

APPENDIX I.

A RECORD OF THE WORK AT THE DEPOT and of THE COMFORTS & PRISONERS OF WAR FUNDS

Compiled from materials supplied by

COLONEL G.W. MAUNSELL, C.M.G.
and
LIEUT.-COL. J.P. DALISON

THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE WAR.

Orders for mobilization reached the Depot on the 4th August and within a short time nearly all the Regular officers and staff joined their battalions. On the first day of mobilization, 5th August, Colonel G. W. Maunsell took over command from Major P. M. Robinson, C.M.G., and his first duty was to improvise a new staff from retired officers and ex-N.C.O.'s who rejoined on declaration of war.

Major Robinson, however, remained at the Depot for some days to superintend the mobilization of the Regular units.

After the Reservists had been dealt with, being sent either to the 1st or 3rd Battalion, the mobilization of two Regular medical units was expeditiously carried out.

From this time recruiting became one of the most important works carried on at the Depot. During the early months of the war, there was first an almost overwhelming rush of recruits, and then a steady flow of men which lasted until the spring of 1915. Recruiting centres were established at Tonbridge, Bromley,

485

Gravesend, Chatham and Sheerness, where the officers in charge enrolled the men and passed them to the Depot. These recruiting officers were in close touch with the Kent Territorial Force Association, whose organization greatly assisted in keeping the Centres well supplied with recruits.

At the Depot the men were provided with accommodation, pay, and as far as possible clothing and equipment - and began their training.

But so great was the rush of men joining that the problem of dealing with them was full of difficulty.

To provide food, the Drill Hall was turned into a mess room, and at one time it was necessary to provide relays of meals lasting nearly all day.

Although strong drafts were sent to the 6th Battalion, which was formed at Colchester on August 14th, the barrack rooms were congested, passages were filled, and men even slept under the trees in the barrack square. At the beginning of September the situation became critical, nearly 3,000 men being in barracks and in requisitioned houses and buildings close by. So on September 4th authority was received for the completion to full strength of the 6th Battalion and for the formation of the 7th Battalion. The men were at once told off into companies, a few ex-Regular N.C.O.'s were allotted to each company, which was then put in charge of some Regular or retired officer.

On the afternoon of the 5th September the two senior Service Battalions of the Regiment were completed, and the drafts were despatched to their training camps. On the 14th September, the 8th Battalion was similarly formed and the 19th October saw the birth of

the 9th Battalion.

The reserves of clothing and equipment were soon used up. The 6th and 7th Battalions were fortunate and left Maidstone fairly well equipped, but after their departure no more clothing or equipment was available for some time. So the 8th and 9th Battalions when

486

they paraded for their departure to their training camps, presented an extraordinary appearance. Very few men possessed any uniform, headgear of every sort was to be seen—straw hats, bowlers, caps, and there were even some top hats amongst them. Many men carried their belongings in suitcases, hand bags, or cricket bags.

For the 8th and 9th Battalions, the provision of officers also became less easy, and any previous experience in military training or in handling men was found to be valuable.

On the departure of the 9th Battalion the barracks became less congested and the Staff were able to give more attention to training, which up to this time had been of a very elementary nature. But recruits still continued to arrive each day in considerable numbers, and many of them were drafted by companies to other regiments. Naturally this was not popular with the men, who were however consoled by the assurance that their companies would be kept intact in their new regiment.

Not the least important work carried out by the Depot Staff up to the end of 1914 was the selection after interview of candidates for commissions. It is satisfactory to know that the whole of the 200 who were recommended by the Depot were accepted. In fact the name of the Officer commanding the Depot became known at the War Office as that of a man whose recommendations could be implicitly trusted, as he put forward only those candidates whom he considered fit to become officers in his own regiment.

On April 10th, 1915, Colonel Maunsell was ordered to take up an appointment in France and handed over command to Lieut.-Col. W. L. Rowe.

RECRUITING.

