



# What Became of the The Yorkshire Regiment's Contemptibles?

## THE 2ND BATTALION IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

By Dr Edward Nicholl

It is said that the Kaiser Wilhelm issued an order to Von Kluck, Commander of the German 1st Army;

It is my Royal and Imperial command that you concentrate your energies for the immediate present upon one single purpose, and that is that you address your skill and all the valour of my soldiers to exterminate the treacherous English, and walk over General French's contemptibly small army.

In mistranslation, 'contemptibly small' became 'contemptible little'. However, on hearing this, the men were happy to be known as The Contemptibles, and after the war they became The Old Contemptibles.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Yorkshire Regiment had two service battalions (the 1st and 2nd Battalions), one special reserve battalion (the 3rd Battalion), and two Territorial battalions (the 4th and 5th Battalions).

Of the two service battalions, the 1st Battalion was in India at the time and remained there throughout the war. The 2nd Battalion was garrisoned in the Channel Isles, and was immediately mobilised for service in the European theatre. The 2nd Battalion sailed from Dover on 4th October 1914

and disembarked at Zeebrugge early on 6th October. By 20th October the 2nd Battalion was in action in the First Battle of Ypres and was taking its first casualties.

By being part of the British Expeditionary Force which took part in the opening phase of the war, the 2nd Battalion would be part of that body of men known as The Contemptibles.

There are two photos, in particular, of the 2nd Battalion, which have exercised a great fascination for me, and I have spent much time trying to find out more about the soldiers associated with those photos. In the course of this research, I have compiled a Roll of Honour for the complete Yorkshire Regiment, the details of which can be found on the website [ww1-yorkshires.org.uk](http://ww1-yorkshires.org.uk), in which the names of **all** men who served with the Yorkshire Regiment and who lost their lives has been collected. The website includes photos of the memorials and headstones of many of the soldiers of the regiment, together with data on their careers with the regiment. There are also a number of photos of the individual men who served during the war. From this data, I have been able to piece together some idea as to what happened to some of the Yorkshire Regiment's Contemptibles, unearthing some remarkable tales in the process.

The two photos which drew my interest so strongly are firstly that of the 2nd Battalion officers, photographed in October 1914

before embarkation for service overseas, and secondly that of fifteen soldiers of the 2nd Battalion photographed in 1919 after the war. This second photograph was presented to the Green Howards Regimental Museum in December 2007, and the claim was made at the time that the fifteen men were the only survivors of the original 2nd Battalion. I was intrigued to know whether this was really the case.

The photograph at the top of the page hangs in the Regimental Headquarters in Trinity Church, Richmond. Of the 26 Officers photographed in October 1914, ten were dead by the end of the year, three more were killed subsequently, twelve were wounded and / or taken prisoner (ten of whom were wounded in October 1914), and only one officer in the photo survived the war unscathed.

The photograph shows 26 officers, although a total of 29 actually sailed for Belgium. The additional officers who sailed, but who aren't shown in the photograph, included Captain E. S. Winter, the Medical Officer and Lieutenants Thorne and Bell.

The officer in the photo who escaped unscathed was Lieutenant Quartermaster Edward Pickard. He is credited in the official history of the regiment as having been the first member of the regiment to have shot and killed a German. This happened near Ypres, soon after the 2nd Battalion arrived.

Edward Pickard was a career soldier through-and-through, joining the regiment as a Private in October 1891 and retiring 36 years later as a Lieutenant Colonel. He had served in the Boer War and was present at all of the operations at which the 2nd Battalion were engaged in the First World War. He was twice mentioned in despatches, and was awarded the DCM and Belgian Croix de Guerre. He retired on 16th February 1928, and died only a few months later on 17th July 1928 at the age of 55.

The first of the officers to be killed was Lieutenant Richard Walmesley on 21st October 1914. Not much is said in the official history as to the manner of Lieutenant Walmesley's death.

The account of the action that day starts by saying:

That day was our first experience of shell fire and though we had only shrapnel against us it was not very pleasant . . .

On the 22nd October Captain Claud Gifford Jeffery was mortally wounded. The account of the incident in which Captain Jeffery was mortally wounded is notable for the heroic manner in which this happened.



Second-Lieutenant F. C. Hatton.

From the official history we read:

Waller dashed back to inform Captain Jeffery, the Germans being now some fifty yards away. Captain Jeffery said, "If they are as near as this we must charge them with the bayonet: who will rush them with me?" Waller and about twenty men jumped out of the trench and charged, Captain Jeffery gallantly leading them, sword in one hand, revolver in the other. Before they reached the Germans Captain Jeffery was struck by a rifle bullet . . .

