

Brecknockshire Battalion The South Wales Borderers TF

World War I

Fact Sheet: 3-B07-10

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Summary of Service:

1/1 Brecknock Battalion - 4th August 1914: Territorial Force, Headquarters Brecon, as part of South Wales Brigade, Welsh Division. 5th August 1914: Moved to Pembroke Dock. 28th September 1914: Moved to Dale. 29th October 1914: Embarked from Southampton with Home Counties Division. 3rd December 1914: Arrived at Bombay and transhipped for Aden arriving 16th December 1914. 5 August 1915: Embarked Aden for Bombay, India arriving 11th August. Stationed at Mhow, Central India. October 1919: Embarked for UK.

2/1 Brecknock Battalion - A second line battalion of the Brecknocks was formed at Brecon in September 1914. April 1915: Moved to Dale near Milford Haven. December 1915: Moved to Bedford as part of 68th Division. November 1916: Absorbed by 2/7th Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers at Wrentham, Southwold, Suffolk.

3/1 Brecknock Battalion - A third line battalion of the Brecknocks was formed in April 1915 and remained in Milford Haven until 1917. 8th April 1916: Became 1st (Reserve) Battalion. 1st September 1916: Became part of Welsh Reserve Brigade. August 1917: Combined with 1st (Reserve) Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment at Gobowen, Shropshire.

On 25th July 1914, the Brecknockshire Battalion went to camp at Portmadoc. It returned to Brecon before the declaration of War so as to be ready to mobilise. On 5th August, after completing mobilisation, it moved to its war station at Pembroke Dock. After two months of coast defence duty in this area it was selected for service overseas in October, nearly all its officers and men having promptly volunteered for active service. Leaving England on October 29th, with Colonel Lord Glanusk in command, the battalion was stationed at Aden, where the menace of strong Turkish forces in the Yemen necessitated the maintenance of a substantial garrison. Turkish aggressiveness led in July to the dispatch to the support of the Sultan of Lahej of the Aden Movable Column, to which the battalion contributed over 400 riflemen. This move, undertaken in extremely hot weather and with inadequate transport and hospital arrangements, proved a severe strain on young soldiers hardly yet acclimatised and unaccustomed to long marches in such conditions. The men reached Lahej completely exhausted, and though some were able to assist in beating off a vigorous Turkish attack, the defection of the camel drivers with the guns, reserve ammunition and medical stores necessitated the evacuation of the town, and the return march to Aden proved an even greater trial than the advance. Practically all those who had made the march were incapacitated, nearly twenty died of heat stroke, and the battalion had to be relieved by a fresh unit and transferred to India.

Here it was stationed at Mhow, an important station in Central India, where it remained until August 1919. Many officers and men of the battalion found their way to Mesopotamia, mostly as reinforcements to the 4th Battalion, South Wales Borderers, many NCOs and men were given commissions in the Indian Army Reserve of Officers and, others found active employment in other ways, but the Brecknocks as a whole never got another chance of going into action, though frequently reported upon as highly efficient and in every way fit for active service. The 'internal security' duties which the battalion was called upon to discharge were, however, of essential importance, and the many troubles of 1919 caused its retention in India until October 1919, nearly 300 officers and men being drafted to units on the Frontier for the Third Afghan War. Not till over five years after the Battalion's departure for foreign service could a remnant return home to be demobilised.

When the Battle Honours for the Great War were announced in 1925, the Brecknocks now part of 3rd Battalion Monmouthshire Regiment was awarded 'Aden'.