

## THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

### Their First World War 'Story' – December 1914

#### The 'Bigger' Picture

##### The Home Front

15th - German airship sighted off East Coast of England (first appearance of hostile aircraft in vicinity of British Isles)

16th - Scarborough and Hartlepool, East coast of England, bombarded by German battle cruiser squadron.

21st - First German air raid on England. Aeroplane drops bombs in sea near Dover

24th - Second air raid on England. First bomb dropped on English soil near Dover.

##### The Western Front

The 2 sides settle down for trench warfare and attempt to make themselves 'comfortable' and reconstitute themselves.

14th - Allied demonstrations on Flanders front begin. Attack on Wytschaete.

20th - First Battle of Champagne begins.

20th - British defence of Givenchy, 1914.

The first Christmas of the war was an emotional time for many including those in the front line where combatants were generally Christian professional soldiers, many thought of home and better times.

Princess Mary (George V's daughter) through the auspices of the Sailors and Soldiers Christmas Fund put in place a scheme where all sailors and soldiers on active duty in France received a box of either smoking material or chocolate. Over 350,000 were distributed.



Princess Mary Christmas (1914) Box

## The 'Christmas Truce'

The Truce on the Western Front on Christmas Day 1914 has gained an almost mythical status; however the truce was localised and unsanctioned, it was a spontaneous act by professional soldiers. During the afternoon and evening of the 24th, British infantry were astonished to see many Christmas trees with candles and paper lanterns, on the enemy parapets. There was much singing of carols, hymns and popular songs, and a gradual exchange of communication and even meetings in some areas. Many of these meetings were to arrange collection of bodies. In other places, firing continued. Battalion officers were uncertain how to react; in general they remained cautious and alert.

On Christmas Day units behind the lines attended church services and had in most cases arranged Christmas dinners which were taken in barns and shattered buildings. In the front lines, the fraternisation of Christmas Eve continued throughout the day; not all units knew about it, and it was not universal but was widespread over at least half of the British front. Many bodies that had been lying out in no man's land were buried, some in joint burials. Many men recorded the strange and wonderful events; many men exchanged tokens or addresses with German soldiers, many of whom spoke English. However 81 British soldiers died on this day; a few died in areas that were otherwise peaceful and with fraternisation going on, victims of alert snipers. In other areas, there was considerable activity: 2nd Grenadier Guards suffered losses in a day of heavy fighting. As night fell, things grew quiet and men fell back to their trenches to take whatever Christmas meal that had been provided for them.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> some snow fell. In some areas, the friendly spirit was resumed. Gradually however, officers and men on both sides began to resume normal trench caution. The atmosphere in general remained relaxed as Brigade and Battalion officers took a pragmatic view of events. The chance was taken to carry out work that would otherwise have been hazardous. By now, however, news of the truce was reaching higher commands. General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien requested particulars of those units and officers who took part, with a view to disciplinary action. In the event, no action was taken against any unit or officer. 62 British soldiers died on this day.

Several football matches took place in no mans' land and in the war diary of the 1/6th Cheshire Regiment they recorded a score of 3-2 to the Germans



British and German soldiers fraternise in No Man's Land – Christmas 1914

## Other Fronts

### EASTERN FRONT

Again the 2 sides are settling in for the winter with bitter fighting on the Serbian front and about Warsaw.

## MESOPOTAMIAN FRONT

4th - First action of Qurna begins.

## WEST AFRICA

4th - Portuguese Expeditionary Force leaves Lisbon for Angola

## SOUTH AFRICA

1st - General de Wet, the leader of South African rebellion, captured by Union troops

## EAST AFRICA

4th - General Wapshare succeeds General Aitken in command of the British forces in East Africa.

## DARDANELLES

Russian Commander-in-Chief (Grand Duke Nicholas) suggests a British expedition against the Turks to ease Russian situation in the Caucasus (support for the Gallipoli campaign).

