

The Lonsdale Battalion of the Border Regiment

Subject listing – September 1914 to May 1915

Research exclusively based on the Battalion archive

deposited at the Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle.

Introduction

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Almost immediately, the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) embarked for Europe to stop further German invasion into Belgium. On 27 August, at the Battle of Mons, the B.E.F. was routed and the War Office realised the need for volunteers to join the Army. On 3 September in London, 33,000 volunteers were recruited in one day; men were urged to “join up with your pals.”

The 5th Earl of Lonsdale (known as the Yellow Earl) was either the second or third person in the country to be given permission by the War Office to raise a battalion of pals. Lord Lonsdale’s telegram to the War Office read:

‘meeting of Cumberland & Westmorland Territorial Force Association today decided create special Lonsdale Battalion men who had already enlisted in groups for this Unit have been suddenly called Depot Carlisle and merged with others. This has proved prejudicial to recruiting. Essential that Men now enlisted for this Lonsdale Battalion being of higher class than ordinary recruits should remain together until transferred Recruiting will commence on receipt of reply.’

1 Recruitment Phase One

The War Office agreed to the request two days later. An Executive Committee of the Association decided to raise 4 Companies:

A & B from North and East Cumberland based at the racecourse in Blackwell, Carlisle; C from Westmorland based in Kendal; and D from West Cumberland based in Workington.

Even before the War Office approved the recruitment of the Lonsdale Battalion on 17 September men were being recruited at the Drill Hall in Penrith where the Cumberland and Westmorland Territorial Forces' Association was based and was also the original Battalion headquarters.

Col. Percy W. Machell, commanding the Battalion appointed a network of Recruiting Officers throughout Cumberland and Westmorland (12 in Carlisle alone). At the same time the official Recruiting Office opened at 7 Devonshire Street, Carlisle (now Le Gall restaurant).

Three days later, one of the Recruiting Officers, I.H. Mawson, solicitor of Carlisle reported progress to Machell :

'I am very glad to say that we have now got to work with Recruiting Meetings. We held our first meeting last night at Dalston and were successful in getting 15 or 16 young fellows to come forward for your Battalion. Of these nine were passed by the Doctor. They seem to be all of the right stuff, mostly agriculturalists. We are [at] Silloth tonight [where 4 men were recruited] Aspatria tomorrow [where 3 men were recruited] Wetheral [where 2 men were recruited]- Monday night and Brampton [where 3 men were recruited] on Tuesday night and I hope we shall be able to raise Your Lordship's battalion to its full strength.'

By the end of September 82 men had been recruited to A Company; similar progress was made in Westmorland where C Company in Kendal had 79 men recorded on its nominal rolls by 1 October.

During the following fortnight men were recruited at: Kirkbride (3), Cumwhitton (1), Drumburgh (6), Wigton (2), Hallbankgate (4), Aikton (3), Abbeytown (5), Bowness-on-Solway (1) and Low Row (3). During the same period 11 men were recruited at Stead McAlpin's textile factory at Cummersdale during the dinner hour; similar tactics were used at the Cocklakes gypsum works where 7 were recruited. At the same time the Recruiting Office in Carlisle sent 87 attestation papers to Machell who was still based in Penrith. By 8 October the Battalion's strength was 431 men and 10 officers.

On 12 October rules for recruiting were changed:

'Authorise the acceptance of recruits of a minimum height of 5' 3ins and of a chest measurement of 34 inches if under 22 years of age, and 34 inches if over.'

The Recruiting Office reported:

'I must draw to your notice that the hirings [of agricultural labourers] in Cumberland will be taking place about the first week in November all Recruiters in the Area should take steps to obtain as many recruits as possible.'

During the second half of October recruiting continued at Burgh-by-Sands (12 men), Thursby (6), Wreay (3), St. Nicholas, Carlisle (22 from Cowans Sheldon, civil engineers), Warwick Bridge (4), Carlisle Cross and Recruiting Office (15), Carr's Biscuits in Caldewgate, Carlisle (21), Nelson Street, Carlisle (20), Kirkbampton (1), Great Orton (3), and Causewayhead (22 men). The Recruiting Office in Carlisle sent 94 attestation papers to Penrith and then Blackwell.

From 21 October, the Recruiting Office recorded the name, height and chest measurements (and occasionally boot size) of recruits.

Recruitment figures had exceeded 700 by 24 October and reached 814 by the end of the month.

During the remainder of October recruiting continued at Bromfield (2 men), Caldbeck (2), Kingstown (3), Fir Ends (2), Carlisle Cross (12), Holme St. Cuthbert's (5) Cargo (4) and High Hesketh (3). The Recruiting Office in Carlisle sent 47 attestation papers to Camp.

At the same time, there are three accounts of recruiting in North Westmorland before the November hirings:

'meeting here [Appleby] was very satisfactory, several men coming forward at & after the meeting & today several have been attested here, & going on to Kendal on Wednesday. I was wondering if it could be arranged that you will be able to let us have some [lantern] slides of photo's taken of Lonsdale Battn. that we could throw [i.e. project] upon the sheet.'

'men are hanging back until that day [hirings in Appleby] because the farmers are refusing to pay them their half year's wages until that date. I have had to take the Police Superintendent out to make the farmers pay up & release the man and also to write a strong letter to the farmer threatening a call from the police. Another matter to consider is this. On hiring day there are no amusements in Appleby & after the morning's business is over the great majority of the lasses & lads clear off to Carlisle by the midday train, therefore any display must take place pretty early in the day.'

'the main hirings in Westmorland are Appleby & Kendal, both on at. 14th I propose with your leave to send a Section to Appleby (preferably of local men) under Rivington & shall make a show there.'

At the beginning of November, Machell reported to Lord Lonsdale:

'Strength yesterday over 850, and I expect to be nearly full in 10 days.'

In early November recruitment continued at Roadhead (1 man), Lees Hill (2), Easton (2) and Rosley (5). The Recruiting Office sent 31 attestation papers to Camp.

From early November there are reports of recruitment meetings, hirings and route marches in:

Kirkby Stephen: *'We had a grand meeting here last night 400 people & a great number of likely men but could not get one to put his hand up, although after the meeting several came and stated that they were going into Appleby on Sat. next to join the Battn.'*

Brampton: *'it would be far better if the men could get to Brampton about 9.30 in the morning and catch the youths as they come into town and before they are signed on for another 6 months, and that it would be a help if a rousing speaker could accompany them, and say a word in the market place I am exceedingly anxious that some should be caught not only for king and country, but for honour, righteousness and freedom.'*

Hallbankgate: *'I hear you propose visiting on Wednesday. This will be quite useless. It is Hiring Day at Brampton and all the young men from that District will be here.'*

Carlisle: route march *'Currock Road, James Street, Viaduct, Milbourne Street, Kendal Street, Hawick Street, Caldewgate, Annetwell Street, Castle Street, Market Place. Halt. Scotch Street, The Sands, Lowther Street, Bank Street, Crescent, Botchergate, St. Nicholas to Camp'*.

Maryport and Workington: *'route march of 1 sergeant, 2 corporals and 40 men in uniform without arms: leave Cummersdale [station], arrive Maryport to be met by band and parade; march to Workington.'*

Cockermouth: provisional arrangements by the Joint Political Recruiting Committee: *'The County Industrial School Band to meet contingent of West*

County men belonging to Lord Lonsdale's Battalion marching from Workington. This Contingent will march to the Railway Station where some half dozen of the [Westmorland & Cumberland] Yeomanry will join them – then all will proceed to Market Place where Col. Weston M.P. will speak. Col. Weston will speak again at the Cinema Show and also at the Drill Hall.'

Brampton: letter from the vicar to Col. Machell: 'I hear that a detachment of the Lonsdale Battn.is coming to Brampton on the Hiring Day, Nov. 11th & will stay overnight in the town. As that night is the rowdiest of the year, with a lot of drinking, & worse – we should be grateful to you if you would kindly see that some officer is sent with them who will be able to exercise a fairly strong control over them. On each hiring day towards the evening may be seen numbers of half-drunken lads and girls & these would be a great temptation to your young men of whom we are justly proud. The hiring practically ends by one o'clock: after that there is much dancing & drinking.'

Wigton: 30 men were recruited

Workington: 'Recruiting is quite brisk here today, between 20 or 30 left for the Camp this afternoon. The march out through this district did a lot of Good, the men looked very well & behaved like gentlemen.'

During the same period, the Recruiting Office sent 58 attestation papers to Camp.

Machell was obviously satisfied with the progress of recruitment as his telegrams record.

'Enlist up to fifteen at Appleby if quite exceptionally good but tell them we are now only taking the best to replace a few undesirables. 35 should be extreme limit as A and B companies now complete and West Cumberland men pouring in for D as result march'

'Strength D Company yesterday night 219 so do not require more than 50 altogether please make certain of only sending best men and then open waiting list.'

'Have four single excellent fellows here [Workington] waiting regret to miss them can you possibly admit'. Machell replied 'Enlist these four if specially good but can take more bearing in mind men expected from you.'

On 13 November Machell reported to the press:

'Lonsdale Battalion strength now 1000 recruiting for this Battalion closed for the present.'

Two days later, the full strength was 1109.

And on 18 November Machell wrote to the Recruiting Office

'now only taking odd men who had been enlisted previously and sent home.'

Despite Machell's messages, the Recruiting Office sent 91 attestations to Camp until the Office closed:

'Yesterday ... closed the Recruiting Office, which has sent men to join the Lonsdale Battalion. The strength of the Battalion today [22 November] is 1153 – officers, non-commissioned officers and men.'

2 Camp and Equipment at Carlisle Racecourse

Carlisle Racecourse at Blackwell on the outskirts of the city was only about 10 years old when it was requisitioned by the War Office. Mentions in the archive are sporadic but they record the problems of accommodating hundreds of men in buildings that were not constructed for the purpose.

Major Binning, temporarily in charge of the Camp wrote to J.W. Barker, manager of the racecourse: *'I have arranged with the Boys Scout Authority to provide 10 Scouts for orderly work in connection with the new Camp.'* 25 September 1914.

William Henry Wright of London Road, Carlisle offered to visit the Camp to provide shaving and haircutting services; 28 September 1914. The same day a telegram recorded:

'As proper accommodation available at camp on race course Carlisle drafts will be sent and Headquarters established Carlisle.'

Binning wrote to the Carlisle Charitable Organisation Society: *'I require two Charwomen to scrub out a large building here tomorrow into which we have to put men, if you would kindly provide all that is necessary in the way of Cloths Brushes and Carbolic Soap.'* 13 October 1914. The Society replied: *'I think the*

women should have 3s 6d each, as they had to provide their own food. That is the regular charge when women go to clean empty houses." 16 October 1914

Equipment at Camp: 10 felling axes, 20 billhooks, 10 pickaxes, 10 shovels, 10 spades, 6 sledge hammers, 12 latrine screens, 10 brooms, 50 latrine buckets, 2 bundles latrine paper, 3200 yards of flannelette, 9 gallons of oil. 19 October 1914.

Telegram from Machell to Mr. Spedding, Lord Lonsdale's agent at Lowther: 'owing to water pouring through roof compelled evacuate Bar stand and accommodation accordingly reduced by 40. Hope can make weather tight quickly.' 28 October 1914.

