



History
of
The Queen's Own
(Royal West Kent Regiment)



THE QUEEN'S OWN
(ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT).

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE QUEEN'S OWN (ROYAL WEST KENT REGIMENT).

THE inspiring motto of the men of Kent—"Invicta" (the Unconquered)—aptly describes the achievements of The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) during its long period of faithful service in all parts of the world; for all ranks have from time to time been called upon to face the greatest dangers and to overcome extraordinary difficulties in the course of their duties, and have always emerged triumphant, earning for the Regiment a great and highly treasured name for steadfastness, courage, devotion, and discipline.

The history of the Regiment dates back to December 18th, 1755, when an order was issued authorizing its raising as the 52nd Foot. It was renumbered as the 50th Foot in 1757, when Sir William Shirley's regiment of American Provincials, which then took rank as the 50th, was disbanded. The original facings of the 50th Foot were black, and the lace red and white. Norwich was its first station, where and in other garrisons it did duty till 1760, when it was dispatched to Germany to join Prince Ferdinand's Army. There for three years it experienced some very arduous service during the latter part of the Seven Years' War, at times operating in areas which in years to come were destined to witness many splendid deeds of heroism carried out by the Regiment in the Great War. The Allied Army, of which the British formed part, was called upon to perform

many very heavy marches and fight some severe battles, and the British troops were the admiration of all the foreign cities for their hardihood, endurance, and courage—a reputation which the 50th shared.

In 1776 the Regiment was ordered to North America, where the Colonists were in revolt, but did not take part in the fighting. It was, however, called upon to supply drafts for regiments that had been engaged at Bunker's Hill. The Colonel of the Regiment at this time was Lieut.-General Sir Thomas Wilson, Bart., of Charlton Court, near Woolwich, through whom the connection of the Regiment with West Kent originated.

In 1778 the Regiment was serving as marines on board the Fleet, under Admiral Keppel, and took part in the great naval battle against the French Fleet off Ushant.

In 1782 the 50th Foot became the 50th West Kent Regiment of Foot, and for many years it maintained a depot or recruiting company at Maidstone, an association with the county town that was destined to become permanent.

When the French Revolution broke out the Regiment was in garrison at Gibraltar, and was soon called to active service, fighting with signal bravery at Toulon and the reduction of Corsica, where it took a prominent part in the capture of the strong Martello towers, the storming of the Conventional Redoubt, the blockade and capture of Bastia, and the long and successful siege of Calva—operations which called for the highest courage. The Regiment received the special thanks of the Commander of the Forces for its valuable services.

The Regiment then proceeded to join Sir Ralph Abercromby's Force in Egypt, in 1801, and took part in that arduous and memorable campaign, which resulted in the total defeat of the French Army in the East. In recognition of its services, the King bestowed the badge of the Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt," on the Regiment.

Service in Malta and Ireland followed, and on the renewal of hostilities the Regiment was directed to raise a second battalion, at Ashford. The 1st Battalion sailed for Copenhagen in 1807, and served with great distinction in the siege of that city, receiving special notice for a gallant repulse of a determined sortie.

The Regiment formed part of the Cadiz Expeditionary Force, under Sir Brent Spencer, and in 1808 joined Sir Arthur Wellesley's Army in Portugal in time to take a notable part in his great victory at Vimiera. This battle was notable for the fact that it was the first time that Napoleon's hitherto undefeated troops had faced a British Army, and the rough handling they received was deeply mortifying to the veteran French troops, especially as the British were greatly outnumbered. The Regiment took an important part in the battle, holding a hill on the right of the line, and by a gallant charge completely routed an enemy column five thousand strong. Napier, in his wonderful history of the Peninsular War, says of the part the Regiment played at Vimiera: "With faces begrimed with powder as black as their own lapels, they came tumbling down on Laborde's Division of French, amidst a fearful war cry, and with a shock that nothing could withstand." The enemy broke and fled in confusion, leaving six guns and a number of prisoners in the hands of the Regiment, together with an eagle staff, which for long afterwards was carried in action as a trophy, between the King's and the Regimental Colours.

