

## THE HEREFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

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

#### The 'Bigger' Picture

Throughout Europe (and the World) intrigue continues with internal political changes and countries internationally relationships changing in an attempt to secure both internal and external political and strategic advantage. The impact of the war is now spreading throughout the world. Examples of this are:

Romanian Government negotiate loan of £5,000,000 in Great Britain.

Formerly secret agreement for mutual support between Italy and Romania announced by respective Governments.

British Government offer Greek Government concessions in Asia Minor in return for help to Serbia – later refused

Entente Governments agree to hold 'Pact of London' applicable to war with Turkey

General Pimenta da Castro succeeds Senhor Coutinho as Portuguese Premier

In Germany Lt Gen von Falkenhayn succeeded as German Minister for War by Lt Gen Wild von Hohenborn. Gen von Falkenhayn remains Chief of the General Staff

#### The Home Front

19<sup>th</sup> - First airship raid on England – first aeroplane raids had taken place in December 1914.

#### The Western Front

Lt Gen Sir A J Murray resigns as Chief of the General Staff (CGS), BEF, replaced by Lt Gen Sir W Robertson who was previously Quartermaster-General (QMG) BEF. Lt Gen Sir R C Maxwell appointed QMG BEF.

The stalemate continues with generally only small scale localised operations.

#### Other Fronts

##### EASTERN FRONT

General inactivity continues due to the exhaustion of troops and equipment/ammunition and the winter weather. The Russian Siege of Przemysl continues

##### CAUCASUS FRONT

Battle of Sarikamish ends

Urmia and Tabriz (North Persia) evacuated by Russian forces; Tabriz occupied by Turks but later reoccupied by Russians.

Battle of Kara Urgan.

##### ARABIA

Britain defends Muscat (Eastern Arabia)

## PALESTINE FRONT

Turkish advance on Suez Canal and Egypt through Sinai begins

## EAST AFRICA

German attack on Edea (Cameroons) repulsed by French garrison.

## SOUTH WEST AFRICA

Swakopmund (German South-West Africa) occupied by South African forces.

## SOUTH AFRICA

Last rebels in the Transvaal (South Africa) captured  
Defence of Upington

## EAST AFRICA

Jasin captured by German forces

## DARDANELLES

British War Council resolves that the Admiralty should prepare for a naval expedition in February against the Dardanelles

### At Sea

1<sup>st</sup> – HMS Formidable sunk by German submarine in English Channel.



24<sup>th</sup> - The Battle of the 'Dogger Bank'.

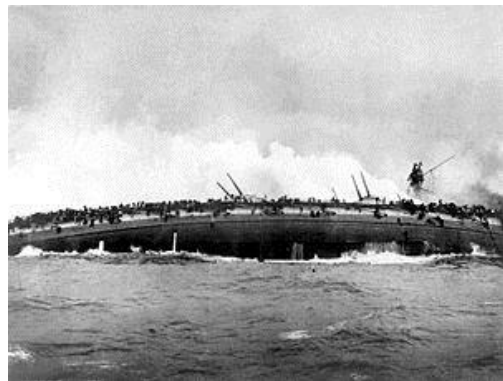
This Battle of Dogger Bank was fought near the Dogger Bank in the North Sea between squadrons of the British Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet.

The British had advance knowledge, due to radio intercepts that a German raiding squadron was heading for Dogger Bank; they dispatched their own naval forces to intercept it. The Royal Navy found the Germans at the expected time and place; surprised, the smaller and slower German squadron fled for home. During a stern chase lasting several hours, the British slowly caught up with the Germans and engaged them with long-range gunfire. The British disabled Blücher, the rear German ship, but the Germans put the British flagship HMS Lion out of action with heavy damage. Due to a signaling mix-up, the remaining British ships broke off pursuit of the fleeing enemy force to sink Blücher. By the time this had been done, the German squadron had escaped; all the remaining German vessels returned safely to harbour, though some had heavy damage.

Lion made it back to port but was out of action for several months. The British lost no ships and suffered few casualties, while the Germans lost a ship and most of its crew; the action was considered a British victory but both navies made changes to equipment and procedures.



SMS Blücher



SMS Blücher rolling over

#### CRUISER WARFARE

28th - United States SV William P Frye sunk by German armed merchant cruiser

#### U-BOAT WARFARE

29th - Walney Island battery (Barrow-in-Furness) shelled by German submarine (first operation of German submarines in the Irish Sea).

