7th Bn officer wrote of his battalion:

"We have been under fire, and the men have been splendid. They take the whole thing as a huge joke, and I am afraid they will never take it really seriously."92

Other ranks had comments to make on their comrades' behaviour under fire. L/Cpl Sammy Chadwick, A Coy, 7th, tram driver, of South Headingley, a former Regular:

"We went on splendidly in the trenches, considering it was the first time we, or rather the platoon, had been under fire. I was not much perturbed, having been out in South Africa. But it is quite different here, and terribly more fierce."93

L/Cpl John R. Smith, 7th, correspondence clerk at the City Square branch of the London City and Midland Bank, a pre-war Territorial:

"The lads are sticking it like true Britons. It is, to say the very least, a bit unnerving, seeing that very few men in the whole battalion have ever before been under fire. We have a few 'old sweats' amongst us, who have been through the South African War, and seen fighting in India, but they are unanimous in their agreement that all the scrapping they have seen was a



cake-walk to this little lot... We are on the right of a well-known Scottish regiment (Regulars), and are about 500 yards, in some places much less - from our 'friends' the Teutons. If you keep your head down, and don't get careless, you are fairly safe from rifle fire, and get used to the whistling of the bullets in a very short time. The shells take a bit more getting used to... Their snipers are extremely good, and a ——— [censored] nuisance. A lot of them are using explosive bullets - which does not tend towards fostering any great degree of friendliness on our part!... I only trust that, with God's help, we shall be equal to any demands made upon us, so that Leeds may be justly proud of the 7th West Yorks. We are secretly delighted at having stolen a march on the 'Pals'".<sup>94</sup>

Trench instruction consisted of pairing every officer and man in the party with his opposite number in the host battalion who would then instruct him for the next 24 hours in his duties,<sup>95</sup> and many Riflemen picked up useful tips from their instructors.<sup>96</sup> It was the first opportunity the Territorials had had of observing at close quarters the Regulars in their working environment and they were considerably inspired and impressed by their calm self-possession. In a letter home, dated 25th April, an NCO in the Barnsley Company of the 5th Y and L described how he had been in the front line with two "famous regiments", the Rifle Brigade and the Royal Irish Rifles: "We found these two regiments, who have been here since the beginning of the war, very cheerful and happy. Their experience was very valuable to us, and put much heart and confidence into our fellows".<sup>97</sup> A sergeant in the 1/6th WYR wrote: "The veterans of the Border Regiment took their relief as stolidly as wool-combers on the night shift at Isaac Holden's."<sup>98</sup>

Brothers 2891 Bugler Charles Edward Hannan, A Coy, engineering apprentice, aged 20, and Rfm Tommy H. Hannan, B Coy, steel moulder, aged 21, of Hunslet Moor, both of the 8th, wrote:

"It was a bit hot, and no mistake. We were in with the ——— [censored], and jolly chaps they are. One of the sergeants was talking to me, and he was sent for some water by the officer, and two minutes afterwards he was brought back shot through the heart. Only half an hour before he had made me some Oxo and given me some cigarettes. We had a little concert that night. The regiment we were in with were playing bag-pipes and melodeons, and each man sang a song, and when we had finished you could hear the enemy joking and laughing and singing as well."<sup>99</sup>

Sanderson also saw a member of the host battalion killed. As his platoon was approaching the line they met a water party:



"... just as they passed, another shower of bullets came along. The water party all crouched down, and we followed their example. None of us were hit, but one of the water party got a bullet through his head and was killed instantly. One of his pals turned and shook his fist in the direction of the enemy, and I heard him say, 'Fritz, you square-headed bastard, you've killed our best half-back.' They all talked at once, and it soon became obvious that they could have borne the loss of their comrade with comparative equanimity but for the fact that there was a temporary dearth of efficient centre-halves in their battalion."<sup>100</sup>

Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th, Machine-Gun officer, insurance clerk, of Roundhay, aged 23, was highly impressed by the sheer professionalism of the Regulars. He watched in horrified fascination and admiration as the Scots Guards CSM began checking the kit of a man killed by a sniper before he had even been put on a stretcher to be taken away for burial.<sup>101</sup>

These four men report the deaths in a matter-of-fact, unemotional and completely detached fashion, and through these Territorial eye-witnesses we are enabled to see the unflinching manner in which fully-trained and battle-hardened Regular soldiers faced up to the loss of comrades. This is not an indication of any lack of compassion on their part, but a reflection of their mental training which aimed at cushioning them against such traumas. A further point has to be mentioned: the dead men were unknown to the Territorials.

Sanderson was considerably shocked by two incidents that occurred during his instructional tour. Firstly, he saw a Guards officer who belonged to the aristocracy not only picking lice out of his shirt but also doing it in public. Secondly, he was called upon, in his professional capacity as stretcher bearer, to attend a Gordon Highlander wounded in both legs. He was horrified by the attitude of the man's comrades who offered their congratulations, expressed their envy on his getting "a nice Blighty one" and declared they would give a year's pay for "that little lot", for his previous military socialisation had taught him it was deeply shameful for a soldier to long for a wound.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to some other "green" divisions, for example, the 50th (Northumbrian) Division T F which, within a week of disembarkation, was thrust into 2nd Ypres and suffered heavy casualties, the 49th had undergone a surprisingly gentle initiation into war. The Territorials had been thrown in at the shallow end; their already high morale and confidence in themselves had been strengthened even further. In consequence, when their testing time came, as it did only a few days later on 9th May, it found them more than equal to the occasion.



9.3. The Real Thing : Holding the Line and the First Time in Action

This section attempts to show the complex range of psychological reactions to (1) the excitement, emotional intensity and sense of change engendered by war, and (2) the horror and destruction of war.

On 2nd May 146 Brigade marched to Bac St. Maur, where the two tired and footsore battalions of the Leeds Rifles were billeted in an abandoned cloth mill that had "been partly burned down by the Germans"<sup>103</sup> who, according to Espin's information, had been in occupation only three weeks earlier.<sup>104</sup> The Riflemen, especially former employees of the firm, were delighted to note that much of the machinery had been made in Leeds by Lawson's. The apprentice-trained engineers were surprised to find it still in working order.<sup>105</sup> Knowles was extremely cheerful:

"We were watching a British aeroplane being shelled by German guns last night. You would have thought he was sure to be hit with the shells flashing and bursting all round him but he got safely away. I have met any amount of lads here that I know, I was surprised. They are in all sorts of regiments and some of them are racing lads. Tell Charles [his brother, wounded in March, an in-patient of Becketts Park Military Hospital, Leeds] I was speaking to [Sgt] Herbert Fearnley this morning. He said Charles had written to him asking about me. He looks in the pink, in fact we all do... I see by the papers that some of the lads have had sent that there have been all sorts of rumours about us, but there isn't one of our lads hurt yet so you needn't be uneasy... It is an exciting performance getting a wash here. We have to walk about a 100 yards to the river, then you do a kind of a tight rope performance across a narrow iron girder to a half sunken boat, so you can imagine about fifty of us all wanting to cross at the same [time], it is about an evens chance falling in. In fact one of the lads did fall in yesterday morning, right in as well. Of course he got plenty of sympathy - a yell of laughter, that's all. It's rather expensive as well. I have had three washes and done three half pounds of soap in."<sup>106</sup>

On 5th May infantry battalions of the 49th relieved the Regulars in the front line and the Territorials were on their own. The 7th relieved the 2nd Scots Guards just SW of Fauquissart, about two miles from Laventie.<sup>107</sup> Butcher wrote:

"Under heavy fire while entering trenches. Arrived safely in. Some parts ankle deep with water. Feet wet. 300 yards from German trenches. Heavy rifle fire all night, nothing else."<sup>108</sup>

Knowles described the life to his wife:



"We are in the trenches again for a spell. I don't know how long, we have been in two days up to now. I see by the papers that you are getting well posted about The Leeds Rifles. Life in the trenches is both exciting and interesting. We sleep in dugouts on straw and oil sheets, and covered by our greatcoats. We sleep sound I can tell you for all there is firing going on all night. We have to be up at daybreak, and 'Stand to'... then we tidy up our drawing rooms, clean rifles and then take our turns on sentry. I was with a 'ration party' last night... It's like running the gauntlet, with the bullets flying all the time, but none of our party got hurt... We are in some trenches that were captured from the Germans just before I came out. I have seen some dugouts with wallpaper on the walls and pictures hung all round." 109

3227 Clarence Lazenby, C Coy, 7th, grinder, of East Armley, aged 22, had his first encounter with sudden death. It proved a traumatic experience:

"Luke Lyon, the first man of ours to get killed, was standing right next to me when a bullet came right through the parapet and caught him in the chest. He said, 'I'm shot', and I fell down in a dead faint. Lieut. Calvert thought I'd been shot too."110

Only C and D Coys of the 8th went into the line. A and B Coys went into reserve billets at Suicide Corner, near Neuve Chapelle, and provided working parties. Rfm Harry Routh, C Coy, 8th, insurance clerk, of Burley, described the arduous routine in reserve:

"The other morning at four o'clock, we were turned out of bed and told to pack up. We did this, and after a hurried breakfast started out at 6 am and marched to the firing trenches. Here we were on with some special work, which was very arduous, too. From 8 am until the following morning at 11 o'clock (27 hours) we were at it, and I had only two hours' rest the whole time, and a few biscuits, bully and two pieces of bread. So you can imagine that I was absolutely done when our relief came. The march back nearly knocked me over. When we arrived all our chaps, although very dirty and hungry, simply laid down, and I'll guarantee everybody in the billet was fast asleep inside fifteen minutes."111

On 6th May Suicide Corner was shelled. Espin found this a traumatic experience:

"Germans begin to shell us bloody heavy. The place is blown in all over. Jim and I are lucky: many are killed and wounded. The place is like a slaughter yard. Order to Stand To."112

The actual casualties were one man killed and not more than one man wounded. Amidst the confusion and the destruction the situation would appear much more grave than it was.



On 8th May IV Corps was to attack Fromelles and Aubers Ridge, but the operation was postponed for 24 hours on account of the weather. The British attack was not a purely local action, but part of a much greater French operation designed to break the enemy line on a wide front. The British front line was shaped somewhat like a horse-shoe. The 49th was to hold the part of the line nearest the enemy, while the 7th and 8th Divisions and Lahore Divisions carried out the assault from the flanks. The 49th Divisional Artillery was to bring "to bear on the enemy's trenches sufficient fire to hold his infantry on the portion of the front which was not being attacked."<sup>113</sup> 147 and 148 Brigades of the 49th were detailed to occupy the enemy trenches captured by the Regular troops. 146 Brigade was to stand fast, holding the line allotted to it, and to be prepared to meet strong counter-attacks.<sup>114</sup> 146 Brigade was ordered to cover the enemy's front line and communication trenches in the portion of the front not being attacked with fire whenever there was any movement.<sup>115</sup> Although the British attack failed due to the inadequacy of the artillery bombardment, said to be the severest of the war so far, but which was not sufficiently heavy to smash the German barbed wire entanglements, it did achieve, like so many operations during the war on the Western Front which were, or which appeared at first sight to be, failures in themselves, the indirect success of engaging sufficient enemy forces materially to assist other operations simultaneously taking place elsewhere, in this case, the French advance towards Lens.

On the evening of 8th May, A and B Coys of the 8th went into the trenches, and C Coy came out into support, D Coy remaining in the line. C Coy was allotted a special task which was described by an unnamed NCO, who had been selected for a commission, in a letter published under the headline "Leeds Rifles Cool Under Fire" in the Yorkshire Post of 18th May 1915:

"Matters have been fairly warm among the Leeds Rifles during the last few days, both in respect to the weather and also other things. At last I have been in action, and I am delighted to say our Leeds boys all behaved with consummate coolness. When we came under a dangerous shrapnel fire they took cover very intelligently, which perspicacity undoubtedly saved us from serious loss. I saw my name gazetted among the Military Intelligence in The Yorkshire Post on the 5th May, and naturally felt very proud. Last Saturday a party of our corps were required for the trenches to take part in a big movement. I was afraid my appointment would be with a reserve battalion in England, so I took the opportunity of seeing action before I was ordered to return. In the circumstances I picked out all the single men to accompany me.



We were in the third line of trenches from 4.30 am Sunday until 2 pm Monday. All day Sunday the guns were pounding away. Yet we were comparatively safe, our task being to dig trenches under cover of artillery fire. As matters turned out, we were not required for that purpose, and we received orders to return to our billets on Monday at 1 pm. Coming out of the trenches we came under very accurate shrapnel fire for about fifteen minutes. It was during this period that our lads behaved so well. Our officer was a brick; a grand fellow he is; got a jaw on him which suggests things, and which Monday's action has confirmed. He is possessed of rare grit and coolness, and he steered us back into our billets about 2.30 pm. It was frightfully hot; all the men were carrying picks and spades in addition to their usual harness. We saw the poor wounded being carried out of the trenches. And what wonderful patience they show! I had to go across to a farm to fetch some water, and got a good sight of what it all means. It affected me in two ways. One created a feeling of intense pity for these wounded men; the other stiffened up my jaw for the future which is going to be a stiff task. My officer stayed behind at the dressing station to see after a couple of wounded, and I marched the others back to our billets. My word, I did feel proud of them! As soon as we returned we were shelled in our quarters. I was lying asleep on the ground, being thoroughly exhausted, when the first two shells burst, but someone awoke me, and we all quickly got into our dugouts, until the bombardment was over. At present we are in a position of safety, and expect to be for a while; but when the Leeds Rifles are wanted they will be ready, because they have earned the admiration of all those with whom they have come into contact." Rfm W.H. Reynard was one of this party. He could recall only the boredom of the Saturday night and Sunday morning: "We did absolutely nothing but sit on the firing step all night... We knew nothing about a battle at all."<sup>116</sup>

The many sources existing for the events of 9th May forcibly illustrate the dangers and folly of relying on only one or two sources in the reconstruction of events. The war diaries, often the chief, or even the sole, source of military history, make the operation appear dull, in fact not much like a battle at all. The 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary provides the most informative account of the three:

"Heavy artillery bombardment began at 5 am and lasted till 6.30 am. Most of the artillery fire was directed on our flanks, a little of it on the enemy's trenches in front. The bombardment from behind us ceased at 5.50 am and we then opened rapid fire on the German trenches for quarter of an hour. We received practically no reply either then or for half an hour afterwards. There was occasional artillery fire till 3.30 pm, then heavy firing again for an hour... The enemy opened rapid fire in several short bursts throughout the day, but no attack was made on either side. The enemy's fire was very half-hearted and we came to the conclusion that the trenches in front of us were thinly held."



Espin's Diary entry for 9th May gives an entirely different and, at first sight, equally erroneous impression of the attack:

"5 am a terrible bombardment: it is hell let loose. We have had a big rum issue. I am feeling the effects of it, everybody is mad and excited. The place is full of dead and wounded. The Germans were four deep, coats off, waiting for us. What a terrible time. Indians cut up on the left of us, the Sherwoods on our right. The result is terrible, not quite a success."

Espin admitted he was "not much of a scholar" and he had not learnt to express himself clearly. Each of his sentences has to be examined carefully in order to get at its meaning. His fourth sentence may refer to dead and wounded in his own trench, or it may refer to No Man's Land, since the Sanderson Memoirs state that "On our side of the enemy's barbed wire the Indians' dead and wounded lay three deep." The "us" in the fifth sentence refers not to the 49th, but to the attacking divisions. The "big rum issue" in the second sentence indicates that the 8th men had been given a double rum ration, a usual procedure when a battalion was about to engage the enemy. Over-proof rum is a powerful disinhibitor. A double rum ration gave a man enormous Dutch courage: as one respondent put it, "it made you want to fight the whole German army single-handed." The fact that "everybody is mad and excited" may not be entirely due to the rum. The strict teetotaler, L/Cpl Kit Wall, who never accepted the ration, wrote:

"On Sunday the 9th of May we went under a heavy fire and it was not very nice, but it gives one an idea of how you can get excited and so forget all fear."<sup>117</sup>

Butcher's Diary entry runs:

"5.0 am opened with fierce bombardment of German trenches with 800 guns. The noise was awful. It was like hell let loose. Shrapnel burst all round us. Much damage done to our trenches by our own artillery. Several men wounded. Ordered to rapid fire. Gave them socks. Get no reply. After a bit we manage to get a bit of breakfast. My rifle is red hot owing to the number of rounds 400<sup>118</sup> I fired. After breakfast shellfire renewed but with not so much vigour as before. Germans open machine gun fire on us, but with no effect. All this happens on a Sunday. It is a lovely day. We have been in the trenches four days. Terrific firing going on on our left. On our front there is comparative calm. We keep a good look out through our periscopes which are priceless. Bombardment lasts till 5 pm and now things are quiet 6 pm. Stand to arms 9 pm. The artillery begins again, the noise is terrific. How men live in such a tornado of fire puzzles me. We have had practically no sleep for four days and I have not had my boots off for five days. I shall be glad when we get relieved."



He had time to write a letter home as well as fill in his diary. This provides additional information:

"One of our lads in my trench was hit by a shrapnel bullet, but he was very lucky. The bullet went through his overcoat at the back, through his tunic and his shirt, but never drew blood." He refers to the 15 minutes' rapid firing: "Of course, we did give it to them. We never thought about any bullets coming back. We simply kept our heads above the top and let them have it as fast as we could load. It was simply glorious. I'll bet they were a bit shy."<sup>119</sup>

The Battle of Aubers Ridge, in the words of respondent 3227 C. Lazenby, 7th, was where the men of the Leeds Rifles "first saw what war was really like". To those in the firing trench it was a vivid and unforgettable experience. For the first time they had to "endure what the Commander-in-Chief himself described as the severest ordeal a soldier can be called upon to face, and that is to remain steady under shellfire and see his comrades struck down."<sup>120</sup> They encountered the horrors of war; they lost beloved comrades; they had brushes with death.

Many were extremely impressed by the British preliminary bombardment. Virtually all the respondents spontaneously used the same phrase as Espin and Butcher had used to describe the bombardment: "hell let loose". Rfm J. Townsend, 8th, of Kirkstall Road West, told his wife it was "like being in H-[ell] with the gates shut."<sup>121</sup> Others used more homely similes. 1226 Sgt Geo. Denton, 8th, of Kirkstall Road East, whose brothers Richard and Edgar were serving with him, told his parents it was like "the noise of 1,000 Leeds Forges all working at once."<sup>122</sup> Rfm Frank Hallam, 7th, a building worker of BelleVue Road, aged 29, a married man with three children, wrote:

"You have heard the steam hammer at the Leeds Forge in the middle of the night, and if you can imagine two or three thousand of these banging simultaneously, you will have some idea of what it was like."<sup>123</sup>

L/Cpl J.R. Smith, 7th, wrote:

"What a morning it has been! We were in England when the bombardment of Neuve Chapelle took place. We have been on the spot this time. Our guns started at five o'clock. I took particular note of the time, and in less than one minute were in the midst of the most awful din I ever heard, or imagined, in all my life. We seemed to be firing along a front of several miles, and Goodness only knows how many guns were actually in action. There seemed to be one behind every blade of grass. Imagine a battery of maxims on at full-tilt, but each crack representing a heavy gun. Mingle with this the



heaviest thunderstorm you ever experienced, blending the whole into one continuous roar, and you arrive at a faint idea of it! What on earth it must have been like where the shells were bursting amongst the enemy, I cannot even faintly conceive. I should imagine Dante's Inferno was a pleasure garden compared with it! And they kept it up for two solid hours without a semblance of a break."<sup>124</sup>

All ranks were ordered to take cover in the dugouts during the British bombardment and, immediately it ceased, to man the parapet and prepare to give covering fire to the advancing troops in accordance with the Corps' fire plan.<sup>125</sup> Just before the bombardment ceased, however, the Germans were spotted by the sentries leaving their front line trenches and retiring, and immediately the order to stand to and rapid fire was given.<sup>126</sup>

"We swept the German trenches with fire - as rapid fire as poss. [sic], over a hundred rounds per man in fifteen minutes. It was grand. Our chaps are splendid. You forget all danger ... The noise was deafening. I fired so rapidly that my rifle burnt my fingers."<sup>127</sup> We have ceased fire for a time, but the guns are going strong. I think the Germans lost very heavily and we lost a few, mostly by shrapnel fire. The lads seem eager to have another go, and they are likely to get the chance any minute. We have cleaned our rifles ready for the job. We expect them to make a counter-attack... Two of the chaps are singing, one reading a book and the rest writing letters in our trench. You would think there was no German for miles."<sup>128</sup>

1987 Sydney Appleyard's platoon lay prone on the parapet:

"We were fully exposed. My rifle bolt jammed with the heat and I jumped back in the trench to put some oil on it. 2/Lt Findlay shouted, 'Appleyard, get back up there, I order you.' But I got an oil can and climbed back. How long we were like that, loading and firing, I do not remember."<sup>129</sup>

During the bombardment some men at first felt apprehensive or frightened. Rfm Ernest Pickering, B Coy, 7th, company secretary, of North Chapelton, aged 22:

"I remember Alby [furniture retailer Albert E. Farrar, his life-long friend] and I crouching on the firestep, frozen with fright, at Aubers Ridge, watching the Regulars advancing in front of us getting mowed down by our own artillery... The shrapnel shells were bursting on the ground in front of us and behind us. We were petrified because we were inexperienced."<sup>130</sup>

Rfm Henry Storey, 8th, a pre-war Territorial, serving with his uncle and cousin, of Central Armley, and employed at Wilson and Mathieson's, wrote to his mother:



"We lay in the dugouts trembling with cold, and I might as well say, with fear, when the order came to 'Fix bayonets and Stand To'. We all thought the time had come to make a charge, but instead of that we were ordered to begin firing rapidly. As we climbed out of our dugouts the trembling left me, and I felt as cool as a cucumber. Our officers were acting as if they were used to the job, and they kept encouraging us by telling us we were working like heroes."<sup>131</sup>

Rfm J.E. Hodgson, 8th, a Territorial of long standing, serving with his two nephews, and employed at the Farnley Ironworks, wrote to his mother:

"We started with rapid rifle fire and the officers gave us words of cheer and praise. Talk about hell on earth! I thought it was my last: I trembled in every limb until we started the rifle firing, and the cheery words from our officers seemed to inspire us with fresh courage, for we lost the trembling feeling, and I think every man was ready for anything."<sup>132</sup>

Other rankers praised the conduct of their officers, e.g. Rfm W.H. Gidlow, 7th, insurance agent, son of 136 Sgt F.A. Gidlow:

"All along the trenches our men stood it well, and our officers were splendid, walking about just as if they were going up Briggate."<sup>133</sup>

The greatest ordeal came when shells started falling in and around the trenches occupied by the 8th and B Coy of the 7th. The Regiment's casualties (7th: 1 died of wounds, 9 wounded; 8th: 8 killed, 3 died of wounds, 17 wounded) amounted to 88% of those sustained by 146 Brigade and over 40% of those sustained by the Division as a whole. 1960 Rfm Percy Brook, A Coy, 8th, printer employed by the Leeds Mercury, of Little London, wrote to his wife:

"I am a very lucky man that I am alive to write to you. A shell burst not a yard and a half in front of our dugout, and there were six of us in it. I can tell you we all said our prayers a few times over. We were nearly smothered in earth from the top of the dugout. There were about twenty casualties in our lot, ten killed and the same number wounded with their dugouts being blown in on top of them. A few were hit by shrapnel, and one poor chap was cut completely in two."<sup>134</sup>

2952 Lawrence Tallant, A Coy, 8th, wood working machinist, of The Bank, aged nineteen, also had a narrow escape:

"Our Company was in dugouts about ten yards behind the front line. Shells started falling in the front line or on the dugouts. Some slid across our dugout roof, but didn't do us any harm. A shell killed everybody in the next dugout to ours."<sup>135</sup>



Sgt Wilfred Wood, D Coy, 8th, tool merchant [G. Wood (Tools) Ltd., King Edward Street], of Roundhay was in a dugout in which five men were killed outright and five unhurt:

"It was a fine sight to see our boys half way over the parapet giving the Germans a perfect hail of bullets, and personally I believe the short time of rapid fire restored the nerves of the rest of us who had been in the dugout."<sup>136</sup>

The two most graphic accounts come from non-combatants: 8th Bn stretcher-bearers. The first was written by Bandsman Sanderson, who, after well over ten years of working down the pit, during which time he had qualified as a Colliery Ambulanceman, and several years as a member of the Mines Rescue Brigade, was already well-acquainted with death:

"It was just after 5 am. I was roused from my sleep by the cry of 'stretcher bearers!' I scrambled out of my dugout at once, wondering dazedly what this noise could be that sounded like the beating of a thousand bass drums. Then I remembered. I ran along the trench a few yards, and there lay Lance-Corpl [John] Moore just about drawing his last breath. A large piece of shell had severed one of his arms and entered his side. My own chum, another stretcher-bearer, had followed me, and when he saw Moore he went into hysterics and ran away, shrieking like a woman. I, too, felt suddenly sick and faint as the smell of hot, reeking blood reached my nostrils. I felt pretty bad for a moment, especially as just then another shell burst a few feet away, killing or wounding all of a group of about eight men who were standing there. I trembled violently, and my heart seemed to be literally in my mouth, almost choking me. This didn't last long, though. When I saw Moore was dead I dragged him into a small recess on the side of the trench and went to the group of men above-mentioned to see what could be done for them. Immediately I got to work dressing wounds I forgot all my fears, although it often needed all my strength of will to enable me to carry on. Accustomed as I was to all kinds of mine accidents, I had never before been called upon to handle men who were mutilated as these men were mutilated, and never had I experienced the nauseating smell of fresh, hot blood as it poured from the body of a fellow-man, a smell which no man can ever forget. Above the din of the bombardment the cry went constantly: 'Pass the word for the stretcher-bearers' and 'Pass the word for Sandy', for everybody had great faith in my skill at first aid. I ran up and down the trench, attending the worst cases myself, and advising the other stretcher-bearers what to do for the less seriously wounded. One of the men I attended to was J. Tindall, the Batley footballer. He had received terrible injuries to his shoulder and back, and was in great pain. I did my best for him, but I was too late to save him, and when I saw that to prolong his life was only prolonging his agony to no purpose, I allowed him to bleed to death."<sup>137</sup>



Jackie Tindall, a millworker from Bramley, who had served in the 8th Bn for four years before the war, was a Northern (Rugby) Union wing three-quarter famous for his try-scoring record (which still stands) and the object of popular hero-worship in the battalion. His frantic friends of D Coy, who included Clifford Walton and 1090 James Rhind, rushed to get the best available medical help for him,<sup>138</sup> Bandsman Sanderson, who actually belonged to A Coy. Though Sanderson was unable to do much for Tindall, he was in time to save the life of respondent 2586 William Wilson, D Coy, rivetter, of North Hunslet, aged 24, who was lying in the dugout next door with a severed femoral artery. D Company's casualties were the heaviest in the battalion: 6 killed, 9 wounded, according to Sgt Denton,<sup>139</sup> out of a total of 11 killed and 17 wounded. An interesting phenomenon that emerged from oral testimony was that a considerable legend later grew up around D Coy's casualties until, according to the telling of it, practically the entire company had been wiped out at Aubers Ridge. Some respondents were convinced of the truth of it. The legend may well have been centred on Jackie Tindall.

Stretcher-bearer F. Townend, 8th, of Armley, wrote:

"...it is so cold we cannot sleep at all. Very soon we hear the artillery are to bombard the German trenches, so we get under cover as much as we can. Presently they are at it like mad, with the shells bursting all over. It is just like hundreds of big drums banging one after the other. This goes on for a quarter of an hour, when the cry comes for stretcher-bearers at the double. Off goes one or two of us and attend to a man who is hit with shrapnel. He dies, almost at once, and in the meantime there are more cries for stretcher-bearers, and all of us are now at it with white faces doing what we can for the poor chaps who are injured. I am wrapping a bad wound up when bang goes a shell at my elbow. I am startled, but I get my man wrapped up and make him comfortable. Then another comes running up: 'For God's sake, go to so-and-so, he is very badly wounded.' It goes on like this for two or three hours, and more by luck than anything our squad is still unhurt. Gradually the fire dies down, and we can take a good look round. We find five dead and ten wounded. We have to go and see [to] some of the wounded for they have wriggled about and worked the bandages off or loose. The poor chaps want [dial: "need"] taking away to the dressing station but we cannot take them yet. At last we are told we must get the men out, so we get our stretchers and set off down winding trenches with the awfulest corners to turn. When we get out we are seen by the enemy. Shrapnel begins to fly all round, and we have to get in another dugout. It is now afternoon, and the shellfire is so bad we have to stay there till 5.30. At last we are missed, and they are bothering about us and send up some men to see if we are all right. One squad goes off, and we can see how they get on for snipers. They get on all right, and then the next goes, and so on till all are off with one wounded man who can walk.



Whizz! a bullet sings over us, and we lie down in the grass for a while. We get off again and hurry till we get out of range, and then plod on steadily till we get to the dressing station. We get back at 8.30. There are three more wounded to go, but I am not one of those to take them. I sit down and fall asleep straight off, completely done up."<sup>140</sup>

It did not take long for the Riflemen to realise that virtually all the shells that fell in their trenches that morning had been fired by a British battery, nor for them to find out which particular battery was responsible. Major Tetley noted that the 10 casualties in B Coy of the 7th "were caused by our own guns during a general engagement."<sup>141</sup> The 1/7th War Diary entry for 9th May noted that "Parapets suffered from our own Artillery and from hostile artillery"; one sentence in the entry had been crossed out and is illegible. Butcher blamed "our own artillery" (see above). 1376 Cpl James Smith, A Coy, 8th, dyer's assistant, of Horsforth, aged 20, who was killed on 15 May, wrote in his notebook: "We had over a dozen casualties by our own Artillery with their shrapnel taking short range (unofficially)."<sup>142</sup> Neither of the 1/8th War Diaries referred to these matters. None of these sources named the guilty battery.

The respondents were not so reticent, e.g. 1726 Jack Barker, C Coy, 7th:<sup>143</sup>

"I was stood with Capt. Watson, our Company officer, at Aubers Ridge when our shells started falling in our own lines. It was mostly the 8th Bn who copped it. They said Col. Alexander was going off his head trying to 'phone the battery to make them cease fire. The Otley Howitzers got blamed at first, but it couldn't have been them because of the different trajectories. It was the Aberdeen Artillery who were responsible. They blamed the shells and said they were faulty."

Cpl Albert Bowden, C Coy, 8th, a former Volunteer, miner, of Garforth, aged 27:

"Col. Alexander broke down and cried at Aubers Ridge when the Aberdeen Artillery were killing our men. The tears streamed down his face. He managed to make them cease fire and brought up the French 75s very close to us."

1022 Walter Stead, D Coy, 8th, railway platelayer's assistant, of East Armley, aged 24:



"I remember us getting shelled by the Aberdeen Artillery; they killed a lot of men in D Coy. All their officers got cashiered and the NCOs and men were sent home for further training. They tried to put all the blame on the observers for giving them the wrong range."

2891 Bugler Charles E. Hannan, A Coy, 8th:

"I remember D Coy copping it off our own artillery at Aubers Ridge. Bloody bad shooting it was, but they blamed the observers for giving them the wrong range."

2893 George Nichols, A Coy, 7th, fishmonger's assistant of Burmantofts, aged 20:

"I remember some of our lads getting killed by our own artillery. 'Stocky' [Capt. Stockwell, O C B Coy] went straight down to Brigade HQ and played holy war and the whole artillery battery was taken out of the line for further training. They were Territorials like us and quite inexperienced. They blamed the observers in the balloon for giving them the wrong range."

Dr. C.A. Lupton, a subaltern in the Artillery during World War I, and brother of Hugh Lupton, stated that, because kite balloons were always tethered well back from the front line, he, like everyone else, had not unnaturally assumed that the observers made impossible claims for accuracy until he went up in a balloon himself; he was astounded at the very high degree of accuracy obtained.

It has not been possible to check these allegations about the Aberdeen Artillery. BBC Scotland, both radio and television, local radio, and the local newspapers failed to trace any survivors of the Aberdeen Artillery. If the officers were cashiered, their court martial records will not be available for inspection until the year 2015.

Defective ammunition was the most likely cause of the tragedy. "Dud" shells fell prematurely. Sgt Arthur Hawkins of the Leeds Artillery stated that in the summer of 1915 they were obliged to make continual complaints about the quality of the ammunition with which they were being supplied.<sup>144</sup> Capt H. R. Lupton recalled that it was not at all unusual for the Leeds Artillery's shells at this period to fall behind the British lines.<sup>145</sup> American-made shell fuses were highly unreliable: John Nettleton's battalion spent some time during the Battle of Loos removing defective American fuses from 3" shells and fitting British replacements.<sup>146</sup> 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, stated "There were a lot of dud shells at Aubers Ridge; I saw them myself. They were filled



with sawdust instead of explosives and were made in the United States. Their makers had deliberately defrauded the Government."<sup>147</sup>

The inferior quality of much of the artillery ammunition, resulting in ranging difficulties as it did, is one of the three major causes of the failure at Aubers Ridge listed by the Official History:

"Many of the fuses, in particular those of the 15-inch howitzer, were defective owing to lack of competent inspection in the factories, and consequently the shells failed to burst on striking the sodden ground. According to British aeroplane reports the registration before the battle was useless; for the changed atmospheric conditions and the previous wear of the guns resulted in many of the shells falling short."

The Aberdeen Artillery was equipped with 4.7" guns that had been used in the Second Boer War. While the bombardment of the morning of the 9th May was in progress,

"reports were received from the front line that a quantity of shell, including 4.7 inch employed for counter-battery work, was falling short of the enemy defences. This, being due to wear and tear of the gun barrels and to faulty ammunition, could not be remedied, and consequently much of the fire failed to reach the German position and its defenders."

At the conference of Corps commanders held on 10th May to discuss the failure of the attack it was reported that the ammunition for the 4.7" batteries on the front of the IV Corps assault "had proved to be so defective as to render these guns practically useless for counter-battery work."<sup>148</sup>

The following day, after a night spent standing to, was surprisingly quiet. Butcher noted: "Nothing much during the day except occasional sniping."<sup>149</sup> The men were kept busy repairing the damaged defences. Roll call was taken: Espin wrote: "my platoon is gone - only six of us left. I am sad, my clothes is badly torn and covered with blood."<sup>150</sup> This is a puzzle and can only be the result of Espin's demonstrated propensity to over-exaggeration and self-dramatisation. There seem to have been no more than two casualties in the whole of B Coy; Espin gives no names and has written "platoon" when he meant "section". The 1/8th's War Diary entry runs:

"It was reported by Art[illery] observation officer that the enemy were concentrating in trenches to our front, but no attack was made: a few shells were fired at our



trenches but had no effect. The remainder of the day was suspiciously quiet. At 9 pm we were warned to be specially on the alert and prepared for use of asphyxiating gas by the enemy. This warning caused A Company to report gas coming over at 9.50 pm, but the cause of the report was traced to the use of chloride of lime in the trench latrines."<sup>151</sup>

(This incident was a favourite anecdote of several respondents.) It was so quiet on the 11th that Rfm Burford of D Coy, 8th,

"went out in front of trenches to within 20 yds of enemy's line through mustard crop and found dead ground where enemy could collect, he also found 8 newly killed Germans at a spot where the MG had been aimed."<sup>152</sup>

Burford may have been on a private mission at the time (see below).

The writers of letters are, understandably, feeling saddened. Sgt Harry Potterton, sergeant stretcher-bearer of the 7th, sign-writer, of Bagby Fields, to his wife:

"We are now in the thick of it. We are going through it, but all the lads are in good spirit, and show plenty of pluck. We have a very busy time seeing to the wounded. We have lost five of ours and ten wounded [since the beginning of the trench tour]. We have to bury the poor lads, and I have been busy writing the crosses. I never could imagine what it was like to be under fire, but, by Jove! We had it and no mistake. Our artillery was bombarding their trenches yesterday, and it was terrible. I shall never forget it. We had to go into the trenches against the enemy's fire, and get the wounded out." <sup>153</sup>

Rfm W. White, B Coy, 7th, insurance agent, of Cross Green, to his parents:

"Since writing to you last, I am very sorry to say we have been under a very heavy fire of artillery, and our platoon has, unfortunately, suffered the heaviest. I don't know exactly what the exact number of casualties is for the battalion, but our little party has had three killed and seven wounded. All went well until five o'clock on Sunday morning, when the guns opened their fire, and my word, the noise was almost indescribable. In fact, many put cotton wool in their ears. At first the shelling was in another direction altogether, but our turn was to come, and we got it! I am very proud to know that every man stuck to his post in such a stinging time, and the officers behaved splendidly. Two of the young chaps [Hitchen aged 18, Pearce aged 17] who were killed were with me at Carlton Hill, and one of them, E. Pearce, was in the same house as me at Gainsborough. It is marvellous that many more were not hurt, because bullets and pieces of iron and other missiles were flying like hailstones around us from the bursting shrapnel shells. Another young chap, W. Robinson, who was wounded, was a personal friend of mine. Not above a yard away from where I was a chap was hit in the head with a piece of shell, killing him instantly. However, all is quiet



again now. In fact, ...were it not for an occasional rifle shot, one could hardly realise that such a terrible war is raging. I have not written this to make you uneasy, but to give you a slight idea of what war actually is, and that the 7th West Yorkshire (Leeds Rifles) can be as calm, and do as well as any other Regular regiment under the same conditions, a thing I am sure all Leeds will be proud of."154

Following the traumas of 9th May, the personnel of the Regiment quickly settled down into the routine of "normal" trench warfare. Working parties, wiring parties and listening patrols were sent out nightly. The patrolling of No Man's Land was not highly organised. There seems to have been more activity during the hours of darkness of an unauthorised and unofficial kind: by souvenir hunters, who used the saps and old communication trenches in front in order to reach their booty. The repair and improvement of the breastworks amounted to virtually a full-time task in itself. Theoretically, 25% of the personnel were on duty in the trench by day and 50% by night, but no one got much sleep because there was so much work to do. Every man was new to trench work and all it involved. Necessity and experience were his only teachers, for very little instruction in field engineering had been given in training. Professional bricklayers and professional diggers thus found themselves in demand. The officers applied the managerial expertise learnt in business and were soon getting things organised. At that stage of the war, the defence of the line depended on the rifleman, so, in order to secure maximum fire power, as many men as possible were permanently stationed in the front line. The 8th Bn officers reorganised duties so that three companies held the line, two platoons of the 4th company held the forts (outposts), while the remaining two platoons of the 4th company were held in reserve at HQ and carried up all the supplies, including rations, to the trenches. The greatest difficulty to be overcome had been water supplies, but 9-gallon barrels had been obtained and these were carried into the trenches on poles.<sup>155</sup>

The men, in their inexperience, considered this part of the line "lively", but, compared with the Ypres Salient, it was extremely quiet. Day after day the entry in the 1/7th War Diary reads "Nothing of importance (or, note) happened." Although War Diary entries may be, and often are, seriously misleading, the Butcher and Espin Diaries confirm the comparative calm of the sector. Entries such as "quiet day" or "nothing much doing during the day" are fairly common. Civilians were in evidence quite close to the reserve lines as well as near rest billets. Espin noted on 26th May: "A little child is killed while



selling us chocolates."<sup>156</sup> Although there were occasional days of heavy bombardment, for much of the time the German artillery was fairly inactive and some days remained completely quiet all day. "Strafes" were usually of short duration and sometimes consisted of only a few salvoes; the heavy guns seemed to reserve their attentions for the British artillery positions and the villages and roads some distance from the line. This is somewhat surprising, since it would have been possible to wreak fearful havoc in the crowded fire trench. The enemy concentrated rather on trench mortar fire, short spells of which the British front line was subjected to on most days, e.g. 24th May:

"2 Trench mortars explode in our trenches. Shakes the whole place up and one makes a hole big enough for me to stand up in. We were smothered with dirt but no one was injured";

9th June: "9.10 pm Trench mortar came over and dropped bang in our traverse. Sentry warned us of its coming. Poor old Mann blown to pieces nearly. Bishop, Dunne, Glover and Frankland wounded." <sup>157</sup>

Owing to the shell shortage, retaliation could seldom be made, but this latter occasion was an exception. The Otley Howitzer battery was at the time positioned behind the 7th Bn. They were immediately contacted. They placed six rounds in or about the spot from which the bombs had been fired, scoring direct hits and silencing the mortar or mortars completely. "The accuracy of the Howitzer fire on a point so close to our own trenches cheered the men up no end."<sup>158</sup> The Otley Howitzers were rationed to two rounds a day, one for the morning, one for the evening,<sup>159</sup> since the supply of ammunition for these obsolete guns was very limited; many of the Otley gunners had friends, relatives and neighbours in the 7th Bn. Later, in the Salient, the 1/8th obtained official permission to call upon the Otley Howitzer battery for retaliation purposes.<sup>160</sup>

Enemy aeroplanes flew over the Leeds Rifles' positions several times a week. Any that came low enough were given rapid fire.<sup>161</sup>

Enemy rifle fire was often heavy. Snipers, or so-called snipers, were chiefly responsible for the fact that each battalion lost one or two men virtually every day, and the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary makes special reference to them on the 10th and 12th May. During the first trench tour the Germans opposite the Leeds Rifles were a Jäger regiment recruited from Bavarian huntsmen and others who had been



trained in the use of the rifle since childhood.

"Apparently they were the cream of the German Army's marksmen and had been drafted to this part of the front because of the apparent threat of further attack. They demonstrated their readiness to meet any new assault by standing up whenever our artillery had the temerity to fire into their defences, and taking cool aim at the tops of our sandbags, which they ripped with an accuracy most awe-inspiring and scarcely credible to our civilian army from Leeds. The said army, having no unruly imagination, lost no sleep over this phenomenon, and was, at least as regards my No. 12 platoon, stirred to mirth when the customary target for the wits of the party, the lean and lanky Laverick, ventured to raise his woolly balaclava an inch above the trench-top and instantly had it perforated. This cap became the platoon trophy for the next twenty-four hours. As we were not required to prove ourselves the masters of the situation, we had no casualties at the time."<sup>162</sup>

The demonstration of such contempt for the Leeds Territorials was not supinely accepted by them. Many of the pre-war Territorials, particularly the former Volunteers, were crack shots. After six days in the line, Rfm 1412 Alfred O'Shaughnessy (life-long friend of respondent 2715 James Eastburn, and later to be invalided out and to die of T B before the end of the war), 8th, of Park Lane, wrote to his parents:

"Our section corporal bagged three of theirs on Thursday. Through the glasses we could see a working party throwing earth up behind their parapet... We waited for about five minutes, and they seemed to get tired, and knocked off for a rest; one of them was actually leaning with his elbows on the parapet showing his head and shoulders above the top. Our corporal fired, and he disappeared. At the same instant three heads bobbed up from behind the earth as though they were looking to see who had been hit. The centre man of these three was the next victim, and he went down for 'ten'. About ten minutes later we saw one crawling up the bank they had been building, and when our corporal fired at him we could plainly see him slip back out of sight... But for the trench mortars it has been very quiet here."<sup>163</sup>

A system of snipers under the command of a sniping officer was organised in June.<sup>164</sup>

It was almost certain death to show one's head above the parapet in daylight, for it would be readily spotted from the German trenches, since the British bulwarks, composed of sandbags of a uniform yellowish-brown colour, presented a neat and even horizontal top. German sandbags, on the other hand, varied in colour, though mainly light green and blue, which effectively broke up the line of bulwarks and made field-grey



capped heads difficult to see from the British side. German snipers, in addition to being excellent shots, were equipped with telescopic sights. Many, in direct violation of the Hague Rules and Geneva Convention, used "dum-dum" (expanding) bullets which, in addition to producing hideous injuries that invariably proved fatal, were capable of causing enough damage inside a sandbag to enable further bullets that were fired into the same hole to travel right through the parapet and strike whoever happened to be standing on the other side. Cpl 1376 James Smith, A Coy, 8th, was killed in this way. "I said to him, 'Watch yourself in the next bay, Jim. There's a sniper got a fix on it.' But the sniper got him with a dum-dum bullet and blew most of his head off."<sup>165</sup> Espin made the following entry in his diary: "Cpl Smith's brains blown out at my side."<sup>166</sup> Lt Rigby reported: "One man was killed this morning in the trenches by a bullet coming through the parapet. Additional sandbags have been placed at this point."<sup>167</sup> A sniper captured in No Man's Land by a patrol of the 1/5th KOYLI was found to have in his possession "over 300 rounds of explosive and dum-dum bullets."<sup>168</sup> Sixteen-year-old Butcher had the greatest respect for German snipers. When the 7th moved to trenches near Fleurbaix he wrote: "Germans only 100 yds away. Occupants presumably Bavarians. Good shots, dare not put our heads above the parapet during the day." The following day he noted: "3 men get killed by putting their heads above the parapet." Two days later, on Whit Monday, nineteen-year-old 1774 Bugler John Stead, B Coy, nephew of the 1/8th's Quartermaster, and an employee of Lt W.H. Braithwaite's father, was "hit in the head by explosive bullet. It was an awful sight to behold his brains bespattered over the sandbags. Put his head above the parapet."<sup>169</sup>

"One who fell a victim to sniping was Alf Featherstone [A Coy, 8th], a Glasshoughton lad. He was engaged in a veritable duel with one of the enemy, and had exchanged about a score of shots with him, when he received a bullet in his head which scattered his brains."<sup>170</sup> Several, including Lt G.W. Sykes, D Coy, 7th, and 2023 William Wells, the 8th Bn's Musketry Officer's servant, were killed in such "duels", conducted from behind a steel loophole, before it was realised that they were merely German ruses to engage a man long enough to enable a sniper to get a fix on him. The inexperienced Riflemen were often encouraged to keep firing by an apparently sporting gesture: the waving of a spade to signal a miss, the "wash-out" signal used on the rifle range.



Until the first supply of Mills bombs arrived on the Western Front in July 1915 the British Army was obliged to rely entirely on improvised grenades,<sup>171</sup> of which there were about twelve patterns.<sup>172</sup> German bombs of the period were much superior in every respect. In May men skilled with their hands, of which there was no dearth in either battalion, were put on the manufacture of Jam Tin bombs and Hair Brush bombs, directions and working drawings for which had been published in the official War Office pamphlet, Notes on Field Defences (collated by the General Staff) (1914), which itself had been extracted from Notes From the Front, Vols. I and II. 2232 L/Cpl J. Varley, A Coy, 7th, was accidentally wounded by a homemade bomb on 14th May, and two other 7th Bn NCOs and three men were accidentally wounded by bombs in the period up to 1st October,<sup>173</sup> when Mills bombs came into general use. Neither the Tetley Diary nor any of the War Diaries mentions the use of these weapons against the enemy. The first line of Espin's diary entry for 15th May, however, is: "Quiet morning until we started bombing - cause heavy casualties in the enemy." It appears that the 8th Bn prudently waited until the day of their relief before trying them out on the enemy. 1090 James Rhind and the 8th Bombing Sergeant, Arthur Sykes, rigged up a mechanical catapult to fire jam tin grenades.<sup>174</sup>

The home-made bombs were unreliable and dangerous to the user:

"You had to light Jam Tin bombs with a match and then count so many seconds before you threw them. If you threw them straight away the Germans threw them back! We also had stick (percussion) bombs. Hard luck if you happened to catch one on the side or back of the trench when you were drawing your arm back to throw it."<sup>175</sup>

Hairbrush bombs were supplied with a striking pad which first had to be strapped on the wrist; the ignition on the bomb was struck against it. 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, 7th, related a story about a 7th Bn bomber in the 15-yard sap on the Salient, who struck a hairbrush bomb against his pad, threw it, but it failed to explode. He threw another with the same result. About ten minutes later something flew over the parapet and landed in the bottom of the trench. No bang. On investigation the mysterious object, wrapped in a length of 4 x 2, was found to be a box of German matches.<sup>176</sup> This entertaining "tale of artistic merit",<sup>177</sup> however apocryphal, demonstrates the proven unreliability of this type of bomb.

The overheating problems of 9th May caused general dissatisfaction with the CLLE rifles and made the men keen to possess themselves of



Short Lee-Enfields. Following the Battles of Neuve Chapelle and Aubers Ridge, a good many were lying out between the lines. Any man obtaining a Short Lee-Enfield complete with bayonet was allowed to keep it, subject to it satisfying the Armourer Sergeant's inspection. (The Leeds Rifles was not re-armed with the Short Lee-Enfield until May 1916.)<sup>178</sup> Not many men in the 8th, however, managed to get one.<sup>179</sup> One morning, strictly against orders, 2221 George A. Fletcher, 8th, C Coy, clothing trade apprentice, of Burley, aged 19, and his friend, George Taylor, crawled out into the long grass of No Man's Land to search for short rifles:

"We heard some heavy thuds at irregular intervals, lifted our heads slowly and were having a look round, when suddenly in front up popped the face of a German, round cap, black moustache, taking a careful look round too. Luckily he never spotted us. We didn't waste a lot of time returning to the front line I can tell you. Mr. Bellerby caught us red-handed coming out of the sap and didn't half dress us down. To excuse ourselves, we had to tell him what we had seen. He got the telescope from Coy HQ, had a look and then let us have a look. We saw a gang of Jerries digging a trench mortar pit: the mortar was there with its iron wheels. Mr. Bellerby rang up the Artillery O Pip [observation post] and they were shelled out."<sup>180</sup>

Normal routine in this sector consisted of six-day periods in the front and reserve lines alternating with six-day periods of "rest" in Brigade Reserve where R E fatigues were the order of the day. Following the failure of May 9th IV Corps would have manpower and other organisational problems. Six days - and another four days - came and went before the Leeds Rifles received word they were to be relieved at last. Considering their very limited knowledge and experience, the men had been doing what they could to make themselves at home and the spirits of all ranks remained surprisingly high. "Inspiring messages", announced the Yorkshire Post of 20th May (and the Yorkshire Evening Post of 19th May), bursting with local chauvinistic pride, "continue to be received by the relatives of the members of the Leeds Rifles, many of whom are now in the trenches." An unnamed Leeds Rifles officer, after describing how parts of the trench had been named after well-known Leeds streets, declared:

"It is only about the first day or so that you don't care much about this game, and then you get quite used to it; then you don't care fourpence", adding that "about the only complaint the fellows are making" was "the want of a good night's rest." <sup>181</sup>



Bugler Jordan, 7th:

"The cheerfulness and soldierlike manner in which our men carry out their work is remarkable. We have already been complimented by Regular troops."<sup>182</sup>

Bugler Harry Gaunt, 7th, of Roundhay Road:

"I cannot speak of the spirit of our chaps too highly. They were joking and laughing as the shells were bursting over them and all around."<sup>183</sup>

Rfm A.E. Firth, 8th, of Wortley, employed at the Farnley Ironworks:

"I could not have dropped into a happier lot. We sing 'Has anyone seen a German band?' for Fritz nearly every night."<sup>184</sup>

The casualties suffered during the first spell of front line duty do not appear to have adversely affected morale. The Yorkshire Post of 21st May published extracts from the last letter of 2069 L/Cpl Andy Dods, C Coy, 7th, compositor, of South Harehills, written shortly before he was killed on 14th May.

"The fine spirit of the Territorials", said the Post, is displayed in the concluding passages:- 'We have had some casualties, of course, but they have only served to stiffen our lads, and, if possible, have made them more than ever determined to overcome our unscrupulous opponents. The sufferings British soldiers have had to undergo should serve as a stimulus to recruiting. Any person who asks himself what sort of people are we fighting, and answers his own question, and then fails to offer his services to his country, is unworthy [of] the name of Briton. We shall win, maybe not in a month, or a year, but win we shall, and the world will be sweeter by being purged of a foul state'".

Two letters referring in some detail to casualties end respectively:

"The battalion stood their poundings excellently, and are ready for anything... Some of the fellows do some humorous things quite unconsciously. I heard one softly singing the 'Rosary', punctuating the lines with shots at the Allemands";<sup>185</sup>

and

"The Sunday bombardment was something I shall never forget. We gave the Germans something to go on with. I don't think anyone can say that the 8th Leeds Rifles have not done their best. It would only have needed a word from our officer and we should have been over the top of our trenches, and at them, but that was not to be."<sup>186</sup>



The men in other battalions of the 49th Division were also in excellent spirits. Lt Horace Clayton-Smith, 5th KOYLI, son of a Pontefract solicitor, and a well-known local cricketer:

"Getting shelled out of billets periodically is quite exciting; far more than a Featherstone match. Don't think I shall ever funk a fast bowler after this lot (even on a bad wicket)."187

By 15th May, all ranks, whatever their ages, were feeling the combined effects of seemingly never-ending work, lack of sleep and protracted nervous and physical strain, and were more than thankful to be able to come out of the line and enjoy a complete rest for what was to turn out to be the best of two days. The 22-year-old tough rugby-playing L/Cpl Espin, a member of the prominent amateur Northern Union club, Buslingthorpe Vale, wrote:

"We are relieved at 9 pm by the Sherwoods much to our pleasure as we are done up, getting sick of it. Arrived at Laventie about 11 pm, running all the way. Never been this way before: could hardly walk, dead beat."188

Rfm Frank Ibbetson, 7th, a married man with children, and presumably older, wrote:

"Our battalion came out of the trenches late on Saturday night for a rest, and I can tell you we were all ready for it. None of us have had our boots off for ten days. I read that letter in The Yorkshire Evening Post about one of our chaps who had been in the trenches for 24 hours and said he wished he had been stopping 24 days, but I think he will have a different opinion now. Ten days is quite long enough for me, and all the other chaps seemed glad of a rest, especially after their first spell in the trenches, where there are usually two or three bombardments a day."189

(If Butcher's Diary, kept in some detail, is a full and complete record, this last statement is a somewhat wild exaggeration.)

Even 2/Lt Hugh Lupton, the 8th Signalling Officer, Cambridge undergraduate in mechanical sciences, of Roundhay, aged 21, was looking forward to a rest. However, he appears to have been far from down-hearted. Giving his address as "Hotel de Dugout, Rue de Firing Line" he wrote to his parents:

"We are to be relieved in the trenches tomorrow and will be going into rest billets I know not where. Still I shall not be sorry to be in safety for a few days. Just lately the Huns have been peppering us a bit with shrapnel and HE shells, but I don't think they have done much harm beyond annoying



the ration parties and breaking our [telephone] wires. This morning I was out collecting derelict wire when they began knocking shells about. They spotted a ration party of ours and picked up its range nicely. I never knew that the 8th could run as that party ran then: they really were comic. I went over and asked them whether any of them had been hurt, but there had been no damage at all though one man's foot had been slightly bruised which frightened him very much. Of course, the shells make a loud pop, but they don't generally do much in the open, especially if you can get cover from shrapnel, and the effect of the HE shells is very local. One of the signallers in the dugout had his writing-case opened for him by a shrapnel bullet just as he was taking it out of his pocket. It was not, however, opened in the intended way, but through the back. Our casualties so far are, however, very slight, and no officers have been hurt. Yesterday, we had a taste of what wet weather is like here, and I don't want another. The trench becomes a sort of quagmire, but nobody seems to mind very much. Last night there was a bit of a bombardment and I think it beat any fireworks show I have ever seen. The whole place was lit up brightly by the almost continuous flash and made a very fine light."<sup>190</sup>

On the first full day out of the trenches, 16th May, after a good rest, an issue of bread (meriting a special entry by Espin: "Hurrah! Bread at last!"), and the arrival of the mail from home, Rfm J.W. Pickles, C Coy, 8th, clerk in a city centre firm of chartered accountants whose senior partner, Charles Beevers, was a former Rifleman himself, was in cheery enough spirits to write the following to his erstwhile colleagues:

"My battalion has just returned from the trenches after 11 days. This, I may add, constitutes a record for the Territorial Force. The previous record was 10 days, achieved by the 13th London Regiment. On Tuesday it simply poured down all night, and by next day I was up to the knees in mud. This day eventually turned out warm, and my clothes dried on my back... Bavarians are opposite us, and I gave Fritz a whistle. He replied by whistle, and I yelled across that the company choir were about to give them a tune for the benefit of Von Turpitz. 'Rule Britannia' was sung, accompanied by a tin whistle, biscuit boxes for drums, and combs with tissue paper attached. This was encored and replied to by bullets skimming the parapet. Little did we know about the Lusitania then... I have had many narrow escapes. The trip wire bell, only two yards from me in the trench, was blown to bits yesterday. Each night a corporal and one man leave the trenches and work towards the enemy lines. I have already done this twice. The purpose is to listen for any movement the enemy may make. If once you are spotted, your number is up. I used Pear's Soap on the 7th inst., and since then I have used no other - nor water. I had my boots off for a few hours last night for the first time since a week last Tuesday."<sup>191</sup>



Rfm Knowles, one of the older men in the 7th, was merely pleased to be out of the trenches:

"We came out of the trenches late last night, and got here early this morning. We were in 10 days and nights, and were just about beat when we got here. We have had rather a hot time and have a lot of casualties [actual number: 13]. You remember that young Cockney lad that was staying with me at Gainsbro? Lloyd, I mean him that was always running errands. Well he got done in the other day, poor kid, he was only about 19. Everyone liked him. Well, sweetheart, I am in good health and spirits and am not worrying. It is a beautiful day and a treat to have a rest as we have been at it day and night since a week last Wednesday. It was one of the principal battlefields of the war where we have been, and I could have collected tons of souvenirs - German helmets, bullets, shells, bodies as well if we had wanted them, the stench in some parts was awful. But I am not carrying any extra luggage just yet. If I fetch myself home in one piece it will do for you, won't it, lass? I asked about Eddie [his brother in No. 4 platoon, A Coy] last night and I think he is all right... don't get worrying about me, as you know I was always happy go lucky. It's a good job, too, as it wouldn't do for anyone to be nervous out here... PS You can send me a little grub each week, if you can afford it. Nothing else."<sup>192</sup>

On 21st May, both battalions were due to return to the front line, but an epidemic of what appeared to be German measles had broken out in the 8th, 1 officer and 25 other ranks being sent to hospital,<sup>193</sup> and the battalion was promptly struck off trench duty until further notice. Owing to the manpower situation, however, it was placed in partial quarantine only: "During these days we were not quite idle but had to provide several working parties for digging behind the trenches and we also garrisoned and defended posts 20 and 21."<sup>194</sup> (19-year-old 1669 Albert Huffingley, a driller at Wilson and Mathieson's, of Kirkstall Road West, serving with his brother in B Coy, was killed on 24th May whilst coming out of post 20.) The 7th went into the line and was not relieved until the 29th, when the 8th was passed fit for duty by red-faced divisional medical officers who had mistaken for a highly infectious disease an allergic rash caused by the over-enthusiastic use of croesol by the launderers of the clean shirts and underclothing supplied to the men of the battalion on the 17th, when they were taken for their first bath.<sup>195</sup>

As a first step to further operations, Haig reorganised his First Army front between 31st May and 2nd June into one defensive and two offensive sectors. The former sector, eight miles long, was allotted to the Indian Corps which now comprised the Meerut, Lahore, 8th and 49th



Divisions. The West Riding Division took over the larger part of the Corps front.<sup>196</sup>

The two months spent in this sector, May and June, were a military finishing school for the 49th Division in which its education was polished and completed. The men came to realise that, in essence, war was "day after day the butchery of the unknown by the unseen, and events decided by the greatest mass of projectiles hurled simultaneously in the general direction of the enemy."<sup>197</sup> A learning process seemed to operate which decreased fear reactions. The men developed considerable ability in discriminating between the various sounds of the projectiles and between their trajectories and so assess their proximity to the target and take appropriate avoiding action. They soon learnt it was possible to trace a method or pattern in the bombardment of ordinary trench warfare. For instance, they learnt to forecast lulls by counting the numbers of rounds fired in a series.<sup>198</sup> The 5.9" howitzer shells, nicknamed "Jack Johnsons" after the famous Negro American boxer because they burst with a cloud of black smoke, but which officers usually referred to as "crumps", ordinarily gave a 7-10 second warning. Following the thud as the shell was fired

"was a series of 4 or 5 fairly rapid whistles, each louder than the last, culminating in a roar and a crash. The further away the shell was, the more certainly you heard the entire sequence of sounds, but if it was close, you heard only the last one, or two whistles at the most. No one ever heard the approach of the shell that got him. So, if you could hear the menacing sound of the approach, all you had to do was to sit tight, and all would be well. Other lessons to be learned were derived from the psychology of the enemy. He invariably fired a salvo of six rounds and then stopped. It was safe, therefore, to move towards a point at which fire was being directed so long as one made a mental note of the number of rounds being fired and timed one's arrival accordingly. Invariably, the fire ceased on my arrival and so I became regarded as a sort of 'miracle' man, whereas in fact I banked on a psychological judgement which never once failed me."<sup>199</sup>

2/Lt Hugh Lupton soon developed a contempt for German artillerymen and their missiles:

"It really is extraordinary what fools the Germans are";  
 "I haven't half the respect for artillery fire that I had. HE shells have only a very local effect, while cover is easily got from shrapnel." "I don't mind the guns a bit. They don't keep me awake in the least." "The Germans dropped a few shells round here today and last night, but I don't think they do it with any malicious intent." "I had



my first experience of a trench mortar yesterday, one bursting about ten yards away in the air. These seem to be treated as a mere joke by our people, though one did once kill one man. They make a loud noise and hit you in the face with a sort of warm thud such as you might experience on shutting an oven door quickly."<sup>200</sup>

By June the men felt themselves to be seasoned campaigners. Sanderson, a married man with three children, suspected that many of them like himself were actually enjoying the "Adventure" and he felt that some of the expressions so often repeated, such as "Jolly fine war, this is!" and "Wish it would last for ever", were frequently said as much in earnest as in jest.<sup>201</sup> Oral testimony and the newspaper letters appear to support this, e.g. "We are all in the best of spirits and I think as happy as can be under the circumstances. We are all in good hopes of being home for our Christmas dinners at the very latest."<sup>202</sup> There were spells of hot, sunny weather. There was the open-air life, well-spiced with danger. There was the ego-strengthening knowledge of performing a vitally important task. Certainly the majority were free, for the first time in their lives, from the fear that had constantly haunted the British working classes, fear of dismissal from work. "'They don't sack you here at any rate' was a common saying, and if it did generally elicit the rejoinder 'Worse luck!' such is merely the Tommy's way."<sup>203</sup> The men enjoyed the close-knit family life of the Regiment, with its wonderful comradeship and the far from impersonal relationships with the officers. Once they had learnt and settled down to the routine of trench life and reconciled themselves to the omnipresent threat of maiming or sudden death, soldiering became just another job and the Riflemen tradesmen of war, "Warriors for the working day":

"It is a marvellous thing how soon anyone gets used to a job. Six weeks ago when we took our first turn in the trenches, we were all a bit fluffy, but now see us going. We go just like going to work. With every shot that used to come we were ducking our nuts, but now they bother us very little."<sup>204</sup>

Rfm W.R. Morcombe, 8th, on his first experience of listening patrol:

"I felt strange at first, but you get used to it."<sup>205</sup>

Rfm W.H. Jacques, of Hyde Park, later commissioned in the 1/7th, works manager, son of a former Leeds Rifleman, to his former colleagues:

"We have been within sound of the guns ever since our arrival. Getting in and out are two of the greatest difficulties of trench work. The relieving of those in the trenches obviously must be accomplished under cover of



darkness. The approach to the holes... with bullets whizzing around your heads, and at periods shells bursting uncomfortably near, is no very pleasant sensation. Rather sporting, all the same. The approach to the trenches resembles nothing as much as the view obtained when approaching some huge fair in full swing at night. Lights are seen as far as the eye can discern, but the ping of the bullets, the whizzing of the shells, and the bang of the guns dispel the illusion."206

Sgt G.M. Barnett, chief cashier of the Leeds City Tramways:

"There are many thrills to be had walking up and down a quarter of a mile of trenches in pitch darkness to relieve sentries. However, one gets used almost to anything. The time passes very well up to midnight, but after that it is suspense; two hours seem like a day, and anyone gifted with a vivid imagination may see objects, which do not exist, moving over the parapets - nerves must be strong for life in the trenches... The daytime is spent in eating, sleeping, working and recreation... The daytime is made less monotonous by watching the shelling of aeroplanes. It surprises everyone to see how brave these aviators are. In spite of the mud, which has to be seen to be believed, the men have nothing to grumble about - for myself, I like difficulties - and the people at home suffer more than the troops in the trenches. I would rather be here than exchange places with those at home; in a sense, they have undoubtedly the hardest burden to bear."207

The last two sentences of this letter, apparently ironical in tone (note the echoes of Shakespeare's King Henry V), were probably aimed at his former colleagues in an attempt to shame them into enlisting. The desirability of introducing conscription was already a discussion topic amongst Riflemen (see below). The Evening News of 24th May had published a letter from Bugler Harry Gaunt of the 7th which included the following passage:

"About the reserves marching through Leeds, I think it is an awful thing when a regiment has to march round a large town like Leeds looking for men to defend their own country. If the men only knew what some soldiers were going through out here I think they would join the Army."

Knowles' letters illustrate quite well the gradual transformation process from tyro to veteran soldier. Knowles had enlisted, at great personal sacrifice, solely out of patriotic duty. He was deeply devoted to his pretty young wife and three children, the youngest only a baby, and was on the brink of real success in his chosen vocation of bookmaker when the war broke out. Born in a shabby street of back-to-backs in Little London, he had worked himself up into a position of some affluence. He lived in a large through terrace house with bay



window and garden, two important contemporary status symbols, in a Respectable working-class neighbourhood. He dressed well, lived well, and by the standards of the upper working class, spent lavishly. His eldest child recalled that his father could always pull a handful of gold sovereigns out of his pocket. Knowles was an excellent provider. His wife and children were always well-dressed and well-fed; the coal cellar was always full; the family were taken on seaside holidays, sometimes as far as the Isle of Man, at least once a year. When he had had a successful day at the races he came home laden with presents for all the family. "Gentleman Joe", as he was known in C Coy, would not have adjusted easily to such a different life style and to such a reduced standard of living as was now his lot. His comments upon his changed circumstances and upon the war are therefore of especial interest:

23rd May: "We are in some forts adjacent to the firing line. We have just been repairing a dugout, and it is fine; we have sleeping and eating apartments, and a fine apple tree just outside. I suppose we shall be away from here long before the apples arrive. We are more comfortable here than anywhere we have been. It is fairly safe in the daytime, except when they start shelling, when we have to dash for cover, but it is hot as soon as it gets dark. The German snipers make a speciality of sniping at one corner so they have christened it 'Suicide Corner'. I am with the easiest-going set of lads you can imagine."

25th May: "There has been a heavy bombardment, but instead of hitting us they shelled some houses near. One had the roof blown off and another was set on fire. We were stood watching the flames as they rose as high as the trees. You would be surprised to see us, no one takes the least notice of the firing. We go on writing or reading in our dugouts as if nothing was taking place. Our dugout is hit scores of times during the night by bullets and we have found spent shot right in the doorway next morning. We had to make a dash to Headquarters for rations last night during a lull in the bombardment, and the bullets weren't half screaming about all the time [the 1/4th KOYLI were successfully attacking a nearby enemy trench]... The lads were scouting for water in the dark this morning to make tea with on our fire, so you can tell we don't worry much. I am sorry to say our Regt. are losing lads every day, but it cannot be helped. We lost an officer named Sykes this morning; I have just seen him at Headquarters. I felt sorry for him as he was very popular, and he was only young... I have just read that racing has been stopped. I am sorry as it will ruin a lot of good pals of mine, but it will very likely make a lot enlist who would not have done so otherwise. I am pleased to see that we look like having conscription. I hope they do... I understand our armies are having a good time. Half a dozen batteries of the enemy were put out of action yesterday. Now that Italy has joined in things ought to hum a bit... Well,



my girl, I am glad to tell you that both British and French troops are to use gas, even if they have not already started. It is a good job. The war will be over all the quicker. Everyone you speak to here don't seem to think the War will last long; let's hope so."

29th May: "I want to tell you I had a right stroke of luck today. I did a 24 hours' guard finishing last night at 8 o'clock. We were relieved by a corporal and six men. Two of them were on duty today between 2 and 3 when a shrapnel shell burst right beside them. One had his leg blown off and the other badly hurt. I was in the exact place, doing the same guard, at the exact time 24 hours earlier, nuff said, 'what has to be will be'... Bradley and Taylor have left our company to be bomb throwers. I am glad they did not pick me because I don't fancy committing suicide. I can do my whack with a rifle and bayonet. ...I am in the pink, never better in my life for all we are roughing it. I have give my mind to it from the start. As regards feeling nervous I don't think I have any nerves."

3rd June: "We are going in tomorrow night for about a week... I see that Italy has started with a vengeance, and the British have been gaining ground nearly all along the line. Everyone here thinks it will soon be over... The cocoa and sugar will be grand in the trenches. We make little fires in biscuit tins, and then make cocoa etc over them. It is very handy about three in the morning when you are finishing 'stand to'. It is an exciting life, and rough, but I am getting quite used to it."

5th June: "Shells are hurrying across as I am writing this, but you take very little notice of them unless they are addressed to you."

10th June: "Our lads are sticking it fine, but I am sorry to say we have had a lot done in... you would be surprised how we enjoy ourselves under the circumstances. We were having a concert last night in a dugout."

17th June: "It is wonderful to see birds nesting and bringing up young right on the firing line, with the guns roaring and the bullets ping-pinging all over the place, but they take not the slightest notice."

20th June: "I have had one or two narrow escapes. For instance, when they were shelling last week, a shell skimmed the top of the barn where we were sleeping, and there were pieces of brick knocked clean through on to our packs which we use as pillows, but a miss is as good as a mile, and it didn't spoil our sleep."208

A civilian's view of the induction or acclimatisation process is given by the war correspondent, G. Valentine Williams (afterwards commissioned in the Irish Guards), in his book, published in September 1915, With Our Army in Flanders. Mr. Williams had spent the spring and summer of that year studying every aspect of the life and work of the BEF. He recalls the first Territorial battalion he ever saw in Flanders, a unit of the North Midland Division:



"The men of the battalion had been allowed to break the ranks. ...They stood about in groups in the desultory fashion of the Briton in a strange place... It did not need the bronze 'T' on collars and shoulder-straps to tell me that these were not Regular troops. These men were prone to silence, rather shy, a trifle helpless, as they stood about the rain-swept street, waiting for their officers to show them their billets, to tell them what to do."

Some time later, he saw the North Midland Territorial battalion again, on this occasion in the front line:

"...in the sunburnt, calmly deliberate veterans who manned the parapet I scarcely recognised the young troops with the half-fledged air."<sup>209</sup>

Towards the end of June it was decided that the 49th Division was ready to undertake important work in the hottest sector of the Western Front.



NOTES

1. Yorkshire Evening News, 12 April 1915.
2. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, and others.
3. Knowles letter, 12 April 1915.
4. Reynard Memoirs.
5. Perry Memoirs.
6. Personal communication.
7. Espin Diary, 15 April 1915.
8. Many of the "landladies" and "landlords" later kept in touch with the men, writing letters and sending them parcels of comforts.
9. Perry Memoirs.
10. Leeds Mercury, 16 April 1915.
11. Rfm P.G. Standley, article, 'With the Rifles 20 Years Ago', Yorkshire Evening Post, 6 May 1935.
12. Capt. P.G. Bales, The History of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919 (Halifax and London, 1920), p.10.
13. Wall notebook, entry dated 16 April 1915.
14. Perry Memoirs.
15. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th.
16. Sanderson Memoirs.
17. Perry Memoirs.
18. Sanderson Memoirs.
19. Wall notebook, entry dated 16 April 1915.
20. Perry Memoirs.
21. Rfm P.G. Standley, loc. cit.
22. Sanderson Memoirs.
23. Bellerby Memoirs.
24. Testimony of 2222 William Horsman Reynard, 8th.
25. Sanderson Memoirs.
26. Burrell Diary, 16 April 1915.
27. Wall notebook, 16 April 1915.
28. Ibid.
29. Perry Memoirs.
30. Rfm P.G. Standley, loc. cit.
31. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th; compare John O. Nettleton, The Anger of the Guns: An Infantry Officer on the Western Front (London, 1979), p.29.
32. A reminiscence very similar to this is quoted in M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), p.41. The incident was also recorded by Capt. E.V. Tempest, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, Vol. I, 1/6th Battalion (Bradford, 1921), p.22.



33. Perry Memoirs.
34. Ibid.
35. Testimony of 1712 Bandsman J.W. Sanderson, 8th.
36. Wall Notebook, 16 April 1915.
37. Sanderson Memoirs.
38. Espin Diary, 20 April 1915.
39. Reynard Memoirs.
40. G. Coppard, With a Machine-gun to Cambrai (London, 1968; 1980 edn.), p.17.
41. Reynard Memoirs.
42. Burrell Diary, 20 April 1915.
43. Yorkshire Post, 26 April 1915.
44. Knowles letters, undated, and 20 April 1915.
45. Reynard Memoirs.
46. Knowles letter, 20 April 1915.
47. Burrell Diary, 20 April 1915.
48. Reynard Memoirs.
49. Burrell Diary, 22 April 1915.
50. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1 February 1916.
51. Testimony of Mrs. Herbert Fearnley.
52. 'Kitchener's Army: The Somme and After', Journal of the Royal United Services Institute, Vol. 123, No. 1 (March 1978), 17.
53. Sanderson Memoirs.
54. Yorkshire Post, 20 May 1915.
55. See, for example, Espin Diary, 15 May 1915.
56. Butcher Diary, 24 May 1915.
57. Wainwright Notebook, 6 May 1915.
58. See, for example, J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun: A Personal Narrative of the Somme, Ypres and Arras (London, 1978), pp.150-1.
59. Testimony of 2554 Claude N. Pepper, 8th.
60. Testimony of 2290 Joseph Carter, 7th.
61. Compare "The only thing I am afraid of is fear". The Duke of Wellington, 3 November 1831, J. Bartlett, Familiar Quotations (London, 14th edn. 1968), p.506a.
62. For example: P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, Not for Glory (Oxford, 1969), p.32; H.E.L. Mellersh, Schoolboy into War (London, 1978), p.68; C.P. Clayton, The Hungry One (Llandysul, 1978), p.10.
63. Sanderson Memoirs.
64. E.D. Wittkower and J.P. Spillane, 'Neuroses in War', British Medical Journal, (1940 Vol. I), 224. This valuable review unfortunately does not contain a list of references.
65. Graham H. Greenwell, An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-1918 (London, 1972), p.14, also p.13; see also Henry Williamson, The Patriot's Progress (London, 1930; 1968 new edn.), pp. 58, 71; Julian Grenfell's poem 'Into Battle', written in 1915.



66. Reckless conduct of this nature was a court-martial offence.
67. Leeds Mercury, 5 May 1915.
68. Yorkshire Evening Post, 3 May 1915; Yorkshire Post, 4 May 1915.
69. Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 May 1915.
70. Sanderson Memoirs.
71. Leeds Mercury, 30 April 1915.
72. Sanderson Memoirs.
73. Butcher Diary, 29 April 1915.
74. Espin Diary, 26 April 1915.
75. Yorkshire Post, 4 May 1915.
76. Knowles letter, undated, but evidently written on 29 April 1915.
77. For example, Rfm Charles Richmond, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 5 May 1915.
78. Yorkshire Post, 14 May 1915.
79. Butcher Diary, 24 April 1915.
80. Perry Memoirs; 1/8th Bn War Diary, 30 April 1915, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], War Office, WO 95/2795.
81. Wainwright Notebook, 27 April 1915.
82. Testimony of 2222 W.H. Reynard, 8th.
83. Testimony of 1726 J. Barker, 7th.
84. G.H. Greenwell, op. cit., p.37.
85. Testimony of 2992 George A. Walker, 7th.
86. Yorkshire Evening Post, 5 May 1915; Yorkshire Post, 8 May 1915.
87. Perry Memoirs.
88. Compare, for example, C.P. Clayton, op. cit., p.10.
89. Bellerby Memoirs.
90. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 April 1915.
91. Ibid., 25 April 1915.
92. Yorkshire Post, 12 May 1915.
93. Ibid., 5 May 1915.
94. Ibid.; Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 May 1915.
95. Testimony of 1726 J. Barker, 7th.
96. Perry Memoirs.
97. Yorkshire Post, 3 May 1915.
98. Quoted by E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918 (London, n.d. [1924]), Vol. I, p.53.
99. Yorkshire Post, 5 May 1915.
100. Sanderson Memoirs.
101. Testimony of Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th.
102. Sanderson Memoirs.
103. Knowles letter, 4 May 1915.



104. Espin Diary, 2 May 1915.
105. Sanderson Memoirs.
106. Knowles letter, 4 May 1915.
107. Tetley Diary.
108. Butcher Diary, 5 May 1915.
109. Knowles letter, 7 May 1915.
110. Testimony of 3227 Clarence Lazenby, 7th.
111. Yorkshire Post, 15 May 1915.
112. Espin Diary, 6 May 1915.
113. Sir J.E. Edmonds, History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, Military Operations, France and Belgium (hereinafter referred to as OH), Vol. IV, 1915 (London, 1928), pp.30-1.
114. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 8 May 1915.
115. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 9 May 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
116. Reynard Memoirs.
117. Wall Notebook, entry undated.
118. A great exaggeration: it was impossible to fire 400 rounds in 15 minutes with a CLLE rifle. Extra ammunition had been issued the previous day. This would be 50 rounds per man, making the individual allocation 170 rounds. There was a shortage of SAA ammunition at this period.
119. Butcher Diary, 9 May 1915; Yorkshire Post, 19 May 1915.
120. 1712 Cpl John William Sanderson, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 24 August 1915.
121. Yorkshire Evening News, 24 May 1915.
122. Ibid., 26 May 1915.
123. Ibid., 27 May 1915.
124. Yorkshire Post, 15 May 1915.
125. Testimony of Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th.
126. Sgt W. Wood, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 14 June 1915; Rfm E. Bilborough, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 22 May 1915.
127. This was the chief drawback of the obsolete charger-loading Lee Enfield with which the Territorials were armed. It overheated after 15-20 rounds had been fired, the rifle bolt jammed and the gun had then to be allowed to cool (testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th). "...over a hundred rounds per man in fifteen minutes" may sound quite a lot, but as this works out at only seven rounds per minute, it compares very badly with the Regulars' Short Lee Enfield which was capable of firing over thirty rounds per minute and was not prone to overheating.
128. An unnamed Rifleman, Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 May 1915.
129. Oral testimony.
130. Oral testimony.
131. Yorkshire Evening News, 17 May 1915.
132. Ibid. Compare the very similar reactions of Henry Williamson's hero, John Bullock, who is "Everyman-become-Everysoldier", op. cit., p.71.



133. Yorkshire Evening Post, 31 May 1915.
134. Leeds Mercury, 18 May 1915.
135. Oral testimony.
136. Leeds Mercury, 14 June 1915.
137. Sanderson Memoirs.
138. Testimony of 1090 James Rhind, 8th.
139. Yorkshire Evening News, 26 May 1915.
140. Leeds Mercury, 24 May 1915.
141. Tetley Diary.
142. Smith Notebook, entry undated.
143. All the statements in this paragraph are oral testimonies.
144. Oral testimony. See also S. Rogerson, Twelve Days (London, 1933), pp. 77, 86.
145. Oral testimony. See also Capt. P.G. Bales, op. cit., p.22.
146. John O. Nettleton, op. cit., p.41.
147. Oral testimony.
148. OH, Vol. IV, 1915 (London, 1928), pp.41, 33, 39-40.
149. Butcher Diary, 10 May 1915.
150. Espin Diary, 10 May 1915.
151. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 10 May 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
152. Ibid., 11 May 1915.
153. Yorkshire Post, 17 May 1915.
154. Yorkshire Evening Post, 13 May 1915.
155. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 13 May 1915; War Diary, 12 May 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
156. Espin Diary, 26 May 1915.
157. Butcher Diary, 24 May, 9 June 1915.
158. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 9 June 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
159. Testimony of Bombardier Reginald Naylor, 10th Battery (Otley), 148th (4th WR) Brigade RFA.
160. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 15 August 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
161. For example, see Butcher Diary, 8 June 1915.
162. Bellerby Memoirs.
163. Leeds Mercury, 16 June 1915.
164. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 12 June 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
165. Testimony of Bugler 2891 Charles Edward Hannan, 8th, a member of Smith's platoon.
166. Espin Diary, 15 May 1915.
167. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 15 May 1915.
168. Yorkshire Evening News, 16 June 1915.
169. Butcher Diary, 21, 22, 24 May 1915.



170. Sanderson Memoirs.
171. Sir J.E. Edmonds and Lt. Col. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, OH, 1918, Vol.V. (London, 1947), p.597.
172. John Terraine, ed., General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964), p.113.
173. Tetley Diary.
174. See, for example, 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 14 August 1915.
175. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
176. Oral testimony.
177. See Appendix I, section 9, for an explanation of this term.
178. Lupton letter, 20 May 1916.
179. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
180. Testimony of 2221 George A. Fletcher, 8th; corroborated by 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 8th.
181. Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May 1915.
182. Yorkshire Evening News, 19 May 1915.
183. Ibid., 17 May 1915.
184. Ibid., 24 May 1915.
185. Sgt A.E. Flint, 8th, engineering draughtsman, Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May 1915.
186. L/Cpl Arthur Clarke, D Coy, 8th, of Kirkstall Road East, serving with his brother Edward, Yorkshire Post, 19 May 1915.
187. Yorkshire Post, 22 May 1915.
188. Espin Diary, 15 May 1915.
189. Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 May 1915.
190. Lupton letter, 14 May 1915.
191. Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May 1915. Note the humorous reference in the penultimate sentence to the famous Pear's cartoon and advertisement.
192. Knowles letter, 16 May 1915.
193. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 24 May 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
194. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 May 1915.
195. Testimony of Sgt 132 Harry Thackray, 8th.
196. Sir J.E. Edmonds, OH, Vol. IV, 1915 (London, 1928), p.93.
197. 'The War Day by Day', Times, 24 November 1914, 5 b-c.
198. See Chap. 10; also "Ex-Private X", War is War (London, 1930), pp.78-9; W.L. Andrews, Haunting Years: The Commentaries of a War Territorial (London, n.d. [1930]), p.233; A. Thomas, A Life Apart (London, 1968), pp. 111-2.
199. Testimony of 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 8th.
200. Lupton letters, 8 June, 16, 17 May, 15, 18 June 1915.
201. Sanderson Memoirs.
202. Rfm A. O'Shaughnessy, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 16 June 1915.



203. Sanderson Memoirs.
204. Rfm James Sugden, D Coy, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 16 June 1915; compare the testimony of Sgt Billman, 9th East Surreys, M. Brown, Tommy goes to War (London, 1978), p.73; see also P. MacGill, The Great Push: an episode of the Great War (London, 1916), pp. 129, 131; P. Gibbs, Realities of War (London, 1920), p.324; W.L. Andrews, op. cit., p.143.
205. Leeds Mercury, 16 June 1915.
206. Yorkshire Post, 28 May 1915.
207. Ibid., 31 May 1915; Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 May 1915.
208. Knowles letters, 23, 25, 29 May, 3, 5, 10, 17, 20 June 1915.
209. With Our Army in Flanders (London, 1915), pp.301, 303.



CHAPTER 10.      MILITARY OPERATIONS

Although the Regiment had four Active Service battalions during the war, only two of these, the 1/7th (49th Division) and the 8th (62nd Division), both of which had had a continuous existence since 1908, remained at the cessation of hostilities, the 1/8th and the 2/8th having been amalgamated in February 1918 to form the 8th Bn and the 2/7th having been disbanded in June 1918. The difficult apprenticeship period, culminating in the Battle of Bullecourt, May 1917, of the 2/7th and 2/8th, and their important part as members of a leading infantry brigade (185, 62nd Division) in the Battle of Cambrai, November 20th/21st 1917, have unfortunately had to be omitted. No unpublished documents relating to these two battalions in 1917 were unearthed, other than their respective Official War Diaries. Only 2 of the respondents were present at Bullecourt, and only 2 at Cambrai: they could recall nothing of these operations but the merest fragmentary impressions which were useless for the purposes of the present study, indeed all the 2 respondents who were at Bullecourt could say was that "the shellfire was absolutely terrible." (The very heavy casualties, virtually all local men, sustained by the 2/7th and 2/8th battalions during their first six months of active service perhaps explains the very small number of respondents from these units obtained.)

The contrasting roles in the war of the two West Riding Territorial divisions - that of the 49th as a "holding" division, that of the 62nd as an "assaulting" division - arose as an inevitable result of their early records of active service. At the end of 1915, following 6 months' continuous duty holding the line in what was generally admitted to be a most dangerous sector of the Ypres Salient, at that time itself the "hottest" part of the entire Western Front, the 49th, never having yielded a single yard of ground nor a single post to the enemy, had won a reputation for steadfastness, loyalty, reliability and devotion to duty. Following what Haig described as its "brilliant achievement"<sup>1</sup> at Cambrai in making the record infantry advance in any one day (up to that point in the war) of over 7,000 yards, over-running two German defence systems and capturing three villages including Havrincourt, the strongpoint of the Hindenburg Front Line, capturing some 2,000 prisoners and 37 heavy guns, and handing over all gains intact to the relieving division, the 62nd became an elite or "crack" division and thereafter figured prominently in the so-called "German Black List" which so many British troops firmly believed existed.<sup>2</sup> The comparison of the military experiences of the 1/7th and 1/8th with those of the 8th is therefore of more than ordinary interest.



## 10.1 1915: 1/7th and 1/8th: Ypres Salient

On June 25th the 49th Division was suddenly taken out of the line and ordered north to Ypres where it was to join the VI Corps and take over the North Salient from the 4th Division which was badly in need of a rest. The 49th was probably the likeliest of the possible candidates for the job. It had completed a far from easy apprenticeship with flying colours and its high standard of discipline had impressed even the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>3</sup> Both the Commander of the 2nd Army, Sir Herbert Plumer, and the VI Corps Commander, Sir John Keir, were convinced believers in the military value of the Territorial Force: Plumer, as GOC Northern Command before and at the beginning of the war, had taken a keen and very active interest in the training and progress of the West Riding Division; Keir had been GOC South Midland Division before the war. The Salient was no place for a weak link in the chain of defence. As the 2nd Battle of Ypres had ended less than 5 weeks previously, it was essential that the division chosen to take over the North Salient should be thoroughly reliable. Although no important Allied operations were envisaged in this sector in the foreseeable future - major attacks were planned only at Loos, further south - it was vital that the enemy should not gain any impression that a breakthrough was possible here. The orders issued to the 49th Division throughout its six months' stay never varied: the front line was to be held at all costs.<sup>4</sup> Two brigades were always in the line while the third was in "rest".

The 1/8th was not at all sorry to leave the Laventie trenches which, after the recent very wet weather, "were over the boot-tops in mud and water in the driest parts, whilst in the communication trenches we were often knee-deep." Lt Lupton referred in letters to "a swim up to the trenches" and "a swim out of the trenches."<sup>5</sup> An ominous portent of what lay ahead was provided by the demonstration lectures given to the battalion officers shortly after coming out of the trenches on poisonous gases and the use of the respirator and Vermoral knapsack sprayer.<sup>6</sup> After a march of four days, the battalion arrived at Proven in Belgium, in torrents of rain, very tired, very foot-sore, wet through, and everybody cursing and grumbling.<sup>7</sup> The men were to discover what war and "Hell on Earth" (as survivors of 2nd Ypres had described the Salient) were really like much earlier than they had anticipated. At that moment the 11th Infantry Brigade (4th Division) was in action near Boesinghe in a line recently taken over from the French. Assistance was urgently requested from the newly arrived Division. The 1/8th was singled out and bussed up as close as possible in London General motor buses. It was attached to the 11th Brigade until further notice and went into support.<sup>8</sup>



A small operation on a German salient in the line between Boesinghe and Ypres was planned by the 11th Brigade for 6th July. The following few days were arduous and dangerous for the men of the 1/8th. At least three-quarters of the battalion were engaged nightly in working parties in the front line and communication trenches; the remainder provided guards on the roads for traffic regulation.<sup>9</sup> There was considerable shelling by both sides. Sgt Angus Macfarlane, 8th, wrote to his mother on the difficulties of digging new trenches under almost continuous fire. He comments in truth

"This is one of those little jobs that do not shine in the reports, but it involves the maximum amount of risk with the minimum amount of honour."<sup>10</sup>

On 3rd July came a new experience:

"Enemy using large numbers of gas bombs and shells. Gas effected [sic] men's eyes, noses and throats mostly but none were very seriously effected, and were able to carry out the work allotted to them, with a few exceptions who had to be sent to hospital suffering from gas poisoning. This was the first experience of gas in this Batt<sup>n</sup>. [sic] and all men behaved exceedingly well, there being no excitement and no one losing his head."

18 NCOs and men were admitted to hospital,<sup>11</sup> but all returned within 24 hours.<sup>12</sup> L/Cpl Espin, as was often the case, found the experience traumatic:

"Terrible bombardment all day long. I thought my time had come today: 2 holes through mess tin - shrapnel - and a piece passed through my tunic neck, never touching me. Enemy use gas. We have lost heavy with gas. Pitiful sight. Men are choking round me as I write this. I am fed up."<sup>13</sup>

Lt Lupton, however, classed the gas bombardment as "a little amusement" and boasted "now we shall be able to crow over the other battalions, having smelt the real thing." His men did exactly that.<sup>14</sup>

The 11th Brigade's operation was completely successful, resulting in the capture of 500 yards of enemy front line; the 1/8th, held in reserve, was not called upon.<sup>15</sup> Large working parties, however, were sent to the captured trenches to "put them in a state of defence, the enemy giving very little trouble, there being very little rifle fire, and shell fire mostly going over the first line trenches."<sup>16</sup> During the period of attachment to the 11th Brigade, all ranks of the 1/8th were given Battle Order haircuts for the first time:<sup>17</sup> the hair was closely cropped to about 1/8" all over (a) to frustrate head lice, and (b) to facilitate the dressing of any head wounds and to cut down the risk of infection. Surprisingly, no respondent, either at the time or since, saw anything ominous in this mass hair-cutting operation. The 1/8th was returned to the 49th Division on 7th July when it came up to replace the 4th Division, and went into



Divisional Reserve. The 1/7th went into the front line.

As they went into the trenches, relieving a battalion of the 12th Brigade, the Germans were making a heavy counter-attack on the [recently captured] trenches on the left, and the front line and supports were heavily shelled the following morning.<sup>18</sup> Of the bombardment L/Cpl Charles Hemingway wrote home "Dante's Inferno was a trifle [compared] to it."<sup>19</sup> The Battalion had to wait only until its second full day in the line to undergo its first experience of gas shells: 13 men were slightly affected before they were able to put on their gas helmets and were taken to hospital.<sup>20</sup> The battalion was subjected to a continuous bombardment, fluctuating in intensity, for the following four days; the relief of the 13th was postponed for a "considerable time" on account of a "severe" bombardment of "mixed projectiles including gas shells" and could not be completed until 2.20 am of the 14th.<sup>21</sup> The enemy was making a determined attack on 148 Brigade on the left, which was successfully resisted,<sup>22</sup> whilst bombarding the front line and support trenches very heavily on either side of the position under attack,<sup>23</sup> the customary procedure in such affairs. Knowles wrote:

"I was in a traverse that was blown in by a shell. I was smothered with dirt, but did not get hurt. We had to wear our gas helmets for a while as the Germans were sending gas shells over. We had the trenches piled high with cartridges ready to hand and fixed bayonets, expecting them to attack every minute."<sup>24</sup>

L/Cpl Hemingway wrote,

"We waited in smoke helmets for two hours, but the enemy did not come over. If they had come the lads of the 7th would have given them the time of their lives."<sup>25</sup>

The Division's stay in the Salient was one of "comparative military inactivity"; phrases such as "nothing to report" or "nothing of importance happened" are common in the 1/7th War Diary, for instance. Such phrases convey an entirely false impression. Although the Division was never in action, infantry activity being confined to the nightly patrols, it was engaged in the most hellish siege warfare imaginable. The fire from enemy artillery, trench mortars, machine guns and rifles was severe. The noise and vibration caused by the guns and the various types of lethal projectiles that filled the air was loud and continuous, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

"There was no quietude in the terrible Salient ... To the newcomer that never-ceasing scream of shells and the roar of the guns was an awesome and terrifying thing."

"The guns were hardly ever silent, and even when they did cease fire, the intervals were broken by the heavy explosion of trench mortar bombs, 'whizz-bangs', rifle- and hand-grenades. Peace there was none."<sup>26</sup>

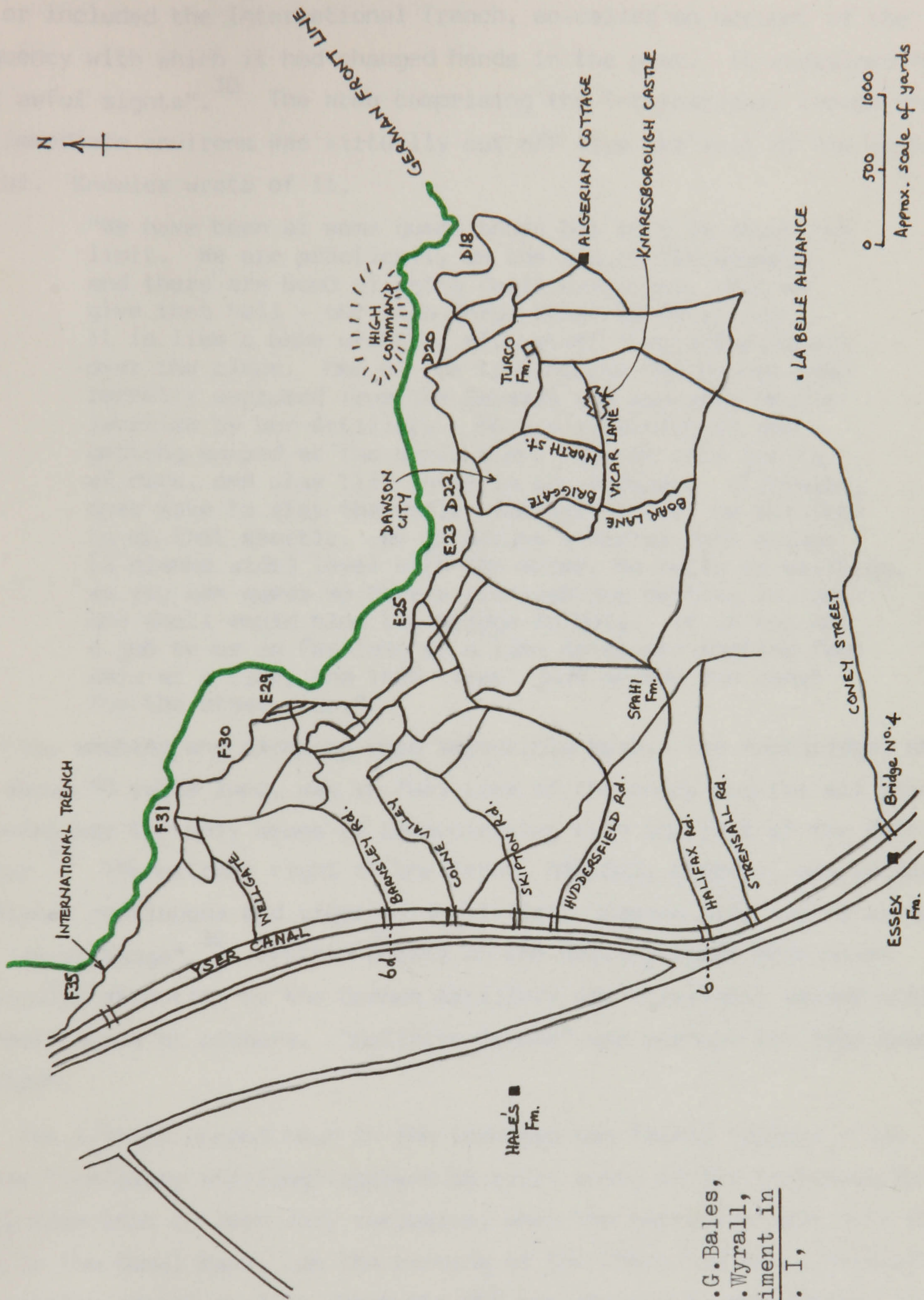


The forward zone east of the Yser Canal was shaken by continuous fire, but no part of the Salient was safe from the German artillerymen who, with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of ammunition, methodically and assiduously searched for gun emplacements, dumps, camps, transports, working parties. Enemy aircraft were also very active: Espin, on 2nd July, for instance, saw "10 planes fighting at once."<sup>27</sup> Nor was any type of employment undertaken by members of an infantry battalion safer than any other. Casualties among men and animals in the Transport sections of both 1/7th and 1/8th were severe, the officer of the former being killed; gas masks were eventually provided for the animals. After his first night on a Salient ration party, Rfm W. Marsden, 8th, wrote, "It is like walking into a death trap. You talk about Hell on Earth, it is not in it."<sup>28</sup>

The 49th Division held the extreme left of the British front, from the boundary with the French (sector F35) to sector D18, about 750 yards east of Turco Farm. Over most of the divisional front No Man's Land varied in width from 80 to 150 yards. In places near Turco Farm No Man's Land was perhaps 300 yards wide; in sector F35 the distance to the German line was only 20-30 yards and one sap ran out to a point only 15 yards from the enemy. The divisional sector was overlooked and completely dominated by higher ground - Pilkem Ridge on the left and the so-called "German High Command" on the right, opposite Turco Farm - which was entirely in the hands of the enemy who thus possessed superior observation, and who appeared to fire at anything that moved. It was popularly claimed that if so much as a rat ran across the Menin Road in daylight, a salvo of shells would fall on the spot a few minutes later. "Brigade reserve" was the notorious Canal Bank which was frequently shelled in order to destroy the dams and bridges; in addition, the stretch between bridges 6d, at Barnsley Road, and 6, at Halifax Road, was at the mercy of German machine-gunners who were able to fire straight down the Canal in enfilade (the most effective type of machine-gun fire). "Divisional reserve" meant, often enough, the unwelcome attentions of a 17" gun known as "The Ypres Express" (from the noise made by its shells whose craters measured about 40 feet in diameter and were some 15 feet deep) and salvos of gas shells.

No part of the divisional front was preferable to any other: the extreme left was perhaps the worst and the most dangerous. Some of the trenches here had been captured as recently as July and were in a very broken-up condition; there were no dugouts.<sup>29</sup> Owing to the proximity of the enemy there was virtually complete freedom from artillery fire but, to compensate, the unfortunate occupants received an enormous number of trench mortar bombs and hand-grenades as well as a great deal of machine-gun and rifle fire. Wiring was impossible and constant vigilance was





Source: Maps, (i) Capt P.G.Bales, op.cit., p.58; (ii) E.Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918, Vol. I, opposite p.142.

Fig.7. Forward zone, 49th Divisional sector, N. Ypres Salient, 1915



essential, since the positions could be easily rushed at night. This sector included the International Trench, so-called on account of the frequency with which it had changed hands in the past. It contained "some most awful sights".<sup>30</sup> The area comprising the International Trench and its immediate environs was virtually cut off from the rest of the British sector. Knowles wrote of it,

"We have been at some queer shops but this is about the limit. We are practically on the top of the Germans and there are bomb slinging duels every day. But we give them hell - our lads throw three to their one. It is like a bone orchard, with stiff 'uns unburied all over the place. One of the trenches we occupy has been recently captured from the Germans and was very nearly levelled by our Artillery. We are repairing it and getting sniped at the whole time. We can only get in at dark, and stay till three in the morning. Of course, some have to stay the whole time but it will be our turn to do that shortly. We go across a narrow foot bridge [2 planks wide] level with the water, no rails or anything, so you can guess we have a ticklish job getting in, as one shell would blow the bridge to Hell. It is too hot a job to be on for long at a time so we are working four days at a time, and then 'rest' just across the canal for the other four."

Shaving, washing and sleeping were impossible here. The footbridge, which was about 50 yards long, was in full view of the enemy and for all practical purposes was the only means of communicating with the rest of the British sector.<sup>31</sup> The extreme right of the Front, D18-D22, however, was subjected to almost continuous and vigorous shell-fire; Dawson City was notorious for "whizz-bangs".<sup>32</sup> Certain points on the Salient roads were given particular attention by the German artillery and inevitably became known as "hot" spots or corners. "Hellfire Corner" was perhaps the best known of these.

The 1/7th's second tour in the trenches was fairly typical. The phrase "customary shelling" appears in every entry in the battalion War Diary from 20th to 26th July inclusive, when the battalion went into dug-outs on the Canal Bank. On the evening of the 25th, the men witnessed an exciting aerial duel in which the RFC man dropped a hand grenade which set fire to his opponent's petrol tank and caused the German plane to crash in flames:<sup>33</sup> "... you should have heard us cheer", wrote Rfm H. Hall of B Coy, "it was like being at Headingley when Leeds and Hunslet meet for the Lazenby Cup."<sup>34</sup> On the 27th and again on the 28th the men amused themselves all day long taking it in turns to row up and down the Canal in a heavy RE pontoon.<sup>35</sup> They were of course off duty, but should have been sleeping since they had been working all night. At 8.30 am on the 29th "Heavy shelling of dam commenced at rate of 2 x 8.27" H E shells



per 5 minutes. This was kept up until 12 noon, when rate reduced to 1 per 5 minutes. Several dugouts blown in. 1 officer and 10 men wounded."<sup>36</sup> When the bombardment started, 2122 Robert Vine of B Coy was opening a parcel from his mother. 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher of D Coy, in his dugout near the top of the embankment, was cooking his breakfast when a shell dropped in the Canal outside. He was showered with mud, the breakfast was completely ruined and the dugout entrance was partly blocked.<sup>37</sup>

"Lt Briggs was standing at the entrance to the officers' dugout with a bottle in his hand and was acting about, reckoning [dial.: "pretending" or "supposing"] to look through it like a telescope. Suddenly he spots this shell coming straight at us and yelled 'Look out, lads, this B-'s for us!' and dived into the dugout and we all dived into ours. He was completely buried. I was first on the scene. I shouted for others to come and help and started digging with my bare hands. 5 men and Mr Glazebrook came and we dug like maniacs, but he was barely alive when we got him out."<sup>38</sup>

The same shell, exploding underground, also buried about a dozen men in the dugouts next door. Rfm George Smith described his experiences to his mother:

"... the next shell came down just behind our dugout, and made a hole in the ground big enough to bury a horse and cart in. Harry, myself, and three more were in the 'house' at the time, while H. Watts, with about seven others, were in the next 'house', when the shell exploded and buried us nearly alive. As soon as the smoke cleared away, some of the others came with picks and shovels, and dug us out. A pal named Harry Kitching had his head just above the ground, but all the rest of us were completely buried. Our rescuers worked like slaves, and in a short time they got us all out. Some of the fellows sustained broken legs, one had a few ribs broken, while others escaped only crushed a little. Harry and myself were the most fortunate of the lot. Except for a few black bruises on the back, I escaped untouched. I can tell you it is a real experience being buried alive, and one I do not want again in a while. All my belongings were buried, these including equipment, rifle, greatcoat, and, worst of all, your parcel which I had only just opened. I had not had time to have a cigarette out before the affair happened. All I possess at present is a pair of boots, socks, trousers, tunic and a shirt."<sup>39</sup>

The shelling did not cease until 1 am on the 30th:

"only 2 shells fell after that hour - in all 230-odd shells fell near the dam, which remained untouched, although the adjoining bridge was damaged in 3 places."<sup>40</sup>

The phrase "only 2 shells" would appear to refer to 8.27" shells only, since, according to the Butcher Diary, the battalion position continued to receive "small shells" throughout the day. Knowles rashly claimed that "more shells dropped into the canal in one bombardment than were used in the whole South African War."<sup>41</sup> (The censor, who had expunged large



sections of this letter, had ignored this statement.) The dam was shelled again on the following morning, but no damage was caused.<sup>42</sup> On August 1st the battalion went into the second-line trenches for 6 days. On August 4th the Germans apparently decided to mark the first anniversary of the outbreak of war by commencing a heavy bombardment of the whole line that was to last several days. The bombardment of the 6th was so intense that the men of the 1/7th were obliged to take refuge in the front line.<sup>43</sup>

The casualties for this tour were as follows: July 20-26: 1 killed, 6 wounded; July 26-31: 1 officer killed, 12 men wounded; August 1-6: 3 men wounded. Total for the 18 days: 2 killed, 21 wounded. This was about average. Total casualties for the 25-week period in the Salient were 228, 17.1% killed: officers: killed or died of wounds 2, wounded 6; other ranks: killed or died of wounds 37, wounded 159, gassed 24.<sup>44</sup> Total casualties in the 1/8th for their 26-week period of duty were 270, 14.8% killed: officers: killed 1, wounded 8; other ranks: killed or died of wounds 39, wounded 204, gassed 18.<sup>45</sup> (Total casualties for the 1/4th DWR, 147 Bde, were 340, of which 82 were sustained in the gas attack of 19th December.)<sup>46</sup> The weekly average casualty rate in the Leeds Rifles in the Salient was thus 9-10, compared with an average rate in the Fauquissart-Fleurbaix-Laventie sector of 7-8.

