

## Spencer Kipling's War

(John) Spencer Kipling was the son of the Rev Robert Henry Kipling, a Methodist minister, and his first wife Sarah Emma (nee Robinson). He was born in Bishop Auckland in 1893. In 1911, he was living with his father, step-mother and step-sister in Devonport. His father moved to different churches around the country every few years, although Spencer had been educated at Ashville, a boarding school in Harrogate for the sons of the Methodist clergy.

1	Robert Henry Kipling	Head	56	Married				Minister of the Gospel	423
2								United Methodist Church	
3	Grace Helen Kipling	Wife	40	Married	9	1	1		
4	John Spencer Kipling	Son	16	Single				Student	380
5	Agnes Helen Kipling	Daughter	6						
Durham: Darlington		226							
Yorkshire: Bartsland									
Yorkshire: Bartsland		030							
Durham: Bishop Auckland		222							
Cheshire: Poynston		120							

1911. 62 Alcester Road, Devonport

Spencer later worked as a clerk for Lloyds Bank in Bideford. He also played cricket locally.

Mr. Rogers' XI.	
W. H. Rogers, b. Warfield	1
P. M. Hayward, c. and b. Stuart	11
C. M. D. Mountjoy, b. Warfield	1
C. Pine-Coffin, b. Stuart	0
J. Baglow, b. Warfield	0
J. S. Kipling, not out	5
W. H. Smale, c. Petzsche, b. Warfield	0
P. Tucker, b. Warfield	0
P. Norman, b. Warfield	0
J. Knight, c. A. Paton, b. Stuart	1
T. Norman, run out	1
Extras	5
	<hr/> 25

Rogers v Horns Cross
These teams met at Hoops on Friday, August 29th, Mr. Rogers' XI. having first lease of the wicket. The visitors, however, found Warfield in form with the ball and were all dismissed for 25 of which Hayward and Kipling contributed 11 and 5 respectively. Horns Cross opened badly, the first three wickets being down for 8 runs but with Warfield partnering Rev. Gregory runs came quickly and the visitors' total was soon passed. The Rev. Gregory contributed a well played 18 to the score, and Warfield 10. A display of good cricket by the brothers Paton carried the score to 50, Horns Cross eventually winning by 29 runs.

Hartland and West Country Chronicle - Thursday 26 September 1912

**SHEBBEAR**

The College team played a winning game at Bideford on Saturday, winning by 183 to 20 to the home team. Scores:—Shebbear College: Bounsefell, st Lock, b Guard, 7; R. Lambert, c and b Guard, 2; D. H. Reed, b Mountjoy, 0; R. L. Baukwill, lbw, b Mountjoy, 9; L. C. Deacon, c Mountjoy, b Guard, 1; J. Mathews, c Balsdon, b Guard, 95; Mr. Fowleston, b Mountjoy, 6; Mr. Jacob, st Lock, b Guard, 33; L. Clothier, b Mountjoy, 18; W. Bayly, not out, 8; R. H. Jacob, lbw, b Guard, 1; extras, 3; total, 183. Bideford: H. Guard, c Reed, b Mr. Fowleston, 0; C. Mountjoy, b Mathews, 4; H. Heard, b Mathews, 3; G. Easterbrook, b Mathews, 0; L. Lock, c Bayly, b Mr. Fowleston, 7; J. Balsdon, b Mr. Fowleston, 2; J. S. Kipling, b Mathews, 0; J. H. Walker, not out, 2; T. Morris, c Fowleston, b Mathews, 0; H. C. Cooper, b Mathews, 0; E. J. Davis, b Mathews, 0; extras, 2; total, 22.

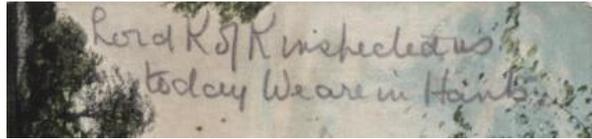
*Western Times - Friday 27 June 1913*

On 10 September 1914, just over a month after war was declared, he joined the Devonshire Regiment as a private and was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> (territorial) battalion. The battalion had already been in training on Salisbury Plain for a month and Spencer soon joined them. The territorial battalions had been formed for home defence only but members were asked to volunteer serve overseas to free up regular army battalions to move to the Western Front. Not all did, and volunteers were urgently needed to replace those who refused.

