

Name, Rank & Regiment of Soldier:
Bacon, Thomas Henry M.M.

Lance Corporal Lincolnshire Regiment (2nd
 Battalion)
 Service number: 11213



Right: Tom Bacon (back right) aged about 11 with his widowed mother, Mary & siblings. His younger brother Jack is standing on the other side of his mother.

Date of birth	Date KIA	Age
1 st March 1892	July 31 st 1917	25

Background: Thomas H. Bacon

Thomas (Tom) was the oldest of seven children born to Mary Ann Bacon (née Coulby) and George Henry Bacon, an ex-soldier who later worked as a platelayer on the railways. Although both parents were from Collingham, they lived on Wright Street in Newark from when they were married in 1890 to around 1900 when they moved to Ordsall near Retford. Five of their seven children were born in Newark. George Bacon died of yellow fever in 1904 aged 43 and is buried in All Saints Churchyard.¹ Mary Ann (always known as Polly) returned to Collingham either just before George died or soon after. Their 7th child, Arthur, was born the following June.

In 1911 Mary Ann lived in a four-roomed house Low Street with her children². Thomas (19) was a baker and confectioner and his brother Jack (16) a baker's apprentice. However, by 1914 they were both working as porters for Midland Railways. The others on the 1911 census were Florrie, Sarah, George – the baby in the photo- (9) and Arthur (5).

Tom's brother John William (Jack) was also killed in the war (see separate entry).

¹ East Trent Genealogy website & info from Brenda Sills

² No 53, Cleave Cottage - see John William Bacon's entry for more details on the family.

Military History: Lance Corporal Thomas H Bacon

Tom enlisted in Leeds on September 9th 1914, (the day after his brother Jack). His 'Trade or Calling' was described as 'Porter'. According to his attestation papers he was 5'3 ½ " tall, weighed 8 ½ st and had a tattoo on his left forearm. He was passed 'A 1' fit and joined the 2nd Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment.

2nd Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment

This was a regular battalion of the army as opposed to the 'new armies' created after Lord Kitchener's rallying cry of 'Your Country Needs You.' They were attached to the 25th Brigade/8th Division under Gough.

After seven months training in England, Tom Bacon went to France on 24th April 1915. The Battalion remained in action in France and Belgium throughout the War. During Tom's service the 8th Division participated in:

1915

The Battle of Aubers

The action of Bois Grenier (a diversionary attack coinciding with the Battle of Loos)

1916

The Battle of Albert (the first phase of the Battles of the Somme 1916)³

1917

The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line

The Battle of Pilkem Ridge

On 23rd June 1917 Tom was promoted to lance corporal, perhaps as a result of the bravery that resulted in him being awarded the **Military Medal**, the third highest gallantry award (below the Victoria Cross and the Distinguished Conduct Medal) open to NCOs (non-commissioned officers) and other ranks. He was 'Gazetted' – i.e. notification of the award was published in the London Gazette – on 9th July. Brenda Sills, a direct descendant of the Bacon family, remembers her mother telling her that Tom got the medal for carrying a wounded comrade on his back across the battlefield to safety⁴.

L/Corporal Bacon was posted 'Missing' only a few weeks later - 4th August - and 'accepted for official purposes as having died on or since 31.7.17'. This was ten months after Jack was killed. Both their names appear on the All Saints' Church, Collingham Memorial.⁵

Pilkem Ridge July 31st – Aug 2nd 1917

³ See 'Further Reading' page 4

⁴ Information from Brenda Sills 18th Feb 2018

⁵ Trevor Frecknall 'Collingham during the Great War and also his entry on the 'ournottinghamshire' website

July 31, the day Tom died, was the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres more commonly known as Passchendaele. Altogether 4,500 men of the British Expeditionary Forces died that day. The following is an extract from *'The History of the Lincolnshire Regiment 1914-1918'* by Major C R Simpson, describing the attack on Pilkem Ridge on July 31st. Full text page 5-8:

'By 9 a.m., the 2nd Lincolnshire had arrived at the position of deployment. All companies, however, reported casualties from machine-gun fire, whilst passing through Chateau Wood and from shell-fire between the Wood and Westhoek. The carrying platoons were exhausted from the effects of gas-shells and the heavy going. By 9.40 a.m., the Commanding Officer, the Adjutant and two other officers were casualties, and command of the battalion fell upon 2nd Lieutenant K. Young. Orders then came from the Brigadier to advance. With 'D' Company on the right, 'A' in the centre and 'C' on the left, 'B' Company acting as "moppers up," the Lincolnshire pushed on to the crest of the Ridge...'

