

1928 REGIMENTAL CHRONICLE
1st Bn OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

SUMMARY OF FIRST BATTALION DIARY

PARKHURST.

January 4.—Lieut W. G. Clarke cross-posted from 2nd Battalion. Authority: War Office Letter P/18716/6 (A.G.a(0)) dated 4/1/28.

January 7.—Captain E. H. Whitfeld, M.C., 52nd, visited the Regiment.

January 9.—One other rank (Signaller Hamblett) died in Netley Hospital from appendicitis.

January 10.—Captain A. E. Mason, Quartermaster of the Depot, and late Quartermaster of this Regiment, died at Cowley Barracks from an illness contracted while a prisoner after Kut-al-Amara. Buried at Rose Hill Cemetery, Oxford, on 14th January with full military honours, detachments being found by the Regiment and Depot.

January 19.—The Mayor and Corporation of Newport dined with the Officers of the Regiment.

January 20.—The Isle of Wight Foxhounds met in Barracks.

January 23.—The Regiment found a Guard of Honour at Ryde on the occasion of the funeral of the late Admiral of the Fleet, Sir John de Robeck.

January 25.—A draft of 25 men and 1 boy arrived from the Depot.

January 31.—A draft of 95 other ranks and three families left Southampton in H.M.T. *Neuralia* for the Second Battalion. Captain Naylor and Captain Hamilton also proceeded in this ship on posting to Second Battalion.

February 7.—2nd Lieutenant H. S. P. Barstow (Supplementary Reserve of Officers) attached to the Regiment for two months on first appointment.

February 11.—R.Q.M.S, C. T. Moody promoted to rank and appointment of Lieutenant and Quartermaster and posted to the Depot. Authority: "London Gazette," February 11, 1928.

March 1.—The re-organisation of the Regiment into a Headquarter Wing, three Rifle Companies, and one Machine Gun Company of three sections (12 machine guns) came into force. Letter "D" or Captain B. Burt-Smith's Company, was disbanded on this date.

March 8.—A party of ten other ranks, under the command of 2nd Lieutenant T. G. D. Rowley, proceeded to the Small Arms School, Hythe, to form part of a Demonstration Platoon during the forthcoming training season.

March 10.—2nd Lieutenant R. O. Spence, from Supplementary Reserve of Officers, gazetted to the Regiment on first commission. Authority: "London Gazette." Ante date of commission, 4th November, 1925.

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March 15.—Lieutenant Nils Houge, Norwegian Army, attached to the Regiment for one month.

April 5.—Major G. F. Plowden, M.C., Qualified (Q.I.) at Netheravon (S.A.S.).

April 14.—Six N.C.O.'s proceeded to the Chemical Warfare School, Porton, as volunteers to undergo treatment for the furtherance of chemical research. These N.C.O.'s were awarded ten days extra annual furlough in recognition of their services.

April 18.—The Machine Gun Company proceeded to concentration camp at Netheravon for ten days.

April 25.—A Draft of 30 Other Ranks arrived from the Depot.

April 26.—The strength of the Regiment on this day was 28 Officers and 460 Other Ranks.

May 1.—Captain and Brevet Major R. J. Brett, D.S.O., relinquished the appointment of Adjutant on posting as D.A.A.G. War Office.

Lieutenant R. H. Doyne was appointed Adjutant vice Captain and Brevet Major R. J. Brett, D.S.O.

May 8.—Signallers' Classification—all passed first class. Percentage 99.97.

May 15.—Lieut. M. H. S. Last proceeded to the Depot for a tour of duty vice Lieut. L. R. Randall reposted to Regiment, and posted to "B" Company.

May 28.—Isle of Wight Races, Ashe. Officers "At Home" on Race Course (two days).

June 1.—H.M.'s Levee. Following Officers attended: Lieut.-Colonel Day, Major Brett, Lieuts. Bernard, West, Clifton, Spence, 2nd Lieuts. Boileau, Rowley, Edmunds and Ducat-Hamersley.

June 14.—Draft of 26 arrived from the Depot.

June 19.—2nd Lieut. P. C. Boileau and 2nd Lieut. J. S. R. Edmunds qualified (Q.I.) at the S.A.S. Hythe Qualifying Course (Q.6).

June 23-28.—Regimental Cricket Week at Cowley Barracks.

June 29.—Draft of 14 arrived from the Depot.

June 30.—Regiment marched out to Brook Camp for Battalion Training.

July 11.—Regiment returned to Barracks from Battalion Training.

July 13.—Information received that Major A. E. Sanderson, D.S.O., has been appointed to command 52nd vice Lieut.-Colonel W. H. M. Freestun, C.M.G., D.S.O. (17 December, 1928).

