

## Section 189

# The First Battle of Ypres

## 1st Battalion

### October 13th to November 15th 1914

*The 1st Royal Berks had been in the thick of the retreat from Mons and had held the line on the Marne. Now they were to participate in the First Battle of Ypres. Continued from section 181*

## The Race to the Sea

### 13th October 1914 - Bourg

On the 13th the 1st Royal Berks were ordered to join the 'race for the sea'. This was an attempt to cut off further German advances towards the ports of Antwerp and Ostende. The CO was summoned to the Chateau to receive his orders for the move. Five companies of French troops of the 239th Infantry arrived at Englefield and took over the trenches.

Pte William Norton [7526] of Great Coxwell was killed. The body of 9905 Pte Kinchin was found and buried - he had been killed 14/9/14

The companies marched independently to billets in Bourg led by A under Lt Belcher who left at 17:30, taking over at Bourg from 2/Connaught Rangers.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 13th.*-Came back to Englefield last night, got in about midnight. Sent down to the Brigade Headquarters at 6 p.m. to meet a French colonel and show him a plan of our trenches at this point to take over from. His Battalion relieved us and we marched to Bourg, which we reached about 2.30 a.m. on the 12th and went into billets.

A Newbury Lance Corporal wrote:

At last we received the order that the French soldiers were going to relieve us and we jumped for joy, thinking we were going back to have a well earned rest, But no, our services were required in another part of the long front, for instead of getting a rest we went for a 100 mile journey to help in the Battle of Ypres.

Col Graham wrote on the 13th:

The big German gun (220 lb shell, 32" high 8 1/4" diameter) has gone away or worn itself out. But we still have heaps of his 16 lb shells and the 100 lb howitzer. However we are well dug in and my casualties are few, - an odd man sniped or hit by a splinter. .... We have been getting such heaps of parcels of things for the men; it is a great comfort.

I fairly drew the Germans last night! Their position on the high ground in front of me is far too strong to attack, it is a

mass of wire entanglements, abbatis and machine guns. But I continually worry them at night.

Do not be surprised if you don't hear from me again for some time. I am expecting to be relieved by a French regiment at any moment and then we rest for one day, then one days march followed by a train journey. After which I shall be very far from the place the boat from Folkestone goes to !!? Whether the Indian contingent [2nd Battalion] has gone there I do not know.

We have had shirts and socks for the men and have also got blankets and overcoats. It is very cold - a very sharp frost last night.

So Antwerp has fallen. The great thing is that the Belgian Field Army has got out.

I am quite fit and long to be on the move again. This trench life is monotonous and anxious work.

Do you notice I have a new Censor stamp no 253? My previous stamp no 64 I lost when Perrott was killed [on the 10th Sept]

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 13th Short rations again, letters up, & promised parcel from N arrived, contents of which was much enjoyed, could not have come at a better time. Rumours that the French relieve us at night remained in trenches all day. tea served up soon after dusk, ordered to be ready to move at a moment's notice. turned out & waited about 2 hours while the trenches were handed over to the French. Finally marched back about 5 miles to Soupir arrivig there at 4 am & turned into Billets. goodbye to Metz Farm

### 14th October 1914 - Bourg

C, the last company cleared Metz Farm valley under Capt Bird at 0330 on the 14th under and it was still raining. They were stood to arms at 0515 and given their jobs in case they were attacked while in billets. B Coy under Capt Lucas would occupy trenches from Moulin to the Bourg-Vendresse road; A Coy under Lt Belcher would carry on to the centre of Courtonne and protect the guns; D Coy (less one platoon) would take the defence to Mt de Ribaudon. C Coy and the remaining platoon of D Coy with the machine guns would be in reserve about 400 yards north of the main cross roads in the village.

Sgt Tiesteel:-

We had another turn in the trenches and then we were relieved by the French. We had received our first reinforcements of 3rd Bn men while we were in the trenches and a smart lot of fellows they were. Lt Belcher came to our Company and everyman in the Company liked him. He was

afraid of nothing and always had a kind word to say to you, as well as a piece of chocolate. It is impossible to exaggerate the service and confidence this splendid young officer gave.

Then we were relieved by the French and after staying a night at a small village where some more of the 3rd Bn joined us, we marched off and entrained for Belgium.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 14th Rouse at 2:30 am. breakfast Stand to Arms after 1 hours rest, short rations issued again, but a little better than yesterday, with the exception of no bread issued, contents of yesterday's parcel not yet finished so shall manage alright shall probably remain here all day, so hope for a chance to sample Camp coffee. remained in Billets all day & night

## En Route to Ypres

**15th October 1914**

On the 15th they marched to billets at Bazuches but at 19:45 they were sent on to Fismes to board the train.

October 15th.-Marched at 4 a.m. to a place about 4 miles from Fismes. Billeted in a farm for the day. Marched at 7.45 p.m. to Fismes Station. Entrained 9 to 12 a.m.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 15th Rouse 2:30 am, Breakfast Parade 3:15 am, & march to within 3 or 4 miles of Pismes, roads in a dreadful state for marching no halt given until well after daybreak, & was not allowed to smoke, arrived at Destination about 9 am billeted for the day in an hay loft above an empty house, very glad of the rest.

Parade again at 7:30 pm march about 4 miles & entrain at Pismes just after 9 pm in vans similar to those used in England for milk 40 men to a truck afterwards reduced to 35, still tightly packed hardly room to sit down, very uncomfortable, no chance to lay down, journey commenced about 12MN on the move all night.

