

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

RECORD OF THE 1st BATTALION, 1919.

THE Battalion commenced the year on the Euphrates, carrying out demobilization. In February the Cadre moved down to Basra, and sailed from Mesopotamia for home on the 4th March. Arriving at Aldershot on the 12th April, it was found that the Battalion was to be made up to strength and proceed with the relief force to North Russia, where it was employed until October. Returning to England on the 4th of that month, officers and men who had been attached to the Battalion were sent to their respective depots, and those of the Battalion were granted two months special leave pending reconstruction.

Summary of the Battalion diary :—

1919.

January.—The principal work carried out this month consisted of making bricks wherewith to build huts for the permanent garrison of Hit (1 squadron 10th Lancers). Demobilization continued, and by the end of the month the Battalion was reduced to 11 officers and 336 other ranks.

Between the 26th December 1918 and the 27th January 1919 the following officers proceeded to England:—Major C. Fitzgerald; Captains H. T. C. Field and W. Rane; Lieuts. T. P. Williams, H. C. Joyce, E. B. Parkinson, A. H. Lewis, T. R. Brown, B. F. Roberts, L. Rock, and T. R. Milford.

On Major Fitzgerald's departure, Captain Meade assumed command.

February 1st-18th.—The Battalion remained in camp at Hit, on the river bank half a mile south of the town. During this period demobilization continued fairly steadily, and by the middle of the month there remained only 12 officers and 250 other ranks with the Battalion. Thirty other ranks with two or more years of their engagements to complete were sent home on leave. Of the other ranks still with the Battalion 26 had re-enlisted or re-engaged, and 80 were awaiting demobilization. The remainder were retainable for the Army of Occupation. Great efforts were made by the Division in organizing classes of instruction in various trades (blacksmiths, railways guards, motor-drivers, market gardeners, etc.) in order to help the men on their return to civil life; and several were sent to Baghdad, Ramadie, and elsewhere for attachment to the Mechanical Transport and other services.

FROM LIEUT AND ADJUTANT H. E. F. SMYTH'S DIARY

During the winter parties continued to improve the roads in the Brigade area, and to work on the new barracks about a mile south of our camp. Our old friends the 10th Lancers, who were camped below us, were particularly interested in our building operations, as they are to form part of the post-war garrison, with probably a squadron at Hit.

Recreation was provided by football, and an Inter-Platoon Competition (shooting, running, drill, and marching), which was won by No. 6 Platoon, B Company. The pontoons of the local bridging train were also very useful for boat races and fishing excursions.

Meade collected a pack of four or five couple of "long dogs" (Arab and Persian greyhounds) in November, soon after the Regiment moved back to Hit from Sahiliyah. They lived in a sand-bagged emplacement called the "Kennels," and provided excellent sport two days a week all through the winter.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

February 20th.—The Turks on our front have faded right away to Aleppo, and our Political Officers have been up to Ana and Deir-ez-Zor.

The Arabs are quiet, but they are very short of food in this region, and the prices are high. They blame us for putting the prices up, and in this they are perhaps right.

To-day information was received that the Regiment is for foreign service again, and that the Cadre, with some other Cadres, is to proceed to the United Kingdom as soon as possible. This means leaving behind 8 officers and over 200 other ranks, as only 5 officers and 46 other ranks can be taken home with the Cadre. All the mobilization stores are to be taken and handed in to the Ordnance Depot, Baghdad. All the Regimental baggage is, of course, to be taken, except such mess stores, etc., as have to be left for the details remaining behind, who have been formed into two companies under Bleeze and Banks. No orders concerning these details have yet been received, except that they are to proceed, as soon as transport is available, to Dhibban, the 15th Division railhead for Baghdad.

February 21st.—Orders received for the Cadre to proceed tomorrow by river to Dhibban, accompanied by one company of the details. The transport to remain at Hit under the Transport Officer (Lieut. H. C. Adams).