The bulk of casualties in the Salient resulted from shellfire, whereas rifle bullets had been responsible for more than half the casualties sustained in the Fauquissart-Fleurbaix-Laventie sector. Sir Herbert Plumer is said to have been satisfied if Second Army casualties did not exceed two hundred a day in ordinary trench work.<sup>47</sup> Considering the frequency, intensity and duration of the artillery and trench mortar bombardments to which the two battalions were subjected, the Leeds Rifles casualties were surprisingly slight. Several factors seemed to have contributed to the low casualty rate. First, the men were now experienced veterans. Sheer inexperience had caused many of the casualties from sniper fire in their previous sector. Trench mortar bombs could be seen approaching both by day and by night, for they were bulky objects with a large glowing fuse, and avoiding action could often be taken. The men had quickly realised that the Germans were slaves to routine and took advantage of the fact. Salvoes of trench mortar bombs were sent over from the "German High Command" every morning at the same time, immediately after "stand down."<sup>48</sup> A fixed machine-gun sighted on an exposed stretch of road might fire a burst either at fixed times or at fixed intervals, say, every 5 minutes, and it was safe to cross at other times.<sup>49</sup> German batteries fired salvoes at fixed intervals and registered the same targets at the same



time every day,<sup>50</sup> and so on. Military policemen regulated traffic on the roads on the basis of German artillery routine.<sup>51</sup> Second, the depth and extreme narrowness of many of the Salient trenches afforded a very large measure of protection from shellfire, except where direct hits and high explosive shells were concerned. (On the extreme left, however, because they were so little raised above the height of the Canal, the trenches consisted mainly of sandbag breastworks.) Third, generally speaking, the cost-effectiveness of the German bombardments was extremely low.<sup>52</sup> "On Aug. 25 and 27 they bombarded our line heavily with Trench Mortars and heavy guns but did very little damage considering the amount of stuff they sent over" (casualties: 2 killed, 4 wounded).<sup>53</sup> Knowles wrote, "It's marvellous the hundreds of shells they send over without hitting anyone." "German shelling is very ineffective", reported Lt Lupton, while 1866 L. George Clough, 1/7th, declared that the German artillery was "not half as good" as the British.<sup>54</sup> To take a specific example, that of 29th July: over 230 8.27" shells expended, the target untouched, a bridge slightly damaged; practically all the shells fell harmlessly without causing any significant damage. The shell that killed Lt Briggs and wounded 10 others, like the 17" shell that fell on the 3rd Monmouths (the pioneer battalion of the 49th Division) at Elverdinghe on 29th December 1915, causing 64 casualties, nearly half of them killed,<sup>55</sup> appears as something of a fluke.<sup>56</sup>

The low cost-effectiveness of the enemy bombardments did not appear either to comfort or to lessen the agonies of the casualty under fire. Signaller J.R. Currie, 1/8th, wrote to his mother from hospital:

"How I came out of it alive I don't know. We have lived through horrors unspeakable. Before getting a dose of gas I was hit on the mouth with a bomb. Luckily the bomb did not burst, but it broke my teeth. They got me out and sent me on a stretcher down the communication trench to the hospital, about a mile from the firing-line. On the way down, shells were falling everywhere. Oh! the horror of it all. I was helpless and every time the men heard a shell whistling over, down they went, stretcher and all, till it had burst. They got me to the dressing-station, but could not send me to a hospital just then. So they put me in a dugout, with four other men, on the banks of the - [censored] Canal, until it was quieter. We had not been in long, however, before we were subjected to a terrible bombardment. Some of us crawled out. 'Where shall we go', said one poor fellow. There was nowhere to go. Shells were falling everywhere. Huge trees were blown into the air, and some were cut clean in two. It was terrible. Shells dropped into the canal and burst at the bottom, sending water and mud high into the air. The canal seemed on fire, the flame coming up when the shells burst. Round about there was hardly an inch of ground where a shell had not dropped."<sup>57</sup>



Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 1/8th, was taken ill with acute appendicitis in the trenches; on the way to the Canal Bank dressing-station he was wounded and both the stretcherbearers killed by shellfire.<sup>58</sup>

The trench routine at Fleurbaix and Laventie had been 6 days in, 6 days out. The Salient routine, however, began as a 24-day cycle: 6 days in front line, 6 days in reserve, 6 days in second line, 6 days in "rest". This system soon broke down. The frontage allocated to the Division severely stretched its manpower resources from the first, even before sickness and shot and shell began to take their toll. An ad hoc system, dependent on the available manpower resources (in turn dependent on the rate at which reinforcement drafts arrived) and the exigencies of the military situation, had to be brought into operation. The 1/7th, for example, during its 177 days on duty in the Salient, spent a total of 115 days (65%) in the trenches, the periods being made up as follows: trenches 8 days, rest 5 days, trenches 18 days, rest 6 days, trenches 18 days, rest 20 days, trenches 25 days, rest 13 days, trenches 15 days, rest 8 days, trenches 8 days, rest 9 days, trenches 23 days. Several respondents wanted to claim, quite independently of each other, that the 1/7th had been in the first, 2nd and 3rd lines continuously for 60 days without relief. The War Diary, however, does not appear to support this claim. Several of the most reliable respondents, in both battalions, stated that a 25 days' stretch, which both battalions had to do, was "a record for the British army at the time."<sup>59</sup> Two letters written in August 1915 in the trenches by 1/7th men, C. Wilson and J. Dalton, do, however, refer to being in the trenches continuously for 30 days and 29 days respectively, while Knowles claimed, also in August 1915, to have done "about 50 days in the fighting line and reserves."<sup>60</sup> Working in the trenches while on "rest" may have been counted by the men as trench duty. Digging in the forward zone to reconstruct the defences destroyed during 2nd Ypres occupied the greater part, or occasionally even the whole, of "rest" periods. In the autumn the following verse (with apologies to Lewis Carroll) was playfully circulated as an official communication to all units by 49th Div. HQ:

'If all the troops with all the tools  
Should dig for half a year,  
Do you suppose,' our Captain asked,  
'That then we should be clear?'  
'I doubt it,' said the Adjutant,  
'Knowing the Brigadier.'<sup>61</sup>

The question of manpower resources in the Leeds Rifles during this period, in view of the conflicting evidence and inadequate data, is an extremely difficult one to assess. No statistics of strength appear to be available for the 1/7th. The 1/8th War Diary, however, gives figures



of total strength on a fairly regular basis; the lowest figure given for Other Ranks is 819 (as at 14th and at 31st December). It does not give figures of "fighting" (trench) strength or ration strength. There were often large discrepancies between these various sets of figures: e.g. for 31st May 1917 the 1/8th War Diary gives the various figures as follows: Total strength: 34 officers, 899 other ranks; Ration strength: 23 officers, 720 other ranks; Trench strength: 19 officers, 611 other ranks. The three sets of figures are very rarely given in the War Diary. The numbers of officers and men on HQ staff accounts for the discrepancy between ration and trench strengths. The discrepancy between total and ration strengths was made up of men on leave, on special courses of instruction, temporarily detached for duty, and, prior to July 1916, sick in hospital. Since no records of these categories survive, there is no means of estimating trench strengths in 1915. The numbers of men sick must have been considerable: Major Tetley records that during the first week of November, 99 men of the 1/7th went sick.<sup>62</sup> The numbers on detachment were also considerable: assigned to special tasks, such as instructing, or escorting prisoners, attending courses, seconded to divisional baths, laundry, workshops, concert party, canteen, etc. In addition, round about the beginning of December the Royal Engineers made a heavy raid on the Division for specialists of various kinds, e.g. 1712 Cpl John Wm. Sanderson, 1/8th, a qualified shot-firer skilled in the use of explosives in mining operations, was detached in order to supervise a tunnelling company.<sup>63</sup> TF units were plundered of all kinds of specialists, such as chemists, entomologists, zoologists, photographers, cartographical draughtsmen, civil engineers and surveyors.

It is evident that the trench strength of both battalions had slumped to a dangerously low level by the middle of December: the entry for 14th December, 1/8th Unofficial War Diary, runs: "The strength of the companies is now very small, owing to the number of men who have lately been sent to hospital ... Each company has now only about 60 men to take into the trenches." 2780 Harold Kirk, D Coy, 1/7th, stated that during December the fighting strength of No. 16 platoon was reduced to himself and the pioneer, "Nunky" Young (1880 David W. Young wrote in his pocket diary against 9th December "all platoon gone"); 3112 Philip G. Standley, also of D Coy, 1/7th, recalled that No. 13 platoon got down to 17 including members of specialist sections and HQ staff; 1726 Jack Barker, 1/7th, stated that platoons in C Coy "got down to only 4 or 6 men apiece"; 1987 Sydney Appleyard, B Coy, 1/7th, stated that on 9th December there were only 8 men including himself in No. 7 platoon. On 30th December, there was an average of 70 men per company in the 1/7th to march away from the



trenches. 3407 Ernest Fenton, a member of the 1/7th Quarter Master's Staff, who was actually responsible for making up the rations, stated that the Battalion Ration Strength, all ranks and sections, at the end of February 1916 was 820.<sup>64</sup>

The majority of respondents who were with the Regiment at the end of 1915 declared that the manpower shortage in the Division became so acute that it was a miracle the 49th managed to hold out. Typical is Albert Edward Pitts, B Coy, 1/8th: "Fortunately Jerry didn't know we were so weak. He could have come over many a time and we couldn't have done much to stop him." From 2 men to a firebay, 4-6 yards apart, in July, by December the men were up to 50 yards apart. 3149 James Warman, A Coy, 1/7th, stated that during one tour 6 companions and himself were holding a trench about 600 yards long. Respondents recounted with gusto the various ploys resorted to in an attempt - obviously successful - to deceive the enemy into believing the line was actually strongly held: the use of straw dummies dressed in khaki uniforms; running up and down the line at night firing Verey pistols and both during the day and night firing 5 rounds rapid every few yards. The machine-gunners, carrying the gun on their shoulders, continually walked up and down their portion of the battalion front, stopping every few yards to fire a burst, resting the gun directly on the parapet instead of on its tripod. Several respondents cited as a further example of a deception ploy the behaviour of the RFA batteries which would come galloping up, wheel into action, unlimber, open fire, limber up and gallop off again, all in the space of a few breathless minutes.<sup>65</sup> The CRA (Commander of the Divisional Royal Artillery) may well have wished to persuade the enemy that he possessed far more guns than he actually had, but it has to be pointed out that it was essential for the RFA batteries to keep constantly on the move in order to prevent German artillery observation officers bringing the heavy guns to bear upon them. The Royal Artillery had its own deception ploys: dummy guns made of wood.

Large-scale deception ploys called "demonstrations" were made by the 49th Division on August 8th - to distract the enemy's attention from the 6th Division's counter-attack at Hooze - and on September 25th - to assist the offensive at Loos. The 1/8th was in the front line on both occasions. Of the first occasion, Lt Rigby wrote:

"For the last two days the Boche aeroplanes had been allowed to come right over our reserve positions and large bodies of troops were sent for route marches along the principal roads. This was done in the hope that the German air scouts would report a considerable concentration of troops behind our positions here. Then at 6 pm on the 8th our divisional guns assisted by 90 French guns opened a heavy



bombardment on the German trenches, while the 148th Bde moved the Chevaux de frise in front of their trenches and gave every sign of an intention to attack. At 3 am next morning the attack was pushed through at Hooze and was successful beyond expectations."<sup>66</sup>

The second demonstration thoroughly alarmed the enemy:

"At 5.30 am our divisional artillery and the French guns on our left started a heavy bombardment of the German trenches and of important points behind their lines. At 5.55 a company of the KOYLI who had come in for that purpose began throwing smoke bombs and lighting phosphorus, petrol and sulphur. The wind was in our favour so this had the desired effect of making the enemy think we were going to attack under the cover of gas. They opened a steady rifle and machine gun fire into our 'gas' and when the smoke cleared we saw them standing ready for us with respirators on. The reply to our bombardment was very vigorous, especially on the left of A Company and redoubled in violence when our 'gas' was seen. We were treated, besides shells, to hand grenades, rifle grenades, trench mortars and aerial torpedoes."<sup>67</sup>

The enemy lit fires on his parapet<sup>68</sup> in order to disperse the "gas". It had been hoped that the enemy would evacuate his front line and that the Division would then be able to run over and capture it:

"We were told to be ready to 'go over the top' in the morning. I'll leave you to imagine our feelings. We had to prepare. Our front was reinforced, bombs brought up, and wire cutters told off to their respective jobs ... The Boches thought we were making a gas attack. They got the 'wind up' as we call it, and started firing all sorts of things at us, mostly at random, and calling for reinforcements, which was what we wanted ... It seems hard to realise that any regiment could go through such a warm two and a half hours without losing half the battalion."<sup>69</sup>

It was A Coy that bore the brunt of the enemy's swift and heavy retaliation.

1788 John Allman had the narrowest escape of his life:

"We'd just got a draft a day or two before and a chap old enough to be my father came to be with me. Major Hess had just ordered us into the next traverse when the German artillery opened up. The bombardment was terrible. You could hear the first shells coming over, a rushing sound, and then the explosions, but after a while there were so many shells coming at once that it was just one big sound, like an earthquake, all around you, and like a terrible thunderstorm with the shells flashing. I never heard the shell that got us. There was suddenly muck on top of me and I was buried under the parapet. Next thing I knew the ambulance men were pulling me out. When they got the other chap out he'd been struck dumb. I never saw him or heard of him again."<sup>70</sup>

On October 28th the weather, which had been unsettled and changeable for some considerable time, for September had been unusually wet, broke up completely. It rained heavily for most of the next eight days. By



1st November there was nearly 2 feet of water in all the 1/7th's trenches.<sup>71</sup> The trenches started falling in and the dugouts collapsed; stretches of communication trench were waist-deep in liquid mud and some were completely impassable.<sup>72</sup> The collapse of long stretches of the front line necessarily entailed evacuation and the establishment of a new system of defence. The front line throughout most of the Divisional sector became a series of posts which were completely cut off from one another and which could only be reached across the open, islands in a sea of mud. Backing up the series of posts was the second line now perforce promoted to front-line status. The entry for 3rd November in the 1/7th War Diary reads: "Rained. Abandoned certain trenches leaving posts in front line to prevent any inquisitive Boches from investigating position too minutely. Front abandoned covered by machine guns." The ordinary complement of machine-guns was doubled, since the machine-gunners were providing the bulk of the defence. The 1/8th Machine-gun Section now held four isolated posts that were closer to the German line than their own. 2251 L/Cpl Christopher Pallister, Clifford Walton and three other men stayed in one post for 28 days before they could be relieved. They had no shelter but a piece of corrugated iron stretched two or three feet above a duck-board, and could not stand upright by day without becoming visible to the enemy. Lt Bellerby, accompanied by his servant, could pay his daily visit to each gun team to receive reports only at night, for they were obliged to pick their way across the crater-pitted, slimy, barbed-wire strewn fields of No Man's Land to reach the posts. Always he found L/Cpl Pallister and his men wonderfully cheerful, with never a grumble, despite their appalling situation: he considered their "28 days' stretch" "a marathon of every kind of endurance."<sup>73</sup> 2158 L/Cpl Harold Dean was in command of another of these posts, also for 28 days without relief and in identical conditions. He recalls being reproved by Lt Bellerby on one occasion for having a 2-3 days' growth of beard.<sup>74</sup> This new system of isolated posts inevitably involved a great increase in patrolling, in order to prevent a surprise attack.

The nightly patrols were the chief form of infantry activity in the 49th Division during its 1915 spell in the Salient. Neither the 1/7th nor the 1/8th mounted any raids against the enemy's line, nor was either battalion raided by the enemy. The patrols were purely defensive in character and took the form of reconnoitring patrols, listening patrols and wiring parties with their accompanying covering parties (see Chap. 11). The continual ascent of flares and rockets of various colours from the German trenches and the intermittent traversing bursts of German machine-gunfire inches above ground level made patrols hazardous and nerve-racking



affairs, but occasionally they had their lighter moments. On July 30th

"About 9.30 pm 2nd Lieut Will and No. 1960 Rfm [Percy] Brooke whilst repairing the barbed wire in front of our parapet heard some movement beyond our wire and then heard a low whistle; they replied with a similar whistle and two men stood up beyond our wire. 2/Lt Will then spoke to them thinking they were our men but getting no reply, and being unarmed [he had forgotten his revolver], he pointed his finger at them and shouted 'Hands Up'. The men who were Bavarians at once held up a white handkerchief and put up their hands. 2/Lt Will and Rfm Brooke then went to them and took away their arms. The two men belonged to the 238th Rgt; they were at once sent to the Bde where useful information was obtained from them. The Divisional Commander congratulated the Bn on the capture of the two prisoners saying that they were badly required for purposes of identification."<sup>75</sup>

The Germans claimed they had lost their way, but eye-witnesses remarked how pleased they were to be taken: "they were grinning and talking all the time."<sup>76</sup> The Germans also sent out patrols, but not on a regular basis. During the night of 5th/6th December an enemy patrol of 4 men, probably attempting to find out how strongly manned the 1/8th's front line was, stumbled across one of the battalion's isolated outposts: "They were greeted by a couple of Mills' bombs, one man was killed and one wounded." The remaining two Germans picked up their wounded comrade and fled.<sup>77</sup>

During the gruelling and exhausting tour of duty in the North Salient the men of the 49th Division endured stoically and unflinchingly the worst that both the enemy and Nature could provide. The enemy bombardments seldom slackened and were often ferocious, as on 8th December when it was estimated that 3,000 shells fell in the divisional area, mainly on the front-line trenches, during the morning.<sup>78</sup> Rfm P.G. Standley, 7th, described his experiences that day:

"... the dull boom of our guns was heard, and immediately after the approaching shriek of the shells broke upon the stillness, as they soared overhead. Then followed the explosions, as they dropped into the enemy's lines. Soon our artillery began pounding away, and the incessant, almost ear-splitting, roar as the projectiles travelled over spoke of trouble for the enemy. Clouds of smoke hung like a pall over their lines, for our bombardment was merciless, and every living thing must have suffered over there. For upwards of an hour the shells shrieked over us. We were rather enjoying the proceedings when a shell from their artillery warned us to prepare for a somewhat similar bombardment ... The Leeds Rifles have been through some bombardments but they have been nothing compared with what they, or a section of them, have this time passed through. We prepared ourselves and waited events. In retaliation they sent hundreds of shells over. Dugouts caved in, sandbags began to fly, splinters of shells whizzed over, and the fumes from the lyddite and other explosives almost stifled us. All this time our



machine-guns yelled out an angry defiance. Our casualties during the bombardment were small, but one much felt was the death of our platoon sergeant, Sergeant Schutz, who was killed whilst rallying us. It was like an earthquake, the ground simply heaved; to be buried beneath the debris of a fall of trench was a common occurrence and minor bruises were many. Our food and drink were mingled with the mud, and no more was forthcoming until after sunset. Gradually the shells ceased to fall as fast as they had been doing, and for a time we had the chance of attending to the few wounded. When the fumes and smoke cleared we found that the sun was endeavouring to liven things up by adding a little warmth, the birds began to chirp again, an occasional sniping shot was heard, the machine-gun away up the line again spluttered, and everything appeared as before. The bombardment we had been subjected to had been terrible in its severity, but although we only possessed the things we stood up in apart from our rifles, etc., and we were simply drenched owing to the previous night's rain and our food was gone and the next meal far distant, the usual bright spirits of the company were resumed. With night came relief and food. Those who survived the ordeal will never forget it, for it has topped all our previous experiences."<sup>79</sup>

Prior to the end of October, the Divisional RFA had been considerably handicapped by their obsolete guns, which had seen service in South Africa, could not fire H E shells, and were incapable of ranging accurately, and by the ammunition rationing which had restricted each gun to about 3 rounds a day<sup>80</sup> (and one of these was used for registration).<sup>81</sup> The troops had felt these handicaps keenly (a strong complaint was registered in the 1/8th War Diary of 18th August, for instance) and were only too thankful to have the support of the French artillery whose officers were the soul of co-operation, ever ready to assist whenever needed.<sup>82</sup> On 29th October the Divisional RFA was issued with new 18-pounder Quick-Firer Field Guns,<sup>83</sup> and, with an increasing amount of ammunition becoming available, the West Riding artillery retaliation thereafter became much more effective and, in fact, the artillery could now fire whenever called upon. On November 15th the Divisional artillery shelled the roads and forward areas behind the German lines for 3 hours with very little reply and on December 1st shelled "the High Command" for 4½ hours, putting about 800 shells on to the enemy trenches. Lt Rigby reported on 3rd December: "The increasing superiority of our fire is very marked", though on 8th December he decided that the enemy had brought up more guns into the North Salient.<sup>84</sup>

The Division's greatest test to date came on 19th December when the enemy made an exceptionally heavy attack with chlorine and phosgene along the northern half of the VI Corps front, concentrating his effort against the 49th Division which he may have considered the weakest member of the VI Corps. The effects of the gas were widespread over a large area; even Canadian troops 12 miles away were affected.<sup>85</sup> The German XXVI Reserve



Corps held the front opposite the 49th Division. An NCO captured at the beginning of December gave VI Corps HQ prior warning of German intentions,<sup>86</sup> and certain preparations were put in hand. The 49th Divisional Rest fixed for 21st December was postponed for 10 days.<sup>87</sup> All ranks in the Division were issued with the new PH gas helmet and assiduously drilled in its use. Standing measures against cloud gas attacks, including twice-daily inspections of gas helmets and gas alarms, came into force, and the Division was put on alert from 15th December onwards, since both the weather and the wind direction were in the enemy's favour.<sup>88</sup> Patrols on the night of the 17th/18th had reported much hammering and a great deal of coughing in the German front line and a special artillery bombardment organised for the purpose of destroying the gas cylinders was arranged to commence just before dawn on the 18th, but had to be postponed until the following morning on account of fog. This bombardment necessarily involved prior evacuation of the British front line.<sup>89</sup> The 1/8th, who were in Divisional Reserve, were woken up in their "rest" camp shortly after 3 am by a furious bombardment;<sup>90</sup> the 1/7th, who were Right Support Battalion, were in Elverdinghe Wood some way to the west of the Canal. Both battalions had received prior orders under the defence scheme.

It was still quite dark when at 5.30 am [the Official History gives 5.15 am] unusual coloured rockets suddenly shot up all along the German XXVI Reserve Corps front. Along the 49th Division's frontage No Man's Land was mostly narrow and the discharge of gas was preceded by heavy musketry fire from the German trenches. A greenish-white cloud began to drift towards the British trenches. The sentries had immediately sounded the alarms and the men of the front-line garrison, who were already standing to, manned the parapet. At the same time a terrific hail of enemy shells fell on the Canal Bank and the communication trenches. The British and French artillerymen, already standing to, waiting for the pre-arranged signal to start the planned bombardment, donned their gas helmets and immediately opened fire.<sup>91</sup> The 1/5th WYR were ready and waiting in the 146 Bde's front line:

"We saw a blue haze coming across and then we saw the Jerries advancing behind. We all of us opened up rapid fire at the Jerries and drove them back."<sup>92</sup>

No enemy troops succeeded in reaching the Division's wire.

"Small parties of the enemy made half-hearted attempts to attack at various points but were easily driven back; if a serious attack was intended," wrote Major Tetley of the 1/7th, "it was evidently frustrated by our artillery fire."<sup>93</sup>

The Official History endorses his assessment:



"The fire seemed to discourage the enemy; for no general infantry attack followed after the gas, although men in full marching order were seen lying on the parapet, and the trenches were certainly strongly manned ... Small parties were seen to leave the trenches in several different places."

The cloud gas attack lasted 40-50 minutes, the fumes catching some men asleep in the support trenches. About 6.15 am the front was deluged with gas shells, and a heavy howitzer bombardment immediately followed. As soon as it was light an enemy observation balloon was put up and spotter planes flew over. The airmen were obliged to report there were no signs of retirement. The general impression on the British side was that the enemy expected the gas to catch the front system garrison unawares and create such a panic that a wholesale retirement would have taken place and enabled him to take Ypres unopposed. It was known that the Kaiser was looking for a spectacular success in Flanders. The Germans, however, afterwards denied that any infantry attack was intended on 19th December and claimed they only planned to inflict loss.<sup>94</sup> The hostile bombardment was maintained at an intense level throughout the day, all approaches to the front line being heavily shelled, and all types of shells, including gas shells, being used; the bombardment of the Canal Bank and its vicinity was continued until midnight of the 20th. No further attempts to cross No Man's Land on the 49th Division's front were made by the enemy.<sup>95</sup> The Official History states that the enemy bombardment of the VI Corps continued at intervals until the evening of the 21st, a total of 58 hours.<sup>96</sup>

The 6th and 49th Divisional Reserves had been moved forward in accordance with the defence scheme. The 1/8th received the message "Attack - Move" at 6 am and were on the road to Elverdighe Wood by 6.30 am, marching in platoons at 200-yard intervals. On reaching the wood, the men went into the trenches surrounding the Chateau and remained there, standing to, until 6 pm when the order was received to return to camp. Rfm Clifford Walton and 2251 L/Cpl Christopher Pallister had an extremely narrow escape when, only minutes after vacating their machine-gun post, it received a direct hit from a 17" shell. As the battalion was due to spend Christmas in the trenches, that particular day had been chosen for the Christmas celebrations, and respondents brooded on the fact that the enemy had done them out of their Christmas dinner and that instead of pork, plum pudding and mince pies they had had only Army biscuits to eat.<sup>97</sup> The men, however, got their Christmas dinner, albeit belatedly, when they arrived back in camp, although everyone was too tired to bother with the concert that had been planned to follow it.<sup>98</sup>

The 1/7th, being in support, had a much more exciting day. Everyone



was woken up by the commencement of the Allied bombardment. At 6.40 am the message was received to move up to the Canal Bank at Bridge No. 4, and at 7.15 am the battalion, in fighting order, started out, arriving at its destination 1¼ hours later without having had a single shell fired at it. The men had marched in platoons at 100-yard intervals along the open road all the way, but a fairly heavy ground mist had evidently shrouded them from the view of the two observation balloons and four aeroplanes, all hostile, that were up at the time.<sup>99</sup> L/Cpl Knowles found it "a hard though interesting experience":

"... within five minutes we were on the march, just as the Germans started shelling the Wood [with the "Ypres Express"]. It was a wonderful sight ... Ammunition columns were galloping up the Ypres road, the horses lathered in sweat, and shells bursting over us in all directions, and reinforcements marching up all the roads, all making for the fighting line. As we marched through a ruined village a few poor beggars who had stuck to their cottages were stood at their doors looking scared to death. There was a German aeroplane up right above us and our anti-aircraft guns were raining shells all round him but didn't have the luck to hit him ... We moved up into the fighting line last night when it was dark, again under shell fire, but we didn't lose a single man in any company - the 'Lucky 7th' again! When we had to cross the open to get into the firing trench, we could hardly walk a yard for shell holes ... It was pitiful to see the wounded being brought down all day long, and some of the Dead were laid on the roadside as we went up, but there weren't many casualties to say the do it was."<sup>100</sup>

The 1/8th spent their Christmas Day in the trenches "up to our knees in mud and water. We had orders to shoot if they started their wily games this year ... In the afternoon we had a free pantomime given to us by the German anti-aircraft gunners, who must have all been 'canned'."<sup>101</sup> The colonel and the company commanders walked through the trenches and wished the men the compliments of the season. The 1/7th went into the trenches on the night of 25th/26th, after having enjoyed an excellent alfresco Christmas dinner which included plum pudding provided by Col. and Mrs Kirk, cakes, mince pies and chocolate, without any interference from the enemy.<sup>102</sup>

The longed-for Divisional relief arrived, and not a minute too soon, on 29th December in the shape of a Kitchener division, the 14th. The recollections of two of the guides who brought in the reliefs are interesting, since these men who had come out with the Regiment in April, though teenagers, were by Christmas "old sweats", hardened war-veterans. 1726 Jack Barker, C Coy, 1/7th, then aged 19, who guided in the 10th DLI:



"I found them all on the Canal Bank stood around smoking cigarettes. They didn't seem to know there was a war on or what it was all about. I told them to put their fags out sharpish because the Jerries could see their every move and would be sending a few salvoes over when they saw the lights. I was immediately accused of having the wind up, and worse still, they refused to take any notice. Shortly afterwards, their Transport got blown to blazes."

2260 Edgar Taylor, B Coy, 1/8th, then just 18 years old, who guided in a company of the 8th KRRC:

"I took them along the Menin Road to Hellfire Corner. At one point they all took fright and dived into the communication trench at the side of the road. I told them to stop messing about and come on. I took them out into No Man's Land to get into the front line because the trench we should have used was full of sludge and water. I didn't tell them we'd been in No Man's Land until I'd got them safely into the front line. To put it politely, they nearly had kittens on the spot!"<sup>103</sup>

#### 10.2. 1916: 1/7th and 1/8th: Somme

After rest and training, a most welcome and enjoyable holiday on the sand dunes of Calais (even though camping under canvas in mid-winter was scarcely the last word in comfort) during which many men were given 7 days' home leave, the Division was sent in the middle of February to a quiet sector, the Somme front, recently taken over from the French. The Divisional Sector lay opposite a little village the men had never heard of before called Thiepval and, despite the snow, was a very pleasant change after the Salient. Some indication of the quietness of the sector is given by the fact that the 1/8th HQ kept a cow which supplied fresh milk for the staff's tea. Lt Lupton wrote: "I am also credibly informed that a second cow grazes somewhere near here comfortably between the lines and that the privilege of milking it is desperately fought for by bombing patrols on both sides." Field cookers were able to be used in the trenches.<sup>104</sup>

The Division spent March building a light railway and marking roads, and April and May in GHQ Reserve in intensive training: attack practice, tactical exercises, bayonet fighting, musketry, route marching, extended order and close order drill and outpost duty. During April each battalion in turn was treated to Major Campbell's (now, thanks to Siegfried Sassoon and David Jones, somewhat notorious)<sup>105</sup> lecture on the use of the bayonet.<sup>106</sup> In June the Division joined X Corps and much of the month was spent constructing assembly and evacuation trenches in Aveluy Wood and round Authuille. Lt Lupton, now the 1/8th Unofficial War Diarist, reported that the British artillery was "much more active than the German, while their aircraft seemed hardly to get a look in." The great bombardment had been due to start on the 19th, but was postponed for five days, and the



Division did not move back into X Corps Reserve until 23rd June.<sup>107</sup>

It had been decided to take only 25 officers per battalion into the attack on Z day. The remainder, who included the 2 i/cs of the battalion and all companies, together with some reserve sergeants, bombers, signallers and trench mortar specialists, were to stay behind at Divisional HQ. (This was the forerunner of "Echelon B" or "rear echelon" and ancestor of the WWII LOB (Left Out of Battle) system). On 25th June, Lt Lupton learnt that "The Boche apparently does not expect an attack to be driven home on this front." The GOC Brigade addressed the 1/8th the following morning.

"Never before has an army attacked with such artillery, never before have we been truly able to say we are ready. The crisis of the war has arrived and we can now prove that we are, as he believes us to be, the best division now at the front."<sup>108</sup>

He told the 1/7th

"It will be the greatest show in history and there is no doubt about the result ... The general told us the fate of England depended on this do, and said he had every confidence in us and was proud to lead us."<sup>109</sup>

Final preparations in the Leeds Rifles included baths and the issue of clean underwear and extra ammunition.<sup>110</sup> On the evening of the 27th the two battalions marched to hutments at Varennes "in full war kit, including flares and black discs to mark objects [objectives?] attained, two sandbags per man, 170 rounds of ammunition and dog-carts for Lewis guns."<sup>111</sup> The men wore the steel shrapnel helmets issued in May on which the regimental badge had been stencilled. The 1/7th wore large red and the 1/8th large bright blue cloth **T**s on the back and right shoulder, with appropriate coloured **T**s painted on the right side of the helmet<sup>112</sup> in order to become readily distinguishable to observers and aerial scouts in the coming attack. The battalions expected to march to the assembly trenches in Thiepval Wood on the evening of 28th June ready for the attack on the following morning, but the operations were postponed for 48 hours owing to bad weather. Lt Lupton reported an additional reason that had been given for the postponement: the inability of the artillery to let off all their ammunition in the time allotted,<sup>113</sup> i.e. complete their firing programmes. According to the operational orders, the 36th and 32nd Divisions would attack on the Corps front, with the 49th and 25th Divisions in close reserve.

Although Lt Lupton reported on 19th June that letter censorship had become more strict, security nevertheless remained remarkably lax. As long ago as 17th May, Cpl Espin had written in his now illegal diary "The whole division is preparing for some big attack."<sup>114</sup> L/Cpl Knowles



repeatedly referred to his letters from 22nd June onwards to the "big do".  
On 29th June he wrote a letter containing the following censorable passage:

"We have all moved up, all the Division, just behind the line. We are in huts and the place is packed with troops. We are waiting to be called up any hour. We are packed up and all our fighting order ready to slip on and be away in five minutes. There is any amount of the boys come up this last few days and they haven't been under fire yet, so they look like getting a real breaking in ... I don't care how quick we get stuck into it as it is monotonous waiting, and I give you my word there will be no mistake this time, the German swine won't half get slaughtered. I can see the Kaiser squealing for peace very shortly."<sup>115</sup>

The censor had not obliterated a single word of this letter.

About 8 am<sup>116</sup> on July 1st 146 Brigade was ordered to cross the River Ancre and take up positions in the assembly trenches in Thiepval Wood, south of Gordon Castle, in readiness to support the left of the 32nd or the right of the 36th Division as required. Hostile shelling caused a good many casualties. At 3.30 pm Brigade HQ, having been given only half an hour's notice, ordered an attack on Thiepval village by the 1/5th and 1/6th battalions, with the 1/8th in support and the 1/7th in reserve.

"Though the attack was not successful in taking Thiepval, we learned afterwards that the diversion produced was instrumental in saving the remnants of the 36th Div. which had penetrated into the German C lines."<sup>117</sup>

The order to the 1/7th

"was afterwards cancelled and the Battalion was ordered to man the British front line trench from the R. Ancre to Hammerhead Sap at the NE corner of Thiepval Wood ... Major Bousfield saw that the Companies were becoming disorganised to a certain extent owing to the congestion of wounded and stragglers of the 36th Division in the trenches, he therefore went up to the top of Elgin Avenue [a communication trench] to straighten things out; when he arrived there he was urgently asked by the OC 9th RIR to send as many men as possible to reinforce the men of his battalion who were in the A, B and C German lines. Major Bousfield hesitated to go beyond our own Brigade orders and proceeded to the HQrs of the 9th RIR; there he was shown an order from their Brigade Major which stated that 2 Batts. of the 146th Bde were ordered to attack the German front line to help the 36th Division; this decided him to send two Companies (C and D) to occupy A and B German lines immediately in front of them, approximately A15 to A18 and A16 to A17. When Major Bousfield reported to the Brigadier that he had taken these steps he was instructed to attempt to divert these two Companies to the circular trench from A19 to B19 as the Brigadier had detailed 1½ Batts. to reinforce our troops in the Schwaben Redoubt and wanted 2 Coys to hold a line in front of St. Pierre Divion [the Germans were then counter-attacking, or preparing to counter-attack, the Hansa Line and the Schwaben Redoubt]<sup>118</sup>, but it was



Source: Trench map in the Hudson Papers

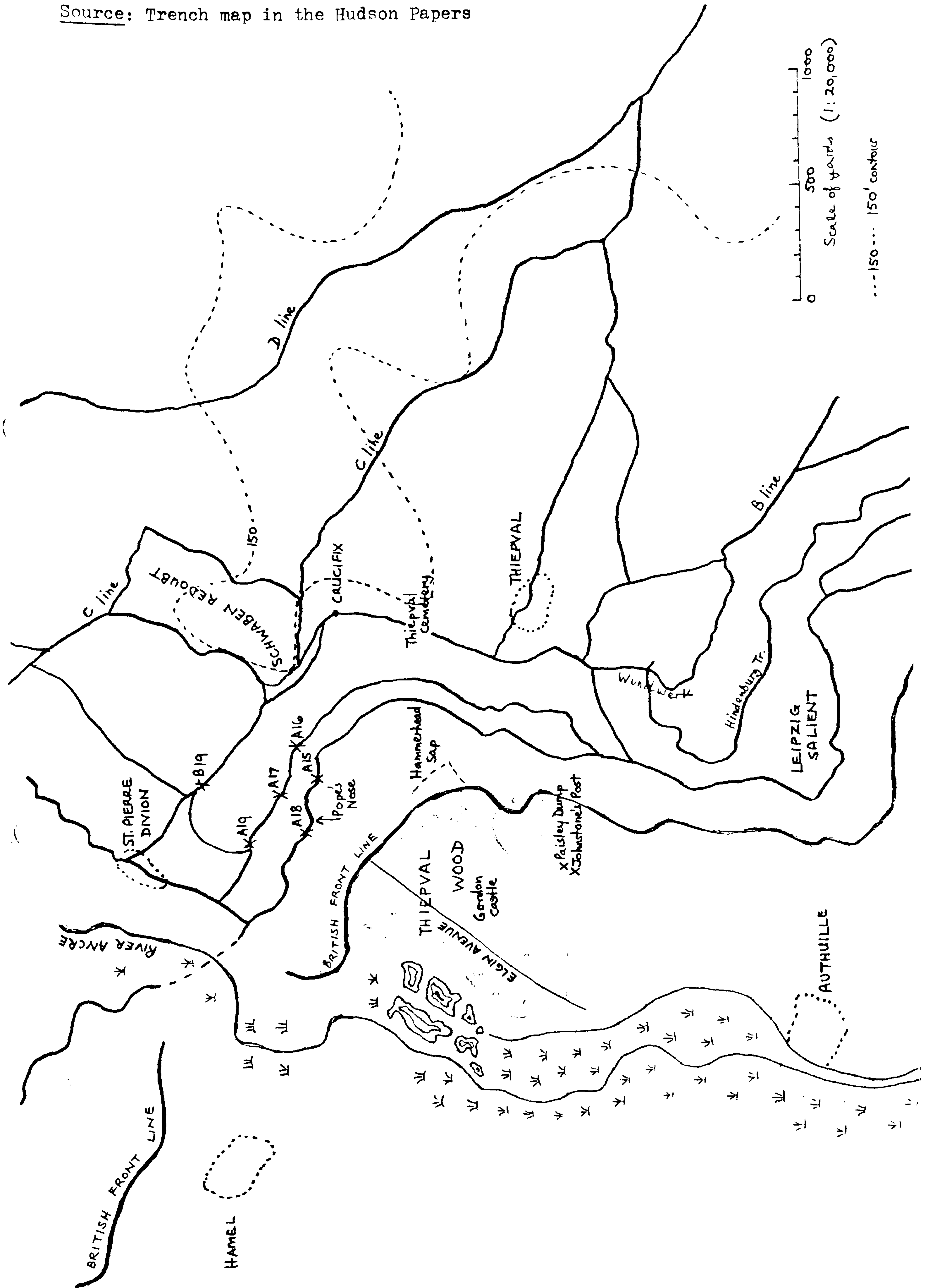


Fig. 8. Main German trenches, 49th Divisional Sector, Somme, July 1916



found impossible as the 2 Coys were already committed. Meanwhile A and B Coys were holding the British front and support lines ... During the night C and D Coys were ordered to withdraw to the British front line but 40 [actually 30] men of C Coy became detached and remained all night in the German lines ... The Battalion was withdrawn to the assembly trenches in Aveluy Wood during the evening of July 2nd."<sup>119</sup>

The Official History is able to add further detail to this account of Major Tetley's. The two companies went too far to the left and took possession of the trenches in the reserve line NW of the Schwaben Redoubt. Owing to the confusion it was not until nearly 9 pm that the other two companies of the 1/7th, two companies of the 1/8th and the entire 1/5th WYR were ordered forward from Thiepval Wood to assist the 36th Division, and they began to reach the Redoubt about 10 pm. Unfortunately, at this time the German infantry attacked simultaneously from the north, east and south, and the senior surviving officer was obliged to give the order to retire to the old German front line in order to avoid being surrounded. The majority of survivors were withdrawn to Thiepval Wood under cover of darkness, only a few small parties remaining in the German original front and support lines, with a detachment of the 1/7th still NW of the Redoubt.<sup>120</sup> Neither the 1/8th Unofficial nor Official War Diaries make any mention of two companies being sent forward in the evening to the Schwaben Redoubt.

When night fell on July 1st the position in this sector was confused and uncertain. Parts of the German front line were occupied by British troops and at the Leipzig Redoubt the 32nd had captured the Hindenburg Trench.

"In front of us, however, in most places the Germans also had evacuated their trenches which we subsequently occupied. Parties of both armies roamed at will in this shell-stricken No Man's Land, succouring the wounded or even merely trying to find their own trenches."<sup>121</sup>

In the German line where 2605 Ellison Whitley of C Coy, 1/7th, was

"there were Ulstermen lying dead all over the place, in front of the trench and in it. There were so many we couldn't help but walk on their bodies. The Ulster Rifles who were still alive were all roaring drunk."

Scout 2715 James A. Eastburn, C Coy, 1/8th, had followed assaulting troops of the 36th Division as far as the German sixth line of trenches (probably as far as the Schwaben Redoubt):

"Nothing went according to plan, and resistance was terrible strong ... We were horribly thin on the ground and in no shape to resist an organised counter-attack."

In the twilight he returned:

"this time crawling all the way over the top as the trenches were jammed with drunks, wounded and prisoners."



4328 L. Frederick Hudson, C Coy, 1/7th, was lying in a dugout in Thiepval Wood seriously wounded, waiting for the German bombardment to slacken off or cease so that he could be evacuated:

"About 2 pm a shell came over and got about 11 of us. I got my foot blown off. George and Walt helped me into a dugout where we had to stay till about 11 pm. We were dying to eat our emergency iron rations, but Lt Foulds had impressed upon us that unless we were going into action and it was an emergency, eating iron rations meant Field Punishment No. 1. We crumbled the biscuits and chocolate up and ate some. We crumbled them up so that when the officer inspected them we could say we'd fallen on them and he wouldn't be able to tell we'd eaten any. Foulds came round later and shouted down to ask if anyone was in there. Walt replied and said, 'We've got Hudson down here, sir, and he's badly wounded'. Foulds threw down a bar of chocolate and said, 'You'd better give him this'."

Yet another respondent from C Coy, 1/7th, 2006 L/Cpl Ernest Woodhead, a Company runner who had been delivering the order to retire to the parties in the German lines, was pinned down by the German barrage and compelled to stay the night with a company of KOYLIs. The day had been, according to him, "a bit of a mix-up and there were chaps of ours all over the place": on his way back to HQ early next morning he collected up about 14 men of his own company.<sup>122</sup> One man of B Coy of the 1/8th was said to have been missing for about 3 days: he "turned up with an armful of ladies' silk underwear that he'd pinched out of a German officers' dugout."<sup>123</sup>

Lt Lupton considered the opening of the Battle of the Somme "a frightful muddle. Quite amusing in its way."<sup>124</sup> The muddle and confusion is well-illustrated in the following extracts from a long account of 1st/2nd July written about 1968 by Lt J.R. Bellerby and L/Cpl Clifford Walton of the 146th Machine Gun Company, 49th Division, formerly of the 1/8th Machine-gun Section. Early in the day encouraging information had come through regarding the success of the 36th (Ulster) Division. Eventually, in the late afternoon, Lt Bellerby received oral orders "to move forward into the area captured by the Irish Division ... and to establish defensive machine gun positions at a point overlooking the village of Thiepval ... rather more than half a mile beyond the original German front line." At the time he had only two gun teams with him. "I had orders to take with me two teams from another section ... This half section was missing when I went to look for them ... so I returned without them and set off with my own two. By now it was almost dark: we were able to move up the valley ... without being seen by enemy troops." Shortly afterwards they met up with a battalion of the 49th Division [almost certainly the 1/5th WYR], making for the same objective, who were just about to send a small patrol forward into No Man's Land to discover the position of any opposing troops:



"the patrol returned saying it was impossible to advance without encouraging heavy fire from the direction of Thiepval." Another route across had to be found. About half way to the German line bullets began to come thick and fast, and Lt Bellerby, hoping his men were close behind him, set off to run as fast as he could.

"There were shell holes, deep ones, and stray bits of barbed wire, and progress was chequered. When I leapt into the deep German front-line trench I found myself alone and unarmed: my revolver had fallen out of its temporary tucked-in position in my webbing. I ran to and fro hoping to meet friendly faces and after a somewhat nerve-shattering delay was relieved to find every member of my two teams struggling down into the trench. Infantrymen accompanied them and the order was given to move along the German line to the left until one of the communication trenches towards the German support line should be reached."

They met no one on their journey and halted about 150 yards along the communication trench. Lt Bellerby was able to arm himself with a British rifle and ammunition. At dawn he saw the smoke of a fire a few hundred yards down towards the river valley, and then a lone German soldier coming towards him who surrendered "with the utmost alacrity."<sup>125</sup> The infantry officers decided to move to the right in the direction of their objective. The party of infantrymen and machine-gunners, which was later found to consist of less than 40 men all told, passed Thiepval Crucifix and Cemetery, often having to walk over dead bodies, and eventually took up a position overlooking Thiepval village and immediately above the Schwaben Redoubt, and posted sentries.

"Not having slept all night I then fell asleep sitting on a fire-step, to be rudely awakened very shortly afterwards by the sound of hand-grenades at very close range ... Evidently the attackers were not numerous. I think it was at that moment that I learned that our infantry force numbered no more than thirty. In the confusion of the previous night the infantrymen had become divided, and our little group had much outstripped the rest ... this was an absurdly small force to be wandering around in the German lines ... My uneasiness increased when I saw a local attack proceeding in the German original front line, the intention obviously being to clear out some small pocket of British defenders."

Lt Bellerby and the infantry captain decided to retire immediately.

"Occasionally we were bombed by pockets of the enemy. At one point a number of Germans attacked us from a trench between our party and our old front ... We continued along one of the labyrinth of trenches - now moving steadily away from the Schwaben Redoubt along a German support line, picking up stray remnants of Irish and Germans en route. Suddenly we were brought to a halt. The infantry captain and Lt Bellerby were leading when we came to a point where another trench crossed, and here the two leaders were fired on at point-blank range with automatic pistols. It soon



became clear that we had barged into a strongly held tunnelled position. Shots came from every direction. In the fighting three infantry officers were killed. Lt Bellerby ... took over and organised a defence position. He arranged bombing posts and then sited the two machine guns. Bramfitt and Sugden manned one gun, Illingworth and myself the other."

There followed a slow, lengthy rearguard action through the German trenches entailing both reconnaissance of the retirement route and a phased, step-by-step withdrawal of the machine guns, with always one of them in a position to fire. At last they found themselves back in the original German support line. The safest route back appeared to be via the trench in which Lt Bellerby had seen a fire burning. They found no one there, but when they finally reached the original German front line they encountered a small party of German bombers. By this time they had attracted the attention of troops, presumably British, on the opposite side of the Ancre valley who opened fire, one shot killing the infantry captain. Shortly afterwards a British spotter plane flew over the position.

"We waved to him and a few minutes later were profoundly impressed by the accuracy of his spotting. Unknown to us, an attack by a new British assault line was being prepared further up towards the crest of the hill; and this was to be preceded by a howitzer bombardment. The shelling was unbelievably accurate, coming close to our position on both flanks but causing us not the slightest harm. By what means the German artillery almost simultaneously discovered our position I could not say, but they opened up with shrapnel against which we had almost no defence whatever, except to go underground. To disappear in this way would mean certain destruction if the Germans attacked first, and all the indications were that an attack was brewing from their side also."

About 4 or 5 pm the German artillery lifted their fire to the British lines. German troops could be seen massing in the support lines. The Yorkshiremen's ammunition had run very low and their tiny force was now much depleted, only 17 now remaining. Their position was clearly untenable. The only possible course of action was to make a dash for some dead ground that was about 50 yards from the British front line, from which they would be able to reach safety without difficulty. Only one man, Illingworth, failed to reach the British lines.<sup>126</sup> (Lt Bellerby was subsequently awarded the MC "For conspicuous gallantry and skill in covering a detachment of infantry and machine-guns during retirement. He was subjected to heavy fire and continuous bomb attacks. He has shown the utmost devotion to duty."<sup>127</sup>)

"The night of 1st/2nd July was a horrible nightmare. Thiepval Wood was a veritable inferno. Before the attack in the early morning the Wood had been thick with trees providing ample cover, but all day long it



had been pounded and lashed by H E and shrapnel, and when night fell, broken branches littered the ground, gaunt stumps stood naked to the skies, shorn of their beauty; the damp and churned up ground beneath reeked with gas fumes, so that men moving in the darkness and wearing their gas masks, stumbled about in vain efforts to find their units and their whereabouts. The front line trenches and many communication trenches were thick with lost and weary men, who waited for daylight in order to find their whereabouts. The dead lay everywhere and the wounded in hundreds, waiting to be evacuated. The scene at Paisley Dump was horrible in the extreme. As one approached Paisley Dump one became aware of noise - a noise inhuman. A wail as of enormous wet fingers on an enormous glass; a wail that rose and fell, interminable, unbearable. Then suddenly one became aware whence that wail came. All along the muddy roadway they lay - the wounded; hundreds of them; brown blanket shapes; some shouting, some moaning, some singing in delirium, some quite still."<sup>128</sup>

On 2nd July the 1/7th and 1/8th were in the original British front line trenches in Thiepval Wood and were subjected to much hostile shelling. During the evening 146 Brigade was relieved and went into hutments in Martinsart Wood where it remained until late on 7th July. Roll call was taken. Two sets of casualty figures for 1st/2nd July are, unaccountably, given in the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary and yet another set of figures (unclassified, totals only) in the 1/8th Official War Diary for July. These are as follows:<sup>129</sup>

	UNOFFICIAL WAR DIARY		OFFICIAL WAR DIARY
	(a)	(b)	
<u>Officers:</u> killed	1	1	
missing	1	1	Total: 11
wounded	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	
Total:	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	
<u>Other Ranks:</u> killed	7	10	
missing	63	14	Total: 191
wounded	<u>46</u>	<u>76</u>	
Total:	<u>116</u>	<u>100</u>	

It should be noted that the statistics for Other Ranks are incompatible. No explanations for the differences are offered in the Unofficial War Diary. Interestingly respondent 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd, A Coy, 1/8th, gave a figure of 183 for missing and wounded. The final total number of killed was 20.<sup>130</sup> Total casualties for the same period in the 1/7th were: 16 killed, 144 wounded, and about 20 missing (excluding those known to be



still in the enemy lines), including officer casualties of 1 killed, 1 wounded and missing, and 3 wounded.<sup>131</sup>

The city of Leeds, three of whose 4 infantry battalions were involved in unsuccessful attacks on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, as yet had no inkling of the tragedy that was about to engulf it. The letters and telegrams arrived fitfully over the next fortnight or so and poignant appeals like the following began to appear in the editorial, not the classified advertisement, columns of the local newspapers: "Mrs Smith, of 20, Darnborough-Street, Kirkstall-road, Leeds, will be thankful for any information regarding her son, Lance-Corporal Gerraghty (Leeds Rifles), who has been missing since July 1st."<sup>132</sup> 2991 L/Cpl Alfred Gerraghty, 1/8th, was eventually listed as having been killed in the bombardment that day. The full horror of the tragedy can have become known only by informal means, since the local papers, dependent to a large extent as always on their readers for such news, were never able to publish the full casualty figures; official figures, though heavy, were hopelessly unrealistic. Out of 328 men of the Leeds Rifles killed in the Battle of the Somme as a whole, only the deaths of 88, just over one-quarter, were reported in the press.

Following relief the Regiment spent the next few days on arduous and harrowing fatigues, including burying parties in Thiepval Wood and the moving of a 12" howitzer known as "Lucky Jim".<sup>133</sup> On 3rd July the 22 survivors of the 30 men of the 1/7th who had been marooned in the German lines turned up. Knowles was one of them. He wrote to his wife:

"Here I am, all safe and sound after going through hell. We have been two days and nights in the biggest battle in history. I cannot tell you much yet, but we charged over the parapet and got as far as the German third line [the B line between St Pierre Divion and the Schwaben Redoubt]. I shall never forget the sights I saw. It was Dante's Inferno and hell's flames combined and the piles of dead were ghastly ... I am too dead beat to write much. We were nearly 48 hours without a drain of water or a bite. It knocked me about a bit I can tell you." "I could have got loads of souvenirs in the German trenches, such as officers' helmets, telescopes in fine leather cases etc. worth at least a tenner, but we were too dead beat with want of sleep and water. I hadn't the inclination to swag them about ... I am extraordinarily lucky to be alive."<sup>134</sup>

A German counter-attack had retaken their A line trenches north of Thiepval Wood and the 1/5th and 1/8th received orders on 7th July to recapture them, but the whole scheme was later cancelled, owing to successes further south which rendered it unnecessary. The 1/8th were then sent to relieve the 10th Cheshires in the line NE of Authuille Wood. Although



the distance was less than 2 miles, owing to the congestion of the roads, the darkness and the uncertainty, it took the battalion six hours to get there. The valley leading up to this wood soon became popularly known as "Blighty Valley" owing to the number of both enemy and British shells that burst over it, causing wounds rather than death. The battalion expected to receive orders to go over the top, but none materialised and the men spent most of the next day in making up kit deficiencies from material left by their predecessors, an entire company supplying itself with mess tins. During the next week the battalion sustained heavy casualties from shellfire: 9 men, including RSM Fear, killed and over 50 wounded; a single 5.9" shell was responsible for killing 6 men and wounding a number of others. On the 15th the battalion relieved the 1/6th WYR in the Leipsig Salient. In the early hours of the following morning the enemy made a determined assault on C Coy and were driven off after 3 hours of close-quarter fighting and at the cost of about 50 casualties; 7 men of the 1/8th were killed or died of wounds. The 17th was "a day of intense bombardment."<sup>135</sup>

At 8 pm on the 19th the battalion was ordered to take over an operation originally planned for the 1/5th WYR, which was now very weak in numbers. This was to complete the capture of a section of the trenches in the Salient that was preventing the areas already captured from linking up. A and D Coys only were committed. The attack took place at 3.30 am the following morning without any artillery preparation whatever. A Coy went over the parapet led by Lt W. Gerard Kemp, whilst D Coy, led by Capt Leslie Hossell "who stood on the parapet firing his revolver in his shirt sleeves", and accompanied by the battalion bombers, worked along a sap to the left, with B Coy holding the line and C Coy fetching up supplies of bombs and ammunition and evacuating the wounded. The operation was completely successful and 7 prisoners of the Guards Fusilier Regiment were taken. Battalion casualties, in view of the objective achieved - two trenches captured - were considered comparatively light: 13 killed, 11 died of wounds, and 57 wounded, virtually all of them from A Coy. (Lt Kemp afterwards gave the Company OR strength as 93.) These were the first German trenches captured by the 49th Division in the war.<sup>136</sup>

The difficulties attending the reconstruction of battles from participant accounts are illustrated by the following nonetheless interesting account given by Lt Kemp himself in a letter dated 22nd July to his best friend, Lt Lupton (also of A Coy), now in hospital:

"We went into the trenches on the night of the 19th and after we had got in, we got orders that A Coy would attack and capture a line of trench in the morning. Of course



there was great excitement and many pow-wows etc. but the arrangements were left to us. A Coy had a little pow-wow on its own and came to the conclusion that we would rather go over without a bombardment so we asked HQ to try and get it washed out, which they did. We fixed zero at 3.30 am and made arrangements for the gunners to open out at the same time. [Lt] Will was ordered to stay behind and look after the supply of bombs etc. so at 3 am I took Nos. 1 and 3 platoons and the battn. bombers into the line and got all ready to get over. Wilky [Lt Eric F Wilkinson MC] had Nos. 2 and 4 platoons behind us to give us a leg and then follow over a little after us. The rest is rather a blank to me, but I remember lying on the parapet with my watch out and at 3.30 am I blew my whistle and just yelled 'Come on' etc. and found myself in some concertina wire! Got out of this and next thing I knew was we were in the trench! I went over between the 2 platoons and as soon as we were in, got a message from the left 'an officer wanted with the bombers'. I dashed up and found Sgt Sykes quite off his head and all he could say was 'They want a lead'. I took L/Cpl Cordeaux and Rfm Spencer and went along with them myself with a bayonet and then started to get on with the job. Spencer soon got killed, and most of the men got hit, but somehow they did not seem able to hit me! The Hun had thrown wire in the trench and made a barricade which we had to remove. We got to the barrier and found the Hun just over the other side and then we had some bombing stunt! I went back about 20 yds and made a barrier and we just strafed him like the devil and lo and behold after a little time he bolted over the top. Our bombers were very much shaken up and did not do well in my opinion, but I got a few together (Sgt Sykes was not to be found!) and we dashed over the barrier and connected up with D Coy who had bombed down their sap. We got to work at once and consolidated and the lads worked like bricks. At about 8.30 the Huns started and of course we all were waiting for a counter attack, but no, it died down and was fairly quiet most of the day. Boche snipers caused us a lot of trouble, and loss of a good number of men. At 6.30 pm another strafe began but again he did not come over! By the way the trench was held by the 3rd Guards. They were fine big men but had the wind right up! I cannot tell you all the casualties but we are now about 93 strong. All officers fit and well and full of fire. We got relieved at about 10.30 pm all simply dead tired and then came to F[orceville] (where the CCS is, I believe). Arrived here at 4 am 21-7-16. Our chaps had very bad luck - D Coy, who only did quite a small bombing stunt, down the trench they were in, got all the souvenirs as they had the dugouts. Our chaps who went over the top got none hardly. The General (Perceval) saw Will, Wilky and I [sic] yesterday and thanked us and the Coy for the excellent work done. He is awfully bucked with us all, and on the whole A Coy is some Coy. I do wish you had been with us. I feel awfully sorry for you as I know you will be very fed up at being out of it."<sup>137</sup>

The 1/7th had relieved in the Leipzig Salient in the early hours of  
8th July:



"The trenches were very bad and up to the knees in mud owing to the rain; there were dead bodies all over the place."

The battalion was ordered to make an attack at 2.15 am on the 14th:

"An artillery barrage was put on to the trenches A-B and C-D at 2.15 am; it lifted at 2.25 am and the attack commenced. This was carried out by a party found by the Battalion bombers and B Coy up each trench, A Coy finding parties to follow up and consolidate. The parties which advanced along A-B trench encountered very little opposition, quickly achieved their objective and commenced consolidation, having stopped all trenches leading into A-B. The party which advanced up trench C-D came to a very strong stop and although they assaulted this three times they were unable to pass it as a strong enemy party was in readiness and responded with showers of bombs. This party had eventually to retire having suffered heavily, and the party in A-B trench had also to retire in consequence. The enemy followed up our retirement with a bombardment attack which was well executed, the Germans showing bravery and great disregard of danger; they at one time got into our trench but were bombed out by 2/Lt Baldwin [formerly a platoon sergeant in D Coy] and men of A Coy; they remained just on their side of our block throwing bombs and making our trench untenable; practically all our bombers were casualties."

At this critical juncture reinforcements in the shape of the 1/6th WYR Battalion bombers arrived most opportunely and

"speedily drove the enemy back from our block, thus enabling us to hold our own trench again. The bombers were much helped by men of B Coy, who got up on the parapet and parados of our trench and sniped the Germans, ... and by the Stokes Mortar Battery."<sup>138</sup>

Casualties were 1 officer and 14 OR killed, 2 OR missing, 4 officers and 88 OR wounded. Although the attack had failed, apparently miserably, the following message was later received:

"The Divisional Commander wishes me to tell you that he considers that the attack by your Brigade last night, and the stubborn fighting that followed, materially assisted in the success of the larger operation on the British front."<sup>139</sup>

Although a cynic might well dismiss this as so much "flannel", every little does help in warfare, and the 1/7th's failure of the 14th may have contributed to the 1/8th's success of the 20th.

The experiences of the 1/8th during August<sup>140</sup> were probably typical of the work of the 49th Division during this stage of the Somme offensive. For the first 16 days of the month it held a "critical corner", as witness the casualties sustained: 2 company commanders and 64 OR killed, 3 OR missing and 67 OR wounded. (The 1/7th sustained 52 casualties from shell-fire in only two days when in the trenches on the right of Thiepval Wood 26th-28th August.)<sup>141</sup> This was a sector between the Leipsig Salient and



Authuille Wood (where, in the words of the 1/8th Unofficial War Diarist, the German artillery was "engaged daily in lopping trees") and included the old British front line which was very much battered - "most of the dugouts had been smashed and those that remained stuck up like gun-emplacements and received corresponding attention from the enemy" - and part of the captured German line. "With the exception of the piece taken off at the Leipsic scheme this was the NE extremity of the captured portion to date, and consequently the Boche and ourselves were holding different ends of the same trench, separated by about 100 yds and a couple of sand-bag barriers", very much a disputed barricade. The new No Man's Land was covered with corpses which had lain there since 1st July. The old No Man's Land was very much broken up; the way across to the captured trench was by means of a long, narrow and shallow sap called Hoy's Trench through which it was impossible to carry the wounded or dead in safety. The safest and most comfortable places in the battalion sector were the old German dugouts, which, however, were heavily infested with vermin. On 3rd August the battalion trench block in the German line was advanced 20 yards, and on the 12th, while the Anzacs were capturing the nearby Skyline Trench, a further 50 yards.<sup>142</sup> Following the first advance the battalion bombers had been discovered by the Colonel "coolly sitting on the bottom of the trench dividing the spoils which included numerous German helmets." Bank Holiday Monday was a beautiful day and the thoughts of many naturally turned to the traditional day's outing to Roundhay Park, but instead they "had to be content with the prospect of that blasted Authuille Wood." During the tour, in addition to the heavy casualties resulting from the virtually continuous enemy shellfire and rifle fire, the sick list was lengthy. The first 6½ weeks of the Somme battle were days of severe hardship. No cooking could be done in the line. The men were living in filthy conditions, the weather was often hot and humid, but there was never a chance of a good wash, let alone a bath. The men were very run down at the conclusion of this long period of harassing conditions. Relief came none too soon:

"Even those who stuck it were done up and some were hardly able to march out of the trenches - for all were dead tired and much depressed."

Sir Linton Andrews described the very similar trying experiences his battalion, the 4/5th Black Watch, underwent during the same period:

"As we went in and out of the line we were more than war-weary. We were like sleep-walkers in an insane nightmare. Again and again we had to go on to the very limit of our strength and even, it seemed, beyond it."<sup>143</sup>

Shortly after the 1/8th were relieved, the GOC Division received a



highly complimentary letter from Sir Douglas Haig in which he praised the fighting qualities of his division.<sup>144</sup> Rest was spent in refitting, training, the inevitable working or carrying parties and a certain amount of recreation. The Army authorities laid on motor bus services to take officers and other ranks into Amiens for shopping and entertainment. The battalion was back on trench duty in Thiepval Wood on the 26th, but only for two days, when the Brigade was relieved in order to have 48 hours' rest before taking part in a large-scale assault on St Pierre-Divion and the Schwaben Redoubt.<sup>145</sup> The fighting strengths of the two Leeds Rifles battalions on 26th August were as follows: 1/7th: 12 officers, 529 OR; 1/8th: 25 officers, 591 OR.<sup>146</sup>

The attack was made by the 49th, 39th and 25th Divisions.<sup>147</sup> Originally scheduled for 1st September, bad weather forced its postponement until the 3rd. In order to reduce the width of No Man's Land, new parallels had been dug in front of the British front line to which they were connected by newly dug saps. On the Divisional front, 146 and 147 Brigades only were committed; in 146 Brigade the 1/6th and 1/8th were to lead, with the 1/5th in support and the 1/7th in reserve in Aveluy Wood. In the 1/8th A and C Coys were in the first wave, B and D Coys in the second. By 5 am all the troops were ready in position, without having attracted hostile shellfire, and the British barrage opened. It lifted 10 minutes later and the first wave climbed out of the front parallel; it reached the first German line without difficulty. Unfortunately the German counter-barrage - Bales<sup>148</sup> gives its timing as 10 minutes after zero, Wyrall<sup>149</sup> as 3 minutes after zero - caught the second wave, which included the machine-gunners, trench mortar specialists and carrying parties. Throughout the morning the German barrage continued to fall very heavily on the British front line, the parallels and on Aveluy Wood, where the reserve battalions were waiting; the 1/7th suffered nearly 70 casualties, including 3 officers killed and 2 wounded. A Coy of the 1/8th had discovered their allotted portion of the German front line unoccupied and taken possession, but C Coy found the wire smashed in only a few places, were held up in consequence and mown down by a tremendous and "terribly accurate" cross enfilade of machine gun and rifle fire. The Germans counter-attacked and the Riflemen along with the rest of the British troops, were driven out of the German lines; having neither reinforcements nor further supplies of bombs, there was no alternative but to retire to their own. What remained of the divisional assault troops were back in their trenches by about 10 am having "sustained heavy casualties and lost most of their officers." 1/8th casualties were 9 officers (including Lt Will, OC A Coy, wounded and captured) and 294 OR (including about 81 missing and 64 killed).



Men on HQ staff were asked, not ordered, to go out into No Man's Land to rescue the wounded: 2880 William Arthur Bywater and his chum Bill Ripley worked non-stop under shellfire and without food for over 12 hours "till we couldn't go on any longer."<sup>150</sup>

The attack was a complete failure and all the 49th Division battalions that had gone into action had suffered very heavily: the 1/8th had lost half its fighting strength. The survivors returned utterly exhausted and demoralised. 1749 Cpl Clifford Roberts, A Coy, 1/7th, was present when a party of men of the 1/8th reported in the front line to an HQ sergeant: " 'What company are you?' he asked. One of the men replied, 'We're not from a company, sergeant. We're the battalion'."<sup>151</sup>

It was an all-too-familiar story. The enemy defences - in this sector mostly underground and invisible - had been seriously underestimated. Artillery preparation had clearly been inadequate. The German machine-gun nests had not been destroyed. Owing to the use of an insufficient number of heavy guns much of the enemy wire remained intact; the Otley Howitzers had early run out of ammunition.<sup>152</sup> The trench mortar specialists, on which over-much reliance may have been placed to knock out the enemy machine-guns, were caught in the counter-barrage. The German machine-guns, trained on the gaps in the wire, were thus able to exact a fearful toll on the attacking force. An operation trench map "corrected from air photos taken at 5 pm September 1st 1916"<sup>153</sup> used by Major R.A. Hudson, 1/8th, then in temporary command of the 1/6th, covering an area of German trenches about 600 yards square immediately to the south-west of St Pierre-Divion, shows 15 machine-gun emplacements on the lower slopes, including one on the apex of a small prominence named "the Pope's Nose", which inflicted severe casualties on the 1/4th and 1/5th DWR of the 147 Brigade which the latter battalion had failed to capture or knock out. There had been a disastrous block in communications: runners became casualties in No Man's Land; in the murky mist visual signalling could not be seen, and the light was too bad for the observation posts to give effective help; several battalion HQs received no news for three hours or more. Each unit tended to believe that the advance of its neighbours on either side was held up and that therefore its own withdrawal was necessitated, since consolidation was thus rendered out of the question.<sup>154</sup>

Wyrall took the view that the physical condition of the assault troops had been of crucial importance:

"There is no doubt that the exhausted state of the men was a very large factor in the failure of this attack. Always willing the men did all that was possible, but they were utterly worn out and quite unfit to attack



when zero hour arrived ..." "... instead of the attacking battalions being kept out of the line to rest and get as fit as possible, every available man was engaged in carrying ammunition and reserve rations to the forward dumps in Elgin Avenue and the parallels. It was a two hours' march up to these dumps and almost always had to be carried out under shellfire and of course always at night. Those who were not engaged in carrying duties were digging trenches. The consequence was that at dawn each day the men were so exhausted that they could hardly stand."<sup>155</sup>

Wyrall may well be right. Even though fatigue parties during the period 28th August - 2nd September are nowhere mentioned in the 1/7th and 1/8th War Diaries, in the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary or in the Tetley Diary, the men of the Leeds Rifles certainly, after more than 8 weeks' almost continuous duty in the line, were desperately in need of rest. Even the ebullient Joe Knowles had become jaded and dispirited, writing for example on 4th September "I am still sticking it but I am not in the pink" and on 11th October "We used to think Ypres was hell, but it was nothing compared with the fighting on this front since July 1."<sup>156</sup> Although there were now labour and pioneer battalions, the British infantryman was employed as a porter or navvy as often as he was as a soldier, a factor frequently overlooked by critics of the Somme offensive. The German army managed things differently. It employed punishment battalions composed of military prisoners; it also employed on construction work forced civilian labour and Russian prisoners of war.

Capt Wilfred Miles, the author of the second volume of the 1916 Official History, took a somewhat different view from that of the other sources:

"There was little fault to find with the artillery preparation and support; but a frontal attack, with no attempt at surprise, upon this portion of the original German defences, commanded as it was by Schwaben Redoubt, seems to have offered little chance of success. Moreover, the troops were very tired, and in the attacking battalions were many partially trained reinforcements posted from many different regiments. These men displayed a certain apathy and lack of determination ..." <sup>157</sup>

Capt Miles' strictures upon the troops involved were misplaced. He should rather have directed his fire on to those high-ranking officers who formulated and/or approved the misguided and disastrous replacement policy.

Following this failed attack, it was back to the old routine of holding the line in the same old sector for the 49th Division until the end of the month. It then moved by easy stages to the extreme north of the Somme front where an assault on Gommecourt, scene of a disastrous diversionary attack on July 1st, was planned for October 18th. The 1/6th and 1/8th battalions were once more selected to lead on the Brigade frontage. The operation was aborted at the last minute and the Division assumed "normal"



trench duties in this sector. Things were very quiet: Hugh Lupton, now promoted Captain, described it as "a real picnic."<sup>158</sup> No Man's Land was up to 1200 yards wide and British patrols never once encountered hostile parties.<sup>159</sup> The rats and the rain were the most formidable enemies the Riflemen had to deal with; the trenches started falling in fast, entailing much construction work.<sup>160</sup> In January 1917 the Division moved to the Bailleulval-Ransart sector.

### 3.3 1917: 1/7th and 1/8th

The new sector was unbelievably quiet: casualties seemed likely only from drowning. The trenches were extremely bad, and the weather was atrocious. Villages even up to within 1000 yards of the German lines were still inhabited by civilians and were very little damaged. Capt Lupton told his parents about a fine old house in one such village:

"It is unfortunately slightly damaged. Otherwise you would hardly know there was a war on."<sup>161</sup>

The communication trenches were good and could be used safely in daylight.

"All sectors of the line commanded a fine view of the hostile hinterland ... The greatest quiet prevailed, disturbed only by the occasional whizz-bang. No Man's Land was of considerable extent in front of the left company but narrowed down somewhat towards the right. In all parts of it our patrols roamed unmolested."

A system of defence in depth had been adopted:

"The line was not continuous, being held as a series of so-called strongpoints, the parts of the line held forming Ts at the heads of communication trenches. The parts of the front line between these were filled with wire and were patrolled at night. A series of intermediate strongpoints in the second line, reinforced by numerous machine guns along the Ridge Road, completed the system of defence."<sup>162</sup>

The increase in British fire-power meant that the keeping of as many men as formerly in the front line was no longer necessary; under this new system of semi-isolated posts, a battalion could hold a 3,000 yard frontage with only about 100 men posted in the front line itself, whereas under the old system, as at Fleurbaix in the early summer of 1915, for instance, a battalion with a trench strength of approximately 700 men had been holding a 1,000 yard frontage. The new system of defence thus made much more effective use of available, often limited, manpower. The real defences of the sector lay in support and reserve positions behind the front "outpost line".

Other changes had taken place. The PH gas helmet had been replaced by the Small Box Respirator, which afforded much greater protection and was much more comfortable to wear. The number of Lewis guns per battalion



had been increased from 8 to 10 in December and further to 12 in January.<sup>163</sup> Three teams of 7 men, each with 4 reserves, were being trained in each company. Reserves were trained to reinforce all types of specialist. The result was that few men remained who were not specialists of one type or another, while some took up as many as three specialisms.<sup>164</sup> The men welcomed the new system with enthusiasm: respondent 3167 Albert E. Wood, 1/8th, who was fully qualified as stretcher bearer, signaller, bomber and Lewis gunner, was one who made a practice of volunteering for as many courses offered as possible since, as he said, "it made a nice change."<sup>165</sup> The organisation of companies was altered completely from 25th January 1917 "platoons being divided as follows: No. 1 section - snipers, No. 2 section - bombers, No. 3 section - Lewis gunners, No. 4 section - Rifle grenadiers."<sup>166</sup> The general training which had been taking place since November now embodied much musketry and rapid loading. Bombing had had its day. It had achieved much prominence during the Battle of the Somme, chiefly due to the methods which necessity had forced upon the training establishments in the UK. As the Army's thirst for men had grown increasingly insatiable, recruit training in 1916 had been reduced to 12 and, eventually, to 9-10 weeks.<sup>167</sup> In this too short space of time a recruit could be trained as an efficient bomb-thrower, but he could not be given anything more than the most elementary course in musketry. A new method of attack was being practised by the 1/8th during January; the officers were given to understand that it was "going shortly to win the war." The new method incorporated the new company organisation: "In the attack the first two platoons go over in depth, forming two lines, bombers and snipers in the first line and Lewis gunners and rifle grenadiers in the second. The third and fourth lines are complete platoons."<sup>168</sup> The commissariat was now much better organised and much more efficient. From the beginning of January hot meals were sent up to the trenches in Thermos containers. From about the beginning of March, after being relieved in the trenches, every man bathed and was issued with clean clothing and a clean blanket.<sup>169</sup>

New ideas had also been applied to trench instruction. On 2nd February one platoon was sent from each company of both battalions to form a composite battalion at Ivergny, while platoons of about double their strength from the second-line London (58th) TF Division came, for 5 days in turn, to take their places preparatory to the newcomers taking over the line from the 49th on 21st February. The men of the London Regiment "were intimately mixed with our own so as to afford the maximum of instruction."<sup>170</sup> They were given the opportunity of witnessing an identification raid on an enemy sap by 2/Lts Smith and Porritt and 18 OR on the night of 11th February.



The raid itself was unsuccessful since the Bangalore torpedo<sup>171</sup> party were prevented, by much extra wire which had been erected since the sap had been reconnoitred, from blowing up the wire. The box barrage, of course, had gone ahead as planned and this it was that, quite fortuitously, produced the required identification: an enemy message in clear, referring to the barrage and giving the name of the 118th Regiment, was tapped by the battalion signallers.<sup>172</sup>

1917 was a year of contrasts for the first-line battalions of the Leeds Rifles: peace and quiet in an inactive sector; ascendancy over the enemy; games of bluff; instruction of the Portuguese; attacked by a terrible new weapon; the agony of Passchendaele Ridge.

At the beginning of March the Regiment found itself back in its old trenches in front of Laventie, and here it was to stay until July. Both Capt Lupton and Col Tetley were amazed at the absence of change since their previous sojourn in the district. If anything, so the former considered, civilisation had advanced. There were many more civilians living in Laventie itself than in May 1915: previously deserted houses had been re-occupied and the buildings appeared to have suffered little from shell-fire in the interval. The billets were excellent, discomfort was unknown and the officers actually had beds with sheets to sleep in; eggs frequently appeared on the breakfast menu, in itself an indication of the quietness of the area. The British trenches (of the breastwork variety) were in excellent condition, comfortable and dry, and trench railways, named Great Northern, Great Central, Midland, and South-Eastern, now led from the reserve line, Rue du Bacquerot, to the front line, rendering carrying parties a thing of the past.<sup>173</sup> "Live and Let Live"<sup>174</sup> had reigned supreme here for many months. Reliefs could be carried out in daylight. The line was virtually completely inactive: "We are still living in comfort in our cellar, in the belief that an internecine cataclysm of nations still rages at our door (or tunnel). We are occasionally reminded of the fact by a shell passing far overhead or our own machine guns pooping off behind us. Otherwise all is still." The British 8" howitzers opened fire from time to time "but more to show there was a war on than with any malicious intent." Capt Lupton found it all very dull and indescribably boring: "Perhaps when peace comes we may get a little excitement."<sup>175</sup>

The enemy had sometime previously evacuated his front line, which had been almost obliterated by British shells and trench mortars,<sup>176</sup> and patrolled it only at night. "One could look over the parapet all day long" and walk freely and with impunity about the British lines; arrivals of an enemy rifle bullet were noteworthy events.<sup>177</sup> A panoramic photograph



taken of the sector from just behind the front line on 14th June 1917 shows, if the partly ruined buildings in the foreground are ignored, a remarkably normal, almost idyllic, rural landscape; even the trees in the British lines appear only slightly damaged and that damage is evidently not recent. Footpaths in No Man's Land were shown on the trench map prepared by a 1/8th Scout, 2972 William E. Capp.<sup>178</sup> The nightly patrols seldom had anything to report and the hostile parties that were occasionally spotted usually retired in great haste.<sup>179</sup> The men noted all these signs - "we are gaffers now" wrote Knowles on 7th March - and, reading of the German retirement to the Hindenburg Line, began confidently to predict an early finish to the war. They began to discuss future civilian careers and that subject dear to the hearts of soldiers on war service, "blood money" [gratuities].<sup>180</sup>

On arrival the 49th Division had been ordered to pursue a high level of patrolling at night and to take every precaution against surprise attack. The men on trench duty were deployed in the front line, in the forts, and in the second or "B" line. Each company had, in fact, a platoon in the B line, 600-700 yards back, whose duty it was in case of attack to counter-attack the front line.<sup>181</sup> Wiring parties were out every night, strengthening the wire defences. Fighting-reconnaissance patrols visited the enemy front line every night. 2715 Sgt James A. Eastburn MM, 1/8th, described such a patrol that took place at the beginning of March.<sup>182</sup> The patrol comprised a subaltern, himself (the Scout Sergeant), a corporal Lewis gunner (carrying his gun in a canvas holdall), a bomber, and a rifle grenadier. Their brief was to discover whether the enemy was holding his line thinly and with second-class troops or whether he had withdrawn further up Aubers Ridge. If possible, they were to obtain a prisoner. In No Man's Land a member of the patrol inadvertently tripped a large flare which exploded almost in their faces. Immediately the young officer started yelling at the top of his voice: he had "lost his nerve and was hysterical with fright." 20-year-old Sgt Eastburn unceremoniously grabbed him and knocked him unconscious with his own pistol. The men held a conference to decide what to do next. They expected the enemy to come out in some strength to search for them. The bomber remained with the officer to ensure his silence so that he could not betray their position. The Lewis gun corporal stationed himself to cover a dyke and take the enemy in enfilade should any emerge from their trenches. Any survivors were to be captured and rendered unconscious: nobody was to fire unless the enemy was "actually on top of us". Sgt Eastburn positioned the rifle grenadier, checked the loading, direction and angle of trajectory of his weapon, removed the pin from the grenade, and ordered him to remove the safety catch and fire on



hearing one long blast from his whistle. Eastburn selected himself a "nice squat" pollarded willow to hide behind, and

"then blew a long steady blast. The balloon went up with the rifle grenade - bedlam broke loose. It was a magnificent shot - three times as far as a man can throw ... Machine guns chattered; lights went up galore ... I made out about nine strong-points falling back diamond-shaped in echelon, manned by machine-gunners along fixed lines. They dared not fire to their flanks or rear for fear of scuppering each other."

The Riflemen "all lay doggo for a while" until the tumult subsided and the firing died away. Eventually came the Green Verey light from the British front line, signalling them to return without delay. They suffered no casualties. The enemy, who had developed "the jitters", "swept our front with machine guns, whizzbangs and shrapnel" just before dawn, evidently expecting an attack. (For this exploit, Sgt Eastburn was Mentioned in Despatches. The subaltern concerned was awarded the MC for his supposed part in the 1/8th's defence against the German large-scale raid of 25th March: one disgusted respondent commented that "he couldn't have stopped a pig in a passage".)

This policy, evidently a new departure in this sector, and in particular the very active patrolling of No Man's Land, the nightly inspections of the enemy front line and the enthusiastic manner in which hostile patrols were pursued,<sup>183</sup> caused the Germans serious alarm. The 1/7th, in the line from 19th to 24th March, were heavily shelled and trench mortared for much of the time and the wire, front line and communication trenches suffered much damage.<sup>184</sup> The relief of the 1/7th by the 1/8th was seriously held up by heavy trench mortar fire on the front line and communication trenches. It seemed to Lt Col Hudson and his officers that a German attack in some strength was imminent, a feeling that became a conviction when heavy shell and trench mortar fire was resumed at 5 pm and which lasted, with only a short break, until 10.30 pm.<sup>185</sup> Various "reception committees" had been arranged to give the enemy "more than he bargained for."<sup>186</sup> Strong mixed patrols, comprising Lewis gunners and riflemen, and 8-man squads of bombers, one of which was commanded by 1757 L/Cpl George A. Blaymire, were sent out into No Man's Land at 5 pm with orders to allow the raiders to approach the wire.<sup>187</sup> Enemy machine guns later began firing from their front line and almost immediately 2/Lt J.C. Chadwick was mortally wounded.<sup>188</sup> At approximately 11.15 pm a party of about 40 Germans approached D Coy's trench, and a few of them succeeded in entering it "wherefrom they speedily retired", as Capt Lupton dryly put it, driven back by rifle fire. As the Germans retired in some disorder they were attacked by L/Cpl Blaymire and his men who "threw bombs like



mad men" and by the patrols. They appeared to have separated into smaller parties, as one ran headlong into a patrol whose Lewis gunners, led by the intrepid 20-year-old 2750 Rfm F. Webster, killed three and wounded an unknown number of others; the patrol "was unfortunately prevented by a broad dyke from adding the effect of their bayonets to that of their gun."<sup>189</sup> Unfortunately the night was very dark and the raiders, wounded and unwounded, were able to make good their escape. In their haste to get away they dumped everything they had been carrying: "a large number of bombs, two infernal machines, wire cutters, Very pistol, etc."<sup>190</sup>

The following message was received:

"The Divisional General congratulates the 1/8th West Yorkshire Rgt. in the following message: The Divisional Commander is much pleased at the manner in which the German raid of last night was driven off. Information was sent back throughout the preliminary bombardment without delay; the plan based upon it is an excellent example of the best and boldest method of meeting an attack, and the execution showed boldness and determination on the part of all who were engaged."<sup>191</sup>

A message was also sent by the Army Commander:

"The Army Commander considers that the initiative shewn by the 1/8th West Yorkshire Regiment in the use of advance patrols is worthy of praise."<sup>192</sup>

Some important information was secured from letters, notebooks and other documents found on the enemy dead, who belonged to the VIth Bavarian Division.<sup>193</sup>

After this raid, the 1/8th, along with the rest of the Division, heard

"of activity designed to begin in the immediate future further south and are ordered as far as possible to lead the enemy to believe an attack here to be imminent. With this object in view the heavies register on Boche strong-points, three camps are ordered to be pitched in the vicinity of Laventie, troops under cover are exhibited on the approach of hostile aeroplanes, and - finesse of a fertile genius - road-sweepers are held in readiness to raise a dust in the somewhat improbable event of dry weather."<sup>194</sup>

Patrolling policy became even more aggressive and fighting patrols were strengthened numerically. Nightly patrols, however, continued to find nothing and often enough no sounds of any kind of enemy activity could be heard by patrols who went as far as the German parapet. This policy was, however, persisted in for some considerable time, and on occasions the enemy betrayed his anxiety and alarm. In June enemy aerial activity increased considerably and one day Capt Lupton counted 19 "sausage" balloons up at once.<sup>195</sup> The enemy made periodic raids on the 49th Division lines from the beginning of May onwards.



On the night of 2nd May, the 1/8th was again raided, and again unsuccessfully. A 1/8th patrol was already out when a hostile barrage was put on the front line and old support line and

"at the same time a heavy protective M.G. barrage across No Man's Land on each flank of the raiders was opened from well behind the enemy's front line. One of our Lewis gun teams saw a party of 5 outside our wire, but did not fire for fear of hitting our patrol which was held up by the barrage. Three of the party of 5 came up to our trench and a Lewis gunner, Rfm [H.] Talbot, shot one of them dead with his revolver. A hand to hand struggle then ensued and the Germans bolted. A patrol was then sent out to reconnoitre our wire and found one wounded German NCO and one dead. Both were brought in and it was discovered that they were of the 2nd Battalion, 6th Bavarian Regt. 6th Division. The main party of the enemy entered an unoccupied portion of our trench and appear to have dropped their bombs and bolted. About 30 bombs were picked up, and an unexploded tube similar to our ammonal tubes ["Bangalore torpedoes"] was discovered. Our casualties - 6 wounded, none seriously, by shellfire."

The wounded prisoner gave useful information: that "orders had been given to re-occupy the front line in this sector" and that the raid had not been "a 'Sturm-Trupper Raid' but a fighting patrol consisting of 8 men and 1 leader who came from reserve in Aubers to obtain an identification."<sup>196</sup>

On 7th May the 1/8th mounted a successful large-scale raid on the enemy which was a classic example of a well-planned, well-rehearsed and well-executed small military operation.<sup>197</sup> The raiding party consisting of 4 officers (OC: Capt E.F. Wilkinson; 2i/c: 2/Lt W.G. Kemp) and 104 other ranks, including 1 corporal and 1 private of the Royal Engineers, had as their object "to capture prisoners and cause enemy casualties" during a projected stay in the enemy lines of 20-30 minutes. The operation orders were extremely detailed and left nothing to chance. A planning conference had been held with staff, Artillery and Royal Engineers to settle the logistics and the timetable of operations. Artillery support was to consist of barrages by the 2" trench mortar battery and 146 Bde trench mortar battery (3 minutes on front line, 4 minutes on second line and "a box" round Dora Delta) and a "searching battery" by 14 machine-guns of 146 Machine Gun Company, while the heavy artillery was to engage in counter-battery work. 148 and 170 Brigades on the flanks had arranged trench mortar "demonstrations" in support, while the 1/5th WYR had a fighting patrol on stand-by to create a diversion if necessary.

The raiders were divided into 10 parties, each assigned to a specific task, e.g. No.1 party was detailed to deal with a certain hostile machine-gun, No. 2 party was to bridge the dykes; only one party, No. 8 consisting of 2/Lt Kemp, 2 NCOs and 16 OR, was the actual attacking party. The code



word for return was "Wiltshires": "The words RETIRE or WITHDRAW<sup>198</sup> will NOT be used." Dress was "clean fatigue, hands and faces blackened, steel helmets ... square white patch on back below collar, officers will wear double patch." "All papers, photos, identity discs, shoulder titles and badges will be left behind." "A razor will be carried in the right breast pocket." Wire cutters were to be carried by 25% of the total party. Every man was to take "Rifle with Bayonet fixed and blackened, 10 rounds in magazine, 5 clips in pocket. Parties No. 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 will carry 6 Mills bombs per man in haversacks." All officers and NCOs, and all other ranks of No. 8 party, were to wear light body shields.

Capt Wilkinson's report on the operation was as follows:

"We were ready in our front line by 9.20 pm when we moved out into the assembly positions which we reached by 9.37½ pm (zero minus 2½ minutes). The bridges were put into position by zero minus 10 minutes. At zero, the main party crossed the bridge and formed up on the far side of the dyke. We then crept in parties to within 25 yards of the barrage which was very accurate. At zero plus 3 minutes we got to the German front line finding some difficulty in getting through the wire. Meanwhile the two flanking parties reached their positions exactly as arranged. No. 1 party found no machine guns. Forward parties reached the front line at the top of Dora Trench. A Boche post was found taking refuge in a dugout - one prisoner was taken.<sup>199</sup> I gave orders for the front line to be systematically searched before going forward, and it was found to be an intricate network of trenches with dugouts and shelters. The Bangalore torpedo party went forward to reconnoitre the wire round the objective and I followed them. As I saw the Germans barraging their own 2nd line with Light Trench Mortars and what appeared to be Vane bombs, I considered it extremely unlikely that there were any enemy there, and I gave orders for the searching of the German front line to be completed, and several dugouts and shelters were found and bombed. Being satisfied that no more Germans were in the front line and the main object having been attained I gave orders to withdraw at 10.5 pm. This was accomplished - all casualties being removed, I sent forward 2nd Lt Kemp to stop the barrage as I thought this would stop the hostile barrage then playing on No Man's Land. This was justified and the Germans promptly lengthened range on to our CTs, enabling us to bring in our casualties. Parties all returned to front line and reported to Capt H.R. Lupton MC at Report Centre, and then assembled in 'B' line. Casualties 1 OR killed, 4 OR [slightly] wounded, all brought in. All in at 10.25 pm. Covering parties were in at 10.35 pm."

The writer of the War Diary reported that a hostile machine-gun had opened up at zero plus 8 minutes, but ceased fire after about 6 minutes. The enemy artillery had not begun to fire on the British front line, support line and communication trenches until zero plus 12 minutes. An isolated flare had been fired from the enemy positions at 9.45 pm, but the artillery



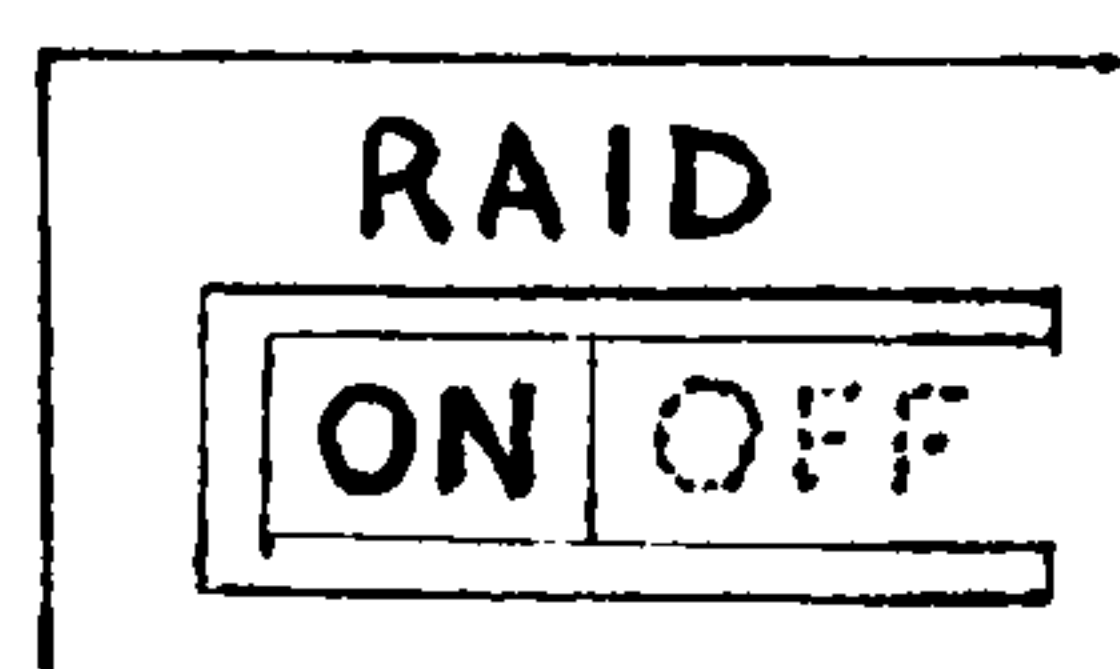
SOS - 3 green lights, 1 red, 3 green, 3 green in rapid succession - had not been sent up until 9.57, zero plus seventeen minutes. The raid had achieved complete surprise.

Energetic patrolling continued over the entire Divisional front in order to maintain the pressure on the enemy, parties sometimes penetrating even behind the German support line.<sup>200</sup> In response to British tactics, the German line was now being held very thinly with posts which frequently moved. The 1/7th raided the enemy line with 4 officers and 87 OR at moon-rise on 7th June, but found all the posts unoccupied: "The men were as keen as mustard and were tremendously disappointed at not finding any Boche."<sup>201</sup> Occasionally the enemy hit back: on 3rd July there was an intense bombardment lasting 1¼ hours all along the Brigade front line, which caused 13 casualties in the 1/7th<sup>202</sup> (including L/Sgt Joe Knowles, killed). This was followed by raids on either side of the 1/7th, who saw no enemy whatsoever in front of their trenches; the 1/6th WYR had 2 men taken away by a hostile party.<sup>203</sup> Sometimes - and unexpectedly - patrols were fired on.<sup>204</sup> In general, however, the enemy was quiet and inoffensive. Capt Lupton considered him "slack".<sup>205</sup> British hopes that the enemy would divert troops and heavy guns to this sector, or, alternatively, carry out a strategic withdrawal in this sector, were not realised.

About the end of May or the beginning of June battalions had been

"ordered to prepare orders for two possible operations: (i) for pursuing the enemy should he retire owing to pressure on his flanks; (ii) for occupying posts in or about his support line system partly to get more into touch with the Boche and partly by demonstrating our ability to hold more of his troops."<sup>206</sup>

The posts to be occupied by the 1/8th were the Deltas (or heads) of Bertha and Clara trenches and the Wick Salient. "This was to be done silently and at night, though a subsequent version added a barrage. Trenches were to be dug across No Man's Land." This occupation was later timed for the night of 15th/16th June. After all the arrangements had been made the scheme was "postponed indefinitely" at the last minute. On the 19th, however, training for the occupation scheme, now planned for the 24th, recommenced. However, the following afternoon it was cancelled yet again. To give some indication of the regimental officer's general lack of enthusiasm for the scheme and his disgust at the endless shilly-shallying, Capt Lupton, the Unofficial War Diarist, cited the officer of the 1/5th WYR who, "to aid his halting memory" adapted one of his sliding gas alert indicator-boards to read:





"This he placed so that all Colonels, Brigadiers or even higher command might see and congratulate themselves in their efforts to mislead the enemy."<sup>207</sup>

At the beginning of April companies of the 1st Division, Portuguese Expeditionary Force, began arriving for trench instruction, prior to their taking over the sector from the 49th Division. They created an extremely bad impression on their hosts, both officers and men, on account of their indiscipline, lack of moral fibre and general lack of soldierliness. Capt Lupton, who was fluent in French, confessed himself "not immensely taken with the officers or NCOs" and described the men as being "entirely devoid of discipline." Col Tetley, who hardly ever permitted himself a personal comment of any kind in his Diary, wrote:

"The Portuguese appeared to have very little idea of soldiering - when on sentry duty the men thought nothing of leaving their posts if they wanted to talk to their friends or if it rained; they were very dirty in their habits; they had no idea of cleaning their rifles, some of which had never been cleaned since they came from the makers; the men were sturdy and willing and were capable<sup>208</sup> of being trained if their officers had been of any use."

They quickly became objects of derision to the men. Respondents were obviously enormously shocked by the general behaviour of the Portuguese troops and without exception spoke of them in the most contemptuous terms. The frequency with which Portuguese officers fired unjustified SOS signals naturally failed to endear them to the Divisional Artillery.<sup>209</sup> The following comments are typical:

"The Portuguese were absolutely terrified by the 'minnies'. They refused to come out of their dugouts, even to visit the latrines";

"They had to be chased out of their dugouts at bayonet point. We called them the 'Pork and Beans'. Then an order came from way above saying that this practice must cease forthwith and that henceforth we must refer to them as 'Our Gallant Allies'." <sup>210</sup>

No one in the Regiment was surprised when they heard that a German raiding party had taken about 6 Portuguese prisoner on the night of 2nd/3rd June.<sup>211</sup>

On 10th July the 49th Division handed over to the Portuguese and set off for the French coast in the region of Dunkirk in order to participate in the second part of Haig's 1917 Flanders programme, the Northern Operations to expel the enemy from the Belgian coast. The Division had been intended for the XV Corps' big coastal attack, but the successful capture of the Dunes sector of the Yser bridgehead on July 10th/11th by the Germans, had frustrated this operation.<sup>212</sup> It was then intended that the 49th should attack and recapture the village of Lombartzyde. This operation, too, was cancelled, probably in consequence of the enemy's pre-emptive strike



of 21st July against the 49th Division, in which the 1/8th suffered the most heavily, sustaining casualties of 22 officers and 781 other ranks: excluding the men of the Transport section, QM and HQ staffs, there were 25 survivors.<sup>213</sup>

The Division had been made responsible for the defence of Nieuport on 18th July. "Any port except Nieuport" had become a catch phrase.<sup>214</sup> The front line was intersected by canals and marshes and communication with the Belgian Army on the right was maintained by means of a raft operated by a wire rope from the far bank on the sound of a whistle. The town itself lay in "divisional support". The Germans, aware that the planned offensive against Ostend was imminent, heavily shelled it almost continuously. It was in ruins and its defences were in a most dilapidated condition.<sup>215</sup> The "support trenches" were the cellars of the town which had been joined up where necessary by tunnels.

On the night of 21st/22nd July the 1/8th was in Brigade support.<sup>216</sup> The majority of the personnel were in the cellars; there were several working parties out, one in the command of 2/Lt Tom Nettleton, a former L/Cpl in the 1/7th. The night was warm and the wind speed no more than 3 miles per hour. The town was subjected to three severe bombardments, each of half an hour's duration at 9 pm, 11 pm and 2 am. There was nothing unusual in this and the men in the cellars, reinforced by partly collapsed buildings over them, felt safe enough. Some, like the Signalling Sergeant, 2349 Harry Walton, and his pal, Signaller Jimmy Seed, were even asleep. Observers of the first bombardment thought that there seemed to be rather a lot of "duds" among the H E shells. They did not know that the shells which burst open on impact with a dull plop contained Germany's terrible new weapon, the highly volatile vesicant chemical dichlorethyl sulphide ("mustard gas"). The gas had been used for the first time 11 days earlier, against British troops and on the Nieuport bridgehead, and the battalion had been warned about it. All ranks had, in fact, been warned that very night to don respirators should they detect a smell of mustard, but very few had done so by about 10 pm. Capt Lupton had personally visited all the cellars to make sure his men had the wet Vermoral blankets over doors and other openings, as instructed, to keep any poison gas out. The odour was hardly detectable in the cellars and no one seemed to be affected. Everyone was wearing their respirators when the second bombardment of gas shells, mixed with H E shells to disperse the gas more widely, started but by then it was too late. "About midnight many men became sick and started vomiting, and in consequence could not keep their box respirators on." Trapped in the confines of the cellars and tunnels, the gas achieved



maximum effect. Every single man there become a casualty. The total number of cases admitted to hospital by July 25th was: 19 officers, plus the MO, and 756 OR, though the eventual total was 22 officers and 781 OR. Over the next three weeks or so 96 (about 12%) died (used in the open, the chemical produced an average mortality rate of only 2%).<sup>217</sup> 437 (about 56%) were later evacuated to England; recovery was very slow. Many had suffered a permanent injury to the health - for example, 3108 Cpl Ben Marsh permanently lost the sight of one eye and was awarded a 30% life pension - and only a relatively small proportion were subsequently passed fit for overseas service. The Official History unaccountably makes no reference to the mustard gas attack on the 1/8th, but it would appear that the 1/8th's was the highest casualty rate from mustard gas suffered by a single battalion in the war.

The chemical mainly attacked the eyes, skin and respiratory system.<sup>218</sup> It caused severe conjunctivitis, suppuration, photophobia, severe burning pains in the eyes, oedema of the eyelids and, finally, temporary blindness but, providing treatment was quickly given, permanent impairment of the sight was relatively rare. Penetrating to the deeper layers of the epidermis, the gas produced vesication and ulceration of the skin; the lesions were very slow to heal and readily became infected. Severe inflammation of the entire respiratory system was caused and this often developed into acute bronchitis. In the worst affected cases this developed in turn into terminal bronchopneumonia. This was the cause of the majority of the deaths, though a small proportion resulted from leucopenia and bone marrow necrosis. It has been estimated that some 168,000 casualties were caused by dichlorethyl sulphide in 1917-18.

The characteristics of the gas make it extremely dangerous as a military weapon. Its action is insidious, its effects not developing until 2-4 hours after exposure and by the time symptoms appear, it is too late to prevent injury. Although it presents a fairly characteristic garlicky odour, this is not at all strong and detection by smell is most unreliable: a rising concentration in the air might well escape notice altogether. Because of its very slow rate of vaporisation, it persists for weeks, even months, depending on air and ground temperatures; even walking on contaminated ground is dangerous. Its powers of penetration are such that it will eventually penetrate all but the most impervious substances - soil, wood and bricks, as well as leather and cotton and woollen clothing - and is most readily soluble in fat and skin. Once absorbed by materials and structures it continues to present a vapour hazard by desorption.

By breakfast-time on the 22nd the symptoms had manifested themselves



in the majority of the battalion.<sup>219</sup> The officers and men of the working parties, apparently unaffected, "worked like Trojans all day, collecting up the casualties and guiding them to the ambulances. Some were in a very pitiful condition, gasping for breath." RAMC orderlies had quickly arrived to take the casualties away to the dressing station; "long lines of them were to be seen, each holding on to his predecessor," for all were blinded. In the evening all of those who remained out of the battalion, 6 officers, all subalterns, and about 100 men, proceeded to Riboulet Camp where their brothers-in-arms of the 1/7th, "received us with open arms and showered on us every kindness." Major W.H. Braithwaite of the 1/7th took over temporary command, but within a few days the battalion strength was down to 2 officers and 25 other ranks, the remainder having been sent to hospital by the Divisional ADMS.

On 25th July the 1/7th went into the line NE of Nieuport and was heavily shelled much of the time. The situation was both unpleasant and worrying, since should the bridges have been broken, the battalion would have been completely marooned on the German side of the canals. During the tour raids were carried out on the enemy and all failed. The first raid on 28th July cost 4 men killed, 5 men missing believed killed, and one officer (Lt George Zucco) and 8 men wounded; the supporting barrage was not good and the raiding party found the enemy bombers and machine-gunners waiting for them. Two separate raids on 1st August failed

"owing largely to the very bad weather conditions, very heavy rain, and a very dark night. The raiding party from the right Coy lost direction and never reached the enemy's trench; the raiding party from the left Coy reached their objective but were met by bombs and were forced to retire. It was intended to blow up a concrete erection named Rat Post; the RE carried out mobile charges and placed them in position, but owing to a misunderstanding and to the darkness the charges were not fired."

The casualties during the second raid were 1 officer and 8 men wounded. During the night of 1st/2nd August the Division was relieved. The fortnight at Nieuport had cost the Leeds Rifles dear: the 1/7th had lost about 220 men killed, wounded and gassed and the 1/8th had been completely wiped out.<sup>220</sup>

It was now time for the Division to be called on to take part in Third Ypres. But first, two months had to be spent in intensive training, during which time the Division was visited by the Army Commander, General Plumer, and by Lt Gen A. Godley, commanding the 2nd Anzac Corps (XXII Corps), which the 49th had now joined. In due course orders were received to carry out, with the 66th Division, the main attack in the operations of 9th October west of Passchendaele, known as the Battle of Poelcappelle, a name of ill



omen since, translated, it means "the church in the bog". The 1/8th (now reconstituted), 1/7th and 1/5th WYR, with the 1/6th in reserve, were to advance, with 148 Brigade on the right and another TF division, the 48th, on the left. The first objective of 146 Brigade was about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the tape line, the second objective 1200-1300 yards from the tape line.<sup>221</sup>

The weather in September had been fairly dry, but the normal Flanders October rains had begun on the 4th and it rained almost continuously until the night of the 7th/8th.<sup>222</sup> It began to rain very heavily again in the late afternoon of the 8th. The meteorologists had forecast more stormy weather with no improvement in the outlook period. Up to 4th October there had been no serious difficulty in maintaining the communications to the front, but by 9th October the roads and tracks across the battle zone had gravely deteriorated; the mass of shell holes had filled with water; the area behind the 2nd Anzac Corps, i.e. the entire valley of the upper Steenbeek and its tributaries, had become "a porridge of mud". It had not been possible to make progress with the plank roads for the artillery's forward move; long stretches of the only passable supply routes to the front line, the signposted duck-board tracks, had been trampled out of sight by pack animals. Instead of going forward as planned, the Corps field batteries were obliged to remain west of the Steenbeek on hastily improvised and unstable gun-platforms that shifted on recoil and began to sink into the mud after only a few rounds had been fired. Not only were accurate aiming and ranging impossible in these conditions, but the inability to move forward meant that the mass of German batteries were out of range. The artillery ammunition had to be taken up on the backs of pack animals under the greatest difficulties. The preparatory bombardment and the creeping barrage were accordingly feeble. A large number of guns and howitzers, in fact, failed to participate, others were unable to fire accurately, and the high explosive shells buried themselves in the soft ground. The consequences for the attacking troops were tragic. The enemy's front-line troops were not disorganised, let alone destroyed, his massive wire entanglements were not cut, his machine-gun teams were not knocked out, and his batteries were not neutralised; the concrete pillboxes were invulnerable to anything less than a direct hit from an 8" shell.

The officers spent the 7th October in reconnoitring with much difficulty the assembly position for the attack and the route up to it.<sup>223</sup> 20 officers, including the CO and the MO, were assigned in each battalion to take part in the operation. At night parties of officers and men went up to lay the tapes. 1310 William Gill, A Coy, 1/8th, was one of them:



"Our officer collapsed through sheer exhaustion on the way up and we had to yank him out of a shellhole."

In addition to the heavy rain, the weather, even for early October, was very cold and Capt Lupton asked his mother to send him a woollen sweater. At 9 am on the 8th the two battalions paraded and marched off to St Jean. After midday dinner, the men drew ammunition, bombs, shovels and sandbags, and at 5 pm the three attacking battalions of 146 Brigade proceeded in single file to the assembly position about 2½ miles away along No. 6 track. Torrential rain had been falling since late afternoon, accompanied by a fierce, buffetting, icy cold wind, and the night was pitch black. Many parts of the trench gridding were missing. The men "did not march, but staggered and stumbled up to take part in the attack."<sup>224</sup> Rfm Henry Spurr, D Coy, 1/7th, said: "We were all worn out by the time we got to the jumping-off place. It was madness to have even set off. The duckboards were all smashed to bits by shellfire. I was carrying Lewis gun panniers, but I kept falling down in the mud and my rifle was so clogged up with mud I couldn't have fired it." Rfm Gill found that the tapes he had put down had completely disappeared in the mud. The German artillery were busy most of the night, but neither Leeds Rifles battalion sustained any casualties, although quite a few men had had to be rescued from shell holes. It took the 1/8th Signallers over 8 hours to reach their position. The 1/7th reached its assembly position at 3 am, 10 hours after setting off, but the 1/8th took 12 hours, and the rear company arrived in its position only 5 minutes before zero which was 5.20 am. (It had been estimated that the brigades leading the attack would be able to reach the jumping-off tapes in 5 hours, but some battalions in both the 49th and the 66th Divisions failed to arrive in time and there were consequently large gaps in the first wave at zero.) The men of the Leeds Rifles were completely done up and could hardly stand, but "In spite of the disorganisation, the fatigue following on a trek of twelve hours with heavy loads, the rain and the mud, the men went forward with great gallantry." The Official History comments "That the attacks ordered were so gallantly made in such conditions stands to the immortal credit of the battalions concerned."

The physical conditions of the battlefield at this stage of Third Ypres have been described so often that a repetition seems scarcely necessary. "... in all that vast wilderness of slime hardly tree, hedge, wall or building could be seen. As at the Somme no landmarks existed, nor any scrap of natural cover other than the mud-filled shell-holes."<sup>225</sup> The ground over which the Leeds Rifles advanced, the 1/7th and the 1/8th side by side, was a sodden swampland, churned up into an endless mass of



water-filled shellholes, and almost impassable, and dominated by hostile concrete machine-gun posts surrounded by massive belts of wire entanglements. Dante would have had little difficulty in recognising this area of awful desolation as one of the lowest circles of Hell.

The Riflemen lay prone in the mud, waiting for the signal to advance.<sup>226</sup> They were to go over in two waves on a two-company per battalion front, B and C companies comprising the first wave detailed to capture the first objective, A and D companies the second detailed to capture the second objective. The whistles sounded and the men scrambled up. Rfm Gill and his comrades from Pudsey shouted to their life-long chum Harold Northropp who had risen to the rank of sergeant in the 1/8th and who had recently re-joined the battalion as a platoon officer. He was going over in the first wave. He turned and waved a cheery greeting to them; they never saw him again. As he passed Bn HQ, platoon Sgt 1090 James Rhind, D Coy, 1/8th, was wished Good Luck by Col Hudson. Yelling back "Same to you, sir!" Sgt Rhind must have been one of the last men to speak to him. The German counter-barrage came down within a minute and a half of zero. 2735 Cyril Clarkson, D Coy, 1/7th, in the second wave, saw the head blown off much-hated Provost Sgt George Limbert of the 1/8th, walking only a few feet away from him. A respondent in the 1/7th's first wave saw four sergeants standing in a group, apparently gossiping. Muttering imprecations about idle sergeants leaving the corporals to do all the work, he trudged on. A shell exploded fairly close behind him, the blast lifting him off his feet. As he picked himself up, he saw the four sergeants, or rather, what was left of them, lying dead.

A formidable obstacle between the Leeds Rifles and the first objective was the Stroombeek, a normally shallow stream, now a morass up to 50 yards wide in places, and 4'-5' deep in thin liquid mud. 2605 Ellison Whitley, C Coy, 1/7th, was only one of many who jumped in expecting it to be a few inches deep and landed up to his neck. "A lot of men", probably non-swimmers, panicked and lost their balance. Casualties were very high in both battalions: 230 other ranks in the 1/7th, 301 (of which only 166 were wounded, but 61 were posted missing) in the 1/8th. Respondents were convinced that the majority of the killed and missing were drowned, Sgt Rhind putting the ratio as high as 4 men drowned for every one killed by bullet or shell, for, in this dreadful morass, the water-filled craters were virtually contiguous. As usual, strict orders had been issued that all wounded were to be left: "The orders were - every man for himself. If you stopped you started sinking in the mud. On every side men were calling out 'Help me out, mate, help me out', but you could hardly help



yourself. You didn't like leaving mates in trouble, but orders were orders." Respondents choked with emotion when they spoke of comrades who had drowned. Some could not bring themselves to talk about their experiences on 9th/10th October. Rfm Clarkson was typical of respondents who were both willing and able: "The Somme was bad enough, but this was terrible. Sometimes when I think about it I could go mad."<sup>227</sup>

The 1/7th (and the 1/5th) had successfully reached the first objective and Battalion HQ moved forward to take up a position in shell holes, where Col Tetley awaited further news of the attack.<sup>228</sup> No runners got back, the signallers could not connect up, and the pigeons which had been taken up had been too frightened to leave their baskets.

"No news was received from Coys until Lt F.J. Baldwin, OC A Coy (the left Coy for the 2nd objective) came back wounded about 7.0 am and said that his Coy was held up by machine gun and snipers' fire from the left as soon as it moved forward through the 1st objective Coys. He told me he had given orders that 2 platoons should move along to deal with this M. gun, but apparently they failed to silence the gun. As I got no reports whatever from the Coys I went up to the [new] front line [a German trench] near Yetta Houses."