Letter from the Local Government Board: 'the conditions at Blackwell Camp. The following occur to me as the most important considerations in connection with its sanitation: steps should be taken to render the drinking of water from the well impossible; the conditions of water-carts which convey the Carlisle water to the camp should be strictly supervised and the tanks should be kept scrupulously clean.' 2 November 1914

Equipment ordered for Camp: 1 lifting jack, 1 Maltese cart, 3 wagons, 2 water carts, 2 small lamps, 8 gas bags, 2 cases of pencils, 2 bottles cleansing gas, 2 tin cans, 4 retorts, 2 spanners, 5 message books, 106 signal flags. Equipment ordered for horses: 6 nose bags, 2 harness brushes, 6 horse brushes, 6 curry combs, 1 oil pan, 6 horse rubbers, 1 pair trimming scissors, 23 sponges, 1 saddle blanket, 2 harnesses, 1 pair of horse clippers, 3 saddlery packs. 5 November 1914.

Delivery of 80 second-hand railway sleepers. 16 November 1914

Schedule of lights and fittings at the Grand Stand. 25 November 1914.

Diagrams of electric and petrol lighting at Camp showing the ranges of buildings and the number and position of lighting points. 27 November 1914.

Robinson Brothers [now House of Fraser] submitted the following sample articles [for the officers' mess?] for inspection: hand brush 8d, small scrubbing brush 3s 6d per dozen, plate brush 4d, chamois leathers 6d, wash bowls 11d, zinc buckets 6d, painted hot water cans 2s 3d, dustpan 10d, copper crumb brush and tray 3s 2d, iron saucepans from 1s 8d to 3s 10d, dessert knives 4s 9d per dozen, tables knives 6s 6d per dozen, nickel silver teaspoons 1s 7d per

dozen, nickel silver dessert spoons 4s 2d per dozen, nickel silver table spoons 6s per dozen, nickel silver dessert forks 4s 2d per dozen, nickel silver table forks 6s per dozen, case of fish knives and forks 9s 6d, case of fish carvers 9s 3d, E.P.N.S. breakfast cruet 4s 4d, E.P.N.S. dinner cruet 6s 6d, E.P.N.S. toast rack and butter [dish] 3s 9d, knife cleaners 3d, knife power 4d per tin, enamel buckets 2s, large tray 7d, green tray 2s 6d, oak tray 3s 6d. 16 December 1914.

Following War Office instructions, fire screens to isolate burning huts were procured from Messrs. Laings, builders of Carlisle for £3 19s each. 21 December 1914.

Battalion Orders: 'complete supply of [50] Urine tubs having now been received and issued to Companies, O.C. Companies are responsible that these Tubs are placed by the Orderly men in convenient positions outside the Men's quarters, each evening at Retreat. At Reveille each morning their Company Orderly Sergeant with their Orderly men will remove the Urine Tubs and empty them at the Urinals, after which they will be partially filled with clean water and stacked alongside the Urinals until required at Retreat.' 30 December 1914

Estimate from Joseph Bell, joiner of Stanwix: *'gunracks for huts, they will cost about 2 17s 6d each per hut.'* 4 January 1915

Battalion Orders: 'In order to reduce the risk of fire, O.C. Companies will ensure all stoves, in Quarters and Barrack Rooms, being raked out and made safe before lights out. At least once N.C.O. per room is required to be in his quarters, from last post, each evening, and it will be one of his most important duties to see that this is enforced. Steps are being taken to provide iron plates ... outside each stove, but meanwhile the greatest care must be taken.' 6 January 1915

Equipment ordered: 148 axes, 148 pick axes, 222 shovels. 7 January 1915.

Equipment ordered: 81 Infantry whistles. 9 January 1915

Battalion Orders: 'In future, only Civilian Instructors & Staff Sergeants will sleep in the Sergeants' Room. All officers will occupy the bunks which have been specially prepared for them.' 12 January 1915

Another letter from the Local Government Board: *'The accommodation provided for the military at Blackhall Farm is not of a satisfactory nature. The men at the farm sleep in a number of loose-boxes which differ somewhat in size*

and construction. None of them are efficiently ventilated, some have very imperfect means of ventilation and others no means of ventilation with the exception of the door which is probably closed at night-time. Some 6 or 7 men generally occupy each loose box. I roughly measured two of them and found that the entire space available for each man in one loose-box was about 200 cub ft, while in the other it only amounted to about 160 cub ft. I think that the conditions at Blackhall Farm are such as to be prejudicial to the health of the men and that no time should be lost in providing more suitable accommodation by the erection of huts or otherwise.' 13 Jan 1915.

The same day a progress report commented: '*C Company arrived from Kendal 5th instant and is accommodated in four huts 90' x 20' just completed. New latrines will be ready this week. Drying Rooms for 3 Companies will be ready in about 10 days. Ablution rooms for 2 Companies within 1 week. Officers' mess nearing completion.'*

Letter from Machell: '*I regret to say the Engine is still giving trouble and this Camp was in darkness on Tuesday night when there was a big concert at the Y.M.C.A., last night, and again this morning.'* 15 January 1915

Letter to Binning: '*Water Supply to Blackwell. We find that to deliver the quantity of water required, a larger Plant and Pipe will be required to meet your requirements. We propose to fix a 30 feet Tower, this will give you a daily average of 4500 gallons. The water from the Council's main will be delivered into a 550 gallon Tank.'* 17 January 1915

Order for 200 more pick axes and 200 more shovels. 18 January 1915.

Letter from Machell: '*The Battalion under my command having instituted dry earth latrines, I shall be obliged if you will authorise me to make a Contract for the removal of the contents of the pails. I enclose an offer from ... who is prepared to do the work up to 50 pails a day, which will meet requirements. I consider 12s per day for 1 horse and 2 men to be reasonable.'* 20 January 1915

The Camp and its contents was insured against fire for £3800; the premiums totalled £3 18s 1d. 27 January 1915

Battalion Orders: '*Discipline: Units returning to camp after route marching, night work, or field operations will be called to attention at least 100 yards from the entrance and will march to their private parades for dismissal by the officer or N.C.O. in command. In wet weather, or whenever it appears*

desirable the O.C. Company may order platoons or sections to march direct to their respective rooms, where they will be properly dismissed by their Commanders.' 29 January 1915

Memorandum: *'Fire broke out this morning in no. 2 Barrack room. The damage is very slight being confined to the woodwork of the window sill. There is a danger of fire arising from all the stoves because they are fixed too near to the woodwork.'* 31 January 1915

Order from the Quartermaster: *'All latrine buckets, or urine tubs used in the barrack rooms for coke, to be returned to the Quartermaster's store at once. Coke scuttles will be issued on requisition, one per barrack room.'* 3 February 1915. 70 more urine tubs were ordered on 11 February 1915.

Memo. from Binning: *'Alterations at Stables ... 1. Make boxes 59 and 60 into a Detention Room for 8 prisoners and fitting up with Guard Room beds. 2. Transfer stove and fittings from present Harness Room, provide 6 extra saddle racks, 2 extra saddle horses. There is ample accommodation in the compartments on either side for 55 transport horses. 3. Transfer the men occupying box 53 to empty boxes which can be made fit for use by boarding up (with cavity the back walls which are now damp).'* 12 February 1915.

Order for 500 sandbags. 19 February 1915.

Telegram from Binning: *'[oil] Engine [for lighting] completely broken down send man immediately.'* 20 February 1915

Letter from Charles Thurnam, printers of Carlisle, asking for the return of their loaned typewriter unless the Battalion wished to purchase it. 2 March 1915.

Battalion Orders 2 March 1915: *'A drying-room having been provided for each Company, O.C. Companies will see that this is accessible to their men at all times and that suitable fires are maintained as required. The Officers commanding B and C Companies will satisfy themselves that all ranks know how to act promptly in case of fire. The occupants of the hut in which a fire has occurred will endeavour to isolate the actual fire and to extinguish it by means of blanket and water. The occupants of the adjacent huts down wind instantly endeavouring to protect them by setting up sufficient numbers of screens to windward.'*

Bill for £5 for a portable phone; previously the Camp did not have one. 3 March 1915.

Tender from John Hewitson, St. Nicholas slate works: *'to point up and repair to prevent snow etc. drifting on to the beds at the above [racing stables] so help to make the place more comfortable for the sum of three pounds.'* 8 March 1915

Letter from Brigadier Collings, Western Command to Machel: *'Your men are accommodated in huts and the racecourse building. Please let me know how many in each, and if the accommodation is sufficient for your requirements, also terms you hold the buildings on that is tied or free & when hiring terminates – I see your depot remains at the Racecourse on the battalion proceeding to a training centre. If congestion is the reason you could I suppose easily camp out a company.'* Machel replied immediately: *'One company is located in the various rooms of the Grand Stand, one in the Stables, which have been specially adapted, and two Companies are in hutments which have been constructed for the purpose. The Camp is situated 2 miles from Carlisle. We have no telephone.'* The same day, 18 March 1915, Battalion Orders: *'The attention of all ranks is drawn to the urgent necessity of keeping all Gates on the race-course closed, in order to avoid damage to the cattle and sheep of the grazing tenant.'*

Letter to Machel: *'My medical inspector of recruits reports that Lonsdale Battalion under your command is being very much overcrowded. Is it possible to arrange to billet your depot company and prevent this overcrowding?'* Machel replied immediately and sounded rather irritated: *'Depot Company already billeted. If remaining longer would possibly recommend building additional accommodation but under circumstances useless. Cubic spaces in some cases technically inadequate but men perfectly fit and happy.'* 20 March 1915

Battalion Orders 20 March 1915: *'O.C. Companies should satisfy themselves that all papers and other combustible refuse from their quarter is placed in the incinerators, and not in the hole which is needed for the ashes.'*

As the move to Training Camp drew nearer: *'it is probable that all men in billets will be moved into Camp during April. Any claims for alleged damages should be submitted forthwith, as no subsequent claims can be considered.'* 26 March 1915

Battalion Orders 27 March 1915: *'The Quartermaster's Store will be closed for issues ... for the Annual Stock Taking'*

Battalion Orders 1 April 1915 *'All Barrack Rooms and lines to be scrupulously clean.'*

Progress report on huts: *'2 Companies have been accommodated in W [ar] O[ffice] pattern huts, the buildings of Grand Stands have been adapted for another, and the 4th has been lodged in the stables which have been floored and otherwise rendered habitable.'* 13 April 1915

However, concern about overcrowding continued: *'there has been a great amount of overcrowding in the horse boxes used as billets in the Camp. Please inform me if this has been remedied.'* Machell replied immediately: *'if it had been intended continue occupation horse boxes I would have recommended building huts but these boxes will not be re-occupied when the Battalion leaves. Expect order leaving Carlisle daily.'* 20 April 1915

And Machell's final words on the Camp: *'The original 'fields' have of late been merged to a great extent, and there is no doubt the troops use practically the entire area though of course part of the ground in front of the Stand is used most. I suppose Mr. Irving's claim for £57 10s represents something a little over 25% of his rent, and having regard to everything, especially the fact that it has been impossible for him to turn out more than perhaps 1/3 of the usual number of ewes this spring, I am inclined to consider his claim to be reasonable.'* 28 April 1915

3 Lieutenant-Colonel Percy W Machell

Much of the information about Machell (who came from Crackanthorpe) comes from his reports to the Cumberland and Westmorland Territorial Forces' Association (of which he was a member), his memoranda on a variety of topics, his letters to the Earl of Lonsdale, and his correspondence with his superiors at Western Command.

