

CHAPTER FIVE

Identity, Discipline and Combat Effectiveness 1917-18

Introduction

This chapter investigates the increasing dilution of local representation amongst the ranks of 1/7th King's, together with the events and steps taken throughout 1917 and 1918 which helped to diminish its significance. It also assesses whether this had any impact on morale through a study of the disciplinary record of the Battalion and through further analysis of the combat record, at Ypres, the Lys and in the Hundred Days. The record of the Battalion on the Somme demonstrated a growing understanding and awareness of the important elements of an attack on the German trenches, an understanding that was further tested in the Salient the following year. The subsequent success in the defence of Givenchy and the ability to adapt to the new warfare of the Final Advance suggests that they, and other Territorial Force units, were able to learn effectively through the course of the War. This chapter sees the culmination of this second major strand to the thesis focusing on the good battlefield performance of a territorial unit.

From 1917 onwards the morale of the unit was under attack from various quarters. The effects of the Military Service Acts had meant that new drafts to the colours were conscripts with little or no direct link with the unit to which they were assigned, unlike the volunteers to the Pals and county territorial regiments in 1914 and 1915. Thus, local identity within the army unit was liable to deteriorate and if identity was the key to good morale, this too would be affected. At the same time, the longevity of the War was questioned from within and without the War Front as disillusionment threatened the War effort. Bourne pointed to the early months of 1917 on the Home Front and the winter of 1917-18 on the battle front, as being periods when morale was particularly low.¹ To some extent this can be measured by the disciplinary record of the unit concerned.

Even with the new drafts of men (reinforcements under the conscription legislation) as has already been seen, Battalion strengths were never as high as they had been in the summer of 1916 and this added further pressure on tired and exhausted men whose units were to be rearranged in early 1918. However, the successful defence of Givenchy in the spring of 1918 and the subsequent march from France into Belgium and Germany in the autumn, were driven by the effectiveness of the combat units. A

¹ Bourne *Britain and the Great War* pp. 209 and 223

significant element in this success lay in the tactical skills and persistence of the Commanding Officer, Jeudwine. The role of the CO has already been identified as another important element of troops' morale and, as well as his tactical strengths, Jeudwine continued to develop and maintain the local identity and significance of his West Lancashire Division, despite dilution and reorganisation. His success in this was best seen after the stand at Givenchy. The impact of Givenchy on the sense of community identity in the Battalion and at Home mirrored the earlier engagement at Festubert, the significance of which is further examined in the final chapter.

Dilution in the ranks and the preservation of local identity

There remained throughout the War a very significant number of local men amongst the ranks of the 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment. Even with official attempts to encourage and maintain a sense of local identity within the Division and within Battalions, these would have had little effect had it not been for this matter of numbers. Unusually, especially for a Territorial Battalion, 1/7th King's remained predominantly a unit founded in Bootle, Southport and the surrounding area. Even those who transferred into the Battalion were predominantly from Lancashire, so limiting the extent of dilution in regional identity for the unit. This feature continued against the backdrop of the impact of the Military Service Acts and the introduction of conscription from 1916, which removed the volunteers' opportunity to elect the unit with which they served.

The evidence of recruiting reports in the local press indicated that when the 1/7th Battalion left for France in March 1915 it was mainly made up of local men. Before Festubert there had been few casualties and numbers were at the optimum. After the battle, the fighting strength was reduced to 639.² There were more casualties in the summer and, as highlighted in the previous chapter, in early August 1915 the Battalion was detached for training as a Pioneer Battalion. However, ranks were filled by a draft of 164 men arriving on 9th August 1915, with a further 76 coming on 7th September.³ In early January 1917, 550 reinforcements who had been training at Musketry School, swelled the ranks of all three Brigades.⁴ The only other significant

² WO 95/1352 6th Brigade War Diary 23rd May 1915

³ WO95/1360 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 9th August and 7th September 1915

⁴ WO 95/2909 55th Division War Diary AQMG Branch January 1917

draft of men to the Battalion came in early 1918 when 202 joined from sister Battalions as a result of the reorganisation of the Army.⁵

The full extent of the dilution of the Battalion can be established by examining the details presented in *Soldiers Died*.⁶ The analysis below is based on the 960 Other Ranks listed in *Soldiers Died*. Over the course of the War, 70% of the men killed were from the Merseyside area, including 55% coming from the specific recruiting bases of Bootle, Southport, Crosby, and so on. A further 16% had enlisted in Lancashire. Table Eight p.236 and Graph One p.236 show the numbers of local men killed over the course of the War. The first figure relates to men whose residence or place of enlistment was Southport, Bootle, Crosby, Formby, Waterloo or Birkdale. The second figure includes men who enlisted in Liverpool. Thus, in 1915, the Battalion's fatalities were all from the Liverpool area with nearly 90% of these men coming from the specific recruiting area of the Battalion, though this had dropped to just over a quarter in 1918. In 1918, only 26% were specifically local, but considerable numbers remained, with 45% in total from Merseyside and 45% from the rest of Lancashire. As deaths increased in 1917 and 1918, the ratio of deaths from the local area fell. Less local numbers being killed despite the overall increase in deaths indicating that there were less men from the area left in the Battalion to be killed. However, the figure shows that there was still a significant percentage of men from the region. These figures compare favourably with those provided by McCartney for 6th and 10th Liverpool Battalions.⁷

The notion of a Battalion which had a solid identification with its local community has been said to be a fallacy. Fuller felt that such identification, or 'demarcation' was thin from the start.⁸ However, it was possible that, even with a decreasing number of 'local' men, a Battalion could still retain this allegiance on the basis of tradition and the 'cultural seniority' of original members. The Irish or Scottish Battalions from

⁵ WO 95/2910 55th Division War Diary A&Q Branch January 1918

⁶ *Soldiers Died* pp.48-58; Beckett used the source for similar purposes in 'The Territorial Force' p.147 There are other caveats which must be placed on these statistics, including the fact that the list in *Soldiers Died* covered all three Line Battalions indiscriminately. While the numbers who died in 3/7th were very small as the Battalion did not leave England as a fighting unit, 2/7th was a fully-fledged Battalion within the 2nd Line West Lancashire Territorial Division – 57th. They entered the War in June 1917 and should be recognised in relation to deaths during the last eighteen months of the War.

⁷ McCartney "The 1/6th and 1/10th Battalions of the King's (Liverpool) Regiment in the period of the First World War" p.371

⁸ Fuller *Troop morale and popular culture* p.58

Liverpool, Tyneside and London were the most obvious examples, retaining a strong regional or ethnic identity despite the influx of men from many other parts of the country. A similar situation, creating a Lancashire identity, was created in 7th Battalion, something also found in other Liverpool Battalions.⁹

It is possible to establish the source of regimental drafts. For instance, the transfers arising from the reorganisation of 1918 saw some of those from the first line Liverpool Battalions being amalgamated with their second lines and others drafted to 1/5th, 1/6th and 1/7th Battalions. The Battalion War Diary noted specifically 137 Other Ranks and five Officers transferred from the Liverpool Irish (8th Battalion).¹⁰ Another large group came from the Manchester Regiment. This is clear from the numbers recorded in *Soldiers Died* and the dates when they started being killed. There were not high numbers of men joining the 7th Battalion from alien units except for this large draft from Manchester, mainly Tameside, whose timing matches the dates for new drafts in August and September 1915, recorded in the 1/7th Battalion War Diary.¹¹

Against this background another element introduced to engender cohesion within the Division was the trench magazine, *Sub Rosa*. Fuller believed trench magazines were an important element of unit cohesion and some were produced on a monthly basis, although the 55th Division only had two editions – June 1917 and June 1918.¹² This may have been because that need did not exist to the same extent as some other units, perhaps due to the success of other factors contributing to unit cohesion explored in the previous chapter. The evidence of the ‘Lancashire’ togetherness demonstrates that the reason cannot have been that there was no divisional loyalty to work with in the first place. It is possible that magazines at Battalion level were more relevant to the troops and that these two issues were simply secondary efforts to maintain morale designed to bolster the more widespread aspects such as football, entertainment and red rose badges. However, the existence of such magazines in other Units of the Division is unknown. Although there was an editorial note in the inaugural edition to the effect that all ranks were represented in

⁹ McCartney “The 1/6th and 1/10th Battalions of the King’s (Liverpool) Regiment in the period of the First World War” p.81

¹⁰ Wyrall *The History of the King’s Regiment (Liverpool)* p.608; WO95/2927 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 31st January 1918

¹¹ WO95/1360 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 9th August and 7th September 1915

¹² Fuller *Troop morale and popular culture* p.4.; IWM MS/E/S 851 *Sub Rosa* June 1917 and June 1918

contributions, and there were caricature cartoons of the General Staff, the inclusion of lists of gallantry awards, the number of contributions apparently from officers, and the use of the official rose motif, demonstrate that the magazine had unofficial sanction at the highest level. The Latin title – *Sub Rosa* – certainly implied that it was initiated from amongst the officer class.

The timing of these publications may give the clue to their main purpose of lifting morale at particularly difficult moments. The first edition, in June 1917, had a number of cynical articles, including a mock intelligence report compiled by A. Nobon, Captain, and General Strafe, and a sardonic report of an MP's visit to the Line. A Platoon Commander's instructions included points to check when doing the rounds which used accent and dialect to draw particular attention to the class distinction between officer and man: 'Are all my rifles charged with "Five i' th' tin box and wun i' th' funnel"?' and 'Where are my listening pests?' The friendly disregard of officers, War policy and politicians demonstrated that the magazine had a relatively relaxed attitude towards the usual sensibilities.

The 1918 version had less of the cynical contributions, and the clause stating that it was the 'work entirely of serving soldiers' went on to say that not all contributions had been printed, some being 'deemed unsuitable.' A facetious collection of patrol reports was submitted by such typical patrolmen as Horatio Bottomley, G.K.Chesterton, George Robey and G.B. Shaw, the latter who was purported to have reported: 'It was a bloody battle (but not my blood).'

Amongst the poetic contributions in 1918 were two from Major Blumberg, 1/7th King's, including 'Wipers', reproduced in the appendix p.242. While he was a senior officer from Southport, Blumberg's poem used the language and dialect of the men in the ranks.¹³ It may not be a piece for literary acclaim but it may have been more appealing than perhaps some others written by officers about the War. It also demonstrates that the magazine itself was aimed at the readership amongst the other ranks.

The most heartfelt comment lay in the witty (and, as it turned out, accurate) report in the 1917 edition: 'the war will certainly end before 1930. This is official'.

¹³ Compare with Private Peet's note after Festubert and the relevance of dialect to social identity – Joyce *Visions of the People* p.279

Fuller found that many trench magazines only ran to five or less editions, so it may be that there is nothing untoward in only having two. However, both were published in June. In June 1917 it had been several months since the Division had been in a direct attack. Not only had there been time to work on a publication but also the assault at Ypres on 31st July, was looming. Perhaps this was an opportunity to give another boost to the morale and unity of the Division before that attack. The content was distinctly Lancastrian. The edition in June 1918 came after a difficult winter, followed by the German Spring Offensive. The magazine in June was an opportunity to boost morale again after the very successful, but costly, stand at Givenchy in April. It came out too far in advance of the Division's Advance a few months hence, but the halting of the German Offensive and crucial battles on other areas of the Front, were signs of a turning tide. Again, Divisional command needed to put out another subtle message of loyalty and commitment, emphasising its Lancashire focus.

The red rose of Lancashire, which appeared on the front of *Sub Rosa*, was an emblem noted by the Major-General as 'an object of deepest reverence ... there was no more dreadful punishment ... than to order the individual to remove the Rose from his shoulders or the unit erase it from their transport'.¹⁴ When the booklet produced to celebrate the stand at Givenchy in April 1918 had an early version of the logo, Jeudwine was incensed, noting on his copy 'This is not the correct badge'.¹⁵ In theory, every officer and man had the badge on both shoulders and it was painted on every item of transport and artillery. The rose had been adopted as the motif during 1916, however the motto, 'We win or die', was adopted in 1917, coming from a poem by Lieutenant L.G. Wall, A Battery 275 1st West Lancashire Brigade, who was killed on 9th June 1917:

'When Princes fought for England's Crown
The house that won the most renown
And trod the sullen Yorkist down
Was Lancaster

Her blood red emblem, stricken sore
Yet steeped her pallid foe in gore,
Still stands for England ever more
And Lancaster

¹⁴ 356 FIF/57 A history of the Rose Jeudwine MSS

¹⁵ IWM Ref. 72/82/1 Jeudwine MSS Imperial War Museum

Now England's blood like water flows,
Full many a lusty German knows
We win or die who wear the Rose
Of Lancaster'¹⁶

The numbers of local men in the 1/7th Battalion clearly did decline during the War but this 'local' link was never broken. It is very clear that the Battalion remained predominantly a Lancastrian one, even if the Merseyside element fell below 50%. As with the study of the Leeds Territorials, where Morris found that despite losing high numbers of local men, the 'local spirit' of the Battalions remained, the maintenance of this social cohesion and *esprit de corps* was also prevalent in 1/7th King's.¹⁷ A great deal of this was due to the activities of the Division, bolstered by the publication of the trench magazine. While evidence of the local connection is more limited in 1917, the reaction to the defence of Givenchy in 1918, examined below, does demonstrate the importance of the local identity of the unit for its morale. The study, below, of the disciplinary record of the Battalion gives an indication of the consistency of the Battalion's *esprit de corps*.

