

## **Walter Braithwaite**

Walter Pipon Braithwaite's (1865-1945) First World War career was nothing if not turbulent.

Recalled home in disgrace following the disastrous Gallipoli undertaking he was sent to France following a period spent in home service and subsequently performed notably well in helping to destroy the Hindenburg Line in the closing weeks of the war.

The bulk of Braithwaite's military career saw him occupied in various staff positions before taking an active turn during World War One.

Following twelve years of service with the Somerset Light Infantry he entered the Staff College in London and remained in staff positions until his career was rescued from an apparently terminal end in 1916.

Commandant of the Indian Staff College at Quetta when war broke out in August 1914, Braithwaite returned to London with its closure and was appointed Sir Ian Hamilton's Chief of Staff of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in March 1915.

Although regarded by Hamilton as a "rock" Braithwaite and his Staff quickly gained a notorious reputation for arrogance and incompetence throughout the campaign. This came to haunt him with his - and Hamilton's - recall to London in October 1915 following the manifest failure of the expedition.

While Hamilton's military career was effectively at an end, Braithwaite - a close friend of BEF Commander in Chief Sir Douglas Haig - was handed command of a second-line Territorial division, the 62nd (2/West Yorkshire).

With the eventual posting of the 62nd to France in January 1917 Braithwaite's languishing career experienced a re-birth, first at Bullecourt in May 1917 and then at Cambrai, helping to halt the German Spring advance of 1918.

Briefly appointed to temporary command of XXII Corps Braithwaite was handed full command of IX Corps in mid-September 1918. Two weeks later his forces were placed at the head of Rawlinson's Fourth Army in successfully smashing the Hindenburg Line, thereafter maintaining a leading role to the far right of the British line.

With the armistice Braithwaite was commissioned by Haig to prepare a report evaluating the effectiveness of British staff work during the war; its conclusions were (unsurprisingly) broadly favourable.

Having enjoyed something of a career rehabilitation late in life, Walter Braithwaite died in 1945