

THE FITZMAURICE FAMILY

Service and Sacrifice

For King and Country in the Great War



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INTRODUCTION

This is an account of the service and sacrifice given to King and Country by the Fitzmaurice family during the Great War 1914 – 1918.

Dr Richard and Alexina Fitzmaurice had eight children and lived for many years at Everyndens in the High Street, Lindfield¹. In addition to being a village doctor, Richard was the medical officer for the Cuckfield Union Workhouse and Infirmary.



Dr Richard Fitzmaurice. Photo: Family collection

All of their six sons were of military service age during the war years. Four sons served with the Army, sadly three did not return. Their other two sons, Henry and Nicholas, had joined the Colonial Service prior to the war and served the Government as diplomats in Asia².

Their eldest daughter, Jane, a member of the British Red Cross Sussex 150 Voluntary Aid Detachment, served as a nurse³. Her sister, Alexina, was just 17 when the war started and is thought not to have been involved in war work while the family lived in Lindfield.

Suffering from serious health problems in late 1914, Dr Richard Fitzmaurice retired from his medical work and moved to Littlehampton the following year.

ALEXANDER LINDSAY FITZMAURICE



Dr Alexander Fitzmaurice died of disease in Somaliland on 11 January 1915 while attached to the Camel Corp. Photo: Family Collection

Alexander Lindsay Fitzmaurice was born in Lindfield on 18 April 1885 and was educated locally at Belvedere School, Haywards Heath. On completing his schooling he was admitted to London University in June 1903 before joining Guy's Hospital to study medicine in October of that year.

Alexander qualified as a doctor in 1909⁴ and a number of house appointments followed, including at Bagthorpe Infirmary, Nottingham and South Eastern Hospital, New Cross Gate, London. His qualifications by 1914 were MRCS, LRCP and MB.BS. It is said that he had gained much appreciation as an anaesthetist and was a popular doctor with his colleagues.

Following a course at the London Tropical School of Medicine, Alexander joined the Colonial Medical Service and left England for Berbera, British

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Somaliland, on 30 April 1914. In British Somaliland he was attached to the Camel Corps with the rank of Captain.

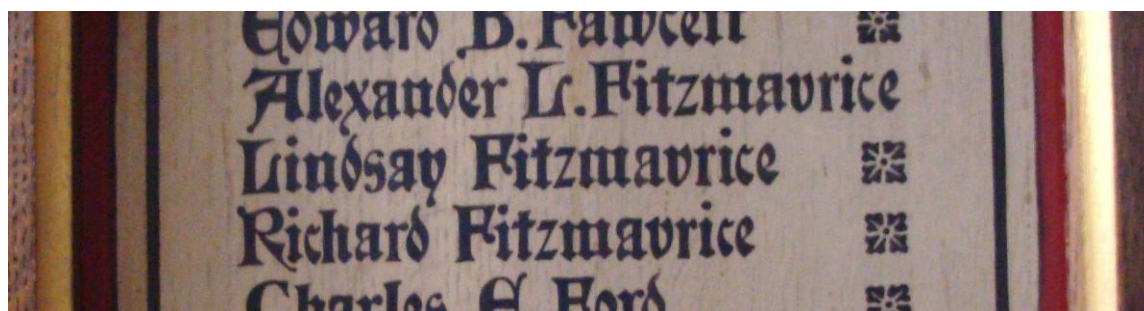


Alexander Fitzmaurice (centre). Photo: Family collection

His last letter was received from Burao, where he was in good health and had been attending to Indian troops wounded in the fighting in the Somaliland Protectorate.

Subsequently, while serving in the country, he died of disease on 11 January 1915 at Burao [or Galoli]. His death certificate was signed by Dr A J M Paget on 18 January 1915.

Alexander is not listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as a soldier who died in the Great War. However, he is commemorated on the Village War Memorial and All Saints' War Memorial at Lindfield.



Alexander Fitzmaurice commemorated with his brothers who fell in the Great War on the All Saints' War Memorial, All Saints' Church, Lindfield
Photos: Lindfield History Project Group

RICHARD FITZMAURICE



Richard Fitzmaurice, C Company, 1/14th, (County of London) Battalion (London Scottish)
killed on 25 September 1915 during the Battle of Loos. Photo: Family Collection

Richard Fitzmaurice was born at Lindfield in 1891, the fourth son of Dr Richard and Alexina Fitzmaurice. He was educated, it is believed, at Belvedere School, a respected private school in Haywards Heath.

In the 1911 Lindfield Census, aged 20, he is recorded working as a Bank Clerk and living with his parents at Everyndens.

The London Scottish

The London Scottish was part of the Territorial Force established in 1908 for home defence. Along with the other smarter and socially exclusive London Territorial units⁵, it was part gentleman's sporting club and part infantry battalion with headquarters at Buckingham Gate. To ensure the 'right sort' was recruited to the ranks, the London Scottish required men to have a high standard of education, chiefly from public schools and university, who were either Scots or of Scottish descent⁶. Additionally, a joining fee of £10 and annual subscription towards regimental funds was required.

London Scottish mobilisation and recruitment

At the outbreak of war, the London Scottish were mobilised for full-time service⁷. Their HQ was immediately inundated with reservists and would-be recruits. By the end of the week all vacancies had been filled and could have been many times over. On 16 August 1914, the London Scottish departed for their training site at Abbots Langley. Each man was asked if he would serve abroad and the necessary numbers were obtained to classify the Battalion for foreign service.

The War Office, on 26 August 1914, authorised foreign service Territorial battalions to raise a second battalion. This resulted in the original London Scottish Battalion becoming the 1/14 London Scottish. Enlistment for the new 2/14 London Scottish started at Buckingham Gate on 31 August 1914. Within a week it had a full complement of men who enlisted on the old conditions of four years service, joining subscription and Scottish nationality. Four out of five men volunteered for foreign service.