**16th October 1914**

The train left Fismes at 00:22 on the 16th and arrived at Paris St Denis at 07:25. It then ran via Amiens, Abbeville, Boulogne and Calais, St Omer to Strazeele. Somehow one man went missing.

October 16th.-Reached St. Dennis 9 a.m. Amiens 3pm Etaples 6 p.m. Delayed during night by train off the line.

Lt Sparrow is on the train and thinking of past events:-

We are in the train, bound for the left flank, and all it we have just been discussing is hidden from us. All that you yourself are aware of is that nothing is quite as you expected. People behave quite differently, and the very tactics we have been taught in peace lose much of their value because they have ignored the great factor of fear. Nothing you have read from Henty to Henderson suggested what you have seen. Even the stories you have heard of Port Arthur, where the Japanese were supposed to have flung themselves on the barbed wire that others might cross their writhing bodies, bear no resemblance to what you have

experienced. They don't fit in with the feel of this war somehow. You can't imagine it happening here, after what you have seen. Only something you had read about the men of Osaka at the battle of the Isthmus (Nan-Shan) - something about themfunking - doesn't seem to demand re-examination. You accept that as true.

But why worry? It's hey for open warfare again, and this time we're ready for it! The French are sending us because they know we're so much better than themselves. Why are the French troops so bad? Is it the effect of their wickedness?

The train pulls up at St. Denis, and you gaze long and thoughtfully at this suburb of ill-famed Paris which you have never seen. It is a Sunday, about 10 a.m., and the only street you can see looks drab, respectable, and dull. Perhaps, like the London ladies, they don't do business on Sundays, or is it the sadness of sin?

Whose thoughts are these, you demand of yourself with a start. They are the inner you pushing through the plaster covering of common-sense with which you have so painfully and unsurely encrusted him. Push him back quickly before anyone sees.

"I'm extraordinarily hungry," you say, turning from the window. "You always are," someone retorts.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 16th Remained in the train all day still travelling, tea served up just before 9 am, able to scratch our legs for a few minutes when the train stopped at the large stations, remainder of camp coffee finished today, obtaining the hot water from an Engine driver, able to buy a loaf of bread while waiting at a large station after climbing to the top of a 12 ft fence & waiting for civilians to get it, just managed to secure it in time, the train being on the move while still on the top of the fence, but had no difficulty in boarding the train while on the move, spent the night in the train, passing through Calais, but it was too dark to see much of it.

**17th October 1914**

Arriving at Strazeele at 08:30 on the 17th they marched the four and a half miles to Hazebrouck where they went into billets.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 17th.-.* Passed Calais before light. Reached Strazeele 9.30 a.m. Detrained. Marched to Hazebrauck, reached there at mid-day.

Sgt Tiesteel:-

I forget how long we were on the train, but I remember we were in cattle trucks and packed like sardines about 40 to a truck. We detrained about 4 miles from Hazebrouck and were billeted in a fine big school in Hazebrouck. Whilst we were lying down on the lovely straw which had been laid on the floors for us, the school teacher came and took their books etc. away.

Lt Sparrow: gives an impression of what it was like to be billeted on a Belgian family-

HAZEBROUCK is empty, abandoned by its whole population. Our hobnails ring on the pave, and echo in the deserted streets that sound hollow as a drum.

But there's plenty of room. That's one good thing. The latchkeys are all at the Maine, and one can pick and

choose. With the experienced eye of an old campaigner, you select a house for the officers of your company that is near the mess and send for the key.

The officers of your own company trust you to do them well in this respect, for already you are the veteran of the party, being the only one of them that had started with the battalion from Aldershot. One was killed at Maroilles, another wounded on the Aisne, two have gone sick, and the adjutancy has claimed a fifth; the turnover is extraordinarily rapid, and the battalion has not yet had a heavy action.

The key fetched, you inspect your new domicile with more than a little satisfaction. It's better than you had hoped. You feel you have done them proud. Three officers and three bedrooms, a comfortable sitting-room with a piano, and a kitchen for the servants. The whole furnished complete with linen and rent free! What more could men want? It's far in a way the best quarters you've struck. You tell your servant to lay a fire in the sitting-room and prepare for a comfortable evening.

About six o'clock, as we are smoking comfortably round the fire, we become aware that all is not well in the kitchen. There is obviously someone there who is trying to explain something to the servants, and sure enough one of the latter shortly comes in and explains that two of the family have returned and want the kitchen. Very well, you're sorry, but there's nothing for it but for the batmen to clear out and sleep with the company. After they have gone there is a considerable lull, but presently we hear a renewal of talk in the kitchen, and become aware that somebody is peeping through the keyhole at us. Opening the door, we find it is a girl of about twelve. She has just returned along with her uncle. There are now four of them in the kitchen - father, mother, the girl, and the uncle, who was subsequently known by us as "Le méchant Monsieur," a Rabelaisian old rogue with a wickedly merry eye, who revelled in his new soubriquet. We have some difficulty in understanding their strong Flanders accent with its "Oo-wee, Oo-wee" for "Oui," but there's not much doubt what they want - one of the bedrooms. We are not going to be as comfortable as we thought, and matters are further complicated by the arrival of a fourth officer, a subaltern fresh from England.

Hardly have we adjusted ourselves to the new state of affairs when Marie enters the sitting-room like a queen, shakes hands all round, and bids us "Bon soir." She is about eighteen and magnificently self-possessed. She, too, she explains, was refugee with la petite - and with a wave of her hand she indicates a child of nine peeping round the door - but she was ordered back and now, alas! she is sorry, but we will have to give up another bedroom.