13th - Turkish battleship 'Messoudieh' sunk by British submarine 'B 11'

## Battle Of The Falklands

Admiral von Spee's squadron destroyed. 'Scharnhorst,' 'Gneisenau,' 'Leipzig,' and 'Nürnberg' sunk. Admiral von Spee killed. Battleship 'Dresden' escapes

## MERCHANT SHIPPING

British, Allied and Neutral ships lost to enemy submarines, mines and cruisers etc in the month - 26 ships of 49,000 tons gross.

Total since outbreak of war - 165 ships of 324,000 tons gross

## The 'Herefords'

The Depot at Hereford continued to function, receiving soldiers returning from both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions for a variety of reasons including illness and inefficiency; with a reduced number (compared to previous months) of soldiers being discharged under King's Regulations paragraph 392 xvi as 'unfit for military service'; Included amongst these were:

2742 Private Leonard REE

enlisted 17/10/1914 discharged 5/12/1914 aged 17 years and 35 days.

2426 Private Henry James WALKER

enlisted 15/9/1914 discharged 7/12/1914 aged 17 years and 84 days.

Recruits continued to be enlisted, again at a reduced number compared to previous months, and after basic administration posted, generally to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion for basic training. Included amongst these were:

3035 Thomas PULLEN

3051 Frank CAFFUL

4027 Henry James KENDRICK

The following account was published in the Hereford Times:

12 December - Pte Davies made the journey from Chicago to join The Herefordshire Regiment. Out West he was a mining engineer. His father is Mr Davies of Holmer Villas, Holmer Road; a brother of Pte Davies is already in the Battalion.

It has not been possible to identify, which Pte Davies this was - over 100 Davies served with the Battalion during the war and over 50 were serving in 1914; records show at least 15 that enlisted in November and December 1914.

Drafts, again of smaller numbers continued to be formed up from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to bring the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion up to strength and the administration for these moves fell to 'the Depot'. One soldier included in these moves was 2109 Private Percy Pritchard on 3 December.

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

The Battalion continued to train and be billeted in the Irchester and Rushden area in Northamptonshire, moving to the Cambridge area in the middle of the month. There was excitement at the rumours of Christmas leave – *'there was considerable disappointment that Christmas leave was not granted. The men had been hoping all along that they would be allowed leave. One man who shall remain nameless did allow his valour to outrun his discretion, and he went home; since then he has regretted it in the guard room!'*

Routine training continued; an accidental shooting was recorded in the Ledbury Guardian on 5 December:

### **LEDBURY TERRITORIAL SHOT – STATED TO BE AN ACCIDENT WITH REVOLVER – CONDITION SATISFACTORY AND HOPEFUL**

Startling news was received in Ledbury this week that Percy Taylor, son of Mr & Mrs C Taylor of Church Street who is with C Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Herefordshire Regiment has been shot. The Regiment left Northampton on Monday last for Woodbridge. It appears that the affair was an accident caused by the accidental discharge of a revolver through which Private Taylor received an injury to his side.

We are unable at present to give details of how the mishap actually occurred. We are glad to say that his injury is not likely to prove fatal. At present there are no bad symptoms.

Yesterday, Thursday, the young man's parents in Ledbury received a reassuring telegram from the Adjutant, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Herefordshire Regiment to the effect that their son's condition that morning was satisfactory and hopeful.

Private Taylor is a member of the Battalion Band and before the war broke out was employed by Messrs Hopkins and Son, New Street, Ledbury in the Coachbuilding Department. Well known in Ledbury the news was received with much regret and it is hoped that he will make a complete recovery.

824 Pte Charles Percy TAYLOR, who was a pre war member of the Regimental Band having enlisted in December 1909.



2152 Thomas Paul BAUSER's diary continues:

11 Dec Moved to Hepwood.  
 25 Dec Lame with both ankles sprained  
 Reveille 0515  
 Breakfast 0530 - hot sausage and bacon  
 Coy left at 0700 - if they don't return RAMC will look after me.  
 Dinner at Hepworth School  
 cards with: Wilson, Banks, Fletcher, Dillow\* and Miller  
 31 Dec I make my little annual balance sheet up in the guard room - a loose box with straw for a bed.



