

1925 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF FIRST BATTALION DIARY.

January 7.—Regiment inspected by Colonel-Commandant A. B. E. Cator, C.B., D.S.O., Commanding 10th Infantry Brigade.

January 8.—Regiment inspected by Major-General Sir R. B. Stephens, K.C.B., D.S.O., General Officer Commanding 4th Division.

January 10.—Major-General Sir John Hanbury Williams, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., C.M.G., carried out his farewell inspection prior to the move of the Regiment to the Rhine. A large number of past members of the Regiment attended, and accompanied the Colonel of the Regiment on his inspection.

January 16.—General Sir George Milne, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., D.S.O., A.D.C., General Officer Commanding -in-Chief, Eastern Command, carried out his farewell inspection. Information received that Lieut. J. B. Jarvis, passed "Q.I." at a Light Automatic Course at the Small Arms School, Hythe.

January 19.—Advanced Party consisting of Captains Mason, Toye, Lieut. Stebbing, and 30 other ranks left for Cologne.

January 23.—Lieut. D. S. Newton-King is seconded for service with the Sudan Defence Force (London Gazette January 9).

January 24.—A draft of 1 Sgt. and 74 other ranks left in the *H.T. Neuralia* to join the 52nd.

January 27.—The Regiment—strength 20 officers, 6 W.O.'s, and 497 other ranks—left Shorncliffe for Cologne.

January 28.—The Regiment arrived in Cologne and were quartered in Zugweg and Ulrich Gasse Barracks.

February 10.—Regiment inspected by Colonel-Commandant H. F. Bethell, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding 2nd Rhine Brigade.

February 11.—Regiment inspected by Lieut.-General Sir John Du Cane, K.C.B., General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, the British Army of the Rhine.

February 17.—Information received that Major J. J. Powell had been selected to attend a Course at the Royal Air Force Staff College, commencing May 4, 1926.

April 2.—Information received that the Signallers Classification result was, Reading Average, 99.57%—

April 15.—Major B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., joined on posting from G.S.O. II, War Office.

May 2.—The Regiment, less A and B Companies and the Machine Gun Platoon, marched to Leidenhausen Camp to fire the annual range courses on the Urbach ranges.

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June 4.—Lieut. J. L. Stebbing attached to G.H.Q. Cologne for intelligence duties.

June 6.—The Regiment moved from Leidenhausen Camp to Wahn for Company Training.

June 15.—Captain A. M. Toye, V.C., M.C., commenced a one-month's attachment to H.Q. 2nd Rhine Brigade.

July 7.—The Regiment marched back from Wahn to Cologne.

July 10.—The Regiment took part in the Rhine Army Parade on the Exercier Platz at 11 a.m., for review by the Rt. Hon. Sir L. Worthington Evans, Secretary of State for War. He sent the following message to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief:—
"On leaving Cologne I desire to congratulate you and all ranks who took part in yesterday's review on their soldierly bearing under arms and the precision with which the movements were carried out."

July 15.—Major B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., to be Brevet Lieut.-Colonel (London Gazette July 7, 1925).

August 19.—Colonel A. G. Bayley, C.B.E., D.S.O., to hospital (pneumonia); Brevet Lieut.-Colonel Paget, D.S.O., M.C., took over command, Major Whinney not being available owing to his appointment as Senior Umpire, 2nd Rhine Brigade.

August 20.—The Band rejoined from a two-months' tour, fulfilling engagements in England. The following letter was received from the O.C. Regimental Depot:—
"I would like, if I may, to draw your attention to the very good work carried out by the band of the 43rd during the preparation for and the actual performances of the Torch Light Tattoo here. . . . They played excellently all the time, worked most willingly, and I never heard a complaint of any sort. Their efforts contributed very largely to the success of the tattoo."

August 21. —The 1st Indian Draft left for the Depot.

August 24.—Under W.O. Letter 109/Infantry/3336 (A.G.2A.), dated July 20, 1925, 57 N.C.O.'s and men with 2 and 3 years' service proceeded to the Depot for premature transfer to the Army Reserve.

August 25.—Battalion Training commenced.
The Regiment marched to Konigsdorf and billeted for the night.
Very bad weather.