Today this episode might seem remarkable in that Captain Jeffery went into action against a hail of bullets and shrapnel brandishing his sword and pistol; it was 1916 before even helmets were introduced.

On the following day, 23rd October, Captain Frank Cooper Ledgard was killed. He was in command of the battalion's machine guns at the time.

Not long afterwards the most senior member of the Battalion, and one of the oldest members of the regiment to be killed in action, lost his life. On 30th October 1914, Colonel Charles Arthur Cecil King, the commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, was killed while serving in the trenches.

As recounted in the official history:

The Colonel could not have died a more gallant death. Right in the front trench he was, leading and cheering on the men. He was shot by a rifle bullet and death was absolutely instantaneous.

Colonel King has no known grave, and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.

Captain Lawrence Peel was killed on 24th October 1914. He was another officer who died fighting hand to hand in the midst of the enemy, sword in one hand and revolver in the other.

Major Wilfred Beckett Walker was killed on 29th October 1914.

Lieutenant Philip Chabert Kidd was killed on 30th October 1914.

Captain Ernest Scott Broun was killed on 30th October 1914.

Lieutenant Colonel Walter Lorenzo Alexander was killed on 14th May 1915.

Captain Cusack Grant Forsyth was killed on 14th September 1916.

Captain Michael Day Wade Maude died of wounds on 14th October 1917 whilst fighting with the 9th Battalion.

The youngest officer in the photograph, Lieutenant Hugh Godfrey Brooksbank, was wounded by shell fire on 4th November whilst in a reserve trench. Lieutenant Brooksbank was evacuated back to London for treatment, but died of his wounds on 16th December 1914 in a Nursing Home in Park Lane, London. Hugh Brooksbank was the third son of Sir Edward Clitheroe Brooksbank, of

Healaugh near Tadcaster. The Brooksbanks were a Green Howards family, in that William Stafford Brooksbank was Adjutant to the 2nd Battalion when he died on service in India in 1891, and Captain Stamp Brooksbank, an older brother, was killed serving with the 2nd Battalion on 26th September 1915. Captain Stamp Brooksbank is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

Hugh Brooksbank is buried in the churchyard of St John the Baptist, Healaugh. His grave is unusual in that it is not marked by a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone, but is in an ornate and distinctive family tomb.

This casualty rate is by no means the worst amongst officers in the Yorkshire Regiment. The 6th Battalion at Gallipoli (see John Powell's article in the *Green Howard*, Issue 5) suffered far more severely. However, it is highly thought provoking to look at the photo of those men taken in October 1914 and to think of the terrible waste of young lives that occurred not so long after the photo was taken.

Not shown in the photograph of the officers was Second Lieutenant Frederick Charles Hatton, as this man was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 2nd Battalion on 5th October 1914.



Second-Lieutenant Logan Studley.

Courtesy Madras College Archive.



Lieutenant Hatton was a remarkable man, in that he had joined the regiment as a Private. He was the son of Alfred Charles Hatton, a Lance Sergeant with the 19th Regiment Foot. He had served throughout the Boer War as a Corporal with the 2nd Battalion, before being invalided home at the end of 1901.

Frederick Hatton was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant on 9th October 1914, and was killed only three weeks later on 30th October 1914. He has no known grave, and is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.

The battalion's war diary indicates that he was killed by sniper fire, at the same time as Colonel King and Captain Brown.

However, there was one other man promoted from the ranks to become an officer, who lived an even shorter time to enjoy his commission, and whose story is also remarkable.

#### **The Private Soldier Who Became an Officer and was Killed Soon Afterwards**

In the roll of Warrant Officers, NCOs and men who embarked for Belgium on 5th October 1914 can be found the name of Private L. Studley, 10397. But reading Wylly's official history of the Yorkshires in the Great War the following brief statement is made; 'on the 25th (of October) Second-Lieutenant L. Studley received wounds of which he died.' Extraordinarily, these two names are one and the same person. So who was L. Studley?

'L. Studley' was a student called Logan Studley at the Madras College, St Andrew's,

Fife in Scotland. He had been born in York, but his father was Major (Quartermaster) Harry Studley of the Black Watch. Almost certainly influenced by his father's military connection, in September 1917 Logan Studley enlisted with the 7th Battalion Black Watch Special Reserve in Edinburgh. He was still a student at Madras College at the time.

On 11th January 1914, only just aged eighteen years, he was released from the Black Watch and enlisted with the 2nd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment (the choice of regiment possibly being connected to him having been born in York). Two weeks later he left Perth for Guernsey where he joined the 2nd Battalion which was stationed in the Channel Islands at the time.