\* 2402 Private Frederic Warren DILLOW, a Bank Clerk from Kington; his father being a school master. He went on to serve at Gallipoli, was Commissioned at Gallipoli on 21 August 1915 and became the physical and bayonet training officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. He served with the Battalion throughout the war; he went on to serve in the Home Guard in Surrey during the Second World War.

Lieutenant Dillow after Commissioning.

The others cannot be identified from just their surnames.

The following letter to the Editor of the Hereford Times from Lt Col Gilbert Drage, Commanding Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Herefordshire Regiment describes Christmas for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion:

Sir, your readers who so generously subscribed to the Regiment's Christmas fund will, I am sure, like to hear something about the arrangements made here [*Cambridge*] on Christmas Day. The dinners were a very great success, and very much appreciated by the men, and I tender our warmest thanks to all those who gave us the means of providing it.

A, B and C Companies with the Medical Corps Detachment and transport men dined in the schools of one village; D and F in the schools of another; H in a barn, and G and E in schools near their billets. It was a nine mile ride to visit all the dinners on Christmas Day.

The following quantities of food, drink etc were provided for the men [825?] present with the Headquarters of the Regiment:

96 geese weighing about 1050 lbs

420 lbs of suasaes

825 mincepies

825 oranges

722 pints of beer

206 bottles of mineral water

84oz of chocolate

7830 cigarettes

Exrtra potatoes, supplementing the government supply of 4 ounces per man were also issued.

Onions and cabbage

Last, but by no means least about ½ lb of plum pudding for each man.

The Mayor of Leominster collected and forwarded, carriage free to Bury St Edmunds boxes weighing 4 hundredweight; filled with plum puddings; they arrived just in the nick of time, and they had to be distributed at once.

Friends of Officers and Men provided more plum puddings and other gifts in kind.

As the men have, under ordinary circumstances only their mess tins to eat out of, and in order to make things a little less primitive we hired: 1650 plates, 200 vegetable dishes and 825 glasses; 100 each of pepper, mustard and salt pots; also carvers and steels and 100 tin trays to bake geese and meat in, as we do not have such luxuries. They are a useful addition to our dixies and mess tins which constitute our 'batterie de cuisine' under ordinary circumstances. Each man brought his own knife, fork and spoon; we did not have any damask table linen, but many yards of white calico provided a good substitute; bits were also useful as pudding cloths.

Much assistance was given by local people in decorating the dining places, and 200 flags of the Allies were bought to make the plum puddings less insular than is usual on such occasions.

Cheques were forwarded to OiCs of men on detachment at Northampton in order that they might be provided with dinners on a similar scale; I have not yet received any account of them.

If we do not move again before New Year's Day I hope to give a repetition of sausages on that day, as I am told they are most appreciated as a change from the sameness of the Government ration. Our QM cheerfully undertook the purchase of provisions etc their distribution and cooking. This in addition to his ordinary duties, which are by no means light. It should be remembered that we are in a remote part of Suffolk where there are but small villages, and there is no town of any size nearer than 10 miles by road and no railway closer than 9 miles, in order to appreciate the difficulties organising the dinner.

I am very much indebted to the ladies who initiated the appeal which met with such a generous response, and in conclusion I am also very grateful to you for causing it to be widely known through the medium of The Hereford Times.

I am unaware of the names of the other journals in Herefordshire and Radnorshire who operated with you; but I should be glad if you will allow me to trespass further on your kindness by asking you to convey copies of my letter to them, so that they may, if so disposed publish my letter in their columns and convey to the supporters of our Christmas fund The Regiment's very hearty thanks and best wishes for a happy new year.

*Editor's note: We have much pleasure on complying with Col Drage's request.*

Some 160 men of The Herefordshire Regiment and 300 of the Monmouths spent their Christmas at Northampton [*Presumably detached on a Musketry Course*]. Christmas Day the men did nothing. On Boxing Day they paraded and then fell out. The rain was pouring down, and musketry practice was out of the question. As soon as they finish their musketry course they will rejoin their companions at Cambridge. It would be incorrect to say that it was a happy or merry Christmas, although those whom they were billeted with did their best to make it as happy as possible.



