



## Masnières in 1917, including RGLI losses.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November the RGLI took part in the Battle of Cambrai, the Allied offensive against the fortified German Hindenburg line, together with 467 tanks over a 20km wide front.

They were successful in advancing as second in the line and leaping over the first troops who achieved their objectives, capturing and holding 'Nine Wood', Northwest of the small village of Marcoing. Taking several machine guns and the quarry within the woods they were sent to Marcoing for rest.

The 1,000 men of the RGLI, nicknamed the Norman Ten Hundred, were repositioned on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1917 to the town of Masnieres, two km to their right. Here they took shelter in the catacombs below the town church to escape artillery fire.

They were repositioned below the San Quinten canal in the small residential area called Le Rue Verte. On the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1917, a Bavarian Regiment counter attacked Masnieres from the right flank on either side of the canal.

Despite crushing artillery and mortar fire the RGLI held their ground for three days despite several counter attacks by a superior force, very often in hand-to-hand combat amongst the ruined buildings. For this battle alone one VC (Captain Rober Gee, Royal Engineers, attached); Military Crosses (RGLI: Lt H A Le Bas, Lt H E K Stranger); DCM's (RGLI: Sgt W H Budden, Sgt H L James, Sgt W J Le Poidevin); Military Medals (RGLI: Pvt T R Robin, Corp J Sealey, Corp W Gannicott).

As the other British regiments either side of them had withdrawn leaving the RGLI as a salient, General De Lisle (himself a Guernseymen) ordered the regiment to withdraw and straighten the line. The German army was left to tender to the British wounded who could not be evacuated and bury the Guernsey's dead.

Lost in the fog of war we know that that temporary grave with over 100 Guernseymen lies undiscovered today somewhere south of the canal near to Le Roux Verte. The RGLI memorial made of Guernsey granite records a piece of Guernsey brought to remember the dead who remain there to this day.

At the roll call after the battle some 40% of the regiment were missing, killed or wounded. The RGLI would never again be completely made up of Guernsey born men as the losses were too large to fill by the local islanders alone