Early in September, by exchange of drafts between the 1/14 and 2/14 London Scottish, the former comprised entirely of those men who had volunteered for foreign service, left for France on 15 September 1914. The 2/14 London Scottish became the 'Reserve Battalion' for the supply of replacement soldiers.

Enlistment

The available records state Richard Fitzmaurice enlisted at Blackheath, London but the date is not given.

His brother, Lindsay, went to London at the beginning of September to join a socially exclusive regiment and it would appear Richard made a similar decision.

Richard is first listed in the Role of Honour published in the Mid Sussex Times on 10 November 1914; it states 'Richard Fitzmaurice 2nd Co 14 County of London (London Scottish) Batt London Regiment'. Therefore, Richard probably entered service in late October 1914. His name appears in subsequent weekly lists and the Mid Sussex Times, 23 March 1915, listing reads '1st Reserve Batt London Scottish', that is to say, the 2/14 London Scottish as other Reserve Battalions had subsequently been formed.

Service with the 2/14th London Scottish

Richard having joined in autumn 1914, spent until the end of 1914 in London undergoing training, drill, route marches and perhaps some ceremonial duties. On 4 January 1915, the Battalion moved to billets in Dorking⁸ for field training, long route marches and defence duties. They were accommodated in halls, empty houses and with families.



2/14 London Scottish kit inspection at Dorking. Photo: Dorking Museum

In March 1915, nearly 400 men were drafted to France as replacements, with a number of smaller drafts continuing until end June. Throughout this period training in England continued and, in May, the Battalion moved to Saffron Walden for further intensive training, especially firing practice.

Drafted to France

Richard was drafted to the Western Front to join the 1/14 London Scottish and arrived in France on 23 April 1915⁹. During the second quarter 1915, the 1/14 London Scottish was constantly on the move; spending time in

billets, training, in front line trenches and as reserves. They played an active role on the Western Front taking a number of casualties.

Along with his comrades in the Battalion, the first week of July was spent in the reserve line at Vermelles, followed by a few days in the village doing heavy fatigue work and training. On 12 July 1915 the Battalion relieved the Black Watch in the trenches for a week, returning to Bethune for six days rest. Then they relieved the Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Cambrin, with the 12 days passing without incident.

A march to Bethune was undertaken on 6 August 1915 to camp in canvas huts outside the town for a week's rest and training, before returning to the trenches at Vermelles. The German trenches were about three quarters of a mile away and on 23 August 1915, the 1/14 London Scottish supported the night time digging of a new front line trench 300 yards forward in No Man's Land.

The next day they marched to Verquin, a village two miles south of Bethune. A week later the Battalion did a 14 mile march to Lespesses to train and make preparations for the impending Loos offensive.

The Loos Offensive

In response to pressure from the French for a 'Big Push' to break through the German lines, the first major offensive¹⁰ on the Western Front was, reluctantly agreed by the under-resourced British Army, for September. Consequently, the British Army was committed to a battle, in the Loos area, over land unsuited to an attack, without clear objectives, while lacking in manpower and munitions. The Loos battlefield was uniformly flat, dominated by defended slagheaps, mining installations and villages.

The offensive commenced with a continuous four-day artillery bombardment. Although this removed any element of surprise, it was believed that few men in the German first-line trench system would survive the bombardment. Any survivors would be killed or wounded by chlorine gas, being used by the British for the first time. In addition to killing the enemy, the bombardment was intended to destroy the German barbed wire.

At the Battle of Loos, Lieutenant-Colonel James Lindsay was the Commanding Officer of the London Scottish and his book 'London Scottish in the Great War', gives a detailed account of the London Scottish role in the battle. The above and following two sections are based on his account.

The Loos Battle Plan for the London Scottish

The 1/14 London Scottish were attached to the 1st Division; 1 Brigade. The Division's orders required 1 Brigade to attack with its left on the Hulluch road, going due East. On its right, 2 Brigade was to attack across Hill 69 and push on towards the slag-heaps of Puits 14 (a coal mine) in the ESE direction.

The divergence of directions would produce a gap between the Brigades who had been ordered, as soon as the first German line had been taken, to send bombing parties inwards towards each other clearing the gap before moving on.

The task of maintaining connection between the two Brigades, when mounting their further advance, was assigned to a detached force under the direct orders of the Division. Comprising the 1/14 London Scottish from 1 Brigade and 9 King's Liverpool from 2 Brigade, this force was known as Green's Force, as it was commanded by Colonel Green (Royal Sussex Regiment).

Green's Force was to move up to the British front line as soon as the 1 and 2 Brigades had left the trenches. Then, when these Brigades had cleared the German first-line trenches, to move forward into the gap and occupy the German reserve line. After this had been achieved, Green's Force was to maintain contact with the Brigades assisting, if necessary, in the capture of Hulluch.

On this plan, Green's Force was not intended to come into action until after the German first-line system had been cleared and passed.

Battle of Loos commences

On 21 September 1915, the London Scottish troops began their move to the front, with a march and bivouac in Le Marequet Wood, near Lapugnoy. Then two nights later, in darkness and heavy rain, they marched to bivouac near Verquin. Next morning, the soldiers were advised the battle would begin the following day, 25 September 1915. The few remaining hours were spent in final preparation.

At 9.30pm that evening, they marched off towards their assembly position, making their way along a long communication trench, which in places was knee deep in water. Eventually, they reached Fosse Way Trench, north of Le Rutoire Farm, where a 300 yard length had been allotted as the assembly point for their 600 men. In such crowded conditions and with the impending attack, sleep was very difficult.

