

## THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

### Their First World War 'Story' – June 1915

#### The 'Bigger' Picture

San Marino declares war on Austria-Hungary.

First meeting in Paris of Allied Conference on Economic War.

First Conference of British and French Ministers to co-ordinate war policy and strategy held at Calais.

Russian and Chinese Governments conclude agreement respecting Mongolia.

Act Passed in British Parliament empowering Customs to compel all exports to Holland to be consigned to the Netherlands Overseas Trust.

Canada announces intention to raise a further 35,000 men.

Blockade of coast of Asia Minor announced by British Government.

#### The Home Front

The war was having an increasing impact on civilian life:

The first Zeppelin attack on the City of Hull shattered the peaceful evening of June 6, 1915. By dawn, 24 people were dead and 40 wounded by the bombs dropped from Zeppelin L-9, commanded by Kapitanleutnant Heinrich Mathy.

Bill to create Ministry of Munitions introduced.

Mr Asquith announces forthcoming bill on the registration and organisation of national resources.

National Registration Bill introduced

#### The Western Front

Allied Spring Offensive continues.

German airship LZ-37 destroyed in mid-air by Lieut Warneford, RNAS, near Ghent (first occasion of airship successfully attacked by aeroplane).

#### Other Fronts

##### EASTERN FRONT

Spring offensive continues

Stanislau recaptured by Austrian forces

Battles of Przemysl and Stryj (Galicia) end.

Third Battle of Lemberg - city retaken by the Austrian forces

##### BALKANS

San Giovanni de Medua (Albania) occupied by Montenegrin forces.

## ITALIAN FRONT

Monfalcone (Isonzo) taken by Italian forces.  
First Battle of the Isonzo

## SOUTH WEST AFRICA

South African forces begin advance on Otavifontein (German South-West Africa)

## WEST AFRICA

Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Cameroons decides to abandon the advance on Yaunde.  
Garua (Cameroons) capitulates to the Anglo force.  
Ngaundere (Cameroons) captured by the Allied Force.

## RED SEA

Turkish Attack on Perim Island.

## MESOPOTAMIA

Amara captured by British forces.  
British advance up the Euphrates begins.

## THE DARDANELLES

First meeting of Dardanelles Committee of the British Cabinet.  
Third Battle of Krithia; British and French forces mount a limited attack but still fail to reach their objectives  
Action of Gully Ravine - largely successful at achieving its limited objectives but typically high cost in casualties.  
Thoughts of a swift decisive victory over the Ottoman Empire were vanishing quickly. The story was becoming predictable with exhausted troops and resources, uninspiring tactics and operational stagnation. The Battles of Krithia and the attack at Gully Ravine had much in common with the trench warfare prevailing on the Western Front.

## MERCHANT SHIPPING

British, Allied and Neutral ships lost to enemy submarines, mines and cruisers etc in the month  
- 128 ships of 131,000 tons gross.

## The 'Herefords'

The Depot at Hereford had settled down to its new function and routine. It was now termed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Line Depot. This is not to be confused with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion which was not formed until later. [Designations are complicated and often misquoted! In this case the designation is for function and in simple terms: the 1<sup>st</sup> Line was the trained and deployed Army, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Line were those units trained but not deployed and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Line were basic training units. Designation within Regiments is different (!) with the 1<sup>st</sup> Line being the senior classification (for most units the 1<sup>st</sup> Line Battalion was the Regular Battalion, but as the Herefords had no Regular Battalion the Territorial Battalion was the 1<sup>st</sup> Line), thus the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Herefordshire Regiment was the 1<sup>st</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup>].

Recruits were still arriving and being held at Hereford to receive their initial training before being posted to either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

Some 520 men paraded at the Drill Hall, under command of Capt Speer for inspection by Col Greg the Officer Commanding 3<sup>rd</sup> Line Depots of The Welsh Division. The inspection included 'drills' on the Bishops Meadow; Col Greg expressed his satisfaction.

Recruits included:

3863 Pte Percy MARFELL from Brierley, Ruardean  
3879 Pte Thomas Victor STINTON aged 19 from North Road Leominster  
3884 Pte George TOMBS aged 29 from Sydenham Place Tupsley  
3906 Pte Thomas PREECE aged 35 from Upper Well Brook, Peterchurch

Those discharged included:

2479 LCpl Edward Charles HOWELLS who had enlisted in September 1914  
8029 Cpl Richard PRICE who had served since April 1908  
3192 Pte William HOARE aged 19 who had enlisted in February 1915

All were deemed unfit for military service.

A cricket match was played at Widemarsh against the RAMC; the Herefords were defeated by a 'handsome margin' of 102 runs. The Herefords side consisted of:

Sgt Jennings	caught	5
Pte Rowberry	bowled	9
Pte Fletcher	bowled	9
Pte Roden	caught	16
Lt Parker	run out	1
Lt Williams	bowled	0
Pte Hanks	not out	3
Pte Cookson	bowled	1
LCpl Davies	caught	0

Pte Wood	bowled	0
Extras		2

Two soldiers, brothers (?) Frank and Robert Fletcher, from the Herefords appeared in court in Leominster whilst on leave; their appearance was reported in the Hereford Journal under the heading 'Too Energetic Recruiting At Leominster'. The report goes on: 'the affair, no doubt the outcome of the defendant's over anxiety to obtain recruits, and evidence that there is practically no check on soldier's home furlough who are inclined to indulge in too much drink'. Police Sergeant Worthing stated the accused had assaulted a third party who was 'in civilian clothes and pushing his bicycle'. He further stated 'they used bad language; they were drunk'. The magistrate went on to fine them both £1 for the assault and 10 shillings for drunkenness; he went on to say 'the people who supplied them with drink should be ashamed of themselves'.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

2Lt HW Croft is seconded whilst employed as Assistant District Purchasing Officer for Supplies.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June the Hereford Journal reported that the Battalion had been informed that it would not be sent overseas and any man that wanted to go to France should volunteer for transfer to another battalion. The lack of commitment for overseas service remained a keen topic of concern within the Battalion with many men feeling slighted and encouraging further recruitment from the County. Recruiting parades were taking place throughout Herefordshire and meeting with some success (see figures in training at the Depot), but it took time for these men to become trained. There was also opinions expressed that the formation of the New (Kitchener's) Armies had 'robbed' the Herefords of many potential recruits.