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July 16.—Regiment proceeded to camp at Tidworth Pennings in order to pitch camp for O.T.C. Every available man on working parties.

July 20 and 21.—Regimental Team obtained second in the Army Athletic Championships at Aldershot.

Result :

2nd Batt. York and Lancs	33 points
43rd	28 points
3rd Batt. R.T.C.	27 points

August 15.—2nd Lieut. G. W. Lathbury proceeded to West Africa for service with W.A.F.F.

August 16.—Advance Party to Boscombe Aerodrome Camp for Brigade Training.

August 17.—Remainder of Regiment to Boscombe Camp for Brigade Training,

August 18.—Lieuts. Graham, Bernard, West and Boileau selected to run for Army v. Navy and Air Force.

September 1.—Brigade Training ended and advance party of Regiment went to Tidworth Park Camp in preparation for Divisional and Command Training.

September 10.—Divisional Training starts—a four days' exercise.

September 13.—Regiment returns to Tidworth Park Camp.

September 17.—Regiment marches out to take part in Southern Command Manoeuvres.

September 21.—Regiment returns to Tidworth Park.

September 23.—Regiment returns to Isle of Wight on conclusion of Collective Training.

September 24.—The strength on this day was 26 Officers and 492 Other Ranks.
2nd Lieut, P. C. Boileau appointed Assistant Cadre Officer for Winter Training.

September 27.—Draft of 29 Privates and 4 Boys arrived from the Depot. 29 Privates posted to Machine Gun Company, 4 Boys to H.Q. Wing.

September 29.—Information received that Captain W. A. R. Ames is cross-posted to 43rd from 52nd with orders to join on November 13.

October 1.—Captain T. E. Withington, A.F.C, is appointed Instructor in English at Ecole Speciale, St. Cyr, France.

October 9.—First Indian Draft consisting of 6 N.C.O.'s and 1 Bugler embark on *City of Marseilles* for Bombay.

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October 11.—Draft of 21 Privates arrived from the Depot and were posted to A, B and C Companies.

October 17.—Inspector of Remounts (W.O.) saw horses and mules and was well pleased with their condition.

October 23.—Colonel Day visited the Regimental Depot.

October 25.—Lieut. Doyne proceeded to Aldershot for a six weeks Physical Training Course.

2nd Lieut. T. G. D. Rowley awarded a Q.I. Certificate by the Small Arms School, Hythe, in connection with work done when commanding Demonstration Platoon in March and April.

October 26.—2nd Lieut. H. J. C. Ducat-Hamersley returned from Hythe having completed a Qualifying Course.

November 9.—Annual Inspection by Brigade Commander.

November 11.—The Regiment attended an Armistice Day Memorial Service at the Newport War Memorial.

November 12.—2nd Lieut. J. S. R. Edmunds goes to Tidworth for a Physical Training Course preliminary to Aldershot.

November 13.—Captain W. A. R. Ames joins for duty.

December 4.—Lieuts. Jarvis and Spence go to sea in *H.M.S. Champion* to see gunnery trials.

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FIRST BATTALION LETTER, 1928

DEAR EDITOR

The beginning of the year 1928 found us reorganising ourselves into the new Infantry Battalion Organisation, so on March 1st "D" Company ceased to exist, and the Machine Gun Company consisting of three sections of four guns each, came into being. In addition to this, the Regiment now consists of three Rifle Companies and the Headquarter Wing.

Until the middle of July we were left in the Isle of Wight to complete Weapon Training as well as Company and Battalion Training.

The ranges at Newtown are about three miles away, and each company spent three weeks or so in camp on the ranges firing the new and somewhat complicated course.

Company Training was finished by the end of May, and on June 30th we started Battalion Training for a fortnight. Considering the size of the Island and the amount of cultivation there are some quite satisfactory areas in which to carry out training, and on the whole they proved adequate for these earlier stages of collective training. Brook Green, where the Regiment went into camp, is an ideal spot not more than two hundred yards from the sea, and we were blessed with delightful weather during the period of Battalion Training. Although the length of our marches were necessarily limited by circumstances, it was found that climbing up and down the steep hills improved our wind and got us all pretty fit.

Battalion Training was cut short by a few days owing to orders being received that the Regiment was to move (bag and baggage) to Tidworth on July 16, in order to assist in the erection of O.T.C. Camps at Tidworth Park and Tidworth Pennings. The Gloucesters, who had been detailed for this Herculean task, were suddenly ordered to China, and the job of putting up, keeping clean, and finally pulling down these camps, devolved on us.

