

## Section 093

# Summary

## The 1st/4th Battalion

When war broke out the 4th Battalion were engaged in their annual summer camp near Marlow. They were at first told to return home to await orders but the order to mobilise came almost before they had begun. The Battalion moved first to Portsmouth and then after three days to Swindon where everyone was invited to sign the Imperial Service Declaration which qualified them for service abroad. Those that did were formed into the 1st/4th Battalion and sent off to Chelmsford, those who didn't became part of the 2nd/4th Battalion. For the next few months they spent an anxious time at Chelmsford waiting for orders to go to France but Lord Kitchener did not favour the Territorials and it was not until the 30th March 1915 that they were able to board their transport at Folkestone.

In France they went to Romarin to be attached to the Royal Warwicks of 6th Division to learn about trench warfare and acclimatise. They were part of 145 Brigade and 48 Division. Their first front line duty was at Le Gheer near Ploegsteert and here they remained until June with spells in trenches and in reserve. They spent most of the Summer near Hebuterne fighting what they called 'peace warfare' when they did enough to keep annoying the Germans opposite but not enough to cause them to retaliate in strength or engage in any serious fighting. The Germans for their part seemed content with the arrangement.

In September they moved back to the Hebuterne area in preparation for the follow up to the Loos offensive, but the follow up never happened and they spent a miserable winter between Hebuterne and Authie engaged mainly on working parties.

In Spring 1916 they worked on preparations for the Somme offensive but coming under attack on the 16th May when they lost 16 killed, 29 missing and 51 wounded. They had several minor engagements in early July 1916 and a major attack near Pozieres on the 23rd. The rest of 1916 and the first three months of 1917 were spent in the Somme area with the occasional raid and spell of trench duty until on the 4th April they received orders to take the three villages of Ronssoy, Basse Boulogne and Lempire where they lost a number of officers. The pattern continued until the 30th June when they returned to Flanders for the Third Battle of Ypres. Here they endured the mud and other horrors until they were withdrawn and sent to Italy at the end of November.

Their first two months were spent in reserve having a generally pleasant time until they were moved up to hold the right bank of the River Piave on the 27th February. Again they indulged in minor skirmishes and raids until they came under Italian command on the 9th October and began the final attack after which they chased the Austrians across the Alps finishing up at Vigalzano on the 4th November when the Austrians capitulated.

They returned to England in March 1919 to a rapturous reception at Reading on the 2nd April.