At 5.30am on the 25 September 1915, under a dull rainy sky, the artillery opened an intense bombardment along the line, deluging the German front with shells of all calibres. The smoke hung over in a dense mass as there was very little wind. Conditions were not favourable for the use of the gas, but at the appointed time gas was released. The dull white vapour cloud hung low and drifted slowly in No Man's Land.

At 7.30am, the attacking infantry left their trenches and the advance began. On the 1st Division's front the 1 Brigade made steady progress, sweeping over the first German line and pressing on towards Hulluch. But the 2 Brigade was soon in difficulties. The gas cloud hung heavily over the land they had to traverse, and while they moved out over No Man's Land, in wave after wave, with the enemy's shells bursting among them and machine-gun fire sweeping their ranks, they found themselves in a fog of poisonous vapour. Some went down, others struggled on, coughing and gasping, only to find themselves up against great belts of uncut wire as they reached the hostile lines.

Green's Force - with London Scottish on the left, Liverpools on the right - had waited, crowded together in the Fosse Way Trench until the troops further forward had cleared out of the front fire trench and support line. At 8.00am the order was given to move forward to these trenches. The London Scottish advanced in two lines of companies, A and D Companies in the front line, B and C [Richard Fitzmaurice's Company] in the second. The 2 Brigade attack having failed and, as the smoke cleared away, the London Scottish advance was made in full view of the enemy and under aimed fire. As soon as the Companies began to move they came under shell and rifle fire. Their casualties were heavy, but they advanced as if on parade, the Black Watch cheering as they passed.

Arriving at the British front-line trenches, the troops laid down behind the parapets to await the capture of the German first line. Away to the left front, 1 Brigade could be seen in the enemy's lines, but there was no sign of the bombing parties. There was nothing to be seen of 2 Brigade, but groups of dead and wounded out in front, and gassed and wounded men straggling back. The German shelling had now ceased, but the enemy kept up a brisk rifle fire, which rose to a tornado whenever a man moved. The London Scottish had lost heavily during this advance and suffered

more losses while waiting, as the troops could not enter the front trenches due to gas. The low parapets behind which the men lay afforded little cover.

Early in the afternoon, Green's Force was ordered by the Division to attack 'with one Battalion on each side of Lone Tree'. Major Lindsay suggested that if his Battalion, the 1/14 London Scottish were sent in the rear of the 1 Brigade and then swung round to take the enemy in flank, the spirit of the order would be complied with and better results obtained. Colonel Green, however, decided that the order must be literally obeyed.

The Liverpools accordingly advanced on the right of Lone Tree, the London Scottish on the left. B Company under Captain Stirling were detailed for the attack with support from C Company (Captain Low); A and D Companies being held back. Both B and C companies moved by half-company short rushes executed so well that casualties, though heavy, were less than might have been expected. They were assisted by a London Scottish machine-gun, which came into action from the extreme left.

On reaching the German line the men were confronted by the same absolutely intact belt of wire, twenty yards wide, which had earlier stopped the 2 Brigade. Further advance was impossible. They lay down, answering the German fire with their rifles, but suffering serious loss, especially when machine-guns began to enfilade them from the right. The Liverpool attack was no more successful. It was an unpleasant and hopeless situation.

Assuming Richard, as a member of C Company, was not killed in the move to the British front line trenches or in the initial stages of the attack, it is likely he perished in the full frontal assault mounted beyond the Lone Tree, which was brought to ground by the belt of wire. After this failed assault, C Company was not involved in further actions that resulted in significant casualties during the remainder of the day. His date of death is recorded as 25 September 1915.

Burial and Commemoration

Richard was laid to rest in a grave with an Imperial War Grave headstone at the Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos.



Richard Fitzmaurice's grave at Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos
Photo: R Smethurst

He is commemorated on the London Scottish 1914-1919 Memorial at the London Scottish Headquarters in London¹¹. Richard is also named on the Village War Memorial and All Saints' War Memorial, Lindfield and the Littlehampton War Memorial.



Lindfield Village War Memorial Photo: Lindfield History Project Group

LINDSAY FITZMAURICE



Captain Lindsay Fitzmaurice, Prince Albert's 8th Somerset Light Infantry, killed in the Ancre Valley on 18 November 1916 during the Somme offensive. Aged 24 years.

Photo: Family Collection

Born in Lindfield in 1893, Lindsay Fitzmaurice and his three elder brothers attended Belvedere School, a private school, in Haywards Heath¹². Upon completing his schooling, Lindsay was admitted to London University and in the 1911 Lindfield Census is described as a student aged 18. While undertaking his university studies he joined The University Officer Training¹³ Corps and had completed his university course prior to commencement of the Great War.

Answering the Call to Colours

Following the declaration of war, on 10 August 1914, the War Office advertised for 2,000 junior officer entrants¹⁴ from ex-cadets of University Officer Training Corps, members of Universities and other young men of good education. These junior officers were required for the New Armies being raised by the Government.

Lindsay's actions suggest he may have applied unsuccessfully as the vacancies were vastly over-subscribed and quickly filled. This left a large number of young men with a similar background not knowing how best to serve their country.

A letter appeared in The Times on 26 August 1914¹⁵ proposing that an infantry force comprising young men who had attended public school or university should be formed. The idea was that young men with similar backgrounds and shared past experiences could enter into training and serve together without having to await further officer vacancies. This idea received much support and a civilian committee was formed to establish a force of 5,000 men, to be known, initially, as the 'Public Schools and University Men's Force'¹⁶.