The Regiment continued to serve in Portugal, and formed part of that small but gallant British Army that, under Sir John Moore, marched into Spain to make a spirited thrust against the French lines of communication. It was a brilliant project, as the French had enormous forces in the country, and, like most brilliant schemes in war, it involved tremendous risks; but the daring project succeeded, thanks mainly to the splendid marching powers of the British infantry, and Napoleon's

plans to overwhelm the Peninsula were completely upset by the unexpected move of the small British force. In a fury he called his divisions from all points to march at once to surround the daring opponents. After this lightning thrust the British retreated rapidly over the mountains to Corunna, where a fleet of transports lay, skilfully evading the converging columns. In that retreat the British had to fight the grimmest of rearguard actions on the mountains and in the plains, and succeeded in holding off the pursuers till the sea was reached. Then the British soldiers, growling because not allowed to stand and fight, were permitted to face the enemy, with the result that one of the most glorious victories in the annals of the British Army was won. The Regiment was heavily engaged in this battle, attacking the enemy's heavy battery on the hill beyond Sevina, being led by that gallant soldier, Major—afterwards General—Sir Charles Napier, who was left for dead on the field, but recovered to win a great name as a soldier.

A short spell of home service followed, the Regiment being restored to strength by drafts from the home battalion, and then, after serving at Walcheren, once more landed in the Peninsula, and experienced a great deal of arduous service throughout the campaign of 1810-14, being present in the operations on the Coa, at the Battle of Almaraz, and Battle of Vittoria. It took part in the strenuous operations in the Pyrenees, was at the crossing of the Nive, the Battle of Orthes, and a number of other but minor engagements. At Almaraz the Regiment gave a striking example of its fighting quality, being detailed to storm a strong fort guarding a bridge over the Tagus. The attack was carried out without waiting for artillery support, and with such spirit that the garrison fled in panic once the British had effected a lodgment on the walls.

On the return of the Regiment to England the home battalion was disbanded. As a single-battalion Regi-

ment it once more went abroad in 1819, serving in Jamaica till 1827, and on its return new Colours were presented by Queen Adelaide (the Duchess of Clarence), the old Colours, it is stated, being cremated, and the ashes preserved in a silver box forming part of the mess plate. The Regiment was then directed to assume the title of the 50th (Duke of Clarence's) Regiment of Foot, which on his accession to the throne as King William IV was changed to the Queen's Own, the old black facings being replaced by facings of blue velvet. The black facings had earned for the Regiment the nickname of "The Dirty Half Hundred," owing to the dye of the cuffs making the men's faces grimy when wiping away the perspiration in the heat of battle.

A period of service in Australia as convict guards in New South Wales, followed, and then the Regiment was dispatched to India, in 1841, where it was destined to win further laurels on active service. It was in Tenasserim when those Provinces were threatened by an invasion of a Burmese Army of 100,000 warriors with 200 guns, the danger being averted by the bold front and skilful disposition of the British force of two British and five native battalions.

The Queen's Own bore a gallant part in the fierce battle of Punniar, one of the most critical of the Mahratta War, the Regiment charging a dense mass of the enemy at the point of the bayonet, taking their guns and putting them to flight. It was a decisive victory, as it occurred on the same day that Sir Hugh Gough defeated the main body of the enemy at Maharajpore. In the great Sikh War of 1845 the Queen's Own added to its splendid reputation by its gallant achievements in action. It fought with signal bravery in Sir Harry Smith's division at Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Aliwal, and Sobraon, all against desperate odds. At Moodkee the advance of the Regiment under a heavy fire of grape and round shot won the admiration of the Army; and at Ferozeshah the Regiment captured two enemy standards, and,

advancing through the enemy's training camp, occupied an isolated position of great peril till the following day. At Sobraon the Regiment, when advancing in line, halted and formed fours to permit of another regiment that had been badly knocked about in the attack to retire through their ranks, and then went forward to force a way at the point of the bayonet into the heart of the enemy's position.

It is admitted that the charge of the Queen's Own turned the tide of the battle, and led to ultimate victory.

