

**IN MEMORY OF 4258 PRIVATE JOHN WILLIAM  
BARKBY - 1/5th BATTALION, THE  
LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT**



**Bienvillers Military Cemetery, Par de Calais, France where John William Barkby  
is buried and commemorated - Killed in action August 6th 1916**



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART - OCTOBER 2022**

## BEINVILLERS MILITARY CEMETERY

Bienvillers Military Cemetery was begun in September 1915 by the 37th Division, carried on by other Divisions in the line until March 1917, reopened from March to September 1918, when the village was again near the front line, **and completed in 1922-24 when a number of graves, mainly of 1916, were brought in from the battlefields of the Ancre.** Its twenty-one plots show a remarkable alternation of original burials in regimental or divisional groups, and groups of concentrated graves. The cemetery now contains 1,605 Commonwealth burials and commemorations of the First World War. 425 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to two casualties known or believed to be buried among them. The 16 Second World War burials all date from the early months of the war, before the German invasion in May 1940 forced the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from France. *(taken from the CWGC website for which they own the copyright).*

Bienvillers is a large village in the department of the Pas de Calais 18 kilometres south-west of Arras.



Bienvillers Military Cemetery, France

### JOHN WILLIAM BARKBY'S GRAVE

(Copyright of original - Michael Doyle Their Name Liveth For Evermore: The Great War Roll of Honour for Leicestershire and Rutland)

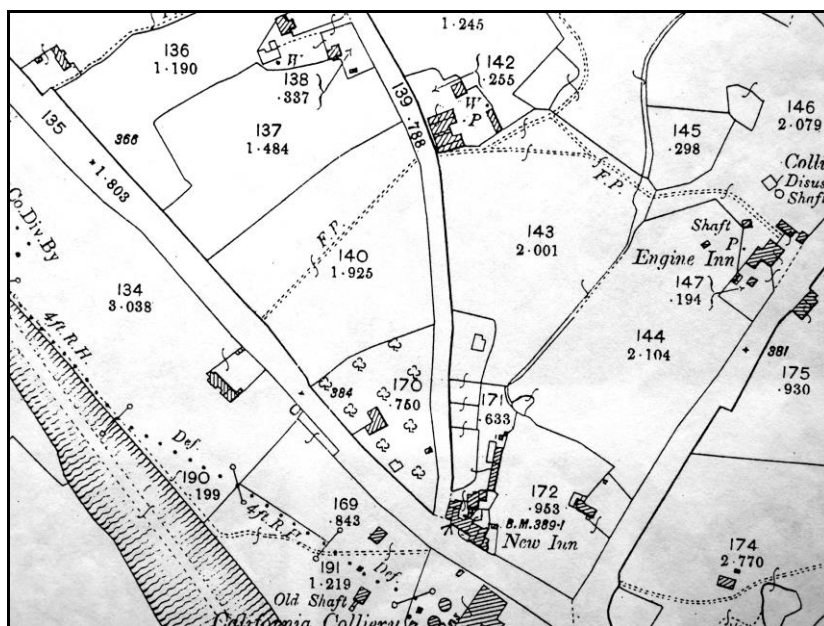
## JOHN WILLIAM BARKBY

John William Barkby enlisted with the 1/5th Leicestershire Battalion at Coalville at the age of 19 to serve his country in the 1st World War, and was killed in action in France on August 6th 1916 at the age of 21. He was born in 1896 in Griffydham to James Barkby (coal miner) and Mary Barkby. He had nine siblings, all born in Thringstone (possibly Pegg's Green) Leicestershire - Lewis (b.1899); James (1890); Frederick (1892); Joseph (1894); Jesse (1898); Johanna (1900); Mary (1903); Elizabeth (1904) and George (1907). The family were living in Lily Cottages, Clay Lane, Pegg's Green, in 1911 and were still living there when he was killed in 1916 as they were given as his next of kin on war grave documentation (featured later), and in the newspaper article below. A "Barkby" is mentioned as being killed in the Regimental Diary which is almost certainly Private John William. **This is highlighted in blue on page 27.**

### Transcribed from the Coalville Times - Friday September 15th 1916 **PEGG'S GREEN SOLDIER'S DEATH**

*The death is officially reported to have taken place on August 6th, of Private John William Barkby, of the Leicestershire Regiment, as the result of wounds received in action. He was 21 years of age, and was the son of Mr James Barkby, retired miner, of Lily Cottages, Pegg's Green, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Before the war, he worked at the Coleorton Colliery, and resided with his parents. He enlisted in May, 1915, and had been about six months in France. A letter from a chaplain states that he has been buried in an English cemetery behind the firing line.*

*The deceased soldier was formerly a popular member of the Pegg's Green Victoria Football Club, being their left half-back. It is interesting to note that members of this club have done splendidly for their King and country. Of the eleven which won the Coalville League cup the two seasons prior to the war. In addition to Barkby having lost his life, the captain, Harold Curtis and W. Bird are reported missing. Another player, Driver Hy. Challoner, of the R.F.A. has been "out there" since the commencement of the war, and Private W. Holt, R.A.M.C., and Private W. Wilton, are also serving – a total of six from the football team of eleven.*



Extract from 1903 O/S Map

Lily Cottages are shown on Clay Lane at top / centre on plot 142





**The Great Way Memorial Brass plaque in St. George's Church Swannington which features the name of John William Barkby along with Harold Curtis and William Bird who also lost their lives and played with John William Barkby in Pegg's Green Victoria football team.**

***IN ABIDING***

***MEMORY OF THE MEN OF THIS***

***PARISH, WHITWICK ST. GEORGE***

***WITH SWANNINGTON WHO LAID DOWN***

***THEIR LIVES IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 -1918***

# **THE 5th BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT**

## **SHORT OVERVIEW**

The 5th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment was a County Battalion and a unit of the Territorial Force founded in 1908. They were organised in eight companies, with headquarters respectively at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Oakham, Melton Mowbray, Hinckley, Market Harborough, Mountsorrel, Shepshed, and one at the Regimental Headquarters at Loughborough. The companies thus were much scattered, and it was only at the annual training camps that soldiers met as a battalion. After training in England, they arrived in France on the 28th February 1915 and spent the first few months of the War in Armentieres sector before moving south to Loos. During the attack on the Hohenzollen Redoubt, which decimated the 4th Battalion, the 5th Battalion was in reserve. In December 1915, the Division was ordered to Egypt and the 1/5th Battalion embarked at Marseille on the 21st January 1916 in the Cunarder Andania, a ship described as a floating palace, but the next morning they were ordered to disembark and the divisions went back to the trenches of the Western Front.

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## THE REGIMENTAL DIARY

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM THE REGIMENTAL DIARY OF THE 5th BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT IS TAKEN FROM - "THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF THE 5th Leicestershire"

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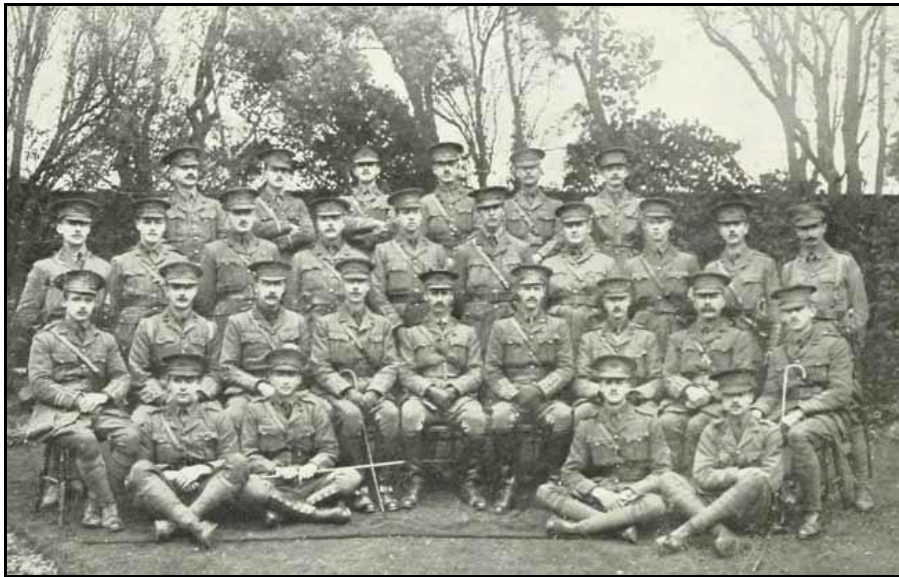
Title: The Fifth Leicestershire  
A Record Of The 1/5th Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment,  
T.F., During The War, 1914-1919.

Author: Captain J.D. Hills

Release Date: December 22, 2005 [EBook #17369]

**The original hard copy version of this book was printed and published by the Echo Press at Loughborough in 1919**

Although it is not possible to provided a report from the Regimental Diary describing the action on the exact day of the fighting which resulted in John William Barkby's death, a description of the action during the period 3rd July to 29th October is taken directly from the Regimental Diary. A man by the name Barkby is mentioned (which cannot be a coincidence) on page 26 of this publication. The paragraph in question is highlighted in blue. No other Barkby is recorded in the identified graves in the Beinviller's Military Cemetery.



Officers in 1914



**Captain J. D. Hills**



**Captain J. D. Hills second from right**



## ENGLAND

**4th Aug 1914 to 25th Feb 1915.**

*The Territorial Force, founded in 1908, undoubtedly attracted many men who had not devoted themselves previously to military training, nevertheless it took its character and tone from men who had seen long service in the old Volunteer Force. Hence, those who created the Territorial Force did nothing more than re-organise, and build upon what already existed. In the 5th Leicestershire Regiment there crossed with us to France men who had over 30 years' service. At the outbreak of war in 1914, R.Q.M.S. Stimson could look back on 36 years of service, and, amongst other accomplishments he spoke French fluently. Other names that occur to us are **Sergeant. Heafield, with 28 years, and C.S.M. Hill with 16 years, both of Ashby**, and both of whom served in the Volunteer Company in South Africa. R.S.M. Lovett (27 years), of Loughborough, also wears the South African medal for service in the same Company. Then there are Pioneer-Serjt. Clay (27 years' service), **C.S.M. Garratt, of Ashby**, C.S.M. Wade, of Melton, R.Q.M.S. Gorse, of Loughborough, Signal-Sergeant Diggle, of Hinckley—all long service men. The senior N.C.O. in Rutland was C.S.M. Kernick, who had done 18 years' service when war was declared.*

*The infantry of the 46th (North Midland) Division consisted of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, the Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, and the Staffordshire Brigades. Our brigade, the 138th, was commanded at first by General A.W. Taylor, who was succeeded a few days before we left England by General W.R. Clifford. Staff officers changed frequently, and we hope we did not break the hearts of too many. Staff-Captain J.E. Vicars survived most of them, and we owe him much for the able and vigorous assistance he was always ready cheerfully to give us.*

*The 5th Leicestershire was a County Battalion, organised in eight companies, with headquarters respectively at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Oakham, Melton Mowbray, Hinckley, Market Harborough, Mountsorrel, Shepshed, and one at Regimental Headquarters at Loughborough. The companies thus were much scattered, and it was only at the annual training camps that we met as a battalion.*

*The Territorial Force was better prepared for mobilisation than is generally supposed, and if the history of the assembly of the regiment at Loughborough in the first week, their train journey to Duffield in the second week, the purchase of horses, the collection of stores, the requisitions for food and the sharpening of bayonets, be demanded, it can be read in the orders printed many months before war even threatened. The orders were drawn up by Lt.-Colonel G. German, T.D., our former commanding officer, now D.S.O., and by his conscientious and indefatigable adjutant, Captain W.G. King Peirce, who was killed early in the war fighting with his old regiment, the Manchesters'. It is due to these officers to record that every detail was studiously followed and found exactly correct. We heard of one officer who, at the time the printed book of orders was issued, was so fearful lest it should fall into the hands of some indiscreet or improper person, that he packed and sealed it, addressed it to his executors, and locked it up in a safe, so that even sudden death on his part would not force him to betray his trust.*

*Of all hard-worked people in the early days it is possible that upon Major R.E. Martin fell the greatest share. Not only did he see that supplies were forthcoming, and that dealers delivered the goods expected of them, but he set himself to design water-carts, and troughs-water-feet-for-the-washing-of, and cunningly to adapt stock material to the better service and greater comfort of all, many of whom were for the first time dragged from the civilities and luxuries of home life.*

*At Loughborough from the 5th to the 11th of August we did little more than pull ourselves together generally, and enjoy the good will of the inhabitants, led by our firm friend, the oft-repeated Mayor, Mr. Mayo, J.P.*



*It did not demand much wit to foretell that sooner or later we should be asked to offer ourselves for service abroad. The question was put for the first time on the 13th of August, at Duffield. A rough estimate was made that at least 70 per cent. would consent gladly and without further thought, and of the others hesitation was caused in many cases because men wondered whether in view of their positions in civil life they had the right to answer for themselves. It should be understood that a very large number were skilled men, and had joined the home army merely because they thought it a good thing to do. And because they liked it, and knew it was a good thing to do, they were content to accept humble places in a force formed for home service and home defence only. Also, at that stage it was not perfectly certain that everyone would be wanted, and when the question of war service abroad was raised, and other men were not serving at all, it is only natural that the thought passed through some men's minds that the appeal was not for them. We think that the battalion might be congratulated upon the general spirit of willingness shown, especially as in the 17th August when the question was put again more definitely, the percentage of those ready to extend the terms of service was estimated at 90.*