He found D Coy, the right Coy, near Peter Pan in touch with the 1/5th.

"Two officers were left on duty with my right Coy, but in the other 3 Coys all the officers and the greater part of the senior NCOs had become casualties. This made it difficult to obtain really reliable information. Enemy M.guns and snipers in carefully concealed positions were very active; they continued to fire through the barrage and were able to prevent our advance to the 2nd objective owing to the accuracy of their fire and the difficulty of locating their exact positions. A number of the enemy were killed by our rifle and Lewis gun fire, and an enemy M.gun, firing from the parapet of a trench on the right, and enfilading troops advancing on the left, was rushed by one man, Rfm C.A. Capp, single-handed, whereupon the team ran away."

During the morning 2 Coys of the 1/4th DWR, from the brigade in reserve, reported to Col Tetley and at 2 pm he sent one of them to plug the gap between the left of the 1/7th and the right of the 1/8th. Small counter-attacks were attempted by the enemy about 2 pm and about 6 pm, but these "came to nothing." During the night and early morning a company of the 1/6th DWR mopped up all the ground gained by the battalion right up to the most advanced posts. At breakfast-time the new front line reported all quiet in front and all in order. Enemy shelling was heavy throughout the day. The battalion was relieved during the evening of the 10th. It was brought back under the command of respondent 2635 Reginald Frank Charge of B Coy, a full corporal.



Officer casualties in both battalions had been high, despite the fact that, as had been customary since before the Somme offensive had begun, they were dressed as ordinary Riflemen. The 1/7th lost 14 (6 killed, 1 missing believed killed, 1 wounded and missing, 6 wounded), the 1/8th 17 (8 killed, 1 died of wounds, 1 missing, 7 wounded). (High though these casualties were, they were rather below the average for the 49th Division as a whole.)<sup>229</sup> When the advance had come to a standstill the officers went forward to reconnoitre the position and were shot at by snipers and machine gunners concealed both in shellholes and on the Wallemolen Spur. The same sniper accounted for more than one officer casualty in the 1/7th and Capt Fender (said to be a distant relative of Percy Fender, the England cricketer) promised a DCM to any man who would silence him.<sup>230</sup> Col Hudson of the 1/8th had been mortally wounded soon after zero, some reports say by a piece of shell, others by a sniper. A L/Cpl Edmund Parkinson of the 1/7th who had taken cover in a dugout after becoming separated from his comrades later claimed to have found Col Hudson already in there and to have done what he could to make him comfortable and to have stayed with him until he died.<sup>231</sup> According to several respondents, however, Col Hudson collapsed and fell into a shell crater and drowned while being taken to the Aid Post. His name is on the Tynecot Memorial as having no known grave.

The 1/8th met more severe opposition on their front of advance and failed to reach the first objective. In addition to the hostile barrage, heavy machine-gun and rifle fire swept the area of advance and enemy snipers were extremely active. The main advance came to a halt only about 300 yards from the jumping-off place; the survivors beat off repeated counter-attacks for more than 36 hours before they could be relieved.<sup>232</sup> Some individuals and some parties, however, managed to get further. Rfm Gill:

"I was crawling about from shell hole to shell hole. I was on my own. Everybody else had disappeared except for one or two in the distance. I couldn't find a single officer or NCO to report to, so I had to make my way back best way I could."<sup>233</sup>

Capt Lupton:

"We started off but got caught almost immediately in the enemy machine-gun fire. I was about 30 yards away from the Huns when I got hit by a machine-gun or sniper firing gaily out of the barrage which ought to have annihilated him but which was very feeble. My sergeant-major and a man of the 1/7th got into my shell hole unwounded and there we stayed until it was dark... We were well ahead of anyone else in our vicinity."<sup>234</sup>

2818 Cpl Percy Shepherd, A Coy, 1/8th:



"We were out there from Monday afternoon to the Thursday morning. I'd not had a wink of sleep in three days and had been grovelling round in shell-holes all the time. The second night we were in shell-holes. We were convinced we were behind the German lines because there was a fair number of them in front. Anyway, we couldn't stop there for ever, so we decided to chance it. We invited them to surrender and they seemed glad to. There were 18 of them - more than us! - and they'd got lost. Later on, we saw another 4 Germans, also lost, so me and another lad ran out and captured them. We never thought for a minute they might kill us. They came quietly enough and didn't give us any trouble. In fact, they seemed quite glad to see us."

(Cpl Shepherd and his colleague L/Sgt Jack English and their comrades got back safely with their prisoners, and on the way collected some other men of the 1/8th from shell holes.)<sup>235</sup>

It was a terrible job to clear the wounded. The mud was so awful that it took 4 men 7 hours to get the badly wounded Sgt Billy Mellor, 1/8th, to an Aid Post. An example of the ordeals of the wounded was given by Rfm Clarkson. Advancing towards the second objective he was badly wounded in the leg:

"I couldn't stand. My foot became so swollen I had to take my puttee and boot off and then started to crawl back on my hands and knees, passing other wounded who could not move, also dead men, horses, tanks out of action, guns also. I crawled through ditches, barbed wire and mud and mud. I was looking for an Aid Post. I eventually found one where the sergeant sent me hopping on one leg, my arms on the shoulders of two stretcher bearers to the main RAMC Aid Post lower down the line. We were very unlucky. We got into some very heavy shelling. I was wounded again - both hands, both legs, neck, back, scalp - but the two stretcher bearers were killed and I lay there for nearly two days when the Australians picked me up. They said to me, 'We have done nothing but pick your chaps up. Your people have gone out and left a number of your lot behind wounded.'"

(Rfm Clarkson remained a semi-invalid for the rest of his life, during which time he underwent 40 major operations.) A D Coy, 1/7th, stretcher bearer, 2686 Vincent Warrillow, admitted that he had taken Rfm Clarkson, a member of his own platoon, for dead. The mistake was understandable in the circumstances. This 18-year-old youth, who already had 2½ years' service with the BEF, had been working at top pressure virtually non-stop since zero and had had no sleep since Reveille on 8th October. Like the rest of the Leeds Rifles stretcher bearers, he had "worked until he dropped."<sup>236</sup> The Australian's remark was therefore most unfair.

During the evening of 10th October the survivors of the Leeds Rifles, after being relieved by the New Zealand Rifles, returned completely



exhausted, hardly able to stagger, let alone walk properly. 1610 Thomas Doran, B Coy, 1/8th, described Major W.H. Brooke (now in temporary command) and his accompanying party of about 20 men: "They looked just like ghosts, with white, drawn, haggard faces and uniforms daubed all over with mud."<sup>237</sup>

The previous day Philip Gibbs had met walking wounded of the 49th Division:

"Only in the worst days of the Somme have I seen such figures. They were plastered from head to foot in wet mud. Their hands and faces were covered with clay, like the hands and faces of dead men. They had tied bits of sacking round their legs, and this was stuck on them with clots of mud. Their belts and tunics were covered with thick, wet slime. They were soaked to the skin, and their hair was stiff with clay. They looked to me like men who had been buried alive and dug up again ..."<sup>238</sup>

Sgt Rhind, returning to the rear with the remnants of his company - "hardly enough to fill a charabanc" - was met by an unknown officer on horseback:

"A colonel or something - I don't know what regiment. Not ours. He starts shouting at me for bad marching or something because he sees I'm a sergeant, but I answered him back, saying, 'Can't you see we can hardly stand?'"

The 1/8th Signallers had had to struggle back through the mud with heavy loads of special equipment which had proved completely useless in the conditions (they had had to resort to signalling to airmen with a white sheet). At one point one man, described as a recent conscript, refused to carry his load any longer and threw it down. Signalling Sgt Harry Walton had to threaten to shoot him at point-blank range before he would pick it up again.<sup>239</sup> On relief the two battalions had withdrawn to the old British front line for the remainder of the night of October 10th/11th, and they set off for the camp at Vlamertinghe just before dawn. The roads were often knee-deep in mud and the average speed of progress was half a mile an hour. Although the columns were in view of the enemy, there were no further casualties. On 17th October the Brigade was inspected by the Corps Commander and to the Leeds Rifles officers' surprise, "thanked for its service in the show, which proved in the light of later events to have been greater than we thought."<sup>240</sup>

The respondents were unanimous as to the reason for the failure of the main attack on 9th October: they blamed the virtually impossible conditions, Napoleon's "fifth element", mud. This appears to have been the view of Haig himself who told war correspondents that mud alone had been responsible for the failure. Sir J.E. Edmonds, however, considered that the real stumbling block to success had been the continuous belt, 25-40 yards wide, of new wire entanglements protecting the pillboxes on



Wallemolen Spur which had been virtually untouched by artillery fire.<sup>241</sup>

On 31st January 1918 the 1/8th was disbanded under the War Cabinet's scheme to reduce infantry brigades to 3 battalions. HQ, together with 8 officers and 200 men, was transferred to the 62nd (West Riding) Division, absorbed the 2/8th and became the 8th Bn. Remaining personnel were shared between the three West Yorks battalions of 146 Brigade. The 1/7th received 10 officers and 230 other ranks.<sup>242</sup>

From the second week of November the 1/8th to the end of its existence and the 1/7th to the end of March 1918 were alternately engaged in providing large working parties (for salvage work and the construction of light railways) and holding the front line mainly in the Broodseinde sector. This latter activity can better be described as periods of difficult outpost warfare. The front line system invariably consisted of a series of wired-in isolated posts which could not be reached in daylight. Two companies would hold the posts, with one company in support and one in reserve. The environmental conditions were truly appalling and almost begged description. The 1/8th promptly and "unanimously decided to change the heading of its correspondence to 'In the Mud', no field being visible." Hostile shelling was both frequent and heavy: during its first tour, 15th-19th November, the 1/8th sustained over 50 casualties. Every night patrols "sallied forth to harass the enemy". The Germans retaliated. 5 prisoners were captured on the 17th and 2 further prisoners on the 18th.<sup>243</sup> No details were given of the circumstances in the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary, but Capt W.G. Kemp gave his friend Capt Lupton an account of the events of the 17th:

"The last time in the line B troop captured five fine fat Boche. It was a very foggy morning and at about 9.30 am I heard a shot fired and someone shouted into the dugout 'Captain Kemp, the Boche is coming over!' As a matter of fact I quite believed it at the time, as it was just the morning for a show. I rang up HQ and gave the warning, and dashed outside minus revolver and steel helmet, picked up a rifle and bayonet and made off to meet the Hun Army! Imagine my surprise and relief when I saw five Boche, with hands high in the air, being marched in by L/C Barron, who covered them with a dud revolver that he had just that moment found, assisted by a S.B. [stretcher bearer] pointing a pair of wire cutters at the now terrified Hun! I managed to ring up HQ in time to prevent a barrage coming down, but could not satisfy S.S.S. [Acting Lt Col Stanley S. Sykes] that all was well for many hours!! 'Is that B?' 'What is happening?' 'Are you O.K?' 'Be on the look-out.' 'Stand to' etc. etc. etc. One of these five proved to be a Sgt Major, complete with revolver, dagger, and field glasses. At last I have got my much longed-for automatic! Three of them had revolvers, the other two rifles, which I found out in No Man's Land. I dashed out with a patrol



at once hoping to find the rest of a battn. waiting to be taken!! But no luck! These five say they got lost in the fog, but I have my doubts about their statement, as the S.M. had a bag of rations with him! We got a complimentary message from the GOC and now B Coy have their tails well up in the air!"<sup>244</sup>

At 1.15 am on Boxing Day a hostile party of 6 attempted to raid one of the 1/8th's front-line posts, but were driven off, leaving one man behind dead.<sup>245</sup>

#### 10.4 1918: 1/7th

In February 1918, as a precursor of the offensive, a "very marked and significant" escalation in enemy infantry activity occurred in the Ypres Salient.<sup>246</sup> There was an unsuccessful raid on the night of 23rd/24th February by a strong hostile raiding party on the 1/7th who were holding the front line in front of Broodseinde Ridge.

"At 11.20 pm the enemy opened a heavy barrage on the front and support lines along the whole Battalion front. At the same time a strong enemy party approached our advanced post at D23.d.50.50 - this post was manned by Corporal [Jack] Moss (D Coy) and 8 OR who estimated the enemy to have been nearly 100 strong. The post immediately opened fire with Lewis gun and rifles and the enemy attempted to surround them and commenced to throw stick bombs. After putting up as strong a resistance as possible, and being in imminent danger of getting cut off and captured, Cpl Moss decided to withdraw his party to the front line posts. This he succeeded in doing. By this time he had had two men killed and two wounded." "The SOS signal was sent up and our barrage came down very quickly and was very good." "In the centre of the front the enemy seems to have made no attempt to enter our line. On the right Coy's front more of the enemy were seen by our sentries and a party of 1 officer and 15 OR were successful in crossing our front line near D29.d.45.40. The first indication of their presence was when Capt Booth (B Coy) on proceeding down Nidd Comm. Trench met a German running towards him and captured him."

The raiders entered a section held by 4158 Sgt George S. Ibbitson and men of No. 13 platoon, D Coy. Warned by the sentry's shouts and having no idea of the size of the raiding party, but assuming it to be large on account of the intensity of the barrage, Sgt Ibbitson ordered his men to lie down and feign death. The Germans were all completely taken in. Not even stopping to search the "corpses", they made off hastily in the direction from whence they had come.

"The remainder of the enemy party then apparently crossed the C.T. and proceeded towards our No. 2 Support Post. Capt Roberts (A Coy) was here and ordered Lewis gun and rifle fire to be opened from the post, at the same time



sending Sgt [S.] Sanderson (C Coy) and some men up the C.T. to work round and cut off the enemy's retreat. It was here that the German officer was wounded and one of his men killed, the remainder were captured by Sgt Sanderson and his party."

A member of this party was 3167 Albert E. Wood (transferred from the 1/8th on 31.1.18), at the time acting as a stretcher-bearer:

"I tore off my Red Cross armband and showed 'em all how to throw bombs. I gave 'em quite a few. The German officer was badly wounded and I got his revolver as a prize."

The dead man was a Sergeant-Major and the rest of the raiders, numbering 22, according to Rfm Wood, surrendered meekly; several of them wore the Iron Cross. The following night three more Germans got into the 1/7th's line, but this time they had come over deliberately to give themselves up.

The 49th Division was not involved in the first three weeks of the German offensive. On 10th April the 1/7th was suddenly detached from the Division and ordered to report to 62 Brigade, 9th Division, XXII Corps, at Parrett Camp on the Kemmel-Vierstraat road: "we were told to take proper precautions on the march as the enemy was reported to be in Vierstraat; this proved to be untrue as he was not even in Wytschaete at the time."<sup>247</sup> (Wytschaete was lost later in the day but recaptured the following morning.) The 9th Division, very much a scratch team and only recently transferred to the XXII Corps, was attempting to cover over 9,000 yards of front; it had no heavy artillery.<sup>248</sup> The Riflemen were unaware that a scheme for the gradual evacuation of the Ypres Salient and the area south of the Wytschaete-Meteren line had been approved and that the first stage of this withdrawal would be put into operation on the night of 12th/13th April.

The situation on the afternoon of 11th April was critical, the brigade holding the Messines sector having been driven back, leaving the right flank of 62 Brigade "perilously exposed".

"About 4 pm on 11th April orders were received that two Coys were to proceed as soon as possible to take up a position just south of Wytschaete on the ridge from Bogaert Farm to Pick Wood as the right flank of the [62] Brigade was in danger owing to the retirement of other troops on that flank. C and D Coys were sent up and, according to the Brigade Major, carried out the manoeuvre very well, particularly as there was heavy shelling and other troops were retiring from that part of the line."

Brigadier-General G.H. Gater, commanding 62 Inf Bde, was not stinting in his praise:



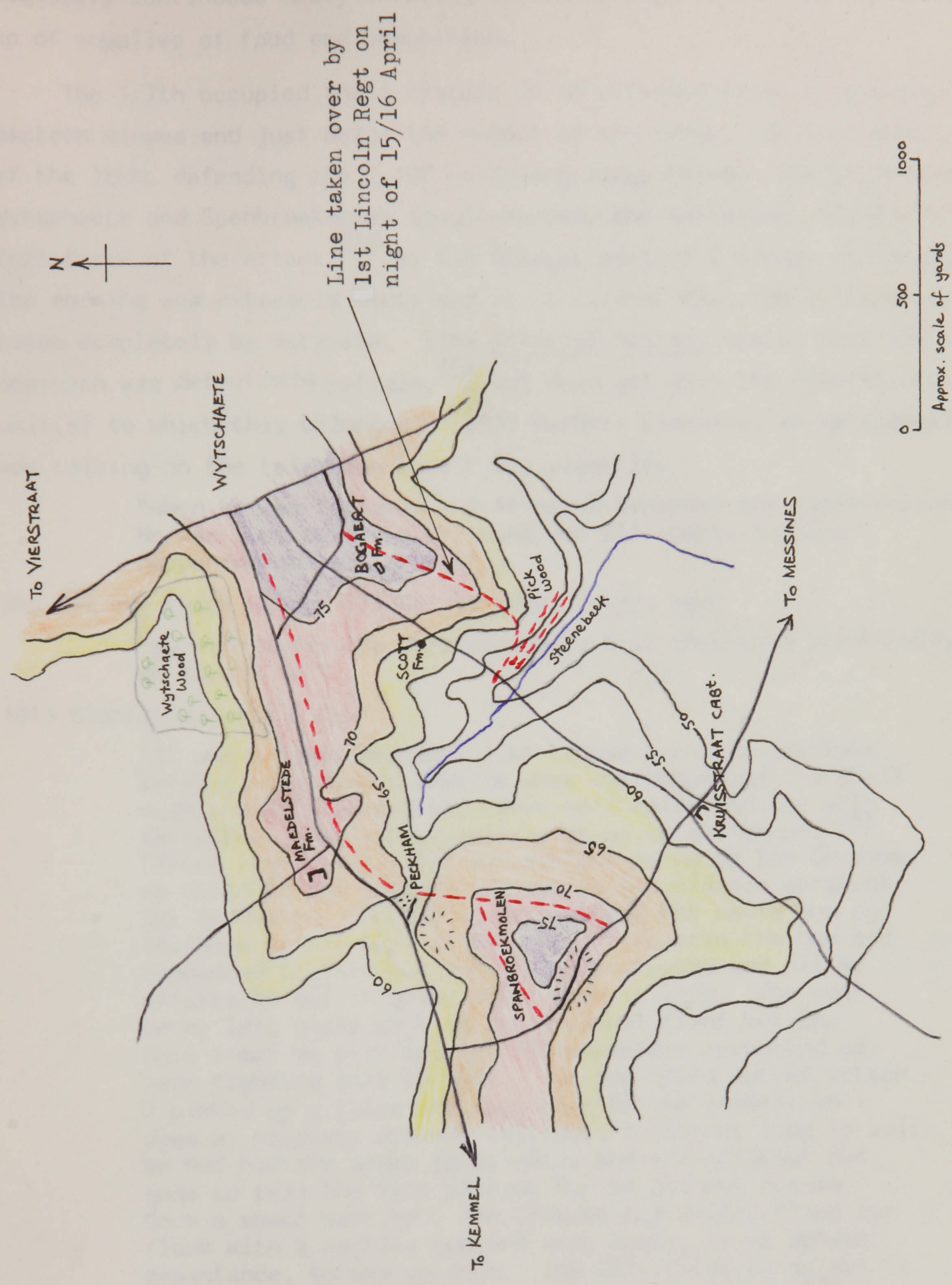
"Under very heavy shelling the battalion moved forward splendidly and their steadiness undoubtedly saved the situation."

"Battalion HQ and A and B Coys were ordered to proceed to Regent St. Dugouts but were soon moved from there, Batt. HQ moving to Wytschaete, A Coy to take up a line along the road from Wytschaete to Peckham, and B Coy to place 2 platoons at Peckham and 2 platoons at Spanbroekmolen. Our right flank at Pick Wood on the Steenbeek was very much in the air as the front line of the people on our right ran from Kruisstraat Cabt. to Maedelstede Farm in between. During April 12, 13, 14, 15 shelling was very heavy all round and we had about 75 casualties ... About 8 pm on April 15 we received orders that D Coy at Bogaert Farm would be relieved by a Coy of the 1st Bn Lincoln Regt [62 Bde] and that we were to take over the Spanbroekmolen defences which were held by 4 Coys of the 9th Bn Royal Welch Fusiliers and 1 Coy of the 6th Bn Wiltshire Regt. These trenches or posts ran roughly from Peckham to the road leading from Kruisstraat Cabt. to the Kimmel-Wytschaete Road along the Eastern slopes at Spanbroekmolen, but there was no time or opportunity to reconnoitre them in advance. The relief was not complete until about 4 am on April 16 and at 4.50 am the enemy put down a heavy barrage on the front line and back areas and attacked in a thick mist from Spanbroekmolen to Wytschaete; the SOS signal could not be seen through the mist and the Artillery never opened fire. The enemy broke through and took up positions in Wytschaete, on Spanbroekmolen, and on the high ground NW of the Kimmel-Wytschaete road between the two places. About 5 officers and 100 of our men got away, but these were mostly from the 2 platoons [of D Coy] west of Spanbroekmolen, which retired in conformity with the other troops in their neighbourhood when their left flank was in danger. Our casualties were 12 officers and about 400 other ranks, of whom about 320 were missing."

The dead included 3 officers, RSM Herbert Fenton, DCM, MM, CSM Herbert Edward Peacock MSM, and 4 sergeants including Sgt Edgar Green, formerly of the 1/8th, and totalled about 48.<sup>249</sup> Total losses amounted to nearly 2/3rds of the strength of the battalion. 146 Brigade Diary recorded that only about 180 all ranks of the 1/7th rejoined the Brigade on 19th April. The 49th Division as a whole was in a weakened state: on 18th April its effective fighting strength was only 232 officers and 4822 OR, or less than half of establishment.<sup>250</sup>

The troops on Kimmel Ridge had been given the forlorn task of holding the line to the last, with the aim of delaying the enemy advance long enough for the Salient to be evacuated. Around Kimmel Hill itself was deployed a composite body of some 900 men, including men of the 146 Brigade (1/5th and 1/6th WYR), called the Kimmel Defence Force and commanded by Lt Col H. D. Bousfield, formerly of the 1/7th.<sup>251</sup> Conditions on the Ridge from 12th April onwards were extremely difficult and the





Source: Sketch-map in the Tetley Diary

Line taken over by 1st Lincoln Regt on night of 15/16 April

- ⊘ crater
- 60- contour (in feet)
- - - 7th Bn defence lines

Fig. 9. Disposition of C & D Coys, 1/7th Bn, 12 - 15 April 1918 on Kimmel Ridge



virtually continuous heavy shelling seriously interfered with the bringing up of supplies of food and ammunition.

The 1/7th occupied shell craters on an extended front on the south-eastern slopes and just below the summit of the ridge. On the morning of the 16th, defending the 2,100 yard-long ridge between the summits of Wytschaete and Spanbroekmolen single-handed, the battalion encountered the full force of the attack<sup>252</sup> by the greater part of 2 German divisions.<sup>253</sup> The morning was extremely misty and it is evident that the Riflemen were taken completely by surprise. (The Official History states that the enemy's approach was detected by patrols,<sup>254</sup> but does not give the name(s) of the unit(s) to which they belonged.) 2892 Herbert Creswick, an HQ signaller, was talking on the telephone to a C Coy signaller

"when he was captured and we never finished our conversation. He was just saying everything was all right, nothing happening and all quiet."

The fog was thick where 1953 George Wood, C Coy, was:

"We didn't see the Jerries coming till they were practically on top of us."

1813 Stanley Holmes, C Coy:

"It was a foggy morning, like it had been the previous morning. We didn't realise what was happening. A shell came and half-buried us. When we'd collected our wits there were the Jerries yelling at us to surrender."<sup>255</sup>  
 "About 5 am a heavy barrage was put on us by the Germans. We stood to and shortly afterwards the platoon sergeant, Sgt Sanderson, shouted to me to mount the Lewis gun on the bank at the back of my post. I mounted the gun and commenced to fire but soon the gun stopped and all my efforts to get it going again were in vain. The post on my left still kept to its original front but [by this time] my post had turned completely round and we were fighting back to back. The gun being out of action I picked up a rifle and soon that became jammed, so I drew my revolver and sat waiting. I had not long to wait. We had had the order to withdraw and the sergeant had gone to tell the left platoon but he did not return. Soon a shout went up. The Germans had worked along our flank with a machine gun and were ready, if we showed resistance, to mow us down. The only thing to do was to turn the game up which was exactly what we did."<sup>256</sup>  
 "It was fairly misty, visibility about 30 or 40 yards, hard to say. Suddenly we were under heavy attack, but we thought the situation was quite under control. Then we found lads were getting shot in the back and we realised we were surrounded. There were bloody thousands of them coming at us from all directions. No exaggeration, we were outnumbered by about 1000 to 1. It was just like crowds coming out of the gates at Elland Road football ground. Shoulder to shoulder, 5 or 6 or even 7 deep, and there were only 20 or 30 of us in our shell hole. Our officer had gone berserk - he was only very young and hadn't been with us long. He was all for going on and fighting to the last man. But then he suddenly came to his



senses and asked our advice. We advised him to surrender. It was the only sensible thing to do. It was nothing but foolishness to try to carry on. We couldn't have held up the German advance. We'd have only sacrificed our lives for nothing. The officer was terrified of being shot for cowardice.<sup>257</sup> The Germans stripped us at gunpoint of all our socks, boots and every woollen garment and put them on themselves. Because of the blockade they were much worse off than we were for such things."<sup>258</sup>

3149 Sgt James Warman, C Coy, seems to have been fully cognizant of the desperateness of the battalion's situation and to have half-expected the attack:

"Our right flank had been left in the air, but the Lincolns had come up on the left. The day before we'd seen the Jerries massing and we'd used up most of our ammunition, especially the Lewis gun ammo, on them. That night one of our lieutenants and a sergeant went out on patrol and we never saw them no more. I've heard since they got killed. It had been foggy the morning before and it was quite misty that morning. We were firing away when my corporal suddenly shouted, 'The Lincolns have run for it!' [Here the respondent interpolated some highly derogatory remarks about Regulars.] So we were left completely cut off. There were thousands coming round the back of us and they'd taken Coy HQ first so that we got no warning. We'd got rid of most of them in front, but we couldn't have escaped that way. We hadn't had much ammunition left, as I said, so when we'd used it up, there was no alternative but to surrender. We fully expected them to kill us instead of taking us prisoner."<sup>259</sup>

After the Armistice 2/Lt George J. Nye sent Col Tetley an account of the action at the latter's request:

"Baxter went out on reconnaissance with a fighting patrol the night before my capture and was left for dead a few hundred yards up the road rear right of my position. You will be glad to know that C Coy fought well and stuck it out through very heavy casualties until entirely surrounded in a hopeless position and myself being the only officer left and wounded in both legs I ordered them to surrender - CHQ had been taken some time previously. After you visited us enemy fire increased, particularly artillery - continuous, with special outbreaks at frequent intervals - on the 15th enemy attacked at close quarters - troops on our left [1st Lincolns] began to run back but seeing it in time I was able to get them back into fighting line and the enemy were repulsed; they then increased their bombardment and we had two posts buried and some of the men including Corpl [John William] Hoban - one of our best LGs - we were able to dig out in time - a bad night with many casualties most of which we buried. In the misty dawn enemy again attacked, on our immediate front, after some hot firing we made them run, but they got through on our left. I turned two LGs inwards to that flank but light conditions were very bad for that sort of fighting. I sent up meanwhile two SOS to which there was no reply (probably the mist). I also



sent 4 messengers to CHQ - none returned - I then went myself to investigate [CHQ] which I found to be in enemy hands, but nearing CHQ was wounded in both legs. I then sent my runner back to Sergt Sanderson to tell him to attempt a retreat of the remains [sic] of the Coy by the right. I bound myself and crawled across the road (now being enfiladed by enemy fire) to a small post of Mr Baxter's men - where I learnt his fate - I took charge and we got in some useful rapid fire - but shortly after I saw our men in front had been unable to effect a retreat and were captured. We were entirely surrounded in an untenable position and further resistance could not serve any useful purpose, so I reluctantly ordered the men to surrender and [they] were taken prisoner - net result a very bloody and unsatisfactory business. I heard afterwards that C Coy Sergt Major - I forget his name [George Cusworth, DCM, Croix de Guerre, died in hospital 2/6/19] - was safely taken prisoner. I hope he returned alright for he was a stout fellow."<sup>260</sup>

In its account of the German attack, the Official History states that the troops defending Kemmel Ridge had the "help of the 156th and 162nd Brigades of the 33rd Division artillery."<sup>261</sup> The respondents vehemently denied they had any artillery support whatsoever. They were extremely bitter about this: 1310 William Gill, C Coy, formerly of the 1/8th, was convinced that two artillery batteries could have repulsed the attack.<sup>262</sup>

The respondents who were captured were all "originals". Defeat and surrender were particularly bitter pills to swallow on the third anniversary of their landing with the Regiment in France, and especially when they had been badly let down by a battalion of Regulars. Their feelings can well be imagined. They were angry: none accepted that defeat had been inevitable. On the contrary. Rather did they regard it as the outcome of a series of misfortunes in which lack of ammunition, the retirement of the Lincolns, the lack of artillery support and in particular the failure of the Artillery to respond to SOS signals, the destruction of telephone lines by heavy enemy shelling, and, of course, the fog prominently figured.

The Official History states that a counter-attack was ordered at 8 am and took place about 11 am,<sup>263</sup> but none of the sources mentioned this. The Tetley Diary stated that at 7.30 pm a counter-attack was made by the 2nd Lincolns and battalions of the Gloucester and Sussex Regiments, but that it was unsuccessful, being held up by machine-gun fire from the right, where a French division should have attacked simultaneously, but failed to put in an appearance. Had it been successful it would, however, have failed to free the men of the 1/7th who, according to Rfm Tom Wood's written account, had already been removed from the area.



After the capture of Kemmel Hill on 25th April by a numerically vastly superior enemy force, 146 Brigade was able to muster only about 300 men all told. After a period of refitting and training, the Brigade in the second week of June returned to routine front line duties in a quiet sector and during the following two months or so gave instruction to American regiments from the Southern States. Towards the end of August the 49th Division transferred to the 1st Army and underwent a period of intensive training in open warfare, interspersed with spells of front-line duty. It was not recalled to the thick of the fighting until immediately after the capture of Cambrai, when the pursuit to the River Selle began. The 4th Canadian Brigade had launched an attack north-east of Cambrai on 10th October and the 49th Division, now part of XXII Corps, was ordered at 9.30 pm to continue the operation on the following day.<sup>264</sup>

The 1/7th moved off to the assembly position within an hour, and was in position on the Iwuy-Rieux road by 2.30 am.

"At this time the situation was very obscure, as no officer had had any opportunity of reconnoitring. It was known that the enemy still held Iwuy in force, but his position on the immediate front of the Batt. could only be determined by the almost continuous machine-gun fire. As there was no cover of any kind this fire caused considerable inconvenience, but by daylight everyone had managed to dig some sort of cover for himself."<sup>265</sup>

The objectives were the station and railway cutting south of Avesnes le Sec and the village of Haspres, involving an advance of approximately ten thousand yards. The capture of the ridge east of the Erclin River (which the Canadians had attacked without success the previous night) had been ordered "at all costs": its capture would render the enemy's position untenable and force his withdrawal. The battalion's battle strength was 21 officers and 634 OR.

In many respects this operation was typical of the campaign of the autumn of 1918. At 5.30 am<sup>266</sup> the enemy was seen taking up positions on the high ground about 200 yards in front from which he had an excellent field of fire. At dawn he had put down a heavy barrage on the British assembly position, but caused very few casualties. Zero hour for the attack was 9 am, a late hour which appeared to take the enemy by surprise. A heavy barrage had been ordered for this time behind which the 146 Brigade troops were to follow closely. It was not, however, particularly heavy and fell rather short, though Wyrall describes it as "magnificent". The two leading companies of the 1/7th immediately came under heavy machine-gun fire from the ridge in front and from the left flank, but they moved forward steadily, clearing out several machine-gun nests before reaching the high ground. The Germans were shot or bayoneted before they could



bring their guns into action. Enemy soldiers started running down the slopes with their hands up before the first wave of 146 Bde reached the ridge: the 1/7th had taken 300 prisoners before 9.20 am when the first wave reached the crest and captured a large number of light and heavy machine-guns. Battalion HQ moved to the top of the ridge. The 2nd Canadian Division on the left flank had not succeeded in silencing the machine-guns in Iwuy (which was not completely mopped up before 1 pm) and Lt Col Pinwell, now in command of the 1/7th, was one of the many caught in the direct enfilade fire. Meanwhile the attack was still making splendid progress. The barrage was thundering on towards Avesnes le Sec and the first wave had disappeared into the thick mist of drizzle which was now falling and which had reduced visibility to about 500 yards. C Coy, in the second wave, sent back a message at 9.50 to say they had captured 12 Field guns.

About 500 yards to the east of the ridge a sunken road ran across the line of advance. Here the enemy's resistance stiffened, for parties of men lined the road and opened a heavy fire on the first wave as they appeared. The advance was not checked for long, however. Just after 10 am the 1/6th WYR reached a point within a mile of Avesnes le Sec. They were fired on at point-blank range by hostile field guns: 2 of the men of the 1/6th rushed one of these guns, shot four gunners and took the remainder prisoner.

News of the success of the attack had quickly reached Brigade and Divisional HQs and by 10 am guns were being moved up to advanced positions and motor ambulances were arriving at Rieux crossroads to collect the wounded. Shortly after 10 am observers on the ridge south-east of Iwuy were amazed to see men retiring from the direction of Avesnes le Sec along the whole front. Suddenly, the enemy artillery fire increased. A hail of shells fell on the ridge and a violent storm of machine-gun fire from the railway embankment south of Avesnes le Sec swept the ridge. At the same time 5<sup>267</sup> German light tanks (all of German design, not captured British machines), accompanied by infantry, appeared, firing their machine-guns and inflicting very heavy casualties on the first wave. This was the first occasion the 1/7th and 1/6th had encountered enemy tanks. Unfortunately, the leading companies of the 1/7th and 1/6th had already lost a great many officers and senior NCOs and, being completely inexperienced in dealing with this type of opposition, fell back until they were checked by the second wave. They were eventually forced back about 2000 yards to the crest of the ridge west of the Iwuy-Villers-en-Cauchies road. On the western slopes, the 1/7th and 1/6th, reinforced by some Canadian troops and reserve companies of the 1/6th, rallied. Despite a murderous hail of hostile machine-gun bullets and H E shells, the enemy tanks were driven off about 10.45 am by a heavy concentration of Lewis gun and rifle fire,



which disabled one of them. (The tanks continued to patrol in front of Avesnes for about an hour, but artillery fire from RFA batteries compelled them to withdraw completely about noon.) The 1/7th and 1/6th re-advanced and recaptured the ridge completely and the line was consolidated. Further advance was ruled out by disorganisation, lack of ammunition and the high number of casualties already sustained. The enemy attempted a further counter-attack (not mentioned in the Official History), but heavy Lewis gun and rifle fire prevented him from approaching nearer than 1000 yards. From noon until 7 pm the ridge was subjected to heavy hostile artillery and machine-gun fire and many casualties were caused. The remnant of the 1/7th was relieved after nightfall to reorganise.

The ridge had been captured, but at a terrible price to both the 1/7th and the 1/6th. The former had lost 13 officers and about 400 other ranks (over 63% of those who had gone into action that morning), and the latter 9 officers and about 400 other ranks. Losses in the 1/4th DWR were comparable. The capture, however, was an important one. The enemy, realising that further effort in this area was futile, began retiring during the night, and the following day the 1/5th was ordered to follow the retreating enemy, with the 1/7th and 1/6th in support. By noon the 1/5th was astride the Villers-en-Cauchies railway south of Avesnes le Sec with patrols out 1000 yards in front.

146 Brigade remained in the battle area of the Selle but did not take part in any operations until 31st October when the 1/7th moved up to the village of Famars, where the West Yorkshire Regiment had captured its regimental march "Ça Ira" in 1793 during the Revolutionary Wars, in preparation for the attack on the morrow. Virtually no reinforcements had been forthcoming and the Brigade was now very weak numerically, totalling only 46 officers and 942 other ranks: 1/5th: 16 officers, 453 OR; 1/6th: 15 officers, 226 OR; 1/7th: 15 officers, 263 OR.<sup>268</sup>

The XVII Corps of the 3rd Army and the XXII Corps and the Canadians of the 1st Army attacked the enemy on a front of about 6 miles south of Valenciennes. The battle lasted two days and ended in a severe defeat of the enemy. As the strongest unit in 146 Brigade, the 1/5th led the attack on 1st November on the Brigade front, with the 4th Canadian Division on its left, the first wave advancing at 5.15 am carrying footbridges to cross the Rhonelle. Apart from losing over 100 men from a heavy hostile barrage, the 1/5th's advance went like clockwork. There was little ground opposition as far as the sunken road and a large number of prisoners and guns were taken. The final stage of the advance was held up some 1000 yards from the objective by heavy artillery and machine-gun fire from about



9 am for about 4 hours.<sup>269</sup>

The 1/7th had crossed the river by 6.55 am and started advancing on the village of Aulnoy which they liberated with very little enemy opposition and at little cost to themselves; many prisoners were taken. The civilians asked the Riflemen what state in America they came from: the Germans had told them that all the British soldiers had been killed. The battalion then took up a position in the sunken road at E4.b and d., and at 10 am was called up to reinforce the 1/5th who were unable to maintain their position on the railway line, mainly due to the fact that 147 Brigade, which had met heavier resistance, had not yet reached its first objective. A Coy was sent to protect the right flank, C Coy the left and B Coy the centre, while D Coy was sent forward to fill the large gap that had developed between A Coy of the 1/5th and its other companies. D Coy finally reached the position three-quarters of an hour later under heavy shell and machine-gun fire, having lost its OC, Capt W.S. Scholefield, and 2/Lt H. Berry wounded. The flanks of the Brigade front were secured by 2 pm and at 3 pm the situation was reported "quiet". Enemy aircraft later became active and at 4.30 pm a heavy hostile bombardment opened and a counter-attack developed. After an hour's fighting in which A Coy "were enabled to use their Lewis guns with good effect", the enemy broke off the engagement and retired. At dusk the line was pushed forward to the final objective and consolidated unopposed, and at 6 pm the situation along the whole Brigade front was reported "quiet". Hourly reports throughout the night continued unchanged. Total casualties in the 1/7th during the day were 5 officers and 56 OR.<sup>270</sup> The Division took about 900 prisoners.<sup>271</sup>

On the night of 1st/2nd November 146 Brigade was relieved and the following night, according to official sources, the whole Division was relieved. According to respondent Clifford Day, however, no more than one company, probably D Coy, and HQ staff of the 1/7th were relieved. The remainder of the battalion continued to press forward with other companies of the Brigade towards Mons. Day had no inkling that the end of the war was near, even though every night, under cover of darkness, unarmed parties of Germans were coming over to give themselves up. The telegram announcing the cessation of hostilities was delivered at the 1/7th's HQ about 10 pm on 10th November and was handed to the senior officer present, RQMS (acting QM) Harry Rhodes. The news seemed almost too good to be true. No one could really believe it even next morning at breakfast time when the HQ bugler sounded the call "No Parades Today". Day and his comrades did not get the news until RQMS Rhodes and his men arrived just after 10.30 with the



rations and a barrel of Tetley's beer. With whoops of joy the Riflemen threw off their steel helmets and soon after 11 o'clock were holding a drumhead thanksgiving service in No Man's Land, singing their favourite hymns. After dark they celebrated with a bonfire (a wooden hut set alight by the Brigadier himself) and firework display provided by Verey lights from captured German signalling pistols (which were more spectacular than British rockets), and the following day joined the rest of 146 Brigade at Evin Malmaison where the Riflemen kept telling each other they had reached "Evin" at last.<sup>272</sup>

#### 10.5 1918: 8th

During the last 12 months of the war the 62nd Division achieved a record of success unsurpassed by any other division of the British Expeditionary Force. From 20th November 1917 onwards it never failed in any task allotted to it, however difficult, however apparently hopeless. The degree of success achieved, indeed, often enough exceeded the wildest of expectations, as in the desperate rearguard action at Bucquoy, which not only halted the enemy advance in this sector but caused him to break off the offensive here altogether. This astonishing record of success brought the Division its accolade on 11th November 1918 when the GOC received notification that his troops were to join the Army of Occupation. No other Territorial Force Division was so honoured. In the closing months of the war it was one of the four divisions comprising the crack spearhead VI Corps: the others were the 2nd, 3rd and Guards Divisions.

The Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief always alluded in his official despatches to the 62nd Division in terms more than complimentary. Congratulatory messages from Army, Corps and Divisional Commanders were invariably liberally sprinkled with superlatives such as "magnificent", "brilliant", "splendid", "very fine". From this division of first-class battalions, Guillaumat, General Officer Commanding the French 5th Army, singled out the 8th Bn the West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles) as bataillon d'elite,<sup>273</sup> following its capture in July 1918 of the Bois du Petit Champs and the Montagne de Bligny. The following are some extracts from Special Orders of the Day:<sup>274</sup>

Battle of Tardenois: Major Gen W.P. Braithwaite, GOC 62 Div, 31st July 1918:

"The Division made a great name for itself at the Battle of Cambrai. It enhanced that reputation at Bucquoy where it withstood the attacks of some of the best of the German troops up to that time flushed with success. It has, in this great battle, set the seal on its already established reputation as a fighting force of the first quality. During the period



it has been fighting with its comrades of the French Army and side by side with the 51st (Highland) Division, the 62nd (West Riding) Division has utterly defeated the 123rd German Division, which had to be withdrawn on the 22nd instant, and the 50th German Division (an assault Division of the first rank) shared a similar fate a few days later. The fortitude, steadfastness and valour of all ranks has been beyond praise ... To every officer, Warrant Officer, Non-Commissioned Officer and Private soldier I tender my grateful thanks and express my unstinted admiration of their victorious efforts. They have gloriously upheld the highest traditions of the British Army. It is with intense pride that, once again after a great victory, I have the honour to sign myself as Commander of the 62nd (West Riding) Division."

Capture of Havrincourt: extract from personal letter dated 13th September 1918 from Lt Gen Sir Julian Byng, commanding 3rd Army, to GOC 62 Div [now Sir Robert D. Whigham], published in Orders, 14th September 1918:

"I set the 62nd Division a very hard task yesterday, but the importance of it was so great that I determined to try it. The Division has done it, and done it splendidly, so I write to let you know how proud I am of their achievements."

Capture of Marcoing: message from Lt Gen Sir J.A.L. Haldane, commanding VI Corps, to GOC 62 Div, 28th September 1918, quoted in 62nd Div Special Order of the Day, 29th September 1918:

"Please convey to the survivors of the two companies 8th West Yorkshire Regiment, my high appreciation and admiration of their initiative, dash, and gallantry in pushing up to the outskirts of Marcoing yesterday in spite of all obstacles. It is by resolution and bravery, such as they displayed, that great victories have been won in the past history of the British Army. I heartily congratulate the whole Battalion, yourself, and your splendid Division on this inspiring incident in front of Marcoing."<sup>275</sup>

Battle of the Canal du Nord: GOC 62 Div, 1st October 1918:

"I have today been visited by the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief who has desired me to convey to all ranks of the Division his congratulations and high appreciation of their splendid courage and endurance. For myself I give you all my warmest thanks for the unfailing cheerfulness with which you have carried out the most arduous tasks, often in conditions of great hardship and discomfort. It will ever be to me a pride to have commanded so magnificent a Division."

Before their amalgamation the 1/8th and 2/8th Bns had each enjoyed very good reputations; the 1/8th had been singled out for special tasks on a fair number of occasions. After amalgamation they seemed to draw strength from each other. The 8th Bn went from one success to another and the French bestowed upon it the title of bataillon d'elite. It had a fighting career of little more than nine months, but in that time



achieved a most enviable reputation and level of success. An account of some of its main actions follows. Unfortunately accounts of the battalion's part in the Battles of Havrincourt, the Canal du Nord (including the capture of Marcoing) have had to be omitted. The confusion and fog of war dominated the War Diary to such an extent that it was found impossible to produce coherent accounts of these particular actions.

#### 10.6 The Defence of Bucquoy, March 1918

After the war Sir Walter Braithwaite told Laurie Magnus<sup>276</sup> that he regarded the defence of Bucquoy as the finest achievement of the 62nd Division. On 24th March and during the first few days the situation along the southern flank of the German offensive was one of the most critical of the war. The enemy was making violent efforts to penetrate to Amiens between the inner flanks of the Third and Fifth Armies. All available reserves and any divisions that could be spared from the northern flank of the German offensive were hurriedly despatched south to stem the advance. 185 and 186 Brigades (187 Brigade was temporarily retained a further half-day by XVII Corps) were rushed from the Arras area to assist IV Corps which was holding a great re-entrant that extended from Hamel to Bucquoy.

Movement orders were issued to the 8th at 2.20 am on 25th March and the head of the column marched off about 3 am. Moving southward, the roads became increasingly congested - large numbers of civilian refugees were encountered, as well as walking wounded, non-combatants of every description, guns accompanied by artillerymen, and all types of transport - and beyond Alette were completely choked. As a result, the battalion did not arrive in Bucquoy until about 2 pm. Orders were immediately received to move straight into action. None of the men of 185 Brigade got any dinner before they had to march off. In the area were the 4th Australian Brigade, the New Zealand Division, the 19th, 25th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 51st and 63rd Divisions. The two West Riding Brigades, each with a company of the 62nd Machine Gun battalion, were to guard the village of Achiet le Petit, with the 42nd Division (TF) on their left, though their right flank was "in the air". During the early evening the tired and fought-out 19th, 25th, 40th, 41st and 51st Divisions withdrew behind this line held by the 62nd and 42nd, which now became the IV Corps front line. As 2222 Rfm William H. Reynard, 8th, succinctly put it: "The rearguards came through us and we were 'the thin red line'."<sup>277</sup> Opposing the two Territorial Divisions were no less than 15 German divisions.<sup>278</sup> 187 Brigade arrived to rejoin the 62nd Division after midnight.

The men had fully realised the seriousness of the situation when they had arrived in Bucquoy. Everything and everybody seemed to be moving west-



wards and on all sides wooden army buildings, including hospitals, and ASC store dumps were engulfed in flames and the smells of burning food were borne upon the wind. Even before reaching the village they had watched the Garrison Artillery fire the last of their ammunition and then destroy the breech blocks. On reaching the village, the men of the 8th had been ordered to remove their packs which were then put into piles and immediately fired.<sup>279</sup>

During the night, one of bad weather and mist, a German patrol entered the 8th Bn line but quickly retired, evidently chiefly interested in discovering the dispositions of the British troops.<sup>280</sup> At 2.45 am on the 26th the battalion was ordered to withdraw and take up a position in an old 1917 line of trenches immediately to the east of Bucquoy; the other battalions received similar orders to retire to hastily prepared positions on the outskirts of Bucquoy. As they withdrew, enormous numbers of German troops followed close behind them.

The battalion was ready and waiting to receive the enemy by 7 am:

"The first sign of enemy was about 8.30 am when small parties of his advance guards were seen on the outskirts of Achiet le Petit; they opened fire with MGs at long range. By 9.30 a trench mortar had been brought up and opened fire on our front line, paying special attention to the main road at entrance to village. About 12 midday the enemy had got a battery of field guns in position and began shelling the village and our line. This continued very heavily until late in the afternoon. Our casualties during the day were not excessive considering the heavy attacks made on our line."<sup>281</sup>

During the afternoon no less than five separate attacks were made on the three battalions defending the eastern side of Bucquoy, the 8th, the 2/5th WYR and the 2/7th DWR. Each time a very heavy frontal fire from machine-guns, Lewis guns and rifles and a very heavy enfilade Lewis gun fire from the 2/7th DWR mowed down the massed formations: at that range and with so many of the enemy in front it was impossible to miss.<sup>282</sup> Rfm Reynard stated that only one German managed to get as far as a shellhole a few yards from his parapet; he was shot dead. Few survivors apparently remained to crawl back to the German lines.<sup>283</sup> Capt W.G. Kemp, who was wounded during the day, later wrote from hospital:

"There was some very fine scrapping out there just before I was hit. It was really rather good sport, we got one or two topping targets. At one place we could see the Huns moving his field guns about. The men did splendidly and fought well in spite of being absolutely dead tired at times."

He stated that the 8th's attackers were the 1st and 3rd Guards Divisions.<sup>284</sup> Other sources refer to the "Prussian Guard".<sup>285</sup> Throughout the day enemy



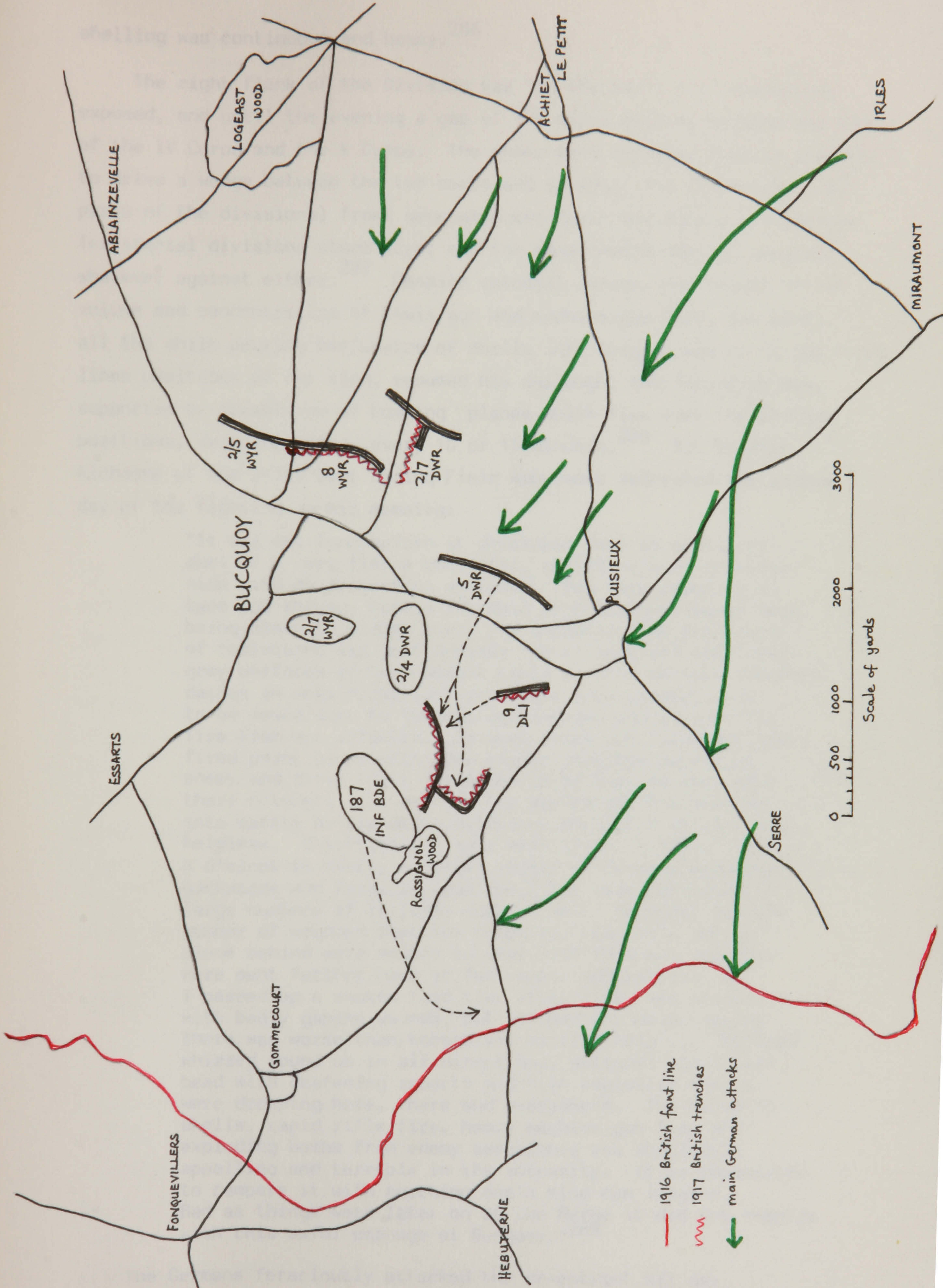


Fig. 10. The Defence of Bucquoy, 26 March 1918

Source: Based on map facing p.143, E.Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (WR) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I.



shelling was continuous and heavy.<sup>286</sup>

The right flank of the Division was "in the air", i.e. completely exposed, and until the evening a gap of 3-4 miles existed between the 62nd of the IV Corps and the V Corps. The enemy made repeated furious attempts to drive a wedge between the two corps and so split the Third Army. All parts of the divisional front were attacked again and again, but the two Territorial divisions stood firm, and the enemy could make no progress whatever against either.<sup>287</sup> Despite colossal losses, the result of the volume and concentration of Lewis gun and machine-gun fire, the enemy, all the while pouring hailstorms of shells into Bucquoy and on to the front lines positions of the 62nd, resumed his onslaught the following day, supported by formations of bombing planes which flew over the British positions, dropping bombs, every 10 or 15 minutes.<sup>288</sup> Sgt William Alchorne of the 2/3rd West Riding Field Ambulance described the second day of the fighting in his memoirs:

"It was not long before it developed into an artillery duel of a very fierce character, shells raining on every side with no protection whatever. Men were dropping in twos and threes, horses lay dead in heaps and wagons were being blown to pieces every few seconds. The main point of resistance was just outside the village and the field grey uniforms of the Germans could be seen to make frequent dashes in mass formation across the open ground, only to be mowed down by intense machine gun and rapid rifle fire from our infantry. In some cases our field artillery fired point blank with open sights into the masses of enemy and broke their formation up as fast as they made their attempts ... Our job now was to get the wounded into safety before being killed by shellfire as they lay helpless. Unfortunately many were blown to bits. From 4 o'clock to nearly midnight relays of bearers struggled backwards and forwards from the front line, bringing in large numbers of terribly wounded men. So great was the number of wounded that the temporary hospitals put up close behind were unable to deal with them all and many were sent further back in fast motor ambulances. As I passed up a sunken road time after time, men passed by with badly gaping wounds, but refused any help, saying there was worse than themselves waiting help ... Bullets whizzed round us in all directions, shrapnel burst overhead with deafening reports and high explosive shells were dropping here, there and everywhere. The bursting shells, rapid rifle fire, heavy machine-gun fire and exploding bombs from enemy aeroplanes was absolutely appalling and terrible in its intensity. It is impossible to compare it with anything one's mind can imagine. Bad as things were later on at the Marne it did not compare with this awful carnage at Bucquoy."<sup>289</sup>

The Germans ferociously attacked the re-entrant all day.

"Up to noon all enemy advances were broken up, mainly by artillery fire; the earlier attempts were made in the mist and supported by machine-gun fire at two hundred



yards' range; later attacks were carried out by larger forces and covered by artillery fire, for which there was excellent observation over the foreground from the enemy's line on the heights. A most determined attack, after heavy shell-fire, was made on Bucquoy held by the 62nd Divn; but the British machine gunners, popping up out of shell holes, shot down the bulk of the Germans, while an artillery barrage, dropping 'like a blanket', finished off the survivors. For two hours the German artillery continued to pour more heavy shell-fire into the village, without, however, dislodging the 62nd Divn."<sup>290</sup>

The 2/7th Leeds Rifles had relieved the 8th and the 2/5th WYR during the night. Though it sustained nearly 100 casualties on the 27th, it inflicted enormous losses on the attacking force and finally compelled the enemy to withdraw in disorder. The exhausted men of the 8th now occupied a trench in the rear of the village where they were heavily shelled all day: "We did not know what day or what date it was. We were without food and drank water from the shell holes."<sup>291</sup>

On the 28th the enemy made an even more desperate attempt to break the line and roll up the flanks. Large forces attacked time after time and some small gains were made. It was to be his last attempt in strength. The IV Corps front did not break. It was held by the New Zealand Division, 19th, 62nd and 42nd Divisions, in that order. They were opposed by 9 German divisions with a further 5 in support. On 31st March/1st April the 62nd Division was at last relieved: on Haig's return of 1st April the division was one of 15 "exhausted" divisions listed as being still in or near the line.<sup>292</sup> During March its losses were 98 officers and 2,084 other ranks, but, on the credit side, the enemy between 27th and 31st March had gained less ground here than on any other part of the British front.<sup>293</sup> The enemy had literally been fought to a standstill. He switched his attentions elsewhere.

#### 10.7 Tardenois: July 1918

On 13th July Marshal Foch, planning his great counter-offensive on the Marne, requested a further four British divisions to be placed unreservedly at his disposal. The XXII Corps, under the command of Lt Gen Sir Alex Godley, was dispatched south, the 15th Division to the XX French Corps, the 34th Division to the XXX French Corps, both belonging to the Tenth French Army, and the 51st and 62nd Divisions, to remain together, to the Fifth French Army. Entrainment began on 14th July. After a fortnight's "holiday" in glorious summer weather and in comfortable billets, the 62nd Division (the "Enfants de Yorkshire" as General Berthelot, commander of the Vth Army, was to translate the soubriquet



"Yorkshire lads") were in "first-class fettle".<sup>294</sup> On 15th July the Germans made their pincer attack on Reims, hoping to pinch off the whole of the Reims Salient, i.e. the city and the entire stretch of territory to the south which included the Forêt de la Montagne de Reims. On the 18th Foch launched his counter-attack between Chateau Thierry and Soissons and took the Germans by surprise.

In the early hours of the following morning the 62nd was ordered up.<sup>295</sup> 185 Brigade was to concentrate at St. Imoges. The 8th received the movement order at 4.30 am and after only a sketchy breakfast was on the road at 6 am. "The morning was exceedingly hot, and the march was made more difficult by the numerous lorries and the volume of traffic on the road." En route civilians came out with baskets of luscious fresh fruit to give to the soldiers. At 7.30 pm the CO and Adjutant were summoned to Brigade HQ where orders were issued for an attack the following morning. The conference did not finish until 8.45, but as the battalion had to be ready to move off at 9.30 pm it was possible only to issue very brief orders to company commanders; "The difficulty was increased owing to the failing light and the impossibility of using lights to explain the position from the map." The march to the assembly area was "an exceedingly long and difficult one taking from 9.30 pm to 3.20 am." Lt H.R. Burrows of D Coy wrote in his private diary a very vivid account of this march through an eerie maze of blackness called the Forest of Reims, along steep paths, stumbling "on and on and on, through trees, over trees, into trees." When a halt was finally called, the men dropped exhausted where they were and fell fast asleep immediately. A wonderful sight unfolded itself at dawn: the beautiful undulating valley of the Ardre, full of fields of ripe corn, and steep-sided high ridges and spurs that were covered by champagne vineyards on the lower slopes and crowned with dense forests.

The whole Army front was to make a general advance. The two Territorial divisions were to attack side by side down the valley of the Ardre, the final objective 7 kms away, the attack to be supported by French and Italian artillery. The 62nd attacked on a two-Brigade front, 187 on the right and 185 on the left, a machine-gun company attached to each. Unknown to the troops admiring charming scenery, however, was the fact that the standing corn and the vineyards contained innumerable German machine-gun nests. Tragically, the French had arranged for the barrage to fall 1,000 yards ahead of the assembly positions - this was the consequence of the situation in front being so obscure - and this left the hostile machine-guns unscathed. The two West Riding brigades moved off in artillery formation at 8 am. "The attack went well at first, but



within an hour of zero was completely held up by heavy machine-gun fire." To all intents and purposes the enemy was invisible and very few Riflemen even caught a glimpse of a German. Meanwhile, the barrage screamed harmlessly over the heads of the enemy troops. The day's casualties in the 8th were: 7 officers, 43 men killed; 3 officers, 199 men wounded; 20 men missing; 3 men missing and wounded; 26 gassed. The battalion had to be reorganised into 2 companies. The attack was a failure, and the writer of the 8th War Diary, the Adjutant, Capt Norman Taylor (the former Signal Sergeant), laid the major part of the blame on the misdirected barrage which had "left untouched a strong line of machine-guns."<sup>296</sup>

The advance finally came to a halt in the middle of the afternoon after only about 1500 yards had been gained. The type of fighting was something entirely new to the 62nd Division. The enemy, making skilful use of the terrain, clung tenaciously to all his positions and the machine-gun nests "proved very stubborn to rout out."<sup>297</sup> The enemy were evidently present in some considerable strength, since prisoners from four German divisions, 103rd, 123rd, 50th and 86th, were taken.<sup>298</sup> The attack was continued next day, but it became evident that no real progress was going to be made until the Bois du Petit Champs was taken. This was attempted on the 22nd by the 5th DWR, but was only partly successful. The task was handed on to the 8th Bn on the 23rd.

The attack was to take place at the same time as 186 Brigade's attack on the Marfaux-Cuitron line. Two companies of the 8th were actually detailed for the operation, but they were, in actual fact, the whole battalion, since, even with a few reinforcements just arrived from "Echelon B" the battalion was only just strong enough to be organised into two small companies, No. 1 and No. 2. The reduction in strength to 40 officers and 900 OR that had taken place on 11th July thus proved to be a serious error.

Gen Braithwaite described the Wood as a "most infernal place" which "had defied all efforts of the French and Italians" of the Italian II Corps, the centre corps of the French Vth Army in the German attack of 15th July. Speaking of the forests that looked down on the Ardre, he said he had seen nothing thicker since he had fought in the Burmese jungle as a young officer.<sup>299</sup> The 8th had had no training, nor indeed any previous experience, in forest or jungle warfare, which bore no relation whatsoever to open or semi-open warfare, but had much in common with guerilla warfare.

Orders were received by Col England about 9 pm on the 22nd. Lt Burrows described what happened:<sup>300</sup>



"And so in the gathering darkness the company [No.2] was hurriedly evacuated from its holes, nests and crannies in the forest. Then we set out at once on another of those endless crawls through these pestilential woods. At one stage of our journey we reached an area which was being very persistently and very methodically shelled ... Someone trips over a telephone wire strung loosely across the path. A low muttered opinion of the idiot who so placed the wire is all that breaks the uncanny silence of the long file of men. It is on such occasions that suspense and relief are almost tangible. But we had no casualties, though No. 1 Company in front had lost quite a few, and we passed several men being attended to by our battalion stretcher bearers. Then we turned away from the road and began to grope our way through bushes until a ghostly voice told us to lie down. The word came for company officers, and we set out again and found the CO who informed us that we were going to attack through the Bois du Petit Champs at 6 am, and that for this operation we were attached to the 186th Brigade ...

"The task given to No. 2 Company was to clear the left of the wood, chiefly by disposing of the machine-guns which had proved so deadly during our attack on the 20th. No. 1 Company was going through the wood well on our right and was to join up with No. 2 on the far side of the wood. It was the last I saw of No. 1 Company.

"There was no time for reconnaissance. The CO of the 'Dukes' and Colonel England took us to our starting positions, gave final instructions and left just before it had become too light. I could make nothing of my French map, which seemed to grow more and more like some weird etchings of countless hairy caterpillars intertwined in awe-inspiring designs<sup>301</sup> ... At 6 am we began to advance in small sections about twenty yards apart, worming our way through the thick wood, and keeping [in] touch as much as possible. We now passed the front line, the left section working along the edge of the wood overlooking the valley ... Other sections worked along echeloned to the rear, so that our right flank, 'in the air' of course, was to a certain extent protected. But careful direction and keeping of formations soon became impossible. The thick undergrowth, some quite impassable, prevented any intelligent observation. Our own scouts sometimes carefully stalked each other. Then the Boches decided to join in at the game. A machine gun would spit out from some cunningly concealed position. At times an ingenious sniper would fire at us from his fortalice in some tree-top. However, we were getting on and had already secured a few prisoners. [The War Diary of the 23rd states that the first batch of 10 prisoners reached Bn HQ at 7.15 am]. Though it was quite light, the further we wormed our way into this tangle of wood the more 'nervy' we became.

"Once we had gone forward only to find a whole crowd of Boche behind us. We changed direction to avoid being cut off. This game of hide and seek continued for hours. The wood was certainly held in strength. The nervous excitement of scrambling through undergrowth, sometimes meeting a terrified Hun popping up from some hole, or sometimes finding oneself



in the centre of an amazed group of attacking Germans, was rather wearing. Naturally enough the men were feeling exhausted. We had done our main task, for the edge of the wood had been cleared of enemy machine guns ...

"However, we made another attempt, but only ran into many more Boches. Our next excitement was to run into some French, but fortunately no side suffered casualties. Then we tried a joint effort, but with no better success. The game was no nearer solution. We decided to hold on to the southern edge of the wood, for it was hopeless attempting too much. As it was, the Boche made two attempts to drive us out and down the hill. It was just as well for the Brigade in the valley that we managed to stick to our position. Where the end of the spur is marked on the map was rather an important tactical position<sup>302</sup> and we hung on to this in spite of curiously persistent shelling from our own guns which lasted for something like four hours on this corner of the wood.

"We then had news that No. 1 Company had bumped into trouble soon after starting at 6 am, and had met with strongly fortified machine-gun nests. After a hard fight in which all the officers became casualties, [306966] Sergeant [James] Horner, with a few men, succeeded in getting forward on the outside of the wood, and established a post which afterwards proved of great value.

"No. 2 Company consolidated on the edge of the wood, and remained there during the night. The next morning the wood was found to be evacuated and patrols were sent out. We were relieved later in the day."

Casualties on the 23rd were: 1 officer, 7 OR killed; 2 officers, 33 OR wounded; 1 OR missing. 18 prisoners and 9 machine-guns were captured. A large number of enemy dead were later found in the wood.<sup>303</sup>

During the night of 26th/27th a German retirement began on the Marne. The enemy gradually fell back unit by unit, fighting stubborn rearguard actions to protect his retirement. The push along the Ardre through Marfaux to Chaumuzy by the 51st and 62nd Divisions seriously threatened the left flank of the Reims-Soissons Salient held by the Germans. In order to prevent the cutting off of a considerable portion of his troops, it was vital for the enemy to cling to the valley of the Ardre for as long as possible and his best troops were assigned to this task. The forests, with their tangle of undergrowth, were virtually undamaged and, if skilfully defended, were capable of tying up the Allied divisions for a considerable period. Special detailed orders, laying down methods of forest fighting, were issued to the German troops.<sup>304</sup> The failure of the enemy to hold the forests was not due to any want of either careful instructions or training.

Excellent progress, up to 5,000 yards in places, was made in the advance of 27th July. Nappes, the high ground in its vicinity, Chaumuzy



and the Bois d'Eclisse were taken and the line established over 1,000 yards in front of Chaumuzy. Enemy rearguards were, however, holding the Bois de Dix Hommes, Bligny and Montagne de Bligny line with great determination. The line was of supreme importance to the enemy. The Montagne itself was of immense tactical importance since it commanded the entire Ardre valley and its loss would compel the enemy to evacuate the Salient completely. The attack of the 28th was entrusted to the 62nd Division. The assault of the Montagne itself, the prime objective, was assigned to the 8th Bn with the 2/5th WYR in support. Its capture was ordered "at all costs".<sup>305</sup>

The 8th Bn was now very much a scratch team.<sup>306</sup> Early on the 27th a very wet and very tired draft of 10 officers and 200 men arrived at Ecueil Farm, the Bn HQ, and the battalion could now reorganise into four companies of three platoons each. Platoon sergeants had to be chosen from young lance-corporals; the organisation of the Lewis gun sections proved difficult as no team could be allotted more than two trained gunners; most of the draft were youngsters just out from England who had never before been under fire; all "old hands" among the private Riflemen were offered a stripe. As the last bomb was being given out, orders were received to move forward. Everyone was extremely tired: the draft had been travelling for at least two days, while the rest of the battalion had had only a short rest after "the long trying march through the dark and drizzling forests" of the day before.

Late in the afternoon of the 27th the battalion reached La Maisonette, a lonely woodman's cottage in the heart of the Bois du Petit Champs, and bivouacked.

"About 7 pm rations were being sorted out, when orders came to move. After a more or less orderly scramble for tins of butter and jam, for lumps of cheese and bacon, and on my part a hurried dinner of dry biscuit, cheese and champagne, the leafy bowers glistening with dew drops were forsaken ... At 7.30 we were not sorry to be once more on the move, even though it was through quagmires which credulous persons called tracks. As to our direction, destination or possible fate I knew nothing, and the more it rained the less I cared. It was growing dark. 'Bill, this is where we put the wind up those Jerry gunners!' He was quite right. We had now reached the familiar haunts of the southern edge of the Bois du Petit Champs where we had disposed of several Boche machine-guns during our second attack. Our route now lay between the wood where we had experienced a hard fight four days ago, and the valley of standing corn with its tiny hamlet of Cuitron and battered village of Marfaux. The few of us who had known both scenes were just a little thoughtful as we ploughed along through the mud, between the sea of mist in the vale and the gloom of the wood. It grew darker, though now and then



the rain ceased. We were now on a track pitted with shell holes, filled only with mud and the spirit of desolation, which was leading us over open country ... In time, however, we reached the road from Marfaux to Chaumuzy. It was at this place that the Colonel had arranged to meet the battalion after he had seen the Brigade Major. After a considerable wait we heard that he had been seen ahead, and so we set off along the Chaumuzy road. We were met by the Colonel who gave orders for an artillery formation on each side of the road, at the conclusion of which company commanders were to report to him at a small stone hut on the side of the road. At 10.30 pm the CO was giving us the only information he knew about the coming attack when the Brigade Major, Captain Kreyer DSO, informed Colonel England that the situation in front of Chaumuzy was very obscure and that it would be advisable to deploy and send out patrols before going through the village. The Colonel at once disappeared in the direction of Chaumuzy, found a battalion of the 51st Division who had been engaged in operations during the day and who were now holding an outpost line in front of the village, found also an Intelligence Officer of the 153rd [French] Brigade, and from these he secured much useful information. He then discovered from the 6th Gordons that their patrols had been out 500 yards from the village and had not seen anything of the enemy. At midnight he again met the Brigade Major who gave him orders to attack at dawn in conjunction with the 5th Devons [who were to attack the village of Bligny].

"All this time we were waiting at the tiny stone hut for the CO to finish his instructions. But he did not return, and instead we received orders to hand over the companies to Milligan, our Adjutant, and to report to him in the village. The orderly who had brought the message guided us to a cellar somewhere amongst the ruins of Chaumuzy. I had not been more than a few minutes in this close atmosphere of a cellar crowded with sleeping forms of this famous Scottish Division when I feel asleep. I awoke, however, in time to receive orders. We were to move forward to the attack at 4 am with C and D Companies in front and A and B in close support. Our objective was some old French line of trenches encircling a high knoll [the Montagne] about 3,000 yards in front of the village. A few cavalry had been out. Information about the enemy was practically nil ... There would be no preliminary bombardment, no barrage, and indeed no artillery support of any kind."

A good many of the cellars of the houses in the village contained vats of still champagne, from which "a lot" of the Riflemen helped themselves while they were waiting to move off. 1688 L/Cpl Harry Slater considered that "quite a few of them" might well have been half-drunk as a result; he had not taken any himself. 1294 Sgt Alexander Latto MM, who had been wounded on 20th July, jocularly attributed the success of the attack to the champagne and its well-known tonic effects.<sup>307</sup>

Lt Burrows' narrative continues:



"We made haste through the desolated village and came out on the Sarcy road, on the left of which we found our companies in small scattered groups whom persistent shelling had compelled to seek protection, real or imaginary. It was still dark with just the faintest suggestion of approaching dawn. Everyone was cold and wet ... Fortunately the rain now stopped altogether.

"As soon as the sections were in their correct starting positions the rum ration was taken round and helped considerably in lessening the numbness of cold and fatigue. Magazines were charged, bayonets fixed and last orders given, and so with every man knowing the nature and position of the objective, we waited only for the dawn.

"'They've started, sir!' Some fifty yards in front our connecting files could just be seen in the faint light of daybreak. There was a chilly mist and the damp breeze rustled through the corn. It was one of those moments which reveals the emptiness of human vanity.

"D Company, with its right on the road, led the way and our sections followed not very far behind, as they wormed their way through corn and through pasture. It was now growing light enough to see something of our surroundings ... far away in the distance was a dim outline of some prominent hill. It still looked a good two miles to this Montagne de Bligny.

"We were getting along in great style and not a sign of the enemy had been seen. I could not understand what had gone wrong with the left, for the company that should have linked up with us on that flank in support of the left flank company seemed to be missing. The left, resting on the edge of the sparsely-planted wood, was anything but secure. I sent several messages to Clidero to move his platoon further and further over to the left. And yet nothing happened to hinder the steady progress of the tiny sections.

"We then reached the Bligny-Chambrecy road which cut across our path. In the crossing we had to clamber over a rather high bank, but we were soon over this obstacle and into the cornfields. The Montagne grew more and more distinct and several isolated trees became easily distinguishable. It was now broad daylight and the mists were clearing. There were no enemy to be seen, and the battle so far was progressing well.

"Crack! went a Mauser rifle. Then rifles and machine guns spluttered and crackled from scores of hidden emplacements in the hill sides. Two guns were spurting out destruction from the high ground on the left. Were we going to be caught again within the deadly zone of machine-gun cross-fire? Our advance certainly received a decided check. The delay did not last for long, for each section changed its hitherto steady walking progress to one of quick rushes and short rests.

Then coming up to us from the rear came Battishall leading part of the company whom I thought was missing. I am afraid that we had words as to our respective right of ownership of that particular portion of the cornfield. On showing him the left where Clidero and his platoon had reached, he went over with his party and did much in the disposal of the enemy machine guns on that flank.



"The battalion now roused itself and got a real move on. Forgetting their fatigue, section after section darted up [the slopes of the mountain] in the corn, rushed a few yards, dropped down in the corn and opened fire, all obeying orders which rang out from the impromptu section commanders above the spluttering of the machine-guns and the cracks of the snipers, and all in the face of a heavy enemy fire coming from a hill with steep and treacherous sides. And we were making headway, though only a slow one against this strong resistance.

"Then up the road on which our right flank was resting and where we joined up with the Devons [i.e. the inter-battalion boundary] a cavalry patrol galloped majestically towards us, and amidst the cheers of our men dashed past us. Their morning canter, however, did not last very long. They had gone up at a good speed but they came down at a much greater, nor did I blame them. And that was all we saw of the cavalry.

"Snipers and machine guns began to thin our ranks. Some sections lost heavily and grew small in numbers. One heroic gun section consisted of the Lewis gunner, his gun and a pannier of ammunition, which he hauled along when not firing at the Boches to keep them down while his pals made their rush forward. Inch by inch the line crept forward. Nothing seemed to be able to stop the darting up in the corn of the tiny resolute sections, and in spite of casualties there were still some left to continue the section rushes. The enemy marvelled at such courage, then wondered, and then doubted his marksmanship to knock out each member of the rushing sections, and then wavered. Our men felt this and rushed in with the bayonet. In most cases he fled in great haste with the bullets from his own machine guns hastening his departure. I cannot describe the adventures of individual groups, but the stories can be imagined from the original copies of recommendations for honours.<sup>308</sup> This wonderful and heroic achievement of men wet and weary after long night marches was worthy of the fittest guardsmen; and even then it would have been rather miraculous. The French and British High Command who were watching the battle far off in the rear could scarce believe the evidence of their own eyes.

"Yet some groups of the enemy still held out, and from concealed positions they continued to pour a heavy fire into the small groups who scrambled and stumbled up the hill towards them. The German snipers and machine gunners are brave men - to admit less would be to minimise the courage of our own fighters - but they were reluctant to face the gleaming bayonets which crept nearer and nearer. Some waited for the hand-to-hand struggle, but the others fled. Battishall, just before he was wounded, led a dashing charge in a fancy unlicensed shirt,<sup>309</sup> having discarded his tunic and equipment.

"The dug-outs were searched, the wood was cleared, and a few of our sections had won through to the crest. Sections reassembled and carried on up the hill, through the vines, and over the other side and into old disused trenches, where a few lingering Boches were captured. The Montagne was ours! It must remain ours! providing, of course, we could hold it. On the lower and more gentle slopes on the far



side the crops of cultivated vines gave place to open stretches of standing corn in which many enemy still lurked. They crawled about for hours, and we suffered a few casualties from their unpleasant attentions. Once or twice, considerable numbers collected for a counter-attack, only, however, to be smashed by our fellows."

L/Cpl Slater confirms that the enemy garrison were taken completely by surprise. (2880 William A. Bywater ascribes this to the fact that the corn stood as high as a man.) He states that the leading sections got to within 100 yards of the foot of the Montagne itself before they were spotted.

"Just before we reached the summit I caught sight of some of our lads lying in the undergrowth, either dead or badly wounded, so I ordered my lads to stop and rest and get their breath back. It was a good job we did this as things turned out. I told my lads to start firing as soon as they reached the summit and we set off again. On the other side a line of German riflemen were standing about 30-40 yards back with rifles aimed, just waiting to get us as soon as we appeared. We seemed to take them by surprise and they started falling back as rapidly as they could. We could pick them off almost at will, because we had the advantage now and were firing downhill. They counter-attacked fairly strongly, but had no success because we had the key position, the summit. Quite a lot surrendered, we killed a lot and the rest ran away."<sup>310</sup>

Lt Burrows continues:

"I was near the road with what remained of company headquarters, but the company itself was scattered about on all sides of the hill ... We had therefore reached the old line of French trenches known as the Red Line [the objective], and so we settled down contentedly to consolidate the position and hold it. Reay [OC D Coy], Hirst [A Coy] and myself held a council of defence and arranged accordingly our dispositions. Captain Müller [OC C Coy] had been killed in the advance [while storming a promontory below the summit] ...

"I chose as my own HQ a stone hut almost on the very summit of the hill and from this point set out to discover the whereabouts of the men. It was far from pleasant. Sergeant Horner was wounded by a sniper in the corn, and we were obliged to do a good deal of undignified dodging, as we made ideal targets on this hillside. Nor was it long before the Boche brought into use a number of machine guns. Once I went over to see how the Devons were faring [Lt Burrows was now senior officer in command on the Montagne]. They had reached their objective in the valley on the right but were very anxious about our position. I reassured them and returned to my refuge in the vines. Then I had my first news of Naylor and Barker, who had careered down the hill, captured two machine guns, and with a garrison of twenty held an isolated trench against numerous counter attacks. They still dream of yellow cornfields alive with crawling Boches ...



"There is nothing as harrowing as an ear-splitting, nerve-racking bursting of trench mortar shells, such as began in the early afternoon. The little stone hut began to shake as shell after shell burst round about it. We sought shelter on what we considered was the safe side of the building, for as a T.M. shell comes down vertically this, after all, was only moral protection.

"Then to our discomfort and astonishment French and Italian 77s directed battery fire against our unfortunate residence, and four shells burst at the very entrance ... This was all very well until both the Trench Mortars and the 77s set to work at the same time. To say we ran like hares would be to exaggerate in our favour.

"We returned to find our dinners covered with portions of the hut, though most of the structure still remained intact. By this time a company of the 2/5th West Yorkshires had reached the wood below and were attached to us as support. One of their platoons was immediately placed in position behind Naylor's Post. Naylor was keeping me well-supplied with information describing the trench mortars, the battery of 77s and the ever-crawling Boches. He was certainly having a bad time. I sent him a Lewis gun section of two men and some ammunition. My stone hut had now become a veritable arsenal containing some 14,000 rounds of SAA.

"During the afternoon one of our aeroplanes came droning over in an endeavour to locate our positions. We had no flares and could only wave pieces of tin ...

"Dusk came over the harmless-looking rolling country and screened the movements of stretcher-bearers searching the hill for wounded. Firing died away until all was strangely quiet. A mental drowsiness, only a poor apology for sleep, came to such fortunate ones as were not on duty. Imaginary shapes of shadowy enemy groups began to grow out of the corn, and in the wood, ever a ghostly spot at night, all sorts of strange terrors flickered about. It is at such times as these when everyone is growing stupid from want of sleep that officers and NCOs prove their worth. There are sentries to organise, patrols to take out, defences to be improved, reports to be made, and ammunition, rations and water to be distributed.

"In the dark distance there flickered the flashes of guns, but overhead there twinkled the same old stars. Suddenly a shot rings out from some zealous sentry, and the hill rattles with rifle and Lewis gunfire. There is a sharp contest with the raiding Huns, and bullets twang and zip overhead. The would-be visitors return and silence again reigns.

"If anyone deserved a rest that night it was the Lewis gunners who, with bullets spluttering and kicking up earth all around them, had rushed forward to fire burst after burst in an unequal struggle against machine guns. But they and their guns were 'standing to'.

"The grey misty light of dawn came stealing along the valley and as the daylight grew cold and real, men shivered in their posts but were ready for any attempt at a surprise. The sun shone out and warmth began to spread over the country.



War seemed to grow further and further distant. One grew weary of crouching in holes, and grew reckless, until an observant sniper reminded one of the stern reality of a possible accident in this grim game.

"During the morning GS02 paid a visit to the stone hut, bringing along with him a sensible map. On it were shown two small woods of identical shape and both on the same side of the hill. We argued long over the position of one of these woods but I had to admit in the end that our flank should have gone as far as the second wood. Of course, our [French] map had not shown the wood or the trees in this wood, but only the caterpillars in the trees.<sup>311</sup> We had secured an old line of trenches on the far side of the Montagne and we had been content ... As is generally the case when the staff comes round not a single shot or shell disturbed the morning sunshine ...

"Not long afterwards Colonel England came to the hut. We were having a walk round when our friends the 77s began again, and the CO was fortunate to get out alive. Soon after his departure the battery ceased to trouble us ...

"In the afternoon we witnessed an attack by a battalion of the 51st Division<sup>312</sup> ... Unfortunately they suffered heavily from an intense barrage ... Then about three miles away on the right we saw the French advancing and we began to feel a little more secure.

"But our own troubles were not over. At one time quite a number of Boches had crawled up to the small wood. Their shots cracked nearer and nearer. Reay and myself stood to in a shell hole with a revolver and a bomb. In time, though, they were persuaded to leave. Frequent trench mortar shelling prevented the day from being a dull one. Late in the day a company of the 2/5th West Yorkshires under Captain Green MC attacked and captured the second small wood about 150 yards away."

(Part of the 8th participated in this attack, sustaining casualties of 2 killed and 2 wounded.<sup>313</sup>)

During the night of 29th/30th July the 8th were relieved by the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (51st Division), who were attacked the following evening. On the credit side the 8th had captured the Montagne, 69 prisoners and 9 machine-guns (the Official History gives the tally as only 40 prisoners and 3 machine guns); on the debit side they had lost 1 officer, 13 men killed; 2 officers, 9 men missing; 3 officers, 93 men wounded; 2 men gassed. The battalion had to march back to Chaumuzy in gas helmets.<sup>314</sup>

Meanwhile the French authorities were delighted by the capture of the Montagne. "They made that much fuss," said Rfm William Wrench MM, formerly of the 2/7th, a runner at 185 Brigade HQ, "you'd have thought the 8th had won the war single-handed." He had watched car load after car load of French high-ranking officers (whom he described collectively



as "generals") and civilian gentlemen in top hats (perhaps politicians) arrive at 62 Divisional HQ. In October the French Government decided to award the Croix de Guerre to the battalion to commemorate its Mention in Army Orders. L/Cpl Slater said that the men were taken aback by the French reaction, although they had been enormously pleased to be Mentioned in Orders:

"It was just part of our everyday work. We were just doing the job we were there for. Mind you, we knew we were doing a good job."<sup>315</sup>

Colonel England, interviewed ten years later, considered that the capture of the Montagne de Bligny was the most difficult task ever set the battalion and he regarded this notable feat of arms as one of "the star attacks of the war."<sup>316</sup> L/Cpl Slater looked upon the victory as being symbolic: from the summit he could see the Promised Land, the way to Germany.

"The war was all uphill up to the summit of La Montagne de Bligny. When we started going down the other side the war was downhill all the way afterwards."<sup>317</sup>

On the 30th July the 62nd Division was relieved and the following day, with the 51st Division, began its return to the British Army, its task completed.<sup>318</sup> The Ardre valley had been captured, together with its surrounding heights. Between 20th and 30th July the two Territorial Divisions had captured 21 officers and 1300 other ranks from seven different German divisions, 140 machine-guns and 40 artillery guns, and broken and repulsed 4 German divisions and advanced over 4 miles after continuous heavy fighting in extremely difficult country. In this entirely new kind of warfare all arms of the 62nd had acquitted themselves magnificently, and the experimental Machine Guns Corps Battalion had proved a highly successful innovation, its improvement in efficiency and effectiveness being estimated at at least 60%. Divisional casualties during the ten days' "continuous fighting of a most difficult and trying nature" amounted to 4,126. Success in non-static warfare was bought at a high price: on 31st July the ration strength of the 8th Bn was only 21 officers and 364 other ranks.

In its last battle, the Battle of the Sambre commencing 4th November, the 62nd Division, who with the Guards Division were leading the VI Corps advance, drove the enemy back 20 miles in 4 days, the advance often being held up by heavy machine-gun fire. Entries in the 8th Bn War Diary are dull and uninformative. It was often difficult to maintain contact with the enemy, and the poverty-stricken, starving civilians greeted the West



Riding men with pathetic eagerness, waving them onward

"singing the Marseillaise and giving us apples ... We reach a little village called the Cheval Blanc, billet the men in a barn and then partake of food which the French people give us, just a bit of bread, brown and unsavoury, a little coffee and a few pears. We give them in exchange a little white bread, at the sight of which one old woman nearly had hysterics, and a little corned beef. We can't spare much as we don't know where we shall get our next rations."<sup>319</sup>

2222 William H. Reynard recalled

"There was one thing we dreaded when we came to every French village. Most of them had buried the Village Band instruments to prevent the Germans using them in ammunition manufacture. The villagers dug them up as soon as the Germans left. They should have waited to dig them up until we had left! As soon as they saw us approaching they got the band out and when they halted they commenced to play our National Anthem. We had to stand to attention and this was no joke after a march of possibly 20 kms and stomachs calling out for food and feet as hot as a furnace and red raw, and loaded with full marching order."<sup>320</sup>

Sometimes the troops encountered scenes of wanton destruction and examples of appalling savagery committed by the enemy. In a village near Solesmes very recently abandoned by the Germans Sgt Alchorne spotted an old peasant and his wife lying on the footpath in a state of collapse and detailed an NCO and two men of his Field Ambulance unit to attend to them. "Lying in the centre of the road just on the outskirts of the village were two girls about 17 and 20 years of age, both with their throats cut and the eldest had been bayonnetted [sic] through the body."<sup>321</sup>

On 9th November the 62nd entered the fortress town of Maubeuge. The 8th marched to the tune of 'Tipperary' played by the Regimental Band:

"In the doorway of a little cottage stands a bearded, aged man at the salute. On his breast are medals, and in his cap are feathers such as children put in their paper hats when playing at soldiers. The old fellow is singing at the top of his voice, and our men begin to laugh, when suddenly it strikes them that he is singing the Marseillaise. The band carries on the strain and it is picked up by the men - and so we made our entry."<sup>322</sup>

For the 8th Bn the war was over.



NOTES

1. J.H. Boraston, ed., Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches (London, 1919), p.156.
2. See, for example, C.E. Carrington, Soldier from the Wars Returning (London, 1965; 1970 Arrow paperback edn.), pp. 102-3. There may have been some basis of truth in this persistent "legend", as Carrington calls it. In his unpublished MS memoirs, 'With the 62nd Division in the Great War', 434 Sgt William Alchorne, 2/3rd WR Field Ambulance, states that a German Army document found on a German general captured in late 1918 "drew special attention to the British [Territorial] divisions, 51st, 59th and 62nd as Furchtbarkeit" [i.e. frightful and formidable].
3. Letter, Adjutant General, GHQ, to HQ 1st Army, 7 June 1915, recorded in the minutes of 28 June 1915, Minutes of the West Riding Territorial Force Association, Vol. II, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 1469.
4. Capt P. G. Bales, The History of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919 (Halifax and London, 1920), p.31.
5. Machine-gun Sergeant A.E. Flint, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 9 July 1915; Lupton letters, 24, 26 June 1915.
6. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 25, 26 June 1915.
7. Espin Diary, 29 June 1915.
8. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 29 June 1915.
9. Ibid., 30 June - 2 July 1915.
10. Espin Diary, 1-3 July 1915; Leeds Mercury, 5 August 1915.
11. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 3 July 1915, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], War Office, WO 95/2795.
12. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 3 July 1915.
13. Espin Diary, 3 July 1915.
14. Lupton letters, 4, 7 July 1915.
15. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 July 1915; E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918, Vol. I (London, [1924]), p. 98.
16. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 6 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
17. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
18. Butcher Diary, 7, 8 July 1915.
19. Leeds Mercury, 27 July 1915.
20. Tetley Diary.
21. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 13, 14 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
22. Tetley Diary.
23. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 13 July 1915.
24. Knowles letter, 15 July 1915.
25. Leeds Mercury, 27 July 1915.
26. E. Wyrall, op.cit., pp. 103, 104.
27. Espin Diary, 2 July 1915.
28. Leeds Mercury, 15 July 1915.



29. E. Wyrall, op.cit., pp. 135-6.
30. C.M. Slack, Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918 (Ilfracombe, 1977), p. 49.
31. Knowles letters, 23-25 September, 8 October 1915.
32. Espin Diary, 13 December 1915.
33. This incident is recorded in the Tetley Diary, the Butcher Diary, 25 July 1915, and in the 1/7th Bn War Diary, 25 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
34. Leeds Mercury, 1 September 1915. This is a reference to a "local derby" rugby football match.
35. Tetley Diary; Knowles letter, 28 July 1915.
36. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 29 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
37. Oral testimonies.
38. Testimony of 2010 I. Harry Butcher, 7th; corroborated by 3354 Edward Woodhead, 7th.
39. Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 August 1915.
40. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 30 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
41. Knowles letter, [commenced] 28 July 1915.
42. Tetley Diary.
43. Butcher Diary, 1, 4, 6 August 1915.
44. Figures calculated from data given in the Tetley Diary.
45. Figures calculated from data given in the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary and in the Burrell Diary.
46. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., Appendix IV, p. 307, also p. 57.
47. L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (London, 1920), p. 57.
48. Reynard Memoirs.
49. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th.
50. See also Alan Thomas, A Life Apart (London, 1968), pp. 111-2; Ian Hay, 'Carry On! The Continued Chronicle of K(1) By the Junior Sub', Blackwood's Magazine, 199 (1916), 125.
51. Testimonies of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th, 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby and Lt H.R. Lupton, 8th.
52. See, for example, S. Rogerson, Twelve Days (London, 1933), p.61.
53. Tetley Diary.
54. Knowles letter, 20 December 1915; Lupton letter, 6 December 1915; Leeds Mercury, 20 July 1915.
55. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 29 December 1915.
56. Compare M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), testimony of L/Sgt Elmer Cotton, p. 73.
57. Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 September 1915.
58. Oral testimony.
59. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, and others.
60. Leeds Mercury, 18, 10 August 1915; Knowles letter, 23 August 1915.
61. Quoted Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., p. 35.



62. Tetley Diary.
63. Oral testimony.
64. Oral testimonies of Kirk, Barker, Appleyard and Fenton; P.G. Standley, article, 'A Rifleman looks back', Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 May 1935; "Blue Chevron" (an ex-Rifleman), article, Yorkshire Evening News, 28 December 1937.
65. Testimonies of A.E. Pitts, 2363 Ben Clark, B Coy; 2880 William Arthur Bywater, C Coy, 1/8th; 3149 J. Warman, A Coy, 1726 Jack Barker, C Coy, 976 Thomas Wilson, 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, D Coy, 1/7th.
66. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 8 August 1915.
67. Ibid., 25 September 1915.
68. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 25 September 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
69. Sgt Angus Macfarlane, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 5 November 1915.
70. Oral testimony.
71. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 1 November 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
72. Yorkshire Evening News, 11 January 1938.
73. Testimony of 1/8th Machine-gun Officer, 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby.
74. Oral testimony.
75. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 30 July 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
76. Lt A.G. Rigby, 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 30 July 1915; Rfm H. Moorby, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 10 August 1915.
77. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 December 1915.
78. Ibid., 8 December 1915.
79. Yorkshire Evening Post, 20 December 1915.
80. Minutes of the West Riding Territorial Force Association, Vol. II, 27 January 1919, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 1469.
81. Testimony of Sgt Victor George Head, Bradford Artillery.
82. See, for example, Capt E.V. Tempest, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, Vol. I. 1/6th Battalion (Bradford, 1921), p. 52.
83. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 67.
84. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 8, 15 November, 1, 3 December 1915.
85. E. Wyrall, op.cit., p. 143.
86. Sir J.E. Edmonds, History of the Great War, Based on Official Documents: Military Operations, France and Belgium (hereinafter referred to as OH), Vol. V, 1916 (London, 1932), p. 158.
87. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 14 December 1915.
88. OH, op.cit., pp. 158-9.
89. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 53-4. The Official History suggests a different reason for the postponement: rationing of howitzer ammunition (loc.cit.).
90. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 December 1915.
91. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 53-4.
92. Testimony of Thomas R. Kitson, 1/5th WYR.
93. Tetley Diary.



94. OH, op.cit., pp.160, 161, 162.
95. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 19, 20 December 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
96. OH, op.cit., p. 162.
97. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 December 1915; testimonies of C. Walton, 3167 Albert E. Wood, 2313 Herbert C. Sweetman, 8th, and others.
98. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 December 1915.
99. Tetley Diary; 1/7th Bn War Diary, 19 December 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
100. Knowles letter, 20 December 1915. He wrote this knowing it would be posted in Leeds by a pal who was going on leave that day and that accordingly it would not be subjected to censorship.
101. L/Cpl A. Wells, 8th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 13 January 1916.
102. Yorkshire Evening Post, 30 December 1915; Rfm P.G. Standley, article, 'Christmas Day with the Leeds Rifles', ibid., 31 December 1915.
103. Oral testimonies.
104. Testimonies of 2363 Ben Clark, 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 8th; Rfm F. Hallam, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 1 March 1916; Lupton letter, 14 February 1916. On cows, see also T. Ashworth, Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System (London, 1980), p.131.
105. Memoirs of an Infantry Officer (London, 1930; 1964 edn.) pp.16-17; In Parenthesis (London, 1937; 1963 edn.), p.222. According to Capt Tempest, the lecture was well-sprinkled with funnystories (op. cit., p. 85).
106. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 10 April 1916.
107. Ibid., 19, 23 June 1916.
108. Ibid., 25, 26 June 1916.
109. Knowles letter, 26 June 1916.
110. Ibid., 256 June 1916.
111. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 27 June 1916.
112. Lupton letters, 5, 20 May 1916.
113. Tetley Diary; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 29-30 June 1916.
114. Lupton letter, 19 June 1916; Espin Diary, 17 May 1916.
115. Knowles letter, 29 June 1916.
116. OH, op.cit., p. 412, gives the time as 9 am.
117. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1 July 1916.
118. OH, op.cit., p. 414.
119. Tetley Diary. The assembly trenches were actually in Thiepval Wood, not where stated.
120. OH, op.cit., p. 415, 419-20.
121. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1-2 July 1916.
122. Oral testimonies.
123. Testimony of 2260 Edgar Taylor, 8th.
124. Lupton letter, 3 July 1916.
125. Respondents, not only from the Leeds Rifles but also from other infantry regiments, repeatedly remarked on the eagerness with which lone or small groups of German soldiers surrendered. Often these



- men were starving or badly in need of medical attention. Rfm William Deacon, 7th, wounded crossing No Man's Land on 1st July, had lain out there for nearly two days when he was picked up and carried to the British lines by a wounded German (Yorkshire Evening Post, 13 July 1916).
126. Unpublished written account, about 1968.
  127. MC citation.
  128. E. Wyrall, op.cit., p. 222.
  129. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1-2 July 1916; 1/8th Bn War Diary, July 1916, PRO, WO 95/2795.
  130. Oral testimony; E. Wyrall, op.cit., casualty lists of 1/8th Bn.
  131. 1/7th Bn War Diary, July 1916, PRO, WO 95/2795; Tetley Diary.
  132. Yorkshire Evening Post, 24 July 1916.
  133. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 July 1916; Tetley Diary.
  134. Knowles letters, 4, 5 July 1916.
  135. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 7-17 July 1916. "Blighty Valley" now contains a British war cemetery.
  136. Ibid., 19-20 July 1916.
  137. Lupton letters, W.G. Kemp to H.R. Lupton, 22 July 1916.
  138. Tetley Diary.
  139. Quoted ibid.
  140. Most of this paragraph is based on the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1-16 August 1916.
  141. Tetley Diary.
  142. 30 yards was the figure given in the (official) War Diary: entry for 12 August 1916, PRO, WO 95/2795.
  143. Article, 'The Agony of the Somme', Yorkshire Post, 29 June 1966; unlike much of the article, this particular passage had not been taken from his war memoirs, Haunting Years. See also Lord Moran's description of the 1st Royal Fusiliers of the same period: The Anatomy of Courage (London, 1945), p. 70.
  144. The Official History acknowledges that during the period 1st July-19th August the 49th Division, by exerting continuous pressure against the enemy, had been assisting "in some measure" the advance of the right wing of the 5th (or "Reserve") Army. During that time its officer casualties had amounted to 58% and its Other Rank casualties 41% of its established strength (Vol. VI, 1916 (London, 1938), p. 222, fn. 1, p. 223).
  145. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19-25, 26-31 August 1916.
  146. E. Wyrall, op.cit., p. 254.
  147. This paragraph is based on ibid., pp. 256-7; L. Magnus, op.cit., pp. 102-4; and the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 3 September 1916. 1/7th casualty figures were obtained from the Tetley Diary, those of the 1/8th from the War Diary, 3 September 1916, PRO, WO 95/2795.
  148. Op.cit., p. 82.
  149. Op.cit., p. 256.



150. Testimony of 2880 William A. Bywater, 8th.
151. Oral testimony. This was a common reaction amongst demoralised men (see, e.g., P.H. Liddle, Men of Gallipoli (London, 1976), p.109). It might also be noted that the sole survivor(s) was a frequent theme of the popular military romance. The pathetic figure of Dr William Bryden, sole survivor of the Army of the Indus, through lithographs of this well-known epic painting, was a familiar sight in many homes and schools.
152. Testimony of 2880 William A. Bywater, 8th.
153. In the Hudson Papers.
154. OH, Vol. VI, 1916, pp. 279-80; L. Magnus, op.cit., pp. 103, 102.
155. E. Wyrall, op.cit., pp. 257, 255.
156. Knowles letters, 4 September, 11 October 1916.
157. OH, Vol. VI, 1916, p. 280.
158. Lupton letter, 26 October 1916.
159. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, November-December 1916.
160. Lupton letters, 29, 30 October 1916.
161. Ibid., 8, 10 January 1917.
162. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 11 January 1917.
163. The Official History states that the Lewis gun establishment was doubled, to 16, before July 1916 (Vol. V, 1916, p. 65).
164. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 12-22 December 1916.
165. Oral testimony.
166. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 25 January 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
167. Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock', evidence of Lt Col Scott-Jackson, p. 47; 1922 Cmd. 1734, xii, 759.
168. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 26 January 1917.
169. Ibid., 19 January 1917; 1/8th Bn War Diary, 31 March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
170. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 10 February 1917.
171. A length of 2" dia. iron piping about 22 feet long, stuffed with gun cotton; it took 3 men to handle it.
172. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 11 February 1917.
173. Lupton letters, 2, 9, 20, 17 March 1917; Trench map in Hudson Papers.
174. See, for example, OH, Vol V, 1916, p. 156.
175. Lupton letters, 3, 9 March 1917.
176. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 28 February 1917.
177. Tetley Diary; Lupton letter, 2 March 1917.
178. Photograph in LRMT collection; map in Hudson Papers.
179. 1/8th Bn War Diary, March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
180. Knowles letters, 7, 28, 30 March 1917.
181. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1 March 1917.
182. Oral testimony.
183. See, for example, 1/8th Bn War Diary, 4 March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
184. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 25 March 1917.



185. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 25 March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
186. 1757 L/Cpl George Alfred Blaymire MM, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 10 August 1917.
187. Oral testimony of 1757 L/Cpl Blaymire.
188. Testimony of 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd, 8th.
189. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 25 March 1917.
190. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 25 March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
191. Quoted ibid.
192. Quoted 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 25 March 1917.
193. Ibid.
194. Ibid., 26-31 March 1917.
195. Lupton letter, 24 June 1917.
196. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 2 May 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
197. This and the following two paragraphs are based on ibid., 7 May 1917, and the operation orders, reports and summary of intelligence gained attached as appendices.
198. Unexplained retirements of British troops during raids or at crucial points in battles, afterwards found to have been due to the shouting of orders to retire by unidentified persons, were not rare (see, for example, OH, Vol. IV, 1915 (London, 1928), note 1, p. 36; E. Wyrall, op.cit., p. 126; ed. J. Terraine, General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964), p.237). Misleading bugle calls and shouts of "Retire" had been employed by the Boers "to the disaster of British troops" (Leeds Mercury, 10 July 1909). P.H. Liddle heard from Gallipoli veterans "numerous stories" about Turks and indeed Germans, wearing the uniforms of dead Australians, or merely unseen, shouting confusing orders to the Anzac troops (op.cit., pp. 108, 109). A rumour that a German disguised as a British staff officer had ordered the 21st Division to retire at Loos was current in the BEF in the autumn of 1915 (L.D. Spicer, Letters from France 1915-1918 (London, 1979), letter dated 7 November 1915, p. 15). Graham H. Greenwell cited two examples of troops on the Somme retiring on German orders (An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-1918 (London, 1972), letter dated 26 July 1916, p. 119). The ploy would naturally work best on inexperienced troops.
199. According to the Unofficial War Diary, 7 May 1917 entry, 2 or 3 Germans in this post were killed, and the prisoner was "unceremoniously bundled" into the Report Centre at about zero plus 11 minutes. 2349 Signalling Sergeant Harry Walton recalled seeing the prisoner "shivering like a jelly and crying with fright" being hustled along by two terrifying black apparitions (oral testimony).
200. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 5 June 1917.
201. Tetley Diary, 7 June 1917.
202. 1/7th Bn War Diary, 3 July 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
203. Tetley Diary.
204. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 14 June 1917.
205. Lupton letter, 6 June 1917, for example.
206. This paragraph is based on the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 5, 15, 20 June 1917.



207. Lupton letter, 22 June 1917.
208. Ibid., 4 May 1917; Tetley Diary.
209. Testimony of Sgt Victor G. Head, 246 Bde RFA (Bradford Artillery).
210. Testimonies of Edward Flatley, 7th, and 1757 L/Cpl George A. Blaymire, 8th. See also the unpublished memoirs of 4726 Lewis Gun Sgt J.W. Stephenson, 1/6th DWR, 49th Division, 'With the Dukes in Flanders 1914-18 War', p. 22, Imperial War Museum, ref. 78/36/1.
211. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 3 June 1917.
212. OH, 1917, Vol. II (London, 1948), pp. 116-22; P.G. Bales, op.cit., p. 146.
213. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 31 July 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795. At least two respondents were convinced that a prisoner, deserter or spy had given the plan to attack Lombartzyde to the enemy and that this had brought about the pre-emptive strike.
214. L. Magnus, op.cit., note 2, p. 140.
215. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19-21 July 1917.
216. This paragraph is based on ibid., 21 July, 1 August 1917; 1/8th Bn War Diary, 21, 31 July 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795; testimonies of Capt H.R. Lupton, 2/Lt Tom Nettleton, 2349 Sgt Harry Walton, 8th, Mr Norman Marsh (son of Cpl Marsh).
217. Lord Moran, op.cit., p. 188.
218. This and the following paragraph are based on Medical Manual of Defence against Chemical Agents (London, 1972), pp. 15-19; Anti-gas Precautions and First Aid for Air Raid Casualties: Air Raid Precautions Handbook No. 2 (London, 1935), pp. 15-17, 56-9; T.A. Gonzales et al., Legal Medicine: Pathology, Toxicology (New York, 1937; 1954 edn.), pp. 519-20; J.P. Modi, A Textbook of Medical Jurisprudence and Toxicology (Bombay, 1920; 1955 edn.), pp. 744-5.
219. This paragraph is based on the testimony of 2/Lt Tom Nettleton; Lupton letter, 27 July 1917; Tetley Diary; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 22 July 1917.
220. Tetley Diary.
221. Ibid.
222. This paragraph is based on OH, 1917 Vol. II, pp. 325, 327, 328, 329, 330. Leon Wolff estimated that no more than a third of those batteries assigned to the attack of 9th October got into action that morning (In Flanders Fields (London, 1959; 1966 Corgi paperback edn.), p.228).
223. This paragraph is based on the 1/8th Bn War Diary, 8-9 October 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 9 October 1917; Lupton letter, 7 October 1917; testimonies of Henry Spurr, 7th, 1310 William Gill, 2349 Sgt Harry Walton, 8th; Tetley Diary; OH, 1917 Vol. II, p. 330.
224. Sir Philip Gibbs (ed. C. Prigg), The War Dispatches (London, 1964), p. 281.
225. OH, 1917 Vol. II, p. 330.
226. This paragraph is based on the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 9 October 1917 and on the testimonies of 1310 William Gill, 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 8th, 2736 Cyril Clarkson, 2635 Cpl R. Frank Charge, 7th.
227. Testimonies of 2605 Ellison Whitley, 2735 Cyril Clarkson, 7th, 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 1310 William Gill, 2880 William Arthur Bywater, 8th.



228. This paragraph is based on the Tetley Diary. A copy of Lt Col Tetley's complete narrative is also attached as an appendix to the October 1/7th Bn War Diary, PRO, WO 95/2795.
229. See OH, 1917 Vol. II, p. 334.
230. Testimony of Henry Spurr, 7th.
231. Yorkshire Evening Post, 27 August 1963.
232. E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918, Vol.II (London, [1928]),p. 126.
233. Oral testimony.
234. Lupton letter, 12 October 1917.
235. Oral testimony.
236. Testimonies of 2818 Cpl Percy Shepherd, 8th; 2735 Cyril Clarkson, 2686 Vincent Warrillow, 1522 Sgt Jack E.T. Wilson, all D Coy, 7th.
237. Oral testimony.
238. Loc.cit.
239. Testimonies of 1090 Sgt James Rhind and 2349 Sgt Harry Walton, 8th.
240. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 11, 17 October 1917.
241. OH, 1917 Vol. II, pp. 338-9, 331.
242. Tetley Diary.
243. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 12, 15-19 November 1917.
244. Lupton letters, W.G. Kemp to H.R. Lupton, 29 November 1917.
245. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 26 December 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
246. Capt E.V. Tempest, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, Vol. I. 1/6th Battalion, p. 209. The remainder of this paragraph is based on the appendix to the 1/7th Bn War Diary, February 1918, PRO, WO 95/2795; Tetley Diary; testimonies of 4158 Sgt George S. Ibbitson, Henry Spurr, 3167 Albert E. Wood, 7th.
247. Tetley Diary.
248. OH, 1918 Vol. II (London, 1937), pp. 333-4.
249. Tetley Diary. Brig Gen Gater's Report, dated 20 April 1918, is attached.
250. E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 260; OH, 1918 Vol. II, note 1, p.353.
251. OH, 1918 Vol. II, p. 272.
252. Brig Gen Gater's Report.
253. OH, 1918 Vol. II, p. 334.
254. Ibid.
255. Oral testimonies.
256. Extract from an account written before 25 April 1918 in the PoW camp by respondent Tom Wood, Lewis gunner, C Coy, 7th.
257. Every returning PoW officer had to explain the circumstances of his capture to a court of enquiry: see War Office Form W9572, reproduced as Plate 22, M. Middlebrook, The Kaiser's Battle 21 March 1918: The First Day of the German Spring Offensive (London, 1978). An officer who surrendered while still unwounded naturally risked court-martial under Section 4 of the Army Act, all of whose offences carried the death sentence.