L/Corp Thomas H Bacon is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial.

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He is also remembered on the War Memorial Cross (North Collingham) and Parishioners' Plaque

Brothers Jack and Tom Bacon were born two years apart but to all intents and purposes were like twins. Their careers as bakers and then porters matched each other's. They enlisted a day apart (although not in the same regiment), were both promoted to lance corporal, were both killed in action, their bodies never found.



Sources:

Nottinghamshire County Council Roll of Honour website

East Trent Genealogy database

Ancestry.co.uk for attestation papers, census returns and T Bacon's war record

Trevor Frecknall: Collingham and district in The Great War & article on the 'our nottinghamshire' website here:

http://www.ournottinghamshire.org.uk/page/bacon_thomas_henry_of_collingham?path=0p134p52p50p85p467p

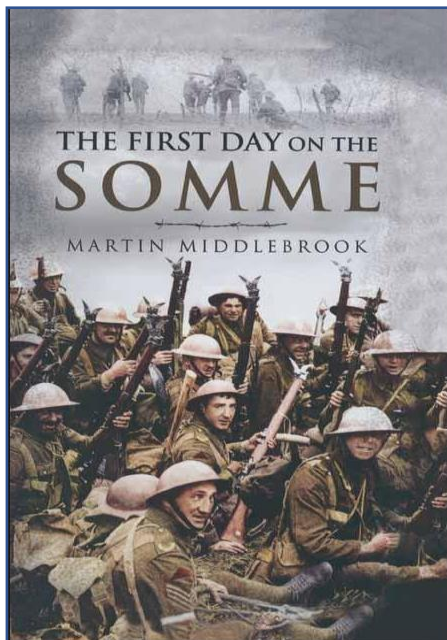
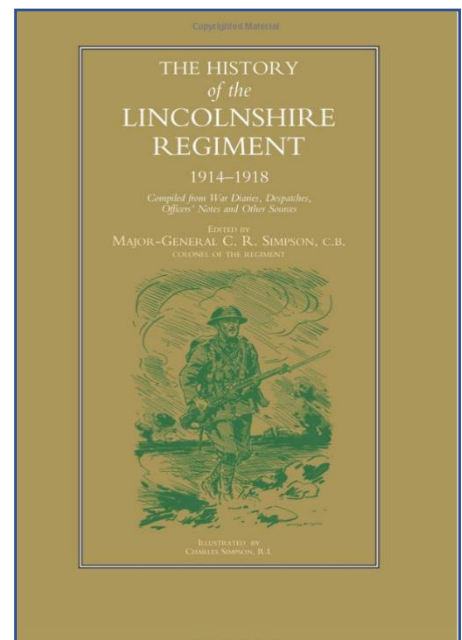
The Battle of Pilkem Ridge summary here:

<https://www.cwgc.org/learn/news-and-events/news/2017/08/08/13/53/7-facts-about-the-battle-of-pilckem-ridge>

With thanks to Charlie Stothard for his initial research into T H Bacon 9/9/2014 and Mrs Brenda Sills of Saxilby, Lincolnshire, for her invaluable insight into the Bacon family.

Further Reading

The History of the Lincolnshire Regiment by Maj. C R Simpson (right - pub 1931) has been reprinted by Naval & Military Press and is available to buy from various retailers for £22.00. See below



The Lincolnshire Regiment is featured in Martin Middlebrook's seminal book 'The First Day of the Somme' (July 1st 1916) Middlebrook follows Bacon's battalion & his commanding officer, Lt. Col. R Bastard, of the 2nd Lincolns.

The First Day of the Somme reprinted by Pen and Sword 2002

i) The Battle of Pilckem Ridge : 31st July-2nd August

It was hoped that in this first attack our troops would succeed in establishing themselves on the crest of the high ground east of Ypres, and would also secure the crossings of the Steenbeek. For this purpose four Army Corps were placed at the disposal of General Sir Hubert Gough, the II., XIV., XVIIIL, and XIX. Corps. The II. Corps (Jacob) attacked on the right of the Fifth Army, south of the Ypres-Roulers railway, with three divisions, in order from right to left, as follows : 24th, 30th and 8th (Heneker), in which the 2nd Lincolnshire were serving, in the 25th Brigade. The first stage of the attack was carried out, as far as the 8 th Division is concerned, by the 23 rd and 24th Brigades, with the 25th Brigade in support.