The Regiment returned home in 1848 with a greatly enhanced reputation, and on the outbreak of the war with Russia the 50th was dispatched to the Crimea, landing in time to share in the honours and losses of the Battle of the Alma. It took part in the Battle of Inkermann, and shared in the rigours of the Siege of Sebastopol. It was specially selected to lead one of the columns in the attack on the great Redan, Major C. H. Lumley and Sergt. J. Coleman winning the V.C. for conspicuous bravery in that engagement.

In the meantime the present 2nd Battalion had been raised as the 97th (Earl of Ulster's) Foot, the facings being sky blue, the colour of the ribbon of the Order of St. Patrick, from which the Regiment got its nickname of "The Celestials." The 97th were soon serving abroad, being stationed for ten years in Ceylon during a period of great unrest which kept it almost constantly in the field. It subsequently served in Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, Jamaica, and North America. It was serving with the Queen's Own in the Crimean War. The associations thus commenced in the field were destined to become permanent when the two Regiments were linked up in 1881 as the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment).

The Colours carried by the 2nd Battalion in the Crimean and Indian Mutiny campaigns were deposited in All Saints' Church, Maidstone, and new Colours

presented by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge at Sandgate, Kent, on June 23rd, 1891.

Both Battalions served in India and Ceylon during the Indian Mutiny, and in 1863 the 1st Battalion was dispatched to New Zealand, where it served with credit in the very trying and protracted war against the Maoris.

Africa next called the Regiment on active service, the 2nd Battalion taking part in the first Boer War of 1882, and the 1st Battalion in the Egyptian Campaign of 1881 and the Nile Campaign of 1884-5-6. In 1897, the 1st Battalion being in India, further arduous service was experienced on the North-West Frontier with the Malakhand Field Force, winning the highest praise for the gallantry displayed by all ranks in the storming of the tribesmen's stronghold in the Swat Valley.

The 2nd Battalion played a brilliant part in the South African War, where it formed part of Sir Leslie Rundle's 8th Division, to which was allotted a most difficult task. The Division for a very long period was called upon to make a series of forced marches on very short rations, for the purpose of heading off Boer columns. Some of the achievements of this Division were absolutely marvellous, the rate of marching and the endurance of all ranks being unequalled throughout the campaign. Indeed, at times the infantry travelled as fast as the mounted men, although in heavy marching order, and their speed and lean condition earned for the Division the nickname of "Rundle's Greyhounds." The fighting spirit of the Regiment was equal to its high traditions, as the conduct of all ranks proved in many an encounter with the enemy.

The Battalion was present at the capture of Prinsloo and his commandos of about five thousand at Wittebergen, and at Biddulphsberg, where extensive veldt fires added to the horrors of the battle, the wounded lying helpless in the midst of the sweeping flames, many being rescued amid situations of great danger. The

losses of the Regiment in this campaign were relatively light ; a stained glass window placed in All Saints' Church, Maidstone, commemorates those who fell.

The 3rd (Militia) Battalion was embodied during the war, and, volunteering for service overseas, was the first militia unit to be dispatched from England ; and the Volunteer Battalions of the Regiment furnished active service companies that served with credit in the campaign.

The good name of the Regiment has been built up in peace as well as in war, and all ranks have from the earliest days of the Regiment's existence been imbued with the strongest *esprit-de-corps*, which has always been in evidence in everything pertaining to training and sport. This has helped in achieving many notable successes in open competition, and the Regiment has won the highest honours in many forms of sport, such as football, boxing, cricket, running, etc. The 2nd Battalion won the Army Football Cup in 1893, and also the cup presented by His Majesty for the best boxing team, open to all India, at Delhi in 1911. The 1st Battalion in 1908 and 1909 won two boxing championships in the Naval and Military Boxing Tournament—Cpl. Baker winning the Light Weights and Cpl. Darley the Feather Weights, both years. In 1911, Cpl. Baker won the Welter Weight Championship of the Army and Navy, and Pte. Smith the Light Heavy Weight Championship. Both Battalions of the Regiment were in a splendid state of efficiency when in August, 1914, England sent her famous ultimatum to Germany—that unless Belgian territory was respected, she would declare war. That ultimatum was ignored, Germany, in her arrogance, affecting to despise the British Army because of its comparatively few numbers. But the splendid valour, endurance, and efficiency of the British troops was destined to prove the factor mainly responsible for the upsetting of the German war plans and the ultimate defeat of that great Power.