Machell to the Cumberland & Westmorland Territorial Forces' Association: *'Thanks to the Executive Committee and other patriotic gentlemen at Kendal, Carlisle and Workington we have been able to start long before our central camp could be ready. One thing we will not do & that is ask a man to come to us before we are ready to make him comfortable.'*

When a man joins the Lonsdale Battalion he is taking a wise step. Lord Lonsdale, whose name we are proud to bear, has lent us marquees, stoves, cookers & is helping us in every way. We are a battalion of "Pals" men from different localities in the two Counties soldiering together in sections, platoons and companies. Officers, Non-Commissioned officers and men, we are all soldiers; badges and stripes do not imply social superiority, but merely indicate our jobs. We are all rungs upon the same ladder. Officers are no good without the rank and file, and the rank and file are no good without the officers.

If I am the Commanding Officer, it is not because I am a better man than anyone else, but because I have been a soldier, & know what I have got to do. True discipline is based on the genuine cooperation of all ranks, and we have all of us joined with one idea. We are out for King & Country and each has got to do his best.

There will have to be a lot of drill at first, because drill means system, & we cannot do without it, but drill is not the end, it is only the beginning. On top of drill will come the big thing, the development of the soldier's sense of duty, the soldier spirit. Once we have got this, everything comes easy, hardship & danger, it is all Duty, and we will do our duty for all we are worth.

As we have written on our posters, the men of Westmorland and Cumberland will enlist together & fight together, and I look forward with confidence to the Lonsdale Battalion becoming one of the finest fighting regiments in the British Army.' 30 September 1914

Letters from Machell to Lord Lonsdale who asked Machell to address him as Lonsdale not Lord Lonsdale:

"a football match and the players wanted to wear yellow[Lonsdale] colour. Men on duty were allowed to go home for the weekend; recruitment now over 700.' 24 October 1914

'The mess hut has been lengthened, several of the new tables have been received & we can now just seat all the men together - a huge advantage. Men are also at work flooring the stables, as further accommodation is urgently required. Men are coming in well - strength yesterday 729; we have about 200 men in uniform now. We are organising a big parade for 7th Nov, the hiring day at Carlisle. The health of the men is good, their conduct is splendid.' 26 October 1914

'It is most kind of you to have ordered the football jerseys, & we shall be very pleased to wear your crest. We have had to evacuate the tents as the water came through. However, they have got on well with flooring the loose boxes. Tomorrow our numbers should be 800, and I expect a big influx at the hirings. In the Race Stand buildings we have not accommodation for more than 350. If the Bar Stand can be made habitable, we can temporarily put 40 there, but it is wanted as a canteen. In stables say, 300, & I should like to use the Pavilion as a mess & recreation hut, so that we shall require hutments for 450 men.' 30 October 1914

'You thought you could lend me a useful animal [horse] for Parade, I should much like him this week – we contemplate a march round Carlisle on Saturday, the hiring day.' 1 November 1914

Machell did not live at Camp but leased Blackwell Lodge from 4 November 1914.

'Lonsdales beat the great "Bighill United F.C. Whitehaven by 5 goals to 1 yesterday, in the new shirts. 31 recruits, grand fellows, came in last night, I have also probably up to 70, and [need to] weed out undesirables as much as possible. I am assured by the men that we could raise another Battalion if we wanted to, but the men won't hear of anything but the Lonsdales. After Parade today I told them we had raised the Battalion with their cooperation and it was their cooperation we relied upon to enable us to run it. It occurs to me that you might like to let the W.O. know that obviously the way to get recruits is to send the men home on weekend pass and tell their friends the facts. The 4 London sergeants are grand they teach the men as much and more in an hour as others do in a week. Heavy snow today.' 15 November 1914

'Yesterday the Lonsdales beat the Carlisle United F.C. by 2 goals to 0 – a fine match, far the best yet. The weather is awful & there is a lot of mild sort of influenza – in fact it is just a matter of how bad everyone is, but it will do us all good. I have got all up from Stables now except those who actually mess in the Pavilion, & hope to get the Kendal Company in the new huts by Xmas. There has been a muddle about the great coats which are now urgently required – the Committee appear not to have made a proper contract, so has been at the mercy of the contractor. Your belts are a godsend, & the rugs' 29 November 1914.

'We have been issuing your coats all day & giving out the thicker ones first – they are immensely appreciated. It really was becoming very serious. The weather has been exceptionally bad, but the health of the men is not suffering as much as one would expect – the anti-typhoid inoculation laid a lot up for a day or two, but they get over it quickly.' 4 December 1914

'Your magnificent present of cigars has arrived and they have been distributed. Being in boxes of 25 this was easy, and there is great excitement about it. Thank you once more for all the kind things you have done. Our Xmas card has turned out rather a poor affair. The wretch said he could not use the good photo you sent because it was not toned & substituted this bad one! Grand weather for work now. I hope by next Xmas the Battalion will have made a good name, & that you will never regret all that you have done for us – we will do our best.' 23 December 1914

As the arrival of C Company from Kendal grew near, Machell wrote to their commander, Major Rivington: *'I think it would be a very good thing if you were to bring your small car here – I will try & see about a place for it before you com. Was sorry to have to postpone your move, but I am glad I did, because I see the contractor will probably not get the last hut finished in time for 29th. There will be delay about the ablution rooms in any case, but I know your fellows will realise that it is desirable that the Battalion should get together as soon as possible, and a shift and a shake-up is all on the way to making them helpful. Am forming up the Battalion now in Mass instead of cols. of Platoons.'* [He continued to give Rivington detailed instructions of what and how to practice and issued 'Falling in in Mass for Battn. Parades' the following day.] 26-27 December 1914.

In 1915, Machell's concerns are chiefly about the Battalion's next move:

'From this time onwards [Officers Commanding] should make every endeavour to get their men together and smarten them up after the prolonged rest entailed by vaccination. The immediate destiny of the Battalion will largely depend upon the impression formed of its merits by the Inspecting General Officer.' 14 March 1915

Machell's draft letter to General Henry Mackinnon, Western Command: *'I hear that we are probably to assemble at Grantham in early April. As regards strength, almost up to 1350, all ranks, but we are now weeding steadily & recruiting has checked since we had to close our private recruiting office.'*

Today our strength is 29 officers, 1302 N.C.O.'s & men. I am collecting officers gradually, and I think I can get the men when I resume recruiting in earnest. It did us so much harm before having to turn men back. I am sorry to say we still have only our 400 old rifles, and 10 new Miniature, but I have borrowed 10 Service rifles & collected 2500 rds. of ammn.' 19 March 1915

Machell's final letter to Lord Lonsdale: *'One thing is certain, viz. that we ought to move on from here with Brigade as soon as possible – people are mocking at our men & they hate it – recruits say it is no good joining a Battalion which does not get out further than Blackwell. I expect things near Ypres are so bad that Kitchener is thinking seriously about Home Defence, & this is probably the reason for creating local armies. Anyway what we ought to have is a move some time soon, the men are getting rather stale here, comfortable as we are.'* 27 April 1915

4 5th Earl of Lonsdale

The 5th Earl of Lonsdale, known as the “Yellow Earl” was not a professional soldier but enjoyed most things military. He was an Honorary Colonel in the Westmorland Cumberland Yeomanry and before the War had a long friendship with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. They met at Cowes Week on the Isle of Wight in the early 1890's and their mutual love of sailing started the friendship. The fact that they shared the same birthday led the Kaiser to call the Earl his “celestial twin.” The Kaiser visited Lowther Castle at least twice and the Earl visited Germany a number of times, sometimes to spectate at the Kaiser's ‘Military Manoeuvres’.

Apart from raising the Lonsdale Battalion, the Earl's other achievement in the war was to be responsible for supplying ‘remounts’ or replacements for horses killed and injured in the conflict.

His contributions to and influence on behalf of the Battalion is evident right throughout the archive, but particularly in his dealings with Col. Machell.

Telegram from Machell: *'Lord Lonsdale has obtained authority enlist five feet five instead of five feet six.'* 1 October 1914

Telegram from Lord Lonsdale: *'have got present for each man of pair blankets if not three they will be at Carlisle today.'* 1 October 1914

Telegram from Machell to Spedding, agent at Lowther: *'tables for Mess and Hut urgently needed know his Lordship wishes this to be got on with.'* 19 October 1914

Lord Lonsdale asks if the Battalion will wear the Lowther crest as their badge. 26 October 1914.

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: *'urgent six hundred blankets required to give each man three owing severe cold.'* Lord Lonsdale immediately replied: *"Am sorry men are likely to feel the cold delighted to send more blankets 900 despatched today.'* 17 November 1914

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: *'The blankets have not actually arrived, but I have a notice today that a large quantity was despatched yesterday, so I expect we shall have them very soon. All going well – I had a special little parade at noon today –which went off well.'* 19 November 1914

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: *'greatcoats actually received 230.'* Lord Lonsdale immediately replied: *'great coat difficulty was not fault of committee but fault of contract being made with company who became insolvent and could not obtain cloth.'* 1 December 1914

Telegram: *'Lord Lonsdale approves of water pipe [to Camp] get it done at once.'* 5 December 1914

Letter from Lord Lonsdale: *'I am delighted to hear that you are getting on so well, at football & all else. I fear this weather has been terribly against all proceedings, huts, etc. Certainly I will have a Photograph taken for your Xmas card & I will send you a Sketch of the Badge which is almost complete. How many badges do they require, one for cap 2 for shoulder, where else? What awful weather we had just over 8 in of rain in 6 days here, the record for Lowther for the last 50 years.'* 8 December 1914

Letter to Machell: *'Daily News Army and Navy Xmas Pudding Fund at the request of Lord Lonsdale we forward 10 cases each containing ten 8lb tins and one containing five 8lb tins of Xmas Puddings. On the basis of half-a-pound of pudding per man, this consignment will provide for 1680 men in all.'* 14 December 1914.

Letter from Machell to the War Office: *'I am directed by the Earl of Lonsdale to request that the twenty chemical 'Extincteurs' may be supplied as early as*

possible. Wooden hutments for 600 men, besides officers' quarters & other buildings have now been erected, & owing to shortage of water there is absolutely no means of dealing promptly with possible outbreak of fire.' 16 December 1914

Christmas telegram from Lord Lonsdale: 'Christmas greetings to you and yours and all the best of wishes. It is Regiments such as yours that are going to establish the supremacy of England for-ever and sincerely trust that this will be done as speedily as possible and that next Xmas I can congratulate you upon all success and the safety of the Empire but troops are still needed so use your collective and individual help in recruiting in the interest of King and your country' 24 December 1914.

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: 'Received 600 badges with 1000 thanks badges perfect for caps total with Depot 1600. Unsuitable for shoulders where usual order badge must be worn. Suggest hundred extra to supply officers' collars.' 11 January 1915

List of officers who had received a cardigan, scarf and mirror as gifts from Lord Lonsdale. 12 January 1915.