The committee advised Lord Kitchener of their plan and he responded 'Go ahead and if you can raise 10,000 men I shall be all the better pleased.'¹⁷ This was taken by the committee as authority to proceed. Newspaper articles and advertisements appeared. A chief recruiting office was established in Westminster and throughout the first week of September applications started to roll in and enrolment, attestation and medicals by volunteer doctors commenced immediately¹⁸. Because this was to be a new Force, all those joining had the rank of Private as no officers had been appointed.

Lindsay must have been aware of this initiative and perhaps saw it as the best way to serve his country in response to Lord Kitchener's call to arms.

However, the War Office considered that the arrangements and recruitment were proceeding too fast and without proper authority¹⁹, as on Friday 4 September they ordered all attestation to stop immediately. It was not until 9 September that formal authority was given by the Army Council to form four infantry battalions of the New Armies. The first was established as the 18th (Service) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (1st Public Schools & University) on 11 September 1914. The 19th and 20th Battalions immediately followed and a little later the, 21st Battalion respectively the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th PS&U. However, although sanctioned, the Army Council

required the committee to organise clothing, feeding and accommodation. By their recruitment criteria they were in effect 'pals battalions'.

Within a day or two, the committee obtained permission to use land at Woodcote Park, Epsom, (the Country Club of the Royal Automobile Club) as the site for their camp²⁰. Pending construction of the camp, arrangements were made to billet the battalions in Epsom, Ashstead and Leatherhead. With this essential requirement in place recruitment could proceed.

On 10 September 1914, formal recruitment was put in hand, with properly agreed medical examinations and attestations to be conducted at Westminster by the duly authorised Captain Hallett. Some 5000 recruits had to be notified by postcard to attend this process. All the paperwork and recording was administered by the Force's civilian volunteers.

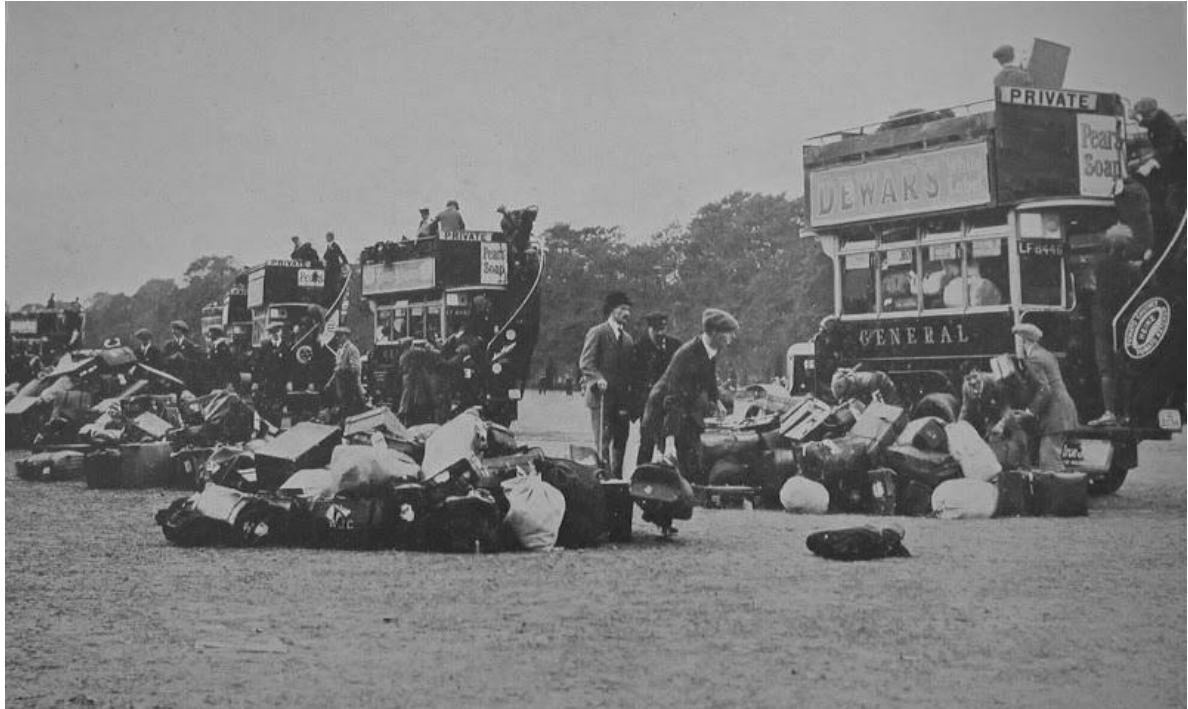
Enlistment

Lindsay may have enrolled with the Force prior to it being sanctioned by the War Office, as his recruitment was formalised and the attestation conducted by Captain Hallett at Westminster on 15 September 1914²¹. His age and occupation on the application form was stated as 22 years 3 months and Clerk. A medical examination that same day passed him fit and recorded his height as 5ft 7ins and weight 10 stone. He signed up for 'Three years with the Colours' subject to the proviso 'unless War lasts longer than three years, in which case you will be retained until the War is over'. Lindsay was assigned to the 18th (Service) Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (1st Public Schools and University) further indicating the promptness of his enrolment. He joined with the rank of Private, returning home to await mobilisation.

Mobilisation and Initial Training

Mobilisation for men of 18th, 19th and 20th Royal Fusiliers, who lived in London or within easy train journey, was ordered for noon on 18 September 1914 by notices in the press²². Lindsay duly reported to the muster point at Hyde Park (opposite Knightsbridge Barracks). The men were allowed a single suitcase or bag, which were taken to Epsom on a fleet of motor buses, while the men marched to board chartered trains for the journey.

On arrival at Epsom station, Lindsay and other members of D Company were dispersed to accommodation with families in Epsom town. By all accounts the residents welcomed the troops into their midst²³.



Royal Fusiliers (1st PSU) Luggage being loaded in Hyde Park for journey to Epsom on 18 September 1914. Photo: 'Royal Fusiliers UPS' p41.

