

DURHAM
AT **WAR**



**MY EXPERIENCES & IMPRESSIONS SINCE THE
DECLARATION OF WAR (volume 1)
by Hubert Horatio Shirley Morant**

The Story of the 10th Battalion Durham Light Infantry
in the First World War

by its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Morant

PART 16: Pages 243-256 December 1917 – February 1918

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Song Sung by H.Q. to D.L.I.
on the March.

We are the lads from Durham we are
We have just arrived in town.
We make a show where ever we go
We're in the front line, we're in

the know
We know all the pretty girls from
Ypres up to Durham, to Durham
To wake up and shake up the
dear old town
We are the lads from Durham

We are
Left, Right, Left

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As my H.Q. in the Goudberg Sector was practically in the front line I had a good opportunity of seeing what went on. When going round our posts at dusk I could clearly see the Boches coming forward to advanced shell holes & going back in the early morning. They were very good at this elastic system of posts. We established posts & always occupied them. The Boche was far more elastic & at night advanced his outposts close up to ours. After observing this I sent written orders to all officers that any movement was to be fired upon - but this they did not do the next night - another evening noticed the same thing & no action being taken.

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Retrospect.

Xmas was of the "old fashioned" sort but Xmas day was not kept until the 31st. Left on a month's leave from Roperinghe on the 26th - crossing over on the 27th. The Brigade entrained for St. Omer Area on the 26th & shortly after moved South to East of Amiens - leaving the VIIIth Corps.

This had been a more eventful year than any for the Battⁿ - we had had a strenuous time viz
6th Jan^y - Raid at Arras -

9/10 April - Attack on Red-Blue & Brown Lines - Arras offensive.
3rd May - Reserve in attack East of Wancourt took over a bad line East of Wancourt subsequently.

20th Aug - Attack & Defence of Inverness Copse.
24th -

Sep^r - Oct. Messines Line
October. Cameron Court Line
December. Passchendaele Line

Though we had some hard times we had a good deal of time for training. In spite of our losses - probably nearly 1000 - the Battⁿ maintained its efficiency and probably was never ^{so well} ~~better~~ turned out ~~than~~ it was in the summer 1917 - all equipment being kept scrubbed & cleaned with Mills Equip^t powder.

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10th Bⁿ Durham L. Inf.

1. Result of Brigade A.B.A. Platoon Competition held on 16-1-18.

Winning Team. No 5 Platoon - 10th Battalion Durham L.I.

Team.	2/Lieutenant T. Scott.	No 44185 L/Sgt J.T. Gale.
No 10148 Sgt A. Whitthouse.		18/1324 Corpl J. Dobson.
1541 Cpl R. Lee.		73414 Private J.C. Jackson.
15123 Pte R. Routledge.		73392 " R.H. Robson.
73391 " J.H. Smith.		71038 " W. Shepherd.
77310 " W.H. Smith.		73393 " A. Robson.
77454 " J. Kerr.		41079 " J.W. Middleton.
73260 " J.T. Dunning.		20/14 " R. Hodgson.
376337 " F.H. Day.		44181 " F. Webster.
73070 " J. Young.		73304 " J. Johnson.
73173 " B. Waugh.		588 " P. Spencer.
73387 " F. Hutchinson.		51603 " J. Gyll.
788 " P. Hall.		71067 " G.A. Stott.
24533 " F. Read.		
73261 " W. Scott.		

2. Result of Divisional A.B.A. Platoon Competition held 17-1-18.

2nd - No 5 Platoon - 10th Battalion Durham Light Infantry.

Team. As above.

3. Result of Brigade Boxing Competition held 18-1-18.

Welter Weight.

Winner - Private Broad - S.L.I.

Light Weights.

Winner - Private Holden - 10th Durham L.I.

Feather Weights.

Winner - Private Jubbs - 10th Durham L.I.

Bantam Weights.

Winner - Private Mitchell - 10th Durham L.I.

4. Result of Brigade Cross Country Run held 25th Nov: 1917.

Winners. - 10th Durham Light Infantry.

Team.

Captain & Adjutant G.P. Grant.
 Captain H. Wilkinson.
 Lieutenant A.A. Roach.
 " R.D. Harrison.
 " O. Stephenson.
 " W.C. Vaughan.
 Private Achilles.
 " Hall.
 " Foster.
 " Roberts.
 " Watson.
 " Armstrong.