*There were other phases of this call for extension of service, too numerous to detail here; for example, on one occasion we were asked to get six companies ready at once. This for a time upset everything, for, as we have said, the original eight companies were taken from different parts of the county, and there was a strong company comradeship, as well as a battalion unity; and if six be taken out of eight it means omissions, amalgamations, grafts, and all sorts of disturbances.*

*We left Duffield on the 15th of August, and marched to Derby Station. Our train was timed to start at 11 p.m., and seeing that we arrived at Luton at 2 p.m. the next day, the rate of motion was about 6 miles an hour, not too fast for a train. But the truth is we did not start at 11 p.m., but spent hours standing in the cattle yard at Derby, while trucks and guns were being arranged to fit one another. As that was our first experience of such delay, the incident was impressed upon our minds, and it counts one to the number of bars we said our medal should have.*

*As in Loughborough, so in Luton, our billets were schools. There was one advantage about the Beech Hill Schools of Luton, namely, that the whole battalion could assemble in the big room, sit on the floor, and listen in comfort to words of instruction and advice. But day schools were not intended for lodging purposes, and here again was displayed Major Martin's skill in the erection of cookhouses and more wash-tubs and other domestic essentials. The moment we got settled, however happened to coincide with the moment at which the education branch of the Town Council determined that the future of a nation depended upon the education of her children, and thus it came to pass that on the 28th of August we moved out of the schools, and entered billets in West Luton.*

*The long rows of houses were admirably suited to company billets. Occupiers dismantled the ground floor front and took in three, and generally four men at various rates. On the 2nd of October a universal rate of 9d. a day each man was fixed. That made twenty-one shillings a week towards paying off a rent which would average at the most twelve shillings. The billets delighted us, and we hope the owners were as pleased. We thank them and all we met in those billeting times for their kind forbearance.*

*The headquarters and billets of senior officers were at Ceylon Hall. The building was owned by the Baptists, and we found their committee most willing and obliging. On one occasion they lent us their chapel and organ for a Sunday service, and set their own service at a time to suit ours, when churches in the town could not help us.*

*Altogether we were in Luton just 3 months training for war. To a great extent the training was on ordinary lines. A routine was followed, and all routines become dull and wearisome. We had been asked to go abroad, we had expressed our willingness to go. This willingness grew into a desire, which at intervals expressed itself in petulant words of longing—"Are we ever going to France?" The answer was always the same: "You will go soon enough, and you will stay long enough." This increased our irritation. Suddenly, on one still and dark November*

day, parade was sharply cancelled, we clad ourselves in full marching order, there was just a moment to scrawl on a postcard a few last words home, tender words were exchanged with our friends in the billets, and with heavy tread and in solemn silence we marched forth along the Bedford Road. There was a pillar box beside the road. It was only the leading companies that could put the farewell card actually in the box, for it was quickly crowded out, and in the end the upper portion of the red pillar was visible standing on a conical pile of postcards.

Never had a field day passed without some reference to the 16th milestone on the Bedford Road, but on this particular day orders did not even mention the milestone. This in itself was sufficient to convince us that real war had at length begun. Long before the 16th milestone was sighted, we were diverted into a field, our kit was commented upon, and we marched back to the same old billets. For convenience of reference this incident is entered in our diary as the march to France along the Bedford Road, and no bar was awarded. The march formed a crisis in our history, for subsequent to it leave home was not sought so eagerly. Positively the last words of farewell had been said, and it was difficult to devise other forms of good-bye nearer the absolute ultimate with which to engage our home friends, who, to our credit be it said, were just as anxious as we were.

It was about this time that our attention was drawn to the anomaly of the discharge rule. A man who had served for four years could take his discharge as a time-expired soldier. At the same time men were enlisting freely. One young man of under 21 was said to have claimed his discharge on the very day that his grandfather, newly enlisted, entered upon three days' "C.B." for coming on parade with dirty boots.

It was in Luton, too, that we overcame our distrust and dislike of vaccination and inoculation against typhoid. We remember C.S.M. Lovett being inoculated in public to give a lead to others, and we smile now to think that in those days it was power of character and leadership only that accomplished things, and incidentally made the way smooth for a Government's compulsory bill.

We were inspected several times, in fact so often that the clause "We are respected by everyone," which comes in our regimental ditty—(and how could it not!!)—was given the alternative rendering "inspected." Twice his Majesty the King honoured us with a visit, and in addition General Ian Hamilton, Lord Kitchener, and others.

Regiments differ much; each has its peculiarities. The 5th Leicestershire a county battalion, if in nothing else, excelled individually in work across country. Though all may not have been as clever as "Pat" Collins (G.A.), who acted as guide to the commanding officer for many months—and we have the commanding officer's permission to add "counsellor and friend"—there was never any difficulty in finding the way in the day or at night. If we may anticipate our early days in France, a few months hence, we can remember being occupied all one night in extricating parties of men who had lost their way hopelessly in open country in the dark. Those were men who came from a city battalion, brought up amongst labelled thoroughfares, street lamps, and brilliantly-illuminated shop windows. We practised night work at Luton, and all was easy and natural, though we added to our experiences, as on the night when in the thrilling silence of a night attack the fair chestnut bolted with the machine gun; and having kicked two men and lost his character, reverted to the rank of officer's charger.

On a day in October the whole division had entrenched itself in the vicinity of Sharpenhoe and Sundon. To enliven the exercise night manœuvres were hastily planned. Our share was to march at about 11 p.m., after a hard day and half a tea, and to continue marching through the most intricate country until five o'clock the next morning. At that time we were within charging distance of the enemy, and day was breaking. Filing through a railway arch we wheeled into extended order and lay down till all were ready. When the advance was ordered, though we had lain down for two minutes only, the greater number were fast asleep. Despite this hitch the position was taken, and then a march home brought the exercise to an end at 8.10 a.m. For this operation we voted a second bar to our medal.

*To those who knew all the details of the plan the most brilliant feature was the wonderfully accurate leading of our Brigade Major, now Brigadier-General Aldercron. He led us behind the advanced posts of the enemy and it was their second line that we attacked.*

*Many officers were joining us. Since war had been declared, E.G. Langdale, R.C.L. Mould, C.R. Knighton, S.R. Pullinger, C.H. Wollaston, G.W. Allen, J.D. Hills, and R. Ward-Jackson had all been added to our strength. Later came D.B. Petch, R.B. Farrer, and J. Wyndham Tomson, of whom Petch was straight from school, and he, with the last two named, served a fortnight in France before being gazetted. Their further careers can be followed in later chapters with the exception, perhaps, of Hills, who himself writes those chapters. As his service is a combination of details, many of which are typical of the young officer who fought in the early days of the war, for general information we narrate so much. John David Hills, though not 20, had already seen six years' service in his school O.T.C., including one year as a Cadet Officer. He surrendered his Oxford Scholarship and what that might have meant in order to join up at once. He passed through the battalion from end to end, occupying at various times every possible place: signalling officer, intelligence officer, platoon commander, company commander, adjutant, 2nd in command, and finished up in command of what was called "the cadre." For some time, too, he was attached to the brigade staff, and when we add that he excelled in every position separately and distinctly, and won the admiration and love of all, we may spare him further embarrassment and let the honours he has won speak for him.*

*Clothing was a lasting trouble. We were now wearing out our first suits, and from time to time there confronted us statements that sounded rather like weather reports, for example—"No trousers to-day; tunics plentiful." Then the question arose as to whether a man should wear a vest, and, if so, might he have two, one on the man, the other at the wash. Patient endurance was rewarded by an answer in the affirmative to the first part of the question, but the correspondence over the second portion has only just reached the armistice stage.*

*And as with men, so with animals. "The waggon and horses" sounds beautifully complete as well as highly attractive, but in the army we must not forget to see that harness comes as well. And this thought, the lack of harness, carries us to another great event in our history, the end of the Luton days, the march to Ware.*

*Why was the march to Ware planned exactly like that? It is not in the hope of getting an answer we ask the question. Waggons and horses and no harness, and whose fault? Waggons and horses with harness, and carrying a double load to make up,—no fault, a necessity. Officers away on leave,—but let us set things down in order. Barely a fortnight after the march to France along the Bedford Road, on Saturday, the 14th of November, a proportion of officers and men went on leave as usual till Monday, and all was calm and still. At 1 a.m. on Monday, orders were received to move at 7 a.m., complete for Ware, a distance, by the route set, of 25 to 30 miles,—some say 50 to 100 miles. Official clear-the-line telegrams were poured out recalling the leave takers. Waggons were packed—(were they not packed!)—billets were cleared, and we toed the line at the correct time. For want of harness, the four cooks' carts and two water carts were left behind; for want of time, meat was issued raw; for want of orders, no long halt was given at mid-day. One short and sharp bit of hill on the way was too much for the horses, and such regimental transport as we had with us had to be man-handled. This little diversion gave regiments a choice of two systems, gaps between regiments, or gaps between sections of the same regiment, and gave spectators, who had come in considerable numbers, a subject for discussion. But the chief feature of the day was that we reached Ware that day as complete as we started. We arrived at 7-20 p.m. except for two Companies who were detached as rear guard to the Division. The tail end of the Divisional train lost touch and took the wrong turning, and for this reason the two Companies did not come in till 11-30 p.m. We understand that the third bar on our medal will be the march to Ware.*

*Amongst those who watched us pass near the half-way post we noticed our neighbour, General Sir A.E. Codrington, then commanding the London District, who as an experienced*



soldier knew the difficulties and gave us, as a regiment, kindly words of praise and encouragement.

We have often wondered what was the verdict of the authorities upon this march. As this is regimental history only, it may be permitted to give the regiment's opinion. We fancied we accomplished passing well an almost impossible task. It is true that not long afterwards we were well fitted out and sent to France. We are persuaded, too, to add here that we said we owed one thing at least to our Divisional Commander, General E. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley; we were the first complete Territorial Force Division to cross the seas and go into action as a Division against the Germans. And it may be that the whole Territorial Force owe to our General, too, that they went in Divisions, and were not sent piecemeal as some earlier battalions, and dovetailed into the Regular Army, or, perhaps, even into the New Army. We live in the assurance that the confidence the Army Council extended to us was not misplaced.

Having rested a day at Ware, we marched to Bishops Stortford, where we cannot say we were billeted neither can we use again the word rest, for the town was over-crowded, and queues were formed up to billets; queues composed of all arms of the service, and infantry did not take the front place. Let us say we were "stationed" there one week. The week was enlivened by strange rumour of German air attacks, and large patrols were kept on the watch at night.

On the 26th of November, the time of our life began when the regiment marched into billets at Sawbridgeworth. The town was built for one infantry regiment and no more. The inhabitants were delightful, and we have heard, indirectly, more than once that they were pleased with us. We soon learnt to love the town and all it contained, and we dare not say that our love has grown cold even now. The wedding bells have already rung for the regiment once at Sawbridgeworth, when Lieut. R.C.L. Mould married Miss Barrett, and we do not know that they may not ring again for a similar reason. In Sawbridgeworth, our vigorous adjutant, Captain W.T. Bromfield, was at his best. Everyone was seized and pulled up to the last notch of efficiency, pay books were ready in time, company returns were faultless, deficiency lists complete, saluting was severer than ever, and echos of heel clicks rattled from the windows in the street. Best of all were the drums. Daily at Retreat, Drum Sergt. Skinner would salute the orderly officer, the orderly officer would salute the senior officer, then all the officers would salute all the ladies, the crowd would move slowly away, and wheel traffic was permitted once more in the High Street.

The ordinary routine of military life was broken into at times by sudden and violent efforts dictated by lightning ideas of the Divisional or Brigade Staff, or by the latest news from the front. There was a time, for example, when we could think of one thing only,—the recessed trench. That gave place to the half company trench, a complete system, embracing fire trenches, supports, inspection trenches, with cook houses, wash houses, and all that a well regulated house could require; and so important was it, and its dimensions so precise, that an annotated copy was printed on handkerchiefs.

Then came a sudden desire to cross streams, however swollen, and a party rode off to Bishops Stortford to learn the very latest plans. We had just received a set of beautiful mules, well trained for hard work in the transport. As horses were scarce, and the party large, our resourceful adjutant ordered mules. Several mules returned at once, though many went with their riders to the model bridge, and in their intelligent anxiety to get a really close view, went into the water with them.

On another day we did a great march through Harlow, and saluted Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C., who stood at his gate to see us pass.