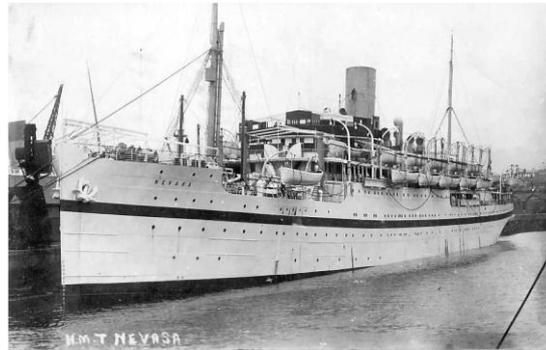
On 2 October, Spencer sent an amusing postcard from Perham Down camp near Andover, to his sister Nancy (Annie Emma), care of his father who had by then moved on to Lancaster. Nancy pasted her cards into an album.



He wrote again to her at Holyhead, where she was working as a nurse, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, giving his future address as “c/o GPO Bombay” and mentioning that his father had visited him that day and that they had been inspected by Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War.



The battalion sailed from Southampton on HM Troopship *Nevasa*<sup>1</sup> that same day, via Gibraltar, Malta, Suez and Aden.



A card of an unknown date in 1914 shows the Hospital of the Suez Canal Company, Ismailia, Egypt. Nancy has written next to this in her album “*Spent in hospital here*”. On the reverse, Spencer describes himself as “Pte J S Kipling, 2295 G Co. 5th Devons” and what is legible of the date is 31/XX/XXX4. The card was addressed to Nancy in Birkenhead. It is known that Spencer contracted malaria at some time during his service and he may have been hospitalised here at a later date rather than on his way out to India.

The battalion arrived at Karachi on the 11th of November and was stationed in the 3rd (Lahore) Divisional Area at Multan. Multan is a city in the Punjab, roughly in the centre of what is today Pakistan. It had the reputation of being the hottest and dustiest cantonment in India. The 5th had only 2 hours rain in over a year there. In the hottest period, most of the battalion spent time at Dalhousie, a hill station in northern India (a picture of which Spencer also sent Nancy).

The next surviving postcard from Spencer to Nancy is from India. The picture was of Malta, so obviously picked up en route but the postmark is illegible. He told he was busy “battalion training”. Another card, not posted so presumably sent in an envelope, shows the parade ground and barracks at Kasauli. He says that there are 14 in his room, half of whom are 1/5 Devons.

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HMT *Nevasa* was 9071 gross tons, length 480.5 feet x beam 58.1 feet, one funnel, two masts, twin screw, speed 14 knots, accommodation for 128-1st and 98-2nd class passengers. She was launched 12th December 1912 by Barclay, Curle & Co., Glasgow for British India Steam Navigation Co., she started her maiden voyage from London to East Africa and Calcutta on 22nd March 1913. In August 1914 she was taken over and converted to a troopship, and from January 1915 to 1918 was fitted as a 660 bed hospital ship.



The General View of Parade Ground and Barracks, Kasauli.

Kasauli was another hill station about 50 miles from Simla. It was the location of a signals training establishment, something Spencer later mentioned he was trained in (including sending Morse code by flag and light).



Spencer (right) in the Himalayan foothills

According to the regimental history, in the winter of 1914-15 the 5<sup>th</sup> sent several companies on tours through parts of the Punjab to counteract anti-British propaganda and “to show the natives that there wee still plenty of British soldiers left in India”

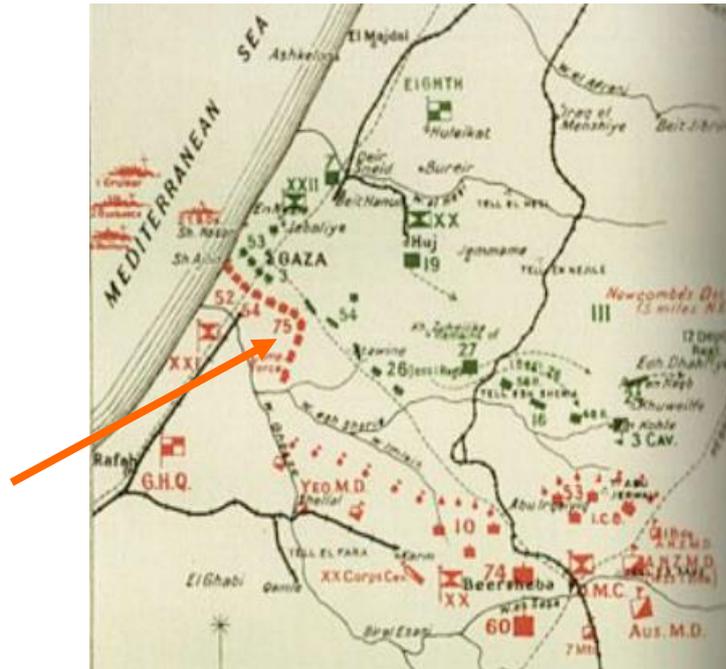
In December 1915, the 5<sup>th</sup> moved to Lahore. Although various drafts of officers and men were sent to make up for casualties in other battalions of the Devons or even other regiments, Spencer remained with the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Another card from India survives, posted from Lucknow in March 1916. Spencer tells Nancy of a trip to there, Cawnpore and Benares, “All material for spinning the yarn when I see you!”