Four of us in a single room is not quite what we had hoped.

The rest of the evening we are constantly aware of eyes staring at us through the keyhole, but before we go to bed "Le père" and "Le méchant Monsieur" bring in a bottle of more than passable wine which they drink with us, telling us of the Uhlans who had ridden through and returned a few days later.

Thereafter the family regard themselves quite definitely as our hosts. The company commander can play the piano a bit, and they come in every evening and sing - Hortense, the middle one, precocious in mind and body, has learnt a few words of English at her school, chiefly the phrase "Will you keep me?" whilst Marie gets smarter each day and from the second day onwards wears her Sunday best.

On the third evening our hosts invite a girl in a pink blouse to entertain us. It is supposed to be a great treat. We gather that she has the reputation of a great beauty, and "Le méchant Monsieur" is quite peculiarly vulgar about her, so that we all feel rather ungrateful because we do not find her

so attractive. You feel rather unhappy, because you appreciate so strongly the extreme kindness of our hosts. But one of the troubles is that none of us is quite clear in his own mind how he ought to take her, as "Le Méchant" suggests or as our own judgment would prompt. We halt between two stools and the evening falls rather flat.

But all things come to an end. Shortly after dinner on the fourth day we get sudden marching orders. There are farewells to be said, and as you are saying yours to Marie somebody pushes you both over and flings the tablecloth over the pair of you struggling on the ground. All bid light-hearted aux revolvers and vow to return. But you were the only one that ever did - for the others were killed.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 17th Detrain at Dames about 9 am. the London Scottish supplying a party to help us get our transport off the rail. tea served up & Bread issued, remainder of rations to be issued on arrival in Billets. Transport all cleared, & Batt moved off at 11 am, march about 6 miles to Hazebrouck, the largest town we have ever billeted in. Our Coy 'D' being put into a row of new houses which had not been finished, no boards just earth floor. Coy officer not satisfied with these billets & went off to find better accommodation for us, & we were eventually billeted in the Concert hall belonging to and adjoining the College. St Jacques. Stage & fittings all complete, & Incandescent gas lights, a great contrast to the usual barn billet, this being the cleanest & most comfortable place we have had for a billet. Able to obtain Bread & Butter (Bur) first taste of butter since leaving Venerolles August 21st.

### 18th October 1914 - Hazebroek

The battalion were on standby at Hazebroek all day waiting for the next move.

Pte Edward Gilbert [7466] of Swallowfield was killed.

Capt Lucas:-

October 18th.-Ransome went to hospital. The Battalion waiting to move at an hour's notice.

Lt Sparrow:-

Of all the training you did at Hazebrouck, only one incident remains in your mind. It was a conference, and ie C.O. says: "The enemy, as they retire, will probably leave machine-gunners concealed in houses ready to open fire on the main body. They are quite capable of it. All houses are to be searched and no quarter is to be given to any found. For the only way to stop it is to let these fellows realise it means certain death." These words stick in your mind, for they so exactly agree with all you've been thinking. A resolute enemy can stop any advance in column of route. The problem of the machinegun was insuperable for infantry. What the Colonel had just said was a counsel of despair. We were up against a new problem and we had got to evolve a different technique. We had shut our eyes to the problem at Aldershot, but you had heard a keen Territorial declare in a lecture at Dover that as a result of his personal experiences in the Russo-Japanese war he was convinced we were under-estimating the potentialities of this weapon. But that was the only real warning you had ever had. Now, however, brought up hard against the problem, the only answer we could furnish at short notice was a clumsy terrorism, likely to be as futile as Bayard's executions of all gunpowder wallahs.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 18th Still in billets, able to obtain almost everything fortunate in having a good dinner of meat & potatoes at a small shop almost opposite, a great treat, letters up, received one from N, answered it with several others, but not able to hand them in yet, another night in peace & warmth.

### 19th October 1914 - Godeswaerswelde

After another long wait all day the move to Ypres began at 16:00. They reached Godeswaerswelde at 21:30 and camped for the night.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 19th.*-Left Hazebrauck 4 p.m. Reached Goedesverwalde 9.30 p.m.

Col Graham:-

At 4 pm we moved from Hazebrouek at half hours notice. Torrential rain and a ...eral night in these trench with the Germans

Sgt Tiesteel:-

A couple of days rest and then off on the march we went towards Ypres

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 19th Remaining in the same billets, rouse at 5 :30 am each morning while here, Parade Drill Order for Musketry at 6:15 until 7:00, Breakfast immediately afterwards. Parade again 9:30 marching Order for Route March, also practised system to adopt while under Artillery fire, the advance to the firing line, some successfully carried out to the satisfaction of the OC Coy, return to billets about 12:30 pm. move at a moments notice at 4pm, march about 10 miles, 7 billet in a jute Factory at Codewersve1t

### 20th October 1914 - Ypres

I Corps began its advance at 06:00 on the 20th. 2nd Division were led by 4th Brigade on the right and 5th Brigade on the left. 4th Brigade moved through Ypres with 6th Brigade in reserve behind it.

The 1st Royal Berks were up early in the morning to complete the march to Ypres which they reached at 12:45 They were kept waiting about until 15:00 whne they were ordered to billets which turned out to be a diamond factory. They could hear the sounds of heavy fighting to the east of the town.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 20th.*-Marched for Ypres 6 a.m. Reached there 4 p.m; halted for three hours just before going into billets, passed French Regiment, got into billets at dusk, with heavy rifle and gun fire going on in front. Our billets were one large building with one small door for the whole Battalion; we had to cut two windows out so that the men could turn out quickly if required'.