Football, boxing and concerts, not to mention dancing, filled our spare time, and there was the famous race which ended:—Bob, Major Toller, a, 1., Berlin, Capt. Bromfield, a, 2. And we are not forgetting that it was at Sawbridgeworth that we ate our first Christmas war dinner. Never was such a feed. The eight companies had each a separate room, and the Commanding officer, Major Martin, and the adjutant made a tour of visits, drinking the health of each

*company in turn—eight healths, eight drinks, and which of the three stood it best? Some say the second in command shirked.*

*Officers had their dinner, too. After the loyal toast there was one only—"Colour Sergt. Joe Collins, and may he live for ever!" The reply was short—"Gentlemen, I think you are all looking very well." It was his only thought, and we were well. We know how much we owe to him as our mess sergeant; he studied our individual tastes and requirements, and kept us well for many months. Good luck to him!*

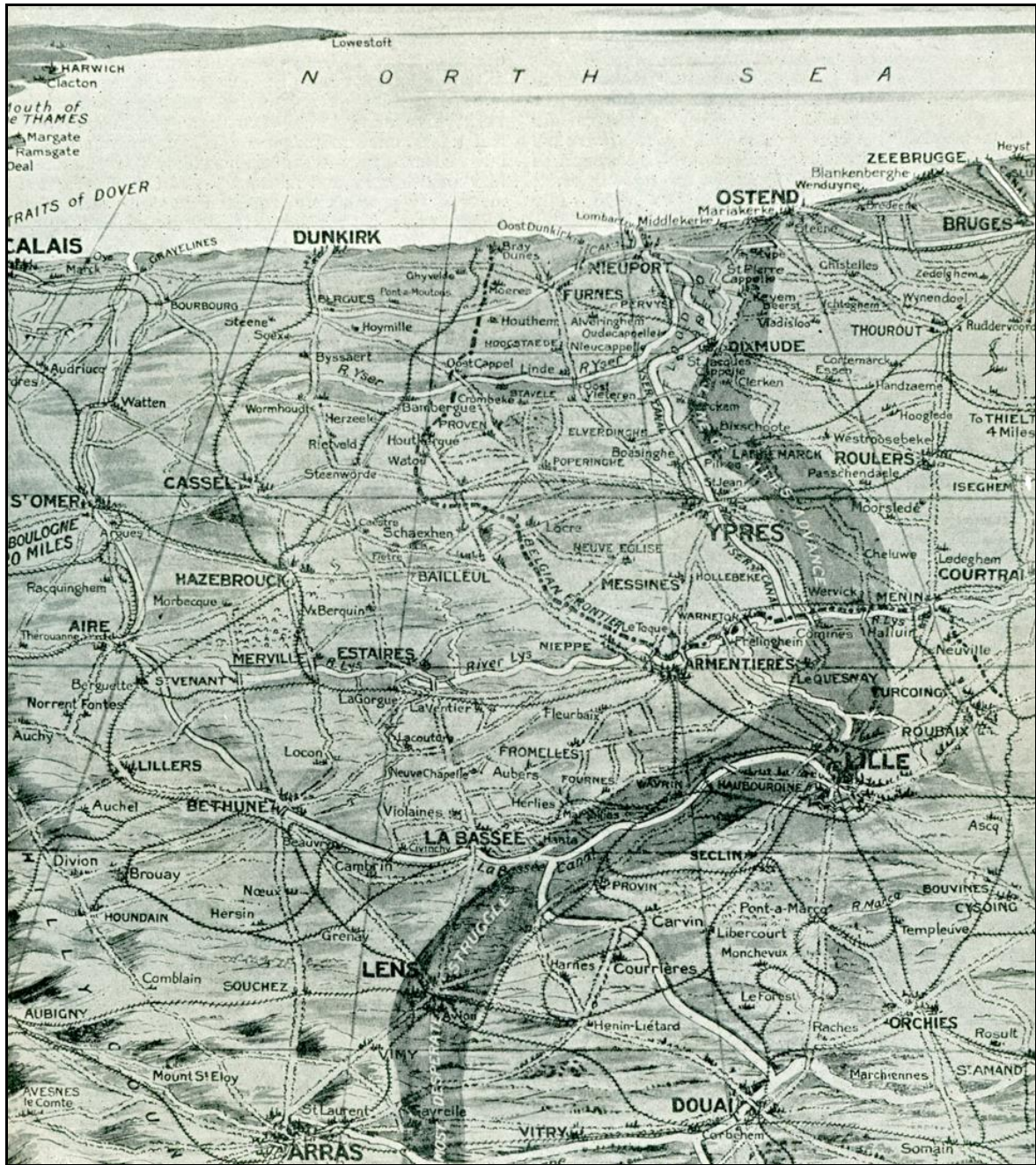
*It was not till January, 1915, that a most important, and as a matter of fact the very simplest, change in our organisation was made. To be in keeping with the regular forces, our eight companies were re-organised as four. This system would always have suited our County battalion even in 1908, and our only wonder is that it was not introduced before.*

*When, on the 18th of February, the G.O.C. returned from a week's visit to France, and gave us a lecture upon the very latest things, we knew we might go at any time. Actually at noon on the 25th we got the order to entrain at Harlow at midnight, and the next morning we were on Southampton Docks.*

*We left behind at Sawbridgeworth Captain R.S. Goward, now Lieut. Colonel and T.D., in command of a company which afterwards developed into a battalion called the 3rd 5th Leicestershire. This battalion was a nursery and rest house for officers and men for the 1st Fifth. It existed as a separate unit until the 1st of September, 1916, and during those months successfully initiated all ranks in the ways of the regiment, and kept alive the spirit which has carried us through the Great War.*

**Continued over page**





Attempts by the Franco-British and German armies to envelop the northern flank of the opposing army through Picardy, Artois and Flanders, rather than an attempt to advance northwards to the sea. The "race" ended on the north sea coast of Belgium around 19th October, when the last open area from Dixmude to the North Sea was occupied by Belgium troops. The outflanking attempts had resulted in a number of battles but neither side was able to gain a decisive victory. This established a continuous front from the Swiss border to the coast.



## EARLY EXPERIENCES.

**26th Feb 1915 to 16th June 1915.**

*After spending the greater part of the day (the 26th February) lounging about the Hangars at Southampton, we at length embarked late in the afternoon—Headquarters and the right half battalion in S.S. Duchess of Argyle, left half, under Major Martin, in S.S. Atalanta. The transport, under Capt. Burnett, was due to sail later in S.S. Mazaran, since torpedoed in the Channel, but they embarked at the same time as the rest. Four other ships containing Divisional Headquarters and some of the Sherwood Foresters were to sail with us, and at 9 p.m., to the accompaniment of several syrens blowing "Farewell," we steamed out, S.S. Duchess of Argyle leading. The Captain of the ship asked us to post a signaller to read any signals, Serjt. Diggle was told to keep a look out and assist the official signaller, a sort of nondescript Swede or other neutral, like the rest of the crew. We soon sighted some war vessel, and asked if they had any orders, the reply being, according to Serjt. Diggle, "No go"—according to the Swede, "No no." The Captain preferred to believe the latter, and as there were no orders continued his course, though we could see the remainder of our little fleet turn round and sail back. The weather was appalling, the sea very rough, and long before we had reached half way we were all very ill. This was not surprising, as our transport was built for pleasure work on the Clyde, and, though fast, was never intended to face a Channel storm. Each time a wave crashed into the ship's side we imagined we had been torpedoed; in fact, it was one long night of concentrated misery.*

*We reached Le Havre in the early hours of the morning, and disembarked, feeling, and probably looking, very bedraggled. From the quay we crawled up a long and terribly steep hill to the rest camp—some lines of tents in a muddy field. Here, while we waited 24 hours for our left half Battalion, of whom we had no news, we were joined by our first interpreter, M. Furby. M. Furby was very anxious to please, but unfortunately failed to realise the terrible majesty of the Adjutant, a fact which caused his almost immediate relegation to the Q.M. Stores, where he always procured the best billets for Capt. Worley and himself. On the morning of the 28th we received an issue of sheepskin coats and extra socks, the latter a present from H.M. the Queen, and after dinners moved down to the Railway Station, where we found Major Martin and the left half. Their experiences in the Channel had been worse than ours. Most of them, wishing to sleep, had started to do so before the ship left Southampton on the 26th; they were almost all ill during the night, so were glad to find a harbour wall outside their port-holes the following morning, and at once went on deck "to look at France"—only to find they were back in Southampton. They stayed there all day, and eventually crossed the next night, arriving on the 28th, feeling as bad as we did, and having had all the horrors of two voyages.*

*We were kept waiting many hours on the platform, while the French Railway staff gradually built an enormous train, composed of those wonderful wagons labelled "hommes 36-40, chevaux en long 8," which we now saw for the first time. Hot in summer, cold in winter, always very hard and smelly, and full of refuse, they none the less answered their purpose, and a French troop train undoubtedly carries the maximum number of men in the minimum of accommodation. During this long wait we should all have starved had it not been for the kindness of an English lady, Mrs. Sidney Pitt, who, with other English ladies, served out an unlimited supply of tea and buns to all. Eventually at 5 p.m. our train was ready, and we entrained—all except two platoons, for whom there was no room. The transport was loaded on to flats which were hooked on behind our wagons, and we finally started up country at about 7 o'clock. The train moved slowly northwards all night, stopping for a few minutes at Rouen, and reaching Abbeville just as dawn broke at 7 a.m. Here, amidst a desolation of railway lines and tin sheds, we stayed for half an hour and stretched our cramped limbs, while six large cauldrons provided enough hot tea for all. From this point our progress became slower, and the waits between stations proportionally longer, until at last we reached a small village, where, according to our train orders, we should stop long enough to water horses. This we began to do, when suddenly, without any whistling or other warning, the train moved on, and Major Martin and Captain Burnett, who were with the horses, only just managed to catch the train, and had to travel the next stage on a flat with a limber. At St. Omer we were told where we should detrain, a fact hitherto concealed from us, and eventually at 2-35 p.m. in*

*a blizzard and snow storm we reached Arneke, detrained at once, and marched about five miles to the little village of Hardifort, where we arrived in the dark.*

*We were, of course, entirely inexperienced at this time, and in the light of subsequent events, this, our first attempt at billeting, was a most ludicrous performance. The Battalion halted on the road in fours outside the village, at the entrance to which stood a group headed by the C.O. with a note-book; behind him was the Mayor—small, intoxicated and supremely happy, the Brigade Interpreter, M. Löst, with a list of billets, and the Adjutant, angry at having caught a corporal in the act of taking a sly drink. Around them was a group of some dozen small boys who were to act as guides. The Interpreter read out a name followed by a number of officers and men; the C.O. made a note of it and called up the next platoon; the Mayor shouted the name at the top of his voice, waved his arms, staggered, smacked a small boy, and again shouted, at which from three to five small boys would step out and offer to guide the platoon, each choosing a different direction. How we ever found our homes is still a mystery, and yet by 10 p.m. we were all comfortably settled in quarters. We were joined the next morning by the two remaining platoons, 2nd Lieuts. Mould and Farrer.*

*The billets were slightly re-arranged as soon as daylight enabled us to see where we were, and we soon settled down and made ourselves comfortable, being told that we should remain at Hardifort until the 4th March, when we should go into trenches for a week's instruction with some Regular Division. We had nothing much to do except recover from the effects of our journey, and this, with good billets and not too bad weather, we soon did. The remainder of our Brigade had not yet arrived, so we were attached temporarily to the Sherwood Foresters, whose 8th Battalion was also absent, and with them on the 4th moved off Eastwards, having the previous day received some preliminary instructions in trench warfare from General Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, who spoke to all the officers.*

*Preceded by our billeting party, which left at 5 a.m., we marched from Hardifort at 9 a.m., and, passing through Terdeghen, reached the main road at St. Sylvestre Capel, and went along it to Caestre. On the way we met General Smith-Dorrien, our Army Commander, and while the Battalion halted he talked to all the officers, gave us some very valuable hints, and then watched the Battalion march past, having impressed us all with his wonderful kindness and charm of manner. At Caestre we found motor buses waiting for us, and we were glad to see them, for though no one had fallen out, we were somewhat tired after marching nine miles, carrying, in addition to full marching order, blankets, sheepskin coats and some extra warm clothing. The buses took us through Bailleul and Nieppe to Armentières, at that time a town infested with the most appalling stinks and very full of inhabitants, although the front line trenches ran through the eastern suburbs. Having "debussed," we marched to le Bizet, a little village a mile north of the town, and stayed there in billets for the night. During the evening we stood outside our billets, gazed at the continuous line of flares and listened to the rifle fire, imagining in our innocence that there must be a terrific battle with so many lights.*

*The next day our instruction started, and for four days we worked hard, trying to learn all we could about trench warfare from the 12th Brigade, to whom we were attached. While some went off to learn grenade throwing, a skilled science in those days when there was no Mills but only the "stick" grenades, others helped dig back lines of defence and learned the mysteries of revetting under the Engineers. Each platoon spent 24 hours in the line with a platoon either of the Essex Regt., King's Own or Lancashire Fusiliers, who were holding the sector from "Plugstreet" to Le Touquet Station. It was a quiet sector except for rifle fire at night, and it was very bad luck that during our first few hours in trenches we lost 2nd Lieut. G. Aked, who was killed by a stray bullet in the front line. There was some slight shelling of back areas with "Little Willies," German field gun shells, but these did no damage, and gave us in consequence a useful contempt for this kind of projectile. Trench mortars were not yet invented, and we were spared all heavy shells, so that, when on the 9th we left Armentières, we felt confident that trenches, though wet and uncomfortable, were not after all so very dreadful, and that, if at any time we should be asked to hold the line, we should acquit ourselves with credit.*

*Our next home was the dirty little village of Strazeele, which we reached by march route, and where we found Lieut. E.G. Langdale who rejoined us, having finished his disembarkation duties. Here we occupied five large farm houses, all very scattered and very smelly, the smelliest being Battalion Headquarters, called by Major Martin "La Ferme de L'Odeur affreuse." The Signalling officer attempted to link up the farms by telephone, but his lines, which consisted of the thin enamelled wire issued at the time, were constantly broken by the farmers' manure carts, and the signallers will always remember the place with considerable disgust. One farmer was very pleased with himself, having rolled up some 200 yards of our line under the impression that all thin wire must be German. The rest of the Brigade had now arrived, and the other three Battalions were much annoyed to find that we were already experienced soldiers—a fact which we took care to point out to them on every possible occasion. Our only other amusement was the leg-pulling of some newspaper correspondents, who, as the result of an interview, made Major Martin a "quarry official," and Lieut. Vincent a poultry farmer of considerable repute!*

