

## Private Harold Walter Randall WWI

First World War, Private Harold Walter Randall only discovered during research that the Guards were granted the privilege of calling their private soldiers Guardsman by King George V, in November 1918, and therefore shortly after the death of Private Randall.

Private Randall was born in Brixton Deverill in 1899 to Samuel George Randall and his mother Harriet Randall. Samuel was born in Blandford St Mary in Dorset, whilst Harriet was at Chilmark girl. Shortly after Harold's birth his parents moved to Longbridge Deverill and 83 Sand Street, and (Figure 1) is a photo of the cottage as it is today in which they lived.



*Figure 1 - 83 Sand Street, Longbridge Deverill*

By 1911, the Randall's were living in Chilmark, and (Figure 2) is a photo of the current cottages in which they lived and in the 1911 census the parents and seven siblings were living in three rooms.



*Figure 2 - Chilmark Cottages*

Samuel was at varying times a carter, farm labourer, and a groom and had lived in the Countess at Amesbury, Brixton Deverill, Hill Deverill, Longbridge Deverill, Chilmark and on

the death of his son somewhere in Teffont Magna, but I have been unable to identify the house in Magna that he and his family lived in.

In 1916, conscription was introduced and all those over the age of 18, were conscripted. Harold was attested in September 1916, at the age of 17 and was transferred to the reserve. He was mobilised on 30 January 1917 and the following day he reported to Caterham Barracks (Figure 3) and I have been unable to discover why he joined the Coldstream Guards, but it may have been a matter of which regiments required more troops.



*Figure 3 - Caterham Barracks*

He spent almost exactly one year at Caterham, which was not that unusual because by 1916 - 17, the training system had become well-established. He may also have been restricted by virtue of his age as well.



*Figure 4 - Caterham Barracks The Blocks*



On 2 February 1918 he was posted and the war diary (Figure 5) of the Second Battalion the Coldstream Guards shows the arrival of a draft of 94 other ranks on 6 February 1918 when the Battalion was based at Arras prison, France (Figure 6) undergoing training.

WAR DIARY  
or  
~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~  
(Excess heading not required)

February 1918 Army Form C. 2118.

2nd Bn. Coldstream Gds

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. This page will be prepared in manuscript.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
In the Field.	Feb. 1st 1918.		Billets in ARRAS. Training.	
	2nd		The Battalion paraded about 4.30 p.m. and marched to 'Q' Dump, ARRAS, thence entraining to PAMPOUX Station, arriving about 6 p.m. The Battalion then marched to the Front Line trenches, relieving parts of the 1st & 2nd Battalions Scots Guards. The front taken over by the Battalion was a new Sector allotted to the 1st Guards Brigade.	
	3rd.		Front Line Trenches.	
	4th.		do.	
	5th.		do. (Casualty - 1 O.R. wounded)	
	6th.		The Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards about 8 p.m. and marched back to PAMPOUX Station, thence entraining to 'Q' Dump and marching to billets in the PRISON, ARRAS. A draft of 94 O.R. joined the Battalion.	
	7th.		PRISON, ARRAS. Training.	
	8th.		do.	
	9th.		do.	
	10th.		The Battalion paraded about 5 p.m. and marched to 'Q' Dump, ARRAS, thence entraining to PAMPOUX Station, and marching to the Support Line Trenches, relieving the 1st Battalion Irish Guards.	
	11th.		Support Line Trenches. Fatigues.	
	12th.		do. do.	
	13th.		do. do. 2/Lieut: G.O.L. Atkinson joined the Bn.	
	14th.		The Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards about 5.45 p.m. and marched to the Front Line Trenches relieving the 1st Bn. Irish Guards.	

Continued.

Atty. W. W. W. 1918. 2nd Bn. Coldstream Gds. D.D. & L. 1st. Form C. 2118.