At about this time it became clear that the enthusiasm which had brought such enormous numbers of men into

487

the Army during the first months of the War had in some measure abated, and voluntary enlistment was not producing sufficient men to fill the units of the New Armies or even to replace the heavy losses suffered by regiments at the front. Efforts were therefore made to make the voluntary system of enlistment more effective. The Regimental Recruiting Area was divided into five sub-areas, Chatham, Gravesend, Bromley, Tonbridge and Maidstone, working under the Headquarters of Recruiting at Maidstone Barracks. Sheerness was at this time transferred to The Buffs. Later these five sub-areas were reduced to three, but the system remained the same till the end. All recruits raised were sent to the Depot for first payment, clothing and posting to units.

AREA REGISTRATION OFFICE.

About August, 1915, the Registration Act was passed, which made it compulsory for every man to register his name, age, occupation and other details with his Local Authority. This information in the case of all men between the ages of 18 and 40 was sent to the Area Office for registration. So on the 8th September the Area Registration Office was opened. To complete and keep up to date the registers, not only was it necessary to increase the

existing staff by six female clerks and three or four men returned from the front, but also obtain as much voluntary help as possible. Assistance was given by local ladies and gentlemen, by some of the banks, and on many occasions the staff of the Sessions House assisted by working after hours up to 11 o'clock at night. In spite of all this extra help the Registers were not complete till the middle of October, by which time 50,000 names had been entered. As the scheme developed, this number was largely increased until at the end there were over 82,000 names in the Register.

488

The principal work in the Area Registration Office was to keep the Register up to date from information supplied from sub-areas of the results of Tribunal cases, medical examinations, enlistments, etc. Work increased rapidly and with it the number of clerks employed, so that the office was transferred to and occupied the whole of the Commanding Officer's house. The more important increases of work were due to the Derby Group system instituted in December, 1915, which invited men to enlist and be passed at once into the Reserve, to be called up when needed, and to the addition to the Register in 1916 of lads between the ages of 15 and 17.

OCCUPATIONAL INDEX.

Towards the end of 1916 a completely new department had to be established to keep an Occupational Index. Its object was to classify every man on the Register under his occupation so that the number of men in each trade could be readily ascertained. This index contained 36,000 cards: there were 18 main trades with 90 sub-divisions. Early in 1917, the Review of Exceptions Acts was passed. This act authorized the calling up for re-examination of all men rejected for service on medical grounds, after six months from the date of their last examination. As approximately a million men came under the provisions of this Act, the importance of the work it entailed is easily understood, and necessitated a close scrutiny of the Registers. About the middle of 1917, two fresh groups were formed, viz.: for men of 45 to 49 years of age and for men of 50. As each step was taken by Government to meet the demand for men, so the work of registration increased. Inspection of the Registration Offices were frequent, and the complimentary reports on the accuracy of the work were in great measure the result of the indefatigable work of the Chief Clerk, Q.M.S. R. Giovanni.

489

POSTING OF RECRUITS.

Connected with the work hitherto described was the handling and posting of recruits on their arrival at the Depot—a difficult task demanding tact and discernment which was most ably and conscientiously carried out for nearly two years by Captain R. H. Eccles, in addition to his other duties.

A recruit on arrival was classified by a medical board according to his fitness for general service, garrison duty, labour, or sedentary work at home or abroad. If unfit, the man was at once discharged. After being classified, he was posted to a suitable unit in accordance with the instructions of the Army Council. To decide how each man could be most usefully employed was no easy matter, and the difficulty was much increased by the large number dealt with, which reached at one time 240 in a day.

Although all possible consideration was shown to the personal wishes of the recruit, it was not infrequent that the necessities of the service demanded that they should be disregarded.

And as a rule the older men were sent to fill up the number required as tradesmen, while the younger men were posted to units in the fighting line.

Having been posted, unless he could be dispatched at once to his unit, a recruit was accommodated at the Depot and received one day's pay each evening. The filling up of the men's documents was a lengthy and tedious business, and kept the Posting Officer and his valuable assistant, Colour—Sergt. Palmer, at work to late hours.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

Several Conscientious Objectors were dealt with. Those not exempted by the Tribunals were posted to the infantry, and at the Depot they, like other recruits, were sent to the Quartermaster's Stores to receive their

490

uniform. This the Conscientious Objector invariably refused to wear, and was at once put in close arrest on the charge of disobedience to orders.