In March 1917 the battalion were sent to Egypt, landing at Suez on the 4th of April. They joined 232nd Brigade, which moved to El Arish in early May on outpost duty. In Jun, they went on to Deir el Belah for instruction in trench warfare. They then went back into the line at Sampson’s Ridge where on July 20<sup>th</sup>, B company was heavily shelled. The 5th were shelled again the following week and on their return to Deir el Belah brought with them a reputation for steadiness and good discipline. They returned to the trenches in early September in the Sheik Abbas sector.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Division (part of XXI Corps) first saw action during the Third Battle of Gaza in November.



In short order thereafter they were involved in the Battle of Junction Station, about which has been written:

*“The battle of Junction Station, 13-14 November 1917, saw the British defeat a Turkish attempt to defend the line of the railway to Jerusalem. The centre of that line was Junction Station, where the line from Jerusalem joined the main north-south line. East of Junction Station the Turkish line ran almost alongside the railway, but ran through hilly country unsuitable for the British cavalry. West of Junction Station the line ran west to the villages of El Mughar and Katrah, on either side of the Wadi Jamus, and then turned north.*

*General Allenby decided to turn the Turkish right flank. XXI corps would attack south of Katrah, along the line of the main road from Gaza to Junction Station. On their left the Yeomanry and Anzac Cavalry Divisions would attack to their left, from El Mughar to the north.*

*The advance began at 7 a.m. on 13 November. After pushing back Turkish outposts, the advance became stuck at around 10 a.m. Both the 52nd Division, attacking Katrah and El Mughar, and the cavalry further north, came to a halt in front of strongly located defences.*

*The key to the British victory was a dramatic cavalry charge at El Mughar. At 2.30 pm it was decided to use the 6th Mounted Brigade to attack the Turkish lines on the ridge north of the village. Despite having to advance across 3,000 yards of open terrain, the cavalry successfully reached the ridge (Action of El Mughar), and their dismounted reserve captured the village itself.*

*To their right Katrah was eventually captured by the 52nd Division. The next day, 14 November, the 75th Division captured Junction Station, cutting the Turkish rail link to Jerusalem.*

Later the same month, they took part in the Battle of Nebi Samwil.

*“Allenby’s first plan was for a cavalry advance into the hill. The infantry of XXI corps, with the help of the Anzac Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade would hold the coastal plains, while the Australian Cavalry Division and the Yeomanry Mounted Division would mount the attack.*

*This plan lasted for one day. On 18 November the cavalry attacked Latron, the most westerly of the Turkish positions, and suffered heavily. In response Allenby modified his plan to use two infantry divisions in the attack on Jerusalem, with the cavalry in support. It was hoped to swing around Jerusalem to the north, cutting the road to Nablus. This would force the Turks to abandon Jerusalem before they were entirely cut off.*

*The new attack began on 19 November. On the same day the winter rains began. Transport was difficult on the narrow roads of the area, and artillery support was limited or non-existent away from those roads. Some progress was made, and on 21 November the British captured the hill of Nebi Samwil, north west of Jerusalem, from where they could see into Jerusalem. This was the furthest point reached. Attempts to make progress east towards the Nablus road all failed, and on 24 November General Allenby called off the offensive.”*

The 5th attacked the well-defended height of El Jib on 23 November, without material artillery support, suffering many casualties. They were, however, lucky not to be counter-attacked by the Turks and were able to withdraw under cover of darkness. Spencer may have been present at this attack, as he used to talk about marching with Allenby on Jerusalem, although XXI Corps was not involved in the final attack on Jerusalem itself, which fell to XX Corps on December 9<sup>th</sup>, Allenby entering in triumph on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

In March and April 1918, the battalion fought in The Battle of Tell'Asur and The Battle of Berukin, both elements of the allied advance from Jerusalem northwards across Palestine against Ottoman and German opposition. However, Spencer was on leave in England in February 1918, visiting his father who was then at Barrow-in-Furness, so it is uncertain whether he would have returned to his battalion for these actions or not.

From Barrow, he sent Nancy, by now married, a card with a view of Nazareth which he had presumably acquired during his time in Palestine.



The battalion then transferred to the Western Front, landing at Marseilles on the 1st of June and travelled north by train to join 185th Brigade, 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division.



THE 15th DECCAN RESTING.