Won by 190 points.

Distance 3½ miles.

(over)

5.

Result of Divisional Cross Country Run held 20-1-18.

2nd - 10th Battalion Durham Light Infantry.

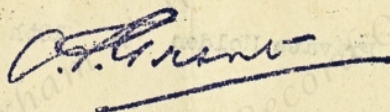
Team.

Captain & Adjutant C.P. Grant.
 Lieutenant A.A. Roach.
 No 20653 Private W. Armstrong.
 245386 " R. Taylor.
 245386 " J.W. Roberts.
 201440 " T. Hall.
 43349 " N. Cowen.
 201443 " W.O. Foster.

30 Teams entered for this Run.

Distance. About 5 miles.

10-2-18.



Captain.

Adjutant, 10th Durham Light Infantry.

17
A
17

Brig Genl. Tempest inspected the Battⁿ in marching order at Zindausques about 24th November & was particularly pleased with the turn out & the completeness of kits & sent us a most flattering report.

We did well in sports too - winning:

All Brigade Box ing (Tournaments^{Events}).

Brigade X County Run

In football we did not do so well - being beaten in the Bde Competition in Nov. by D.C.L.I.

D Comp^y through the efforts of Cap^t Davies was the best Company.

During Jan^y (1918) the 14th Divⁿ was transferred to the 5th Army and moved South and about the end of the Month took over front from the French South of St. Quentin behind the Oise about Venderuil.

Everything was extremely quiet here and it was a delightful country. It was here I came to say goodbye to the Battⁿ on appointment to the command of 3rd Bn at the end of Jan^y. I found the Transport Camp at Remigny.

Major Ward (D.C.L.I.) was in command & I went up to Battⁿ H.Q. on the night of 26th & said goodbye to him & others. Next day I addressed the men at the Transport Camp & rode to Ham - thence by train to Peronne

After a few drafts we received immediately subsequent to the Inverness Copse fighting we got no more. We got no men to replace the wastage of ^{messing} Cameron Covert Sector, or Passchendaele consequently by X was 1917 we were down to a 3 Platoon + 2 Platoon organization. The whole Division was the same. 12 Months previously Bde's in the 14th Div were mostly 1200 strong and they were more like 400 - at the same time Lloyd George was making a speech to the effect the strength of the British Army was greater in Jan. 1918 than it had ever been - It was this was a lie. Genl. Maurice showed it up. At the moment Lloyd George was saying this Bdes were being reduced to 3 Batt^s on ^{my} return from leave at the end of Jan. this was the situation. When asked if we had been "made up" the answer was "No we are going to be disbanded as there are not enough men. The selection of Batt^s for disbandment was carried out arbitrarily by the W.O. at home. Dist. Commanders had nothing to say to it - but 5th O.C. 14th Div: when 5th Shropshire L.I. 10/D.L.I. were selected stated openly they had selected his 2 best Batt^s in the Division & 6 weeks later he had painful practical experience of it.

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and Amiens where I stayed the night - journeying to Poperinghe next day to find my Bde H.Q. on the Canal Bank.

About the beginning of Feb^r all Bdes were reduced to 3 Batt^s the 10th D.L.I. was broken up. Some off^r men going to Territorial Batt^s in the 50th Div others to 2nd & 15th Batt^s. The 14th D.L.I. shared a similar fate.

Less than 2 Months later the great German offensive broke on this Sector - ^{up to then} ~~peacefully~~ so peaceful - and the 14th Light Division was wiped out. As the Major General Commanding said afterwards - they had taken away & disbanded my two best Batt^s the 10/D.L.I. and the 6/Shrops. L.I. - on the eve of the attack. Poor John Derwood a hero of the 10/D.L.I. was killed acting in command of the 6/Som. L.I. - Lt. Yellowkes was taken prisoner - Lt. Harrison killed.

There is no doubt when the 10/D.L.I. was disbanded, except for being weak, the Batt^y was at the top of its form. It had an experienced Staff, good Officers, some experienced NCOs. The men were cleaner & smarter than they had ever been & had won both at Athletics Training Competitions most of the events in the Bde.

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Dear Sir,


I think it may be of interest to you, for the purposes of Regimental History, to have the following facts of the 10th D. L. I.

The battalion has been under my command from the day it was formed at Woking under Lieut.Col. H.H.S. Morant.