Garrard & Co. Crown Jewellers, to Lord Lonsdale: 'we have this afternoon forwarded to Col. Machell 650 of the silver regimental badges, we have made to your esteemed instructions.' 16 January 1915

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: 'When we go to Grantham our Depot [E Company] here has got to come under the Border Regiment at Carlisle. I am advised to ask you to be so kind as to write to Sir H. Mackinnon [at Western Command] to tell him that you desire the Lonsdale Depot to remain under me, as long as we are in England, for all purposes, otherwise our recruiting will be completely killed. My Brigadier asks if I can get a couple of Dummy Machine Guns made for training purposes. It is evidently impossible to obtain real machine guns, but dummies are equally good for training purposes. Could you ask Vickers Maxim or other firms if they will supply?' 16 April 1915

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: 'now that Grantham is cancelled & advance party ordered back here I am anxious about our fate it is important we should make a move & I don't see why we should not be transferred fifth to third army now that we are not to go with 112th Brigade. Could you ascertain somehow what War Office intends to do with us?' 17 April 1915

General Mackinnon to Lord Lonsdale: *'I take the opportunity of expressing to you my very high appreciation of your patriotic action in raising the battalion, and of congratulating you on the success which has attended your efforts.'*

6 May 1915

5 Uniform, Clothes, Personal Equipment and Field Glasses

Even before the Battalion was officially formed, D. Morphy & Co. of Kendal wrote to Major Binning: *'We have secured sufficient Army Grey Flannel to make 1000 men's shirts, & can make and deliver these next week.'* 11

September 1914

Machell realised it would take time to order clothes and uniform and so wrote to his Recruiting Officers: *'Owing to the impossibility of obtaining at once sufficient blankets, underclothing, and necessaries, Recruiting Officers are requested to inform all recruits that they are recommended to take with them the following articles, which will be taken over if serviceable and paid for according to valuation of the prescribed government rates. Each recruit: Blankets 2 or 3. Clothing 2 pairs of boots and laces, 1 pair woollen drawers, 1 cardigan, waistcoat or jersey. Necessaries: 1 pair braces, 1 hairbrush, 1 shaving brush and 1 toothbrush, 1 comb, 1 knife, 1 fork, 1 spoon, 1 razor, 2 flannel shirts, 3 pairs of socks, 2 towels.'* 21 September 1914. Later, in addition: *'The following have been added to the list of articles to be provided for men of locally raised units who were enlisted before the 15th Nov. 1 pair woollen gloves, 1 cap comforter, 1 holdall per man. To cover the cost of these articles the sum of 2/9d per man may be drawn.'* Battalion Orders, 4 January 1915.

Once the Battalion was official, local suppliers were ready and waiting. Estimate from Joseph Blain, general dealer of Blackfriars Street, Carlisle: *'1000 hairbrushes at 12s per dozen, 1000 toothbrushes at 4s per dozen, 1000 dressing combs at 5s per dozen, 84 dozen knives and forks at 4s 9d per dozen, 1000 tablespoons and teaspoons at 6s 6d per dozen, delivery in about 7 days.'* 19 September 1914. The same day a memo. from J. Fitzsimmons, hatter of Botchergate: *'I have pleasure in quoting for 1000 Territorial Caps – Standard Army Pattern – making, trimming including badge – price 2s 9d each.'* and enclosed a sample of material; 19 September 1914. Binning ordered from Redmayne's, tailors of Wigton: *'making up & trimming 2000 Jackets & 2000 pairs of Trousers@ 8s 9d per set. Delivery to be made at 300 suits per week.'*

Garments to be turned out smart and well-finished. 22 September 1914. A week later Thorpe's of Carlisle acknowledged an order for: *'2000 pairs of pants as 40s per dozen.'* At the beginning of October, Carlisle Cooperative Society wrote: *'We regret our inability to procure any Cardigans, Jackets & Sweaters of any description whatsoever. We have tried all our available sources, and have found it impossible to get even a dozen.'* What the Coop could not supply, Thorpe's could and a week later they acknowledged an order for *'1000 Stockinette Cardigan Jackets assorted linings.'* However, the Coop was able to supply: *"1 pr Specials [boots] size 14 made to measure 18s 6d.'* on 17 October 1914. They followed this up a week later with: *'We have delivered boots as follows to Blackwell Camp: 687, and to Kendal 238 pairs making 925 pairs, leaving 125 pairs..'*

As the clothes began to arrive, Redmayne's of Wigton retorted to a complaint: *'My instructions are 'No alterations to be made, the tunics & trousers are to be tried on different recruits until each one receives somewhere near a 'fit' as all are made in stock sizes, not to measures!'* 27 October 1914.

Once Binning had ordered basic uniform and clothes, he turned his attention to how they should be washed. He received an offer to wash and mend officers' garments from Fusehill Street Workhouse, and Carlisle Electricity Department showed the brand to be used for stamping shirts and blankets.

During November 1914 further uniform, clothes and material arrived: 3200 yards of flannelette; the parishioners of Nether Denton donated 4 belts, mufflers and 11 helmets; Redmayne's delivered 999 suits and caps; 1100 shirts, flannel silver grey were ordered. On 5 January 1915, a telegram recorded: *'706 men have two pairs boots 612 expected daily.'*

Samples of shoulder titles, 20 January 1915

Once the uniforms and clothes had arrived or were ordered, a series of Battalion Orders instructed men how and when to wear them.

'No soldier will ever be allowed to leave Camp unless properly dressed. Puttees will also be worn when walking out, and short canes carried. The latter can be obtained at the Y.M.C.A. Recreation Hut.' 29 December 1914

'On and after Sunday 16th, every man leaving Camp for the purpose of proceeding to town will be required to carry a cane of regulation length.' 15 January 1915

'O.C. Companies will have the N.C.O.'s and men of their respective Companies measured by the Master Tailor without delay.' 29 January 1915

'O.C. Companies will arrange to issue their equipment, as received from the Quartermaster & have each N.C.O. & man properly fitted.' 3 February 1915.

'N.C.O.'s and men of Companies in possession of equipment will wear waistbelts, intrenching tool & helve, frogs & one pouch on right hand side, I.E. "Drill Order" on all duties except when specially ordered to approach in "Marching Order" or otherwise. Guards invariably mount in "Marching Order" the equipment being worn over the great coat in inclement weather and as soon as they have mounted they will change from "Marching Order" to "Drill Order", sentries being relieved for this purpose. The old guard including sentries will await the arrival of the new guard in "Marching Order". N.C.O.'s and men on Orderly Duty will wear belts and bayonets.' 9 February 1915.

Captain Diggle's order to officers: *'Until further orders the usual brown leather belt will be worn by Officers on all ordinary duty. Swords will not be worn under any circumstances. Every officer must provide himself with a Service revolver and pouch for ammunition, which will not be worn at present, but which will be shortly required.'* 3 March 1915

'Officers Commanding Companies must be very particular to see that no alterations are made in the new Khaki Clothing. There is always a tendency for young soldiers to desire to have their clothing made so tight as to make it impossible for them to move their limbs freely. This is harmless if it is merely "Walking-out dress", but it is absolutely fatal to attempt to make "Service dress" fit closely. A very real soldiers endeavours to have his Service dress as easy and comfortable as possible, and Service dress made too tightly only makes the wearer look ridiculous.' 16 March 1915

'The new Khaki Uniforms will be taken into wear for walking out and otherwise when specially ordered and the clothing of each N.C.O. and soldier is passed.' 18 March 1915

'It should be understood that, as the new clothing of each soldier is marked and fitted, it will at once be taken into wear by him without further order for walking out. From tomorrow inclusive Khaki will be worn on guard. For the present the grey caps will continue to be worn with either the grey or the Khaki uniform.' 20 March 1915

And last but not least: *'The Commanding Officer has received the following gifts of socks: St. Stephen's Church Sewing Guild 110 prs; Queen Mary's Needlework Guild (through Lady Valda Machell, Machell's wife), 10,000 pairs; Lady Valda Machell 41 prs.'* 26 March 1915.

Carlisle Citizens' League appeared to be looking for favours when they wrote to Lord Lonsdale: *'may we point out to your lordship that the League has been mainly the instrument of collecting and forwarding to the Lonsdale Battalion over 4000 articles – overcoats, shirts, socks, blankets, pillows, razors, tobacco, pipes, etc.'* 29 April 1915.

One item of equipment in short supply was field glasses. It was reported that 12 pairs had been received from the National Service League on 4 December but two months later, Machell made an urgent plea to the local press:

'By courtesy of the Cummersdale Miniature Rifle Club, the Battalion under my command has already been able to obtain a good grounding in elementary musketry on the Miniature ranges situated within twenty minutes' march of our Camp, with the result that the Musketry Staff Officer of the Western Command, after his recent inspection of the Lonsdales, reported that he was well satisfied with the progress we had made. Having passed through the 'grouping' practice stage, we now feel the urgent need of field glasses for the use of our Non-Commissioned Officers; if good results are to be obtained, it is necessary for these N.C.O.'s to be able to observe the effect of each shot fired in the 'Application' and 'Disappearing Target' practices. Further, as we now proceed with training in Outpost work, and other Minor Tactical Exercises, we feel more keenly than ever the necessity of providing our Section Commanders with reliable field glasses, in the efficient use of which they need careful practice before going to the front. There are many keenly patriotic people in these counties who, while not able to enter upon active service themselves, are anxious to help on the training of the New Army in every way they can. They have done much for us already, and it has been suggested that, in this matter of providing field glasses for our Non Commissioned Officers, they will be generous enough to give us further assistance, by lending or giving a sufficient number of glasses, either for the period of our training or (and this would be far better for the Battalion, of course) for the duration of the War. The Lonsdale Battalion is now over 1300 strong. We are all Westmorland and Cumberland men, bent upon doing credit to the Border Counties, if we can, during the present national crisis. It is this that emboldens us to ask the patriotic men and

women of these counties to give us their generous assistance in a matter of great practical importance. Every one of our Non Commissioned Officers needs a pair of Field Glasses, in order that he may be placed on even terms with the enemy he will presently have to face. I venture to think the people of Westmorland and Cumberland will help us out to supply this need. As is generally known, there are 16 section commanders in each Company besides other N.C.O.'s, and four Platoon Sergeants. There are, of course, four Companies in every Service battalion. Officers provide their own glasses, but we should be very grateful for one hundred pairs, or even fifty pairs for our N.C.O.'s. Glasses are urgently required now, and later they will be indispensable. Glasses may be sent to this Camp. Each pair received will be properly listed, with the name and address of the sender, and every effort will be made to return them in due course, where that is desired' 18 February 1915.

On 10 March, H.E.P. Welch of Kirkby Lonsdale wrote: 'I hope the Cornet may be of some use to the "Lonsdale" Band. I shall be glad to have the glasses back again at the end of the war.' The following day Battalion Orders reported: '50 pairs have now been received, besides £26 6s in cash, with which it is hoped to purchase glasses if any can be procured.' and 'Captain Rivington has very kindly assumed responsibility for providing field glasses for the N.C.O.'s in his own [C] Company.'

By the time the Battalion left for Prees Heath in Shropshire, 84 pairs of field glasses had been received.

6 Health

These entries record the general state of health and not individual sick leave, some records of which may be found in Daily Orders.

Some men were soon found to be unfit for service. Letter from Dr. Morland: 'Owing to the development of varicose veins in both legs I consider Private J. Colman to be unfit for Military Service. While on duty the condition became gradually worse.' 17 October 1914.

The Camp was ready to deal with health problems:

The Voluntary Aid Department Cumberland 3 wrote 'our members will relieve each other on duty at the Pavilion sick ward.' 8 October 1914.

Despatch of stretchers on 4 November 1914 and an order for 4 more on 16 December 1914.