Discipline matters

A unit's disciplinary record was an indicator of morale and thus also related to its combat effectiveness. The record of 7th King's appears to have been a good one with relatively few cases overall, although there is a recognisable difference between their time in the Regular Divisions in 1915 and the impact of Major-General Jeudwine. Jeudwine was especially known for his emphasis on training and discipline, and there is evidence of increased attention to disciplinary matters once the Battalion joined the 55th Division in 1916.¹⁸ However, it also seems apparent that the efforts of the Battalion and its Colonel, Marriott, within the Division, had first to overcome the memory of a rout at Loos in September 1915. Difficulties with discipline have been highlighted in 1917. Beckett summarised that 'military crime invariably rose after heavy casualties', noting particular problems following Passchendaele. He also noted that despite the notoriously difficult winter of 1917/18, an analysis of Fifth Army

¹⁶ 356 FIF/57 'A history of the Rose' Jeudwine MSS; IWM Ref.72/82/1 Jeudwine MSS
Imperial War Museum

¹⁷ Morris "The Leeds Rifles" p.993

¹⁸ Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* pp.81-83

records showed 'little sign of any serious morale problems' and an examination, below, of discipline in the 7th King's Battalion's time in Fifth Army confirms this.¹⁹

During the whole War Courts Martial heard 141 cases from 7th King's, constituting 124 individuals (a number of men were tried on more than one occasion). This was 0.1% of all cases recorded in the Field General Courts Martial records. These results are presented in Tables Eleven p.240 and Twelve and Graph Five p.241. The only consistent comparison of discipline that can be carried out is in terms of death sentences. An analysis of all units by Oram indicated that the King's Liverpool Regiment as a whole had 62 death sentences passed; twenty-two in the first four Regular Battalions, twenty-six in the Territorials (5th - 10th Battalions) and fourteen in the New Army and Service Battalions.²⁰ This indicates that discipline amongst Territorials was not noticeably worse than amongst Regulars and would imply a cohesive unit committed to comrades and the cause.

Of the death sentences, six were for men in the 7th Battalions, representing 23% of all the Liverpool Territorials sentenced - the same as 9th Battalion, but less than 8th (eleven). The 10th (Scottish) were the only one of the six Territorial Battalions to have no-one sentenced to death.²¹ Only six of the Liverpool Regiment's sentences were carried out with two Regulars, two Territorials (from the Liverpool Irish) and two New Army men being shot.²² Six executions out of the Regiment's total 62 sentences corresponds with the overall ratio of executions during the War being 10% of the 3,080 sentences.²³ Another two men from 7th King's are not amongst the official court records but were reported as absentees being sought by the Military Police.²⁴ Their fate is unknown.²⁵

¹⁹ Beckett *The Great War 1914 – 1918* pp.221, 222

²⁰ Oram *Death sentences passed by military courts*

²¹ WO213/4-27 Field General Courts Martial Registers 1915 - 1919

²² Putkowski and Sykes *Shot at dawn* pp. 286 – 291: These men were executed on 16th July and 2nd November 1916. Two other men from 55th Division were executed, one also on 16th July, the other, 25th October 1916.

²³ Putkowski and Sykes *Shot at dawn* p.11

²⁴ WO154/8 List of Absentees up to 8th December 1916 reported to the Provost Marshal GHQ in the War Diary of Assistant Provost Marshal IX Corps; List of Absentees up to 30th June 1917

²⁵ The six were Privates Bolton (2/7th King's, November 1918), Braithwaite (July 1915), Halsall (July 1916), Hilton (July 1915), Robson (April 1917) and Tolley (September 1918), although Oram stated that, with the exception of Bolton, they were in the Isle of Man Battalion in Salonika. Robson was clearly not in Salonika, in any Battalion, as he appeared on the

The large majority of other disciplinary cases in the Battalion involved Privates. There is no reliable indication of the soldiers' social backgrounds but there is some limited evidence of the ethnicity of the men involved. In their studies on executions Putkowski and Sykes have shown that northern English units suffered disproportionately.²⁶ Oram has drawn out the latent trends and fears showing that there were racial and other considerations involved. An indication of this may be seen in the fact that the Irish 8th Battalion had more men sentenced to death than any of the other Liverpool Battalions. Conversely, the Liverpool Scottish had none at all. Oram was clear that it was the Irish who were seen as the 'threat' to military order.²⁷ It is possible to make a crude assessment of the ethnic origin of those charged from their surnames. On this basis, maybe up to thirty-eight (30%) of the 124 cases recorded could be men of Scottish, Welsh or Irish descent. Compared with the earlier assessment of names listed in *Soldiers Died*, that 10% of the Battalion were Celtic, this much higher proportion of men with apparently immigrant roots who were charged would tend to support Oram's conclusions. However, there is no evidence that the transfer of men from the Liverpool Irish in January 1918 created a significant change in the disciplinary record of 1/7th King's.

As shown in Table Twelve p.241 and Graph Five p.241, there was an average of just over one case per month in 1915, whereas this more than doubled each year for the rest of the War.²⁸ Apart from two men sentenced to death for sleeping at their post and a Private tried for desertion in December, the cases were largely low level

List of Absentees in the Western Front section, not in the sections on other theatres. Nor is there any mention in the Courts Martial records of the trial being in Salonika. Oram himself refers to the trials of Braithwaite, Hilton and Tolley being in France and Flanders. Halsall is recorded as being tried at Bretencourt. The source of Oram's misunderstanding appears to be that the Isle of Man Battalion in the Liverpool Regiment, which derived from the Volunteer battalions of the pre-1908 reforms, was styled as 7th (Isle of Man) Volunteer Battalion. According to James it formed a service company which was attached to 16th King's in March 1915 and then transferred to 3rd Cheshire Regiment in October of that year as 1st Manx (Service) Company. The Company became 'A' Company of 2nd Cheshire's and joined them in Salonika on 12th January 1916.

Sources: Oram *Death Sentences passed by military courts* p.107 inter alia;
Frederick, J.B.M. (compiler) *Lineage book of British land forces 1660-1978* Microform Academic Publishers Wakefield 1984; Brown 'The King's Regiment (Liverpool) – Liverpool's Volunteers and Territorials and their Shako, Helmet and Cap Badges' pp. 23-7;
James, Brig. E.A. (compiler) *Historical records of British Infantry Regiments in the Great War 1914-1918* Samson Books London 1976

²⁶ Putkowski and Sykes *Shot at dawn* p.23

²⁷ Oram *Worthless men* pp.60-73, 116

²⁸ Not all cases appear to have been recorded: Critchley claimed to have spent '10 days in jankers in the cookhouse' for keeping a Uhlan horse after shooting the troopers when out on a patrol with some Regulars in the summer of 1915, but there is no record in the

misdemeanours, usually drunkenness.²⁹ There does not appear to be any link between these serious 'crimes' and a particular event.³⁰

If the individuals' behaviour indicated a Battalion of good discipline, one incident relating to the whole Battalion damaged that gloss to some extent. In November 1915 Major Paul Hemelryk, acting Colonel of the Battalion, was sent home in unusual circumstances, and this coincided with a long leave of absence for Colonel Potter, resulting in Captain Marriott being put in command of the Battalion. Writing in a letter to his father dated 25th October 1915 Marriot recounted that

the poor old battalion had a severe trial the other night which had a rather unfortunate sequel. It was a misty night, chaos in the front line when you could not state definitely if the trench was ours or the Bosch... sudden outburst of bombing near a large body of men. The men were already overstrung and half a dozen got out of hand. A report and request for names has been made but none are forthcoming and two days later on adverse reports were sent in. There was not much about the Battalion as a whole and the General said the Officer's conduct was splendid³¹

The letter referred to the 'last fighting' and in a letter at the end of September he had written: 'We have been forward again since my last and things have happened which unfortunately I am not allowed to speak about.'³² Marriot later inserted these paragraphs into his text in the letter of 25th October. The chronology of correspondence clearly places the incident in question during the battle of Loos. There is a note made by the cataloguer of the collection in Liddell's Archive to the effect that the CO was sacked and sent home.³³

This was a conclusion corroborated by a further reference in Marriott's correspondence where he referred to 'the unfortunate affair of the night attack on the Battalion leading to the CO's sacking.'³⁴ Certainly around this time, Potter appears to have disappeared but this seems linked either to an injury – Potter was in a list of

registers

²⁹ WO 213/4 and WO 213/6 Field General Courts Martial Registers 1915

³⁰ WO 95/1360 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary May, June, July, November, December 1915

³¹ Marriott correspondence 25th October 1915

³² Marriott correspondence 28th September 1915

³³ Marriott correspondence 30th October 1915

³⁴ Marriott correspondence undated [25th - 30th October 1915]

casualties of 25th September which Marriott recounted later in his letters,³⁵ - or to personal problems: Marriott wrote: 'the CO is quite fit but his business and father are bad and I think he gets special leave tomorrow.'³⁶ On 1st November 1915, Marriott wrote: 'The CO has had his marching orders.. await actual instructions when I shall take over,' and this appears to refer to Potter because a subsequent letter records that Hemelryk and Stott were candidates for the promotion awarded to Marriott.³⁷

This was a confused and confusing episode. It is clear that Hemelryk departed in bad favour as he appeared in the Army List as CO of 3/7th Battalion at home.³⁸ Marriott referred to it on a number of occasions in later letters: '...the authorities have forgotten or forgiven the incident which led to Hemelryk's departure, but I have found it many times a millstone round the neck'; 'I know Division is pleased as they sent 2 bottles of whisky, 1 of Port and a tin of Egyptian cigars. This, compared with the reception after Loos under Hemelryk shows we are alright.'³⁹

In the absence of service records for either Marriot or Hemelryk, little more is known of the affair. There were no references in War Diaries at Battalion, Brigade, Division, Corps or Army level.⁴⁰ It is only possible to assume the date of the incident based on Marriott's letters as there is no obvious reference in the Battalion War Diary.⁴¹ Nor was there any noticeable disciplinary action taken against men of the Battalion, at this juncture.⁴² Marriott was gazetted in December 1915.⁴³ After he returned to

³⁵ Marriott correspondence 4th November 1915

³⁶ Marriott correspondence 6th October 1915

³⁷ Marriott correspondence 1st November 1915 and 5th December 1915

³⁸ *Army List* January 1916

³⁹ Marriott correspondence 19th June and 14th August 1916 (referring to 8th August action)

⁴⁰ WO 95/1360 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary ; WO 95/1343 5th Brigade War Diary; WO 95/1286 2nd Division War Diary; WO 95/592 I Corps War Diary; WO 95/158 and 159 1st Army War Diary

⁴¹ '24th September - Battalion in trenches and several working parties detailed to various Battalions of the Brigade. 25th September - The Battalion took part in the operations of the 5th Brigade covering the left flank of the Brigade and finding several working parties...The Battalion was withdrawn to Billets in ESSARS late at night. 26th September - ...spent 'cleaning up' 27th September - ...relieved the Glasgow Highlanders in the trenches.28th September - Battalion were relieved at 8.20 from trenches by 1/1st Ghurkas. Returned to ESSARS late at night.' - WO 95/1360 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary

⁴² WO 213/5 and 6 Field General Courts Martial Registers August - December 1915. The only other scrap of evidence about this incident **could** relate to Second Lieutenant Herbert Watson's relinquishing of his commission, the subject of his own court hearing back home in Southport. Watson's own evidence was reported as follows: 'Defendant gave evidence in support, and added that he was between nine and ten months in France and was at the

England in late summer, 1916, it was Colonel Potter who returned to take over command, apparently signifying that there was no slur against him at least.⁴⁴

While writers have observed that territorial discipline tightened up during the War, the new Divisional General, Jeudwine, was particularly keen.⁴⁵ Baynes has listed good discipline as an element of morale but Jeudwine said just the opposite, that morale was an element of good discipline.⁴⁶ The transformation in discipline brought by Jeudwine was felt by the Battalion Commanders. Marriott wrote home in March 1916 saying: 'The old Territorial ideas have gone by the board. We are Regulars pure and simple. Last time we were in rest I had 31 men tied to the wheel at the same time'.⁴⁷ By March 1916 only thirty-one cases had gone through the courts in the whole of the previous twelve months. It is possible that Marriott's exaggeration was based on fact, possibly the half dozen men sentenced under s.11 on 28th February.⁴⁸ However, not all cases were processed through the system by Battalion Officers, though a crime meriting Field Punishment Number One should have been significant enough to have done so.⁴⁹

On another occasion ten men were charged with 'disobedience' and were also sentenced in June to 90 days Field Punishment Number One.⁵⁰ This may have been a particularly significant and co-ordinated act of disobedience, or the punishment

battle of Loos. In consequence of some action when the men were being brought out of a farmyard he got a moment's (sic) order to go to England' – *Southport Guardian* 23rd September 1916 p.8. The report could be read as linking the two events, although this was probably unlikely as it took until May 1916 to issue the order, and Marriot was so fulsome in praising Watson despite the breach of discipline for which he was sent home.