Basic training, consisting of physical exercise, route marching and drill, reminiscent of OTC training, started immediately. In the absence of uniforms the soldiers wore civilian clothing featuring school scarves, college sweaters, brown shooting or riding outfits²⁴. It was not until 11 October that 200 rifles per battalion were received, which was timely as the King inspected the Brigade two days later.

The London Gazette dated 26 October 1914 listed the first officers²⁵ appointed to the Brigade from within the ranks; no doubt to Lindsay's disappointment he was not promoted. However, by the beginning of November several hundred men had already left the Brigade receiving commissions in other regiments.

Commissioned in the 8th Somerset Light Infantry

As part of the Third New Army, the 8th Somerset Light Infantry was raised during October 1914 and started to recruit junior officers. After 66 days as a Private in the Royal Fusiliers, Lindsay received his 'Discharged on receiving commission'²⁶ and joined the 8th Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) on 20 November 1914. He was 'Gazetted' ten days later.



Lindsay Fitzmaurice Photo: Family collection

This new Battalion spent the next ten months in strenuous training²⁷. Initially, they were stationed at Leighton Buzzard, then Halton and latterly at Witley Camp near Godalming, for final training in preparation for being sent to France.

8th Somerset Light Infantry ordered to France

The Battalion received orders to join the Expeditionary Force in France and on 9 September 1915 embarked at Southampton landing the following day at Harve²⁸. The next 24 hours was spent in the Rest Camp. The Battalion then proceeded by train to Watten and marched to Bayenghem, remaining there until 19 September 1915, making preparations for a move up to the front line to take part in the Loos offensive.

Leaving Bayenghem at 8.00pm on 19 September 1915, they marched via Wardrecques, Bourecq to Ferfay for two days final preparations, before bivouacking near Noeux les Mines on 24 September 1915 enroute to Vermelles.

The Loos Offensive: 25 September – 28 September 1915.

The Battle of Loos was the first large-scale British offensive on the Western Front. The terrain was generally flat punctuated by pit head winding towers and slag heaps with settlements surrounding the coal

mining centres. The Germans had turned this landscape to their defensive advantage.

Following a four-day artillery bombardment, the Loos offensive commenced on the morning of 25 September 1915.

On the morning of 25 September, Lindsay's Battalion marched to Vermelles and deployed to go into action at about 7.00pm, reaching Fosse No 7 on the Loos Road at 8.00pm. Bayenghem to Fosse No 7 was a distance of some 60 miles, an arduous march considering the weight of kit and equipment carried by each soldier and the bad roads.²⁹

The Brigade Diary records that from Fosse No 7, a coal mine, the Battalion was required to 'advance to the line of the Hulluch – Lens Road by night, thence to continue advance against German trenches in the direction of Annay'.

The 21st Division, of which the 8th Somerset Light Infantry were a part, had been in France for about two weeks and were quite inexperienced and totally lacking in knowledge of the enemy's methods and trench warfare. The Division had never fired a shot at the Germans, neither had it been fired upon, regardless of this, however, it was required to take part in a major offensive.

A detailed account of the Battalion's ensuing action, as part of the Loos offensive, is described in Major Howard's report³⁰, see below. He commanded B and C Company. Lindsay Fitzmaurice was an officer in one of these Companies.

'At 7 p.m. on the 25th September 1915, I received verbal orders to take B & C Companies, 8th [S] Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry as a firing line and go due east to make good the Hulluch – Lens road at H.25a. The 8th [S] Bn Lincoln Regiment was on my left. I started about 7.30 p.m., and about 9.45 p.m. I stopped for twenty minutes to make all my men fill their water-bottles and haversacks with water and provisions of which there was a good supply in our vacated first-line trench. I then resumed the advance, keeping close touch with the Lincolns on my left and arrived at my objective, the Hulluch – Lens road – H.25.8.7, at about 3.30 a.m., having searched wood H.25 on my way. During the advance we were under machine-gun fire from the direction of H.25 but had only two casualties.

I then received orders from Brigadier-General Nickalls to take up a position with one company facing east along the Hulluch – Lens road, H.25.a.8.7 to H.25, and place the other company, as a brigade reserve, in the chalk pit at H.25.a.7.7. I placed B Company, under

Capt. Nichols, along the Hulluch – Lens road, but finding the company too weak to hold such line I asked for and obtained permission from Brigadier-General Nickalls to place another platoon there. This gave me 5 platoons along the Hulluch – Lens road, from H.25.a.8.7 to H.25, and three platoons in the chalk pit.

..... I made all hands spend the remainder of the night vigorously digging themselves in. From dawn onwards we were persistently sniped at but could not find the snipers. At 8.20 a.m. I received orders for an advance on Annay and at 8.45 a.m., whilst reading and explaining these orders to my officers, I was called for by the Brigade Major who informed me that we were being counter-attacked on our right and asked me to place my three reserve platoons in position along the edge of the wood, H25.a, facing S.E. This I did, finding them good natural cover and an old deserted shallow trench. A continuous heavy rifle was then opened upon us, but I only had about three casualties as my men were well under cover. During this time a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire was turned on us, accompanied by a very heavy and accurate shell fire. However, we were well entrenched and our casualties were remarkably few'.

At about 10.15am some troops on Major Howard's left retired. His report continued.

'I could see a few men were still left in the trenches. The Germans began to show their hand, coming out in the open from wood H.25 and 26 and attacking along my left front in a half-hearted manner. The Yorks and Lancs on my right had already retired owing to the intensity of the enemy shell fire, so I drew in my right flank and made a redoubt of the chalk pits. The enemy then concentrated their fire on my position but without great effect – their shells going over our heads and bursting at the bottom of the chalk pit. The snipers were deadly though and 2/Lt. Hopkins was killed and Lt. Fitzmaurice was wounded at about this time.'