Figure 5 - War Diary 1918

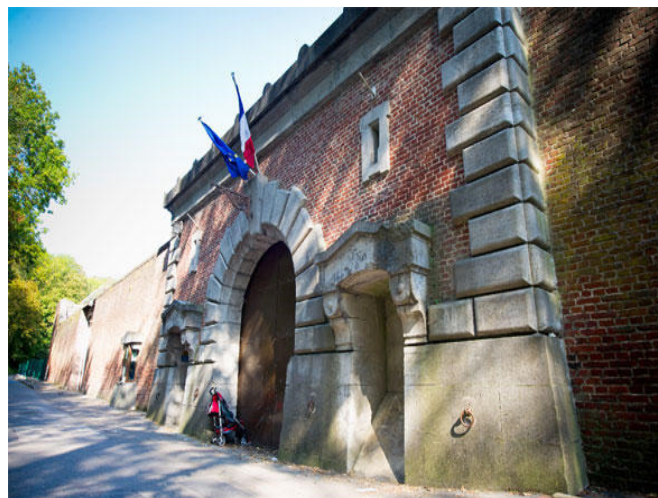


Figure 6 - Arras Prison France

It is most likely that Harold was a member of this draft. The Regiment has no record of which company Harold was posted to, or indeed any of his movements up until his death. However, it is safe to assume that as he died of his wounds in 3 Field Ambulance, which was one of the Field ambulances that supported the Guards Division, he remained with the Second Battalion throughout. The Battalion led a rather nomadic existence moving every few days between the front-line trenches, the supporting trenches, the reserve positions and training camps. (Figure 7) shows their movements from the moment Harold joined them until his death which I will show on the next picture (Figure 8).

Let me explain this slide – the 1st Guards Brigade of which the Second Coldstream were a part held front-line trenches astride the Arras to Douai railway line and their support trenches were in the area to the rear and to the east of Arras.

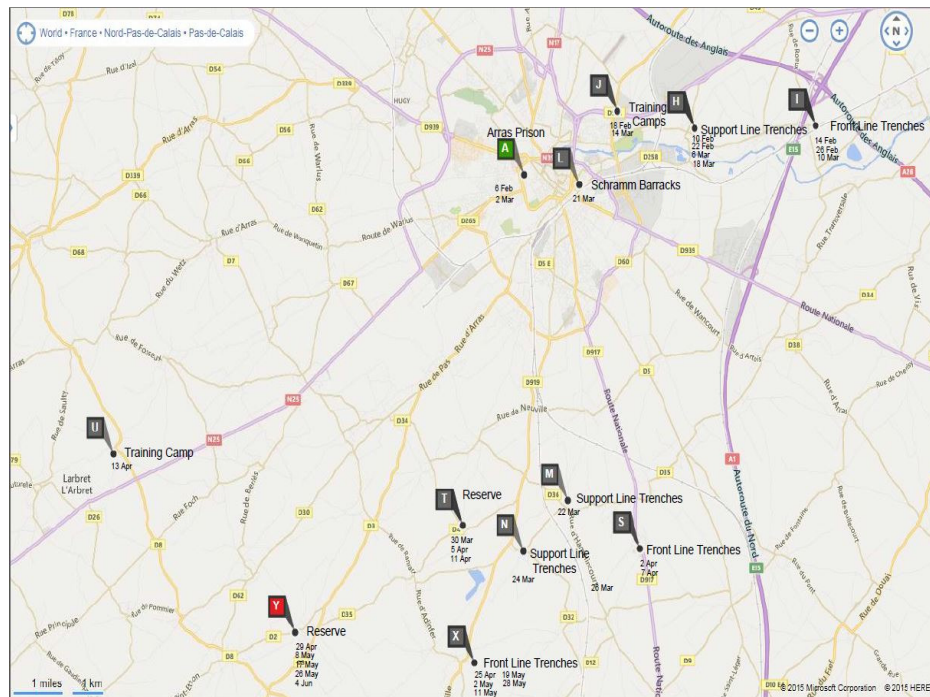


Figure 7 - Movements Map

You will have all seen numerous photos of First World War trenches and documentaries showing the terrible conditions, particularly in winter, however, not to disappoint by include one of the first guards Brigade.



Figure 8 - WWI Trenches

This one is probably of a temporary nature. Let me read from the History of the Guards Division at the time Harold joined 2 CGds in the Arras sector. (Figure 7) Map again.



Throughout this whole period there is a constant trickle of soldiers being killed and wounded, particularly when in the front-line trenches, but also in the support line trenches and sometimes when in reserve. You will see from the map that the Brigade moved from front-line trenches to the East of Arras to front-line trenches, South West of Arras. This was caused by the major German offensive which started on 21 March 1918 and is shown more clearly on this slide (Figure 9).