*The 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Devons resting*

They were in action between July 19<sup>th</sup> and the end of the month as part of the French Fifth Army during the Battle of the Tardenois (the first element of the Second Battle of the Marne), south of Rhiems. The two actions with the largest number of casualties were on the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of July. The history and battalion diary for these days can be seen in Appendix 1.



*Attack involving the 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Devons, July 1918*

My orders were to attack at dawn the road running from MONTAGNE de BLIGNY to R. APRES. I was informed by Bde. Major 185 Bde. that 186 Bde were also advancing at dawn, but that I was to attack in conjunction with 8<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt on my left, whether 186<sup>th</sup> Bde. advanced or not - objective old 1<sup>st</sup> front line.

At 3.30 am. July 28<sup>th</sup>. I therefore lined up the Bde. in the sunken road 100 metres N of CHAMUZY.

The attack started at 4.10 a.m. and met with little opposition till cross roads 1300 metres N of CHAMUZY was reached. When a great deal of M.G. fire was encountered especially from the right flank and the direction of BLIGNY. However, this was successfully overcome and the objective reached about 7 a.m.

As my right flank was exposed through the 186 Bde. not advancing, I obtained permission to send up 1 Coy, 5<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt. to form a defensive flank on my right and act in support in case of a counter attack.

Battalion diary for 28<sup>th</sup> July 1918

Spencer was wounded on 28<sup>th</sup> July.

**WOUNDED.**  
 Lce.-Cpl. John Spencer Kipling (24), only son of the Rev. R. H. Kipling, United Methodist minister, Lancaster, was wounded in the Rheims sector on July 28th, and has been admitted to a Bristol Hospital. When war broke out he was a bank clerk at Devenport, and immediately enlisted in the 5th Devons. For two and a half years he served in India and then in Egypt and Palestine. Four months since he landed in France as signaller for his Battalion.

Lancaster Guardian - Friday 13 August 1943. Retrospective of 25 years previously)

The casualty record for the month shows around a 50% loss rate.

1-5th DEVONSHIRE REGIMENT.				
Effective Strength				
1st July 1918.	31st July 1918.	Decrease during the month.		Increase during the month.
O. O.R.	O. O.R.	O. O.R.		O. O.R.
39 867	25 496	Sick to Hospital.	104	Reinforcements. 3
		Transferred Sick to United Kingdom.	4	Discharged from Hospital, and retaken on Effective Strength. 1
		Wounded in Action.	19	
		Killed in Action.	4	
		Missing.	40	
			18 478	4 107

The next surviving card from him is from Eastleigh Military Hospital in Hampshire, dated 3 August 1918.



He writes “Have arrived here. A week or two will suffice for the wound. Then leave. Then the good old Bosche.”

It is unclear whether he ever did return, but the next record is a photograph of him at the family home in his step-sister's album, captioned 'December 1918'.



*'Spencer Kipling December 1918'*

He was formally discharged from the army in February 1919 under para 392(xvi) of the King's Regulations ('no longer physically fit for war service').

He received the British War medal and the Victory medal.

Name	Corps	Reg. No.	Rank	Date of Discharge	Cause of Discharge				
KIPLING. JOHN. SPENCER.	DEVON. REGT.	859038	PTE.	3-2-19 Enlistment 10-9-14.	PARA 392 (xvi) / R.R. A.O. 29 (2). W				
Date of application	(a) Badge	" "		(b) Medal					
No. of File	"	" "		" "					
Address of applicant :-				<table border="1"> <tr> <td>C/2/103 B13</td> <td>G41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-dr-</td> <td>-dr-</td> </tr> </table>		C/2/103 B13	G41	-dr-	-dr-
C/2/103 B13	G41								
-dr-	-dr-								
Action taken <i>List 6/10/2</i>									
W9369-RP3794 100,000 2/19 HWV P727) K586									

He also received the Silver War Badge.

24125  
27125  
28 MAY 1919  
C/1310/2

201, Great Portland Street, London, W.1.  
is inserted by the envelope.

ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the "WAR BADGE."

27 MAY 1919  
WAR OFFICE

Regtl. No.	Rank	Name (in full)	Unit discharged from	No. of Badge and Certificate (To be completed at War Office)	Date of:—		Cause of Discharge (Wounds or Sickness and para. of K.R.)	Whether served Overseas (Yes or No)
					Enlistment	Discharge		
3994	Sgt	Pitt, Arthur	1st Bn Devon		29. 5. 16	8. 5. 19	XVI Sickness (A Regt)	Yes
4584	H	Johnson, John Frank	"	D/6 J 841	2 3 16	10. 5. 19	XXV	No.
4589	"	Gillard, Sidney James	"	B203342	12. 9. 16	10. 5. 19	XVI Draft	No.
4344	"	Waddy, George Henry	"	B203343	11. 12. 15	13. 10. 16	ii(cc) Medals	No.
240638	"	Kipling, John Spencer	"	B203344	10 9 14	3 2 19	XVI Wounded	Yes

I certify that the particulars furnished hereon are correct.