A week later, in strong terms this article was retracted – 'military discipline restricts any further discussion on the matter at this juncture'. The Hereford Times reported 'there is not an atom of truth in the statement The Herefords will not be sent overseas'.

The Battalion was undergoing hard training, no doubt it was detailed and demanding and the Battalion and Brigade were building up to a peak of readiness, with the possibility of deploying overseas being a popular topic of conversation. The improved weather and longer days meant the training was more intensive, but with improved fitness and proficiency was more readily received.



The Commanding Officer – Lt Col  
Gilbert Drage.

He had served for 23 years in the  
Royal Marines and retired, and  
joined The Herefordshire Regiment in  
1913.

He lived in Prestiegne.

Many soldiers continued to have photographs taken to send to their mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts, below are a few unknown portraits.





## 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, along with other Territorial 2<sup>nd</sup> Line Battalions was split to form a Home Service Company. About 150 men who had not signed for overseas service were transferred to a 'Home Defence Army'. Men under 19 (the minimum age to serve in a war area) could take the overseas pledge which seemed to indicate the Battalion may be destined for an overseas garrison task. 'The 150 marched off to the band playing Auld Lang Syne and loud cheers from their comrades'. The men ceased to be members of The Herefordshire Regiment and removed their capbadges and have become part of the 46 Coast Battalion (elsewhere reported as 48<sup>th</sup> Provisional Battalion) – although it is not clear what capbadge they wore<sup>1</sup>. The men were under the command of Maj Symonds-Tayler with Major Greenly, Capts Robinson & Bacon and 2Lt Crossley.

The expected move to London took place and the Hereford Journal reported:

The Battalion left Northampton and entrained for villages about Southend ..... many of the men hope to see some fun while here. The Zeppelin in their late raid on Southend passed over the villages ..... . The Battalion parades from 0645hrs to 0730hrs and from 0845hrs to 1530hrs during which time they are fully employed. Haversack rations are taken, and the men come home to a hot meal. The work is not carried out in the happy-go-lucky fashion as at

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<sup>1</sup> - This illustrates the problems of tracing soldiers 'careers' during the first World War; soldiers were often transferred from one regiment to another, changing their capbadges and being issued with a new regimental number aligned to that new Regiment. At this time, as well all Regiments had their own series of numbers all which had started with number '1'. Thus all Territorial battalions had renumbered on formation in 1908, generally numbers were allocated by seniority with the RSM or RQMS (as the senior non-Commissioned soldiers) being allocated number '1'. There is one example of a soldiers joining the Herefordshire Regiment and later being transferred to 3 other Regiments, thus having 4 regimental numbers. On some occasions the administration was completed and the soldiers were not even aware they had been transferred! They would write home, and letters were often reported in local newspapers, giving details of their transfers – they did not always get the details correct!

Hereford and Aberystwyth, with a quarter of an hour on and the same off. Each man has to work steadily for 5 hours without any relief except for half an hour for dinner. After Northampton the place seems quiet, but everyone is settling down now.

Despite the fact that the work is hard and weather perhaps too hot for work, C and D companies are as happy as 'sandboys' in their village and very few are looking forward to going back to Northampton as the Essex people are giving them a good time. The cricket and tennis club grounds are open to soldiers and rackets, bats and balls are freely lent to the men. Gardens are open to the soldiers and at the Rectory a gramophone with many records is provided.

On Sunday after a Drumhead Service, conducted by the local rector and accompanied by the Regimental Band, the band gave a concert at the Cricket Club ..... which was enjoyed by all.

On Monday a concert was arranged ..... among those contributing were: 2Lt Phillips who sang 'Jack Briton' and 2Lt Haines who gave a piano solo of Greig's Triumphal March.

On Saturday many men took advantage of gaining a pass to visit London or Southend.

One evening in the week C Company gave D Company a 'good licking' at cricket but when the Battalion cricket team played Wickford they got 'badly beaten' and had been unlucky in losing some of their best men before they had got into full swing. The last bats for the Herefords were Lts G and T Millyard; T Millyard was run at at 13, and G Millyard bowled out for a yorker for 2. The Herefords scores were:

Sgt Rouse bowled	2
Sgt Evans knocked off own bails	1
Lt G Millyard bowled	2
Lt T Millyard run out	13
Cpl Hopkins bowled	0
Pte Williams bowled	3
Pte Gardner bowled	0
Pte Lamputt caught	12
Cpl Pembridge not out	6
Pte Lomax caught	2
Byes	3

Wickford, when the post left had secured 140 for 7.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> the Battalion moved back to Northampton and 'after nearly three weeks in quiet country villages it is a pleasant change to be in a town again'. Training commenced immediately with night operations and a Brigade route march.

The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Wood-Roe thanked the men for all their hard work during the detachment and read out endorsements from Maj Norton Royal Engineers ' ..... the men have worked

hard ..... the discipline on the work has been exemplary .... the brushwood revetments are a model of how such work should be completed'.



Two recruits in their recently issued uniforms.