

WAR DIARY OF D SQUADRON NORTH IRISH HORSE¹
30 APRIL 1915 TO 30 APRIL 1916

51st (Highland) Division Mounted Troops

April 1915

30	D Squadron North Irish Horse 51 st (Highland) Division left Cople (Bedford) on the 30 April 1915 under Major Honourable A Hamilton Russell.
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May 1915

1-4	<p>Southampton. 5am. One half the men of D Squadron North Irish Horse, together with all Squadron horses (under?) Major Hon A Hamilton Russell, 2nd Lieutenant J.C.G Kirkpatrick² and 2nd Lieutenant W Murland³ on board the Anglo-Canadian left Southampton at 6pm and arrived at Havre at 11am 2 May 1915. The remaining men of the Squadron under Major Holt Waring⁴, 2nd Lieutenant J.V Adair⁵ and 2nd Lieutenant L.C Wise⁶ on board the Empress Queen left Havre [sic] at 7pm 1 May 1915 and arrived at Havre at 7am 2 May 1915. <i>[Arrived at Southampton at 6am 1 May 1915. Embarked at 4pm in two transports and arrived at Havre at 6am 2 May 1915. ... The Squadron consists of the following Officers: Major Honourable A Hamilton-Russell, Major Holt Waring, 2nd Lieutenant J.C.G Kirkpatrick, 2nd Lieutenant W Murland, 2nd Lieutenant J.V Adair, 2nd Lieutenant L.C Wise; 141 NCOs and men, 158 riding and draught horses. Interpreter H Martin Zédé joined the Squadron on disembarkation at Havre on the 2nd May 1915.]</i></p> <p>Men and horses disembarked at once and rested at the docks during the day. At 10pm 2 May 1915 the Squadron entrained at Havre Station, leaving at 1am for Berguette, arriving there at 12 midnight 3/4 May 1915 and detrained in heavy rain. <i>[Proceeded at once to Busnes.]</i> Busnes was reached at 5am 4 May 1915 and the men billeted in barns, the Squadron horse lines being placed in two orchards. The road from Berguette to Busnes was good.</p>
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¹ Official War Diaries (Ref. WO 95/2854) written by **Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) the Honourable A Hamilton Russell**, Commanding D Squadron North Irish Horse, arrived France 1 May 1915.

There are two versions of the Diaries for D Squadron, one more detailed than the other. The more detailed version is shown here, with any additional or alternative information that appears in the shorter version shown in square brackets and italics.

² **James Cunningham Gordon Kirkpatrick**, Lieutenant then Captain, North Irish Horse.

³ **W Murland**, 2nd Lieutenant then Captain, North Irish Horse.

⁴ **Major Holt Waring** (later with C Squadron North Irish Horse then Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Irish Rifles), died of wounds on 15 April 1918, aged 41. Husband of Margaret Waring, of Waringstown, County Down, Ireland, he is buried at Wulvergehm-Lindenhoek Road Military Cemetery.

⁵ **John Valentine Adair**, 2nd Lieutenant North Irish Horse, Captain 12th Royal Lancers.

⁶ **Lancelot Charles Wise**, 2nd Lieutenant then Lieutenant, North Irish Horse, later attached 3rd Lancers (Skinners Horse). Wise died on 2 May 1917, aged 23, and is buried in Rawalpindi War Cemetery. He was the son of Charles Dacres Wise and Madeline Stella Wise of Allerton, Loddiswell, Devon.