Place Exeter Date 27 5 19

I certify that Badges and Certificates, numbered as above, have been issued to the individuals concerned.

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

W 3518—H 2223 100,000 10/16 H.V.V. (R.S.) H16/1308  
H 3532 100,000 4/17

Signature and Rank of Officer certifying issue.

Here is his pension card

DEAD

John Spencer

Devons 240638 2295

3.2.19 PA ~~50A 5401~~

11/M/310891

Ad 4.3.19 at 4/3 from 4.2.19  
to 3.2.20 Chelsea No. BK 3C  
Received 6.3.19 5-5-05

Clouds bank  
Devonport.

Appendix 2 outlines his subsequent life.

## Appendix 1

### The attack on 20<sup>th</sup> July

The Battr. formed up at the point of assembly on 20<sup>th</sup> July at 5.30 a.m. - men very tired by hard climb and rough road.

At 7 a.m. I lined up my Battr. and took forward my Coy. commanders to reconnoitre the ground, having previously looked over it myself. I gave them CUISTON as their line of march and ordered them to march by the centre, trying to avoid the valley as much as possible and keep concealed in the woods for as long as possible, and keep in touch with 8<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt on right and 5<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt on left.

At 8 a.m. the Battr. was on the move, at 8.10 a.m. enemy barrage fell on edge of wood. Our barrage started on ridge the other side of MARKETON - CUISTON.

The leading 2 Companies made fair progress in support of 5<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt. and 8<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks Regt. who both appeared to come under hostile M.G. fire on leaving PONCEY and the woods at LE PAYS D'ECUI. My 2<sup>nd</sup> line, 7 & 8 Coys. were severely handled by enemy barrage on edge of woods and all came under severe M.G. fire on debouching into the open.

About 11 am. it appeared certain that the attack could not develop successfully, as the 51<sup>st</sup> Divn. seemed held up on the other side of the ARDRE and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks. Regts were suffering severely in front of MAREUX and CUTRON.

I therefore communicated the position to Bde. Hd. Qrs. at ECUIE farm and at the same time sent my 2 Companies in 2<sup>nd</sup> line to the support of the 5<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks. Regt round MAREUX, keeping only 2 platoons in reserve near Batin. Hd. Qrs. at 22 14 2 03.

During the afternoon I got orders from Bde. Hd. Qrs. to put out outposts and hang on to the ground won - during the afternoon I discussed the position with Lt. Col. England, 8<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks. Regt. and decided to personally report situation to G.O.C. 18<sup>th</sup> Bde. at seven farm. There I received instructions to put out Battle outposts and line up with the 5<sup>th</sup> W. Yorks. Regt and the F. holding the line on the high ground East of CUTRON. This I accomplished by 11.30 p.m. the operation was a good deal hampered as the enemy put down a hostile barrage, mistaking our stretcher parties for attacking troops.

Casualties suffered by my Batin. during the days operations were

8 Or. Killed	34 O/Rs. Killed
7 Or. wounded	185 O/Rs. wounded

The further attack on the 27<sup>th</sup>

The arrival of this Company at 10.30 am. had the desired effect in screening this flank during the afternoon the 186 Bde. advanced and secured the line BUNNY Village - Bois de HOMMES. The French having meanwhile captured the latter high ground.

Casualties from M.G. fire were severe during this attack

2 Or. Killed	5 O/Rs. Killed.
2 Or. wounded	62 O/Rs. wounded.

Out of a total of 280 all ranks taking part with the Coy. in this action.

Letter of appreciation

Headquarters,  
62nd (West Riding) Division.  
2nd August 1918.

Dear Sir,

About a month ago the 1/5th Devonshire Regiment was sent to the Division which I have the honour to command.

It came from Egypt and at once took its place in the line. A fortnight ago we were despatched South to take part in the great Battle of the Marne alongside French troops.

You will, I am sure, be proud to hear that the 1/5th Devonshire Regiment has more than worthily uphold all the proud traditions of the distinguished Regiment of which it forms a part.

The men are of fine physique, soldierly bearing and splendid courage. They played a worthy part in the great battle and were continuously engaged with the enemy from the 20th of July till the 30th of July - a very high trial for troops inexperienced in Continental warfare. I never want to have a finer Battalion under my Command, and I think it is only right, therefore, that I should acquaint the Territorial Association of Devonshire with my opinion of the prowess of their countrymen.