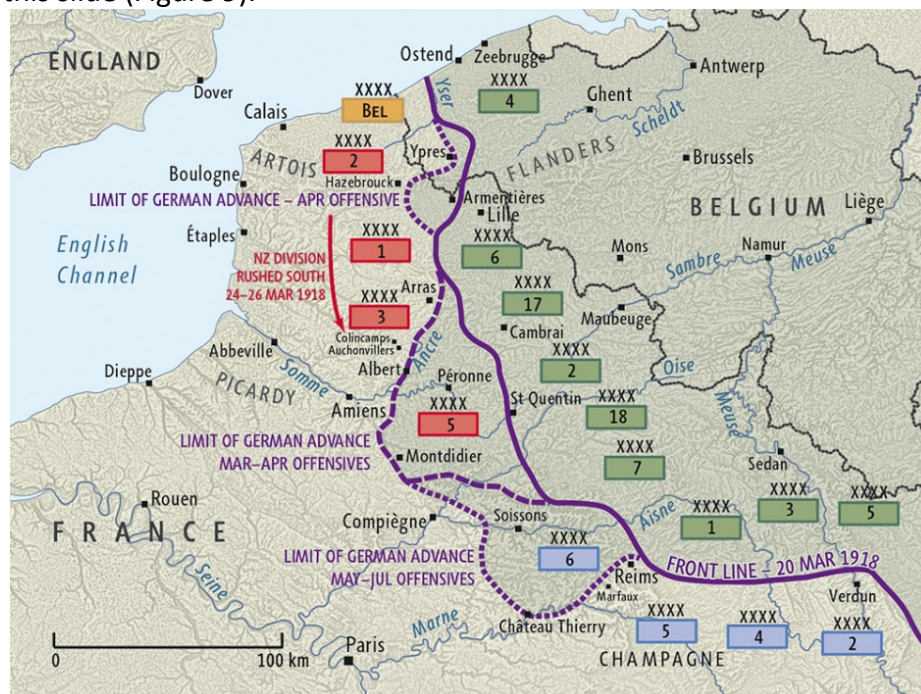


Figure 9 - German Offensive

You can see that the front to the south of the Guards Division was forced westwards and the Guards Division was moved South West onto the flank of this German salient and this is shown more clearly on the next slide (Figure 10).

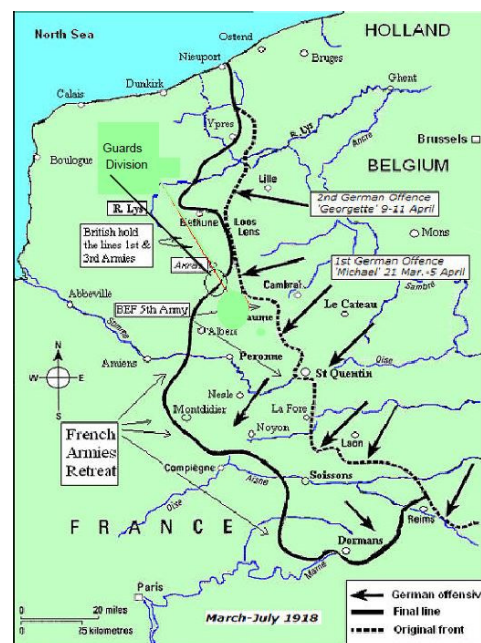


Figure 10 - German offensive

Despite this enormous offensive 20,000 British dead and 35,000 wounded on the first day the war diary of the Second Battalion shows little in the way of change in their routine, other than the location has moved to the South West. Whilst this major offensive was still taking place the Battalion left the line to train and for example spent the whole of June 1918, in a training camp. Bavincourt sports day (Figure 11)



*Figure 11 - Bavincourt Sports Day*

It is not clear when Harold was wounded and we do not know how long he survived his wounds but it is quite possible that he was wounded towards the end of July 1918, when the Battalion was in the area of Ransart. There happened to be an American artist, John Singer Sargent, in this area in 1918, and (Figure 11) we see some of his paintings titled sunken road at Ransart, dugout at Ransart (Figure 12) and the gates at Château Ransart (Figure 13).



*Figure 12 - Sunken road at Ransart*

He also happened to be an invalid in a field hospital for a time and (Figure 15) shows a painting of the scene in the hospital.