⁴³ *London Gazette* 7th December 1915

⁴⁴ Potter rejoined sometime in late August/early September 1916, and was wounded on 25th (again!) at Gueudecourt. He was back in the Battalion on 6th November 1916: WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary

⁴⁵ *Sheffield Leadership in the trenches* p.27 -28

⁴⁶ Baynes *Morale* pp. 253 -254; 356 FIF/13 55th Divisional School of Instruction Syllabus 27th February 1917 Jeudwine MSS

⁴⁷ Marriott correspondence to his father 17th March 1916. According to the War Diary WO 95/2927 the last time the Battalion was 'at rest' was in Beaumetz between 8th and 14th March. Prior to that they had been in the trenches and support areas since 15th February.

⁴⁸ WO 213/7 and 8 Field General Courts Martial Registers January – March 1916

⁴⁹ Field Punishment No.1 consisted of putting the man in fetters or handcuffs, or both, and attaching him to a fixed object for a period of up to two hours every day. He could not spend more than three out of four consecutive days cuffed or tied to the object. He was also subjected to labour, the like of which could be similar to hard labour. Field Punishment No.2 consisted of being handcuffed or fettered and labouring, but the soldier was spared the attachment to a fixed object: *Manual of Military Law* HMSO London 1914

may have been just to set an example in advance of the raids and fighting described in the previous chapter. Tilsley noted that 'a man who is crucified to a wheel before all his comrades suffers a degrading, demoralising punishment. His battalion is often kept in the line longer than the recognised spell'.⁵¹ His storyteller, Bradshaw, had been in doubt about the existence of Field Punishment No.1 until he had seen 'a Lancashire of the old Festubert days tied to a limber wheel near the cookhouse. Men passed by indifferent and spiritless; the Aussies would have cut him free very quickly'.⁵²

There is no record in the War Diary of this event. June was spent in 'Usual trench routine', working parties, classes and instruction around Wailly. May 1916 had been much the same, including a visit by Jeudwine on Sunday 28th, who had congratulated the Battalion on its 'excellent turnout and appearance.'⁵³ Appearance was another of Jeudwine's concerns, emphasising the need for smartness and discipline in saluting.⁵⁴ There were several references to being congratulated on its appearance in the Battalion War Diary – 6th April 1916 by the Corps Commander and 28th May by Jeudwine for example – although Marriott wrote that 'the general is alternatively cursing or praising us. He likes our vigorous methods but says we are dirty when in billets. He is right to an extent as we recruit from the slums of Bootle.'⁵⁵

A study of the cases around Third Ypres in 1917 proves interesting as it coincides with a period generally reckoned to have been of lower morale and tests the assertion that discipline was tightened in advance of a 'Big Push'.⁵⁶ The incidence of convictions in the Battalion increased during 1917 suggesting either an increase in poor discipline or a tightening up of discipline. Two cases of cowardice occurred in July, while the Battalion was supplying working parties on the outskirts of Ypres and there were three other cases, for being drunk and an offence against an inhabitant,

⁵⁰ WO213/9 Field General Courts Martial Register April – June 1916

⁵¹ Tilsley *Other ranks* p. 180

⁵² *ibid.* p.124

⁵³ WO95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary June 1916

⁵⁴ WO 95/2899 55th Division War Diary Training Notes circulated by Cochrane 7th January 1916; 356 FIF/13 55th Divisional School of Instruction Syllabus 27th February 1917 Jeudwine MSS Liverpool Record Office; various references in Jeudwine's notebooks to saluting (356 FIF/38) march discipline (356 FIF/40) and uniform (356 FIF/41)

⁵⁵ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 6th April and 28th May 1916; Marriott correspondence 20th April 1916

⁵⁶ Oram *Death sentences passed by the military courts* p.14

for striking a senior officer, and one under s.40 of the Army Act.⁵⁷ This considerably higher number in July could have been related to the imminent attack on 31st at Ypres.

These two cases of cowardice were the only ones recorded in 7th King's. Table Eleven p.240 shows the nature of offences alleged against men during the hostilities. It is interesting to note that charges under s.11 were prevalent in 1916, but for the rest of the War the miscellaneous charge under s.40, for offences prejudicial to order and discipline, was more common.⁵⁸ Sleeping or quitting a post did not occur in the Battalion after 1916. However, desertion was much more prevalent in 1917 and 1918 indicating a growing disillusionment and demoralisation in the War. The extent of self-inflicted wounds is not clear, as a Fifth Army circular reminded officers that men to be tried for self-wounding should usually be charged under s.40 and not s.18(2).⁵⁹ In the Fifth Army as whole, the number of convictions for self-inflicted wounds under s.40 from June to September 1917 was 101 out of 1,771 individual classified charges - 5.7%.⁶⁰ As the cases of Barker and McFarlane in July were 'Cowardice s.40', it is possible that these were incidences of self-inflicted wounds.⁶¹

Comparative information for the period the 55th Division spent in Fifth Army between June and September 1917 exists in the detailed conviction statistics extant in the

⁵⁷ WO213/16 and 20 Field General Courts Martial Registers July 1917 – February 1918

⁵⁸ Section 11 of the Army Act stated that it was an offence to disobey garrison or general orders. Concealment of venereal disease could be dealt with under this order. Disobeying a specific order or command relating to a military duty came under Section 9, which, if associated with wilful defiance, could be punishable by death. Section 40 was a useful catch-all which declared it an offence to carry out 'any act, conduct, disorder, or neglect to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.' Neglect needed to be wilful and the court had to be satisfied that the act was prejudicial to both good order and military discipline. Sometimes Section 20 - permitting the escape of persons in custody – was used in association with this Section. Charges coming close to desertion or abandonment which were not sufficient to be catered for under Sections 4 and 5, would be covered by Section 40. The other commonly used Section was 19 – drunkenness: *Manual of Military Law War Office - HMSO London 1914*. The relevant legislation was the annual (from 1913) amendments to *The Army Act, 44 & 45 VICT. c.58*

⁵⁹ WO95/525 Fifth Army War Diary Adjutant and Quarter Master General Circular 1902 15th June 1917

⁶⁰ WO95/525 Fifth Army War Diary Adjutant and Quarter Master General. The percentages rose more or less month by month from June to July, August and September 1917. The figures were: 5.3%, 4.9%, 5.7% and 6.8% respectively

⁶¹ Thomas Hope recounted the organisation of a mutiny in a Lancashire Battalion which received agreement from men in his own Battalion, against a likely execution in October 1917. A man was charged with sleeping at his post and then deserting but as the death sentence was commuted to ten years in prison the threat abated: Hope *The winding road unfolds* pp.191 - 212

War Diary,⁶² and it will be recalled from the previous chapter that much of this time was spent in the Front Line areas. During this period the Division's rate of convictions varied from 1% to 2% of that Army's convictions, and in July it was at its highest with fourteen convictions (2%). Five of these were from 1/7th King's Liverpool. In October 57th (West Lancashire 2nd Line) Division joined Fifth Army more or less as the 1st Line Division left, and of six convictions in that Division, only one was from 2/7th King's Battalion. The statistics demonstrate that both Divisions had low levels of indiscipline compared to other units in Fifth Army at that time. As the winter passed into 1918 there were six cases of serious indiscipline between December and February, including desertion, breaking out and under s.40, and a series of isolated convictions for breaking out, desertion and disobedience went on into April, resulting in eight men being given Field Punishment Number One.⁶³ Although still relatively few in number, this corroborates the period being one of low morale.

There were further charges in 1918, including two desertions in May, two in June, one in August and two more in September.⁶⁴ Critchley recalled an incident when he had struck an officer which seems to have occurred during the stand at Givenchy, or possibly soon afterwards. It does not appear in official records but he recorded it in his interview:

I was on duty in an advance post and no-one came out in daytime ... this officer had only just come out to France ... and he broke our rule of not being disturbed [during the day]. When he came into our sap I let fly at him ... I got 90 days field punishment number one ... I was lucky because I could have been shot but at my trial I had my Adjutant to act for me in my defence. When the officer was asked could he identify me as the one who hit him, he shuffled and said I think so ... but the Court knew I'd done it so I got field punishment no. 1 but spared my life. All pay was stopped and I lost two stripes - but when the punishment was over I got them back ... All my lads had been asked and they all said they did not see me and they told the Court no-one was allowed in the sap in the daytime - my defence by the Adjutant was that I may have thought he was a German.⁶⁵

The statistical evidence shows that Jeudwine's approach to discipline had an impact, as the number of cases rose dramatically within the Battalion once it had joined 55th Division. However, the incidence remained low. There is some evidence that charges

⁶² WO95/525 Fifth Army War Diary Adjutant and Quarter Master General

⁶³ WO213/19-21 Field General Courts Martial Registers November 1917 – April 1918

⁶⁴ WO213/22-26 Field General Courts Martial Registers April 1918 – September 1918

⁶⁵ Critchley: A precise date for this event is not available but it appears to have happened around the time of the German attack in April 1918 and before the British advance began

increased in advance of an attack, for instance in July 1917. This reflects the officers' need to instil some resolve and demonstrate to the men the futility of indiscipline. The more consistent rumbling number of convictions for desertion and breaking out which continued from late 1917 through 1918, could be an indication of low morale amongst the men, rather than over enthusiastic officers making a point. As an indication of morale, both arguments provide a background for the examination of combat effectiveness at Ypres, the Lys and in the Hundred Days, which follows.

Third Battle of Ypres – 'our finest hour'⁶⁶

Further indication of the continued relationship between Home and Front and the Unit's combat effectiveness being fed by the morale inspired by that symbiotic relationship can be understood through a study of Third Ypres. This demonstrates that in spite of an apparent rise in discipline problems which could be an indication of a dip in morale, the links between Home and Battalion were maintained through newspapers and letters home. Third Ypres also demonstrates a further step in the tactical development of the Battalion in particular, and the Territorial Force in general.

As Southport prepared to celebrate the third anniversary of the Declaration of War, in August 1917, the editor of the *Southport Guardian* was forced to admit the enemy was 'still firmly entrenched' though in 'moral isolation'. Despite the hope that 1916-17 would be 'the year of restoration' he was enthusiastic in reporting that, having taken Vimy Ridge and the Messines Ridge, the Allies 'are now completing the capture of the Ypres salient'. In the same edition, on other pages, there were lists of the wounded being brought to Southport, fresh from the new assault on 31st July.⁶⁷ The community could read the words of encouragement but would be in no doubt of the sacrifice when they saw the flood of men to the local hospitals.

Having spent much of the spring, as Wyrall wryly noted, 'in trenches, usual routine',⁶⁸ 1/7th King's Liverpools were in action again at Ypres on 31st July. Later, despite fighting over much the same ground again in September, the Battalion achieved some tactical success. The wider strategy failed and lessons were learnt regarding still more flexibility in attack and reliance on local leadership decisions. These factors

in the late summer.

⁶⁶ Critchley

⁶⁷ *Southport Guardian* 4th August 1917 pp 4 and 6

formed key parts of the Divisional training in later 1917 and 1918, in both offence and defence.

The attack known later as Third Ypres, began at 3.50am 31st July, Zero Hour,⁶⁹ and 1/7th King's were in action until the Division was withdrawn early on 4th August. The 55th Division was now in XIX Corps, Fifth Army and attacked eastwards from Ypres, with 166th and 165th Brigades leading the assault. Their first objective was the enemy's front line trench system, or Blue Line, and then the rear battalions would leapfrog and capture the second line system, the Black Line (Stuzpunkt Line). Then 164th Brigade would pass through the lines to take the third line system, or Green Line (Gheluvelt - Langemarck Line).⁷⁰

What actually happened on 31st July 1917, until it started to rain again, has been described as relatively successful by historians,⁷¹ and this appeared to be supported by evidence relating to 1/7th King's operations.