258. Testimony of 2607 Sgt Walter Atkinson, D Coy, 7th.
259. Oral testimony. Compare the testimony of 2/Lt Crowder, quoted M. Middlebrook, op.cit., p. 216.
260. Letter G.J. Nye to Col C.H. Tetley, 24 March 1919, attached to Tetley Diary.
261. OH, 1918 Vol. II, p. 334.
262. Oral testimony.
263. OH, 1918 Vol. II, pp. 334-5.
264. E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 269, 353.
265. Tetley Diary, 11 October 1918. Col Tetley, after 3 years' continuous service at the front, had by this time returned to England, but was kept supplied with material for his diary by the Adjutant.
266. The following account of the operation is based on that given in the Tetley Diary, on the official narrative of events ('Diary of Action E. of Cambrai on Oct. 11th 1918') attached (a copy of which is also attached to the October 1/7th Bn War Diary), and on the account given in Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 353 ff. An account of the part taken by the 1/4th DWR and the 1/6th WYR in the action is given in P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 260 ff. and E.V. Tempest, op.cit., pp. 257 ff.
267. The figure given in the Tetley Diary, which respondent eye-witness Harry Leak corroborates. Wyrall gives the number as 4, Bales as 8. German accounts give 6 or 7 (OH, 1918, Vol. V (London, 1947), p.255).
268. Tempest's figures for both Brigade and 1/6th Bn are approximately half these totals (op.cit., p. 273).
269. See E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 382-3.
270. 'War Diary of Operations on November 1st 1918' attached to Tetley Diary (a copy is also attached to the November 1/7th Bn War Diary). See also E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 383.
271. OH, 1918, Vol. V, p. 458.
272. Testimonies of Clifford Day and 2952 Lawrence Tallant, 1/7th Bn HQ staff.
273. General Order No. 430, reproduced as Appendix III in E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 412.
274. In the LRMT collection.
275. This has been omitted from the present study as it was found impossible to produce a coherent account of the action (Wyrall made an heroic attempt: op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 338-9). The battalion's casualties were 11 officers and 341 other ranks. Not a single man or officer of either B or C Coy returned unwounded. The 8th had captured 15 field guns, at least 9 machine-guns and a large number of prisoners which no one apparently had had either the time or the inclination to count (8th Bn War Diary, 28 September 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083). The battalion had to be reorganised as No. 1 Coy: 2 officers, 81 OR; No. 2 Coy: 2 officers, 79 OR; HQ Coy 4 officers, 63 OR (Yorkshire Post, 1 February 1919), making a total of 8 officers and 223 OR.
276. The West Riding Territorials in the Great War, p.172. For full accounts of the 62nd's part in this action see ibid., Chap. XII, and E.Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol.I (London, [1924]), Chaps. XIII and XIV. The following account is partly based on these three chapters.
277. Oral testimony.



278. OH, 1918 Vol. I (London, 1935), p. 482.
279. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
280. Ibid.
281. 8th Bn War Diary, 26 March 1918, PRO, W095/3083.
282. E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, p. 150.
283. Oral testimony.
284. Lupton letters, W.G. Kemp to H.R. Lupton, 24 April 1918.
285. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 174; article on the 8th Bn, Yorkshire Post, 1 February 1919.
286. OH, 1918 Vol. I, p. 524.
287. Ibid.
288. Alchorne Memoirs.
289. Ibid.
290. OH, 1918 Vol. II, p. 35.
291. 2/7th Bn War Diary, 27 March 1918, PRO, W095/3082; testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
292. OH, 1918 Vol. II, pp. 56, 58, 113.
293. E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, p. 162.
294. Ibid., pp. 169, 172. Chaps. XVII and XVIII of this work give a full account of the 62nd's part in this battle.
295. This paragraph is based on the 8th Bn War Diary, 19 July 1918, PRO, W0 95/3083; the testimony of 5155 Abe Freedman, 8th; the diary entry of Lt H.R. Burrows, 8th, quoted E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, pp. 180-1.
296. 8th Bn War Diary, 20 July 1918, PRO, W0 95/3083. The account of the day's action written by Lt Burrows is quoted E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, pp. 187-8.
297. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 207.
298. E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, p. 193.
299. Ibid., pp. 195, 178.
300. Lt Burrows' diary account of the period 22-29 July is attached as an appendix to the July 8th Bn War Diary, PRO, W0 95/3083, and all the extracts relating to this period quoted in this chapter have been obtained from this source.
301. An apt description of the black and white hachured maps: see OH, 1918 Vol. III (London, 1939), p. 302.
302. Since it overlooked Marfaux. The success of the attack on Cuitron, Marfaux and the Bois d'Aulnay depended on the capture of the Bois du Petit Champs.
303. 8th Bn War Diary, 23 July 1918, PRO, W0 95/3083.
304. The Times History of the War, Vol. XIX (London, 1919), pp. 118-19.
305. Yorkshire Evening Post, 27 July 1928.
306. This paragraph is based on extracts from Lt Burrows' diary and on the testimony of 1688 L/Cpl Harry Slater, D Coy, 8th.



307. Oral testimonies.
308. Unfortunately these do not appear to have survived.
309. The officer had been wearing a ranker's tunic which buttoned to the neck.
310. Oral testimonies.
311. Lt Burrows' unfortunate mistake led to the Official Historian recording that the 8th Bn "could not complete the capture of the whole position" (OH, 1918 Vol. III, p. 278).
312. Presumably the 1/7th Gordon Highlanders: see ibid., p. 279.
313. 8th Bn War Diary, 29 July 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083.
314. OH, 1918 Vol. III, pp. 288, 278; 8th Bn War Diary, 30-31 July 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083.
315. Oral testimonies.
316. Yorkshire Evening Post, 27 July 1928.
317. Oral testimony.
318. This paragraph is based on: French V Army Order of the Day No. 63, 30 July 1918, reproduced as Appendix IV, E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Yorkshire) Division 1914-1919, Vol. I, p. 245; E. Wyrall, op.cit., pp. 215-19; L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 209; 8th Bn War Diary, 31 July 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083. It should be noted that the statistics given in the sources do not tally with those given in the Official History, 1918 Vol. III, p. 288.
319. Lt Burrows' diary, 5 November 1918, quoted E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Riding) Division 1914-1919, Vol. II (London, [1925]), p. 137.
320. Reynard Memoirs.
321. Alchorne Memoirs.
322. Lt Burrows' diary, 9 November 1918, quoted E. Wyrall, The History of the 62nd (West Yorkshire) Division 1914-1919, Vol. II, p. 149. The 8th Bn was the only battalion in the Brigade with a (full) military band.



## CHAPTER 11. "EYE-DEEP IN HELL" : EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE LEEDS RIFLES<sup>1</sup>

Note: The various topics have received somewhat uneven treatment because much more information was available on some subjects and on some periods of the war than on others. On certain subjects data was negligible or lacking.

As in most wars and campaigns the British Army had been engaged in since the start of Victorian times, the real enemy was the environment. As in South Africa, so on the Western Front the number of men who succumbed to sickness and disease far exceeded the number of battle casualties in every year of the war. In 1916, for example, hospital admissions on the Western Front were 500,576 wounded and 643,921 (56.26% of total) sick.<sup>2</sup> Even in 1918, with its massive casualties, hospital admissions in France for sickness and disease easily exceeded the number of wounded: 574,803 (36.95% of total) wounded compared with 980,980 sick. The annual admission rate for sickness was 533.1 per 1000 of strength, which compares very favourably with that of the 2nd Boer War.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to the vigorous preventive measures taken by the Army authorities, which included virtual universal vaccination, the chlorination of drinking water and prescribed methods of disposal of waste products,<sup>4</sup> epidemics of typhoid (enteric fever), paratyphoid, typhus, and cholera, which had decimated armies in the past, did not occur. A new scourge, however, caused a heavy drain on manpower. This was "trench fever", first noticed in Flanders in the summer of 1915 and then labelled "P.U.O", or, "pyrexia of uncertain (or unknown) origin". Caused by a virus present in the faeces of the body louse, it was characterised by a rash and a debilitating high fever. It has been estimated that the fever produced a casualty rate of at least 45,000 per million, and that of these, 80% would lose at least 3 months off duty. Although the standard of sanitary discipline in the Army was excellent, the fact that the great majority of soldiers were often crowded together in confined spaces, habitually lived with vermin of various species, continually fed in conditions which aid the rapid spread of infection, and could bathe or change their clothes only at infrequent intervals, resulted in a sick rate from the so-called "dirt diseases" (so familiar to doctors who practised in the slums) which amounted to nearly 50% of the total sickness in the Army.<sup>5</sup>

No definitive totals of the number of wounded and sick for the Leeds



Rifles battalions or for the 49th and 62nd Divisions exist. The only published set of statistics is a provisional return of casualties in the West Riding TF which appears as Appendix IV of L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (1920), pp. 323-4. This return, as the author admits, is far from complete. It gives, for example, a total of dead and missing in the Leeds Rifles of 1557, which is only 75.95% of the total number (2050) of names which appear in the relevant casualty lists of E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918 (n.d.), Vols. I and II. The number of sick given for the two divisions (857 officers, 22,653 other ranks) is so low as to appear likely that these figures represent only those men evacuated to hospitals in the UK.

The estimation of the numbers of sick is fraught with difficulties. Regimental Aid Post statistical returns no longer appear to exist. Numbers of sick were never given in the official sources available; only isolated pieces of information about the sick appear in the other sources. Only the 1/8th Bn Official War Diary gave regular statements of total strength. As trench and ration strengths and the numbers of reinforcements were, however, omitted, it is not possible to estimate the numbers of sick from these statements. The War Diaries are an unsatisfactory and unreliable source of data on casualties.<sup>6</sup> Where statistics are given they are often scattered, and in the only instance of systematic reporting of casualties - in the 1/8th in 1915 - the numbers are understated by 22%. In the (Official) Diary the figures up to 31st December 1915 are: 1 officer, 53 OR killed; 9 officers, 208 OR wounded. Those given in the Unofficial Diary entry for 15th April 1916, presumably authoritative figures obtained from GHQ where the definitive statistics of every unit were kept, were, for the same period, 1 officer, 63 OR killed; 11 officers, 269 OR wounded. The number of dead given in the Unofficial Diary agrees with the Wyrall casualty list.

It is possible to estimate, but on hearsay evidence only, the number of sick evacuated (probably to base hospitals) in the first-line Leeds Rifles and in the 49th Division only for the period April 1915 to June 1916. No estimates can be made for the later periods, nor for the second-line battalions, nor for the 62nd Division. On 15th June 1916 Knowles told his wife that it had been announced on parade that the 49th Division had sustained 12,000 casualties [74% of established strength] and that "our Regiment alone has had 1500" [approx. 75% of strength].<sup>7</sup> Up to that date battle casualties in the Leeds Rifles totalled 667 all ranks (1/7th: 316; 1/8th: 351). Accordingly the number of sick can be estimated at 833, i.e. 405.55 per 1000 of established strength. The number of sick



in the Division can be estimated as follows:  $12000 - [(667 \times 6) + 279] = 7719$ , i.e. 477.57 per 1000 of established strength for the first 14 months of active service.<sup>8</sup>

This may be a serious under-estimation of the true extent of sickness, for how was the term "sick" defined? Were those treated regimentally in the waggon lines, at the Casualty Clearing Station, or at the three WR Field Ambulance hospitals in the divisional sector included in the statistics if they never reached a base hospital? Were those who were given medicine on sick parade but who remained on duty (known as "M and D") included in any official statistics? It is probably true to say that well over half of the unwounded men in the Leeds Rifles became sick and unfit for trench duty annually. 2158 Harold Dean, 8th, estimated that during the last six months of 1915 an average of 20 men weekly<sup>9</sup> (equivalent to a ratio of 987.5 per 1000 of strength) left the battalion for hospital, an estimate which does not seem excessive in view of the many testimonies to the extremely low trench strengths of December 1915. As some of these men would be absent for only a few days after treatment at the Field Ambulance, Dean's estimate does not necessarily entail an annual Battalion wastage rate from sickness alone of 1040. Knowles wrote in June 1916: "I have got a bit of a record - 14 months' active service and never been in hospital or 'down the line'. There is very few in our lot that can say it." He had had a short spell "on the sick list" in the waggon lines with a badly bruised back seven months previously,<sup>10</sup> but this did not count against his record.

Unwounded men who wanted medical treatment whilst on trench duty, after first obtaining clearance from their section corporal or platoon sergeant, reported at the Regimental Aid Post which would be located within 100 yards of the battalion's position. If a man was unable to walk he would be carried there by stretcher-bearers. In rest billets a sick parade was held every morning; the first one held on coming out of the trenches was invariably heavily attended. The Leeds Rifles' MOs would make "a home visit" to any man too ill to leave his billet.<sup>11</sup> Published reminiscences<sup>12</sup> suggest that the standard of medical care in the first-line Leeds Rifles was considerably above average.

Despite the fact that going sick without cause was a serious military offence, a few men in rest billets might attempt to malingere<sup>13</sup> (known as "swinging the lead") in order to avoid the hated carrying fatigues and RE working parties. There were occasional instances of men feigning deafness or insanity in an attempt to obtain a medical discharge with



invalidity pension (known as "working one's ticket"), rather in the manner in which they might have tried to take advantage of the Workmen's Compensation Act in civilian life. Some of the common ailments seen were clearly related to the men's working and living conditions: "trench feet" (caused by prolonged standing in water), "trench fever", exhaustion, rheumatism, haemorrhoids (caused by prolonged standing), gastro-enteritis, boils (caused by dietary imbalance), septic cuts, gashes, sprains, wasp or other insect stings, rat-bites, bad blisters, scabies, nephritis, the common cold. Trivial ailments were treated by the MO's sergeant, e.g. an 8th man suffering from constipation would be advised to "go and see 'Thack' and get a No. 9."<sup>14</sup> The MO's sergeant was chosen from the battalion stretcher-bearers and needed to possess above-average intelligence and educational attainments and also good handwriting. Among his many and varied duties he was required to assist at emergency operations on patients requiring urgent attention. Sgt Thackray was awarded the DCM in 1915 for assisting the RMO in an amputation performed in the front line under heavy fire.

"Trench feet" was potentially an immense drain on infantry manpower, as witness the example of 99 men of the 1/7th going down sick during the first week of November 1915, a "good many" with trench feet and that of the 146 men of the 1/4th DWR sent to hospital with this condition during that month.<sup>15</sup> Knowles returned from a week's leave that month to find that his brother Eddie and nearly 40 men from his company had been taken to hospital with trench feet during his absence. Eddie returned to duty on 17th November with his feet bandaged and wearing boots two sizes too large, but at the end of the month was again carried out of the trenches, this time "after being waist deep for two days without shirt or overcoat", having lost these when a section of the trench collapsed. He was treated at the RAMC rest station, where "trivial" wounds and sickness were treated, in the Divisional back area at St. Sixte and returned to duty on 19th December.<sup>16</sup> He had been absent sick for a total of over 5 weeks. His case was fairly typical. Some cases, however, returned fit only for light duties in the waggon lines, others had to be sent down to the base, whilst the worst cases often had to be evacuated to the UK for hospital treatment. Some were said to have died from gangrene. The total number of cases of trench feet in the 49th Division in the last four months of 1915 was 760, said to be among the lowest in any division of the BEF,<sup>17</sup> despite the fact that the Division's trenches were permanently flooded throughout this period. Towards the end of 1915 the Army medical advisers realised that trench feet was a preventable condition and, as soon as prophylaxis was universally available, it was accordingly classed as a "self-inflicted wound" and made a court-



martial offence.

The autumn rains which set in Belgium on September 1st 1915 appeared to catch the War Office unprepared, for the troops were without suitable clothing. Col Alexander of the 1/8th sent home to Leeds for supplies of rubber wellington boots, socks and whale oil, the West Riding Territorial Association meeting the cost. He ordered all ranks to wash and/or dry their feet, rub them with oil and change their socks daily. As a result, a total of only three cases of trench feet occurred in the battalion, despite the fact that by the beginning of November the trenches were well over the knees (and therefore the boot-tops) in water and mud in many places. Government waterproof capes and thigh-length gum boots were not issued until November 5th and 6th.<sup>18</sup> Trench feet had appeared in the 1/7th as early as September.<sup>19</sup> Col Alexander's procedure for the prevention of the condition was, in fact, identical to that laid down by the authorities in General Routine Order No. 1275, dated 28th November 1915. During the winter of 1916-17 it was decreed that the men's feet had to be washed and rubbed with oil twice daily and company commanders were required to render certificates to that effect.<sup>20</sup> In France in 1916, venereal disease, which in pre-war days had been the most important single cause of military inefficiency from sickness,<sup>21</sup> took a greater toll than trench feet.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly up to September 1916 the personnel of the 1/8th, having in effect two doctors, both highly qualified, enjoyed the highest possible standard of regimental medical care. Col Alexander was keenly interested in the care of the sick and wounded and frequently attended the patients himself. He would scrutinise carefully every man on parade for signs of illness and order men in need of medical attention to fall out and report to the MO. He monitored the treatment given to the sick and wounded who had been sent to hospital. For example, on 8th December 1915, 2222 Signaller William H. Reynard was buried when the Signal Office received a direct hit and was unconscious when rescued. When he returned from the Field Ambulance hospital a few days later after having had neither treatment for concussion nor medical tests, for, apart from superficial small wounds to face and neck, he was apparently physically unharmed, Col Alexander was extremely angry and lodged an official complaint with the ADMS, a Leeds medical consultant whom he knew well in civilian life. He placed Reynard on light duty in the waggon lines and when, some time later, the signaller suddenly collapsed, he was taken to hospital and there subjected to a complete range of tests, including a lumbar puncture, and given every possible attention.<sup>23</sup>



Territorial medical officers were mostly general practitioners in uniform, and were engaged on fixed short-term contracts. Many had high qualifications: for instance Lt O.S. Scarborough and his successor, J.S. Alexander (the Colonel's nephew) of the 1/8th were both MRCS, LRCP. This was in marked contrast to the Regular RAMC of pre-war days who suffered from a chronic shortage of doctors of any quality. During the war a number of RAMC Territorials, unlike their fellow-officers in the other arms, reached the rank of Brigadier-General and Major-General, among the latter the Leeds Territorial, Berkeley Moynihan, who was appointed Chairman of the Army Medical Advisory Board.

In view of the low standard of health and physique prevailing in the civilian population prior to the war, the weather and other environmental conditions in Flanders during the war, and the inadequate housing and clothing of the troops, the standard of health of the BEF was amazingly high. Knowles, during the first weeks in the Salient, several times commented on the fact: "It is surprising what one can stand out here without any effect that would make you ill at home." "We are all surprisingly well considering the rough grub we get, but we seem to thrive on it." "It is surprising how well everyone looks, as the conditions just now are the limit."<sup>24</sup> The answer lay in the fact that the Riflemen "were fitter than at any other time in their lives."<sup>25</sup>

Although no sets of statistics exist, sufficient scattered data is available to indicate that sickness, wounds, transfers and deaths combined together to produce a staggering rate of turnover in the first-line Leeds Rifles, one which must have been exceeded in many other regiments which played a more active role in military operations. Up to 30th June 1916, only the following categories were struck off the total strength: the dead; those evacuated to the UK; and those transferred out. In the first 4½ weeks of 1916, for instance, there were no battle casualties in the 1/8th, but strength declined by 55. During April 1916 there were similarly no battle casualties, but OR strength declined by 64 despite the draft of 29 that arrived during the month,<sup>26</sup> representing an annual wastage rate of 1116 excluding battle casualties. Knowles wrote on 7/3/16: "Only a few originals [i.e. those who had embarked with the Regiment on 15th April 1915] left" (though respondent 1661 William Gregory, 1/7th, recalled it being announced on parade on or about 31st December 1915 that about 250 "originals" remained in the battalion), and on 31/3/16 "there is less than 200 of us left that came out at first." On 23rd April a First Anniversary photograph was taken of the "originals" of his platoon of 60 men: only 5 men appeared on it.<sup>27</sup> There is no comparable data for the 1/8th, but



there were about 340 "originals" left in the 1/4th DWR on the first anniversary,<sup>28</sup> which suggests that the number of men in the 1/7th transferred out during the year was very much above the average for the Division. The number of transfers in the 1/7th and 1/8th must have been large. If we assume that in June 1916 there were 370 "originals" left in the Regiment and further assume - most unrealistically - that the 667 battle casualties and 833 sick had all been "originals", we are left with 204 "originals" transferred out during the previous 14 months. This is an absolute minimum. A transfer rate per battalion of only 5 men per week would have resulted in an annual loss of 260. When he became a company commander, Capt H.R. Lupton continually complained about "the perpetual drain" of his men, and on one day alone, 12th March 1917, had 5 men taken from him.<sup>29</sup>

Up to the Battle of the Somme all sick and wounded passed fit were returned to the Regiment automatically, but from July 1916 only sergeants and warrant officers retained the right to be returned to their units, and rank and file were placed in a manpower pool at the Base Depot to be sent, at first to any battalion in 146 Brigade requiring men, later to any battalion in the BEF. (At around the same time conscripts were denied the right to enlist in the regiment of their choice unless they volunteered prior to the receipt of call-up papers). This change of policy caused immense resentment and bitterness amongst the men affected and their officers, but no amount of complaints and representations was allowed to change it.

"Men who had been wounded in the early days of the battle began to return to their battalions. Most of ours were drafted to other battalions in the Brigade and theirs were sent to us. Many efforts were made to change this policy, but the only time one succeeded it was revoked a few days later owing to the confusion which arose in the books at the Base."<sup>30</sup>

Col E. Kitson Clark evidently did what he could: 2880 William Bywater, 1/8th, told how the commandant, noting his black buttons and service bar, had crossed his name off a draft at the Base and deliberately held him back until a draft was required for the 1/8th.<sup>31</sup> This must necessarily have been a rare occurrence, however. Knowles wrote on 4th September 1916 "there are only a handful of the original Battalion left"; on 25th September "Bradley went to hospital this morning so I am on my own in No. 11 platoon of those that came out with the Battalion"; and on 7th October "the old lads have just about all dwindled away."<sup>32</sup> Some men, but not many, purely by a lucky chance managed to get back to the 1/7th or 1/8th after being in hospital. The only sure way for a sick or wounded man to avoid being sent to another regiment on recovery was for him to be invalided to the UK and then to be placed in one of the B or C medical categories, whereupon



he would be immediately despatched to the third line or, later, the 7th (Reserve) Bn. According to respondents, only about 30 "originals" were still serving with both the 1/7th and the 8th on Armistice Day, practically all of them as members of HQ staffs. The 1/4th DWR was more fortunate: on 14th April 1917, nearly 200 "originals" remained, while a year later, there were still 4 officers and 114 OR left of the "originals". In Ian Hay's battalion, a Kitchener unit, there were 5 officers and barely 200 OR, most of them HQ or Transport men, left on the first anniversary of their embarkation of the original 28 officers and nearly 1000 OR.<sup>33</sup>

It is extremely difficult to estimate how many men passed through the 4 active service, 2 draft-finding (later reduced to one very large Reserve battalion) battalions and regimental depot of the Leeds Rifles. The total may have been some 20,000 - 21,000, perhaps even higher. Three very rough methods of estimation, based on national statistics, all of which assume the Leeds Rifles to be an "average" regiment, and none of which can take into account men previously in other units, can be used. The first, which can be used for any Army unit, is to assume that the total number of dead represents 12.9% of the total strength, i.e. the percentage killed of the Army during the war.<sup>34</sup> The percentage in the infantry, which suffered disproportionate casualties, was higher: over 15%.<sup>35</sup> This method would give a total strength of the Leeds Rifles of 15,891 (based on 12.9%) or 13,666 (based on 15%). The second is to multiply the total number of men who enlisted in the regiment during the first year of the war - 6,250<sup>36</sup> - by 1.48,<sup>37</sup> and add the number on the strength at mobilisation (1304). This would give a total strength of 16,830. Unfortunately enlistment in Leeds was considerably below average.<sup>38</sup> The third is a variant of the second, employing the numbers who had enlisted by the end of 1915. 4,970,902 men joined the Army in the war.<sup>39</sup> Approximately half of these had joined by the end of 1915. Regimental numbering was discontinued in the early summer of 1916 and Army numbering substituted. Judging by the regimental numbers of men appearing in the Leeds Rifles casualty lists for 1916, a minimum of 9406 men had joined the Regiment since the outbreak of war. If this is multiplied by 2 and 1304 added, a total of 20,116 is obtained. A fourth, equally rough, method is to base the estimate on the combined casualties of the two West Riding Divisions. This is fraught with difficulties. First, Magnus' provisional figures<sup>40</sup> must be corrected: if we assume his total figure of 68,813 to be 75.95% of the final figure, the total should be corrected to 90,603 (which is over 5½ times the establishment). If we assume that the 24 infantry battalions sustained 93.5% of the casualties, which is the case in Magnus' table, this produces an average of 3,530 per



battalion (though only 3,209, if an 85% rate is assumed). Assuming casualties including sick to amount to 75% of strength, this gives the average battalion total strength as 4,700, or 4,279 if based on 3,209. This should be then multiplied by 5, the third-line and depot being together equivalent numerically to at least one battalion, giving a total of 23,500 or 21,395. The total casualties suffered by the British Army as a whole amounted to 47.4% of strength,<sup>41</sup> a figure which excluded the statistics for sickness alone (which appear to be no longer in existence). The figure of hospital admission rate for sickness of 533.1 per 1000 suggests the addition of at least a further 50% to the total casualties. If a casualty rate of 97.4% were assumed, a much higher total strength would naturally be obtained for the Leeds Rifles. However, several complicating factors present themselves: the second-line division did not go out until January 1917; in January 1918 the number of infantry battalions was reduced to 18; the 2/7th Leeds Rifles had to be disbanded in June 1918 for lack of reinforcements. There were also wide differences in casualty rates, e.g. the 1/7th lost 215 killed in the 19 months' service of 1915-16, and 569 in the 23 months' service of 1917-18, whilst the 2/7th lost 263 men killed in the 17 months of its service. There is the additional factor to be considered of men who became wounded or sick more than once being counted more than once in the official statistics. No allowance can, of course, be made for these. Finally, 2222 Signaller Reynard who served in the 8th Bn until disembodied in the cadre in 1919, remembers being informed that the 8th Bn alone suffered over 8,000 casualties, including sick.<sup>42</sup> If this figure is multiplied by 2, and the total taken to be 75% of strength, a figure of 21,333 is obtained.

It is unfortunate that data on drafts was only occasionally recorded. Judging by the fluctuations in strength recorded in the 1/8th War Diary in 1915, drafts during that year arrived every 5 or 6 weeks on average, although "the big draft" and "the draft" mentioned in the Diary of L/Cpl Jack Espin of the 1/8th on 27th May and 4 July respectively do not show up in the War Diary figures. The "big draft", which may have been well in excess of 100 men, was sent from the Divisional Infantry Base at Harfleur where its members had been retained since coming over with the Regiment in April. (Each battalion had left England 1350 strong, but only about 1027 proceeded to the war zone immediately). The 4th July draft may have come from the same source, or it may have been "the 1st line base detachment", comprising Capt Michael Tetley and 99 men, despatched from the 2/8th on 29th June. A "1st Reinforcement" draft of 200 was already training separately in the Midlands and was apparently sent out in July,



whilst a further draft of 54 men was despatched the following month.<sup>43</sup>  
 The official figures of the total drafts sent out from the second-line units (of the 62nd Division) to the 49th Division to August 1915 are: officers 116, OR 2,778.<sup>44</sup>

In March 1916, eleven months after Embarkation, Col Kitson Clark, the Base Commandant, sent off 400 men to the Leeds Rifles, among them the 7000th reinforcement to the Division. 7000 draftees represented approximately 57% of the established strength of the divisional infantry and averaged 583 per battalion. "Old hands" rejoining their units after being in hospital or detached for duty were not included in this total. Col Kitson Clark severely criticised the physical quality of the Rifles recruits obtained in the last stages of the true voluntary system, and compared them most unfavourably with the "Derby conscripts" whom he described as "very good and intelligent" and "a stiff [dial.: "well-built"] good favoured lot."<sup>45</sup> L/Cpl Knowles also considered in February 1916 "they are a very poor sample we are getting reinforced with"; the majority had gone down sick by the following week.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the drafts, the trench strengths of the Leeds Rifles and the other battalions of the Division dwindled away in the autumn of 1915 as sickness took its toll. In part, this was due to the considerable time-lag in sending up drafts in response to manpower requisitions: by the time a draft arrived another was required. At the beginning of August Col Wade of the 1/6th WYR, only half-jokingly one suspects, accused Col Kitson Clark of keeping all the reinforcements "up his sleeve" in order to accumulate a division of his own "which Major General EKC will bring up to the front when complete."<sup>47</sup> The time-lag is clearly shown in the 1/8th OR total strengths which, with minor fluctuations, steadily diminished, reaching the lowest total, 819 (18% below establishment), in December.<sup>48</sup> The conclusion is inevitable: drafts in 1915 were neither frequent nor strong enough. The deficiency was not redressed until June 1916, following, it should be noted, several months in GHQ or Corps Reserve. The lagging-behind of drafts, however, was not the whole story by any means. The figure of 819 above, according to respondents, concealed an actual trench strength of less than 200; some put the figure under 150. The appallingly low trench strength was principally due to the practice, retained as a sop to Territorial sentiment, of not striking the wounded and sick off the strength. This practice, fundamentally sound psychologically though it was, could not be defended when wounds and sickness produced a high percentage of ineffectives and was abolished at the beginning of the Somme offensive in the interests of military efficiency. Throughout the second half of 1916



and the whole of 1917 the 1/8th was permanently below strength in other ranks, the highest total recorded being 972 on 30th September 1917 (immediately prior to the Battle of Poelcappelle). The battalion was at full strength only on two occasions in its history: on landing in France in April 1915 and on 30th June 1916, the only month the draft was adequate in size. This, of course, was nothing but the experience in microcosm of the BEF which "from first to last ... never had enough troops, or labour, for the task required of it."<sup>49</sup>

From July 1916 the Leeds Rifles, along with every other locally-raised unit in the BEF, began to lose its local character. (For example, in the first major action, in July 1916, of the 2nd Buckinghamshire Battalion, 71% of the casualties were from Bucks parishes, but in its second major action, in August 1917, only 44% of the casualties were Bucks men).<sup>50</sup> July drafts of returned wounded were mostly ex-5th and 6th Bn WYR men of 146 Brigade, but the August drafts contained returned wounded from the other battalions of the 49th Division.<sup>51</sup> As time went on, drafts contained returning sick and wounded men from other TF divisions, and from Kitchener and Regular battalions, men from dismounted yeomanry and cavalry units, disbanded cyclists' corps, disbanded infantry battalions; A1 men from non-infantry arms (RFA, RE, ASC, ASC(MT), RAMC), "combed out" members of staff of training battalions, and, no doubt, also ex-military detainees.<sup>52</sup> Many of the recruits in the drafts, too, had been conscripted into the West Yorkshire Regiment from different parts of the country: on completion of training, recruits were allocated to the various regiments purely on the basis of manpower requirements at the time.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, according to respondents, there remained to the end in all four battalions a sizable number of Leeds men. 46 (i.e. 48%) of the 96 men of the 1/8th who died as a result of the July 1917 mustard gas attack appear on the City of Leeds Roll of Honour, which lists only Leeds residents. B Coy of the 8th Bn, on 1st January 1919, contained a minimum of 113 men from Yorkshire, 56.5% of strength.<sup>54</sup> Entirely fortuitously, some Riflemen managed to return after being sick or wounded and some Leeds conscripts, like respondents Harry Spurr of the 1/7th and L/Cpl Robert H. Schulze of the 8th, were drafted into the Rifles. Both third-lines continued to send out drafts to the first- and second-lines until the beginning of 1918 when the 7th (Reserve) Bn was formed from all the unfit men in the third-line and sent out to Ulster. When the 1/8th and 2/7th were mustered out in 1918, the 1/7th and 8th respectively received large drafts from these battalions.

Although drafts did not appear to make good "normal" wastage, a battalion could usually rely upon receiving substantial reinforcements,



sufficient to make it up to full strength (if it was lucky) prior to taking part in a large-scale attack. Unfortunately for military efficiency, they often arrived at the last moment and had to be deployed before they had undergone battalion training, been assimilated by the unit and generally "broken in". This thoroughly pernicious and psychologically unsound and damaging system,<sup>55</sup> for which the inexperience of the staff officers operating it may have been in part responsible, was universally condemned by regimental officers<sup>56</sup> and senior NCOs and was frequently blamed for lack of success in operations against the enemy, as in the case of the 49th Division's failure of 3rd September 1916. The Guards Division, however, refused to have any truck whatever with the system, kept its own sick and wounded and received only drafts of recruits that had been trained at its own depôt.<sup>57</sup>

GHQ, however, did give priority in allocation of drafts to units which had recently suffered heavily in action, thus preserving the integrity of the British regimental system. A battalion that had been wiped out ceased to exist only for a very short period. It was not tossed aside as used up, but renewed almost immediately. When the 1/8th was effectively reduced to 25 men by mustard gas in July 1917, reinforcements of 27 officers and 519 OR arrived during August, together with 3 officers and 54 men returned from hospital. On 25th August, Capt Lupton returned from hospital to take over as OC D Coy "in which I know only two or three men and no officers ... The battalion is practically renewed and there are very few old faces to be seen." Drafts continued to arrive during the first two weeks of September, and included "some old friends" back from hospital, until the total strength was 47 officers and 972 OR. The 8th Bn, in action at the Defence of Bucquoy 25th-29th March 1918, received a draft of 207 OR on 3rd April. During June, after a period of normal trench warfare, total reinforcements of 9 officers and 280 OR made up strength to 46 officers and 1045 OR. This was evidently an administrative error, for orders were received to despatch a draft of 124 OR to the 9th KOYLI, 21st Division on 11th July. Unfortunately for the 8th, the 62nd Division was placed at the disposal of Marshal Foch less than 48 hours after the departure of these men. A draft of 10 officers and 200 OR arrived opportunely on 26th July, the day before the assault on La Montagne de Bligny; it appears to have been despatched from the Base as soon as the news was received that the Battalion had sustained casualties of 10 officers and 291 OR on 20th July.<sup>58</sup>

The physical discomforts and deprivations of the Riflemen, like their sorrows, came not "as single spies, but in battalions."<sup>59</sup> In the forward



zone they were subjected to a whole barrage of severe environmental stresses arising from the weather, living and sleeping conditions (including the horrible all-pervading stench of putrefaction), the limited opportunities for diversion, the tension from being continuously on the alert, long and threatening journeys for rations and other supplies, and working parties. It will be noticed that the enemy scarcely figures in this list.

They were very badly housed, both in and out of the line, frequently in conditions far worse than in any slum, and this undoubtedly contributed to the high sick rate. Severe overcrowding was the rule rather than the exception. In August 1915 Lt Lupton shared a tiny dugout with Lt Sissons: it was too small to enable them to sleep in it together. Earlier that month, in the Lancashire Farm lines, he had been lucky enough to have a dugout in which he could lie full-length. In his Canal Bank dugout he could not lie down, but had just enough room to allow him to sit up. A typical Salient dugout for 4 men measured 9' x 4' x 2'6",<sup>60</sup> a mere 90 cubic feet. The east bank of the Yser Canal was "honey-combed with dugouts and looked like an enormous rabbit warren."<sup>61</sup> Salient dugouts were, indeed, often referred to by respondents as "glorified rabbit burrows." In July 1915 Cpl Edward Yeadon, 7th, wrote: "My abode of love at present is a hole two feet high and they shell us all day long." Small dugouts for one, or two men, hollowed out of the trench walls were common in former French trenches. As they had no proper supports they were apt to collapse without warning in rainy weather, as Rfm Rowland Firth and his corporal discovered to their cost. Many parts of the line in 1915, such as the Fauquissart-Laventie-Fleurbaix sector, were very badly provided with dugouts. In the reserve trenches in May 1915, 1298 G. Colin Cameron and his brother 2096 Charles Cameron of the 1/7th, with 7 comrades, lived and slept in a short trench three feet wide and about three feet deep with a cover of corrugated iron.<sup>62</sup> The dugouts which were Coy HQ, Bn HQ or the Aid Post might be 12 feet square and 5 feet high, double-roofed with beams covered with chicken wire on which was laid a course of sandbags filled with bricks and stones to detonate whizzbangs on impact.

In contrast, the Riflemen found the French dugouts on the newly-taken over Somme front "palatial": these were 20 to 40 feet deep in the chalk with piped water laid on to the trench.<sup>63</sup> Captured German Somme dugouts were most impressive: up to 30-40 feet deep, often equipped with electric light and efficient ventilation. Equally frequently, however, they were indescribably filthy and vermin-ridden. Writing on 5th August 1916 from a good German dugout large enough to accommodate the entire platoon, Knowles remarked ruefully, "the only thing they beat us at is being lousy, as this



shanty is lifting."<sup>64</sup> Ironically, the Rifleman found his best trench accommodation in the German lines.

Reserve and rest billets were described, in the typically public-school understatement of C.H. Tetley and H.R. Lupton, as "poor" or "inadequate". The actual standard was, typically, appalling. For this the blame must be laid squarely upon the Government and the War Office whose neglect of soldiers' living accommodation was traditional.<sup>65</sup> Until the middle of 1916 very few hutments were provided, although training establishments in the UK were well supplied with them.<sup>66</sup> The authorities relied upon tents, of which there was an inadequate supply, and upon billeting men in farm buildings, empty houses, etc. Field hospitals were under canvas throughout the year. Some billets obtained were totally unsuitable. On one occasion the whole 1/8th was accommodated in an abandoned mill still full of machinery. Its three floors were served by "a single, very dangerous staircase." It took the battalion "a full half-hour to get on parade every day, and one shudders to think what would have occurred had a fire broken out." Rest camps in the divisional sector of the Salient were frightful. That at Coppernollehoeck Woods NE of Poperinghe consisted in September 1915 of belltents and of shelters made out of logs and tree branches, roofed with tarpaulins; the men crowded 15 or 16 into a tent intended for 10-12 men, while some had to rig up two-man bivouacs with saplings and waterproof sheets. By 11th November this camp was a veritable quagmire: "A few wooden huts were up in the camp but most of the men and all officers were under canvas; the mud all over the camp was terrible." The 1/8th were cramped 20 men to a tent "swamped with water. The ground was absolutely waterlogged - it moved like a blancmange when you stepped on it." During the first half of October the 1/7th and 1/8th spent much of their Brigade Rest erecting wattle and daub huts at the St Sixte rest camp which, a month later, was described as "a sea of mud."<sup>67</sup> Ian Hay graphically defined a Salient rest camp as "a collection of antiquated wigwams half-submerged in a mud-flat."<sup>68</sup>

Camps seem to have been universally bad: under canvas on the Calais sand-dunes in the middle of January 1916; on the Somme front, 26/11/16: "draughty huts surrounded by much mud"; Fort Mardyck, 14/7/17: the men were under canvas, severely overcrowded, sleeping 20 to a tent; Ypres Salient, 6/10/17: "nothing whatever but bare huts, no cookhouses, table or benches." The worst of all seems to have been in Aveluy Wood in May-June 1916 where only 12 bell tents and 100 shelters were provided for the entire regiment of over 2000 men. To make matters worse, it rained heavily for much of the time during the period 3-13 June and the men frequently got wet through while out on working parties. The 1/8th Bn Diarist commented



that "living in tents in such weather is as bad as living in trenches in mid-winter." Knowles unhesitatingly called it "a swamp".<sup>69</sup> Similar conditions appear to have existed at Camp 34 in Trones Wood, Somme, in November 1916.<sup>70</sup>

Civilian billets were hardly any better, and they were given up in 1917 as hutment camps were built.<sup>71</sup> In February 1916 the 1/7th's billets at Martinsart were very poor, "the snow penetrated them and made them very uncomfortable", whilst the 1/8th's billets at Fordrinoy were "excessively dilapidated barns" built of mud and wattle. In 3½ years' campaigning the 1/7th appears to have had only one "really good billet", Frenchencourt Chateau in March 1916. In areas accommodating large numbers of troops all billets were allocated by drawing lots.<sup>72</sup>

The poor living conditions were made very much worse by the adverse weather conditions that prevailed for much of the Regiment's 3½ years' active service. A large part of the war seems to have coincided in Flanders with a weather cycle of above-average precipitation and below-average temperatures and sunshine: cool, wet summers, and drenching wet autumns that started before summer's official end characterised 1915 and 1916, while the winter of 1916-17 was one of the severest of the 20th century. The rainfall totals of September 1915, July-September 1916 on the Somme and July-October 1917 on the Salient were all much above the average.<sup>73</sup> The result was what Hugh Lupton called "the soldier's natural element",<sup>74</sup> mud

"... mud," wrote Philip Gordon Standley, "the literary scribe" of the 1/7th. "No matter how you try, you cannot evade it; it is everywhere, clinging and wet. There is mud by the yard, mud by the ton. We live in it, wallow in it, and at times perforce eat it, for no matter how careful one is, it creeps in, perhaps amongst the bread, or, again, into the tea. Truly we have taken Belgium into our inmost being ... 'Remember Belgium!' Can any member of the Leeds Rifles ever forget it?"<sup>75</sup>

Knowles told his wife that he and his comrades often wondered if they'd ever be clean again.<sup>76</sup>

The fertile Flanders Plain was flat, almost featureless and extremely low-lying. In peacetime an intricate drainage system was required to protect it from the omnipresent danger of flooding. Military operations and the action of the Belgians at the beginning of the war in opening the tidal sluices had virtually destroyed the drainage system and raised an already high water table. In addition, periods of rain always caused the water table to rise considerably, particularly during the autumn and winter when the rate of evaporation was low. In consequence the heavy clay soil turned to mud after only a few hours' rain and any excavation or depression soon



filled with water; a few days' heavy downpour turned the territory into a vast bog. In August 1915 after only ten minutes' heavy rain Brigade, the trench outside Lt Lupton's dugout, became "a roaring cataract running of course into another cataract coming to meet it to make together a young lake in the middle." With mud more than knee-deep in the communication trenches before the middle of August,<sup>77</sup> the situation boded ill for the approaching autumn and winter.

On 5th September Knowles wrote:

"I have been a bit off colour. We were four days without sleep or rest of any kind and thigh deep in mud and water the whole time ... We were washed out [of the dugout] the other night. There was about four inches of mud on the floor and it was pouring in through the top and we were all asleep in it. We had our oil sheets pulled right over us and the rain pattering on us like a kettledrum."

Lt Lupton informed his parents the same day that trenches were falling in, and had earlier told them of dugouts being flooded out. A week's continuous heavy rain commenced on 29th October and by 1st November further trenches were falling in and there was nearly 2 feet of water in all the trenches in the Brigade sector. Certain trenches had to be abandoned altogether on the 3rd. In the middle of November Knowles returned from leave to find that "the trenches were rivers, full nearly to the firing platform, and not a single dugout."<sup>78</sup> For this sorry state of affairs GHQ was partly to blame. A proper trench drainage scheme should have been instituted in July when the 49th Division was first set to work to reconstruct the trench system of the North Salient, and the necessary materials for strengthening trenches and dugouts should have been designed and/or ordered in large enough quantities and supplied to the Royal Engineers early in the year. The dream of the big breakthrough dominated military thinking at GHQ where, amid an atmosphere of starry-eyed optimism rather than of realism, the positions of the British troops in the Ypres Salient tended to be looked upon as being merely temporary.<sup>79</sup>

The consequences can be seen in the following extracts:

"November 10th: Up to the knees in water and mud, raining heavy all the time. I am feeling out of sorts.  
November 16: RE fatigues. In dugouts on Canal Bank. We are flooded now. All around here the water is up to my waist. November 18th [in the reserve line at Spahi Farm]: Nowhere to lie down, the place is flooded. I am feeling very tired."<sup>80</sup>

"We have been having fearful weather, and the front line trenches were over knee-deep in water in many places. This of course makes them collapse by undermining the bottom of parapet and parados, so that we get frequent falls which have as far as possible to be dug out, though shovelling the mud doesn't always do much good as it generally



succeeds in running back again in spite of revettements and bags. Add to all this that all the dugouts which have not collapsed are a few inches deep in water and you will see that manning the trenches in rainy weather is a wet occupation. Another annoying point about these trenches was that the Boches in one place could drain their trenches into ours."<sup>81</sup>

(This last point aroused great indignation among British troops).

"By the time we left there was very little parados left standing and most of the dugouts had fallen in. Besides sentry duty, the men were kept busy day and night with pumping and draining the trenches and rebuilding what had fallen down."

When the 1/8th was relieved there was "not a dry stitch of clothing in the Battalion". The men were supposed to go into the second line, but B Coy's trenches between Zouave Villa and Irish Farm "had almost entirely collapsed", while A Coy's trenches at Irish Farm "had quite ceased to exist" and "No. 2 platoon found shelter in La Brique by night, but by day became wanderers on the face of the earth."<sup>82</sup>

"You can imagine what some of the trenches are like when I tell you that I found one of our men today who was just going to leave stuck completely and unable to move. He was well above his knees in it." "Most of the trench has fallen in and is in places impassable by daylight. At night of course things are easy as you can walk along the top."<sup>83</sup>

Before the middle of the month there were no dugouts left in either the front or second lines.<sup>84</sup>

"In the Algerian Cottage-Turco Farm area we were up to our thighs in mud and there were no duckboards. You had to stick your elbows out to jam them on the sides of the trench in order to keep your feet. All the communication trenches were water-logged. One night when I was i/c a bombing post, Dicky Bousfield came to visit us and told us that if we had any casualties we were to get the York & Lancs stretcher-bearers, as ours couldn't communicate with us. To us, the conditions were far worse than the Germans."<sup>85</sup>

The difficulties involved in evacuating the wounded in these conditions can be imagined. It was also well-nigh impossible to keep rifles properly clean, for canvas covers had not yet been issued; they would often jam after firing 3 or 4 rounds rapid.

"Nobody who wasn't actually there can possibly imagine what it was really like. I don't know how any of us managed to survive. It was a miracle anybody did. The conditions were indescribable - up to the waist in water, continual shelling."

"It was a very miserable war. I didn't see much action at all. I never had to go over the top. But it was all so miserable. I never thought I'd live to see the end of the war; hardly anybody did. You wouldn't believe the conditions we had to face, the mud. All your friends got killed. The front line never moved so the Jerry artillery



always knew where you were. You kept getting shelled and shelled, unless they'd run out of ammunition temporarily. As I said, in those days we never thought we'd get through, but we got used to it and made some sort of life of it. You can get used to anything if you have to, but it was a nightmare, just being stuck there, in the mud."

"The worst thing about the Salient was the cleaning-up. It was never ending. It really got you down. Every time you came out of the line you had to start and you'd no sooner got clean than you had to go back and get daubed up all over again."<sup>86</sup>

An old Belgian told Knowles that "it always rains every two days in winter." It rained nearly all the time throughout November and December and the weather loomed large in Knowles' letters. He wrote from the front line in November

"There are no dugouts, but you can have as much mud and water as you like, so you can imagine we are enjoying ourselves a treat."

On 18th December he complained that he was

"wet through for a week together many a time ... We moved into reserve last night, and of course it was raining. It never stops out here."

On 20th December: "It has rained night and day for nearly two months and we haven't been really dry for weeks."

On 27th December: "it is perishing cold and raining like hell as usual."

He gave the address of the letter he wrote on Christmas Day as "Raining in Torrents."<sup>87</sup> Small wonder the troops sang, to the well-known hymn-tune 'Nicaea':

"Raining, raining, raining,  
Always bally well raining,  
Raining all the morning,  
And raining all the night."

From about the middle of November temperatures often fell below freezing at night, making the mud even worse and adding to the general misery. The water froze round the legs of men standing in the trenches, often ice had to be smashed in a morning to get water to wash in, and Knowles heard of rifles being frozen together.<sup>88</sup> The topic of the weather also dominated Lt Lupton's letters and L/Cpl Espin's Diary entries at this time. On 3rd December Espin noted that men had frozen to death in the Spahi Farm trenches, but this appears to have been merely rumour erroneously reported as fact. Lt Lupton wrote from Elverdinghe Chateau camp, which comprised tents and bivouacs, on 28th November that that morning his breeches, which had got wet the day before, "were frozen stiff and were thawed out by the servants amid some amusement," and on 11th December: "I spent much of yesterday morning rigging up (literally) a drying tent for the company. I couldn't find any cord to do it with but I scrounged some muddy telephone wire.



This place is ankle deep in mud, here where we are supposed to get clean."<sup>89</sup>

These terrible weather conditions had two important effects: first, on the sick rate in the Leeds Rifles (and in all other units in the Salient). It is clear from both the Butcher and the Espin Diaries and from the Knowles letters that these environmental conditions, coupled with insufficient sleep and the usual fatigues, produced such a physical strain upon many men that they became ill. The weather militated against any real rest, as Knowles had pointed out in his letter of 18th July. The appalling environmental conditions in and around Aveluy Wood Camp in June 1916 also affected Knowles:

"I am sorry to say I am not so well. I have been wet through every day since we have been here and it is raining torrents now ... We are all plastered up to the eyes at present. In fact I could make a dozen clay bricks with the clay on my clobber." "I have been off colour this last few days with being continually wet through and having to sleep in sludge [dial.: "mud"] and let our clothes dry on us."<sup>90</sup>

Exhaustion and long-continued exposure to wet and cold were not the only physical stresses to which the infantryman was subjected which told on his health. There was also his pack plus equipment that he had to carry. This averaged 66lbs in weight, excluding personal possessions, in summer and, judging by totals given by respondents, may have increased by a further 11-18 lbs in winter.<sup>91</sup> In addition, he had to carry a rifle and bayonet. The CLLE Mark I rifle, with which the Leeds Rifles was equipped until 1916, weighed 9lbs 5ozs and its sword bayonet 15½ozs, bringing the total weight carried, excluding the clothes being worn, to at least 77lbs. In addition, 120 rounds SAA weighed 7½lbs. In winter, when wearing a wet overcoat and when mud and water on equipment, trousers and puttees might add a further 14lbs, the infantryman might well be carrying a load in excess of 114lbs, quite apart from extra ammunition, bombs, etc. he might be carrying. It is generally recognised by doctors and physiologists that serious pathological effects can ensue when a person is asked to lift or carry habitually a weight of more than half his own weight; furthermore, excessive loads were noted as promoting earlier fatigue and a definite lowering of morale. Comparatively few Riflemen weighed 11 stones, and a good many would have weighed less than 9st. 6lbs, the minimum body weight for carrying a weight of 66lbs. The Official Medical History noted that it was not uncommon to find a soldier carrying a load that amounted to 75% or more of his body weight, although the average load was about 60% of body weight.<sup>92</sup>

The second important effect of the weather of November and December 1915 was upon military strategy. It literally forced upon GHQ the adoption in the Salient of a forerunner of the system of defence in depth which made much more efficient use of available manpower (see Chapter 10). A third



effect might be mentioned, one which appeared to the troops as a positive advantage: in the Salient, in 1915, at any rate, wet weather tended to keep the enemy quiet. On 13th November Lt Lupton wrote from the front line: "I think the Germans are as badly off as we are ... things are very quiet here as far as the infantry is concerned, these [of both sides] having their work cut out to keep warm and avoid sinking in the mud which is thigh deep in places."<sup>93</sup>

The limit of physical misery and wretchedness was reached in the Salient in November and December 1915. For the men of the 49th Division it was also reached exactly two years later: in the line of shell-hole posts on the forward slope of Broodseinde Ridge, also in the Salient. Here no movement was possible by day, for the posts were under direct observation from the enemy-held Keiburg Spur. The ground was so water-logged that attempts to deepen the shell-holes only caused them to fill with water and, moreover, attracted the unwelcome attentions of the enemy. Furthermore, almost every attempt at digging would reveal corpses in various stages of decomposition that lay just below the surface. No fires could be lit, drinking water and rations were brought up with great difficulty, and the only hot food or drink that could be obtained was that which could be heated on a "Tommy's cooker".<sup>94</sup> An American officer attached to the 1/4th DWR at the time "expressed amazement that men could exist at all under such conditions."<sup>95</sup> The limit was closely approached during the severe weather conditions of February 1916 and of January-February 1917.<sup>96</sup> After two days of continuous rain in the middle of February 1916 the Somme trenches dug in chalk were about a foot deep in water and those dug in clay were collapsing; the "palatial" subterranean dugouts were all flooded with the result that "sleeping accommodation is not commodious." Knowles wrote "if you make one false step you are up to the neck in water." The flooding was immediately followed by severe frost and a foot of snow. Many rifles were frozen up and could not be fired. Trench Standing Orders of the 62nd Division, first published in May 1916, and which incorporated much advice from officers of the 49th Division, instructed men to work rifle bolts from time to time in very cold weather to prevent the striker becoming frozen, adding the order "men will sleep with their rifles close to the body." It is reasonable to infer that these instructions were incorporated in the 49th Division Trench Standing Orders during the severe weather of February 1916. Conditions in billets were also very bad at this time, and it took the 1/7th four hours to march, or rather skate and slide, the 5 miles from one billet to another. Conditions were even worse in the arctic winter of 1917. "This God-forsaken country is still wrapped in a mantle



of snow and ice" wrote Knowles on 8th February 1917. "No one has ever experienced anything like it. We are having 20 degrees of frost in the daytime and it even gets to 30 at night." Moisture on moustaches, eyelashes and eyebrows froze. Water in the water bottles froze, bread froze and became almost impossible to cut. Boots froze hard if taken off and could not be put on again. Tinned fruit and tinned milk froze solid in the billet. "I thought I was seasoned to any sort of weather", wrote Knowles on 24th February, "but it is wicked just now. If you manage a few hours' sleep you wake up absolutely perished."

Although the summers were unsettled there were spells of hot weather and these brought plagues of flying insects, many of them a serious threat to health. In Northern France and in Belgium the transition between winter and summer takes place much more rapidly than in Britain and the insect reproduction rate is greatly accelerated in consequence. Millions of blue and green blowflies clustered in indiscriminate and noisome masses on refuse, empty cans, food and corpses of men and animals, and their maggots fed on corpses, never ceasing to disgust, even distress, many respondents, 5155 Abe Freedman, 2/8th and 8th, considering them "the worst thing about the war."<sup>97</sup> Wasps were also present in enormous numbers, attracted by the ample supplies of runny Tickler's jam and comparatively fresh meat. Flies plagued the Riflemen both in billets and in the trenches in the summer of 1915. "Nearly all the fly papers in Bac St Maur have been bought up" reported the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary on 20th June, while on 2nd August the official War Diary informed GHQ from Trois Tours that "the enormous number of flies in this neighbourhood renders the position unhealthy." Rfm William May, 8th, jocularly claimed that he had to fix his bayonet to keep the bluebottles off his breakfast,<sup>98</sup> while Lt Lupton, when off duty in his quarters, put his meat safe or a large handkerchief over his head, to keep off not only flies, of which he had never seen so many anywhere in his life, but all other types of flying insect that abounded. In marshy regions the Riflemen were also frequently troubled in summer by mosquitoes, described by Lt Lupton as "a foe far more noxious than the Germans." The RAMC went round covering with crude oil the pools that were the insects' habitat as far as possible, but Hugh Lupton was still suffering acutely from mosquitoes two years later and his father sent him a mosquito net.<sup>99</sup> One 1/7th officer was invalided with severe malaria in 1915. Some 1/8th Bn Other Ranks were taken to hospital with malaria.<sup>100</sup> All Battalion MOs on the Western Front held stocks of quinine pills.

Rats, chiefly Brown Rats, were a major perennial problem and, like every other type of vermin on the Western Front, never effectively combatted.



Although they constituted a major health hazard and consumed and contaminated vast stocks of food, they fortunately did not introduce any virulent plague-like diseases, nor was the fatal infectious jaundice, Weil's Disease, a problem to the medical authorities. A fact frequently overlooked, however, is that they did perform their useful ecological function of scavenging.

A typical "rat story" is the following:

"The rats bother us the most and I have been bitten on the nose by one. Other men have been bitten on the hand. Whatever you put down, if it is eatable, they will be there in a tick. Some of them are as big as cats, and fierce too, and there are thousands round here."<sup>101</sup>

Many respondents described how they had been obliged to sleep with their waterproof sheet or cape or their blanket wound tightly round their bodies, carefully hiding face and hands, to avoid being bitten as they slept. They described rat-killing sessions during quiet periods in the trenches: pieces of cheese would be put out as bait and the rats would then be attacked and beaten to death with entrenching tools. (Rat-killing was traditionally one of the favourite amusements of lower working-class men.)<sup>102</sup> 2313 Herbert C. Sweetman, 8th, recalled that when the nightly rations arrived, two men, each armed with an entrenching tool or a pick-axe handle, would be detailed to sit on guard over them till morning. Ferrets had been sent out to the Front in 1915,<sup>103</sup> but without noticeable effect. Lancelot Spicer's father sent him supplies of rat poison.<sup>104</sup> Hugh Lupton almost welcomed the German gas shells sent over during the Battle of the Somme, regarding the gas as "a blessing in disguise" since it did no harm to his men but killed huge numbers of rats and flies.<sup>105</sup> Many stories were told of the extreme boldness of the rats: perhaps the best one, related in Sgt Alchorne's Memoirs, concerned the theft of half a dozen lighted candles from the bottles in which they had been stuck. There were also gruesome tales of wounded men being attacked by rats as they lay helpless on the Somme battlefield.<sup>106</sup>

Body lice (known as "chats") were the bane of the infantryman's life. Everyone had them. A parodied version of the hymn "Art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore distressed?" was widely sung on the march by the troops of the BEF: "Art thou frowsy, art thou lousy, art thou Hitchy Koo?" Since lice in civilian life were associated only with the lowest strata of society, the men, and in particular the teenagers, from the Respectable working classes were horrified, disgusted and deeply ashamed when they first discovered they were harbouring such vermin.<sup>107</sup> Each Divisional Baths contained a machine for delousing soldiers' clothing, but the treatment killed only the insects and left the eggs in the folds and seams unscathed, with the result that allegedly clean shirts and underclothing were frequently as heavily infested as those discarded.<sup>108</sup> Methods of



destroying the louse were therefore dependent on the individual soldier. Some widely publicised remedies were virtually useless; for instance, the creatures appeared to revel in Keating's Powder. A 1/7th pioneer soaked the crutch of his trousers in the antiseptic croesol, while a man in C Coy applied another recommended nostrum, Harrison's Pomade (a specific against the head louse) liberally all over his body, both with disastrous results, to the vast amusement of unkind and callous comrades. Harry Martin, 1/7th, recalled how, in the severe weather of January-February 1917, they would hang out their wet shirts and pants on the trees, hoping to freeze to death the lice they contained. The creatures, and particularly their eggs, however, seemed immune to any extreme of temperature. Red carbolic soap moistened and rubbed into the folds of the skin was found to be perhaps the most effective deterrent to the louse, but only two effective methods of dealing with the ova were known: crushing between thumb nails and the fire of a candle flame run quickly along the garment seams (always supposing the soldier was lucky enough to have a candle end). Battle order haircuts suppressed head lice. The body louse constituted a major health hazard, being associated with a variety of medical conditions, including "trench fever", which was common, and the often fatal disease, typhus, which was fortunately extremely rare in the BEF. 1764 Sgt Arthur G. Illingworth of the 1/1st WR Field Ambulance recalled a case of a wounded man brought in at the point of death who died of suffocation: there was a louse covering every pore in his body.<sup>109</sup>

Out of the line, certainly in 1915 and 1916, facilities for washing the body and for washing and drying clothes were, as a general rule, extremely poor. Permanent camp sites eventually got piped water laid on, but indoor drying facilities were often non-existent, their provision often depending on the initiative of individual junior officers. Men usually had to dry wet garments on trees and shrubs. In the line water was often at a premium. 62nd Division Trench Standing Orders recognised this: "When water is available all ranks will shave daily." The Riflemen had to wash and shave in whatever water was available, whatever its quality: "some rainwater in a flooded trench"; "green slimy water"; "half a mess-tin of thawed snow"; "nasty water in shellholes." It was a common occurrence for half a dozen men or more to share a mess-tin of water; sometimes there was no alternative for the Rifleman but to save some of his morning tea to shave in.<sup>110</sup> Platoon-sgt Frank Dilley, 2/8th, asked by his officer why he hadn't shaved that morning, replied, "Didn't get no tea, sir", an explanation immediately accepted without comment. In rainy weather jam tins and buckets were put out to catch water for washing in.<sup>111</sup> At



some periods, in particularly "hot" sectors of the line, washing was out of the question: "I have never had my boots or clothes off since we kicked off on July 1st. We were over a week without a wash or shave. I can tell you a few of us looked like Sheeney window menders"; "I have just had a wash, the first for about fourteen days. It is like having a birthday."<sup>112</sup> Baths and changes of shirt and underclothing were comparatively rare events until 1917 and many men felt this particular deprivation keenly, especially in summertime. In August 1915, Rfm C. Wilson, 7th, complained he had had neither bath nor change of shirt for 5 weeks, while Cpl Tommy Shimeld of the 1/8th Bn Machine-Gun section complained he had "not been able to get a bath for nine weeks, that is because for that period of time we have been constantly under shell fire." Rfm Arthur Oates wrote: "We have just come out of the trenches and you cannot realise how we enjoy a bath and a change of underclothing. We splash about just like little kiddies at the seaside."<sup>113</sup>

At bathing parades the soldier handed in his tunic and trousers to be "stoved", i.e. "deloused". He handed in his shirt and underclothing and received clean garments in exchange; he also exchanged his towel for a clean one. Divisional laundries or civilian contractors did the washing. A frequent complaint was that the clean underwear was never the correct size. During 1915 and 1916 the parades unfortunately occurred at irregular and often infrequent intervals, doubtless as a result of the organisational difficulties involved. According to the Butcher Diary, the 1/7th were bathed on 28th and 30th April 1915, but Espin of the 1/8th did not get his first bath and change of shirt etc. since leaving England until 17th May. These baths took place in the tubs of a laundry, part of which was still in business. The men of the 1/7th and 1/8th each had four baths during June, although clean shirts were not provided on every occasion. These took place in the vats of a brewery at Bac St Maur, to the accompaniment of jokes such as, "So this is how they make that French beer" and "I've always dreamt of swimming in a brewery." In the Salient, however, despite the opening of the Divisional Baths (described by respondent Harry Martin, 7th, as "Heath Robinson contrivancies made out of any sort of old pipe") on 28th July, baths were few and far between, at intervals of 6 or 7 weeks or even longer. No one in the Rifles got a bath in July at all; Butcher had to wait until 12th August and Espin until 25th August for their first baths since leaving France at the end of June.<sup>114</sup> Some men therefore endeavoured to make their own arrangements. Sgt J.B. Taylor of the 1/7th found a large, deep pond to the rear of his trench in which he had a "good" bath, followed by a swim, but retired hastily when he bumped against a submerged object which he found to be a dead cow.<sup>115</sup> 167 Sgt Charlie Young, D Coy, 1/7th,



described how he came across his CSM, Charles Hardcastle, standing stark-naked outside his dugout, dabbing himself all over with a shaving brush, his batman beside him holding a mess tin full of water. Fastidious men who could afford to provide themselves with a shirt and set of underclothing took advantage of the efficient Army Postal Service to send their washing home regularly and so have more frequent changes.<sup>116</sup>

In the line there were no facilities for washing or drying clothes. Often enough the most that could be managed was to wash a pair of socks and dry them in front of a brazier or in the sun. Larger garments could not be dried unless the weather was sunny or there was a good drying wind, and then below the level of the parapet. More often than not there was no alternative for the Rifleman but to keep his wet garments on. Like Knowles, he just had "to stick it": "you are wet through by the time you get in and you stop so till you get out."<sup>117</sup>

Officers were required to make their own arrangements for bathing, washing and changing of clothes. Sometimes Hugh Lupton, if his duties allowed, managed to get a hot shower at the Divisional Baths, sometimes he got one at Brigade HQ when he happened to be visiting on official business. As such occasions were so uncertain and he hated to feel dirty, he acquired a collapsible canvas footbath, in which, in severe weather, "the water would persist in freezing before I used it." His habit of regularly using this bath, whatever the weather, only served to strengthen his reputation for being "mad". Whenever his servant was lucky enough to get him some hot shaving water, he would usually take the opportunity to have an all-over wash. In the forward zone, however, he was frequently as dirty and as plastered with mud as any of his men. On one occasion, after visiting Brigade HQ and obtaining a bath there, his colleagues and his men playfully affected not to recognise him on his return to the front line. He sent his washing home in 1915, telling his mother that on account of the lice a change of underclothes and shirt was "almost necessary" every 12 days, but from the beginning of 1916 managed to get it done locally, usually by civilians. Greatly concerned at the lack of baths for his men in the winter of 1915-16, he managed to borrow from local civilians butter tubs (which were not used in winter) for them to use out of the line, the field kitchens providing the hot water.<sup>118</sup> Such improvisations were thankfully rendered unnecessary from early 1917 when the authorities had become sufficiently well organised to give every Rifleman a bath, clean shirt and underclothing, and a clean blanket every time he came out of the line.<sup>119</sup>

By modern British Army standards the BEF was very badly clothed, but even by later World War I standards the men of the Leeds Rifles, up to late



1915, were poorly clad, inadequately protected against the elements. The uniform, particularly the tunic with its high, tight-fitting collar, was most unsuitable for hot weather. During the heat-wave conditions of early summer, Col Alexander of the 1/8th, anxious to minimise the incidence of heat exhaustion, ordered his men to cut off their trousers at the knee; the men cracked innumerable jokes about Boy Scouts.<sup>120</sup> Trousers were later re-designed so that they could be converted to shorts in hot weather, as shown in 1918 official photographs in E. Wyrall, History of the 62nd Division (n.d.), Vol. II. Young Harry Martin, 1/7th, was frankly envious of the cotton drill shorts worn by the 18th Division that came up in the third week of September 1916.<sup>121</sup> The greatcoat was totally unsuitable for wear in wet weather in or out of the line and in the trenches, particularly. When saturated with rain this heavy coat acquired an added weight of some 20lbs exclusive of adhering mud. The Official History of the Medical Services admitted that the greatcoat was too heavy and too long.<sup>122</sup> In the trenches the coat, with its long skirts which quickly became extremely heavy when saturated with mud and water, was a serious encumbrance, and the Riflemen cut down their coats at hip level with their officers' blessing.<sup>123</sup> Riflemen were not, in 1915, each issued with a vest, nor with a spare pair of underpants, nor with 3 pairs of socks, as claimed in the Official History.<sup>124</sup> In 1915 the Rifleman depended heavily for socks, as he did for any kind of knitted woollen garment, upon private sources: relatives, friends, the voluntary benevolent agencies and generous well-wishers. Lt Lupton referred, in a letter dated 30th October 1915, to the "long overdue" official issue of socks that had arrived the previous day. The private sources made a considerable contribution. No statistics are available for the Leeds Rifles, unfortunately, but the 1/4th KOYLI (of Wakefield, Normanton, Dewsbury, Batley and Morley) had, by the Embarkation, received over 2,000 pairs of socks, about 1400 flannel shirts, nearly 1000 mufflers, as well as mittens, woollen body belts and handkerchiefs.<sup>125</sup>

The tardiness of the War Office in supplying wet weather clothing in the autumn of 1915 has already been referred to: waterproof mackintosh capes and thigh-length gum boots were not supplied to the 1/8th until 5th-6th November.<sup>126</sup> The decision to issue warm winter clothing appears to have been governed by the calendar rather than by prevailing climatic conditions, though there is evidence that, as usual, Kitchener divisions were kitted out before the Territorials. Fur coats and winter service dress caps (which had ear flaps which could be tied underneath the chin) were not received by the Leeds Rifles until towards the end of November, though "the new winter clothing" had reached the Kitchener battalion, the 9th KOYLI



(21st Division) about three weeks earlier.<sup>127</sup> The fur coats, which were sleeveless, were of shaggy sheepskin or goatskin. The men fancied themselves in these coats: Knowles considered he looked "a napper". In photographs, the men look like a bunch of Balkan brigands. Lt Lupton disapproved and told his parents, "the company looks like a mixture of teddy bears and rag dolls." Machine-gun Sgt Tommy Shimeld of the 8th described himself as a "human wardrobe": "first a shirt, next a cardigan jacket, then a tunic, a fur coat, and then a great coat, and to finish off, a waterproof cape." The writer of the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary was not able until 24th November to write that "there is now no shortage in the supply of socks, shirts and other clothing."<sup>128</sup>

The quartermasters laboured under considerable difficulties: often they held very small supplies or were completely out of stock of essential items of kit and clothing, and deliveries from Base dumps were erratic.<sup>129</sup> Clothing and kit might be lost in trench and dugout collapses due to flooding or shell explosions.<sup>130</sup> The men of the 1/7th lost much of their clothing, including ammunition boots, oil sheets, mackintosh capes, as well as the rest of their kit, when they were rushed up to the Canal Bank in fighting order, carrying only gas mask, gun and ammunition, on 19th December 1915.<sup>131</sup> The only boots the 7th Quartermaster could give 1726 Jack Barker were a second-hand pair that had "probably come off one of our own chaps who'd been killed or died." The Battalion was still "waiting patiently" for an issue of clothing in the first week of January 1916 when Knowles complained to his wife that they looked "like a lot of scarecrows." Supplies always seemed to be late. Espin was not issued with a blanket until 9th September 1915, although he had clearly been in need of one since the beginning of August, a month of unsettled, often chilly weather.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps the worst instance of War Office tardiness concerned the manufacture and issue of steel helmets.<sup>133</sup> Steel helmets began to be issued in the 49th Division in very limited numbers as trench stores, to be worn by sentries, in November 1915,<sup>134</sup> but were not generally issued for another 5 months. (The "hard men" started taking bets that they could withstand any blow on the head with an entrenching tool handle while wearing the helmets.)<sup>135</sup>

It was quickly found that the thigh boots and the fur coats, initially welcomed so enthusiastically, had serious disadvantages. The latter, dampened by rain during the day, froze "like boards" at night in the trenches, and caused their wearers considerable discomfort. Furthermore, they became heavily infested with lice. The coats were replaced by leather jerkins in the middle of December.<sup>136</sup> The boots had two outstanding disadvantages.



First, unlike fisherman's waders, they were not attached to belt or braces, but had to be held on by the wearer (which was itself an enormous inconvenience, particularly to a ration carrier). This meant that they could be lost all too easily in deep water or mud. Sgt Alchorne gives a striking illustration of this in his Memoirs, writing of 185 Brigade's move to Lealvilliers, just after the thaw had set in on the Somme in March 1917:

"It poured with rain soon after our arrival here, and that night about 9 pm, the 7th and 8th [second-line] Leeds Rifles marched into the village for the most part without boots or socks, footsore and weary. They had just come out of the line and the mud was so deep that the trench waders ... had to be left in the clinging mud and water."

Second, the boots were not issued to the men individually but, presumably to save money, were classed as trench stores. This entailed the setting up, near Company HQ, of Company gum-boot stores where men, before going into or coming out of the trenches, could change their footwear, attaching a numbered check-tag to their ammunition boots for the purposes of identification.<sup>137</sup>

There was a great deal of informality of dress on trench duty. Men wore privately-supplied woollen caps, balaclava helmets, scarves, pullovers and cardigans, and they removed the wires and the stiffening inside the service dress caps to make them more comfortable and also to render them less conspicuous to enemy snipers.<sup>138</sup> Before the arrival of gumboots many of the men took to wearing sandbags tied round their feet "to stop them slipping and partially filter the mud." Sometimes men took articles of clothing they were in need of from unburied corpses<sup>139</sup> (German officers' boots were particularly prized). For example, one night coming back from patrol 1219 Cpl Arthur Fozard tore his trousers very badly on the barbed wire. He took the kilt from a dead Scottish soldier lying just outside the trench. The first morning out of the line he appeared on parade, naturally, in the kilt. Col Alexander, a Scotsman, "couldn't stop laughing and said he'd never thought he would ever see a Leeds Rifleman in a kilt."<sup>140</sup>

Soldiers, in addition to food rations, were entitled to fuel and lighting allowances. These were frequently deficient, as they were, for instance, at the end of November 1915:

"Practically no wood is available, the coal is often of very poor quality and great difficulty is experienced in keeping the coke and charcoal dry while it is being carried up to the trenches. The subject of waterproof bags is under consideration."<sup>141</sup>

Fires which emitted smoke were banned in the trenches because they attracted artillery fire. Some men, like Frank Richards,<sup>142</sup> would become "crack hands



at making smokeless fires" with dry chips of SAA boxes in a biscuit tin punctured with holes made by a bayonet. Braziers in which coke or charcoal could be burnt were supplied to front-line troops for the winter of 1915-16 and were invaluable for drying clothes, cooking or warming up food, brewing tea, or merely keeping warm. Unfortunately, on the coldest nights, men took the braziers into dugouts, all fires at night being forbidden in any case on account of the glare they caused, and several near-fatalities through asphyxiation occurred in the Leeds Rifles,<sup>143</sup> with the men concerned having to be taken to hospital. W.H.A. Groom, apparently unaware of the number of fatalities and near-fatalities attributable to the use of braziers in the winter of 1915-16, sharply castigates the Army authorities for imposing a total ban on their use the following winter.<sup>144</sup> Wood was always in very short supply and foraging parties were generally part of the daily routine in and out of the line. L/Cpl Espin went out in charge of a wood party on 12th May 1915; as the Battle of Aubers Ridge had taken place only three days earlier, his mission was successful: he found 4 SAA boxes. The men of the 1/7th on 25th October watched, no doubt gleefully, the unoccupied Foch Farm immediately behind their front being heavily shelled for 1½ hours, "affording a plentiful supply of firewood and bricks." The 1/8th Unofficial War Diarist (who was the son of a Methodist minister) noted on 11th December "Elverdinge Church was apparently once very rich in wooden images and because of the rain the Battalion has been somewhat short of dry timber for fuel." Since it was frequently not possible to have even a coke fire on trench duty, many Riflemen relied for cooking upon the "Tommy's cooker". This was a pocket solid-alcohol stove in a tin box which was sold under various proprietary names such as "Tinned Heat" for around 7½d. ("Ex-Private X" said that it took two hours to boil half a pint of water.) It did not become an Army issue until 1917, and the men obtained them prior to this through relatives or the voluntary benevolent agencies. A substitute for a Tommy's cooker was made by putting strips of sandbag sacking and pieces of candle in an empty biscuit or Maconochie tin. Several respondents described, however, how they had often had to fall back for cooking on a candle or candles (from the lighting allowance), or on the army biscuits themselves which were highly inflammable. In the absence of any kind of cooking facility, tinned food had, of course, to be eaten cold.<sup>145</sup>

The Field Service rations aimed at providing the soldier with approximately 4,000 calories daily. While on trench duty infantrymen received in addition pea-soup powder and Oxo cubes (1oz soup powder and 1 Oxo cube daily) and an extra daily ration of tea and sugar.<sup>146</sup> Riflemen



did not have to rely completely on Army rations. Virtually all of them regularly received from relatives parcels containing delicacies not normally provided in the rations, such as cakes, pies and other pastries, hams, cooked chickens, fancy biscuits, tinned fruit, etc. The quartermasters provided extra food, such as fresh vegetables, fresh fruit or eggs, out of the Regimental Institute (i.e. canteen) funds. In addition, when out of the line, Riflemen could usually buy food or cooked meals locally. (Emergency rations were also provided, but these could be eaten only in an emergency and then by express permission of an officer.) It is not surprising, therefore, to find references in both the Knowles and the Lupton letters to their writers' increasing weight and girth;<sup>147</sup> virtually all the respondents had photographs which graphically illustrated their substantial increase in weight during active service. John Burnett rightly remarks in his social history of diet that "for millions of soldiers and civilians wartime rations represented a higher standard of feeding than they had ever known before."<sup>148</sup>

It may very well be, as respondents have suggested, even maintained, that the 1/7th, 2/7th and 1/8th were exceptionally well fed. Certainly by 1918 the 1/8th had gained the enviable reputation of being "the best fed mob in the British Army." Nevertheless, in view of what respondents had to say about items in the rations which have since passed into World War I folklore - (tinned) bully beef, Maconochie's tinned mixed meat and vegetable ration (wittily referred to by Ian Hay as "that great chieftain of the ration race, The Maconochie of Maconochie"),<sup>149</sup> tinned pork and [haricot] beans, Army biscuits - it would appear that the picture of starving Tommies of the BEF which not infrequently appears in World War I literature,<sup>150</sup> must be viewed with a certain amount of scepticism. Many respondents had enjoyed these items, even the biscuits, and considered their reputation ill-deserved. It is likely that critics were either what Robert Roberts, author of The Classic Slum, called "food illiterates",<sup>151</sup> or wore false teeth, or had carious teeth or insufficient teeth to masticate their food properly. Knowles was one of the many critics of Army rations who had poor teeth, as was Cpl Ted Yeadon of the 1/7th.<sup>152</sup> Fred Hearn of the 1/8th said, "The men used to go mad for Maconochie's M and V. God help any ration carrier who lost a parcel of that in the mud!"<sup>153</sup>

In periods of supply difficulty, the troops had to exist on "Iron Rations": 1 tin of bully beef, 3 biscuits, an Oxo cube and a small bag of tea and sugar, mixed, per day. There were naturally occasions when, due to enemy action, the rations failed to arrive. Then the Riflemen would have to borrow from the battalion next door, or eat their emergency



rations, or as Lieutenants Kemp and Lupton did on the Somme on 8th July 1916, in order to feed their men, search the haversacks of recently killed men in other regiments. They "returned triumphant with biscuits, cheese, etc. and many such luxuries, even tea and sugar." 2222 William H. Reynard, 2/8th, recalled searching the haversacks at Cambrai of dead KOYLIs (killed that morning) for food, tea and Oxo cubes.<sup>154</sup> Such contingencies, however, occurred rarely and such states of affairs very seldom lasted more than 48 hours, a fact confirmed by Capt B. Liddell Hart.<sup>155</sup>

There were some legitimate complaints about the food, however.<sup>156</sup> Dried meat was universally disliked, being both difficult to cook and hard to masticate. One respondent referred to it as "dried mule" (because it was so obstinate). Much of the fresh meat was of poor quality: the troops used to sing, to the tune of 'The Soldiers' Chorus' in Gounod's opera 'Faust', "All Bones and Bloody Great Lumps of Fat". Moreover, there is no equitable method of sharing out an animal carcass. Capt Farrar, the 8th's Quartermaster, overcame this difficulty by obtaining a butcher's mincing machine and having the HQ cooks make the meat up, together with onions, herbs and ration porage oats, into rissoles (similar to "hamburgers") which, being already cooked, then only needed heating up to provide a tasty and sustaining meal, one that was hugely popular with the men. Capt Farrar purchased, out of the canteen funds, extra food from civilian sources, employing Cpl Lee, manager of a grocery shop in civilian life, for this task, and in 1917 and 1918 was providing cooked suppers for the battalion whenever it was out of the line. Far and wide through the BEF, the 8th Bn was known as "The Four Meals a Day Mob". Other regiments were said to be "jealous to death". Respondents nostalgically recalled, with gratitude, the cocoa or hot soup available at Coy HQ at night during trench duty in the winter months, as well as the hot porridge liberally laced with ration rum, not to mention the famous rissoles, four of which, Signaller Reynard swore, saved his life during the Defence of Bucquoy. Small wonder they repeatedly referred to Capt Farrar as "the best quartermaster in the British Army." Such was his reputation in official circles that quartermasters of other units were sent to him for instruction.<sup>157</sup>

The Leeds Rifles officers' claim that everything humanly possible was done for the men's comfort and welfare was no idle bombast, but a well substantiated fact, and in no area more than in the provision of food. The role of food in maintaining morale was fully recognised in the 1/8th, for instance. Lt Lupton was always on the lookout for "something extra" for his men, particularly in periods of bad weather. At his request, his parents in 1915 sent out boxes of lettuce, gooseberries, and kippers.<sup>158</sup>



Espin, who was a member of Lupton's platoon, included in his diary entry for 12th May: "Had a luxury for tea - some lettuce."<sup>159</sup> The officers also received the same field rations as the men, but their diet could be as varied and as lavish as they or their parents could afford, as is illustrated in Graham H. Greenwell, An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-1918 (1972). Some authors have failed to appreciate this and expressed resentment of the superior diet of many officers.

Rations and water were carried up to the forward zone by fatigue parties, about 20 strong, who would meet the regimental transport and the water cart at a collection point out of range of German bullets. In the Salient in 1915 the rations were dumped between Bridge 4 and Essex Farm which was approximately 1850 yards from the nearest point of the German front line. Essex Farm and its environs, where battalion limbers met carrying parties after dark was likened by 132 Sgt Harry Thackray, 1/8th, to "Briggate on a Saturday night", although 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, thought it more appropriate to liken it to Leeds Market on a Saturday Night in pre-1914 days, with all the shouting, but without the lights.<sup>160</sup>

The rations were carried in clean sandbags. Their contents were seldom parcelled up, with the result that meat and bacon, according to respondents, were "so hairy they practically needed a shave", and in wet weather sugar was apt to dissolve out, tea was spoilt, and bread and bacon got muddy. Water was carried in 2-gallon petrol tins (which usually had previously contained petrol and which were supposed to have residual petrol and vapour burnt out before use as water carriers) slung by leather straps over the carrier's shoulders.<sup>161</sup> Sometimes on the way back, a water can would stop a machine-gun bullet. 2460 L/Cpl Ernest W. Kirkland, 1/8th, recalled such an occasion:

"The word came back to the NCO bringing up the rear: 'Man hit'. He edged his way forward asking who it was. 'It's me, corp', said the man, 'in the shoulder'. A groundsheet was held over him, the corporal undid his tunic and shirt and a match was struck, revealing a large, dark brown, pungent-smelling stain, but no apparent wound. 'What were you carrying?' asked the NCO. 'A water can' came the reply. The can, now almost empty, lay on the bottom of the trench with a bullet hole in it. 'You silly beggar', said the corporal, 'where the hell did you get that can from?' 'It was on the side of the road'. 'In future', said the corporal sternly, 'only bring what's given you from our limber. We can't make tea with bloody creosote'."<sup>162</sup>

Ration carriers were excused from wearing their equipment but had to carry rifle and gas mask. The last man in the file carried the mail bag containing parcels for the company.<sup>163</sup> Two 1/7th respondents, 1726 Jack Barker and



3227 Clarence Lazenby, both of C Coy, stated that they frequently volunteered for ration fatigues in 1915 because of the opportunity it afforded them to have a good drink at the water cart and to fill their personal water bottles. 3018 David Clayton, 2/7th, stated that he frequently volunteered in 1917 and 1918 because "buckshee" [Army slang: "free"] drinks of tea or cocoa and hot bacon sandwiches were usually then available at collection points.<sup>164</sup> In "hot" sectors, such as the Ypres Salient in 1915, men could not be spared from the front line for fatigue duties and rations and all other supplies were brought up by parties from the second- and third-line, i.e. support and reserve, troops.

Hot food was not carried up to the trenches in the British Army until the autumn of 1915. Until then each man was issued with his daily ration of raw food by his platoon sergeant and left to organise his own cooking arrangements. He would cook his own bacon or cheese for breakfast or tea in his mess tin lid, but it was usual for members of a section to take it in turns to cook dinner (as the Riflemen called luncheon) for the section until a man with hitherto undiscovered talents for cookery was found. The Riflemen would have picked up some useful cookery hints from the Regulars during trench instruction, but they also derived much amusement from their own self-taught efforts at field cookery:

"... we turn out some very good dishes ourselves in the trenches. Only a day or two ago some of our chaps were eating jam pudding, which they had made out of biscuits at 4.30 am, and judging from the exclamations it was very good. The women at home will have to watch their p's and q's when we return";

"The meals in the trenches consist of bacon, biscuits and tea for breakfast; meat and potatoes for dinner, and biscuits, cheese, and tea for tea. Bread is a rarity ... All sorts of dishes prevail - bacon and fried cheese; meat, potatoes and onions, tea containing broken biscuits, and then there is what has been truly named 'trench pudding'. This consists of broken biscuit, boiled in water until reduced to a pulp, with the addition of jam, and it is very good. The food is excellent, but living in the trenches reminds me very forcibly of the old saying: 'God sends the food, but the devil sends the cooks'."<sup>165</sup>

Bread was indeed something of a rarity on active fronts and 8 men to a loaf was regrettably commonplace. Several respondents recalled with nostalgic pleasure stew made from bully beef, broken biscuits, the Maconochie ration, and boiling water, stirred well together and the whole laced with "Yorkshire Relish", a thin, highly spiced bottled sauce manufactured by Messrs. Goodall & Backhouse of Leeds and sent to the Regiment in crates as a gift from the Leeds Flag Days' Committee. (Wyn Griffith described rissoles made of "bully, powdered biscuit and bacon drip.")<sup>166</sup> Stew and tea were made



in the same dixie, with no washing out in between. Tea was made by throwing tea leaves into boiling water. Milk came in the form of sweetened condensed milk (which also partly replaced the sugar ration), "Ideal" unsweetened evaporated milk, or powdered milk. If insufficient water had been brought up with the rations, a party would go out to obtain some nearby, but this would not be chlorinated. Many stories were told of brewing tea with water from shell holes containing freshwater fauna or a corpse or two. Taking water from shell holes was actually expressly forbidden, not only for obvious reasons, but also on account of the danger of gas poisoning. Often enough, however, there was no other alternative. C.M. Slack wrote of his tea and coffee in February 1916: "Sometimes it is light brown, sometimes black: last night it was green. The taste is always the same - dead men."<sup>167</sup>

German and French shrapnel helmets were particularly prized since, with the linings removed, they made excellent utensils for boiling potatoes or frying chips. The enemy often did his best to spoil the meals:

"Our cook was making one of his special stews in the line, the sort you could stand your spoon up in. A whizzbang landed straight in the stew just as it was ready. The cook's language - and ours - was terrible."

"... the language is not always very pleasant, especially when you have spent half an hour making a drop of good tea and frying a bit of bacon, and you nicely get sat down to enjoy it, when a sniper fills it with clay and sand."<sup>168</sup>

Many respondents had similar unhappy experiences to relate. The frequency with which men got dirt in their meals in this way was naturally given as the joking explanation of how British Tommies came to be so full of grit.

The monsoon-like weather conditions of the 1915 autumn compelled attempts to be made to supply hot food to the trenches, since cooking had been rendered impossible there. The liberal rations (which had been increased in November) and the means adopted for ensuring a daily supply of hot food did go some way towards counter-acting the harmful effects of exposure on health and military efficiency. Food was cooked in the waggon lines, put while still hot into the hot compartment of a field cooker and taken up to the ration collection point. From there it was taken up to the trenches in special food carriers often improvised with hay and biscuit boxes which kept a dixie and its contents hot for up to 18 hours. Hot soup was carried in 2-gallon petrol tins insulated by a covering of felt and waterproof sheeting hung on braces so that one man could carry two, one on his chest, the other on his back.<sup>169</sup> Hot soup, later in the war (from January 1917), was carried up in specially made Thermos-type metal canisters.<sup>170</sup> In the 1/8th attempts to supply hot food to the front line were made early



in the autumn: bacon was fried and Symington's packet soups made up at the CQMS's large dugout towards the rear and taken up in insulated dixies by orderly men.<sup>171</sup> (There were several science graduates and undergraduates amongst the regimental officers.) In early 1916 the Somme front was so quiet that the Leeds Rifles field cookers were taken up the line and company trench kitchens set up in the second line so that hot meals could be served daily to men in the regiment's entire defence system; Frank Simpson, B Coy, 1/8th, actually cooked Yorkshire Pudding here. This unfortunately had its drawbacks. On 23rd February the smoke emitted by the cooker of D Coy of the 1/8th attracted the attention of a German artillery observer and all the cooks were wounded by the same shell. Three days later Espin slipped on ice and fell down the 99 steps of "Jacob's Ladder", losing his section's dixie of tea.<sup>172</sup> Several respondents reported similar accidents while carrying food from the company cookers.

Not unnaturally, the subject of food occupied a major place in the thoughts and conversation of Riflemen. Herbert Checkley, the 1/7th Transport Sergeant, for instance, wrote home in June 1915 to tell them that he had spent all day on Whit Monday thinking of the steak and chips and bottle of Bass he'd had at the seaside the previous Whitsun.<sup>173</sup> References to food are frequent in the Espin and Butcher Diaries. Espin noted that he got no bread between 16th April and 16th May 1915, when he wrote "Hurrah! Bread at last!"; on 21st May he wrote "Another striking incident: a loaf of bread a man!" He notes the apparently rare occasions he gets plenty to eat, and the times he gets a double rum ration or no bread in the rations. Two typical entries:

"Cooking my breakfast it is upset by a shell. I have no food, am rather hungry"; "No wood to cook my breakfast."<sup>174</sup>

Butcher frequently notes his assessment of the meals, e.g.

"First good dinner since I landed in France"; "Tea without sugar. Very nasty"; "Breakfast consists of Biscuits and Bacon. I don't much care for the biscuits, they are too hard"; "Tea bread butter and pineapple. Very good"; "Dinner - stew very good"; "Breakfast good"; "Rotten breakfast ... Drinking water very poor."<sup>175</sup>

Some respondents said they often felt hungry on trench duty. This is the kind of statement that requires the greatest care in interpretation and should not be automatically taken at face value and interpreted as a reflection either on the Quartermaster concerned or on the authorities. As a general rule, the rations were ample, but varied little from day to day. The usual menu was "Bfast Bacon bread tea, dinner stew, tea bread and marmalade or jam and cheese."<sup>176</sup> As Rfm J.Appleyard, 7th, pointed out,



"We are doing very well as regards food. We get plenty, but of course it's the same day after day, and the chaps get stalled" [dial.: "fed up"].<sup>177</sup>

It is a common psychological phenomenon for people under stress to turn to continual eating in an attempt to calm and comfort the nerves. In any case, young men in their late teens and early twenties commonly have large appetites which are further sharpened by living and working constantly in the open air. "What an appetite", wrote Butcher on 19th May 1915, "there is no satisfying it."<sup>178</sup>

Stealing food (or other property) from civilians and detaining or appropriating provisions and supplies belonging to other corps, battalions or detachments whilst on active service were offences liable to be punished by the death penalty, under Section 6, Subsections (f) and (j) of the Army Act. In the matter of these extremely serious offences there was, however, a considerable "grey area" between legality and illegality. 2122 Robert Vine, B Coy, 1/7th, alleged that the Regular battalion with whom his platoon had taken trench instruction had filched his platoon's rum ration and substituted lime juice (which came in very similar jars).<sup>179</sup> Clothing and kit that had to be left behind in a hurry was seldom, if ever, seen again.<sup>180</sup> Clothing and items of kit taken from dead men were not regarded as being stolen, although, properly, they should have been taken or sent to salvage dumps for cleaning and re-issue. The appropriation of provisions inadvertently left behind by the outgoing battalion was looked on as a legitimate fortune of war:

"In the dugout I'd just taken over I found two jars of rum with their seals still unbroken. I soon contacted my pal, Sgt Scott, No. 16 platoon, and gave him one, and we issued it to our lads as soon as we had got settled in, with no questions asked. Next day, enquiries were made from Company HQ, but nobody had seen or knew anything about our find, of course. Our platoon officers, Lt Watson and Lt Wilson, might have had an idea but they did not let on - they'd got their ration!"<sup>181</sup>

Abandoned civilian buildings were respected until they were badly damaged by enemy action, when the taking of firewood etc. became permissible. Fruit, vegetables and flowers in the gardens of empty and abandoned houses were regarded as fair game though Signaller Reynard and his friend were brought up on Company Orders on a looting charge for helping themselves to ripe cherries from a tree outside a ruined farmhouse; they escaped with a reprimand.<sup>182</sup> At Coxyde in July 1917 the men of the 1/8th got a rare and unexpected windfall in the shape of new potatoes and lettuces left behind in their gardens by the villagers who had recently fled. At Bienvillers, while the 1/8th were in billets there, a spell of twice-nightly German shelling compelled the inhabitants to flee, leaving behind a wounded calf



which was found by men of A Coy. The Regimental Butcher was sent for, and the animal was slaughtered and dressed and handed over to the cooks of A Coy, whose men "much appreciated" the extra meat,<sup>183</sup> fresh and home-killed to boot. Shortly after arriving in Belgium in 1915, men of the 1/7th found an orphan kid beside its dead mother, a victim of shell-fire, and promptly adopted it as the regimental mascot. A wandering goat found by the 1/5th WYR was served up for dinner.<sup>184</sup>

The Riflemen quickly became inured to the sights and smell of the battle zone. A middle-class respondent, 2158 Harold Dean, confessed that he was violently sick the first time he saw the mutilated body of a mortally wounded man, but such sights never bothered him again.<sup>185</sup> The first sight of violent death appeared to trouble few of the Riflemen, however. Working-class Victorian and Edwardian children were not shielded from the facts of death.<sup>186</sup> Some, at least, of the respondents as children had seen suicides who had drowned or hung themselves, or cut their throats, and few, if any, of the former miners had not seen mangled victims of colliery accidents. Moreover, their training had considerably toughened them mentally. The classic soldier's reaction to death "terrible hard lines", frequently appears in the early published Riflemen's letters: for the first time in the letter written by Bugler Charles Edward Hannan, aged 20, while on his first trench tour.<sup>187</sup> Gruesome sights in the Salient in 1915 were legion. French-interred corpses were commonly buried in very shallow graves from whence rats and the weather quickly unearthed them.

"We have taken over a trench that was occupied by the French. The stench from the dead bodies is awful, especially as they are not buried very deep", wrote Rfm F. Luff, 7th, to his wife. "It is nothing to see faces and legs and arms protruding from the earth."<sup>188</sup>

Often enough a body would be sticking out of the trench walls: a pair of boots, its hobnails highly polished by uniformed shoulders brushing past; a standing helmeted French soldier, gassed at his post; a skeleton wrist and hand, all flesh removed by rats, with whom the Riflemen shook hands for luck as they passed.<sup>189</sup> French and German graves were often completely unmarked, with the result that Riflemen not infrequently came across them whilst repairing or constructing trenches and dugouts.

"I have been working in a communication trench and I had to pull about a dozen dead Germans out of the way before I could start digging. They are fine big fellows about six foot. The smell of the dead is horrible, and it is a good job we were inoculated before we came out or we should all have the fever."<sup>190</sup>

Riflemen tended to be shocked in more ways than one at the burial methods of other armies, particularly the French.



Most soldiers or ex-soldiers would describe war as "nine-tenths boredom."<sup>191</sup> A particularly apt description is given in The American Soldier (1949): "Combat as actually experienced consisted of periods of intense activity and excitement punctuating the periods of routine and boredom."<sup>192</sup> A well-known British definition of war was "Long spells of intense boredom punctuated by moments of intense fear."<sup>193</sup> "Boredom" is perhaps not the most appropriate word to use; "monotony" would be better. A bored soldier is an inattentive soldier, a danger to himself and his comrades. No respondent, in fact, had found trench warfare "boring" as such, despite "the dreary pattern of the infantryman's existence."<sup>194</sup> Routine ruled the Rifleman's life and nowhere more than in "normal" trench warfare when the same pattern unfolded itself day after day with monotonous regularity. 1712 John William Sanderson, 1/8th, gives the following typical routine for the rank and file in his Memoirs:

"On sentry duty midnight to 1 am; 1 am- 3 am manual work in the trench; sentry duty 3 am - 'Stand To'. (Every man stood to arms on the parapet for an hour or so from half an hour before dawn until the command 'Stand-Down' was given when the enemy parapet could be clearly seen. If it was misty, the order would not be given until the mist had cleared. During 'Stand-To' the platoon officer or sergeant inspected rifles, ammunition, equipment and gas helmets.) After 'stand-down', draw the day's rations, cook and eat breakfast, clean rifle, bayonet and ammunition, wash and shave, clean up clothes and boots as far as possible, assist in the general tidying of the trench for CO's inspection at 10 am. After inspection, carrying fatigues. Dinner. Sleep for a couple of hours. 3 pm-5 pm sentry duty. Tea. 'Free time' until 'Stand-To' (which commenced just before sunset, and ended one hour later when it was completely dark). Working in trench 'Stand-down' to midnight."<sup>195</sup>

Here are some typical entries from the Butcher Diary.

"27th-29th May 1915: Stand to arms 2.15 am. Breakfast Bread and Bacon. 2 hrs sentry. Answer letters. Dinner stew very good. After tea I go on fatigue fetching frames for dugouts up com[munication] trench. 2 hrs sentry immediately I return. Turns very cold towards night. Start building a wall of sandbags round cookhouse to protect cooks from German snipers. Carrying sandbags for 2 hrs. Then finish and do 2 hrs sentry again till moon [rise]. Very cold. Stand to arms 2.0 am. After stand to I had a good sleep while breakfast. Bread and Bacon for break[fast]. Spend our time during the morning making a loophole. 11.30 am 2 hrs. sentry. Weather very fine. Have a sleep in the afternoon. Tea 5.0 pm. Fatigue duty again. Same thing as last night. On my arrival back we stand to. 9 pm start filling sandbags, filled 180 in 2 hrs. 11.0 pm 2 hrs sentry. Received parcel from home. 1.0 am get down for 1 hrs' sleep. Stand-to 2.0". 20th July [in the reserve line]: "Stand to arms 2.15 am, get down to sleep after stand to and slept while 10.0 am. Get up



and have breakfast. Go on water fatigue after tea. It was awful in the com. trenches with mud and water. Nearly up to our knees. Arrive back safe and go on guard 8.30 pm to 10.30 pm. Get to sleep for 4 hrs." 23rd July [in third line]: "Stand to arms 2.15 am. After stand to get down to sleep. Had a good sleep then get up and make a bit of breakfast. Rest during the day. Go on ration fatigue 8.0 pm. When we come back we go brick carrying. Finished about 12.30."<sup>196</sup>

In his letter of 2nd December 1915, Lt Lupton gives a timetable of a "typical" day of his in the Salient taken "at random". He was in the front line in Sector D22:

"12 midnight: more or less asleep in a dugout (one of the few remaining in the line). Usually disturbed by odd messages. 2 am. Proceed on duty, wading about lines. Find Illuminating Pistol out of order. Sit in Sgt Major's dugout (most comfortable in lines) trying to repair same. Succeed in partial repair by about 3 am and fire off triumphant pyrotechnic display. Nothing to be seen. 3 am.-5.22 am. Patrol lines. Listen with interest to one of sergeant's family history. 5.22 am. Drink cup of warm cocoa quickly. Cup wanted for Major. 5.22-6 am. Contemplated situation and patrolled lines. 6 am. Company Stand To. That is, they leave what fires they have and stand in line trenches. This makes very little difference in present state of dugouts. Inspect distribution of rations. This takes about an hour and in wet weather is not an encouraging operation, bread being generally covered with mud and other Rations similarly disfigured. 7.15 am. Breakfast followed by more sleep. 10.0 am. We are told we are going to strafe the Boche for some hours beginning in twenty minutes. We therefore move one of our platoons whose trenches have almost ceased to exist to a more sanitary area and place the rest of the men in as safe places as possible for fear of retaliation. (And well it was we did so as we found afterwards.) 11 am-1 pm. Desultory bombardment. 1.0 pm. Thought it was lunch time and began lunch but had to clear out of dugout on account of pipsqueaks. Bombardment became heavy but was harmless. Continued lunch but not in dugout. 1.0 pm-3.30 pm. Stand in trenches and patrolled same watching bombardment. 3.30 pm visited company on right to enquire into its health as we had seen several trench mortars drop into them. However, no harm had been done. 4.30 pm. Returned to tea, had same and collected belongings etc. ready for relief soon after 6.30 pm. 7.30 pm. Relief reported complete. Walked down with the Major who kept on falling into shell holes. 8.15 pm. Had dinner in new HQ. Herrings sent from home much appreciated. 9.15 pm. Having arranged for carrying parties slept in Mess waiting for first party to report in so as to send off second party. This however didn't happen before midnight and so does not come in diurnal diary. In fact second party did not return till 4 am."<sup>197</sup>

The 24-hour period described by Lt Lupton was hardly "typical", however - he has, for one thing, omitted Evening Stand-To - and one suspects he



wished to give his parents the entirely erroneous impression that he was not required to work particularly hard. Regimental officers of all ranks were saddled with a continuous load of duties, not only in the line, but also out of it, and in consequence had very little free time of their own, certainly no more and probably much less than their men received. There were foot inspections, cleaning-up and training to organise, discipline to administer, meetings to attend, working parties to organise and supervise, internal economy to organise, welfare matters to attend to; these were only a few of the multifarious duties of the officer out of the line. Periods of officer shortage in trench warfare bore very heavily upon the subalterns. Extracts from C.M. Slack's letters illustrate this:

"That day [Friday] I was on my feet from two in the afternoon till 2.30 on Saturday morning with 15 minutes for tea. I went out again at 6.00 on Saturday evening and did not get back till 2.45 on Sunday morning having had no rest during the day." "Two nights running I got only three hours' sleep, and no rest in the day. The CO sent us an officer to help for a couple of hours at night, otherwise we might both have broken down."<sup>198</sup>

Officers commanding companies, as well as the commanding officer of the battalion and the adjutant, were fighting a war on three fronts: against the enemy, against the weather and the physical environment, and against the Army administrators whose demands for more and more reports and statistical returns became increasingly insistent.<sup>199</sup> The 1/8th Unofficial War Diary of 22nd August 1915 gives an example of "the principal curse of the Company Commander", trench returns: "EVENING REPORT AAA (1) OPERATIONS DURING DAY AAA NIL AAA (2) DIRECTION OF WIND NW AAA." Just before Christmas 1915 the 1/8th in the line received the following message:

"Division is very anxious to obtain dead bodies of rats that were killed by gas on the 19th AAA Please cause a very careful search to be made at once in trenches in your area AAA If any dead rats are found these should be sent here at once AAA Rats if any must be sent to Battn HQ tonight AAA."

The Adjutant, Capt W.H. Brooke (a glass bottle manufacturer in Hunslet), whose initial reaction to this apparently fatuous and bizarre request was, understandably, "Rats!" was moved to write a poem on the subject which he intended to submit for publication in Punch. The first verse runs:

"What returns do we make today  
'Undercoats, fur', or SAA,  
A shortage of pepper, or coke, or hay,  
or RATS?"<sup>200</sup>

(The rats were, of course, required for post mortem examination.)

Returns, often referred to as "Eskimo Returns", were a common focus of officers' grouses<sup>201</sup> and a common target for sardonic humour. One of



Capt Bruce Bairnsfather's most celebrated cartoons, 'The Things That Matter', depicts Colonel Fitz-Shrapnel in the middle of the Battle of Loos, surrounded by shell-bursts and bullet-traces, receiving the message "Please let us know, as soon as possible, the number of tins of raspberry jam issued to you last Friday."<sup>202</sup> This cartoon inspired an officer of the VIth Corps (perhaps of the 49th Division) to fire off a literary salvo of his own at these incessant, apparently pointless, returns and requests for reports, entitling it also 'The Things That Matter':

"'Twas in the war nineteen-fifteen, at early dawn one day  
 Our orders were to take the trench which opposite us lay.  
 The battle raged around us fierce, the air was thick with shell,  
 But no man flinched as we advanced to drive the Hun to hell.  
 Our object gained, we paused awhile to get our breath much needed.  
 (And all this time, I'd have you know, the battle still proceeded).  
 The ground behind us now was swept by all the hostile guns  
 To stop Reserves from coming up - a habit of the Huns.  
 On glancing back, to my surprise I suddenly observed  
 From out the smoke a figure rush, a V.C. he deserved:  
 'Go back', I cried, 'Go back at once!' my words passed quite unheeded  
 (And all this time, as I've remarked, the battle still proceeded).  
 He reached our trench though wounded thrice, and, as he fainted, gave  
 A message form into my hand, that gallant soldier brave.  
 'What's this?' I gasped, as I read out the message written there,  
 "'Report at once the method used by you to cut men's hair."  
 'No time to lose', I shouted out, 'Now who will volunteer  
 To take the answer back "at once", though 'twill be late I fear'.  
 'Let me go, Sir,' the cry went up from every lusty throat.  
 I picked a man, then sat me down, and this reply I wrote:  
 'The method used by me to cut the hair of men who need it  
 Is sometimes just to burn it off, and other times to weed it,  
 And often rasps are used instead; these latter cause some bleeding.'  
 (I'd like to add, to let you know, the battle's still proceeding).  
 With bated breath we watched him start, the gallant man selected  
 To take the message back to those by whom it was expected.  
 'Twas with relief we saw him gain a spot from whence we knew  
 He could proceed with safety with his message to H.Q.  
 'The war is won', I told my men. 'No need to use our rifles,  
 While those behind look after us, we need not think of trifles  
 Such as the Hun in front of us or when it's time for feeding.'  
 (But all the time, I'm loath to say, the battle's still proceeding.)<sup>203</sup>

It is important to realise, when considering these complaints, that combat soldiers regard anything without some foreseeable or immediately discernible aim as useless, petty and time-wasting.<sup>204</sup>

An anonymous Rifleman wrote:

"When we are in the trenches the time, as you may imagine, seldom drags. It may be that one is on sentry, which is a duty to be performed with the utmost care, as the whole well-being of one's particular section depends upon one's vigilance. Another day or night one will be told off as stretcherbearer to go with a working party. Another thing is being one of the 'rations party' - a job which we all like when it is over, especially on a sloppy night. Such is trench life, with its accompaniment of bullets and shells' whistle, and crackle, and roar."<sup>205</sup>



This correspondent makes no mention of other regular features of trench duty: repair and construction work, carrying parties, listening post, reconnaissance patrols, wiring, occasional raids.

Daily - and nightly - work was necessary in the front line to repair the ravages of both the weather and artillery and mortar fire and to effect minor improvements. Any new trenches and fortifications were constructed under RE supervision by troops who were technically "resting". Several respondents were of the opinion that the 49th Division had been ordered to the Salient at the close of 2nd Ypres expressly for the purpose of reconstructing the defensive system of the northern sector. Be that as it may, only in the front line or in GHQ Reserve did the men of the Leeds Rifles escape the RE working and carrying parties. "Carrying parties loom up in the memory as the most persistent, fatiguing, hateful chore of the war in France and Flanders", wrote Charles E. Carrington.<sup>206</sup> 1610 Thomas Doran, 8th, considered the carrying parties as

"the worst part of the war, without a doubt. Always in darkness and in conditions of very great danger. Men getting hit, in front of you and behind. Falling in the shell holes full of mud and water. And the physical hardship alone - think of carrying your rifle and 50<sup>207</sup> empty sandbags on your arms and shoulders as well."

Two examples indicating the amount of work carried out by working and carrying parties can easily be given. Lord Scarbrough, visiting the 49th Division in September 1915, was informed that it used over 360,000 sandbags a month; a brigade of the 42nd Division, during the winter of 1917-18, carried 5,036 sandbags full of cement, 19,384 bags of shingle and 9,692 bags of sand, each averaging 60lbs. in weight, 34,112 man-loads in all.<sup>208</sup> Battalion fatigue parties carried up SAA, bombs, barbed wire, flares and other trench stores to their own units. In the Salient, where front line men were excused carrying fatigues, parties from the second- and third-lines carried up food, water, ammunition and all other stores to the front-line garrisons. The men much preferred to be in the front line rather than in the second and not only on account of immunity from carrying fatigues and RE working parties. The second line customarily suffered more frequent and heavier shelling, fatigue duties there were particularly heavy, while sentry duties were equally as onerous as in the front line. Men in the specialist sections, such as signallers and pioneers, were not as a general rule required to undertake any form of fatigue duty. Stretcher bearers, however, usually accompanied, in a professional capacity, RE working parties in the forward zone, but not carrying parties of any kind, though casualties appear to have been equally frequent in the latter.