Another letter from the Voluntary Aid Detachment of the British Red Cross in Carlisle: *'I will be pleased to come up and arrange what I can to provide a staff for your proposed [Medical] Detention Room at the Camp.'* 4 December 1914

There followed a programme of inoculation: *'1259 men inoculated against typhoid.'* 18 December 1914. At the end of December Cumberland County Council Health Department wrote to Machell: *'enclosing an account for £1 6s 4d incurred for needles used in inoculating your men. We have most gladly given of our services and will always be willing to do whatever we can, and I think you will agree that the Army ought to bear this cost.'*

For those who could not be treated in Camp:

Letter from Machell: *'I consulted the Committee of the Cumberland Infirmary, who have agreed to allow men of the Battalion under my command to occupy up to thirty beds provided that the cases are suitable for admission, and that there is room.'* 31 December 1914. A week later he wrote: *'The Cumberland Infirmary kindly agreed to accept a limited number of our more serious cases on payment of 1s 9d per day, the amount allowed for our messing. This is by far the best arrangement that can be made. Our own ambulance takes our sick from our medical detention room in the camp, straight to the Infirmary.'*

Inoculation continued: *'Inoculation will be resumed tomorrow for primary or secondary inoculation for painting previous to inoculation.'* 11 January 1915. A month later Battalion Orders recorded: *'The Officer Commanding is glad to be able to announce that the percentage of Officers, N.C. Officers and men of the Lonsdale Battalion who have been inoculated is today over 95 per cent.'* Inoculation continued at the expense of other matters: Battalion Orders of 4 March 1915: *'Parades and training tomorrow will be at the discretion of Officers Commanding Companies, having due regard to the effects of vaccination.'*

As the move to training camp drew nearer, Battalion Orders of 27 March 1915 recorded: *'All men who after Medical examination are found permanently unfit for service abroad, but fit for home service will be transferred to Depot Company.'* And for those who were fitter, Battalion Orders of 5 April 1915 recorded: *'N.C.O.'s and men who are unfit to march with their Companies on*

Wednesday but who are pronounced by the M.O. fit to proceed to Grantham will be marched to the Station & entrained in a separate Compartment.' The same day, 21 privates '*not being considered likely to become efficient soldiers on medical grounds*' were paid and then struck off.

7 Bad Boys

It is perhaps too much to expect that hundreds of young men away from home and family, often for the first time in their lives, should behave well all the time. Most misdemeanours were lateness and absence, for which the punishment were usually forfeiture of pay and sometimes detention.

However, the following entries record a flavour of the wilder escapades:

Affiliation order granted against Private John Boadle of Southey Street, Keswick; 29 September 1914.

Conviction of Edward Salkeld for stealing a cart and harness; imprisoned for one month or to pay 23 shillings; 7 November 1914.

Letter from Miss Edith Annie Smith of Whitehaven: '*I not having received any money from Private Patrick Canon for the maintenance of my child.*' 11 December 1914.

Letter from the Chief Constable of Carlisle '*I have to inform you that Private John Bell was arrested last night for being drunk and disorderly and creating a disturbance in the Palace Theatre [Botchergate, Carlisle]. I understand his conduct in the gallery at the Palace was disgraceful and the Artiste who was performing had to leave the stage before finishing his turn in consequence of Bell's behaviour. He would not have been locked up but for the fact that he refused to leave the building and declined to give his name.*' 19 December 1914.

Letter from Major Harrison, Officer Commanding D Company: '*I have to report that the following men are absent without leave. S. Lowe of Whitehaven, W. Mumford of Workington, J.W. Oglethorpe of Workington, J. Donaughee of Workington, E.F. Hall of Whitehaven, and J. McGee. Some of these men applied to me for leave and I refused. The absence of these men together points somewhat to a conspiracy and a defiance of the regulations. Do you think it is worthwhile to notify the Police?'* 19 December 1914.

Private R. Rumney sentenced to detention barracks in Stafford for 28 days for using threatening and obscene language to an N.C.O. and striking an N.C.O. with a fork; 23 January 1915.

Letter from the Chief Constable of Carlisle: *'a report against Lance Corporal Austin Ferguson for driving a motor bicycle without a licence. Shall be glad to know whether you will deal with it yourself or prefer it to come before the Justices in the ordinary way.'* 9 March 1915.

Sergeant Peter Crilley was convicted of being drunk and disorderly in Carlisle and fined 10s and asked to revert to the rank of corporal. Private Robert Carruthers was convicted of being drunk and capable and fined 5s; 16 March 1915.

'I beg to report that two prisoners have broken out of cells. Private J. Telford and Private T. Richardson, both of B Company. These two men were placed in the cells at 9.40 a.m. charged with being drunk. They were visited at 2.30 p.m. and were then taken to the latrines. At 3.30 p.m. the prisoners shouted to the guard that they wanted to go to the latrines [the guard] did not take the prisoners to the latrines because the Sergt. considered that they had no real need to go. They were at this time using foul and abusive language. At 4.45 p.m. the Corporal of the Guard took tea to the cells, and found that louvers in the lower part of the door had been broken out and that both prisoners were gone. The Sergeant of the Guard has been relieved of his duty and placed in open arrest.' 20 March 1915

Letter from Alice Coulthard of Carlisle: *'I have applied for a grant for a little boy five years old of course I cannot get it without the father's sanction. He is a private in your Battalion. He has promised to see it, but he keeps hanging back perhaps he does not care to broach the subject. We have received nothing since he enlisted; Private James Kay.'* 4 May 1915

8 An Army Marches on its Stomach

Letter to Mr. Barker, Central Hotel, Carlisle: *'The following are the hours for opening the Canteen [at the Camp] 12 noon to 12-45 5.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.'* 2 October 1914.

Telegram from Major Binning to Machell: *'John William Harker contractor supplies all food and is paid two shillings per head per day no profit to*

Battalion. So far everything satisfactory. Could not get anyone else to take on contract.' 14 October 1914.

Canteen Prices: Ale 3d per pint; Beer 4d per pint; Whisky ranging from 2d to 5d a measure; Port or Rum 2d or 3d a measure; soda 1d. Dry goods: pies 2d; cakes 2d; chocolate 1d; boxes of matches 1d; tin of metal polish 1d; tin of boot polish 1d; twist of tobacco 2d; packet of cigarettes 1d. 28 October 1914.

Memo. 'Please give orders that, in order to ensure proper supply of biscuits at early morning tea, which until further order will be served at 6.45 a.m., Company Orderly Corporals will take over biscuits for the number of men in mess in their respective Companies from the Contractor's store at 6.40 a.m. & will be responsible for proper issue.' 13 November 1914.

Telegram from Mrs. Dixon of Wood View, Carlisle: *'Could the Lonsdale Battn. use ½ a ton of jam? It is offered as a present from some people in Carlisle.'* 26 November 1914. Letter from Constance Davidson, Home Food Culture of Cumberland and Westmorland requesting tins in which to store the jam, and make arrangements for delivery. 7 December 1914.

Invoice from Briggs Brothers of Market Street, Carlisle: *'To hire of 132ft of Tabling for Dining Rooms from Oct-Dec 1914, 3 Months £2 10s.'* 8 January 1915.

Captain Diggle's order: *'No breakfasts will under any circumstances be taken to a Barrack-room unless by special order of the Medical Officer.'* 15 April 1915.

Battalion Orders: *'The Quartermaster has arranged to provide tea or coffee at 7.0 a.m. for men going to the Baths. 2 biscuits per man will be drawn by O.C. Companies the previous day and issued under Company arrangements. Hot soup and bread will be provided for Companies returning from night work on indent, stating numbers and hour at which the meal is required.'* 28 January 1915.

Battalion Orders: *'In future meals will be set out in the Cook-house in the following order. C Company, D Company, B Company and Orderlies will parade and will be marched in accordingly, so that meals of those who have furthest to go will start first.'* 29 January 1915

Battalion Orders: *'On Saturdays the Canteen will be open for the sale of intoxicating liquors from 2 p.m. till 9.15 p.m.'* 13 February 1915.

9 Discharges

Most men were discharged for bad behaviour or 'not likely to become an efficient soldier.' Others were discharged for a variety of reasons:

Letter from Major Binning: *'Robert Rutherford has made a false attestation. He is an indentured Apprentice and his employer will not let him go. I therefore recommend that he be discharged.'* 15 October 1914.

Telegram: *'Stop attestation from Joseph Young find he has just finished three months imprisonment, he will be prosecuted tomorrow.'* 16 October 1914.

Machell's letters re discharges:

'Private J. Simpson, this man is so dull-witted, stupid and obstinate as to be incapable of learning his drill. He is unable to keep step or to perform the simplest of movements correctly. He is of powerful physique, and I have personally endeavoured to induce him to try & keep up with his comrades. I had almost decided he was mentally deficient.' 8 November 1914.

'Pte. R. Johnston, he is a constant source of trouble to his Platoon Sergeant, his comrades complain of his obscene language & low habits, and he makes little or no progress with his training. On being awarded a minor punishment he broke out of camp & remained absent till nearly midnight.' 13 November 1914.

'Ex-Sergeant E.J. Caine. Having been found to be useless as an Instructor he was appointed Pioneer Sergeant. On 12th Nov. he was placed under arrest for drunkenness & was released with a warning. On 28th Nov. he was again very drunk, and created a considerable disturbance in Camp. He was reverted to the ranks.' 22 December 1914.

'Thomas Stewart was discharged on account of his unsatisfactory conduct. He was not guilty of any serious crime, but on account of his slovenliness, slackness and undesirable influence it was considered desirable to discharge him.' 20 January 1915.

Between Christmas 1914 and 21 April 1915, 114 men, about 10% of the Battalion's strength, were discharged *'not having finally been approved.'*

10 Rifle and Other Training

Apart from drill, this was the main focus of training in Camp. Although there were facilities relatively close to the Camp, there was always a shortage of proper rifles and ammunition.

Letter from Major Binning: *'We are taking over a Miniature Range and shall be much obliged if you will kindly quote for Ammunition .22.'* 5 October 1914.

Robert Fulton of Cummersdale Mills: *'We have been carrying out a good many alterations to our Range but we hope to complete them by Saturday and you would be able to commence shooting any time after that. You will be able at least to have 12 men shooting at once and if found necessary 18 with very little difficulty. We have managed to get 11 Rifles several clubs having responded to our appeal. I have been fortunate in getting 20,000 Rds of Ammunition. I take it you will be using the white target with round "bull" at first until your men get used to the sights. But if later you wanted to use the green card (enclosing sample) with khaki man upon it.'* 28 October 1914.

Letter from Machell: *'Having obtained the loan of a few service rifles and a small quantity of ammunition, I wish to put each Company through a modified course of musketry as it completes its practice with Miniature rifle.'* 28 October 1914.

For nearly 3 months, the records are silent about the progress of rifle training until Machell wrote: *'There is a range at Burgh by Sands which in normal times belongs to the Territorial Force, but it has now been taken over by the War Office. I have permission from the T.F.A. to make use of their Target requisites.'* 25 January 1915.

A small number of men was sent on an irregular basis to train at the School of Musketry, at Altcar near Formby, Lancashire.

Nearly a month later, Brigadier Collings wrote to Machell: *'I wrote to Sir Henry Mackinnon [Western Command] to ask him if your Battn. could not be pushed on to musketry, & he replies that he regrets very much he cannot get rifles for you to do so.'* 22 February 1915.