The 1st Battalion of the Regiment was amongst the first of the British troops to land in France in that fateful August, and it shared in all the hardest fighting in the Battle of Mons and Le Cateau. The rest of the Regiment was mobilized, and new Battalions were quickly raised and trained, and in due course went overseas to take their place in the battle-lines, where all ranks bore themselves with splendid courage. How well all ranks acquitted themselves can be seen by the long roll of heroes who gave their lives for King and Country, and the brilliant array of honours, distinctions, and decorations awarded to that Regiment.

The War Honours won by past and present members of the Regiment during the Great War include the following :—

OFFICERS.

V.C.	...	...	...	...	2
K.C.B.	...	...	...	...	1
K.C.M.G.	...	...	...	...	1
C.B.	...	...	...	...	5
C.S.I.	...	...	...	...	3
C.M.G.	...	...	...	...	18
C.B.E.	...	...	...	...	4
C.I.E.	...	...	...	...	1
D.S.O. and three bars	...	...	...	...	1
D.S.O. and two bars	...	...	...	...	2
D.S.O. and one bar	...	...	...	...	4
D.S.O.	...	...	...	...	59
O.B.E.	...	...	...	...	14
M.C. and two bars	...	...	...	...	2
M.C. and one bar	...	...	...	...	13
M.C.	...	...	...	...	192
D.F.C.	...	...	...	...	3
M.B.E.	...	...	...	...	9

Foreign Decorations.

French	...	...	...	...	17
Russian	...	...	...	...	3
Belgian	...	...	...	...	9
Serbian	...	...	...	...	2
Egyptian	...	...	...	...	4
Italian	...	...	...	...	1
Greek ...	...	...	...	...	1
American	...	...	...	...	1
Roumanian	...	...	...	...	1

Mentioned in Dispatches.

Seven times	...	...	...	...	2
Six times	...	...	...	...	4
Five times	...	...	...	...	12
Four times	...	...	...	...	12
Three times	...	...	...	...	14
Twice ...	...	...	...	...	37
Once ...	...	...	...	...	156

WARRANT OFFICERS, N.C.OS. AND MEN.

V.C.	...	...	...	...	3
M.C.	...	...	...	...	4
D.C.M. and one bar	...	...	...	...	7
D.C.M.	...	...	...	...	142
M.M. and two bars	...	...	...	...	2
M.M. and one bar	...	...	...	...	42
M.M.	...	...	...	...	688
M.S.M.	...	...	...	...	81

Foreign Decorations.

French	...	...	...	...	21
Belgian	...	...	...	...	16
Russian	...	...	...	...	8
Italian	...	...	...	...	2
Serbian	...	...	...	...	12
Roumanian	...	...	...	...	3

Mentioned in Dispatches.

Three times	...	...	...	...	2
Twice	...	...	...	...	5
Once	...	...	...	...	235

In the Great War "The Queen's Own" established a record second to none for discipline, bravery, and endurance.

Mons, Neuve Chapelle, Hill 60, Trones Wood, and Nasiriyeh are only a few memorable names which recall the way in which the Regiment covered itself with glory, added richly to its roll of honour, and reflected lustre on the country. The German troops who moved against St. Ghislain early on August 23rd, 1914, imagined that the English were inferior troops, and that the forcing of the Mons Canal at that point would be a matter of little difficulty. But they were soon undeceived, and "The Queen's Own," after repulsing every German effort, still held the crossing of the Canal when night fell. During the subsequent retirement to the Marne the discipline and marching powers of the Regiment were beyond praise, and the feats performed showed how the training and *esprit-de-corps* instilled into all ranks during the previous years of peace had borne fruit. The present saying that "the West Kent Regiment have never lost a trench" was earned at Neuve Chapelle at the end of October, 1914. Then the Regiment held its trenches for several days in spite of the line being broken on its left, and the Germans not only on the left flank of the Regiment, but also actually behind it. At this period the men in the fire trenches were fired at from the front, the flank, and from behind, and yet, even though there were only two officers unwounded, the N.C.Os. and men stuck to their ground and refused to retire, thereby establishing a record as fine as any contained in the extracts already given. After the relief of the 1st Battalion from the trenches at Neuve Chapelle, the Army