When the 2nd Battalion embarked for Belgium, Logan Studley was shown as a Private on the Battalion's Roll of Warrant Officers, NCOs and men. But in the Madras College magazine he was credited as having been a Sergeant, and in the London Gazette of 16th October 1914 he is listed as having been a Lance Corporal. The truth, clearly lies somewhere in between.

But what is clear is that in the London Gazette mentioned above, Logan Studley is shown as having been commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant into the East Yorkshire Regiment. His rise from Private to NCO to Officer was thus very rapid and very unusual. But poor young Logan Studley had little time to enjoy being an Officer. Nine days after the London Gazette announced his appointment to the East Yorkshires he died of wounds whilst serving with the Yorkshire Regiment.

And still being just eighteen years old, he was technically also an under-age soldier at the time (to serve overseas it was a requirement to be 19 years old).

#### **The 2nd Battalion Soldiers Who Survived**

The photograph at the top of this page was presented to the Green Howards Museum in December 2007 by Stuart Everitt, grandson of one of the men in the photo, Private Tom Everitt (fourth from left, back row). Allegedly, the fifteen men in this photo (additional to the officer) were the only survivors still serving out of the original 2nd Battalion that embarked for Belgium in October 1914.

We know something about four of these men, and their (very brief) stories are presented below.

Private Tom Everitt, 7706 – Wounded, Captured, and Interned. Tom Everitt was born on the 17th July 1883 in Laceby, Lincolnshire, joining the 1st Battalion Green Howards, at the age of 21, serving in Aldershot and Sheffield. After completion of his engagement he settled in Oulton, Yorkshire, obtaining employment as a shunter at a nearby railway station.

On the outbreak of World War One he was recalled to the colours joining the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment, and embarked with the battalion for Belgium on 5th October.

On the 30th October 1914 Tom Everitt was wounded and captured. He was carried by two of his comrades four miles behind German lines to the town of Menin where an operation saved his life.

Tom Everitt (marked). Taken in Switzerland.



After spending two years in a German prisoner of war camp he was transferred to an internment camp at Mirren in Switzerland as part of an exchange. Those sent to Switzerland with him had also been wounded or were ill. His remaining time in captivity was somewhat pleasurable compared to the grim time that he had endured as prisoner in Germany. He remained a prisoner until the end of the war, when he returned to England and was discharged from the Army in March 1919. Tom Everitt returned to civilian life as a colliery worker in a local coal mine, and died in December 1953 aged 70.

Corporal Tom Riordan, 8496 – Captured and Interned. Also identified at the time this photograph came into the museum's possession was Corporal Tom Riordan (seated second from the left). One of Corporal Riordan's sons, George, wrote a very

comprehensive article in *The Green Howard* (Issue 3, September 2007) on the actions of the 2nd Battalion at the First Battle of Ypres and the part his father played in it. Corporal Riordan was captured in October 1914 and was interned as a prisoner of war. He was repatriated before the end of the war on medical grounds.

Corporal Tom Riordan, later appointed Regimental Sergeant Major, was one of a very well-known Green Howards family. His father, Thomas Mortimer Riordan, was appointed Sergeant Major (equivalent to RSM) in 1892. Tom Riordan had five sons one of whom, Jack Riordan, was also appointed Regimental Sergeant Major in the Green Howards and later became a Major.

Three more of Tom Riordan's sons served in the Army (including George, mentioned above, in the Royal Tank Regiment) and a

fourth was in the RAF. Thomas Mortimer, Tom, and Jack Riordan were all appointed MBE.

Sergeant Frank Allen and Sergeant George Richard Hill, 9881. Two other men have been identified in the photograph. They are Sergeant (later Major) Frank Allen, seated second from right and Sergeant George Richard Hill, standing third from right.

Unfortunately, Frank Allen was not amongst those who first embarked in October 1914. He was, however, one of a draft which was sent out in November 1914 to reinforce the original 2nd Battalion. Therefore, strictly speaking, he cannot be counted as one of the survivors of the original 1,064 men of the 2nd Battalion.

Frank Allen was wounded in 1917 while serving with the 2nd Battalion. He was commissioned in 1936, went on to serve in Palestine in 1938-39, and served throughout the Second World War. He retired from the Army in June 1946, aged almost 51.

