

The Monmouthshire Regiment TF

World War I

Fact Sheet: 7-B07-11

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Summary of Service:

1st (Rifle) Battalion: 4th August 1914: Territorial Force, Headquarters Stow Hill, Newport, Monmouthshire as part of South Wales Brigade, Welsh Division. 5th August 1914: Moved to Pembroke Dock. 10th August 1914: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. End of August 1914: Moved to Northampton. December 1914: Moved to Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. January 1915: Moved to Cambridge. 13th February 1915: Landed in France as part of 84th Brigade, 28th Division. 27th May 1915: Amalgamated with 112nd and 113rd Battalions in 84th Brigade, 28th Division. 11th August 1915: Battalion resumed its identity. 3rd September 1915: Assigned to 46th Division as Pioneer Battalion. 11th November 1918: Pioneer Battalion of 46th Division, south west of Avesnes, France.

A **second line battalion** of the 1st Monmouths (211 Monmouths) was formed at Newport in September 1914. 20th February 1915: Moved to Cambridge as part of Welsh Border Brigade, Welsh Division. 19th April 1915: Moved to Northampton as part of 205th Brigade, 68th Division. July 1915: Moved to Bedford. November 1916: Moved to Lowestoft, Suffolk. April 1917: Moved to Herringfleet, Suffolk. Autumn 1917: Returned to Lowestoft. 31st March 1918: Battalion disbanded.

A **third line battalion** of the 1st Monmouths (311 Monmouths) was raised at Newport moving to Abergavenny in February 1915. September 1915: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. 8th April 1916: Designated as Reserve Battalion. 1st September 1916: Absorbed 2nd and 3rd in Welsh Reserve Brigade TF. Summer 1917: Moved to Gobowen, Shropshire. 10th July 1917: Absorbed 1st (Reserve) Brecknock Battalion. March 1918: Moved to Kinmel, Flintshire. July 1918: Moved to Herne Bay.

2nd Battalion: 4th August 1914: Territorial Force, Headquarters Osborne Road, Pontypool, Monmouthshire as part of South Wales Brigade, Welsh Division. 5th August 1914: Moved to Pembroke Dock. 10th August 1914: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. End of August 1914: Moved to Northampton. 7th November 1914: Landed at Havre, France as part 12th Brigade, 4th Division. 20th November 1914: Moved to Le Bixet. 27th May 1915: Amalgamated with 111st and 113rd Battalions in 84th Brigade, 28th Division at Vlamertinghe. 24th July 1915: Battalion resumed identity and rejoined 12th Brigade, 4th Division. 30th January 1916: Assigned to Lines of Communication. 1st May 1916: Joined 29th Division as Pioneer Battalion. 11th November 1918: Pioneer Battalion, 29th Division at Celle, west of Renaix, Belgium. 9th December 1918: Arrived Kreil, Cologne, Germany. 27th May 1919: Cadre embarked at Antwerp for Tilbury. 7th June 1919: Cadre received civic reception at Pontypool.

A **second line battalion** of the 2nd Monmouths (212 Monmouths) was formed at Pontypool in September 1914. November 1914: Moved to Northampton as part of Welsh Border Brigade, Welsh Division. 19th April 1915: Moved to Northampton as part of 205th Brigade, 68th Division. July 1915: Moved to Bedford. November 1916: Moved to Lowestoft, Suffolk. April 1917: Moved to Herringfleet, Suffolk. Autumn 1917: Returned to Lowestoft. 20th April 1918: Battalion disbanded.

A **third line battalion** of the 2nd Monmouths (312 Monmouths) was raised at Pontypool moving to Abergavenny in February 1915. September 1915: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. 8th April 1916: Designated as Reserve Battalion. 1st September 1916: Absorbed into 311st Monmouths.

3rd Battalion: 4th August 1914: Territorial Force, Headquarters Abergavenny, Monmouthshire as part of South Wales Brigade, Welsh Division. 5th August 1914: Moved to Pembroke Dock. 10th August 1914: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. End of August 1914: Moved to Northampton. 14th February 1915: Landed in France. 3rd March 1915: Assigned to 83rd Brigade, 28th Division. 27th May 1915: Amalgamated with 111st and 112nd Battalions in 84th Brigade, 28th Division. at Vlamertinghe. 11th August 1915: Battalion resumed its identity and rejoined 83rd Brigade, 28th Division. 28th September 1915: Became Pioneer Battalion 28th Division. 9th August 1916: To GHQ troops. 31st August 1916: Battalion disbanded and personnel assigned to 111st and 112nd Monmouths.

A **second line battalion** of the 3rd Monmouths (213 Monmouths) was formed at Abergavenny in September 1914. February 1915: Moved to Cambridge as part of Welsh Border Brigade, Welsh Division. 19th April 1915: Moved to Northampton as part of 205th Brigade, 68th Division. July 1915: Moved to Bedford. November 1916: Moved to Lowestoft, Suffolk. April 1917: Moved to Herringfleet, Suffolk. August 1917: Battalion disbanded, personnel absorbed in 211st and 212nd Battalions.

