



Kent Composite Battalion

The Birth of the Kent Composite Battalion

There has been a lot of rubbish written about this most unusual of Kent units. Many published books seem to confuse the Kent Composite Battalion with the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles who also saw active service in Gallipoli during the Great War. During April 1915 the **Monmouthshire Brigade** was suddenly sent off to France leaving the 53rd (Welsh) Division one full Brigade short. Therefore a new Brigade was made up from the Home Counties to re-enforce and generally supplant the Welshmen's ranks and make their Division complete. It was decided to re-enforce the 53rd (Welsh) Division from spare elements drawn from the **202nd (2nd Kent) Brigade** and from the **67th (2nd Home Counties) Division**. Once formed the new 160th Brigade joined the 53rd (Welsh) Division at Cambridge –

160th Brigade

(53rd Welsh Division)

Comprised the following units:

Kent Composite Battalion

1 Battalion (1000 men)

1/4th Royal Sussex Regiment

1 Battalion (1000 men)

2/10th Middlesex Regiment

1 Battalion (1000 men)



Kent Composite Battalion

Headquarters Company

2/4th West Kent's (West Kent's capbadge)

Commanding Officer - Lieutenant Colonel A.T.F Simpson (West Kent Regiment)

Major H Smithers (Second in Command) (Invalided October 1915)

Major Vaughan (Devonshire Regt) (took over from Major Smithers)

Captain F Johnson (Adjutant)

Second Lieutenant Bailey (Machine Gun Officer)

Lieutenant Ruse (Quartermaster)

A Company

2/4th Buffs (Buffs capbadge)

Captain Jude (Sick December 1915)

Captain Taunton

Lieutenant Dixon

Lieutenant Filmer

Second Lieutenant Larking

Second Lieutenant Morgan

B Company

2/5th Buffs (Buffs capbadge)

Captain Greatorex (Sick November 1915)

Captain Lamarque

Lieutenant Keeble

Lieutenant Wood

Second Lieutenant Willows

Second Lieutenant Griffin

C Company

2/4th West Kent's (West Kent's capbadge)

Captain Dillon (Sick August 1915)

Captain Dowling

Second Lieutenant H.J Wilson

Second Lieutenant L.E Wilson

Second Lieutenant Woolett

Second Lieutenant Le Fleming

D Company

2/5th West Kent's (West Kent's capbadge)

Captain Palmer

Captain Savage

Lieutenant Stern

Lieutenant Tharp

Second Lieutenant J.C Cobb

Second Lieutenant R.S Cobb

Movements

24 April 1915 - Kent Composite Battalion formed from elements of The Buffs and West Kent's

14 June 1915 - To Cambridge (160th Brigade)

1 July 1915 - Training Bedford

18 July 1915 - Left Bedford for Southampton

20 July 1915 - Sailed (SS "Northland") from Southampton to Alexandria Egypt

31 July 1915 - Arrived Alexandria, Egypt

8 August 1915 - Sailed (SS "Northland") to Mudros

10 August 1915 - Landed West Beach, Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, Turkey (160th Brigade, 29th Welsh Division)

13 August 1915 - 2/4th manned frontline trenches for the first time at Sulajik in front of Salt Lake

15 August 1915 - Col Simpson wounded Major Smithers takes over command at Sulajik

17/18 August 1915 - In frontline with 2nd South Wales Borderers (29th Division)

1 September 1915 - To Divisional Reserve at West Beach

15 November 1915 - Terrible Blizard in the trenches

1 December 1915 - Battalion employed on rearward defences at Lala Baba

13 December 1915 - Evacuated from Gallipoli to Mudros.

15 December 1915 - To Egypt where the battalion was soon redesignated 2/4th Royal West Kent Regiment

Those wishing to follow the 2/4th Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment) from here need to look at the West Kent pages.

The period spent by the Kent Composite Battalion at Suvla was one of monotonous hardships. Though shelled from time to time, and constantly under rifle fire, which varied from intermittent heavy fusillades to occasional sniping, it had no opportunity of distinguishing itself either in attack or defence, though its discipline, its cheerfulness and its powers of endurance were severely tested and found not to be wanting. Periods in the frontline trenches alternated with periods in reserve near the beach, but even in the reserve areas there was no real shelter from enemy shellfire or the terribly inclement weather. When in reserve the battalion spent much time loading and unloading stores from ships and building hard standings and roadways. Casualties in action were few but the battalion dwindled rapidly from sickness.

Re-named!

Because the vast majority of manpower was originally drawn from the West Kent's (including its Headquarters Company) the Kent Composite Battalion was eventually re-designated the **2/4th Battalion, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)**. This name change was not officially sanctioned until the battalion arrived back in Egypt after being evacuated from Gallipoli. It is believed that the name change was official by January 1916. The 2/4th Battalion already existed in the UK. All personnel from the Kent Composite Battalion were immediately merged into the existing unit. This name change was fiercely resisted by those men who had originally been drawn from the 2nd Line Buff's Territorial's. These men desperately wanted to keep their "Dragon" capbadge. By January 1916 the whole battalion was wearing the "Invicta Horse".

