

The Day Sussex Died

Further to my article in the Winter 2015 issue of 'Soundbow'.

A reminder that on Thursday 30th June 2016 is the centenary of the 'Battle of the Boar's Head,' which has become known over time as 'The Day Sussex Died,' the battle took place just south of Richebourg, L'Avoue, Northern France.

The 'Battle of the Boar's Head' was a planned diversionary tactic, although the soldiers themselves were unaware of this. The plan was to weaken the resolve and defences of the enemy in preparation for the Somme offensive that would begin the following day, 1st July 1916.

This assault was carried out by other 'Kitchener' battalions recruited from the south coast of England and included three (Service) Battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment, 11th 12th and 13th otherwise known as the (1st, 2nd & 3rd South Down) and locally in Sussex as 'Lowther's Lambs' (after Lt-Col Claude Lowther MP, who had raised them in 1914.) They were really 'The 'Royal Sussex Regiment Pals' Battalions, they had been recruited together, to fight together and sadly would die and be wounded together just like what would happen to the other Pals Battalions from other UK regiments on the following day.

After the battle when the time came to take stock, the casualty numbers were large. The 11th Battalion had sustained 116 casualties whilst supporting the attack. The 12th Battalion lost 429 men either killed or wounded. The 13th Battalion, however, had been almost entirely destroyed with over 800 men being killed, wounded or captured. The majority of officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) in these battalions were among the casualties. Around 70% of those men who died that day came from Sussex with estimates including up to 12 sets of brothers.

And as the days and weeks went on many more would die from their wounds. In regards to casualties the battle itself was one if not the worst moment in The Royal Sussex Regiment's military history and the day its men died. The majority of those Sussex men who were killed are buried at cemeteries near Richebourg, France.

The Southdown Battalions of the Regiment would over time be rebuilt but they would lose much of their Sussex identity with recruits being brought in from across the country.

To commemorate the centenary, an SCACR Peal attempt is to be rung at Chichester Cathedral on Thursday 30th June between the hours of 13:45 -17:15. The 'St. George's Chapel' in the Cathedral has been the Memorial Chapel of The Royal Sussex Regiment since 1921, and it's where the names of all those Royal Sussex men who died in the Great War are commemorated on panels in Battalion order.

On 30th June there's also a centenary commemoration taking place at Richebourg, France, this is being held at 17:00 UK time. There will be also other commemorations happening at that time in the Sussex too.

So to help commemorate this centenary in Sussex wouldn't also be great if as many SCACR bands as possible from across Sussex could also ring out for say 15 minutes at 17:00 on Thursday 30th June. If not at 17:00 then at some time during that day would be good.

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