It came out to France in May 1915; it has been in all the hard fighting the 14th Division has seen - at YPRES in 1915; the SOMME and DELVILLE WOOD in 1916; ARRAS,

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WANCOURT, INVERNESS CUPSE, and
PASSCHENDAELE in 1917. In all these
battles they have nobly kept up the
traditions of the D. L. I.

In the trenches there were no
harder workers; they were never
surprised by the Germans; and, as
far as I know, no man of this
battalion was ever made prisoner.

When they were disbanded I lost
one of the finest battalions in my
Division.

11/2/1918 Major-General
Cmndg. 14th (Light) Div

(ci)

Keep this in my
Diary - please.

8th Feb 9 1918.

DCLI

Letter from Major Ward who took
over Command of the Battⁿ from
about 1st Jan^y 1918 to its disbandment.

Dear General,

Very many thanks for your
three letters; I have sent the cheque for £25
to Mr Debor asking him to credit it to the ac^t
of Durham Light Infantry Charitable Fund -
the other one - 60 p^{rs} - I have sent to the L^ord
Bank and have asked them to send me
a statement of accounts - We were too late,
alas, with the P^{er} I accounts and in face of
the order we had received, Gen Lempert told
me I had better not try any "fudging," so it
had to go - (That's a swindle isn't it - the Canten Money goes to the
Govt).

We came out of the line on the night of
1st - 2nd and on the afternoon of the 2nd we
paraded for a farewell by the BGC - he spoke
very well and thanked the battalion for all
they had done since he had known them
and of course mentioned you - The men
gave him a real good cheer & the band played

"For he's a jolly good fellow" & "Auld lang syne" when he left. Gen Cooper also came later on and said goodbye - They did not parade but the band was playing and many men hanging around; he also got a great send off when he left -

I showed Gen Temperley your first letter and he said I had better leave Yellowbles and Stevenson out of the recommendations on account of their doing company work, so I sent in Wilkinson's name for a MC and Cherry for the higher rate of pay - I hope this is what you would have wished -

On Sunday morning - the 3rd - the battalion ^{territorial} paraded in 6 parties for the 2nd, 5th, 6th, 4th, 8th & 15th Bns. The band went complete to the 2nd and also a good percentage of the best men - it was a sad business saying goodbye to them & I know they felt the break up keenly - since then officers and men have been turning up from courses, jobs etc and passing through to their new battalions - This morning

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2.

The transport left under Dredge, as he is on leave; they have a three day trek in front of them, to the area we left before coming down here -

And now only Grant, Keith, Cherry, Ned & myself remain, with oddments, in all about 40 - Grant, Keith and I hope to be away on the 1st on leave, the two former on a month and myself on 14 days - One wonders what will become of us - it has been a sad break up and I think I have felt it as much as anybody; I enjoyed every minute of my six weeks command; there was such a wonderful "spirit" in the battalion and the men were splendid; I love the little ditties they used to sing on the march - "We are the lads from Durham, just as we are"; it seemed to hold them together so well when they sang it, especially at the end of a long march - one can easily understand the pride you took in them -

Yellowbles has gone to the Pomerets - The WCC

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has his eye on him and I have also spoken
to Beller about him - I took a great fancy to
him - he is a life long company commander in my
humble opinion - Beller told me he would fix
him up with a company the first moment he could
unfortunately for the moment he must revert to
2nd Lieut.

Well General I mustn't bother you with an
unnecessarily lengthy letter as I'm sure you are very
busy these days - May I wish you the very best
of success with your brigade and say how honoured
I have been in following you and in being identified
for a short time with the 10th S.I.?

Yours very sincerely

Frederick

P.S. I have sent in Grant's name with a
recommendation for

1. Staff Captain of an Inf. Bde
2. An Adjutant of a battalion, for
choice Durham Light Inf⁵

Frederick

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Rewards Gained by the Batt.

D.S.O. M.C. X. D.C.M. M.C. Med

THE DURHAMS.

STORY OF A FIGHTING BATTALION.

MEN OF THE FIRST HUNDRED THOUSAND.

(By Charles J. Jory.)