*On the 11th March we marched to Saily sur la Lys, better known as "Sally on the loose," where with the Canadian Division we should be in reserve, though we did not know it, for the battle of Neuve Chapelle. The little town was crowded before even our billeting party arrived, and it was only by some most brazen billet stealing, which lost us for ever the friendship of the Divisional Cyclists, that we were able to find cover for all, while many of the Lincolnshires had to bivouac in the fields. Here we remained during the battle, but though the Canadians moved up to the line, we were not used, and spent our time standing by and listening to the gun fire. A 15" Howitzer, commanded by Admiral Bacon and manned by Marine Artillery, gave us something to look at, and it was indeed a remarkable sight to watch the houses in the neighbourhood gradually falling down as each shell went off. There was also an armoured train which mounted three guns, and gave us much pleasure to watch, though whether it did any damage to the enemy we never discovered. Finally, on the 16th, having taken no part in the battle, we marched to some farms near Doulieu, and thence on the 19th to a new area near Bailleul, including the hamlets of Nooteboom, Steent-je (pronounced Stench), and Blanche Maison, where we stayed until the end of the month, while the rest of the Brigade went to Armentières for their tours of instruction.*

*Our new area contained some excellent farm houses, and we were very comfortably billeted though somewhat scattered. The time was mostly spent in training, which consisted then of trench digging and occasionally practising a "trench to trench" attack, with the assistance of gunners and telephonists, about whose duties we had learnt almost nothing in England. General Smith Dorrien came to watch one of these practices, and, though he passed one or two criticisms, seemed very pleased with our efforts. We also carried out some extraordinarily dangerous experiments with bombs, under Captain Ellwood of the Lincolnshires and Lieut. A.G. de A. Moore, who was our first bomb officer. It was just about this time that the Staff came to the conclusion that something simpler in the way of grenades was required than the "Hales" and other long handled types, and to meet this demand someone had invented the "jam tin"—an ordinary small tin filled with a few nails and some explosive, into the top of which was wired a detonator and friction lighter. For practice purposes the explosive was left out, and the detonator wired into an empty tin. Each day lines of men could be seen about the country standing behind a hedge, over which they threw jam tins at imaginary trenches, the aim and object of all being to make the tin burst as soon as possible after hitting the ground. We were given five seconds fuses, and our orders were, "turn the handle, count four slowly, and then throw." Most soldiers wisely counted four fairly rapidly, but Pte. G. Kelly, of "D" Company, greatly distinguished himself by holding on well past "five," with the result that the infernal machine exploded within a yard of his head, fortunately doing no damage.*

*All this time we were about nine miles from the line, and were left in peace by the Boche, except for a single night visit from one of his aeroplanes, which dropped two bombs near Bailleul Station and woke us all up. We did not know what they were at the time, so were not as alarmed as we might otherwise have been. In fact "B" Company had a much more trying time when, a few nights later, one of the cows at their billet calved shortly after midnight. The sentry on duty woke Captain Griffiths, who in turn woke the farmer and tried to explain what had happened. All to no purpose, for the farmer was quite unable to understand, and in the*



end was only made to realise the gravity of the situation by the more general and less scientific explanation that "La vache est malade."

On the 1st April we received a warning order to the effect that the Division would take over shortly a sector of the line South of St. Eloi from the 28th Division, and two days later we marched through Bailleul to some huts on the Dranoutre-Locre road, where we relieved the Northumberland Fusiliers in Brigade support. The same evening the Company Commanders went with the C.O. and Adjutant to reconnoitre the sector of trenches we were to occupy. It rained hard all night, and was consequently pitch dark, so that the reconnoitring party could see very little and had a most unpleasant journey, returning to the huts at 2 o'clock the next morning (Easter Day), tired out and soaked to the skin. During the day the weather improved, and it was a fine night when at 10 p.m., the Battalion paraded and marched in fours though Dranoutre and along the road to within half a mile of Wulverghem. Here, at "Packhorse" Farm, we were met by guides of the Welsh Regiment (Col. Marden) and taken into the line.

Our first sector of trenches consisted of two disconnected lengths of front line, called trenches 14 and 15, behind each of which a few shelters, which were neither organised for defence nor even splinter-proof, were known as 14 S and 15 S—the S presumably meaning Support. On the left some 150 yards from the front line a little circular sandbag keep, about 40 yards in diameter and known as S.P. 1, formed a Company Headquarters and fortified post, while a series of holes covered by sheets of iron and called E4 dug-outs provided some more accommodation—of a very inferior order, since the slightest movement by day drew fire from the snipers' posts on "Hill 76." As this hill, Spanbroek Molen on the map, which lies between Wulverghem and Wyttschaete was held by the Boche, our trenches which were on its slopes were overlooked, and we had to be most careful not to expose ourselves anywhere near the front line, for to do so meant immediate death at the hands of his snipers, who were far more accurate than any others we have met since. To add to our difficulties our trench parapets, which owing to the wet were entirely above ground, were composed only of sandbags, and were in many places not bullet proof. There were large numbers of small farm houses all over the country (surrounded by their five-months' dead live stock), and as the war had not yet been in progress many months these houses were still recognizable as such. Those actually in the line were roofless, but the others, wonderfully preserved, were inhabited by support Companies, who, thanks to the inactivity of the enemy's artillery, were able to live in peace though under direct observation. In our present sector we found six such farms; "Cookers," the most famous, stood 500 yards behind S.P. 1, and was the centre of attraction for most of the bullets at night. It contained a Company Headquarters, signal office, and the platoon on the ground floor, and one platoon in the attic! Behind this, and partly screened from view, were "Frenchman's" occupied by Battalion Headquarters, "Pond" where half the Reserve Company lived, and "Packhorse" containing the other half Reserve and Regimental Aid Post. This last was also the burying ground for the sector, and rendezvous for transport and working parties. Two other farms—"Cob" and "T"—lay on the Wulverghem Road and were not used until our second tour, when Battalion Headquarters moved into "Cob" as being pleasanter than "Frenchman's," and "Pond" also had to be evacuated, as the Lincolnshires had had heavy casualties there.....

## **FLANDERS MUD TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.**

**15th Oct 1915 to 28th Jan 1916.**

The whole Brigade was left very weak after the battle, and there was a serious shortage of officers. As in this respect we, as a Battalion, had suffered least, we had to supply the needs of other units, and Major Toller went to command the 4th Battalion, taking with him 2nd Lieut. Trevor Jones, as they had no subaltern officers. At the same time 2nd Lieut. H.E. Chapman was sent to help the 5th Lincolnshires, and Capt. Burnett and Lieut. Ward Jackson went to Brigade Headquarters to look after Transport and Bombs, while their duties in the Battalion were performed by Serjt. Brodribb and Serjt. Goodman. We could not afford a machine gun officer, so Serjt. Jacques was made responsible for the guns until an officer reinforcement should arrive. "A," "B" and "D" Companies were commanded by Lieuts. Tomson, Wynne, and Shields, and, as Lieut. Allen was still in hospital, Lieut. Hills acted as Adjutant. The officers all

*messed together at first, and tried to maintain the old cheerful spirit of the Battalion mess—a little difficult after losing in one day more than three-quarters of the mess.*

*On Sunday, General Montagu-Stuart-Wortley came to talk to the Battalion after Church parade, and congratulated us on the fighting, saying that, considering the odds against us, he thought we had done very well indeed. He then went round the ranks talking to some of the men who had taken part in the battle, and was very amused by some of the answers he received to his questions. One soldier, asked what he had done in the fight, replied that he had "blown half a Boche officer's leg off with a bomb." The General thought this excellent, but wanted to know why he had chosen half an officer only, and not a whole one.*

*We stayed ten days at Hesdigneul, and then moved to Drouvin and Vaudricourt, where the billets were better, and we were able to have a Battalion officers' mess. During this time, many reinforcement officers arrived and two large drafts of other ranks. Two of our original officers returned—Capt. Beasley, who now took command of "B" Company, and Lieut. Knighton, who returned to "D" as 2nd in Command. The remainder were new to us, and were posted as follows: "A" Company—2nd Lieuts. M.A. Hepworth, C.H. Pickworth, and G. Russell; "B" Company—2nd Lieuts. J.W. Brittain and, when they returned, the two officers lent to other Battalions; "C" Company—Capt. S.J. Fowler, 2nd Lieuts. A.M. Barrowcliffe and A.L. Macbeth; "D" Company—2nd Lieuts. A.H. Dawes, H.W. Oliver, and J.R. Brooke. 2nd Lieut. C.L. Saunders became Machine Gun Officer. With these additions we were able to start training again, and devoted our time to route marching, bayonet fighting, and, most of all, bomb throwing. At no time during the war was more reliance placed on bombs, and scheme after scheme was invented for "bombing attacks up a trench," to such an extent that the platoon organisation was now re-modelled with the one idea of forming bomb parties. The rifle seemed to be temporarily forgotten.*

*On the 28th October, as many Units as possible of the 1st Army were inspected by H.M. The King. Our Brigade formed a composite Battalion commanded by Col. Jones, and, with the rest of the Division, and representatives of other Divisions, was drawn up along the Hesdigneul-Labuissière Road. His Majesty rode past us from Labuissière and, after taking the salute, came down the hill again in his car with the Prince of Wales. He acknowledged our cheers with a smile, and it was not until afterwards that we learnt of his accident soon after passing us, and knew the pain he was suffering during his drive back, pain which he had so admirably concealed.*

*After the inspection we sent a large party, six officers and 230 N.C.O.'s and men, to Saily Labourse, to carry gas cylinders and other material to trenches, but except for this we were spared all fatigues during our period of rest. A week later we marched through Béthune and Robecq to Calonne sur la Lys, a little village outside Merville, where we remained another week before going to the line. Lieut. Allen rejoined us and became Adjutant; Lieut. Hills, after a few days with "A" Company, went to Brigade Headquarters as a Staff Learner. At the same time, Major Toller returned to the Battalion as 2nd in Command. After commanding the 4th Battalion until a new Colonel arrived for them, he had been posted to the 5th Lincolnshires, and for a time it looked as though he would be permanently given command. However, bad luck pursued him, and, as two new Colonels arrived for that Battalion the same day, he again lost his Command. Considering that he had commanded us for three months during the summer with great success, and was easily senior Major in the Brigade, it was exceptionally bad luck that he had to wait another eight months before finally getting his Battalion.*

*On the 10th November, we were told that we should once more take over a part of the line, and the following morning we marched to Lacouture and went into billets for one night. "B" Co. (Beasley) went on at once and spent the night in support positions near the Rue du Bois between Festubert and Neuve Chapelle. The rest of us moved up the next day and took over our new line from the Sherwood Foresters the same night. Battalion Headquarters lived in a little cottage, "No. 1" Albert Road, two Companies occupied a large farm house in the same neighbourhood fitted up as a rest house, one Company lived in a series of curiously named keeps—"Haystack," "Z Orchard," "Path," and "Dead Cow," and one Company only was in the front line.*

*The Brigade now held the line from "Kinkroo," a corruption of La Quinque Rue, crossing to the "Boar's Head," and of this we held the stretch opposite the two farms in No Man's Land, Fme du Bois and Fme Cour d'Avoué. The latter, surrounded by a moat, had an evil reputation, and was said to have been the death-trap of many patrols, which had gone there and never been seen since. The trenches had been dug in the summer when the country was dry, with no regard to the fact that in winter the water level rises to within two inches of the surface of the ground. In consequence, the trenches were full of mud and water, and most of the bivouacs and shelters were afloat. The mud was the worst, for although only two feet deep, yet it was of the clinging variety, and made walking impossible, so much so, that many a man has found it impossible to withdraw his foot, has had to leave his gum-boot behind, go on in his socks, and come back later with a shovel to rescue his boot. The water was deeper and often came over one's gum-boots and up to one's waist, but at least it was possible to walk slowly through it without fear of getting stuck. To add to the discomfort of the garrison, the weather was bitterly cold and often very wet, and though no Company remained more than 24 hours in the front line, yet that was long enough for many to become chilled and so start the terrible "trench foot."*

*"Trench foot," as it was called, was one of the most terrible afflictions of winter trenches. After standing for a long period in water or mud, or with wet rubber boots, the feet became gradually numbed and the circulation ceased, while as the numbed area increased a dull aching pain spread over the whole foot. Exercise to restore the circulation would have prevented this, but for men who were compelled to spend the entire day in one fire bay, exercise was impossible, and by evening the numbness had almost always started. As soon, therefore, as a Company came from the front line, it marched to the rest house. Here, every man was given a hot drink, his wet boots and socks were taken away, his feet rubbed by the Stretcher Bearers until the circulation was restored, and then with dry socks and dry boots he remained for the next 24 hours in the warmer atmosphere of the rest house. Should action not be taken in time, and a man be left for 48 hours with wet boots and socks, the rest house treatment was insufficient, and he had to be sent to Hospital, where, if gangrene had not set in, he could still be cured. Many in the early days did not realize its dangers, for once gangrene starts, the foot has to be amputated.*

*The enemy's trenches were probably as bad as our own, and he only manned his front line at night, leaving a few snipers to hold it by day. These were active for the first hour or two after morning "stand to," but then had breakfast and apparently slept for the rest of the day, at all events they troubled us no more. This was a distinct advantage, for it enabled communication to be kept between posts and from front to rear, without the orderly having either to swim up a communication trench or run a serious risk of being sniped. One, Kelly, a famous "D" Company character, tried to walk too soon one morning to fetch his rum ration and was hit in the knee, much to his annoyance; but on the whole there were very few casualties. By night, too, there was not much firing, probably because both sides were hard at work taking up rations, relieving front line posts, or trying to get dry with the aid of a walk "on top." In our case, with 24 hour reliefs, there were no ration parties, because each Company as it went to the line took its rations and fuel with it.*