Following a subsequent roll call, the losses of the 8th Battalion in this action were three officers killed, seven wounded, five were reported 'wounded and missing' and, in the other ranks, 26 killed, 156 wounded 3 gassed and 86 missing. The Loos offensive was called off in failure on 28 September 1915.

Lindsay was one of the seven officers wounded in the action which lasted a little over 20 hours. As mentioned in Major Howard's report, Lindsay was shot by a sniper at about 10.15am on 26 September but is unlikely to have reached a dressing station for several hours. A subsequent report

states his injury as 'Gun shot wound left elbow – fractured' and records Lindsay as having left his unit that day. After receiving attention at a field dressing station he started his journey back to England, embarking on the S.S. Dieppe at Calais on 1st October bound for Dover, where he arrived later the same day.

On Sick Leave in England

The War Office sent a telegram³¹ on 7 October 1915 addressed to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice at Lindfield advising Lindsay 'was wounded between 25/27 Sept further news will be wired when received'. The following day a further telegram was received saying, 'admitted Endsleigh Palace Hospital, Endsleigh Gardens W.C. Oct 1st Suffering from gunshot wound left arm.' This was a hospital for wounded officers.

A Medical Board examined Lindsay and he was granted sick leave until 27 January 1916. He wrote to the War Office from hospital on 1 November 1915 claiming a gratuity for the elbow wound saying 'both the bones are fractured.' He received £83-6s-8d³².

Correspondence indicates that Lindsay had returned home to his family at 29 St Flora's Road, Littlehampton by 22 November 1915. He returned to the hospital for treatment and a Medical Board examination at the end of January when sick leave of absence was granted to 26 May 1916.

Ten days prior to the end of each sick leave period, Lindsay was required to report in writing to the War Office giving his whereabouts for the next Medical Board. In the middle of May he wrote from the Greyhound Hotel, Fordingbridge, which suggests he was taking a short holiday.

Following his Board examination on 2 June 1916, Lindsay was passed fit for 'light duties at home'³³ and ordered to report to 9th Reserve Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, Naval Camp, Blandford, Dorset, which he did on 5 June 1916. The Medical Board instructed that Lindsay must not be detailed for duty with the Expeditionary Force until reported fit for service abroad. A further Medical Board examination on 3 July 1916 reported, 'has recovered from his wound – but requires hardening,'³⁴ and declared him fit for service at home.

A re-examination on 3 August 1916 declared that Lindsay was now fit for General Service and should report to Officer Commanding, 9th Reserve Battalion, at Swanage. Subsequently, he received an order dated 28 August 1916 'to rejoin Expeditionary Force as soon as possible after 48 hours leave' and 'to report personally Embarkation Commandant, Southampton before Four p.m. date proceeding.'³⁵

Return to France

Lindsay sailed from Southampton and journeyed through France to rejoin his old unit in early September. The Battalion was out of the front line and had been billeted at Gouy Servins since mid-August³⁶.

On 18 September 1916 the 8th Somerset Light Infantry moved back to the front line taking over trenches in 'Souchez I' until late October. It was a comparatively quiet time on this section of the front.

Somme Offensive - Battle of the Ancre

Towards the end October, the Battalion moved south again to the Somme, reaching Beauval on 30 October 1916 where the Battalion billeted for two weeks for training.

On 8 November 1916, Lindsay Fitzmaurice was promoted to Captain³⁷.

When the orders came to move forward, as part of the 63 Brigade, the 8th Somerset Light Infantry comprised 32 officers and 778 other ranks. From Beauval they moved to Lealvillers and Acheux Wood for two days final training, prior to the Battle of the Ancre³⁸.

At 10.00am on 14 November 1916, the 8th Somerset Light Infantry marched from Lealvillers to Hedauville, halting at about 2.00pm before resuming the march at 5.30pm for Englebelmer, where the 63 Brigade was to assemble before taking over the front line.

The 8th Somerset Light Infantry were to have a support role in the Beaucourt Trench, which ran from the western outskirts of Beaucourt along the southern side of the Beaucourt – Beaumont Hamel road.

The move to the front line began at midnight (14/15 November) on a pitch-black night. The area over which the troops had to move was in an appalling condition. Mud and water, shell holes and craters, the remains of roads and trenches, wrecked dug-outs, and everywhere unburied bodies. Arriving at their location the men dug in.

During 15 November 1916 the Battalion provided working parties and assisted in making good the communication trench. The next day was spent working on the trench and carrying supplies with intermittent shelling inflicting a few casualties.

Late the next day, orders were received to occupy Ancre Trench with one company and push out patrols to the junction of Ancre and Puisieux Trenches. C Company undertook this task and early on 17 November 1916 they were attacked by a German bombing party who were beaten

back. The three remaining companies continued carrying supplies under shell fire and some casualties were suffered.

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Scott, received orders that the Battalion would, during the night 17/18 November, 'establish strong points in River and Puisieux Trenches and reconnoitre Baillescourt Farm aaa. They will endeavour to assist 56 Brigade S of River in the capture of Grandcourt in the morning. Posts will be established as soon as possible. Zero hour will be at 6.10am. It is of the utmost importance that the work of patrols and the establishment of the line of posts should be forwarded to the Brigade at the earliest possible moment.'

At 1.00am on 18 November 1916, the 8th Somerset Light Infantry soldiers moved off by companies through Beaucourt and completed a line of posts from Bois d'Hollande in a westerly direction across the open ground to Puisieux Road. A Company was on the right from Ancre Trench to Bois d'Hollande, B Company next in the centre, and C Company to the left. D Company, at Ancre Trench, had orders to reconnoitre Puisieux Trench and establish strong points in that trench and in Puisieux River Trench, if possible. Two Stokes mortars and two machine-guns were attached to D Company to assist in this attack.

