

## Section 152

### The Other Battalions

# The 3rd/4th Battalion

## Overview

The 3rd/4th Battalion was the Territorial reserve battalion in the Great War. It was formed at Chiseldon near Swindon in September 1914. The 4th Battalion's ranks had been swollen by men who volunteered in response to Kitchener's appeal and for those who had been in the 4th Battalion pre-war they were given the opportunity to sign the Imperial declaration which enabled them to serve overseas. The men who signed formed the basis of the 1st/4th Battalion and those that didn't formed the 2nd/4th. The 1st/4th was then filled to complement with the new volunteers and the remainder were formed into the 3rd/4th which promptly moved to Aldermaston to begin training the new men. However it very soon moved back to Reading with the men billeted in the town.

Over the next few years the 3rd/4th acted as the Reserve Battalion for the 1st/4th and later the 2nd/4th as well and supplied drafts to those battalions as required.

So far as we have been able to ascertain no records of the Battalion have survived and they did not even get a mention in Petre's History of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. The only sources found are the local Reading newspapers and *Berkshire and the War*.

## Aldermaston Court

Thanks to the generosity of Mr C E Keyser Aldermaston Court was used as a standing camp for all the Berkshire Territorial Reserve units. This opened on the 28th May 1915 to provide a home for the 3rd/1st Berkshire Yeomanry, the 3rd/1st Berkshire Royal Horse Artillery, the 3rd/2nd South Midland Mounted Brigade ASC as well as the 3rd/4th Royal Berks.

In the first edition of *Berkshire and the War* the description read:-

The troops are encamped amidst picturesque surroundings and there are ample facilities for training, both for mounted and dismounted branches.

Being near Reading there are opportunities for the relatives and friends of soldiers to visit the camp.

There are, or will shortly be Recreation tents, Canteens, Hospital accommodation etc. and there is also a large

lake available for bathing purposes which it is expected will be greatly appreciated during the coming months.

## Recruiting

Appeals were put out for recruits who had to be at least 5 ft 2 in and willing to serve abroad if required. They could be aged 19 to 40 years, or 45 in the case of old soldiers.

## Christmas 1914

## Christmas 1915

## The Band

We hear of Sergeant Davey being transferred to the 3rd/4th to get the band up to scratch in December 1915. It was reported in the *Berkshire Mercury*:-

The drums and bugles of the (2nd) 4th Royal Berks at Chelmsford have lost the services of Sergeant drummer J W Davey. He and Sergeant Burroughs having been attached to the (3rd) 4th Royal Berks now in Reading. This is the second time Sergeant Drummer Davey has been transferred he having left the drums of the (1st) 4th Royal Berks in November 1914 to take over the training of the drums and bugles of the (2nd) 4th Royal Berks at Maidenhead. As before he has left a fine corps of drums behind and they have won high compliments from the head of the division, Colonel Wheeler, the officers and all ranks have on many occasions expressed their approval in the most complimentary way of the playing of the band and much regret Sergeant Drummer Davey's departure. It is safe to say that if the (2nd) 4th drums continue in the same manner in which they have been trained they will retain the name for duty well done and worthily follow the example set by their predecessors in the (1st) 4th Royal Berks

Sergeant Drummer Davey in taking leave of those who had served under him expressed his gratitude for their loyalty and support assuring them that their kindness and good comradeship would always be in grateful remembrance. He and his party had the honour of being played to station by both bands of the regiment viz brass and bugle an act which was much appreciated by a;:. It is

interesting to note that he has done 33 years in the regiment the whole of his time being spent in the drums. He also had the sterling support of Segeant W Burroughs who has himself served 25 years.

## Commanding Officers

### THE LATE COL ELLISON

As already mentioned, the late Colonel Ellison MVO VD rendered splendid service in raising and organising the reserve battalion of the Royal Berks Territorials which provided drafts for the Territorial Battalions. How successful he was may be judged from the following letter sent to Colonel Ellison by an officer commanding one of the drafts sent to France:-

March 8th 1916

Dear Colonel, - we arrived here yesterday afternoon and go up to join the --- [1st/4th] Battalion tonight, ..... Colonel ---, who commands here, told me last night that the Berkshire draft was the best by a long way of those he had seen so far and the general officer commanding the whole camp, ie the base details of the ---- and ---- Armies picked out the Berks and some Canadians as the best all-round reinforcements so far sent out. You would have been very gratified if you had heard what they all said to me about the Berkshires

Yours sincerely

(signed) -----

[this is probably written by Lt Hine who returned to the battalion from base with a draft of 103 NCOs and men on March 8th at Saily au Bois] TX00717