Battalion Orders record the progress of training:

'The Miniature Range will be at the disposal of Companies for application Practice, one sighting shot and five rounds per officer, N.C.O. and man.' 19

February 1915. *'Great Coats will be always be worn or carried by N.C.O's and men proceeding to Musketry, for the purpose of protection in the case of rain and to lie upon when firing.'* 24 February 1915. *'O.C. Companies will be careful to make complete arrangements regarding targets, target requisites and ammunition at least one day before they proceed to the Ranges, and an advanced party should always be sent to have all ready for practice to commence as soon as the Platoon or Company arrives.'* 25 February 1915. *'Arrangements have been made for 4 Officers and 16 N.C.O.'s per Company to undergo a modified preliminary course of musketry at Burgh on Sands. Cold luncheons to be carried in haversacks, Great coats carried in packs or worn. [O.C. Companies] will arrange for the 10 Service Rifles to be handed over and for 15 rounds of ammunition per man to be issued. Preference will be given [to those] who have never previously fired any course of musketry.'* 10 March 1915. And the same day: *'The Miniature Range will be at the disposal ... for the purpose of firing any casuals or bad shots in application practice.'* And a week later *'The Miniature Range this week will be at the disposal of Companies for snapshooting - practice will be carried out lying down over sand-bags, 5 seconds allowed.'*

Machell reported: *'The special modified course of Musketry with 10 Service Rifles at Burgh-by-Sands is now concluded.'* 26 March 1915. However Battalion Orders the following day recorded: *'The Miniature Range next week – Companies will finish the Snapshooting Practice and, if possible, complete the Timed Application.'*

Other training included:

Bayonet Fighting; *'You can obtain a few sacks locally & get them filled with straw & suspend from a tree, goal post, etc.'* 29 December 1914.

Memo. from Machell to Platoon Commanders on *'Attacks, Rushes, Moving to a Flank/Crossing a Gap in File, Moving as in File and Wheeling to the Front, Passing Through a Wood, Reinforcing, Mutual Fire to Cover Rushes, Passing Messages, Fixing Bayonets, the Charge, the Pursuit.'* 28 January 1915.

The physical training inspector: *'expressed himself satisfied – far better than any other Battalion.'* 28 January 1915.

Instructions: *'Attack First Stage.'* 13 April 1915.

Letter from Machell: *'I no longer have any properly qualified [gym] instructors.'*
20 April 1915.

Memo. from Rivington: *'Please send entrenching tools to the Quarter Master's Stores so that [we] can use them this morning.'* 21 April 1915.

Mock attack by D Company on C Company, 28 April 1915; Machell's instructions for *'C Company occupying entrenched position facing West, D Company attacking from Blackhall Wood.'* 29 April 1915.

11 Y.M.C.A

The Young Men's Christian Association in Kendal and Carlisle played an important part in the welfare of the young men in the Battalion:

Letter from the Y.M.C.A. in Kendal: *'We give them a most hearty welcome to use our Rooms during their stay in Kendal. We have Reading & Writing, Billiard & Smoking, Miniature Shooting & Gymnasium Rooms.'* 25 September 1914.

John Gibson of the Kendal Y.M.C.A. wrote to Lord Lonsdale a month later to report on progress: *'Our aim is to provide a home from home for the men and to keep them out of temptation's way. We have organised sing songs, concerts, band entertainments, shooting and billiard competitions, and allow smoking throughout the place.'*

On 2 November 1914 the Y.M.C.A. wrote: *'I understand that your Battalion is to be quartered for the winter in Carlisle and we have been wondering whether we could offer you the use of our organisation and staff to carry on the work on the lines with which you are familiar for the benefit of your men. We have been approached by a number of our friends in the Lake District asking if we are going to do anything for the men, and, of course, we are anxious to be of any possible service.'* Two days later they wrote again: *'... what sum we would be justified in spending for the comfort and recreation of the men in Carlisle and to ascertain whether it might not be possible to secure a building locally and erect it on the camp site.'*

The two huts at Blackwell Camp were obviously a huge success because the Y.M.C.A. in Carlisle wrote to Machell on 25 March 1915: *'May I thank you, and the other officers, for the kind way they have supported the Y.M.C.A. at*

Blackwell. The way our buildings in the camp have "taken on" with the men, has been in no small measure due to your valuable cooperation.'

Just before the Battalion left Blackwell, the Y.M.C.A. in Carlisle wrote again: *'The retention of the Y.M.C.A. huts at Blackwell ... retain charge of the higher Camp Hut and that we close down the Lower Camp Hut entirely.'* 4 May 1915.

12 Comforts for the Troops

Once the Camp at Blackwell had been established, gifts to make the men's lives more pleasant began to arrive:

Major Binning to George Dale Oliver, architect of Carlisle: *'receipt of supply of Cigarettes and Tobacco for the men here.'* 6 October 1914.

Major Binning to Carlisle Citizens' League: *'Will you please convey to the Members who are supplying papers to the Camp here the appreciation of the Officers and men for their gift?'* 7 October 1914.

Letter from Carlisle United Football Club: *'To inform you that after Sat. next or any cup tie permission have been given to admit any of Lonsdale army men in uniform or with Permit to Half Price to all Parts of the Ground.'* 20 October 1914.

Letter requesting permission to take a photograph of the church parade, adding *'I may say I have lent the Gramophone up at the camp.'* 22 October 1914.

'The Soldiers' Club will re-open tomorrow night at 6.0 p.m. at the new premises at 41 Bank Street. We trust your men will look upon it as a home when they are in Carlisle.' 4 November 1914.

'At the annual meeting of the Goodwin Male Voice Choir, it was proposed and carried that the Honorary Membership of the choir be offered to all men of the Lonsdale Battalion who might wish to attend practices for singing. The National Anthems of the Allied Forces will be learnt.' 16 November 1914.

Letter to Machell: *'The Committee of the Wesley House Soldiers' Institute [announce] that there will be a concert for Soldiers (admission free) at the Y.M.C.A. Hall on Saturday. The Committee are sorry to find that another Concert for Soldiers is to be given in the Bank Street Institute on the same*

evening. They think that everyone working for these brave men who are ready to give their lives for their King and Country should work in harmony and that there should be no competition.' 26 November 1914.

Programme for a concert (including 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary') to be held in the Y.M.C.A. Pavilion, 16 February 1915.

Battalion Orders: *'The barber attends Camp daily. The Barber is not entitled to make any charge for hair-cutting either in Camp or Town.'* 25 February 1915.

13 Weapons

As has been seen in Rifle Training (above) weapons always seemed to be in short supply despite a number of orders:

955 short rifles, 953 sword bayonets, 953 scabbards, 5 Webley pistols, 955 bottles of oil, 955 pull-throughs, 12 mirror reflectors, 5 pistol cleaning rods;
29 October 1914

40 fencing muskets with spring bayonet; 3 December 1914.

40 fencing gloves, 40 fencing arm guards, 40 fencing jackets, 40 bayonet fighting masks, 40 body fencing pads, 40 breast fencing pads; 8 December 1914.

Letter to Machell: *'Probably the rifles which you will eventually get are probably not yet made. [It is] suggested that you should number your equipment now and when you get the rifles number them accordingly. I fancy the numbering is entirely a regt. affair and rifles not issued with numbers on them but done on arrival with the regt. It's rather putting the cart before the horse to number the equipment first, but in these strenuous times there seems nothing else to be done.'* 4 January 1915.

Battalion Orders: *'In order to equalise the distribution of Rifles, so that each Coy may have 100, Rifles will be handed over clean and in good order.'* 11 January 1915. *'The Brigadier-General promised to make an urgent representation on the subject of the necessity for the immediate issue of service rifles and ammunition. The Officer Commanding observed that all ranks did their best throughout, and takes this opportunity of expressing his satisfaction with the progress the Battalion has made.'* 18 February 1915.

Further orders for weapons followed:

600 rifles, 600 sword bayonets, 600 sword scabbards; 6 March 1915.

2000 dummy cartridges, 23 March 1915. This was confirmed by Machell: *'I have succeeded in obtaining 14 more service rifles, making 24 in all, and another 2000 rounds of ammunition.'* 16 April 1915.

14 'This Infernal Trench Warfare'

On 7 December, someone who signed himself "P" wrote to Machell on a scrap of paper:

'Only one line to give you an idea of the trench in general use hereabouts:

Detailed pencil sketch of a cross-section of a trench with 2 soldiers in it, plan of a loophole and a steel loophole plate.

You have to have 2 "headers" sandbags thick now, or 3' 6" dry to 5' 0" (wet) earth to stop Mauser bullets. Screen your loopholes when not in use otherwise they make an excellent bullseye at short range. (The Germans are in some places only 20 yds off or so.) I hope this infernal trench warfare is not going on to the end of the war – it gives one no scope. Don't bother to acknowledge. We sometimes have steel loophole plates which are useful against single bullets (but not when 20 or 30 come in exactly the same place). Our trenches are all falling in, as they were not revetted in the first instance. Awful grind putting them up again.'

15 Sports

As well as the football matches referred to above in Machell's letters to Lord Lonsdale, other events were organised to improve physical fitness and boost morale.

'The Lonsdale Battalion contemplates giving a special exhibition of high-class Boxing at the Drill Hall, Swifts Lane, Carlisle, on the evening of Boxing Day. It is hoped that the Earl of Lonsdale [who instituted the Lonsdale Belt for boxing], will be present. The Boxing Competitions recently held at Blackwell Camp have shown there is a great amount of talent in the Battalion.' 7 December 1914.

Battalion Orders: *'A Football Match will take place at Aspatria tomorrow, Lonsdale Battalion v. Aspatria.'* 22 January 1915. *'A football match will take place at Greysouthern [sic] on Saturday, February 13th.'* *'A Football Match will take place at Brunton Park, Carlisle on Saturday February 27th.'*

Letter from Carlisle United Football Club: *'Thank you for allowing Privates Winter, Harkness & Kirkpatrick taking Part in several of our matches of the N.E. League and they have done splendid, on Sat next we are playing our Last Match this Season at Sunderland I should very much like to take them through I think that is the least I can do, if they Fight as Good as they Play of which I feel sure they will, you have some champion Lads.'* 29 April 1915.

A Battalion Sports was held at Camp the day before 4 Companies left for Prees Heath, near Whitchurch in Shropshire for training.

16 Religion

As Christmas approached, thoughts turned to religion.

Letter from Mrs. Trench of Workington offering to *'each man in the Lonsdale Battalion who will accept it a portion of the Scripture in small form.'*

8 December 1914.

The weekly denomination roll recorded: *'Church of England 656, Roman Catholic 94, Wesleyan Methodists 38, Presbyterians 18, Baptists 3, Primitive Methodist 11, Congregationalists 6, Scotch Nationalists [Church of Scotland] 3. Total 829.'* 18 December 1914.

Letter from the Roman Catholic chaplain; *'As New Year's Day is a Sunday would it be too much to ask you to allow the Catholic troops under your command to attend Divine Service on that day?'* 29 December 1914.

Letter from E.M. Brown: *'My object in writing to you is to know if it would be possible to make known that the soldiers would be most heartily welcomed at our Gospel Meetings on Sunday evenings. A number of them come into the City and we would like to see them come into the room for an hour. The service is shot and hearty and quite unsectarian.'* 5 January 1915.

17 'It will all be over by Christmas'

Canon H.D. Rawnsley, [vicar of Crosthwaite, Keswick], on behalf of the Mayoress of Carlisle, asked Machell to tell him the number of children of married men in the Lonsdale Battalion so that the Mayoress could organise the collection and distribution of toys. 25 November 1914.