*Our only communication trench was "Cadbury's," which started near "Chocolat Menier," corner of the Rue du Bois, so called after an advertisement for this chocolate fastened to the side of a house. It was even more water logged than the front line, and consequently, except when the ice was thick enough to walk on, was seldom used. With a little care it was possible to reach the front line even by day without the help of a trench at all, and Lieut. Saunders always used to visit his machine guns in this way, making the journey both ways over the top every day that we held the sector, and never once being shot at.*

*The Rue du Bois we used as little as possible, for every other house was an O.P., and the gunners preferred us at a distance. The "Ritz," "Carlton," "Trocadero," and "Princes" all gave one an excellent view of the enemy's front line, and, knowing this, the Boche concentrated most of the little artillery he used on this neighbourhood. There was seldom any heavy shelling, mostly field artillery only, and this of a poor order, for not only were there many "duds" in every shoot, but also the gunners seemed to lack imagination. So regular were they*



*in their choice of targets, times of shooting, and number of rounds fired, that, after being in the line one or two days, Col. Jones had discovered their system, and knew to a minute where the next shell would fall. His calculations were very accurate, and he was able to take what seemed to uninitiated Staff Officers big risks, knowing that the shelling would stop before he reached the place being shelled.*

*Amongst the new subaltern officers was one unlike any we had seen before—2nd Lieut. J.R. Brooke. He loved patrolling for its own sake, and during his first few days in the line explored everything he could find including the German wire and trenches. From this time onwards he spent more of his days crawling about on his stomach than sitting like a respectable soldier in a trench, and even when years later he became a Company Commander it was found impossible to break him of the habit. Captains were forbidden to go on patrol, but this did not matter to him, he would take a subaltern with him and make the latter write the report, calling it 2nd Lieut. — and one other Rank. One would expect such a man to be large, strong, and of a fierce countenance; 2nd Lieut. Brooke was small, of delicate health, and looked as though his proper vacation in life was to hand cups of tea to fair ladies at a village tea fight.*

*It seemed probable that we should have to remain in this sector for the whole winter, and our first thought was, therefore, how to make the trenches somewhat more habitable. It was obvious that digging was out of the question, and that nothing less than a large breastwork, built entirely above ground, would be of any use. General Kemp visited the lines several times before finally deciding on his plan, and then sighted two works, the front a few yards behind our present front line, the second just behind what was called the "old British Line," now used for our supports. It was a gigantic task, and the work was very slow, even though every available man worked all night. The inside of the breastwork was to be revetted with frames of woodwork and expanded metal, and, in order that the parapet might be really bullet proof, the soil for it had to be dug from a "borrow pit" several yards in front. The soil was sticky and would not leave the shovel, which added terribly to the work; for each man had literally to dig a shovel full, walk five or six yards and deposit it against the revetting frames. Fortunately for us the Boche did not seem to object to our work, in any case he left us in peace each night.*

*While this was in progress, an effort was also made to try and drain the area. In many places water was lying, held up by sandbag walls and old trenches, actually above the ground level, and it was hoped that by cleaning ditches and arranging a general drainage scheme for the whole area, this surplus water might be drained off, and, in time, the whole water level lowered. Lieut. A.G. Moore, M.C., who returned from England at this time, was made "O.C. Drainage," and set to work at once with what men he could collect, but so big were the parties working on the breastworks each night, that only a very few could be spared for this other work, and not very much could be done.*

*Soon after Lieut. Moore, 2nd. Lieut. G.B. Williams also returned to us, and became Battalion Intelligence Officer, a post now started for the first time. At the same time four new officers arrived—2nd Lieuts. G. Selwyn and W. Ashwell to "A" Company, 2nd Lieut. A.N. Bloor to "B," and 2nd Lieut. V.J. Jones to "D." C.S.M. Gilding and Serjt. Brodribb both left us to be trained as officers, and their places were taken by C.Q.M.S. Johnson who became C.S.M. of "C" Company, and Corpl. Roberts who took charge of the Transport. The latter was still under the special care of Capt. Burnett, although he had all the Transport of the Brigade to look after.*

*Our first tour ended on the 25th, when, after 12 days' mud and frost, we were relieved by the 4th Lincolnshires, and came back to billets in the Rue des Chavattes, not far from Lacouture, where Stores and Transport remained throughout this time. Our casualties had not been very heavy, and we lost more through the weather conditions than at the hands of the enemy, for Capt. Fowler and several N.C.O.'s and men, unable to stand the exposure, had to be sent to Hospital. Our billeting area included several keeps or strong points—L'EpINETTE, le Touret, and others—for which we found caretakers, little thinking, as we stocked them with reserve rations, that the Boche would eventually eat our "Bully," and it would fall to our lot in three years time to drive him from these very positions. The day after relief, the Brigadier went on leave, and Col. Jones took his place at Brigade Headquarters—"Cense du Raux" Farm—*

somewhat to the annoyance of one or two of the other Commanding Officers, who, though junior to the Colonel, were all "Regular Time-serving Soldiers."

Up to this time our covering Artillery had belonged to another (New Army) Division, but now our own Gunners took over the line, making it more than ever certain that we were to spend the whole winter in these abominable trenches. We were very glad to see our own Artillery again, for, though their predecessors had done quite well, we always preferred our own, even in the days of 15 pounders and 5 inch howitzers. Not only were they more accurate than other people, but they were also more helpful, and were obviously intent on serving us Infantry, not, as some others, on carrying on a small war of their own. Besides, we knew the F.O.O.'s so well and looked forward to seeing them in the Mess, where, between occasional squabbles about real or imaginary short shooting, they were the most cheerful companions. Lieuts. Wright, Morris-Eyton, Watson of the 1st Staffs., Morgan, Anson of the 4th, and Lyttelton, Morris, and Dixie of the 2nd Lincolnshires, were the most frequent visitors for the "pip squeaks," while Lieuts. Newton, Cattle, and F. Joyce performed the same duties for the Derby Howitzers. They always took care to maintain their superiority over the mere foot soldier by a judicious use of long technical words which they produced one at a time. At Kemmel they were always "registering"; at Ypres, as we, too, had learnt the meaning of "register" and even dared to use the word ourselves, they introduced "bracketing," and as this became too common, "calibrating" and so on; the more famous of recent years being "datum point" and M.P.I. (mean point of impact). Occasionally our officers used to visit the Batteries, in order to learn how a gun was fired—an opportunity for any F.O.O. to wreak vengeance on some innocent Infantry Subaltern, who had dared to suggest that he had been shooting short. The Infantryman would be led down to the gun pit, and told to stand with one leg on each side of the trail, "so that he could watch the shell leave the gun"; some Gunner would then pull a string and the poor spectator, besides being nearly deaf, would see some hideous recoiling portion shoot straight at his stomach, stop within an eighth of an inch of his belt buckle, and slide slowly back—a ghastly ordeal.

On the night of the 2nd December, we went once more to the line and relieved the 4th Lincolnshires in our old sector, which we found very much as we had left it, perhaps a little wetter, as it had been raining. For this tour we slightly altered our dispositions, and instead of each of the four Companies taking a tour in the front line, two Companies only would do so for this tour, the other two doing the same the following tour. It was hoped that in this way the garrison would take more interest in improving their surroundings if they knew they would return to the same place every other day. Under the old system, no one took much interest in a trench which he only occupied for 24 hours, and would not see again for four days. We did not, however, have a chance of testing this new arrangement, for at 3-45 the following morning, orders came that the Division would be relieved the following night, and was under orders to go to the East. As soon as it was dark, the 19th Division took our place in the line, and we marched back for the night to the Rue des Chavattes, whence, after ridding ourselves of gum-boots, sheepskin coats, and extra blankets, we marched the following day by Locon, Lestrem and Merville to Caudescure, a little village on the edge of Nieppe Forest.

We found fairly good billets here, though they were too scattered to allow of a Battalion Mess, and we spent a very enjoyable fortnight training, playing football, and listening to rumours about our destination. The most persistent of the last was Egypt, based in the first instance on a telephone conversation between a Corps and Divisional Signaller, overheard by a telephonist at Brigade, in which the Corps Signaller told his friend that he had seen a paper in one of the offices which said that we were to go to Egypt. On the other hand, Lieut. X of the Lincolnshires had a brother in the Flying Corps, who had ridden on a lorry with an A.S.C. Serjeant from G.H.Q., and had been told that all the Territorial Divisions in India were being relieved by Divisions from France. Against this was Captain Z's batman, who had a friend in the Staffordshires who was batman to an officer who had a cousin in the War Office, and he said we were going to the Dardenelles. On the top of all these came General Montagu-Stuart-Wortley to inspect us, and, incidentally, to tell us that he himself had not the slightest idea where we were going.

*On the 19th we moved to the little hamlet of Tannay, still on the edge of the woods, between Haverskerque and Thiennes. As we paraded in the morning there were many who said they could smell gas, but as the wind was N.E. and the line very far away, we thought they must be mistaken. However, the next day the official communiqué told us of a big gas attack at Ypres on the 9th and 49th Divisions, and though Ypres was 18 miles away, it must have been this that could be smelt. In these new billets we spent Christmas—the first Christmas in France for us, and managed with the aid of plum puddings and other luxuries sent out to us by the good people at home, to enjoy ourselves immensely. Not only were many good things to eat sent us, but we also received some very welcome gifts of tobacco, cigarettes, books and stationery from the "Leicester Daily Post and Mercury" funds. Both these papers have been most faithful throughout the war, never failing to send us "themselves," and often adding boxes of comforts for all. Our celebrations included a Brigade Football Cup competition, for which we entered a hot side, including many of our old players—"Banger" Neal, "Mush" Taylor, Toon, Archer, Skelly, Fish, Serjt. Allan, Kirchin and others. We met the 5th Lincolnshires in the semi-finals and beat them 2—1, and then turned our attention to their 4th Battalion, who after beating our 4th Battalion, our old rivals, met us in the final and went down 1—0. The final was a keen, hard game, played well to the finish, and we deserved our win. The trophy—a clock, mounted into a French "75" shell—was taken back to Leicestershire by Capt. Farmer when he next went on leave.*

*On the 27th we again moved, this time to some farms round Widdebroucq, just west of Aire, to be nearer our entraining station Berguette, which with Lillers had already been reconnoitred. As Captains Hills and Ward Jackson had already gone forward with an advance party to Marseilles, it began to look as though we really should go East before the end of the war—a fact which some of us were beginning to doubt. Training still continued each day, special attention being paid to open warfare tactics, which fortunately included more musketry and less bombing, and we also carried out a number of route marches and field days. Scouts, having become obsolete, were resurrected, and Field Service Regulations rescued from the dim recesses of valises. It was a pleasant change after the previous nine months' trench work.*

*At last, on the 6th January, we marched to Berguette station and boarded a long train of cattle trucks, leaving at 4.40 p.m. The first part of the journey was uninteresting, but after passing Paris, the train seemed happier, went quite fast at times, and did not stop so long between stations. The weather on the 8th was lovely, and the third day's travelling under a hot sun was delicious; doors were pushed back, and those for whom there was no room on the foot-boards, sat on the carriage roofs. Finally, at 1.0 a.m. on the 9th, the train reached Marseilles, and we marched out to a camp on the west side of the town, in a suburb called Santi, where there were tents for all, and a large room for an officers' mess. Here we remained 14 days in the most excellent surroundings, and with heavenly weather.*

*The Staffordshires and Lincolnshires had already sailed for Egypt when we arrived, and a few days later another ship carried some Padres and other officers of the Division to the same destination. For the rest of us there were for the moment no transports, so we had to wait—not a very terrible task, when our most strenuous exercise was sea-bathing or playing water polo, and our recreation consisted of walking into the town, to which an almost unlimited number of passes were given. Here, it must be admitted, there was often too much to eat and far too much to drink, and the attractions were so great that everybody waited for the last possible tram back to camp, with the result that this vehicle arrived with human forms clinging to every corner of the sides, ends and roof—a most extraordinary sight. On one occasion two well-known soldiers who had dined too well and not too wisely, stood solemnly at the side of the road holding up their hands to a tram to stop, when a party of lively French scavengers turned the hosepipe on to them, and they had to be rescued from the gutter, where they lay with the water running in at their collars and out at their ankles. The officers, too, had many popular resorts, such as Therese's Bar and the Bodega for cocktails, the Novelty for dinner, and a host of entertainments to follow, ranging from the opera, which was first-class, for the serious, through the "Alcazar" and "Palais de Crystal" for the frivolous, to the picture palaces for the utterly depraved.*



*On the 20th we learnt that our Transport was now ready for us, and the following morning we marched to the docks and embarked in H.M.T. "Andania," late Cunard, which can only be described as a floating palace, fitted with every modern luxury. We were all rather glad to be leaving Marseilles, for it was an expensive place, and many of the officers were beginning to be a little apprehensive about the lengths to which Mr. Cox would let them go. However, all would now be right, because once in the desert we should draw extra pay and find no Bodegas. We were to sail on the morning of the 22nd, and soon after dawn orders arrived—to disembark! Sadly we left our palace and walked back to Santi Camp—now hateful to look upon, as we realised that within a few days we should be back once more in the mud, rain, cold and snow of Flanders. The reason for the sudden change, for taking half the Division to Egypt for a fortnight only, was never told us, but probably it was owing to the successful evacuation of the Dardanelles. Had this been a failure, had we been compelled to surrender large numbers to save the rest, the Turks would have been free to attack Egypt, which had at that time a small garrison only. As it was the Division from Gallipoli went to Egypt, and we were not wanted.*