30th - British Admiralty warn British merchant vessels to fly neutral or no ensigns in vicinity of British Isles

#### Merchant Shipping

British, Allied and Neutral ships lost to enemy submarines, mines and cruisers etc. in the month - 24 ships of 49,000 tons gross (Lloyd's War Losses)

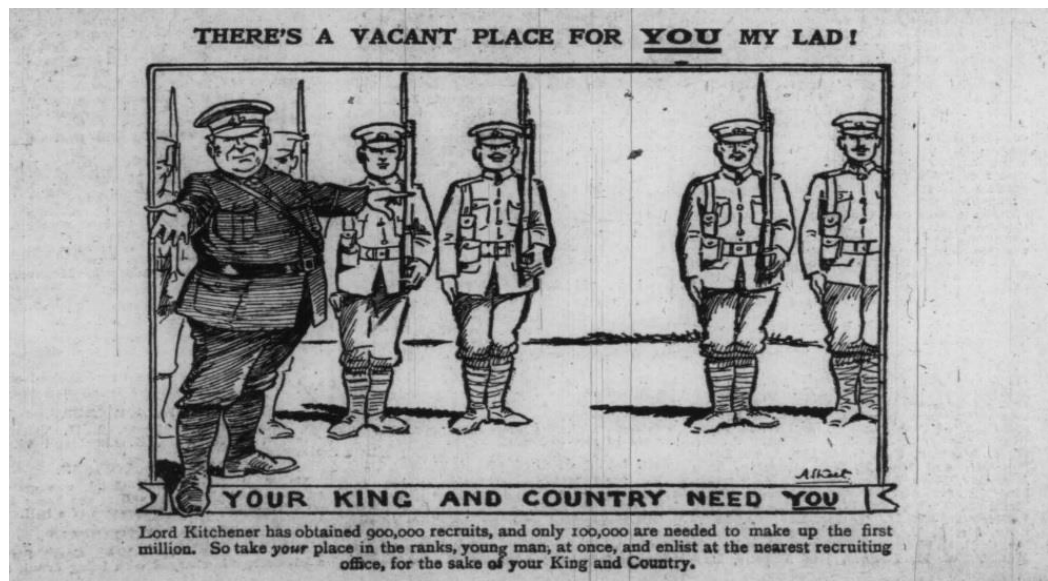
#### The 'Herefords'

Hereford Hereford continued to function as the Depot for administration of soldiers, handling enlistments, discharges and long term sick leave. During January 1915 about 80 men 'signed on', although in the 16<sup>th</sup> January recruitment was temporarily halted due the high numbers already in the recruiting/training process. As a result many local men enlisted in other Regiments – The King's Shropshire Light Infantry, The Worcestershire Regiment, The Gloucestershire Regiment, the South

Wales Borderers as well as technical corps (RA, RE, RAMC, RAVC, RASC) and the Royal Navy. Those that did enlist to the Herefords included:

3088 Private William Ernest GREENWAY age 18, a tinworker from Lydbrook, who went on to serve at Gallipoli; he also served with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and the Cheshire Regiment and was discharged from the Army in April 1919.

3093 Private Thomas MORGAN age 37, a gamekeeper from Bromsberrow, who served at Gallipoli, was wounded and evacuated and discharged as unfit for further service in August 1916.



A recruiting 'poster' from The KingtonTimes of January 1915

Some 30 individuals were discharged, mainly due to not meeting the Army's medical standards, these including:

2621 Private George BAYLISS age 40 who had enlisted in October 1914.

1433 Private Walter TURNER age 41 who had enlisted on 5 August 1914.

One soldier, 2896 Private Francis PREECE, aged 18 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion died and was buried at Hereford Cemetery; he had enlisted in December 1914. His family lived at 8 Priory Place, Widemarsh Common, Hereford and he had been employed at Green Crize Nurseries. He was billeted at 67 North Parade Aberystwyth and had complained of stomach pains, he was violently ill during the night but went back to sleep, his companions decided to let him 'sleep in' in the morning, when they went to rouse him they found him dead.

The establishment of Territorial Infantry Battalions was to be the same as that of Regular Battalions at:

- 30 Officers
- 52 Sergeants

- 928 Other Ranks
  - 16 Drummers/Buglers
- 1026 all ranks

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



The Battalion started the new year based in the Cambridge area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was settling down to the hard graft of training for war! It had reorganised, been issued with uniforms and equipment, got rid of those unfit to fight and been reinforced by new officers and men. Some of these reinforcements had previous service but most were unskilled in military matters. Some officers had served in their school cadet corps, but still had lots to learn about 'real' soldiering.