February 22nd.—The Cadre left Hit for the United Kingdom, composition as follows: Captains Meade, Murphy, Smyth; Lieuts. Murray and Lethbridge; R.-Q.-M.-S. Moody; C.-S.-M.'s Bovington, Hodgson, and Headdon; Sergeants Bull, Young, Keen, Prior, Sylvester, and 36 other ranks. Sergeant Ridgeway (Orderly Room Sergeant) will join at Basra from the 3rd Echelon.

The following remained at Hit: Captains Bleeze and Banks; Lieuts. Burrell (K.R.R.C.), Vine (D.C.L.I.), Adams, Shepherd, and Johnston, and 200 other ranks. Three officers holding appointments also remained elsewhere, viz.: Lieut. (A/Major) Anderson, D.A.D. Railways, Baghdad; Lieut. (A/Captain) D. A. T. Wilmot, Adjutant Embarkation Camp, Basra; Lieut. D. S. Northcote, Adjutant Armenian Refugees Relief Centre, Baqubah.

The troops, in four small barges, were conveyed down stream to Ramadie, where they disembarked to sleep on the river bank at night.

February 23rd.—Started early and reached Dhibban about noon; unloaded barges and loaded all kits, stores, etc., on a train, then went to the Rest Camp for the afternoon. Here the Camp Commandant did everything possible for the Cadre. The N.A.C.B. Canteen was opened, and the men were given a free issue of beer, cakes, and cigarettes.

Entrained at 5 p.m. and reached Baghdad (Right Bank) at 11 p.m. Unloaded the baggage (12 tons), and went into the Rest Camp for the night.

February 24th.—Handed the Mobilization Stores in to the Ordnance Depot, and then, crossing the Tigris by steam ferry to Karrada Baghdad (Left Bank), the Cadre entrained with the Cadre 7th Hussars for Kut-el-Amara.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

February 25th.—Arrived at Kut and detrained. Embarked on a river steamer for Amara.

February 27th.—Disembarked at Amara, and entrained for Basra (Makina).

February 28th.—The Cadre arrived at Makina, and was accommodated in No. 2 British Base Depot.

March 2nd.—Lieut.-Colonel G. E. Whittall, M.C., arrived at Basra from leave in England, and took over command of the Cadre.

March 4th.—Embarked on H.T. "Ellenga," with the Cadres of the 7th Hussars and 2nd Norfolk Regiment and Demobilization Details, the embarkation being carried out by A/Major R. C. Loverock, D.S.O. (43rd), who is Embarkation Staff Officer, Basra. Started down the river, and saw the last of Mesopotamia at about 6 p.m.

March 9th.—Arrived at Bombay, and transhipped into the S.S. "Tahiti," a New Zealand boat absolutely packed with troops, and several Officers' families.

March 25th.—Reached Suez, disembarked, and conveyed by train to the Rest Camp, two miles inland.

March 29th.—To Port Said by train and accommodated in the Rest Camp, where all troops were confined to camp owing to trouble in the town. This embarking and disembarking, entraining and detraining, have become a little wearisome now. We have about six tons of baggage, and the constant moving of this is hard work for the Cadre, which is a small party. There is also the risk of losing portions of it.

April 3rd.—Embarked on H.T. "Malwa" for Taranto. A much more comfortable ship than the last one.

April 7th.—Disembarked at Taranto, and next day entrained for Havre, the three Cadres travelling in a special train, and reaching Havre on the 10th.

April 11th.—After spending last night in the Rest Camp, we embarked this evening for Southampton. We are still without orders as to our destination on arrival in England, but we hope it will be the Depot, Oxford.

April 12th.—Arrived at Southampton and disembarked. Orders were now received for the Cadre to go to Aldershot—much to every one's disappointment. Reached Aldershot at 6 p.m., and were met by Titherington, Tyrwhitt-Drake, and others of No. 2 Composite Battalion (afterwards re-named 1st Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry), being prepared for service in North Russia.

The Cadre, having been inspected on the platform by the G.O.C. in C. (General Sir Archibald Murray), marched to Wellington Lines and a day or two later every one went on leave. We had taken 51 days to get from Hit (Euphrates) to Aldershot, travelling in 3 river boats, 4 sea-going ships, and 8 trains.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

NORTH RUSSIA.