*On the 27th Pte. Gregory, who died as the result of a tram accident, was given a full military funeral, and the following day at 4.30 a.m. we left Marseilles for the North.*

## MONCHY AU BOIS.

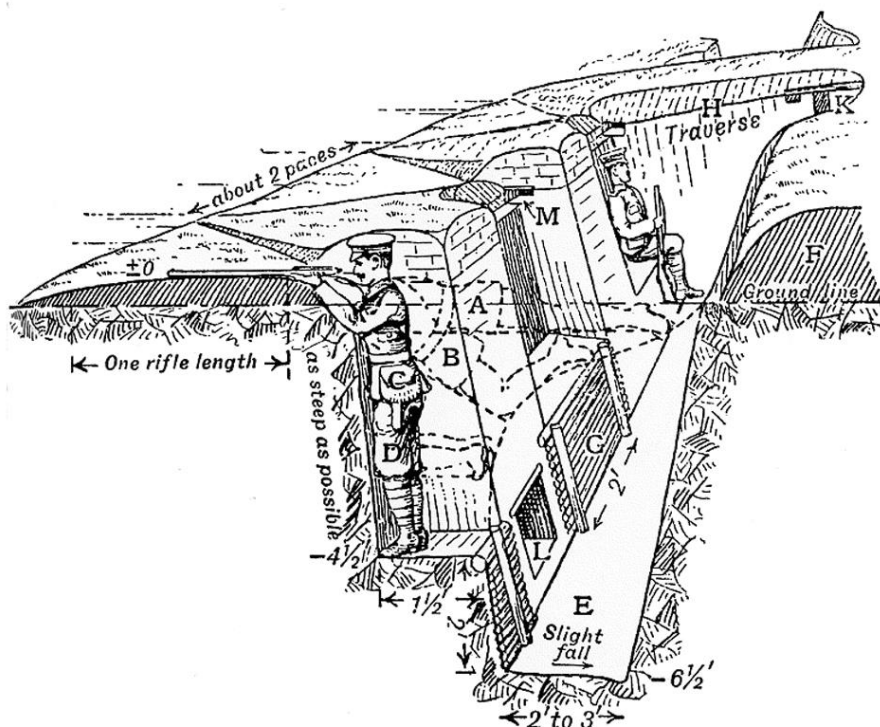
**3rd July, 1916 to 29th Oct 1916.**

**John William Barkby was killed on August 6th, 1916, and the paragraph mentioning the name Barkby is highlighted in blue on page 27. Clearly John William was buried close to where he died described elsewhere by a Chaplain as in an English Cemetery. However if one reads the feature on the Beinville's Military Cemetery on page 2 we can imagine how John William's body was brought back to be buried there when the cemetery was completed in 1922-24 when a number of graves, mainly of 1916, were brought in from the battlefields of the Ancre.**

*North of Gommecourt the enemy's line, after passing Pigeon wood, ran a few yards West of Essarts village along the high ground to within a short distance of Monchy au Bois, then, turning West, made a small salient round this village, which lay in a cup-like hollow. Between Essarts and Monchy, and on higher ground still, stood Le Quesnoy Farm, which, with some long tall hedges in the neighbourhood, provided the Boche with excellent and well concealed observation posts and battery positions. Behind Monchy itself, and again on high ground, was Adinfer wood, and near it Douchy village, both full of well concealed batteries, while the trees in Monchy itself gave the enemy plenty of cover for machine guns and trench mortars. Opposite this our line was almost entirely in the open. From Foncquevillers it ran due North to the Hannescamps-Monchy road, more than 1,000 yards from the enemy opposite Essarts and Le Quesnoy; then, crossing the ridge, dropped steeply to the Monchy cup, where, at the Bienvillers road, the lines were only 200 yards apart. The only buildings near the line were the two Monchy mills, North and South, both about 80 yards from the front line and both little more than a heap of bricks with an O.P. concealed in the middle. Just South of the Bienvillers road a small salient, some 180 yards across ran out towards the enemy's lines, overlooked from two sides, and always being battered out of recognition by trench mortars and bombs.*

*The rest of our front line system was more or less ordinary—deep trenches with, at intervals, a ruined dug-out for Company Headquarters. Owing to the appalling weather all trenches were very wet, including the communication trenches, of which there were several—Chiswick Avenue opposite Essarts, Lulu Lane alongside the Hannescamps road, with Collingbourne Avenue branching off it, and, on the Monchy side, Shell Street in the middle, and Stonegate Street alongside the Bienvillers road. The last had been so named by the Leicestershire "New Army" Brigade, who had originally built the trench. Hannescamps, a minute village, lay 1,000*

yards from the line, partly hidden by a hollow, and, with an excellent bank full of dug-outs, was a home for Battalion Headquarters and one Company. Another Headquarters was in Shell Street, and the Support Battalion, with many batteries and others, lived in Bienvillers au Bois, about 1½ behind the line. Pommier, la Cauchie, and occasionally Humbercamps were rest billets still further back. Beyond them a large farm, la Bazéque, was the home of all the Brigade transport and Q.M. Stores. Such was the sector into which the Division went after Gommecourt to rest and gradually recuperate. Our Brigade had the Monchy front and the stretch with the wide No Man's Land opposite Essarts; we, as a Battalion, were sometimes North, sometimes South of the Hannescamps Road, the other Brigades were further North, in the Ransart, Bailleulval and Berles area. Here we stayed, with one rest later on, for eight months.



Soon after our arrival in Bienvillers, we were much surprised to see Colonel Toller again return to us. We thought that he really had got a permanent Command when he went to the Highlanders, but apparently a former Colonel returned a few days after he arrived there, and he was consequently sent back. However, there were now many vacancies in our Division, and Col. Toller was at once sent to command the 7th Sherwood Foresters, the Robin Hoods—an appointment which proved to be permanent, and which he held for the next two years. At the same time, Lieut. N.C. Marriott, wounded at Hohenzollern, returned to us, and soon afterwards 2nd Lieut. J.C. Barrett joined us from England, while we lost 2nd Lieut. G.E. Banwell, who was slightly wounded at Gommecourt, and, after several efforts to remain with his unit, had to go to Hospital with a badly poisoned foot. We also lost our Divisional Commander, Major General the Hon. E.J. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.V.O., who went to England. Before he went, the following notice appeared in orders:—"On relinquishing the Command of the Division, General Stuart-Wortley wishes to thank all ranks, especially those who have been with the Division since mobilization, for their loyalty to him and unflinching spirit of devotion to duty. He trusts the friendship formed may be lasting, and wishes the Division good luck and God speed." To quote the Battalion War Diary—"The Major General has commanded the Division since 1914; universal regret is openly expressed at his departure."

The new Divisional Commander, Major General W. Thwaites, R.A., arrived soon afterwards, and soon made himself known to all units, introducing himself with a ceremonial inspection. Ours was at Bailleulmont, where we were billeted for a few days, and on the afternoon of the 13th we formed up 650 strong to receive him. After inspecting each man very carefully, the

*General addressed the Battalion, calling Col. Jones "Col. Holland," and us the 5th Leicesters, two mistakes which were never forgotten, though soon forgiven.*

*He congratulated us on our appearance, and said that he read determination in our faces, promising to know us better by seeing us in the trenches. We then marched past him and went home.*

*Our first few tours in this new sector might well be described as a nightmare of H<sub>2</sub>O and H<sub>2</sub>S. It rained very hard, and all the trenches at once became full of water—in some places so full that the garrison, as the weather was warm, discarded trousers and walked about with shirts tucked into sandbag bathing drawers. Some of the communication trenches were in a particularly bad condition, and worst of all was the very deep Berlin Trench running alongside the road from Bienvillers to Hannescamps. A sort of "Southend-pier" gridded walk had been built into one side of this about four feet from the floor of the trench, and in some places even this was covered, so that the water in the trench itself was nearly six feet deep. Pumps proved almost useless, and it was obvious that something drastic would have to be done if we were to remain in this part of the world for the winter.*

*The H<sub>2</sub>S was in cylinders. For some unknown reason the Special Brigade R.E., or "gas merchants" as they were more popularly called, considered the Monchy hollow a particularly suitable place for their poison attacks. The result was that we spent all our rest periods carrying very heavy cylinders into the line or out again, terribly clumsy, awkward and dangerous things to carry, while our trenches, already ruined by the weather, were still further damaged, under-cut and generally turned upside down to make room for these cylinders. Then again, the actual gas projection caused a most appalling amount of trouble. The wind had to be exactly West, for a touch of North or South would carry the poison over our miserable little salient, but at times the wind was due East, and on one occasion it remained obstinately in the wrong quarter for three weeks, while we lived in daily terror of some chance Boche shell hitting one of the cylinders. On several occasions we had to assist with smoke candles and smoke bombs, and this, too, caused us much worry. Perhaps at dusk the wind would be favourable, and orders would arrive that gas would be discharged at 11-34. At 11-34 we, having heard nothing to the contrary, would light our smoke machines, and find no gas turned on. At 12-55 we should get another message by some orderly to say "discharge postponed until 12-55"—then, of course, no time to warn anybody, and no smoke left.*

*The reason for this delay in the communication of orders was that our telephones were in a state of transition. We had discovered that the Boche with his listening sets could overhear all conversations carried on by the ordinary field telephone, and consequently it was absolutely forbidden to use this instrument, except in emergency, within 2,000 yards of the front line. A new instrument, the "Fullerphone," was being introduced which could not be overheard, but one could not use it for talking; all messages had to be "buzzed." Incidentally the "buzzing" process produced a continuous whining noise, and this, in a small Company Headquarter dug-out, was almost enough to drive the unhappy Company Commander off his head. The Fullerphone, too, was very scarce at first, so that almost all messages had to be sent by orderly, or runner as he now began to be called. This caused so much trouble that the next stage was the introduction of codes and code names. At first these were very simple, we were "John" after Col. Jones, the 5th Lincolnshires "Sand," from Sandall, etc., while "gas" became the innocent "Gertie," and to attack was "to tickle." One very famous message was sent when an expected gas attack had to be suddenly postponed—"John can sleep quiet to-night, Gertie will not tickle." Later we became "Sceptre," when all units in the Division were called after race-horses, and still later, when Brigade Headquarters became "Girl," we each had a lady's name; we were "Gertrude." It sounded somewhat curious to hear a Staff Captain who had lost his Brigadier ringing up a Battalion Headquarters to ask "have you seen a 'Girl' about anywhere?" The "Bab" code was also introduced, a three-figure code with innumerable permutations and combinations. The whole thing was very secret, and added much to the worries of the Company Commander, who not only had to be careful not to lose the code book, but had to remember, without writing it down, the Corps code letter and number for the week.*



*In the same way the Artillery had all manner of codes for every conceivable occasion. Various messages were devised and entered in the Defence Scheme for retaliation, S.O.S., raid purposes, etc., and woe betide the luckless F.O.O. or Infantryman who sent the wrong message. There were "concentrates" and "Test concentrates," and "attacks" and "Test attacks," and "S.O.S." and many others. If anything serious really happened, the lines were always broken at once, and there remained only the rockets and coloured lights. The S.O.S. signal was almost sacred, not to be used for a hostile raid, or when retaliation was needed, but only in the event of the enemy massing for a general attack. However, it was once used—in a rather curious little battle fought on the 4th August, 1916.*

*Our trench strength at the time was very weak, because two days later we were to raid the enemy's lines opposite Monchy salient, and the raiding party had been left out of the line at Pommier to practice. At 3-30 a.m. on the 4th the Boche, either annoyed at our wire-cutting, or to celebrate his favourite anniversary, the declaration of war, opened a heavy fire with guns, mortars, rifle grenades, coloured lights and everything else imaginable. The noise was terrific, and the C.O. and Adjutant rushed to the Defence Scheme to find what was the correct message to send; most of the noise was at trench 86. They decided to tell the Gunners "assist L," but, between F.O.O. and signals, this reached the Artillery as "assist 86," which was meaningless, so they did nothing. Meanwhile, our Lewis Guns could be heard, so Col. Jones, unable to telephone to Companies whose lines were all cut, finally sent the S.O.S. The reply was prompt and terrific. There was plenty of ammunition, and all the gunners, wakened by the bombardment, were only too anxious to shoot, so that within a few minutes every weapon, from an 18 pounder to a 12" gun on railway mounting, was raining shells into Monchy and its surroundings. It was very effective, but none the less there had to be an enquiry into "who had dared to use the S.O.S.," and, when the facts were all brought to light, the F.O.O., Lieut. Cave, partly responsible for the initial mistake, earned the name of "S.O.S. Cave," which stuck to him till he left the Division.*

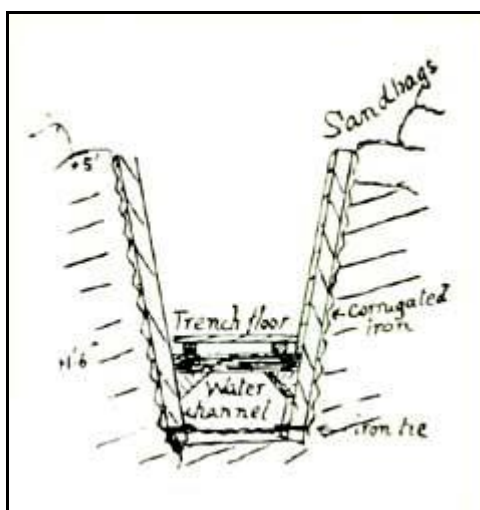
*The raid was not a great success. For several days "C" Company, who were chosen for the task, carried out continuous practices at Pommier, first under Capt. Mould, and later, when he had to go to Hospital with septic tonsillitis, under Capt. Shields. Capt. Moore was at the Army School at the time. The Infantry arrangements were made satisfactorily, but there was little or no opportunity for the Gunners to observe the result of their wire-cutting, with the result that, when the party went over on the evening of the 5th, they found no gaps. The raiding party advanced in four groups, each group with bombers, bayonet men, and sappers for demolition work, and each under an officer—2nd Lieuts. Steel, Barrett, Heffill and Morris. The party removed all marks of identification, but wore their collars turned up, and a small patch of white on the back of their collars for mutual recognition.*