5-13	<i>[At Busnes]</i> the Division (51st) <i>[remained in reserve]</i> being directly under the orders of General Headquarters. On the 9 th May 1915 a very violent attack was begun by the British in the neighbourhood of Festubert, the Indian Army Corps being engaged. This engagement lasted four days but no great success was obtained. ⁷
14	Pradelles. 3pm <i>[1pm]</i> . The Division marched north on the 14 th of May 1915, the Squadron marching at 9am via St Venant – Hazebrouk to Pradelles, the Division now coming under the orders of General Officer Commanding Indian Army Corps (<i>Lieutenant General</i> Sir J Willcocks ⁸). The road was in good order. Men were billeted in three barns, the horse lines in an open grass field. Water for horses obtained in a local pond. Drinking - cooking water from local pumps. Ref Map 1/40,000 Bethune.
15-18	–
19	La Gorgue. 11am. At 6am 19 May 1915 the Squadron <i>[Division]</i> marched to La Gorgue (via Vieux Berquin), the roads somewhat cut up by motor traffic. The Squadron bivouacked near a powder factory south of the La Gorgue – Merville Road. Major Holt Waring left the Squadron during this march and proceeded to take over C Squadron North Irish Horse attached to the 3 rd Division in the neighbourhood of Bailleul. Captain E King King ⁹ transferred from C Squadron North Irish Horse, joined the Squadron this day from C Squadron.
20	Hinges. <i>[2pm. On the 20th May 1915 the Division moved south, Divisional Headquarters being at Locon.]</i> At 10am 20 May 1915 the Squadron marched via Paradis to farm north of the La Bassée Canal, ½ mile north of Hinges. The road used being a 2 nd Class Road and in fair order, arrived at billets 3pm, the men billeted in a barn, horses in an open grass field.
21-31	The 2 nd and 9 th Divisions were relieved by the Highland (51 st) and Canadian Divisions. The Division moved into the 4 th Army Corps Command (Lieutenant General Sir H Rawlinson ¹⁰). The Squadron remained ½ mile north of Hinges until the 1 st of June 1915 when it marched to Carvin. During this month the weather remained fine and warm. There were occasional showers, but not sufficient to damage the roads to any great extent. Ref Map 1/40,000 Bethune.
June 1915	
1	Carvin. 5pm. <i>[3pm. On the 1st June 1915 the Division joined the 4th Army Corps (Lieutenant General Sir H Rawlinson).]</i> The Squadron marched at 2.30pm 1 June 1915 to Carvin <i>[near Robec]</i> . Arrived at 5pm. Route taken partially along canal bank. Roads dry and in good order. The Squadron lines were situated in a shady orchard, good water obtained from small stream. The men in barns. On this day the Prime Minister ¹¹ motored through a part of the 51 st Divisional area and addressed the troops.
2-13	–
14-18	Le Touret. 6pm. <i>[During the period 14-17 [June] there was a big British attack at Festubert and]</i> two troops under Captain E King King moved via

⁷ Part of the Second Battle of Ypres.

⁸ **Sir James Willcocks**, Lieutenant General, Indian Expeditionary Force; General, Indian Army Corps.

⁹ **Eustace King-King**, Captain North Irish Horse, arrived France 21 August 1914.

¹⁰ **Henry Seymour Rawlinson, Bart.**

¹¹ **Herbert Henry Asquith**, Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916.