IT may be of interest to explain why the Battalion was sent to North Russia six months after the conclusion of the war. During the war, while Russia was still one of the Allies, the ports of Archangel and Murmansk were used for the dispatch of stores to Russia, but when the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany and thereby released a million fighting Germans to reinforce our enemy on the Western Front, our reason for being at the North Russian ports underwent a change. Russia was no longer our Ally, and having ceased to fight no longer required the munitions and stores which we had accumulated at the ports. There was the danger, also, of the Germans obtaining possession of them, and of using Archangel and Murmansk as submarine bases, if we abandoned those ports. And there was another reason for an Inter-Allied force continuing in occupation; during the war the Russians had captured from the Austrians a great number of Czechs (about two Army Corps), who had been compelled to serve with the Austrians, although in reality pro-Ally. These troops, anxious to get away from the Bolsheviks and join the Allies, first endeavoured to find their way to Vladivostok; but this proving impossible, it was suggested to them that they should go in the other direction, and cut their way out by Viatka to Archangel. Taking all this into consideration, the Allies decided in August 1918 to increase the garrisons in North Russia by a small mixed force of British, French, Americans, and Italians, and to attempt to effect a junction with the Czechs. This part of the programme, however, proved a failure, as the Czechs never succeeded in getting anywhere near Viatka, and the Allied force had to remain in occupation of the two ports and the neighbouring country to a distance of about a hundred miles inland. There the Allied presence made itself felt, as the Germans could not leave such a force uncovered, and consequently for the last few months of the war had to cease moving troops from the Eastern to the Western Front.

The Armistice, concluded in November 1918, should in the natural course of events have brought about the withdrawal of the Allied force from North Russia, but the lateness of the season rendered this impossible. The winter had set in, the ports were ice-bound, and the little force was practically marooned, or at any rate cut off from all friends, except some loyal Russian troops who objected to Bolshevism and supported the new North Russian Government. Throughout the winter the troops suffered considerably from the climatic conditions, as well as from constant Bolshevik attacks; and to add to the difficulties of the situation, a large number of the Russian troops, thought to be loyal, mutinied, and went over to the Bolsheviks. It is not, however, necessary to enter into details of these and other complications, as they occurred prior to the dispatch to the scene of action of the reinforcements with which was the 1st Battalion of the Regiment.

In February 1919 it was decided at home to withdraw the force from North Russia, and to evacuate any Russian refugees who wished to leave, as soon as the northern ports should be free of ice and open to navigation. To effect this withdrawal successfully it was necessary to send large reinforcements from England, for the force on the spot was not thought to be sufficiently strong to withstand the Bolshevik attacks and fight rearguard actions for any length of time.

The situation has been likened to Sir John Moore's Retreat to Corunna in 1808-9; and as Moore, when reinforced by Baird's troops, was enabled to hit back hard enough to check the French pursuit, so the reinforcements sent to North Russia dealt a blow to the Bolsheviks with such force as to make it possible to evacuate to the ships all the troops (29,000 British and 13,000 Allies) together with no fewer than 6,500 Russian refugees.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

(A Blue Book (Cmd. 818) *The Evacuation of North Russia*, 1919, was published in 1920, and contained full particulars, as well as two maps.)

Colonel W. Marriott-Dodington, C.M.G., who was now in command of the newly-formed Battalion, gives the following account of its further services :—

THE 1ST BATTALION IN NORTH RUSSIA.

Officially, the Regiment that took the field in North Russia in the spring of 1919 was the 1st Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. In reality it consisted of details from some twenty different units.

Towards the end of March 1919 I received orders to report at the War Office for a personal interview. At this interview I was instructed to assume command of the 1st Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry at Aldershot, and prepare the Regiment for immediate service overseas.

On arrival at Aldershot on 1st April, I found Titherington in command of the so-called Field Service Details, consisting of some 70 other ranks, fits and unfits.