If ever a battalion won the right to be called a fighting battalion, one I visited in peaceful and rural rest billets somewhere in France on a Sunday morning recently has done so. Its record is one any regiment would be proud of. Durham miners have never been accused of lacking courage, and this battalion is mostly composed of such men—lusty fellows, cheerful under all sorts of privations, and developed wonderfully by their Army training. Stanley, Annfield Plain, Dipton, Swalwell, Blaydon, all have representatives among this thousand or so men, and the battalion has been in existence since the first month of the war. The officer who raised it still commands it, and is now a D.S.O. Twice he has been wounded and once he led an attack with only two other officers. The list of awards to officers and men speaks for itself—one D.S.O. and twenty Military Crosses have been won by the officers, while eleven non-coms. and men have the D.C.M., and one has since won a bar to this decoration, while another has been honoured by the French Government. No fewer than fifty-four Military Medals have been awarded, and in one case a man has won a bar to his medal also. This is a record for one battalion which will take some beating.

Being of the First Hundred Thousand, these men naturally led the way in other things. They, for instance, made the first daylight raid on the Western front, and they were in the first brigade to adopt the distinguishing marks now generally worn by all troops. In the raid they penetrated to the enemy's third line, and some of them found it much harder to get back than it was to go, but fought their way through with slight loss compared with that which they inflicted on the enemy. This, of course, was only the forerunner of many such affairs, but the old stagers are proud to relate that it was the first of its kind attempted. Their "biggest show," as they term it, was at Hooge in 1915, but they have won battle honours on many other fields. They were at Ypres (one wonders what battalion at one time or another was not!) and they helped to finish the job at Delville Wood, winning four Military Crosses and 11 Military Medals in that desperate struggle, when every foot of ground was bitterly contested. On the very last day of their stay in the Ypres salient Regimental Sergt.-Major A. Noble, D.C.M., a brave man loved by all in the battalion, was killed. He was buried in the Poperinghe Cemetery, and had a great funeral. They did good work, also, at Puidecourt, and in the Battle of Arras they were among the Durhams specially mentioned. In the first 24 hours they advanced 3,000 yards and took the three main objectives. Only those who have seen the ground over which the advance took place can realise what a feat that was.

SPORTS WHEN AT REST.

The battalion were having a quiet time this Sunday morning. Comfortably lodged in farm buildings and Church parade over, some were at work in the pale sunshine on domestic tasks, washing, mending, etc., while in an outbuilding near by the cooks were busy with the dinner. By far the greater number of men were watching a football match, one of the ties in a company competition. It was being played on an excellent ground, far better than many of the players had been used to at home, and the contest was very keen. The crowd were as vociferous as any on English fields, and they spared no players' feelings when they inclined to criticism. The game over, they trooped back along the narrow country lanes to their billets, the Durham dialect very much in evidence as the merits of the teams were thoroughly discussed. The appetising smell from the cook-house was stronger than ever, and one envied the men their appetites!