Letter to Machell from Wilson, Jesper & Co., tailors of Carlisle: *'We should esteem it a favour if you will release Sergeant Jackson from his duties with the Lonsdale Battalion at the end of the week. Our wish that he may be relieved from his duty is dictated not by unpatriotic motives but is solely due to the fact that we require him to be back to business previous to the rush which we always experience during the Christmas and New Year holidays.'* 15 December 1914.

Invoice from Mrs. Haworth of Loughrigg, Ambleside for 16 x 8lb tins of 1st quality plum puddings @ 6s 9d. 18 December 1914.

Machell to C Company: *'The proportion of 20% of N.C.O.'s & men proceeding on Christmas leave by train will in no case be exceeded.'* 21 December 1914.

Battalion Orders: *'Lady Valda Machell [Col. Machell's wife] has collected from kind friends over 1200 pairs of wool mittens which have been made as Xmas presents to the Lonsdale Battalion. These mittens have been issued to Companies today – should be distributed to Officers, N.C. Officers & men forthwith.'* 23 December 1914; and on Christmas Eve: *'The following Christmas presents have been received from the Earl of Lonsdale 1600 pounds Plum Pudding and 1300 cigars. Also: 1000 cigarettes, 40 tins of sweetmeats, 8 geese, 100 body belts.'*

Return of 379 unsold Battalion Christmas cards to W.H. Smith in English Street, Carlisle. 22 January 1915.

18 5th Depot (later E) Company and Recruitment Phase 2

Battalion Orders 11 December 1914: *'Authority having been received for the Lonsdale Battalion to recruit a 5th and later on a 6th (Depot) Company, and arrangements having been made for the provision of the necessary number of billets in the vicinity of the Camp, recruiting is re-opened from this date. The*

function of the depot Companies will be to provide successive drafts of Lonsdale men for the Lonsdale Battalion at the Front.'

The same day, Machell issued a press release: *'The War Office having authorised the formation of a 5th (Depot) Company, with a strength of 250 men and an establishment of Officers, and a 6th Depot Company later, arrangements have been pushed forward for the accommodation of men in billets in the vicinity of Blackwell Camp, where the new Companies will be trained.*

On Saturday the Lonsdale Recruiting Office will reopen and the Recruiting Officers at the principal Centres have been requested to give notice that it is once more possible for men of good physique and high character to offer themselves for enlistment in the Lonsdales.

The ranks were so rapidly filled at the time of the Hirings that bitter disappointment was caused to hundreds of splendid fellows who came forward to do their duty and soldier with their Pals in the local Battalion. Now they have their chance. They cannot join the Service Battalion at once because it is still over establishment, but the function of the Depot Companies will be to provide a steady stream of Lonsdale men for the Battalion at the Front.

Short as has been the history of the Battalion up to date, a good tradition has already been established and its feet stand firm upon a solid foundation of right feeling and goodwill.

The Lonsdale Battalion is young and has much to learn in a short space of time, but all are keen, and if only the weather will continue favourable, they will soon be fit for service.

C Company is coming from Kendal immediately after Christmas and they will receive a rousing reception from their comrades. All classes of men are soldiering side by side in the Lonsdales, and the clannish spirit which has been so noticeable already will become intensified when the Battalion goes abroad.

A month ago when Recruiting was stopped, and so much disappointment was caused, a number of men said "Lonsdales or nowt" and went home. Now is their chance! There is room for 250 today, and then 250 more. The Officer Commanding does not believe in more meetings. He believes in the men. He has told the Battalion there are vacancies for 250 recruits, and he says the men will simply tell their friends.

He says "Look at the Football!" our fellows have never been beaten. They have successively defeated Carlisle Police, the Border Depot, Bigrigg, Carlisle United, and finally our Rugby Union Team has beaten Silloth.

Machell then wrote to Major Rivington, Officer Commanding C Company in Kendal: 'The Depot Companies will be 'composite' but the men from various 'localities' placed in sections together - & men will be posted to A B C & D according to where they come from. I am telling the men to get to work. Only let them bring real stout fellows, we only want really good ones. If you collect any before you come here on 29th better take them on a separate squad to C Company and turn them over to the 5th (Depot) Company as soon as you arrive. The Depot men will all be in lodgings 2/- a day like at Kendal, and have got over 300 places ready for immediate occupation.'

Recruiting began in earnest just before Christmas and Machell was able to write to Lord Lonsdale on 12 January 1915: '1 Depot Company which we are rapidly completing. We have just got started again, & men are coming in splendidly – all I want is to let them go on coming in until we have got the two double companies and then shut down – this recruiting, as far as the Lonsdale Battalion is concerned, works on 'snowball' lines – the more we get the more come – I know Lord K[itcheener] wants them and propose to carry on. Today only 65 are required to complete establishment of 1st depot Company, & over 20 recruits again will be coming in this afternoon.'

Machell's concern for the new recruits was obvious: 'I hear that some of the recruits E Company have been wearing the same shirt for a fortnight. Please see that full allowance of shirts, socks etc. for all recruits is drawn from the Quartermaster's Stores as soon as possible.' 13 January 1915.

The recruiting records are incomplete, but it would appear that at least 93 recruits were enlisted to E Company between 15 January and 21 April 1915. The new recruits had a lot of training to catch up with and Battalion Orders recorded: 'The Officer Commanding E Company will arrange to borrow rifles, for the instruction of his men, on Saturdays, in Rifle Exercise & Aiming Drill.' 25 January 1915.

The 6th Company did not materialise. Letter from General Collings, Western Command: 'You will see that the raising of your 6th or second depot coy is not sanctioned. No reason given.' 25 January 1915.

19 Western Command

Machell, of course, was subject to a higher authority. The Battalion was made part of the 124th Infantry Brigade on 10 December 1914 and incorporated in the 5th Army on 7 January 1915. However, his military superiors were always impressed with their inspections:

Private letter from General Collings to Machell: 'to let you know how pleased I was with all you showed me today. When you see Lord Lonsdale will you tell him how greatly I was struck with the evidence of what he has done for the Battalion and of the interest he takes in its welfare. I shall write to Western Command informing them of my inspection & satisfaction & shall also mention about the quality of the boots as there is a very general complaint & something should, if possible, be done in the matter.' 7 January 1915.

The Brigadier-General's official letter appeared in Battalion Orders the following day: *'I desire to express to you my satisfaction with the inspection of your battalion today. The men are smart, well set up and soldierly in appearance, their quarters clean and orderly and the interior economy of the Battalion is good. Although owing to heavy rain I was unable to see the Battalion at drill, I feel sure that its training, as far as it has gone, has been well carried out with good results.'*

Preparations for the next inspection: *'The Battalion will parade as strong as possible at 11.15 a.m. and at 2.15 p.m. on Monday. The buglers and Drummers will attend both occasions and Staff and Battalion Transport will attend the 2.15 p.m. parade. Rifles will be carried by leading Platoons and by the right half of the second Platoons of Companies. Platoons will be equalised. The Recruits will fall in separately as directed for the General's Inspection. The Parade will be dismissed early on Monday afternoon and O.C. companies will arrange to have their lines thoroughly cleaned in preparation for the Brigadier on Tuesday.'* 12 February 1915.

Letter from General Sir Henry Mackinnon, Commander in Chief: *'Hope to fetch up at the Station Hotel, Carlisle. I shall have my Motor with me and shall come out to Camp on Friday morning for an hour or two, and should like if possible, to see a little digging, some physical drill, and other Company work. Don't have any Parade for me. I may ask them to march past in fours. I shall be glad to see you for I know you have done your training well, although you have been handicapped by want of rifles, etc.'* 22 March 1915. The inspection went well:

'very much pleased with his inspection. He is well aware of the difficulties under which you formed the Battalion, and he considers very great credit is due to you for the efficient training and administration of which he saw such evident proof. He is confident that, wherever you go, you will sustain the credit of the Western Command. He will watch [the Battalion's] military career with great interest.' 26 March 1915.

General Mackinnon to Lord Lonsdale: *'I am much distressed about the W[ar] O[ffice] plans for your Battalion. I did hear that the Battalion were going to be put in the Highland Division. That would not be so bad if it were the 1st Highland, which I understand is going abroad soon. If, however, it is the 2nd Highland, I should be sorry. If you ever come across Lord K[itcheener], you might mention the Battalion to him, and you certainly have my authority to say how very highly I think of the material and training.'* 18 April 1915.

As the Battalion prepared to leave Blackwell Camp, Brigadier Mackenzie wrote officially to Machell: *'Before a battalion leaves its present station the horses are to be examined by a veterinary surgeon. Should any be found unfit to travel, and found to be suffering from contagious or infectious diseases, local arrangements are to be made for their care until they are able to rejoin their units. Officers Commanding Battalions will be most particular to ascertain from householders damages to billets during the stay of their men in the town, and if possible they should be made to sign a form together with the last payment, that no liabilities for damages are outstanding. If there is any possibility of complaints from any farmers, or any other people who have lent ground for manoeuvring purposes, they should be investigated before the battalion leaves.'* 1 May 1915. Two days later he wrote personally: *'On the departure of your battalion from the 112th Brigade, I should like to express to you, and all ranks under your command, my grateful thanks for the energy and ability that has been displayed in training in the battalion since the 18th March. It is a great regret to me that the battalion will no longer be in my Brigade. I wish all of you every luck and prosperity for the future, and I shall watch your movements with interest, knowing that whatever you are asked to do in the future, you will uphold the honour and credit of the British Army.'*

20 'Monty'

One member of Western Command would become internationally famous during World War 2. Major Bernard Montgomery was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry in 1914 when he turned Germans out of their trench with a bayonet although severely wounded in the lung and knee. After recovering, he was appointed to the 112th Brigade early in 1915. He soon developed a rapport with Machell:

'I was talking to General Caunter at Command Hd qrs today on the telephone and he said that from now on we were to consider you as belonging to our Brigade.' 18 March 1915; two days later he issued instructions for route marching.

'The move is hung up for the present; they are talking about reconstituting the 37th Division and until they have finished arguing about [that] we shall have to sit where we are. This is private. Meanwhile, the general does not want any time to be wasted, but training to go on as usual. I will wire you as soon as ever I know anything definite re the move. If they do reconstitute the Division, they may move battalions about into different brigades, but your battalion will remain anyhow, for which I am glad. I hope you are going on well.' 9 April 1915.

'You should always PUT "Bangor N. Wales on the envelope as there is another Bangor somewhere. As the move is put off for at least two weeks I hardly think it necessary to send a section from each [company] to Grantham [although Machell did]. Your advance party will have plenty of time to get things straight, while we go on with the training. You can if you like bring back one of the two officers you sent down there. One officer at Grantham would be quite enough; however that is as you like.' 11 April 1915.

'You haven't lost the general and myself yet. My general & myself are left with you. I hate all these changes as it unsettles one, but both the general and myself are very glad that you are still with us. Anyhow at present you are still with us, and we don't go to Grantham. I am afraid neither of us can come up to you on Monday now. But when it is all settled one of us will come and see you. You can be assured of one thing that wherever the general and myself go we shall do our very best to keep up you with us; we both know a good battalion when we see one.' 17 April 1915.