The Cadre of the 43rd was then on its way home from Mesopotamia, and arrived at Aldershot on 12th April.

It would be tedious to give in detail the many vicissitudes of the Regiment between 1st April and the date of embarkation. The great difficulty was personnel.

On 8th April orders were received that the Regiment should be known as “No. 2 Composite Battalion” and should consist of :—

H.Q. and A Company, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.
B Company, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.
C Company, Devonshire Regiment.
D Company, Royal Berkshire Regiment.

During the next few days officers reported in shoals, but other ranks came in slowly from their depots.

On 15th April the Regiment moved to Crowborough, and from this date to the time of embarkation we were engaged in trying to organize companies, and do as much training as circumstances permitted.

On 24th April the War Office finally decided that the Regiment—was the 43rd—officially the 1st Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. Early in May, the Regiment being still some 500 other ranks below establishment, we received drafts from a large number of units, which brought us up to a strength of approximately 800.

On 9th May General Sir Henry (now Lord) Rawlinson inspected No. 238 Special Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General G. W. St. G. Grogan, V.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., to which the Regiment belonged.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

On 12th May the Regiment embarked at Southampton in the Hired Transport "Czar," together with the 155th Field Ambulance, and a large number of Royal Naval and Royal Air Force details.

The embarkation strength was 34 officers and 779 other ranks. In addition, 13 officers and some other ranks proceeded in the Hired Transports "Czaritsa" and "Stephen."

We were given a great "send off" at Southampton, the Mayor being good enough to come down to the Docks and make a speech.

Except for the passing of a few floating mines, the voyage to Archangel was uneventful. We reached Murmansk on the 19th, and remained there till the 24th, as the ice pack outside the White Sea was impracticable without ice breakers.

**ROLL OF OFFICERS WITH THE 1ST BATTALION ON
EMBARKATION FOR NORTH RUSSIA.**

Headquarters

Brevet-Colonel W. MARRIOTT-DODINGTON, C.M.G., Commanding.
Major L. J. CARTER, D.S.O., Second in Command.
Lieut. H. E. F. SMYTH, Adjutant.
Lieut. R. C. WARREN, M.C., Assistant Adjutant.
Lieut. T. TYRWHITT-DRAKE, M.C.
Lieut. H. S. EAGLE, Transport Officer.
Lieut. A. B. HAMILTON, Lewis Gun Officer.
Lieut. D. J. L. LETHBRIDGE, Signalling Officer.
Captain A. E. MASON, Messing Officer.
Captain J. W. MEADE, Supernumerary
Lieut. F. C. L. A. LOWNDES, M.C., Supernumerary,
Captain F. C. CHANDLER (R.A.M.C.), Medical Officer, attached
Hon. Lieut. and Quartermaster G. DANCEY, M.C., D.C.M.

A Company—Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry.

Captain C. S. BAINES, D.S.O. Captain G. NAYLOR. Lieut. J. E. H. NEVILLE M.C. Lieut. E. HOLT, M.C. Lieut. P. BOOTH. Lieut. O. H. M. STURGES. Lieut. L. W. GILLES, M.C.
2nd Lieut. C. A. SAWYER

B Company—Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Captain A. J. POAK. Captain L. R. SWINHOE. Lieut. W. L. DIBBEN, M.C. Lieut. H. J. KING. Lieut. J. E. W. RANGE. 2nd Lieut. J. CLEWS, D.C.M. 2nd Lieut. H. G. HARBOURNE. 2nd Lieut. R. M. HARMAN (43rd).

C Company—Devonshire Regiment.

Major A. F. NORTHCOTE. 2nd Lieut. J. MOULDING. Captain O. M. PARKER. Lieut. M. H. C. PERRY Lieut. H. GIBBONS. 2nd Lieut. N. L. HUGHES 2nd Lieut. J. W. WADHAM.