Of the Battalion strength of about 1000, some 600 had joined since mobilisation; there was clearly a lot of training required and this concentrated on personal administration in the field, individual skills, particularly fitness and musketry training, then progressively: individual, section, platoon, company and battalion battle skills and tactics. In the winter conditions and sparse camps training was demanding, but food and company was good.

The day's training started with reveille in the dark; the Battalion cooks provided hot water for early morning ablutions and the ever necessary bucket of tea.

Lance Corporal WH Savage in a letter to his parents said: 'we have landed in a very small village, so you must excuse me writing in pencil. There is only one small shop in the neighbourhood, and we are sleeping in a barn, so you see there is no convenience for us to write letters. Our bed consists of straw, one blanket, and our kit bag for a pillow. We are here trench digging, and start at 7.30am and finish at 5pm. Four miles to walk and we march in full order, with all our kit and carrying 100 rounds of ammunition, shovel and pick – so you may guess we are being put through the mill. One thing – I do not mind the life in the least. We are expecting to move any minute to Cambridge. Then we have been promised leave; Christmas was very strange to us all, but we had a Christmas Dinner in the village schoolroom which we all enjoyed.'

The Brigade was inspected by General Sir Ian Hamilton on 20<sup>th</sup> January, and shortly after this an account of the 30 January gives some indication of the proficiency and keenness of the Battalion to see some fighting:

A remarkable situation has arisen with regard to the likelihood of the Battalion proceeding to the front. One day last week General Sir Ian Hamilton inspected the Regiment at Cambridge, and was highly pleased with the men, being particularly pleased with their appearance. Later the men were paraded and informed by the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Drage, that although the Battalion, is 'thoroughly efficient' and had been chosen as the first battalion in the Welsh Border Brigade to proceed to the front, they could not until more men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had signed on for Foreign Service, so that drafts could be sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion as required. The men were greatly disappointed by this state of affairs and many appeals have been sent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in Aberystwyth to correct the situation. An appeal from D Company 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion to D Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion included the plea ' Until we are backed by a draft of 500 Foreign Service men, fit and old enough to serve in France, we must stay at home; our 2 counties [*Herefordshire and Radnorshire*] must not be disgraced by being among the few Territorial battalions that are not to share in the Great War. We will get the men some where, but we do not want to go outside the Regiment – now you know how things stand, we do not believe that this will be necessary. Buck up men of Herefordshire and Radnorshire, enlist in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and sign on for Imperial Service, and bring your pals as well. The only thing for strong men in this war is to fight by the side of our allies and sooner we are sent abroad the sooner will your turn come to show what can be done!

On 25<sup>th</sup> January 4 soldiers also wrote an open letter to the Hereford Times voicing their disappointment at the situation and appealing for volunteers.

About the 28<sup>th</sup> the Battalion moved from Cambridge to the Northampton area.

Corporal Bauser's diary relates:

9 Jan 15	Moved to Cambridge. Billeted in examination hall of university buildings.
19 Jan	Capt Green informed me that he had been requested to recommend a few people for commissioning - submitted our names (Billie)
27 Jan	Interviewed by Lt Col Drage
28 Jan	Moved to Northampton Billeted with Billie and Doug at 138 St James Park Road

It is not clear who Doug and Billie were, but Corporal Bauser's interview obviously went well as he was later Commissioned.

8199/235952 Pte (later Company Sergeant Major (CSM)) William Cyril WORTHING from Rhyader, enlisted in August 1914 served at Gallipoli, in the Middle East and in 1918 in France.

He was wounded in the Middle East and awarded the Distinguished Conduct medal (DCM) for: 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in action, and for general good work. He handled his platoon with skill, determination and dash, especially in the operations in March 1918, where though practically surrounded, he hung on to his position and actively assisted the advance of the troops on his right and left.'

He was discharged in February 1919 and went on to serve in the Metropolitan Police.



A group of soldiers, including Pte Worthing (arrowed), in billets with their hosts – note billeting officers chalk marks indicating accomodation allocation.



Group of Herefordshire Regimental soldiers, (including Pte Worthing), most wearing the Imperial Service Badge, indicating they had volunteered for overseas service.

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

In response to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's pleas for more men to sign on for Foreign Service 'a good number came forward'.

There were mixed reports from Aberystwyth!

