

1920 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
2nd Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

THE 2ND BATTALION IN 1920.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR EDITOR,

January 1st found the 52nd still at Victoria Barracks, Cork, with the Headquarters and a few men of the 43rd sharing Barracks with us

The situation in Ireland in January was not as bad as the daily papers made out; in fact, Cork City was very well behaved, and no notice was taken of the "Military," as the rebels were still concentrating on the Police.

Things, however, began to move after Alderman McCurtain was murdered, and the situation went from bad to worse up to the time when we eventually left Cork in July.

As to why we came to England, and what we did when we arrived, you shall be told later, but now for a brief account of the events before that happy day arrived.

Winter Training was only carried out on a small scale and for short periods, the difficulties being the shortage of men to be trained and the duties to be found, which assumed at times very large proportions.

Towards the end of January, D Company, which up till then had been composed entirely of recruits, was broken up, about 50 per cent, going to the 43rd, as also some 30 men from A, B, and C Companies.

We still had our detachment under Field at Macroom, a village some twenty miles west of Cork. It seems to have been quite a pleasant station, and Wood made full use of the fishing facilities in the neighbourhood, after taking over from Field in April.

Several officers hunted during the winter with the "United," and, in spite of nearly all riding hirelings, had some good days. For many it was the first experience of the famous Irish banks, but the general opinion was that they were quite easy to negotiate provided your horse knew anything of the country.

Portal was our only representative in the "United" Point-to-Point. He rode his grey mare (which he bought locally), but the pace set by the thrusters was too much for her, and she came down, causing Portal to spend several days in hospital.

We sent a team to compete in the Regimental Point-to-Point, which was held near Thame at the end of March. Crosse, Brett, Drake, and Eagle rode, but as they were all on horses hired in Oxford they did not have much of a chance, and the 43rd won. It is true that the 43rd were under similar difficulties, but they managed to bring over from Ireland two horses good enough to get 1st and 2nd place. The Meeting was a great success, the only trouble being that very few officers could be spared from the arduous duties at Cork.

Lieut.-Colonel Clayton arrived in March and took over command from Colonel Pope-Hennessy, who went to the War Office.

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During this period Football, Hockey (on the Square), and Crosscountry running were all carried on with some success. In Football our team, ably led by Isaac, reached the 5th round of the Army Cup, the best we have done for several years. The Company Shield was won by C Company, the Inter-platoon League was never finished, owing to the difficulty of getting the men and the shortage of grounds. B Company won the Hockey Shield.

During the winter, our Concert Party, organized by Dowson and Wootten, gave several excellent concerts.

A good deal of boxing was carried out, both Regimental and Garrison. C Company won the Boxing Shield.

We sent a strong team to Dublin to compete in the Irish Command Sports, and Ames and C.-S.-M. Smith, D.C.M., distinguished themselves by getting 2nd in the Three Miles and Half-mile respectively, qualifying to run in the Army Championships at Aldershot.

Cricket was started, but there is no Cricket Field at Cork, except the Square, which is covered with stones, and the popularity of the game was not excessive. The Regiment played one match against the 2nd Hampshire Regiment, the Cork County Club lending their ground for the occasion.

About the end of May the rumour that we were leaving Cork for England became a fact, and great was everyone's delight at the news. We were told that we would go to Lichfield and relieve the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment and that they would relieve us at Cork. The reason for our withdrawal from Cork was supposed to be that we were to prepare for Foreign Service in the trooping season.

At the end of June our advance party left to take over our new home, and by 1st July the move was complete. Thus, with great rejoicings on our part and great lamentations on the part of our old 2nd Division friends the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment, we arrived at Lichfield.

Now for our life in the peaceful surroundings of Whittington Barracks.

The barracks themselves are, compared with those at Cork, mere children in age, and consequently are more pleasant to live in. They stand on fairly high ground 3 miles from Lichfield and 4 1/2 from Tamworth.

We share the barracks with the Depots of the North and South Staffordshire Regiments and Brigade Headquarters. The rooms are—with, of course, the exception of the officers' quarters—lighted with gas, which is not so convenient as the electric light at Cork. Officers' bathrooms, as at Cork, do not exist. The barrack rooms are large, and can each hold a platoon, which is a great advantage over the small rooms at Cork.

The fact that here there are no "Patrols," no chaining up of rifles, no locking up of bolts, is a great relief to all.

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Waterloo Sports were kept till we arrived at Lichfield, and were held on 6th August in good weather and with a very fair attendance of officers of the Regiment past and present, including Major-General and Mrs. Davies. The Championship Shield was hotly contested, and after a good struggle by C Company was won by B, who undoubtedly had the pick of the runners of the Regiment. Mrs. Davies presented the Shield to the winners.

On the following day on Church Parade General Davies presented the medals of 70 N.C.O.'s and men which had been received.

Cricket was made easier here by the fact that we have a good ground, as Garrison grounds go; but arriving late in the season we never got properly into our stride, and did very little good. The Regimental team, having no outstanding players and a rather weak tail, failed in the two matches we played. No. 5 Platoon won the Inter-platoon Competition, and B Company won the Company Shield, defeating C Company in the final.

In August we gave a Dance The gymnasium was divided into a ballroom, a sitting-out room, and a supper-room, all officers being on fatigue getting things ready. A large number of people turned up, and the Dance was believed to be a success.

A Rifle Meeting was held at the end of September The Ranges here are conveniently near, but do not lend themselves for Rifle Meetings. However, the Committee got up a good programme lasting two days, the weather was kind, and the Meeting was a success. Many sixpences were spent in trying to find the elusive "pool bull," and some, the lucky ones, were well "up" on the two days' shooting.

On 1st October A and D Companies went off on leave, and B and C Companies started "individual" training

All went well with the training, but not so with the leave. The miners very inconsiderately decided to have a strike, and every one was recalled from his hard-earned leisure.

Some were in France, others scattered all over the country; but back they all came, with the exception of one who was half across the Atlantic and was therefore not available.

We prepared for strike duty and hung about for about three weeks, when those whose leave had been interrupted were allowed to proceed once more, having lost a clear three weeks.

The first half of the Winter Leave ended on 14th December, when a "general post" took place, A and D Companies came back, and B and C Companies went on leave.

Just before Christmas, Wood and Ballard left us, both having sent in their papers. They took their motor-cars with them, but how Ballard enticed his "rattle box" out of Barracks remains, and probably always will remain, a mystery.

Earlier in the autumn E. C. Simmons and E. K. Blyth resigned their Commissions.

Football started again in October, and full use was made of the available grounds. In the Army Cup we were beaten by 1—0 in the 2nd round by the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons. A half-Battalion Platoon League was arranged. No. 11 Platoon won. This platoon will have to play the winning platoon of A and D Companies in the final.

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Lichfield is, from a hunting point of view, a distinctly good station. We live in the South Staffordshire Country, while the Atherstone and Meynell are within reach.

The members of the South Staffordshire Hunt have made us very welcome. Our chief regret is that on the day when they met at the Mess, and to our surprise drew the Osier bed just outside Barracks, we did not have a fox for them.

Yours,
FIFTY-SECOND