21 Proposed move to Belton Park Camp, Grantham, Lincolnshire

Battalion Orders announced:

'An advance party will proceed to Grantham by train on Monday 5th [April]. The Battalion will probably leave Carlisle on Wednesday 7th by special train for Grantham. Dress. Khaki. Marching Order. Luncheon will be carried in haversacks. Water Bottles will be filled. All baggage of Headquarters and Companies will be prepared the previous evening and will be stacked as directed by the Quartermaster, in readiness for removal to the railway station early on Wednesday. A fatigue party of 1 N.C.O. and 5 men per Company under the Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant will load the baggage on the hired transport wagons and accompany to the Carlisle Railway Station, where they will unload and pack it in the train. A special label for each article will be supplied by the Quartermaster to O.C. Companies. Breakfast will be provided in Carlisle for this party.' 31 March 1915. *'The advance party will proceed by 7.33 a.m. Train from Carlisle, arriving Grantham 9.19 p.m. Breakfast will be served at 5.45 a.m. and cold luncheon will be carried in Haversacks.'* 1 April 1915. *'A telegram received from 112th Infantry Brigade at noon today stated that the final instructions regarding date and hour of move had not yet been received.'* 6 April 1915. *'Latest instructions from Headquarters state that the concentration of the 112th Infantry Brigade is still in abeyance. Orders will be issued as soon as received.'* 8 April 1915.

Between 4 and 15 April, there were three lengthy and detailed reports from the advance party about progress at Belton Park. Machell wrote to Lord Lonsdale: *'We did not leave on 7th, the move is in abeyance, I believe the reason is the filthy condition of the Camp at Grantham – our advance party is busy cleaning our part & I hope we may be able to go soon. It is time we got into Brigade so as to go ahead with our training exactly on proper lines.'* 10 April 1915. However, Western Command sent a telegram to Machell: *'Your battalion will not proceed to Grantham, your advance party at present at Grantham will be relieved when relieved they will return Carlisle by ordinary train service.'* 16 April 1915.

22 Move to Prees Heath Camp, near Whitchurch, Shropshire

On 28th April 1915, Machell received a telegram from Western Command: *'Hold 11th Bn Border Regt. (Lonsdale) in readiness to proceed shortly to Prees*

Heath. Please arrange for despatch of an advance party 4 officers 200 other ranks required at Prees Heath early to prepare camp.’ Later that day, Machell wrote to Lord Lonsdale: ‘Today received orders appointing Lonsdale to 97th Brigade with three battalions Highland Light Infantry to assemble at Prees Heath and advanced party to be held in readiness proceed early so all is well. I expect we have to thank you and am deeply grateful.’

Events then moved very quickly:

Machell to Lord Lonsdale: ‘Our Advanced Party, 4 officers, and 200 N.C.O.’s and men, left this morning for Prees Heath. All in excellent form & very pleased with the move.’ 3 May 1915; ‘D Company has gone to Prees, & as one camp is now ready, I have wired to ask sanction for us to go on Friday or Saturday.’ 4 May 1915. The following day, arrangements were made: ‘Rail conveyance required about 9 a.m. Saturday morning from Carlisle to Whitchurch Salop for Prees Heath Camp for 11th Battalion Border Regt. strength about 25 officers 900 other ranks 14 horses 5 four wheel vehicles 2 two wheeled vehicles 40 tons Baggage and stores. Please inform me if the heavy baggage can be offloaded from light railway which runs into the Camp. I hope to come along at 3.40 and march up to Camp with B & C [Companies].’ 5 May 1915.

However, not everyone was happy: letter from William Johnson, member of the Recruiting Staff to Machell: *‘The residents of Botchergate were very much disappointed when the advance party of your Battalion was taken by James Street to the station. I have been asked by a deputation of wives & friends of the men to ask if you will be kind enough to march the men by way of Botchergate, when they leave the City. The Station Authorities will not allow either wife or other relative in the Station, & it will be the only chance of seeing their dear ones who are going to fight for us, on their march to the Station, by doing so you will be doing a graceful act, & will earn the thanks of the many friends who look upon the “Lonsdales” as their particular Battalion. Wishing you good luck.’ 5 May 1915.*

Even Machell was not entirely happy with the arrangements:

‘You will think me unreasonable about the rations for Saturday, but it is one of those things that is impossible – we draw on 1/9d per head here and have to live on it – it is not possible to calculate the value of the various ‘ingredients’ of the tea meal & pay for them. But it is quite easy as it is – we have breakfast here, dinner in the train, & take tea, sugar, milk, cheese etc. asking you to have

the bread bought locally & all ready, because it is bulky – then on Sunday night we get no 1/9 simply draw the usual army ration and the 4d per man grocery ration. The Battn is being paid today. There is the usual excitement, of course, and they tell me we shall have a job to get down Botchergate on Saturday morning. No detail yet about hour of departure but it will be 2 trains – The 1st probably taking heavy baggage & 1 Company, the other kitbags etc. & 2 Companies. I wish Lord Lonsdale could have seen D Company too. I am so glad all are doing so well. I think all is straight here – it is lucky I don't want to go away myself! Clart has been North & gathers that our Scotch friends [Highland Infantry?] are not wonderful. I wish they were – it would lift us along to get with good people.' 6 May 1915.

On 7 May 1915 Machell ordered: *'The Battalion will parade for inspection by the Earl of Lonsdale. Dress khaki, Marching Order – the Battalion will be formed in Mass, and, after being inspected, will rank past in forms from the right hand and dismiss by Companies.'* Later in the day he wrote: *'arrival [at Prees Heath]. A & detachment D with all baggage and transport horses, 2.20 p.m. Baggage to go up to Camp by Contractor's line – B & C & Horses 3.40 p.m. Nothing in this train but men and officers' horses. All well here, Lord Lonsdale has been and inspected us today & made a good speech which I hope will be published – there were some reporters present. All cut & dried now for tomorrow & I expect a big crush in the town this time.'* The Chief Constable of Carlisle was also making last-minute arrangements and wrote to Machell: *'will make the necessary arrangements for dealing with the traffic in the vicinity of the Railway Station tomorrow morning. I shall be glad if the 2 Sergeants and 30 men of E Company can be at the Viaduct entrance not later than 7.45 a.m.'*

Contemporary photographs show that Machell got the crush he expected and G.D.S. from High Wray, Ambleside wrote to him and gave an eye-witness account: *'Welcome to your new camp. I hope you will find it really comfortable. We were very glad we came [to Carlisle] and were in time to say goodbye to the first lot. I was very sorry you had such a mob at the end as I should like to have seen you march on but it was a wonderful sight the thin stream of khaki filtering through the two gates [The Courts] and then a sudden admixture of black coats and then the great rush coming through like a dam bursting. Well, it shows what a hold you had got on Carlisle and must surely make every man there wish he had been in your lines to have got such a send off. You deserve it too you have nursed those men and trained them and they*

must have often been a sore trial on your (hereditary) temper but it has been worth it all and now you can feel you have given the Empire a real tool shaped properly out of what was at the beginning most unpromising material.'

Finally, Machell wrote to Lord Lonsdale *'We had a tremendous crowd to see us off, but got here [Prees Heath] all right. It is a good camp but I am worried about ground for training.'* 11 May 1915.

23 Miscellaneous

Some subjects only occur occasionally in the archive and do not warrant a section of their own, but help to throw light on the Battalion's time in Cumberland and Westmorland.

Good behaviour: Letter from the Chief Constable of Carlisle to Machell: *'number of your men have been rendering most valuable assistance at a very large factory fire that has occurred in the City this afternoon. Some of them inform me that they will be late getting into Camp, and that they are wet though to the skin, they will have to go to their homes and obtain dry underclothing before they can return to camp. I am deeply indebted to them for their hard work, and hope you will overlook their not being in Camp at the proper time.'* 28 December 1914.

Death of Private Fairlamb: *'which took place through an accident near Brampton. A Funeral Party composed of a Firing Party of 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal and 12 men of C Company with 1 Drummer and 2 Buglers and 12 representatives of E Company, will proceed by train to Brampton for the purpose of attending the funeral at Farlam Church. Cold luncheon to be sent by transport to the Railway Station for consumption in the train. Great Coats will be worn or carried rolled according to the direction of the Officer in charge.'* 20 January 1915.

Bathing: Letter to Major Binning: *'The C.O. wants to know if you can possibly write for leave for E Coy to go to the Baths every Tuesday; they are rapidly joining the 'great unwashed'. Some of the men have already been here for 5 weeks.'* 28 January 1915. The Baths Superintendent replied two days later: *'Free Bathing at the Public Baths. I do not see how it is possible for the Corporation to increase its facilities for this Battalion bathing. We are now*

providing accommodation for 856 of your men to attend the swimming baths per week and if this does not provide for each man having a bath say once in seven days, I think the only way to meet the increased numbers will be for you to arrange for them to go say once in eight days or possibly nine.’ A further letter was written on 6 April 1915: ‘There will be no objection to your [E] Company continuing to use the Baths during this month, on Friday mornings, and if a 6th Company is raised there will be no objection to them attending the Baths on any morning other than Tuesday or Saturday. After this month, fresh arrangements will have to be made.’

French Lessons: Letter from Marie Fox of Carlisle: *‘I beg to offer you my services as French Teacher to your men. I could arrange to come during the day. Having coached many officers & men for the Army it would give me great pleasure to continue my work.’* 2 February 1915.

Leave: Letter from ‘An Old Soldier & Reservist Langdale: *‘Regarding the Langdale Recruits that have been on leave this weekend. Most of the men are married men with wives & large families & they have all sacrificed good homes & good situations. The men, no doubt would be very glad to see their homes again, but we think you have done them a great injustice by inflicting punishment in not returning on Friday. The weather was abominable & I suppose you do not consider the distance they have to walk to Windermere 10 miles through rain and snow. We think you might consider their cases & extend their leave until Monday hoping you will look on their cases.’* 4 February 1915.

Mascot: Letter from Alfred Hall, head teacher of Seaton: *‘Seeing that the battalion is one raised in Sporting Counties with one of our greatest sportsmen at its head, and also that Coursing appeals to the majority of men of Cumberland & Westmorland, I shall be pleased to make the Battalion the present of the pure bred Greyhound dog ‘Hayes Gaffer.’’* 26 March 1915.

Letter from R. Sewell, saddler and harness maker of Carlisle: *‘Before the Battalion leaves Camp I should like to have the pleasure of presenting your Mascot [with a coat] for when he leads the Regiment. As to colour and as a suggestion I would either say Lord Lonsdale’s [racing] colours, blue, trimmed with yellow with a monogram L.B. in the hind corners.’* 1 May 1915.

Bullying: Letter from E Company: *‘After parade today the Coy held a meeting to ask you whether Sergeant Major Oliver has to stay with E Coy or the boys*

have to be bullied to death through him as the company have no heart to work when he is in sight and we also agreed not to do fatigue work after five o'clock as all the Battalions were to blame and not only us as was stated. We understood that when we enlisted in the Lonsdale Battalion that we would be trained to be soldiers not slaves and would be very pleased if you would do something for us. This letter is instead of that Post Card you will very likely receive.' 14 April 1915. The post card read: *'We think it is time that Sergeant Major Oliver was shifted as we have no heart to work through his bullying.'* Acting Company Sergeant R.B. Oliver had been transferred to E Company on 8 March 1915.

Munitions: The establishment of a Ministry of Munitions in 1915 led to the *'temporary release from the Army'* of *'fitters six are desirous of employment in armament workshops.'* April 1915.

24 What Happened Next?

The Battalion archive continues to record training at Prees Heath 10 May – 21 June 1915; Wensley in West Yorkshire 23 June – 5 August 1915; Strensall in North Yorkshire 6-11 August 1915; and Codford in Wiltshire 13 August – 22 November 1915.

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