



Second Lieutenant Eric Leslie Finch Beatty lies interred in Kemmel Chateau Military Cemetery: Grave reference F. 5.

The 12th Battalion Sherwood Foresters (*Nottinghamshire and Derby Regiment*) was formed on October 1, 1914. The 12th (*Service*) Battalion (*Pioneers*), recruited in Derby, was attached to the 24th Division at some time before March of 1915 as Divisional Troops, and remained in the United Kingdom for five more months – apparently only in July were rifles issued to them. On August 29 the 24th Division traversed the English Channel to land in France.



(continued)

The Battalion's first experiences of the Great War, according to the following excerpt extracted from the web-site, *The Long, Long Trail*, and pertinent to the 24th Division, were not to inspire confidence in the British war effort:

The Division's first experience was truly appalling. Having been in France for only a few days, lengthy forced marches brought it into the reserve for the British assault at Loos. GHQ planning left it too far behind to be a useful reinforcement on the first day, but it was sent into action on 26 September, whereupon it suffered over 4178 casualties for very little gain. (From The Long, Long Trail)*

**The typical British division of the day numbered about twenty-thousand personnel.*



(Right above: A scene of the French village of Loos just after the attack in September of 1915 – from *Le Miroir*)

Second Lieutenant Beatty is recorded as having been posted to the 12th Battalion Sherwood Foresters in the United Kingdom as of January 30, 1915 – this the date of his Commission as recorded in the *London Gazette* - although not to active service on the Continent until October of the same year according to his Medal Cards. At some apparently undocumented point after this he was attached to the Battalion's Trench Mortar Battery.

(Right: Trench mortars on display at the Army Museum in Les Invalides, Paris – photograph from 2015)



Compared to the history of other units, the 12th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters during the posting of Lieutenant Beatty's time with it, recorded a relatively inactive autumn, winter and summer in the area of *the Ypres Salient*, at least from a military perspective; the only actions to have been entered into the Battalion documents were the gas attacks at Wulverghem which took place on April 30 and June 17 of 1916 – the accompanying German infantry assaults were repulsed on both occasions.

(Right: *The very first protection against gas was to urinate on a handkerchief which was then held over the nose and mouth. However, all the armies were soon producing gas-masks, some of the first of which are seen here being tested by Scottish troops. – from either Illustration or Le Miroir*)



On the other hand, it was the personnel of the *Sherwood Foresters* who were responsible for the publishing of what was known as the *Wipers Times**. This magazine, printed during the Great War at irregular intervals between February of 1916 and February, 1918, finally – after a ten-month pause - issued its final copy in time for Christmas of 1918.

****Wipers was the manner in which many soldiers apparently pronounced the name of the city of Ypres (today Ieper).***

(Right: The city of Ypres towards the end of 1915: it was already looking much like this by the end of May of that same year. – from a vintage post-card)



The death of Lieutenant Beatty has raised questions in some researchers' minds: while he was recorded as having been *killed in action*, there was apparently no action to be recorded at the time: *June 23, 12th Batt. revetting, duckboarding, sandbagging, making firesteps and widening trench – the others in camp. Casualties reported: - one wounded by a bullet* (Battalion War Diary?)

There apparently was, however, at that time, a young officer returning from patrol who, having forgotten the correct password, was shot by a sergeant on sentry duty.

The son of Andrew Henry Beatty* - of Pilley's Island and whose later address was Chellow Dene, 56C, Putney Hill, London SW - and of Florence Harriett Beatty, Second Lieutenant Beatty was reported as having been *killed in action* on June 23, 1916.

**** Manager of the mine of the Pyrites Company Ltd. of England which opened in 1889 on Pilley's Island, Andrew Henry Beatty apparently later again married, to a Lydia L., and was still travelling back and forth from the United Kingdom to Québec on business as late as 1929, as the Director of an un-specified company.***

Eric Leslie Finch Beatty was born on Pilley's Island on December 24, 1893 – according to *Vital Statistics of Newfoundland* - and died in Belgium at the age of twenty-two years.

Second Lieutenant Eric Leslie Finch Beatty was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – February 18, 2023.