Corps Commander, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, visited the Battalion and addressed it in the following stirring words :—

“ Officers and men of the Royal West Kent Regiment,—For a long time I have been wanting to address you, but in this strenuous war it has been quite impossible to catch certain Battalions ; I have found it impossible to get to you, what with one thing and another, and you being in the trenches. My reason for coming to address you is that I want you to understand that we who are behind appreciate your splendid services. I very much regret that yesterday your gallant Colonel (Col. Martyn) was wounded, but I am very glad to say that it is not a bad wound, although he may be laid up for a considerable time, and we must lose his services for the present. I can only tell you that the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief realizes how splendidly the Regiment has done, and your Colonel is about to be made a Brigadier-General. That is a direct compliment to you. I am perfectly certain that there is not another Battalion that has made such a name for itself as the Royal West Kent. Everybody is talking about you. They say, ‘ Give them a job ; they will do it. They never leave the trenches. It is perfectly certain they will stick it out.’ One point I want to refer to. No matter how gallant the work that has been performed, or how splendid the stands that have been made, you hear nothing about it. I will just briefly explain why. We are fighting the most serious war that has ever taken place, against highly trained armies and highly trained staffs. If we were to publish that the Royal West Kent Regiment had made a gallant stand, or had done a certain thing at a certain place, the enemy would say at once, ‘ The Royal West Kent Regiment ? That is the ——— Brigade, that is the ——— Division, that is the ——— Army Corps,’ and thus locate us at once. It is absolutely necessary to keep everything important from getting into the papers—the gallant deeds, how per-

formed, and what such and such a regiment has done. That is why our men have to go on performing these deeds without their relations at home knowing anything about them. I hope you will understand. It is very galling for you to go on as you do day after day, and your folks at home not to know. But I have records of performances of battalions, and when the time comes these will be published. They will be handed down in the records of the Regiment, and in no records will be recorded better deeds than those of this Battalion. I have received from the Brigadier-General commanding your Brigade appreciation of the gallant conduct of Lieut. White and the other young officer (2nd-Lieut. Russell) who is not on parade to-day: the way these two young officers handled the Regiment after all your other officers had fallen, how they stuck to it, and how eventually, when the time came, they brought the Regiment out of it. I have brought his name to the notice of the Field-Marshal Commanding troops, and sincerely hope he will receive the reward he so richly deserves. I will not detain you, as I want you to enjoy your rest. Heaven knows you have not had much, not since you have been in this country! I do congratulate the Regiment on the magnificent work it has done. I thank you most heartily for your support to — Corps, which I have the honour to command. I regret your losses, your great losses among the officers—and such magnificent officers, too! We are going to win, and we shall always win as long as we have the help of Battalions such as yours. I am always thinking of you men, and asking different officers what I can do for you. I can never forget your magnificent Regiment. I told the Commander-in-Chief yesterday that day after day I had been trying to address you. In fact, I have been out here three times. He said, 'That is a magnificent Regiment.' That is enough. Good luck to you all."

HILL 60.

On the evening of April 16th, 1915, the 1st Royal West Kents and the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers, who were to storm the hill, were in the trenches. When an attack of this kind is impending, men are keyed up to a high pitch, and are anxious to get it over as soon as possible. It speaks highly for the fine discipline of the troops that they waited in the narrow trenches all through the heat of April 17th without a trace of nerves. By 7 p.m. everything was ready. Major Joslin, who was to lead the storming party, stood with his whistle to his lips beside the Royal Engineer officer, who was to fire the first of the five mines to be exploded. The first mine went off with a dull, rumbling explosion, not very loud, but the earth swayed perceptibly to and fro, and an immense black spout soared heavenwards, descending again in a shower of sand, trees, timber, and dismembered fragments of human beings. At the same instant, with a roar, our artillery, supported by French and Belgian guns, opened fire on all the German positions in the vicinity—on the woods, on the ruined houses of Zwartelen on the left (we were attacking from the north), and on the railway cutting. The second mine went up with a deafening explosion, which was so much louder than the first that the mine is supposed to have let off a German mine with it.