D Company—Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Major A. G. MACDONALD, D.S.O. Lieut. H. E. BALDWIN. Lieut. P. H. HIGHT.
Lieut. D. C. COLVILL, M.C. (43rd).¹ Lieut. W. S. MCKAY. Lieut. E. C. D. DE VITRE.
. Lieut. A. S. DENHAM, M.M. 2nd Lieut. F. W. PAINES

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

239th Trench Mortar Battery.

Captain J. L. CARR (Royal Berkshire Regiment).
Lieut. J. C. HOLBERTON (Devonshire Regiment).
Lieut. M. G. BECK (Devonshire Regiment).
2nd Lieut. W. T. TRENGROUSE (43rd).¹
2nd Lieut. E. B. DICKENSON (Royal Warwickshire Regiment).

Attached.

The Rev. I. JONES, C.F., Chaplain.
2nd Lieut. N. TREWHEELER, Interpreter.

Reinforcements.

Lieut. L. H. M. WESTROPP (Devonshire Regiment).
2nd Lieut. F. C. HOLLAND (43rd).¹
2nd Lieut. W. MAUNDER, M.C. (Devonshire Regiment).
2nd Lieut. M. A. WICOX (Devonshire Regiment).

(¹Regular Officers of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry)

On the 24th May the Convoy (“Czar,” “Czaritsa,” “Stephen” and “Menominee”) assembled outside Murmansk, each ship with an ice breaker preceding it.

On the 25th we were held up in the ice for some three hours, but on the 26th we were through, and arrived at the Subornaya Quay, Archangel, at about 1 p.m., passing from ice and cold to warm summer weather in a few hours.

On 27th May the Brigade landed and was received by the Russian Authorities, Civil and Military. Our Commander (General Grogan) receiving the traditional offering of bread and salt, at a triumphal arch, erected in honour of the relieving troops.

The Regiment (*In speaking of the Regiment, No. 239 Light Trench Mortar Battery (3-inch Stokes), which was formed from details of the Regiment, is always included.*) was quartered in the Olga Barracks and in a large river barge.

On the 29th the Mayor of Archangel gave a tea, which was attended by 40 officers; and on the 30th, Carter (Second in Command), with some officers and men, attended a Memorial Service for the United States troops who had fallen in North Russia.

On 1st June the Regiment, with other troops, paraded to take part in the King's Birthday Parade, and to witness the presentation of a Colour to the 1st Battalion Slavobritish Legion (Dyer's).

This parade was most interesting, the slow marching of the Russian troops at the trooping of the colour being excellent. It is melancholy to think that this Battalion, raised from Bolshevik prisoners, with a proportion of British officers, warrant officers, and N.C.O.'s, with so much care, should later on have mutinied at the instigation of some dozen or so fanatical Communists who had got into the ranks.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

On 2nd June the Regiment suffered a great loss. Dancey, after completing all preparations for the impending move up the Dwina, shot himself, and died in a few hours. There is no doubt that he had completely overworked himself; he had been ill before leaving England, and the strain was too much for him. Those who knew his work will appreciate the loss the Regiment suffered. Mason, who had gone on with the advanced party on 30th May, was appointed Acting Quartermaster and eventually Quartermaster.

On 3rd June the Regiment (less D Company) embarked in 15 tugs of various sizes at the Subornaya Quay, and proceeded up the Dwina, bivouacking two nights in the meadows on the banks, and on 5th June arriving at Osinovo on the right bank opposite Beresnik, where we went into a canvas camp for the night.

Beresnik, the advanced base for both the Dwina and Vaga columns, lies close to the junction of the Vaga with the Dwina.

The next day (6th June) we re-embarked in two barges, and were towed up to Ust Vaga (on the left bank of the Vaga), a large and straggling village, with blockhouse and barbed wire defences. This place was and remained the base of the Vaga Column.

On 7th June we commenced relieving the troops (British and American) in the forward area, viz. : the villages of Kala Beresnik (left bank), and Mjni Kitsa, Koslovo, and Seltso on the right bank. Carter assumed command of the forward area, and on 8th June I took over the Vaga Column.