The fact that this Division is a West Riding Division ( having till a month ago been composed entirely of troops from the West Riding of Yorkshire ) does not detract from the fact that we are proud to welcome amongst our Yorkshiremen so distinguished a Battalion as that which we have had the honour to receive into our ranks.

Believe me,  
Yours faithfully,  
*(Sd) W.P. Braithwaite*  
*Major General*

Chairman,  
Devonshire Territorial Association,  
57, High Street,  
Exeter.

P.S. I enclose a copy of the Order of the Day.

*app B7*

In his history of

the 62nd Division, E Wyrall describes the action of 19/20 July thus:

Battalion commanders were told to march off as soon as possible to reach Courtagnon by 12 midnight, where guides provided by the French, then holding the line, would meet them and conduct them to their assembly positions. The frontage allotted to the Brigade was from the Bois de Rheims, on the right, to the River Aisne, on the left; the 8th West Yorks Regt. (Lieut.-Colonel England), on the right; 2/5th West Yorks. (Major R. Stewart), on the left, and the 1/5th Devon Regt. (Lieut.-Colonel H. V. Bastow), in support. The positions of assembly were:—8th West Yorks Regt. Bois de Pourcy; 2/5th West Yorks Regt. and 1/5th Devons, round Pourcy.

No details exist in the Battalion Diaries of the difficulties of that terrible march by night, through almost pitch-black forests, to the positions of assembly. Only one report—by the C.O., 1/5th Devons—gives any impression of the hard task set to troops already tired out by the day's march:—"My Battalion," he said, "marched at 10 p.m. from St. Imoges. Guides were met at the Farm Courtagnon; these led the Battalion by woodland tracks to positions of assembly near French Regimental Headquarters. Tracks very steep and rough; heavy shell fire experienced *en route*. Casualties, one officer and twenty-three other ranks wounded, and two other ranks killed. The Battalion formed up at the point of assembly on 20th July at 5-30 a.m. Men very tired by hard climb and rough road."

But the following account from the private diary of an officer, serving with the 8th West Yorks, gives a very vivid impression of that exceedingly difficult march. "By 10 p.m. we were well on our way with the platoons at intervals of 100 yards. It was a march which will long be remembered, for the bright moonlight made the long straight road into a shining white ribbon, dividing the eerie blackness of the Forest of Rheims.

"Leaving the main road we plunged into the darkness of the wood along a country lane, which soon became only a track. 'They have halted in front, Sir,' shouted the connecting file just ahead. . . . However, it was a real genuine halt and the column disappeared into the hedge-rows, except for the limbers and the small unfortunate crowd of Lewis gunners, who were now getting their guns, spares and panniers of ammunition, as it had been decided to send back the limbers from this point.

"We now reached one of the worst stages of the journey. The track, hitherto quite respectable, now became a mere narrow space between trees, and later on, into a mere nothingness. Thick blackness was everywhere excepting a faint illumination showing where the tops of the trees were. On and on we stumbled in single file, colliding with trees and with our neighbours and plunging into deep holes full of sticky mud. At one place we passed some French *poilus*, but could only recognize them by their words of welcome. After despairing of ever getting out of this maze of blackness we began to discern some faint light ahead, and in time we dragged ourselves out into the clean and wholesome moonlight. A rest just outside a gas-shelled, ruined village and again this long single file tried to rejoin its forces.

“ Once through the village we again left the road and having climbed up a steep path found ourselves once more in the woods. By this time each Company was moving independently with its own French guide. It was not long before we were on the hard road, disentangling ourselves from Italians, French, another unit of our Division, motor lorries, French transport, ammunition wagons, guns, limbers and mules ; countless mules—mules carrying rations, mules carrying water, mules carrying ammunition and more (spare) mules. We sat down by the wayside and waited . . . and then resumed our journey under the guidance of our very impatient guide. (I discovered later that his impatience was justified, seeing that he had no idea as to our destination !)

“ The unfortunate Battalion then became mixed up at some cross-roads with a crowd of units from different Divisions and of seemingly different nationalities.

“ The scene was awesome. French guides, interpreters, company commanders, vied with each other in apt description of the situation, and present and future fate of the responsible authors. The men were feeling too done to comment much beyond an occasional muttered curse.

“ Again and again a kind of a raid had to be organized in order to rescue one of our men who had been whirled into the running stream of humanity and mules. . . Our guide implored us to double, but this was just a little beyond us, as we could scarcely limp along. But the fears of our guide were justified for the road began to be heavily shelled. . . Once more we plunged into the horrors of those forest depths and, in the early hours of the morning these dark woods, with their muddy paths and their foul stench of gas and decaying bodies of horses, began to tell on the energy and spirits of the men. I walked, or rather stumbled along in a kind of mental haze. . . in a pestilential blackness with a hazy moonlight above the trees, we stumbled on and on and on, through trees, over trees, into trees. When I could think, it was about our attack at dawn.