A **third line battalion** of the 3rd Monmouths (313 Monmouths) was raised at Abergavenny in February 1915. September 1915: Moved to Oswestry, Shropshire. 8th April 1916: Designated as Reserve Battalion. 1st September 1916: Absorbed into 311st Monmouths.

4th Battalion: June 1915: Home Service personnel of the Monmouth and Hereford Battalions formed the 48th Provisional Battalion. 1st January 1917: At Cromer, Norfolk, 48th Provisional Battalion re-designated 4th Battalion, Monmouthshire Regiment. Summer 1917: Moved to Mundesley, Norfolk. May 1918: Happingburgh, Norfolk as part of 224th Brigade.

If the Brecknockshire's experience of active service had been limited, this could not be said of the three former Volunteer Battalions of the Regiment, taken away from it in 1908, but with which it retains a close connection, officially expressed by the phrase that the Monmouthshire Regiment 'forms part of the Corps of the South Wales Borderers'. The Territorials of the Monmouthshire Regiment in 1914 carried the battle-honour 'South Africa, 1900-1902', won by its members as Volunteer companies of the 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers, and no apology is needed for including here a record of its share in the great doings of 1914-18.

The Welsh Border Brigade, to which the three battalions belonged, had been selected to take part in the Army manoeuvres and was not in camp when war broke out. It was promptly mobilized and by 6th August was at its war station at Pembroke Dock. Its stay here was brief; within three days it had been transferred to Oswestry, whence its Division moved at the end of August to Northampton. Here it formed part of the 'Central Force', organized in readiness for a possible German invasion. Intensive training was the order of the day, varied with field fortification work on the East Coast, where the capacities of the Monmouthshires as diggers were much in demand. The great majority of officers and men had undertaken the overseas obligation; the few who had not been able to do so or to pass for service abroad were transferred to the 'Second Line' Battalions.

However, none of the Monmouthshires were to go overseas with the Welsh Division. The urgent need for reinforcements led to the sending out to France of individual Territorial Battalions which were attached as extra units to Regular Brigades. Four were sent out before the end of October 1914, and in the first week of November another dozen, among them the 2nd Monmouths crossed to France, the battalion leaving on November 6th and thus earning the 1914 Star. The battalion was posted to the 4th Division, whose 12th Brigade it joined in the trenches near Armentières before the end of November. In this area it spent the first winter, earning a great name for its capacities in digging and mining. 'Trench-warfare' was active that winter and, if the Armentières 'Plug Street' area ranked as 'quiet', the 2nd Monmouths' 170 casualties in five months are some indication of what the troops had to go through.

At the end of April came a call for the Fourth Division to quit the 'quiet' of Plug Street, and plunge into the thick of the fighting round Ypres, where the first German 'gas attack' of 22nd April 1915, had just added a new horror to war. Here the 2nd Monmouths found themselves fighting alongside their other two battalions, the 1st and 3rd Monmouthshire having in their turn been selected for service in France. Both had come out in February and been posted to the 28th Division, formed of Regulars withdrawn from India and the Colonies, who had been plunged almost straight from the tropics into the mud and wet and cold of about the very worst position of the British line in the Ypres Salient.

Actually, when the two Monmouthshire Battalions joined the 28th Division its infantry had been shifted to the trenches opposite the Messines Ridge, but after a brief apprenticeship here they moved to the Salient, to which their Brigades were returning, taking over the Broodseinde sector at the point of the Salient.

All three battalions came in for very severe fighting; the 1st had a company involved in supporting the right of the Canadians by counter-attacks as early as 24th April 1915, though most of the battalion and all the 3rd were holding the 28th Division's front line until the withdrawal to a shorter line nearer Ypres on the night of May 3rd-4th. The 2nd, coming up with the Fourth Division on the left of the line, after the Canadians had been withdrawn, shared in the splendid defence of that portion of the front which the Fourth Division maintained almost throughout May. If it escaped the intense fighting of 8th May, when the 1st and 3rd Battalions were reduced to mere fragments in the defence of the Frezenberg position, it had a prolonged and strenuous trial, and it is only in comparison with the other two battalions that it may seem to have fared well. On 8th May 1915, one of the worst days in the whole struggle, the 3rd Monmouths, near Frezenberg itself, and the 1st, away on their left, north-east of Wieltje, both in very hastily constructed defences, had to bear the brunt of a tremendous bombardment followed by an attack in great force. Both battalions were virtually annihilated; by the end of the day their survivors between them hardly amounted to a war-strength Company, but they had put up a splendid fight and B Company of the 3rd Battalion earned special distinction by holding on in the front line, along with two companies of the 1st KOYLI, although quite isolated, the troops on both flanks having been driven back. Its stand has been picked out by the Official History of the War as 'among the historic episodes of the War'.

So reduced were all three battalions that on 22nd May 1915 orders were issued for their temporary amalgamation, the strength of the amalgamated unit being about 900, nearly two-thirds of whom came from the 2nd Battalion. This unit, after re-equipping and a little rest, joined the 84th Brigade in the St. Eloi sector on 11th June, and remained with it until the end of July, when the 2nd Battalion resumed separate formation and rejoined the Fourth Division, which had now moved to the new front on the Somme, recently taken over