Bombers accompanied wiring parties and listening patrols into No Man's Land in order to protect them from hostile partols.<sup>209</sup> Bombers often armed themselves with unofficial homemade weapons suitable for hand-to-hand combat: a photograph of 1/8th bomber L/Cpl William Dunn, holding his fearsome-looking mace or knobkerrie studded with large nails, appeared in the Leeds Mercury of 11th January 1916.

Wiring parties went out practically every night to strengthen the barbed wire defences. Faces were blackened, and gloves and balaclava helmets were worn so as not to show any give-away white patches and mallets were covered in sacking, or a folded sandbag placed between post and mallet, to muffle the noise as the wire pickets were hammered into the ground.<sup>210</sup> Different coloured flares and signal rockets were continually sent up from the German lines, earning the name of "Brock's Benefit" for this nightly pyrotechnic display, which early Riflemen's letters frequently compared to the prewar public firework displays in Roundhay Park, Leeds.<sup>211</sup> Whenever a flare went up, it was essential for every member of the party to keep perfectly still whatever his position, since he could then be easily mistaken for a tree or a shadow. To flop down was dangerous, since the sudden movement might be noticed by the vigilant enemy machine-gunners who, moreover, traversed at ground level. Often the parties were obliged to work in close proximity to the enemy. One night L/Cpl Espin went out wiring, discovered he had forgotten his clippers, went back for them and returned only to find that the enemy had made off with his wire. "The sods have stolen it", he wrote indignantly in his Diary.<sup>212</sup> Familiar stories in the literature about British and German wiring parties sharing the same mallets can be dismissed as soldiers' jokes. Encounters with the enemy in No Man's Land, as far as the Leeds Rifles were concerned, were extremely rare. When they occurred, the enemy ran away: "Had some good sport, raced [dial: "chased"] a few Germans, they wouldn't stand", wrote Espin, who had now become a bomber, in February 1916, or, as once happened to 976 Thomas Wilson, 7th: "We just looked at each other for a few seconds and then we all ran off in the opposite direction as fast as we could go."<sup>213</sup>

Reconnaissance patrols of scouts went out nightly, faces blackened, pockets emptied, all regimental badges and other identification removed.

"We used to crawl out into No Man's Land in a V-formation, each man close enough to be able to touch the legs of the man in front. We communicated solely by signals. If the Germans sent up flares we had to freeze. We were armed only with our bayonets which were wrapped in sacking or in a sock so as not to catch the light."<sup>214</sup>

These were in addition to the familiar two- or three-men patrols consisting



of an officer and an NCO (and/or orderly). The Scout (later re-named Intelligence) Officer and his men were responsible for updating trench maps and consequently it was necessary for them to become thoroughly familiar with No Man's Land and the enemy front line. Listening patrols, who went out to listen for sounds that the enemy were making preparations for a raiding party or a general attack and give timely warning of them, crept out nightly and lay for some time in a pre-selected shell-hole with feet touching.<sup>215</sup> In many parts of the line "the listening post" was a shell hole perhaps 20-30 yards out connected by a sap to the British front line.

"We get out as far as possible, and lie down in the sap and listen. We cannot talk or cough, or if we do it gives the game away ... You go out for two hours at dusk."

Rfm Percy Brook, 8th, described a Salient reconnaissance-cum-listening patrol he had been on:

"... the captain came up the line asking for three volunteers to go over by the German line to see if anything was going on out of the ordinary, as things were quiet, and there is generally a calm before a storm. So when he got to our section, Fred and I and a lance-corporal volunteered. We went over the top of the trench and crawled for about 170 yards before we came in sight of the German trench down in a hollow. We lay just in front listening, and soon we saw a party of Germans digging ... Then we saw a party that looked like a listening patrol. I think they saw us, but they did not advance. Fred and I had a bag of bombs each, so if they had come they would have got a warm reception. After watching them for a time, we went back to report. Our officer asked us if we would go out again with him and try to capture them. So we went out, but we found they had sloped off. The officer asked us to stay out for a time, so we stayed for three hours lying on the ground in pouring rain."<sup>216</sup>

No Man's Land was full of hidden dangers:

"The Germans made a practice of booby-trapping dead bodies (their nationality was immaterial). This made it very difficult finding your way about in No Man's Land after dark, even if you'd got the booby traps spotted in daylight. Anyone who tripped over or stumbled into one of these booby-trapped corpses would set off a small bomb quite powerful enough to kill or seriously maim anyone in the vicinity. In addition, there were trip wires hidden in the undergrowth only 2" or 3" above ground level and these were also connected to explosive charges"; "The Germans used to put bully tins on their wire so that they'd rattle if anyone tried to cut through it, so we did the same."<sup>217</sup>

Despite the dangers and discomforts, and consequent great strain on the nerves, there was never, according to respondents, any shortage of volunteers for the tasks of wiring and patrolling. During July and August 1915 Butcher noted his participation in one listening patrol, one reconnaissance patrol and one wiring party.<sup>218</sup>



Every man had to take his share of sentry duty (and even the corporals when the company was short-handed).<sup>219</sup> These were posted, i.e. changed, every 2 hours throughout the 24-hour period, except in inclement weather when the sentries were relieved hourly. It was strictly forbidden to wear any covering over the ears, however severe the weather. Daytime sentries kept watch by periscope. Several men were killed, shot in the eyes, by snipers in 1915 while actually using periscopes, including 2276 James Morrell and 499 CSM David Myers, both of B Coy, 1/8th.<sup>220</sup> Periscopes which clipped on to the bayonet were introduced about the end of 1915. Night sentries stood with head and shoulders above the parapet.

"Night time is the worst when you are on sentry duty and straining your eyes in the darkness on the look-out. You fancy all sorts of things, and a rat jumping over your rifle or the rattle of a tin-can makes you jump."<sup>221</sup>

It was often hard for a sentry at night to fight off sleep and many kept the point of the bayonet (which was fixed on the rifle) just below the chin in case they nodded off. 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 7th, always kicked sentries with his knee if he saw them dropping off.<sup>222</sup> Lt Rigby noted in the 1/8th Unofficial War Diary on 12th October 1915

"A strange phenomenon has been discovered - a guard mounted 'to see that the sentries are awake'." A Classical scholar, he added wryly, "sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?"

62nd Division Trench Standing Orders laid down that not less than 1 in 10 of strength by day, and not less than 1 in 4 by night must be posted as sentries. "Night" was defined as the period between the Evening Stand-to and the Morning Stand-down. Standing Orders stipulated that if a good view of the enemy's trench line could not be obtained by day, the number of sentries must be increased, whilst by night and in places having the reputation of being dangerous by night and by day, sentries should be doubled or the next relief stationed "within kicking distance".

For the greater part of the daylight hours, the three lines would appear deserted except for a few sentries and a sniper or two.<sup>223</sup> Night was the time of greatest activity in the forward zone - and the time of maximum alertness. Bayonets were always fixed at Evening Stand-to and not removed until Morning Stand-down. Occasionally men were accidentally wounded in the dark. Lt Eric Wilkinson of the 1/8th, shortly after winning the MC, received an accidental bayonet wound 2" deep in the buttock when the parapet gave way as he was climbing down into the trench after supervising a wiring party.<sup>224</sup> (Quipped 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby: "he proceeded home on sick furlough exhibiting a decoration on his chest and concealing another on his posterior").<sup>225</sup> Full equipment was worn at all times by the men in



the front and support trenches except when on patrol in No Man's Land, or on wiring parties, or on ration and carrying fatigues. Men in reserve trenches were allowed to remove their equipment when off duty. 62nd Divisional Order G1642 of 25th July 1917 relaxed these rules somewhat to allow all men except sentries in support trenches to remove their equipment and to allow, at Brigadier-Generals' discretion, at any one time, a certain number of men to remove it in the front line of sectors where no support trench existed. In the front line at night and during trench reliefs all talking was forbidden; conversation, singing and the playing of musical instruments was usually permitted in the second and third lines. During the day in front line positions less than about 80 yards from the enemy, all conversation was subdued, by order, to a whisper. By day and by night singing and playing instruments in the front line was forbidden, although singing could scarcely be objected to if a bombardment was in progress.<sup>226</sup>

The heavy demands made by the RE on "resting" infantry units meant that the men were usually tired out before they went into the trenches. In fact, it was common for men to claim sardonically that they were "going into the trenches for a rest". This was, of course, not true. Trench duty was extremely onerous and a 19-hour working day was frequently the norm for all ranks,<sup>227</sup> even in comparatively quiet sectors: "The worst of this life is that one can never get more than four hours' sleep at a stretch, and we are extremely lucky if we get that."<sup>228</sup> The Lead-Swinger, the journal of the 1/3rd WR Field Ambulance, suggested an emendation to the Field Service postcard: "(cross out the words not required) I had 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 hours sleep last night."<sup>229</sup> In active sectors it was common for men to get no sleep at all for two or three days together<sup>230</sup> or even longer:

"Here we are again (what there is left of us) after 17 days, in action nearly all the time, day and night. I never had a sleep for a week, and it was murderous ... I am just going to have a nap as I think we are going into the front line tonight and there is no sleep there however long you are in."<sup>231</sup>

Capt B.H. Liddell Hart speaks for all front line soldiers: "the agony due to lack of sleep was perhaps the most constant trial of the war-time life."<sup>232</sup> This agony was intensified by the fact that very few opportunities occurred to sleep during the natural period, night, and the opportunities that presented themselves during the day were commonly a few odd hours here and there rather than one continuous period. Until the Riflemen learned to take naps at a few minutes' notice, they suffered considerably both physically and mentally: acquisition of this knack merely alleviated their suffering. The deprivation bore hardest upon the physically immature, the teenagers. 1726 Jack Barker, 7th, only 18 in 1915, found himself fighting



off sleep all the time; 2780 Harold Kirk, 7th, the same age, claimed he had

"marched miles fast asleep. You may think this is impossible, but it's not when you've got a man on either side of you, propping you up";

1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, 17 in 1915, said

"I got so absolutely beside myself for lack of sleep I didn't know what I was doing. One morning I'd just got off when L/Cpl Ernest Pickering came to wake me because it was my turn for orderly man. Without realising what I was doing I just lashed out at him with my feet and kicked him."

1717 Harry Bedford, 7th, 18 in 1915, said,

"I was a sniper. I got the sack from this job when I was found asleep in my outpost. I could have got shot for this! I was always falling asleep on duty, I'm afraid, and it was quite a common crime amongst us young lads. I'm afraid we were just not quite old enough to be up to the job physically and we couldn't stand going for long periods without sleep."

Older men, such as 3354 L/Cpl Edward Woodhead, 7th, admitted that they had often fallen asleep in the line whilst standing up. 1522 Sgt John Edward T. Wilson, 7th:

"We got desperately short of men at Ypres and there was so much work you hardly got any spare time for sleeping. I got copped myself asleep by Capt Redmayne who asked me whether I was ill. I told him I had had no sleep for the last 3 days and nights because I had been continuously on duty. He asked me where Sgt Patrick was. I had to tell him the truth - that Sgt Patrick had not been out of his dugout for 3 days. He wouldn't come out, you see. I don't know whether he was poorly or just windy, but I had to do his work as well as my own and that's how it came about that I'd not had my head down for 3 days. Capt Redmayne was horrified."<sup>233</sup>

Sleeping on duty was an immense problem to commanding officers throughout the British forward zone: the Commander-in-Chief's attitude was sympathetic and humane. Although "sleeping on post" was a military offence punishable by death, during the war only 2 British soldiers were executed for this crime.<sup>234</sup> In the 1/7th, a habitual military offender (known as "a blackguard") in D Coy, named Chadwick, was court-martialled in late 1915 and sentenced to death for "sleeping on post" in an obvious effort to bring home to the rest of the battalion the enormity of his crime; his sentence was commuted to penal servitude. In the 1/8th, several NCOs, including highly popular Corporal 1707 George Taylor (later to become Chairman of Horsforth Urban District Council), were reduced to the ranks in order to maintain discipline and provide an example.<sup>235</sup> Sleep deprivation posed a hazard no less dangerous than sleeping on post. American military research



in the late 1950s found that acute sleep loss at about 28 hours produces brief periods of no response in the face of auditory and visual stimuli which normally elicit a response.<sup>236</sup>

Although it was usual for men in the second and third trench lines to get more opportunities for sleeping, it is doubtful whether anyone in the forward zone of an active sector like the Salient was able to obtain anything approaching an adequate amount of sleep. In addition, units in Brigade Reserve, as well as being at the beck and call of the Royal Engineers, were required to furnish men for the punishing 24-hour road guards. Knowles wrote:

"I had just finished 24 hours continuous duty last night and had been in my dugout about an hour, when I was sent for to go with a party to carry Engineers stuff about 2 miles. You should have heard the cursing. A lot of the lads hadn't had a wink of sleep like myself. It is starting to get monotonous."<sup>237</sup>

Not surprisingly, the "march" out of the trenches on relief was invariably nothing but a "semi-conscious shamble when Will said, 'I won't stop!' and Body argued, 'I can't go on', at each agonising step."<sup>238</sup> Rogerson gives a vivid description of such a march out.<sup>239</sup> Lt Francis W. Smith MC of the 1/8th, who was commissioned from the ranks of D Coy, wrote a poem 'On leaving the trenches':

"Weary and slow the tired men go,  
 Their march is the old trench crawl;  
 And they bow their backs 'neath the dragging packs,  
 As the nightshades softly fall.  
 Their mouths are grim 'neath the sad eyes dim,  
 For dead is the guiding mind;  
 And they pass no jest though they're out for rest  
 And the trenches fall behind.  
 With unfaltering breath they have gazed on Death  
 And some of their pals have gone;  
 They've suffered hell 'midst shot and shell,  
 Yet still they stumble on.  
 The whole step drags as they light their fags,  
 But the sergeants speak no word  
 For they know the noise would distract the boys  
 And their orders rest unheard.  
 Weary and slow the tired men go,  
 Their march is the old trench crawl;  
 And they bow their backs 'neath the dragging packs  
 As the nightshades softly fall."<sup>240</sup>

As C.E. Montague points out, "For most of his time the average private was tired. Fairly often he was so tired as no man at home ever is in the common run of his work."<sup>241</sup> (Not infrequently the men were so totally exhausted that asleep they lay like men drunk or dead and could be roused from slumber only with the greatest difficulty.)<sup>242</sup> The above quotations tend to refute suggestions by recent writers that war correspondents who filed stories about



cheerful Tommies marching singing up to the trenches were in reality describing soldiers marching back from the trenches.<sup>243</sup> They also give some justification for the frequently-made claims of war veterans to be able "to sleep on a clothes line". Family man Rfm P. Chapman, 7th, after little more than a fortnight at the front, wrote to his wife: "I don't think you will ever hear me grumble about it being too light or too noisy to sleep when I get back to work again."<sup>244</sup>

"... to represent the war as one long nightmare is to exaggerate one aspect at the expense of the other ... And life in the trenches was not all ghastliness. It was a compound of many things: fright and boredom, humour, comradeship, tragedy, weariness, courage, and despair ... Any description of a long period must focus attention on the highlights, the whirl of battle, the shock of raid and mine. It must skip the lengthy, humdrum and frequently amusing intervals."<sup>245</sup>

A typical view of everyday life in the Leeds Rifles was given by 2363 Ben Clark of the 1/8th, who was only 18 at the time of the 1915 Embarkation: while acknowledging the many horrifying experiences and the appalling environmental conditions, he nevertheless described his period of service as "a load of laughs". In or out of the line, the Riflemen lived for the moment, determined to extract the maximum amount of fun and enjoyment from every situation. Many of them saw humour - "having a bit of a laugh" - as the most important thing in life, whether the witty rejoinder, the awful pun or the well-developed physical humour that laughs at someone else's misfortune. Anything and everything was made the subject of facetious comment. The most popular men were those who could make their comrades laugh: in B Coy of the 1/8th "there were always plenty who could crack jokes and pass comical remarks no matter how grim things got. We'd have gone quite crackers otherwise."<sup>246</sup> Humour thus fulfilled a vital role: it relieved the tedium of normal trench warfare, it defeated boredom and fear, it overcame hardship and problems, it was a way out of almost anything.

"Our men in the trenches ... with just the fluke of luck between life and death, seized upon any kind of joke as an excuse for laughter ... It was the protective armour of men's souls. They knew that if they did not laugh, their courage would go, and nothing would stand between them and fear."<sup>247</sup>

As a man in the 1/4th DWR put it, "We either have to laugh or cry and we prefer to laugh."<sup>248</sup>

According to respondents, the atmosphere, the spirit of the trenches was that expressed in Bruce Bairnsfather's cartoons.<sup>249</sup> Bairnsfather's immense popularity with all ranks attests to the acuity with which he caught the front-line soldier's point of view. It appears likely that Bairnsfather



did not make up his jokes himself but merely illustrated those he heard cracked by his own men. Rfm Clark gave two examples of the sort of thing that made him and his comrades laugh: One night in camp there was a sudden commotion and Cpl Lally turned out the guard in a panic, only to discover that all that had happened was that a pack of mules had broken loose from the horse lines and was galloping up and down the camp; His platoon-sergeant was an unpopular man who was always saying pompously "I'll lead". One day a fallen tree barred the platoon's way and there was no alternative but to climb over it. Sgt Longmire (leading as usual), his rifle and equipment, became hopelessly entangled in the branches. Instead of immediately rushing to free him, his men roared with laughter and vied with each other at offering him unhelpful advice of a facetious nature.<sup>250</sup>

Some other examples of trench humour:

"We were stood in the trench up to the thighs in water and my mate was moaning about it. 'Shut up', I said, 'the Navy's relieving us next week'."

"Scene: the Somme, February 1916, everywhere flooded, the mud and water well above our knees. A ration party approached the front line. The sentry challenged, 'Who goes there?' No answer. He challenged again. No answer. At the third time of asking an exasperated voice yelled 'Douglas Haig's bloody water rats!'"<sup>251</sup>

"It was somewhere near the frontier and a gang of soldiers were sweating at filling sandbags - a job they had been on for a week or more. One said to the other, 'I say Bill, which is Belgium, where is it?' 'Where is it?' reiterated Bill, 'well, judging by the amount of digging we've done this last week I should say it's nearly all in these sandbags'."<sup>252</sup>

"At present in these trenches there are many minnows in the minnie holes. Consequent humorous notices about the fishing rights are to be seen and also there is in one place a derelict top of a Coffee Pot just to the shape of a challenge cup purporting to have been won by No. 4 platoon in the Trench Mortar race. The underlying idea is that the men evacuate any small part of trench which is being strafed by heavy mortars until same stop, and is a piece I imagine of trenchant sarcasm by No. 3 platoon." "...having just had a good swig of Cherry Brandy am, in the words of one of the letters I have just censored, 'at peace with all the world except the chaps opposite'." "The dugout we occupy at present is really a bomb store and is labelled outside 'Newton Pippins'."<sup>253</sup> "In the trenches, after a week without tasting bread, someone put a notice up, 'Joe Gregory's Bakehouse. French loaves baked daily', while a footnote added 'All orders cancelled if the firm "goes West"' [soldiers' euphemism for "gets killed"]. In the next trench was a notice to the effect that anyone found in possession of any bread would have it confiscated, and would be shot at dawn."

Rfm W. Rhodes, D Coy, 7th, describing himself as the principal of "Rhodes & Sunley Ltd. The Trench Barbers", wrote to the Yorkshire Evening News to



appeal for hairdressing and shaving instruments, saying his customers "remark that they would rather face the German bullets than have their whiskers torn out by the roots as they do at our high class establishment."<sup>254</sup>

Many letter writers adopted a jocular style suggestive of high spirits:

"Our cookhouse got in the way of a 'Krupp's Cracker' yesterday, so we had to take in our belts a couple of holes for dinner ... I have not yet tasted frog soup, but our drinking water comes from a pond infested with tadpoles and bullheads (and bully tins), and I expect the taste is similar. It's very nourishing."

"I have a nice little dugout of my own called 'Fritz Villa' and no landlord calling for rent. It is very comfortable."

"As for feather beds, if we ever get on one all the Jack Johnsons [German 5.9" shells] in the world won't wake us up. The bully beef which we get out here will have pulled tons of leather about in its time. That must be the reason for it being tough."

"We are now back again at the old shop ('Ell's own factory!)). We are in for 18 days this time, and I think before we finish it nerves will be quaking - and nerves will have finished quaking in some cases ... They sent us another sample of their gas - quite free, of course, and no carriage to pay, also high explosives, and a new thing called an aerial torpedo which works with a fan arrangement. The bullets it ejects are the size of the glass stoppers you find in mineral water bottles and if one hits you, you can bet you're a stopper."

"We have been having some wretched weather, and, to make things worse, the Germans have been giving us free samples of Krupp's Coalboxes, and so the water and the shells have made a mess of things. The foot-boards are, of course, floating, and all we are afraid of, as we are sailing about on these, is that the Germans may torpedo us."

"We gave the enemy a few Lloyd George shells for dinner today and he sent per return a few Whizz Bangs and Coal Boxes."<sup>255</sup>

All German projectiles were given nicknames; other general names used include "Iron Rations" and "Souvenirs from Wilhelm & Co Ltd."<sup>256</sup> This had the useful psychological function of containing such horrors, otherwise too overwhelming to be borne, making them appear much less frightening and threatening, almost objects of amusement and derision, as, indeed, they were often regarded. Calling the enemy "Fritz" or "Jerry", like calling Napoleon "Boney" in an earlier war and pilotless aircraft "Doodlebugs" in a later one, performed an identical function and did not indicate, as some authors have affected to believe, any friendly or empathetic feelings towards him.

In the line, as Philip Gibbs observed, men seized every opportunity for amusement. Baiting the enemy, by sticking up notices, hurling insults,



singing "Has anyone seen a German Band?", and chasing timid Germans in No Man's Land have already been referred to. When the 1st KOYLI were issued with sheepskin coats, the men got down on all fours and made baa-ing noises. Men of one platoon in the 1/6th WYR presented their sergeant, J. Bernstein, with a "trench DCM" made of baked mud in recognition of his gallant conduct in bringing them hot soup across "a bullet-swept zone".<sup>257</sup> Considerable amusement was afforded the Riflemen in June 1915 by the gas masks, which spawned a lot of jokes about Dick Turpin: "When we put these respirators on we are forced to laugh, because we look very much like highwaymen."<sup>258</sup> A popular prank was to send field postcards to comrades, especially officers, on leave. One day in a flooded trench Lt Lupton was trying to repair a pump that had broken down when it suddenly started up and he was showered with liquid mud "to the intense amusement of the assistants." It was clearly evident, from the relish with which virtually all the respondents recounted their experiences, that the Riflemen found much to enjoy in their service. An air of enjoyment pervades Hugh Lupton's letters, as it does Graham Greenwell's, and the word "amusing" frequently appears. In October 1915, for instance, Lupton joined in a bombing duel with the enemy in sector E29: "Bomb throwing is certainly an attractive and exhilarating occupation", he wrote, "and I propose turning anarchist on the cessation of hostilities."<sup>259</sup> Rfm Oates was not at all untypical when he wrote,

"But despite all the hardships we go through it is the sort of life I like. I am in my glory when I am popping at the Germans, and should I be bowled over you will know I died fighting."<sup>260</sup>

As conditions worsened, it seems that the need for humour increased. On 25th November 1915 the Yorkshire Evening Post published a highly amusing Punch-style piece about trench cookery by Rfm Philip Gordon Standley ("P.G.S.") of the 1/7th, while the 27th November issue of The Lead Swinger published spoof "war news" concerned exclusively with conditions in the Salient. "Rumours" were "reported" of a submarine being sighted in the Yser Canal: a Pte Barlow had fallen asleep in his dugout in Boar Lane and gently floated down the trench to the Canal where a sentry mistook his nose for a periscope. Another "news item": "The battleship Queen Elizabeth, which did such good work in the Dardenelles, is to be attached to the 49th Division. Great difficulty is being met with in the finding of a dry dock."<sup>261</sup> The Wipers Times, too, tried to make light of worsening conditions:

"The world wasn't made in a day,  
And Eve didn't ride on a bus,  
But most of the world's in a sandbag -  
The rest of it's plastered on us."<sup>262</sup>



Lupton wrote in the late autumn,

"Our men have stood the cold and wet which we have been having of late absolutely splendidly. They certainly are a bit of a lesson to those who said the English were a soft nation." "Our men generally grouse when conditions are favourable and sing and rejoice when standing soaked in sludge."<sup>263</sup>

This phenomenon was noted by several participant-authors. Frederic Manning:

"The strange thing was, that the greater the hardships they had to endure, for wet and cold bring all kinds of attendant miseries in their train, the less they grumbled."

Sidney Rogerson:

"... this was one of the remarkable characteristics of the British soldier - when by every law of nature he should have been utterly weary and 'fed up' he invariably managed to be almost truculently cheerful."

General Jack:

"The men are great-hearted fellows. Their legs, capes and jerkins are habitually sodden with wet clay ... In spite of extremely long hours on duty in great discomfort, hard labour repairing the parapets and other defences, besides no proper meals in the trenches, there is little grumbling and never a whine from their lips whatever they may think of the business in hand ..."

Graham Greenwell:

"They are never depressed by mere appearances and are always prepared to make the best of everything."

Cecil Slack:

"The men are wonderfully cheery, considering what we have gone through."<sup>264</sup>

W.H.A. Groom vehemently denies that such attitudes existed on the Western Front, and repeatedly attacks war correspondents and certain officer-authors, particularly singling out General Jack, for presenting what he maintains are "false pictures" and "legends".<sup>265</sup>

Like Greenwell's men of the 1/4th Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (145 Bde, 48th Division), the men of the Leeds Rifles were "always prepared to make the best of everything". Their cheerful, never-say-die attitude is epitomised by Lt Smith's poem 'The Optimist', which appears to have been written in 1915 while he was still in the ranks:

"When it's raining night and morning.  
And the mud's up to our waist;  
When the dug-out roof is leaking  
And our bed a slimy paste;  
Though caked up to the shoulders  
And soaked through to the skin,  
He doesn't growl like most of us  
But murmurs with a grin -



"I would I were a gondola  
 Or some such kind of boat;  
 Then in this trench, like Venice, I  
 Would elegantly float!"  
 When the bill of fare is scanty  
 And bully beef is stale,  
 When army biscuits break our teeth  
 And leave their eaters pale,  
 He'll get his mess-tin on the fire,  
 And, adding morsels few,  
 Will shortly from its depths produce  
 Anaemic-looking stew.  
 "I'm glad I have an appetite,"  
 He chuckles in his glee,  
 "It's just like mother makes it, boys,  
 Who'll try a bit with me?"  
 When nights are cold and cheerless  
 And the wind cuts to the bone;  
 When our feet are wet and leaden  
 And enthusiasm's gone;  
 When rum is issued sparingly  
 In doses small and rare,  
 He doesn't toss his off, like us,  
 And then begin to swear;  
 "I wish I were a tall giraffe,"  
 He chortles with a wink -  
 "With such a neck as his, you know,  
 'Twould be a longer drink!"<sup>266</sup>

It does not seem at all likely that W.H.A. Groom had Francis Smith's poem in mind when he advised his readers to read the war poets if they wished to learn the truth about war.<sup>267</sup>

The men tried their best to make a home for themselves in the drab, alien and hostile environment of the forward zone. Dugouts were given names, such as "Fritz Villa" and "The Cheery Boys' Retreat". In the Salient the names of their civilian houses were put over the various officers' dugouts in the 1/8th. New trenches dug by the Leeds Rifles were named by them: in the North Salient: Boar Lane, Briggate, Vicar Lane and North Street; on the Somme: Leeds Trench. (This was common practice throughout the BEF.) Other trenches in the N.Salient included Skipton Road, Huddersfield Road, Halifax Road, Wellgate (Rotherham), Coney Street (York), and special defensive positions included Clifford Tower (York), Knaresborough Castle and The Pump Room (Harrogate); the Bramley [and Pudsey] Battery of the Leeds Artillery named a road junction about 2½ miles NW of Ypres on the Elverdinghe road Dawson's Corner after a well-known landmark in Stanningley, Pudsey. All these names were adopted on official maps. Keen gardeners planted clumps of flowers dug up from abandoned gardens outside their dugouts. Other men, like L/Cpl Colin Cameron, 7th, decorated the insides of their dugouts with jars of cut flowers.<sup>268</sup> Supporting No. 4 Bridge in the Salient was a fair-sized river craft lying half-submerged.



An unknown Rifleman scrounged some white paint and renamed the boat in elegant lettering "Mary Gordon" after the large pleasure boat that plied in the summer season on Waterloo Lake, Roundhay Park.<sup>269</sup>

The Research Branch of the US Army (hereinafter referred to as "the USARB") were surprised at the complacency with which men accepted privations when they realised that there was little that could be done about them.<sup>270</sup> The men of the Leeds Rifles accepted their many hardships and deprivations philosophically and stoically with a cheerfulness that amazed observers. On leave in Leeds in January 1916, regimental chaplain the Rev. Hood gave a Press interview:

"... his first word of praise is for the spirit of the men. It is simply marvellous, he says, and scarcely any but those who have seen for themselves could believe it. He describes the soldiers' cheerfulness under the most disconcerting conditions as something to wonder at, and an object lesson to the croakers at home."

Lord Scarbrough three months earlier, on his return from his visit to the 49th Division, said that he and Brigadier-General Mends had

"met only smiling faces, and were struck by the remarkable spirit of cheerfulness pervading all ranks, together with a sense of mastery over the enemy in this amazing kind of warfare."<sup>271</sup>

The men had quickly discovered how few of the decencies of civilisation were really necessary in order to survive, and equally rapidly developed a keen appreciation of creature comforts. Many men's idea of heaven was a good feed. Much time was spent in gossiping and the commonest and unflagging topics of conversation were things that civilians back home took completely for granted: Mother's cooking, Leeds beer, sleeping on a feather bed with sheets, drinking tea in cups and saucers, even eating off plates.<sup>272</sup> Another popular conversation topic was sporting history: some Riflemen wrote from the front line to the Evening News Sports Editor to ask him to settle arguments on which quite heavy wagers depended.<sup>273</sup>

One creature comfort that was not missing in the forward zone, however, was the rum ration: 1/64th of a gallon (2½ fluid ozs. or approx. 3 table-spoonsful) per man per day during the winter half of the year. It was not issued as a regular ration, but only at the discretion of the GOC on the recommendation of a medical officer,<sup>274</sup> and was not issued to men when in rest billets, or in reserve. It was of high quality and extremely potent. Typical respondents' comments were "It trickled down your throat like cream" and "It warmed you up and helped you to sleep." It came in earthenware jars labelled "S.R.D." which was variously said to stand for "Spirit Ration Diluted", "Service Rum Diluted", "Service Rum Department", and



"Special Ration Department."<sup>275</sup> The ration was served out by the junior officers, or by the platoon-sergeants in the presence of junior officers, and was given only to those men who requested it. 62nd Divisional Trench Standing Orders stipulated that those in receipt of rum "will drink it in the presence of the issuing officer."<sup>276</sup> As the regiment contained an appreciable number of teetotalers, there was plenty of surplus rum available for putting in the porridge and hot cocoa (see above). Clarence Schutz, the platoon-sergeant of No. 7 platoon, 1/7th, carried a water bottle full of ration rum in order to give a drink to any of his men who might be suffering from exposure. After he was killed during the bombardment of 8th December 1915, the 8 survivors of his platoon shared it between them.<sup>277</sup>

The sale of spirits to troops in the war-zone was strictly forbidden. Only beer and vin ordinaire were available. Belgian and French beer was universally criticised.

"You can get beer here a penny a glass, but there is precious little alcohol in it; it tastes about as strong as English ale smells" lamented Knowles.

"The beer is rotten ... and if you drink it from morning to night you couldn't get drunk", complained former barman Rfm J. Appleyard, 7th.

"... The best you can say for the beer is that it is wet ... We have christened it 'Arms & Legs Beer' - and the description is, I think, very good, seeing that there is no body in it!" said an unnamed Rifleman (probably P.G. Standley). A Pte Thomas Eyre from Featherstone described Belgian beer as "only hot water struck blind and coloured", adding "but just because it is called beer we drink it."<sup>278</sup>

Like Pte Eyre, the Riflemen heroically continued to down the Belgian beer, deprived though they were of the time-honoured complaint that they'd be glad when they'd had enough. By the end of 1915, however, the men of the 1/7th had stopped moaning about the local beer; Major Tetley had arranged for his father's Best Bitter to be available in the canteen on a fairly regular basis.

A 1oz. ration of cigarettes or tobacco was issued twice weekly. The cigarettes had unfamiliar and lurid brand names such as "Flag" or "Red Hussars". Respondents declared that the cigarettes and pipe tobacco were of such low quality that only the undiscerning, new smokers and "those desperate for a smoke who couldn't get anything else" smoked them. A Barnsley Territorial reported that despite the generous ration, the troops of the 49th Division had a "continual craving" for Woodbines. The walls of the dressing station just inside the Lille Gate of Ypres were said to be lined with unwanted unopened tins of tobacco. Knowles said that the tobacco ration was always "slung in the scrapheap as soon as we get it."<sup>279</sup>



Ration cigarettes, however, had their uses. Non-smoker Albert Pitts, 8th, while employed as a stretcher-bearer, always carried a supply of "ration gaspers" to give to wounded men. 4726 John W. Stephenson, 1/6th DWR, used to keep his hands warm on sentry duty by holding a lighted ration cigarette in each cupped hand inside a greatcoat pocket. (He claimed that the cigarettes sent by the Weekly Despatch fund, nicknamed "Half a Mo'" cigarettes after the famous cartoon used to raise money for the fund, were "so wicked nobody could smoke them".)<sup>280</sup> Many men became chain smokers during the war. Major Hudson of the 1/8th was one: a newspaper photograph of him coming out of Buckingham Palace after receiving the DSO shows him with a cigarette in his mouth.<sup>281</sup> Smoking was thought to counter the cold and fatigue. The writer J.B. Priestley recalled that "if I could smoke my pipe I could often forget I was hungry and short of sleep."<sup>282</sup>

An important psychological comfort was the mail. The Army Postal Service was amazingly efficient: under normal conditions the average time of transit between posting in London and delivery in the front line was 36 hours.<sup>283</sup> Average transit time between Leeds and the trenches was thus 40 hours. A letter written in the front line by Bugler Charles E. Hannan 8th, on 15th May 1915, in which he refers to the death of Cpl James Smith that day, was published in the Evening News only 4 days later on 19th May. Outgoing soldiers' letters were carried free, but parcels had to bear postage stamps. They were put in the company mail bag which was collected every evening by the Regimental Postman, a lance-corporal or corporal on the Quartermaster's Staff. He was often a postman in civilian life. He sorted all incoming mail in the waggon-lines, bundled it up, and delivered it. If the battalion was in the line, the Post Corporal would accompany the ration party, carrying the letters himself while one of the ration carriers carried the bag containing the parcels. The volume of mail passing between the personnel of the Leeds Rifles and their friends and relatives in the UK was huge: with the exception of a tiny minority of men who either had no relatives or whose families had disowned them, each man would, it is estimated, receive and write at least 3 letters and cards every week and most received at least one parcel (which, for each battalion, represents a weekly incoming mail of 3,000 letters and 1,000 parcels). Within this estimate lay a wide range of variations. Some sent home only Service Field Postcards (known as "Quick-firers"), which were issued free and which, since nothing need be written on them other than the soldier's name and the addressee's name and address, appealed especially to the illiterate and semi-literate. This type of man, however, might frequently engage a comrade to write letters for him: one respondent appeared to have been



his company's specialist in the writing of love letters. Some men, by falsely representing themselves as "lonely soldiers" to various young women whilst still in England, were conducting a correspondence with as many as a dozen girls at a time and receiving parcels of comforts, the motive for their deception, from each one. A group of such men in the 1/8th actually formed a club called "The Silver Hairpin Gang" whose members, amid a great deal of hilarity, passed round the epistles received from lovelorn females; to qualify for membership, a man had to have a minimum of three "clients".<sup>284</sup> It is naturally impossible to estimate the amount of mail with any degree of accuracy. Lupton wrote on 17th October 1916 that he had censored about 700 of the company's letters that day, but gives no indication of the length of time they had been awaiting attention. Knowles wrote to his wife every two or three days on average and also wrote to other relatives, including his mother. Lupton tried to write to his parents at least every other day and also wrote to other relatives. He received several parcels a week. If there was any item of essential equipment that he could not obtain quickly from official sources, he asked his father to send it. Items supplied to the 1/8th at his own expense by Hugh Lupton Snr. included periscopes, telephone clips, telephone headpiece holders and voltmeters.

All outgoing mail was censored regimentally by the platoon officers.<sup>285</sup> In a regiment with a high average standard of literacy, like the Leeds Rifles battalions, it is evident that the officers did not have sufficient time to read all letters, a fact which Hugh Lupton cheerfully admitted. The envelope flaps frequently bore the inscription "SWAKFOWLY": "sealed with a kiss from one who loves you".<sup>286</sup> After regimental censorship, the officer concerned signed his name on the face of the envelope, it was sealed and forwarded to the brigade or divisional Field Post Office to be franked. It proceeded to the port of departure via the base where the Base Censor carried out his spot checks. Except for certain periods in the war, letter censorship seems to have been by no means as strict as is often represented. Out of the 283 envelopes bearing the Field Censor's stamp that accompanied the Lupton letters, only 2 had been opened and read at the Base. In order to cut down the amount of work involved in regimental censorship, the authorities introduced AFW3078, "the Green Envelope",<sup>287</sup> which bore a declaration to be signed by the writer "I certify on my honour that the contents of this envelope refer to nothing but private and family matters." These were issued normally at the rate of one per man per week, but their issue was suspended during large-scale offensives, such as the Battle of the Somme.<sup>288</sup> Knowles wrote love letters to his wife in these envelopes and usually managed to cadge or buy one from a comrade during weeks they



were issued. The Green Envelopes were liable to be opened by the Base Censor; several of those accompanying the Knowles letters had been opened. Any officer or man could easily circumvent the censorship by giving letters to comrades proceeding to the UK on leave. The authorities appeared to place their reliance on frequent lectures to the troops on the importance of not writing about matters of military importance and on appeals to their honour. It is clear, however, from the letters that what constituted a matter of military importance was not closely defined.

Cigarettes and food in parcels were always shared with comrades in the section or platoon. One respondent recalled one comrade chiefly because the man's sister had sent him a madeira cake every week. Another recalled how one particular comrade, a man who had been disowned by his family, always contrived to be present when his mother's weekly parcel of home-made cakes and pastries arrived and then watched avidly as he unwrapped it. Officers who received food parcels or hampers always contributed them immediately to the mess so that all could share.<sup>289</sup>

Complaints about delays in the mails were unfortunately common. Although submarine activity or mine-sweeping operations in the Channel might sometimes keep boats in port, the usual cause of delays was "military exigencies" (though Knowles reported in August 1916 that hold-ups were being caused "through letters being censored at this side").<sup>290</sup> As the Yorkshire Post article of 27th December 1915 had pointed out, no cross-channel steamer could carry more than 5,000 bags of mail and the biggest army lorry could not carry more than 90 bags. At all times priority had to be given to the carrying of military supplies. By November 1915 road traffic in the war zone had reached saturation point and all transport services were being taxed to the utmost. The War Office had no alternative but to limit the amount of parcel traffic intended for troops in France and Belgium. It was announced that the maximum permissible weight for parcels would be reduced to 7lbs and that all perishable articles, including puddings, would not be accepted for delivery in December.<sup>291</sup> Although a few respondents could recall some instances of food having gone bad in transit, no one complained of having had parcels looted en route.

Officers of the rank of Captain and above obtained a leave (or furlough) every six months, subalterns about every nine months, depending on the number of junior officers available for duty. Officers, additionally, were permitted to apply for leave in order to attend to urgent business or family affairs or if they felt they were approaching a nervous breakdown.<sup>292</sup> Other ranks, as had been the practice in peace-time, were entitled to one



leave a year, "subject to the exigencies of the service". Espin got his first leave on 5th August 1915, less than four months after Embarkation, but 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 1/7th, had to wait until January 1916, nine months after Embarkation, and 1726 Jack Barker, 1/7th, until May 1916, thirteen months after Embarkation, for their first leaves. At the beginning of April 1916 Knowles stated that there were about 5 men in his brother Eddie's platoon who had not been on leave since leaving England.<sup>293</sup>

Complaints about leave were general throughout the Army. Complaints, and in particular grievances as to the inequality in granting leave and the inordinate lengths of time some men had been without leave (up to 2½ years in some instances), were frequently raised in the Commons in 1917.<sup>294</sup>

At first in 1915 leaves in the Leeds Rifles were allocated by lot, but once large drafts started arriving, a leave roster was drawn up according to length of service in the BEF, a system which was considered fair by all ranks.<sup>295</sup> In 1915 leaves were of 7 days' duration counted as absence from the unit, but in 1916 the period was extended to 9 days to allow 7 days in the UK and 2 days for travelling. During the 49th Division's spell in the Salient in 1915 the stopping of all leave was a common occurrence, particularly in times of manpower shortages. Knowles was writing of the difficulties of obtaining leave as early as 15th August 1915. On 5th September he wrote "getting leave seems an Impossibility ... I know 40 men who have passes in for leave, all for dangerous illness of relatives, and one by a lad who had lost his mother, but no one has got one yet." He obtained leave himself in November 1915 at short notice when his baby became dangerously ill: his wife had to write to his company commander, enclosing a medical certificate, before it was granted. One of Lt Lupton's duties around this time was to put his company's applications for compassionate leave as far as was possible into the order of their urgency.<sup>296</sup>

An extremely popular leisure activity was the reading of newspapers and magazines. "If there is a magazine to be got there is a dash for it. It is the same with newspapers" wrote Rfm C. Wilson, 7th.<sup>297</sup> Newspapers and magazines were passed round until they disintegrated in tatters. Magazines popular with officers like Bystander, The Spectator and Punch were passed on to the ranks via servants. Knowles liked his wife to send him John Bull and the Sunday Pictorial, but the vast majority of men preferred the Leeds newspapers, particularly the evening papers, which were avidly read from first page to last, including the advertisements. In the rest camps of the rear areas of the Divisional sector it was possible to buy London-published daily or Sunday papers, two or three days old.<sup>298</sup> Most men preferred to have the Leeds papers sent by post, even though they



might be up to a week old when received, since these afforded countless topics for conversation.

Some soldier-authors, notably C.E. Montague and Lord Moran,<sup>299</sup> have vigorously attacked newspaper accounts, war correspondents' despatches, official press censorship and general news management. These attacks usually appear to overlook, in addition to the provisions of the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act, two salient points concerning soldiers' attitudes to the newspapers which clearly emerge from Riflemen's letters. The first was that the soldier's view of the war was literally what he could see for himself. Thus, immediately at the end of the Battle of Aubers Ridge, Rfm Percy Brook, 8th, wrote:

"We don't know how things went on at the ends of the line. We don't hear much as to what happens. It seems a bit funny for us to be here and you getting to know more about what is being done than we know ourselves."<sup>300</sup>

Lt Lupton, on the fourth day of the Somme offensive, wrote

"I haven't seen a newspaper for a long time ... You really have much more news than we have", and on the sixth day, "I entirely fail to understand the military situation, but rather imagine that we are at the beginning of a biggish offensive ... But I know nothing."<sup>301</sup>

The Armistice came as an enormous shock to 2222 Signaller W. H. Reynard, 8th, and his comrades despite the large advances the 62nd Division had been making for some weeks. Knowles was clearly dependent on newspapers for war news: "Please send me a few up to date newspapers. We cannot get to know anything here" and "How is the war going now? I haven't seen a paper for a week"<sup>302</sup> are typical. (Compare Edmund Blunden: "What the infantryman in France knew about the war as a whole was seldom worth knowing, and we had little time or taste for studying the probable effect upon us of events beyond the skyline of immediate orders."<sup>303</sup>) Newspapers were thus the soldiers' chief source of information as to the progress of the war. Other sources were senior regimental officers (whose source in turn would be Brigade HQ), official communiqués, rumour, and the regimental grapevine. The last, which emanated from the officers' mess and orderly room staffs, was often reliable, in complete contrast to rumour which merely filled the vacuum caused by the dearth of real news. L/Cpl Espin was regrettably prone to over-exaggerate in his Diary and perhaps report rumour as fact, eg. on December 19th 1915: "Nearly the whole division is wiped out by the gas." Actual casualties were about 800; casualties in the 1/7th for the 19th and 20th were 11 gassed, 6 wounded, 1 died of wounds.<sup>304</sup> Occasionally rumour had a morale-boosting and entertainment value:

"... the various rumours which were rife regarding our destination, were talked over. The debate waxed strong,



whether we were bound for Jamaica, to supervise the supplying of rum for the troops out here, or for Egypt, for an unstated term of rest. The latter rumour gained sway, one debater going so far as to state he had seen the dromedaries and camels being trooped down in our rear."<sup>305</sup>

Several respondents reported comrades who claimed to have seen pith helmets etc. in the QM Stores. The Egypt rumour was the most persistent rumour, in the first-line Leeds Rifles battalions, of the war, some respondents claiming to have first heard it in August 1914. It also seems to have been a popular rumour in the 50th Division.<sup>306</sup>

Secondly, the attitude of the Riflemen to the various sources of news and in particular to newspapers was curiously ambivalent. Perhaps because of his extremely limited view of the war, the soldier, almost automatically, derided the despatches of war correspondents. Wrote Lt Lupton: "From reading the Daily Mail I should say the newspaper correspondents must have the most vivid imaginations."<sup>307</sup> (Mr William Beech Thomas was savagely satirised repeatedly by The Wipers Times in its various forms.) Yet, despite widespread complaints about the inadequacy of official communiqués,<sup>308</sup> he went on, "still the official despatches and prognostications are certainly more reliable than any news we get out here."<sup>309</sup> Knowles clearly believed much of what he read in newspapers and periodicals, yet he was extremely scathing about news items of which he had personal knowledge:

"I have seen some cuttings out of the Evening Post about the Leeds Rifles Rest that make you tired. I never read such trash in my life. You can imagine how the lads have a let out when they read it." "Some of the stuff we read makes us tired. It is common to see us showing a newspaper round with some rubbish in. It would do you good to hear the lads playing hell about it."<sup>310</sup>

Riflemen were thus often critical of items they read in the Leeds newspapers, yet what they read in them clearly influenced their attitudes, particularly towards the home front. One can imagine their reactions to a news item published in the Leeds papers in the later stages of the Battle of the Somme: the celebrated Northern Rugby Union International and popular hero Billy Batten, a miner exempted from military service, was fined for being absent from work without notice, having been absent 31 times from 44 consecutive shifts.<sup>311</sup>

The news and comment read by Knowles strongly influenced his frame of mind and his personal morale, and he maintained an optimistic attitude towards the outcome of the war right until his death. The respondents who were captured in April 1918 were ignorant at the time of the scale and the success of the German offensive and thought that the enemy had merely



scored a local success. Capt Lupton wrote on 10th April 1918 from a School of Instruction at Stafford, "I think this latest advance of the Germans may be taken with little anxiety as it seems to me just to affect the front held by the Portuguese, whom we could hardly expect to make a brilliant resistance."<sup>312</sup> Press censorship and news management thus had a not unimportant role to play in the maintenance of the troops' morale.

Trench newspapers provided a useful safety valve. In relation to the authorities, i.e. GHQ, they occupied a position of special privilege, often printing what officers and men were thinking. Favourite targets of the jokes and satire were war correspondents, staff officers, rear echelons and civilians. The Wipers Times and other newspapers examined - The Salient and the two 49th Division papers, The Lead-Swinger and The Buzzer - displayed no kind of despondency or defeatism whatever in their columns. Patrick Beaver claims erroneously that, apart from The Wipers Times, the content of trench journals had "little bearing on life at the Western Front" and that they were produced in England.<sup>313</sup> The presentation and content, including spoof adverts, of The Wipers Times were not original, as claimed, but were closely modelled on the predecessors, The Salient and the two 49th Division newspapers, which, in their turn, owed much to Punch and university undergraduate magazines. The Salient was typed on the same make of typewriter, using identical typeface, and printed on a spirit duplicator on the same size and type of paper as were used at 146 Brigade HQ for producing orders and trench maps and it accordingly appears highly unlikely that it was printed in England as stated by Beaver.<sup>314</sup> The Lead-Swinger was unusual in that it was written and produced entirely by rankers (a list of staff and contributors appears in each printed volume). Printed originally at HQ on the Orderly Room's spirit duplicator, it was afterwards published in volumes and put on sale in Sheffield by a local master printer who was the father of the journal's editor.<sup>315</sup> Its first issue was produced at Poperinghe in September 1915.

Contrary to a widely held impression conveyed by many imaginative writers, life in any division on the British sector of the Western Front was not a continuous hell. The average infantryman "spent only a comparatively few days in the face of the enemy."<sup>316</sup> Lt Col Howard Green MC estimated that, taking a division's entire war service in the BEF, "only about one day in twelve was hell."<sup>317</sup> "During the 1,010 days of its existence the 56th Division spent 330 [32.67%] in rest ... 195 days [19.30%] were in a quiet sector on the Western Front, 385 days [38.12%] days in an active sector and 100 days [9.9%] in active operations."<sup>318</sup> On examining his diary for 1916, Carrington found that he spent 65 days



[17.76%] in the front line, 36 [9.84%] in support; 120 days in reserve, 73 on rest, leaving 72 days over (21 in schools of instruction, 10 in hospital, 17 on leave, 9 at Base, and 14 in travelling); the 101 days [27.6%] under fire contained 12 tours of duty varying from 1 to 13 days, although the battalion itself had 16 tours during the year. During these twelve tours the battalion was "in action" four times: one direct assault, two bombing actions, one fairly large-scale trench raid and one action holding the front line from which other troops advanced. He regards the programme outlined as typical.<sup>319</sup> Similar programmes for the 49th and 62nd Divisions and for the Leeds Rifles battalions cannot, unfortunately, be drawn up since insufficient information exists in the War Diaries (which usually gave map references, in accordance with official instructions) and in the published histories to assess the status of the various spells of duty, training, rest, etc. They would, however, be broadly similar to those outlined above. The 49th Division's programme would have had much in common with that of the 56th Division and the 1/7th's with Carrington's battalion, the 1/5th Royal Warwickshire Regt of the 48th Division.

The programmes above illustrate GHQ's policy with regard to the management and employment of divisions, one which greatly contrasted with those of all foreign armies. Periods of trench duty in active sectors, in quiet sectors, periods of rest and refitting, spells of training and of active operations, were taken, as far as possible, in pre-determined rotation. This was not only fair, but militarily prudent, since the division could thus be preserved intact by "good husbandry" as a living organism, a worn-out division emerging some 3-6 months later reinvigorated, fresh. Above all, the policy was humane. After 6 months' trench duty in the Salient in 1915, the exhausted 49th Division spent about a month in recuperation in Corps Reserve on the coast, a month in a quiet sector, a month on RE construction work in a back area, two months in training, followed by a further month of RE working parties, by which time it was deemed ready to take part in the beginning of the Somme offensive. Four months on the Somme were followed in turn by six months in a quiet sector, and no further active operations followed the Battle of Poelcappelle in October 1917 until the German offensive of 1918. Approximately three months was the minimum period needed for an individual infantry battalion to recover its numbers, its military efficiency, its confidence and its morale after a severe mauling in active operations. It took the 2nd WYR three months to recover from the terrible blow it suffered on 1st July 1916.<sup>320</sup> The 1/8th was virtually wiped out by the gas attack of 21/22 July 1917, but by 9th October, only just over 11 weeks later, the battalion personnel according to 2/Lt



Tom Nettleton, "had completely regained our fighting spirit and morale and were quite ready for the attack on Poelcappelle."<sup>321</sup>

On coming out of the trenches on rest, there was always a good hot meal waiting in the billets for the men and Reveille was not sounded before 11 am at the earliest.<sup>322</sup> As General Jack observed, "... healthy young soldiers recover with remarkable rapidity from the most gruelling experiences when they have a good sleep and a square meal."<sup>323</sup> After breakfast on the first day out, there would be rifle cleaning followed by inspection; the remainder of the day would be devoted to "cleaning-up" (drying and/or cleaning the mud from clothing); some of the more energetic might go for a stroll or play football. Rest was supposed to be devoted to what Hugh Lupton calls the "usual refitment and smartening up processes":<sup>324</sup> interior economy; kit inspection, parades, physical drill, route marches, cross-country running, platoon and company drill, organised games. The Royal Engineers seldom failed to disrupt the "usual routine" seriously. In the Salient during 1915 rest periods were normally allocated monthly, but, to take a few examples, in September the 1/8th arrived for 12 days' Brigade Rest to find they had been set a 9-day work task, the August period in Divisional Reserve had been spent in carrying stores, while the October rest was taken up with working parties at night and by day with building wattle huts and sandbagged tents and bombing practice (with the recently introduced Mills bombs) for all ranks, and the November rest with heavy working parties every night.<sup>325</sup> There were also, of course, plenty of battalion fatigues and duties in camp, such as wood-collecting, cookhouse fatigues, cleaning billets, carrying parties for the Quartermaster, unloading supply trucks and wagons, sorting out old clothes, taking dead men's equipment and rifles to the Dump, and providing fire piquets, in addition to all the usual guard duties.

In between all these duties and fatigues, the men fitted in the physical training, the games and the concerts organised for them by the junior officers. The emphasis was on recreation and enjoyment. Although the object of physical training was to develop the individual soldier's capacity for resisting fatigue and privation, its performance was made enjoyable by the introduction, as advised in Infantry Training (1914), p.3, of team games and competitions in which everyone could take part, such as the popular 'Twos and Threes'. Not only were such games of recreational value, but they impressed upon the participants the value and importance of teamwork. The men liked any type of competition, be it bayonet fighting, rugby goal-kicking, or throwing the cricket ball. On one occasion, his men asked Capt Lupton if they could have a competition in the construction of



barbed wire "concertinas".<sup>326</sup> Many cricket, association and rugby football matches were played. Soccer was universally popular and played throughout the year; almost everyone played. Both the 1/7th and 1/8th contained players of professional or near-professional class; the brightest star from 1916 onwards was the future international Jimmy Seed, then an unknown. Minutes after an inter-company match had ended at Elverdinge Chateau camp a 17" shell from "the Ypres Express" landed in the middle of the pitch.<sup>327</sup> Rugby football was commonly played as "Touch-and-Pass", on account of the risk of injury if played according to conventional rules. Contests of "Piggy", a game then popular in the mining communities in and around Leeds and sometimes known as "Miners' Golf", were often held.<sup>328</sup> The men especially looked forward to the boxing tournaments. There were a fair number of professional boxers in the Regiment, as well as a number of more than capable amateurs, one of whom, 2156 Laurence Louis ("Len") Granger, of the 1/7th Transport, a middleweight, won the heavyweight championship of the 49th Division and the accompanying purse of 20 fr. (16/8d), apparently all that was available from the Regimental Institute funds. At first, the tournaments were run on conventional lines, often on an inter-company or inter-regimental basis, but soon comic contests were being introduced. In the 1/7th tournament held in September 1915, following the top-of-the-bill contest in which Len Granger decisively beat Georges Carpentier's chief sparring partner, it was announced that a formidable opponent had been found for L/Cpl Harry ("Buck") Ellis, who belonged to the Regimental Police and was therefore unpopular. Into the ring climbed 1854 Bugler Clarence Baddeley, the smallest man in the battalion, only 5'2" tall; he was, naturally, the winner. A "blind" bout, in which both contestants were blindfolded, was a common and highly popular feature of later tournaments. Comic football matches in which men wore long skirts or had their hands tied behind the back were played.<sup>329</sup>

By the time 146 Brigade began its 12 days' rest on 9th September 1915, entertainment for the troops had become well-organised. The men loved any kind of music after coming out of the line. The 49th Divisional Band, formed for the express purpose of giving concerts, and composed of former regimental bandsmen (including 1608 Frank Greenwood Allatt of the 1/7th) now graded unfit for active service overseas, under its Bandmaster, George J. Connors, until very recently CSM (and former Bandmaster) of the 1/8th, gave its first performance on 15th September. The "Tykes" Pierrot troupe, formed of semi-professional entertainers mainly drawn from the RE, ASC and RAMC of the 49th Division, though including L/Cpl J.R. Smith of the 1/7th, a comedian well-known in Leeds under his stage-name "Jack



Allerton", gave its first performance at a rest camp near Poperinghe on 22nd August. It was the fourth Divisional concert party to be formed in the British Army.<sup>330</sup> Its leader was Lt Percy Barker, a Leeds solicitor with a first-rate tenor voice and one of the best known local amateur performers in Harrogate.<sup>331</sup> The "Tykes" began on improvised stages in the open air, such as an amphitheatre with stage (and backdrop) constructed inside a crater made by a German 17" shell, or in barns or stables. Its members performed no military duties, but had to find and rig up their own theatres, using acetylene stage lighting, and petrol tin boxes for seats, and make their own props and costumes.<sup>332</sup> When better premises were found in the shape of halls, the West Riding County TF Association provided furniture and accessories. The "Tykes" were immensely popular. In February 1916 the troupe visited Yorkshire. Their concert at the Leeds Empire got an excellent review. It was described as being "far superior to the average pierrot show". All profits made in the war zone were shared between the various Regimental Institutes of the Division for the provision of comforts, sports equipment, etc: total profit for the period 1916-1919 exceeded 80,000 fr.<sup>333</sup> (over £2,900). About the same time the VIth Corps started a pierrot troupe called "The Fancies" which gained some fame because it included two French girls, nick-named "Vaseline" and "Lanoline", among its members.

The 62nd Division's Concert Party,<sup>334</sup> called "The Pelicans" after the divisional symbol, was largely composed of former professional music-hall artistes and was dominated by two Riflemen of the 2/7th, Edward Woolhouse and Leslie Barker who, though conscripts, were both local men, hailing from Harehills and Stanningley respectively. Edward Woolhouse, who used the stage name Kemsle Scott Barrie, was a performer of great talent. Described by respondents as a combination of Danny La Rue and Bruce Forsyth, he was the master of quick-fire repartee and an outrageously convincing female impersonator. He had formed his own concert party about 1910 and by 1914 was playing Dame in pantomime, and was appearing with his own troupe at the Harehills Pavilion, Leeds, during the autumn and spring, and on the South Pier at Blackpool for the summer season. The officer in charge of the "Pelicans" had had no peacetime experience in theatrical management and there were serious disagreements between him and Woolhouse which eventually led to the latter being dismissed in the summer of 1918 and returned to military duties in the 8th Bn, the 2/7th having been disbanded. Woolhouse died on 6th October 1918, and it is stated by eye-witnesses that he continued to recite comic poems and tell jokes as he lay mortally wounded



on the stretcher waiting to be taken to the Casualty Clearing Station. Leslie Barker was a singer of popular sentimental ballads who modelled himself on Eugene Stratton. The 7th Reserve Battalion, while in Ireland, had a Pierrot troupe called the "Polyglots" (after the popular name by which the Regimental March of the West Yorkshire Regiment was known). The 8th Bn in 1918 had a regimental concert party run, of course, by Woolhouse, ably assisted by Cpl J.M. Richardson, a professional artiste known on the Yorkshire music halls as "Jimmy Rich", which called itself "The Trifles", a punning allusion to the regiment's popular name in Leeds, "t'Rifles".

Before and after the setting up of these pierrot troupes and concert parties, the 1/7th and 1/8th organised their own entertainments in the form of concerts and comic bands. There was no dearth of talent in either battalion. The 1/7th had many fine singers, including George Sanders and Lt H.E. Pearce, who had been a leading singer in George Edwardes' company on the West End stage before receiving his commission, and 1485 Alfred Clarkson who specialised in comic "patter" songs. It also had an outstandingly popular broad comedian, Joe Ball, well-known in Leeds as a public house and workingmen's club entertainer. The officers were captivated both by his stage appearances and his impromptu performances off-stage. He once rode on a farm horse on to the field during the Battalion sports dressed as a jockey.<sup>335</sup> Knowles wrote of one of his concert performances:

"One of our set got made up in a Frenchy's uniform. He had a tunic full of medals made of jam tins. He did look a guy. He is a fine comedian and they pulled the place down for him, officers as well."<sup>336</sup>

He would whip out his false teeth and have his audience in stitches within seconds at the faces he pulled.

"A typical joke was to sing 'You gave me your heart', then he'd pull a red cardboard heart from inside his tunic, hold it up and sing, 'but I ordered liver'."<sup>337</sup>

The 1/7th had a fine classical pianist in Signaller Norman Drake, later commissioned, though the men naturally preferred a pianist who could play all the music hall songs, as battalion concerts always concluded with a good sing-song. 1/8th talent included singers Grainger Rex<sup>338</sup> and Gilbert Field (head chorister at Wakefield Cathedral), Rfm Kitchen, a singer of the songs of George Formby Snr., 1235 Bugler Arthur William Irwin, singer of comic songs, Rfm A.E. Firth, who had been an entertainer at Wortley Working Men's Institute,<sup>339</sup> Lt Eric F. Wilkinson and Rfm (later 2/Lt) Francis W. Smith, the Battalion poets, who recited monologues they may have composed themselves, Lt Weaver, a professional actor who appeared as a female impressionist,<sup>340</sup> and 2907 Signaller Harold N. Pearson, a cinema pianist in civilian life, who played selections from Gilbert and Sullivan and other



operettas and musical comedies, as well as accompanying the artistes and the sing-songs. Occasionally there appeared in the personnel of one or other of the battalions a ventriloquist, or conjurer, or other rarer theatrical talent.<sup>341</sup> Both battalions possessed some good instrumentalists, including former bandsmen now employed as stretcher-bearers, and some talented piano accordion (e.g. 1814 Walter Hawkshaw, 7th),<sup>342</sup> concertina and melodeon players. Signaller Pearson often played at concerts upon a small collapsible organ, the personal property of Padre Hood, for pianos were seldom obtainable; he stated that the concert platform was frequently a GS wagon.<sup>343</sup>

Knowles described a half-battalion concert held behind the reserve trenches in the Salient, perhaps inside a large shell-crater:

"It was wonderful. We had some real talent. My pal Lance Corpl Wilson is a fine Baritone, and he got a fine reception. There were good comedians too and of course a few bottles of wine and cigars. It was an impressive sight - about 300 soldiers in a circle, some sitting, some standing, all joining in choruses. We carried on till nearly dark when the rockets were blazing out in the sky from three sides of us and you could hear our lads rapid firing like hell. If any frightened slackers could have seen us it would have surprised them I bet."

Impromptu concerts were held in the reserve and support lines, provided the enemy front line was a good way away:

"We were having a concert last night in a dugout. It was pouring with rain, but that didn't stop the lads from singing and playing mouthorgans ... A minute after it was over we were dodging bullets on sentry."

In 1916 concerts were held in both battalions to mark the first anniversary of the Embarkation. At the 1/7th's concert, champagne flowed "like water".<sup>344</sup> The 1/8th's was attended by the former CO, Col E. Kitson Clark, and the high spot was his speech which he himself described as a "comic turn".

"I asked them if there were many who remembered Wales, and there was a shout of 'Boro-da', showing that there was a great crowd of the old hands still in good fettle, to which I replied 'No, Bon Jour' and they absolutely roared 'Oui'."

The Colonel descended from the stage "amidst much applause".<sup>345</sup>

Other organised amusements included Cinematograph shows, first given to the men of the regiment in September 1915,<sup>346</sup> (a Divisional Cinema was opened in March 1917<sup>347</sup> and Signaller Pearson of the 1/8th appointed its pianist), regular battalion sports, inter-battalion, inter-brigade, inter-division and inter-army sporting contests (on one occasion the 1/7th soccer team played the Belgian Army representative side), and divisional horse shows. The men also organised their own amusements. Many liked going for long leisurely walks or rambles round the countryside.<sup>348</sup> Some keen



naturalists went collecting wild flowers, like 4328 L. Frederick Hudson, 7th, or bird-watching, like 2158 Harold Dean, 8th. An angling club was formed in the 1/8th in early 1916 to fish in the Ancre.<sup>349</sup> Fishing had also been popular in 1915 in Brigade Reserve on the Canal Bank: Espin was fishing in the Canal from an RE pontoon one day "when a shell all but blew" him in.<sup>350</sup> At Fordrinoy in 1916 some men of C Coy of the 1/7th decided to go hunting:

"Someone noticed that not far away was a hillside full of rabbit warrens. After a long consultation at which various methods were suggested, including snickles, as not one of us knew how to set a snickle, in fact we were all urban with not a rural amongst us, we had to think of something else before we got stewed rabbit. After a bit of talking we found that we had about 7 Mills bombs that were not on indent, so it was decided that we should blow the rabbits out. About ten of us set off for the warrens, posting four men as lookouts. The rest of us took up our positions at what seemed to be the most frequently used burrows. Cpl Foggitt said, 'Now when I raise my hand pull out the firing pins and when I drop it let the bomb run down the burrow and get back over the hill'. We followed instructions and the bombs went off almost simultaneously and blew half the hill away. It was the same old menu as usual for dinner next day."<sup>351</sup>

Some men liked looking round what local shops existed, buying tourist souvenirs and postcards, particularly the embroidered lace variety. Some places would do special designs, like regimental badges, to order. One particularly enterprising British printer, J. Salmon of Sevenoaks, produced for the BEF market sets of comic postcards bearing individual regimental names which the French or Belgian shopkeeper could put on display whenever battalions of the appropriate regiment were billeted in the vicinity. Two postcards seen bore respectively the captions: "For gootness sake Halt - der LEEDS RIFLES are koming!"<sup>352</sup> and "Look out Fritz - the LEEDS RIFLES are here!" A large number of men indulged in gambling, playing "put and take", or card games, like pontoon and solo whist, or "housey-housey" (the ancestor of bingo), or "pitch and toss", to which miners were often addicted. Dedicated gamblers let nothing interfere with their obsession: "I am with the easiest going set of lads you can imagine" wrote Knowles on 23rd May 1915. "It takes them all their time to give up gambling even when the shelling starts." The authorities frowned heavily upon all forms of gambling and particularly upon "crown and anchor", the first game to be banned. A vigorous campaign to stamp out gambling was mounted in the autumn of 1915, with the military police constantly touring cafes and estaminets, first to stop the playing of crown and anchor and then, in December, every kind of gambling game. Gambling was never successfully eradicated in the first-line Leeds Rifles, despite its strong Nonconformist conscience. In



November 1915 when a 1/7th Battalion Order was issued, absolutely forbidding the playing of crown and anchor and warning that anyone caught playing it would be severely dealt with, Knowles, the battalion's "Crown & Anchor King", asked his wife to send him a roulette wheel. He was repeatedly heavily fined by the CO for illegal gambling: when he was promoted sergeant, for instance, he received only one shilling a day instead of two shillings and fourpence.<sup>353</sup> A blind eye tended to be turned to housey-housey, as in most regiments, since it was considered the least harmful of the gambling games. Social and more dedicated drinkers frequented the estaminets and the wet canteen, while teetotalers visited the YMCA, Salvation Army and Church Army recreation and refreshment huts or, if they were in the neighbourhood of Poperinghe, the home of Toc H, Talbot House (named after Gilbert, a son of Bishop E.S. Talbot, who had been the Leeds Rifles chaplain from 1889 to 1895).<sup>354</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting home-made amusement of the Leeds Rifles other ranks was the comic band. Both the 1/7th and 1/8th had one, though the former's was easily the better known. They came into existence in April or May 1915, shortly after the regimental bands had had their instruments removed, to the intense disappointment of all ranks. Comic bands of itinerant street entertainers composed of unemployed men were known in Leeds, Morley and Drighlington in the first decade of this century and proliferated in the towns of the West Riding conurbation during the depression of the 1920s and 1930s under bizarre names such as "The Hunslet Nanny Goat Lancers", the "Holbeck Jungle Band" and the "Whiffen Waffen Fuffen" or "Whiffum Wuffum Band".<sup>355</sup> They were genuine products of West Riding working class culture and Joe Ball's Band was essentially part of the tradition. Joe himself wore a goatskin coat and a top hat in addition to his army uniform and had his wife send him greasepaint so that he and his bandsmen could make up. The band, comprising 20 or so members, was far from being distinguished musically, for the instruments were mouthorgans, tin whistles, two melodeons, kazoos (also known as "bazookas" or "Tommy Talkers"), a concertina (played by Ernest Ambrose), a kettledrum made out of an Army biscuit box, and combs and paper. The band, made up and wearing articles of fancy dress, entertained local civilians and neighbouring units, "making everyone laugh."<sup>356</sup> "We visited our [the Leeds] Artillery yesterday, and gave them a tune and a song, and then refreshed ourselves with a jar of rum. They made us a collection, which will come in handy."<sup>357</sup> Joe Ball, the National Reservist who had at least 15 children, seldom did anything that did not have some personal profit in it. His comic band activities were no doubt responsible for his promotion to Bugle Major at the beginning



of 1916. Like Sidney Rogerson's L/Cpl "Buggy" Robinson,<sup>358</sup> he was an incorrigible scrounger, forever collecting the flotsam of battle which he would stuff into his kitbag and hawk round the estaminets, finding a ready market among ASC men for bayonets, helmets, watches, rings, cigarette cases etc. taken from dead Germans. He was said to boast of gouging out with his jack knife the gold fillings of German corpses in No Man's Land. He was certainly the type of old soldier who would deliberately put young "rookies" off their dinner, or advise them in a fatherly manner not to drink the beer in front of them as it would only make them poorly, so that it would be left for him to consume.<sup>359</sup>

The 1/8th's comic band was called "The Lunies' [sic] Ragtime Band" and was led by 1967 Signaller J. Butterfield of D Coy.<sup>360</sup> The Leeds Rifles comic bands, which became known and were imitated throughout the Division, may well have influenced the development of similar bands, which were often largely composed of ex-servicemen, in the West Riding in the postwar period.

At the rest camps the men of the 1/7th could renew their acquaintance with the battalion pets and in particular with the universal favourite, the regimental mascot, Belgie, a young goat. "He loved every man in the battalion. Some claimed he could recognise the Rifles cap badge, because the funny thing was, he wouldn't have anything to do with men from other regiments." He had "a remarkable appetite, and anything left lying about vanishes down its throat." If he came across a messtin containing rum he would drink the contents eagerly and was seen to be drunk on more than one occasion. There was no "Goat Major" officially on the battalion establishment, but Belgie was the particular pet of Cpl Jimmy Hansgate, an old soldier on the Transport staff as a horse doctor, who had reared him and who led him at the head of the battalion when on the march. Each section at the waggon lines had their own pets. The Transport Section had a goose called "Mike" which was primarily kept as a watchdog to warn of military horse-rustlers and clandestine exchangers of unfit or unmanageable horses belonging to other units who were regrettably all too common on the Western Front.<sup>361</sup> At one period the Sergeant Shoemaker and his assistants kept two rabbits, a kitten, a bitch and its pup. At the same time the Stores staff kept a Pomeranian bitch and its three offspring. Dogs were continually attaching themselves to the men, even in the forward zone. On the Somme, early in 1916, a large setter decided to join the 1/8th officers' mess; he settled himself down comfortably "in almost the only dry spot in the mess", Lt Lupton's bed.<sup>362</sup>

The officers shared some of their men's leisure pastimes. They attended and participated in concerts and they joined in the games and athletic sports,



particularly rugby and cricket. They frequently offered small monetary prizes for the various competitions. On account of the expense involved, some leisure activities were virtually confined to officers, such as travelling to nearby towns to patronise restaurants. Only officers were able to afford to buy gramophones and records. Only officers and their grooms were able to indulge in horse-riding for pleasure.

The mental release of going out of the forward zone into rest billets was naturally immense and the men, as soon as they had had their good meal and good sleep, took on a new lease of life, laughing and joking and enjoying every minute of their free time to the full.<sup>363</sup> It did not take much to make front line soldiers happy: their greatest pleasure was to feel like a decent normal human being for a while. "We are having a real rest a few miles from the fighting line", wrote Knowles in September 1915 from the camp in Coppernollehoeck Woods NE of Poperinghe.

"It is quite a treat not to be dodging shells and bullets for a while." "We go for a route march nearly every morning but we don't have our equipment on, so it is quite a treat to stride out instead of being harnessed like a pack horse."

Note Knowles' use of the word "treat". He used it again at Wormhoudt when the Division was in Corps Reserve "far, far from Ypres" at last:

"You can't imagine what a treat it is to be able to step out and have a good walk without being harnessed up and no danger of falling head first into shell holes full of water."

Rfm Philip Standley wrote at the same time

"What a relief! At last for a time we can walk and not wade, as we have been accustomed to do in and around the firing line these last few months."<sup>364</sup>

At last they had the freedom to walk upright, all shell and rifle fire blissfully absent, the sounds of battle unheard.

The periods spent far to the rear of the war zone in training areas were devoted to "peacetime soldiering". The 15 days spent at Wormhoudt in January 1916 were primarily recuperative: Reveille 6.30 am, physical drill, breakfast at 8 am; company training occupied every morning from 9 am to 12.30 pm, but after dinner the rest of the day was "free time". Games and sports were organised every afternoon. "The Tykes gave their entertainment every night; it was exceedingly good and very much appreciated, the hall being full every night." Major Tetley noted with evident satisfaction that the men's behaviour "was excellent all through". The Brigade then marched over 42 miles to a rest camp 2 miles outside Calais in stages over 3 days. The march tired the men considerably, but not a single man in either the 1/7th or 1/8th fell out,<sup>365</sup> despite the fact that the men's feet were "soft with trench life and the wearing of gum boots."<sup>366</sup>



On arrival in Calais Espin wrote: "... my feet are full of blisters. I fear taking off my socks. Never have I been in this state before", and on the following day, "Nobody can hardly walk. The doctor is busy, the CO is assisting him in attending to the men's feet."<sup>367</sup>

Training recommenced on the 19th; it occupied mornings only and passes were granted daily from 3 pm to 7 pm. Brigade competitions were held in turnout, march discipline, cleanliness, saluting, bombing, signalling, scouting, the machine gun, rugby, soccer, boxing and officers' revolver shooting.<sup>368</sup> Knowles, however, complained that "You can hardly call it rest as we are at it doing something from Reveille till Lights out [8.30 pm]" and informed his wife that British troops were permitted in Calais only between 5 pm and 7.45 pm. The two months spent in GHQ Reserve Training for the Somme followed almost exactly the same routine as Divisional training in England. Knowles, complaining about "the usual restrictions - this out of bounds and that out of bounds", found it monotonous in the extreme and declared he "wouldn't be a soldier in peacetime for a pound a day."<sup>369</sup> Sports and competitions, however, were held two or three afternoons a week and plenty of concerts were organised. Passes were liberally granted and when the 1/8th marched out of Vignacourt at the end of May, the writer of the Unofficial War Diary dryly noted that the battalion left behind "many weeping friends",<sup>370</sup> presumably female.

In and out of the line, many men composed verse, particularly in the 1/8th which produced two published war poets, Eric F. Wilkinson and Francis W. Smith. Poetry and its appreciation occupied a conspicuous place in the English literature syllabuses of both elementary and grammar schools in Leeds in the Edwardian era, and poetry, particularly that of a topical nature, was a regular feature of many widely-read newspapers and magazines. The Yorkshire Post first published many of Wilkinson's poems. Hugh Lupton came across many verses in the letters he censored and he copied down those that especially appealed to him. One, 'The Company Signaller' by Signaller J. Boucher, 1/8th, appeared in the Leeds Mercury of 1st September 1915. Much of the verse possessed little literary merit, however.

Two anonymous poems from The Wipers Times summarise the essence of everyday life on the Western Front:

"So here's to the lads of the P.B.I.,  
 Who live in a ditch that never is dry;  
 Who grin through discomfort and danger alike,  
 Go 'over the top' when a chance comes to strike;  
 Though they're living in Hell they are cheery and gay,  
 And draw as their stipend just one bob per day.  
 Back once more to the boots, gum, thigh,  
 In a pulverised trench where the mud's knee-high;



To the duckboard slide on a cold wet night,  
 When you pray for a star-shell to give you light;  
 When your clothes are wet, and the rum jar's dry,  
 Then you want all your cheeriness, P.B.I.  
 They take what may come with a grouse just skin-deep;  
 In a rat-worried dugout on mud try to sleep;  
 Do you wonder they make all the atmosphere hum,  
 When some armchair old lunatic grudges them rum;  
 And they read in the papers that 'James so-and-such  
 Thinks that our soldiers are drinking too much!'"

"If you can drink the beer the Belgians sell you,  
 And pay the price they ask with ne'er a grouse,  
 If you believe the tales that some will tell you,  
 And live in mud with ground sheet for a house;  
 If you can live on bully and a biscuit,  
 And thank your stars that you've a tot of rum,  
 Dodge whizzbangs with a grin, and as you risk it  
 Talk glibly of the pretty way they hum;  
 If you can flounder through a C.T. nightly  
 That's three-parts full of mud and filth and slime,  
 Bite back the oaths and keep your jaw shut tightly,  
 While inwardly you're cursing all the time;  
 If you can crawl through wire and crump-holes reeking  
 With feet of liquid mud, and keep your head  
 Turned always to the place which you are seeking,  
 Through dread of crying you will laugh instead;  
 If you can fight a week in Hell's own image,  
 And at the end just throw you down and grin,  
 When every bone you've got starts on a scrimmage,  
 And for a sleep you'd sell your soul within;  
 If you can clamber up with pick and shovel,  
 And turn your filthy crump-hole to a trench,  
 When all inside you makes you itch to grovel,  
 And all you've had to feed on is a stench;  
 If you can hang on just because you're thinking  
 You haven't got one chance in ten to live,  
 So you will see it through, no use in blinking  
 And you're not going to take more than you give;  
 If you can grin at last when handing over,  
 And finish well what you had well begun,  
 And think a muddy ditch a bed of clover,  
 You'll be a soldier one day, then, my son."<sup>371</sup>

In the forward zone and out at rest singing was a highly popular pastime, particularly on the march and in the tents of a rest camp after Lights Out. The men were especially fond of sentimental ballads about best girls, mothers and roses round the door. A great favourite in the 1/7th, according to Rfm Jack Barker, was the following battalion version of a parody of a well-known sentimental song:

"Sing me to sleep where bullets fall,  
 Let me forget the war and all;  
 Damp is my dugout, cold are my feet,  
 Nothing but bully and biscuits to eat.  
 Sing me to sleep where bombs explode,  
 And shrapnel shells are à la mode;  
 Over the sandbags helmets you'll find,  
 Corpses in front and corpses behind.



Far, far from Ypres I long to be,  
 Where German snipers can't pot at me.  
 Think of me crouching where the worms creep,  
 Waiting for the sergeant to sing me to sleep.  
 Sing me to sleep in some old shed,  
 Where rats are running about my head;  
 Stretched out upon my waterproof,  
 Dodging the raindrops from the roof.  
 Sing me to sleep where campfires glow,  
 Full of French bread, safe from the snow;  
 Dreaming of home and nights in the West,  
 Somebody's trench boots on my chest,  
 Far from the star-lights I'd love to be,  
 Lights of old Leeds I'd rather see;  
 Think of me crouching where the worms creep,  
 Waiting for the sergeant to sing me to sleep."<sup>372</sup>

A man in the 1/8th composed a little ditty that was sung by his comrades to the tune of 'Who'll play Puss in the Corner?':

"Let's all go into the dugout  
 When the shells go over.  
 If a Swish bang hits you  
 Well! You won't see Dover.  
 Let's all go into the dugout,  
 It's the safest place you see  
 Swi-ish! Swi-ish! [shouted] Bang! Bang! Bang!  
 Into the dugout with me."<sup>373</sup>

Hymn-singing was a popular form of singing, and not merely a part of religious observance. Religion had an important part to play in everyday life. Church parades were held in the rest areas on Sunday afternoons for Anglicans, Nonconformists and Catholics. They were invariably held in the open air with the unit drawn up in the form of a hollow square, the padre at the centre near the altar which was often composed of the Bugle Band's drums. 146 Brigade had one Catholic priest, one Nonconformist minister, and 4 Church of England chaplains, one for each battalion. A Rabbi was provided for the Jews in the second-line Leeds Rifles, but the number of Jews in 146 Brigade was so small that they had to be content with occasional services held by a visiting Rabbi. Attendance at church parade in the first-line Leeds Rifles was not compulsory, but was strongly encouraged by having plenty of the popular hymns which the men enjoyed singing and which they sang "with great heartiness."<sup>374</sup> Even a convinced unbeliever like Knowles could enjoy church parade.<sup>375</sup> In some units of the Division only C of E parades were held, and in many, attendance was compulsory, as in the 1/6th DWR, where it was invariably followed by a march out accompanied by the band and an hour's squad (i.e. close order) drill, and only men certified by the MO as being on the Sick List were excused attendance.<sup>376</sup> The Catholic padre of 146 Brigade, a "muscular Christian", was said to maximise attendance at Mass by compelling backsliders to put



the boxing gloves on with him. Every time the Leeds Rifles went into the trenches, the Catholic padre would stand at the end of the communication trench giving absolution to each member of his flock as he filed past.<sup>377</sup> Virtually every man carried a New Testament or St John's Gospel which contained prayers and hymns, presented by Christian agencies such as the YMCA, SPCK, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Scripture Gift Mission, and religious observance was thus possible in the forward zone. John Greaves, a member of the Church Army, and 2290 L/Cpl (later CSM) Joseph Carter, a Wesleyan, were among those who held prayer meetings in the 1/7th.<sup>378</sup> Some committed Christians managed to hold services in the trenches, even in the front line itself until all such activities in the front line had to be banned:

"We always manage to have a service on a Sunday night. Last Sunday we had just begun a service when the Germans started shelling us. We were all startled, but we stuck it all right."

"We manage to have a service on a Sunday evening, and if you heard our platoon choir you would think they were class enough for the Parish Church. We have some very good singers, and also a champion leader, who is also a good preacher."<sup>379</sup>

"Services are often held in curious places. He [Padre Hood] has conducted them in barns, drawing-rooms of old castles, dug-outs, orchards, market-squares, and sand dunes ... he instanced one which was held in a dug-out. It was rather a long one ... with room for about 30 men to sit, or crouch, down each side. When he looked in, it was nearly full, and upon asking, 'Well, what about a service?' the idea was eagerly taken up ... without any more formality a service was held, and some of the old favourite hymns sung. The place quickly became crowded. No daylight entered the dugout, and a few candles stuck in the floor were the only illuminant."<sup>380</sup>

Religion, defined as a system of beliefs or doctrines of faith, played a vital role in the generation and maintenance of morale. The various aspects of this topic are discussed in Chap 14, Section 14.6.



NOTES

1. "Eye-Deep in Hell" is a quotation from Ezra Pound, 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley E.P. Ode pour l'élection de son sepulchre', IV.
2. OH, Vol. V, 1916 (London, 1932) p. 93.
3. Major Gen Sir W.G. Macpherson, ed., History of the Great War, Based on Official Documents: Medical Services (hereinafter referred to as MOH): Diseases of the War, Vol. I (London, 1922), Table, p.2; p. 4; Table, p.1.
4. For these, see MOH, Hygiene of the War (London, 1923), Vol. I, Chap. 1 passim.
5. MOH, Diseases of the War, Vol. I, pp. 359-60, 9.
6. Since War Diaries had to be submitted without fail on the last of every month and definitive casualty figures might frequently not be immediately available, it would hardly be reasonable to expect definitive figures to appear in the Diaries.
7. Knowles letter, 15 June 1916.
8. Leeds Rifles casualties were calculated from the Tetley Diary; the casualty lists in E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918, Vol. I, (London, [1924]; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary; 1/8 Bn War Diary, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], War Office, WO 95/2795. 667 x 6 is the estimate of battle casualties in the 12 infantry battalions, 279 that in the non-infantry units (assuming these to be, as in Magnus' Appendix IV, 6.5% of the divisional total).
9. Oral testimony. A daily figure of 0.3% of strength is stated to have been accepted by the authorities as "the permissible limit of inefficiency due to sickness in an army in the field"; units with higher figures were investigated (MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, preface, p.ix).
10. Knowles letters, 15 June 1916, 14 November 1915.
11. Testimony of 132 Sgt Harry Thackray, 1/8th, MO's assistant i/c the Aid Post.
12. See, for example, J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun: A Personal Narrative of the Somme, Ypres and Arras (London, 1978), p. 176.
13. Malingering - feigning illness or infirmity - was classed as "disgraceful conduct" under Section 18 of the Army Act. It was a court-martial offence liable to be punished by imprisonment. "Disgraceful conduct" also included injuries self-inflicted with intent to render oneself unfit for service.
14. Testimony of 132 Sgt Harry Thackray, 8th. Surgical cases were normally dealt with at the CCS.
15. Tetley Diary; Capt P.G. Bales, The History of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919 (Halifax and London, 1920), p. 49.
16. Knowles letters, 10, 14, 17 November, 3, 20 December 1915.
17. L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (London, 1920), p. 65.
18. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 22, 5, 6 November 1915.
19. Tetley Diary.
20. Lupton letters, 8, 21 January 1917.



21. See, for example, Report on the Health of the Army for the year 1909, p. 29; 1911 Cmd. 5477, xlvii, 27.
22. OH, Vol. V, 1916, p. 93.
23. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
24. Knowles letters, 18 July, 18, 28 August 1915.
25. Testimony of 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 8th.
26. 1/8th Bn War Diary, January, April 1916, PRO, WO 95/2795.
27. Knowles letters, 7, 31 March, 19 May 1916.
28. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., p. 66.
29. Lupton letter, 12 March 1917.
30. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 26-31 July 1916.
31. Oral testimony.
32. Knowles letters, 4, 25 September, 7 October 1916.
33. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 129, 238; 'Carry On! The Continued Chronicle of K (1) By the Junior Sub', Blackwood's Magazine, 202 (1917), 375.
34. J.M. Winter, 'Britain's "Lost Generation" of the First World War', Population Studies, 31, 3 (1977), part 3, Table 4, 451.
35. The infantry consisted about 60% (which fell to 45% by 1 October 1918) of the Army on the Western Front, but it sustained 85.49% of the total fatalities and 82.77% of the wounded in this theatre. About 34.5% of the infantry strength was wounded (calculated from General Annual Reports on the British Army (including the Territorial Force) for the period from 1st October 1913 to 30th September 1919, Part IV, War Casualties, pp. 62-71; 1921 Cmd. 1193, xx, 469).
36. Letter, Major Braithwaite to Editor, Yorkshire Evening News, 13 August 1915.
37. Nationally, the number of men who joined the Army from August 1915 to the end of the war was 1.48 times the number who joined during the first year of the war (calculated from statistics given in D. Winter, Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War (London, 1978), pp. 27,29).
38. This phenomenon was discussed at some length in Chap. 6, section 6.1.
39. J.M. Winter, op.cit., Table 2, 451.
40. L. Magnus, op.cit., Appendix IV, pp. 323-4.
41. J.M. Winter, op.cit., 451.
42. Oral testimony.
43. 2/8th Bn War Diary, 29, 7 June, 15 August 1915, PRO, WO 95/3082.
44. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 74.
45. Letters to wife, 16, 3 March, 10 January 1916, Kitson Clark Papers, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 2004.
46. Knowles letters, 26 February, 3 March 1916.
47. Col Kitson Clark to wife, 9 August 1915, Kitson Clark Papers, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 2004.
48. 1/8th Bn War Diary, December 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795. The data on strengths given in this paragraph was obtained from the War Diary.



49. OH, 1918 Vol. V (London, 1947), p. 594.
50. I.F.W. Beckett, 'The Local Community and the Great War: Aspects of Military Participation', Records of Bucks, XX, part 4 (1978), 508.
51. E. Wyrall, op.cit., p. 254.
52. In the Leeds Rifles casualty lists of 1917-18 (ibid., Vol. II (London, [1928])), are former members of the following regiments: Northumberland Divisional Cycle Company, Nottinghamshire Yeomanry, 20th Hussars, Queen's Own Oxford Hussars, Northumberland Fusiliers, Lancashire Fusiliers, Durham Light Infantry, Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry, Sherwood Foresters, Royal Berkshire, Royal West Kent, Worcestershire, Leicestershire, Essex, Suffolk, Devonshire, Gloucestershire, Cheshire, Middlesex, Dorset, North Staffordshire, Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, Liverpool, and Border Regiments, Labour Corps.
53. Testimony of Mr Arthur Calvert and others.
54. Calculated from Roll of B Coy, 8th Bn, 1 January 1919.
55. See R.H. Ahrenfeldt, Psychiatry in the British Army in the Second World War (New York and London, 1958), pp. 214-5.
56. See, for example, Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 67-8.
57. Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (London, 1945), p. 181.
58. Lupton letters, 25 August, 2 September 1917; 1/8th Bn War Diary, July-September 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795; 8th Bn War Diary, April, June, July 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083.
59. W. Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Act IV, sc. v, l.78.
60. Lupton letters, 22, 16 August, 9 October 1915. Ironically, in the winter of 1914-15, the amount of space per man in barrack rooms in UK training establishments was, with misgivings, reduced to 400 cubic feet (MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, pp. 257-8).
61. Tetley Diary.
62. Leeds Mercury, 20 July, 4 October 1915; Yorkshire Evening News, 27 May 1915.
63. Lupton letter, 11 February 1916.
64. Knowles letter, 5 August 1916.
65. See A.R. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home (London and Montreal, 1977), pp. 27-41.
66. MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, pp. 279-80.
67. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 2 May, 19 November 1915; Tetley Diary; Butcher Diary, 9 September 1915; testimony of 2880 William A. Bywater, 8th; Lupton letter, 17 October 1915.
68. Op.cit., Blackwood's Magazine, 199 (1916), 131; see also "Ex-Private X", War is War (London, 1930), pp. 118, 157. For further complaints about rest camps (and "rest") see, 'At the Front', Punch, CXLIX, 8 December 1915, 476.
69. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 26 November 1916, 14 July, 6 October 1917, 13 June 1916; Knowles letter, 15 June 1916.
70. See S. Rogerson, Twelve Days (London, 1933), p. 13, sketch opposite p.12.
71. L.D. Spicer, Letters from France 1915-1918 (London, 1979), p. 95.
72. Tetley Diary; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 3 February 1916; Lupton letter, 11 February 1916.



73. See OH, 1917 Vol. II (London, 1948), note 1 to Chap. XI, pp. 211-2.
74. Lupton letter, 17 February 1917.
75. Yorkshire Evening Post, 31 December 1915. "Remember Belgium!" was an official recruiting poster slogan of 1914-15 and naturally became a popular soldiers' joking catch-phrase.
76. Knowles letter, 23 July 1915.
77. Lupton letter, 11 August 1915; Butcher Diary, 12 August 1915.
78. Knowles letters, 5 September, 14 November 1915; Lupton letters, 5, 2 September 1915; 1/7th Bn War Diary, October-November 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795.
79. OH, Vol. V, 1916, p. 156.
80. Espin Diary, 10, 16, 18 November 1915.
81. Lupton letter, 4 November 1915. Capt Bales makes an identical complaint (op.cit., p. 47).
82. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 28 October - 2 November 1915.
83. Lupton letters, 6, 13 November 1915. Walking on the parapet was strictly against orders. Knowles wrote the following June "I have seen a party of us climb out of a trench and walk on the parapet rather than go over our knees in water. Everyone would sooner chance their arms rather than put up with personal discomfort" (Knowles letter, 29 June 1916). Similar sentiments were also expressed by Sgt J.B. Taylor, 1/7th (Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 July 1915). Respondent 2122 Robert Vine, 1/7th, related how he was wounded by a sniper on 5th November 1915 while "going along the top" to fetch water.
84. Lupton letter, 10 November 1915; Knowles letter, 14 November 1915.
85. Testimony of 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 7th.
86. Testimonies of 2780 Harold Kirk, 7th; 1788 John Allman, 8th; 2607 Walter Atkinson, 7th.
87. Knowles letters, 6 December, 10 November, 18, 20, 27, 25 December, 1915.
88. Ibid., 19, 30 November 1915.
89. Espin Diary, 3 December 1915; Lupton letters, 28 November, 11 December 1915.
90. Knowles letters, 8, 9 June 1916.
91. MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, p. 24 gives the average dry weight in winter as approx. 80½ lbs.
92. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 130, 131, 129. Modern experts in ergonomics recommend maximum weight limits for male workers that are much lower. A 1978 article recommended 55 lbs. as a maximum for men aged 20-35, adding a rider that it should be reduced by a quarter if regular and frequent handling is necessary (Dr G. Socrates, 'Some aspects of ergonomic stress', Management Services, 22, 1, January 1978, 51).
93. Lupton letters, 5 September, 30 October, 4, 13 November 1915.
94. See E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 182; Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., pp. 179-80.
95. Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., p. 179.
96. The remainder of this paragraph is based on: Lupton letters, 16 February 1916, 31 January 1917; Knowles letters, 14, 26 February 1916, 8, 24 February 1917; Espin Diary, 18 February 1916; Trench Standing Orders of the 62nd Division (1917), p. 18.



97. Oral testimony.
98. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 20 June 1915; 1/8th Bn War Diary, 2 August 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795; Yorkshire Evening News, 6 July 1915.
99. Lupton letters, 12 June, 4 July, 1 August 1915, 17 June, 15 July 1917.
100. Casualty List of Officers, 7th Bn, 1915-1917; testimony of 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 8th.
101. Rfm W. Johnson, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 2 March 1916.
102. See Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor (London, 1861), Vol. I, p. 15, Vol. III, pp. 1-11; Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London (London, 1904 edn.), Series I, Vol. I, pp. 249-50.
103. Oral testimony; photograph in Yorkshire Evening News, 30 December 1915.
104. Letters from France 1915-1918, p. 25.
105. Lupton letter, 23 September 1916.
106. Compare M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), pp. 88-9.
107. Sanderson Memoirs; testimonies of OR Sgt A. MacKellar, 5th SR, 2992 George A. Walker, 7th, and many others.
108. It would appear that Chap. XII of MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. II, paints a far too rosy picture of the prevention of infestation by lice.
109. Testimonies of 2870 Harold Kirk, 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, Harry Martin, 7th, 1764 Sgt A.G. Illingworth, 1st WR Field Ambulance.
110. Butcher Diary, 22 May 1915; Lupton letter, 9 August 1915; Knowles letter, 8 February 1917; testimony of 2158 Harold Dean, 1/8th; Sanderson Memoirs.
111. Testimonies of Sgt F. Dilley, 2/8th, and Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th.
112. Knowles letter, 19 July 1916; Cpl A.B. Elphick, 7th, Leeds Mercury, 1 September 1915.
113. Leeds Mercury, 18 August, 8 September, 1 October 1915.
114. Data on bathing arrangements obtained from the Butcher and Espin Diaries, dates cited, and from the testimony of 2008 Provost-Sgt Harry Ellis, 7th.
115. Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 July 1915.
116. Testimonies of 167 Sgt Charles Young, 7th, and 2812 L/Cpl Percy Shepherd, 8th.
117. Knowles letter, (undated) December 1915.
118. Lupton letters, 6 August, 15 October, 4, 10 November, 4 December 1915, 3 January, 21 February 1916; testimony of his servant, 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 8th.
119. First noted in the 1/8th War Diary of 31 March 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
120. Rfm W.R. Morcombe, Leeds Mercury, 16 June 1915; Rfm Horace Boothroyd, ibid., 17 June 1915.
121. Oral testimony.
122. MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, p. 312, Vol. II, p. 130.
123. Testimony of 3354 Edward Woodhead, 7th.
124. MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. I, p. 313.



125. Lupton letter, 30 October 1915; CO's letter to Editor, Yorkshire Post, 17 April 1915.
126. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 November 1915.
127. See L.D. Spicer, op.cit., letter dated 7 November 1915, p. 16.
128. Knowles letter, 30 November 1915; Lupton letter, 28 November 1915; Leeds Mercury, 23 November 1915; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 24 November 1915.
129. Testimony of 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 8th QM staff.
130. Rfm J. Towneley, 7th, Leeds Mercury, 1 January 1916; Rfm George Smith, 7th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 August 1915.
131. Knowles letter, 24 December 1915.
132. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th; Knowles letter, 5 January 1916; Espin Diary, 1 August - 9 September 1915.
133. See Sir E.L. Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918 (London, 1967), p. 44.
134. Lupton letter, 13 November 1915.
135. Compare Capt E.V. Tempest, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment, Vol. I, 1/6th Battalion (Bradford, 1921), pp. 85-6.
136. Knowles letter, 30 November 1915; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 14 December 1915.
137. Testimony of 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 8th, and others.
138. Capt E.V. Tempest, op.cit., p. 30.
139. Lupton letters, 24 January, 20 July 1915, 8 July 1916.
140. Testimony of 2891 Bugler Charles E. Hannan, 8th.
141. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 24 November 1915.
142. Old Soldiers Never Die (London, 1933; 1964 Faber paperback edn.), p. 246.
143. See, for example, 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 23 November 1915.
144. Poor Bloody Infantry (London, 1976), p. 52.
145. Espin Diary, 12 May 1915; 1/7th Bn War Diary, 25 October 1915, PRO, WO 95/2795; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 11 December 1915; "Ex-Private X", War is War, p. 68; testimonies of 3018 David Clayton, 2/7th, 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, and others.
146. See MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. II, pp. 39-49, 57.
147. For example, Knowles letter, 13 July 1915; Lupton letter, 9 April 1917.
148. Plenty and Want: a social history of diet in England from 1815 to the present day (London and Edinburgh, 1966), p. 214.
149. 'The First Hundred Thousand by the Junior Sub', Blackwood's Magazine, 198 (1915), 441.
150. For example, E.W. Parker, Into Battle 1914-1918 (London, 1964), p.40.
151. See also, for example, N. Gladden, The Somme 1916, a personal account (London, 1974), p. 24.
152. Leeds Mercury, 20 July 1915. Army biscuits were extremely hard. A Sergeant Wilson of the 1/8th made one into a photograph frame which is now in the Leeds City Museum (Evening Post, 12 June 1974).
153. Oral testimony.



154. Testimonies of 1726 Jack Barker, 1/7th, and 2222 William H. Reynard, 2/8th; Lupton letter, 8 July 1916.
155. See his Foreword, p.xi, to S. Rogerson, op.cit.
156. This paragraph is based on the testimonies of 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 2222 William H. Reynard, 2880 William A. Bywater, 1090 Sgt James Rhind and others of the 1/8th and 8th.
157. Lupton letter, 9 April 1917. There is a reference in the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary entry for 23 November 1917 to the practice of giving cooked supper to all ranks.
158. Lupton letters, 30 October, 16 November, 26 May, 6 July, 6 December 1915.
159. Espin Diary, 12 May 1915.
160. Oral testimonies.
161. Testimonies of Albert E. Pitts, Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th, and others.
162. Oral testimony.
163. Since many participant-authors, e.g. L.D. Spicer (op.cit., p.25), state that parcels were not allowed to be sent up to the trenches, the Riflemen seem to have been extraordinarily lucky in this respect. The carrying-up of parcels may have been a concession left to the discretion of the Brigade or Divisional GOC. Parcels were not sent up to the Leeds Rifles in the front line during difficult periods, such as July 1916.
164. Oral testimony.
165. "A Halifax Territorial", Yorkshire Post, 21 May 1915; Sgt G.M. Barnett, 7th, ibid., 31 May 1915, Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 May 1915.
166. Up to Mametz (London, 1931; 1981 edn.), p.54.
167. Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918 (Ilfracombe, 1977), p.40.
168. Testimony of Sgt Albert Bowden, 8th; Rfm James Sugden, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 16 June 1915.
169. See MOH, Hygiene of the War, Vol. II, pp. 51-2.
170. Testimonies of Albert E. Pitts, 1/8th, and David Clayton, 2/7th.
171. Testimony of Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th.
172. Testimonies of Frank Simpson and 2229 Walter Stead, 8th; Espin Diary, 23, 26 February 1916.
173. Leeds Mercury, 5 June 1915.
174. Espin Diary, 16 April - 16 May, 21 May, 30 November, 2 December 1915.
175. Butcher Diary, 23 April, 22, 26, 29, 8 May, 5 June 1915.
176. Richardson letter, 7 May 1915. From the time he was demobbed 1712 L/Sgt John W. Sanderson habitually ate for his supper sandwiches containing slices of cheese spread with jam (oral testimony).
177. Leeds Mercury, 24 June 1915.
178. Butcher Diary, 19 May 1915.
179. Oral testimony.
180. See also L.D. Spicer, op.cit., p. 5.
181. Testimony of 167 Sgt Charles Young, 7th.
182. L/Cpl Colin Cameron, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 June 1915; Reynard Memoirs.



183. Lupton letter, 19 July 1917; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 18 July 1917, 14 November 1916.
184. Testimony of Walter Wilson, 1/5th WYR.
185. Oral testimony. Sgt Alchorne saw many horrifying sights during his first days in the battle zone of 1917. He classed Beaucourt as "the worst [area] I ever saw in France for gruesomeness. Even Thiepval, bad as it was, could not compare with it ... The carnage in this area had been awful ... Not more than a few inches separated one shell hole from another, while huge mine craters abounded everywhere. Masses of barbed wire entanglements were intermingled with thousands of dead bodies. It was no uncommon sight to see as many as 8 or 10 dead soldiers in one shell hole. I saw in the distance what appeared to be a man standing gazing silently at the sights around him, but on getting closer found it to be a headless body of a Tommy firmly wedged in the wire. The most common sight was a boot containing a foot severed at the ankle and they seemed to be everywhere" (Alchorne Memoirs).
186. See, for example, R. Roberts, The Classic Slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century (Manchester, 1971), p.97.
187. Yorkshire Evening News, 19 May 1915.
188. Leeds Mercury, 21 July 1915.
189. Testimonies of 2780 Harold Kirk, 2605 Ellison Whitley, 7th, and others. Peter H. Liddle dismisses "familiar stories" concerning skeleton hands as "theatrical bravado" (Men of Gallipoli (London, 1976), p.220). Such a hand is referred to in the unpublished letters of R.C. Case, RE (Imperial War Museum, Dept. of Documents, P. 147); see also Ronald Blythe, Akenfield: portrait of an English village (London, 1969), p.40.
190. Rfm W. Marsden, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 15 July 1915.
191. See, for example, J. Terraine, ed., General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964), p.7; S. Rogerson, op.cit., pp. 82-3.
192. S.A. Stouffer et al., (Princeton, NJ, 1949), Vol. II, p.88.
193. Quoted Col A.C.T. White, The Story of Army Education 1643-1963 (London, 1963), pp. 46-7; a variant is given in 'Diary of a Subaltern', Blackwood's Magazine, 197 (1915), 479-80, and yet another in Griffith, op.cit., p. 60.
194. Guy Chapman, A Kind of Survivor (London, 1975), p.64.
195. Sanderson Memoirs. On trench routine and "free time", see also, for example, V. Walpole, The Men in the Line. Sketches and Impressions, Western Front, 1916-18 (Cape Town and Johannesburg, [1929]), pp. 25-35, 63-71.
196. Butcher Diary, 27-29 May, 20, 23 July 1915.
197. Lupton letter, 2 December 1915. Night patrolling of the lines was described by Sidney Rogerson as "the usual, tedious routine of an officer's night-life in the line". This involved roaming up and down, talking to the men with "the vague general idea" of keeping them cheerful and at work and taking a turn at digging in order to keep himself warm, "all the while trying to stave off sleep" (op.cit., p. 78). Daytime line-patrolling was broadly similar.
198. Op.cit., pp. 43, 46; see also p. 141.
199. See, for example, J. Terraine, ed., op.cit., p. 226.
200. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 22 August, 25 December 1915.



201. See, for example, L.D. Spicer, op.cit., p. 19; poem 'Q', P. Beaver, ed., The Wipers Times (London, 1973), p. 128.
202. The Bystander's Fragments from France (London, [1916-18]), Vols. I-VI.
203. The Salient, Christmas 1915 issue. A rather similar poem, 'An ode to Q', appears in The Wipers Times, p. 19.
204. See, for example, Anon., 'The Making of the Infantryman', American Journal of Sociology, LI (1945-6), 376-9.
205. Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 October 1915.
206. Soldier from the Wars Returning (London, 1965; 1970 Arrow paperback edn.), p.104.
207. Oral testimony.
208. Yorkshire Post, 2 October 1915; F.P. Gibbon, The 42nd (East Lancashire) Division 1914-1918 (London, 1920), p. 116.
209. Testimony of 3354 L/Cpl Edward Woodhead, 1/7th battalion bomber.
210. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 1/7th.
211. For example, 2158 Harold Dean, 8th, Yorkshire Post, 14 May 1915; Rfm James Sugden, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 16 June 1915.
212. Espin Diary, 24 June 1915.
213. Ibid., 15 February 1916; testimony of 976 Thomas Wilson, 7th.
214. Testimony of 2407 L/Cpl Arthur Wainwright, 8th.
215. Testimony of 976 Thomas Wilson, 7th.
216. Rfm W.R. Morcombe, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 16 June 1915; Rfm Percy Brook, 8th, ibid., 24 July 1915.
217. Testimonies of Fred Hearn, 8th, and 2407 L/Cpl Arthur Wainwright, 8th.
218. Butcher Diary, July-August 1915.
219. Knowles letter, 3 March 1916.
220. Espin Diary, 24 June, 22 August 1915; testimony of 1757 L/Cpl George A. Blaymire, 8th.
221. Rfm W. Johnson, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 2 March 1916.
222. Oral testimony.
223. OH, Vol. V, 1916, p.157.
224. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 29 July 1915.
225. Oral testimony.
226. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th.
227. Lupton letter, 1 March 1916.
228. An unnamed 1/7th Bn officer, Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May 1915; compare C.M. Slack, op.cit., p. 42.
229. Issue of 16 October 1915 (Vol. I, Sept-Dec 1915 (Sheffield, 1916)).
230. Testimony of 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 8th.
231. Knowles letter, 17 July 1916.
232. Foreword, p.xi, to S. Rogerson, op.cit.
233. Oral testimonies.



234. Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920 (London, 1922), Part XXIII, Table (vi)(b), p.649.
235. Testimonies of 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 7th; 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 8th, and others.
236. H.L. Williams, A. Lubin and J.J. Goodnow, 'Impaired Performance with Acute Sleep Loss', Psychological Monographs, Vol. 73 (1959), no. 14.
237. Knowles letter, 23 February 1916.
238. B.H. Liddell Hart, loc.cit.
239. Op.cit., pp. 94-5.
240. 'The Great Sacrifice' and other poems (London, 1917), p.16.
241. Disenchantment (London, 1922; 1968 edn.), pp. 44-5, see also p.47.
242. Compare the testimony of Platoon-Sgt J.E. Yates, quoted Capt E.V. Tempest, op.cit., p. 120.
243. For example, Lyn Macdonald, broadcast 'I died in Hell ... They called it Passchendaele', BBC Radio 4, October 1977, repeated June 1978.
244. Leeds Mercury, 20 May 1915. See also Ian Hay, 'The First Hundred Thousand ...', Blackwood's Magazine, 198 (1915), 440.
245. S. Rogerson, op.cit., Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii.
246. Testimony of 2363 Ben Clark, 8th. The importance of the role of humour in the culture of working-class adolescent males at the present day is discussed in Paul E. Willis, Learning to Labour: how working class kids get working class jobs (Farnborough, 1977), pp. 29-33.
247. Philip Gibbs, Realities of War (London, 1920), p. 110.
248. Quoted Capt P.G. Bales, op.cit., p. 51. Compare Byron, 'Don Juan', Canto IV, st. 4:  
     "And if I laugh at any mortal thing,  
     'Tis that I may not weep."
249. An opinion supported by, among others, C.E. Carrington, Soldier from the Wars Returning, p. 109; Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War (London, 1928; 1965 edn.), Introduction; Lord Moran, op.cit., p.14; N. Gladden, op.cit., p. 187.
250. Testimony of 2363 Ben Clark, 8th.
251. Testimonies of 1460 Cpl George Crowther and 1748 L/Cpl Jack Langton, 8th.
252. An unnamed Leeds Rifleman (probably P.G. Standley, 1/7th), Yorkshire Evening Post, 23 July 1915.
253. Lupton letters, 4, 10 May 1917, 2 September 1915.
254. Colin and Charles Cameron, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 27 May 1915; Rfm W. Rhodes, 7th, ibid., 7 July 1915. For further examples of soldier's humour, see M. Brown, op.cit., pp. 129-31.
255. Rfm G.F. Hyde, 7th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 14 May 1915; L/Sgt John Cape, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 May 1915; John and Herbert Rhodes, 8th, ibid., 22 May 1915; Sgt J.B. Taylor, 7th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 July 1915; Sgt Tommy Shimeld, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 23 November 1915; Rfm Arthur Oates, ibid., 1 October 1915.
256. Lupton letter, 26 May 1915.
257. Testimony of Sgt Dennis Furlong, 1st KOYLI; Leeds Mercury, 17 December 1915.