. . . There is no energy left for grim jokes or curses, and the only sounds are the sobs of some youngster who found his load of rifle, ammunition, pack, rations, bombs, equipment, one or two panniers and other impedimenta almost too much for his boyish strength.

. . . It was some time before I could realise that my guide was informing me that we had finished the journey.”

A halt was called and whilst the Company Commander went forward to interview the French Company Commander, whose position the former was supposed to take over, the men dropped exhausted and fell fast asleep immediately. Eventually, it transpired that this Company (D) of the 8th West Yorks. was to be in the third wave of the attack ; and so it had to be hurried out into a place secure from observation.

From the edge of the Bois de Pourcy, the battered village of Marfaux could be seen away on the left flank ; Cuitron lay opposite the centre, and Bois de Petit Champ on the high ground, whose southern slope was to form the right flank of the 8th West Yorks. In front of the Battalion stretched a golden panorama of cornfields—a wonderful sight in the early morning light.

Just before 8 a.m. the attacking troops were in position : 187th Infantry Brigade (Right) with the 2/4th York and Lancs. on the right, the 5th K.O.Y.L.I. on the left and the 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I. in reserve ; the 185th Infantry Brigade (Left) with the 8th West Yorks. on the right, the 2/5th West Yorks. on the left and the 5th Devons in reserve. Each attacking Battalion was to move forward on a two-company front.



THE 1/5TH DEVONS RESTING.

### *The 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Devons resting*

At 8 a.m., punctually, the two assaulting Brigades moved forward to the attack. It was a brilliant morning, full of sunshine which flooded the cornfields, over which part of the attack was moving forward. "Surely," said an officer, "there was no war in this pleasant country." But the standing crops in the undulating valley, the vineyards on the slopes leading up to the heights and the dense woods along the ridges, concealed from view hostile positions of great strength, and death lurked in the shimmering haze covering those peaceful fields and quiet uplands.

.....  
The 5th Devons had already suffered casualties numbering one officer and twenty-three other ranks wounded and three other ranks killed, by shell fire, when the Battalion reached its assembly positions, and though tired by their long night march the men were in excellent spirits.

The Battalion was in support of the 8th and 2/5th West Yorks, and, at 8 a.m., with orders to move by the centre on Cuitron as their line of march, keeping to the woods and in touch with the two attacking Battalions as long as possible, the two leading Companies C and D, joined by A and B Companies, set out. "The leading Companies," said the C.O., "made fair progress in support of the 5th West Yorks. Regt., who both appeared to come under hostile machine-gun fire on leaving Pourcy and the woods at Le Pates D'Ecueil. My second line—A and B Companies—were severely handled by enemy barrage on edge of woods and all came under severe machine-gun fire on debouching into the open."

About 11 a.m., it appeared obvious that the attack could not develop successfully, as the 51st Division across the Ardre was held

up owing to the very heavy shelling in front of Bois de L'Aulnay and Marfaux, and the 2/5th and 8th West Yorks. were, as already shown, in a similar position. Colonel Bastow, therefore, after reporting the position to Brigade Headquarters at Ferme D'Ecuiel, sent A and B Companies (less two platoons in reserve at Battalion Headquarters) to support the 2/5th West Yorks., who had got within fair distance of Marfaux but could get no further. On again reporting his position to Brigade Headquarters the C.O. of the Devons was ordered to push out outposts and "hang on" to the ground won. Finally the Devon men linked up with the 2/5th and 8th West Yorks., though the operation was considerably hampered by an enemy barrage.

.....  
Quite unlike anything the Division had hitherto experienced in France, was the desperate fighting which took place on the 20th July. The enemy clung tenaciously to all his positions. Everything was in his favour—his machine-guns were skilfully concealed and well handled, and his snipers were everywhere where vantage ground could be made use of. The barrage which, had it come down on the right positions, must have shaken him, was wide of the mark. And yet, the Yorkshiremen, fighting under extraordinary disadvantages and difficulties, clung equally tenaciously to every foot of ground gained. Their pluck and endurance were inspiring. Prisoners (three officers and fifty other ranks) had been taken from four German Divisions, *i.e.*, 103rd, 123rd, 50th and 86th, which showed that the enemy was as strong, if not stronger, than the two British Divisions opposed to him.<sup>1</sup>

## Appendix 2 –After the war

After the War, Spencer married Daisy Furze, a childhood neighbour from a time spent living Bristol. They lived initially in East London, had two sons and then moved to Bradford in Yorkshire. Spencer was for many years manager of Lloyds Bank Colonial and Foreign Branch there, arranging financial transactions for the textile firms and other Bradford businesses. During the Second World War he took on a role in air-raid precautions.

