

# THE HISTORY OF THE SECOND DIVISION 1914 1918 VOLUME 1

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*Of the six pre-war regular divisions only two, 2nd and 5th, published a detailed history of their part in the Great War. The 2nd Division landed in France with the original BEF as part of I Corps (Haig) between 11 and 16 August 1914. It was not directly engaged at Mons and such casualties as were sustained (10 killed 80 wounded) were from artillery fire. During the retreat it was engaged at Landrecies (4th Guards Brigade) and Villers Cotterets but its first major battles were at the Marne and the Aisne, and subsequently it fought in all the battles of First Ypres. During the three months September to the end of November 1914 it suffered some 8,500 casualties. At the end of 1914 the division moved south to the Bethune sector where it remained throughout 1915, still in I Corps. It was at Festubert, Loos and the Hohenzollern Redoubt, which in all cost almost 9,000 casualties. In February 1916 it moved down to the Vimy sector in IV Corps where it stayed till July; the next move was to the Somme. Here the division had a protracted spell, till March 1917, during which time it was in action at Delville Wood, Guillemont and the Ancre incurring nearly 8,000 casualties. The 2nd was one of the few divisions not involved Third Ypres (July-November 1917) but it had earlier taken part in the April/May Arras offensive and later, in November/December, in the Battle of Cambrai. Throughout 1918 the division was in the line for much of the time, in the German offensive and in the Advance to Victory; its final action was the Battle of the Selle, 23-25 October. The final casualty figure was around 45,000. Seventeen VCs were won, and two of the commanders went on to greater things - Monro to Commander in Chief India, and Horne to command of First Army. The division took part in the march to the Rhine occupying the area around Cologne. In March 1919 the division ceased to exist as such when it was redesignated 'The Light Division.' The history is a very good one by probably the most prolific of all the authors of formation and regimental histories of the Great War. The detailed account is easy to follow and the Wyrall has taken care to name many individuals in the actions and events he is describing. Casualty details are given in appendices and in the text, and there is a nominal roll of divisional staff with all the changes throughout the war.*

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