258. Rfm A. Appleton, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 7 June 1915; see also Rfm J. Goodall, Leeds Mercury, 18 June 1915.
259. Lupton letters, 2 June 1917, 1 November, 5 October 1915.
260. Leeds Mercury, 1 October 1915.
261. The Lead Swinger, Vol. I.
262. The Wipers Times, issue of 12 February 1916, p.9.
263. Lupton letters, 15 November, 30 October 1915.
264. Her Privates We (London, 1930), Chap. 14, p. 335; Twelve Days, p.130; General Jack's Diary 1914-1918, entry for 6 January 1915, pp. 92-3; An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-1918 (London, 1972), letter dated 30 March 1917, p.171; Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War, letter dated 9 March 1916, p. 46.
265. Poor Bloody Infantry, pp. 16, 20, 22-3, 82-8, 97-8.
266. Op.cit., pp. 22-3.
267. Op.cit., p. 64.
268. Yorkshire Evening News, 12 May 1915; Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May 1915; Lupton letter, 18 August 1915; testimony of Capt H.R. Lupton; Yorkshire Evening News, 12 June 1915.
269. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th, and others. Mary Gordon was the wife of John Gordon, former Lord Mayor and retired Leeds Rifles officer.
270. S.A. Stouffer et al., The American Soldier, Vol. I, pp.178-9.
271. Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 January 1916; Yorkshire Post, 2 October 1915.
272. Yorkshire Evening News, 17 June, 15 October 1915; Leeds Mercury, 20 July, 5 June 1915; Sanderson Memoirs. Compare, for instance, S. Rogerson, op.cit., p.96.
273. Yorkshire Evening News, 16 October 1915.
274. Written Parliamentary answer, 90 HC Deb. 5s. 19 February 1917, col. 1006.
275. These explanations are given in: Sanderson Memoirs; D. Winter, Death's Men, p. 103; M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War, p. 75; L. Macdonald, They Called it Passchendaele (London, 1978), p. 36.
276. p. 23.
277. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th.
278. Knowles letter, 20 April 1915; Yorkshire Evening News, 17 June 1915; Yorkshire Evening Post, 23 July 1915; Leeds Mercury, 4 December 1915.
279. Yorkshire Post, 3 May 1915; testimony of 1712 L/Sgt John W. Sanderson, 132 Sgt Harry Thackray, 8th, and others; Knowles letter, 5 September 1915.
280. Testimonies of Albert Pitts, 1/8th, and 4726 John W. Stephenson, 1/6th DWR.
281. Daily Graphic, 18 May 1916.
282. Margin Released, a writer's reminiscences and reflections (London, 1962), p. 102. See also G. Coppard, With a Machine-gun to Cambrai (1968; 1980 edn.), p. 85.
283. Article on the APS, Yorkshire Post, 27 December 1915. In one week in December 1915 BEF post offices handled 5,160,713 letters and 52,477 parcels, but by September 1916 these totals had more than doubled.



In Christmas week 1916, BEF post offices received 157,948 bags of mail. All Divisional and Brigade HQs had branch post offices, each with their own postmarks for franking mail. Stable fronts actually speeded up the mails since postal lorries had then no need to travel in supply columns (see OH, Vol. V, 1916, pp. 125-9). In 1917 the weekly volume of mail sent overseas averaged 90,000 bags of parcels and over 40,000 bags of letters. Over 800,000 parcels weighing in total over 1,300 tons and about 9 million letters weighing in total over 350 tons were sent to the Western Front weekly. During Christmas week 1916 30m. letters and 5m. parcels left the UK, compared with 9m. letters and 3m. parcels in the corresponding period of 1915, when the size of the Army in the Field was, of course, much smaller (source of statistics: 94 HC Deb. 5s. 5 June 1917, col. 57). Territorial battalions commonly generated huge volumes of postal traffic: the mail received by the 1/5th SR equalled in volume the combined total of that of the other four battalions, all Regular, of the 19th Brigade (Lt Col R.M. Benzie et al., The Fifth Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles 1914-1919 (Glasgow, 1936), p. 32).

284. Sanderson Memoirs.
285. See, for example, Ian Hay, 'The First Hundred Thousand ...' Blackwood's Magazine, 198 (1915), 443-7.
286. Lupton letters, 17 October 1916, 28 May 1915.
287. For this, see OH, Vol. III 1915 (London, 1927), p. 32.
288. See, for example, Knowles letter, 29 August 1916.
289. Testimonies of 3257 George S. Yeomans, 3149 James W. Warman, 7th, and Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th.
290. Knowles letter, 18 August 1916.
291. Leeds Mercury, 23 November 1915.
292. Lupton letter, 20 August 1915.
293. Espin Diary, 5 August 1915; Knowles letter, 6 April 1916; testimonies of 1987 Sydney Appleyard and 1726 Jack Barker, 1/7th.
294. 90 HC Deb. 5s. 27 February 1917, col. 1825; 91 HC Deb. 5s. 6 March 1917, col. 186, 8 March 1917, col. 1968; 92 HC Deb. 5s. 28 March 1917, cols. 439-40, 27 March 1917, col. 288, 2 April 1917, cols. 949-50, 19 April 1917, cols. 1858-9; 93 HC Deb. 5s. 14 May 1917, col. 1353, 16 May 1917, col. 1618; 94 HC Deb. 5s. 19 June 1917, col. 1590; 95 HC Deb. 5s. 5 July 1917, col. 1313; 96 HC Deb. 5s. 25 July 1917, cols. 1243-4; 97 HC Deb. 5s. 9 August 1917, col. 576.
295. Testimony of 2122 Robert Vine, 7th.
296. Knowles letters, 15 August, 5 September 1915; Lupton letter, 17 October 1915.
297. Leeds Mercury, 18 August 1915.
298. Testimonies of 30 Frederick Dent, 1/3rd WR Field Ambulance and 1726 Jack Barker, 7th. Rfm Barker produced a letter he had written to his parents from a convalescent camp on 17 September 1916, which corroborated his statement.
299. Disenchantment, Chap. VII, 'Can't believe a word'; The Anatomy of Courage, Chap. VI, 'Nemesis of Deception'.
300. Leeds Mercury, 18 May 1915.
301. Lupton letters, 4, 6 July 1916.
302. Testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th; Knowles letters, 10 March 1916, 7 May 1917.



303. Op.cit., OUP The World's Classics 1956 edn., p. 245; see also J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun, p. 10.
304. Espin Diary, 19 December 1915. Divisional casualties are given in OH, Vol. V, 1916, p. 161, 1/7th casualties in the Tetley Diary.
305. Rfm P.G. Standley, 7th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 January 1916.
306. See C.M. Slack, op.cit., p. 62.
307. Lupton letter, 6 July 1916.
308. See, for example, the poem 'All Quiet on the VIth Corps Front', quoted in Chap. 12, section 12.2.
309. Lupton letter, 6 July 1916.
310. Knowles letters, (undated) January 1916, 29 November 1916.
311. Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 November 1916.
312. Lupton letter, 10 April 1918.
313. The Wipers Times, pp. xiii-xiv.
314. Ibid., p. 365.
315. Testimony of 30 Frederick Dent, 1/3rd WR Field Ambulance.
316. Charles Edmonds (pseudonym of C.E. Carrington MC), A Subaltern's War (London, 1930; 1972 facsimile edn.), p. 195.
317. The British Army in the First World War: The Regulars, The Territorials and Kitchener's Army, with some of the campaigns into which they fitted (London, 1968), preface.
318. Col Evelyn Wood et al., The Citizen Soldier (London, 1939), p.49.
319. A Subaltern's War, p. 120.
320. S. Rogerson, op.cit., p.5.
321. Oral testimony.
322. Noted in the Butcher Diary.
323. J. Terraine, ed., op.cit., p.152, see also pp.212, 93.
324. Lupton letter, 6 January 1916. For the usual routine out of the line, see J. Terraine, ed., op.cit., p. 107, Appendix II, pp. 302-3; C.E. Carrington, Soldier from the Wars Returning, pp. 111-12.
325. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 9 September, 15 August, 16 October, 19 November 1915.
326. Lupton letter, 9 April 1917.
327. Testimony of 2865 Harry L. Yeadon, 7th.
328. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 20 June 1915.
329. Testimonies of 2156 "Len" Granger, 2008 Harry Ellis, 1854 Bugler Clarence Baddeley, 2642 Sgt George Herbert Guthrie, 7th, and others.
330. Testimony of 1608 Bandsman Frank G. Allatt, 7th; L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 64, sketch opposite, p.136.
331. Leeds Mercury, 23 September 1915.
332. Article, Yorkshire Evening News, 3 February 1916.
333. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 66; Leeds Mercury, 5 February 1916.
334. The data in this paragraph was provided by Bandmaster Sam B. Wood, 8th, Clifford Day, 2/7th, 3478 Sidney Lofthouse, 2/7th, William Laycock, 2/7th, 2222 William H. Reynard, 132 Sgt Harry Thackray, 8th, and 1485 Sgt Alfred Clarkson, 7th (Res.) Bn.

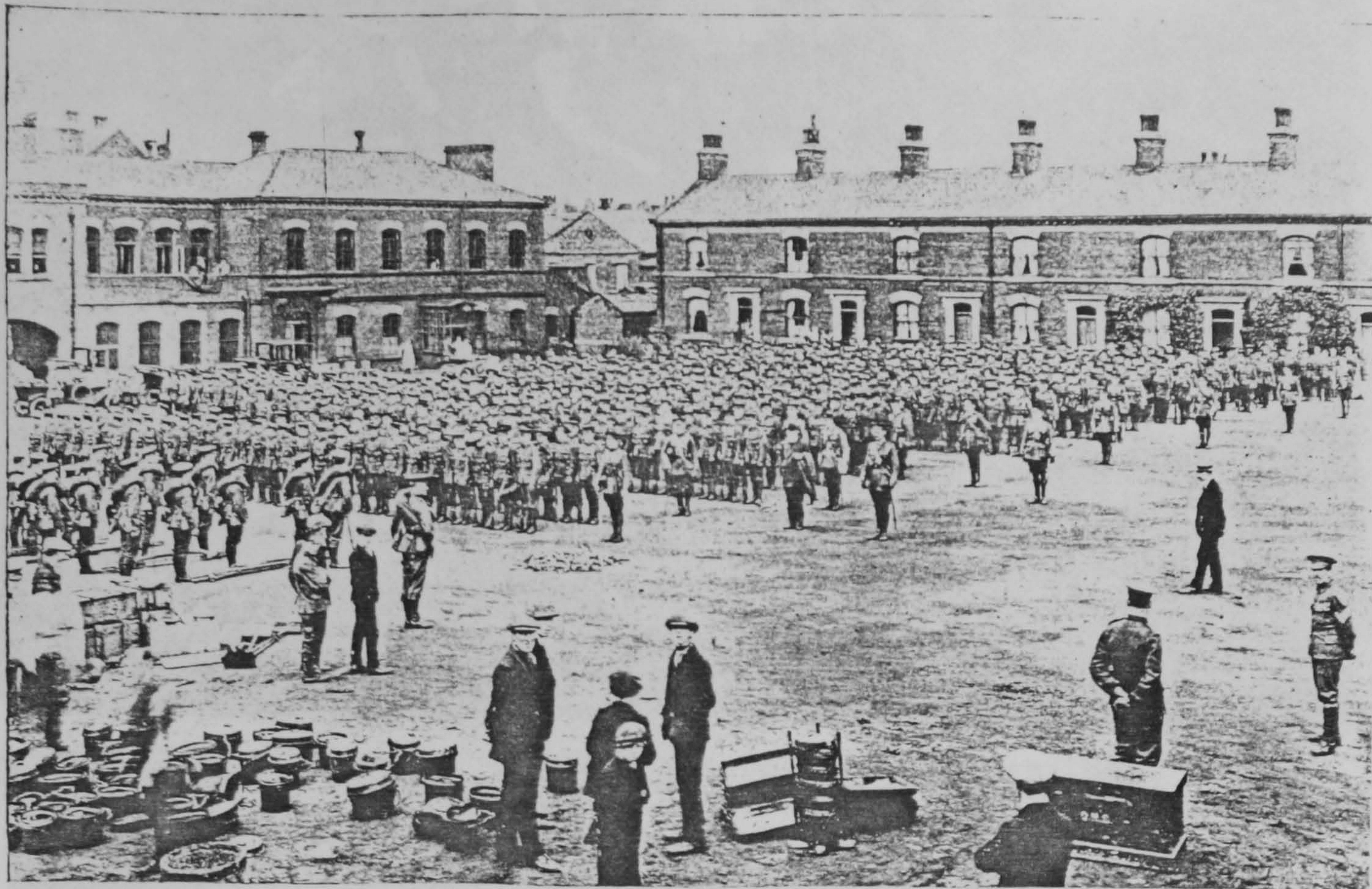


335. Testimony of 2642 Sgt George H. Guthrie, 7th.
336. Knowles letter, 8 September 1915.
337. Testimonies of 1726 Jack Barker and 2122 Robert R. Vine, 7th.
338. Father of former (English National) Opera North leading singer, Sheila Rex.
339. Yorkshire Evening News, 24 May 1915.
340. Lupton letter, 9 March 1917.
341. See, for example, 8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 15 April 1916.
342. Father of leading pop music composer, Alan Hawkshaw.
343. Oral testimony.
344. Knowles letters, 18 August, 10 June 1915, 16 April 1916.
345. Undated letter, Col E. Kitson Clark to wife, Kitson Clark Papers, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 2004; Lupton letter, 16 April 1916.
346. Tetley Diary.
347. L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 66.
348. Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 October 1915.
349. Testimonies of 4328 L. Frederick Hudson, 7th, 2158 Harold Dean, 2260 Edgar Taylor, 8th.
350. Espin Diary, 20 July 1915.
351. Testimony of 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, 7th.
352. Evening Post, 20 July 1974.
353. Knowles letters, 23 May, 16, 25 October, 17 November 1915, an undated letter of December 1915, 29 September 1916.
354. For the work of these particular Christian agencies, see A.B. Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War (London, 1978), p.154.
355. See Yorkshire Post, 2 August 1977; Evening Post, 4 November 1978; R. Wharton and A. Clarke, The Tommy Talker Bands of the West Riding (Bradford, 1979).
356. Testimonies of 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 2892 Signaller Herbert Creswick, 2122 Robert Vine (one of the mouthorgan players), 7th. See also letter Joe Ball to Editor, Yorkshire Evening News, 17 June 1915.
357. Rfm Ernest Ambrose, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 29 May 1915.
358. See Twelve Days, esp. p. 75.
359. Testimonies of 1661 William Gregory, 2992 George A. Walker, 1953 George Wood, 7th.
360. Leeds Mercury, 10 July 1915.
361. Rfm P.G. Standley, Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 January 1916; testimonies of 2290 CSM Joseph Carter, 2008 Provost Sgt Harry Ellis, 2606 Sgt Thomas Henry Watson, Cpl Jimmy Hansgate, 1677 L/Cpl George H. Strickland, 7th. R.B. Talbot Kelly, RFA, admitted to both rustling and "losing" unsuitable animals (A Subaltern's Odyssey: Memoirs of the Great War 1915-1917 (London, 1980), pp. 172-5): many respondents, both from the ASC and RFA as well as from the Leeds Rifles, had stories to relate about these illicit activities.
362. Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 May, 22 January 1916; Lupton letter, 19 February 1916.



363. Compare W.H.A. Groom, op.cit., pp. 62-3, 72, 97-8.
364. Knowles letters, 13, 16 September 1915, 4 January 1916; Yorkshire Evening Post, 12 January 1916.
365. Tetley Diary.
366. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 16 January 1916.
367. Espin Diary, 17, 18 January 1916.
368. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 19 January 1916.
369. Knowles letters, (undated) January 1916, 27, 30 April 1916.
370. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 31 May 1916.
371. The Wipers Times, pp. 131, 241. "C.T." means communication trench; "crump-holes" were the craters of 5.9" shells.
372. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th. "Star-lights" were star-shells, i.e. German flares.
373. Sgt Angus Macfarlane, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 5 August 1915.
374. Testimony of Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th.
375. Knowles letter, 27 April 1915.
376. Testimony of 4726 John W. Stephenson, 1/6th DWR.
377. Testimonies of 2122 Robert Vine, 7th, and 1610 Bugler Thomas Doran, 8th.
378. Testimony of 2290 CSM Joseph Carter, 7th.
379. Rfm L. Hodgson, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 June 1915; Rfm J. Appleyard, 7th (a member of Joe Ball's comic band), Leeds Mercury, 24 June 1915.
380. Article, Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 January 1916.





Parade of the 7th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles), August, 1914.

Carlton Barracks: left, Officers' Mess and Orderly Room; right, quarters for Permanent Staff

(source: W.H. Scott, Leeds in the Great War 1914-1918, opposite p.91)



Officers of the 1/7th, 10th August 1914, with Lord Harewood and Canon Bickersteth, outside the Officers' Mess (note stained glass windows)

(This photograph and those on the following 3 pages are from the private collection of P.M. Morris)





Strensall Cookhouse 1914: Orderly men collect the porridge



Camp cooks, Aberystwyth 1913



Sergeants' Mess at Camp. Note the damask tablecloth, etc.





*1/8th Battalion Prince of Wales' Own  
West Yorkshire Regiment  
(LEEDS RIFLES)*

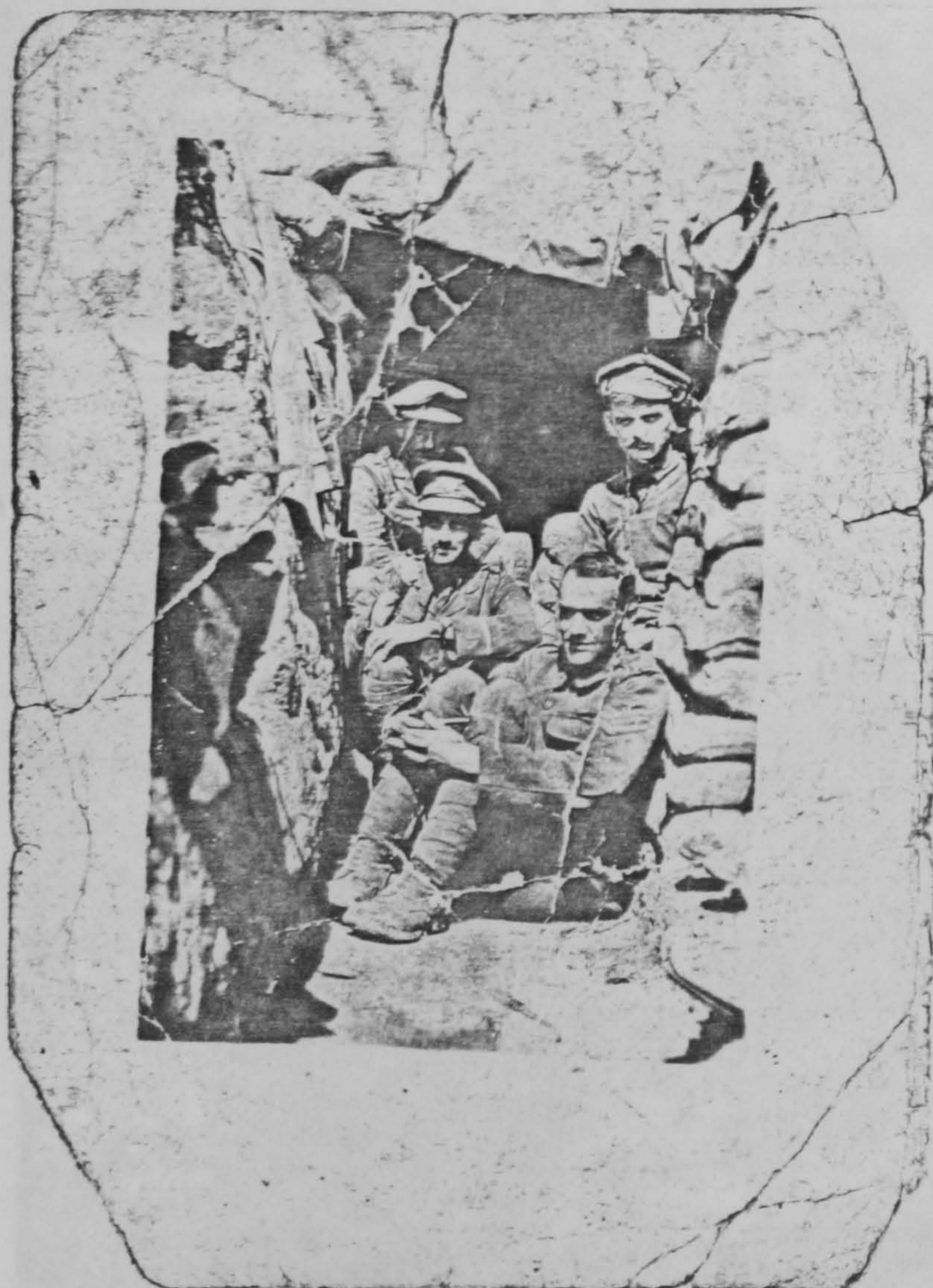


Joe Knowles



*Dugouts on the banks of the Yser Canal*

*Christmas, 1915*



1/7th Bn HQ, Laventie trenches, 1915



1/7th HQ tradesmen and Belgie, 1915



B Coy officers, Canal Bank, 1915

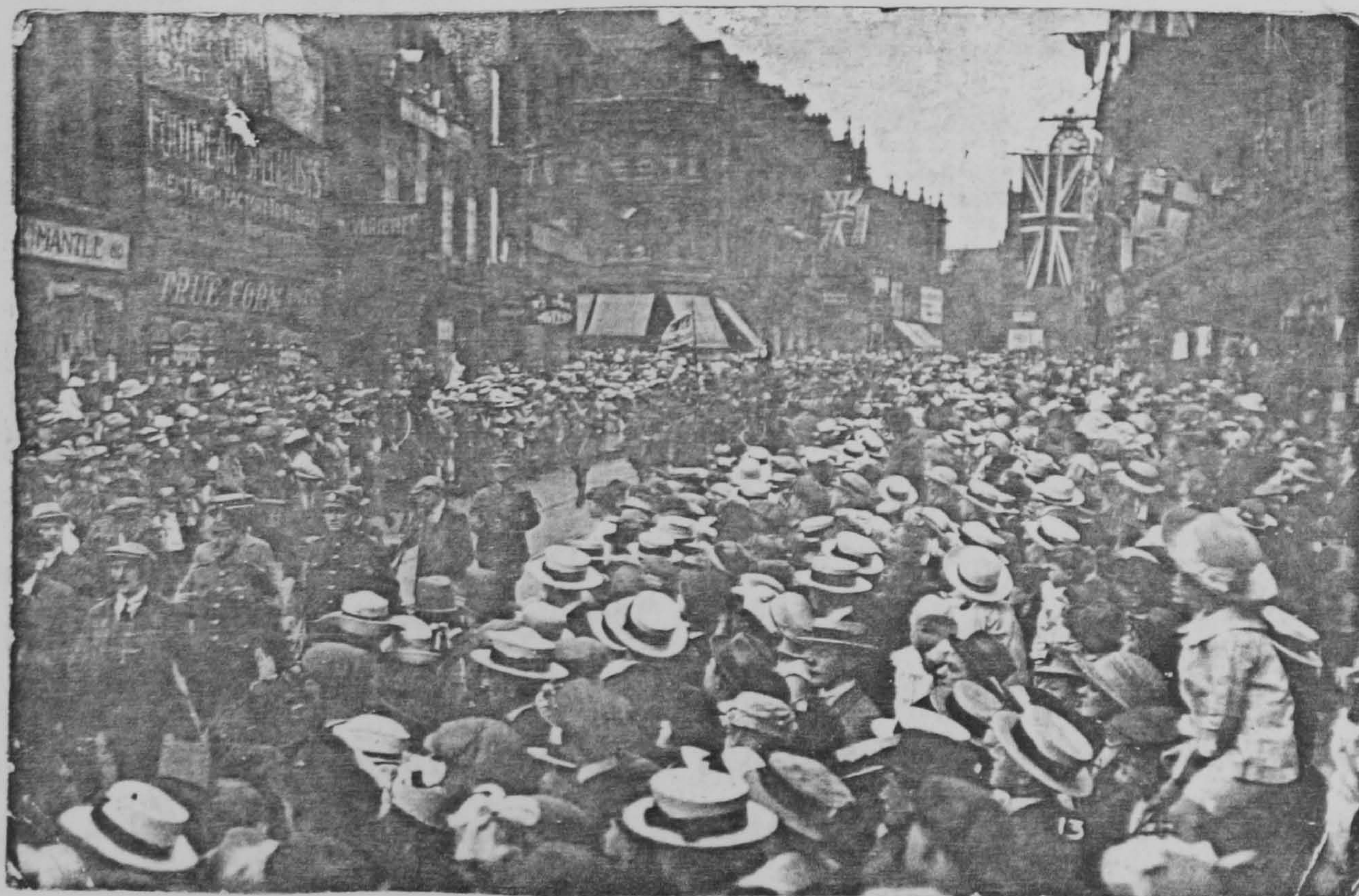




Strensall 1914: recent recruits wear fatigue dress - note civilian flat caps



Somme, autumn 1916: Capt Lupton and some friends. Front row, left to right: N.J.Mason, CSM Pearson DCM, Ramsden, Lupton, Chadwick, A.E.Green; on ground left, Percy Shepherd; standing, extreme right, Jack Flockton.



Leeds welcomes back the 8th Bn - on a weekday, Friday, 16th May 1919.



## CHAPTER 12. SOLDIERS' ATTITUDES

### 12.1 Attitudes to the enemy

The overwhelming impression given by writers on World War I, including authors of personal reminiscences, and indeed often categorically stated by them, is that the front-line soldier did not hate his German enemy.<sup>1</sup> As hatred of the enemy is a factor in combat motivation<sup>2</sup> and a characteristic of the soldier of good-to-high morale (see Chap. 14, section 14.3) this attitude was possibly more typical of weakly motivated troops of relatively low morale. Vindictiveness towards the enemy is certainly not absent from the pages of The Wipers Times (1973) and the other trench newspapers seen, nor from George Coppard's With a Machine Gun to Cambrai.<sup>3</sup>

As will be shown in Chaps. 13 and 14, the men of the Leeds Rifles were strongly motivated and of high morale. Hatred of the enemy was found to a remarkable extent, both in documentary sources and in the oral testimony of respondents, only one of whom claimed that he had not hated the enemy, although his feelings nevertheless remained negative. The vast majority, 60 years on, still held firmly to their wartime view that the only good German was a dead one. The relatively high incidence of the attitude appears to be, at least in part, a result or a reflection of the extremely favourable attitudes towards combat as a whole displayed in the Regiment, and it may have been fostered by the inaction of static trench warfare. This does not mean, however, that the men of the Leeds Rifles could be said to be consumed with the self-destructive emotion of hate. Individual prisoners were almost invariably treated with kindness and compassion. (One prisoner, said to be a chef by trade, taken in October 1918, was not handed over to the proper authorities but actually put on the ration strength of the 1/7th's QM staff and retained until after the Armistice.)<sup>4</sup>

The USARB found that veterans were less likely than trainees to be vindictive towards the enemy, and that among infantrymen officers were markedly less vindictive than other ranks.<sup>5</sup> It appears likely that broadly similar conclusions would have been drawn about attitudes in the Leeds Rifles battalions, although due allowance would have had to have been made for individual variations from the norm: although the Other Ranks exception referred to above was one of the longest-serving members, other respondents with comparable service records did not share his views. The officers appear to have schooled their feelings and striven to adopt a more detached



approach, e.g. "They had some Germans here [at Doulieu] till Oct. 14th. They were here 10 days and shot eleven civilians so were not popular;" "... the church there [at Doulieu] had been entirely gutted by fire; it had never been shelled but had been wantonly set on fire by the Germans before they left."<sup>6</sup> The desire for revenge, however, is a major theme of Capt Eric Wilkinson's poem, 'Twentieth Century Civilisation',<sup>7</sup> probably written in 1916.

Vindictiveness was often related to the witnessing of enemy atrocities against civilians, troops and prisoners. The term "atrocities" requires careful definition: to the British soldier an atrocity was nothing more or less than a violation of the Hague Rules (1907) or of the Geneva Convention ("for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field" 1906) on which all British troops were lectured during training.<sup>8</sup> These violations which, technically and legally, were War Crimes<sup>9</sup> included the use of explosive (expanding) bullets, asphyxiating gases, and other weapons, such as flame-throwers, calculated to cause unnecessary suffering; the poisoning of water supplies; killing or wounding by treachery or perfidy; improper use of the flag of truce<sup>10</sup> or of the Red Cross flag and armband; wilful failure to respect and protect medical units and establishments and their personnel; torture and other inhuman treatment of prisoners, including the withholding of Red Cross parcels; the killing, pillage or maltreatment of wounded prisoners, including the refusal of food and medical care and treatment; the maltreatment of civilian populations of occupied territories, including the imposition of collective punishments, such as killing hostages; the bombardment of undefended (open) towns and villages; the unnecessary destruction of or wilful damage to churches, historic monuments, universities, etc. The deliberate waging of war on defenceless civilians, whether on land or at sea or by air, was universally condemned by British soldiers as a violation; the wanton desecration of cemeteries, particularly the conversion of funeral vaults to HQs or gun-emplacements, was widely regarded as a violation.<sup>11</sup> The torpedoing of 9 hospital ships, which were prominently marked and illuminated,<sup>12</sup> must be classed as an atrocity by any civilised standard.

In view of the high-pressure propaganda campaign of hate against Germany conducted by the British press during World War I, particularly by the "popular" daily, Sunday and weekly newspapers and magazines and particularly during the first year of war, it is not surprising to find many expressions of hatred and vindictiveness in the letters written by Leeds Riflemen (and other soldiers) that were published in the Leeds news-



papers in 1915.

"I have been able to converse with the natives here, and never have I heard such tales as they tell. 'Made in Germany' has been a sign of 'shoddy'. In the future the words will symbolise all that is foul and inhuman."

"No one at home can realise the carnage and devastation which poor France and Belgium are suffering. It makes even the hardest heart soften, but the more determined that this nest of vipers as a nation shall cease to exist. The civilians one and all tell the same story, that they have lost either husband, son, brother or lover in this most terrible war, so we feel amply repaid for our sacrifices, dangers and trials."

"What with the Lusitania, the gas and other dastardly and previously unheard-of outrages the Germans are becoming more 'popular' every day. I may say that whatever respect the Germans obtained previously as honourable foes has now entirely vanished. I have heard some very hard things said by our men as to what they will do when they come to grips."

"If the Germans did not use gas the war would have been over. We are in a spot where they never leave it alone. My only hope is to get my bayonet in one of them and then I shall be happy."

"All swear vengeance on the cruel heathens from Germany."

"Tell the neighbours I have put a German down for each one of them."

"I cannot explain the terrible agony the men are suffering through the use of poisonous gases by the Germans. It is a slow, suffocating death, and if they don't get a great amount they are ruined for life ... it makes my blood boil when I see the poor fellows fighting for breath."

"Every little helps, as the old proverb says, and so we are doing a little bit to terminate the gigantic struggle for the cause of freedom, justice and righteousness. The 7th West Yorks (Leeds Rifles) may not be able to do great things like those historic regiments we have so often read of, and which are famous throughout our Empire, but we are helping a little, and however mean our efforts may be, we are helping to bring nearer the day of retribution ... we have a formidable enemy to face, and one that will not hesitate to lower itself to any inhuman actions."

"Ypres now presents a most pathetic sight. Half that once magnificent town is in flames ... a picture of ruin and desolation! ... street after street may be seen without a building intact. Nothing of any importance has been spared, and the roadsides are strewn with the bodies of men and horses in an awful state of decomposition. Numbers of civilians lie buried beneath what were once their homes, and in many houses the remains of a meal may be seen distributed among the debris. Dead bodies are to be found in all positions ... Articles of value lie about everywhere, and the general condition of things is beyond description. If people at home could only see Ypres as it is today, compulsory service would be what Mr Balfour would term of



'academic interest' only; and Lord Kitchener's requirements would be speedily met."<sup>13</sup>

Like many other soldiers, Knowles was moved by compassion at the sight of female refugees:

"We have passed through towns and villages without a single building left standing, except here and there a partly demolished house with a window blind fluttering through the smashed window frame. Dozens of kiddies' boots and clothes half burnt amongst the debris. We passed through a village a while ago and the Germans were pouring what they call incendiary [sic] shells into it. Three farms were blazing sky high and the poor beggars were struggling away across the fields the best way they could. One poor woman was carrying a baby and a boy about as big as our Harry, and as a soldier stopped to help her over a little stream it made our hearts ache."

A man well into his thirties and a devoted family man, he was particularly disturbed by such affecting sights:

"... one poor woman was struggling up the road trying to carry two kiddies and a big bag - all she had been able to save I suppose. It made my heart ache as I couldn't help thinking, if the Germans had got to England it might have been you and my kiddies."<sup>14</sup>

Knowles had an intense and durable hatred of the enemy. He very rarely referred in his letters to "the Germans" or "the enemy", but used expressions like "German swine", "German dogs", "German bastards", "dirty Fritz", "dirty square-headed Boche", "dog-headed German bastards". (Other Riflemen used the epithet "baby killers", while would-be humorists preferred, for instance, "Ally Kids", and "our sausage friends").<sup>15</sup> He hailed every Allied victory, however small, with delight and his letters were well-sprinkled with vindictive remarks right up to his death in the summer of 1917, e.g.

"Our artillery has been bumping [dial.: "thumping] the German swine these last few nights. It's lovely music and it's grand to know the square faced curs are getting no rest. They are getting some horrible casualties, so they will be able to make plenty soap, glycerine and pig swill, the dirty Bastards."

His attitude to prisoners remained harsh and uncompromising:

"The first prisoner I saw on that terrible Saturday morning asked me for water. I told him I would give him some rat poison."<sup>16</sup>

Occasionally there was, in the Leeds Rifles ranks, a hint of sympathy for the enemy in general:

"Our Artillery bombard their trenches in front of us. Shot after shot is fired on their trenches. I pity the poor devils in them";



"The German prisoners taken say they had been in the trenches for two months without relief";

Rfm Rowland Firth, writing about the appalling weather conditions:

"I think the Germans were as badly off as we were."

Very occasionally there were words of admiration for the Germans' fighting qualities:

"The enemy followed up our retirement with a bombing attack which was well executed, the Germans showing bravery and great disregard of danger."<sup>17</sup>

The typical attitude, however, was probably one of loathing and contempt, and Knowles' comment, on reading of a Zeppelin raid on England,

"That is all they are fit for, killing English women and kids",

would have received widespread approval.<sup>18</sup>

Though Knowles' attitude to prisoners may well have been atypical, there were certainly many among the respondents who could match his hatred and vindictiveness in general. All the former POWs, except one, complained of personal ill-treatment by their captors, many of them alleging threats of being killed, refusal of food and water and/or medical attention (sometimes for 3 or 4 days at a stretch), or the withholding of Red Cross parcels (the commonest complaint); several spoke of fellow-prisoners dying as a result of lack of food and/or medical care. Two next-of-kin of 2/7th men taken prisoner at Bullecourt in May 1917 alleged that their brothers had been tortured to reveal military information; another next-of-kin alleged that her brother, an 8th warrant officer, had been forcibly subjected to medical experiments.<sup>19</sup> Respondents were particularly angered by killing or wounding by treachery,<sup>20</sup> by the murder of wounded prisoners, by the aerial bombing or shelling of hospitals and hospital trains and by the deliberate (as they saw it) shelling of and shooting at ambulances, doctors, stretcher bearers and other medical personnel, specific examples being cited in every case. Killing by treachery included the use of booby traps. Lt Charles A. Lupton, RA, described one trap he saw himself in December 1917:

"This consisted of a grave with a rough cross and next to it a half-dug second grave. By it was a rough stretcher with the supposed body of an English soldier lying face downwards with his face in his helmet. However, a closer look showed that the body was a dummy, and that there was no face to it.<sup>21</sup> The stretcher was wired and would have blown up if handled."

Sgt Alchorne described one he saw in Cambrai in October 1918:

"A private of the West Yorks saw a live cat impaled to the door of a dwelling, or what was left of the place, by a bayonet thrust through its paws, and running across, pulled out the bayonet to release the poor creature. As he did so, a violent explosion took place, the door and frame was blown out, the cat to fragments and poor Tommy's head practically blown off his shoulders."<sup>22</sup>



Many stories were told of men collecting wounded being fired upon by German snipers who had taken cover among the wounded of both sides.<sup>23</sup>

The officers of the West Riding Field Ambulances RAMC wore revolvers, for their own defence and for that of the sick and wounded under their care, which was permitted under Article 8 of the Geneva Convention. One doctor of the 1/1st WR Field Ambulance, a Capt Goode, trusted the enemy so little that he held his revolver at the ready whenever he led his stretcher-bearers on to the battlefield.<sup>24</sup>

Without exception, all the Regular soldiers interviewed were extremely vindictive: e.g. Pte Henry Edward Smithin, 2nd Worcester Regt:

"Bavarians didn't take prisoners - they shot them and bayoneted wounded."

L/Cpl G Jim Smith, MM, 4th Middlesex Regt., described the enemy as "bestial and cruel";

"At one place in 1914 we had to leave behind a company of wounded. We recaptured it later. The Germans had bayoneted every one of them through the throat and looted the bodies."

He added that his CO, Lt Col [later Major-General Sir] C.P.A. Hull, broke down and wept at the sight. The three RAMC territorials interviewed were also extremely vindictive.<sup>25</sup> Sgt Alchorne, too, was extremely vindictive. His Memoirs contain several instances of German misuse of the Red Cross armlet and several examples of atrocities against civilians in occupied France; he stated, however, that

"many incidents still outstanding in my memory have been omitted because they are too harrowing to detail ... My analysis of the average German is thus, the greater part of his nature consists of 'fiendish cruelty', in addition to which his moral code is very low."<sup>26</sup>

Not all the Germans were regarded by the respondent as being equally bad. The Saxons who, it will be recalled, were involved in the Christmas Truce of 1914, were often found to be rather easy-going and were accordingly thought of as being "the best of a bad bunch."<sup>27</sup> They were said to be always ready to come to a "Live and Let Live" arrangement.<sup>28</sup> This was borne out by respondents.

"If we had Saxons opposite, they fired very little. In fact, if we didn't fire at them, they didn't fire. They didn't seem as though they wanted to fight us at all. We'd wave to each other. They'd shout to us if we were close enough. A lot of them seemed to be able to speak English and they would put up notices like 'We are Saxons, you are Anglo-Saxons. Why should we kill each other? Save your bullets for the Prussians'. They didn't seem to like Prussians themselves."

"If you had Saxons opposite, the line was quiet. If Prussians, there was hell to pay."<sup>29</sup>



976 Thomas Wilson, 7th, gave several examples of Saxon messages:

"We won't fire, if you don't"; "Keep your heads down, Tommy, the Prussian Guards are coming in tonight."

Fred Hearn, 8th, said

"The Saxon prisoners were just like us. They were very friendly, showed us all their photographs and insisted on giving us souvenirs. We got on like a house on fire with them. They all seemed glad to be out of it. Those that could speak enough English said they hadn't wanted to fight us at all. It was the Prussians that made them. They all hated the Prussians."<sup>30</sup>

The opportunity to converse with a friendly-disposed prisoner was welcomed by many Riflemen:

"We often wondered what the German soldiers thought of the war, so even a momentary meeting with an opposite number became an event."<sup>31</sup>

Some approaches by individual Germans appear to have been sincere. H.E. Smithin was attended on the battlefield by an English-speaking Saxon who dressed his wound with Smithin's field dressing and gave him directions for reaching the British Aid Post without meeting any Germans.<sup>32</sup> While Rfm Arthur Oates was in the 15-yard Sap in the North Salient, the enemy "threw a bottle over with a note in it, saying he was fed up, and that peace would be declared on October 5th."<sup>33</sup>

It must be open to doubt, however, whether more than a tiny fraction of these apparently friendly approaches were sincere in intention. Singing, chanting "Gott Strafe England", waving a white flag, shouting messages and brandishing boards bearing English messages were recognised as common German ruses to attempt to induce British soldiers to lift their heads above the parapet and so present targets for the waiting snipers.<sup>34</sup> When the enemy threw a wooden board carrying the message "We are Saxons, you are Anglo-Saxons and our brothers. Save your bullets for the Prussians!" into his sap, 1891 Thomas Hunter, 7th, treated it with the contempt he felt it deserved and used it for firewood.<sup>35</sup> The Germans certainly treated shouts and singing from the British trenches with the gravest suspicion. During their first month or so in the trenches the high-spirited Riflemen had sung and played musical instruments, chiefly mouth organs, melodeons and concertinas, in the front line. Though sometimes the Germans had shouted back "Hoch!" or even cheered and applauded, as they did 1712 Bandsman J.W. Sanderson's renderings on the cornet of popular jazz tunes, the Riflemen's singing of their favourite song, "Has anyone seen a German Band?" more usually evoked a hail of bullets or a salvo of shells or trench mortar bombs,<sup>36</sup> and about the first week of June all singing and the playing of instruments in the fire trench had to be forbidden.<sup>37</sup> A rather silly attempt by the inexperienced 1/8th to celebrate the King's Birthday in the



front line by the traditional feu de joie, followed by the singing of the National Anthem, brought a swift and sharp retaliation: "Germans going mad: answer our volley with heavy shelling." The 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary for 3rd June noted that "The Germans were quite game and gave us a 'feu de joie' in return."<sup>38</sup>

In common with the personnel of other units, all ranks of the Leeds Rifles were warned on arrival in France that enemy spies might be anywhere and everywhere. (French troops were warned by public notices: "Taisez-vous. Méfiez-vous. Les oreilles ennemies vous écoutent".) They were warned against careless talk and that civilians in the front line areas might be signalling military information to the enemy by means of codes, involving washing pegged on lines, tethered cows, or ploughing patterns, as well as flashlights.<sup>39</sup> Writers in recent years have tended to discount stories of French and Belgian spies and German officer- and soldier-spies dressed in British uniforms, Paul Fussell, for example, even going so far as to dismiss in scathing fashion all such stories as fables, superstitions or folklore.<sup>40</sup>

Some spy stories cannot be lightly dismissed as hysterical figments of over-heated imaginations. British troops in 1915 were often disconcerted to find that the Germans opposite knew exactly who they were;<sup>41</sup> the 1/8th was greatly taken aback on 8th May 1915, the first time they went into the front line as a battalion, to be greeted by shouts of "Now, Leeds!",<sup>42</sup> a dialect form of greeting, which was promptly adopted as a regimental war-cry.<sup>43</sup> An old Frenchman leading a cow was arrested by a 1/7th sentry outside C Coy HQ in the reserve lines near a gun emplacement.<sup>44</sup> Although this incident proved to be a misunderstanding and was laughed about a good deal afterwards, an alleged German spy was arrested near the 1/8th billets on 20th May 1915 and another on 15th June. The man at a farm where B Coy of the 1/8th was billeted for a time was shortly afterwards arrested as a spy.<sup>45</sup> A very worrying problem in the Fauquissart-Fleurbaix sector was posed by the snipers operating behind the lines: men were being killed or wounded at dumps well over a mile from the British front line. Lt Rigby noted in the 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary entry for 12th May: "Attempt made to locate a sniper between trenches and headquarters failed." This was probably the man shot dead in a tree later in May: "He was dressed in green, had four day's rations and a box of ammunition with him."<sup>46</sup> Several respondents recounted their suspicions of the women who kept an estaminet that was untouched by shell-fire although every building in the vicinity was in ruins. 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 8th, stated that his Company Commander, Capt L.C. Hossell, and a squad of men, arrested three German snipers disguised



as women who lived together in one house and sold coffee and egg and chips to soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Capt Maurice Lupton of the 1/7th was killed on the night of 19th June by an explosive bullet that entered the back of his head while he was looking over the parapet after firing a Verey pistol; he was almost certainly shot by a sniper behind the British lines. These Germans operating behind the British lines communicated with their headquarters by means of messenger dogs. Two of these dogs were captured, one in the front line, one in the reserve line, by members of the 1/8th during May, but the animal-loving Capt Sykes refused to let his men shoot them.<sup>48</sup> George Coppard states that it was not unknown for Germans masquerading as British officers to enter the lines at night and that he encountered one himself; Cecil M. Slack recounts four separate encounters in his book, and John Nettleton one.<sup>49</sup> Although no respondent claimed to have met a German masquerading as a British soldier, 3085 Sidney Bailey, A Coy, 8th, recalled that his comrade Rfm F. Webster, when on sentry duty in the trenches, had arrested a man in British uniform who could not give that day's password. He proved to be a German, and Webster was given 800 francs and a week's leave as a reward.<sup>50</sup>

In the middle of June 1915 C Coy of the 1/8th was shelled out of its billet, a large empty house that stood on the main road. It received 15 direct hits which reduced it to an uninhabitable ruin; fortunately only one man was wounded, slightly.<sup>51</sup> The men strongly suspected that spies were responsible, a suspicion that later became a conviction after they moved the same evening to a barn half a mile closer to the line and were not troubled by a single shell during the remaining 5 days of their rest.<sup>52</sup>

Apart from the Knowles letters, there is no evidence to indicate whether attitudes towards the enemy in the Leeds Rifles changed, whether to harden or to ameliorate, in the period 1916-18. In view of the rapid turnover in personnel, the low proportion of long-serving members (see Chap. 14, section 14.3) and the generally high level of morale maintained throughout the period, it seems unlikely that any discernible change occurred.

## 12.2 Attitudes towards rear echelons and the home front

The infantryman bore the brunt of the fighting; his was the most dangerous and arduous work in the army. In the front line he was removed physically and psychologically from all that lay behind it. The USARB found that front-line troops were typically resentful towards, often harbouring grudges against, the rear echelons and that this resentment was based, understandably, upon envy. This has probably been true of all armies in the history of warfare.



"To make their unfavoured position more tolerable, combat men claimed higher status than those who were taking less punishment, and cherished feelings of fierce, often bitter, pride",<sup>53</sup>

adopting scornful attitudes towards and frequently disparaging the troops in the rear, e.g.

"You say girls at your shop get letters every day. What are they in? RAMC, ASC, or some other of the scores of 'slow time mobs' behind the line, I bet, but there is only one real soldier, kiddie. That is the Infantryman with the Rifle and Bayonet."<sup>54</sup>

A frequent complaint against rear echelons was that they did not appear to realise what conditions were really like in the line.<sup>55</sup>

Most of the antagonisms expressed by respondents were general in character. That expressed by 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th, was typical. He stated that he and his comrades hated the Staff, the "Base Wallahs", the Artillery, the Engineers, the ASC, in short, "everybody!", because "we were the only ones doing any bloody fighting!"<sup>56</sup> The "skulkers", "lead-swingers" and "column-dodgers" at the Base were the target of many antagonisms;<sup>57</sup> some respondents seemed to have envied the alleged "cushy" job of the ASC. The Tenth Commandment in the list of 'The Commandments' published in The Buzzer (Notes and Jottings in the Field), the trench newspaper of the 49th Division, was

"Thou shalt not covet the ASC's job; thou shalt not covet the ASC's pay, nor his motors, nor his waggons, nor his tents, nor his billets, nor his horses, nor his asses, nor any other cushy thing that is his."<sup>58</sup>

It is significant to note that the Leeds Rifles respondents did not display antagonism to non-infantry troops behind the front line that they knew, those belonging to the other Leeds units of the 49th and 62nd Divisions. The respondents reserved their hostile criticisms and expressions of personal animosity for groups of people in the rear echelons they did not know and in particular for civilians.

The specific criticisms against the ASC that were general throughout the Army (noted in the next section), particularly the appropriation of choicer items of supplies, such as butter, and the animosity that often existed in the Regular Army and the New Army between the other ranks of the infantry and those of the ASC, Artillery and RAMC, should be regarded as typical manifestations of front-rear antagonism. Front-rear antagonism was exacerbated by the fact that the infantry were the worst paid. The frequent complaints that the further a British soldier was removed from the front, the higher was his pay, were largely justified. A driver in



the ASC (Mechanical Transport) received 6 shillings a day, for instance.

Front-rear antagonism is a natural psychological phenomenon of war. The fact that it is well-documented in World War I reminiscences<sup>59</sup> and novels and is even found in the war poetry, e.g. Siegfried Sassoon's 'Base Details', has, however, unfortunately misled many writers and historians into interpreting it as "disillusion". They have overlooked the fact that front-rear antagonism has its civilian counterpart in almost every organisation of any size.

Perhaps the most serious examples of front-rear antagonism from the historian's point of view were the criticisms of staff officers (derided as "Fireside Lancers", "The Bumph Brigade", "The Royal Staybacks", and other titles) in general and of GHQ in particular. As The American Soldier points out,<sup>60</sup> the fact that Brigade and Divisional HQs and GHQ lay in the rear inevitably introduced misunderstanding and resentment into the relations of front-line troops with higher command. This fact also has probably been true of all armies since heads of state stopped leading their troops into battle: front-line officers were evidently complaining about the Staff in Shakespeare's day.<sup>61</sup> Criticisms of staff officers are to be found in enormous numbers throughout the literature,<sup>62</sup> including poetry. Indeed, they appear to have become virtually obligatory in works published since 1960, or thereabouts, perhaps in response to the anti-war movement of the 1960s.<sup>63</sup> Again, the sheer volume of criticism has misled many writers and historians into largely accepting it at face value and thus allowing it to affect their judgement. They do not seem to have realised that denouncing the "barely credible workings" of the collective mind of the "Powers-that-Be" was a popular sport among regimental officers,<sup>64</sup> undertaken in order to release pent-up frustration and emotion. Lt Hugh Lupton and the RMO, Dr Scarborough, "used to have interesting indignation meetings with reference to the authorities-that-be, generally coming to the conclusion that they shouldn't."<sup>65</sup> Few writers, apart from Lt Col John Baynes and W.N. Nicholson, himself a divisional staff officer,<sup>66</sup> have attempted to present the staff officer's point of view. There is evidence that undue criticism of higher authority, often only two or three ranks above the complainant, was frequently an indicator of stress, of low morale or, more rarely, a prodromal manifestation of a psychoneurosis (see Chap. 13, section 13.4). Undue criticism of higher authority is frequently found in civil life: personnel of branch offices, for example, commonly feel that "head office" is unappreciative, uncaring, and lacks understanding of their problems, and believe that they know better and can do the job better than their superiors at "head office".



It is difficult to understand how a ranker could hold a valid opinion on "the brass hats", despite frequent claims in the literature to the contrary. Many Leeds Rifles respondents, indeed, felt unable to express an opinion on the commanding officer because he was so far above them and they had never had anything to do with him (see below, section 12.7). No ranker-respondent, nor any of the letter writers, including Knowles, diarists or authors of Memoirs, had any opinion on staff officers, or on Field Marshal French, or his successor, Haig. The few respondents who held opinions on brigadiers, divisional generals and corps commanders had obviously based them on personal observations, at a distance, of their bearing, demeanour and personal appearance; without exception, their comments were complimentary. Sir Herbert Plumer was very highly thought of by respondents, but this opinion was evidently based solely on his reputation for "having a soft spot" for the 49th Division; his ability as a military commander was never mentioned. The USARB discovered that higher command had relatively little direct significance for the combat motivation of the Other Ranks unless it was "personalised by a highly popular individual commander."<sup>67</sup> This finding lends little support to the often-repeated assertion that by 1917 the men of the British Army had lost faith in their generals.

The officers had no criticisms to offer of staff officers or of generals. This was perhaps not surprising in the case of staff officers, since many of the staff officers of the 49th Division were selected from the units making up the Division. Capt G.L. Watson and Lt D. Powys of the 1/7th and Major F. Hess, Capt W.H. Brooke, Capt the Hon R.D. Kitson and Lt A.G. Rigby of the 1/8th all served on the Divisional or Brigade Staff during the war. Exceptionally happy and cordial relations were said to exist between staff and regimental officers throughout Sir Herbert Plumer's 2nd Army,<sup>68</sup> with which the 49th spent long periods during the war. Capt W.G. Kemp, 8th, specifically praised the 62nd Division staff work involved in the withdrawal from Achiet-le-Petit to Bucquoy in 1918 as "quite the best piece of staff work I have seen."<sup>69</sup> As officers, chiefly of the rank of Captain and above, were the only people who dealt with staff officers, only officers could be expected to hold valid opinions about the Staff. A popular joke among officers, told by the Brigadier to Capt H.R. Lupton, was that the Germans inflicted the death penalty on any of their men who killed a British staff officer, on the grounds that he was aiding and giving comfort to the enemy.<sup>70</sup> The same story was told about the Turks.<sup>71</sup>

Many of the criticisms of the staff by regimental officers clearly stemmed from resentful envy. For example, Ian Hay spoke bitterly of staff officers being "compensated for their comparative security" by extra pay



and leave and "first chop at the War medals."<sup>72</sup> In 1915 the Yorkshire Evening News published a rebuttal of "reckless charges" currently being made against GHQ staff which alleged that they were allowing their work to be interfered with by card parties and visits from society ladies.<sup>73</sup> Infrequency of social interaction, lack of communication and ignorance of the staff officer's work were contributory factors. The regimental officer was usually unaware that the average staff officer's life was one of unremitting toil, a 100-hour (or more) working week with a half-day off if he was fortunate. The logistic side of staff work was itself colossal in volume. He was aware that the staff were housed in comfortable quarters, and got good food, regularly served. Not surprisingly, he firmly believed that the staff lived in safety, in comfort or luxury, did very little work, and pre-empted the entertainment facilities in the rear areas. When the overworked staff officer paid one of his necessarily infrequent visits to the front-line units, he became a natural target for the regimental officer's aggressions and frustrations. The mud-engulfed officer took one look at the staff officer's clean, newly pressed uniform and highly polished boots and was immediately antagonised. He "desired his death exceedingly", as Philip Gibbs put it.<sup>74</sup> He mentally labelled the staff officer as a "shirker" - some authors refer to the gorget patches on the lapels as "the red badge of cowardice" or "the badges of funk"<sup>75</sup> - and felt misunderstood and unappreciated, to say the least.

"Maximum resentment is to be expected where the disadvantaged group does not fully accept the legitimacy of the advantaged group's position: resentment then approaches 'moral indignation'. The combat man's powerlessness to change his situation could only add to his antagonism."<sup>76</sup>

It is easy to understand how these criticisms of staff officers have managed to gain such widespread credence.

Two examples of widely-publicised criticisms can be given from the trench newspaper of the VI Corps, The Salient. Spoof advert:

"GSO's A few vacancies still open. In SALUBRIOUS country, excellent SHOOTING, hot and cold water. American BAR, weekly LEAVE, occasional EXCURSIONS to trenches. 'You hardly know you're at war'."

A protest against the tight-lipped, considerably under-stated official communiqués:

"While whizzbangs and sausages go screaming overhead  
 And German hordes advance against our line,  
 Our Staff Officers are lying so comfortably in bed  
 And spend their time in sniping pheasant fine.  
 'Why worry?' is their motto and their reason is so blunt  
 As 'Everything is quiet on the VI Corps front'.  
 While all of us are suffering from a thirst we cannot quench  
 And men are rushing backwards in a rout,



And Cavalry are screaming 'There's a bomb right in our trench,  
Please, Infantry, do come and take it out,'  
Our gilded staff rely on this really ripping stunt,  
'Oh! Everything is quiet on the VI Corps front'."77

The term "gilded staff" was an expression frequently used by regimental officers - John Nettleton calls staff officers "gilded popinjays" - the majority of whom were middle-class. Some of them, evidently anti-aristocracy, resented the fact that many members of Brigade, Divisional and higher Staffs in the Regular Army came from aristocratic families (L/Cpl G. Jim Smith stated that when he was a member of a Regular Brigade HQ staff, two of his fellow-corporals, including a motor cycle despatch rider, were sons of earls or viscounts).<sup>78</sup> Montague is one of many who made allegations<sup>79</sup> that Division, Corps and Army HQs were shelters of the aristocracy, although the war losses of the aristocracy do not appear to lend support to such claims. Capt the Hon Roland Kitson, 8th, though he happened to be a member of the aristocracy, was the general manager of a large steelworks and it would have been a serious under-utilisation of his knowledge and expertise not to employ him on the Divisional Staff. He became an executive director of the Ford Motor Company in Dagenham. The following protest in verse against the employment of the aristocracy on the staff was noted by Capt Lupton written on the walls of Red House, near Laventie, habitually used as a Battalion HQ in July 1917:

"A Prayer for the extra A.D.C.

Fighting in mud we turn to Thee in these dread times of battle, Lord,  
To keep us safe, if so may be, from shrapnel, sniper, shell and sword.  
But not on us (for we are men of meaner clay who fight in clay)  
But on the STAFF - the Upper Ten - depends the issue of the day.  
The STAFF is working with its brains while we are fighting in a trench  
The STAFF the universe ordains - subject to THEE and General French.  
God keep the STAFF - especially the young ones, many of them sprung  
From our aristocracy - their lot is hard - they are so young.  
O God, who made all things to be and made some things so very good,  
Please keep the extra A.D.C. from horrid scenes and sights of blood.  
See that his eggs are newly laid - not tinged as some of ours with  
green,  
And let no nasty draughts invade the windows of his limousine,  
When he forgets to buy the bread, when there are no more minerals,  
Preserve his smooth, well-oiled head from wrath of austere  
Generals.  
O God who made all things to be and hatest nothing Thou hast made,  
Please keep the extra A.D.C. out of the sun and in the shade."<sup>80</sup>

Infantrymen's attitudes to the home front were strongly influenced by resentful envy. This was a topic investigated by the USARB. Resentment and bitterness at the apparent inequality of sacrifice between the civilians in the USA, living in complete safety, and troops in theatres of war were found to be widespread. Two common complaints noted were that civilians



did not know there was a war on and that they had no appreciation of what soldiers had done for them. In a survey made in Europe in 1945, of 804 infantrymen asked how many of the people back home had a real sense of gratitude and appreciation for what the soldiers had done, only 49% gave favourable replies. Feelings of being forgotten also caused resentment. Stories of fantastic profits and wages and of strikes and industrial disputes, which the men had read about in newspapers and magazines or in letters from home, produced hostile reactions in American troops. In April 1945 men in Europe were asked if any specific groups in the US had taken selfish advantage of the war, 9% named Trade Unions, 19% business interests. In a survey in December 1944 of discharged veterans, about half the men criticised unions for striking for higher pay while they were drawing soldiers' wages.<sup>81</sup>

The American researchers had discovered nothing new. These feelings were widespread in the British Army<sup>82</sup> and also in the French Army in World War I, and are well-represented in the literature. The infantryman, isolated physically and psychologically by his work in the front line from all that lay behind it, felt particularly isolated from the civilians on the Home Front and gradually developed feelings of bitterness, resentment and hostility towards them. One of Barbusse's characters says, "We're divided into two foreign countries: the Front, over there, where there are too many unhappy, and the Rear, here, where there are too many happy."<sup>83</sup> Expressions of bitterness against the Home Front, and particularly against Trade Unions, start to creep into Ian Hay's The First Hundred Thousand as early as the July 1915 episode.<sup>84</sup> The sense of estrangement, the antagonism, are well-expressed in the classic British WWI novel by Private 19022 (Frederic Manning), Her Privates We (1930).<sup>85</sup> In his war poetry, Siegfried Sassoon "constantly exploits the discrepancy between civilian apathy and the suffering of the soldiers."<sup>86</sup> Leaving aside the traditional inimical relations between soldiers and "the bloody Civvies", as they were wont to refer to them, which must have had an effect, it is certainly possible to discern in the literature a growing antagonism and a growing sense of isolation resulting from the conditions of the war, leading to a complete lack of understanding between soldiers and civilians. Officers and men would return from leave extremely disillusioned by their reception at home, feeling alienated from everyday life in Britain, strangers although among friends and relatives.<sup>87</sup> Resentment towards the Home Front was exacerbated by the comparatively mild effects of the war on conditions in Britain, where prosperity was often all too evident, especially in urban working-class areas. "I've sometimes thought it would be a bloody good thing for us'ns,



if the 'Un did land a few troops in England. Show 'em what war's like", says one of Manning's characters. "Say they be ready to make any sacrifice", says another, "but we're the bloody sacrifice."<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps as a result of the massive volume of support they received from the citizens of the city of Leeds in general, the men of the Leeds Rifles did not appear to hold such extreme views on soldier-civilian relations as some soldiers in the literature who may have served with generally-, as opposed to locally-, raised units. They did feel, however, that the civilians could not (or would not) understand what they were called upon to endure and suffer, had no appreciation of their work and its importance, and that they were appallingly ignorant of conditions in the war zone. Rfm W. Poulter, 8th, wrote to his civil employers from the Salient:

"Reports from those who have been home on leave give the impression that the people of Leeds do not realise the work our units are doing."

Rfm J. Townley, 7th, after surviving the gas attack and Christmas in the trenches, complained

"People in England think we are having the time of our lives out here, with nothing else to do but cook meals, smoke and fire at the Germans. They ought to come out and experience it. We are up to the neck in sludge, and our dugouts have been flooded out."<sup>89</sup>

Even Knowles occasionally got irritated with his wife's lack of understanding:

"I am sorry you did not like the Photo, but after three months active service marching up to our eyes in mud, sleeping in woods, barns and in trench bottoms, you would not expect me to look as if I was going to Ascot." "You ask me to send you some scent, but do you know love I haven't had my clothes off for fifteen days. I am fighting, not at a picnic, lass, and all the houses and shops round about where I am just now are blown to Hell."

His wife wrote to complain about soldiers' "disgraceful carryings-on" and hint that her husband was taking part. Knowles greatly resented her remarks and insinuations:

"Bastard German prisoners have more liberty than us. I don't know what rot you have been reading to write such a letter."

After her husband was blown to bits by a trench mortar, Mrs Knowles wrote to the 1/7th to demand the return of his gold wrist watch.<sup>90</sup> (It was common for relatives to demand from unit commanders knowledge of the whereabouts of the deceased's valuables.)<sup>91</sup> Lt Lupton became irritated at his parents' continual pestering to tell them what the Germans thought of the war:

"You say that I ought to be able to judge of the German public feeling better than you, but you must remember that



I have hardly seen a German yet, much less talked to one."<sup>92</sup>  
 On arrival home on demobilisation leave in 1919, 2738 Norman Sanderson, 7th, immediately informed his Leeds employer of his return and expected to arrange to recommence work on the expiration of his month's leave. His employer, completely ignoring the Leeds Rifles' recently well-publicised war record and its total of over 2,000 war dead, told him

"You'll start on Monday or not at all. You've had your holiday in the Army for the past four years."<sup>93</sup>

Public ingratitude for the valuable services performed by soldiers has a long history in literature, extending back to Shakespeare.<sup>94</sup> It is the theme of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'Tommy' and of Francis Quarles' epigram, written in the 17th century:

"Our God and soldiers we alike adore,  
 When at the brink of ruin, not before;  
 After deliverance, both alike requited,  
 Our God forgotten, and our soldiers slighted."<sup>95</sup>

3149 James William Warman, 7th, felt a sense of alienation:

"I couldn't settle when I came home on leave. I felt like a fish out of water. You know, I was almost, but not quite, raring to be back with the 1/7th. Can you imagine anyone really wanting to go back to the Front?"<sup>96</sup>

(Gilbert Hall, the subject of Not for Glory, and Capt Harry Yoxall experienced very similar feelings.)<sup>97</sup> 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, was shocked and disgusted by the changes he found on the Home Front when he came home on his first leave in January 1916. The public houses were packed with female munitions workers, all well-dressed, many of them soldiers' wives, who, in defiance of both pre-war social conventions and the law against "treating", offered to buy him drinks:

"The civilians had absolutely no idea how we had to suffer out there. Loads of them had never had it so good. Whooping it up like mad, having a right good time every night, plenty of money to spend. There were loads of young men in reserved occupations. After the war, the quickest way to start a riot in a pub was to start singing 'When I wore a tunic' - a lot of landlords banned the song so they wouldn't get their place smashed up."<sup>98</sup>

The song referred to, sung to the tune of 'When you wore a tulip', was:

"When I wore a tunic, a dirty khaki tunic,  
 And you wore your civvy clothes.  
 We fought and bled at Loos, while you were on the booze,  
 The booze that no one here knows.  
 Oh, you were with the wenches, while we were in the trenches,  
 Facing an angry foe.  
 Oh, you were a-slacking, while we were attacking  
 The Germans on the Menin Road."<sup>99</sup>



This protest song, composed in the autumn of 1915, was sung with heartfelt feeling throughout the BEF. It expressed the soldier's hatred and contempt - and, it has to be said, envy - for the able-bodied men at home whose share of the fighting he was having to undertake in addition to his own. The volume of protest was immense and vociferous and contained more than an echo of the pre-war conscription campaign. Few anti-conscriptionists among the BEF in 1914 and 1915 failed to become convinced, in a very short time, of the sheer inadequacy, the futility and the unfairness of the voluntary system of recruiting. Even that staunchest of anti-conscriptionists, the Liberal, Col E. Kitson Clark, had become an ardent supporter of conscription by the beginning of 1916.<sup>100</sup>

The soldiers wrote to their relatives, friends, employers and the newspapers to voice their protests about the "slackers". The Lead-Swinger (The Bivouac Journal of the 1/3rd West Riding Field Ambulance) published a poem 'To the "Slackers" at home' in its issue of 6th November 1915, aware, since an edition of this journal was printed and sold in Sheffield, it might well reach many of the men aimed at. The average soldier, on arrival at the Western Front in 1915, soon became aware of the inadequate supply of manpower, which he attributed directly to the slow recruiting that he continually read about in the newspapers. It was quickly brought home to the men of the 49th Division in the Salient that they had come to relieve an exhausted Regular division. The published letters of Riflemen illustrate this:

"We still hear of young fellows walking about town. How do they expect we are going on? I am not saying that we are done up, but I think the men who have been out since last August ought to have a rest before winter";

"I am glad the boys are responding more to the call, for the men here have done a noble duty so far, and ought to be relieved, if only for a time. Surely every man is morally bound to help his country in the hour of need. I say to the men of Leeds up to the age of forty-five, come and do your share ... we do not want men to be compelled to do their share if we can help it, but we must acknowledge that we all have a duty to perform ... and I say 'Shame on the man who is hiding or trying to slink out of it. The 7th and 8th West Yorkshires have done their best, and intend doing their best till this country and the Allies are free from a human monster like the Kaiser."<sup>101</sup>

As the Leeds Rifles' manpower problems in the Salient became more acute, fatigue duties increased and multiplied for those who remained. As a result, the men grumbled a good deal about the "shirkers at home" and about the authorities "who allowed the shirkers to continue their idle ways." The lengthy spells of trench duty in the Salient led the men to call for more



recruits so that they themselves would get more frequent reliefs.<sup>102</sup>

Other letter writers pursued the theme already adopted by the recruiting-poster propagandists in Britain:

"I think that all the young men in Leeds ought to come forward. If the Germans were to do in England what they have done here, those who now stay behind would wish they had come to help us";

"Bank Holiday is here again, and still the war is going on, as strong as ever, while there are still plenty of eligible young fellows going to the seaside for their holidays. Really, I don't know where some of them find the cheek to walk about. I'm sure I couldn't, especially after seeing what I have seen here."<sup>103</sup>

Knowles often had something to say about "frightened slackers" in his letters. He automatically branded any man of military age who was not in the armed forces as a shirker and coward. His remarks were often vindictive:

"it makes you bitter against the bastards who are sidestepping the issue in England, behind their wives' skirts, or in munitions factories. I shall have some scores to settle with a few cowards when I come home for good"; "I am glad Emily's slacker has had to join up ... If I had a few like him in my platoon, I would make them jump about a bit."

Sometimes they betrayed resentful envy:

"I see nearly all the shirkers are getting wiped up now, it is about time too. They will be up against it when they get busy with this graft, they have had the sweets all this time."

Knowles was extremely proud of having been a 1914 Volunteer and despised all conscripts, even including "Lord Derby's slackers".<sup>104</sup> This attitude was common among 1914 volunteers. 1679 Charles Lonsdale, 7th, who was graded B2 in 1915, did not go out to the Western Front until 1917, when, after serving as a corporal with a labour battalion, he was transferred to a Lancashire Territorial battalion. Until he discovered that he was not "a Derby conscript" as he believed, the CSM subjected him to a sustained campaign of victimisation and harassment in the matter of allocating duties, time-off, etc. When he discovered his mistake, the CSM's attitude changed completely: he had Lonsdale promoted sergeant immediately the next vacancy occurred and awarded him special privileges which were reserved in the battalion for pre-war Territorials and "originals".<sup>105</sup>

The beliefs of conscientious objectors appear to have been respected in the Leeds Rifles, which contained a large number of church and chapel attenders. Not a single respondent nor a single letter was found that criticised or attacked them.

The members of the Home Front which aroused the fury of the Riflemen and of other front-line soldiers were the strikers. The number of working



days lost in Britain through strikes during the war is as follows: 1915 - 2.953 million; 1916 - 2.446 million; 1917 - 5.647 million; 1918 - 5.875 million.<sup>106</sup>

Factory stoppages and colliery and transport strikes due to industrial disputes were freely reported in the newspapers read by soldiers who faced a firing squad, not a placatory government minister, if they went on strike. It is far too facile to attribute the soldiers' attitude to strikers to the influence of the extensive press coverage, often hostile, of industrial disputes, important though the influence the press had on soldiers' attitudes generally was. First of all, there was the factor of resentful envy. Imagine the feelings of the Riflemen, the majority earning a shilling a day, as they read in their newspapers during their first spell of duty in the trenches an item headlined "Dissatisfaction among the Leeds workers ... shilling or two considered inadequate."<sup>107</sup> When they came home on leave, almost the first building they saw on coming out of either of the two mainline railway stations, New and Central, was a new picture palace to cater for the "new rich", the munition workers, who, they learnt, were earning a pound a day as compared with their shilling a day.<sup>108</sup> Munition wages later soared to unbelievably high levels. Capt P.A. Thompson quotes a sketch from an Army concert party: a Tommy says to a "munitionette", "You get £6 a day for making shells and I get 6 bob a week for stopping 'em!"<sup>109</sup> The Tommy thought it was a poor sort of thanks for chancing his life times without count,<sup>110</sup> a sentiment shared by the German soldier.<sup>111</sup> Second, by stopping supplies of food, military material and the mails, the strikes often caused real hardship and suffering to the troops. The dock strike in the spring of 1915 caused the troops in France and Belgium to be put on quarter-rations; in those units lucky enough to get bread, it was one loaf a day between 12 men.<sup>112</sup> For their first week or so in France the Riflemen had nothing but bully and biscuits - "Iron Rations" - to eat. The men of the 20th Hussars, a regiment of iron discipline, became so desperately hungry they were driven to steal from the local civilians any kind of food they could lay their hands on. Although looting was a capital crime, in the circumstances, a man who stole a rabbit and his comrades who ate it were merely each fined one day's pay to be given as compensation to the owner. SAA was severely rationed during the dock strike and any man who fired more than his daily allocation was to be court-martialled.<sup>113</sup>

The strikers were condemned as anarchists, German agents, and traitors who could have cost Britain the war:

"as for the strikers, it would do some of them good to come out here. They would be glad to get home and work for half of what they are getting now. They are greater enemies to us



than the Germans. When the enemy hear of it, it is as good as a victory to them. The strikers should change places with the 'Tommies' who have been here all winter. They don't seem to know that a war is on. They might realise it if ever the Germans landed in England";

"It is simply sickening to us to read of a coal strike when a lot of we fellows out here are making such great sacrifices";

"I should like to have some of our strikers out here and put them in our places for half an hour. I think that would be sufficient for them. They go about shouting about 'Britain's liberty!' Are they helping us to keep it? They ought to hear what our once-despised Tommies think about them";

"I should just like them to hear what the lads out here say about them, the lot of dirty cowardly dogs. I wish I was on a firing party told off to do a few in. I bet I wouldn't waste a single bullet."<sup>114</sup>

The Tommy's solution to the problem of strikes was that of CSM W.I. Pickles:

"It makes us wild here to think of the strikes at home when so many of the best of our land are giving their lives. I would like to see the strikers put into the front-line trenches for a time, and that is the opinion of all out here."

As Knowles remarked,

"I bet they would not grumble about working on holiday or overtime any more."<sup>115</sup>

It was an opinion shared by a large majority of respondents who included Trade Unionists. Trade Unionists serving in the BEF could condemn the strikers as heartily as anyone else. The following is an extract from a long letter written by a member of the Crewe No. 2 branch of the NUR to Mr G.J.Wardle MP about a threatened rail strike:

"In times of peace we who are now fighting out here are among the first to support any movement to obtain a better wage, but now that the nation is in the throes of the most terrible war ever known it is unbelievable that fellow workers at home should in any [way] hamper the men at the front. Perhaps those who have not been out here scarcely realise the disastrous effect a railway strike would have, and that by the stoppage of the transport of guns, ammunition, food, reinforcements, etc. the strikers would indirectly, but not the less surely, sell our lives to the Huns. The men who are daily and hourly sacrificing life and limb in order to protect the families and homes of themselves and their countrymen from the awful fate meted out by the Germans to the inhabitants of Northern France and Belgium, when they hear that their fellow countrymen at home would treacherously stop their supplies in order that they (the strikers) could live in increased comfort - can it be wondered that every man here feels as if he could gladly shoot them down? Perhaps when the day dawns that will see these men under conscription, wearing uniform, being paid 1/- a day, and having doled out to them the bare necessities of life, those of them not absolutely indispensable to the railway taking their place in the trenches, and it may be dying an



agonising death for the country they would now betray, perhaps then they will begin to wonder what impulse made them try to take advantage of the nation's hour of need, and perhaps then they will realise the awful consequences of a strike. Won't the men play the game by us? We are content to live in mud and slime during another winter, on an average of a halfpenny or a little more an hour, on the most frugal food, risking wounds and death, if only those at home will be Englishmen, and treat the strike agitators like the German spies they are and play the game."<sup>116</sup>

It seems likely that the strikers, typical civilians, "having it 'cushy' all the time and being completely ignorant of what war was really like", did not appreciate the consequences of their actions. 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, came home on leave in 1917 to find a relative, a munitions worker, on strike for higher pay. Appleyard told him, "You're a traitor to your country". His relative replied, "We're on strike for you and all the other soldiers so that you'll all have higher wages when you come back from the war."<sup>117</sup>

Leeds Rifles-civilian relations did have their positive side, however. Being in a local regiment had distinct advantages for its members, one of which was the fact that there was never any danger of becoming forgotten by the people in the town or area in which the regiment had been recruited. For the men of the Leeds Rifles, this support, which reinforced the support already being given by the men's relatives and civilian friends, came in several forms: from voluntary benevolent agencies, from churches and Sunday schools, from schools, from newspapers acting as agents, and from philanthropic individuals and ad hoc groups.

The two chief benevolent agencies were the Lady Mayoress's Committee, started in 1914, and the Leeds Flag Days' Committee, started in July 1915. The former had an immense range of activities, prominent among which were the welfare of servicemen's families and the organising of parcels of clothing, cigarettes and other comforts to be sent to Leeds men at the front. The knitting of such essential garments as socks, cardigans, cap comforters and fingerless gloves was arranged; accompanying each garment was a note giving the name and address of the knitter and perhaps a well-wishing message. 1726 Jack Barker, 7th, recalled how very pleased and flattered he had been in the autumn of 1915 to receive a balaclava helmet knitted by the Lady Mayoress herself.<sup>118</sup>

The Leeds Flag Days' Committee in the period 1915-1918 spent £15,276.1s.11d of the funds it collected in buying comforts for the Leeds units at the front. The selection of comforts was made after enquiries from unit officers



and the gifts were despatched in bulk to be distributed with the rations so that every officer and man received his share irrespective of whether or not he had been a Leeds citizen. The principal items sent included cigarettes, matches, writing pads and envelopes, indelible pencils, soap, boot laces, candles, tinned sardines, biscuits, Yorkshire Parkin, chocolate, mint humbugs, apples, and "Yorkshire Relish".<sup>119</sup> Large and regular consignments of comforts were sent to all battalions of the Leeds Rifles on active service abroad. Lt Col Hudson of the 1/8th wrote to the Editors of the local papers at the end of 1916 that the comforts

"had been very much appreciated by them, and this not merely for the value of the gifts but because they see in these presents tangible proof that those at home have them in remembrance."<sup>120</sup>

The consignments arrived nearly every month. In September 1915 the gifts were: for each man: a tin of sardines, a small bottle of "Yorkshire Relish", a tube of Vaseline, a tin of acid drops, a letter pad with pencil and envelopes, a tablet of soap and a shaving stick; and between every two men a tin of pineapple. The following month the Committee sent 4 footballs to both the 1/7th and the 1/8th, a tin whistle for every 5 men and four candles for every 2 men.<sup>121</sup> Girl packers at Joseph Watson & Sons' soap works enclosed letters and messages in the soap cartons.<sup>122</sup>

The churches and Sunday school scholars sent gifts, often to members rather than to the regiment. The Ladies of Mill Hill Unitarian Church sent to member 2/Lt Hugh Lupton a large parcel of socks for distribution among the men of his platoon. Parish priests would write to servicemen from their own parishes: the Vicar of Burley wrote to L/Cpl Knowles saying that he would pray for him,<sup>123</sup> a gesture wasted on a committed atheist who had never attended church in civilian life. 2780 Harold Kirk, 7th, received regular gifts and letters, including a rather blood-thirsty one congratulating him on his appointment as a Company Sniper and wishing him "a good bag of Germans", from his old Sunday School.<sup>124</sup> School-children, as well as being primarily responsible for street collecting for the Flag Days' Committee, wrote letters to Leeds soldiers (and also to the patients in the local military hospitals and convalescent homes) to cheer them up.<sup>125</sup> At the premises of many firms with appreciable numbers of employees at the front regular collections were made to send them parcels of comforts. Monthly collections were made at John Fowler & Co. (Leeds) Ltd, the employers of a considerable number of Riflemen, to send them cigarettes.<sup>126</sup> Hathorn Davy's, where 2/Lt Lupton served his engineering "apprenticeship" in the University vacations, sent him Christmas parcels. In 1915 the Leeds Rifles were inundated with Christmas gifts addressed generally to the regiment, not to individuals, which started arriving at the beginning of December.



The junior officers apparently did not relish the thought of all the extra work which would devolve upon them in dividing the gifts out.<sup>127</sup> If they wanted anything in particular, the Riflemen knew they only had to write to the local papers in order to receive it. Rfm J. Appleyard, 7th, for example, wrote to the Mercury:

"We are badly in need of a pair of hair clippers, as our original barber has been invalided home and, of course, he had taken his tackling with him, so I hope this letter meets the eye of one of your kind readers who would like to do a little favour for Tommy Atkins at the front."

Rfm Arthur Benson, 8th, wrote to the Evening Post to appeal to all relatives of Riflemen to send them a parcel at Christmas:

"No matter how small the parcel is, it will gladden their hearts after such a long and trying time in the trenches."<sup>128</sup>

Other Riflemen wrote to local editors to appeal for such diverse things as footballs, musical instruments and flypapers. No local paper ran any specific schemes for servicemen, such as the Tobacco Fund run by the Weekly Dispatch which sent out parcels of tobacco and cigarettes. Well-to-do, charitably-inclined people in Leeds sent parcels to individual soldiers, the Adjutants supplying lists of names and platoons: Knowles received one from a solicitor's wife in Far Headingley.<sup>129</sup> Some particularly kind-hearted people wrote to the 1/7th and 1/8th battalions offering to "adopt" any NCO or man who was without relatives, i.e. write to him regularly, send him parcels and let him spend his leaves with them and their families. Orphan 3227 Clarence Lazenby was immensely grateful to be adopted by two elderly ladies, sisters, in Headingley; Mr Tapp, a philanthropic stationer and printer (Tapp & Toothill), and his wife adopted several men in the 1/8th.<sup>130</sup>

Conversations with men from locally-raised units of other towns and districts suggest that the material-moral support given during the war by the people of Leeds to the battalions of the Leeds Rifles was, in volume and scope, exceptionally large. The Regiment thus enjoyed emotional support from the Home Front on a lavish scale.

In August 1916 the practice of erecting War Prayer Tablets was started in working class areas of London and quickly spread to Leeds. The Tablets were large boards, having inscribed upon them the names of all men in a group of streets who were serving in the forces, that were erected against a wall, surmounted by flags and pots and vases of flowers, and made the focus of open-air informal weekly services of prayer led by the curate or vicar of the local church. Eight prayer tablets were put up in streets in the neighbourhood of St Dunstan's church, Armley,<sup>131</sup> a major Leeds Rifles recruiting area. A similar number of back street shrines were erected in



Woodhouse, another major Leeds Rifles recruiting area. Mrs Reginald Bradbury, whose sweetheart was serving in the 1/7th and whose younger brother, 3796 Leonard Ledgard, was serving in the 1/8th, recalled that the prayer meetings held at least once a week in her Woodhouse street were always well-attended. Hymns, sometimes accompanied by a cornet or other musical instrument, were sung, special prayers were said for the wounded and for the dead or missing, and intercession lists containing the names of every man from the neighbourhood in the services were read out. Individual men and women were often to be seen praying at the shrines. In the autumn of 1916 Woodhouse became a very sad place, in dire need of spiritual comfort.<sup>132</sup> War Prayer Tablets may have been erected in other working-class districts of Leeds, but no information has been obtained concerning these. The street prayer meetings led to the development of large-scale interdenominational Services of Intercession which were held at venues such as the Town Hall and the great nave of Kirkstall Abbey.<sup>133</sup>

### 12.3 Relations with other units

Since early Volunteer days the Leeds Rifles had been on excellent terms with the cavalry regiments that had occupied Chapeltown Barracks. On a purely pragmatic level, a good relationship was of mutual benefit: No. 5 Company drilled in the Regulars' riding school, and the Cavalrymen used the Rifles' range for their annual firing courses; later, the Volunteers of all Leeds units borrowed the Cavalry horses on Saturday afternoons. The cavalry officers and the Leeds Rifles officers mixed socially and invited one another to each other's regimental social functions. An indication of the good feeling that existed between the Regiment and the Regulars at Chapeltown Barracks was given in 1875 when the Riflemen, returning from their third camp, found the Band of the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) waiting for them at the station to pay them the high military compliment of playing them back to their headquarters.<sup>134</sup> Shooting matches were arranged between teams of NCOs: one between the Rifles and the 21st Hussars in 1879, for instance, resulted in a decisive win by the Riflemen by 1,017 points to 836.<sup>135</sup> Friendly relations were further fostered when military entertainments became fashionable. Assaults-at-Arms, entertainments to accompany the Annual Prizegivings, were presented jointly by the Leeds Rifles School of Arms and a team from the local Regulars, who were, in 1894, for instance, the 17th Lancers, and the 8th Hussars in 1895 and 1896.<sup>136</sup> The outcome of this longstanding relationship was that a not inconsiderable number of Leeds Rifle Volunteers enlisted in these cavalry regiments.

After the furore caused by the Regiment's refusal to adopt the uniform, badges and buttons of the Prince of Wales's Own West Yorkshire Regiment



and its adoption (officially, in 1891) of the Rifle Brigade uniform had died down, strenuous efforts were made to foster good relations between the West Yorkshire Regiment and its three Volunteer Battalions. The Harrington Shield rifle-shooting competition, between teams of NCOs, was started in 1894, and continued for about 40 years. The Depot team did not win regularly and was, for instance, well beaten in 1898 and 1899. This competition led to friendly social relations being established between the Rifles Sergeants' Mess and that of the Depot: annual football and cricket matches were staged. During the Second Boer War the most amicable and comradely relationship existed between the West Yorkshire Volunteer Company and the Regular WYR battalion to which it was attached:

"The best of feeling prevailed between Volunteers and the Regulars, and when the citizen soldiers left to come home the battalion turned out en masse and cheered vociferously, and their drums played the Volunteers three miles on their way."<sup>137</sup>

In the pre-war Territorial era, both adjutants, Lt Craddock-Hartopp of the 7th and Capt A.M. Ross of the 8th, who both held Regular commissions in the West Yorkshire Regt, made every possible effort to encourage friendly, even close, relations between all ranks of the WYR Depot and home battalion and those of the Rifles. A typical social occasion was that when a combined Rifles team played the 1st Bn WYR team at rugby and afterwards entertained them to a tea and a smoker.<sup>138</sup> The junior officers of the Rifles were required to spend a whole month, as part of their training, with the home battalion; they were very kindly treated in every respect. In consequence, relations with the Regular battalions remained excellent throughout the war.<sup>139</sup>

Relations with the other Volunteer/Territorial units in Leeds had been excellent since the inception of the Artillery, Engineer and Medical Corps. Up to 1908, the last-named corps had used the drill hall and parade ground, and also housed its ambulance, at Carlton Barracks. The officers and the sergeants of the Leeds Rifles were on extremely friendly terms with their counterparts in the other Leeds units and held "open house" in their respective messes. Annual dinners of the Sergeants of the combined Leeds Volunteer corps began in 1881, whilst the Corporals formed an Association in 1883.<sup>140</sup> In the Victorian era many local Volunteer officers had previously served in the ranks of the Leeds Rifles before taking their commissions. Teams from the various units met regularly to compete in rifle-shooting, association and rugby football, cricket, boxing, billiards and dominoes. The Leeds units gave combined fund-raising concerts and entertainments - the "United Corps Dramatique of the Leeds Artillery and Rifle Volunteers", giving performances of Shakespeare's plays and other works<sup>141</sup> from 1864, was an early example - and collaborated in Whitsun Marching Columns



and sham fights. Perhaps the main reason for the excellent relations that existed between the Rifles and the other Leeds units from the earliest days right through to the end of World War I and beyond, was the fact that many of all ranks, including officers, of the Rifles had relatives, friends, and acquaintances in the other units. During the war the "Leeds family circle" was widened to include the Otley Howitzer battery, since it contained many Horsforth men. Because the Leeds Territorial units, with the exception of the Engineers, were closely associated on active service, there was none of the animosity between the infantry and the artillery, and the Medical Corps, that often seemed to exist in the Regular Army and in the New Army. 1891 Thomas Hunter, 7th, gave an example of the hostile attitudes found in the Regular Army. He was badly wounded in the arm while on an ammunition carrying party in October 1917. He managed to walk, supported by a concerned RAMC sergeant, to the Advanced Dressing Station. On the way they passed a Regular RFA gun emplacement. Catching sight of the blood-stained sling, some of the artillerymen immediately started to cat-call and jeer at him, shouting out remarks such as "He's got a Blighty! He's got a Blighty!"<sup>142</sup>

The RAMC were often known as "Rob All My Comrades", though, to misquote Shakespeare, he jests at the RAMC who never felt a wound. Wild statements such as "Scores of thousands of men have been killed by our own artillery"<sup>143</sup> are by no means rare in personal reminiscences, published and oral. The most seriously and widely traduced branch of the Army, however, was the ASC. Criticism ranged from the mild - the derisive soubriquet "Ally Sloper's Cavalry", which was changed in World War II to "Run Away, Someone's Coming" - to allegations of large-scale criminal conduct, including accepting bribes in return for favours and selling Army supplies to civilians for private gain. Such serious allegations, no doubt based on a few guilty individuals, are fairly common in published reminiscences and in books based on them,<sup>144</sup> and often stated as fact. A comparatively mild criticism appears in the following definition of the ASC published in The Salient, following its original publication in The Lead-Swinger:

"(Technically known as the 'Strawberry Jam Pinchers'.) Predatory pirates who lead a life of filibustering. They have a habit of becoming 'attached' to regiments, which may account for their habit of attaching themselves to rations. Act as 'clearing station' for all rations."<sup>145</sup>

Capt J. Rhodes Simpson, a devout churchman, was so upset by these allegations that he would not permit strawberry jam to be included in the rations of 465 Coy, 49 Divisional Train, ASC.<sup>146</sup>

Relations between the men of the Leeds Rifles and those of the 49th Divisional Train ASC were particularly amicable. This was hardly surprising,



since three of the Train's four companies were recruited in Leeds. The Riflemen and the ASC men evidently possessed great respect and admiration for each other's work and devotion to duty and they associated during off-duty periods. CQMS William Wilson, 465 Coy, married the sister of Rfm Henry Charles Skilbeck, one of his many off-duty friends in the Leeds Rifles.<sup>147</sup>

The corps that was universally intensely disliked, if not actually hated, by Regulars, Territorials and Kitchener's Army alike, was the Royal Engineers, who quickly proved themselves as hard as taskmasters as the Ancient Egyptians. ("Ex-Private X", indeed, describes going on RE working parties as being "sold into slavery".)<sup>148</sup> Their demands were insatiable<sup>149</sup> and not even the RAMC could escape them: The Lead-Swinger's (and therefore The Salient's) definition of the RAMC:

"A party of men lured into Belgium under false pretences. Ostensibly for the purpose of practising the healing art, they lead a precarious existence with a spade. (For further particulars see 'Navvies Battalion' (except pay))."

Spoof advert from The Lead-Swinger:

"Wanted Navvies, Labourers, Engineers, or in one word, RAMC men, to build Pill-boxes, dug-outs etc. to tear up railway tracks ... Applicants must sign an agreement not to demand Engineer's pay."<sup>150</sup>

The RE made heavy and incessant demands on the infantryman's rest periods.

"We are now back from a so-called rest," wrote Hugh Lupton to his parents on 21st November 1915. "But the infantry are sat on in all ways and we have dozens of working parties even here which completely spoil the men's rests ... it annoys me fearfully." "... there are working parties every day which use up every available man," he wrote on 17th March 1916. "This is the second railway we have been working at ... The only thing I object to is that we are being turned into navvies having come out to be soldiers."<sup>151</sup>

The RE expected the Riflemen to work on this railway from 8 am to 4 pm seven days a week (in addition to which the latter had all the usual military duties to attend to)

"... the tact of the Brigade Staff was tried to the uttermost to obtain even a Sunday afternoon off."<sup>152</sup>

Small wonder that the following appeared among 'The Ten Commandants' published in The Buzzer:

"Remember thou shalt not rest on the Sabbath Day. Six days shalt thou labour and the seventh day is the work of the CRE; on it thou shalt do all manner of work, thou and thy officers, thy non-commissioned officers, thy sanitary man and the Kitchener's Army who are within thy trench (for instruction)."<sup>153</sup>

The only place in the Ypres Salient in 1915 where a Rifleman could escape the hated RE fatigues was in the front line itself.



The interminable navying and portering worried and angered Hugh Lupton, concerned as he was with the health and welfare of his men. It was a problem that also worried and angered General Jack who was only too aware that weary soldiers were not physically or mentally fit to face the intense strain of battles.<sup>154</sup> It was a problem that the British Army was never able to solve. The Other Ranks bitterly resented the never-ending RE fatigues and felt imposed upon. Hugh Lupton noted the following written on the wall of a billet:

"We are but little Gloucesters weak  
Our pay is seven bob a week  
Whate'er we do by night or day  
It makes no difference to our pay  
Our hours of work are twenty four  
We thank the Lord there are no more  
For if there were we know that we  
Would work another two or three"

He wrote: "It rather aptly expresses the infantry's point of view."<sup>155</sup>

The Wipers Times was often unkind and bitter towards the "Press Gang", as The Salient called the Royal Engineers. For instance, a poem entitled 'Sursum Caudasi' ("Tails Up!" in Latin) about "the Sanguinary RE" appeared in April 1917, while a verse from 'A BEF Alphabet' published in March 1917 ran:

"I for the Infantry prefixed 'P.B.',  
One bob per diem and milk in their tea:  
They work day and night, after which they are free  
To start on a job in the trenches."<sup>156</sup>

The basic cause of the infantryman's resentment was, of course, pay differentials and anomalies: not only was the basic pay higher in the RE, 1/1½d per day in 1914 for a sapper as compared with 1/- per day for an infantry private, but in addition there was Corps or Engineer's pay which ranged from 4d to 2/- a day, according to rank and rating. The infantryman thus had a genuine grievance: though he was employed to do RE work, he did not receive the rate for the job. A further grievance affected regimental telegraphists and linesmen who received only infantryman's pay according to their rank, and not the tradesman's rate which a RE man doing comparable work received.

"God made the busy bee,  
And the bee makes the honey:  
The 7th Signallers do all the work,  
And the RE's get the money"

wrote Signaller Thompson, 1/7th.<sup>157</sup> This verse, with appropriate third line, was well-known throughout the BEF; another version, appears for instance, in Beaver, op.cit, p. 55. The final insult came to the 1/8th when, in September 1916, badly mauled and exhausted after the failure of 3rd September, their much-needed rest was interrupted by the arrival of a cavalry regiment



sent by the RE to show the veterans of 17 months' trench warfare how to dig, using a new "patent" method of intensive digging. A large draft had just arrived from the disbanded 63rd Division, mainly from the 7th DLI, many of whom were coal miners. A team of Riflemen, no doubt selected from the new arrivals, digging "in our own unenlightened fashion completely demonstrated their superiority" by digging about half as deep again as the demonstration team in the same length of time. Capt Lupton wondered "Perhaps a few lessons in riding by an infantryman might be agreeable to the cavalry?"<sup>158</sup>

Relations between the Leeds Rifles and the other infantry battalions of the 49th and 62nd Divisions were excellent, the traditions of friendship extending back, through countless Annual Camps and Field Days, to early Volunteer days. During the war a very high esprit de corps developed at both Brigade and Divisional level. Some slight animosity appears to have existed before the war between the other ranks of the Leeds Rifles and those of the 6th WYR. At the 1910 Camp, many of the 6th Bn of all ranks, including officers, had adopted a superior, sanctimonious attitude over the alleged "mutiny", bandying about epithets like "cry babies." At the 1912 Camp teenagers from the 6th and teenagers from the 7th and 8th, all very much the worse for drink on pay night, had brawled on Filey railway platform.<sup>159</sup> As the Bradford newspapers had given sensational and highly-coloured accounts of both these incidents, there must be a suspicion that local chauvinistic jealousies had provoked these outbursts. During the war relations between the 6th WYR and the Leeds Rifles were perfectly harmonious.

The men of the Leeds Rifles, however, did (and still do) harbour feelings of resentment towards the 15th WYR, the "Leeds Pals". Some had personal reasons: like 2363 Ben Clark, 8th, they had been refused admission to the City Battalion because they were manual workers. Many of the pre-war Territorials resented the facts that the Pals wore the city coat of arms as their cap badge and the name "Leeds" on their shoulder titles. These military parvenus had too much of the stamp of municipality for their taste; they felt that the new battalion had usurped the Leeds Rifles' place as the "city's chosen". This feeling was considerably strengthened in all ranks during the period September 1914 - March 1915 by the saturation press coverage given to the Pals, with never a mention of the two first-line Leeds Rifles battalions. This was an unfortunate result of the press censorship, and was not the result of social prejudice as many of the Riflemen thought. Since they were Territorials, the Rifles were immediately classed as being on active service as soon as they left Leeds in August 1914; the Leeds Pals' activities, however, did not come under censorship until they embarked for overseas in December 1915.



On embarkation for France, L/Cpl John R. Smith, 7th, voiced his comrades' sentiments when he wrote home that "we are secretly delighted at having stolen a march on the 'Pals'."<sup>160</sup> The Riflemen naturally assumed that they and their activities would now dominate the Leeds papers for a change. They were, of course, disappointed. By August 1915, 1712 Cpl J.W. Sanderson, 8th, a Normanton man, felt so incensed about this apparent social injustice that he wrote to the Editor of the Yorkshire Evening News to protest:

"Often they complain, and I think not without reason, of being overshadowed in the newspapers and in the affections of the Leeds public by the other units of the city. They fully appreciate the good work that is being done by the various other Leeds corps serving at the front, but, as your readers know, and will readily admit, it is the infantry in this war who have the most difficult and the most dangerous work to do. Therefore, the two battalions of the Rifles, as the only infantry units yet representing the city in the firing line, naturally consider that their services should be as fully recognised and acknowledged as any of the others. I can assure your readers that they, as citizens of Leeds, have every reason to be proud of the men they have sent out to fight for them."<sup>161</sup>

In June 1915 it was rumoured in France that the Pals were coming out. L/Cpl Colin Cameron, 7th, expressed the majority view of Riflemen: "I hear the 'Leeds Pals' are coming out here. I hope so, as a change will do them good ..." In the event, the Pals did not reach the Western Front until February 1916 when L/Cpl Knowles remarked "It's about time they came too."<sup>162</sup> The Pals' tragic destiny was to be "two years in the making and ten minutes in the destroying"<sup>163</sup> on 1st July 1916, the first time they went into action. In his book Leeds in the Great War, in the section on 'Military Achievements', W.H. Scott accords the Leeds Pals 16 pages. The four battalions of the Leeds Rifles, with their splendid record of achievement, are altogether accorded only 21 pages.

#### 12.4 Relations with Regular troops

Sgt Herbert Widdus, who joined the Leeds Rifles in 1925 after 11 years' service in the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, gave the typical regular soldier's attitude to the Territorial at the time the war broke out: he obviously did not hold a high opinion of him. The popular 1914 Regular Army marching song 'Send for the boys of the Old Brigade ... But for Gawd's sake don't send me!' included the lines:

"Send for the brave Territorials  
They'll face death with a smile (I don't think)"

The Regular despised the Territorial for being half-trained, scruffy, undisciplined and far too matey with his NCOs and officers, but most of



all, he, as a professional, despised him for being an amateur, an amateur moreover, who was trying to do the work of a professional. The 'T's that marked the Territorial were a badge of contempt.<sup>164</sup> Said Lt General Sir John Keir:

"In the eyes of the pre-war regular soldier any individual who was unfortunate enough to be branded with the letters 'T.F.' could never rise from the depths into which these disqualifying tokens had plunged him. He had become a species of military pariah doomed to everlasting inferiority ... [The Regular Army] had imprinted on its mind a certain type of officer and man and could see no good in, or have respect for, any other."<sup>165</sup>

(By WWII, many Territorial, particularly Yeomanry, officers had become inordinately proud of their traditions and appeared to have convinced themselves that they were superior to the regular professionals.<sup>166</sup> TA officers were outraged at the beginning of the war when they were ordered to remove the Ts from their lapels.<sup>167</sup> The 'T' had now become the badge of courage and distinction.)

The Regular soldier on active service, particularly in the rank and file, however, was a practical, down-to-earth fellow who judged other soldiers by the results they obtained and by their behaviour as observed by himself. His prejudices against amateur soldiers had largely evaporated by the end of 1914. The Times Special Correspondent apparently did not over-exaggerate when he reported that

"I have heard from many sources that when going under fire for the first time the Territorials have, without exception, acted with a restraint and a self-possession which have surprised the seasoned veteran and have gained and held his warm respect."

He considered that the Territorials, showing "fighting spirit worthy of veterans" had put new heart into the Regular troops.<sup>168</sup> Regular infantryman interviewed, H.E. Smithin (2nd Worcesters), L/Cpl Harry Fotherby (2nd Yorkshire Regt (Green Howards)), Sgt Dennis Furlong (1st KOYLI) and Edward Bilton (2nd KOYLI), were all agreed that

"it was a good job there were the Territorials to fall back on as we needed all the help we could get."

L/Cpl G. Jim Smith, 4th Middlesex, said:

"They were a fine body of men. After a few weeks out there they were first-class soldiers. I won't have anything said against Territorials. We were a beaten Army and if the Territorials hadn't come to help us, the British Army would have had to surrender. The Territorials saved the British Army and there's no mistake about that."<sup>169</sup>

The opinions of these ordinary soldiers are thus in broad agreement with those of their Commander-in-Chief:

"I say without the slightest hesitation that without the assistance which the Territorials afforded between October,



1914, and June, 1915, it would have been impossible to have held the line in France and Belgium, or to have prevented the enemy from reaching his goal, the Channel seaboard"; [the amateur soldiers had filled] "the gaps in our line, through which, ... the Germans must have penetrated had the Territorial Army not existed to step into the breach."<sup>170</sup>

Territorial "Old Contemptible" OR Sgt Archibald MacKellar, 1/5th Scottish Rifles, said of the Regulars' attitude: "I don't think they thought very much of us at first because we were Territorials, but they got quite attached to us in the 19th Brigade and thought quite highly of us."<sup>171</sup> Highly enough, indeed, to accord them the Regular Other Ranks' accolade, a nickname, that of "God's Own", on account of their unbelievably low casualties, a mere fraction of the numbers suffered by the other battalions of the Brigade, up to the Somme offensive of 1916. Usually TF battalions were attached in 1914 as a supernumerary unit to a Regular Brigade, but the 9th HLI, sent out at the same time as the 5th SR, had the distinction of being at once constituted as one of the four battalions comprising the 5th Brigade, their fellow battalions being the 2nd HLI, the 2nd Worcesters and the 2nd Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry. The 9th HLI were soon complimented by the award of the title "The Glasgows".<sup>172</sup> The Hertfordshire Regt TF, which was attached to a Guards Brigade, became known as "The Herts Guards". The 1/4th East Yorks of Hull which took a prominent part in a counter-attack during 2nd Ypres, were christened "The Mad Mullahs" by their Regular colleagues.<sup>173</sup>

The Regulars were pleased to see the Territorial divisions that arrived at the Western Front in 1915. According to the Official History, the arrival of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division at the very beginning of 2nd Ypres "did much to hearten the troops with whom they came in contact, and their subsequent help and sacrifices were gratefully acknowledged by their Regular comrades."<sup>174</sup> The 49th Division, according to letters and respondents' accounts, were welcomed in France with open arms. The day after his arrival, Sgt S.C. Myers, 49th Divisional Cyclists' Corps, formerly of the 8th, wrote, "how very glad they are to see us; there is no cold shoulder for the Territorial here."<sup>175</sup> The Riflemen found the Regulars from whom they took their trench instruction, extremely kind, friendly and helpful. The 2nd Scots Guards were particularly welcoming, for this battalion contained, and by tradition, an appreciable number of Leeds men; soldiers were always on the look-out for men they knew in other regiments. One of them, Pioneer C. Spencer, wrote home to his wife in Armley:

"We had some of the Leeds Rifles in the trenches with us to learn the way about. We gave them cigarettes and tea,



and soup for dinner. They said they had never come across better fellows than those of us out here, for we did everything to make them comfortable."

(Rfm Arthur Fozard, 8th, reported that the Guardsmen from Leeds "were quite touched when they saw us. I suppose it reminded them of home. They made quite a fuss of us.")<sup>176</sup> The Regulars, however, could not be expected to abandon their ingrained prejudices overnight and mixed with the immense affability was more than a hint of condescension. 1310 William Gill, 8th, was only one of many respondents who felt that Regulars were inclined at first to look down on them, "but", he added, "they were soon damn' glad we were there." 2407 Arthur Wainwright, 8th, stated that the men of the first Regular battalion (IVth Division) the 1/8th encountered in the Salient were "so pleased to see us they nearly kissed us."<sup>177</sup>

At first the Riflemen held the Regulars in something like awe, but as their self-confidence increased, so did the Regulars' respect for the Territorials. Battalions who passed each other on the march marched at attention and paid each other military compliments. As the Riflemen bandied light-hearted persiflage, e.g. calls of "Does your mother know you're out?" a popular catch-phrase of the day, with passing Regulars, 1610 Bugler Thomas Doran, 8th, could not help noticing the increasingly admiring looks and comments their marching and saluting attracted; "Regulars set a great deal of store by that sort of thing and judged you by it," he added.<sup>178</sup> In the Salient the word soon got round about the Rifle regiment in the West Yorks, something of a military curiosity. Knowles wrote in August 1915:

"We have done about 50 days in the fighting line and reserves which is an extra long spell even for regulars, but we are doing the same as them. You would be surprised, kid. Every regiment we have met - Scots Guards, Royal Fusiliers etc - think the world of us. As you pass them on the march they will sing out 'Are you West Yorks' and then shout Good Luck etc."<sup>179</sup>

That the Riflemen were not mistaken in the Regulars' attitude is illustrated by the following. L/Cpl Cecil Lund, serving in the ASC (MT) attached to a Regular West Riding (Duke of Wellington's) battalion in the VI Corps, wrote that the Regulars

"call the Leeds Rifles 'the Yorkshire Gurkhas' because they are always wanting to be at them."<sup>180</sup>

Pte Alfred Gibbons, 1st WYR, was interviewed by a reporter when home on leave:

"Gibbons has had the opportunity on several occasions of seeing the Leeds Rifles under fire, and he speaks very highly of the way in which they conduct themselves under very trying circumstances. 'They are as steady as a rock', he said, 'and as cool as you please'.<sup>181</sup>



When 2/Lt Wilkinson and Rfm Clough of the 1/8th were awarded the first medals for gallantry in the 49th Division, warm messages of congratulations were immediately despatched by Field Marshal Sir John French, General Sir Herbert Plumer, Lt-General Sir John Keir and Major-General Perceval,<sup>182</sup> all, it must be conceded, known Territorial supporters. However, the surprisingly long period of time - six months - that the 49th Division was retained in the Salient must be seen as a GHQ compliment to its fighting spirit and level of esprit de corps.

Despite the general level of acceptance, one or two isolated pockets of Regular prejudice lingered on, even into 1916. 1522 Sgt John E.T. Wilson and 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, both of No. 13 platoon, D Coy, 1/7th, recalled the conversation they had had with a Regular sergeant when they had made their first trench relief in the Salient in July 1915:

"Who are you, then?" "7th West Yorks." "Aw, bloody Territorials! I expect we'll have to come back in two or three days to rescue you lot."

Some considerable time later, Sgt Wilson met this sergeant again, this time at the Base. The man apologised profusely for his earlier remarks, explaining that he had been tired and considerably over-wrought at the time. Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th, reported that when he joined a Regular battalion in 1916 with a Permanent Regular commission, he

"met very little prejudice on account of being an ex-Territorial. Most of the officers were extremely nice to me; a couple of the younger ones were a bit toffee-nosed and made one or two snide remarks, but only at first."

He could recall no other instances of Regular prejudice.<sup>183</sup> Lt Col Frederick William Turner, CO of 1/4th Suffolk Regiment was not so lucky. He went out with the battalion in November 1914 as second-in-command. In February 1915 his CO was invalided home and an Indian Army major appointed to the command. He took part in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle and was wounded 6 weeks later. He returned to the battalion in March 1916 and appointed CO on 18th March. Towards the end of May he was removed from the command by the general officer commanding the brigade which was, of course, a Regular one, on the grounds that he did not have sufficient experience of warfare,<sup>184</sup> a criticism that could have been levelled against the vast majority of commanding officers in the Territorial Force, including those of the 50th Division, thrust into 2nd Ypres within a few days of arriving from England.