August 26.—Regiment marched to a prepared camp at Glesh.
The training area bad, consisting almost entirely of cultivation.

August 30.—Major H. F. Whinney, D.S.O., O.B.E., having finished his duties as Senior Umpire, assumed command of the Regiment.

September 17.—Commencement of inter-Brigade operations.

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September 20.—The Regiment forming the White Force, or skeleton enemy, for the Rhine Army Manoeuvres, proceeded by march and lorry to Keyenberg.

September 26.—Rhine Army Manoeuvres completed.
The Regiment returned by train to Cologne.

October 6.—2nd Lieuts. M. M. Alston-Roberts-West and C. Clifton joined the Regiment and were posted to C and D Companies respectively.

October 7.—Lieut.-Colonel B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., went to Morocco for a short visit under the orders of the War Office.

October 16.—The 2nd Indian Draft left for the Depot.

October 26.—Lieut. J. P. A. G. Graham proceeded to Aldershot for a six-weeks course in Boxing, Wrestling, Judging, and Athletics.

Lieut. C. W. P. Branson proceeded to Porton for a three-weeks course in anti-gas training.

November 2.—Captain A. M. Toye, V.C., M.C., proceeded to England *en route* for Egypt, having been appointed Assistant to the Chief Instructor at the Cairo Military School.

Lieut. J. B. Jarvis took over the duties of Officer-in-Command, Regimental Training Cadre from Captain Toye.

November 5.—Lieut.-Colonel B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C., returned from Morocco and assumed duty as 2nd in Command.

December 14.—Major H. F. Whinney, D.S.O., O.B.E., and Captain A. E. Mason went to Wiesbaden to inspect accommodation to be occupied by the Regiment at Langenschwalbach.

December 17.—Colonel A. G. Bayley, C.B.E., D.S.O., returned from sick leave and resumed command of the Battalion.

December 22.—Regimental conference to consider details of carrying out the move to Langenschwalbach.

Instead of taking over fully equipped barracks on arrival, all stores have to be taken from Cologne. These include Beds, Mattresses, Blankets, Tables, Furniture of Messes, Gymnasium, Miniature Range equipment, Institutes, as well as all the Bedding and Cooking equipment of the married families.

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COLLECTIVE TRAINING AND MANOEUVRES ON THE RHINE, 1925.

FIELD Training in the Cologne Sector of Occupied Territory was carried out under difficulties on account of the lack of suitable ground, and we were usually dependent on our Allies for permission to use parts of their areas.

Company Training was carried out at Wahn, east of the Rhine, midway between Cologne and Bonn. This had been a German Training Camp before the War and had barracks and hutments for the accommodation of troops. The Camp was allotted to the French in the partition of occupied territory, and we borrowed parts of it from them for certain periods to accommodate battalions during Company Training.

The area consisted of thick woods with rides and clearings, except for one large open space in front of the Camp, which was used as a Field Firing Range. C Company gave an excellent demonstration of a company field firing scheme here for the 2nd Rhine Brigade.

An element of excitement was added to Company Training by the fact that the French continued to carry out aerial bombing and machine gun firing from the air on the area. If one had received information as to when their planes would be up one kept off the area; if not, it was necessary to give a demonstration of mobility and the use of cover.

For Battalion, Brigade, and Divisional Training in 1924 we had borrowed from the French a part of the beautiful Eifel country, which lies west of the Rhine between Bonn and Coblenz. In 1925 it was not possible to get this, and instead we used an area about 20 miles west of Cologne, partly in the British and partly in the Belgian zones.

The country was in the main flat and uninteresting, and the weather conditions so bad that at one time it seemed likely that further training might be cancelled and the troops withdrawn to Cologne. It was, however, found possible to complete the programme, which consisted of 11 days Battalion Training, 8 days Brigade Training, 3 days Inter-Brigade Training, and 6 days Divisional Manoeuvres.

We made the best use we could of the Battalion Training area, which consisted for the most part of plough and knee-high root fields, but were glad that we also had the use of the area allotted to the cavalry, who did not come out from Cologne until later.