Without doubt the Victorian seaside resorts were 'suffering' from the effects of the war, with boarding houses and trade down – many saw the billeting of troops as a way of making good the shortfalls. This commercial approach did not always lead to harmonious relationships, and it looks as though the relationship was not being fulfilled as the weekly billeting rate was reduced from 21 shillings (£1.05) to 17/6 (£0.87.5); this created some bad feeling! There were complaints from both sides, but soldiers spoke in praise of their 'hosts' and the hospitality they had received over the Christmas period.

The other side of the coin was that the 'seaside' is not overly attractive in the winter and that the training facilities were not what was needed: 'we are absolutely fed up with the place .... As for being an ideal training area, it is all rot. There is not a piece of ground suitable for battalion drills for miles. Most of the fields are nothing but mud and water; Aberystwyth seems to be composed chiefly of mud and water. The health of the Battalion is suffering almost every man has a cough or cold.' There may have been some politics at play here as the Mayor of Hereford (Councillor GB Greenland) was petitioning the War Office for troops to be billeted in Herefordshire!

Another account reads: 'rain fell incessantly on many days, with the result that many and varied were the 'wet day' drills. Companies were taken to the station to practice en-training and de-training drills, some disused iron works were used as a temporary gymnasium and for musketry instruction; extra 'bath days' were also allotted. The Town Hall taken over for lectures.'

The account goes on: 'we did what may be described as cross-country marches, up hill and down dale surmounting all obstacles such as fences, ditches and hedges in various formations. The way in which some of these unpronounceable hills were scaled is evidence of the physical fitness of the men.'

Sports were an important part of fitness training and building esprit de corps. The Battalion football team defeated the 1<sup>st</sup> Welsh Field Ambulance team; the Battalion team consisted of: Ptes Beatley (in goal), Jauncey, Longman, Merrick, Cale, Price (SH), Jones (W), Sayce and Harris (J), Cpl Creed and Sgt Evans (T). The final score is not recorded but goals were scored by 'little Georgie' Sayce (3), Evans (2) and one each for Jones and Harris. The Battalion rugby team also played several games – in their first they were defeated by The Chesire Regiment although the score is not recorded! The team consisted of: Sgt HC Thomson, Lt Berney, Sgt Seabrook, Pte A Bishop, Pte Jacques, Pte L Fisher, Sgt Bowers, Sgt Miles, Pte A Duberley, Pte S Burford, Sgt Bowdler, Pte OL Bennet, Pte NJ Langford, Sgt A Evans, Sgt C Jordan.

The Battalion was also preparing a Bugle Platoon under the direction of Colour Sergeant Cooke.

An interesting 'event' occurred on the night of 16<sup>th</sup> January, when a practise alarm was conducted by the Battalion and all troops were required to stand to. The bugle calls and general activity was heard by



neighboring units and within the hour all of the Brigade had been stood to – much to the amusement of The Herefords!

The Broadwood Camp concert party visited Aberystwyth and gave a series of 4 concerts at 'The Rink' and it is estimated that over 4,000 individuals attended included most of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.

The following comment was included in a report in The Hereford Times: ' By the way, dire calamity has befallen all members of the 'anti-moustache' fraternity. The tragic blow has come at last. Due official warning has been given to all and sundry who were not hitherto the proud possessors of this particular facial adornment that in future ' the top lip is not to be shave'. Quite a revolution isn't it!'

2<sup>nd</sup> Herefords were part of 205 Brigade of 68 (Welsh) Division with a Battalion of The Monmouthshire Regiment. Soldiers were drawn from each Battalion to staff the Brigade Headquarters.



The Regimental Policemen of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Herefordshire Regiment at Broadwood Camp Aberystwyth, including 18/235002 Sergeant George VALE (arrowed). Sgt Vale was a pre war Territorial and was enrolled as regimental number 18 on the formation of the Territorial Force on 1 April 1908. He volunteered for overseas service, but did not serve overseas in 1914 or 1915, but did later; he was therefore entitled to the Territorial Force War Medal. He was also awarded the Territorial Force Efficiency Medal for 12 years efficient service – the combination of these 2 medals to The Herefordshire Regiment is rare with there being only 6 examples.



Sgt Vale with a group of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire Regiment soldiers



Sgt Vale with a (larger) group of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire Regiment soldiers

Sgt Vale was wounded in France in 1917 and evacuated to England; he was treated in several hospitals. The photograph below shows him with his arm in a sling, wearing 'hospital blues'. The photograph is on the reverse of a card showing other wounded soldiers and nurses at Hampton Grange convalescence hospital.

# Post Card

For Correspondence

Address Only



WILSON-PHILLIPS . HAMPTON GRANGE HOSPITAL . SEP. 30. 1918