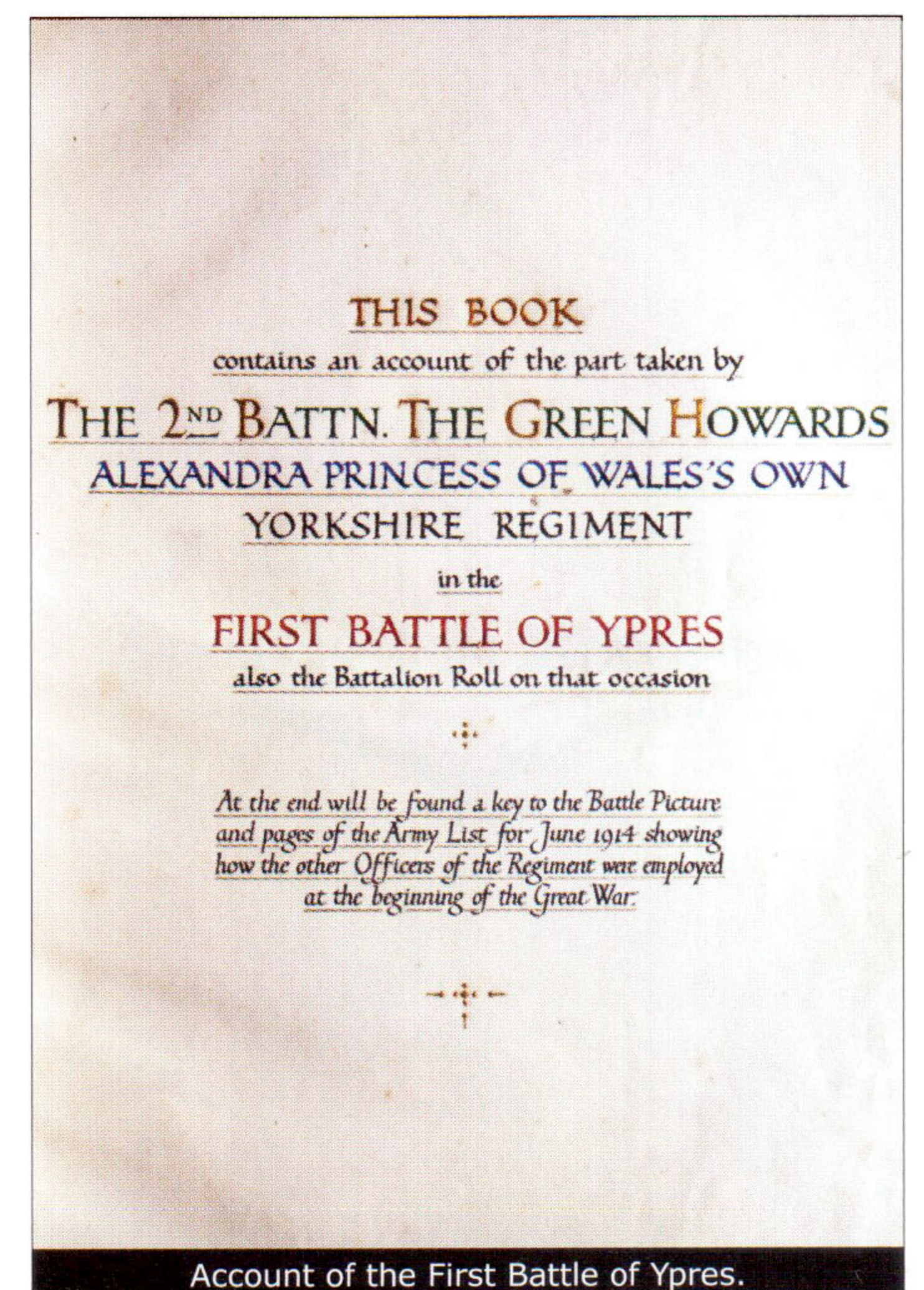
George Hill was severely wounded serving with the 2nd Battalion in March 1917. He was awarded the Military Medal the same month. He died, aged 70, in 1963.

### The Survivors of the 2nd Battalion

I was intrigued to know whether out of the original roll, the fifteen men in the photograph really represented the only survivors. This seemed to be a rather extreme outcome, but rigorous research has provided a pointer as to the high casualty figures suffered by the 2nd Battalion in the war and some sort of a feeling as to how likely this was.

The starting point for my quest was the original roll of Officers, Warrant Officers, NCOs and men who embarked for Belgium on 5th October 1914. The names of these men can be found in a remarkable book that can be found in the Green Howards Regimental Museum in Richmond.