So on July 12 an advance party under Packe and Jarvis went off to Tidworth to pitch two camps where we might live. The Regiment followed on July 16, travelling in two boats to Southampton, and then by two trains on to Tidworth, The cost to the Government of moving us to Tidworth, and having got us there, of paying our field allowances and other expenses, must have been prodigious. However, the British taxpayer is very long suffering.

The Regiment, less a proportion of the Machine Gun Company, who went to Tidworth Park, were in camp in Tidworth Pennings, which, as camps go, was very comfortable. For the next month, every available man in the Regiment was on a working party of some sort or another from about 7.30 in the morning till 5 or 6 o'clock at night. In the days during the war, when the writer used to spend a few nights in the summer under canvas with his School O.T.C., he was made to carry out all sorts of domestic duties, and there was little or no help from the Regular Army in these matters. Nowadays it is different, and the modern schoolboy has myriads of soldiers to fetch and carry for him.

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Our stay at Tidworth, however, was not entirely without incident, for, towards the end of July, the Army Athletic Championships took place. The team, extremely ably trained and captained by that indefatigable runner, Graham, was considered to have a very reasonable chance of giving a good account of itself. That we should be runners up for the Army Championships one hardly dared to hope. Yet such was the case. It is not proposed here to deal with the Aldershot meeting in any detail, as a graphic description appears elsewhere, and the writer and such others as were fortunate enough to see the sports at Aldershot on that memorable Friday and Saturday experienced enough thrills from the spectators' point of view to last them a lifetime. It was a great achievement, and much praise is due to every member of the team who took part, and especially to Graham, who, besides running magnificently himself, and saving a critical situation more than once, produced a team not only well balanced but trained to the minute.

In August we moved to Boscombe Down Camp, there to take part in Brigade Training for a fortnight, subsequently to return to Tidworth Park Camp with the rest of the 9th Infantry Brigade to take part in Divisional and Command Training. The stage for these exercises was set on Salisbury Plain, most of our engagements being fought against the Mechanised Force. The exploits of the Regiment on training are chronicled by one better able to do justice to the trials we endured than the writer.

We returned to our Island home on September 23, having been under canvas practically without a break since June 30.

The business of classes, drafts, leave, and last, but not least, hunting, again began to occupy our attention.

Prospects of hunting on the Island are quite rosy. There are plenty of foxes, and hounds have accounted for a good number of cubs. We are fortunate in again being affiliated to the 3rd/6th Dragoons for the purpose of hiring troop horses. This year they have supplied us with quite as good a selection of troop horse hunters as they did last year. So we are extremely lucky, and, given an open season, should have nothing to complain of.

The Regiment is still very weak in numbers, and there are at the time of writing only three platoons at the Depot. However, our drafting requirements for the 52nd are considerably smaller than last year, so it is to be hoped that we may, before very long, be nearly up to peace strength.

It would be unfitting to end this letter without offering our sincere congratulations to Sanderson on getting command of the 52nd, and wishing him the best of good luck and success in his new appointment.

Yours ever,
43RD.

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**COLLECTIVE TRAINING ON SALISBURY PLAIN IN AUGUST AND
SEPTEMBER, 1928**

QUARTERMASTERS are a ubiquitous tribe and, when it comes to camp life, can be likened to the Bedouins or, as they are called in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Ahl el Beit," the people of the tents.

And so it happened last summer that camps sprang up for us like mushroom beds only to disappear again equally suddenly, and if we awoke one morning to find a fatigue party removing the tents from over our heads, all we had to do was to make a gigantic hop to find everything ready for us in a brand new camp elsewhere. Thus we hopped from Newtown to Brooke, Brooke to Tidworth Pennings, Tidworth Pennings to Boscombe, Boscombe to Tidworth Park, all in the space of seven weeks or so.

Most camps look alike but they each have their own individuality. The wasps of the Pennings were preferable to the earwigs of the Park and these again were preferable to the funny little things that bit you at Boscombe, so, taking it all round, Brooke was our best camp and Boscombe our worst one.

Anyone who has lived on the Isle of Wight for any length of time appreciates an occasional visit to England, even if it is only to camp on Salisbury Plain, and this fact, coupled with the prospect of fighting the much-talked-of Experimental Armoured Force, brought us all keyed up to our Brigade training camp at Boscombe Aerodrome on August 18. If we had only studied our maps more carefully and seen that, in the centre of our training area, was printed "Porton Gas Establishment," we might have smelt a rat, but more of this beastliness later.