9 Ditto	83	1 Kipling John S.	M. Spence	94 M. Clerk in Charge Bank	Air Raid Warden
		2 " Daisy R.	F. 23 K. 1900 M. Housewife		Nursing Aux. Res.
		3 " John J.	M. 4 August 1915	Art School	

1939 National Register. 9 Toller Drive, Bradford.

He was also for many years active on behalf of ex-servicemen and women through the British Legion.

### Pensions protests

Pensions for disabled ex-Servicemen were described as "scandalous," "miserable" and "mean" by speakers at Saturday night's 32nd annual dinner of the Bradford branch of the British Legion, held in Busby's Café, Manningham Lane.

The first comment came from Mr. J. S. Kipling, a senior vice-president. Proposing, "The City of Bradford," he declared: "It is an absolute scandal that ex-Servicemen with 100 per cent. disablement should be fobbed off with a miserable 55s."

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Angus Crowther) replied to the toast. He said, "I think it would be nothing less than mean ingratitude if we did not recognise the need of any man who has saved this country from disaster and preserved it from the assault of the enemy."

Finally, Mr. M. Woodhead, President of the Bradford Branch, said that the pension payments were a scandalous shame when one realised how wages and salaries had advanced.

Captain S. H. Hampson, Chairman of the British Legion, replied to "The British Legion." Colonel Sir Alfred Mowat proposed, "The Armed Forces," to which Lieut.-General G. C. Evans, GOC-in-C Northern Command, replied. "Our Guests," was proposed by Mr. G. Fishwick, Chairman of the Bradford Branch. Captain C. Leach responded.

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He is pictured below (wearing his War and Victory medals), laying a wreath on Remembrance Day 1969 at the Bradford cenotaph.



In the 1970s, two blocks of Legion flats for the elderly in Bradford were named Kipling Court One and Two in his honour.



He died in 1982 and the picture below shows the unveiling of a memorial plaque at the British Legion's Bradford HQ the following year.

## Memorial to 'Kips' unveiled

PLAQUE commemorating Mr. John Spencer Kipling's work for the Royal British Legion in Bradford and West Yorkshire was unveiled and dedicated last night.

The ceremony was held at Turley House, Claremont, the Legion headquarters in Bradford. The plaque was unveiled by Mr. Frank Scott, president of Bradford Central branch, and the service of dedication was led by the Rev. Bernard Gribbin, branch

chaplain and Vicar of Bankfoot.

Mr. A. O. Gray, chairman of the Bradford group of branches, spoke of the "old world courtesy" which Mr. Kipling brought to all his Legion work and said they already missed him greatly.

Mr. Kipling, who lived at Toller Lane, Bradford, died last September aged 88. The plaque lists the offices he held at various levels of Legion organisation. It was paid for from donations received after an appeal launched in February.

Seen from left are Mr. Robert Kipling, Mr. Kipling's son and the Bradford branch treasurer, Mr. Scott, the Rev. Bernard Gribbin, and Mr. Jack Venner, branch chairman.

# Legion's last tribute to 'Kips'

THE following tribute to Mr. John Spencer Kipling, Bradford's Royal British Legion stalwart, who died last week, aged 88, has been sent by Mr. A. O. Gray, chairman of the Bradford Group, Royal British Legion.

On Monday, we paid our last respects to "Kips", as he was known to those of us who were honoured to call him friend. As a young man, he saw action in the 1914-18 conflict to such effect that he seemed apologetic that he should have survived unscathed.

To this end, he devoted himself to assisting the ex-service community via the Royal British Legion from its inception in 1921. His particular interest was in war pensions and he gave unstinting service to the Bradford and Keighley War Pensions Committee.

He was a leading figure within the Royal British Legion, holding office at branch, group, district and county levels.

His tolerance, understanding, loyalty and dedication were, and will remain, an example to us all for he displayed these qualities with old-world charm and in such a gentlemanly manner that we will always remember him with honour and affection.

**KIPLING.** — On September 21, at his home, John Spencer, aged 88 years, the dearly-loved husband of the late Daisy Kipling, a dear father, grandad and brother. Service and cremation on Monday, September 27, at Nab Wood at 3 p.m. Friends please accept this intimation. By request, family flowers only please, but, if desired, donations in lieu may be sent to The Royal British Legion, 9 Claremont, Bradford 7. — H23