The forward area was some 12 to 14 versts distant from Ust Vaga, which made supervision difficult; hence we decided to move Headquarters to Seltso. This move took place on 15th June, but Ust Vaga remained the base for all administrative services.

The most advanced village in the forward area (Mala Beresnik) was in fairly close touch with the enemy, and few days passed without its receiving some shells.

All the villages were well defended with trenches, dug-outs, blockhouses, and wire, and showed the good work performed by the troops whom we relieved, and who had borne the "cold and burden" of the previous winter.

We were fortunate in being able to form a small Regimental transport column under Eagle, which proved invaluable. We got together some 35 ponies and 25 carts, the latter carrying 300 lb.

On 16th June we had our first brush with the enemy, a patrol of B Company coming on some defences. The patrol killed eight of the enemy before withdrawing, and had no casualties.

On the 18th General Grogan came up to see the defences, and informed me that the Commander-in-Chief wished the column to undertake a raid on the enemy positions at Ignatovskaya and Kitsa.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Reconnaissance in North Russia is difficult, and can only be carried out by patrols. The whole country is dense and swampy forest, through which run tracks more or less passable for small parties. The main road (a fine broad sandy road in very fair order, but unmetalled) followed the left bank of the Vaga from Beresnik, through Ust Vagaa nd Mala Beresnik to Ignatovskaya.

The villages are surrounded by open areas in which cultivation is carried on, but there were no inhabitants in the forward area. Ust Vaga was a hotbed of enemy espionage.

It would have increased our chances of success had we known as much as we did later, when Tyrwhitt-Drake and his scouts had explored the tracks.

The Commander-in-Chief (Major-General Ironside) visited Vaga Column Headquarters on 24th June, and it was arranged that the raid should take place on the night of 26th/27th June. Night implies darkness, but there was no darkness at this period of the year.

The total force engaged (besides the Russian Artillery in position) was 2 1/2 companies of the Regiment, two 3.7-inch mountain Howitzers, a detachment Royal Engineers, and some details of Machine Gunners and Trench Mortars.

The plan briefly was for the main column to move by the left bank, and after "mopping up" the enemy advanced position to capture Ignatovskaya.

A small column was to move by the right bank and enter Kitsa after the capture of Ignatovskaya.

The two columns would then unite, and after "mopping up" return to quarters.

The enemy's advanced position was captured by Naylor and two platoons of A Company without difficulty, 17 prisoners and two machine guns being taken.

The enemy opened an intense and accurate bombardment of the road exits from Mala Beresnik, which, however, caused few casualties.

It did, however, cause the pony in the telephone cart to bolt, and hence all communication except by messenger failed. The raiding party made rapid progress without opposition along the Ignatovskaya road, until suddenly held up by rifle and machine-gun fire from the enemy defences.

A free fight ensued, but as our bombardment was to take place shortly, the troops, who were closely engaged, had to be withdrawn for safety's sake.

On conclusion of the bombardment, we again attacked, but made little progress, and at 2.50 a.m. I decided to break off the engagement.

The withdrawal was carried out without incident and without interference by the enemy.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Our casualties were 2nd Lieut. N. L. Hughes (Devonshire Regiment) and eight other ranks killed. Captain C. S. Baines, Lieuts. Sturges, Maunder (Devonshire Regiment), and Browne (R.A.), and 25 other ranks wounded.

Five other ranks missing (these, four of whom were wounded, were afterwards ascertained to be prisoners of war).

The right bank column met the enemy, and withdrew after a short engagement, as there was no object in pushing forward, unless the action of the main column was successful.

Notwithstanding our want of knowledge of the country, it seems probable that the raid would have been successful if communication had not been lost. It is certain that the enemy was fully aware of our intention to attack and was prepared.

On 27th June the Routine Tug came up the Vaga for the last time until August 25th; thus, owing to the low state of the river, we were dependent for two months on convoys moving by the main road for supplies of every description.

