

Ypres 2025

Proud to be a part of Ypres Branch Centenary Celebrations 14 June 2025

It was an honour for the Oxted and District Branch to be represented at the centenary celebrations of the Ypres Branch. Our Standard Bearer and several members of the Branch Committee travelled to Ypres on the 14th June to mark the centenary of the Ypres Branch. Established on 16th May 1925, Ypres members have a long history of providing support to the Armed Forces community and performing acts of Remembrance, burials, and rededication ceremonies. The centenary celebrations included the blessing of a new standard in St George's Memorial church, a garden party, and a parade to the Menin Gate for the Exhortation and Last Post. A wreath was laid by the Branch in remembrance of 3634 Pte Richard Hay, of the 1st Battalion the Gordon Highlanders, who died on the 6th May 1915. RIP.









The following is extracted from the 1st Gordon's War Diary. This is to help provide a context to Richard Hay's brave sacrifice for our country.

DATE

EVENT

1914 After the very heavy losses at Mons; Le Cateau; 1st Marne; Aisne; La Bassée and 1st Ypres, suffered during the first months of the Great War. By late November 1914, the old British Army had virtually disappeared.

The first winter 1914/1915 was relatively quiet, and saw a period of training, with the 1st Gordons joining its brigade at Locres on 2nd December 1914. Drafts were arriving to bring the battalion up to strength, with Territorial battalions sent out from the UK, towards the end of 1914.

1st Gordons on 14th December 1914 were engaged in an operation at Messives Ridge with 8th Brigade, and again lost heavily.

1915 Into the New Year the 1st Gordons were in billets at Westoutre and Locres, later in trenches at Vierstraat with shelling and some casualties. Later at La Clytte,

Westoutre in billets, drafts arrived to augment strength, some 200 NCOs and men, including

3rd Battalion, and reservists amounting to a further 160 men.

La Clytte

Quiet spell in trenches, alternating in billets, further draft of 166 men joined 27th January 1915, with very little training. Intermittent shelling.

February 1915, Blue Balmoral bonnets issued replacing the Glengarry, but not to be worn in trenches until Khaki covers arrived; too conspicuous. Relieved by the 2nd Suffolks, and alternating trenches and billets during month with casualties, with this battalion.

March saw further alternating relief at billets, with trenches near Vierstraat, with casualties from shelling. Later relieved by 1st Royal Scots and Suffolks, with Bn relieving Camerons 18th March at Vierstraat. Losses of two and three men from snipers and shelling.

April continued with occupation of trenches north of Vierstraat; relieved by Worcestershire Regt. Back in billets at La Clytte. Mid April, quiet virtually no casualties. Half Bn in billets and half in trenches, quiet continued until 22nd April, first reports of gas being used. Month ended as before, few casualties.

May began quietly, heavy shelling on 6th, killed 3 and wounded 5. By the 11th May, Brigade was ordered to relieve 13th Brigade in front of Hill 60. Bn relieved South Lincs; many rifles and equipment found, left by West Riding Regt due to gassing, many corpses; cleaning up carried out. By mid-May patrols carried out at Hill 60, with bombing continuing and parapets blown in. Relieved by Dorsets on 20th, marched back to billets at La Clytte. Preparations leading up to 2nd Ypres begin, with Bn engaged in trench work at Hooze, and quiet conditions at night. Some shelling in mornings.