'Dinner Time C Company', taken by a Cambridge photographer and postmarked Cambridge 13 February 1915 – possibly Christmas Dinner(?).

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

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion remained in Aberystwyth throughout December and it looked as though the wet weather was 'enjoyed/endured' there as well!

The elements themselves might have conspired to produce such climatic changes and surprises as have been experienced by the Reserve [2<sup>nd</sup>] Battalion during the past week. The ultimate verdict, however must be decidedly unfavourable so far as working possibilities are concerned, although conditions must be thoroughly bad to effect any radical change in the parade routine, which was proceeded bravely through though stickily over rain sodden and be-puddled roads.

By the bulk of the Battalion detained in Aberystwyth the Christmas holiday has been voted a thoroughly good time. A full parade was mustered on Christmas morning, when the Coliseum Picture house was again the venue for a hearty special service. The time honoured hymns resounded with a cheery military ardour. From the morning onwards the day was surrendered to all the seasonal recreations, not omitting those gastronomic. It well conveys the Colonel's interest in his men's wellbeing to state that by his order the officer in charge of each company paid a visit to each house where The Herefords are billeted, at what time the Christmas Dinner was being served to see that all was well, and it is equally pleasing to record that it was so, and the sounds of song and Christmas merriment emanating from The Herefords' area during Christmas Night would have gratified kind friends at home who would naturally have had that touch of khaki by their own fireside.



After a short route march on Saturday (Boxing Day) morning, the rest of the day was a general holiday. A football match in the afternoon between The Herefords and Royal Army Medical Corps drew a number of men, the game ending 2 to 1 in favour of the medics. Thirteen of the battalions here have, up to the present, entered teams for the Divisional League competition, including The Herefords (one rugger and one soccer).

Sufficient equipment is now in hand to enable rifle instruction to be given.

The Officer Commanding is pleased to announce the following promotions:

To Sergeant: AJ Roberts, AB Phillips, AJP Morling, H Woolridge, L Meek.

To Corporal: HR Turner

To Lance Corporal: AP Bromage, TB Shinn, CW Smith, W Price, AS Jones, FJ Edwards, JE James, AW Tanner, E Ratcliffe, R Creed, Bates, H Baynham.

The 'details/careers' of some of these men have been traced:

Bromage – 2372 Alfred Percy from Llanindrod Wells; served at Gallipoli.

Shinn – 2548 Thomas Bennett from Ledbury; served at Gallipoli and killed in action in Palestine 9 March 1918.



2548 Thomas Bennett SHINN, taken in Palestine  
December 1916.

Edwards – possibly 2091 Frank James from Llanindrod Wells; served at Gallipoli and latterly with Machine Gun Corps (MGC).

James – 2366 John Emlyn from Llanindrod Wells; served at Gallipoli. Awarded the Military Medal in November 1917 and Mentioned in Despatches as Corporal 12 January 1918. An (incomplete) copy of his service record showing the award of these 2 honours is shown below; the record also shows a disciplinary offence in that he was 'absent from muster parade', but he retained his rank of Corporal, and thus it is assumed to have been a minor infringement.

No. 2566 Name *Cpl James, J.E.* Squ., Batty., or Company } "2" Corps *11/12*

Date of last entry in Company Conduct Sheet } No. and date of last drunk } *Supplementary Sheet* *Sheet*  
~~*Original*~~

Place	Date of offence	Rank	Cases of drunkenness	Offence
<i>Ferdman</i>	<i>6-12-16</i>	<i>Cpl</i>		<i>Disobedience of an Order about off Motor Parade</i>

*Mentioned in Sir A. Murray's Dispatch*  
*awarded Military Medal Great London etc*

Groups of volunteers from Llanindrod Wells in 1914 – reputed to include Frank James EDWARDS (and his brother Thomas) John Emlyn JAMES and possibly Bromage as well.



A group of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion men in billets in Aberystwyth in 1914 including:

Edwards  
Bromage  
James



Regimental number shown incorrectly as 2377

The inside of the Coliseum Theatre, Aberystwyth:



Now Boots the Chemist!