



The Royal Scots, 11th (Service) Battalion



Officers of the 11th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Scots.

At the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 the Secretary of State for War, Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener, proclaimed that Britain needed to enlarge its army if it wanted to seriously challenge and stop the German advance in Europe. He called for 100,000 volunteers to join the New Army units that would help bolster Britain's small professional army. The 11th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Scots [11th RS] was one of those units that came into being during early August, 1914.

At that time a battalion consisted of around 30 officers and just over 970 men of others ranks. The battalion itself was split into 4 Companies, often numbered "A" to "D", a Machine-Gun section and a Battalion Headquarters. By the beginning of 1915 the 11th RS battalion was up to full strength and was assigned to serve throughout the Great War as part of the 27th Brigade, 9th (Scottish) Division. In late April, 1915, whilst located in Bramshott, Hampshire, the battalion received orders to move to the front and on the 11 May 1915 the main body of men boarded the S.S. Invicta and crossed the English Channel landing at Boulogne, France later that same day.

The battalion's first experience of the trenches occurred on the evening of the 20 May, 1915 when the 11th RS entered the front line close to Armentières remaining there for two days under the temporary command of the 6th Division. On the 29 June the battalion was moved to Festubert where the battalion assumed complete responsibility for a section of front line for the first time.

On the 25 September, 1915 the 11th RS engaged in their first major assault on the



Lieut-Colonel R. C. Dundas, 11th Battalion, The Royal Scots.

German line; an action that became known as the Battle of Loos. The battalion took part in actions against the village of Haisnes and a section of the line known as Pekin Trench close to Douvrin. Battalion losses over a three day period were heavy. The battalion commander Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Charles Dundas was killed, 3 other officers were wounded, 5 were missing, 2 of which were believed killed. With regards to men of other ranks, 32 were

known to have been killed, 169 were wounded and 171 were missing. Many of this latter group were later presumed to have died and their names were recorded on the Loos memorial.

After the Battle of Loos the battalion served a term of duty in the Ypres Salient mainly around Ploegsteert. Their next major offensive was the Battle of the Somme. On the 3 July, 1916 they aided an assault on the ruined village of Montauban and over the next few months they were involved in actions close to Longueval, Delville Wood, the Carency Section, Mametz Wood and Le Sars. Losses during this period were heavy with around 13 officers either killed or wounded and over 300 casualties amongst men of other ranks. After the end of the Somme offensive the battalion had to be strengthened and afterwards moved to the Arras sector where it took part in the Battle of Arras from the 9 to the 13 April, 1917 sustaining over 100 casualties. Later that same year the battalion took part in the Battle of Passchendaele, known also as the Third Battle of Ypres, participating in actions close to Hanebeek Wood and the Zonnebeke Redoubt with over 300 casualties sustained.

In the spring of 1918 Germany launched its last great offensive against the Allied lines and the 11th RS played its part in repelling this huge onslaught in the Gouzeacourt sector fighting at times as part of the South African Brigade and then helping cover the retreat to a position close to Maricourt in the Somme sustaining over 430 casualties in the process. After the failure of the German advance the British strengthened their lines and the 11th RS were moved to Meteren. The battalion helped capture the destroyed village after a successful Allied counter-offensive launched during early August, 1918. On the 15 October, 1918, as the battalion fought near Cappelle St. Catherine, Acting Corporal 271410, Roland Edward Elcock of the 11th RS was awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery and initiative.



After the Armistice the 11th RS had the honour of participating in the triumphal march to the Rhine. They were stationed in Haan where the battalion remained until it was disbanded in late 1919.

During the whole of its Great War service approximately 40 officers and just over 1,000 men of other ranks were killed whilst serving with the 11th RS. Thousands more were wounded.

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Sources:

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