	Locon to Le Touret, bivouacking in the neighbourhood of the farm to act as prisoner's escort. These two troops were relieved on the 16 th by remaining two troops under Major Hon A Hamilton Russell on 16 June 1915. These troops returned to Carvin on the 18 th of June 1915. No prisoners were handed over to Officer Commanding Squadron during these four days.
19-20	–
21	La Pannerie. 2pm. Squadron marched via Bois de Pacault to La Pannerie at 10am. Horse lines situated in open grass field west of village. Men in a barn. Roads dry and in good order.
22-23	–
24	On the 24 th of June 1915 certain units of the Division started to move to Estaires and the Division came into the command of the Indian Army Corps.
25	<i>[The Squadron moved ... on the 25th June 1915 to Neuf Berquin (near Estaires).]</i>
26	–
27	Neuf Berquin. 2.30pm. At 9am 27 June 1915 the Squadron moved north via La Gorgue to Neuf Berquin, arriving 2.30pm. A heavy thunderstorm fell during this march. The roads were in good order. Horse lines in an orchard on the north of the Neuf Berquin – Estaire Road. Horses were watered in the canal at La Gorgue. Drinking water was scarce, obtainable in small quantities from pumps in the locality. Ref Map 1/40,000 Bethune.
28-29	–
30	The weather during June (1-25) was extremely hot and dry, no rain falling. On the 25 th a severe thunderstorm succeeded by others on the 26 th and 27 th broke the weather. On the 30 th of June 1915 Captain E King King left for the base to attend a medical board <i>[entered hospital]</i> . He was suffering for debility and eventually vacated <i>[evacuated]</i> to England.
July 1915	
1-26	Neuf Berquin. Working parties of up to 100 men in the support trenches and for the construction of trenches to carry a subterranean telephone wire from advanced Divisional Headquarters to the Brigade Headquarters in case of an enemy attack were found by the Squadron on the 3 rd , 6 th , 9 th , 10 th , 12 th , 13 th , 15 th , 16 th , 17 th , 18 th , 19 th , 20 th and 21 st of this month. This work was one to three miles east of Laventie. <i>[From the 21st June to the 28th July [sic] the Squadron supplied trench repairing and various digging parties by day and by night.]</i> 2 nd Lieutenant W Murland, 2 nd Lieutenant J.V Adair and four NCOs were instructed in 'bombing' at the bomb school (154 th Brigade) at Laventie from 16 July 1915 to 23 July 1915.
27-28	Berguette. 11pm. The Squadron marched at 9.30pm <i>[10pm]</i> via Merville to Berguette <i>[Station]</i> and entrained, proceeding via <i>[Calais]</i> Boulogne, Abbeville and Amiens to Mericourt Station (6pm), detrained at once and marched to Heilly, arriving at 7pm 28 July 1915.

29	Martinsart. 10.30pm. Major A Hamilton Russell, 2 nd Lieutenants J.G.C Kirkpatrick, J.V Adair and sixty men were attached to the 152 nd Brigade [(Brigadier-General Ross ¹²)] and marched at 7pm via Albert to Martinsart. The remaining men of the Squadron and horses remained at Heilly under 2 nd Lieutenant W Murland.
30	Authuille. 1am. Major Hamilton Russell, two Officers and sixty Other Ranks proceeded at 10pm and marched to the trenches at Authuille and were attached to the 1/8 Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell ¹³ commanding). These trenches were taken over this night from the 116 th French Regiment. Ref Map 1/40,000 Bethune. Ref Map 1/100,000 Amiens.
31	–
August 1915	
1-14	The Squadron horses remained at Heilly. On the 5 th of August 1915 they moved to Franvillers. [<i>On the 5th August 1915 the remainder of the Squadron with led horses moved to Franvillers (1pm).</i>] The Squadron Officers and sixty Other Ranks in the trenches near Authuille came out of the trenches at 8pm 13 August 1915, being relieved by [<i>a Squadron of</i>] 3 rd [<i>Bengal Cavalry</i>] Lancers (Skinner's Horse). During their period in the trenches (30 July 1915 to 13 August 1915) their casualties were one slightly wounded [<i>in the shoulder</i>] by a dropping bullet. This man, Private McGivern ¹⁴ , a Squadron cook, being in a reserve trench. During this period, there was a considerable amount of rifle fire, especially early morning and evening, and some shelling by both artilleries of reserve trenches, the fire trenches not being shelled at all, and no trench mortars or bombs thrown by enemy. The 111 th Reserve Regiment was said to be in trenches of the enemy opposite to our own. The trenches in the neighbourhood of Thiepval Chateau were shelled by our artillery. At 1.30am 14 August 1915 we met our horses at R[?] B[?] west of Albert [<i>met at Albert at 10pm [13 August] by led horses</i>] and marched to Behencourt [<i>arriving there 4am</i>], rejoining the remainder of the Squadron, which had moved from Franvillers to Behencourt on the 13 th of August 1915.
15-26	–
27-31	On the 27 th , 28 th , 29 th , 30 th , 31 st August the Squadron furnishing digging parties of one Officer, fifty Other Ranks for construction of trenches west of Albert. [<i>While at Behencourt the Squadron supplied occasional trench repair parties and daily wood cutting parties, built winter stables and made comfortable winter quarters.</i>] Ref Map 1/100,000 Albert.
September 1915	

¹² Probably **Sir Walter Charteris Ross**, Brigadier General, Infantry Brigade.

