

Stamford soldiers – the story of the first recruits of 28th August 1914

Many Lincolnshire towns do not appear to have had a terrier recruiter in August 1914 and therefore about a total of just over 210 men from the county travelled to Luton, Bedford at the end of August where the 4th Lincolns were billeted to formally enlist.

As part of this enlistment 37 men from Stamford went to Luton to join up. Private motor vehicles were pressed into service and the group set off after a "rousing send-off". It was a diverse group including a journalist, students, the son of a prominent landholder, labourers, clerks and factory workers. The youngest was perhaps just 17, while the oldest was over 40. These were among the first men from the town to enlist in a large group, and over the weeks and months that followed hundreds from Stamford would follow their example.

Arriving at Luton the men were formally attested and medically examined with the oath being administered by Capt Leonard Hart, the commander of the Stamford, D Company, 4th Lincolns. From those service records that survive it appears that each of the men offered himself liable for foreign service on this day.

The men who enlisted in the 4th Lincolns at the end of August were numbered consecutively, by company and then alphabetically, with the Stamford lads ranging from 2466, Bird through 2502, Wetherell. All were initially assigned to D company (at this stage the battalion had 8 companies). Among the group were two sets of brothers, the Parkers and Scotts, all four of whom would survive the war.

Approximately half the lads left England with the battalion for France in late February 1915, with most of the others arriving in drafts during the summer. 3 of the 37 do not appear to have served abroad the 4th Lincolns.

The battalion spent the spring and summer of 1915 holding first, a sector of front opposite the Messines Ridge and later at Sanctuary Wood, in the salient. The first fatal casualty would come on 12 May 1915, when Alfred Mackay Marks, a bank cashier was shot through the head by a sniper. A few days later Richard Robinson was similarly hit, being severely wounded and would eventually die from his wounds at Netley Hospital in early June. A third member of the group, Robert Frisby, died of wounds on 9 August 1915.

On 13 October 1915 the battalion took part in an assault on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. 8 members of the 28th August volunteers would be killed in the attack: None have a known grave, with most being initially reported as wounded or missing, a status that was finally amended to killed in action.

Hohenzollern Fallen:

Charles Bird, a motor engineer and former Grammar school boy.

John Henry Cant, builder's apprentice, not confirmed KIA until Sept 1916

Arthur Cecil Evans, well known local journalist, had been wounded in August 1915

Robert Charles Lack, labourer for the town corporation, seen to have been wounded in the initial stages of the charge, and killed trying to make his way back to the British front line.

John (Jack) Lenton, described as "lacking in height but not in spirit", his brother would be commissioned and win the MC in 1918

George Nickerson, active member of local Catholic church and former member of the old militia. His family didn't hear anything concrete about his fate for 12 months.

Harold Shillaker, only son and heir to prominent local farming family.
Horace Walmsley/Waumsley, builder's labourer, part of battalion's pioneer section

A further 5 were wounded at the Hohenzollern:

Fred Eastwood, played footy with my great granddad before the war!
Harold Elson, shot through the back-returned to the battalion in 1916
Albert Goodley, pioneer-brother Harold, joined the 4th in mid Oct 1914, being kia Oct 1916.
Arthur Sandford-worked in engineering works-arms "shattered by bomb"
H.W. Stubbs-wounded to the face by shrapnel (can't find MIC)
Maurice Wetherall-wounded in Sept, slight shrapnel wound. At Hohenzollern hit in the hip by MGC fire

The years after the Hohenzollern

Only one more of the 28th August 1914 lads would be killed during the war: Capt Maurice Hissey, with the 2nd Berks on the Somme. At least 4 more were wounded.
Of the other lads, 5 would be commissioned before the end of the war, including both of the Scott brothers, and Cyril Hensman Joyce who won the MC in May 1918, while 3 others transferred to other infantry units, 5 to the Labour Corps only 7 still serving with the 4th Lincs in 1917-18.

Breakdown

37 enlisted
3 don't appear to have served abroad (8%)
12 killed (32%)
9 wounded-possibly more (24%+)
1 taken POW (3%)
12 no longer serving or with Labour Corps by 1917 (32%)
7 still with the battalion in 1917 (18%)

100,000s enlisted in August 1914*. Of the wider group of late August 1914 volunteers seconded to the 4th Lincs, at least 55 (or 26%) would be killed in the war, again, the majority in 1915

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<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=37243>

* NOTE: 478,893 men joined the British army between 4 August and 12 September 1914 (source: British Library)