Our first Brigade exercise on August 20 was in the nature of a preliminary run to give us a chance of getting on a war footing and to try out some new methods of supplying our Machine Gun Company with ammunition.

We carried out a running attack across the valley of the Bourne with Nether Wallop as our objective. The "Wallops" figured so often in our general and special ideas that those of us who were there might well quote W. Shakespeare as depicted by *Punch* some years ago during Army Manoeuvres :—

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers
Shall be remembered evermore, and men
Shall prate of Nether Wallop in their cups
And dream of Little Wallop in their dreams
And pray to Over Wallop in their prayers.

We never captured our Wallop, however, as Tower Hill and the Royal Scots Fusiliers got in the way and eventually "A" Company, who were leading the attack, were persuaded to stop fighting and come home when the cease fire sounded at 4.30 p.m.

On August 22 we carried out an exercise set by the 3rd Division in which the 9th Infantry Brigade was opposed by the Armoured Force.

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The objects of the exercise were :—

1. To exercise a small mixed force in the selection and occupation of a position to resist armoured fighting vehicles, and in defence against attack by an armoured force.
2. To exercise the Armoured Force in attack against an enemy in a hastily organized position.

This was our first encounter with the famous Armoured Force and we were all agog whilst "taping" ourselves in North and South of Lopcombe Corner. Our anti-tank officer was full of fight with his green and white flags, although he failed to save the life of his commanding officer, who was shot by an armoured car whilst giving out his preliminary orders. This, of course, may have been intentional.

The final attack on our position by the full weight of the armoured force was certainly spectacular and gave us an inkling of what we might expect in the next war. We got the impression however, that, given a good anti-tank gun (or rather four of them) we could hit back pretty effectively. This was confirmed by the opinion of the umpires who held that our line was still intact at the close of operations that evening.

On August 24 we again took the field, this time to practise a withdrawal in the face of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade.

In our encounter with the armoured force we had not seen as much mobility as we had expected, and its movement generally seemed to us slow and cumbersome, but the cavalry really did make rings round us, so much so that, whilst we were held in front by one regiment, the remainder of the Brigade came on our Brigade Headquarters from the rear and captured the Brigadier and staff on Tower Hill. A hastily scratched up counter attack, made by what was left of all the battalions, finally retook Tower Hill and so ended a very interesting and instructive day.

On August 27 and 28 an inter-Brigade scheme was carried out between the 8th and 9th Infantry Brigades to practise the encounter attack, the withdrawal and wood fighting. Space does not permit of a detailed account of this battle which raged around Tower Hill all night. At dawn the right of our line was broken by the Dukes, but our left company, although hit on the nose by the Hampshire Regiment and over the left ear by the Devons, still hung on; the gallant commander refusing to retire, even when the enemy were reinforced by a section of umpires, saying that he would rather die where he was than go any farther away from home.

The final exercise in Brigade Training took place on August 30 and 31. The actual scheme does not matter except that it was devised to practise defence against gas. The experts of Porton were sent out and told to do their worst, and a pretty good worst it was. The lesson learnt was that our respirators, if properly taken care of, not forgetting a small piece of sticking plaster, give complete protection against anything that Porton can do, and we returned to camp to fumigate ourselves and sleep.

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On the completion of Brigade training the Regiment hopped to Tidworth Park and settled down to a week of Command Weapon Training Meetings and Horse Shows, until Monday, September 10, when we sallied forth again to take part in a Divisional exercise, which was originally intended to entail five days and four nights continuous warfare. How the 43rd claim to have shortened the battle by at least one night will be told anon.

The scheme was devised to show the relative strategical values of a force of cavalry with mechanized artillery and infantry on one side, as compared with a larger force of infantry with horse-drawn artillery on the other side. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade and the Armoured Force, as well as the 3rd Division, took part in the exercise.

Stated briefly the general idea was that Northern and Southern Armies were facing each other on a long battle front from Marlborough East to Reading. A deadlock had been reached and both sides started to do the obvious and bring up reinforcements to extend their flanks to the West.

The 3rd Division, which was part of the larger and less mobile Southern Force, had been pulled out to rest at Weyhill, when it was suddenly ordered to move at once and secure the high ground south of Urchfont and Chirton in order to obtain observation over Pewsey Vale, and forestall the movement of enemy reinforcements from Gloucester.

The concentration at Weyhill of the 3rd Division resembled a game of chess, where mechanized units skipped, like Queens and Bishops, from one end of the board to the other at 15 m.p.h., whilst we poor infantry slogged along, like pawns, one square at a time at 3 m.p.h.