The five mines were exploded within a few seconds of one another, and then Major Joslin sounded the charge on his whistle, and the "Gallant Half Hundred" were over the parapet and away, headed by men to demolish any barbed-wire entanglements remaining, and bomb-throwers. The Germans were completely surprised. As the West Kents were getting away, a panic-stricken German rushed out of the smoke of the explosion, with hands uplifted, and tumbled headlong over the parapet into our trench, where he was made prisoner. Our machine guns got well into the surviving Germans as

they hastily quitted their ruined trenches. Such Germans as stood their ground made a mere show of resistance, and were either bayoneted or driven down their communication trenches by our bombers. It was found that the mines had done their work completely and blasted all the barbed wire away. The biggest of the five great craters formed was fully 50 yards across and about 40 feet deep.

In the meantime, while the West Kents pushed on and captured the trenches beyond the craters, barricading the communication trenches, a digging party of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, who had followed up, set about digging trenches across the lips of the craters. By 7.20 Hill 60 was ours, with only a few casualties. The Germans bombarded the new trenches with "whizz-bangs" during the evening, with small effect. About 2 a.m. they attempted three counter-attacks, but these died away successively under the fire of our machine guns. In the small hours of the morning the Scottish Borderers advanced to relieve the West Kents. The Germans had now woke up, and were maintaining a heavy bombardment with shells and bombs. It was pitch dark, and the going over the ground, pitted with shell-holes and encumbered with dead bodies and broken barbed wire, was extremely difficult.

TRONES WOOD.

(JULY 13TH, 1916.)

For many hours cut off in Trones Wood is a record that adds proudly to the already long list of famous actions by the Royal West Kent Regiment. To be surrounded by the enemy in the Great War was something different from what might otherwise serve as historical parallels. The Regiment has more than covered itself with glory during the campaign. The

names of Neuve Chapelle and Hill 60 will be recalled in connection with its gallant deeds. But it will be henceforth inseparably associated with Trones Wood and the great "push" under Haig.

The following is a description of the splendid defence put up by about a hundred men of the Royal West Kent Regiment in Trones Wood, under a Captain of their Battalion. This little force got separated from the main attack upon the Wood, delivered at seven o'clock at night. The attack did not succeed, and dusk found a small band of West Kents cut off in the eastern part of the wood, with Germans swarming around them. Luckily they had collected some Lewis guns left by our troops during an earlier attack, together with a good deal of additional ammunition. The Captain organized his men and established several small strong points, which they successfully held against tremendous odds. Their resolute action materially assisted in enabling the British to capture and clear the whole of the woods.

MESOPOTAMIA.

NASIRIYEH.

The outbreak of the war found the 2nd Battalion in India, and it was dispatched to Mesopotamia.

Early in July, 1915, a Brigade with some guns was sent to take Nasiriyeh. They met with some opposition twenty miles south of it. This was overcome, and the Brigade pushed on to within three or four miles of Nasiriyeh. Here the Turks were found strongly entrenched in a position either side of the river, with each flank on a marsh. On the 16th an attempt was made to turn the enemy's right flank, but it failed, and the 24th Punjab Infantry lost rather heavily. It was then decided to try and pierce the centre. The orders given to the 2nd Battalion were for Nos. 1 and 3 Companies to

lead the attack, No. 1 on the right, No. 3 directing with their left on the river-bank, each in three lines, viz.—scouts, then one platoon, then three platoons. The remaining two Companies, under Major Kitson, were to come into our advanced trench immediately it was vacated by Nos. 1 and 3, ready to support the attack when required, No. 2 behind No. 1, and No. 4 behind No. 3. No other orders were given, but it was pointed out that after carrying the enemy's trenches, Nos. 1 and 2 would have to swing to their right, so that they might enfilade the enemy's trenches towards two towers, and so facilitate the capture of that flank. The bombardment opened punctually at 5 a.m. on July 24th. About 5.20 our scouts crept over our parapet and went forward to the margin of the wood, about 200 yards to the front. At 5.30 a.m. Nos. 1 and 3 Companies commenced their advance, and reached the edge of the wood referred to. There they were held up, and, as the enemy's fire seemed stronger than our own, the remaining two companies were called up. The reinforcing companies gave fresh impetus to the leading line and carried them forward. In the open they could not make much ground, but on the extreme left Major Kitson led portions of Nos. 3 and 4 right into the enemy's flank trench and carried it. A few moments afterwards the whole line surged forward and reached the trenches. One company of the 90th Punjab Infantry was close behind Nos. 1 and 2, and took part in the close fighting in the trenches. The bayonet was brought into play in a few cases, but as a rule the enemy were either shot down at a few yards' distance or, throwing down their arms, were taken prisoners.

