

TBB1/1/1/1/15

An extract from a letter from Thomas Baker Brown to his father, 29th December 1915. He describes having trouble with his feet after a 15 mile march, and being inspected by the 'new Commander of the Battalion' in Scarcroft.

“Yesterday we had a Batt [battalion] route march of 15 miles. The only thing that troubled me were my feet. On arrival at Poppleton Lt. [lieutenant] Haswell had a feet inspection and gave me some boracic powder to put on mine. It has done them a lot of good. “

Key words:

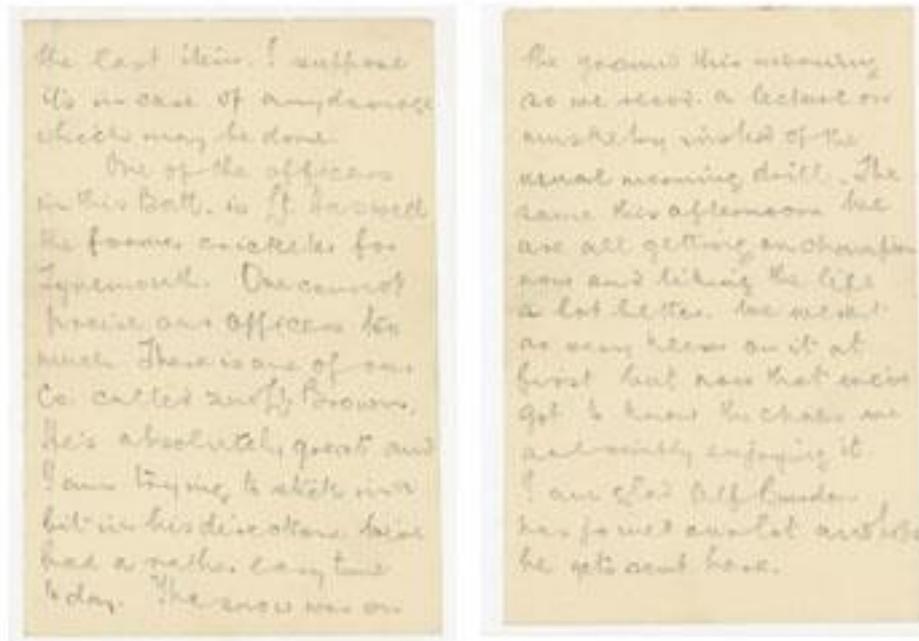
Battalion – a large group of about 1000 foot-soldiers (infantry)

Boracic powder is used to treat fungal infections such as athlete's foot. It can help treat itchy and smelly feet.

Question: Why do you think Thomas had to go on a 15 mile march as part of his training?

Thomas Baker Brown: The story of a First World War soldier from North Tyneside

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TBB1/1/1/1/2

A letter from Thomas Baker Brown to his mother from a training camp in York, *8 December 1915*.

After he signed up to join the army in November 1915, 19 year old Thomas was sent to the Scarcroft Schools Training Camp, York. Although he didn't like it at first, he soon settled in to life at the camp.

In this letter Thomas describes his day-to-day life including getting his washing done, and listening to lectures on musketry.

"...One of the officers in this Batt [battalion] is Lt. [lieutenant] Haswell the former cricketer for Tynemouth. One cannot praise our officers too much. There is one of our co. [company] called 2nd Lt. [lieutenant] Brown. He's absolutely great and I am trying to stick in a bit in his direction. We've had a rather easy time today. The snow was on the ground this morning so we recvd. [received] a lecture on musketry instead of the usual morning drill. The same this afternoon. We are all getting on champion now and liking the life a lot better. We weren't so very keen on it at first but now that we've got to know the chaps we are simply enjoying it. "

Key words:

Battalion – a large group of about 1000 foot-soldiers (infantry)

Lieutenant – an officer in the British army (below a captain)

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Lecture – a type of lesson where the teacher stands at the front of the room and talks about a topic to the students.

Musketry -firing a musket (a type of gun)

Drill – practising and following orders about how to march and use weapons.

Questions:

What does Thomas think of his officers?

Why did Thomas and the others have a lecture on musketry instead of the usual morning drill?

What reasons does Thomas give to explain why he is enjoying life at the training camp more now than he did when he first arrived?

We rose at 6.15 cleaned up and went on parade at 6.45. When I say we I mean "C" Company. A sergeant then marched us out and we did 15 mins running. Came back cleaned buttons clothes boots etc. and also swept floor of room which took us up to breakfast at 8.15. We then washed (no one washes before breakfast here) and paraded again at 8.45. The whole battalion then formed up in school yard and the O.C. then read us the sentence which one of the gaol birds had recd. He got 66 days detention and all pay stopped. That was for striking an N.C.O. I suppose this was done as

an example to us. Our sergeant (a brother of Dixon least he think man) then took the recruits to drill. We do all the drilling on a field a few minutes back from the school and its just like a ploughed field up to the ankles in mud. Medals from 9.0 till 12.30 with an hours Swedish at 10.30. All the newuns feel half dead when finished. Its the fields that does it. It wouldnt be so bad if it was flat but it has a pretty steep incline and when we double up and down 4 or 5 times we feel rather done up. We then come in for dinner at 1 pm. It is served out

practically the same as at the Drill Hall. Next parade at 1.45 and we had to stand and watch a Company Football Match all this afternoon at York Racecourse. Tea came after and then washing up etc. After that we are finished until 9.30 and lights out at 10.0.