Lindsay was a Company Commander but the identity of his Company is not known. Accordingly, details of the four Companies actions are given below.

In the worse possible conditions the battalion set out on their unenviable task. Snow was falling, the ground was heavy with filthy, clinging mud and the going was terrible. As the patrols neared Puisieux Trench, German patrols were discovered in front of their line and the 8th Somerset took cover in shell holes.

Towards dawn, the British guns began to shell the enemy positions and shells shrieked overhead. An entry in the Battalion Diary at 9.20am states, 'Received orders to be prepared to attack Puisieux and Puisieux River Trench from S. end to its junction with Miraumont Alley supported by the 4th Middlesex'.

Due to the difficulty of crossing heavy ground swept by shell, machine-gun and rifle fire, the orders were not circulated until about 10.40am for the attack to start at 11.00am.

At the appointed time, the 8th Somerset Light Infantry launched their attack. Immediately on leaving their shell holes, the men came under heavy enemy rifle fire. Officers and men began to fall and soon casualties became heavy. C and D Companies were moving forward very slowly

from shell hole to shell hole, and the attack was stopped as the advance was coming under fire from British guns.

About noon, bombing parties of C Company entered Puisieux Trench south of the Miraumont Road and captured 20 Germans. D Company quickly followed and the trench was consolidated.

Shortly after midday the attack apparently ended, as the attempt to take Grandcourt had failed and soldiers were dribbling back along the railway line south of Ancre Trench. The results so far as the 8th Somerset Light Infantry were concerned, are recorded in the Battalion Diary as 'Puisieux Trench was held but no further advance was made.'

By early afternoon A Company had lost their company commander and a replacement officer was sent. B Company continued to be under heavy sniping fire. During the afternoon an order was issued for A and B Companies to reoccupy the line of posts held in the early morning and this movement was conducted at dusk.

By 11.00pm, all 8th Somerset Light Infantry companies had been relieved and were located in support trenches and the Quarries just east of Beaucourt.

The day's fighting had cost the 8th Somerset Light Infantry, three company commanders, Captain Lindsay Fitzmaurice, Captain A. H. Hall, and Lieut. F. H. T. Joscelyne, plus another officer killed and five officers wounded. In the other ranks, over one hundred men had been lost and many more wounded.

The time and circumstances resulting Lindsay being killed is not known.

Tragic News and Dealing with Lindsay's Estate

The sad news of Lindsay's death was conveyed to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice in a telegram [again wrongly address to Lindfield] from the War Office dated 24 November 1916³⁹. The telegram read 'Deeply regret to inform you Lieut L Fitzmaurice 8th Somerset Light Infantry was killed in action on Nov 18 The Army Council express their sympathy'.

The War Office records show that Lindsay was a bachelor and his father the next of kin. The grand sounding 'The Standing Committee of Adjustment, British Expeditionary Force' ordered, on 20 December 1916, Lindsay's effects to be forwarded to Cox & Co Shipping Agency Ltd for onward delivery to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice⁴⁰.

Listed in the inventory of effects were:

Cheque for 30 Francs
Drinking Flask
Cheque Book
Officer's Advance Book
Metal Watch (Damaged)
Letters Etc
Card Case
Regimental Badge
Photo in leather case
Pocket Book
Knife
Gold Mounted Pen
Pipes (2)
Lock of Hair
Photos

It was also noted that 6s 0d and 15 Francs had been paid to the Command Cashier. The presence of a 'Lock of Hair' perhaps suggests that Lindsay left a sweetheart at home when ordered to France.

Lindsay's Service Record contains much correspondence from late 1916 between various Army units and the War Office regarding such matters as whether a Will had been made, financial liabilities, gratuities, pay due and the winding up of his estate. It was established that he died intestate so his estate would pass to his father.

Correspondence continued through to 1920. During this protracted period the following three letters are worthy of note⁴¹:

War Office to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice dated 5 April 1917

'I am directed to inform you that a report has been received which states that the late Lieutenant L Fitzmaurice, 8/Somerset Light Infantry is buried in Beaucourt Station Cemetery, Beaumont Hamel. The grave has been registered in this office and is marked by a durable wooden cross with an inscription bearing full particulars'.

War Office to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice dated 10 February 1919

'..... with a view to the issue of the Plaque and Scroll which are to be sent to the next-of-kin of those who have fallen, I am to enquire whether you are still living at the address given.

Owing to the great number of cases to be dealt with it is impossible to say how soon the distribution will be effected in any individual case.'

War Office to Dr Richard Fitzmaurice dated 19 December 1919

'With reference to the information already sent to you regarding the place of burial. I beg to inform you that it has been found necessary to exhume the bodies buried in this area and to re-inter them, and the body of the above mentioned officer has been removed and buried in Ancre River Cemetery, Beaumont Hamel, North of Albert.

The new grave has been duly marked and registered. The re-burial has been carefully and reverently carried out.'

The lack of sensitivity in the wording will be noted and furthermore all these letters were incorrectly addressed and sent to Lindfield, despite Dr Richard Fitzmaurice having given his St Flora's Road address on every communication he had sent to the War Office since December 1916.

Lindsay's Service File was finally marked closed in January 1921.

Commemoration

In addition to the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's headstone marking Lindsay's grave at Beaumont Hamel, his name appears on the Village Memorial and All Saints' Memorial, Lindfield and the Littlehampton War Memorial.