Territorials in non-infantry arms interviewed reported that they had encountered no prejudice whatever, very much the reverse. It will be recalled that before the war, prejudice by the Regular RAMC, RE and ASC had been



virtually non-existent and that the prejudices of the Regular RA had largely disappeared before the outbreak of war. Farrier Staff Sgt Perkins, Leeds ASC, stated that relations with the Regular ASC were "quite good - chiefly because they couldn't find anything to criticise." He said that Regular officers, sergeant-majors and sergeants who came to the 49th Divisional Train as reinforcements were astounded to find such great efficiency in a Territorial train. His own relations with the Veterinary Corps (which had had no viable Territorial counterpart) were excellent in every way, and he had received maximum co-operation at all times. The Regular ASC (MT) had been delighted to receive Driver Stephen Whitacker at the beginning of the war as a recruit, simply because he was a time-served infantry Territorial and could be despatched immediately to France without further training. Sgt Arthur Hawkins, Leeds Artillery, had never found Regulars patronising, even at pre-war camps, if anything, "they seemed rather impressed, really." On the Western Front, he said,

"We were always treated as equals. After being gassed I got drafted to a Regular battery. They were very glad to have me, as an experienced man. No remarks were ever passed about me being a Territorial. In fact, I seemed to get very favoured treatment from both officers and senior NCOs."<sup>185</sup>

Though the Territorial soldier was clearly no longer despised or disapproved of by the great mass of the Regular Army, both officers and men, there still remained a hard core of UK-based, high-ranking officers dedicated to keeping the Territorials firmly in their place as second-class military citizens by deliberate acts of discrimination, some of which are described in Chap. 8. Certain pay regulations were manifestly unfair: Proficiency pay was not issued in the TF on the same system as that obtaining in the Regular Army: in addition to fulfilling the Army conditions, the Territorial, in order to become eligible, had to have served a minimum of 2 years and to have put in the full 15 days' camp training for 2 years. Territorial officers on active service received less pay and allowances than their counterparts in the Regular Army and hence in Kitchener's Army.<sup>186</sup> Unlike his Regular counterpart, the TF officer who had been invalided home and then declared fit was not put on half-pay while standing by awaiting another job if he was unable to return to his previous appointment.<sup>187</sup> A Territorial NCO was permitted to rise in rank no higher than CSM/Acting RSM, a regulation which caused Acting RSM Tom Weldon of the 1/8th to apply for a commission when he found out, and which deprived Acting RSM George William Wheeler of the 8th of the individual award of the Croix de Guerre sent by the French Government to the RSM in command at the capture of La Montagne de Bligny.<sup>188</sup> The TF County Associations were also victimised by a policy of discrimination.



In April 1915 Lord Scarbrough was complaining of the great difficulty "being experienced in obtaining the necessary additional clerical assistance, due to an unjustifiable system of differential treatment as between the clerical staff in Regular and Territorial offices."<sup>189</sup>

A petty act of discrimination directed specifically against the Leeds Rifles occurred in the autumn of 1917 when an edict was issued ordering the officers to cease forthwith the wearing of black Sam Browne belts "in order that they should no longer be mistaken for officers of the Rifle Brigade."<sup>190</sup> Had the enemy learnt of this, he might well have decided to have thrown in his hand then and there, considering it futile to continue against an adversary who could afford to waste time and energy with such piffling details at such a critical juncture of the war. The Rifle Brigade, it must be hastened to add, had nothing whatsoever to do with the affair. Mrs Evaline Burrell, widow of Lt H.B. Burrell, 8th, thought that her husband may have been the unwitting cause. After being graded C3, he was appointed adjutant of the London District Labour Centre. A visiting elderly "dug-out" "high-up" asked him in what regiment he was commissioned. On being told the 8th West Yorks, he demanded explosively what Lt Burrell meant by masquerading as a Rifle Brigade officer and flatly refused to listen to his historical explanation of the Leeds Rifles' badge and uniform.<sup>191</sup>

The most important and the most vindictive form of discrimination, however, concerned the promotion of senior officers. It has been accepted for many years now that the military commander has much in common with the chief executive of a large-scale commercial undertaking and that he must be interested and skilled in "techniques of organisation, in the management of morale and negotiation", and it is no accident that many techniques of management used today originated or were first developed in the army.<sup>192</sup> For instance, Frederick W. Taylor's theories of "scientific management" found considerable support in the U S Army as early as 1909.<sup>193</sup> It was recognised before the end of World War I, at least by Sir John Keir, that "war is merely a large business concern."<sup>194</sup> Since general officers were essentially general managers, ideally, appointments for the rank of Brigadier-General and above should have been made primarily on the candidates' ability to drive a team of subordinates effectively, rather than on the depth of their professional military knowledge.

Among senior officers of the TF were many who in civilian life had been successful managers, some of very large concerns. Lt Col Kitson Clark of the 8th, for instance, was managing director of Kitson & Co, the largest private employer in Leeds. These facts were completely disregarded by the



army hierarchy. There was, according to Sir John Keir,

"a strong professional coterie, saturated with pre-war prejudices, who opposed the advancement of an officer who had started the war in the Territorial Force, because he had had no previous training in the Regular Army, in spite of the fact that he had had several years' experience in the matchless school of active service."<sup>195</sup>

No Divisional or Corps general was selected from the TF because no Territorial was thought fitted or qualified to occupy such a position, and very few combatant promotions to Brigadier-General were made.

One of the recommendations of the 1904 Norfolk Royal Commission was that "The post of Brigadier and all staff posts in the Volunteer cadres should be open to Volunteer officers possessing the requisite qualifications",<sup>196</sup> but the only Territorial ever to be promoted Brigadier before the war was Noel Lee, a prominent Manchester businessman who was appointed to the command of "The Manchester Brigade" (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Manchester Regiment) of the East Lancashire Division.<sup>197</sup> The first Divisional Commander Royal Artillery to be selected from the TF was Edward N. Whitley, CO of the 2nd (Bradford) WR RFA, in 1917, and he and Lt Col R.E. Sugden, 4th DWR, promoted in May 1918 to command 151 Infantry Brigade, 50th Division, seem to have been the only combatant Territorials of the 49th Division to be promoted Brigadier-General during the war.<sup>198</sup> The War Office preferred to "dig out" elderly Regular officers from retirement. By 1917 Territorials had started complaining to their MPs, and allegations were made in the House of "undoubted and numerous instances where Territorial officers have been passed over and where recognition had not been given to their services at the front." The Under-Secretary of State for War had stated that 18 TF Lt Colonels had been promoted to a higher rank, but it later transpired that these were merely full colonels commanding brigades at home.<sup>199</sup>

"In 1922 the then Secretary of State for War (Mr Winston Churchill) told the Council of Territorial Associations that Territorial officers would be eligible for promotion to Major-General and to command Territorial Divisions. It was not until 1938, however, sixteen years later, that a Territorial officer was so promoted. In fairness to successive Secretaries of State it should be pointed out that it was probably the higher military authorities who had prevented such promotions taking place."<sup>200</sup>

Sir John Keir points out that if the Territorial Force had been allowed, like a Dominion Force, to take the field as a separate body, it would have been commanded and staffed by TF officers.<sup>201</sup> The Dominion Forces commanders were in actual fact, mostly amateur soldiers, but neither GHQ nor the War Office had jurisdiction over their appointment. Sir John Monash, regarded by many military historians as one of the outstanding commanders of World War I, was not a professional soldier, but the Australian equivalent of



a Territorial.<sup>202</sup>

This prejudice against Territorials, which during the war disappeared entirely from the lower reaches of the Army, has nevertheless persisted ever since. It has had a particularly baleful influence, however irrational, on historians and writers, and on publishing generally. How else can the gratuitous insult accorded by A.J. Smithers to Walter Braithwaite - "still doing penance for Gallipoli at the head of a Territorial formation"<sup>203</sup> - be explained, when commanding the said Territorial formation, the brilliant 62nd Division, brought Braithwaite a KCB and promotion to the command of an Army Corps? Though the Territorial Force comprised over 21% of the strength of the British Army, though the war in Palestine was won by an army 4/5ths Territorial in composition (Jerusalem surrendering to Territorials of the 2nd/19th London Regt.), though the TF played a truly vital role on the Western Front, particularly in 1914-15 and again in 1918 in stemming the German offensive, no official history of the Territorial Force in the War was ever compiled and published, though it had been mooted. Only one "war history" of the TF was published, The Territorial Divisions 1914-1918 (1922), by ex-Territorial Major J. Stirling, who was obliged to work exclusively from the published Official Despatches. The result, understandably, was unsatisfactory and it has remained an obscure work. Not surprisingly, many general histories of the War make only passing references to the TF or, more usually, make no reference whatever. Many of the books dealing with the war and/or general military matters that do mention the Territorials do so inaccurately (a notable exception, however, is A History of the Great War 1914-1918 (1934) by C.R.M.F. Cruttwell, an ex-Territorial officer) and often in snide and disparaging terms. Military writer C.J.D. ("Jock") Haswell in his book Citizen Armies (1973) dismisses the TF in one sentence on p.149 and part of another sentence on p.154. The only two published works which have attempted to redress the injustices inflicted on the TF by posterity, A.V. Sellwood (an ex-Territorial), The Saturday Night Soldiers (1966), and Lt Col Howard Green, The British Army in the First World War ... (1968), though they convey "the Territorial Spirit" quite admirably, are unhappily flawed by inadequate research.

## 12.5 Attitudes towards French and Belgian civilians

Generally speaking, relations between French civilians and the personnel of the Leeds Rifles (indeed, of the entire BEF) were not good. Both respondents and authors of the documentary sources were loud in their criticisms and condemnations and were often bitter: in their opinion, French civilians were grasping and mercenary, shameless exploiters of both British



troops and the British Government; filthy; bloody-minded; and often hostile. Only one dissentient opinion was given: by 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 8th, who described the civilians in the war zone as "continental peasantry at its gay and imperturbable best."<sup>204</sup> The entente cordiale was often strained to such an extent that the troops were left wondering whether they and the civilians were really on the same side; the answer was, of course, that the peasant was on nobody's side but his own. As the war progressed, relations between civilians and British troops deteriorated further rather than improved. In 1917 the French Government made representations about the looting of wood for fuel.<sup>205</sup> It was widely believed in the BEF that the French Government charged the British Government rent for all land, including trenches, occupied by British troops,<sup>206</sup> a belief that has even been reported by some authors as fact. It is tempting to attribute the hostility between French civilians and British troops to historical factors and traditional animosities. The fact that alleged sharpness of the French in business dealings and alleged uncleanness were frequent complaints of American troops in World War II<sup>207</sup> tends to refute this suggestion.

The Riflemen's experiences during their first weeks in France set the pattern of antagonism. Whenever troops enter a foreign milieu, the problem of cross-cultural understanding inevitably arises. The factor of ethnocentrism results in the soldier making invidious comparisons between his own culture and that of the new milieu, and not surprisingly, much suspicion, disdain and hostility towards the people of the host country results.<sup>208</sup> The great many cultural differences that British troops found in France aroused ethnocentric disdain, while a number of French folkways clearly offended "respectable" mores.

The great majority of Riflemen had been brought up according to the ethos of working-class Respectability, to value hard work as a virtue and to place cleanliness next to Godliness; moreover, the British Army placed great emphasis on the importance of sanitation and hygiene. As far as sanitary reform was concerned, northern France was in the backwoods. The typical French farmstead consisted of a large square yard completely surrounded by buildings. A large midden invariably occupied most of the yard; invariably, the farm's water pump or well was sited in its immediate vicinity; invariably, the water was contaminated. Villages and small towns had no mains drainage. The officers in particular were horrified. Lt Maurice Lupton, 7th, described the first French towns as "loathsome - appallingly dirty". At the first farmsteads in which the Rifles were billeted the men cleaned up the yards and used plenty of chloride of lime, the stock Army



disinfectant.<sup>209</sup> 2381 Rfm Joseph Perry, 8th, a member of the upper working class, was shocked by "the dirty conditions in which these French peasants live" and by both male and female peasants, who wore "despicable clothing" of dirty rags and were filthy in their person: "We were disgusted to say the least of it." Rfm Perry also condemned the practice of using dogs to work treadmills and to pull carts: "Truly the French people don't believe in working if there is any possible way out of it." Since the Riflemen were on quarter-rations due to the British dock strike, the men were naturally keen to buy food from local civilians. There were immediate complaints, that were to become depressingly familiar, of over-charging, and of giving short change or no change at all: "the French people knew how to charge for their goods";<sup>210</sup> "French people like money very much indeed and never miss an opportunity for taking us on."<sup>211</sup> The men of the 1/7th had met their first confidence trickster on the train from Boulogne. A Frenchman had managed to sell blank postcards to most of the battalion by claiming that whenever the cards were held up to a gas light naughty pictures would appear.<sup>212</sup> 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, became very ill after drinking rum and coffee bought from a civilian. The "rum" was methylated spirits, and the seller was punished by having his establishment placed "out of bounds" to troops.<sup>213</sup>

The over-readiness of many civilians to accuse soldiers of stealing and to claim reparations for loss or damage naturally failed to endear them to British soldiers and their officers.<sup>214</sup> Riflemen were accused of stealing even before they had gone into the trenches for the first time. Setting off for the trenches for instruction, Lt Maurice Lupton wished Madame au revoir: "she said I was the only one who had said that and she had got no thanks for all she had done and nearly started crying." As instruction was postponed, Lt Lupton returned a short time later to find her in a fury and refusing to let any of his men into the billet.

"Finis, plus de soldats, finis, they have stolen my candlestick. After all I've done, they've stolen my candlestick, finis, plus de soldats, jamais un autre' ... The others told her in various ways that of course we hadn't stolen her blooming candlestick as we had plenty to carry without carrying her rotten candlestick about with us, silly old fool. She got much more excited for a bit and then I got her away a bit and said we remembered having seen her exceptionally beautiful candlestick two nights ago, and possibly she had left it in the loft when she went up for some mattresses. Might I go and look? She said yes but you won't find it there, they've taken it for a souvenir, it is a shame, plus de soldats, finis. So I dashed up into the loft and luckily there it was. She wept a good bit"

but did not apologise.<sup>215</sup> Officers naturally bore the brunt of such accusations.



"Landladies" like this were by no means rare, as Lt Lupton's cousin Hugh in the 1/8th found to his cost, e.g.

"Yesterday the Boche knocked down a few houses here ... I went round prospecting after it, but retreated with some haste from the old lady who immediately began to recover damages"; "Although we had not yet left this billet the old French lady has been looking round to see that we haven't stolen anything. They want drowning, some of these old crones."<sup>216</sup>

Civilians of any nationality tend to look on the troops of allies as captive customers and accordingly overcharge for goods and services. Complaints about over-charging and profiteering are widespread in the literature.<sup>217</sup>

Knowles complained he had often had to pay 1 franc to fill his water bottle; respondent Fred Hearn, 8th, claimed he had sometimes been charged 5 francs for the same service. 1393 Signaller Fred Warburton, 7th, described how, in February 1916, just after the British had taken over the Somme front from the French, he had been able to buy coffee at a house in Martinsart for 5 cents a cup. As Madame had a passion for collecting customers' photographs, Fred had given her one of himself and had written on the back "The Best Cup of Coffee in France and only ½d a cup." In September 1917 his younger brother Bert visited a coffee shop in Martinsart and was astounded to see Fred's photograph displayed in a showcase. The coffee was now 30 cents a cup.<sup>218</sup>

Disregarding the effects of wartime inflation, two factors helped to force up the prices charged to British, as opposed to French, troops: (1) British service pay, low though it was, was much higher than that obtaining in the French Army, and this would lead the peasants to believe that all British soldiers were rich; (2) at every pay parade, front-line soldiers were advised to "spend up" before returning to the trenches. This belief in the "richness" of British troops unfortunately led to the use of some form of bribery in an attempt to ensure civilian co-operation in the matter of billeting etc, a practice which did nothing to improve relations in the long run. In Laventie in 1917 Marie, "the landlord's representative", could not get along with the 1/8th officers' mess staff. After a serious quarrel with them

"she confiscated all the utensils she had lent them, but as they retaliated by subtracting the rations we had apparently subscribed to her maintenance", wrote Capt H.R. Lupton, "I think the military came off best, though one was soaked by having a jug of water poured over his head."<sup>219</sup>

Many of the problems were, of course, the result of a mutual lack of understanding. It was difficult to make farmers understand that a large



manure heap close to the water supply was a menace to public health:

"Our landpeople are awfully annoyed or were, because we wanted to clean up their yard. However they have now consented and the place is more sanitary."<sup>220</sup>

The troops did not understand the French attitude to female employment:

"We were sat on the canal bank when a barge came along. There was this great fat bargee sat taking his ease while his poor wife, with a big rope round her, had to trudge along the tow path towing it. Of course we let him have it, playing hell with him, and he went and reported us, but we only got told off. We got told off for singing rude songs about Froggies as well."<sup>221</sup>

(B. Livermore tells a very similar story, but with a Middle East setting, in his book.)<sup>222</sup> In particular, the troops could not understand the French peasants' expedient self-sufficiency and sharp opportunism. They saw the hiding of pump and well handles as sheer bloody-mindedness and failed to grasp that the peasants dreaded the drying up of their water supplies as a result of the massive influx of foreign troops and their horses. 3056 Robert W. Cunnington, 1/7th bombing sergeant, had a practice bombing pit made by surrounding a small pond with a wall of sandbags to trap the blast. He did this without reference to any of the local civilians. When the bombs started exploding in the water the occupier of a nearby cottage ran out "screaming blue murder". By an act of thoughtlessness born of ignorance of French folkways, Sgt Cunnington had deprived this peasant woman of her livelihood: she bred culinary frogs in the pond. An amusing example of peasant opportunism occurred one night when the pack horse being led by 2221 George A. Fletcher, 8th, suddenly dropped dead. Fletcher removed the packs and harness and went off to report the loss. Immediately his back was turned the locals rushed to the spot with their knives and cleavers and when Fletcher returned all that remained of the horse was a large pool of blood in the road.<sup>223</sup>

Much of peasant hostility was engendered or exacerbated by the language barrier. Soldiers frequently found a marked improvement in attitudes once they had mastered a few words and phrases, for many peasants doubly distrusted strangers who were both soldiers and foreigners. Soon on sale in both Britain and the war zone were specially compiled French phrase books full of phrases useful to the soldier, such as "Can you sell me fodder for my horse?" Language difficulties sometimes led to amusing incidents. A 1/8th man was sent to ask Madame at the farm if he could borrow a shovel in order to bury some rubbish. He knew no French.

"Will yer lend us a shovel, Missus?" he asked. Madame, who knew no English, looked baffled. "Shovel," he repeated, and then, more loudly, "Shovel". She brightened and immediately went to the stable and led out a horse. "Voila!"



she cried, "le cheval". The Rifleman looked at her in some exasperation. "Nay, missus", he said, "I can't dig a bloody 'oil wi' a bloody 'oss."<sup>224</sup>

In May 1916 Lt H.R. Lupton, doubtless on account of his fluency in French, his experience as 1/8th Billeting Officer, and his undeniable interpersonal skills, was appointed Town Major of Vignacourt where the Leeds Rifles, and the 49th Division, were in GHQ Reserve. The job of Town Major can be described as liaison work between the local civilian population and the military stationed in the vicinity. Its holder needed an unfailing sense of humour, the patience of Job and the diplomatic skills of an ambassador. Two extracts from the Lupton letters illustrate how difficult the Town Major's job in a French town could be. On 7th May Lt Lupton had

"a fairly stormy day. I had arranged for a certain pasture to be used by an RE company's transport, but when they arrived today they found the owner at the gate refusing to let them in except at the sword's point. It turned out that the owner was different from the one I had understood from the Garde Champêtre, and we had to move to the other pasture, where the owner I intended to billet them on defended the gate with equal determination. After a lot of trouble I got out a requisition and he was eventually induced to open the gate, but not before he had had a good tear at the trousers of two engineers who tried to crawl under the gate while he was there. The Maire was throughout most polite, but not too keen on taking any action. The whole thing was rather amusing, though annoying at the time with the company waiting in the road ... There was a biggish fire yesterday night, and I was afraid it might be one of my carefully arranged billets burning. However, the billet part of the buildings was isolated and saved, and I have got a certificate that the fire was in no way due to the English soldiery. This to avoid reclamations."

Two days earlier he wrote,

"This evening I had a protracted discussion with a large landowner here (who looks like a farm labourer) about using one of his orchards or fields as horse standings. He wouldn't have it at all but vociferated loudly. This evening just now (nearly 10 pm) I called on the Mayor and Mayoress on the subject and they told me he was rich and could afford the sacrifice, such as it was, as easily as anyone else. The Mayoress had heard his part of the conversation from afar and was rather amused. I shall therefore tomorrow make a requisition of his orchard."

Lt Lupton's term of office was extremely trying. He was continually harassed by civilians trying to claim exorbitant damages: the rabbits stolen by soldiers were always pedigree rabbits, the trees chopped down by soldiers for fuel were always valuable fruit trees, the men responsible for daughters' pregnancies were always English soldiers, etc. L/Cpl Walter Stead, DCM, 8th, one of those called upon to pay compensation under an "exorbitant" claim, declared the inhabitants of Vignacourt "a rotten lot". Lt Lupton



often found the civilians difficult to deal with and unpredictable in their behaviour, eg.

"The landlady is very worried this morning about a table allegedly pinched by the MGs. She told us she was not a child to be deceived by any answer we liked to give. I am surprised as I talked to her amicably for a long time yesterday afternoon and Major [Acting Lt Col] Alexander gave her some medical advice regarding her half-paralysed husband"; "Since the battalion came in I have been pacifying angry inhabitants who in this district [Bouzincourt] are always finding grievances. The lady where I am billeted refused to let another of our officers, a new one and young, go into the billet he was to share with me because she said the billet was taken for officers and that he was too young to be an officer."<sup>225</sup>

(Billeting money for officers was 5 fr. per head as compared with 1 fr. per head for other ranks).

It is evident from respondents' testimony and from the Lupton letters and other documentary evidence that there was a wide variation in civilian attitudes within one community and from place to place. It is possible to discern an attitude pattern. Educated people and those who had already lost close relatives in the war were invariably friendly, hospitable, sympathetic and generally welcoming. The inhabitants of prosperous villages or districts were in general much more friendly than those in poor areas where scratching a living was one long struggle: in the "filthy" village of Fordrinoy:

"The people here are not as a rule anything like as friendly as those in the districts where I have billeted before ... the houses are nearly all built of mud and are mostly either already fallen [in] or in a very dilapidated condition. Also there is very little water to be had."

In areas habitually used for billeting large masses of troops the inhabitants tended to be hostile and unco-operative. Of Varennes, Lupton wrote:

"The old lady of the house is one in a thousand, very kind and useful in many ways. Most of the inhabitants are rather the reverse and very sulky. I think they have got too used to the troops and forget that they have also sacrificed something on behalf of the Allies. It makes billeting very difficult ..."<sup>226</sup>

The men of the 1/8th found the people of Varennes most disoblging: "French would sell us no bread"; they took their revenge by stealing a sucking pig. In areas unfrequented or never previously used by troops, the inhabitants almost invariably were most friendly and hospitable. Approaching the Belgian frontier on their way to the Ypres Salient in 1915, the 1/8th men were cheered by the inhabitants of the many little French villages they passed through.<sup>227</sup> On the long march to Wormhoudt from the Salient in January 1916 French housewives brought out buckets of water for the men



of the 1/7th to drink out of.<sup>228</sup> At Wormhoudt the family on whose farm A Coy of the 1/8th were billeted were extremely hospitable and obliging, doing their utmost to make the soldiers comfortable and even going so far as to offer to run an electric cable into the barn for the men's benefit. Of Hericourt, Capt Lupton wrote:

"The village here has not I think been often used before for billets ... The natives are very decent compared with those of frequented areas."<sup>229</sup>

The men much preferred the unfrequented areas as they could often barter bully beef and Tickler's jam with civilians for local produce or cups of coffee; in frequented areas civilians were generally interested solely in selling goods for money. In one village 1880 Pioneer David W. Young, 7th, found a cache of empty wine bottles in his billet and, discovering that bottles were in very short supply in the district, exchanged them with the keeper of the local estaminet for all the beer he could drink.<sup>230</sup> In villages where they were well-received, the Riflemen showed their appreciation: every evening the two bugle bands would beat retreat, a military ceremonial hugely enjoyed by the civilians and in particular by the children.<sup>231</sup>

In complete contrast, relations between the personnel of the Leeds Rifles and Belgian civilians, generally speaking, were very amicable. Each had a great deal of sympathy for the plight and sufferings of the other. The civilians would often stand at their cottage doors and wave and speak to the soldiers as they marched past on their way up to the front line: "Pauvres soldats" or "Pauvres Anglais", they would say.<sup>232</sup> A Rifleman, out looking for a plate of home cooking, felt confident of a friendly welcome at any door he knocked at, even if the occupants had no food to sell him. The Riflemen felt that the Belgians appreciated their presence and were grateful for what the British Army was doing for them. They themselves were fully aware that the German invasion of Belgium had been the immediate cause of the war. The respondents reported that they had been able to get along with Belgians much better than with the French, the consensus being that the former were "much more like English people". No respondent made any adverse criticisms of Belgian civilians, and, surprisingly, there were no complaints about overcharging by shopkeepers, although this cannot have been rare. In October 1915 the British Army authorities opened a BEF dry canteen in the 49th Division's rear sector where troops could buy tinned crab, salmon and other favourite delicacies at reasonable prices, in contrast to the "exorbitant" amounts being charged by local shopkeepers for these articles.<sup>233</sup>



## 12.6 Attitudes of the Other Ranks towards Officers: 1914-1918

In order to establish rankers' attitudes towards officers, the "nominating" procedure, by now a traditional technique in leadership research was used: respondents were asked to nominate individuals as "good" or "bad" officers and to list the reasons for their nominations. It clearly emerged from their answers that regimental officers were expected to conform to a certain well-defined stereotype and to follow a certain equally well-defined code of personal behaviour. In essence, there was no divergence between this stereotype and his expected norms of behaviour and the official stereotype cherished by the British army hierarchy.

A high-ranking officer, lecturing in March 1916 to officer cadets on "The duties of an officer", told them that the subaltern was responsible for the successful leading of his men in battle, for their safety as far as this can be ensured, for their health, comfort, good behaviour and discipline, that the officer to be successful must acquire knowledge and "character" (which involved resolution, self-confidence, and self-sacrifice, if necessary)

"in order to inspire your men by your example, sustain their courage in danger by your example, and their endurance in hardship by your example." He emphasised that "the men must have confidence in their officer. They must feel not only that he knows his job, but also that he will set the example of courage, self-sacrifice, and cheerfulness, and that he will look after their welfare and comfort."<sup>234</sup>

The high importance given officially to example is underlined by the fact that the Military Cross was frequently awarded for conduct considered to be exemplary, e.g. the citation of a 2/8th officer, 2/Lt R.P. Nethercot, a 32-year old married man with children, reads:

"At Ecoust on 3rd May 1917 this officer though wounded in three places did excellent work in rallying his men in front of the Hindenburg line. Although wounded in three places he insisted on going forward with his men, thereby setting a splendid personal example. Later in the day he was ordered by his Company Commander to withdraw to have his wounds dressed. Capt Nicholson his Company Commander speaks in very high terms of his services."<sup>235</sup>

Many instances of the very real importance of the officer's example are to be found in the literature, e.g. a ranker in the platoon of C.M. Slack wrote

"The trenches are up to your waist in water and slush and all the time you are in there you have to stick to it. Your body is shaking with cold and you welcome a bullet or shell to put you out of it altogether. God, it is terrible! The one incentive I have is Lieutenant Slack. He is a thorough sport and sticks it."<sup>236</sup>



Some officer-authors have stressed the pre-eminence of the officer's paternalistic duty of care to his men.<sup>237</sup> When John O. Nettleton joined the 2nd RB in 1916 the CO lectured the junior officers most severely on their duties:

"He said that a subaltern, in his own right, was a very low form of life. His only reason for existing at all was to look after his men."<sup>238</sup>

The junior officer was required to spend virtually the whole of his time with his men. In addition to his two prime duties, he was saddled with a very large number of military duties for which he was entirely responsible and in consequence was over-worked. As 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 8th, said

"Officer's duty was almost continuous: one was lucky to get as much as four hours' sleep in twenty-four when in the line."

He described some of his duties:

"Whenever there was digging to be done, or the least necessity for movement of troops, every officer was fully occupied. It was the subaltern's responsibility to design new trench lines and dugouts, to procure implements from supply dumps, signing for them and securing someone else's signature for replaced equipment, to issue orders for rendezvous and for receiving or supplying qualified guides, to arrange all food, ammunition and water supply, to instruct all under his command in their several duties at each new defence post, and at all times hold the responsibility for discipline whether in action or in rest."<sup>239</sup>

The Regular respondents had all enlisted before the outbreak of war. Their officers appeared to have been drawn from the privileged classes and this was a fact taken for granted by them. They were described as being "gentlemen". The respondents expected their officers to be brave and set a good example, to know their jobs properly, and to treat their men well and look after every aspect of their welfare. A few typical remarks:

"We always admired officers who were brave and knew their jobs";

"A wonderful lot of fellas. They were first-class, and fearless in the face of the enemy. It's all wrong when people try to make out that the officers in the Regular Army were no good. It's absolutely untrue. Our officers couldn't have been better";

"A champion lot, very friendly. They were absolutely fearless in the face of the enemy, none of them ever the slightest bit windy";

"They were a good lot who looked after the men properly. No complaints";

"The men had friendly relations with the officers. They treated us right";

"They were all very decent chaps."<sup>240</sup>



Philip Gibbs described the Regular officer as

"the heir to fine old traditions of courage and leadership in battle. He was a gentleman whose touch of arrogance was subject to a rigid code of honour which made him look to the comfort of his men first, to the health of his horse second, to his own physical needs last. He had the stern sense of justice of a Roman centurion, and his men knew that though he would not spare them punishment if guilty, he would give them always a fair hearing, with a point in their favour, if possible. It was in their code to take the greatest risk in time of danger, to be scornful of death in the face of their men, whatever secret fear they had, and to be proud and jealous of the honour of the regiment."<sup>241</sup>

This was the Regular respondents' perception of the regimental officer. They wanted officers who were "gentlemen" by education, manners and habits, who would conduct themselves like gentlemen in every situation. This bears out the view, recently challenged,<sup>242</sup> but one which had been often expressed over the years, that the men preferred to be led by "gentlemen". Prince Rupprecht is said to have observed (perhaps with some surprise) that British WWI prisoners always spoke enthusiastically of their officers as "real gentlemen". The reason lay in the norms of behaviour that could be expected from "gentlemen". Rifleman Harris declared:

"I know from experience that in our army the men like best to be officered by gentlemen, men whose education has rendered them more kind in manners than your coarse officer, sprung from obscure origin, and whose style is brutal and overbearing."<sup>243</sup>

The Regular respondents, though they preferred their officers to adopt a friendly manner towards them, did not expect to be treated like friends, a notion which frankly horrified or scandalised them. Officers described as "human" seemed to have been comparatively rare, particularly before and during the first two years of the war. Officers were usually described as "very stern and strict", while commanding officers seem to have been distant, regal figures of autocratic mould. The commanding officer of Pte G. James Smith, 4th Middlesex, however, was a notable exception. (Pte Smith was his groom, one of his two personal servants):

"Colonel Hull was a wonderful man. He treated me like his son, not as one of his soldiers. He was loved and respected by the men. He was kind and considerate and human. The men always used to say they'd follow him anywhere, because they knew he would never lead them or order them anywhere he wasn't willing to go to himself. He was a real soldier and a very brave man."<sup>244</sup>

The Leeds Rifles respondents' perception of the officer was broadly similar to that of the Regulars. Both sets rated extremely highly as necessary attributes "bravery" and "the ability to set a good example". All soldiers took particular note of the way officers behaved, especially



under fire, and sorted them out into categories.<sup>245</sup> They constantly sought a lead and an example, seeing the officer as a source of moral strength from which they could draw. As Ludendorff observed,

"In trouble, danger or battle the men always relied on and looked up to their officer, even when he was but a boy."<sup>246</sup>

The immense importance of the officers' example was early brought home to the men of the 1/7th and 1/8th: during the bombardment that opened the Battle of Aubers Ridge:

"All along the trenches our men stood it well, and our officers were splendid, walking about just as if they were going up Briggate."<sup>247</sup>

Brave officers were universally admired:

"Lt Alexander was a real 'un, an absolute madman, hadn't a single nerve in his whole body. The men thought he was absolutely marvellous";

"2/Lt Glazebrook was a man I personally admired, not only for his personal bravery in the field - he was one of the bravest men in the Regiment - but because of his great moral courage in overcoming his physical disability of his hare lip and the great disadvantage that the men thought him a bit of a pansy at first till they got to know him";

"Lt Kemp was very nice, very quiet really, but extremely popular on account of being such a fearless chap";

"Mr Webber always seemed very nonchalant. He had a 'couldn't-care-less' attitude to danger and we admired him for that."<sup>248</sup>

An officer who showed fear, or apparent fear, earned himself nothing but contempt:

"There was only one officer I didn't like and he was no good at his job at all. One of these 'parade-ground' or 'pipe-clay' soldier types who aren't any good at actual fighting, and windy as hell into the bargain";<sup>249</sup>

"parade-ground officers" were universally despised by all ranks of front-line soldier. Although rankers showed great compassion for comrades who developed psychiatric illnesses, no allowances whatsoever were made for officers with similar symptoms, and bad nerves or "shellshock" were invariably vehemently condemned as cowardice. A 2/7th respondent said, "Major F.A.L. Wood was an absolute bloody coward. He disappeared after the first time in the line"; Major Wood's casualty report has fortunately survived: "Shell shock adm. hosp. Boulogne 10.3.17."<sup>250</sup> Capt Walter Berry, OC D Coy, 1/8th, is an example of an officer the vast majority of whose men turned against him and branded him a coward when his nerves gave way, in December 1915. Then aged 26, he had hitherto been a most popular officer. Shortly before being invalided home, he had given an order to a group of men which would have led to their almost certain deaths if carried out.



Respondent 1712 Corporal John William Sanderson, 1/8th, one of the men concerned, declined to obey and told Capt Berry he was being "a bloody fool". When he attended the first Reunion of the 1914 Leeds Rifles' Old Comrades' Association 50 years later, he was greatly taken aback to be greeted with loud applause from a large group of D Coy men and cries of "Here's the fella who called Captain Berry a bloody fool!" On being discharged from hospital, Capt Berry was posted to the training camp. 2952 Lawrence Tallant of A Coy, 1/8th:

"Capt Berry was back with the 3rd line at Clipstone when I got there in 1916. He was sending out the drafts. God, how the men hated him! They used to boo him and barrack him. Of course, I don't suppose what the wounded first-line men like me told the third-line men about him helped his popularity. Personally, I just felt contempt for him."

Capt Lupton, who had the opportunity of witnessing this kind of behaviour at first hand, admitted that Berry "had difficulty in maintaining what he considered to be proper prestige."<sup>251</sup> Men in training battalions invariably adopted harsh, uncompromising and unkind attitudes to embusquès, those officers who had returned from the front apparently unwounded.

In a first-line Territorial battalion the men in the beginning looked to the sole professional officer, the Adjutant, to set them a particular example. A typical comment was:

"Capt Dundas, the Adjutant, was a marvellous fella, obsessed by soldiering, he was. A very keen soldier, an example to us all."<sup>252</sup>

The Adjutant was the most important officer, in fact the key figure, in every peacetime and first-line TF battalion. He was in a position to exert a great deal of influence upon standards of discipline, devotion to duty and general efficiency among all ranks, particularly the officers who were only civilians possessing a limited military knowledge and little or no experience. The men of the 5th SR were in no doubt that their Adjutant, Capt W.D. Croft, who had been with the battalion since 1911, set a splendid example to all ranks:

"His influence in obtaining and maintaining the efficiency of the battalion cannot be overestimated. He bore a charmed life. His coolness and courage under fire were a wonderful and inspiring example to all ranks ... His example undoubtedly bore much fruit and his encouragement brought out our latent soldierly qualities which in great measure accounted for our proud record in the war."<sup>253</sup>

A major consequence of the almost universal assimilation of the adulterated form of the ethic of respectability was that the late Victorian and the Edwardian working classes were extremely class conscious;<sup>254</sup> a hierarchy of status extended down to the very bottom of these classes.<sup>255</sup>



Engels had complained in 1889 about the old and firmly established

"division of society into innumerable strata, each recognised without question, each with its own pride, but also its inborn respect for its 'betters' and 'superiors'."<sup>256</sup>

It had long been held that the average British soldier would not accept as an officer anyone who was not his social superior. Sidney Herbert had declared in 1857 that

"military obedience would be impossible, were it not that the soldier comes from the class that is accustomed to respect and obey the class from which the officer comes."<sup>257</sup>

This was the reason why the upholding of the norms of gentlemanly behaviour was considered by the Army hierarchy such an important prerequisite in earning the respect and obedience of the rank and file.

Leeds Rifles ranker respondents, in contrast to the Regular respondents, did not take merely for granted the fact that officers had been of the social status of "gentlemen". Virtually all respondents considered it extremely important for an officer to be a gentleman per se. The men of the Leeds Rifles positively demanded that their officers should be "gentlemen" and were not prepared to accept an officer who was not. This may well have been a natural outcome of the fact of the Regimental officer class being by tradition a socially exclusive body. The former Volunteers and prewar Territorials had been accustomed to see reprinted in their own individual copies of the monthly battalion orders entries from the London Gazette such as "Hugh Delabere Bousfield, gentleman, to be Second-Lieutenant ...", and they knew that the officer class was recruited from local high-status families. Since the men of the middle-class 5th SR did not expect their officers to be of the social status of gentlemen, nor, for that matter, their social superiors,<sup>258</sup> the expectations and attitudes of the Leeds Rifles rankers may not have been typical of the Territorial Force as a whole, although they may not have been rare. The men of the 1/4th Y & L (Hallamshires), another regiment having a socially exclusive officer class, evidently held very similar views:

"Platoons were very loyal to their officer, and were often very attached to him. They didn't mind if he was their own age or even younger, but they wanted someone they could respect and look up to. They preferred to have a 'gentleman', someone from what they regarded as the ruling classes. They would never quite take to an older officer who'd come up from the ranks from their own class - they wouldn't really trust him or respect him."<sup>259</sup>

The following comments are typical:

"The officers were all real gentlemen, real toffs. All very good fellas, grand to get on with, very, very good to young riflemen and never too hard, except on real wrong-doers.



If you were on the peg, they'd look for excuses for you";

"They were all good chaps, all very nice, all local businessmen and all well-off. They'd all been brought up as gentlemen and had been well-educated and knew the proper way to treat us";

"All the officers we went out with were good, and thorough gentlemen. I can't say that of all the officers who came along later. We particularly disliked the ex-rankers who'd become officers. They were uppity, threw their weight about and didn't know the proper way to behave, all because they weren't gentlemen, you see."

The other ranks had evolved their own norms of gentlemanly behaviour to which they expected their officers to conform. All officers who conformed were described as "toffs". Capt Lupton recalled censoring a letter in which the Rifleman had written "our officers are f—ing toffs". He commented, "The kindness was there, though the language was a shade crude!"<sup>260</sup>

First and foremost, the officer was expected to behave in a manner consistent with the ethic of noblesse oblige.

It has become a commonplace to speak of modern armies as having developed out of the feudal system. Commentators have regarded the late Victorian British Army as "the last bastion of neo-feudalism"<sup>261</sup> simply because many of its officers came from the landed classes and many of its rank and file from the former peasant class. They have perceived a close relationship between the stratification system of the army (into two relatively closed social strata) and the closed social class systems of feudal societies, in spite of the obvious fact that it is impossible for the military society to be status-free and classless and still function. As C.H. Coates and R.J. Pellegrin point out, hierarchies of military rank "are not devices for the purposeful creation of social inequalities. Rather, they are institutionalised means of ensuring immediate military control in crisis situations." Some sociologists in the United States, where Britain, with its monarchy and hereditary aristocracy, is commonly regarded as a feudal society, have made much of the pre-eminence of feudal or medieval tradition in the British and other Western European armies.<sup>262</sup> The essential characteristic of the ethic of noblesse oblige, paternalism, as indicated by the responsibility of officers for subordinates, is seen as an integral part of the medieval tradition and the US Army rejected paternalism for obvious political and ideological reasons.<sup>263</sup>

The fact that serving as an army officer was at one time regarded as a facet of the aristocrat's or gentleman's feudal responsibility had very little bearing on the principle of noblesse oblige, however. The principle, which emphasised the Christian virtues of the gentleman, was introduced



into the British Army officer corps around the early Victorian period, perhaps largely due to the influence of Dr Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby 1827-41, and the reformed, or "Arnoldian", public schools, which provided a very large proportion of officers. Arnold saw the first purpose of education as being to inculcate Christian morality: he aimed to turn out "Christian gentlemen".<sup>264</sup> Also to be taken into account was the influence of Disraeli's "Young England" movement (1842-5) which believed that a revival of the ethic of noblesse oblige (as expounded in his novel Coningsby (1844) and perhaps derived from the social theories of Coleridge and Carlyle) was the solution to the nation's social ills.<sup>265</sup>

An apparent echo of the feudal tradition was noted in officer-men relationships in the Leeds Rifles, however: ranker respondents had enjoyed living under a gentleman's patronage. In spite of the Respectable working-class code of "independence", they did not look upon handouts of money, food, cigarettes, beer, chocolate, etc. from their officer as charity, but as the natural perquisites of serving under a "gentleman", expecting like a knight's men-at-arms or retainers, to be "looked after" whilst on active service. The really remarkable thing, is that they would not have expected, sought or been offered gifts in civilian life. Such gifts of comforts were apparently unheard of in Regular units and the Regular respondents were openly sceptical about them. The Leeds Rifles rankers clearly associated the giving of presents of comforts with the ethic of noblesse oblige, and Capt H.R. Lupton, a member of a well-to-do philanthropic family and a liberal dispenser of comforts, equally clearly regarded the practice as an integral part of his welfare duties. The majority of the officers were in the habit of giving presents. The practice drove Ramsden heavily into debt: by June 1917 he had incurred a large overdraft and was obliged to post-date all his cheques by more than six months.<sup>266</sup>

The majority of respondents regarded the care of his men as the officer's chief duty. A typical comment was:

"Lt Wilkinson was my favourite. He'd do anything for you: he looked after our welfare very carefully and always asked after our health and were we quite happy and that."

Officers who neglected this aspect of their work were always heavily censured, e.g.:

"Capt Redmayne was the worst officer in the Regiment, not a nice fella at all. Nobody liked him. He wasn't considerate. If you had to fall out on the march, he'd leave you. He didn't care what happened to you. I didn't think much of him at all, he was a washout";

"I didn't care for our platoon officer very much. He thought too much of himself and he only saw to his own welfare. He wasn't interested in anybody else's."<sup>267</sup>



The USARB of WWII discovered that enlisted men, in evaluating leadership, placed greatest weight on the factor of personal concern for the men, and accorded the highest ratings to the following leadership practices: being interested in the men, understanding the men's needs, and being helpful to the men in the matter of personal and welfare problems.<sup>268</sup> American social researcher Arthur K. Davis observed that the differential privileges of Naval officers were accepted by enlisted men only if the former were considered to behave in a manner consistent with the principle of noblesse oblige, and he drew attention to the moral indignation of followers that arose when leaders neither lived up to their obligations nor received punishment for their offences.<sup>269</sup>

The most popular officers, those that were considered to be the "best" officers, were always those who showed great personal concern for their men. Hugh Lupton, who became a living legend in the 1/8th as "Mad Luppy", intensely admired by the Other Ranks as "the bravest man in the Regiment", was greatly loved because

"he was always so kind and considerate" to his men.

"He always saw to the men's welfare before he even started thinking of his own. I remember one occasion when we'd gone into reserve trenches at La Belle Alliance in the autumn of 1915. It had been raining for days and we had water up to our thighs. I was absolutely fed up. I was wet and cold and couldn't find myself a place anywhere. I was still only 17 then. I was so depressed I went and sat on the top, too miserable to care any more. Then Mr Lupton came along with his torch and asked me what was the matter. I told him. 'We'll soon have you right,' he says, and starts checking all the dugouts to see if they were all occupied. Then he came across a little dugout, just big enough for one. I was very grateful to him."

"One day there was no bread in the rations and we weren't in the front line either. The men were grouching like hell. Luppy ordered me to fall them in and he then marched them off to a village 5 kms away and bought them all bread out of his own pocket."

"Although he didn't smoke himself, he asked his employers, Hathorn Davy's, to send him parcels of cigarettes so that he could give them to his men."<sup>270</sup>

It was close attention to little details like this that counted a great deal in building up and maintaining morale. A.R. Glazebrook, 1/7th, for instance, "had a great big tobacco pouch, always full, and at roadside halts on the march always offered pipefuls of tobacco round to everybody."<sup>271</sup> Many officers would carry the rifles or packs of men who appeared likely to fall out on the march. Pay matters were an important aspect of welfare. The men were paid in 5-franc notes. The 1/8th officers were distressed to discover that if a private made the maximum allotment to his dependents



out of his pay he might be entitled to nothing if pay days occurred more often than once a fortnight. Others might be entitled to nothing if they were in debt to the QM, having, say, lost or damaged their jack knife or "eating irons", or been fined for some misdemeanour. The pay might not arrive on the promised day. In all these cases, the officers might well pay the men out of their own pockets or advance them a small payment from company funds. Said 2221 George A. Fletcher, 1/8th, of his platoon officer, "Lt Callaghan was a toff of a fellow, sometimes paying 5 fr. out of his own pocket when some bloke was in debt." Lupton even allowed "subbing", i.e. giving advances on pay outside pay days, though he was compelled to swear each recipient to absolute secrecy, since the practice was forbidden.<sup>272</sup>

Great store was set by respondents on the importance of "gentlemanly behaviour". This involved being agreeable and courteous to subordinates at all times, never raising the voice to shout. This is what was meant when an officer was described as "quiet". Bawling or "carrying-on" was considered vulgar. Lt R.C. Calvert "was very gentlemanly and always spoke quietly and in such a nice way. He never raised his voice, no shouting or bullying or anything like that." 2/Lt J.S. Parker "was a terribly nice chap and always spoke to you in a very gentlemanly manner. He never ordered you about." Capt Maurice Lupton was "a nice quiet sort who never yelled or bawled."<sup>273</sup> "The officers treat us like gentlemen, and don't bully us and jump down our throats when they give us an order" wrote Rfm A. Appleton, 1/7th, of Beeston Hill, a married man with 5 children.<sup>274</sup> Being customarily treated by the officers in a courteous manner enhanced the Other Ranks' own self-respect as well as their respect for the officers concerned.

Although the men expected their officers to be "gentlemen", they evidently did not regard them as social superiors and officers who treated them as social inferiors were very much resented and often heartily disliked, e.g.

"He was stuck-up, a right superior type. I didn't like him. He was always finding fault and always had a sneering look on his face as though he thought you were beneath him";

"He was very stand-offish and seemed to look down on us. He thought himself quite a few cuts above us";

"I didn't like Lt Hall because he used to address us as 'you people' instead of 'men' or 'lads' like the other officers."

The 1/8th's aristocrat, the Hon Roland Kitson, was very popular because

"although he was one of the nobility, he didn't have any side and was very homely" and "always very friendly."<sup>275</sup>

"Superior" behaviour was clearly not the hall-mark of a "gentleman".



"Superior" attitudes, uppish, overbearing and discourteous behaviour, were the chief complaints made against ex-rankers. The ranker officer's ignorance of "the proper way to behave" immediately antagonised his men. An officer's groom recounted how his ranker-officer had repeatedly refused to pay for the saddle soap and metal polish (which were not government issue) and how the matter had had to be taken, via the Transport Sergeant, the Transport Officer and the Quartermaster, to the Colonel before his grievance was redressed.<sup>276</sup> University students automatically qualified for recognition as "gentlemen". "Gentlemen" rankers were expected to conform to gentlemanly norms of behaviour and those that failed to conform were strongly disapproved of. An example was W.E. Worsley, a Leeds University undergraduate of working-class origins. Despite being captain of the battalion association football team, he was extremely unpopular. He was aggressive and self-assertive and was said to "swear like a trooper" and be over-robust as a footballer: he clearly did not know his place as a "gentleman". When he became a subaltern in the 1/8th he was hated and despised: respondents repeatedly accused him of cowardice and neglect of duty, and several of them appeared to have been involved in a running feud against him. Officer-respondents were at a complete loss to explain the Other Ranks' behaviour and attitudes towards Worsley.

A Leeds Rifles officer who could be regarded socially as a gentleman was accorded immediate respect: "When a youth, however callow, is posted to a platoon he is immediately adopted and becomes OURS, and we trickle behind him just as if we were being led."<sup>277</sup> Whether he retained or increased this respect depended entirely on his subsequent behaviour. Former "gentlemen" rankers were readily accepted: e.g. when ex-Orderly Room Sgt W.B. Burrell returned to the 1/8th as an officer on 11th March 1916, he was given "a very nice reception".<sup>278</sup> Ranker-officers who behaved according to the accepted gentlemanly norms were easily and whole-heartedly accepted by their men whatever their social background, as the following opinions of ex-rankers illustrate:

"Lt Jackson was a good officer, very conscientious and most thoughtful for the welfare of his platoon. He was on leave in England at the time I got wounded and on his return to the unit he wrote me some very nice letters whilst I was in the base hospital. He also got his mother and sister to visit my mother with expressions of sympathy. I cannot speak too highly of him. I felt very sad when I got to know he had been killed";

Capt Yates of the 2/8th, the former RSM-instructor,

"was a right toff. He was a real friend to me. Once, on a route march, I was in pain because I had rubbed up terrible blisters on my feet with new boots. Capt Yates let me ride on his horse";



"Lt Hyland was a grand fella and we really respected him";<sup>279</sup>  
 Worsley's best friend, 2/Lt F.W. Smith, another working-class officer, was very popular and highly regarded by all ranks. Any suggestions that the Other Ranks preferred gentleman officers because the lower classes' attitude to "gentlemen" was traditionally deferential, or that they disliked ranker officers because they were over-strict disciplinarians and were too familiar with the artfulness and trickery of the private soldier to be deceived by any malingering, which may or may not have been true of the peacetime Regular Army, can be entirely discounted as far as the Leeds Rifles is concerned.

The Leeds Rifles ranker liked to have that comfortable and secure feeling that his officer really cared about him as an individual. While he recognised him as his military superior he liked to feel that his officer was his friend and that his officer in turn regarded him as his friend. 2880 William A. Bywater said,

"We were all brothers-in-arms with the officers. They were our friends and comrades. We all did our best for each other."

Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, also of the 1/8th, said,

"In the Rifles a private Rifleman regarded his officer as his friend and brother-in-arms."

2460 Cpl Ernest Kirkland, 1/8th, recalled

"the high regard and respect which 2/Lt Bellerby was given by the NCOs and men of No. 12 platoon as their officer and friend".

Jack Bellerby was highly gratified to learn that

"all in No. 12 platoon knew that I had a high regard for them and was trying to be worthy of them and their trust."

Lt Hartnell

"was greatly beloved in the Battalion, especially by his own platoon (No. 1) who wrote home of him as 'their best friend'."

He died in the arms of one of his men, stretcher bearer 1712 Cpl John W. Sanderson, an unemotional man who regretted to the end of his own life that he had been unable to say Goodbye to him. 2/Lt Glazebrooke wrote to the mother of Rfm Tommy Mann killed in action:

"As you can imagine, living with them day in and day out for so long, I have become extremely fond of all my men, and the loss of one of them is a personal loss to myself of a very great friend."

2635 Cpl Reginald Frank Charge, 1/7th, tried to explain the enormous popularity of his company commander, Capt G.E. St Clair Stockwell:

"All the chaps who'd been in the 7th with him in his Company before the war were his 'special pals'. I call them that because if I call them 'Stocky's pets' it will give you a bad impression. He treated all his men like personal friends - I think that's why he was so very popular."<sup>280</sup>



Although social levelling was commonly a feature of front-line life, the extremely friendly relations that existed between officers and men were undoubtedly a legacy of the Volunteer tradition. Ex-Regular officer Howard Vincent had complained to the Bury Committee in 1878 that in the Volunteer Force there was far too much familiarity between officers and men.<sup>281</sup> The Regular Army was still parroting this complaint about the Territorial Force 40 years later, and comparatively few Regular officers shared the belief of Regular Officer Sidney Rogerson "that the way to get the best out of the British soldier was for an officer to show that he was the friend of his men, and to treat them as friends."<sup>282</sup> Despite the cordiality of relations, a certain social distance nevertheless remained between the officer and his men who always treated him as belonging to a different group or class.<sup>283</sup> As Bugler Ernest Foster, who served in the 8th before the war and later became a Regular soldier, explained:

"If you saw an officer in the street or at the barracks when you were both in civilian clothes, you could speak to him as normal. But you spoke to him respectfully because you always bore in mind that he was an officer. You never tried to be familiar. It was much more free and easy between officers and men in the Territorials than it was in the Regulars. In the Territorials, officers treated you like human beings."

Leeds Rifles officers were frequently described as "human";

"All the officers were very nice really, human, you know. I don't suppose they'd have done for the Regular Army in peacetime - not enough strictness and spit and polish, but most of them, being businessmen, knew how to treat men to get the best out of them."<sup>284</sup>

These remarks are perceptive: of the officers listed in Table 11, Appendix II, for instance, well over half had previously been engaged in occupations in which dealing with people in a general way, or managing men, prominently figured. The secret of man-management lay in getting to know the men under one's command. Before the war the 8th Bn officer had been instructed that

"In order to be able to carry out his work properly ... [he] must take every opportunity of learning the character and capabilities of each individual under his command ... with this object he should not only study them on the parade ground, but he should also avail himself of the opportunities afforded on all occasions - on the Range, in their tents, on the football field, and even at their meals [on Field days and at camp]."<sup>285</sup>

Guy Chapman was told at the OTC where he received his officer training:

"Get to know your men ... Know your men, young man ... and they'll follow you anywhere."<sup>286</sup>

Charles Carrington was told during his officer training that his duty was

"to get to know his men better than their own mothers and to love them just as much."<sup>287</sup>



Leeds Rifles officers primarily got to know their men by whiling away the long weary hours on duty in the front line by chatting with them. The men loved this and came to expect it as part of the officer's customary behaviour. Though they were not expected to be quite as friendly and comradely as the subalterns, the more senior Leeds Rifles officers were preferred to be "human", "approachable" and "down to our level". One 1/7th respondent complained that although Capt W.J. Todd was "a very good chap", he was not particularly approachable: "You couldn't have chats with him."<sup>288</sup> It was not considered a breach of discipline for a Leeds Rifles ranker to address an officer first, as it was in the Regular Army;<sup>289</sup> he never had to enquire, "Permission to speak, sir?" nor was a private required to approach an officer through an NCO.

Fun-loving officers were accordingly extremely popular. 2/Lt Bickersteth was "a right good sport", "quite a card" and "a real character". 2/Lt W.S. Dimery was a "happy-go-lucky" young man who "made light of everything and liked acting about to make us laugh." Lt S.H. Elkington "liked to have a bit of fun with the men, have bets and that. He once bet me he could down a quart of beer faster than me and he won", recalled 1543 Harper Stott, 1/8th. Kempy [2/Lt W.G. Kemp] was a dare-devil, quite fearless. He was very matey and a real sport, full of jokes. Everybody thought the world of him." E.F. Wilkinson, who was highly popular with all ranks of the 1/8th, "always had a joke on his tongue" and often recited comic poems or monologues he had composed himself. Capt Andrew Wilson, 1/8th, nicknamed "Fatty", was popular because "he was a right jolly sort, always laughing and cracking jokes." 2223 Herbert Hopkinson of A Coy, 1/8th, recalled that he and his comrades "used to kid 'Luppy' [Lt H.R. Lupton] proper". His platoon sergeant, 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, said of 2/Lt N. Wilson, 1/7th, "A very nice lad. I got very friendly with him. We used to pull his leg and he was just like one of us." Capt Stockwell of the 1/7th was "everybody's favourite." "They used to fight to get in his company. He was a real character and no mistake, a proper scream, kept us in stitches"; "A very comical fella", "always cracking jokes and making witty remarks, a real 'life and soul of the party' type."<sup>290</sup>

Since the officer was a "gentleman", he was expected to be well-dressed. This was true also of the Regular Army. Haldane was aware of this in 1907 when he was receiving demands for the democratisation of the officer corps. During an Army Debate, he declared that he, personally, would be only too glad to see men rise from the ranks, but pointed out that the career of an officer was an expensive one. "Officers have to keep up a certain state, their own men would not tolerate them if they did not."<sup>291</sup> Respondents



who had served in the Regiment before the war commented in the most favourable terms on the personal appearance of the officers. J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th, was described as being "always terribly smart, just beautifully turned out." Capt C.L. Foulds was "always spotlessly turned out and looked as good as any Regular",<sup>292</sup> even in 1917.

The officer was also expected to conform to the masculine stereotype. Highly-regarded officers were invariably described, as W.G. Kemp was, as "a real man". Lt Col A.H. James, the archetypal manly hero (see next section), was intensely admired. Officers who possessed feminine characteristics, such as high-pitched voices, or schoolgirl complexions, were made figures of fun. The intrepid 2/Lt A.G. Rigby of the 1/8th was "not of military appearance and manners". A candidate for the Wesleyan Ministry, he was of slender build and had pale hair and a beautiful girlish complexion. Back in England his men had immediately nicknamed him "Gladys", but "in the war zone he seemed totally oblivious of fear: he was still referred to as 'Gladys', but in quite a different tone of voice."<sup>293</sup> It may be added, in corroboration, that two respondents, who had been members of his platoon, held high opinions of him.

There was considerable evidence that the men of the Leeds Rifles preferred their officers to be local men. Parochialism, or localism, was then endemic in the Leeds area. A number of respondents felt strongly that the Leeds Rifles should have been recruited exclusively from Leeds men and resented the admission of incomers from London, Liverpool, Birmingham and elsewhere. There were several reasons why the men might prefer local officers. They knew, or could find out, their family background. They knew that the local officers would be able to understand their vernacular. This was an important point to be considered when there were sergeants in the 7th who instructed their men in musketry by saying, "Tha ligs low and lets wang",<sup>294</sup> as the following classic Yorkshire story illustrates. Orderly officer to recruit: Where's your rifle? Recruit: Anna wun, sir. Baffled officer to corporal: What on earth does he mean? Corporal: He's baht, sir.<sup>295</sup> Perhaps they shared the feeling of respondent Staff-Sergeant-Major A. Edward Welburn, 465 Coy, Leeds ASC:

"I suppose you couldn't help preferring an officer who came from the same place as you, as you automatically felt he would understand you as a person better";

or the opinion of George Walker, 1/7th, that having local men as officers increased inter-rank camaraderie:

"They were a very matey lot. Being Leeds men they were our own kith and kin. They always did everything they could for us to the best of their ability."<sup>296</sup>



There was a further advantage accruing from the presence in the Regiment of local officers which materially improved morale and strengthened inter-rank relationships: the welfare role played on the home front by the officers' female relatives, particularly the wives and mothers who were members of the Lady Mayoress's Committee and so able to deal with problems concerning dependents' allowances, etc. H.R. Lupton asked his mother to visit the families of any of his men who were killed or badly wounded, and to visit wives who were ill and whose husbands were worrying about them. Capt R.C. Calvert, OC C Coy 1/7th, sent his sister to visit the wives of all his men with children to see if they were in need.<sup>297</sup> It was common for wives and mothers of Riflemen to write to their officers if they had any problems or complaints. 1310 William Gill, 1/8th, said his mother had complained to Capt Longbottom that he was not writing her letters, only Field Post Cards.<sup>298</sup> Despite the Northerner's traditional dislike of "Southerners" and the Yorkshireman's distrust of non-Yorkshiremen, no evidence was found that suggested that a non-Yorkshire officer's geographical origin handicapped him in any way whatsoever in his relations with his men. It was his qualifications as a gentleman that were of paramount importance here.

Fundamentally, what a soldier sought in his officer was a super-father.<sup>299</sup> This was obvious from the testimony of respondents. Virtually all of them described their battalion as "one big happy family". They consciously carried in their minds the concept of the battalion as an extended family, the Army as the house or shelter, the battalion itself as the mother who fed, clothed and supported them psychologically and their sergeants, sergeant-majors and officers as fathers who protected and guided them and told them what to do. The paternalism of the British Regular Army unit was widely recognised in working-class society before 1914.

This concept can be explained in psychological and sociological terms as follows. The infantry battalion was organised in combat groups called sections and platoons. On active service, the external threat from the enemy and the isolation from home and family in a foreign land produce a definite change in the relations of the members of the combat group towards each other. The men rapidly become united to each other and to their leader by the strongest of bonds. The intensity of their feeling resembles the closeness of relationship between members of the same family:

"In truth, they are brothers-in-arms in more than a figurative sense. They actually feel toward each other as if they were brothers ... The men in the combat teams are brothers by virtue of their constant enforced association, their dependence upon each other, their common ideals and goals, and their relation to their leaders. In the family circle of the combat group the leader is in the position of



the father ... from a psychological point of view, the combat leader is a father and the men are his children."<sup>300</sup>

It has been observed by sociologists and social psychologists that affective and instrumental leadership in groups are frequently on the model of mother and father relations in the family. Margaret Phillips, who included a tank crew among her examples, considered that there existed a perceptible resemblance between the structure of the small group and that of the nuclear family and between the pattern of relationships in the nuclear family and that developing in small adult groups.<sup>301</sup> The military institution is in any case at all times strongly paternalistic. The trained and resocialised soldier is encouraged to become a dependent of the military institution which completely organises his life both overtly and covertly and in psychiatric terms becomes a substitute-parent.<sup>302</sup>

J.R. Bellerby was firmly of the opinion that on active service an infantry officer

"wins authority and, indeed, affection to the extent that he appears as a father-figure. I cannot think," he said, "of a single platoon officer in the 8th Leeds Rifles who failed to achieve this position and to be recognised in it; and I should say it was common throughout the British Army up to the Somme."<sup>303</sup>

The Regular respondents, however, would not accept this view: they treated the notion of the officer as a father-figure with scorn and clearly regarded it as yet another Territorial aberration. It was a notion accepted in Edmund Blunden's regiment, the 11th Royal Sussex, a Kitchener battalion.<sup>304</sup> It was a familiar concept in the Territorial Force: in 1915 a 1/6th WYR man at the front wrote: "We are like a big family, with the Colonel as the father."<sup>305</sup> In the 1/8th Col E. Kitson Clark told his men to think of their officers as fathers and of himself as "Grandpa". After he had sternly lectured them all on the evils of cigarette smoking, the younger members of the battalion started singing a song: "We must not smoke cigs, for Granddad told us so."<sup>306</sup>

In the Leeds Rifles the company commander was a paterfamilias,<sup>307</sup> a just and impartial father who protected the interests of his subordinates in every way and supported them against outsiders whoever they were. Capt G.L. Watson, OC C Coy, 1/7th, for example, was

"always very fair indeed - you know, tried to see every side."

Major H.D. Bousfield, OC A Coy, 1/7th,

"was a very fair and just officer. Our platoon sergeant was always picking on me and at the finish I went to Major Bousfield to ask for a transfer. He wouldn't give me one, but he listened to my complaints very sympathetically.



Then Sgt Worsnop started detailing me for water fatigues every day without fail and I finally refused. Sgt Worsnop screamed he'd get me shot for refusing to obey an order on active service. Major Bousfield gave me 7 days' CB for insubordination - I deserved some sort of punishment - but he made Sgt Worsnop allocate fatigues in strict alphabetical order to make it absolutely fair."

Capt S.S. Sykes, OC C Coy, 1/8th, was a sincere and very fatherly man who took his heavy responsibilities of care very seriously. In December 1915, 2222 Signaller W.H. Reynard was the sole survivor when the Company Signals dugout was blown up:

"When I came to, Capt Sykes was holding my hand and bending over me with a pot of hot cocoa and rum. He personally put me in a dugout with a stretcher-bearer, who attended to my face and head."

Every single man under the command of Capt H.R. Lupton knew that he would treat them fairly at all times and, moreover, ensure that they were fairly treated by others.

"On one occasion the military police had arrested some of my men for causing a disturbance when we were out of the line. I investigated the charges in Company Orderly Room, found them unjustified and dismissed them. Under military law, that finished the case, but the police were annoyed. The men knew, however, that they could not be falsely accused."

Col Kitson Clark continued to regard himself as the Grandfather of the Leeds Rifles even after he became Base commandant. 833 Cpl Joseph W. Goldsack, 1/7th, went out with a draft early in 1916.

"In the draft was a bugler called Arthur Franks and a chap called Frank Dimond, an absolute rotter who boasted he wasn't going to stay. At night I called the roll in the tent and everybody reported present. The following day the Orderly Sergeant came and asked if I had a fella in my tent called Franks. He had to report at the Orderly Room right away for being out of the camp the previous night. I said he wasn't, but the sergeant said he had to go and be charged just the same. I told Franks to send for me if he needed me, and of course, he did. When I went, the RSM crimed me for neglect of duty i/c a tent. He wouldn't hear my side at all. So I went up before Kitson Clark who immediately recognised me. The RSM said I'd reported all present and correct. I said Franks was there and had been with me all evening in the YMCA canteen. It appears that the MPs had found a cap. Inside it said, 'Dimond, Frank 1/7th West Yorks'. That's how the mistake had occurred: Frank - Franks. The RSM found himself in serious trouble with Kitson Clark for charging both me and Franks."

(A common grievance in the Army lower ranks in respect of disciplinary hearings in which a conflict of evidence occurred was that the officer, almost as a matter of course, preferred the evidence of the warrant-officer.) 3112 Rfm P.G. Standley, 1/7th, was one of a detachment of his battalion sent to escort a batch of German prisoners to the Base. Having got permission



to stay overnight, he and his comrades decided to join a large party of Riflemen for a night out in Le Havre. Unfortunately they spent up and left themselves without the money for the long tramride back to camp. As one of the Riflemen was a tramdriver in civilian life, they hijacked an unattended tramcar, leaving its driver and conductor running and yelling after them. Next day the driver and conductor, accompanied by "an excited gendarme", arrived at the camp and insisted that Col Kitson Clark parade every single Rifleman in the base in an attempt to identify the miscreants. This he solemnly did, but not before the Riflemen had hurriedly exchanged their distinctive cap badges with members of the other regiments at the base. As a result the tram men failed to identify anyone and the French police, much to their chagrin, were unable to press charges.<sup>308</sup>

The Quartermasters, as battalion housekeepers, held special positions as combined mother-father figures. Both the 1/7th and 1/8th Quartermasters were held in great respect and affection. The white-haired Major Booth of the 1/7th went out with the battalion in 1915 and remained with it continuously for over 3 years until he was ordered, at the age of 58, to return to the UK to appear before a Medical Board. He was considered "very fatherly". 2149 Walter Medley, Transport Section, said that he was

"a thorough gentleman and a real friend to me. I'd got lost and been copped by the MPs on a closed [i.e. restricted] road. They sent word to the battalion what punishment I had to have. Major Booth told them where to go and gave me a special pass to carry in case I was stopped again. He really looked after his men"

(according to his account, the pass's wording included a number of strong swear-words).<sup>309</sup> The immense devotion to duty of both Quartermasters was commented on by virtually all respondents. Capt Farrar of the 1/8th and 8th scarcely conformed to the popular stereotype of the Regular RSM. A jovial personality, he had laughing eyes, a humorous mouth and an irrepressible sense of humour. As RSM, he was extremely good at dealing with the rougher elements and even the biggest blackguards in the battalion thought the world of him. The younger soldiers, gazing with admiration at his fine military figure and the great barrel chest with its long row of medal ribbons, clearly idolised him. The following testimony is quite typical:

"Benny Farrar was the finest Quartermaster in the British Army bar none. A wonderful chap, the finest man who ever wore the Leeds Rifles uniform. He was the first quartermaster in the British Army to send hot food to the men in the front line. He always saw to it that the rations always got through, no matter what."<sup>310</sup>

The Victorian and Edwardian father was a stern man, imposing a strict discipline, often seeming uncaring and lacking in warmth and affection.



The social scientist, Ferdynand Zweig, in his study of the British working man made about 1950, was greatly struck by the cold and often bitter and hostile relationship then existing between the working-class man and his father.<sup>311</sup> Respondents were not questioned specifically about their relationship with their fathers. Few, however, spoke of Father in anything approaching affectionate terms. It may accordingly appear somewhat extraordinary that the Leeds Rifles ranker respondents should bear so much affection for officers they regarded as father-figures. Some men, indeed, seemed to have been so emotionally attached to their officer that it is not difficult to conclude that they looked upon him as an ideal father whom they would have wished their natural father to resemble. Throughout much of the rankers' testimony about officer father-figures ran a strong under-current of possessiveness. This was sometimes explicitly vocalised, e.g. "Stocky was a champion officer. He wouldn't leave the Regiment even when he was seconded to the RAMC. That shows how much he thought of us."<sup>312</sup> Perhaps significantly, officers who devoted a great deal of time and money to the well-being of the Regiment and its members, for example, Capt F.W. May of the 7th, and A.M. Ramsden of the 8th, to name but two, were frequently described as being "married to the Regiment".

The most popular officer in the 8th was Arthur Maxwell Ramsden, or "Rammy" as he was universally known. 8th Bn respondents rated him "the ideal officer". The selection of testimony which follows indicates why. It amply bears out the findings of the US Army survey referred to above regarding the enlisted men's evaluation of leadership practices: it clearly shows that in assessing an officer they placed greatest emphasis on the factor of personal concern for the men. Ramsden was an outstanding father-figure. In the words of one respondent, he was "the kind of man one can meet just once in a lifetime and then cherish the memory of that meeting for the rest of one's life."<sup>313</sup> He was a Pied Piper of men. They were irresistibly drawn to him by a wonderfully magnetic charismatic personality which radiated personal warmth, generosity and true kindness of heart.

"He was a very brave fella and went everywhere we went. He was a right jolly sort and we all worshipped him. If he came into your dugout and found nobody smoking, he'd get his own cigarettes out and hand them round."

"He didn't stand on his dignity. You could kid him on as much as you liked."

"He was a grand fella and a fine gentleman. He was always buying us tins of sausages."

"Ramsden was the nicest chap I ever knew in my life, let alone the nicest officer. We all worshipped the ground he trod on. He was always so concerned for us - you know, he was interested in you as a person."



"Ramsden was another who wasn't frightened neither. He was always trying to cheer you up. He was very sympathetic. He was very good to my younger sister after the war. Her husband got badly hurt down the pit and they had 4 kids to support. Rammy gave her money regular till the compo [compensation] money was paid. He did it because she was the sister of an old comrade. He was a very considerate chap. He used to come out of the line early to scout round to buy a sack of bread for his men."

"When Ramsden became Bombing Officer they were all fighting to get in the Section because they wanted to soldier with him."

"Rammy was wonderful, one of the finest men who ever lived. He really looked after us, got us proper treatment, saw to it we got our fair share of leave, and wouldn't let us get put on. Once we went a long time without any pay. The next time it failed to arrive, he paid us all out of his own pocket, not the arrears, of course, just enough for us to buy a few drinks or postcards, etc. He didn't look down on us at all, he treated us like equals, and when the Section was on its own, he told us we hadn't to call him 'Sir', but only to call him that if other officers were present or if we were with our own companies. He really knew how to get the maximum out of his men. 'If you have any complaints', he said to us when the Section was first formed, 'make them. If they're serious, they'll be investigated. But if they're not, if they're frivolous, I'll give you hell'. He saw we were never short of rations. He was a proper toff. Whenever a man went on leave, he'd give him a note to take to his dad, with perhaps 2/6d or 5/-, and when the man gave the note to his dad, he'd give him £1 on top of what Rammy had already given him. Rammy never seemed to spend any money on himself - he always seemed to give it away to his lads. At Vignacourt in 1916, when we were training for the Somme, our Section won the Battalion Championship for drill and everything else. Rammy bought us a barrel of beer for winning. There were all sorts in our Section, including some right tearaways, but we were all devoted to Rammy."

"He was a really grand fella, so kind and sympathetic. When I was in the 2/8th I got a very bad kick on the knee in a football match and they sent for the stretcher-bearers. Rammy, who was not my officer, was among the spectators and he sent for the MO. He came to see me in hospital to see how I was getting on. That was the sort of chap he was, so thoughtful for others."

"Rammy was a marvellous fella, a real man's man, a very Christian gentleman always looking to do someone a favour. We all thought the world of him."

"Capt Ramsden was a great fella. He was lovely. He was always the same, you could talk to him like a friend. He'd do anything for you. He was always helping people in trouble."

"Capt Ramsden, the 2nd i/c, was a marvellous fella. He was very good to me personally. When they sent word to the battalion that my little daughter was dying, he sent me home immediately."

"Capt Ramsden was the finest officer in the whole of the British Army. When I came up with the draft I told the



Sgt-Major I wanted to be in B Coy, just because I took to Capt Ramsden as soon as I saw him. He was terrifically popular with all the men. He seemed to have everyone's interests at heart. And he always wanted to be in the thick of it, he shirked nothing. Nothing I could ever say could do justice to Rammy or praise him sufficiently. He was a wonderful man in every way and we all loved him. We were sure he loved us in return."<sup>314</sup>

WWII soldier, Brigadier R.G. Shelford Bidwell, wrote:

"It is the leader's business to reassure, to allot tasks and to point out how they can best be done by personal example. But men seem to require something more than such practical, workaday service from their leaders. They desire someone to whom they can look up, even love and revere. They demand a saviour, a protector and a father, who can achieve the impossible; a man who possesses paranormal powers and intuitions. At the same time, the leader serves as an object for projection, someone upon whom the led can transfer their own often sub-conscious fear, hatred and guilt."<sup>315</sup>

It was apparent from respondents' testimony that the men had regarded many officers as supermen and that they had projected their subconscious fears and hatreds and their feelings of frustration on to the few unpopular officers. Since the soldier's life was a succession of deprivations, particularly of personal choice and personal liberty, it is reasonable to expect officers to be a target for aggression.<sup>316</sup> The strength of respondents' feelings, however, was startling and ranged from fierce disapproval through outright condemnation to naked hatred of one or two individuals. Disliked officers were "bad" officers, in their opinion. They may well have been right, for complaints centred on bad management practices: high-handed treatment of subordinates, arrogant and overbearing behaviour, victimisation of individual NCOs and private Riflemen, inability to make decisions, deliberate fault-finding and officiousness, careless disregard for the welfare and safety of his men. Officers thought guilty of cowardice were heavily condemned unheard. One of the milder condemnations of two officers in the 1/7th was that they were "not the type we wanted in the Rifles at all. They weren't cut out for the job."<sup>317</sup>

The men had their own methods of retaliation against disliked officers. There were several types of psychological harassment such as "dumb insolence", wilfully misunderstanding orders, making complaints to both the officer and his superior, asking to be transferred, and causing the officer's kit and mail to be lost or mislaid. The following testimonies illustrate two types of retaliation.

"The front line at Laventie was a series of firing bays and one could walk along the back without entering the bays. We had one officer, who wasn't particularly well-liked, who complained, quite unreasonably, that at night he could walk



the whole company front without being challenged. One night I was on sentry duty with Rfm Musgrave and we decided to challenge this particular officer when he came round. I waited round the corner of the firing bay and immediately the officer got within striking distance I lunged forward with my bayonet and threatened my opponent's throat in the approved drill manner and challenged him. I nearly frightened the fella to death! Poor old Mussy and I got lectured for 'going to extremes and showing an excess of zeal', they called it."

"Coming out with the first draft was Lt Walling who remarked that this was a picnic, as he'd expected the trenches to be flowing in blood. So the front of the party leaving the trenches gave the quiet word that no messages would be passed back, such as 'hole in trench grid', 'sump on right'. We nearly lost the brave subaltern down a sump! When dumping the rations at the sergeants' dugout which happened to be next to the officers', there were plenty of loud remarks about 'Some b—— picnic this. Who said it was a picnic?'"<sup>318</sup>

## 12.7 The Commanding Officers: 1914-1918

Military writers have often quoted Ludendorff's description of the duties of a "regimental commander" and his required attributes:

"The outward appearance and inward bearing of the troops, and especially of the corps of officers, were indicative of the personality, the will, the capacity, of the commander. He had to inspire his officers and men with his own spirit: he was their example and their stay, their councillor and friend in periods of inactivity as in battle. In trench warfare it was very difficult for him to influence his officers and men, but in the end he set the seal of his personality among them."<sup>319</sup>

Owing to a misleading translation of Regimentskommandeuren, whose nearest British equivalent was "brigade-commanders", this description has been mistakenly thought to be applicable to the commanding officer of a British infantry battalion.

Although the character and personality of the commanding officer are undoubtedly reflected in his battalion (and in his brigade), his influence may not be as all-pervading as the above extract may suggest. Some colonels, by virtue of an outstanding characteristic, made themselves known to every man in their command, but not a few respondents felt totally unable to offer any comments or opinion on a CO because they had never had anything to do with him. George Coppard declared that his CO "might have been the Shah of Persia for all I knew of him."<sup>320</sup> Nor was this experience confined to rankers: subalterns had dealings only with their company commander and seldom met their colonel. The key men in a battalion were the Adjutant, the company commanders and the RSM. The CO's influence was thus indirect rather than direct. A bad CO, by alienating and antagonising the key men, could perhaps exert more influence on the battalion generally than a good



CO. The original CO of the 9th KOYLI had been an elderly retired Indian Army officer with very much outdated ideas. He was replaced shortly before embarkation by a man who appeared to have little or no grasp of the principles of man-management and who accordingly quickly became extremely unpopular with officers and men alike, more than once bringing them to the verge of mutiny.<sup>321</sup>

Respondents saw the role of the commanding officer as being "The Father of the Regiment". He was expected to be completely dedicated to his task and devoted to the welfare of the Regiment and its members. He was expected to be a "gentleman" and to set an example to all ranks.

A.E. Kirk had been serving in the Regiment for almost 27 years when he took the 1/7th out to France in 1915. Former Volunteer 167 Sgt Charles Young, 7th, said:

"I had a very high opinion of Col Tannett-Walker and of Col Kirk who came after. Very fine men, both of them, real gentlemen. They both had the Volunteer Decoration and had given their lives to the Regiment."

Kirk was admired and highly respected by all ranks.

"A very fine officer, without fear and very well liked";

"A very nice fella. He looked after us and tried to do everything he could to make things better for us";

"A real gentleman. But he couldn't take it out there; he couldn't bear the responsibility for men losing their lives or getting maimed for life."<sup>322</sup>

Kirk was obliged to relinquish his command at the end of August 1916 when his nerves gave way.<sup>323</sup> An awful responsibility was laid upon the commanding officer of a fighting unit. Some broke down altogether under the strain, some even committed suicide. More than any other regimental officer, a commanding officer needed to be physically and mentally tough and robust as well as emotionally resilient.

The 7th Bn officer respondent was unstinting in his opinions of both his commanding officer and the second-in-command:

"The 7th was extremely fortunate to have two men like Kirk and Tetley as CO and 2nd i/c. They were two very fine chaps. Col Kirk has been very under-rated in my opinion. A man of real character, like Tetley. Serious, not flamboyant, he was a splendid commanding officer in every way. Tetley, too, proved a splendid commanding officer and was very popular with the men."<sup>324</sup>

C.H. Tetley, who succeeded Kirk,

"was a grand chap, a friendly sort. He was well-liked by the men and very popular altogether."



He had a physical defect which stood him in great stead both as 2 i/c and as CO: he was deaf in one ear and it is said that on active service he always slept soundly because he slept with the deaf ear uppermost.

"He was a bit deaf. We'd be going down the trench and the Jerries would be firing shrapnel shells high above us. They didn't do much damage but the noise terrified you. The noise didn't seem to worry Tetley at all and he'd stride along as though he hadn't a care in the world."

The moral effect of such apparent fearlessness can be imagined. 3191 Sgt William Colbeck described him as

"a very brave chap who didn't realise danger or know what fear was."

Imperturbability was perhaps his chief characteristic but it had nothing to do with his deafness. Two sergeants commented on it:

"He was an excellent soldier and a strict regimental officer. He was always cool, calm and collected - absolutely unflappable. The men would have followed him to the gates of hell. I would myself";

"Col Tetley was a very cool customer, nothing ever upset him. You could tell he was used to handling men: he knew how to deal with them. After all, he was one of the main men at Tetley's. He had a very sensible way of talking to you - you know, as though you were a human being."

Tetley's expertise in man-management and his concern for the men's welfare were well appreciated, especially when the latter appeared in the tangible form of barrels of the Riflemen's favourite tippie, Tetley's Bitter. Henry Spurr, who joined the 1/7th in 1917 as a conscript, thought Tetley was

"marvellous, a really grand fella. We all looked up to him. He was a very fair-dealing chap and after the war he'd do anything to help any man who'd served in the 7th with him."<sup>325</sup>

In many respects Tetley was the ideal commanding officer. He certainly possessed the ideal temperament. His two outstanding qualities were his power to inspire trust and confidence and his calmness and imperturbability at all times, particularly during periods of great stress. A man of great integrity, he was respected by all ranks for his fairness and for his determined and unswerving devotion to the Regiment. His length of service, over three years continuously at the front, when he could have claimed a UK posting at the end of two years' unbroken service, must have constituted something of a record in the British Army. Speaking of officers, Wavell was of the opinion that "in the end character is more important than brains."<sup>326</sup> Tetley had both.

Sir Linton Andrews wrote in Tetley's obituary:

"Shrewdness, integrity, generosity: these were C.H.Tetley's outstanding qualities. No less memorable was his warmth of heart, manifest in many acts of encouragement and sympathy."<sup>327</sup>



From 1926 to 1946 he was Pro-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, to which he was an outstanding benefactor. As in the Leeds Rifles, so in the University he won the respect and affection of all those who knew him. In his Eulogy at Tetley's Memorial Service, Vice-Chancellor Sir Charles Morris, describing him as "one of the most public-spirited men our City and University have ever known", quoted the masterly assessment of a retired professor with which no Rifleman would have disagreed:

"I liked him as soon as I saw him and met him. He made no effort to ingratiate himself among the staff: he had the kind of face that inspired confidence, and reticence and naturalness that immediately won respect. I felt from the beginning that he had a gentle spirit and that everybody would have a square deal ... He was remote but it was the remoteness of shyness and true modesty ... there was no one in Leeds in whom I would more readily place my future than in Tetley even though my acquaintanceship was so slight."<sup>328</sup>

E. Kitson Clark was badly injured when thrown from his horse two or three weeks before the Embarkation and so was unable to take the 1/8th to France. The majority of the men, and perhaps even of the officers, however, were not disappointed, for he was not generally regarded as a good CO. As H.R. Lupton explained,

"He did not really understand the men, nor they him. He had a great propensity to do the unusual thing, and was the despair of the Regular Adjutant, Capt Dundas, who endeavoured to inculcate strict compliance with the Military Code among us civilians."<sup>329</sup>

The son of a Cambridge professor, brought up in a thorough-going academic atmosphere, a man devoted to cultural interests and the pursuit of learning for its own sake, who would have preferred, instead of entering the family firm, to have taken up a full-time career as an archaeologist,<sup>330</sup> he was something of an eccentric and possessed a donnish sense of humour which few of his men could appreciate. Since his first morning parade at the 1913 Annual Camp at Aberystwyth he had shouted "Boro-da" to the men instead of "Good morning" and was commonly referred to as "Old Boro-da" in consequence. He was fond of making humorous references to his mare, Molly, and had once solemnly awarded her 7 days' pack drill for defecating on parade. Stock silly jokes could be tolerated, albeit with some difficulty, from headmasters of public schools or managing directors of large industrial concerns, but not from the commanding officer of an infantry regiment on active service. The majority of the respondents thought him "too silly for words", "daft as a brush" or "an absolute twerp who'd have been no good in the line", and agreed with 1090 James Rhind's assessment:

"He was a very educated chap, but no soldier, in fact, he had no talent at all for soldiering. He was always



making himself look foolish. He wasn't regimental enough. Fellas used to shout out, 'Give Molly a carrot!'"

The majority held a low opinion of him and dismissed him, like teenager 2715 James A. Eastburn, C Coy, did, as "a somewhat foolish old fossil."<sup>331</sup>

Kitson Clark thus had no obvious appeal to the loyalty and support of his men. Nevertheless, a substantial minority of respondents spoke well of him, e.g. here is 2223 Herbert Hopkinson, A Coy:

"When I joined the 8th at Strensall, Col Kitson Clark came to welcome us to the Batt. and to say how sorry he was there were no uniforms to give us. He addressed us as 'gentlemen'. He was very nice. I liked him very much. He was a real comic and said things to make us laugh."<sup>332</sup>

He possessed a very high sense of duty and was immensely devoted to the Regiment in which he had served for 26 years. Although he could have resumed his post as chief executive of Kitson & Co., or taken a desk job at the War Ministry, he gave the authorities no rest until they appointed him commandant of the Overseas West Riding Divisional Base at Harfleur, though he was far from being medically fit, being obliged to walk with the aid of two sticks. Here he demonstrated to several respondents that he was essentially kind-hearted, compassionate and sympathetic. He had a great affection for all his men, officers and NCOs, and after his retirement was always very pleased to see anyone from the Regiment who cared to visit him.<sup>333</sup>

1788 John Allman, A Coy:

"I never had anything to do with him till I went to the Divisional Base after getting blown up at Ypres. He seemed very pleased to see me because I was a Rifleman. He was a very homely person when you got to know him, not a bit stuck up."

2880 William Arthur Bywater, C Coy:

"When I was down at the Base in 1917 after coming out of hospital Col Kitson Clark caught sight of my 3 chevrons and black buttons and badge and came over to speak to me. He was very pleased to see me and remarked that I, for one, had definitely done my bit. He had me taken off all duties immediately and had me kept back until the 8th Bn requested a draft. That shows Col Kitson Clark was a man of real feeling. He knew I'd have been heartbroken to be sent to another regiment. I had 5 weeks' 'rest' at the Base and during that time only had to keep my rifle and myself clean."<sup>334</sup>

Col Kitson Clark was thus not an unqualified failure as commanding officer. His great attention to marching, ceremonial drill and steadiness on the parade ground, carried out so zealously in turn by RSMs Yates, Farrar and Fear, provided the foundation of the 8th's reputation. His officers excused his faults and gave him their loyalty and co-operation because they liked him personally and admired both his great devotion to the Regiment



and the very high personal standards which he set himself.<sup>335</sup>

J.W. Alexander who succeeded him was, in contrast, in complete rapport with all ranks of the 1/8th. He took the traditional role of being "Father of the Regiment" almost literally: "he dearly loved all his troops as individuals" and in return they loved him equally dearly for his kind heart and his whole-hearted devotion to every aspect of their welfare. He was frequently declared to be "the kindest (or kinliest) CO in the whole of the British Army". A doctor possessing the highest medical qualifications, he practised in Armley where his working-class patients were said to idolise him. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that his Riflemen also idolised him, as the following comments will show:

"No finer man you could wish to meet. He had everybody's troubles at heart and was like a big father to all the men";

"One of Nature's finest gentlemen. As a panel doctor in Armley he had the largest surgery of out-patients in the city. We all felt that he'd had a massive job of work thrust on him, and we all did our humble best to lighten the task";

"One of the best, a toff, a gentleman. Always sincere in everything he said and did";

"He knew his job and he was a good doctor, as a lot of chaps would have been able to tell you. We often saw him in the front line";

"He was a good CO and terribly kind. He was too kind to be a CO really. He used to single men out who didn't look too well and order them to attend sick parade";

"a very nice chap, but too soft to be a CO in wartime";

"a very nice chap, firm but fair. But he worried too much";

"He was wonderful, very kind and understanding, always thinking of our welfare. He worried a great deal about us altogether. The men would have done anything for him, you know";

"Col Alexander was too tender-hearted. He blamed himself for every single man's death because he was the man in charge, and brooded about it. He hated violence and killing and said his job as a doctor was to save life, not deliberately end it. He just couldn't bear to send men to their deaths. It got him down completely in the finish."<sup>336</sup>

Several respondents have pinpointed Col Alexander's one grave defect as a commanding officer: he over-identified with personnel, i.e. he showed too much sympathy for his subordinates, was too conscious of their difficulties and became too fond of the men under his command. According to the MO's assistant, Sgt 132 Harry Thackray, Col Alexander was especially attached to the men from Armley, many of whom he had actually brought into the world:

"When he saw them getting killed on the Somme it was like losing his own flesh and blood, for they were like his own children to him. It was more than any normal man could stand



and a terrible experience for him. It's no wonder he cracked up."

2880 W.A. Bywater:

"I remember him sitting on his horse waiting for us to come back from Thiepval on 3rd September 1916. His tunic was wringing wet with tears and they were rolling down his cheeks and he was saying, over and over again, 'My men, my men'."<sup>337</sup>

Alexander was invalided 6 days later: the harrowing weeks of strain had brought about a serious heart condition.<sup>338</sup>

R.A. Hudson, his successor, sadly killed at Poelcappelle, was made of sterner stuff.

"A strong personality and something of a martinet, very necessary when 2nd i/c to Alexander, and good when CO. The men appreciated his qualities."

Col Hudson was very highly respected, regarded as an inspiring example, admired for his bravery and was generally popular, an ideal commanding officer in many respects.

"A marvellous chap. Everybody thought the world of him. He was absolutely devoted to the Regiment. I was very cut up when I heard he'd got killed";

"He was a grand chap. He always had a little smile on his lips. He was a first-class CO";

"Col Hudson was the right sort of man to have for commanding officer. He was a much better CO than Col Alexander, who was his exact opposite. Col Hudson was strict and not exactly hard, but hard-ish. He wasn't heartless, though, and he was fairly human. Being manager of his father's works, he was used to dealing with men. He was a fine soldier in every way. They might even have had him in the Regular Army. His death was a very great loss."<sup>339</sup>

It was "an irreparable loss" to the officers of the battalion. The Adjutant wrote:

"He was an officer of great gallantry, loved by us all, always cheerful, eager, energetic and was a friend to everyone as well as his CO. His work for the Battalion, and he thought of nothing else, was incalculable, his spirit and energy were infused throughout the unit, his unremitting care for all ranks and his cheerful leadership made him loved by all. All who knew him feel an unfillable gap."

Long after his death, he could still provide an example to his men, who continued to mourn him:

"Where his body is we do not know, but his example is still with us, cheering us on, and comforting us in adversity."<sup>340</sup>

The least popular of the Leeds Rifles commanding officers was the Hon. (later Sir) F.S. Jackson. In 1914 he had seemed an admirable choice to command the 2/7th, the credit for whose raising he later shamelessly claimed in his Who's Who entry. He had been born in Leeds. His father, who was



extremely popular locally, had been a founder member of the Regiment. He had previous military war experience, having served for several years in the 3rd Royal Lancaster Regiment (Militia), including the 2nd Boer War period, and was now in his early 40s. He was a known supporter of the Territorial Force and had been a military member of the County Association for some years. Not the least of his qualifications for the appointment was his immense fame as one of the greatest cricketers of all time (whose record still stands unchallenged). Wilfred Rhodes said of him:

"He ... possessed the gift of a fine temperament, with plenty of confidence and pluck, and always appeared at his best on great occasions, especially when fighting with his back to the wall."<sup>341</sup>

Yet, despite his dazzling success, cricket, whether playing either for Yorkshire or for England, was never more to him than a hobby. Business and military commitments had always prevented him from touring abroad and he chose to retire from first-class cricket in 1907 after having played only a few games since captaining England in 1905. His real ambition was to emulate his father's career in politics. F.S. Jackson was elected Unionist member for Howden in 1915, was appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office in 1922 and became chairman of the Unionist party in 1923. He remained an MP until 1927 when he was appointed Governor of Bengal where he narrowly evaded an assassination attempt. He was elected President of the MCC in 1921 and eventually succeeded Lord Hawke as President of Yorkshire CCC.

Regrettably, as far as soldiering was concerned, as with cricket, Jackson was a flâneur, a dilettante with little sense of commitment. From the outset he seems to have regarded his appointment, to use cricketing parlance, as a nightwatchman's job. Although the 2/7th was very early designated as a foreign service battalion, he nevertheless went ahead with his plans to enter Parliament, fully aware that if elected he would have immunity from service in the armed forces, and further, that election preparations and parliamentary duties would leave very little time to spare to devote to his regimental duties even if he declined to take advantage of this immunity. Thus he sowed the seeds of his own unpopularity, as the following comments clearly demonstrate:

"He was very remote and we had no contact at all with him";

"He was very snobbish and wouldn't mix. He spent a lot of time at Westminster";

"He thought himself a proper aristocrat, very hoity-toity - 'I'm IT' style. No genuine sincerity at all. He thought the world of his horse - probably thought more of it than he did of us. He didn't bother with us much";



"He had this wonderful hunter, the most magnificent horse I have ever seen in my life - easily the best in the 62nd Division - it must have cost a fortune - and this marvellous Rolls Royce. We all knew he'd been Captain of England, but it didn't cut any ice with us. I didn't think much of him and none of us did, I think. He was only a parade-ground soldier. We hardly ever saw him because he was in Parliament a lot. He was a wealthy man and I think we, the 2/7th, were just one of his status symbols";

"He hadn't been at the front five minutes before he got a message calling him back to Parliament. We thought he'd arranged it purposely";

"As soon as he got out to France the fighting frightened him so much he claimed Parliamentary privilege and was off."<sup>342</sup>

Several of these men alleged books had been made in the battalion on embarkation, to take bets on how long the Colonel would remain at the front.

These quotations make it obvious why Jackson was considered such a bad commanding officer: in the eyes of his men he had committed two cardinal sins: (1) he failed to fulfil his expected role as "Father of the Regiment", neglecting his men to the extent that they felt he neither cared about them nor wished to become emotionally involved with them; (2) he was felt to be sadly lacking in devotion to duty and was openly or by implication accused of cowardice. Jackson was actually invalided home sick, but not one of the respondents (with the sole exception of his regimental private secretary, Harry Kirk) would believe this. The sick report reads: "Admitted No. 1 Red Cross Hospital, Le Touquet, 5.3.17. Haemorrhoids and Left Inguinal Hernia (slight)".<sup>343</sup> Foolishly, no doubt for reasons of delicacy, these details of his medical condition were withheld from the Other Ranks.

C.K. James, Jackson's successor, was clearly the men's idea of a good, if not excellent, commanding officer, and they accorded him the affection, respect and admiration which they had withheld from Jackson. He was only 25 years of age and held a commission in the 6th Border Regiment (TF). He was a Cumbrian and possibly a distant relative of A.H. James (also a Cumbrian) who contemporaneously commanded the 2/8th. Throughout the 62nd Division they were playfully known as "James the 7th" and "James the 8th".<sup>344</sup> He was killed by a sniper in May 1918. 2657 Bugler Laycock was completely overcome by emotion when he described his colonel's death and the deep attachment the officers and men felt for their CO:

"He was only a young chap. He was like a father to the Battalion and was very concerned for us. I blew the Last Post for his funeral - I'm afraid the tears were streaming down my cheeks as I played. We were all very upset."<sup>345</sup>

W. Hepworth, who had enlisted in the Regiment as an 18-year-old private, had completed over 32 years' service when he retired at the beginning of



1913. Though holding the rank of Major in the Leeds Rifles in 1900 he had been so keen to go out to South Africa that he had volunteered to go out as a subaltern and he earned there the personal commendation of Maj-General Barton. He was 51 years old when invited to take command of the 2/8th. He was extremely popular with all ranks - "a grand old chap" declared 1688 Harry Slater, D Coy - and was regarded as the archetypal "Father of the Regiment". With his stout figure, white hair and moustache, jovial countenance and kindly smile, he looked the part. Prior to Embarkation in January 1917 nearly all the older commanding officers in the Division had been replaced by younger men, but it would have been typical of Hepworth to have insisted on taking the 2/8th to France himself. Unfortunately, the appalling weather and physical conditions in the front line sector of Beaumont Hamel proved too much for him and the day after 185 Brigade was relieved in the front line, on 22nd February, Col Hepworth, crippled with rheumatism, was obliged to relinquish his command, "being physically unable to stand the severity of winter conditions".<sup>346</sup> In complete contrast to the men of the 2/7th, those of the 2/8th were intensely sympathetic and genuinely sorry when their CO went home. In view of his age they were not surprised he had succumbed to the conditions, but they admired his pluck in going out to the front in the worst winter in living memory.

A.H. James,<sup>347</sup> aged 40, a later CO of the 2/8th (and 8th), killed in action at Bucquoy, was in many respects the Regular Army stereotype of the ideal commanding officer, despite the fact that he had not attended Sandhurst. On leaving public school at the age of 16 he had gone out to India to work for a tea-planter and after some years spent as assistant manager, had become manager of a neighbouring plantation where he remained until the end of 1910 when at the age of 33 he was able to retire and return to England to live on the estate of his uncle, Sir Evan James. Throughout his period in India he had lived a hard outdoor life and had become an excellent shot and fearless big game hunter. For 17 years he served in the ranks of a militia regiment, the Northern Bengal Mounted Rifles. On the outbreak of war he had immediately applied for a commission and was gazetted in a Kitchener battalion, the 8th NF, and served at Gallipoli and on the Somme. He was gazetted Major in July 1916 and appointed second-in-command. From November 1916 he was given a series of temporary commands. In March 1917 he was given the 2/8th which was following the retiring Germans.

His attention to duty, his fearlessness, his constant and kindly care for his men, his charming and friendly manner quickly won the devotion of all ranks. A man of strong character and a devout Anglican, as a tea-planter he had maintained excellent discipline and organisation amongst his workforce



and had made a great point of treating all his employees as gentlemen. He ran his battalion in the same manner.<sup>348</sup> He was greatly admired as the archetypal handsome, dashing and manly heroic leader in the true Hollywood mould, but what endeared him to his men was the immense concern he showed for their welfare. He supplied a set of pierrot costumes at his own expense so that they could have a regimental concert party of their own. He saw they got regular cinematograph shows; he got them bottled stout, which was much appreciated. The evening before the Battle of Cambrai "there were long tables set out with food fit for any first-class restaurant. We were told to eat what we wished and as much of anything which included cold chicken."

The general officers commanding brigade and division thought extremely highly of him.<sup>349</sup> GOC 185 Inf Bde wrote in May 1917:

"I take this opportunity of bringing to notice the excellent work done by Lieut Col A.H. James. Since he assumed command of the 2/8th Bn West Yorkshire Regt early in March, the morale, smartness and efficiency of this battalion has steadily improved, and the officers and NCOs have learnt to realise their responsibilities, to handle their men in the right way, and have displayed such confidence as only comes from good leadership."

James was awarded the DSO in the New Year Honours of 1918 to mark the battalion's brilliant achievement of 20th November 1917, but Brigadier-General Viscount Hampden recommended him for a personal DSO which was gazetted on 18th February 1918. The citation reads as follows:

"For gallant conduct and exceptional ability in the handling of the troops under his command on Nov 22nd 1917, S.W. of Bournon Wood, and Nov 27th in Bournon Wood.

"On Nov 22nd the enemy attacked strongly and after sharp fighting forced his way through a gap in our defences as far as Battalion Head-quarters. Owing, however, in a great measure to Col James's grasp of the situation and his personal efforts the troops under his command were rallied, and, counter-attacking, re-established themselves in their original line.

"On Nov 17th, after the failure of our troops to take Bournon Wood, the situation was reported as critical, and Col James, on his own initiative, took his battalion up to the wood and made himself a personal reconnaissance, reporting to me, thereby clearing up what until then had been a very obscure state of affairs. This reconnaissance was carried out under heavy enemy [artillery] and machine-gun fire."

On 22nd November James was in command in the field of three battalions, two having been placed at his absolute disposal, and several times, while the 2/8th was out of the line, he was sent to take over the command of brigades whose brigadiers were sick, wounded or on leave.

James was killed at the Defence of Bucquoy on 26th March 1918 during the second of the three massive attacks the enemy made on the battalion



that day. An NCO eyewitness described what happened:

"The colonel was taking control of his men on the parapet with the idea of helping to repulse the attack. He was acting on his usual principle that he should be with his men at the most dangerous point to give them confidence. He raised himself to observe the enemy's movements over the parapet, and in doing so was shot through the head immediately."

The second-in-command, Major W.H. Brooke, wrote to James's next-of-kin, his uncle:

"I cannot tell you how we all regret the Colonel's death. For myself I had known him for nearly two months only, but it was long enough for me to realise what a first-rate chap he was ... He was quite fearless, absolutely without thought of himself when it was necessary to be out with the men, and he died most gallantly in the front line stopping a heavy enemy attack. There can be no harm, I think, in telling you that the battalion, in spite of severe shelling and rifle and machine-gun fire, stopped the enemy's advance, although the troops opposed to us were a division of the Prussian Guards, and our success was very greatly due to the magnificent example set by the Colonel. He was always in the thick of it, encouraging and urging on his men, and he was sniped just as he was getting fire to bear on a target of advancing enemy."<sup>350</sup>

An anonymous 8th Bn officer wrote to the Editor of the local paper :

"To those of us who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship, his death is a loss we can hardly yet realise. A keen soldier, absolutely fearless, and an untiring worker, he demanded a high standard in his command. His salient characteristic was an unswerving uncompromising honesty. Slacking he detested, but the offender, after a dressing-down, was forgiven. Bungling or incompetence irritated him, but the bungler was helped on his way to better and more useful efforts; but, woe betide the man, officer or other rank who was detected by James in any act that was 'not cricket'. He had his faults, as have the greatest and best, but they were so human that they endeared him the more to us. By his death the Army is the poorer by the loss of a fine soldier, and the country by the loss of a 'pukka Sahib'."<sup>351</sup>

Although he did not hold a commission in the Leeds Rifles, his Rifle-men put on his grave a special Regimental cross: a white-painted cross incorporating a carved laurel wreath painted in Rifle Green and lettered in black, the Regimental colours. Among his papers was found a copy of Maj Gen Braithwaite's Special Order of the Day of 24th November 1917 signed by all the 2/8th officers and bearing the inscription "To Lieut-Col A.H. James, Commanding 2/8th West Yorkshire (Prince of Wales' Own) Regt. As a mark of our appreciation of, and our devotion to, him."<sup>352</sup>

James was Mentioned three times in despatches, for the last time in Haig's Despatch of 7th April 1918, posthumously.



N. England, James' successor, a pre-war Territorial officer (6th DWR), was another extremely popular officer who was regarded by the men as an ideal CO. He too possessed considerable expertise in man-management:

"He was very nice indeed. He did his best to know every man in the battalion. He seemed to know every man by sight and most of them by name. When drafts arrived he would have the new arrivals paraded before him and would welcome each man individually and ask him about his family and where he came from, etc. He seemed interested in every man Jack of us."

The Bandmaster, Sgt Sam B. Wood, declared him "A very brave man who really considered his men, a real gentleman."<sup>353</sup>

In peacetime the Regiment had chosen its own commanding officers and appointments invariably went by seniority. During the war the appointments rested with the Brigadier-General commanding the infantry brigade to which the battalions concerned belonged. For the greater part of the war appointments in 146 Bde had been made by seniority, seconds-in-command assuming command on the invaliding or death of the CO, although they frequently had to wait many months for substantive rank as Lt Colonel. By 1918 there appeared to be a central pool of officers, who perhaps had passed commanding officers' courses, from which temporary and permanent appointments were made. In August 1918, when C.H. Tetley returned to the UK, the 2 i/c of the 1/7th was Major Sir Archibald Edward Dunbar, Bt, MC, who had joined the battalion on 29th April to replace W.H. Braithwaite whose record reads "(Temp) Major 23/9/16. Attended CO's course, Aldershot Jan. 1917. Acting Lt/Col 30/10/17. Relinquished Acting Rank of Lt. Col. 2/11/17. Relinquished the pay of Acting Major 25/4/18."<sup>354</sup> Major Dunbar, aged 29, a Scottish aristocrat of ancient lineage, had served in the Inns of Court Regiment, one of the "poshest" TF battalions, from 1912 to 1914 as a ranker, and on the outbreak of war had applied, at the suggestion of a friend,<sup>355</sup> for a commission in a Kitchener battalion, the 12th WYR. Dunbar, a very popular officer, was, much to the men's surprise,<sup>356</sup> not promoted when Tetley returned to the UK, and Brevet Lt Col W.R. Pinwell, King's Liverpool Regt, was appointed to the command. Pinwell was wounded in October, but Dunbar was again passed over, this time in favour of Captain J.A. Foxton, an officer of less seniority than Dunbar and two genuine Leeds Rifles officers still serving with the 1/7th, Capt G.L. Booth (son of the Quartermaster) and Capt W.S. Scholefield. Respondents waxed indignant at this apparently unfair treatment of Major Dunbar. Allegations were made that he had been the victim of anti-Territorial bias and that he had been made to suffer because he had previously served in the 12th WYR, one of the battalions that had retired without orders at Loos.



Appointments to command in the second-line Leeds Rifles battalions in 185 Bde on active service were not made on the basis of seniority and, in every case, officers holding commissions in regiments other than the West Yorkshire Regt were brought in.

## 12.8 Attitudes to Awards and Promotions

In prewar days the military system was seen by all ranks to be fair in operation. Indeed, certain of its aspects, such as opportunity for achieving upward social mobility, and equality before the law, were recognised as being markedly fairer than the civilian system. The system of rewards, which included decorations as well as promotions and awards of proficiency pay and good conduct badges, worked well according to well-defined rules and customs of the service which everyone accepted and understood. Promotion was achieved by a combination of merit and length of service; decorations were awarded for gallant or meritorious service that went beyond the call of duty.

In consequence of the rapid expansion of the Regular Army and the Territorial Force after the outbreak of war in 1914, the military system became unwieldy and difficult to manage. The system of rewards suffered in particular. Anomalies and injustices began to manifest themselves and grievances, particularly in regard to decorations, became widespread. The ordinary soldier was by no means convinced that decorations either were based on merit or were the reward for exceptional achievement. Their distribution appeared to him to have become distinctly arbitrary and he developed an understandable attitude of cynicism which is well-documented in the literature.<sup>357</sup>

A very large majority of the respondents (all ranks, and even including holders of gallantry awards) were eager to air their complaints and grievances about the medals system which seemed to them to be patently unfair in practice, the typical attitude being "Most of this medals business was a swindle."<sup>358</sup> Some complaints were particularly frequent. Awards seemed often to have been made solely on the basis of seniority with the result that the recipient might have been entirely undeserving of the honour, perhaps at the same time depriving a deserving case of the medal.<sup>359</sup> A Regular respondent claimed to know personally of two unearned VCs awarded to NCOs in his regiment. One example cited by Leeds Rifles respondents was the CSM awarded the DCM, presumably as the sole surviving warrant officer, though he had been no closer to the battle than the waggon lines. Another was the DCM awarded to the Lance/Corporal who was buried by a trench collapse



and rescued by a private Rifleman: together they then rescued a further two men who were buried; the private Rifleman got no award.

Many respondents were disgusted at some awards, not because they were not deserved, but because they were given for deeds which were done every day as a matter of course in the line of duty.

"Meekosha [1/6th WYR] got the VC, but we didn't think he deserved it. He didn't do anything that anybody else wouldn't have done in the same circumstances. It caused a lot of ill-feeling because incidents like that were happening all the time and not getting any official recognition."<sup>360</sup>

Of the award of the MC, the first in the 1/8th and also in the 49th Division, to Eric Fitzwater Wilkinson, 2/Lt Hugh Lupton wrote:

"Personally (and many others think the same) I don't think the action for which the honour was awarded was in any way worth it, as anybody would have done the same, still he is a very plucky chap and deserved it for other things he did."<sup>361</sup>

It was evidently felt that such awards impugned "the soldier's duty", a subject on which the men of the Leeds Rifles were continually lectured, and which demanded a high standard of courage and conduct from each man. One example of the degree of devotion to duty expected is given by school-teacher 721 Sgt Charles Fretwell, 1/8th, who

"had a finger shattered while leading a ration party to the trenches, but he completed the journey because he was the only man who knew the way and the safety of the party depended on him."

