

# THE WELSH GUARDS IN THE GREAT WAR

## Formation

On February 26th 1915 his Majesty King George V granted by Royal Charter the creation of a Welsh Regiment of Foot Guards, to be known as The Welsh Guards. General Sir Francis Lloyd, the most senior Welsh soldier at that time, and commanding the London district was appointed to proceed with the formation and set about interviewing likely candidates. The successful candidate, Major W. Murray Threipland was subsequently appointed as Lieut-Col. Commanding Officer, Welsh Guards. Next appointed, from the Scots Guards, was RSM W. Stevenson. The Welsh Guards first HQ was initially housed in a motley collection of fair & exhibition buildings at White City, Shepherd's Bush, London

The Welsh Guards first mounted guard at the King's residence, Buckingham Palace on March 1st, St. David's Day, 1915. Comprising the Guard party were: Captain of the Guard: Lt. Col. Murray Threipland (the only instance in the history of the Brigade of Guards of a CO acting as Captain of the King's Guard), Lieutenant: Lt. R G W Williams-Bulkeley, Ensign: 2nd. Lt. P L .M Batty, Lt. Viscount Clive, Sgt. of Arms: CSM Woodhouse along with remaining NCO's & Guardsmen from the Brigade

Initially training and recruiting began but on April 28th, a week into the 2nd Battle of Ypres, the Battalion was made up of 31 officers and 1,316 other ranks, and was sent to Esher, where it quartered in the racecourse stands at Sandown Park. On March 19th the King had approved the King's Colour, The Regimental Colour and Company Colours, and conferred on the leading Company of the 1st Battalion the title "Prince of Wales" Company. The uniform. Cap badge and buttons bore the leek, the national emblem of Wales, and this was repeated on the shoulders and as a collar badge. Buttons were in groups of five on the scarlet tunic with bearskin as per the other regiments of Guards but with green and white plume. On June 4th 1915 the Battalion returned to London and were quartered at Wellington Barracks with the Battalion strength at 47 officers and 1,610 other ranks.

## 1st Battalion

August 3rd saw the Battalion on parade at Buckingham Palace where the King inspected the battalion. The colours were then consecrated by the Bishop of St. Asaph which were received by the two senior subalterns. On August 7th the King became Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment. On September 17th the 1st Battalion entrained from Waterloo for Southampton and boarded the SS Palm Beach for France, landing at Le Havre on August 18th at 7 am.

## 1st Battalion WW1

### 1915

August 18th Le Havre, 20th Abbeville, St. Omer, Arques.

September 21st Roquetoire, 23rd Fontes, 25th Haillicourt, 26th Vermelles, 27th Loos, 29th Vermelles, 30th Sailly-la-Bourse.

October 3rd Vermelles (Chapelle Notre Dame de Consolation), 5th Vermelles, 12th Sailly-la-Bourse, 13th Vermelles (Lancashire Trench), 19th Vermelles, 23rd Hollenzollern Redoubt, 27th Allouagne.

November 9th Merville, 14th Laventie (Pont du Hem), 16th Laventie (Line) 19th Laventie (Pont du Hem), 21st Laventie (Line), 22nd Laventie (Pont du Hem), 24th Laventie (Line), 26th La Gorgue.

December 2nd Laventie (Pont du Hem), 4th Laventie (Line), 6th Laventie (Farms around Village), 8th Laventie (Line), 10th Laventie (Farms), 12th Laventie (Line), 14th La Gorgue, 20th Laventie (in Village), 22nd Laventie (Line), 24th Laventi (Village), 26th Laventie (Line), 28th (Village), 30th Laventie (Line).

## **1916**

January 1st La Gorgue, 13th Laventie (Village), 15th Laventie (Line), 17th Laventie (Village), 19th Laventie (Line), 21st Laventie (Village) 23rd Lav

February 1st Laventie (Village), 3rd (Laventie (Line), 5th Laventie (Village), 7th Laventie (Line), 9th Laventie (Village, 14th Laventie (Line), 15th Estaires, 16-17th Lestrem to Calais, 25th Wormhoudt,

March 5th St. Jan ter Biezen, Poperinghe (D Camp), 16th Ypres (Billets), 24th Ypres (Billets), 25th Poperinghe.

April 3rd Ypres (St. Jean -Line) 7th Ypres (Billets), 11th Ypres (St. Jean-Line), 15th Ypres (Billets), 19th Poperinghe 27th Ypres (Potijze-Line),

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

## **1917**

## **1918**

To be continued

## **2nd Battalion**

With the departure of the 1st Battalion to France the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion came into being. Lt-Col. J B Stracey-Clitherow, (Colonel of the East riding Yorkshire Lancers, and formerly Major, Scots Guards) became its CO. The 2nd fed recruits into the 1st battalion

## **Sgt. Robert Bye, V.C. WELSH GUARDS**

Robert James Bye was born on December 12, 1889 at 13 Maritime Street, Graig, Pontypridd, Wales. His parents Martin and Sarah Jane Bye then moved to 21 Woodfield Street, Penrhiwceiber, near Aberdare, Wales, and Robert was educated at the local school there. After leaving school he worked at The Deep Dyffryn Colliery, Mountain Ash, also near Aberdare, before joining the Welsh Guards on April 3, 1915. Advancement through the ranks was rapid when he was promoted to Lance-Corporal in March 1916, Corporal in September of that year and then to Sergeant in April 1917. He served in France and Flanders and was discharged in February 1919. Six months later he re-enlisted in the Notts and Derby Regiment, remaining with it until 1925, and finally re-enlisting again in the Sherwood Foresters in World War Two. After the war he worked at Warsop Main, Firbeck and Welbeck Collieries in the Nottingham coalfield and also became a temporary police constable at Mansfield, Notts. He married a Welsh girl from Penrhiwceiber, Mabel Lloyd, at Pontypridd on October 14, 1912 and they had two sons and two daughters. He died in 1962, aged 72 and is buried at Warsop Cemetery, Nottingham.

Sgt. Bye won his VC on 31 July 1917 at the Yser Canal, Belgium, where he displayed the utmost courage and devotion to duty during an attack on the enemy's position. During the attack, at the third Battle of Ypres, Sgt. Bye saw that the leading waves were being troubled by two enemy blockhouses. He rushed at one of them and put the German garrison out of action. He then rejoined his company and went forward to the second objective. Later he volunteered to take charge of a party detailed to clear up a line of blockhouses which had been passed. He accomplished this, taking many prisoners, and then advanced to the third objective, again taking a number of prisoners. During the action he accounted for over 70 of the enemy. His actions in Woods 15 and 16 and at the Yser Canal on the same day were also taken into account. Sgt. Bye's citation appeared in the London Gazette on September 6, 1917 and he was invested with his VC by King George V on September 27, 1917.