The 165th Brigade captured the enemy's front line trench system.⁷² Companies of 1/7th King's attacked and held Square Farm and Plum Farm, German strongpoints, while B Company captured the Pommern Redoubt. Demonstrating the local decision making, Captain Heaton of B Company also took command of A and D Companies as men came into the Pommern Redoubt to consolidate the position.⁷³

Despite some advances as far as the Green Line, the Black Line was the farthest any Brigade held by the end of the day and XIX Corps were informed of the situation and 'the suggestion [was] made that supporting troops might be sent up'.⁷⁴ This was in response to Jeudwine's concerns for his position:

Troops very much mixed up. Communicated this to BGGs [Brigadier-General] in case CC [Corps Commander] thought it advisable to bring a Bde up behind. Told him all my troops engaged, nothing in reserve,

⁶⁸ Wyrall *The History of the King's Regiment* Vol II p.425

⁶⁹ WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report of operations 29th July - 4th August

⁷⁰ WO 95/2903 55th Division War Diary Operations Order 23rd July 1917

⁷¹ Neillands, R *The Great War Generals on the Western Front 1914-1918* Robinson Publishing Ltd. London 1999 p.392; Lee "The British Divisions at Third Ypres" pp. 216-7; Steel, N and Hart, P *Passchendaele: The sacrificial ground* Cassel & Co London 2000 pp.135-6

⁷² WO95/2925 165th Brigade War Diary 31st July 1917

⁷³ Wyrall *The History of the King's Regiment* Vol.III pp. 499 - 500

⁷⁴ WO 95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report on Operations July 29th to August 4th 1917

except 2 Bns in Blue line - but uncertain whether one of these had not been moved up. Told BGGs this on telephone at 5.35.⁷⁵

Corps did indeed order a renewed attack but with the onset of rain Jeudwine and some of his staff visited the Brigade headquarters and at 11pm he informed Corps that it would be impossible for the Division to attack again. He was so concerned at the state of his troops that he withdrew 164th Brigade entirely and demanded that trains were used to take the men away.⁷⁶

The 165th Brigade War Diary entry for the following day is worth transcribing in full:

Dawn found the Brigade holding tenaciously on to the dearly bought BLACK LINE. Throughout the whole night heavy rain had fallen and the terrain, already in a much churned up condition from the heavy shell fire, was now nothing but slush and mud. The men had spent the night standing in what were once trenches - now knee deep in mud and water - and although soaked through, tired out and hungry, they cheerfully stood the heavy enemy shelling.⁷⁷

However, another day of being shelled under these conditions in the trenches made the situation untenable. A report at 8.50am on 2nd August from 165th Brigade stated that 'the men were completely exhausted - some unable to stand.' The relief was delayed as another counter-attack was launched and it was not until 4am on 4th August that 36th Division took command of the sector and all Lancashire men and equipment had pulled back.

Critchley called 31st July the Battalion's 'finest hour',⁷⁸ and when the Brigadier-General's praise for the King's Battalions was published, the *Southport Guardian* heralded the 'Praise for Local Troops' which would be read with 'considerable pride and interest by Southport people'.⁷⁹ Letters home were more censored than they had been in 1915, omitting mention of the units and names of comrades, but they still gave the local community a graphic idea of the fighting. Private Baxendale wrote from hospital in Boulogne:

One of my best pals has been wounded in the legs, and another one killed. I don't know how several other chums have fared. You will have

⁷⁵ 356 FIF 40 Jeudwine personal notebook [31st July 1917] Jeudwine MSS

⁷⁶ WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report on Operations July 29th to August 4th 1917. Surprisingly, Tilsley made barely any mention of the action at Pilckem Ridge

⁷⁷ WO95/2925 165th Brigade War Diary 1st August 1917

⁷⁸ Critchley

⁷⁹ *Southport Guardian* 1st September 1917 p.6

read about the latest push, so it's no use telling you anything about it, except that I was there, I hope for the last time in that particular spot.⁸⁰

Private Willie Miller was in the first wave and had 'cleared two lots of German trenches and we were going strong for the village of --- when I got shot in the left leg'.⁸¹ Jack Farrington, promoted to Corporal but now acting Sergeant, won a Military Medal for his action on 31st July.

We had 2,000 yards to go before we reached our objective. When we were half-way we had to halt on account of our barrage, and make the best cover we could get [the officer had been killed] so I took charge of the platoon. Up to then we had six men missing. I got the remainder together, ready for the next advance, and I am glad to say we drove the Germans back and gained the position ... I captured between 30 and 40 prisoners.⁸²

It was estimated that thirty enemy officers and 600 men were captured by the Division, while it suffered 166 officer casualties and 3,384 men between 30th July and 4th August 1917.⁸³

Casualties had been heavy from early on 31st July and reserve stretcher bearers had to be sent for. By 1st August over 400 men from other units were being used as stretcher bearers for the Division under terrible conditions –

[Rain] rendered carrying a very difficult matter, for the trenches became impassable ... and carrying in the open, which had in most cases to be resorted to, was slow by reason of the bearers having to pick their way between shell-holes. Towards the end it was found that 8 bearers had to be used for each stretcher.⁸⁴

Miller described the conditions the wounded were left in: 'We were lying in shell holes on Wednesday night full of water and we had to cross a river after Fritz had blown up a bridge.'⁸⁵ Between midnight 30th/31st July and midnight on 3rd/4th August, 1,150 stretcher cases were dealt with at the main Corps Dressing Station.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ *Southport Guardian* 18th August 1917 p.6

⁸¹ *Southport Visiter* 25th August 1917 p.8

⁸² *Southport Guardian* 5th September 1917 p.4: Despite his promotion, Farrington was still as keen on souvenir-hunting as he had been at Festubert – 'they were very glad to give themselves up, they shook me by the hand ... I was rather disappointed for they only gave me a couple of their caps for souvenirs.'

⁸³ Coop *The story of the 55th Division* p.54

⁸⁴ WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report on operations July 29th to August 4th Section IX - Medical Service

⁸⁵ *Southport Visiter* 25th August 1917 p.8

⁸⁶ WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report on operations July 29th to August 4th Section

The Divisional Report noted a number of specific areas where problems had arisen, not least because, 'as expected the Tanks were late'. Despite the heavy shelling, 'concrete dugouts were quite undamaged' and while communications had worked reasonably well, once damaged the reliance on runners was undermined by the rain which slowed that method of communication down. The Report noted that as 'the state of the ground rendered efficient work of Tanks impossible' it would have been better to use them to carry ammunition, wire and tools, thus potentially saving carrying parties and other casualties.⁸⁷

In approaching the second phase of the battle, GHQ attempted to reinvigorate their tactics. Experience had shown the importance of following close on the barrage; the training on leapfrogging to bring in fresh battalions to relieve the attacking battalions and the need to prepare for defence against counter-attack as soon as an objective was secured were the main elements of what was a successful assault.⁸⁸ Also important were the multi-layered barrages and role of the gunners in dealing with any enemy counter-attack.

Still with Fifth Army, 55th Division found itself attacking virtually the same objectives on 20th September as it had on 31st July. Now in combination with Second Army, the attack was to take the Gheluvelt Plateau and the ridge from Zonnebeke to Gravenstafel.⁸⁹ The bombardment began at 3 am on 20th September 1917, and at zero hour – another dawn assault at 5.40am - 1/7th Battalion, King's Liverpool, attacked from a line of shell holes and disused trenches. Casualties came from the start from enemy machine guns in Kaynorth, Iberian Farm and Hill 35, despite being close under the barrage as it crept forward. No Man's Land was, according to Wyrall, a mass of shell holes full of water and 'viscous mud which clung to the boots of the attackers'.⁹⁰ With assistance from the South African Brigade both Kaynorth and Iberian Farm – in effect a string of reinforced concrete dug-outs - were captured by 1/7th King's around 6.45am. As the barrage had moved on, this was done without immediate artillery support.⁹¹

IX - Medical Service

⁸⁷ WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary Report on Operations July 29th to August 4th 1917

⁸⁸ Lee "The British Divisions at Third Ypres" p.219

⁸⁹ Neillands *The Great War Generals* pp. 395 - 396

⁹⁰ Wyrall *The History of the King's Regiment* Vol.III p.515

⁹¹ WO95/2900 55th Division War Diary Report on operations east of Ypres 19th – 24th September 1917

The positions were held and strong points constructed to prepare for the enemy's attack but despite heavy bombardment there was no counter-attack and the Battalion was relieved by 2/5th South Staffordshires at 1.30am on 23rd September. Sixty-one men were killed, 166 were wounded, twelve had gone missing and three later died of wounds, while five Officers died and four were wounded.⁹² Griffith referred to the attack as 'a convincing resumption of the assault' and noted particularly the lower figures of casualties.⁹³ The overall casualties in the Division were 127 officers and 2,603 men.⁹⁴

When Private Baxendale had given scant details of the earlier battle because he assumed local people would have read about it already he was only partially correct. Those reports had been direct from GHQ and with little detail. However, this new attack was reported in much more depth in the local newspapers, using not only GHQ reports but also a number of letters from the Front. Official reports gave 'prominence to the West Lancashire troops, which in conjunction with London troops, repulsed the enemy's infantry with great loss.' Details, based on Press Association reports, were highlighted in the editorials, noting the capture of Iberian Farm, Gallipoli and the Pommern Redoubt by the local troops of the King's Liverpools.⁹⁵ The release of such detail indicated Haig's need to enthuse the Home civilian and political population with good news in the light of mounting casualties and the prolonged attack, both of which adversely affected the resources available to him.

More details were given by local troops, writing home about the Menin Road battle: 'the old regiment has won new laurels. The fighting was far above anything we have struck lately for fierceness'; 'We just sailed in with the bayonet and a nice selection of bombs'; 'Hottest of all ... was the rush through the rough cart-track ... named Scotland Road ... shells were dropping by the dozen and mud went splashing up into the sky in showers'; 'The men fought splendidly ... I have never seen greater steadiness under trying conditions. There were many deeds of heroism ... In one instance a Liverpool docker rushed a German machine gun post on his own, killed the team and turned the gun on the enemy.'⁹⁶

⁹² WO95/2927 1/7th King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 30th September 1917

⁹³ Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* p.88

⁹⁴ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.64

⁹⁵ *Southport Guardian* 26th September 1917 pp 6 and 8

⁹⁶ *Southport Visiter* 25th September 1917 p.6

As at Festubert, the men were able to give a flavour of the battle for the home population, although the numbers of letters were fewer and details of the battle less so than in 1915. The newspapers continued to carry plenty of pictures of the dead and wounded with short biographies or letters from their company officer. Invariably these were printed alongside the reports of Military Tribunals in a deliberate juxtaposition of the community's commitment to the War.

The success in key aspects of the assault has been overshadowed by the subsequent deterioration of the Passchendaele campaign which has contradicted a positive analysis, and suggested that there had been a failure to learn from experience.⁹⁷ In contrast, Lee specifically pointed to the importance of Divisional and Brigade levels in pursuing new tactics in training, in preparation and in the troops' morale which was maintained through widespread loyalty to their unit, rather than a change at the top.⁹⁸ Troop morale was crucially important because these new tactics were not always as seamless or as successful as planned. Anything to enhance that morale was therefore important. Key elements such as more careful reconnaissance; the marking of platoon flanks by notice boards and tape to try and maintain better contact at ground level; and the three Infantry Brigade commanders in the Division being in a joint headquarters to ensure close liaison with artillery command, were deemed the most successful.⁹⁹

Unfortunately 'liaison between Brigade Headquarters and the [artillery] Batteries was bad'. Communications were also a problem - visual, signal and running communications were better, when there was fine weather but all the wires which ran through Bridge House had been cut by shelling.¹⁰⁰ Jeudwine noted other difficulties such as rifle grenadiers having no grenades, officers without maps, men not knowing where their company or platoon headquarters were, lack of tools, flares, and sandbags.¹⁰¹ These appeared to be earlier problems repeating themselves.

⁹⁷ Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* p.88/9; Beckett, IFW "Operational Command: The Plans and the Conduct of Battle" in *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* p. 111; Neillands *The Great War Generals* pp. 397-400

⁹⁸ Lee "British Divisions at Third Ypres" pp. 223 -6

⁹⁹ WO95/2900 55th Division War Diary Report on recent operations East of Ypres, Sep.19th - Sep.24th 1917

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ 356 FIF 40 HS Jeudwine personal notebook [September 1917] Jeudwine MSS

Following the Passchendaele Campaign, Second Army Headquarters issued detailed notes to Divisions to draw from their experiences at Ypres and to further develop the learning process begun on the Somme. They acknowledged that new tactics were required as objectives, such as definite lines of trenches, had disappeared. There needed to be new ways of providing flexibility in attack, in terms of both the lines or waves attacking and of more local initiative and leadership. A key area was the liaison and junction between units. Rifle, Lewis gun and rifle grenades were becoming more important and it was argued bombing squads should be re-trained as riflemen. Some of this thinking was developed later in 1918 as platoons became the focus of attention for an all-arms attack.

