

The Lincolnshire Regiment and the Battle of Loos **(24th September-14th October 1915)**

The Battle of Loos was the largest offensive mounted by the British Army on the Western Front during 1915. The area in which the campaign took place was a coal-mining region where slag heaps helped to supplement the advantage the Germans already had in holding the higher ground along two natural ridges. Neither the timing nor the location of the planned assault were much to the liking of the commander of the British Expeditionary Force, Sir John French, but he was forced to acquiesce to support the wider plans of the French army, which at this stage of the war was bearing the brunt of the fighting.

Included in the units that were earmarked to undertake the offensive was the 21st Division of XI Corps, which included the 8th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. The 8th Battalion was newly arrived in France, having landed at Boulogne on 11th September 1915, and the men were completely untested in action. Their baptism of fire was to be sudden and traumatic, as on the 25th September they were ordered to carry out a night attack through an area that was pitted with shell holes. The Lincolns succeeded in clearing a position known as Chalk Pit Wood and then spent the remainder of the night improving the shallow trenches they were occupying.

On the following day the 8th Battalion was ordered to attack the German positions on Hill 70 and in the initial assault they gained 700 yards of ground. However, a lack of support soon forced the Lincolns to give ground and a resolute counter attack by the Germans resulted in the loss of most of their hard-won positions. Only a trench held by a small reserve force held out, but they were forced to retire at 5.30pm when they found themselves to be practically surrounded.

In their first battle the 8th Battalion had sustained enormous casualties, with 22 officers and 471 other ranks being listed as killed, wounded or missing. Captain H Pattinson, the senior surviving unwounded officer, assumed command of the battalion and was promoted to the rank of acting major at the tender age of just 20.

The 8th Battalion was withdrawn from the fighting and would not return to the frontline until November, by which time the Loos campaign would be over. However, other battalions from the Lincolnshire Regiment would play an important role in the fighting in the Loos sector, which continued for another three weeks. The 2nd Battalion was involved in a costly diversionary attack at Bois Grenier and the 1/4th and 1/5th battalions took part in the disastrous assault on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13th October.

The Loos offensive was finally brought to a close on 14th October 1915 and the entry in the diary of a Coldstream Guards officer on that date neatly summarises the outcome of the campaign: "We have effected very little". The British are thought to have sustained 50,000 casualties, while the Germans are believed to have lost only

half that number. An entry in a German regimental diary gives a terse, but horrifying insight into what many British soldiers faced at Loos: "Never had the machine-gunners had such straightforward work to do, nor done it so effectively. They traversed to and fro along the enemy's ranks unceasingly. As the entire field of fire was covered with the enemy's infantry, the effect was devastating and they could be seen falling in hundreds."

Family tragedies at the Battle of Loos

Among the Lincolnshire men who died at Loos were two brothers, Charles and John Anderson, who were both serving with the 1/5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. Charles was 21 and his elder brother 23; they were the sons of Charles and Miriam Anderson of 79 Campbell Street, Gainsborough.

Another Lincolnshire family with the surname Anderson was also to suffer tragedy at Loos. On 13th October 1915 William Anderson, aged 49, was killed in action while serving with the 1/5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. On the same day his 19 year old son, who was also named William, was killed while serving with the same unit. They were the husband and son of Margaret Livingstone Anderson of 123 Ladysmith Road, Grimsby. A second son, David, who had also enlisted in the 1/5th Lincolns, was killed on active service on 10th June 1917.

The Franklin family from Barton-on-Humber also suffered a double loss at Loos. On 13th October 1915 two brothers, Albert and Edward Franklin, who were serving in the 1/5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, were both killed in the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Both men were born in Barton, but Albert moved to Scunthorpe when he married his wife, Isabella, in December 1914.



One of the early casualties of the Loos Campaign was Sergeant Barnard Beechey of the 2nd Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, who was killed in action at Bois Grenier on 24th September 1915. His mother, Amy Beechey, who lived on Avondale Street in Lincoln, would lose four more of her sons during the course of the war. Document reference: BEECHEY 10/3.

The Attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt
(13th October 1915)



WILFRED CHAPPELL

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Chappell, 27 Olive Street, Lincoln. Born, Lincoln, 12th May, 1892. Educated, St. Andrew's School, Lincoln. Porter. Joined 4th Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, 3rd November, 1914. Killed in action, 13th October, 1915, at Hohenzollern Redoubt.

City of Lincoln Roll of Honour sheet relating to Wilfred Chappell, who was killed in action during the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Document reference: LCL 5091.

The Hohenzollern Redoubt was a formidable defensive work which protruded from the German frontline trenches near Loos. The Redoubt was situated on slightly rising ground, which gave the German defenders an excellent field of fire.

As part of the ongoing offensive in the Loos sector the 46th Division, which included the 1/4th and 1/5th battalions of the Lincolnshire Regiment, was ordered to capture the Hohenzollern Redoubt and the Fosse Trench that lay behind it. The attack was scheduled for 13th October 1915 and at noon on that day a preliminary bombardment began, which involved the use of 54 heavy and 86 field howitzers, supported by 286 field guns.

Although the artillery assault lasted two hours, and was supplemented by the release of gas, it failed to do sufficient damage to the German defences or to incapacitate enough of the soldiers who were manning them. As soon as the British barrage lifted at 2 o'clock the troops were ordered to advance, but they were immediately hit by heavy German shellfire and on leaving their trenches the men were met by a storm of machine gun and rifle fire.

The Lincolns and the 1/5th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment managed to reach the Redoubt, but when they attempted to press on towards the Fosse Trench they were cut down by heavy fire. The men were soon forced to retreat to the cover provided by the Redoubt and the attack petered out. The survivors from the Lincolnshire Regiment held the west face of the Hohenzollern Redoubt throughout the night, in spite of numerous German counterattacks. However, at 8am the following morning the Lincolns were withdrawn from their position by Captain R E Madge, the only unwounded officer.

A Divisional Order issued two days later praised the "most gallant conduct" of the soldiers who attacked the Hohenzollern Redoubt: "The attack was carried out with great bravery and it was no fault of the infantry that the objective of the attack was not reached." The men of the 1/5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment had undoubtedly fought bravely, but the cost had been enormous: of the 23 officers and 850 men who went into action, 22 officers and 460 men were listed as killed, wounded or missing.



C.S.M. W. E. Hamp,
1/5th Lincs. Regt.
Aged 32: killed June, 1917

Company Sergeant Major Wilfred Hamp of Lincoln was awarded the Military Medal for his conduct during the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He subsequently won the Distinguished Conduct Medal, but was killed in action on 26th June 1917.

No 3170. Cpl. / Acting Serjt. ARTHUR CAMPBELL.

(Recommended for Military Medal)

Consistent good work + devotion to duty especially on patrol work. On 13-10-15 at the HOENZOLLERN REDOUBT, when all his officers were killed or wounded, did excellent work in collecting and leading men who had become scattered. He personally killed six Germans with the bayonet.

Summary of a recommendation for the Military Medal made on behalf of Arthur Campbell of the 1/5th Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment. The entry reads as follows:

"Consistent good work & devotion to duty especially on patrol work. On 13-10-15 at the HOENZOLLERN [sic] REDOUBT, when all his officers were killed or wounded, did excellent work in collecting and leading men who had become scattered. He personally killed six Germans with the bayonet."

Document reference: REGIMENTAL COLLECTION.