The book contains a roll of those who embarked for Belgium in October 1914. All the names have been transcribed, with



regimental numbers, and can be found on the Yorkshire Regiment Remembrance website. When the 2nd Battalion was transported to Belgium in October 1914, two ships were used, the *Victorian* and the *Californian*. The *Californian* was the ship that was blamed for failing to respond to the distress signals from the *Titanic* in 1912. The *Californian* was sunk by U-35 in the Mediterranean on the 9th November 1915.

The same website also contains a rigorously compiled Roll of Honour, taken from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission register and Soldiers Died in the Great War for all men of the Yorkshire Regiment who lost their lives in the First World War.

By comparing the names and regimental numbers of the men of the original 2nd Battalion against those in the Roll of Honour, it was found that out of the 1,064 Warrant Officers, NCOs and men 366 had died, or been killed, by the end of 1918 (34%). This figure represents an extremely high proportion of men who lost their lives.

In the First World War, out of a total of 8.7 million UK and Commonwealth combatants, the total who died was 956,703 (11%). In the Yorkshire Regiment as a whole, almost 9,000 died out of 65,000 (11%). Thus, three times as many of the Yorkshire Regiment's Contemptibles died as a result of the war than for the general number serving in either the Regiment or the Armed Forces. This may well be connected to the fact that the Contemptibles entered the war at the very beginning, and therefore were exposed to danger for longer than the 'general population'.

The question then is, how many men out of the remaining 698 would have been wounded or suffered illness and not been fit to return to duty, or had been captured and interned? Without a huge amount of work, this question is almost impossible to answer.

The casualty figures show that of the 8.7 million UK and Commonwealth combatants, 2.27 million were wounded



CSM Herbert Friend MM.

in action, of whom 36% did not return to duty (representing about 10% of the original number). The number of men evacuated back to England from France and Flanders due to sickness and illness was 950,000, though it is not clear how many of these were returned to duty. From these figures one can certainly get the feeling that although there may well have been more than fifteen of the Contemptibles left at the end of the war, the number would not have been that great.

But there was at least one man, in addition to the alleged fifteen survivors, who had a remarkable story to tell. His name was Herbert Friend. Private (later CSM) Herbert Friend MM, 9970, was born on the 16th June 1885. According to his baptismal certificate he was baptised on the 8th July 1885 at St John's Church in Meerut, India. He was the son of Lance Corporal George Friend, (Kings Own Scottish Border Regiment).

Private Friend was one of the original 1,064 Warrant Officers, NCOs and men

of the 2nd Battalion who embarked on 5th October 1914. He survived the First Battle of Ypres unscathed, but the next we hear of him is in the July 1915 issue of the *Green Howards Gazette* when Sergeant Friend 9970 was reported as having been wounded while serving in France.

He married Nora Clark in Carnalway Church, County Kildare, Ireland, on 21st January 1916 whilst home on leave, or possibly whilst still recovering from his wounds. Shortly afterwards he returned to fight with the 2nd Battalion in France. There were several postcards home from France showing where he was, including Loos-en-Gopelle, Vermelles, Millebosc and Loos.

CSM Friend was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field, with announcement being posted in the *London Gazette* of 1st September 1916.

But then the *Green Howards Gazette* of December 1916 reported that Company Sergeant Major Friend, 9970, had been wounded again, presumably on an occasion after that for which he had been awarded the Military Medal.

CSM Friend survived through until almost the end of 1918, when he found himself attached to the 6th Battalion and posted to Russia. He wrote to his family from Dundee and then Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands while on the way to Russia. In the postcards he wrote he referred to the mutiny which occurred on the way out, and which has been well described by John Powell in *The Green Howard* (Issue 8). He was wounded in the chest during his service in Russia, and did not return home until September 1919. His return home on 1st September 1919 was on the *Kildonian Castle*. He retired from service with the 2nd Battalion on 14th January 1924. CSM Friend died at home on 18th November 1928, aged 43. He had been in poor health, and died from pulmonary tuberculosis. CSM Friend died young, as had Lieutenant Colonel Edward Pickard (see earlier in this article). The two men died within months of each other.

### Conclusion

In looking at the story of the Yorkshire Regiment's Contemptibles, I have only scratched the surface with respect to the story of what happened to these men as the First World War progressed and came to its conclusion. But what does emerge from this brief examination was the appalling waste of life that was the lot of many of those in the 2nd Battalion, and the extraordinary stories of some of the men who either died or survived fighting with that battalion.

### Acknowledgements

I have been assisted in my research into Lieutenant Logan Studley by two people, Richard Roberts and Ken Paterson. Also, the archivist of Madras College, Fife, Arlen Pardoe, has provided much valuable information.



CSM Herbert Friend with a field gun team.