All units had to be prepared for the inevitable counter-attack which had to be repulsed and followed up. Key to this was the need for training of junior commanders in developing the initiative to act in unexpected situations and in reorganising the men to prepare for counter-attacks. Training was also important in the use of a compass; in the value of using models and replicas; in enemy equipment, so that it could be turned on the Germans and used against them; in the particular problems of the Salient 'pill boxes'; and on more open warfare with junior NCOs and Privates needing to understand powers of leadership and initiative in the event of the loss of their officers.¹⁰²

The significance of learning and adapting new tactics of attack would only become apparent the following summer. As 1917 turned to winter and the new year, the important aspect of tactical development was to be one of defence.

The Battle of the Lys, April 1918

The defensive operation at Givenchy in the spring of 1918 was of strategic importance in stemming the German attack. It was also significant for it was founded on tactics developed and championed by Jeudwine and his Division which fell outside GHQ doctrine. It had particular significance for the men who fought it and for their local communities as it formed a significant part of the shared identity of the community which can be seen through the War and indeed after it. Its resonance will

¹⁰² WO95/2901 55th Division War Diary Notes from experiences gained by the Second Army during the recent Ypres fighting - [late 1917]

be seen in the analysis of the postwar commitment to the area through charitable and memorable works.

The German attack, known as the Battle of the Lys, has only recently been studied in depth.¹⁰³ Known most for the failings of the Portuguese contingent, it has received little scrutiny, although the maintenance of the Line was seen at the time as being of crucial importance. This analysis of the role of the West Lancashire Territorials and particularly 1/7th King's in that defence, is preceded by an examination of Jeudwine's personal involvement in developing the defensive tactics of the BEF in advance of the German Offensive of spring 1918, demonstrating the Major-General's importance within the BEF and the consequent esteem in which the Division was held.

Festubert had been a formative experience for the 1/7th King's. It had been their first action undertaken when they were new to the real War, part of a Regular Division, and consisted of a strong local contingent. After almost exactly three years they were back in the Bethune sector in spring 1918, with Horne again in charge.¹⁰⁴ This time many of the local old guard had gone, but those who remained were now part of a Territorial Division which, as shown in chapter four, prided itself on its local identity. They had learned their lessons in attack since 1915, but had been castigated for the German breakthrough in the counter-attack after Cambrai in December 1917. As they had not seen any action since that attack, by April 1918 they were fresher than most of the other Divisions in the line, their 'physical and spiritual stamina was high'; but they had been reorganised and the numbers of Battalions reduced.¹⁰⁵ As has been seen, dilution meant reduced numbers of local men and a reliance on smaller optimum fighting strengths, though the sense of local identity still pervaded all that they did. The study of the 55th Division defence in this part of the chapter complements the appraisal of the whole Lys Battle carried out by Blades, and highlights the flaws in Samuels' analysis of the BEF defensive system.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Blades "The Battles of the Lys"

¹⁰⁴ Horne commanded the Second Division in 1915, when Haking led the First, and First Army in 1918

¹⁰⁵ CAB 45/123 Lt. Colonel R. Gardner MC, commander 1/4th King's Own, 164th Brigade, to Edmonds 8th August 1931; in January and February 1918 1/8th (164th Brigade) and 2/8th King's were amalgamated in 171st Brigade; 1/9th (165th Brigade) and 2/9th King's were amalgamated in 172nd Brigade; and 1/5th Loyal North Lancashires (166th Brigade) in 170th Brigade, 57th West Lancashire (Second Line) Division: Becke *Order of Battle* Part 2A pp. 136-7

A Military Court of Enquiry into the German counter-attack at Cambrai on 30th November 1917, found that Jeudwine's Division – 166th Brigade and 2/5th South Lancashire Battalion in particular – had been surprised by the enemy, that warnings had gone unheeded, that there was a lack of both in depth defence and a strategy for a defensive battle.¹⁰⁷ Both Jeudwine and his Corps Commander, General Snow, argued that the opinion of the Court was 'absurd and contrary not only to the truth but to the evidence'.¹⁰⁸ In correspondence throughout 1925 and 1926 they were very clear that it had been Ivor Maxse behind the Court's findings, referring to his 'personal advertisement' as 'very poisonous'.¹⁰⁹ Both Neillands' and Terraine's appraisals of the attack supported Snow's position,¹¹⁰ who 'exonerated all ranks of 55th Division of unpreparedness'.¹¹¹ By 1927, however, any damage to the morale of the men in the Front Line of the Division had already been done.

The Court's comments about a lack of defensive doctrine at Villers-Guislain were seriously undermined as within days of that German attack Jeudwine was heading a Committee of Generals to prepare new defensive procedures. Great merit was seen in the German systems and Jeudwine, Sir James Edmonds – then a staff officer in 4th Division – and Brigadier-General MacMullen of XIX Corps Staff were appointed by Haig to prepare some recommendations on how the British could develop a similar 'elastic' defence system.¹¹² There was considerable mystery about this Committee as it received scant attention in the *Official History*, despite Edmonds' involvement, and Blades noted that no copy of the report has survived.¹¹³ The Committee's proposals

¹⁰⁶ Samuels *Doctrine and Dogma and Command or Control?*

¹⁰⁷ 356/FIF/50 Report of the Court of Enquiry, Jeudwine MSS

¹⁰⁸ 356/FIF/50 and 51 Jeudwine and Snow correspondence, Jeudwine MSS

¹⁰⁹ 356/FIF/50 and 356/FIF/51 Jeudwine to Snow, Jeudwine MSS. Major-General Sir Ivor Maxse, erstwhile GOC of the 18th Division, was Commander of XVIII Corps. Neillands wrote that he set an example in tactical training (*The Great War Generals* p.310) and Griffith agreed that he was significant in developing tactics. He was later Inspector General of Training. According to Griffith he was most keen on platoon organisation and an advocate of the 'blobs' system of defence, which was to fail in March 1918. His ideas were more successful in attack mode. (Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front* pp. 95-100) It is quite apparent that Jeudwine, as another leading advocate of training and tactics, was a rival, and this correspondence with General Snow suggests that the Court's findings were a personal attack by Maxse on Jeudwine's Division, while using it to promote his own opinions.

¹¹⁰ Neillands *The Great War Generals* pp.432 – 7; Terraine *Douglas Haig*

¹¹¹ 356/FIF/49 Snow to Jeudwine, Jeudwine MSS

¹¹² Samuels *Command or Control?* p.203. Strangely, there is no mention of the Committee or Edmonds' role in it in Green's study *Writing the Great War*

¹¹³ *Official History* 1918 Vol.1 fn p.42; Wynne GC 'The Legacy' in *Army Quarterly* Vol. XXXVII

represented an adaptation of the German defensive doctrines, gleaned from captured documents and experience. GHQ rejected the proposals and instead agreed a different adaptation of the German doctrine, apparently first propounded amongst Rawlinson's Second Army.¹¹⁴

The Jeurwine Committee's proposals were based on a recognition that the BEF could not adapt in full to the German doctrine of defence as quickly and as easily as was necessary. They therefore proposed an amended version that the outpost line be thinly held, but that it be a line. When the attack came, the attackers would be held up here, but defenders would then fall back to the main line of resistance.¹¹⁵ By having a thin outpost line sufficient men were left further back to staunch the attack and to form counter-attacks. If possible, ordered and planned withdrawal to the main resistance line was a significant part of the defensive system.

Edmonds did later acknowledge that the German system should have been adopted but that not only were time and labour lacking in advance of 21st March, there was also no real understanding by GHQ of the principles involved in defence in depth.¹¹⁶ Wynne and Samuels claimed that if this system had operated in March 1918 the Line would have broken.¹¹⁷ That may have been true, but it was never tested on 21st March. When it was tested on 9th April against XI Corps the reverse proved true.¹¹⁸

The attack on 9th April 1918 was at the point where the BEF could least afford to give ground, threatening the rail and distribution centre at Hazebrouck, the coalfields, the road to Dunkirk and the channel ports.¹¹⁹ This central part of the Line was held by a weakened IX Corps and XV Corps made up of re-formed or convalescing Divisions. The Portuguese 1st and 2nd Divisions sat to the north of the West

No.2 October 1939; Blades "The Battles of the Lys" p.42 . Even Samuels, who spent some time demolishing the Committee's credibility in *Doctrine and Dogma* only gave its title and membership in his later *Command or Control?*

¹¹⁴ Blades "The Battles of the Lys" p.43

¹¹⁵ Blades "The Battles of the Lys" p.42

¹¹⁶ Green *Writing the Great War* pp.162 - 163

¹¹⁷ Samuels *Command or Control?* p.207

¹¹⁸ Lieutenant-General de Lisle XIII Corps had followed the Committee's proposals and, coupled with the inherent strength of their Vimy Ridge position, the 56th Division defence against the German attack on 28th March was also successful – De Lisle, Sir B *Reminiscences of Sport and War* Eyre & Spottiswoode London 1939 p.p.162-5

¹¹⁹ Terraine *Douglas Haig* p.431

Lancashire Division, with 51st Highland Division completing XI Corps.¹²⁰ While Jeudwine's men were comparatively fresh, not having been involved in the earlier offensive, it was Jeudwine's resolve in sticking to his rejected defensive doctrine that was to prove effective.¹²¹

It is significant that Horne left the organisation of defence to his Corps commanders, noting only that without the strength to fight in depth they must concentrate the fight in the Forward Zone¹²² - where the 'blobs' were. However, at a strategic conference the previous day, Haking, his Divisional commanders, and Jeudwine, and his Brigade commanders, appear to have agreed a different defensive scheme, based on the Jeudwine Committee proposals.¹²³ One of Edmonds' later correspondents, General Green, cited Haking's 'strategical and tactical insight' as being crucial on 9th April 1918, as 'defensive measures were decided on, in place of the hitherto vague and uncertain policy'.¹²⁴ Correspondence between Jeudwine, Haking and Edmonds when compiling the *Official History* demonstrated that they 'had no truck' with the concept of a zonal defence in depth; in other words, neither the German system nor the GHQ version of it, but they used the version propounded by the Jeudwine Committee.¹²⁵

The Conference agreed that, because of the limited number of troops available, emphasis should be put on defending Givenchy, in order to maintain the support flank across the La Bassee Canal to Cuinchy. It was agreed that the only objective for the front line troops was to defend the front system. Givenchy defences were to be strengthened, a counter-attack from the Village Line prepared, protection for the Village Line to be improved and the main line of defence to be made as strong as possible. The Village Line was to be made 'a continuous line so that troops can pass along it'.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Pitt, B 1918 *The Last Act* Cassell London 1962 pp. 114-7

¹²¹ Blades "The Battles of the Lys" p.70

¹²² WO95/175 First Army War Diary General Staff Corps Commanders Conference 26th March 1918

¹²³ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Notes of Conference 25th March 1918

¹²⁴ CAB 45/123 Correspondence with Edmonds 7th January 1931

¹²⁵ CAB 45/123 Jeudwine copy letter to Edmonds 21st August 1931; Haking letter to Edmonds 25th August 1931. Given Jeudwine's shared involvement in the December Committee it is interesting that he made no reference to it to Edmonds in his correspondence on zonal defence.

¹²⁶ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Notes of Conference 25th March 1918

The southern sub-sector included a tunnel that had been constructed under Givenchy village with no forward line, thus the Line of Resistance for 164th Brigade was the Front Line – ‘a definite line not zone composed of independent strongpoints’.¹²⁷ This gave no real depth to the defence, but the local environment did not allow for it. For 165th Brigade in front of Festubert, the marshy and boggy ground was unsuitable for fortified positions other than for delaying the attack, thus for 1/7th King’s, their Line of Resistance was the Village Line, to which they could fall back from their outpost line.