¹³ Probably either **John Campbell**, Lieutenant-Colonel, 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (A&SH), or **Ian Maxwell Campbell**, Captain in 18th A&SH, Major then Lieutenant-Colonel in 8th A&SH.

¹⁴ Probably **Private George McGivern** (No.1208) North Irish Horse, (No.M/323300) Army Service Corps.

1-30	<p>Behencourt. The Squadron found a working party of fifty men for the trenches on the 1st of September 1915. On the 8th of September 1915 2nd Lieutenant P Sherston¹⁵ North Irish Horse joined the Squadron from Antrim. During this month the men of the Squadron were given individual instruction in map reading, riding school and a weekly scheme. From the 25th of September 1915 to the 30th of September 1915 a party of thirty men was detailed daily for wood cutting to supply wood required in the trenches. On 24 September 1915 Major-General Bannatyne-Allason CB¹⁶ handed over the 51st Division to Major General G.M Harpur CB DSO¹⁷, returned to England and took over 61st Division.¹⁸ On the 25th of September 1915 the big attack by the British troops at Loos and the French in Champagne began, which ended in some progress being made by the British and French and a few miles of ground recovered from the enemy. The weather was fine and warm during the greater part of this month, some wet and cold weather from the 25th to 30th September.</p>
October 1915	
1-31	<p>Behencourt. 5 October 1915. A draught [sic] of one Sergeant and eight Other Ranks arrived from the base and joined the Squadron. 11 October 1915. A draught of one Corporal and nine Other Ranks arrived from the base and joined the Squadron, bringing the Squadron up to strength. 7 October 1915. The Squadron horses were moved from the lines into stables in the village. 9 October 1915. The Squadron inspected by General Officer Commanding 51st Division. 25 October 1915. King George and President Poincaré reviewed the troops the Xth Corps (5th, 30th, 51st Divisions) a few miles west of Albert. Working parties in the trenches near Aveluy on 20 October 1915 under 2nd Lieutenant P Sherston and on the 30th October 1915 under 2nd Lieutenant Kirkpatrick. During the month of October the Squadron found a daily wood cutting party of thirty NCOs and men. They also built stabling, bath house, covered latrines, wash house, repaired barns, made beds, and established a canteen and institute in the village. Fine weather the greater part of this month.</p>
November 1915	
1-30	<p>Behencourt. During November the daily woodcutting fatigue party of thirty NCOs and men was continued. Work in Behencourt in connection with stabling and making the village comfortable for troops to winter in, was continued. About 700 French troops, the 292nd and 326th Regiments under General Drouot arrived in Behencourt on the 7th. On the 16th of October 1915 Major General Harpur CB inspected the horses and institutes of the Squadron. Some snow fell on the 17th of November 1915, melted on the 20th November 1915. There was a hard frost and cold weather on the 28th, 29th, 30th.</p>

¹⁵ **Thomas Peter Davis Sherston**, 2nd Lieutenant North Irish Horse, Lieutenant Royal Irish Fusiliers, arrived France 7 September 1915.

¹⁶ **Major-General Richard Bannatine Allason**.

¹⁷ **Major-General Sir George Montague Harper**.

¹⁸ The diaries also record this as occurring on 24 August 1915.