SUBSTITUTION.

About the middle of 1916 another department had to be established to carry out a scheme for substitution, by which Category A men, who were employed in certified trades and could not be spared from such trades, were exchanged with men of lower category obtained from the Army. In each area a Substitution Officer was appointed, and for the West Kent Area, Captain A. H. Pickard. The scheme was explained at public meetings in the chief industrial and farming centres, with the result that many employers sent in lists of men to the Substitution Officer, who obtained substitutes from Headquarters, Eastern Command.

MUNITIONS AREA RECRUITING SCHEME.

In May, 1917, a larger scheme was inaugurated known as the Munitions Area Recruiting Scheme. Captain Pickard became the Munitions Area Recruiting Officer, and working under his jurisdiction were a Dilution Officer, a skilled engineer, from the Ministry of Munitions, an Employment Officer from the Ministry of Labour, and a Substitution Officer from the Ministry of National Service.

The Recruiting and Dilution Officers visited factories and decided what men could be called up for service either without a substitute or on a substitute being found from the Army by the Substitution Officer, or from civil life by the Employment Officer.

The success of the scheme depended in a large measure on cordiality and willing cooperation between the four officers concerned. In the West Kent Area all worked smoothly, so much so that the various M.A.R.O.'s from other areas were sent to Maidstone for instruction, and Captain Pickard was later selected

491

by the Ministry of National Service to inspect and report on the work of all the officers under their jurisdiction.

EMPLOYMENT COMPANIES.

One other measure was adopted to increase the supply of fit men. All men of high medical category were withdrawn from employment in the spring of 1917, and substitutes for them

were found from men in Employment Companies formed of men of low category. The strength of No. 613 Company, formed at Maidstone, was 750. The men were sent to units at home as batmen, storemen, cooks, etc., and their pay was sent to them each week from the Depot.

AGRICULTURAL COMPANIES.

In March, 1917, the Depot shared in the work of increasing and conserving our supplies of food grown in the country by organising and administering Agricultural Companies. At first one company only was formed under Colonel Lushington with an establishment of 250; the actual strength usually exceeded 400, however. In June three more companies were added, all becoming Agricultural Companies of the Labour Corps. The men of these companies were sent out to work on farms in the district and though a large proportion were unskilled, their services were eagerly sought. The men were paid a minimum wage by their farmer employers on working days and received Army pay on Sundays and when in barracks. At the time of the Armistice the number of men on the rolls of these Companies was 3,000.

Sufficient has been said to make clear the enormous volume of work thrown on the Depot Staff by the various measures taken to raise and maintain a National Army. It may be said that an attempt was made, and was in a large measure successful, to do, during the progress of the war, the work of preparing plans for

492

mobilizing our manpower as a Nation in Arms as well as that of putting those plans into execution. And it was on Depot Staffs that the work of carrying out the various plans fell.

THE QUARTER-MASTER'S DEPARTMENT.

All the men who passed through the Depot had to be housed, clothed, equipped and fed. It was fortunate for the successive commanding officers that the Quarter-Master's Department was under the able direction of Major Couch, who had retired on the day before orders for mobilization were received, but at once returned to duty, for on his ability, judgment and integrity implicit confidence could be placed.

The total number of sets of arms and equipment held on charge in mobilization stores was 1,257, all of which were issued to the Army Reservists. Clothing and equipment, etc., was indented for more quickly than it could be supplied, and the reserves held by the Ordnance Department were soon exhausted. Hence arose the remarkable appearance of the 8th and 9th Battalions on their departure from Maidstone. But after their departure all recruits were clothed and equipped by the Depot.

Commanding Officers were directed to purchase locally. Very little could be obtained as the Territorial Association had already purchased for the units for which they were responsible, but a considerable quantity of such articles as razors, towels, knives, forks, spoons, shirts and socks were procured from the big London stores.

Later the Royal Army Clothing Department issued trade pattern clothing, blue uniform and civilian great coats of various colours, but there was no uniformity for some considerable time. About 1,000 suits of Special Reserve red clothing were sent to the 8th Battalion.