Wynne and Samuels’ critiques do not address the shortage of men available to implement the German defence doctrine in full. Corps Commanders were clear that the back line of defences had to be held by other units: ‘If we have any idea of holding our front and holding our back system at the same time with our limited number of troops, we shall have insufficient to hold either and shall run the risk of being beaten piecemeal.’¹²⁸

The forty-two Officers and 946 men of 1/7th King’s Battalion had been in the trenches and outposts in front of Festubert since 31st March 1918.¹²⁹ Leave for the men had been stopped for over a week though Private Erlam Greaves was still hopeful of getting back to Formby on Thursday 4th April¹³⁰ but on the morning of 9th he lay, with the rest of 1/7th King’s, to the front of the central part of Festubert village. The 1/4th Loyals and 1/4th King’s Own held the line in front of Givenchy to the canal.¹³¹ Platoons were to hold the defended localities at all costs. They were wired for all-round defence, communication trenches were wired and wire ran in all directions to the Front to cramp the enemy’s movement.¹³² With this system of apron-fencing, tunnels and a mass of wire, extensive training in their own system was imperative in order to carry out any necessary counter-attacks. According to Colonel Crump, GOC 1/4th Loyals, it was this training policy which ‘bore fruit – a remarkable example of the

¹²⁷ CAB 45/123 Jeudwine copy letter to Edmonds 21st August 1918

¹²⁸ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Notes of Conference 25th March 1918

¹²⁹ WO95/2927 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 31st March – 8th April 1918; WO 95/2910 55th Division War Diary 31st March – 8th April 1918

¹³⁰ Letter from Private Erlam Greaves, A Company 1/7th Battalion, King’s Liverpool Regiment, to his father, 2nd April 1918. His hope was in vain for he was killed in the German bombardment on the first day of the offensive: Coles, private collection

¹³¹ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.p. 90-1

¹³² WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Notes on Recent Fighting No.7 German attack near Givenchy, issued 24th April 1918

value of taking the British soldier into your confidence and making him understand 'why' he was being ordered to do something'.¹³³ Samuels describes this system as simply a return to the old 'Thin Red Line', but there was more flexibility than that and he is incorrect in calling the system 'entirely passive'.¹³⁴ All the evidence points to Jeudwine constructing an 'offensive defence'.¹³⁵

Jeudwine demanded battle narratives after each engagement down to the lowest level and these provide a clear description of events. At 4.15am on the cold and misty morning of 9th April 1918 the Germans attacked the Allied Line with a severe bombardment which lasted for over two hours. The infantry attack began around 8.00am, with 1/5th King's being attacked shortly before 1/7th. At 9.51am Division reported the SOS in front of Festubert to Corps. By 10.30am the outpost line was lost.¹³⁶

The heavy mist or fog restricted visibility to about ten yards,¹³⁷ and when the assault came this added to the confusion. The front companies were overpowered, from the flank and the rear. However, 'the fierce and stubborn fighting of the platoons and companies in the front posts' had broken up and disorganised the attackers.¹³⁸ As the front posts were overpowered few men came back and the remainder were ordered by Company Commanders to fall back to the Village Line.¹³⁹

Casualties in the battle were high, and came predominantly from the initial bombardment and subsequent attack.¹⁴⁰ A number of officers were taken out of the battle, leaving men to organise themselves. Initiative at a local level was quite prevalent and Brind referred to the defence by 'the men in the strongpoints whom General Judy had trained ... to have confidence in themselves'.¹⁴¹ The confidence to

¹³³ CAB 45/122 Lieutenant Colonel Crump DSO to Edmonds 30th December 1931

¹³⁴ Samuels *Doctrine and dogma* p.115

¹³⁵ 356 FIF/14 Memoranda on training for defence, December 1917 - February 1918
Jeudwine MSS

¹³⁶ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Brief Narrative of Events 20th March to 30th April 1918

¹³⁷ WO95/2925 165th Brigade War Diary Narrative of Battle 9th - 15th April 1918 - Lieutenant T.A. Lyon O.C. 9 Platoon C Company

¹³⁸ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Brief Narrative of Events 20th March to 30th April 1918

¹³⁹ WO95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary Report of Colonel Potter 17th April 1918

¹⁴⁰ WO 95/2910 55th Division War Diary 9th April 1918

¹⁴¹ CAB 45/122 Correspondence in compiling the *Official History* : Major General JS Brind CB

show initiative was crucial to holding the Division's frontage. In B Company, Critchley was surprised to see an officer - 'up to then an Officer was so scarce I don't know where he came from ... Corporals and sergeants were the only persons in charge and made decisions.'¹⁴²

When it became necessary, then, the retirement was an orderly one:

Officers NCOs and men began to retire down the CT [communication trench] in a very orderly manner, each in turn, whenever possible, taking up the position on the side of the CT and covering the retreat of others. This was done so well that again no casualties occurred ... a further retreat was necessary, and again the CT was used where the retreat of the Company was done in a very magnificent manner, again each and all in turn covering each other ... At the end of the CT a final stand was made by Lieut. Wolcock and a few NCOs and men.¹⁴³

Strongholds changed hands often more than once but gradually the initiative was regained as Le Plantin, Windy Corner and others were recaptured.¹⁴⁴ During the battle all and sundry were being told off for fighting detail: 'Headquarters Details, including Cooks, spare Signallers, Pioneers, etc. had been ordered to take up a position...'.¹⁴⁵ Critchley said that once the Portuguese had retired and the enemy was behind them, 'every available man...transport, cooks and fellows that had soft jobs after being wounded' were called into the line.¹⁴⁶ Colonel Buckley, in describing the battle said 'the 7th Kings were doing heroic work...everybody was in it - RE's, Pioneers, cooks, bottlewashers and all.'¹⁴⁷ Brind understood that, unusually, 'it was an order in the Division that every man, servants, clerks, cooks etc. had to fire so many rounds over the top every month' in which case at least they would know what to do.¹⁴⁸

CMG DSO BGGs XI Corps to Edmonds 3rd January 1932

¹⁴² Critchley

¹⁴³ WO 95/2925 165th Brigade War Diary Narrative of battle 9th - 15th April 1918 - Sergeant D Lowes No.16 Platoon D Company

¹⁴⁴ Captain JW Cook MC won a bar to his Military Cross for leading the recapture of Le Plantin: Spalton private collection, citation in the *Times* 19th September 1918

¹⁴⁵ WO 95/2925 1/7th Battalion Kings Liverpool Regiment War Diary Report of Colonel Potter 17th April 1918

¹⁴⁶ Critchley

¹⁴⁷ CAB 45/179 Correspondence in compiling the *Official History*: Letter from Colonel Buckley, 5th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment to his brother, 20th April 1918 emphasising the precariousness of the situation by starting "Don't on any account let any of it get into print". The Official Historian duly obliged.

¹⁴⁸ CAB 45/122 Correspondence in compiling the *Official History*: Brind to Edmonds 3rd January 1932

The following day was relatively quiet for 1/7th King's but attacks continued elsewhere and there was more heavy shelling on 11th April. The Battalion was relieved two days later, after fifteen days in the line. The Division pulled out on 16th April to great accolade.¹⁴⁹ The Division was relieved by 1st Division, whose 1st Battalion Black Watch could not hold the Givenchy ridge against another German attack.¹⁵⁰

Jeudwine, perhaps naturally, reasoned that the success of the Division had been down to their adoption of his defensive scheme: 'the answer to the German tactics of infiltration, hitherto so successful, had been found'.¹⁵¹ Much of the evidence supports this assertion. Blades believed that the training, encouragement of initiative and good communications were also vital elements of the Division's defence.¹⁵² Sheffield called the defence 'stubborn'.¹⁵³ Eleventh Corps' analysis was that the German failure was due to the stubborn defence by the local platoons and the prompt and skilful counter-attacks which were made to their flanks. They concluded:

an enemy penetrating into gaps in our positions is very much at a disadvantage until he can widen the flanks of the gaps; if the defending troops strengthen the flanks of these gaps and hold on to their positions tenaciously, he is bound to be caught between two fires, and forced to surrender what he has gained.¹⁵⁴

The importance of the line to Haig was shown by his Special Order of the day famously issued on April 11th 1918 - 'Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.'¹⁵⁵

The stand at Givenchy-Festubert was a crucial one for the profile of the Division. In Haig's General Despatch following the battle he referred to the 55th Division's 'success of this most gallant defence, the importance of which it would be hard to over-estimate,' which he said, in reference to units like 1/7th Kings, ' was due in great

¹⁴⁹ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 165th Brigade Report of Colonel Potter

¹⁵⁰ Wauchope, A *A History of the Black Watch in the Great War 1914 -18* Medici Society London 1925-6 Vol.II pp.82-3

¹⁵¹ Jeudwine, H.S. "An Episode of the German Offensive of 1918 – The Lys Offensive of April 1918" Royal United Services Institute Journal Vol.73 No.491 1928 p.p.688-691

¹⁵² Blades "The battles of the Lys" p.73

¹⁵³ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.228

¹⁵⁴ WO 95/883 XI Corps War Diary Notes on Recent Fighting No.7 30th April 1918

¹⁵⁵ quoted in Terraine *Douglas Haig* p.433

measure to the courage and determination displayed by our advanced posts. These held out with the utmost resolution, though surrounded...'.¹⁵⁶ The Special Order was not issued just to the 55th Division, though readers of Coop's history, or the special publication issued by the Division, could be forgiven for thinking that it was. However, it was a significant element in boosting morale in the Division and strengthening community identity.

In what seems like a unique idea by the Divisional Commander, all men of the Division were issued with a booklet which included comments and references praising the work of the Division during the battle. This was a healthy boost to morale and confidence. Congratulations came from the Army Commanders, Haig, Plumer, Horne and Haking, but the list of other individuals and organisations demonstrates the significance of the local community links. Led by Lord Derby, there were congratulations also from the mayors of Blackpool, Preston and Liverpool, from GOC's of 1st, 42nd, 51st and 57th Divisions, the Liverpool Corn Trade Association, the Blackpool Branch of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors, Liverpool Branch of Comrades of the Great War, and many past and serving officers and commanders of 55th Divisional units.

Conan Doyle wrote 'it is the talk of England'; Lieutenant Colonel Duconge of 64th Infantry, French Army wrote: 'This Rose which met the Boche has made him feel its terrible thorns'. Despite the usual reporting not specifying which units were involved in particular battles, this local emphasis on 'Lancashire men' was repeated in the press reports, and these were quoted at length for the benefit of the men.

It was the magnificent stand of the 55th Lancashire Division at Givenchy which prevented what might have been a rather serious disaster' (the *Times* 12th April); the magnificent fighting qualities shown by the Lancashire territorials (*Daily Mirror* 13th April); the Lancashires of the 55th Division made such a great and gallant stand (*Daily Chronicle* 19th April); Every one who has a relative in that Division must be proud today. It was the Manchesters who originally took Givenchy, and it is again Lancashire men who are holding what Lancashire won (*Manchester Guardian* 20th April).¹⁵⁷

Both Formby and Litherland Councils made moves to have Haig's Order framed and hung in the Council offices. Nothing more was heard of this in Formby when the cost

¹⁵⁶ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.115

¹⁵⁷ "Givenchy-Festubert April 9th-16th 1918" booklet produced in the field - Imprimeries Reunies, Boulogne -sur-Mer June 1918

of framing – between £10 and £12 - was discovered.¹⁵⁸ Litherland agreed to hang the record in the Council Chamber and copies were sent out to local schools and organisations.¹⁵⁹ The success of the defence and the key role which the local Division, and particularly the local Battalion, had played in this test for the BEF would not be lost on the local community.

The stand at Givenchy was an important strategic success, built on the tactical nous of the Divisional General and the support and confidence shown in him by his Corps Commander. It was also built on the strengths and abilities of the men in this territorial unit, reaffirming the assertion that they were one of a limited number of more effective Divisions who could be relied upon in combat. Sheffield cited the importance of Jeudwine's training of the Division in the new methods of defence as paying off 'handsomely'. Sheffield, like Coop, referred specifically to the fighting of the outpost line, the counter-attacks and the initiative of local unit commanders down to platoon level.¹⁶⁰

This engagement also demonstrates, perhaps more than most, the importance of community links to enhancing and maintaining morale. The congratulations and desire to be linked with a successful action at the Front were equally key factors in motivating community support for the remaining months of the War. The action is a good demonstration of how morale and combat effectiveness are inextricably linked.