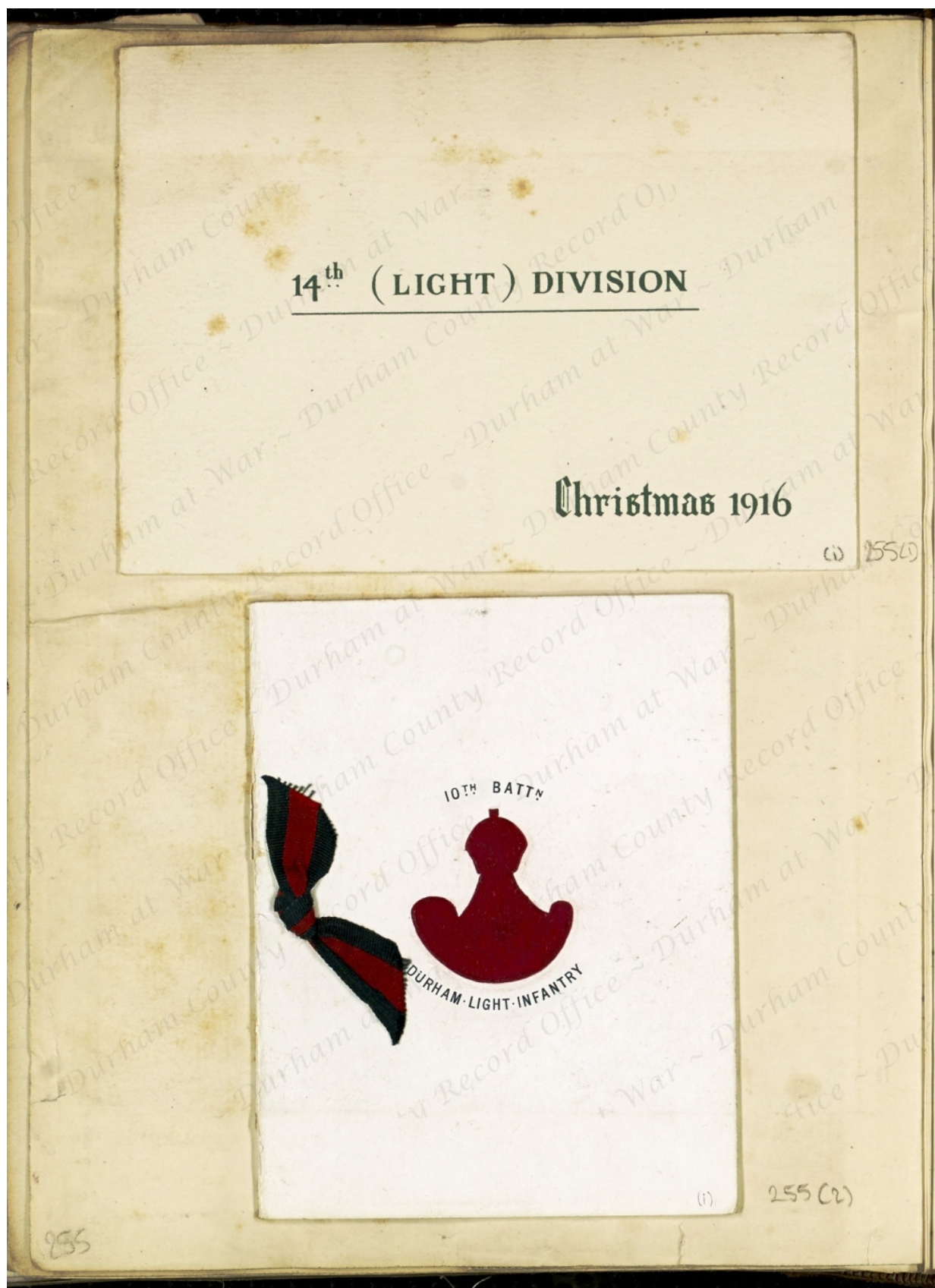
Football is only one of the sports in which the men indulge during the rest periods. On the following day this battalion had a cross-country run, and boxing and other competitions were being arranged. "All work and no play" is not the best plan in modern warfare. When he is out of the line the soldier gets enough drill and other forms of instruction to keep up the necessary standard of discipline and training, and the rest of the time (in most cases it is at least half the time) he is free within reasonable limits to do as he likes. The result is a fit and contented body of men, such as these Durhams were that Sunday morning, fit to go anywhere and do anything—a credit to their county.

SECOND TO NONE.