493

Service Battalions proceeding overseas sent their surplus stores to the Depot, where the clothing was examined, and serviceable garments were cleaned, repaired and re-issued. When Service dress became available battalions near Maidstone were ordered to hand in their emergency clothing at Maidstone. As this occurred at a time of heavy rain, the clothing got saturated, which was particularly unfortunate for the Quartermaster's staff, while two battalions, whose service dress was delayed and who demanded that only their own clothing should be returned to them, came off badly.

The number of articles issued from the stores is quite impossible to compute it must have been colossal, and when it is remembered that every article had to be accounted for in his ledger, it is easy to understand why, although the Quarter-Master was seldom seen there was never any difficulty in finding him.

The number of men for whom rations were drawn was large and often the meals for over 1,000 men were cooked in barracks. At first rations were on a generous scale, but when food became short, rabbits and frozen fish were substituted for meat, and every effort was made to economize. Rabbit skins were carefully preserved and sold, fats of every sort collected for munition factories.

CROPS IN BARRACKS

To increase the supply of food, orders were issued that all Government ground in the vicinity of barracks was to be cultivated. At that time there happened to be plenty of men available in barracks so soon scores of men were lined out with picks and shovels on the Recreation Ground, the whole of which was dug over in one day. In due course it was planted with cabbages, which brought good profit to the Canteen Fund. The next crop was potatoes, nearly half the seed for which was derived from potatoes voluntarily given by

494

the men from their rations. But the most lucrative venture was the establishment of piggeries in front of the Mobilization Store, which under the management of R.S.M. Akhurst brought in a profit of £583.

COMMANDING OFFICERS.

In this short record of the Depot during the war, little mention has been made of the men who carried out their never-ending and ever-increasing work.

On May 17th, 1916, Lieut.-Col. W. E. Rowe retired and was succeeded by Lieut.-Col. E. A. Iremonger, formerly a Major in the Durham Light Infantry, and what was thought of the staff of the Depot by an officer of another regiment may be shown by quoting from a letter he wrote on his departure on April 4th, 1917, when he was succeeded by Lieut.-Col. J. P. Dalison. After stating that he had been privileged to serve in units of three regiments during the War, that in none had the good spirit been surpassed by that of "these most lovable officers and men of The Queen's Own." He concluded, "But for the unswerving loyalty and support you have all accorded me, a total stranger, and regimentally an outsider to you all, life and the performance of one's duty would indeed have been an uphill task." It may be said that the feelings so generously expressed were warmly reciprocated by all ranks. No man could have more jealously guarded the interest and honour of The Queen's Own.

It was perhaps during Lieut.-Col. Dalison's period of command that the stress of work was highest, and he has provided the major part of this short record. His success can perhaps best be judged by quoting from a private letter written by him to the compiler.

"I wanted to say more about the grand way our N.C.O.'s worked all the time and to

mention some of them, especially R.S.M. Audsley, who was splendid,

495

R.S.M. Drew, Q.M.S. Powers, Sergt. Clewes, all wonders in their respective ways.

“But, of course, I think the outstanding figure was dear old Couch. I had said a lot more about him, but lack of space forced me to cross it out.”

To appreciate the good work of subordinates is one of the qualities of a successful and efficient Commanding Officer. To say more is unnecessary.

No account of the work at the Depot during the War would be complete without a description of the funds raised for the welfare of the Regiment.

THE COMFORTS' FUND.

Sir Edward Leach started the Comforts' Fund in September 1914, by making an appeal for subscriptions to provide comforts for our Battalions at the front. Gifts of money and in kind were quickly received, and by the beginning of October Colonel Maunsell, who was acting as treasurer, had received £290. Mrs. Arundel Martyn received gifts of comforts (shirts, socks, tobacco, etc.) and was sending them out in small parcels to the 1st Battalion once a fortnight. From this comparatively small beginning the Fund developed rapidly, and the 53rd and last list of donations published in the “Queen's Own Gazette” in January, 1919, brought the total receipt of money up to £7,568. Of this sum Lord Harris' County Organization, which included the Society of the Men of Kent and Kentish Men, contributed over £2,400. But the money represents part only of the generosity of the friends of the Regiment - gifts of comforts of all sorts were received in a steady stream. Where many give so generously of their time and money, it is almost invidious to mention names, but perhaps the thanks of the Regiment are especially due to the Roan School for Girls at Greenwich, who not only contributed £600 in cash to the

496

Fund, but month after month from the very first sent numerous bales of comforts. Equally, too, to Mrs. O. J. Daniell is the Regiment under obligation. For two years she was responsible for the administration of the Fund, superintending the packing and despatching of all parcels of comforts.