TBB1/1/1/3

A two and a half page extract from a letter from Thomas Baker Brown to his father from a training camp in York, 8 December 1915.

He describes his daily duties, the punishment one of the soldiers received for striking a non-commissioned officer and watching a company football match.

"We rose at 6 15 cleaned up and went on parade at 6 45. When I say we I mean "C" Company. A sergeant then marched us out and we did 15 mins running. Came back cleaned...clothes boots etc. and also swept floor of room which took us up to breakfast at 8 15. We then washed (no one washes before breakfast here) and paraded again at 8 45.

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Key words:

“C” Company – a company was a group of about 200 soldiers, commanded by a Major or Captain. They were usually given a letter A-D, or W-Z or a number 1-4 as there were 4 companies in a Battalion.

Sergeant – an army officer who helped a Lieutenant or Second Lieutenant.

Battalion - a large group of about 1000 foot soldiers (infantry).

O.C.- short for Officer Commanding – the O.C. is person in charge of a company of soldiers.

Gaol bird – a criminal who has been in gaol (jail) or prison.

N.C.O. – a Non-Commissioned -Officer (a lower-ranking officer such as a sergeant).

Recruits – people who have recently joined the army are not yet fully trained.

Drill – practising and following orders about how to march and use weapons.

Swedish – a form of physical training that involved gymnastics style exercises including bending and stretching

Drill Hall – a building where soldiers practice and perform drill.

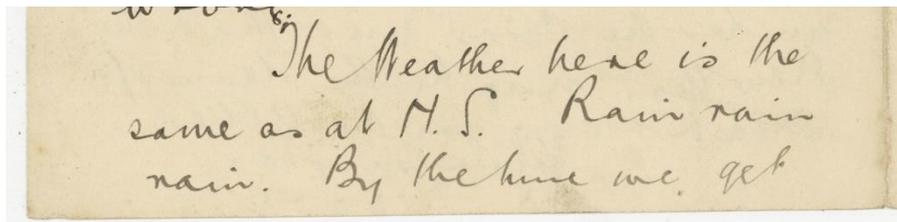
Questions:

What did Thomas have to do before he had his breakfast at the training camp?

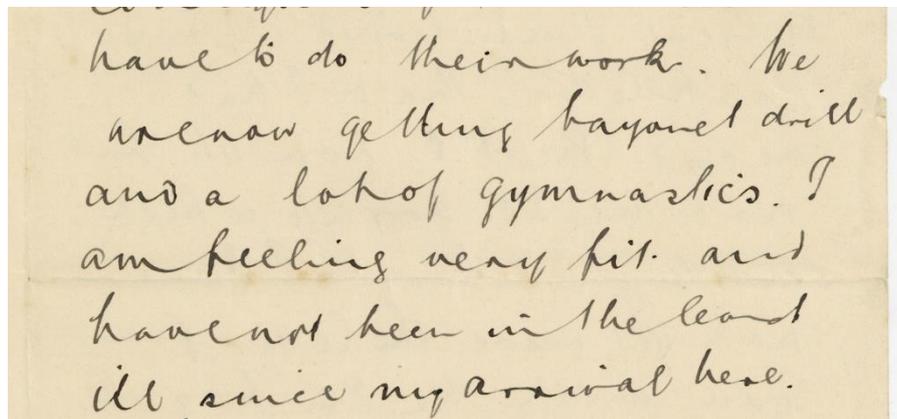
Why does Thomas think they were all told about the punishment given to one of the recruits who had hit one of the officers?

Why were all the recruits really tired after drill?

Why do you think new recruits were made to watch and play football?



The weather here is the same as at N.S. Rain rain rain. By the time we get



have to do their work. We are now getting bayonet drill and a lot of gymnastics. I am feeling very fit and have not been in the least ill since my arrival here.

TBB1/1/1/1/12

Two short extracts from a letter from Thomas Baker Brown to his father from a training camp in York, 23 December 1915. He describes the weather and having to do gymnastics and bayonet drills.

“The weather here is the same as at NS [North Shields] Rain rain rain. By the time we get to the parade ground at Scarcroft in the mornings we are thick with mud... ..we are now getting bayonet drill and a lot of gymnastics. I am feeling very fit and have not been in the least ill since my arrival here.”

Key words:

Bayonet drill – practicing and following orders about how to use a bayonet (a knife-like weapon that is attached to a gun (musket) and is used for stabbing or slashing in hand-to-hand combat.

Question:

What sorts of exercise Thomas doing as part of his training? Is it working? Pick out the phrase from the letter that show you this.