The Final Advance

The leading role played by 55th Division in its sector of the Final Advance shows the reliance and confidence it had built in Army Command. Although not the main focus of attacks the central area was nonetheless a key link in the Allied Line. Under General Birdwood they were the most experienced and senior Division in the new Fifth Army,¹⁶¹ joined in III Corps by the 74th Division, dismounted Yeomanry, recently returned from Palestine.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ UDFo 2/4/4 Formby Urban District Council Minutes 6th May and 2nd July 1918

¹⁵⁹ Litherland District Council Minutes Vol X 6th May 1918

¹⁶⁰ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* pp.228-9

¹⁶¹ Becke *Order of Battle* Part 2A and Part 3A New Army Divisions HMSO London 1938

¹⁶² Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* . p.218

Following the Spring Offensives, the BEF was further restructured and Battalions reorganised. Community identity had been firmly re-established at Home and in 1/7th King's, despite the reduction in the numbers of local men. Morale was boosted by Givenchy and the accolades which followed, although a handful of attempted desertions over the summer still indicated some problems. The Battle of Amiens, 8th August 1918, marked the turning point in the fortunes of the War, and was swiftly followed by attacks at Albert by Byng's Third Army, and by Rawlinson's 'new' Fourth to the south. At the end of August, Horne's First Army attacked around Arras.¹⁶³

During this final phase of the War, 55th Division were to advance 50 miles in the 80 days after they left the Givenchy-Festubert line.¹⁶⁴ The Division, and indeed the Allies as a whole, were able to do this by adapting a fuller understanding of what was required in terms of tactics. Bourne critically pointed out that none of these tactics were new.¹⁶⁵ This adoption of a weapons system, according to Sheffield, too, amounted to little more than using all available elements as part of an all-arms team.¹⁶⁶ Griffith showed that the use of creeping artillery barrage, scouts, improved signals and tanks all contributed to this new-found effectiveness. Particularly important was the attack front which was carried out in the 'blob' formations designed to allow the platoon to switch direction and tactics, leading with any of the four sections, as demanded.¹⁶⁷ This more mobile attack front was considerably different to the more structured assaults of the middle years of the War but evidence of this platoon-focus has already been seen in 1/7th Battalion at Ypres and Givenchy.

The restructuring of the battalion focused increased firepower in platoons, reducing the official fighting strength to 900. However, 1/7th King's was always at the lower end of the permissible range, rarely going above 800 during the summer and, once the Advance was underway, facing a gradual reduction in men from 795 at the end of August to 694 at the Armistice. The significance of the new warfare developing can be seen in the Division's guidelines on battalion organisation where the post of 'scout' at platoon HQ has been added to the table in the War Diary by hand.¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶³ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* pp. 242-243

¹⁶⁴ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.159

¹⁶⁵ Bourne *Britain and the Great War* p.98

¹⁶⁶ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* pp. 236-7

¹⁶⁷ Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* pp.95-8, 173

¹⁶⁸ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary Notes on Organisation of an Infantry Battalion c.October 1918

strategy of following up the enemy withdrawal was reliant on maintaining the logistics of battle – supplies, transport, munitions¹⁶⁹ - and the local emphasis was on improved cooperation with RE [Royal Engineers]. Much better planning and involvement of platoon, company and battalion commanders were also needed in order to fully understand that ‘in these days slinging mud about is a very necessary part of the fighting’.¹⁷⁰

Further, by developing a relatively limited focus for each attack and switching the focus of attack from one Army to another, the Line was able to advance successfully.¹⁷¹ Above all, the advance of the Line on all Fronts depended on the ability of each Army and each Division to adapt to these tactics. Griffith recognised this, referring specifically to the growing level of tactical skill amongst New Armies and Territorials, as essential for this success.¹⁷²

On 3rd September the enemy in front of 1/7th King’s started to withdraw and over the next two days the line was advanced to Chapelle St. Roch and Violaines.¹⁷³ As Sheffield notes, the relatively small scale operations by Fifth Army helped to force the Germans off the Lys battlefield by 6th September.¹⁷⁴ The progress was made by fighting patrols, co-ordinated by the three Brigades continually shifting from left, to right, to support, and no attempt was made to hold a continuous line.¹⁷⁵ Divisional instructions emphasised that obtaining information of the enemy’s intentions should be done with ‘the fewest number of men possible, and to follow up those with platoons acting boldly and with initiative.’ It was further stressed to all ranks that: ‘it is not necessary to advance in any definite line, but that each body of troops must push forward as far as it can ... without waiting for neighbouring bodies which may have been temporarily held up.’¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.247

¹⁷⁰ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary I Corps Notes on the Co-operation of Infantry and Engineers Nos. 468 (G) and 484 (G) 13th and 14th August 1918

¹⁷¹ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.251

¹⁷² Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* p.196

¹⁷³ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 3rd - 5th September 1918

¹⁷⁴ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.243

¹⁷⁵ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* pp. 128-9

¹⁷⁶ WO 95/2906 55th Division War Diary Instructions in the event of a withdrawal 1st

These attacks met considerable enemy resistance, often in hand-to-hand fighting, and some trenches were held by both sides at the same time.¹⁷⁷ The capture of Canteleux Trench gave a clear view to the La Bassee – Fromelles Line and boosted the men's morale.¹⁷⁸ The Outpost Line was strengthened and the more indiscriminate establishment of advanced posts was ended. Between the Outpost Lines and the Main Line of Resistance, patrols were constantly on the watch for enemy movement.¹⁷⁹

Across the Allied Front a co-ordinated series of attacks began in the south with a combined French-American assault in the Argonne on 26th September 1918.¹⁸⁰ The attack was joined on Sunday 29th by 1/7th King's with platoons in light fighting order, without haversacks, to enable them to move quickly and quietly into action.¹⁸¹ A hectic but successful day's fighting demonstrated the importance of the platoon as the focal point.¹⁸² The Outpost Zone had now deepened so much that the Main Line of Resistance was only lightly garrisoned and these troops were to be ready to move forward to retake the Outpost Line should that be lost to a hostile counter attack.¹⁸³

Sheffield acknowledges that the Germans were in a weakened position and that by late 1918, Allied numbers were overwhelming, but he maintains that it was the superior weapons system employed by the BEF that proved successful.¹⁸⁴ However, he does emphasise the significance of the psychological effects of the battles at the end of September and the crumbling of German morale.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, as the limited number of Divisions in Fifth Army could not sustain large-scale offensives against strongly held positions, III Corps advanced on a Front with 74th Division to the

September 1918

¹⁷⁷ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.129

¹⁷⁸ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.131; WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 18th September 1918

¹⁷⁹ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.133; WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 20th September 1918

¹⁸⁰ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.248

¹⁸¹ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary Operation Orders Lt.Col. Potter 28th September 1918

¹⁸² WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary Narrative of Events 29.9.18 Lt. Col. Potter 2nd October 1918; Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.257

¹⁸³ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary Agenda for Conference at DHQ 26th September 1918

¹⁸⁴ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* p.214

¹⁸⁵ Sheffield *Forgotten Victory* pp.251, 259 and 262

north and 55th to the south. Within 55th Division the advance would be in three groups – an all-arms Advanced Guard, a Main Body, and a Reserve. This was much the same as was already in place, with Outpost Battalions, the remainder of the two Brigades in the Line, and the Reserve Brigade. The key difference was to make the Advanced Guard an all-arms affair and to this end the Division was reorganised so that, as well as the infantry, the Brigade commander in the Advanced Guard would command a troop of mounted divisional men, artillery, RE, machine guns and ambulance personnel.¹⁸⁶

Decentralisation of command meant Divisional HQ now gave a Line as an objective for the Main Body to reach. Brigade commanders would decide how far the Advanced Guard should go in order to allow the Main Body to reach their objective. The Advanced Guard was to go beyond the Line which, when the Main Body reached it, would become the new Main Line of Resistance. In the case of 55th Division, astride the La Basse Canal, the Advanced Guard had to operate in two Brigades. The main functions of the Advanced Guard were reconnaissance, exploration, engagement with the enemy, and protection of troops in the rear. Jeudwine's key emphasis was on the need for careful organisation of platoons and sections under their officers and NCOs.¹⁸⁷

At first, the Advanced Guard with Battalions of 164th and 166th Brigades made good progress, covering five miles over 3rd and 4th October 1918 and meeting little resistance except damaged or booby-trapped dug outs and cratered roadways. However, with the Division on one side of the Haute Deule Canal, and the Germans on the other, the advance halted for ten days. Artillery was ranged against the Division and hostile fire continued until attempts to cross the Canal were made from 13th to 15th October, finally enabling the Division to cross on 16th October.¹⁸⁸

Instructions to the Advanced Guard stressed the need for commanders of Outpost Battalions to be able to see the commanders of his artillery, machine guns and mortar companies, as well as any reserve troops in the area. Company commanders were supposed to be able to maintain this contact and watch the action of platoons

¹⁸⁶ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary Agenda for Conference at DHQ 26th September 1918; Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* pp.136 - 137

¹⁸⁷ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary Notes on the Situation G.S. 1565 15th October 1918

¹⁸⁸ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* pp. 140-4

and, for the most effective adaptation to conditions, communications were vital.¹⁸⁹ A Fifth Army memo insisted that Corps commanders took a firmer grip on the situation and followed these principles. Army HQ was especially concerned that Battalion and Brigade commanders 'cannot command from headquarters and dug outs far in the rear'.¹⁹⁰ The message was re-emphasised by Jeudwine to his Brigadiers: 'a Battalion Commander whose troops are closely engaged with the enemy cannot possibly control the fight from behind a hill at 2,500 yards. He must be where he can see and give executive orders'. This was further demonstration of the decentralisation of command structures.¹⁹¹

A hastily typed addendum appeared on the War Diary carbon copy of this instruction: 'It is realized that the above remarks apply equally to Divisional Headquarters and it is for this reason that a forward Divisional Report centre is being established tomorrow.'¹⁹² It is not clear whether this was a note only for the benefit of the official record, although other evidence of Jeudwine's command (his diary notebooks for example) would suggest that he would carry it out in reality.

Considerable distance was made over the 2nd and 3rd October 1918, and again between 16th and 20th October when 1/7th King's was the Advanced Guard.¹⁹³ The Battalion War Diary recorded that one battery of eighteen pounders and two howitzers, four machine gun sections, one field company RE and specialist RE's were attached to the Battalion, demonstrating the level of all-arms co-operation down to Battalion level.¹⁹⁴ Seventh King's last significant engagement with the enemy occurred in a raid carried out on a wood west of Tournai, aimed at capturing prisoners to find out the enemy's intentions.¹⁹⁵

The Corps advanced on a twin divisional front, with 74th following 55th and the all-arms support, cyclists, horse, artillery, transport and train divided in half. A daily move for Divisional Headquarters meant 'cutting down on office furniture, and other

¹⁸⁹ WO95/2907 55th Division War Diary Notes on the Situation G.S. 1565 15th October 1918

¹⁹⁰ WO95/2907 55th Division War Diary Fifth Army G.S. 436/39 16th October 1918

¹⁹¹ WO95/2907 55th Division War Diary G.S. 1571 18th October 1918

¹⁹² *ibid*

¹⁹³ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary Stages of Advance: maps

¹⁹⁴ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment War Diary 18th October 1918

¹⁹⁵ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.150

baggage!’¹⁹⁶ On 9th November 1918, the Escaut river was bridged and 1/7th King’s, as Advanced Guard, pushed on east of Tournai to Beclers. By night on 10th the Battalion Outpost was at Ligne.¹⁹⁷ Orders for the immediate attack on Ath were issued for the 11th. The rest of 165th Brigade joined up with the Advanced Guard of the 1/7th King’s in the morning of the 11th November. To the south the attack was made by 166th Brigade, while 165th Brigade took the north of the town. Lancashire Fusiliers reached the town by clearing the enemy from the bridge early in the morning. The attacking troops were in position to launch the assault. The news of the end of hostilities came incredibly late. A conference of Brigade commanders met at 9.00am to settle details but at 9.05 a telephone call from Divisional HQ informed the Conference that hostilities were to end at 11.00am.¹⁹⁸ As Battalion Commander, Colonel Potter was told shortly after 10.00am. ‘After 11.00 hours the Bn. moved off to billets in Lanquesaint.’¹⁹⁹

Although Coop recorded that the Division travelled 50 miles in forty-four days he was referring to the furthest eastern point reached by the mobile force on the Bassilly-Thoricourt line.²⁰⁰ Griffith compiled a graph showing the relative progress of the five Armies placing the Fifth Army at the bottom of the list, but still having travelled over 60 miles since the first week of August.²⁰¹ Regardless of the precise mileage, the 55th Division was undoubtedly the leading partner in III Corps’ advance. The adaption of new tactics and changed circumstances came easily to Jeudwine and his troops were able to pursue the enemy effectively, reaching their objective of Ath on the very day that hostilities ceased.

For 1/7th King’s their success and involvement in the Advanced Guard role in summer and autumn 1918 and in local raids demonstrated that they were able to develop their experience of the previous four years and to maintain their momentum to good effect in the final days of the War. The Hundred Days marked the culmination of training, skills, tactical ability, discipline and morale for the Battalion and Division.