Sgt Taylor

Rose 4.30 am. Ready to move 6 am. Marched to Ypres, passing hundreds of refugees on the way - old people especially; it was a pitiful sight, but you can guess that the

Germans will suffer for all of this now that the English have arrived in Belgium. On arriving at Ypres we saw guns in dozens belonging to the Allies and you can depend upon it this is another turning point for the Germans. Rested the night in a diamond mill but never had any luck to find a Koh-i-noor. On the evening of this day the First Army Corps halted at a line extending from Bixschoote to the cross-roads a mile and a half northwest of Zonnebeke with the Second Division on the right.

Sgt Tiesteel:-

No German shell had touched Ypres when we marched through it. We halted in the town and bought plenty of cups of coffee and chocolate. We saw French troops marching through the town and then off we went to Friezenburg where the whole Battalion were billeted in a factory. I believe it was a factory where artificial diamonds were made. There was only one entrance to the place, so to guard against surprise and enable the companies to fall in quickly, we knocked out several of the window frames.

Lt Sparrow:-

Ypres appeared very beautiful next day in the soft October light. We were halted on a small hill, and it lay at our feet, this town of Ypen or Ypnes that none of us had heard of. Yet perhaps most of us asked ourselves "Why not?" for even to our untutored eyes the Gothic buildings appeared of rare beauty. Perhaps the old town, warned of its coming doom by the distant puffs of shrapnel, was compressing into a brief hour all the loveliness accumulated by the long centuries. Perhaps what we were seeing was its swan song of beauty. Anyhow, there it lay at our feet, this city of venerable splendour, telling us with its dumb tracery of stone the story of the Flemish Guilds, of Alva, and of Monsieur Vauban, engineer to le Grand Monarque. And some kindly spirit, perhaps Athene, the grey-eyed goddess, warned the staff to let us lie on the slope a full hour to listen with our hearts to what this ancient city was striving to tell. And all the while upon the far horizon the puffs of shrapnel were coming and going.

It was late afternoon ere we resumed our march and swung down the hill, and twilight grew into night as we stood halted in the street leading up to the railwaystation, where a train was shunting. All that we had felt during that sacred hour of the afternoon slipped from our minds, there were so many other things to wonder at. There was a company of tassel-capped Belgian cyclists with machines that folded double for portorage; there were French Territorials, sombre and sardonic-eyed; there were beer and bread to be bought when you could make these Walloon-speaking Flemish understand what you needed; and there was the knowledge that these poor foreigners were gazing at you all, overwhelmed with admiration of the English, and obsessed with the longing to be British. This knowledge made everybody a little self-conscious, and put them, in fact, so much on their best behaviour that even if the prettiest girl in Flanders that we were all longing to see, had walked down the street, nobody would have looked up. For we were English, the pattern and guide of the world, and we felt our responsibility.

We passed the Cloth Hall after nightfall and were billeted beyond the city in a three-storied diamond factory with only a single door, so narrow that but one man could pass in at a time. And five-point-nines crashed reverberatingly in the darkness, and far away, villages were burning.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 20th Rouse 4:30am. Breakfast 5, Move at 6, on the march until about 12., roads very bad, halt for about an hour just outside Ypres, columns of refugees going back to safety, awaiting orders to advance either towards the firing

line, or to proceed to billets, able to buy Tobac, Cigarettes, Coffee & Chocolate during the halt. Hospital train with wounded went by while we were waiting. Ordered to move, & arrived in billets in a Factory at Ypres, about 2 miles from the Railway where we halted about 4:30pm Orders to be ready to move at a moments notice

### 21st October 1914 - Wieltje

The next day they marched out of Ypres north eastwards by St Jean to Wieltje where the 6th Brigade was used to support an attack being made by the 4th and 5th Brigades along the Ypres-Passchendaele Rd. At this point the Royal Berks were detached from the 6th Brigade and put under the command of the 4th (Guards) Brigade who were part of 7th Division. They moved forward about one and a half miles and went into bivouacs for the night.

Col Graham:-

The next day [21st] was attached to support the right flank of the 4th Guards Brigade and remained with them for 24 hours when I was hurriedly sent to help the 22nd Bde.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 21st.*- We only marched about four miles; as we were in support of the Brigade, and they did not require our help, we spent the night in the open.

Sgt Taylor:

On the 21st the Berkshires marched about three miles out of the town; big guns and rifle fire being incessant. That afternoon the 2nd Division linked up with Lawford's 22nd Brigade at the level crossing of the Ypres-Roulers railway and thus protected a point of great danger. The Germans suffered appalling losses but they were elated by their progress.

St Tiesteel:-

We had a peaceful night and set off again next morning towards St Jean. Round about here we deployed and watched our guns getting into position. We also dug ourselves in. Then we were moved into a tobacco field and I remember seeing a shell hit the chimney of the farm house where Bn HQs were.

Lt Sparrow:

Next morning we moved into reserve.