The difficult country east of Ypres, where the Menin road crosses the crest of the Passchendaele-Wytschaete Ridge, formed the key of the enemy's position, and most determined opposition was met by the 24th, 30th and 8 th Divisions, which fought their way through Shrewsbury Forest and Sanctuary Wood, and captured Stirling Castle, Hooge and Bellewaarde Ridge. The second objective of the 8th Division was to be taken by the 25th Brigade, 2nd Lincolnshire on the right, Royal Irish Rifles in the centre, 2nd Rifle Brigade on the left, with the 2nd Berkshire in support.

The Westhoek Ridge was reported in our hands, but on making a preliminary reconnaissance, the Commander of the 25th Brigade found that the situation on the Ridge was not what had been anticipated. Heavy machine-gun fire was coming from Glen corse Wood and hostile machine-guns and snipers were firing from the neighbourhood of Kit and Kat and from the Westhoek cross-roads, while a large number of houses on the Westhoek

road were evidently held by the enemy.

The 2nd Lincolnshire (Lieut-Colonel R. Bastard) formed up at 6.50 a.m. on the 31st July and advanced in artillery formation under Captain G.Mc.I. Bruce ; the Commanding Officer and Adjutant having already started for Westhoek to meet the Brigadier and other Commanding Officers to reconnoitre the Ridge. The reconnoitring parties found the front line to be Jabber Trench, the left of which was very exposed to machine-gun fire from the immediate front.

By 9 a.m., the 2nd Lincolnshire had arrived at the position of deployment. All companies, however, reported casualties from machine-gun fire, whilst passing through Chateau Wood and from shell-fire between the Wood and Westhoek. The carrying platoons were exhausted from the effects of gas-shells and the heavy going.

By 9.40 a.m., the Commanding Officer, the Adjutant and two other officers were casualties, and command of the battalion fell upon 2nd Lieutenant K. Young. 1 Orders then came from the Brigadier to advance. With D Company on the right, A in the centre and C on the left, B Company acting as " moppers up," the Lincolnshire pushed on to the crest of the Ridge. On reached Lieut. Young was awarded the D.S.O. for his energy and resource on this occasion.

[text missing here] ...ing the latter heavy machine-gun fire tore gaps in the ranks of the forward companies and caused heavy casualties. The fire came mostly from the right flank, which was exposed, as the 30th Division had been held up earlier in the day. To make matters worse, our barrage fell beyond the German machine-guns, which left the latter free to pour a destructive fire upon the gallant troops of the 25th Brigade. The result was that no further advance was possible and the Lincolnshire began consolidating the reverse slope of the Ridge with Lewis gun posts pushed forward to the crest. The line upon which consolidation began was just in front of Jabber Trench, which ran from north-west to south-

east and about two hundred yards west of Westhoek. On the left C Company made a determined attempt to rush a machine-gun which was causing considerable trouble but, having to move up a communication trench, found the latter blocked, and, after suffering casualties, had to abandon the attempt. Two attacks were also made on a house along the Westhoek road, but the attackers were so exposed to machine-gun fire from the right that both attacks failed.

At 11.50 a.m., and again at 1.10 p.m., the Germans launched counter-attacks, but both were easily repulsed. At 1.30 p.m., German reinforcements were seen coming from the direction of Anzac (about one thousand five hundred yards north-east of Westhoek) and massing in Jabber support. The 2nd Lincolnshire quickly got to work with Lewis guns and rifle-fire and inflicted considerable casualties on these hostile troops. At 2.30 p.m., having first placed a heavy barrage on Bellewaarde Ridge, the valley west of Westhoek and on the Lincolnshire front line, the enemy again launched a heavy counter-attack. This was also beaten back with heavy losses and after the failure of this attempt no serious counter-attack was made.

Consolidation now proceeded more rapidly and was completed after darkness had fallen. The Lewis gun posts on the crest of the Westhoek Ridge were converted into bombing and listening posts and the night passed without further incident. At 5 a.m., the following morning the 2nd Lincolnshire were relieved by the 2nd Royal Berkshire and moved to Pioneer Camp.

The losses of the battalion were severe: 2nd Lieutenants A.J. Bush and G.E. Truby and thirty-nine other ranks had been killed, Lieutenant A.G. Bloomer and 2nd Lieutenant V.R. Sowerby were wounded and died later of their wounds. Lieut.-Colonel Bastard, Captain G.McI.S. Bruce, Lieutenant L. J. Lill, Lieutenant and Adjutant H. Ingoldby, 2nd Lieutenant F.C. Evans and one hundred and seventy-seven other ranks were wounded,

and twenty-seven other ranks were missing.

The full text can be downloaded here:

https://archive.org/stream/TheHistoryOfTheLincolnshireRegiment1914-1918/TheHistoryOfTheLincolnshireRegiment-C.r.Simpson_djvu.txt



HP 29/3/2018