After carrying the trenches, Nos. 1 and 2 swung to their right and advanced to enfilade the enemy's trenches towards the two fortified towers. Nos. 3 and 4 passed straight on, following the line of the river. Both were held up—Nos. 1 and 2 at the towers, Nos. 3 and 4 just beyond Thorneycroft Corner. Reinforced

by portions of the 67th and 90th Punjabs, the line, thus strengthened, broke down the enemy's opposition and reached the creek, beyond which the enemy retired, and a halt was called. The strength of the Battalion on going into action was :—Officers, 17 ; other ranks, 470. Casualties :—Six officers and about 150 other ranks, or roughly 33 per cent.

DEFENCE OF KUT-EL-AMARA.

Two companies (" B " and " D ") of the 2nd Battalion, under Major T. W. Nelson, D.S.O., took part in the defence. The strength of the companies was six officers, two warrant officers, 322 rank and file, and 13 followers.

The two companies left Nasiriyeh in eighteen sailing boats on November 9th, 1915, and arrived at Kut-el-Amara on November 17th. On November 24th the two companies, with the 14th Hussars, were ordered to march to Lajj to join General Townshend's force, which was retreating from Ctesiphon. On arrival the wing was attached to the 30th Brigade, under General Mellis, V.C. From here the wing took part in the rearguard action back to Kut-el-Amara, which was reached on December 3rd. From this date onwards the condition of the wing was one of death, sickness, and hardship. On January 20th, 1916, the battery bullocks were issued as rations, and vegetables became exhausted. On January 29th horse-meat was issued as rations. On April 24th the ration issued was 4 ounces of bread, 1 ounce of sugar, half an ounce of chocolate. On April 29th, the 147th day of siege, the garrison unconditionally surrendered to the Turks, and on May 4th the garrison started on their march into captivity, the hardships of which were even greater than those of the siege.

DESTRUCTION OF THE 6TH TURKISH ARMY.

The 2nd Battalion took part in this operation, which was the last fight put up by the Turks before the Armistice, and led to the occupation of Mosul, on the Tigris, thus bringing to an end a long and arduous campaign, of which the Battalion had taken its full share, having landed at Bussorah on February 8th, 1915.

Operations started on October 23rd, 1918, and the Battalion, owing to the influenza epidemic which was raging at the time, numbered only 400. On the 24th, without a shot being fired, the Turks were, by a skilful turning movement, driven out of the Suttak position, which they had been strengthening for twelve months.

From here the Turks retired to a position defending Shargat, when the 2nd Battalion, on the 28th, after six days' hard marching over the "worst roads in Mesopotamia," executed a frontal attack, unsupported by artillery, and drove the Turk away from his position. To quote from Brigadier-General A. G. Wauchope's account of the battle: "The West Kent Regiment, it is true, lost 25 per cent. of their number; but had control been lost at any time over those widely extended platoons, had the men ever failed to respond to their leaders or to think of their own safety, then had their losses been doubled and the issue hung in the balance."



HONOURS ON THE COLOURS

The Sphinx, superscribed "Egypt"

"Vimiera"	"Peninsula"	"Inkerman"
"Corunna"	"Punniar"	"Sevastopol"
"Almaraz"	"Moodkee"	"Lucknow"
"Vittoria"	"Ferozeshah"	"New Zealand"
"Pyrenees"	"Aliwal"	"Egypt, 1882"
"Nive"	"Sobraon"	"Nile, 1884-85"
"Orthes"	"Alma"	"South Africa, 1900-02"

Uniform—Scarlet

Facings—Blue