



Redcoats Review

World War 1 Battlefield Tour of the Society's Friends commemorating service to their country of the Officers and Soldiers of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and the Wiltshire Regiment

Redcoats Society Battlefield Tour

10 -14 September 2018

Last year it was decided to put together a Battlefield Tour to the Western Front, concentrating on the actions of the Royal Berkshire Regiment and the Wiltshire Regiment. The aim of this exercise was to raise the profile of the Society. On Monday the 10th September a group of 14 members assembled at Brock Barracks in Reading where we met our tour guide Andy Steele. Andy is a retired Police officer who now runs and organises Battlefield tours *[His father was in the Royal Berks Regt at Dunkirk and who was later commissioned into the 4th/4th Gurkhas and fought with them in Burma along side the 2nd Battalion Royal Berks Regt in the 19th [Dagger Division]. The members taking part included members of the Minty family, Norman with his partner Audrey and his sister, Vera and her husband Franklin. Norman and Vera were in for a surprise on the second day of the tour*

All aspects of the trip were arranged by Andy which included an in depth reconnaissance earlier in the year covering the Regiments's actions.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Introduction.....	1
Itinerary.....	2
Menin Gate.....	3
Reutel	4
Leipzig Redoubt.....	5
Marriolles	6
Birrs Road.....	6
Ovillers.....	7
Minty Farm Cemetery.....	7
Lochnagar Crater.....	8
The Last Supper.....	9

The Tour took place over five days, visited, and had presentations at :-

FLUERBAIX - Christmas Truce 1914 - 2nd Wilts, where we were able to hear the recordings made by the BBC in the 1960's of Lieutenant Colonel Shepherd and WO 1 (RSM) Wilkins recalling their experiences as a Lieutenant and Sgt on 25th December 1914

FREMICOURT - Captain HAYWARDS VC action - 1 Wilts and listening to the citation for his VC unfold over the likely ground he won his award.

LEIPZIG REDOUBT - Attacks by 1 Wilts 1916 so we covered the ground from an original photograph of the battalion crossing the Start Line

BIRRS ROAD CEMETERY - Visit Captain ACKROYD VCs grave - 6th R Berks Regt. In this site we also saw the recently installed headstone for John Kipling, Rudyard Kipling only son.

ANTONS FARM & HYDE PARK [R BERKS] CEMETERY - Story of Lt POULTON PALMER

1st/4th R Berks. Poulton Palmer was a renowned rugby international and on the day of our visit his grave was marked by an enormous wreath from a local Belgian Rugby Club.

OVILLERS - The attacks of the 2nd and 5th Battalion Royal Berk Regt - 1st and 3rd July 1916.

3rd July 1916. Mac had to get this one in as we had a cross country tab of about a kilometre and a half. Very considerate for the ladies in the party.

REUTEL - The stand of the 2nd Wilts Regt 1914. Fascinating to see the ground where a battalion, that three months previously had been on garrison duties in Gibraltar held up 7 enemy Regiments before eventually being surrounded.

LOOS - The attacks of our Regiment - 1915 - Including the TURNER VC action. Covered the ground where battalions from both Regiment were involved.

MARROLLIES - The 1st R Berks 1st major action on the retreat from Mons. Whilst the bridge over the canal has been replaced we could see the pile of the original bridge and follow the withdrawal route.

MEREICOURT STATION - Cemetery visit - 8th Bn R Berks 33 recruits killed by a

Shell. Very poignant story unfurled in the station forecourt followed by a visit to the cemetery, nearly all of the soldiers were 18 year olds'

LOCHNAGAR CRATER [LA BOSSILLE] - where we heard of the attack of the 6th Wilts [Through the eyes of Cpl Bealing MM]

Plus personal visits for Alistair TURTLE at POZIERES [Sgt MEISTER - 6th Somerset Light Infantry] and Pte BARTHOLEMEW, 1st Bn, Wilts Regt, KIA at BELLEWAARDE WOOD on the Menin Road, plus the Menin Gate where he is listed as missing. Plus many other relevant regimental locations.



On the first night of the trip the group attended the ceremony at the Menin Gate. Here we see our tour guide Andy Steel briefing Nigel Walker and Alistair Turtle who were about to lay wreaths on behalf of our two Regiments.

Michael Cornwell reciting the exhortation at the Menin Gate ceremony wearing not only his own medals, but those of his forebears. *‘They shall grow not old ...’*





The group receiving a briefing about the stand of the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment at Reutel, October, 1914. This was an action in which the battalion was all but wiped out. This location is where the Germans assaulted the battalion from. [Major Walker appears to be bird watching!!]



The view from the German positions towards the area held by 2 Wilts Regt in the Reutel action on the forward edge of Polygon Wood. The battalions came out of this action about a company strength.



Andy Steel holding a copy of the famous image of 1 Wilts attacking at Leipzig Redoubt, 1916 [One of very few images taken of live attacks]. In the background is the slope they were attacking up as shown in the image, and the wooded area was the German position known as 'Leipzig Redoubt' which they took and defended against attacks of the Prussian Guards.



Norman Minty in Leipzig Redoubt after laying a Wiltshire Regiment wreath. In 1916 this area was a honeycomb of trenches which the Wiltshires had to fight their way into, and then hold.



The group received a briefing about the 1st R Berks action at Marrol-lies which was the first major action at the start of the retreat from Mons, 1914. The graves are all Royal Berkshire soldiers who fell in the action including Captain Shott, the 1st Officer from the battalion to be killed.



The group at Birrs Cross Roads Cemetery visiting the grave of Captain Ackroyd VC, MC, the Medical Officer of the 6th Battalion Royal Berks Regt. [He only ever served with the 6th battalion, which he described at one point as *'my beloved battalion'*]



The attack of the 2nd Bn, Royal Berks Regt at Ovillers, 1st July 1916. The plinth shows the location of Ulswater Trench which the battalion attacked from. The story of the battalion was told through the eyes of an Audio recording by Captain Hanbury-Sparrow, and a Battalion Runner, Private Angier who was subsequently killed in the action [Research carried out by Friends



A surprise visit to MINTY FARM CEMETERY which we established was named by a Wiltshire Battalion in the early days of the war when the battalion garrisoned the farm. We believe it was named after a Battalion soldier by the name of MINTY [Could be a relation of Norman Minty - watch this space]



The Lochnagar Crater which was attacked by the 6th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment on the 3rd July, 1916. Many soldiers from different battalions of our Regiments are commemorated around this crater

The bottom of the Crater taken shortly after the action. The group were told the story of the action through the eyes of Corporal Bealing MM. He recounted how he managed to get on the forward edge of the crater with a Pte Roy Moxham. As they did this they saw Roy's brother Alfred appear on the opposite side of the crater where he was shot witnessed by his brother. He fell to the bottom of the crater. The image left shows the original wooden grave marker for Alfred. This was later lost and he is listed on the missing memorial at Thiepval. He remains at the bottom of the crater



BUDDING SUBSCRIBERS?

Anyone who has a particular topic that they would like to have included or a story that they wish to recount please get in touch with either Mac or me.

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The group's final lunch where Nigel Walker made a small presentation to our tour guide Andy for what was agreed by all as being a first class trip.

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