December 1915	
1-20	Behencourt. During December (1-20) thirty NCOs and men were employed in woodcutting daily.
21-25	–
26-31	Septenville. On the 26 th of December 1915 the Squadron [<i>left Behencourt and</i>] marched via Molliens-au-Bois to Septenville [<i>(1pm), the 51st Division being withdrawn from the line and retired to rest in a back area</i>], a 2 nd Class road in fair condition. Training, schemes, drill and musketry were carried out during this months. A Squadron of South Irish Horse (Major Stern ¹⁹ in command) attached to the XXXII nd Division succeeded the Squadron at Behencourt and took over the stables, baths, beds, canteen etc which the Squadron had made. Septenville, a small village ½ mile south of Rubempré, consists of three farms and a shooting lodge. Nothing had been prepared by troops previously billeted there for the comfort of troops during the winter months. Weather during December was on the whole mild – fine. Ref Map Amiens 1/100,000.
January 1916	
1-31	Septenville. During January 1916 the Squadron were stationed at Septenville and continued their training while the Division remained in reserve. On the 12 th of January 1916 the Divisional area was inspected by the Commander in Chief and General Officer Commanding 3 rd Army. The Division during this month [<i>4th January</i>] came into the command of the XIII th Corps and Lieutenant General Congreve VC ²⁰ . The Squadron was employed in making road reconnaissance reports of the Divisional area. The weather was fine on the whole and mild for the time of year.
February 1916	
1-7	Septenville. D Squadron North Irish Horse were quartered at Septenville in the commune of Rubempré from the 26 th of December 1915 to the 8 th of February 1916. The horses belonging to 1, 2 and 3 Troops in under the shelter of outhouses, No.4 Troop in the open in an orchard. The men were billeted in barns. Water drawn from a well 250 ft deep was good for men and horses.
8-28	Corbie. 8 February 1916. The Squadron under orders of General Officer Commanding 152 nd Brigade marched via Molliens-au-Bois, St Gratien, Querrieux to Corbie. The 51 st Division still remaining in reserve. Divisional Headquarters at Daours. The Squadron were billeted in Rue Victor Hugo, Corbie, the men in three sheds at the east end of the street, the horses in the open on the bend of a stream running parallel to the Somme River Canal. The conditions were unfavourable for horses, the horse lines deep in mud. Snow fell to the depth of 4" on the 23 rd /24 th but rapidly melted on the 25 th and 26 th . The Division during this month came under the command of the XVII th Corps.
29	Flesselles. The Squadron marched at 8.15am via Daours, Amiens to Flesselles. The march of the Division on this occasion being conducted by groups, each group under a commander, the Squadron North Irish Horse and Cyclist Company forming one group. Flesselles was reached at 2pm. Weather fine.

¹⁹ **Henry Julius Joseph Stern**, Major then Lieutenant-Colonel, South Irish Horse.

²⁰ **Lieutenant-General Sir Walter Norris Congreve VC**.