During these days the 7th Division, newly arrived in Flanders from the Mediterranean, was slowly giving ground before the German forces. This Division was new to the game, and it seemed to us that though it had no reservists within its ranks, yet it was going through the same moral experience that we had gone through. or, as far as we in rear could make out, the fighting was not being particularly severe. Small parties of the enemy were breaking through too easily - that's what we couldn't help feeling. It was the ease with which the intruders were driven back that led us to this opinion. Time and again we were ordered to counter-attack and eject these gentry, only to find the orders immediately cancelled, the enemy having been driven back by the local reserve. And this we considered couldn't possibly have happened if the Germans had been in any strength. It would be a relief to go into action and show these newcomers how to fight, but there's shrapnel viciously clanging overhead and the sickly smell of dead horses to moderate our ardour.

No, perhaps we're better off where we are, and yet, oh, to get on with the war, or at least to understand what's happening.

Rumour became more ominous. A French battery of seventy-fives joggled past, the drivers hitting their half-tarred screws into a shuffling trot. And some who were standing near heard them murmur, "Nous sommes trahis. Nous sommes trahis" - that fell cry echoing down from 1870! "Yes," you think, "perhaps all that they heard was an echo," for there is something puzzlingly efficient in the rapidity with which, having got the guns unlimbered and in line, the gunners conceal them with straw hurdles, so that in less than no time they look like four ricks. They're a puzzle, those French, you reflect for the fifteenth time. One moment you'd have sworn the battery wouldn't fight, the next they conceal themselves with an artistic efficiency you have never seen our gunners produce, and their guns are in action, the grey barrels sliding in and out of their cover. Perhaps even this battery of fantastic fortress artillery that is coming down the road with the solemnity of a funeral cortege may actually be able to fire without blowing themselves up. The cannon resemble those you see guarding a museum more than anything else. It seems inconceivable - and then Athene bids you shrug your shoulders and reserve your judgment. You have seen too much that is queer to rely any longer on appearances. But the second-in-command is frankly pessimistic. "The only thing to do," he says one morning, "is to hold on until the Russians make their weight felt. For," he adds rather wistfully, "they're the only hope we've got as far as I can see." The second-in-command can say these things without doing harm, for we admire and love his ascetic ideal of duty and we know that he would let no man funk, however desperate the situation. He'd been in the same school-house as you, though of course long before your time, and after you'd been wounded he writes: "I congratulate you on winning honour for the college and for the regiment." That was his creed exactly. He'd no use for the fellow who sought to use his school or his regiment for his personal advancement, and this letter, though an expression of his inward self, was also meant as a warning to you. But that was later. Now he goes switching from pince-nez to spectacles and spectacles back to pince-nez, pince-nez for peace and spectacles for fighting. With these constant alarms and cancellations he never knows which to wear.

In the days of these alarms we pass, from farm to farm and homestead to homestead. The Belgians who have fled have left great dogs chained by the doors, and these poor brutes are savage with hunger and thirst, snarling ferociously at anyone who approaches. One or two were provided with a sack of potatoes to eat, but most had nothing, and when our men tried to release them they got bitten. In the fields cows are bellowing to be milked, and when we can we ease their udders and drink much milk. Half-starved pigs, bleating nanny goats, Belgian hares, wander loose, distracted. The sanitary conditions of the farms are appalling, judged by our standards, and you hear that babies are kept warm on beds of horse-dung under the kitchen tables, which you don't know whether to believe or not, though you are ready to believe anything of these people.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 21st Rouse at 3:40 am Breakfast & move in half an hour, Brigade formed up after marching 3 or 4 miles from Ypres, awaiting orders. Advance 2 or 3 miles, & line up under an hedge, remain all day awaiting orders, Bivouack the night no blankets, but obtained a little straw.

**22nd October 1914**

At 0700 on the 22nd B Coy under Capt Lucas was ordered to dig trenches near Zonnebeke to the right and behind of the Guards. A and D Coys under Major Finch were sent to support 22 Bde at Eskternest.

Capt Lucas:

*October 22nd.* - We turned out at 3 a.m.; shortly after daylight we got orders to move about a mile and a half to our right and entrench in rear of the right of the xxx Brigade. Three of our men slightly wounded by a shell.

It was a fine sight at night. The Germans lit a line of stacks all along our front, and we could see the flashes of our guns, and the bursting shells, also we heard very heavy firing on our right.

Col Graham:-

The next day [22nd] our brigade (6th) had got together again and we took over the trenches held by the 22nd Brigade at noon.

Berks Chronicle:-

The British advance was somewhat delayed owing to the roads being blocked; but the attack progressed favourably in face of severe opposition, necessitating the use of the bayonet. Hearing of heavy attacks being made upon the 7th Division and the 2nd Cavalry Division on his right, Sir Douglas Haig ordered his reserve to be halted on the northeastern outskirts of Ypres. Our advance was successful until about 2 o'clock in the afternoon when the French cavalry corps were forced to retire across the Yser canal.

Sgt Taylor:-

October 22nd: Rose 3 am. Moved about half a mile up the road and dug trenches. Just finished when B Coy were ordered to move. We moved off about two miles to our right to help support the Irish Guards. Had to make more trenches. About 12.10 pm one of the biggest battles that have been fought in one day commenced. The big-gun fire was deafening. The Germans had driven all the inhabitants out of a place called ..... then hid themselves in all houses; the churches they were using as observation posts. It was hard luck on our gunners, but they had to drop two shells into the church to drive the Germans out. One shot hit the tower and another went through the roof. Then the town was shelled. Had orders to take no notice of anyone coming and saying they are English, as about 100 Germans advanced to the Irish Guards saying they were Coldstream Guards, but the Irish Guards were not having any, for when the Germans reached about 50 yards of our trenches we opened fire on them and only one out of the lot was left alive.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 22nd Rouse at 4:00 am advance about 1 mile & entrench, move 2 or 3 miles to the right in the afternoon, dig more trenches. Self & 6 men on Group Sentry in a house, found a civilian (probably the late occupier of the house, lying dead in a shed, evidently killed by Germans, house ransacked as usual. Prepared a good supper by killing 2 Chickens plenty of potatoes, onions, & coffee., water just on the point of boiling, when received Orders to rejoin the Coy & advance, so we did not get our supper. Advanced about 4 or 5 miles, & after waiting about a considerable time, finally turned in a small farm & billeted in a shed for the remainder of the night. Rifle fire going on all night.