Another is given by the manner of the death at the end of 1914 of Lt W. Humphrey Coghlan, RFA, formerly of the Leeds Artillery. Working the gun, under heavy attack, with two men who were both badly wounded, and mortally wounded himself, he continued to fire until the last round was expended, then collapsed and died. Dying "a true gunner's death",<sup>362</sup> he had merely been carrying out "the soldier's duty" in the highest traditions of the Royal Artillery. It is General Douglas MacArthur who is credited with the phrase, "A hero is a soldier observed doing his duty".

From this particular complaint involving the devaluation of the soldier's duty stemmed another: that gallantry decorations should not have been awarded for non-military action. Most World War I veterans have heard of the ASC baker who was awarded the DCM for baking bread at Etaples base.<sup>363</sup> 4328 L. Frederick Hudson, 7th, met a DCM holder in hospital who had been awarded the medal for devotion to duty as regimental postman.<sup>364</sup> Officers in particular noticed that those who were well clear of the forward zone appeared to stand a much greater chance of getting an award than the fighting men.<sup>365</sup> In August 1916, for instance, Lt Lupton complained about the Divisional



Honours List: "As usual there are very few common or garden infantry officers decorated", whilst in October he made the bitter comment, "I might get a DSO if I kept far enough from the fighting". In June 1917 he commented on the latest batch of MCs: "Roland Kitson's getting one is rather funny, he having been on Divisional HQ for about eighteen months. It is rotten luck on such people as Kemp and Ramsden."<sup>366</sup>

Such practices, which rewarded men for doing no more than their job, naturally generated resentment in men who, having performed their allotted tasks in an exemplary fashion, felt some recognition was due to them. 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd and his colleague L/Sgt Jack English, who together brought back the remnants of the 1/8th from the Battle of Poelcappelle, accompanied by a large number of prisoners, were disgruntled at not receiving any award. 2635 Reginald Frank Charge, who brought back the remnants of the 1/7th from the same action, was greeted on his return by the CO, Lt Col Tetley:

"'I hear you brought the battalion back, corporal. Well, you were only doing no more than your duty', as though he thought I was expecting a medal for it. Well, I wasn't, and I didn't get one, though Tetley got the DSO and he wasn't there."<sup>367</sup>

Another major grievance was closely connected with the first outlined above. It was neatly stated by Col Sgt Archibald MacKellar, Orderly Room Sgt of the 1/5th SR:

"Many a brave deed went unrecognised because there was no officer to witness it and be alive afterwards to write a recommendation."

An unnamed Leeds Rifles subaltern wrote from the Salient in 1915:

"Last week we had a very nasty experience with shell-fire. Out of my platoon very few escaped without a wound. My tunic has two holes in either side, there are a couple more in my shirt, the lining of my coat was ripped open, and my puttees are ragged and torn, with several blood-stained marks. Yet I was not touched at all. The next unnerving event was being buried by a trench mortar. They are frightful things, coming hurtling through the air, striking the ground with a tremendous explosion, followed by an upheaval of debris, then a dense volume of smoke. On this occasion three dugouts were blown in, and half a dozen of us were buried under sandbags and earth. It is wonderful to see how everyone rises to the occasion, facing ordeals sometimes that need the greatest bravery. Believe me, many a VC is not won because of many a gallant deed passing unnoticed."<sup>368</sup>

It seemed to the ordinary soldier that in every way imaginable there was far too much luck attached to gaining that visible badge of military honour, the gallantry medal. He often felt that such arbitrary and impersonal factors as the level of administrative efficiency at Brigade or Divisional



HQ might well influence the allocation of awards. The cynical story in The Wipers Times,<sup>369</sup> about army returns getting muddled and those men who had appeared on a list of those who had refused inoculation being duly awarded the Military Medal, merely illustrates this feeling. Some battalion commanders became convinced that a unit's proper share of honours was dependent on its commander's literary skill and his talent for writing fiction.<sup>370</sup> Frank Richards' claim that "In a successful stunt a man who got recommended had far more chance of receiving a decoration than a man who had been recommended in an unsuccessful stunt"<sup>371</sup> may well be true. There is much evidence of an inferential kind that awards were allocated to units according to pre-determined scales drawn up on the basis of the success of large-scale actions or the magnitude of small-scale incidents. Allocations of 6 or 3 Military Medals arrived periodically.<sup>372</sup> Awards were frequently granted to the Leeds Rifles in batches of 3, eg. 1/7th: 29th July 1915 bombardment: 1 MC, 2 DCMs; 8th December 1915 bombardment: 3 DCMs, followed later by 3 MMs; 1/8th: 6th November 1915 bombardment: 3 DCMs; 2/8th: first time in the line, 19/20th February 1917: 3 MMs. Failed small-scale operations appeared to merit 3 awards, eg. 1/7th, 14th July 1916: 1 MC, 2 DCMs. Failed large-scale operations appeared to merit 6 awards: 1/7th, 1st/3rd July 1916: 1 VC, 5MMs; Divisional Routine Orders of 7th November 1917 announced that the 1/8th had "had 6 MMs granted for services in the recent action" at Poelcappelle. Successful large-scale operations were treated far more generously: the 2/8th's outstanding achievement at Cambrai in November 1917 was rewarded by 1 DSO, 3 MCs, 2 DCMs, and 20 MMs.<sup>373</sup> Foreign decorations were delivered to Divisions in batches<sup>374</sup> and could be applied for by COs who had used up their current allocation of awards.

This allocation of medals was widely condemned, generating as it did injustices and grievances. The troops cynically declared that medals "came up with the rations". 1396 Reuben Hartley, 8th, who insisted he was ignorant of the reason for his award of the Croix de Guerre, jocularly claimed that "they were giving them away with tins of Maconochies."<sup>375</sup> One respondent claimed to have overheard his company sergeants deciding amongst themselves who was to have a MM in the forthcoming action, another claimed to have overheard NCOs with sons in the battalion saying "I'll recommend your lad if you'll recommend mine."<sup>376</sup> Only two posthumous distinctions were awarded: a Mention in Despatches (which was marked by a printed certificate and a small, five-pointed brass star to be worn on a medal ribbon) and the Victoria Cross. Wounded men were occasionally awarded the DCM, but seldom received the MM, a lower-ranking decoration. In the 1/5th (later 5th/6th) SR the allocations of MMs were usually awarded by ballot to the survivors of an



action. Col Sgt MacKellar hated having to operate what he called this "most unfair" system, since

"a wounded or dead man who was more deserving of a medal did not get anything at all unless he had done something exceptional that had been witnessed by an officer. Some men fully deserved their award, such as L/Cpl Erskine who got the VC, but others got medals only by virtue of seniority or by being lucky enough to survive and win a ballot."<sup>377</sup>

Ballots or the drawing of lots for MMs do not appear to have taken place in the Leeds Rifles. In the two second-line battalions, one particular class of personnel appeared to receive the MM as of right: the runners.<sup>378</sup> It appears as though the distribution of allocations of the Military Medal (introduced in March 1916, it is alleged, in order to save money, the DCM being accompanied by a monetary award of £20)<sup>379</sup> and of foreign decorations was left to the discretion of individual COs. Regular respondent, Bombardier Billy Pratt, 73rd Battery RFA, stated that the personnel of his unit balloted only for foreign decorations, the man receiving the greatest number of votes receiving the medal, often the winner of what amounted to a popularity contest.<sup>380</sup> Accusations of social favouritism or social bias in medal distribution were, according to D. Winter, made in some units.<sup>381</sup> Small wonder, then, that pre-war Regular soldiers thought very little of these decorations.<sup>382</sup>

The limiting of the number of awards in small-scale incidents to, say, one officer and two men, was often unfair in practice. Take, for instance, the shelling of the 1/7th occupying dugouts on the Canal Bank on 29th July 1915, when one officer and ten men were buried. This was yet another instance of everyone in the vicinity rising to the occasion and literally rushing to the assistance of their comrades. It was an integral part of the front-line soldier's code of ethics. Everyone appreciated how quickly a buried man could die of asphyxiation,<sup>383</sup> and that time was of the essence.

2010 I. Harry Butcher, a pit boy, B Coy, 7th, was first on the scene:

"I shouted for others to come and help and started digging with my bare hands. 5 men and Mr Glazebrook came and we dug like maniacs."<sup>384</sup>

The 5 men were 3354 Edward Woodhead, carrier, 1991 Martin Garrity, apprentice moulder, 3017 Jack W. Bentley, colliery fitter, and two other men of B Coy. Lt Glazebrook, a dashing and very popular officer, was awarded the MC, and 17-year-old Garrity, a prewar Territorial, and Bentley, a 1914 Volunteer, each the DCM. The other four men were not even Mentioned in Despatches, and their feelings on reading the following interview in the local paper can be imagined:



"For his age Garrity is a well-built youth and, as is invariably the case where a hero and his bravery is [sic] concerned, he is very unassuming. Indeed, a good deal of persuasion was necessary before he could be induced to speak of the action for which he received the coveted distinction. When finally he did consent to relate his experiences it was in a most shy and modest fashion. 'On the day I gained the medal', he said, 'we were in reserve on a canal bank, and were occupying some dugouts. Our work at that time was to carry barbed wire and other tackle up to the front-line trenches for the Royal Engineers. This we did during the night. We were about a mile and a half behind the firing-line, when the Germans got the range with their artillery and started shelling our dugouts. In one dugout there were ten of our chaps and in another, Lieut Briggs of Moortown. Suddenly a shell hit these dugouts and smashed them in. Myself, Lieut Glazebrook, and Rifleman J. Bentley at once helped to dig out the men, and placed them on the stretchers. Lieutenant Briggs [who could not be resuscitated] and three [actually two] men died later from their injuries. It was a terrible experience, and it is marvellous that any of us came out alive."<sup>385</sup>

The misunderstanding of certain aspects of the medals system led directly to grievances and complaints of unfairness. Decorations were divided into two categories: "honours", for long and particularly meritorious service, and "awards", which were immediate, for a specific act of gallantry.<sup>386</sup> Only the former appeared in New Year and Birthday Honours Lists. Hugh Lupton was Mentioned in Despatches in January 1916 and awarded the MC in the New Year Honours of 1917. He told his parents on both occasions that he did not know the reason:<sup>387</sup> they would be for meritorious service and devotion to duty over a long period. Early in 1916 CSM 25 H. Lodge of the 1/7th received the DCM "for general good work and devotion to duty since the battalion came to France in April 1915." 1931 Sgt J.H. Elliot received the MM "for devotion to duty, particularly on 8th December 1915, when the Battalion was in the front line trenches and was heavily shelled by the enemy." 2050 L/Cpl J. Anderson and 1512 J.W. Cooper received the MM "for devotion to duty on the same day and on many previous occasions."<sup>388</sup> (2635 Cpl R.F. Charge, 7th, roundly declared that all these four medals had been "found in with the rations".)<sup>389</sup> In June 1916 RSM William Fear of the 1/8th became the first warrant officer in the 49th Division to be awarded the MC. This was for carrying the wounded L/Cpl Thorpe (who survived) "over 150 yards of machine-gun and shell-swept road near Forward Cottage last November and for his continual good service."<sup>390</sup>

Another practice which was misunderstood and aroused resentment was that of sending "gallantry cards" as a form of acknowledgement to all men recommended for awards. These were Divisional Gallantry Certificates (George Coppard refers to them as "Soup Tickets")<sup>391</sup> signed by the GOC Division,



bearing the man's name, rank, number, and unit, and the following message:

"Your Commanding Officer and Brigade Commander have informed me that you distinguished yourself in the Field on ...

"I have read their report with much pleasure."

Unfortunately, owing to the allocation scale system, not every recipient of a card subsequently received a medal.

Some of the more perspicacious respondents were not out at the Front long before they began to discern that some awards were being stage-managed for what might almost be termed "political" reasons: to demonstrate official approval of a particular unit, to maintain or boost morale, and, occasionally, for less worthy reasons, such as local chauvinism, or one-upmanship. Edward Bilton, 2nd KOYLI, considered that all VCs had been awarded, not to recognise individual heroism, but to register official approval of the man's unit, on the principle, "The battalion really deserves something, give someone a VC." Col Sir Douglas Stephenson Branson, DSO and 2 bars, and MC and bar, who was promoted Captain in 1915 at the age of 22, and Lt Col and commanding officer of the 1/4th Y & L (Hallamshires) in 1917 at the age of 24, stated that none of his three DSOs were personal awards, but were presented as tokens of appreciation of his battalion's services. In his opinion, very few of the DSOs awarded to officers of the rank of major and lieutenant-colonel were personal awards.<sup>392</sup> The DSO ranked second below the Victoria Cross. An examination of the lists of honours and awards in the two West Riding Divisions<sup>393</sup> reveals that, in the 49th Division no infantry officer below the rank of major was awarded the DSO, but that, in the "crack" assaulting division, the 62nd, 13 infantry officers below the rank of major were awarded this medal. 2/Lt John Edwin Tillotson, 2/7th, was one of the few second-lieutenants to be awarded a personal DSO for gallantry in the field. Aged 20, a former ranker in the 1/6th DWR from Keighley, a railway clerk and son of a paperhanger, he was one of the tiny number of officers of working class origin who served in the 1/7th, joining this battalion when the 2/7th was mustered out in June 1918. His citation reads:

"In Bournon Wood on 27th November 1917 he was in command of a platoon attacking the German positions at the North end of the Wood. He gained his objective but found the companies detailed to pass over him were held up by an enemy strongpoint. Calling on his platoon to follow, he dashed forward and attacked the enemy strongpoint single-handed, killing most of the occupants and capturing two trench mortars. He then opened flanking fire with a Lewis gun and rifles on the remaining portion of the front held by the enemy and was directly responsible for the left [flank] being able to advance. Throughout the operation he showed the very highest degree of courage and bravery."<sup>394</sup>

The intrepid 2/Lt Tillotson was also awarded the MC and was Mentioned in



Despatches. Major-General Henry Michael Tillotson CB, Colonel of the Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire 1979- and Chief of Staff to C-in-C-UK Land Forces 1980-, is his nephew.

Many commanding officers were appointed CB or CMG. These awards may well have been tokens of the King's appreciation of the unit's services. Lt Col C.E. Wood of the 1/5th WYR was appointed CMG in the 1916 New Year Honours, following the involvement of his unit in the German gas attack of December. He was court-martialled and cashiered in July 1916 for dereliction of duty,<sup>395</sup> but the court, which deprived him of all medals, had no power to order the forfeiture of this particular decoration.

It is an enormous pity that the British Army did not adopt the French method of demonstrating official appreciation of a unit's gallantry or exceptional services: from 8th April 1915 all units Mentioned in Despatches for services of outstanding merit which beneficially influenced the course of a battle received the Croix de Guerre avec palme en bronze. The award of this medal to the 8th Bn in 1918 gave intense gratification to all present and past members of the regiment, and aroused none of the rancour and resentment that often seemed to surround the selection of an individual to receive the most coveted award, the Victoria Cross. The men of A Coy in particular of the 1/8th were extremely angry at the end of 1915 when Cpl Samuel Meekosha of the 1/6th WYR had the VC substituted for the DCM he had been recently awarded,<sup>396</sup> not merely because he had not done "anything that anybody else wouldn't have done in the same circumstances", but also because he had won the award in almost exactly the same circumstances and in exactly the same place as three men of A Coy of the 1/8th had won the DCM only a fortnight earlier.<sup>397</sup>

Two sections of No. 1 platoon, A Coy, were garrisoning the Pump Room, an isolated trench near Turco Farm, on 6th November 1915 when a sudden and violent combined bombardment by a 5.9" howitzer, a high velocity and quick-firing field gun, and trench mortars, began, blowing in a dugout and wounding and burying 4 men, one of whom was "very badly crushed".<sup>398</sup> Rfm 2634 Arthur Benson, DCM, later wrote to his brother:

"We were in support to the front line which another company of our battalion were holding, when the Germans or 'Ally Kids', as our chaps call them, commenced throwing six-inch howitzer shells at us. It only requires two of these to bring a house down, but they gave us about two dozen in a very short time. One of them dropped just behind a dugout where four of our chaps were in bed. The whole concern fell in, and three were pinned under the debris. The other, fortunately, was near the door of the dugout and managed to escape, though he received a wound on the forehead, and was covered with dirt. I was standing outside my dugout when the poor fellow came



running down the trench. The trenches were in a bad state, every one being up to the knees in mud and water. My first thought was to go up and try and release the men. I picked up a spade, and had just arrived at the spot when Sergeant Pearson (who has also been awarded the DCM) appeared on the scene. We found the entrance to the dugout stopped up, so we commenced to dig from the top, being all the time in full view of the enemy's lines. Immediately they saw us the Germans sent over a few more shells, but we did not lose heart, as we were bent on getting our chums out to safety. The last man extricated was half-dead from suffocation. He had been pinned face downwards by a plank, which was across his neck. Artificial respiration was tried with success, but we kept him in the trench until evening, and then carried him over an open field to the dressing station."<sup>399</sup>

Later, home on leave, he told a reporter that

"they nearly despaired of getting the last two men out alive. Artificial respiration had to be resorted to, and it was only when they had nearly given up hope that one of the two showed signs of recovering consciousness."<sup>400</sup>

In the incident in which Meekosha was concerned, 6 men were killed, 7 wounded and the remaining 6 men of the garrison "more or less buried". The VC citation stated that Meekosha dug out all the wounded and buried men himself in full view of the enemy's lines and under continuous artillery fire: "By his promptness and magnificent courage and determination he saved at least four lives."<sup>401</sup> If the facts were as stated in the citation, then Meekosha fully deserved to have his DCM upgraded to the Victoria Cross. The respondents, however, would not accept that the "facts" were as stated. On the basis of their own knowledge of the location and of the difficulties encountered by Benson and Pearson who, working together, had succeeded in rescuing 3 buried men only by the narrowest of margins, they refused to believe that Meekosha had accomplished this superhuman feat unaided. Surely, they argued, he could not have dug out 4 men, let alone 13, before time ran out and some died of suffocation? Certainly no report of the incident mentioned the necessity for artificial respiration. One respondent suspected that, "for the honour of the Regiment", Meekosha's assistants had altruistically stepped down and allowed him to take the full credit so that he could qualify for the highest award. Others pointed out that Meekosha had been the senior surviving NCO in the position.

Respondents from the 6th Bn have since confirmed all these suspicions. At least 5 men, possibly 6, assisted Meekosha (who first had to be dug out by two brothers named Wilkinson) in the rescue operation. The award of the VC actually aroused a great deal of ill-feeling in the 1/6th, primarily because the three lance-corporals in the party each received the DCM and the senior NCO received the VC, but the remaining members (all privates)



received no recognition whatsoever. The singling out of Meekosha for the highest award on the basis of seniority was, according to the respondents, widely felt to be unfair and he was said to have been in little or no personal danger during the operation. Perhaps significantly, Capt Tempest in his history of the 1/6th, accords the incident minimal coverage. One respondent considered that GHQ had decided to award a VC to the 49th Division in recognition of its recent services and had selected the 1/6th WYR to receive the honour. He saw it as official recognition of the battalion's heroism and Meekosha as "lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time."<sup>402</sup> It may or may not have been a coincidence that Meekosha was a pre-war Territorial.

It was an invidious task, save on very rare occasions, to select an individual for the award of the Victoria Cross. Many conspicuous acts of gallantry were a collective effort, entirely the result of team-work, such as the stand of men of C Coy of the 1/7th in the Schwaben Redoubt, described below, and this was recognised at least both in the Royal Navy and in the Royal Artillery. Winston Churchill, when First Lord of the Admiralty, had urged upon Kitchener that no individual submariner should be decorated for gallantry. He considered it "necessary that the decoration should be given to the boat, and that the men should ballot among themselves to decide who is to have it."<sup>403</sup> Since artillerymen worked in teams, it was common in Royal Artillery batteries to ballot on the award of the VC.<sup>404</sup>

Genuinely individual acts of heroism were comparatively rare in the Leeds Rifles. The most outstanding act of individual brave conduct that went beyond the call of duty was performed by Rfm Charles Arthur Capp, the "Black Sheep of the Regiment", who, on 9th October 1917, on his own initiative and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, single-handed with rifle and bayonet, rushed an enemy machine-gun post that was holding up the advance of and inflicting heavy casualties upon his own company, D Coy of the 1/7th, and upon the adjacent 1/5th WYR, put the gun team to flight and captured the gun.<sup>405</sup> For this heroic act Capp was awarded the DCM. Respondents declared that this act had merited the VC, but that the fact of Capp being under a suspended death sentence for desertion had disqualified him for this award. A man's record may have been taken into account when considering his recommendation for an award. It seems significant that Max Ramsden, whose activities as a "Prisoner's Friend" frequently incurred the displeasure, not only of Brigade and Divisional HQ, but also of his colonel,<sup>406</sup> never received the MC, and that 3300 Joe Knowles, 1/7th, an otherwise exemplary NCO with a long record of gambling offences, never received so much as a "gallantry card".



There are strong indications that medals were often distributed in order to maintain, or boost, morale. Conditions when the 2/8th went into the line for the first time, in February 1917, were truly atrocious: severe frost and heavy snow, followed by a rapid thaw; three MMs were awarded. The number of awards in both the 1/7th and 1/8th made in November and December 1915, when strengths were rapidly dwindling and conditions were appalling, considerably exceeded the totals made in the preceding six months. Two of the 5 MMs awarded in C Coy of the 1/7th in July 1916 were given to private Riflemen. Sgt (as he now was) Sanders apologised to respondent 1953 George Wood for not being able to get him an MM, telling him that "the powers-that-be had decreed that only one MM was to be given to a pre-war Territorial; the other was to be given to a Derby conscript, as conscripts had to be encouraged." The 6 awards made in the 1/7th for the 8th December 1915 bombardment went to 3 pre-war Territorials and 3 men who had joined before the end of September 1914 and who had embarked with the Regiment in April 1915. Bombardier Pratt recalled the award of a DCM to a man who had joined the battery only recently. The man protested, saying that compared with everyone else in the gun team he had done nothing in particular to deserve it. The battery sergeant-major later informed Pratt privately that the man had been specially selected for the award "in order to encourage the conscripts".<sup>407</sup> Newspapers liked to print human interest stories about medal winners and these never failed to give biographical details including the date of enlistment.

The considerable unevenness in the standard of conduct required to earn the MM provides a further indication. The following examples have all been taken from the same battalion, the 2/8th, to illustrate this.

2995 Rfm S. Preval, B Coy:

"On the morning of February 19th 1917 in front of Beaucourt trench for gallantry in attempting to deliver a message to Company HQ under heavy fire. The previous messenger was shot dead in attempting the feat, while Rfm Preval, who volunteered in his place was shot through the top of his helmet with a bullet."

3370 Lance Sgt W.E. Potts, B Coy:

"On morning of February 19th 1917, in front of Beaucourt trench, this NCO was in charge of an advance post which was attacked by the enemy which, however, he successfully defended with loss to the raiders. Throughout the whole incident he showed great coolness, judgement and initiative and so saved the situation."

4548 L/Cpl J. Priestley, B Coy:

"On the night of 19th/20th February 1917 he volunteered and guided parties to the advance posts as dawn was approaching, the guides having failed to find the posts. This was accomplished at great personal risk near Ten Tree Alley."



3730 Rfm B. Draycott, B Coy:

On 28.2.17 at Brickfield Trench, Miraumont, this rifleman rendered very gallant services as a stretcher bearer, rendering first aid to the wounded under fire. This was done in daylight, and under observation of snipers and machine gun fire."

305183 Corpl David William Elliott:

"At Ecoust on the 12th April 1917 for holding No. 5 outpost with 3 riflemen after it had been blown in by shellfire. The rest of his garrison were either killed or wounded, but Corp Elliott, after extricating himself re-established his position under heavy shell fire, his energy and coolness were most marked."

308646 Rfm Percy Sutton:

"At Ecoust on the 12th April 1917 this man was sent by Capt Nevitt from No. 2 Support Post to find out what had happened to 2nd Lt A.R. Moore's patrol as the previous messenger Rfm Gale, owing to his wound, had not succeeded in finding out the situation. There was heavy shelling and machine gun fire at the time and Rfm Sutton volunteered his services. He returned with information that 2/Lt Moore and his patrol were all killed and that there was no question of the enemy having evacuated their trenches. His reconnaissance was done in broad daylight some 250 yards from the Hindenburg Line."

CSM George William ("Gerry") Wheeler:

"On the 1.9.18 in the attack on Vaulx-Vraucourt when his company was held up by enemy machine guns about 200 yds from their objective, this warrant officer collected a supply of bombs, dashed down in front of the company, cleared the trench and captured three prisoners. His prompt action was undoubtedly the means of clearing up a doubtful situation. Throughout the operations he has shewn great initiative and a total disregard for his personal safety, and his conduct was most inspiring to all those under him."<sup>408</sup>

All the defects and injustices of the medals system were embodied in the award of the VC to Cpl 3203 George Sanders, C Coy, 1/7th, who was senior NCO in a party of 30 men of his company who were marooned in the German B Line NW of the Schwaben Redoubt, 1st-3rd July 1916, during which time, under very trying conditions, they were subjected to several strong attacks. 22 men (including two respondents, Ernest Fenton and 1953 George Wood), not 19, the figure given in the citation,<sup>409</sup> survived the ordeal.

An unnamed survivor gave an account to a "correspondent" (likely to have been Rfm P.G. Standley, 7th) which was published in the local press:

"The little force was disposed to the best advantage, and we settled down to await the expected Hun attack, confident that we could give a good account of ourselves ... In the morning the enemy advanced to attack us. The bombing party opened fire on them when it was least expected. The Huns were thrown into confusion. They desisted for a time and



later made another rush. We stopped them, and then by a sudden counter-attack they were thrown back. In their haste they had to leave some [Irish] prisoners they had taken and were keeping in one of their dugouts before sending them to the rear ... [Later that day] two furious attacks came in rapid succession from bombing parties of the enemy. The Germans pressed their attacks with great determination, particularly the first ... Our confidence was growing then. We gave the enemy back bomb for bomb, and kept up a steady rifle fire that had great effect. Not a shot was wasted. We took careful aim, and made sure of a man before firing. Few bullets failed to find a billet. That attack was beaten off, most of the attackers being knocked out. The second attack was not so determined. The enemy showered bombs on us. We answered in kind. The Fritzie's fled in terror. For the rest of the time an intermittent fire was kept up, and several times the foe made a pretence of rushing our position. There was no pretence about our reply. We peppered them every time they showed themselves ... Every move the enemy made was countered by a better one, and they couldn't make the slightest headway against our little force, in spite of the reckless way in which lives were thrown away. Once during the fight the Huns had the cheek to call out that we ought to surrender. We asked them if they wouldn't like to come and take us. They didn't risk that."<sup>410</sup>

Sanders wrote to his father:

"When doing the deed I never thought that anything would come of it. But I will describe it. On July 1st, after our attack, I went across to the German lines along with my company. Very soon we lost our officer and sergeants, and I found myself in full command. Knowing the line must be held, I posted the men as I wanted them. Not long after, we were attacked, but our gallant party beat them back. By doing this we saved the Royal Irish Rifles from being flanked. But on top of that we caught a party of Germans taking some of the - - - 's [censored] prisoners, and we fired and got our chaps back safely. The commander of the - - - 's [censored] recommended me, and I hear I am to be mentioned for an honour. Well, father, every man of my party was a hero, I owe my honour to their bravery, and I hear they are to be given some honour for it."<sup>411</sup>

Knowles, another survivor, told his wife in his letter of 4th July 1916:

"Our officer has taken the numbers of a bunch of us to be mentioned in despatches. I and a chum carried a lad out of the German lines into our own. He had his foot blown clean off. It was a bit hard but we got across all right. It was a miracle as it was daylight."

He gave further details in his letter of 13th September: On 2nd July the Riflemen had been heavily attacked by a strong bombing party. A German bomb blew off a foot and broke the other leg of Rfm Charles Wood. By daybreak next day Wood's condition had deteriorated to such an extent that Knowles and his chum, L/Cpl Charlie Beanland, decided to carry him

"across No Man's Land amidst heavy shelling and machine gun fire. The odds against getting across," wrote the former



bookmaker Knowles,"was about 1,000 to 1. I shall never forget it, carrying him on our backs in turn and throwing ourselves into shell-holes every few yards for cover. Wood himself was the gamest lad I ever knew, it was 18 hours after he had been wounded and it must have been torture to him, as we could not carry him gently, staggering amongst the barbed wire. I tell you, Maud, love, it was a struggle for life."<sup>412</sup>

The anonymous eyewitness had highly praised Cpl Sanders' powers of leadership. According to him, Sanders had encouraged his men by declaring "We're only a handful of Tykes,<sup>413</sup> but let the Fritziees see that our bite is as good as our bark",

although respondents, including Wood and Fenton, strenuously denied he had said any such thing and dismissed it as a journalistic flight of fancy. The eyewitness account concluded,

"I think the whole credit belongs to Corporal Sanders. It was his skilful handling of the little force that gave us all confidence and made it easy for us to hold our own with the enemy all round us. He richly deserves the Cross, and the men will be pleased to hear of it."<sup>414</sup>

Major Tetley wrote in his Diary

"They were most ably led by No. 3203 Corporal G. Sanders of C Coy who was recommended for gallant conduct by officers of the [9th] Royal Irish Rifles ... It is hoped that Corpl Sanders will receive some very good award."<sup>415</sup>

Only Tetley's prediction proved correct. Within a few days 5 men, 3176 L/Cpl P. Pickles, 2103 L/Cpl A. Fawcett, 3000 L/Cpl L. Kirk, 1966 H. Emmett and 4487 W. Howland, received MMs, 4, including 1953 George Wood, received "Gallantry Cards", but the remaining 12 got nothing. 1966 Harold Emmett tried to refuse the award in protest against the unfairness of the system and when brought before the CO as a consequence, told him that 3230 L/Cpl Charles A. Beanland, who had personally saved his life, was far more deserving of the medal than he was.<sup>416</sup> Beanland and Knowles were bitterly disappointed at being left out. Not only were they the only lance-corporals omitted, but a special recommendation for them had gone in and "it looked a certainty on coming off." They had undoubtedly saved Wood's life. Knowles was feeling intense disappointment by the end of July:

"I have got nothing yet. You see kid, it's just a matter of luck and I am not worrying. I have the pleasure of knowing I saved a lad's life ... My chinas keep telling me I am sure to get something, but I don't think so. There are hundreds of similar cases every day, but it's only a few that get acknowledged."

It was no consolation to him that his company officer promoted him full corporal shortly after his return, the casualties having caused vacancies, and gave him rapid promotion to lance-sergeant, perhaps as a compensation.



Knowles became and remained embittered:

"It is hard lines not getting a decoration out of the VC party, but there is plenty of time yet and everyone in the battalion knows I am entitled to something, especially the lad who was lucky enough to get the highest honour." "If Sanders comes to our house, just ask him what part I played in the VC exploit and he will tell you how unlucky I am not to be in the Honours List." "... it was only luck and having a stripe more on his arm than the rest of us that got him it."<sup>417</sup>

Knowles and Beanland appear to have been unfairly treated by Brigade HQ. As the attack on Thiepval and the Schwaben Redoubt had been unsuccessful, the number of awards was strictly limited. Perhaps it was the fact that they had left the German lines earlier than the rest of the party that disqualified them from consideration. Lt Col Tetley's conscience concerning Beanland's treatment, at any rate, seems to have troubled him, for he made a special entry in his Diary eleven months later:

"In Divisional Routine Orders of 8 June 1917 it was announced that 3230 L/Cpl C. Beanland had been awarded the Croix de Guerre for gallantry and devotion to duty from 1st to 3rd July 1916."<sup>418</sup>

Sanders' award aroused a storm of controversy in the battalion that continued to rage for over 60 years, one which overwhelmingly demonstrated the desirability of balloting. Controversial awards of the Victoria Cross were not rare. The basic reason for the rancour and resentment aroused was always the same: the Victoria Cross carried a life annuity of £10, and it offended many people's sense of natural justice that a man should receive a Crown pension to which he may not have been morally entitled.

Respondents nominated three candidates for the award: (in order) Beanland, Kirk and Pickles. Significantly, although one or two respondents including Wood, were fairly non-committal, no one offered to nominate Sanders himself, and it is worth mentioning that up to the last Reunion he attended, Beanland was always welcomed with loud cheering and applause as "the lad who should have got the VC", a reputation stemming from the prominent part he had taken in the defence of the trench and not merely from his rescue of the severely-wounded Rfm Wood. Lawrie Kirk, a bomber, had been in charge of the right flank of the position and organised the barricade; Sanders had not been present during the whole of the material period, and Pickles had originally been in command of the party.<sup>419</sup> Nearly all the respondents were convinced that Sanders had been given the award solely on the basis of seniority, and they averred their implacable opposition to the award of medals by seniority.

Many respondents voiced strong feelings on the issue. It was clearly



apparent that Sanders had not been particularly popular. He was portrayed as being arrogant, cocky and bumptious, a man who was not a good mixer. As a good pianist with a fine singing voice, he was a popular entertainer in the Officers' Mess, and several respondents referred to him as "the officers' pet". During the night of 1st/2nd July, a C Coy runner, L/Cpl 2006 Ernest Woodhead, had delivered the order, to withdraw immediately, to the commanders of all parties in the German lines, including Sanders. This respondent took the view that, since all other commanders had, despite the shelling, complied with the order, Sanders, instead of being decorated, should have been court-martialled for disobeying "in such manner as to show a wilful defiance of authority" a lawful command, under Section 9 (1) of the Army Act, an offence carrying the death penalty.<sup>420</sup> (According to the unnamed eyewitness, Sanders was expecting a dawn attack, and the party seems to have been fairly well supplied with bombs and SAA. A general order to withdraw immediately, it will be recalled, had been issued to all 146 Brigade troops in the German lines in order to avoid being surrounded.) Some respondents pointed out that Sanders had been extraordinarily lucky to have two officers among the party of Irish soldiers rescued. It was maintained by several respondents that Sanders had originally been recommended for the DCM (which also required eyewitness endorsement by two officers), but that Col Kirk and Major Tetley had taken advantage of the fact that the two inexperienced Irish officers were not fully cognisant of the qualifying standards for the award of the VC and had persuaded them to emend their recommendation accordingly. It was widely felt among respondents that Kirk and Tetley had pressed for the highest honour because they considered the battalion's gallant conduct of 1st/2nd July merited official recognition. The majority was convinced that Kirk and particularly Tetley were keen for a 1/7th man to achieve the distinction of winning the first Leeds VC of the war and/or to achieve parity with the city's arch rival, Bradford, and thereby "get even with the 1/6th for Meekosha".<sup>421</sup>

Sanders, an apprentice fitter at Kitson's, was, like Meekosha before him, recommended for a commission. No one regretted his departure.<sup>422</sup> Knowles wrote, "I hope he doesn't come back to us, as he got 'swelled head' before he left."<sup>423</sup> Sanders went to the 1/6th WYR and had reached the rank of Captain when he was taken prisoner on Kemmel Hill in April 1918.

The fact that the medals system was riddled with injustices and anomalies of the type outlined above must not be allowed to obscure another fact, that many brave men received awards they fully deserved. The exploits of Rfm H. Talbot, 1757 L/Cpl George A. Blaymire, and 2750 Rfm F. Webster (who later received a bar to the MM while serving in the 2/8th), all of



the 1/8th, who each received the MM for "gallantry and devotion to duty",<sup>424</sup> and Sgt S. Sanderson, DCM, MM, 1/7th, were recounted in Chapter 10. 306966 Sgt James Horner's important part in the 8th's capture of both the Bois du Petit Champs and the Montagne de Bligny, which was rewarded by the MM, might be thought to have merited the DCM, but Horner was unfortunate in that, in the former incident, all the officers had become casualties.

1/7th Bn respondents admired the conduct of 2771 L/Cpl Harry Ingleby, who was awarded the DCM for taking charge of the platoon on 8th December 1915 when all senior NCOs had been killed or wounded. He had taken the platoon to a better position, dug out a buried man, and organised under heavy fire the recovery of rifles and equipment from a trench that had been blown in, as well as the removal of the wounded;<sup>425</sup> he died of wounds on 1st August 1916. They also admired the pluck of grandfather, 4 Sgt S. Wormald, MM, the oldest man in the regiment, the archetypal dedicated Volunteer who had served 36 years in the Rifles. No one in the 1/8th would have begrudged the award of the DCM to Lewis Gun Sgt Jack Flockton, a man much admired and respected by all ranks. A miner from Shaw Cross, Dewsbury, he was a character straight from the pages of Robert Service. He was a crack shot with a revolver who liked to enforce Lights Out in billets by shooting all the candles out, and who, "for a frolic, would strap a leather belt around one of us, then lift him off the ground with his teeth." When celebrating the 2nd anniversary of the Regiment's Embarkation with some of his fellow sergeants in Laventie, the enemy began to shell the town. He "proved his devotion to Bacchus by draining the contents of all the glasses left by the panic-stricken revellers before himself making good his escape."<sup>426</sup>

No respondent begrudged awards of the MC to 2/Lt W.G. Kemp, 1/8th, 2 i/c of the raid on 7th May 1917; to 2/Lt F.J. Baldwin, 1/7th Bombing Officer on 14th July 1916; to Lt J.R. Bellerby; and to ex-ranker, 2/Lt Francis W. Smith, the 1/8th Intelligence Officer. During the night of 6th/7th February 1917 Smith was out on patrol with 2707 L/Cpl Harold Moorby (of Wakefield) when the latter was shot and severely wounded in the abdomen. In brilliant moonlight and through heavy rifle fire, Smith carried him back to safety;<sup>427</sup> Moorby unfortunately died shortly afterwards. The imperturbable Lt H.R. Burrows, 8th, the senior officer in command of the Montagne de Bligny, was deservedly mentioned for "distinguished services" in Ordre General No. 363 dated 9/8/18 of the Fifth French Army and subsequently awarded a personal Croix de Guerre avec palme.<sup>428</sup> The men never begrudged the award of medals to popular officers who were admired for their pluck and dash, and were not slow to express grievances on behalf of officers who, in their opinion, had not been sufficiently recognised. Respondents declared, for



Awarded the Military Cross.

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Lieutenant Charles Brian STEAD,  
8th Battn. W. York R.T.F.

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For conspicuous gallantry and able leadership at Havrincourt on 14th September, 1918, when he brought his Company up to strengthen the line. He found the enemy had penetrated the line, and at once organised bombing parties led them forward, clearing the front, and entering a dug-out, captured eight prisoners. During the following night and day he worked incessantly, consolidating the defence.



Lt Charles Brian Stead, 8th, aged 21; photocopy of original MC citation; War Grave headstone. (Note West Yorkshire Regiment crest.)  
(Material supplied by P.K. Stead Esq.)



instance, that Kemp should have been awarded 3 MCs at least.<sup>429</sup> Kemp, in his letters, conforms, to a surprising degree, to the popular image of him.

The most outstanding act of bravery in the 1/8th, according to respondents, was that of Capt H.J. Burke, RAMC. On 8th November 1915 1407 Sgt G.W. Marsh was wounded by a sheet of corrugated iron when a dugout in the front line near Turco Farm was blown in. His leg was so very badly injured that the stretcher-bearer summoned the RMO. Lt Lupton wrote

"Burke excited the admiration of many the other day by visiting a case in the firing line for which he decided immediate amputation was necessary. Of course the commn. trenches were all deep in water and mud so he set off straight across country in broad daylight to secure the necessary instruments."<sup>430</sup>

Capt Burke returned across the open and, while the bombardment continued, performed the operation, assisted by his sergeant, 132 Harry Thackray, who received the DCM. Marsh made a good recovery.<sup>431</sup> Burke came from a military family. When he joined the 1/8th straight from England in July 1915, Lt Lupton was impressed by his family's record: 4 of his brothers had already been killed in action, one the holder of the DSO, another of the VC.<sup>432</sup> He won the greatest admiration and affection from all ranks.

"Under fire he is apparently the cheeriest of mortals, and his Irish wit never leaves him. At all times most daring in his work of tending the wounded, he has six times been wounded, though he has only been at the front a matter of months."

After being wounded for the fifth time he returned to duty with the following notice pinned to his back: "Please send the remains to the Duchess of Westminster's Hospital."<sup>433</sup>

There is no doubt that "assaulting" formations received far more honours and awards than "line-holding" formations. The 62nd Division in 21 months' service with the BEF received 2655 honours and awards, whereas the 49th received only 2640 in 43 months' service.<sup>434</sup> This was clearly unjust, since the services performed by "holding" divisions in critical sectors were at least as valuable as those of "assaulting" divisions. The 49th's stern six-months' defence of the north Ypres Salient in 1915 was essential both to the conduct of the war and to the maintenance of equilibrium on the Western Front. As Major J. Stirling has remarked, few divisions had a more intimate acquaintance with the shell-fire and mud of the hellish Salient than the 49th,<sup>435</sup> which spent a total of nearly 2½ years out of its 3½ years' overseas service in that sector. In 1918 it was one of the Territorial divisions that were prominent in the Battle of the Lys, its "very valuable and gallant service" earning the thanks and appreciation of Haig who informed the GOC



2nd Army that "The courage and determination shown by this Division have played no small part in checking the enemy's advance."<sup>436</sup> The 49th's role brought it no military renown, either at the time or since.<sup>437</sup> In 1935 a letter-writer to the Yorkshire Post appealed for someone to come forward and "record for all time the great work the 49th Division accomplished during the Great War", adding sadly, "the good old 49th has never received that honour, credit and appreciation it, by its great, noble and self-sacrificing work, so greatly deserves."<sup>438</sup> Posterity has only enhanced the unfairness of the war.

Unthoughtful civilians have apportioned fame to formations involved in the big battles and judged regiments and divisions by the number of medals pinned on their personnel. They are uninterested in the successfully fought critical rear-guard actions of 1918, which displayed to the full the splendid fighting qualities of many of the troops concerned, who offered resolute and prolonged resistance to the German offensive, often at tremendous cost. A large majority of writers and historians have been curiously selective and regrettably given undue attention and prominence to offensives, whether successful or unsuccessful, but have paid scant heed to the soldierly qualities demanded by defensive operations, even overlooking the rearguard actions of assaulting divisions, such as those of the 62nd at Bucquoy and the 56th along the Scarpe in March 1918 which caused the enemy to break off his offensive in those sectors. In consequence, the reputations of some regiments and divisions have over the years become inflated at the cost of others. Many soldiers themselves tended to believe, extrapolating from the fact that exhausted and depleted divisions were transferred to relatively quiet sectors or assigned to manual labour, that designation as a holding division in an active or critical sector and as an assaulting division were signs of disapproval and approbation respectively of the Army Commander and Commander-in-Chief.<sup>439</sup> Not surprisingly, some military historians have appeared to take the view that those divisions commonly employed on holding in active sectors were somehow inferior in quality, though a few moments' thought should have convinced them otherwise. There is little evidence to support either this view or its converse, that assaulting divisions were superior in quality. The two divisions blamed for the failure at Loos, for instance, were clearly not of the standard required. It was recognised by high-ranking officers in the field that large formations, once they had passed the novitiate stage and become experienced, commonly possessed little versatility and were better in an offensive than in a defensive role, or vice versa. Specialised training and preparation were equally necessary for success in both roles. Experience thus dictated the practice, subject



to the exigencies of the situation, of confining a division to one role or the other. In view of this general practice, and the very many variables involved, it is futile to attempt to draw up a ranking order of quality. In practice, there appears to have been little to choose between the elite divisions. By 1917 it seems likely that there was no very great variation in quality amongst all the divisions comprising the BEF; some appear to have been more successful when employed in a defensive role, others more successful in an offensive role.

The press was undoubtedly responsible for the building-up of certain military reputations. Dominion troops, who received favoured treatment and enjoyed many advantages denied to British troops,<sup>440</sup> were accorded the maximum publicity permitted. Leeds Rifles respondents complained bitterly that the 62nd had been pushed into obscurity by the 51st, alongside which it had frequently fought. Several Old Contemptibles complained that their regiments' reputations had suffered as a result of the excessive publicity given to the London Scottish. In March 1915, in the magazine Navy and Army, Edgar Wallace was complaining of the inordinate publicity being given to kilted regiments by certain war correspondents and popular mass-circulation newspapers and periodicals: "... it is very remarkable how, when two regiments have been performing duties equally meritorious, it is the kilted which is mentioned by unofficial despatch writers and the non-kilted which is left out in the cold."<sup>441</sup> The 51st (Highland) Division is the only World War I Territorial division known to the man in the street. It first came to public notice by its capture in November 1916 of Beaumont Hamel, after which it became an elite assaulting division and, according to respondent Jack Barker (51st Machine Gun Battalion), rapidly increasingly English in composition. The fact that its personnel were clothed in the kilt did the reverse of harm to its reputation with the British public, a reputation enhanced, moreover, by German references to "Hell's Ladies" and the "Devils in Skirts". It was widely believed in the BEF that the 51st Division headed the legendary German "Black List".<sup>442</sup> On such foundations do many military reputations rest.

With the issue of campaign medals came another major grievance for all front-line soldiers, whatever their rank. Up to 1914 it had been War Office practice to attach clasps to campaign medals awarded to men who had taken part in specific engagements, e.g. The Relief of Ladysmith. Medals without clasps were known as "bare-arsed" and regarded with profound contempt by "pukka" old soldiers,<sup>443</sup> since they indicated that the wearer had not been under fire. Many former front-line soldiers bitterly resented the suspension of the practice in relation to 1914-18 medals since no distinction



was thus made between those who had been in action in the battle zone and those who had not. The sole exception was the clasp awarded to all those members of the BEF who had been under fire between 5 August and 22 November 1914, the "Old Contemptibles".

All medals were die-stamped with the recipient's serial number, rank, surname and initials, and the name of his regiment or corps. Some respondents were aggrieved because their battalion's number was omitted.

Promotion was a common focus of grievance in the TF, particularly among officers. The majority of the more serious anomalies complained of stemmed from the Territorial Force set-up.<sup>444</sup> The first- and second-line battalions were counted as a double-battalion regiment for the purposes of the establishment of officers and NCOs. Officers sick or wounded in the UK remained on the establishment, though a virtually unlimited number of supernumerary second-lieutenants appear to have been allowed. Substantive sergeants and warrant-officers remained on the establishment when detached from the battalion for any reason, although corporals and lance-corporals lost this right in 1916. This caused a great deal of ill-feeling,<sup>445</sup> firstly, because a great many appointments to acting, and therefore unpaid, ranks were made, and secondly, because this system seriously damaged the promotion chances of the lower ranks of both officers and men. 534 Sgt Thomas Dickinson went out from the 2/8th to the 1/8th in the first draft to replace a sergeant who had been killed: "The existing corporals were up in arms about it. 'What chance of promotion have we got', they were saying, 'when a sergeant gets killed and they send out another sergeant in his place?'" In order to put an end to the "unpleasantness, jealousy and back-biting" Dickinson reverted to Rifleman at his own request.<sup>446</sup> Not long afterwards a general order was issued by which all NCOs in overseas drafts were required to take down at least one stripe. Dependents' allotments were, however, reduced accordingly, and this often caused great hardship to the man's family.<sup>447</sup>

Officer replacements caused similar problems. Promotion in the peacetime Army and Territorial Force had been largely on the basis of seniority. On average, progress to the rank of Captain in the TF was attained in 5-6 years and to Major in a further 9-10 years, though Walter Berry and Edward Wrigley Braithwaite, thanks to the lucky fact that the new 8th Bn was being formed, reached the rank of Captain in just under 2 years. The accelerated promotion available to officers with no previous military experience, with the possible exception of service in a school or university OTC, in the de novo, second-line TF and training battalions, caused considerable heart-burning not only among officers holding pre-war commissions but also among



second-lieutenants in the first-line TF battalions. In the 2/8th, for example, former OTC members Eric Billington, Henry Kirk Boyle and Sydney James Pearson were gazetted 2nd lieutenants on 8th October 1914 and lieutenants two days later, although only Pearson had obtained an Army Certificate (Cert. A). Charles Dyson, who possessed no military qualifications but who was aged 33, was promoted Captain less than 4 weeks after being gazetted second-lieutenant. Michael H. Tetley, gazetted second-lieutenant in December 1914, had become a captain less than 5 months later.<sup>448</sup> Tetley was sent to the 1/8th in July 1915. There being no vacancy for a captain, he was required to revert to second-lieutenant. This did not prove to be the permanent solution to these unjust anomalies. Complaints of Temporary captains and full lieutenants being drafted from reserve battalions to first-line TF battalions abroad and there retaining their temporary rank and pay had been raised in the House as early as May 1915.<sup>449</sup> (In response to innumerable complaints from officers holding Temporary commissions, a committee was set up in 1917, under the chairmanship of the Rt Hon W.S. Churchill, to inquire into the "anomalies, inconsistencies and inequalities" of the system of promotion of officers in the Special Reserve, New Armies, and Territorial Force.)<sup>450</sup>

After being wounded, Lt Lupton was sent in August 1916 with his friend Lt Coates to the 3/8th at Clipstone. Here he found that the Company commanders were all rankers recently promoted from the 1/8th, one his former CSM, now Capt Thompson, and that virtually all the captains in the entire training establishment were junior as regards length of service to him and Coates. Lupton heard that 2/Lt Kemp and Lt Wilkinson were now company commanders in the 1/8th and he was anxious to return so that he could become senior company commander himself and so acting Major. On 24th August he heard that two recently sent-out 3/8th officers were now in command of companies in the 1/8th.

"Rotten luck on Kemp & Co.," he wrote, "who have done all the work but who are junior to them. Still I suppose it is what one has to expect from a grateful country."

In July 1917 he wrote to complain to his parents about "the latest scandal":

"Ramsden, Kemp and one Callaghan have commanded companies; yet now one Billington has arrived from England, having been out about a fortnight last year and is being put in command of C Coy above them. It is a scandalous injustice and I think foolish to boot as they are all tried men."<sup>451</sup>

(Territorial officer Cecil M. Slack made very similar complaints.)<sup>452</sup> The CO appears to have protested to the Brigadier, for three days later Lupton, who had only been promoted captain himself in October 1916, was able to write



"Ramsden has after all left the company to command C Coy and Billington has come to us in his place. I think he will be a most efficient 2nd in command. ... This solution of the difficulty is the most satisfactory that could have been reached."

In April 1918, after recovering from his Poelcappelle wounds, he joined the 7th Reserve Bn about to embark for Ireland, and once again faced the old, familiar problem: he was made 2nd in command of C Coy "under a man who joined up considerably after me and who had only a few weeks in France."<sup>453</sup> The problem also existed in Regular battalions in relation to their Special Reserve or training battalions.<sup>454</sup>

As might be expected, respondents' testimony indicated immense resentment amongst pre-war ranker Territorials, particularly NCOs, at the methods of creation and the accelerated promotion of NCOs in the second- and third-lines. All promotion before the war had been dependent on obtaining the Proficiency Certificate, and there were scathing references to second-line sergeants, "foreigners" who had not even been in the TF before the war, or pre-war Territorials who had refused to volunteer for foreign service, having "got their stripes out of jam tins."<sup>455</sup> Becoming a sergeant in the Leeds Rifles before the war had demanded keenness, ambition, dedication, hard work and part-time study. 167 Sgt Charles Young, 7th, who joined in 1904, spent four nights a week and most Saturdays at Carlton Barracks:

"My mind was on promotion from the day I joined and I was determined to work as hard as possible to gain the rank of sergeant. The day I joined I saw them building the new Sergeants' Mess and I vowed there and then to strive until I gained admission to it."<sup>456</sup>

Although they agreed in principle with promotion on merit, a large majority of respondents revealed themselves as staunch adherents of promotion by seniority. It was felt to be the fairest system, excluding bias and favouritism. A sergeant, once he became the senior sergeant in his company, could look forward to promotion as CQMS and then CSM, then RQMS or RSM. The senior man in his grade was, after all, the man of the greatest experience and presumably the greatest knowledge and expertise, although sometimes a CO with a vacancy would find himself in a dilemma when the senior man did not have the necessary personality or qualifications, or when a man from outside was foisted on him by higher command. In either case, there would be complaints of "passing-over". The bringing in of Regular senior NCOs, except as RSM, was greatly objected to, not only by NCO-, but also by rank-and-file respondents.

Respondents strongly disapproved of awards of stripes to former Regular soldiers except on merit, to habitual military offenders on the Napoleonic



principle "The worse the scamp, the better the soldier", and to older men of no previous military experience who had held supervisory positions in civil life. An example of the last category indignantly cited by several 1/7th respondents was 2937 Sgt Richard Dalby, a tramways inspector. Capt Redmayne, who promoted him sergeant shortly after his passing out from recruit training, is said to have remarked to his CSM, "If he's good enough for Hamilton [LCT General Manager], he's good enough for me."<sup>457</sup>

Reformed "blackguards" often proved excellent NCOs. 2008 Harry Ellis, 7th, had been a Militiaman for more than 10 years and was aged 30 and a married man with six children when he enlisted in July 1914. He soon revealed himself as a persistent troublemaker. Of magnificent physique, he had a physically intimidating presence. After considerable soul-searching, it was eventually decided to appoint him to the Regimental Police, where he quickly received a stripe. When the provost-sergeant was wounded, Ellis was promoted in his place. Major Tetley told him, "I'm taking a big chance with you and I'm relying on you to never let me down." Ellis, an outcast of society to whom nobody had ever "given a chance" before he enlisted, promptly swore undying allegiance to his commanding officer.<sup>458</sup> He proved a classic example of "the poacher turned gamekeeper". He showed immense devotion to duty, applying orders and regulations (which he had to learn by heart, since he was completely illiterate) with scrupulous impartiality, which made him popular with the lower ranks, but unpopular with certain sergeants and warrant officers who expected favoured treatment.

Up to the rank of sergeant, which men got promoted when vacancies occurred depended solely on the judgement of the officer commanding the company who may have been advised by platoon commanders but who was almost certainly advised by his CSM, who was regarded by respondents as the real power behind promotions. A man would be singled out for his first stripe on the basis of powers of leadership and initiative demonstrated during his everyday work. Promotion did not necessarily go by length of service or level of education, both of which had a low correlation with the traits of leadership and initiative, although a certain level of education and expertise may have been required for promotion in specialist sections. The conduct sheet, as indicating a man's conformity to the officially approved military mores, may have been an important factor in some instances and with some particular officers. Promotions to warrant officer were made by the commanding officer, advised by the RSM. The qualities looked for in a CSM were personality, expertise and the ability to lead by example. Capt Lupton described one of his sergeant-majors, CSM A.L. Pearson, DCM: "He is a really useful man but is no respecter of persons and with a poor



word of command."<sup>459</sup> (In civil life CSM Pearson had been manager of a stall in Game Row in Leeds Kirkgate Market). A reasonable standard of education was required of a warrant-officer, because of the paperwork the job entailed: in the pre-war Regular Army the possession of the Army First-Class Certificate of Education was regarded as a necessary prerequisite.<sup>460</sup>

Respondents presented a wide variation in personal attitudes to promotion. Many had never sought promotion, some because they felt they were too young to shoulder the responsibility - some young NCOs grew moustaches, if they were able to, in order to make themselves look older - or command the respect of older men. In July 1918, 1688 Harry Slater of the 8th Bn, still only 19 though he had enlisted in the battalion in March 1914, finally agreed to accept a stripe when his officer emphasised that it was his duty to the Regiment. Most men, however, had not wanted promotion because it would have entailed separation from their best friends. Promotion meant leaving the section, sometimes the platoon, whilst promotion to sergeant usually meant transfer to another company. After the Battle of Aubers Ridge, respondents 3167 Albert E. Wood and 1788 John W. Allman and their four closest friends in No. 4 platoon, A Coy, 1/8th, swore a solemn oath on the Bible "that none of us would ever take stripes so that we never would be parted". There was a widely-believed soldier's superstition that promotion must never be accepted if it meant missing leave;<sup>461</sup> to do so would invite the attention of a malign Fate.

The respondents who achieved the rank of sergeant had been keen and ambitious and enjoyed soldiering for its own sake. Some had initially been somewhat reluctant soldiers who would never have dreamt of joining up "if there hadn't been a war on" or if friends or brothers had not already joined up. They had, however, surprised themselves by discovering a real but hitherto entirely unsuspected talent for soldiering. "I took to it just like a duck to water", declared Sgt Samuel A. Hood, 3/7th, apprentice joiner of EastBurmantofts, who found he had an extraordinary talent for shooting, an excellent memory for arms drill and a marked aptitude for teaching drill to others. He was a full sergeant within weeks of reaching his 19th birthday and with less than 12 months' service.<sup>462</sup> Several of the platoon sergeants had discovered in themselves a talent for dealing with and influencing people, and had enjoyed being a "father" to all their men and particularly to their officer. It had been the "human relations" aspect of soldiering that made them eager to achieve promotion to the rank of platoon-sergeant.

Every battalion contained its quota of over-zealous promotion-seekers who tended to antagonise both their peers and those below them in rank and



seniority. Knowles told his wife that there were "plenty" of men in the 1/7th who "think about nothing else" but promotion, but he was keener himself on promotion than he cared to admit, writing in February 1916, obviously a staunch adherent of the seniority principle,

"When a lot of NCOs finish time-expired this spring, things will be a lot different. A few of us 'old sweats' will run this Battalion."

He had been promoted lance-corporal in October 1915 and offered promotion to full corporal exactly a month later. Unfortunately he injured his back and was compelled to go sick and so lost this opportunity of promotion:

"I am bang out of form. If this accident hadn't happened I should have been made full Corporal (two stripes) but as it was, it was impossible, as someone had to take up the duties straight away."

He was extremely disappointed:

"I have had the needle proper about missing the second bar. It will be many and many a month before there is any more promotions, and full corporals are rarely made."<sup>463</sup>

There are indications that the man promoted full corporal in his stead was 3203 George Sanders.

Knowles was one of many sergeants recommended for a commission in the second half of the war. It is evident from his letters that his decision to accept was not a free choice: he would have preferred to remain a platoon-sergeant in the 1/7th.

"I know I can do it and I have an even money chance. I have weighed form up and got to know the full strength. If I went west, you as an officer's wife would get an annuity and the youngsters a good schooling - as a Sergt's wife you would get nothing, kids either. Of course I am just telling you this, sweetheart, to show you that I am studying [dial: "concerned for"] you in everything."<sup>464</sup>

One wonders how Knowles, had he lived, would have fared as an officer. Respectable people regarded bookmakers as criminals, or little better than criminals. Phillip Maddison, hero of Henry Williamson's A Fox Under My Cloak, a grammar school educated member of the lower middle class, commissioned from the ranks, is treated as a social outsider, ostracised and bullied by the officers of the Gaultshires.

NCOs and rankers generally held a variety of attitudes towards becoming officers. Sgt Hood applied for a commission because his superiors had repeatedly rejected his application to be put on a draft to an active-service Leeds Rifles battalion. Many rankers, who might have been considered suitable officer material, refused commissions because they wished to remain in the ranks. RQMS Harry Rhodes refused a Quartermaster's commission because it would have meant leaving his beloved Leeds Rifles in which he had served



continuously for over 32 years. Grammar school educated 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 7th, son of a prosperous building contractor and quarry owner, repeatedly refused to take a commission because he did not want to give up a job he liked and the company of his men and fellow-NCOs. Table 10, Appendix II, shows, for B Coy of the 8th Bn in January 1919, a total of 52 men (26%) in occupational categories II, III, and IVa, rankers who might reasonably have been expected to apply for commissions. Lance Sgt William Edgar Potts, MM, educated at Leeds Grammar School and Leeds Modern School, was offered a commission as soon as he rejoined the 8th Bn in January 1915, but he preferred to become an NCO "in order to learn to handle and train men" and did not apply for a commission until after he had spent several months on active service on the Western Front.<sup>465</sup> Perhaps the most important factors influencing many working-class soldiers, and doubtless many from the lower middle classes, in their decision to decline offered commissions were the expense involved and the risk of social ostracism, particularly by the rank and file (see Chap. 2, section 2.2).



NOTES

1. See, for example, J. Ellis, Eye-Deep in Hell: the Western Front 1914-1918 (London, 1976; 1977 Fontana paperback edn.), pp. 167-8; C.E. Montague, Disenchantment (London, 1922; 1968 edn.), pp. 107ff; W.H.A. Groom, Poor Bloody Infantry (London, 1976), p. 53; P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, Not for Glory (Oxford, 1969), p. 56; T.P. Marks, The Laughter Goes from Life (London, 1977), p.9; C. Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning: propaganda in the First World War (London, 1977), p. 73; A.B. Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War (London, 1978), p.209.
2. See S.A. Stouffer et al., The American Soldier (Princeton NJ, 1949), Vol. II, pp. 156ff.
3. (London, 1968; 1980 edn.), pp. 59, 61, 85, 109, 123.
4. Testimonies of 2952 Lawrence Tallant, 1/7th QM staff, and Mr Cecil Rhodes (son of RQMS (Acting QM) Harry Rhodes). A shell-case decorated with the regimental crest by this prisoner is in the Leeds City Museum.
5. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, Chart IX, p. 158.
6. Lupton letter, 27 June 1915; Tetley Diary.
7. Sunset Dreams (London, 1918 edn.).
8. See, for example, the Diary of Pte Edward Woffenden, 15th WYR, entry for 24 February 1916, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 2153.
9. Manual of Military Law (London, 6th edn. 1914), p. 302.
10. Examples of this violation can be found in J. Terraine, ed., General Jack's Diary 1914-1918 (London, 1964), pp. 54-5; C.M. Slack, Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918 (Ilfracombe, 1977), pp. 22, 124.
11. Examples of this violation can be found in the Alchorne Memoirs; P. Gibbs, Realities of War (London, 1920), p. 143.
12. MOH, General History, Vol. I (London, 1921), Appendix C, p.370.
13. 2069 L/Cpl A. Dods, 7th, Yorkshire Post, 21 May 1915; L/Cpl J. White, Leeds Mercury, 18 August 1915; L/Cpl A. Wells, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 28 May 1915; Rfm F. Luff, 7th, Leeds Mercury, 21 July 1915; L/Cpl Johnny Lancaster, 7th, ibid., 11 August 1915; Rfm R. Brearley, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 15 October 1915; Pte W. Wright, RAMC, Yorkshire Post, 14 May 1915; Rfm A. Mulley, 7th (nephew of Labour Alderman George Ratcliffe), Yorkshire Evening News, 5 June 1915; Pte H.E. Gofton, 1/5th Yorkshire Regt, 50th Division (TF), Yorkshire Post, 21 May 1915.
14. Knowles letters, 23 October, 26 July 1915.
15. Rfm W. Poulter, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 21 July 1915; L/Sgt John Cape, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 May 1915; Rfm Arthur Benson, 8th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 December 1915; Rfm Joe Ball, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 17 June 1915. "Ally" is a corruption of the French.
16. Knowles letters, 12 February, 5 May 1917, 23 July 1916. The last sentence of the second letter is an obvious reference to the notorious "German Corpse Factory" propaganda of April 1917.
17. Butcher Diary, 11 May 1915; Rfm Harry J. Phillips, 8th (son of the Hunslet Baptist minister), Leeds Mercury, 17 July 1915; Rfm R. Firth, ibid., 4 October 1915; Tetley Diary, 14 July 1916.
18. Knowles letter, 15 August 1915. For comparable attitudes in other formations, see F.P. Gibbon, The 42nd (East Lancashire) Division 1914-1918



(London, 1920), p. 58; J.O. Nettleton, The Anger of the Guns: An Infantry Officer on the Western Front (London, 1979), p. 188; G. Coppard, op.cit., p.109.

19. Testimonies of Mrs Norman W. Waddington; 2865 Harry L. Yeadon, 7th; Miss Bertha Fozard.
20. Coppard describes an incident in which a body of about 300 Germans, carrying concealed bombs, feigned surrender (op.cit., pp. 70-1).
21. Memoirs of C.A. Lupton.
22. Alchorne Memoirs.
23. See also N. Gladden, The Somme 1916, a personal account (London, 1974), p. 146.
24. Testimony of 1764 Sgt A.G. Illingworth, 1/1st WR Field Ambulance.
25. Oral testimonies.
26. Alchorne Memoirs. Instances of "horrible" brutality against civilians in the Solesmes area are referred to in M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War (London, 1978), testimony of Lt E.J. Ruffell RGA, p. 263.
27. Compare A. Lloyd, The War in the Trenches (London and St. Albans, 1976), pp. 79-81; J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun: A Personal Narrative of the Somme, Ypres and Arras (London, 1978), p. 53; Capt P.A. Thompson, Lions Led by Donkeys (London, 1927), p.140; J. Terraine, ed., op.cit., p. 94.
28. For example, Yorkshire Post, 21 May 1915.
29. Testimonies of 2122 Robert Vine, 2815 Harry Richmond, 7th.
30. Oral testimonies.
31. Letter, Clifford Walton, 8th, to J.R. Bellerby, 8th, 13 August 1967.
32. Oral testimony.
33. Leeds Mercury, 1 October 1915.
34. See J. Ellis, op.cit., p.70; Rfm James Juinnane, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 August 1915.
35. Oral testimony.
36. Rfm A.E. Firth, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 24 May 1915; testimony of 1712 John W. Sanderson, 8th; L/Sgt J. Cape, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 12 May 1915; Rfm E. Taylor, 7th, ibid., 31 May 1915; 3074 Rfm Ernest Ambrose, 7th, ibid., 29 May 1915.
37. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, and others.
38. Espin Diary, 3 June 1915; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 3 June 1915.
39. See also Capt P.A. Thompson, op.cit., p. 141.
40. The Great War and Modern Memory (London, 1975), pp. 120-5. It should be noted that some 6,000 French and Belgian civilians behind enemy lines were employed as spies by British Military Intelligence in World War I (Dr. Christopher Andrew, 'The Profession of Intelligence', BBC Radio 4, 5 March 1980).
41. See, for example, J.F. Tucker, op.cit., p.53. In 1916 the Germans had the Moritz apparatus which enabled them to overhear telephone messages in the forward area (OH, Vol. V, 1916 (London, 1932), p.71). The Fullerphone was invented to counteract it.
42. Yorkshire Evening Post, 19 May, 6 July 1915; see also letter by Lt H. Clayton-Smith, 1/5th KOYLI, Yorkshire Post, 22 May 1915.



43. Signaller W.E. Bould, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 29 May 1915.
44. Testimony of 1393 Fred Warburton, 7th; Colin and Charles Cameron, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 27 May 1915.
45. Espin Diary, 20 May, 15 June 1915; testimony of 2260 Edgar Taylor, 8th.
46. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 12 May 1915; Burrell Diary, 2 July 1915. Artillery officer R.B. Talbot Kelly, who was in this sector in June-August 1915, also complained of snipers behind the lines (A Subaltern's Odyssey: Memoirs of the Great War 1915-1917 (London, 1980), p.47). Author Charles L. Warr wrote a short story 'Otto the Sniper' based on "a notorious personage" who "inflicted his presence" on Voormezeele in the Ypres Salient (Echoes of Flanders (London, 1916; 1918 edn.), pp.163-78). One of the articles in the 1915 series 'Diary of a Subaltern' contains references to German snipers, wearing British uniforms, operating behind the lines in Flanders (Blackwood's Magazine, 197 (1915), 367).
47. Oral testimony.
48. Lupton letters, 20 June, 28 May, 1 June 1915.
49. With a Machine-gun to Cambrai, p.68; Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918, pp. 118, 156, 209, 212; The Anger of the Guns, p.67.
50. Oral testimony.
51. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 18 June 1915, P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], War Office, WO 95/2795.
52. Reynard Memoirs.
53. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, p. 292.
54. Knowles letter, 1 July 1917.
55. For example, J.O. Nettleton, op.cit., p. 63.
56. Oral testimony.
57. For example, J.O. Nettleton, op.cit., p. 41.
58. Issue No. 6, 1 April 1916.
59. For example, C.E. Montague, op.cit., pp. 47-9, 30-2.
60. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, p.316.
61. See King Henry IV, Part I, Act I, sc. iii, Hotspur's speech, ll. 30-70.
62. For example, C.E. Montague, op.cit., pp. 25, 37, 40, 117-8, 32ff.
63. For example, T.P. Marks, op.cit., p.74 (who accuses "the top brass" of inhumanity and indifference to the fate and sufferings of front-line soldiers); J. Ellis, op.cit., p.197; J.O. Nettleton, op.cit., pp. 111-13; G.H. Greenwell, An Infant in Arms: War Letters of a Company Officer 1914-1918 (London, 1972), p.51; B. Livermore, Long 'Un - A Damn Bad Soldier (Batley, 1974), p.70; M. Brown, op.cit., pp. 242-4; J. Laffin, ed., Letters from the Front 1914-1918 (London, 1973), p.57.
64. See, for example, Ian Hay's witty attack in 'The First Hundred Thousand by the Junior Sub', Blackwood's Magazine, 197 (1915), 442-9.
65. Lupton letter, 1 August 1915.
66. Morale: A Study of Men and Courage (London, 1967), pp. 236-50; Behind the Lines; experiences as a staff officer during the Great War (London, 1939).
67. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, p. 145.



68. A.J. Smithers, Sir John Monash (London, 1973), pp.163-4.
69. Lupton letters, W.G. Kemp to H.R. Lupton, 24 April 1918.
70. Lupton letter, 29 November 1916.
71. F.P. Gibbon, op.cit., p.58.
72. Op.cit., Blackwood's Magazine, 198 (1915), 448.
73. Yorkshire Evening News, 19 November 1915.
74. Realities of War, p.35.
75. C.E. Montague, op.cit., p.41.
76. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, p.305.
77. The Salient, December 1915. An unquenchable thirst was a symptom of gas poisoning.
78. Oral testimony.
79. Op.cit., pp. 140, 141.
80. Lupton letter, 11 July 1917; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 9 July 1917. This is a version of aristocrat Julian Grenfell's poem, 'Prayer for Those on the Staff' (see B. Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight: a Study of the Literature of the Great War (London, 1965; 1980 2nd edn.), pp. 48-9).
81. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 558, 320, Chart IX, 321, 585-6, Table 3, 585, 637.
82. See, for example, Sir Herbert Read, 'The War as a Soldier Saw It', Yorkshire Post, 5 August 1964; P. Gibbs, op.cit., pp. 436-8; Guy Chapman, A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography (London, 1933; 1967 Mayflower-Dell paperback edn.), p.107.
83. H. Barbusse, Under Fire, transl. by W. Fitzwater Wray (London, 1926; 1965 Everyman paperback edn.), p.301.
84. Blackwood's Magazine, 197 (1915), 701.
85. (London, 1930), Chap. 5, p.87; Chap. 12, pp. 275-80.
86. J. Silkin, Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War (London, 1972), p. 154.
87. See, for example, J. Ellis, op.cit., pp. 193-5; J.F. Tucker, op.cit., p. 188; M. Brown, op.cit., p. 225; H.E.L. Mellersh, Schoolboy into War (London, 1978), pp. 100-102, 143.
88. Her Privates We, Chap. 12, pp. 276, 279.
89. Leeds Mercury, 1 September 1915 (see also the letter by Cpl J.W. Sanderson, quoted in the next section); ibid., 1 January 1916. For a similar picture of life in the French trenches, as characterised by the Parisian magazine L'Illustration, see J. Ellis, op.cit., p.193.
90. Knowles letters, 13 July 1915, 1 July 1917, 29 November 1916; Sgt H. Ellis to Mrs Knowles, 26 July 1917.
91. J. Ellis, op.cit., p. 193.
92. Lupton letter, 4 July 1915.
93. Oral testimony.
94. See Sonnets, No. XXV.
95. Various versions of this verse exist; for example, Lt Gen Sir Francis Taker, ed., The Chronicle of Private Henry Metcalfe H.M. 32nd Regiment of Foot (London, 1953), p. 89; I.O. Evans, ed., Spy and Counter-Spy



- (London, 1970), p.78. One was given in the Ringers' Book of the 18th century, Wells Cathedral, quoted in letter Dr. E.C.S. Gibson (chaplain of the Leeds Rifles 1896-1907, later Bishop of Gloucester) to Major W. Braithwaite, 6 June 1903, Braithwaite Scrapbook. Another was quoted by respondent 2586 Provost-Sergeant William Wilson, 1/8th and 3/8th.
96. Oral testimony.
  97. P.W. Turner and R.H. Haigh, op.cit., p. 73; M. Brown, op.cit., pp. 226-7. See also W.H.A. Groom, op.cit., p. 153; H.E.L. Mellersh, op.cit. p. 121.
  98. Oral testimony. Outbreaks of violence, often serious, by soldiers and ex-soldiers against their own civilian nationals were not rare after the Armistice: see E.J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 201-4. Many soldiers felt that as a group they had been exploited and abused and were retaliating against civilian society for the social injustices done them: they had "bled at Loos" whilst civilians earning inflated wages had been "on the booze". Disillusion and "disenchantment" set in when "the land fit for heroes" failed to materialise. Many a returned soldier looked at the country he had "saved" and, for his part, could see precious little in it that had been worth saving.
  99. Version given by 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th.
  100. Letter to wife, 18 January 1916, Kitson Clark Papers, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 2004.
  101. Cpl Edward Yeadon, 7th, Leeds Mercury, 20 July 1915; Rfm George Howe, 8th, ibid., 18 August 1915.
  102. Rfm J. Hamil, ibid., 17 December 1915; Rfm H. Hudson, 7th, Yorkshire Evening News, 10 August 1915, for example.
  103. Rfm W. Marsden, 8th, Leeds Mercury, 15 July 1915; Rfm H. Moorby, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 10 August 1915.
  104. Knowles letters, 5 March, 17 February, 20 June 1917, 29 February 1916.
  105. Oral testimony.
  106. B.R. Mitchell with P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), p.72.
  107. Yorkshire Evening News, 21 April 1915.
  108. Yorkshire Evening Post, 29 January 1916.
  109. Lions Led by Donkeys, p. 62.
  110. Knowles letter, 4 February 1916.
  111. See General Erich Ludendorff, My War Memories 1914-1918, English edn. (London, 1921), p. 333.
  112. Pte W. Holmes, 1st WYR, Yorkshire Evening Post, 23 April 1915.
  113. Testimony of Trooper Horace Merry, 20th Hussars.
  114. Pte Arthur Fielding, 1/5th DWR, Yorkshire Evening News, 2 June 1915; L/Cpl A. Wells, 8th, ibid., 30 July 1915; Driver G. Purcer, Leeds Artillery, Yorkshire Evening Post, 3 June 1915; Knowles letter, 12 May 1917 (see also Frederic Manning, op.cit., Chap. 12, p.275, Capt P.A. Thompson, op.cit., p.57).
  115. Yorkshire Evening Post, 3 June 1915 (see also Pte W. Holmes, 1st WYR, ibid., 23 April 1915; Pte E. Love, another Regular soldier, Yorkshire Evening News, 24 June 1915); Knowles letter, 18 August 1916 (see also Times, 2 October 1918, 10e).



116. Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 September 1915.
117. Oral testimony. Compare J.F. Tucker, op.cit., p.135.
118. Oral testimony.
119. W.H. Scott, Leeds in the Great War 1914-1918: A Book of Remembrance (Leeds, 1923), pp. 297, 298-9.
120. Quoted in 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 31 December 1916.
121. Yorkshire Evening News, 29 September, 30 October 1915.
122. Letter to Editor, Yorkshire Evening Post, 14 October 1980.
123. Lupton letter, 10 August 1915; Knowles letter, 27 April 1916.
124. Oral testimony. The letter referred to was produced by the respondent.
125. Testimony of schoolteacher, Mrs Lillian A. Sanderson. For street-collect see W.H. Scott, op.cit., p.297.
126. Yorkshire Evening News, 18 June 1915.
127. Lupton letters, 28, 6 December 1915.
128. Leeds Mercury, 24 June 1915; Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 December 1915.
129. Knowles letter, 28 April 1916.
130. Testimonies of 3227 Clarence Lazenby, 7th, and Albert E. Pitts, 8th.
131. Yorkshire Post, 30 August 1916.
132. Testimony of Mrs Reginald Bradbury. For street shrines in London, see A.B. Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War, pp. 67, 170-1.
133. W.H. Scott, op.cit., pp. 274-5.
134. Leeds Mercury, 21 June 1875.
135. Ibid., 9 July 1879.
136. Prize Distribution programmes, Braithwaite Scrapbook.
137. Yorkshire Post, 23 May 1901.
138. Yorkshire Evening News, 1 October 1913.
139. Testimony of Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 8th.
140. Newspaper cuttings in Sergeants' Mess newspaper cutting book, 1880-.
141. See, for example, Leeds Intelligencer, 30 April 1864.
142. Oral testimony.
143. T.P. Marks, The Laughter Goes from Life, p. 32.
144. For example, ibid., p.27; W.H.A. Groom, op.cit., p.18; J.F. Tucker, op.cit., p.92; E.W. Parker, Into Battle 1914-1918 (London, 1964), p.40; S.T. Kemp, quoted C. Haste, Keep the Home Fires Burning, p.73; D. Winter, Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War (London, 1978; 1979 Penguin paperback edn.), pp. 147, 67.
145. The Salient, December 1915; The Lead-Swinger, Vol. I, 27 November 1915.
146. Testimony of Staff-Sgt-Major Alfred Edgar Welburn, 465 Coy.
147. Testimonies of Farrier Staff-Sgt William Perkins and CQMS William Wilson, 465 Coy.
148. War is War (London, 1930), p.35.
149. See, for example, Lt Col R.M. Benzie et al., The Fifth Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 1914-1919 (Glasgow, 1936), p.66.



150. The Lead-Swinger, Vol. I, 27 November 1915 (Sheffield, 1916); Vols. II and III, 1916-1919 (Sheffield, 1921), p. 484.
151. Lupton letters, 21 November 1915, 17 March 1916.
152. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 4-15 March 1916.
153. The Buzzer, No. 6, 1 April 1916.
154. J. Terraine, ed., op.cit., pp.137-8, 177, 292, 306-7.
155. Lupton letter, 22 September 1918.
156. P. Beaver, ed., The Wipers Times (London, 1973), pp. 191, 178-9.
157. Leeds Mercury, 4 September 1915.
158. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 September 1916; Lupton letter, 16 September 1916. The discrepancy in dates between these two sources is due to the fact that there was usually a time-lag of 10-14 days in getting the Unofficial War Diary written up and events that happened during rest periods accordingly tended to be entered under the date the rest period commenced.
159. Yorkshire Evening Post, 5 August 1910; Leeds Mercury, 6 August 1912; Yorkshire Post, 7 August 1912.
160. Yorkshire Evening Post, 4 May 1915; Yorkshire Post, 5 May 1915.
161. Yorkshire Evening News, 24 August 1915.
162. Ibid., 12 June 1915; Knowles letter, 20 April 1916.
163. Pte A.V. Pearson, Leeds Pals, quoted M. Middlebrook, The First Day on the Somme 1 July 1916 (London, 1971; 1977 reprint), p. 270. This phrase was used by writer John Harris as the closing lines of his WWI novel, Covenant with Death (London, 1961).
164. Testimony of Sgt Herbert R. Widdus, 2nd Leicesters. See also Frank Richards, Old Soldiers Never Die (London, 1933; 1964 Faber paperback edn.), p.61; Reginald Pound, The Lost Generation (London, 1964), pp. 62-3.
165. A Soldier's Eye-View of Our Armies (London, 1919), p.39.
166. See. J. Ellis, The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II (Newton Abbot, 1980), pp. 330-1.
167. Testimony of Col John Houston Taylor CBE, 8th Bn Leeds Rifles (466 Regt RA).
168. 'Territorials in the Field', Times, 14 December 1914, 8d.
169. Oral testimonies. The 4th Middlesex had the heaviest casualties in Smith-Dorrien's II Corps at Mons on 23rd August 1914, 275 men only answering the roll call that night of about 1000 men who had gone into action: see J. Terraine, Mons: The Retreat to Victory (London, 1960; 1972 Pan paperback edn.), p.85. Only the Regular infantrymen who did not come from Volunteer/Territorial families and who were not former Volunteers/Territorials themselves were questioned on this topic.
170. Field Marshal Viscount French of Ypres, 1914 (London, 1919), pp.294, 296-7.
171. Oral testimony.
172. I.S. Munro, Youth of Yesteryear: campaigns, battles, services and exploits of the Glasgow Territorials in the last Great War (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1939), pp. 76-7.
173. Pte F. Wade, Yorkshire Post, 3 May 1915.
174. OH, Vol. III, 1915 (London, 1927), p. 232.



175. Yorkshire Post, 26 April 1915.
176. Ibid., 3 May 1915; Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 May 1915.
177. Oral testimonies.
178. Oral testimony.
179. Knowles letter, 23 August 1915. On the regard of Regular soldiers, see also the letters of 1226 Sgt George Denton, 8th, Yorkshire Evening News, 26 May 1915, and Rfm James Sugden, 8th, ibid., 16 June 1915.
180. Leeds Mercury, 21 August 1915.
181. Yorkshire Evening News, 26 October 1915.
182. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 1 August 1915.
183. Oral testimonies.
184. Personal Diary of Lt Col F.W. Turner, 1/4th Suffolk Regt, 2/8/14-21/5/16.
185. Oral testimonies.
186. Military Mail, 11, 25 September 1914.
187. 91 HC Deb. 5s. 21 March 1917, col. 1957.
188. Testimonies of 2222 William H. Reynard and CSM G.W. Wheeler, 8th.
189. Yorkshire Post, 27 April 1915.
190. Testimonies of Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th, and Lt Harry Whitham, 7th. It is pertinent to note that the hand-salute of the Army was altered in 1917.
191. Oral testimony.
192. M. Janowitz, The Professional Soldier: a Social and Political Portrait (Glencoe Ill., 1960), pp. 9-10, 26-7, 39, 45.
193. C.H. Coates and R.J. Pellegrin, Military Sociology: A Study of American Military Institutions and Military Life (University Park, Md., 1965), p. 178.
194. Op.cit., p. 41.
195. Ibid., p. 109. See also D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George (London, 1933-6; 1938 new edn.), Vol. II, pp. 2040-1.
196. Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, Report, p. 19; 1904 Cmd. 2061, xxx, 175.
197. Lt Col H. Green, The British Army in the First World War: The Regulars, The Territorials and Kitchener's Army, with some of the campaigns into which they fitted (London, 1968), p.38.
198. Minutes of the West Riding Territorial Force Association, Vol. II, 25 June 1917, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept., Acc. 1469; P.G. Bales, The History of the 1/4th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment, 1914-1919 (Halifax and London, 1920), p. 238.
199. 90 HC Deb. 5s. 1 March 1917, col. 2205; ibid., 21 February 1917, col. 1313; ibid., 1 March 1917, col. 2230.
200. Col Evelyn Wood et al., The Citizen Soldier (London, 1939), pp. 55-6.
201. Op.cit., p. 38.
202. Interestingly, in his War Memoirs, Lloyd George, who in January 1918 had unsuccessfully sought a successor to Haig, suggested that Monash had been deliberately overlooked by the British Army hierarchy and solely because he was a civilian amateur soldier (op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 1367, 2016).



203. Sir John Monash, p.162.
204. Bellerby Memoirs.
205. C.M. Slack, op.cit., p.187.
206. See, for example, H. Williamson, A Fox Under My Cloak (London, 1955; 1963 revised Panther paperback edn.), p. 228.
207. S.A. Stouffer et al., Vol. II, eg. p. 578; D. Glaser, 'The Sentiments of American Soldiers abroad towards Europeans', American Journal of Sociology, LI (1945-6), 434; C.H. Coates and R.J. Pellegrin, op.cit., p. 402.
208. See C.H. Coates and R.J. Pellegrin, op.cit., pp. 399-400.
209. Lupton letters, Lt M. Lupton to aunt, Mrs Hugh Lupton, 4 May 1915.
210. Perry Memoirs.
211. Wall Notebook, undated entry made before 2 May 1915.
212. P.G. Standley, article 'With the Rifles 20 Years ago', Yorkshire Evening Post, 6 May 1935.
213. Oral testimony.
214. For example, C.M. Slack, op.cit., p. 188; H. Williamson, The Patriot's Progress (London, 1930; 1968 new edn.), pp. 85-6.
215. Lupton letters, Lt. M. Lupton to aunt, 4 May 1915.
216. Lupton letters, 9, 18 September 1916.
217. For example, T.P. Marks, op.cit., p. 83; Robert Graves, Goodbye to All That (London, 1929; 1973 Penguin reprint of 1957 revised edn.), p. 140.
218. Knowles letter, 26 July 1915; testimonies of Fred Hearn, 8th, and 1393 Fred Warburton, 7th. The rate of exchange was approximately 27 fr. or  $27\frac{1}{2}$  fr = £1. Soldiers used the following equivalents: a sou (5 centimes) =  $\frac{1}{2}$ d; 10 cents = 1d; 50 cents = 5d; 1 franc = 10d.
219. Lupton letter, 21 June 1917.
220. Ibid., 23 May 1915.
221. Testimony of 3149 James W. Warman, 7th.
222. Long 'Un - A Damn Bad Soldier, p. 69.
223. Oral testimonies.
224. Testimony of 2460 L/Cpl Ernest Kirkland, 8th.
225. Lupton letters, 7, 5 May 1916, 23 May 1915, 11 February 1916; testimonies of Capt H.R. Lupton and 1022 L/Cpl Walter Stead, DCM, 8th.
226. Lupton letters, 2 February, 12 March 1916.
227. Espin Diary, 4 March 1916, 28 June 1915.
228. Testimony of 1726 Jack Barker, 7th.
229. Lupton letters, 1 January 1916, 25 February 1917.
230. Testimonies of 1726 Jack Barker and 1880 David W. Young, 7th.
231. Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 May 1916.
232. Testimony of 1987 Sydney Appleyard, 7th, and others.
233. Leeds Mercury, 26 November 1915.
234. Times, 1 April 1916, 7d.



235. 2/8th Bn War Diary, May 1917, PRO, WO 95/3082.
236. C.M. Slack, op.cit., p. 121.
237. For example, Sidney Rogerson, Twelve Days (London, 1933), p. 97; Lord Reith, Wearing Spurs (London, 1966), pp. 81-2.
238. The Anger of the Guns, p. 124.
239. Oral testimony.
240. Testimonies of Sgt Sam Taylor, 2nd DWR; Sgt Dennis Furlong, 1st KOYLI; Pte Edward Bilton, 2nd KOYLI; L/Cpl Harry Fotherby, 2nd Green Howards; Pte Alfred Holmes, 2nd Green Howards; Pte Henry E. Smithin, 1st Worcester
241. Realities of War, p. 57.
242. A.R. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home (London and Montreal, 1977), p. 200; E.M. Spiers, The Army and Society 1815-1914 (London, 1980), pp. 5-6.
243. C.R.M.F. Cruttwell, A History of the Great War 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1934; 1936 2nd edn.), p. 277; H. Curling, ed., Recollections of Rifleman Harris (London, 1928 reprint of 1848 edn.), p. 41.
244. Testimony of Pte G.J. Smith, 4 Middlesex.
245. See, for example, G. Coppard, op.cit., p. 69; Frank Richards, op.cit., p. 98; C.E. Montague, op.cit., p. 34.
246. My War Memories 1914-1918, p. 394.
247. Rfm W.H. Gidlow, 7th, Yorkshire Evening Post, 31 May 1915.
248. Testimonies of 2221 George A. Fletcher, 1/8th; 2635 Cpl R. Frank Charge, 1/7th; 1788 John Allman, 1/8th; Robert H. Schulze, 8th.
249. Testimony of 2812 L/Cpl Percy Shepherd, 1/8th. Compare Frank Richards, op.cit., p. 295.
250. Testimony of Clifford Day, 2/7th; Casualty List of Officers, 7th Bn, 1915-1917.
251. Testimonies of 1712 Cpl J.W. Sanderson, 2952 L. Tallant and Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th.
252. Testimony of 1159 Thomas Darbyshire, 1/8th, a prewar Territorial.
253. Lt Col R.M. Benzie et al., op.cit., p.63.
254. R. Roberts, The Classic Slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century (Manchester, 1971), e.g. p.147.
255. See, for example, G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London (Oxford, 1971), p.338.
256. Engels to F.A. Sorge, 7 December 1889, S.W. Ryazanskaya, ed., Marx-Engels selected correspondence, transl. by I. Lasker (Moscow, 1955; 1975 3rd revised edn.), p. 386.
257. Letter to Mr Raikes Currie, 25 September 1857, quoted Lord Stanmore, Sidney Herbert, Lord Herbert of Lea, A Memoir (London, 1906), Vol. II, p. 102.
258. Testimony of Col Sgt A. MacKellar, 5th SR.
259. Testimony of Col Sir Douglas Branson, 4th Y & L.
260. Testimonies of 1543 Harper Stott, 1/8th, 1986 Bugler Thomas O'Brien, 3149 Sgt James W. Warman, 1/7th, and Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th.
261. G. Harries-Jenkins, The Army in Victorian Society (London, 1977), p.4, also p.8.
262. Military Sociology: A Study of American Military Institutions and



Military Life, pp. 138, 247.

263. A. Rose, 'The Social Structure of the Army', American Journal of Sociology LI (1945-46), 361-4; H. Brotz and E. Wilson, 'Characteristics of Military Society', ibid., 373.
264. A.R. Stanley, The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold DD (London, 1890 Minerva Library edn.), Vol. I, p.66.
265. See, for example, R.D. Altick, Victorian People and Ideas (New York, 1973), pp. 23, 104.
266. Testimony of Capt H.R. Lupton, 8th; Lupton letter, 10 June 1917.
267. Testimonies of 1022 L/Cpl Walter Stead, 1/8th, 976 Thomas Wilson, 1/7th, 2363 Ben Clark, 1/8th.
268. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 385, Table 4, p. 387.
269. See C.H. Coates and R.J. Pellegrin, op.cit., p. 256.
270. Testimonies of 1610 Bugler Thomas Doran, 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd, 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 1/8th.
271. Testimony of 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 1/7th.
272. Testimonies of Capt H.R. Lupton and 2221 G.A. Fletcher, 1/8th; Lupton letter, 19 March 1916.
273. Testimonies of 3227 Clarence Lazenby, 4328 Lawrence F. Hudson and 1813 Stanley Holmes, 1/7th.
274. Yorkshire Evening News, 7 June 1915.
275. Testimonies of 2893 George Nichols, 1/7th, 1022 L/Cpl Walter Stead, 1/8th, 3882 William Wrench, 2/7th, 1090 Sgt James Rhind and 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd, 1/8th.
276. Testimony of 2221 George A. Fletcher, 1/8th.
277. Testimony of 2715 James A. Eastburn, 1/8th.
278. Burrell Diary, 11 March 1916.
279. Testimonies of 2735 Cyril Clarkson, 1/7th, 5155 Abe Freedman, 2/8th, and Henry Spurr, 1/7th.
280. Testimonies of 2880 W.A. Bywater, Lt J.B. Gawthorpe, 2460 Cpl Ernest Kirkland, 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby and 1712 Cpl J.W. Sanderson, 1/8th; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 16 July 1915; Yorkshire Evening News, 15 June 1915; testimony of 2635 Cpl R.F. Charge, 1/7th.
281. Reports of the Committee appointed ... to inquire into the Financial State and Internal Organization of the Volunteer Force in Great Britain, qq 1105-6; 1878-79 Cmd. 2235, xv, 181.
282. Twelve Days, p. 87.
283. Compare K. Lang, 'Military Organisations' in J.G. March, ed., Handbook of Organisations (Chicago, 1965), p. 871.
284. Testimonies of Bugler Ernest Foster and 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 1/8th.
285. 8th Bn Year Book, 1914, G. Kitson Clark Papers, Leeds City Libraries Archives Dept, Acc. 2004.
286. A Passionate Prodigality, p. 43.
287. Personal communication.
288. Testimony of 2992 George A. Walker, 1/7th.
289. See, for example, Frank Richards, op.cit., p.204.



290. Testimonies of 2893 George Nichols, 2605 Ellison Whitley, 2607 Walter Atkinson, 1661 William Gregory, 3227 Clarence Lazenby, 1/7th, 1543 Harper Stott, 2880 William A. Bywater, 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 2223 Herbert Hopkinson, 1/8th, 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 1986 Bugler Thomas O'Brien, 1657 William Leetall and 3149 Sgt James W. Warman, 1/7th.
291. 172 HC Deb. 4s. 23 April 1907, col. 1684.
292. Testimonies of 1543 Harper Stott, 1/8th, and Henry Spurr, 1/7th.
293. Testimonies of 2260 Edgar Taylor and Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th.
294. Testimony of 2657 Bugler William Laycock, 2/7th.
295. For example, Dalesman, March 1958, p. 730.
296. Oral testimonies.
297. Lupton letters, 22, 30 July, 16 August, 21 November 1915, 17 March 1916; Knowles letter, 2 August 1916.
298. Oral testimony.
299. Compare R.G.S. Bidwell, Modern Warfare: A Study of Men, Weapons and Theories (London, 1973), p. 109.
300. Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel, Men Under Stress (Philadelphia and London, 1945), pp. 21, 22, 25.
301. Small Social Groups in England (London, 1965), pp. 301, 181, 85-8, 179-81.
302. A.B. Hollingshead, 'Adjustment to Military Life', American Journal of Sociology, LI (1945-46), 442.
303. Oral testimony.
304. Undertones of War (London, 1928; OUP The World's Classics 1956 edn.), p. 85.
305. Quoted Col H.O. Wade, 'Reminiscences of the 6th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment', The Heaton Review, IV (1931), 52.
306. Testimony of Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th.
307. Compare A. French, Gone for a Soldier (Kineton, 1972), p.29.
308. Testimonies of 2006 Ernest Woodhead, 3257 George S. Yeomans, 1/7th, 2222 William H. Reynard, Capt H.R. Lupton, 1/8th, 833 Cpl Joseph W. Goldsack, 1/7th; 'A Rifleman Looks Back', Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 May 1935.
309. Oral testimony.
310. Testimony of 1022 L/Cpl Walter Stead, 1/8th.
311. The British Worker (Harmondsworth, 1952), pp. 64-6.
312. Testimony of 2893 George Nichols, 1/7th.
313. Testimony of Robert H.P. Schulze, 8th.
314. Testimonies of 1310 William Gill, 2260 Edgar Taylor, 1159 Thomas Darbyshire, 2349 Harry Walton, 2223 Herbert Hopkinson, 1788 John Allman, 2363 Ben Clark, 2227 Gilbert Freeman; Edward Flatley, 3/8th, 3478 Sidney Lofthouse, 2/8th, 3354 Edward Woodhead, 7th Res. Bn, R.H.P. Schulze, 8th. For the many tributes paid to Max Ramsden after his untimely death, see Yorkshire Post, 8, 9, 13 November 1957, Yorkshire Evening News, 9 November 1957.
315. Modern Warfare, p. 107.
316. S.A. Stouffer et al., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 367.
317. Testimony of 2992 George A. Walker, 1/7th.



318. Testimonies of 4158 Sgt George S. Ibbitson and 2780 Harold Kirk, 1/7th.
319. My War Memories 1914-1918, pp. 391-2.
320. With a Machine-gun to Cambrai, p.13; see also B. Livermore, op.cit., p. 89.
321. L.D. Spicer, Letters from France 1915-1918 (London, 1979), Introduction, pp. xiii ff, see also pp. 36-7, 45-9.
322. Testimonies of 167 Sgt Charles Young, 2780 Harold Kirk, 1182 Cpl Arthur Fisher, 2892 Herbert Creswick, 1/7th.
323. Lupton letter, 7 September 1916.
324. Testimony of Lt H. Whitham, 1/7th.
325. Testimonies of 1699 Bugler Harold Booth, 2892 Herbert Creswick, 3191 Sgt William Colbeck, 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 1485 Sgt Alfred Clarkson, Henry Spurr, 1/7th.
326. Soldiers and Soldiering, or Epithets of War (London, 1953), p. 155.
327. Yorkshire Post, 8 October 1959.
328. Quoted The University of Leeds Review, VI, 4 (1959), 362-3.
329. Oral testimony.
330. Personal communication from son, Dr George S.Kitson Clark.
331. Testimonies of 2407 Arthur Wainwright, 2260 Edgar Taylor, 2158 Harold Dean, 1090 James Rhind, 2715 James A. Eastburn, 1/8th.
332. Oral testimony.
333. Personal communication from son, Dr G.S. Kitson Clark.
334. Oral testimonies.
335. Testimonies of H.R. Lupton, J.B. Gawthorpe and J.R. Bellerby, 1/8th.
336. Testimonies of 2/Lt J.R. Bellerby, 2313 Herbert C. Sweetman, 2715 James A.Eastburn, 2586 William Wilson, 2260 Edgar Taylor, 3167 Albert E. Wood, 2812 Percy Shepherd, 2221 George Fletcher, 1111 Reginald Thackery, 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 1/8th.
337. Oral testimonies.
338. Lupton letter, 23 September 1916.
339. Testimonies of Capt H.R. Lupton, 2455 Sgt Norman J. Mason, 2880 William A. Bywater, 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 1/8th.
340. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 9 October, 31 December 1917.
341. Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack for 1948 (London, 1948), p. 80.
342. Testimonies of 2892 Herbert Creswick, Clifford Day, 3478 Sidney Lofthouse, 1986 Bugler Thomas O'Brien, 2657 Bugler William Laycock and 3882 William Wrench.
343. Casualty List of Officers, 7th Bn, 1915-1917.
344. E. Wyrall, The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918 (London, [1928]), Vol. II, n.1, p. 232.
345. Oral testimony.
346. E. Wyrall, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 14.
347. Much of the information about Col James that appears in the following paragraphs has been obtained from Sir Evan James, A Short Memoir of



Lieut-Colonel A.H. James DSO (Exeter, 1918).

348. The remainder of this paragraph is based on the testimony of 2222 William H. Reynard, 8th.
349. The following reports and citation were quoted in Sir Evan James, op.cit., pp. 27, 33-4, 29-31, 26.
350. Ibid., p. 36.
351. Yorkshire Post, 19 April 1918.
352. Sir Evan James, op.cit., p. 29. The text of this Special Order of the Day can be found in L. Magnus, The West Riding Territorials in the Great War (London, 1920), pp. 152-3.
353. Testimonies of Robert H.P. Schulze and Sgt Sam B. Wood, 8th.
354. 1/7th Bn List of Officers, 1915-1918.
355. Personal communication from son, Sir Archie R. Dunbar.
356. Testimony of 2952 Lawrence Tallant, 1/7th, servant to Major Dunbar.
357. See, for example, D. Winter, Death's Men, pp. 189-192; M. Brown, Tommy Goes to War, p. 240.
358. Testimony of L/Cpl Thomas R. Kitson, MM, 1/5th WYR.
359. Compare, for example, L. Macdonald, They Called it Passchendaele (London, 1978), testimony of Driver Burton, p. 93.
360. Testimony of 1090 Sgt James Rhind, 1/8th. Compare C.M. Slack, op.cit., pp. 106, 137.
361. Lupton letter, 3 August 1915.
362. Leeds Mercury, 22 November 1915; Yorkshire Post, 9 January 1915. "The soldier's duty" is delineated, for example, in Infantry Training 1914 (London, 1914), p.2.
363. Quoted M. Brown, op.cit., p. 240. Henry Williamson gives a variant of this notorious story: the master baker of Rouen, a staff sergeant-major, awarded the MC (The Patriot's Progress, p. 91).
364. Oral testimony.
365. Compare M. Brown, op.cit., p. 240; C.M. Slack, op.cit., pp. 137, 138; Graham H. Greenwell, op.cit., p. 51.
366. Lupton letters, 24 August, 10 October 1916, 8 June 1917.
367. Testimonies of 2812 Cpl Percy Shepherd, 1/8th, 2635 Cpl R. Frank Charge, 1/7th.
368. Testimony of Col Sgt A. MacKellar, 5th SR; Yorkshire Evening Post, 30 October 1915.
369. P. Beaver, ed., p. 192.
370. See J. Laffin, ed., Letters from the Front 1914-1918, letter of Lt Col R. Feilding, dated 17 September 1918, p. 93; G. Chapman, op.cit., p. 207; D. Winter, op.cit., p. 192.
371. Old Soldiers Never Die, p. 143.
372. Testimony of Col Sgt A. MacKellar, 5th SR.
373. These details have been obtained from the Tetley Diary; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 24 November 1915, 7 November 1917; 2/8th Bn War Diary, March, December 1917, PRO, WO 95/3082.
374. J. Laffin, ed., op.cit., p. 93.



375. Oral testimony.
376. Testimonies of 2222 William H. Reynard and 1022 L/Cpl Walter Stead, 8th.
377. Oral testimony.
378. Testimonies of 1294 Alexander Latto, MM, 2/8th, and 3882 William Wrench, 2/7th.
379. Frank Richards, op.cit., pp. 152-3.
380. Oral testimony.
381. Op.cit., p. 192.
382. Frank Richards, op.cit., p. 153.
383. Animal experiments with dogs have shown death to occur from asphyxiation due to oxygen deprivation in about 10-12 minutes. Although it is not possible to estimate or even guess at the ability of an individual man to stay alive after being buried alive in a trench-collapse, Home Office pathologist Dr S Sivaloganathan, Dept of Forensic Medicine, University of Leeds, "suspects that a similar time scale could be applied to man" (personal communication, 2 April 1980).
384. Oral testimony.
385. Yorkshire Evening News, 22 November 1915.
386. See C.M. Slack, op.cit., p. 60.
387. Lupton letters, 3 January 1916, 3 January 1917.
388. Tetley Diary.
389. Oral testimony.
390. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 29 June 1916.
391. Op.cit., p. 132.
392. Oral testimonies.
393. L. Magnus, op.cit., Appendix II, pp. 228-321.
394. DSO citation in possession of his son, Mr John F. Tillotson.
395. Falsely, according to respondents, Thomas R. Kitson, 1/5th WYR, and 2/Lt J. R. Bellerby, then serving with 146 Bde Machine-gun Company.
396. Yorkshire Evening News, 15 December 1915.
397. Testimony of 2891 Bugler Charles E. Hannan, 1/8th.
398. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 November 1915.
399. Yorkshire Evening Post, 16 December 1915.
400. Ibid., 14 December 1915; see also Sgt Pearson's account, a masterly piece of understatement, ibid.
401. Citation quoted L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 62.
402. Testimony of 2317 John H. Taylor, A Coy, 1/6th WYR.
403. W.S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1918 (London, 1923; 1939 new edn.), Vol. I, Appendix E, p. 710.
404. Testimony of Bombardier Billy Pratt, 73rd Batt. RFA.
405. Tetley Diary. In consequence of this act of bravery, Capp's conviction was some considerable time later expunged from his record and the sentence quashed.
406. Testimony of 2227 Gilbert Freeman, 1/8th (officer's servant); Lupton letters, eg. 14, 22 April 1917.



407. Oral testimonies.
408. 2/8th Bn War Diary, March, May 1917, PRO, WO 95/3082; MM citation, CSM G.W. Wheeler, in possession of his daughter, Mrs Irene Wild.
409. London Gazette, 9 September 1916, quoted L. Magnus, op.cit., p. 94.
410. Yorkshire Post, 12 September 1916, also Leeds Mercury, 12 September 1916.
411. Yorkshire Evening News, 11 September 1916. The mention of the Royal Irish Rifles should have been excised by the censor.
412. Knowles letters, 4 July, 13 September 1916.
413. A clever pun. "Tyke" was a popular term for a dog, especially a Yorkshire terrier (and there was a local breed, known as the Airedale Terrier), and was also a popular, though derogatory, term for a Yorkshireman. This phrase points to the authorship of Rfm 3112 P.G. Standley, who had demonstrated a talent for comic writing.
414. Yorkshire Post, 12 September 1916; Leeds Mercury, 12 September 1916.
415. Tetley Diary.
416. Testimonies of 1953 George Wood and 1966 Harold Emmett, 1/7th.
417. Knowles letters, undated letters of July, August, November, 1916, 31 July 1916, 5 May 1917.
418. Tetley Diary.
419. Testimony of 1953 George Wood, 1/7th.
420. Oral testimony.
421. Testimony of 2893 George Nichols, 1/7th, and others.
422. Testimonies of 2607 Sgt Walter Atkinson and 1485 Sgt Alfred Clarkson, 1/7th, and others.
423. Knowles letter, 5 May 1917.
424. 1/8th Bn War Diary, 13-14 April, 2 May 1917, PRO, WO 95/2795.
425. Yorkshire Evening News, 24 January 1916.
426. Testimonies of 1090 Sgt James Rhind and 2715 Sgt James E. Eastburn, 1/8th; 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 15 April 1917; Lupton letter, 21 June 1917.
427. 1/8th Bn Unofficial War Diary, 6 February 1917.
428. 8th Bn War Diary, 9 September, 7 October 1918, PRO, WO 95/3083.
429. See also Lupton letter, 15 July 1917.
430. Ibid., 10 November 1915. The incident is mentioned by Philip Gibbs (Realities of War, p. 174).
431. Testimony of 1294 Sgt Alexander Latto, 2/8th.
432. Lupton letter, 24 July 1915.
433. Yorkshire Evening News, 27 December 1915.
434. L. Magnus, op.cit., Appendix II, pp. 227, 274.
435. The Territorial Divisions 1914-1918, p. 53.
436. Telegram of 2 May 1918, quoted ibid., pp. 55-6.
437. See Lt Col H.D. Bousfield, 'Where the 49th Division Bled and Fought', Yorkshire Evening Post, 18 March 1922.
438. Yorkshire Post, 12 April 1935.
439. Compare Capt E.V. Tempest, History of the Sixth Battalion West Yorkshire



- Regiment Vol. I. 1/6th Battalion (Bradford, 1921), p. 144.
440. See OH, 1918 Vol. V (London, 1947), p. 179; D. Winter, op.cit., p.47; William Moore, The Thin Yellow Line (London, 1974), p. 167.
441. Quoted A.V. Sellwood, The Saturday Night Soldiers, p. 137.
442. Recorded by Major Stirling as a fact (op.cit., p.81); see also Lt Col H. Green, The British Army in the First World War ..., p. 39.
443. Frank Richards, op.cit., p. 323.
444. 70 HC Deb. 5s. 15 March 1915, cols. 1853-56; 71 HC Deb. 5s. 6 May 1915, col. 1281.
445. See, for example, J.F. Tucker, Johnny Get Your Gun, p. 41.
446. Oral testimony.
447. See, for example, Lupton letter, 31 December 1916.
448. Record of Officers' Services, 3rd VB PWO, 1905-/8th Bn 1908-1915.
449. 71 HC Deb. 5s. 6 May 1915, col. 1281.
450. For its three Reports, see: 1917-18 Cmd. 8642, iv, 605; Cmd. 8643, iv, 615; 1918 Cmd. 8978, vi, 327.
451. Lupton letters, 6, 13, 24 August 1916, 6 July 1917.
452. Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War 1914-1918, p. 56.
453. Lupton letters, 9 July 1917, 25 April 1918.
454. See C.P. Clayton, The Hungry One (Llandysul, 1978), p. 164.
455. Testimony of 833 Sgt Joseph W. Goldsack, 7th, and others. See also The Buzzer, 1 April 1916.
456. Oral testimony.
457. Testimony of 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 1/7th, and others.
458. Testimony of 2008 Provost-Sgt Harry Ellis, 1/7th.
459. Lupton letter, 17 January 1917.
460. Testimony of RSM Charles Harold Marshall, 17th Lancers.
461. Testimonies of 1688 Harry Slater, 8th; 3149 Sgt James W. Warman, 1/7th; 3167 Albert E. Wood, 1788 John W. Allman, 1/8th; 2607 Sgt Walter Atkinson and 1522 Sgt J.E.T. Wilson, 1/7th.
462. Oral testimony.
463. Knowles letters, 26 February 1916, 17, 25 November 1915.
464. Ibid., 17 January 1917.
465. Testimonies of Sgt S.A. Hood, 3/7th; Mr Cecil Rhodes (son of RQMS Rhodes); 1182 Cpl A. Fisher, 1/7th; Mr Cecil M. Potts (brother of L/Sgt W.E. Potts, 2/8th).