GIFTS FROM QUEEN ALEXANDRA.

In April 1915, Her Majesty Queen Alexandra sent to the 1st Battalion a gift of comforts. The Officer Commanding on returning thanks wrote: “Your Majesty's kindness and thought are a great encouragement to all ranks, and the knowledge that you are following our movements and doings with interest fills us with sentiments of loyalty and devotion to your person.”

CHRISTMAS CHEER FUND.

In November 1915, a special appeal was made by the Officer Commanding the Depot for money to provide Christmas gifts for our men at the front. The appeal, which was repeated in the three subsequent years, met with a generous response, with the result that £3,169 was handed over to the Comforts' Fund for this purpose. Over half this large sum was collected by a few ladies, and nearly £1000 was received from the Directors of the Kent Messenger,

the proceeds of a "Shilling Fund" inaugurated by them.

Thousands of men blessed these friends of the Regiment for their kindly thought and labour.

PRISONERS OF WAR.

For the first three-and-a-half years of the War, our Prisoners of War were looked after by Mr. J. L. Spoor, who was working voluntarily under the Vice-Lieutenant's County Organization. No record is available of the monies expended during this period beyond the fact that several hundred pounds were sent

497

to Mr. Spoor by the O.C. Depot at different times and from various sources.

In February, 1918, however, the care of our Prisoners of War was handed over to the Depot, and a Prisoners of War Care Committee was formed with the O.C. Depot as Chairman, Captain J. Lees as Hon. Secretary, and Mr. A. P. Margetts as Hon. Treasurer. Mrs. O. J. Daniell undertook charge of stores in addition to her work for the Comforts' Fund, many ladies assisting her.

The total number of Prisoners of War of the Regiment reached 1,863 in Germany and 95 in Turkey during the time of the Committee's management. To our men in Germany 52,203 parcels of food were sent, besides other articles. To arrange for the safe arrival of parcels of food and clothing to our prisoners in Turkey proved a task almost beyond the power of the Committee. But money reached prisoners safely, and the Committee forwarded 846 parcels and expended over £500 in remittances to Turkey.

During the period under review the Committee expended £34,900, of which £33,975 was the cost of the food. This huge sum was received from various sources; grants from the Central Prisoners of War Committee reached £16,300. Subscriptions and donations, which included the money raised by the Local Committee in the county provided £15,700, while the Vice-Lieutenant's (Lord Harris') Organization contributed a further sum of over £2,830, beyond what was given to the Comforts' Fund.

The Regiment therefore received from Lord Harris' Organization the munificent gift of £5,250.

A splendid work was also done by Miss C. K. Macy, of Beckenham, in tracing the whereabouts of soldiers reported missing. By corresponding with prisoners of war and by other means, she was able to bring relief or consolation to the anxious relatives of many of our men.

498

THE "QUEEN'S OWN GAZETTE."

The "Queen's Own Gazette" was one of the very few regimental magazines whose publication was uninterrupted throughout the war. Every month 100 free copies were sent to each battalion and to various hospitals, and the men looked forward to their arrival with great eagerness.

The post of Editor was undertaken by Colonel T. H. Brock early in 1915. Some acknowledgment of the debt owed to him by those responsible for this book is made in the Preface. To the Regiment his work meant that one of the chains which bind its battalions together was never allowed to weaken.

It is impossible to do more than record the activities of the many friends who worked untiringly and gave generously for the welfare and comfort of members of the Regiment. Their work was truly a labour of love, and so to the workers themselves perhaps brought its own reward. It is equally impossible to give expression to the truly heartfelt gratitude of the members of the Regiment, who in all circumstances, however terrible, felt that they were never forgotten, and never neglected by their friends at home.