Operations started at 3 p.m., September 10, and a glance at the map will show that the vital point to both sides was going to be the crossings over the River Avon from Upavon south to Durrington. Consequently at zero hour away we sped for the Avon, back along the same seven miles of road on which we had marched out in the morning, and past our camp at Tidworth Park (a bit hard) and so west to the River. We were attacked by Tanks and Cavalry before we reached it and when we did get there at nightfall, we found the crossings held by the enemy.

Nothing deterred, however, the 43rd forced a crossing at Durrington during the night, thereby getting in behind the enemy holding the main bridge farther north. This enabled the rest of the Brigade to get over before dawn and compelled the enemy to vacate the whole line of the Avon.

If it had not been for this "coup" an organized attack would have been necessary to force the crossings on the nth and so a day was saved.

All day on the 11th we fought our way North West towards Urchfont. Our objective was the line Chirton Copse-Urchfont Down and we assaulted it in the very teeth of the Royal Corps of Umpires, who said we could not capture it because it was not occupied. We tried to argue that this was all the more reason why we should capture it, but we were finally defeated by the Divisional Commander, who sent an A.D.C. to tell us we had marched too far already. With this we agreed and halted for the night.

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At dawn on the 12th we again advanced and by 10 a.m. had reached our final objective at Urchfont. We now thought we had won the war, but alas, mobilization arrangements had gone wrong behind (or was it that a two days cut in the operations could not be permitted?). Anyhow, we had to give up all we had gained and retire to the Avon again.

Encouraged by our withdrawal the enemy put a new kick into things and threatened our lines of communication. Consequently on the 13th we withdrew still farther to the east and the standfast sounded just as we were about to pass through our camp for the second time. The exercise was a strenuous one in which we never had a moment's rest. The recompense came, however, when we were especially complimented on our marching and "elan".

The culmination of the collective training was the Command exercise which started on September 19 at 2 p.m.

It took us two days to get into position at Chisledon, the Brigade marching on the 17th to Savemake Forest and thence on the 18th to Chisledon.

Space does not permit of a full explanation of the General and Special Ideas, nor would they be of any value without references to the map, suffice it to say that we were part of an Eastland Force and our enemy were located round Taunton sixty miles away.

Stated briefly the objectives of the two forces were each other, and as usual, we wore steel helmets and the other side, F.S. caps.

We marched West and Westland marched East and the clash came on the Avon.

As often happens in operations of the magnitude of Command exercises, some Units have all the fun and others get left out in the cold. As luck would have it the 43rd, and in fact the whole 9th Infantry Brigade, came very little into the picture and we had to content ourselves with watching the 8th Infantry Brigade cover themselves with glory on our right at Upavon, where a fierce battle was fought on the evening of September 29.

Darkness left the issue in doubt and the Armoured Force, which belonged to the enemy, was brought up to deal with the final blow to the harassed 8th Brigade in the morning. The blow was delivered, but in vain, as the 8th Brigade were not there. They had withdrawn in the dark and the Armoured Force attacked "Nothing".

Our Army retired on September 21 to the line Sidbury Hill—Long Hill—Rabbit Hill and the Umpires ruled that, owing to the miss fire attack at Upavon, it would take Westland twelve hours to attack us again. Consequently operations ceased at 11 a.m. on September 21.

Thus ended the collective training season of 1928 and we all felt that we had never been through a more interesting one or a more versatile one before. Strenuous, perhaps, but we did not mind that as we were kept interested all the time.

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The lessons we were to be taught have already been stated and we learnt them all and a few more besides :

The Isle of Wight beer is better than the Salisbury Plain beer and both are better than Hay Box tea.

Upturned faces are particularly noticeable from the air. Therefore Pte. Murphy must be cured of the noxious habit of gazing up into the sky and saying, " Blimy, look at that up there."

A number nine pill just fits the barrel of a service rifle firing blank.

Piled arms outside the Pheasant Inn indicates an important position strongly held. This valuable deduction was given as the considered opinion of the Regimental Intelligence Section operating from Lopcombe Corner.

Since our return to barracks a new movement in Arms Drill has been tried out, i.e., the "Present Arms " from the "Present Arms." The movement is a simple one because, when the command is given, any man in the ranks who does anything except nothing, must *ipso facto*, be wrong. Or, to quote the words of the Officer carrying out the experiment,

“When I say Present Arms and you are already at the Present I mean you to remain at the Present. You are not to Slope Arms nor look to your right to see what the man next to you is doing.”

This movement was tested with a view to impressing the Brigade Commander at his annual inspection, but was finally discarded as Regimental Innovations are not popular these days and the movement is not in Infantry Training, Vol. I.