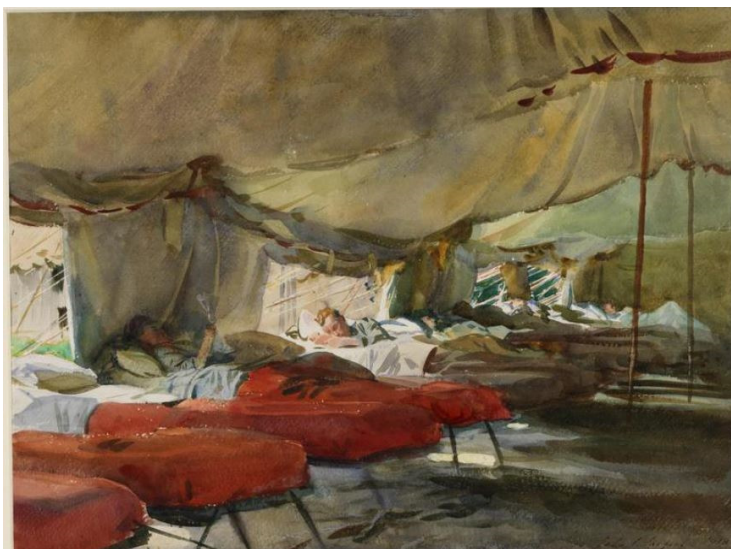




*Figure 13- Dugout at Ransart*



*Figure 14 - Gates at Château Ransart*



*Figure 15 - Field Hospital*

(Figure 16) is the page from the Coldstream Guards war diary for the second half of July 1918 and you can see that there are a steady trickle of casualties, mostly on account of gas, so it is quite possible that Harold died from the effects of gas poisoning. He died on 4 August 1918, and (Figure 17) shows the entry for the day in the 3 Field ambulance war diary for 4 August.

WAR DIARY OF INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.				Army Form C. 21
(Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regt. Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.)				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and References to Appendices
In-the-Field.	July 17th.		RANSART Trenches (Reserve). The Battalion paraded at 10.15 p.m. and relieved the 2nd. Battalion Grenadier Guards in the SUPPORT Trenches near HENDECOURT.	
	18th.		SUPPORT Trenches (HENDECOURT).	
	19th.	-do-	-do-	
	20th.	-do-	-do- (Casualty. 1 Wounded. Remained at duty). Draft of 7 O.R.'s joined the Battalion.	
	21st.	-do-	-do- (Casualties. 2 Wounded. Remained at duty). Lieut. E.F. LUTHERS joined the Battalion.	
	22nd.	-do-	-do- (Casualties 6 Wounded. Gas).	
	23rd.	-do-	-do- The Battalion paraded at 10 p.m. and relieved the 2nd. Battalion Grenadier Guards in the Front Line Trenches. (Cas. 1 O.R. Wounded. Gas).	
	24th.		Front Line Trenches (HAMELINCOURT). (Casualty. 1 Killed). 1st. Vln. Co.	
	25th.	-do-	-do- (Casualty. 1 O.R. Wounded. Gas)	
	26th.	-do-	-do-	
	27th.	-do-	-do-	
	28th.	-do-	-do- (Casualties. 2 O.R.'s Killed. 1 O.R. Wounded). (1 O.R. Wounded. Gas.)	
	29th.	-do-	-do- The Battalion was relieved about 10.30 p.m. by the 1st Bn. Irish Guards and marched back to Trenches at RANSART, becoming the Battalion in Reserve. (Cas: 1 O.R. Wounded). Draft of 4 O.R.'s joined the Battalion.	
	30th.		RANSART Trenches. (Reserve).	
	31st.	-do-	-do- (Casualties 11 O.R.'s Wounded).	

Lieut-Colonel,  
Commanding,  
2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards.

Figure 16- War Diary

Of interest on this page is the fact that the Field ambulance is tending to American casualties and have been given instructions as to how they should be reported.

WAR DIARY OF INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.				Army Form C. 2114.
(Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regt. Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.)				
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information.	Remarks and References to Appendices
	Rec. Dr. 500	3 1/2 pm	Nothing to note.	
	-do-	4 1/2 pm	Consulting Surgeon, Third Army, and Consulting Surgeon, Southern Command, with 2nd. Vln. Co., inspected the Comd S. Everything very satisfactory.	
	Rec. Dr. 500	5 1/2 pm	The Tent Ambulance of the 2/1st N. Mid. Field Amb. was changed for another of the same unit by 2/1st N. Mid. Field Amb. In consequence of the engines 8-1-8-18 concerning the reporting of American Casualties. D.D.M.S. issued instructions that the Regiment and not the Battalion, is to be informed.	

Figure 17- War Diary



Harold is buried in the Bellacourt military cemetery, and (Figures 18 and 19) are a number of shots of the cemetery and his very grave stone can be identified. He was only 19 at the time of his death.



*Figure 18- Bellacourt Cemetery*



*Figure 19 - Bellacourt Cemetery*

We remember Harold and honour his sacrifice.