On 3rd July Naylor carried out a silent raid on the enemy's advanced position south of Mala Beresnik with complete success. The enemy lost one machine gun and eight men killed. Our casualties were Lieut. J. E. H. Neville and two other ranks slightly wounded. For this action and the main raid on 26th/27th June, Naylor received the Military Cross. (This award was afterwards altered to the *Bar to the M.C.*, as meanwhile Captain G. Naylor had been awarded the Military Cross for service in Mesopotamia rendered previously.)

Early in July the Regiment was concentrated on the Vaga, less one platoon of D Company and details at Beresnik.

Little occurred during the remainder of the month beyond patrol actions and desultory shelling.

On 12th July was completed the footbridge from Koslovo to Gunners Landing, which was of the greatest assistance and reflected the utmost credit on Lieut. Wakeford and his section of Royal Engineers.

On 26th July D Company (less one platoon) left for Archangel, and was subsequently stationed at Konetzbok on the Onega road,

On the same date A.H.Q., which had been at Beresnik, also moved to Archangel.

On 27th July the 3/4th North Russian Rifles (H.Q. and two companies) arrived at Ust Vaga, and became part of the Vaga Column.

Hitherto, this column had been directly under A.H.Q., but now came under Dwina Force. This arrangement was necessary in the circumstances, but it was most unfortunate for us, as we received little consideration from early in August till finally embarking at Beresnik.

All our heavy baggage was sent down on 8th and 9th August, and on 10th August Dwina Force commenced operations which were to prove most successful.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

The original plan embraced operations on the Vaga in addition to the Dwina, but the former had to be cancelled owing to the heavy rain, which rendered the tracks impassable.

Had these operations taken place during the settled weather, there is little doubt but that the enemy forces both on the Dwina and Vaga would have been completely dispersed.

On 20th August Meade and three platoons of C Company left for Beresnik and the Seletskoe front, thus reducing the Regiment to nine platoons.

On 22nd August we dismantled our 60-pr., and sent it off on rafts down stream. Our artillery was now reduced to four old 18-pr. guns, and we were unable to reply to the enemy's long-range fire.

On 29th August we made a successful demonstration to draw the enemy's attention to the Vaga front during the Russian initial operations on what was known as the Railway front. The enemy shelled Mala Beresnik heavily from 1.15 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. on 31st August with 6-inch, 4.2-inch, and 3-inch guns, several thousand shells being fired. Our casualties were one man slightly wounded.

September 1st was an exciting day, and what might have proved a most awkward situation was converted into a severe repulse for the enemy.

Ust Vaga (the base of the Vaga Column), with a perimeter of some 5,000 or 6,000 yards, was held by one platoon of C Company, some details of Machine Gunners and Trench Mortars, and H.Q. and one company 3/4th North Russian Rifles, the whole under Major Northcote (Devonshire Regiment).

The Russians were on the perimeter and the British troops were more or less concentrated in reserve.

About 3 a.m. the village was entered by a force of about 200 of the enemy without opposition and from three different points. The leader of the enemy was a local man, and it was afterwards ascertained that he had been in the village for some days arranging matters. The houses in which the British officers and men were known to be were surrounded.

The first evidence of an attack came with the throwing of bombs into the Signal Office guard room, and other rooms known to be occupied, together with the opening of machine-gun and rifle fire on the houses.

The Russian troops took practically no part in the action and disappeared into the woods, and it was left to the small British garrison to deal with the enemy.

By 9 a.m. the village was cleared, after hard fighting and innumerable exciting personal incidents.

The enemy lost 14 killed and 8 prisoners, besides some 15 wounded which he got away. Our losses were 5 killed, 12 wounded, and 1 missing.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

About 9 a.m. the same day the enemy attacked Mala Beresnik in force, but was repulsed at once with considerable casualties. Had we been in a position to counter-attack, we might have inflicted a severe defeat on him; as it was we buried 16 dead and took two prisoners, our losses being two men of B Company killed.

On 3rd September all our Russian troops, including the artillery, left for Beresnik, as the Russian authorities had decided (for the moment) to defend a line lower down the Dwina.