The main impressions left on my mind by Battalion Training are of several marches in the rain, coupled with the problem of whether one ultimately gets wetter with or without a waterproof cape; the long-distance blowing records of the buglers; Niederempt Church and the Lone Tree from the north; the same from the southeast, and west; a very pleasant bivouac near Widdendorf, and the fact that motor headlights are very useful for illuminating the dinner table; the amount of walking exercise taken by signalling officers in mobile warfare; that umpires are rarely accused of not making sufficient use of their horses; that a considerable amount of confusion can be caused by an officer letting off the odd daylight signal at the wrong time; that the amount of rain which a tent will keep out is extraordinary; that few of the officers can now be in doubt as to "Who takes care of the caretaker's daughter while the caretaker's busy taking care."

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Brigade Training, owing to the heavy state of the country consisted practically entirely of route marches and Brigade Battle Drill. The latter is a rather complicated business, which depends very largely for its success on quick deployment and maintenance of direction. We usually took our Cookers as a "point to march on" and found that that worked very well and developed the sense of direction of all ranks.

The Inter-Brigade Training has left few impressions beyond the fact that our Brigade was given an impossible task, and that the directing staff would have been disappointed if we had carried it out; that the Highlanders' uniform is better suited for wading in streams than our own, and that a tank in the middle of a village street is a difficult obstacle to negotiate.

The Rhine Army Manoeuvres must be described at more length, because they were very interesting from the Regimental point of view. They were really enjoyed by everybody in spite of the weather.

The White Force (commander, Lieut.-Colonel B. C. T. Paget, D.S.O., M.C.), consisting of the Regiment with a squadron of the K.D.G.'s and W Field Battery, R.A., formed the skeleton enemy for the 1st Division, i.e. the remainder of the Rhine Army.

In order to make much of ourselves the Regiment was known as the 43rd Light Infantry Brigade, each Company representing a Battalion and each Platoon a Company. We had one Battalion (Company) in lorries, and we also had a detachment of lorried cavalry in addition to the mounted squadron, and a section of guns complete with horses, representing a battery, also in lorries.

We moved stealthily from our camp at Glesh, on Sunday, September 20, the day after the Inter-Brigade operations had finished, and marched 14 miles to Keyenburg. On Monday we moved to Glehn, another 14 miles, and remained there for two days in observation of the 1st Division, who had moved up on the Monday and Tuesday into position to the south of us. Glehn is a pretty village and afforded excellent billets. The officers' mess was located in the Hotel Drink!

On Wednesday, September 23, we attacked the enemy at 0600 hours and drove them back 12 miles in some disorder. The main feature of this day's operations was C Battalion's surprising of the enemy cavalry screen having breakfast in a farm, and A Battalion's hand-to-hand battle with several tanks, during which, the occupant of one of the tanks was unfortunately injured by a missile, which found a chink in its armour. The 43rd Brigade billeted in Holzweiler, tired but satisfied.

On Thursday, 24th, we took up a defensive position in order to let the enemy have a turn, but they were so worn out and disorganized by our hammering of the day before, and the fact that their supply system was not as good as ours, that they were unable to attack before 3 P.M.

We eventually retired, still with a sting in our tail, through successive positions, and reached our billets in Gustorf and Gindorf without being pressed at 11 p.m.

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The main feature of this day was the Force Commander's rapid disappearance up the Garz-weiler Road, pursued by a troop of the enemy's cavalry.

Friday, September 25, saw the 1st Division still attacking and the 43rd Brigade holding a position covering the crossings of the River Erft at Gustorf and Gindorf. As the enemy attack developed we withdrew across the river, blowing up the bridges behind us. The diary notes that the weather all day was "very wet."

The weather report in the diary for Saturday, September 26, is "even wetter than yesterday." It was in fact a perfectly poisonous day.

The 1st Division having forced the crossings of the Erft, attacked the 43rd Brigade, which was astride the main road to Cologne. After a stout resistance the White Force Commander withdrew judiciously to Rommerskirchen Station, where a reliable agent had reported a train labelled "Cologne" to be in position.

This information proved to be correct and the Regiment marched into barracks at about 4 p.m.

The main feature of this day was D Battalion's mammoth smoke screen, made by lighting a bonfire and placing on it their reserve of smoke candles. This has been reported as being quite the best smoke screen seen for some years and it effectually hid their movements from the enemy for some time.

Cologne has rarely looked so pleasant as it did on the afternoon of September 26.

B. C. T. P.