**23rd October 1914**

The Company were shelled on the 23rd but suffered only three casualties. Pte H Johnson [10079] of Oxford and Pte W Simmonds of Caversham [6100] were killed. Two platoons, one from B Coy under Lt Nicholson and one from C Coy under Lt Bishop were employed in escorting the advance guard of a French cavalry division.

Capt Lucas:

*October 23rd.* - Marched at midday back to Battalion Headquarters. Six of us slept in a tiny room.

Sgt Tiesteel:-

The night before we attacked at Zonnebeke C Coy were ordered to escort the guns. Our platoon, no 10, reported to a major of artillery who had a couple of guns in a farm yard. He did not appear to want to trouble us and told us we could make ourselves comfortable and have a good rest which we did and the artillery fellows were real sports.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 23rd Rouse 4:30 am. stand by ready to move, move back about 2 miles soon after 6:00 am & billeted in barns for the day, advance at dusk about 1 mile, Half Coy in trenches, Right half including my platoon, Billeted in a loft over a bakehouse & remain the night. (Zonibeke)

**24th October 1914 - Frenzenburg**

On the 24th B Coy rejoined the rest of the Battalion at a point to the north of Frenzenburg.

At 09:00 they received orders to counterattack against the Germans who had broken through into the woods about Westhoek. However by the time they arrived the 5th Brigade had already dealt with the threat so the 6th were ordered to take over trenches from 22nd Brigade. Again before they were able to complete the task, orders were changed yet again, this time to attack.

6th Brigade had taken over from 22nd Brigade and were tasked to take the former advance trenches of 7th Division along the Passchedaele - Becelaere Rd. The Brigade was organised with the 1st Royal Berks on the left with the Kings Liverpools on the right, supported by the other two Battalions. The 6th advanced with great dash and completely outstripped the brigades to either side of them. The woods were full of Germans and every yard had to be fought for.

B Coy were on the left and had orders to keep in touch with a French Brigade. D Coy were on the right and had similar orders to keep in touch with the Liverpools. A and C Coys were in support. At 1530 the attack started and the Berks were met by fire which generally went high over their heads. B Coy reached the ridge from Zonnebeke to Becelaere without serious opposition. They threw themselves into a ditch alongside the road when heavy rifle fire from a hedge 300 yards away. D Coy were held up by fire from houses on its right The French on the left were also held up. When

eventually D Coy came up into line with B Coy it had to throw up defensive flanks on its right and to the left of B.

Two burning farms in the rear showed up the men on the ridge who were silhouetted and four officers were hit; Capt St J S Quarry had a bullet in the heel, Lt Lawrence Cail Nicholson received serious wounds and died on November 2nd, Lt A H Hanbury-Sparrow was severely wounded in the stomach and 2Lt Warner who was attached from the West Kents.

The Germans also tried to sound the British 'retire' call and pretended they were Belgians but both attempts at deception failed.

Col Graham recounted:-

At 4 pm on the 24th we attacked. It was dusk as we deployed under intensely heavy shell fire. The French were on my left and the Kings (Liverpools) on my right. It was difficult going in the dark - ditches, hedges and many farms and cottages held by the Germans. However we drove them clean away and entrenched a mile forward on a ridge.

On the right we heard voices saying "*Don't shoot - we are Belgians*" We shot!

After the attack on the 24th I was erroneously reported missing! I was away two hours looking for the French who were very slow in coming up on my left, and it was hard to find them in the dark.

The Official History of the War (1914 vol2 p199ff) gives an overall view of the events:-

At 12:30 pm as the French 17th Division was advancing, orders were issued by General Haig for the 2nd Division to be ready to move to the attack through the position occupied by the 21st and 22nd Brigades in order to support the French. Of this Division the 5th Brigade was already engaged in restoring the line of the 21st; the 6th Brigade which had kept touch by means of a company of the 1/Kings with the counter-attack of the 5th Brigade in Polygon Wood, in case help should be required, was ready behind the 22nd in support. Br Gen R Fanshawe at once sent the 1/Kings and 1/Royal Berks to take over the trenches of the 22nd.

Later divisional orders directed the 5th and 6th Brigades to advance in echelon from the left when the French moved forward from Zonnebeke, but it was not until past 4 pm, after a German counter-attack on their 17th Division had been repulsed, that this movement could take place. The 5th Brigade was then still engaged in Polygon Wood and supporting the 21st; but the 6th was ready.

The Kings and Berkshires, with assistance from XXXIV and XLIV(Howitzer) Brigades of the RFA, and with the 2/South Staffordshire in support behind the right, then advanced. They were met by heavy rifle and shell fire but, though the ground (a succession of small ridges and valleys, dotted with small woods and houses) favoured the defence, by 7pm the Berkshires had got forward more than a thousand yards and were now on the Becelaere - Broodseinde road on the top of the ridge - where they captured two guns - in touch on the right with the left of the 1/Kings which had pivoted on its right.