The next day we received two 3-inch Russian guns manned by British personnel, with a very limited supply of ammunition, much of which was bad.

On the 7th the enemy again shelled Mala Beresnik heavily, from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. On the 9th I find the following entry in my rough diary :—"We have now been ordered to move on 15th August, 30th August, 3rd September, 7th September, 9th September, 10th September. Still here!"

Orders for the majority of these moves were got out and issued, and all arrangements made for evacuation, only for a wire to be received at the last moment that the move was postponed.

Those who had to arrange details know what trouble was caused by these postponements. Further, the enemy was growing bolder, and our men were perpetually on duty, which gave us some anxiety as to what might happen if he really induced his men to attack.

13th September was another anxious day. Enemy patrols were active early in the morning, and he shelled Mala Beresnik from 6.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

We were able to get machine-gun fire on to certain parties which were seen, causing some casualties.

At about 6.15 p.m. a complete company of the enemy's 161st Regiment surrendered at Mjni Kitsa (122 all ranks).

The enemy's plan was apparently to attack Mala Beresnik with two battalions of the 156th Regiment and Mjni Kitsa with two battalions of the 161st Regiment, another battalion being held in reserve. Both attacks failed to mature, as the men could not be induced to close with the defence.

On the 14th all preparations were complete for the evacuation next morning, when the usual wire was received that the move would not take place unless further orders were received.

Happily the move was confirmed, and at 6.30 a.m. on the 15th we commenced the evacuation. By 9 a.m. the whole column was on its way to Ust Vaga, which was reached without incident at 12 noon. The column left nothing whatever for the enemy; ammunition which had to be retained to the last in case of attack was destroyed.

1919 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

On the 16th we continued the withdrawal to Beresnik, and embarked in troop barges by 1.30 p.m. The enemy entered Ust Vaga almost immediately we had left, but did not interfere with our march. He did, however, cause some casualties to the Dwina Force while withdrawing down river; and a platoon of A Company under Sawyer, together with a gun, was sent out from Beresnik to deal with a party of the enemy near the mouth of the Vaga. We arrived opposite Archangel on the 20th and disembarked at Bakharitsa next day. Here we found D Company (less one platoon), and on the 23rd we were joined by 3 platoons of C Company and 1 platoon of D Company.

Our first orders were that the Regiment should embark in the Transport "Schleswig," but as this ship did not arrive these were cancelled and we embarked in the "Czar" on the 26th (less D Company, which furnished the shore pickets).

On the 27th, after embarking D Company, we passed downstream to a rendezvous just outside the bar.

Twenty-eight officers and their batmen embarked in the Transport "Braemar Castle," there being no room in the "Czar."

We arrived without incident at Liverpool on 4th October, to find the great Railway strike going on.

The Regiment disembarked in the afternoon and was quartered in Knotty Ash Camp. En route we formed up at St. George's Hall, where the Lord Mayor was good enough to receive and address us.

All attached officers and men were got away to their respective depots by 11th October, and on the 13th the Regiment moved to North Ripon. Strength, 7 officers, and 109 other ranks. Except for the Cadre, under Whittall, who arrived from the Depot, everyone went on leave pending the reconstruction of the Regiment in December.

So ended our little adventure in North Russia, where the Regiment had suffered the following casualties : 1 officer and 15 other ranks killed; 5 officers and 41 other ranks wounded; 5 other ranks missing. Of these, the following belonged to the 43rd: 3 other ranks killed; Captain C. S. Baines, D.S.O., Lieut. O. H. M. Sturges, Lieut. J. E. H. Neville, M.C., and 5 other ranks wounded.

Captain Baines's wound was serious and necessitated the amputation of a leg.

Captain G. NAYLOR, M.C., was awarded the *Bar to the Military Cross* ; Lieut. H. E. F. SMYTH, the *Military Cross*; while 28750 Sergeant W. WARNOCK and 18556 Lance-Corporal C. MARTIN (both of the 43rd) were awarded the *Meritorious Service Medal*. Colonel MARRIOTT-DODINGTON was mentioned in Dispatches.