



10/West Yorks at Arras: An Overview of a Forgotten Battalion

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The 10th West Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Own) is one of the '[forgotten](#)' battalions of the Great War. Its part in the Battle of Arras features little in recent histories and its role in other actions has been also largely overlooked. Formed at York in September 1914, 10/West Yorks had trained at Wareham and was sent to France in July 1915. It saw action in and around the Hooze and Bluff sectors and at Fricourt on 1 July, suffering enormous casualties on the opening day of the Somme offensive in 1916. Eleven officers and 299 other ranks were killed in total.

The actions of 10/West Yorkshire Regiment during the Battle of Arras can be broken down into two phases. These cover the First and Second Battles of the Scarpe between 9 to 14 April and 23 to 24 April 1917. The actions in May constitute a third phase. 10/West Yorks was involved in operations to the south and north of the River Scarpe, with Feuchy, Orange Hill, and Lone Copse to the south of the river, and Fampoux, Roeux, and Greenland Hill to the north all featuring heavily in the fighting during April and May. Before the Arras offensive, 10/West Yorkshire Regiment had spent some time at rest and training; leaving Talavera Camp on 7 April and marching via Agnez-les-Duisans to Arras two days later. 10/West Yorks were to support 3/Cavalry Division in their attack, but these orders were later cancelled.

Among some of the trench names which appear during this period are Charlie Trench, Curly Trench, and Cupid Trench to the west of Greenland Hill ' with Corona Trench running southwards of the Arras-Douai Railway and the west of Roeux and Delbar Wood on the north banks of the Scarpe. Clover, Cam, Cuba and Cut trenches also feature in the preparations which were made to secure the gains already made in the capture of the Chemical Works on 12 May. 'A' and 'B' Companies had moved from the Point du Jour to the Fampoux-Gavrelle line the previous evening and orders were given to move forward to Copper Trench when needed. 7/East Yorkshire Regiment and 7/Green Howards had assisted 4/Division in operations.

In the days which followed 10/West Yorkshire Regiment had taken over the lines at Cuba, Cash, and Chaplin trenches. Orders were also received that 10/West Yorkshire Regiment was to be relieved by a unit of 51/Infantry Brigade on 15 May. The relief had started at 2.30 a.m. when news was received at 4.00 a.m. that the enemy had broken through along the railway and had once again taken possession of the Station Building and the Chemical Works. Defensive flanks were immediately formed to the west of the Roeux-Gavrelle road. 'A' and 'B' Companies had already left the line when the news broke and preparations were made to counter the enemy. This was carried out at 9.30 a.m. on 16 May by units of 51 and 52/Brigades. As the war diaries state:

The enemy were driven out of the Station Building and the Chemical Works and streamed in full flight along both sides of the railway and Greenland Hill. Every available rifle and Lewis Gun in the Battalion was brought to bear upon the enemy as they fled and heavy casualties were inflicted.

The total losses suffered by 10/West Yorkshire Regiment between 9 April and 16 May 1917 numbered one-hundred and seven. Five officers were killed in total - four on the same day. The war diaries also record that the 'enemy was assisted by his aeroplanes.' The largest loss of life was on the opening day of the Second Battle of the Scarpe on 23 April when one officer and thirty-eight other ranks lost their lives. Thirteen ORs are also recorded as 'Missing' in the period 10 April and 17 May 1917. Approximately two-thirds of the men and officers have no known grave and are commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing.

The role of 10/West Yorkshire Regiment at Arras was largely a supportive one which rotated between the rear and forward support lines and front line trenches when not at rest or employed on working or carrying duties. It formed part of 50/Brigade - which also comprised 7/East Yorkshire Regiment, 7/Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards), and 6/Dorsetshire Regiment. The [Arras 95 Project](#) has played a part in ensuring that such regiments are no longer forgotten.

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