

Uniform postcard - The Lancashire Fusiliers, 1918

Introduction

I have previously mentioned a postcard from the Royal Flying Corps [1](#)) in Gale & Polden's History and Tradition series, which reproduced all the regiments and corps of the British Army in the period immediately before and during the First World War.

The postcard series included at least 118 cards, a large number of which existed in several different editions. Some of the rarest cards in the series, in my opinion, include five cards, with drawings by Ernest Ibbetson:

- The Buffs (East Kent Regiment)
- The Devonshire Regiment
- The Lancashire Fusiliers
- The Royal Sussex Regiment
- The East Surrey Regiment

Source 1 mentions that the cards were all published in 1918.

The cards differ from 99% others in the series by only showing the subjects in khaki uniforms.

Despite years of searching, I had not succeeded in seeing just one of the maps in question, and Source 1 was until recently my only information about the existence of the maps.

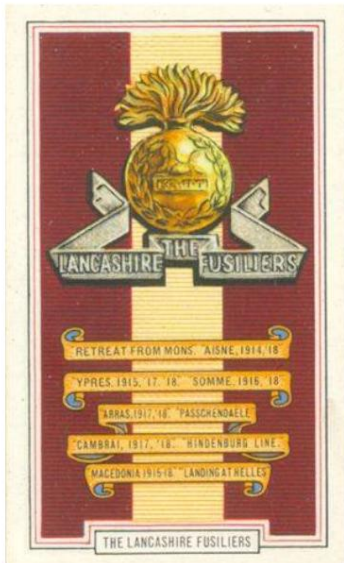
A friendly lady in England then offered the card mentioned here for sale via the internet auction system eBay. Without hesitation, I placed a bid and, competing with only one other interested party, I secured the card.

I'm not sure if the apparently limited interest in the card is because it's not nearly as rare as I imagine, or if most buyers prefer the series' many brightly colored cards. Until proven otherwise, I believe I have made a "discovery".

The Lancashire Fusiliers



If you compare the card with others in the series, you can see that Ernest Ibbetson was a supporter of recycling; the barracks gate and the painter's house thus appear again on several other maps.



The Lancashire Fusiliers.

Cigarette card from the *Army Badges series*, issued in 1939 by the tobacco company Gallaher Ltd.



*th 5th Battalion,
Lancashire Fusiliers, 1915.*

Cigarette card from the
Territorial Army series, published
in 1939 by the tobacco company Players.

The soldier on the right is showing Field Uniform Model 1902 [2](#)) used as the exit uniform (for exit use the infantrymen carried a short stick, while cavalrymen carried a riding whip). The soldier on the left is in guard uniform (hardly a field uniform, as the gun belt is peppery white).

On the back of the card is the following: The Lancashire Fusiliers. William III raised this regiment in 1698, and they won great glory a few years later at Minden, commemorated by the wreath which encircles the badge.

Another of their historical distinctions was that of being on duty at St. Helena when Napoleon died. They have a book presented by him on his deathbed, and his body was carried by twelve of their company.

Thirty battalions served during the War, and the first battalion gained six VC's in Gallipoli in 1915 - a fine record.

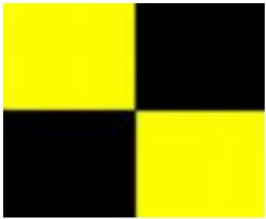
During the First World War, the regiment, which fielded 30 battalions, was awarded no less than 74 *battle honours*, of which the 10 shown on the cigarette card were selected to be worn on the banners.

Six VC's before breakfast



Lancashire Fusiliers landing on W Beach, Gallipoli, 25 April 1915.
From Source 3.

Virtually everything went wrong at this landing in the early morning hours of 25 April 1915 and the battalion lost more than 500 men killed and wounded.



In the center of the drawing is a soldier with a signal flag. The flag may be the signal flag for F - after the then English phonetic alphabet *Fox 3*). I am not aware of the significance of the signal flag in the current operations.

From Naval Signal Flags.

The Turkish positions had not been destroyed during the initial naval bombardment from HMS Euryalus and HMS Swiftsure and well-placed machine guns could now take the British soldiers under fire - with orders to open fire only when the enemy was within 100 metres.

A, B and C companies were transported to the coast in boats from HMS Euryalus, six boats per company, drawn by a steam barge; D Company was similarly landed in boats from HMS Implacable.

A short distance from shore they were launched, and with 4 sailors per boat as rowers, it now headed for land. The landing area was quite narrow - approx. 300 m wide, with cliffs on both sides - and there was no room to unfold much. On the coast was the barbed wire barrier, which had been ordered in advance to drop down in front of, while soldiers equipped with barbed wire scissors provided a clear path through the obstacle.

Suddenly the Turkish machine guns opened fire and at the short distance it was almost impossible not to hit. The oars dropped quickly and the boats began to drift. Only two boats reached the shore and the rest of the soldiers had to wade towards the shore, a difficult journey as their more than 20kg pack weighed them down.

The soldiers were, in the words of the Commander-in-Chief (General Hamilton), formally swept down, as with a scythe.

D Company, which was landed under the shelter of some rocks, met no resistance and was gradually able to work its way ashore, so that the Turkish positions could be bypassed, whereby the heavily engaged companies on the beach could get ashore.

General Hamilton later decided that W Beach should be renamed *Lancashire Landing* to commemorate the landing of the battalion.

	Officers Non-commissioned	
		officers and
		privates
Died	6	183
Wounded	4	279
Missed	--	61

Loss figure

The loss was 533 (out of 950 men), to which were added 64 out of 80 marines who rowed the battalion ashore.

See Sources 2 and 3 for further details of the landing.

The six Victoria Crosses

Captain C. Bromley Sergeant A. Richards Corporal JE Grimshaw

Captain RR Willis Lance-Sergeant FE Stubbs Private W. Keneally

Postscript

At the beginning of May 1915, the first units of the regiment's 5th to 8th Battalion (Territorial Army), the formed *The Lancashire Fusiliers Brigade* in *The East Lancashire Division*, later 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, were also landed at Gallipoli, from where they battles and heavily decimated were evacuated on January 8, 1916.

Sources

1. *Old Military Postcards* by Thomas McGuirl, Military Modelling, March 1987.
2. Six VC's before breakfast by Chris Staerck, from the website of the Gallipoli Association.
3. Timeline: Gallipoli 1915 - Six VC's before breakfast, from the website of the Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire.
4. *Gallipoli 1915* by Philip Haythornthwaite, Osprey, Campaign Series No. 8, London 1991, ISBN 1-85532-111-4.

Notes

- 1) See my article On the Royal Flying Corps in 1914, Part 1.

2) See e.g. my article *The English Field Uniform Model 1902*.

3) It appears that English maritime signal flags (*Royal Handbook of Signalling*, 1913) deviated from the international standard where the flag shown here meant L (*English Law*). Only in 1922 was the English system adapted to international ones, after which F was designated with a white flag, with a red rhombus - see e.g. *Phonetic Alphabet and Signal Flags* on the US Navy website.