*At 11-0 p.m. the party left our trenches and lay out in front of our wire, waiting for our bombardment, which 15 minutes later opened on the enemy's front line. The shooting was excellent, but the backward burst from our 6 inch Howitzers caused several casualties; amongst others 2nd Lieut. Steel was badly wounded in the leg. At Zero, 11-25 p.m., we advanced, but found no means of getting through the wire, while the Boche sent numbers of bombs and rifle grenades along the whole front. The party acted very coolly and searched carefully for gaps, but, finding none, threw their bombs and returned, guided to our lines by rockets and lanterns. Six men were missing. A curious thing happened when our search party, under L/Cpl. Archer, went out to look for them. A German machine gun, hearing the movement, opened fire, and, at the same moment, our "Flying Pig"—240 mm. trench mortar—which had jammed during the barrage, suddenly went off and dropped its shell exactly on the gun team. The following night Cobby's body, one of the raiders, was found in a shell-hole, and soon afterwards two others, Worth and Sommers, returned to our lines, having been lost the previous night. Barkby was found dead a day later, and Duckett's body was buried by a patrol which found it during the following tour. The sixth was Private "Arty" Carr, who returned unhurt at 11-0 p.m. on the 8th, after three days. During the raid he had left his party, and, while they worked to the left, looking for a gap, had gone to the right, where, outside the raid area, he found the wire thin. He had entered the German lines, had some exciting times with a post which he bombed, and then tried to get out, only to find that he had moved away from his original gap, and was now confronted by some*

*very strong wire. He did not get through until dawn on the 6th, so then lay in a shell hole until dark, when he started to return. Tired and somewhat exhausted, he lost his way in the waste of shell holes and mortar craters round the Monchy Salient, and did not finally find our lines until the 8th.*

*Our total casualties were three killed and one officer and 15 wounded. To these must be added Captain Barton, who had a most unfortunate accident. Always wanting to be "up and doing," he watched the raid and helped the wounded, standing on our front line parapet, but, turning to re-enter the trench, slipped and bayoneted himself in the thigh. It was not a very serious wound, but would not heal, and he had to be sent to England. With him we lost another valuable officer, 2nd Lieut. Williams, who, while acting as bomb instructor at Brigade Headquarters, met with an accident, and was wounded in the head. Not long afterwards, Serjt. Goodman, our chief N.C.O. Instructor, who was wounded, and lost one of his legs and part of an arm as the result of a bombing accident at the Divisional School. During this first month our casualties, "holding the line," were very slight, though we lost three good N.C.O.'s through shell fire. Serjt. Shreeves, of "C" Company, died of wounds, Cpl. Ambrose, of "B" Company, was killed outright near Hannescamps, and later Serjt. W. Gartshore, of "C" Company.*

*Between raids and gas attacks we were kept hard at work repairing our trenches. General Kemp was a sapper before he became an Infantry Brigadier, and we were soon instructed in the mysteries of sump-holes, "berms" and "batters," interlocking trench floor boards, and the correct angles for the sloping sides of a trench, while anyone who dared to undercut a parapet for any purpose had better not be present the next time that the General appeared. As far as possible all the carpentry work was done by the Sappers out of trenches and sump-frames were sent up ready made, also small dug-outs in numbered parts, easily put together; all we had to do was to dig the necessary holes. At the same time some genius invented the "A" frame, a really wonderful labour saving device. Hitherto floorboards had been supported on piles and crossbars, while further and longer stakes were driven in to carry the rivetment. The new frame shaped like a flat-topped letter "A," was put in the floor of the trench upside down. The legs held the revetment against the sides, the floorboards rested on the cross-piece, and the space between the cross-piece and the flat top formed a good drain. These were first used in communication trenches only, where the Monmouthshires were at work for us; later we used them in all trenches wherever possible.*



*Meanwhile, when not in trenches, we rested, first at Bienvillers and later at Pommier. Bienvillers had many good billets, but was too full of our heavy artillery to be pleasant, for the noise was often very disturbing. The enemy, too, used to shell the place, and 2nd Lieut. Shipston had a most remarkable escape one day when standing in front of a first floor window, shaving. A whizz-bang hit the window sill and carried itself, sill and many bricks, between his legs into the room; he himself was untouched. Another early morning bombardment found the Doctor in his bath. He left it hurriedly and hastened, dripping and*

unclothed, to the cellar, which he found already contained several officers and the ladies of his billet. But this stay in Bienvillers is most remembered on account of a slight fracas which occurred between Col. Jones and a visiting Army Sanitation Officer. A full account is given in two entries in the War Diary. The first, dated the 23rd July, says simply—"Major T—, Sanitation Officer, Illrd. Army, came to look at billets. We received him coldly, and in consequence got a bad report, see later." The second entry, a week later, is dated 30th July. "The Sanitary report referred to came and we replied. The report detailed many ways in which we, as a Regiment, were living in dirt, and making no attempt to follow common-sense rules, or to improve our state. It stated that we had been in the village three days, and thus implied that there could be no excuse. Our reply asserted that the inaccuracy of the report made it worthless. That, though the Regiment had been there three days, the Army, which the gallant Major T. represented and worked for, had been in the village some months. That Major T.'s party had done nothing to put or keep the billets in order, to put up incinerators, or in any way to make suitable billets for soldiers resting from trench duty. It suggested that Major T. had neglected his duty, and thus was not in a position to judge a Regiment."

Pommier was much pleasanter, and was very seldom shelled. Brigade Headquarters lived there, and, with the aid of an energetic Mayor and our invaluable interpreter, M. Bonassieux, had done much to improve the billets. There were plenty of civilians who were good to us, though, to quote the War Diary again, 26th August, "A complaint was made by the Maire that certain of our officers were bathing in the open, and that this was not counted amongst the indecencies the French permitted." At about the same time, during one of our rest periods, we were inspected by General Thwaites—a full ceremonial inspection, the first of many of these much dreaded ordeals. Again it is impossible to improve on the account given by the War Diary. "At 2-30 we were drawn up in close column in Ceremonial—Companies sized. We received the new G.O.C. with several salutes, the last was probably the worst. The Battalion was then closely inspected, and a few names taken for unsteadiness, dirty buttons, badly fitted packs, and the like. A slight confusion between the terms packs and equipment led us to take off equipment, and we then formed up as a Battalion in Brigade. We saluted again, this time we had no bayonets, and then marched past by Companies and back in close column several times. Then, by a questionable, though not questioned, manoeuvre, we came back again and advanced in review order. The Brigade Band was in attendance and played the Brigade March in place of the Regimental March, because it did not know the latter. While still in Ceremonial order, we finished by doing Battalion drill, under the general idea 'keep moving.' We kept moving for two hours in all, and it was universally conceded that the men moved very well. One or two of the newly arrived officers were unequal to the occasion. It was a good day in the country, and, in the senior officers, stirred up pleasant memories of old peace time annual inspections." The exceeding fierceness of the General on this Inspection had an amusing sequel when, a week later, two of our soldiers were repairing a road outside the Brigade office. One regarded the other's work for a few minutes critically, and then exclaimed fiercely, "Very ragged, very ragged, do it again!" It is only fair to add, that, terrible as was the ordeal of a Divisional Inspection, the General kept his original promise, and spent many hours in the foremost trenches, "that he might know us well."

The evening of this same inspection was one of the few occasions on which Pommier was bombarded. A sudden two minutes' "hate" of about 40 shells, 4.2 and 5.9, wounded three men and killed both the C.O.'s horses, "Silvertail" and "Baby"; both came out with the Battalion. We still, however, had some good animals left, as was obvious at the Brigade Sports and Race meeting held on the 11th September at la Bazéque Farm. This was a most successful show, and the only pity was that we were in trenches at the time, and so could only send a limited number of all ranks to take part. The great event of the day was the steeplechase. The Staff Captain, Major J.E. Viccars, on "Solomon," led all the way, but was beaten in the last twenty yards by Major Newton, R.F.A. Lieut. L.H. Pearson was third on "Sunlock II.," the transport Serjeant's horse. It was a remarkable performance, for he only decided to ride at the last moment, and neither he nor horse had trained at all. The Battalion did well in other events, winning 1st and 2nd places in both obstacle and mule races, and providing the best cooker and best pack pony; the two last were a great credit to the Transport Section. One of the features of the day was the Bookies' G.S. wagon, where two officers disguised with top hats, yellow waistcoats and pyjamas, carried on a successful business as "turf accountants." At a VIIth. Corps meeting, held a fortnight later on the same



course, we secured two places for the Battalion: Capt. Burnett came home 2nd in an open steeplechase, and Capt. Moore 3rd in one for Infantry officers only.

During September our Mess, already up to strength, was considerably increased by a large draft of Officers. First we were glad to see Major Griffiths back as Second in Command, though sorry for Captain John Burnett, who had to go back to Transport for the time. With Major Griffiths came 2nd Lieuts. J.R. Brooke, S. Corah, and W.I. Nelson, while within the same month, or shortly afterwards, 2nd. Lieuts. L.A. Nelson, J.H. Ball, P. Measures, T.L. Boynton, W.C. Walley, W. Lambert, M.F. Poynor, and J.A. Wortley all arrived. In October also Serjeant Beardmore, M.M., of "C" Company, who had latterly being doing exceptionally good work with the Battalion Scouts, was given his Commission in the Field, and reposted as a platoon Commander to the old Company. Capt. Barton's place as M.O. was taken by Captain T.D. Morgan, of the 2nd Field Ambulance. At the same time a stroke of bad luck robbed us of 2nd Lieut. Coles, who was badly wounded. During a raid of the 4th Lincolnshires in October it was our duty to cause a diversion by blowing up some tubes of ammonal in the Boche wire. The party, led by 2nd Lieut. Coles, was about to leave our trenches when a rifle grenade or "pine apple" bomb dropped in their midst and exploded one of the tubes, doing much damage.

During these long months of trench warfare a considerable advance was made in the work of the Intelligence department of the Infantry Battalion. A year ago one officer did duty for a whole Brigade, now each Battalion had its Intelligence officer, its scouts and observers, and its snipers, sometimes the last under a separate officer. The duties of the Intelligence section were many. They must see and report every little thing which happened in the enemy's lines, no small detail must be omitted. The number and colours of his signal lights on different occasions, the relative activity of his different batteries and their positions, the movement of his transport, the location of his mortars and machine guns, the trench reliefs, all these must be watched. The immediate purpose was of course retaliation, counter battery work, the making of our bombardments more effective by picking out the tender spots in his lines, and generally harassing the enemy; but there was a further purpose. It was particularly necessary that the higher commands should be kept informed of all the big movements of troops, the state of the enemy's discipline, etc., and often some little incident seen in the front line would give the clue to one of these. Lieut. L.H. Pearson was at this time Intelligence officer, helped by Serjt. Beardmore, M.M., the humorous side to their work, and many amusing things were seen, or said to be seen, through the observers' telescopes. The old white-haired Boche, digging near Monchy, who looked so benign that no one would shoot him, became quite a famous character, until one day his real nature was revealed, for he shook his fist at one of our low-flying aeroplanes, and obviously uttered a string of curses, so one of the snipers shot him. Then again there was the lady of Douchy, who could be seen each evening coming out to hang up the washing; she was popularly known as Mary, and figured in the reports nearly every day.

With the observers worked the snipers. After nearly two years, telescopic sights at last appeared, and we tried to train the once despised "Bisley shot." They were very keen, and had much success, of which they were duly proud, as their individual reports showed. "We watched for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour until our viggillance was rewarded by seeing a Boche; he exposed half of himself above the parapet, I, Pte. —, shot him," so said one report, the name has unfortunately been lost. Some snipers even kept a book of their "kills," with entries such as "June 1st, 9-30 a.m. Boche sentry looking over, shot in shoulder, had grey hair almost bald very red face and no hat." It was just the right spirit, and it had its results. Autumn, 1915, saw us hardly daring to look over the top for fear of being sniped; Autumn, 1916, saw us masters, doing just what we pleased, when we pleased.

# SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

## Grave Record Documents

25. COPY. REVISED COMPREHENSIVE REPORT.  
GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM.

COMMUNE: BIENVILLERS. REPORT NO: 1. SCHEDULE NO: 26c.

PLACE OF BURIAL: BIENVILLERS MILITARY CEMETERY.  
57d.E.7.b.45.25. Certified complete and correct.

Land belongs to This Report Bienvillers 1.Schs.23/ c.-47c. cancels (Sd) M.H.Newman. The following are buried here:- Report Bien- Registration Officer, villers 1. No.4.Area. Schs.23/c.-39c.