On the other flank they were even a little in advance of the French in front of Zonnebeke. In this fighting Lt Col W S Bannatyne commanding the Kings was killed and Lt Col M D Graham commanding the Royal Berkshire was severely wounded.

Both battalions of the 6th Brigade now entrenched so that the 2nd Division line, with portions of the 21st Brigade mixed with it, ran roughly north and south through the wood north of Polderhock; along the eastern face of Polygon Wood; then curved north eastwards to the Becelaere - Broodseinde road to a point in front of Zonnebeke. The opposing trenches were very close; at one place Germans were found on the other side of a hedge only six yards away.

Lt Nicholson and Lt Hanbury Sparrow were awarded the DSO for their part in the action. Hanbury Sparrow commanded 14th Platoon, D Coy, One of his men, Pte Goddard described it thus:

Lieut Hanbury-Sparrow displayed conspicuous gallantry in leading the platoon. He handled it with skill and as we rushed the German trenches he went ahead of his men. The enemy's trenches were taken and 70 prisoners were captured. It was in this fierce onslaught that he was wounded.

He always commanded the platoon in a very efficient manner and was always conspicuous throughout any attack. He studied his men to the fullest degree and the distinction which has been conferred upon him has been thoroughly earned.

Capt Tindall Lucas commented about Lt Nicholson:-

It came as a shock to us all here as we had hoped that the worst the wound would entail would be amputation. He was my subaltern and on the night he was wounded he displayed conspicuous gallantry for which the colonel brought his name to the notice of the brigadier.

We had just taken a ridge and the company on our right had some difficulty in coming up in line owing to the fire they were meeting from houses on our right. He at once went off and cleared some of them, thus saving a number of casualties in the other company.

I found him lying out waiting for a stretcher. He was extraordinarily good about it all, cheery and never a murmur.

Pte C Jones was one of Nicholson's men:

On the night he got wounded I was with him and at his side. We had just taken the German trenches and it had just got dusk. Where the trenches were there was a road and Lt Nicholson was standing aside giving orders. Just then he got hit and it knocked him flat on the ground. Lt Nicholson told me he thought the shot hit his revolver but I think it hit the road first.

Lt Hanbury-Sparrow gives his version of events and recalls how it felt to be wounded:-

One afternoon you spend in the loft of a farm smoking dry tobacco leaves and watching a section of Guards in action, and very well they were manoeuvred, teaching you quite a lot. That evening there is a shout of "All officers!" Another false alarm? No, it isn't! The brigade is to attack, and in a hurry too.

The objective can be seen on the far skyline, lit up by the rays of the setting sun, and you indicate it to your section commanders, urinating at the same time, for such is the haste. The companies deploy. There's no fuss, confusion, nor noise. An ordered quietness prevails. The second-in-command removes his pince-nez and puts on his spectacles, pushing the wires firmly round his ears.

His action is symbolical of the mental process that is taking place at the same time throughout the battalion. almost before he's got them properly fixed, we're off.

The men are extended six paces apart. The second-in-command is up with the front line in which your platoon happens to be. Let the men close on each other ever so little and woe betide the officer. "Mr. ---, keep your men extended!" "Mr. ---, your men are bunching!" or "Will you see your men keep extended, Mr. ---." What though his reproofs are obviously superfluous, for the men are keeping very good interval, and in that sense unjust. Nobody minds, everybody understands. They are will, regimental will, asserting itself, driving back into the lurking shades the whole pack of jackal fears.

Thus field after field is traversed in orderly lines whilst the British guns bombard the position ahead. The crackle of musketry breaks out on the right. On the left the last rays of the sun reveal dismounted French hussars come a stand-still, figures in silver blue kneeling and firing their pop-guns of carbines. Says the second-in-command:

"Mr. ---, I'm afraid I must leave you here. Keep your men extended." Good-bye, Major. Be very sure nobody doubts your courage. Though we don't know it, you and I will never meet again. Good-bye! In the fast-falling darkness the steady lines advance. Intrepid. And bullets ~ whistling.

We're held up by our own shrapnel. A 'short' bursts straight over your head in an instant of jagged flame. "Can we go back, sir!" "Of course not." The men stand motionless and presently the shells jump forward. "Advance!" Down a slope through acopse whose branches lash our faces and check the pace. There's a sudden sputter of rifle fire on our left. A scattered yell of cheering. They're charging. Hurry up, we're letting them down! Push on, hurry up! God knows what's ahead. A ditch. A grassy incline, grey in the darkness. At the top the black outline of a house, and in our right rear heavy musketry.

Draw your sword, Officer! Charge!

Where are the enemy? There! Strong guttural commands on the right flank; stabs of flame in the darkness; bullets cracking like breaking branches. They're counterattacking! Form line to the right! In the confusion you rush forward round the corner of the cottage and get a bayonet in your wrist from one of your own men. "You excitable bastard," you exclaim, and so much more beside that you pause dead-still for a moment to admire yourself. You didn't know you had it in you, really you didn't.

The men are standing the fire well. Forward - rush! A hedge. Down! Lunge with a sword to ensure no one lives on the far side. The blackness is flashing all round us. The enemy's frightfully close. Rapid fire! Lie down, you fools, firing through the top of the hedge! Lie down! You get up and, going to them, shout once more, "Lie down!"

Shall we try another charge? You stand weighing up

the chances, your hand resting on your sword. hilt. Flash! Crack! Flash! Crack! Crack! Crack! Thwack! And again a sledge-hammer blow - thwack! The incredible has happened. You're wounded.