¹⁹⁶ WO 95/2907 55th Division War Diary III Corps Memo G.O. 2654 6th November 1918

¹⁹⁷ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 9th -10th November 1918

¹⁹⁸ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.p. 157-8

¹⁹⁹ WO 95/2927 1/7th Battalion King’s Liverpool Regiment War Diary 11th November 1918

²⁰⁰ Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* p.159

²⁰¹ Griffith *Battle tactics of the Western Front* p.94

Conclusion

The contribution made by 1/7th King's as Advanced Guard in the Final Advance demonstrate a reliability and combat effectiveness learned and honed over the preceding two to three years. The focus at platoon level, the all-arms ability and the mobility of the Unit and the Division are evidence of a successful Territorial combat unit.

This is a significant issue as they had been under considerable pressure from a variety of factors during 1917 and 1918. Casualties in 1916 and 1917 meant that the Battalion's fighting strength was low and the ranks were being filled by the drafts and conscripts sent under the Military Service legislation. Actual numbers of local men fell in the Battalion. After further casualties at Givenchy they were reorganised and refocused in what appeared to be a more efficient, leaner combat unit.

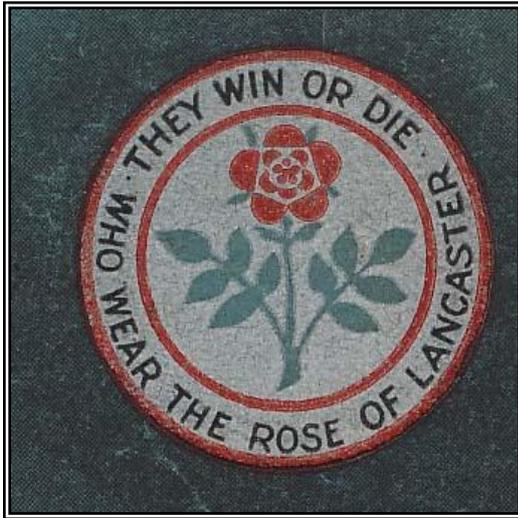
As a Division, there were difficulties associated with the counter-attack at Cambrai but Jeudwine appeared strengthened by that process and his determination to establish an 'offensive defence' won support from his immediate superiors even if not at GHQ. His tactics worked and the line held in April 1918 due to the training, tenacity and commitment of the troops. This effectiveness in combat was a clear indicator of high morale. Similarly, the disciplinary record of the Battalion indicated that there were few problems and that morale was good. Jeudwine's strictures on discipline do not seem to have resulted in large numbers of cases being tried in this Battalion.

The importance of good morale was never lost on Jeudwine but it was the way it was engendered through establishing and maintaining the localness of the Division which demonstrates how significant the sense of belonging to that community was for the maintenance of high morale. A good example lies in the magazine, *Sub Rosa* – 'under the rose'. Here, through cartoon, dialect and poetry the Lancashire soul of the Division was championed.

Finally, the defence of Givenchy provides a clear indication of how these different elements interacted. Givenchy was a triumph for training, tactics, commitment and luck. Its significance was crucial at the time, not least to boost the morale of other units who sat in wait for the next expected German attack. It demonstrated the true viability and flexibility of a Territorial division, which went on to take the lead role in III Corps' advance in the autumn. It was also significant in the attention it attracted from

Home, almost all of which focused on the community identity of the unit. This was a victory for men of Lancashire, for the communities of Lancashire. That the area of the Lys was later to be the centre of attention for a number of the Lancashire towns who adopted French villages was not a coincidence. As will be seen in the final chapter, it held a significant place in the history of the Division, later marked by a war memorial.

The deployment of the 1/7th King's through the engagements described above demonstrated their effectiveness within the Division. Despite the pressures of the Front Line and the longevity of the War itself, morale remained high and their sense of belonging was reinforced by the successes. Their identification with Home may have been less evident until the reaction to the defence of Givenchy, but its obvious resurgence proved that it was never far from the surface.

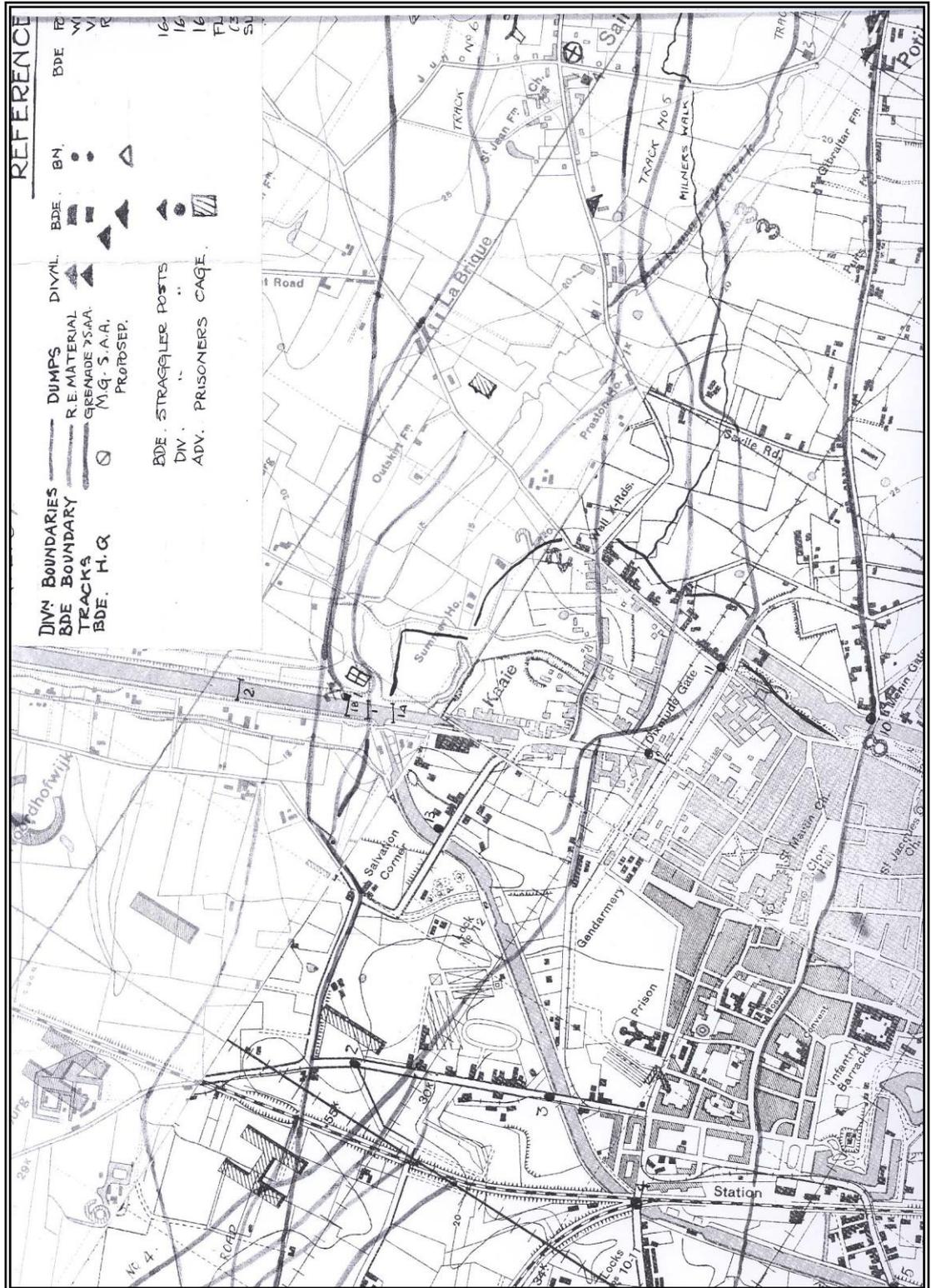


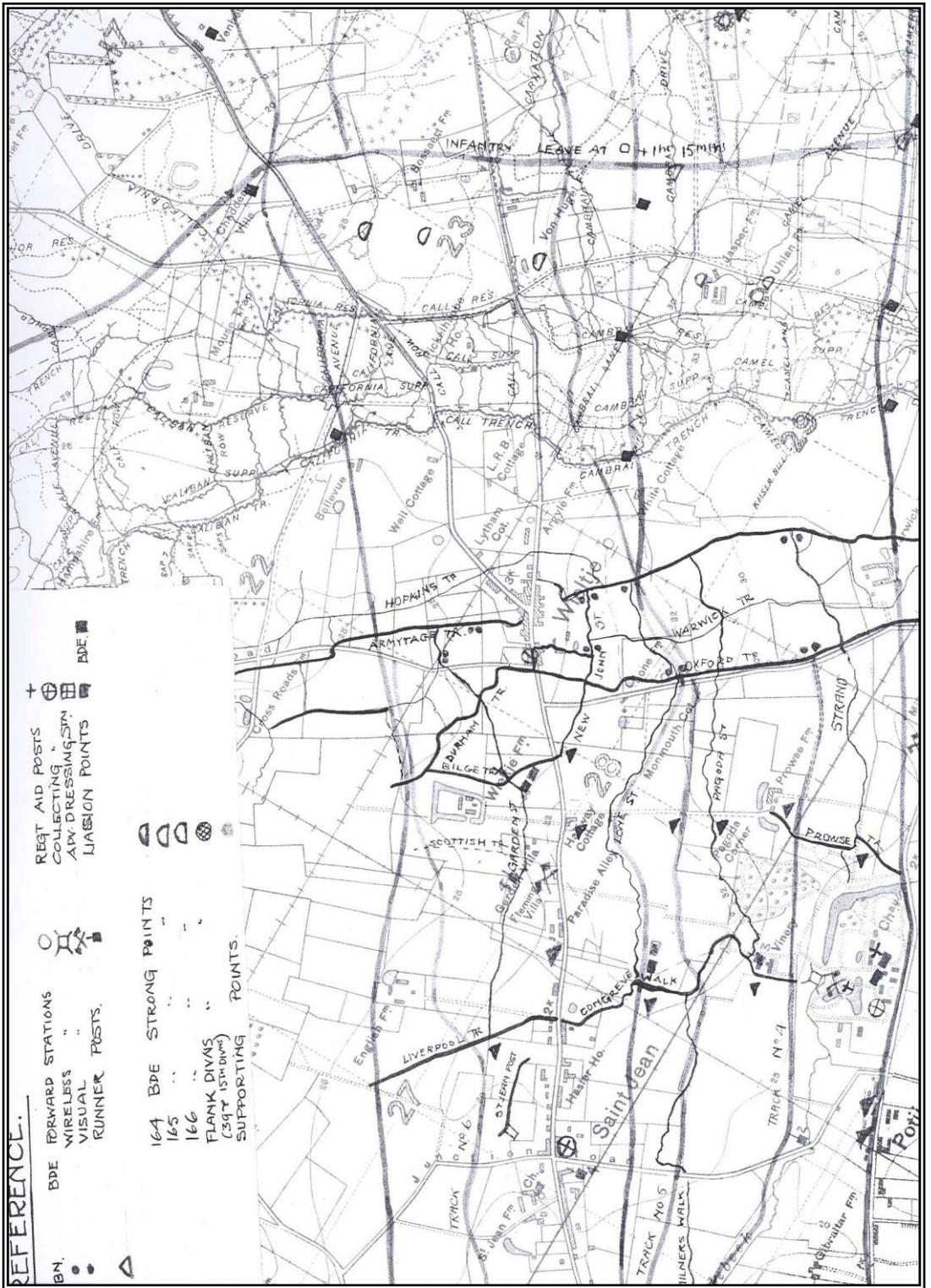
The Divisional Badge and Motto



Cartoon of Jeudwine, from a page of cartoons in *Sub Rosa* trench magazine of 55th Division June 1917

The following three pages show the original plan of action for 55th Division on 31st July 1917. The start of the Blue, Black and Green lines have been highlighted. On the middle map, Divisional boundaries are shown in yellow, and the initial 166/165 Brigade boundary in red. WO95/2903 55th Division War Diary





REFERENCE.

- BN.
- BDE FORWARD STATIONS
- WIRELESS " "
- VISUAL " "
- RUNNER POSTS
- REGT AID POSTS
- COLLECTING " "
- AMP. DRESSING ST.
- LIAISON POINTS
- BDE
- 164 BDE STRONG POINTS
- 165 " " "
- 166 " " "
- FLANK DIVAS (39+ 15+000)
- SUPPORTING POINTS



Photographs of
1/7th Battalion,
King's
Liverpool
Regiment in
the Front Line
trenches,
March 1918.
*Photographs
courtesy of the
Imperial War
Museum.
Reference nos.
Q10737, Q10740
and Q10743*





Men of 55th
Division
marching
away from
the fighting,
10th April
1918.

*Photographs
courtesy of the
Imperial War
Museum.*

*References
Q340 and Q342*



The Final Advance by 55th Division (and following page)
From Coop *The Story of the 55th Division* op cit. pp. 178-9