	Road good. The men were billeted in the Rue D'Amiens in barns, horses in orchard near the road. Good water was obtained from wells in the neighbourhood of Rue D'Amiens.
March 1916	
1-5	Flesselles. The Squadron continued their training from 1 st – 5 th March.
6-8	Hardinval. On the 6 th March 1916 they marched via Naoure, Valenciennes, Candas to Hardinval, road in fair order, very cold, some snow showers. Remained at Hardinval 7 th and 8 th and did some musketry.
9-11	Sericourt. On the 9 th of March 1916 the Squadron marched via Occoches, Barly, Bonnières, Frèvent to Sericourt, road in fair order, very cold north wind, snow lying about. The Division commenced taking over their new line from Neuville-St-Vast (inclusion) to Roclincourt (exclusion) from the French (46, 45 and 48 Brigades) on the 9/10, completing it on the 13/14. On the 10 th of March 1916 the Squadron found guides for reinforcements arriving at railhead (Bouquemaison). Railhead moved to Aubigny on the 11 th of March 1916. On the 11 th of March 1916 one NCO and one man went to Wisques to attend a Hotchkiss gun course, returning 18 th March 1916.
12-13	Berlencourt. On the 12 th of March 1916 the Squadron moved via Frèvent to Berlencourt, a first class road the greater part of the way in good order. Billets were dirty and bad. Horse lines in a filthy state.
14	Tilloy-les-Hemaville. On the 14 th of March 1916 the Squadron marched via Ambrines, Sir Simon, Izel-le-Hameau to Tilloy-les-Hemaville, 2 nd Class road in good order. Met 2 Batt. Artillery (French) and Ambulance Train (French) moving west. Fine and warm. Billets were fair.
15	Vandelicourt. On the 15 th of March 1916 the Squadron moved via Berles to Vandelicourt. Road in good order. Men billeted in huts, horses in open. Fine and warm.
16-31	On the 16 th of March 1916 two Officers (Lieutenant C.J.G Kirkpatrick and Lieutenant W Murland) with fifty Other Ranks marched via Etrun to Louez, arriving at 7.30pm. Proceeded on foot to the trenches to be attached to B and C Companies 4 th Gordon Highlanders and take F.8 – F.15 subsector A.i of the 154 th Brigade trench line. These two Troops were relieved with the 4 th Gordon on the night of the 22/23 by the 4 th Seaforths, the Gordons returning to rest billets at Etrun, and the North Irish Horse meeting their horses at Louez at 12 midnight returned to Vandelicourt. During the six days the North Irish Horse were in the trenches, they had one casualty (Private Harvey ²¹). He was struck in the face and eye by a fragment from a rifle grenade. There was a great deal of work to be done in the trenches to render them more secure and bullet proof, the trenches being much confused by the continuous fighting that had taken place on previous occasions when held by the French. The dugouts were deep and good but insufficient in number. Our men occupied dugouts which had been constructed by the Germans and captured by the French. The weather during this week was fine and warm, but colder on the 22 nd . Snow fell on the 23 rd and 24 th and the weather became wild and broken. One NCO was sent on a course of instruction in Gas - apparatus, remedies, on the 29 th . On the 31 st Lieutenant Adair and Troop proceeded to FILLIÈRE to be attached to the 17 th Lancers (Indian Cavalry Corps on a course of one month's instruction.

²¹ Probably **Private Nathaniel Harvey** (No.1032) North Irish Horse, (No.41362) Royal Irish Fusiliers.

On the 20th of March 1916 leave for the Division reopened and the Squadron were permitted to send one Officer and five men every fortnight.

April 1916

1-30 Vandelicourt. Three Troops of D Squadron North Irish Horse at Vandelicourt, one Troop under Lieutenant Adair were attached to the 17th Lancers (Indian Cavalry Corps) at Fillière on the 31st of March 1916. All Divisional Mounted Troops (Squadrons: (D?) Squadron North Irish Horse, 1 Squadron Yorks Hussars 46th Division, and 1 Squadron Lothian Border Horse 25th Division), Cyclist Companies and Machine Gun Companies took part in a scheme under the personal direction of Lieutenant General Sir J Byng²² commanding XVIIth Corps on the (4?)th and 6th of this month. Captain V Lockett²³ 17th Lancers was attached to the Corps Headquarters Staff as instructor of Mounted Troops to introduce a universal method amongst the Squadrons. Lieutenant Kirkpatrick and three Other Ranks attended a Hotchkiss Gun course at Camiers from 10 April 1916 to 18 April 1916. Officers and NCOs attended an unsuccessful demonstration of liquid fire (Flammenwerfer) on the 13th of April 1916. A daily digging party of twenty men were employed in making trenches for a grenade school at Hemaville. from the 15th of April 1916 till the end of the month. Two Hotchkiss Gun courses of one Officer and six NCOs and men were trained for five days each course. Lieutenant W Murland and Lieutenant P Sherston being the Officers under instruction. Fifteen NCOs and men were instructed under the Divisional Assistant Provost Marshall in military police and road control duties, each course lasting fifteen days. Her Majesty Queen Alexandra sent a variety of gifts to the men of the Squadron on the 4th of April 1916. The weather during the first three weeks of April was cold, wet, and a strong west wind blew daily. The last week of the month was fine, hot, with a light east wind. The battle of Verdun, starting on the 19th of February 1916, appears to have terminated about the 28th of April 1916. The Sinn Fein rebellion started in Dublin on the 24th of April 1916 is still continuing.

²² **Julian Hedworth George Byng**

²³ **Vivian Novene Lockett**, Captain then Major, Lancers.