

Edwin Boothman – Diary of Military service 1918-1919

This is a transcript of the handwritten diary in the Reporters' Note Book. It is written in the past tense which suggests that it was written after Edwin's return in October 1919

- May 16th Left Halifax Barracks for Brocton Camp Staffs. We were trained there until there were 200 of us and on
June 2nd the Coy were sent to Thoresby Park Camp Notts (canvas camp) to join the 52nd Grad. Batt. West Yorks. We went through a very stiff training until we were sent
Aug 8th to Wormald Green Musk Camp nr Harrogate to fire a rifle course.
Aug 25th We came back to Thoresby and carried on training
Sept 6th to the 12th We had our first leave.
Oct 3rd The Batt. Left Thoresby for Chipstone Camp (about a 6 miles walk) for the winter. We went through the usual training until Armistice was signed - 11.11.18 - then training was made easier.

1919

- Jan 2nd to the 13th all the Coy had leave, which was the King's grant to all the troops in England a 12 days Victory Leave.
Feb 15th Re-enlisted in the West Yorks for 2 years to expire 31st March 1921.
Feb 18th Proceeded home for 2 months leave
April 19th Rejoined the Regt. at York Barracks.
April 25th Transferred to the 3rd Batt. West Yorks at Salisbury Plain
May 19th Transferred to the Machine Gun Corp, we were sent to
May 26th Grantham to be trained.
June 20th Our Coy was broken up, and I with a good many others from the West Yorks were sent to the 19th M G C stationed at Dilgate Camp Shorncliffe Kent.
Aug 5th to 10th the Batt. Went on draft leave for Russia.
Aug 11th Inoculated
Aug 16th Two Coys of the Batt. left Shorncliffe for Tilbury Docks London and embarked on S. S. Kildonan Castle
Aug 25th Arrived at the Murmansk Coast and disembarked
Aug 26th Left Murmansk for the line in cattle trucks four days travel
Aug 28th We stayed the night at Herst. The next day we stopped at Medvija-Gorra which was made the Machine Gun Corps Headquarters. This town lay on the right of Lake Onega the longest lake in Europe 600x400 miles.
Sept 2nd We moved to Kapasalga and stayed there 9 days doing out-post duty and getting the guns ready.
Sept 13th We went into the line at 10 o'clock Sat night.
Sept 14th Sunday morning the advance began at 4 o'clock. We had not gone very far before he opened on us with a good many machine guns and rifles and we all lay down and he held us there for 2 hours. Then we had to get up and rush to a different place where we could fire at him and the bullets were flying all around us. We succeeded in driving him out of this stronghold and kept him on the move until night but as he retired he blew up the railway bridges and we had to go round streams and sometimes go through them. Our only meal that day was breakfast which we had at 4am. The next day he again put up a good fight at a well fortified village Nijie-Gorra. At this place he had an ammunition train on the line and our artillery set it on fire. We had to advance through this village and the shells and bullets were flying all around us. We halted for the night in the woods and we had to do guard all night. We had our second meal at midnight.
Sept 17th We were relieved and went in billets at Nigie-Selga. We stayed there until the remainder of the Coy joined us.
Sept 24th We proceeded to MGC HQ we were there 3 days &
Sept 27th the Batt. went to Poppot a small port arriving there
Sept 29th We were taken from the coast in tugs to the S. S. Schloswig which was a German boat which took us to Murmansk.
Oct 1st We disembarked and went in billets at Kola a village about 7 miles from the coast.
Oct 3rd We embarked on the S. S. Ulna which left Murmansk on the
Oct 5th and after a very rough voyage we arrived at Glasgow
Oct 11th We then entrained for Shorncliffe where we were put in a rest camp and cleaned up and given new clothes and sent on 2 months ...

The diary ends abruptly at this point.