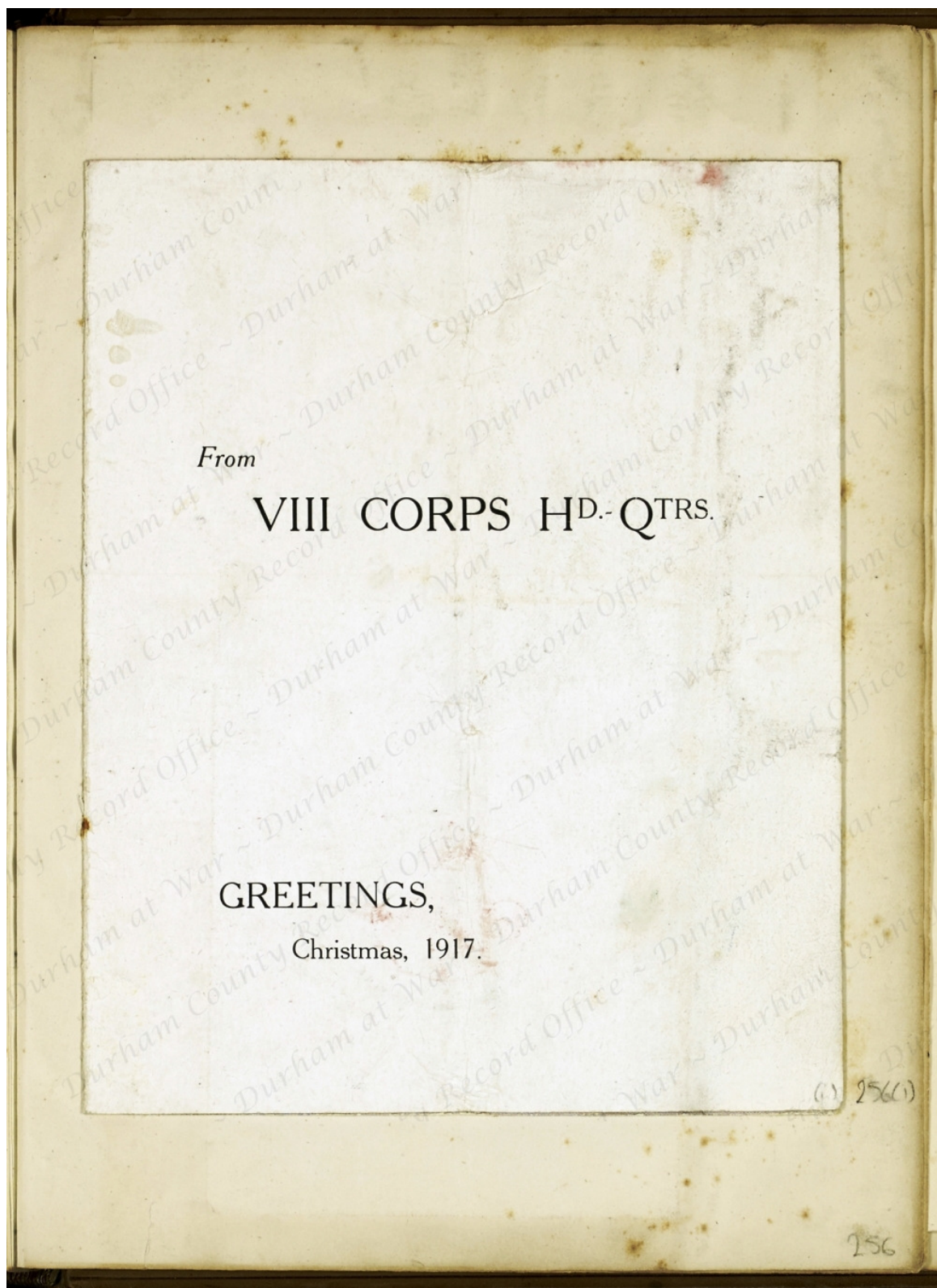
In the annals of this war, as in many previous campaigns, the faithful Durhams have achieved immortal glory, and this has been due to the gallantry and efficiency of the officers as much as of the men. That the Durham's tradition of esprit de corps is maintained is apparent in a stirring farewell message which Brigadier-General H. H. S. Morant, D.S.O., has addressed to the officers and men of the battalion of the Durham Light Infantry which he has commanded with so much distinction. It reads:

On leaving the battalion which I had the honour to raise and to command for the last 3½ years I wish to record my gratitude to Officers, W.O.s, N.C.O.s and men who have served under me, whether for long or short periods, for their never-failing support and obedience to orders at all times, under trying circumstances. The record of the Battalion, one of uniform success both in and out of the line, both in battle and in sport, has, in my opinion, been due to the high tone maintained throughout by officers, N.C.O.s and men, and to the cheerfulness and discipline of the men. However heavy our casualties, and however much we have felt the loss of staunch and gallant comrades, the spirit of the Battalion has ever been maintained by their successors, who have never failed to follow in the footsteps of those whose places they have filled. Though it must be with the greatest regret that we hear of the probable break up of the Battalion, we must remember that it is ours "to do or die" and not ours "to reason why," and we can rest content in the satisfaction that the Battalion will have completed its bit in the great war with a record second to none. In finally saying au revoir, and wishing good-luck to all, I wish to particularly thank those officers and lads from Durham who came out with the Battalion in 1915, and who have fought so gallantly and endured so long for their King and country.

Brigadier-General Morant, who, by the way, is a son-in-law of Mr. J. C. Straker, of The Leazes, has reason to be proud of this officers and men, and we may be sure that the officers and men are equally proud of their commanding officer who has led them through many a desperate fight during the past three years.







Commanding Officers & Officers,
 Warrant Officers, N.C.O.s. & men
 10th Bn Durham L.I.

My greetings and
 best wishes to you
 Agnes Ament Weston

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YPRES - CHRISTMAS - 1917

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