Lindfield Village War Memorial Photo: Lindfield History Project Group

A sad footnote is that unknown to the family, Lindsay's memorial plaque together with his medals, portrait photograph, photograph albums and other personal items were sold at auction by Dix Noonan Webb in 2002⁴². The hammer price was £620 and the identity of the seller is unknown.

FRANCIS FITZMAURICE



Francis Fitzmaurice Photo: Family collection

Francis, generally known as Frank and within the family as Ben⁴³, was the youngest of the Fitzmaurice boys. He was born at Horsted Keynes on 16 April 1895. In the 1911 Lindfield Census he is recorded as a school boy, living with his parents in Lindfield. Like his brothers, he is understood to have attended Belvedere School, Bolnore Road, Haywards Heath.

On 16 September 1914, Francis went to Brighton and enlisted⁴⁴ in the Territorial Force, joining 1/6th (Cyclist) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment. He was aged 19 years 5 month, single, 5 feet 8 inches tall and gave his occupation as Student. It is not known where he was studying, perhaps at home. Francis passed the medical and it was noted that his vision was 'good with glasses'. He joined as a Private with the Service Number 652.

© Richard Bryant and West Sussex County Council

As part of the enlistment process, Francis had to certify being 'able and willing to provide myself with a bicycle during my period of service as cyclist'.

This local Territorial Force Cyclist Battalion had been formed in Brighton in 1911. During 1914 and 1915, the 1/6th Royal Sussex undertook coastal defence duties in England. In March 1915, Francis signed the Territorial Force Foreign Service Agreement.

On 4 September 1915, Francis a member of E Company stationed at Worthing applied for a temporary commission⁴⁵ in the Regular Army for the duration of the war. The application was endorsed by his father and Reverend E F d'Auvergne, until recently the Vicar of Lindfield, provided a character reference. His good standard of education was certified by Ambrose A Ogle, BA Oxon, who described himself as 'tutor, late Headmaster of Preparatory School' with the words 'quite up to London Matriculation standard, which he all but passed with night preparation'. Interestingly, the application form enquired, 'Whether of pure European descent'.

His commission was granted⁴⁶ on 26 September 1915 and listed in the London Gazette on 6 October 1915. He was appointed to 'a Temporary Second-Lieutenancy in the Royal Field Artillery' and posted to the 32nd Divisional Artillery at Heytesbury, Wiltshire.

Unfortunately his Service Record, held at the National Archives, provides no information on his military service between 1916 and discharge in 1919. On 2 December 1915 final orders were received that the 31st Division⁴⁷ would go to Egypt, accompanied by the artillery of 32nd Division. The Division sailed from 7 December with the last units arriving in Egypt on 23 January 1916. Francis arrived in Egypt on 10 January 1916⁴⁸.

The Division took over No 3 Sector of the Suez Canal defences. The Divisional HQ moved to Kantara on 23 January 1916. The stay in Egypt was short, as between 1-6 March 1916 the Division sailed to Marseilles for service on the Western Front⁴⁹.

Assuming the 32nd Division Artillery remained attached to the 31 Division during 1916, it would have been involved in the Battle of Albert including the attack on Serre and the Battle of the Ancre, which were phases of the Battles of the Somme. Francis' presence in France is confirmed by an article in the Aberdeen Daily Journal, 1 December 1916, reporting the death of Lindsay Fitzmaurice who was killed at the Battle of the Ancre. The article commented that 'Second Lieut. Francis Fitzmaurice, RFA, is now in France'.



The details of the units or locations in which Francis served during 1917 and 1918 are not known. However, if he remained in France, it is likely that he was involved in several of the major actions and the final advance across Flanders.

Discharge papers⁵⁰ state that at the time of his discharge on 5 February 1919, Francis had attained the rank of Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery and was serving in the '6 Arty 1st Bde', with the Theatre of War or Command stated as 'Eastern'. His medical category was A1 and there is no evidence he had been wounded during the war.

Francis was the only one of the four brothers who served with the Army to survive the war and return to his family at 29 St Flora's Road, Littlehampton.

JANE FITZMAURICE

Jane Fitzmaurice, also known as Jean, was born at Lindfield in 1889. She was the elder daughter of Dr Richard and Alexina Fitzmaurice.

In January 1913, aged 24, she enrolled in the British Red Cross Sussex 150 Voluntary Aid Detachment⁵¹, which had been established in Lindfield the previous year. Founded by the War Office, the original purpose of VAD Detachments was to support the Territorial Army medical service in the provision of nursing care for the wounded, in the event of a major conflict. Along with the other VAD nurses Jane received her training at the Infirmary of the Cuckfield Union, where her father was the Medical Officer. Following the outbreak of war, the detachment was mobilized on 3 November 1914 and Jane served as a volunteer nurse in the Lindfield VAD Hospital, in King Edward Hall, until December 1915.

Following a move with her family to Littlehampton, she continued voluntary work with the Red Cross. Jane Fitzmaurice was awarded the British Red Cross War Medal in recognition of having completed 1750 unpaid hours. The medal was awarded to volunteers with over 1000 hours of nursing service.



Jane Fitzmaurice's British Red Cross War Service Medal
Photo: Lindfield History Project Group, courtesy of R Smethurst

Jane continued her service with the British Red Cross after the war and she was awarded the British Red Cross 10 years Service Badge.



Jane Fitzmaurice's British Red Cross 10 Years Service Badge
Photos: Lindfield History Project Group, courtesy of R Smethurst

Her nurse's training allowed her to obtain the post of matron at a major Sussex public school for girls⁵². A position Jane held for many years before retiring with her sister, Alexina, to live in Lindfield. Their home was at Armitage, Compton Road. She died in 1992 at Compton House, a nursing home for the elderly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Cover photograph: Lindfield Village War Memorial. Photo Lindfield History Project Group