*REV.*

Regiment.	No.	Name.	Rank and Initials.	Date of Death.	Cross Erected or des-patched.	Plot Row & Grave.
<u>Plot 8. Row "A".</u>						
5/Leicesters.	970.	GARTSHORE,	Sgt.W.	1.9.16.	IWGC.	1✓
1/1 Monmouths (TF).	1/3435.	WARD,	L/C.D.	21.8.16.	IWGC.	2✓
5/Leicesters.	4186.	HICKLING,	Pte.H.	16.8.16.	IWGC.	3✓
-do-	4257.	WOOD,	Pte.I.	-do-	IWGC.	4✓
-do-	4258.	BARKBY,	Pte.J.W.	6.8.16.	IWGC.	5✓
152/Co.R.E.	50598.	DILLON,	Spr.P.	29.6.16.	IWGC.	6✓
UNKNOWN BRITISH SOLDIER.					E.	7✓
Royal Engineers.	134600.	HEWITT,	Spr.E.	5.5.16.	IWGC.	8✓
<i>GOS. SIG</i> -do-	47184.	CHILDS,	Spr.J.H.	<i>13-4-16</i> 5.5.16.	<i>www/LS/4/5163</i> IWGC.	9✓
152/Co.R.E.	50104.	CLAYTON,	Spr.L.	7.1.16.	IWGC.	10✓
<u>Plot 8. Row B.</u>						
154/Fld.Co.R.E.	97309.	FARRELL,	Spr.P.	1.7.16.	IWGC.	1✓
-do-	97550.	CHEADLE,	Spr.F.	1.7.16.	IWGC.	2✓
-do-	49916.	CROMPTON,	Pnr.H.	1.7.16.	IWGC.	3✓
-do-	97473.	IRVINE,	Spr.J.	1.7.16.	IWGC.	4✓

ENTERED *17/5/25*  
LIST CHECKED *9.6.25*



No. of Contract.....dated.....

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION.

SCHEDULE "A" PAGE 17

Name and address of Firm.....

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT (A) OF HEADSTONE INSCRIPTIONS  
to this report is attached  
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT (B) HEADSTONE TEXTS

NAME OF CEMETERY  
BIENVILLERS M.C.

(those headstones to be inscribed with texts are underlined)  
and

To be stencilled on foot of  
headstones below ground level  
abbreviated thus:-

TWO STANDARD LAYOUTS (the layouts to be used  
are quoted on the badge design.)

BIEN. M.C.

Badge Design No. and Layout No.	1st line	2nd line	3rd line	4th line		Centre of Stone	To be stencilled on foot of Headstones below ground level.		
(1)	Number and Rank	Initials, NAME and Honours.	Regiment	Date of Death	Age	Relig. Emb.	Plot - P Row - R Grave - G	No. of Stone	
				In any instance where the entry "NONE" appears in Col. 6, the Age will be omitted from the Headstone and the Date of Death centred laterally.					
				(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	
1075/1A	5368 LANCE CPL.	W.H. BUCKLEY	ARMY CYCLIST CORPS	13TH MARCH 1917	NONE	CROSS	7 C 5	321	
1050/2A	251074 PRIVATE	H. MARSHALL	ROYAL SCOTS	8TH APRIL 1918	AGE 25	CROSS	7 C H 6	322	
1050/2A	50014 PRIVATE	J. ANDERSON	ROYAL SCOTS	8TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 C 7	323	
1050/2E	276073 PRIVATE	J. GRAY	ROYAL SCOTS	8TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 C 8	324	
1050/2A	302381 PRIVATE	G. WOOD	ROYAL SCOTS	8TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 C 9	325	
1185/1A	67318 CORPORAL	T.R. OWEN	MACHINE GUN CORPS (INF)	5TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 D 1	326	
1022/1B	40950 PRIVATE	A. MC CALLUM	HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY	9TH APRIL 1918	AGE 29	CROSS	7 D 2	327	
1022/1E	36889 PRIVATE	J. GOWANS	HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY	9TH APRIL 1918	AGE 20	CROSS	7 D 3	328	
1022/1A	36666 PRIVATE	R. DAVIDSON	HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY	9TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 D 4	329	
1050/2E	33203 PRIVATE	R. COWE	ROYAL SCOTS	11TH APRIL 1918	AGE 20	CROSS	7 D 5	330	
1050/2A	275723 PRIVATE	G. MARCHBANK	ROYAL SCOTS	14TH APRIL 1918	NONE	CROSS	7 D 6	331	
1050/2C	40287 LANCE CPL.	A.S. MEIKLE	ROYAL SCOTS	21ST APRIL 1918	AGE 23	CROSS	7 D 7	332	
1050/2C	38823 PRIVATE	JOHN ALEXANDER MATHESON	ROYAL SCOTS	21ST APRIL 1918	AGE 20	CROSS	7 D 8	333	
1035/1D	97000D SERJEANT	ALBERT WALTER GARTSHORE	LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT	1ST SEPTEMBER 1916	AGE 24	CROSS	8 A 1	334	
1089/1B	1/3435 LANCE CPL.	D. WARD	MONMOUTHSHIRE REGIMENT	21ST AUGUST 1916	AGE 19	CROSS	8 A 2	335	
1035/1E	4186 PRIVATE	H. HICKLING	LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT	16TH AUGUST 1916	AGE 23	CROSS	8 A 3	336	
1035/1A	4257 PRIVATE	I. WOOD	LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT	16TH AUGUST 1916	NONE	CROSS	8 A 4	337	
1035/1B	4258 PRIVATE	J.W. BARKBY	LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT	6TH AUGUST 1916	AGE 20	CROSS	8 A 5	338	
1190/1A	50598 SAPPER	P. DILLON	ROYAL ENGINEERS	29TH JUNE 1916	NONE	CROSS	8 A 6	339	
LAYOUT 1H	UNKNOWN BRITISH SOLDIER		(FOR PARTICULARS OF LAYOUT INSC. ETC. SEE SCHED. G/H)				8 A 7	340	

Proof Checked.....  
Final Check No.1.....  
Office Copy Prepared.....  
Final Check No.2.....

\*These headstones are not to be executed until further orders.



No. of Contract.....dated.....

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION.

SCHEDULE "B" PAGE 23.....

Name and address of Firm.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT B HEADSTONE PERSONAL INSCRIPTIONS  
to be read in conjunction with  
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT A HEADSTONE MILITARY INSCRIPTIONS  
together with  
TWO STANDARD LAYOUTS (the layouts to be used  
are quoted on the badge design.)

NAME OF CEMETERY.

BIENVILLERS M.C.

Badge Design No. and Layout	Headstone No.	Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4	No. of Letters in text.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	331					
1050/2C	332	UNTIL THE DAY BREAK	AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY			37
			(Mr R.Meikle, Earliston Maires, Earliston, Berwickshire.)		10-9	
1050/2C	333	TOO DEARLY LOVED	TO BE FORGOTTEN			27
			(Mr A.Matheson, 33, Gilbert Street, Glasgow.)		7-10	
1035/1D	334	NO MORNING DAWNS	OR NIGHT RETURNS	BUT WHAT WE THINK OF THEM		48
			(Mrs S.A.Gartshore, 86, Barrow Rd, Quorn, Leicestershire.)		14-	
1089/1B	335	HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR OTHERS				22
			(Mr E.E.Ward, 3, Gordon Street, Newport, Mon.)		6-5	
1035/1E	336	OH NOBLE	WAS OUR DEAR ONE'S DEATH	HIS PRECIOUS LIFE HE GAVE	FOR NATIVE LAND TO SAVE	66
			(Mrs A.Hickling, High Street, Kegworth, Nr.Derby.)		19-3	
	337					
1035/1B	338	FORGET ME NOT				11
			(Mrs.M.Barkby, Lily Cottages, Peggs Green, Leicester.)		3-2	
	339					
LAYOUT 1H	340	KNOWN UNTO GOD				
1190/1E	341	HE WAS GREATLY RESPECTED,	ESTEEMED AND BELOVED	FROM HIS LOVING FATHER	AND MOTHER	67
			(Mrs S.A.Hewitt, 29 Digby St, Kettering.)		19-6	
	342					
	343		(Mrs A.Clayton, 51, Sunderland St, Harpurhey, Manchester.)			
1190/1C	344	SACRED HEART OF JESUS	HAVE MERCY ON HIS SOUL			36
			(Mr P. Farrell, Teeling St, Sligo, Ireland.)		10-6	
	345					

Proof Checked.....  
Final Check No.1.....  
Office Copy Prepared.....  
Final Check No.2.....

Names and addresses of Next of Kin, are shown in brackets, and are not to be engraved on the Headstone.

4-11-5 314  
4



INDEX No. Fr. 745  
BIENVILLERS  
MIL. CEM.

BALDWIN, Spr. Charles, 14605. 154th Field Coy. Royal Engineers. Killed in action 1st July, 1916. Age 24. Son of Elizabeth Shaw (formerly Baldwin), of 80, White Rock St., Everton, Liverpool, and the late Charles Baldwin. VIII. B. 8.

BALDWIN, Pte. T., 20672. 6th Bn. Bedfordshire Regt. 30th May, 1916. Son of Mr. A. Baldwin, of Walnut Tree Cottage, Farnham, Bishop's Stortford. IV. D. 7.

BALDWIN, Gnr. W., 700934. "A" Bty. 210th Bde. Royal Field Artillery. 27th May, 1918. Husband of L. Baldwin, of 9, Russell St., Burnley Wood, Burnley. XVIII. A. 11.

BALL, Pte. Edward, 307057. 8th Bn. West Yorkshire Regt. 28th April, 1918. Age 27. Son of Edward Ball, of Haymount Terrace, Newtown, Leeds. XII. A. 12.

BALL, Pte. G., 42022. 2nd/5th Bn. West Yorkshire Regt. 28th March, 1918. Age 28. Husband of Gertrude A. Ball, of 218, Littleworth Tileries, Hednesford, Staffs. X. A. 6.

BALL, 2nd Cpl. Hubert William, 2670. 1st/2nd West Riding Field Coy. Royal Engineers. 19th Nov., 1916. Age 28. Son of Kate Ball, of 51, Carterknowle Rd., Sheffield, and the late Archy Franklin Ball. V. D. 6.

BALLS, Dvr. E., 801316. "C" Bty. 295th Bde. Royal Field Artillery. 24th April, 1918. Husband A. Balls, of 85, Catherine St., Mill Rd., Cambridge. VIII. C. 12.

BALSDON, Spr. Morley, 58786. 154th Field Coy. Royal Engineers. Killed in action 1st July, 1916. Age 19. Son of George and Dorothy E. Balsdon, of Mount Tamar, Burraton, Saltash, Cornwall. VIII. B. 15.

BALSTER, Rfn. William James, S/20436. 12th Bn. The Rifle Brigade. 7th Oct., 1916. Age 29. Son of Alfred George and Mary Jane Balster, of Stoke Newington, London; husband of Ann Montague (formerly Balster), of 173, Roundway, Tottenham, London. XVIII. J. 16.

BAMFORTH, Pte. Ronald, 235852. 2nd/4th Bn. King's Own Yorkshire Light Inf. Killed in action 16th April, 1918. Age 24. Son of William Henry and Ellen Jane Bamforth, of "Coverdale," Howgate Rd., Slaithwaite, Huddersfield. XIII. A. 11.

BANKS, Pte. Charles Henry, 34855. 1st Bn. Essex Regt. 24th Aug., 1918. Age 38. Husband of Mrs. P. Banks, of 40, Queen's Mansions, North Rd., Islington, London. XVIII. F. 10.

BARCLAY, Pte. J., 40724. 2nd Bn. South Staffordshire Regt. 14th June, 1918. Son of Mr. J. Barclay, of 8, Main St., Stewarton, Ayrshire. XIX. D. 5.

BARKBY, Pte. John William, 4258. 5th Bn. Leicestershire Regt. 6th Aug., 1916. Age 21. Son of Mr. and Mrs. James Barkby, of Lily Cottages, Peggs Green, Leicester. VIII. A. 5.

BARKER, Pte. Albert, 21737. "C" Coy. 7th Bn. Leicestershire Regt. 21st May, 1916. Age 30. Husband of Ann Barker, of 97A, Ebenezer Place, Bramley, Leeds. I. A. 38.

BARKER, Pte. Thomas Henry, 227029. 1st Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. Killed in action 21st Aug., 1918. Age 25. Son of Arthur F. and Amelia Barker, of 8, Lord St., Chapel Fields, Coventry. XX. E. 5.

BARRETT, Pte. A. E., 3767. 7th Bn. York and Lancaster Regt. 4th May, 1918. Brother of Mrs. W. Grimsby, of Laughton, Rotherham. XVI. B. 6.

BARRETT, Pte. P., 2189. 6th Bn. Welch Regt. 2nd June, 1918. XXI. A. 12.

BARRON, Pte. Arthur, 1799. 13th Bn. York and Lancaster Regt. 28th March, 1918. Age 27. Husband of Mary Ann Barron, of 70, Cross, Bedford St., Sheffield. XIV. C. 6.

BARTON, Cpl. Alfred Richard, 62164. 4th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. 21st Aug., 1918. Age 25. Son of Alfred and Eveline Florence Barton, of 21, King's Rd., Bournemouth. Native of North Hackney, London. XVIII. F. 9.

BARTON, Rfn. Eric Forrest, 2599. "A" Coy. London Rifle Brigade. 1st July, 1916. Age 20. Son of Henry Thomas and Jessica Elizabeth Barton, of "Barlbro", 10, Elm Way, Worcester Park, Surrey. XVIII. G. 4.

BARTRAM, Pte. Thomas Craven, 6510. 4th Bn. York and Lancaster Regt. Killed in action 5th Oct., 1916. Age 25. Son of Emanuel and Elizabeth Bartram, of Pickhill, Thirsk. Native of Sinderby, Thirsk. V. A. 9.

BATCHELOR, Pte. C., 12593. 6th Bn. Bedfordshire Regt. 21st Dec., 1915. IV. A. 5.