Dying - for the last one got you in the stomach!

Lie still - it's your only chance. Lie still!

The air's mad with bullets. The men will never hold the ground. And you'll be left a prisoner - the shame of it! - and torture, the old fear of torture - you'd never stand it!

The sergeant has bandaged your hand. You rise to your feet. He offers to go with you. "No, you're too valuable," you reply. "Send a private." You know you're doing wrong to take a fighting man, but prison - torture! Away, away, away, with him to guide you!

What's happened? He's fallen over. Clumsy blighter! "Come

on!" you cry impatiently. He's groaning. He's hit in the stomach.

For a second you pause irresolute. There's nothing you can do. Away! Away! Leave him to die.

The platoon you abandoned never gave way an inch, and the R.A.M.C. robbed you of everything except your pipe.

There's a hospital train being loaded up. Stretcher-case after stretcher-case is transferred to the bunks. Officer after officer, Indian Army and British Army, an endless stream of mangled men silently enduring torture they are shifted ever so gently to the bunks. There's a boy with a shattered leg; there's a major of the 15th Sikhs with a smashed thigh. It hurts to see the agony caused by the transfer from stretcher to bunk. They are comfortable at last. Then the boy gazes down the crowded coach and speaks to the major. "Poor thin red line," he says.

#### Berkshire Chronicle:

October 24th will ever be a memorable one in the annals of the 1st Battalion of the Berkshire Regiment. for the enemy's trenches on the Passchendaele - Becclaere road were captured with 70 prisoners; two of the Berkshire officers were awarded the DSO and two of the rank and file the DCM. It was accompanied also by heavy losses amongst the officers, but the Berkshires had the gratification of receiving very high commendation from the Major General commanding the 2nd Division.

#### Capt Lucas:

*October 24th.*-About 9 a.m. we moved off to attack a wood and clear the Germans out as they had broken through the line of the 22nd Brigade during the night. We started off with B and D Companies in the firing line and advanced about 3.30 p.m. I had to keep touch with a French Brigade on my left and Steele on my right.

There was a lot of firing, mostly over our heads into the reserves behind. We reached the ridge without much opposition, found a few Germans in the houses, and shot three of them as they ran away. Fairly heavy fire was then opened on my Company, from behind a hedge, three hundred yards to our front, so we took cover in the ditch along the road. I sent Nicholson with a few men to clear the houses on my right, and told D Company to change direction half right to come up clear to me. There was no trace of the French by this time, and it was found that they had not been able to reach the ridge owing to strong trenches in front of them. The Germans were in trenches in rear of both our flanks. - The danger of the position was not fully realised till the morning.

Thanks to two burning farms behind, which showed the men up - on the skyline, Nicholson, Hanbury-Sparrow, Warner and Quarry were all hit, the two former badly, and a number of men killed and wounded.

#### Sgt Taylor won his DCM on the 24th:

Rose 5.15 and moved forward to attack the enemy. Got to one place but found we were too late as the Guards and 5th Brigade were before us; but not to be done out of it altogether, we moved in another direction and attacked a strong position and captured it.

#### Pte A H Goddard:-

The engagement commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday October 24th. The front line was composed of my Company, the D Coy, and next came C and A Coys. The two last named companies reinforced us as we advanced and by 6.30 the Germans had been driven back fully four miles. The Germans outnumbered us by

eight to one, our regiment only comprising between 600 and 800 men, but in spite of this the enemy was being driven back all the time.

Sgt Tiesteel:-

They [the gunners] gave us hot tea and most of their rations as well as bacon and tomatoes for breakfast.

No doubt Capt W King DCM (he was then our CSM & CQMS) will remember reaching us about 7 am with our rations after having wandered about all night looking for us.

Our job as escort for the guns finished about noon, the gunners having been ordered to a new position, we were ordered to rejoin the Bn. We found the Bn down the road just going into action. We were put into reserve.

We crossed some fields and rested in the outhouses of some farms. I remember Lt Bishop talking to us and pulling out a bundle of French notes and saying he would give the lot for a cup of tea. He also asked if there were any 3rd Bn men in our platoon and getting a reply from Le Kite he said "*I have just had a letter from Colonel Barker and I will read it to you*", which he did. Colonel Barker was very fond of his 3rd Bn and I must say he had reason to be. They were a very fine well trained body of men and did good work with the 1st Bn.

About 4 pm we received orders that the Germans had broken through the 22nd Brigade and we had to drive them back. Capt Quarry had taken away our Coy about an hour before, Capt Birt having been taken ill. He called the NCOs out and explained the position, how we were to attack etc. He was a very fine soldier and he proved it that day and night.

We were on very high ground open country and had a fine view of what was going on on our left, where the French were in touch with us and we could see them clearly advancing through a village and getting heavily shelled. We were free from the shelling as we advanced in artillery formation, only coming under shell fire as we extended into four lines. One section from each platoon forming the first line and so on until the 4 platoons were extended. We advanced each line by short rushes, taking the signal from the sergeant's whistle. Although several salvos of shells burst over our heads we never had a casualty.

It was getting dark as we reached the road running into Zonnebeck and Major Finch had just closed us in and told off one platoon to go and search the houses on our right, when an orderly came up to say Major Finch was to send C Coy to reinforce B Coy who were holding the front line but were getting a lot of casualties.

We crossed the road and lay down in an open field just behind a wood. The Germans shelled the road very heavily and set several of the houses alight. We moved along the edge of the wood in single file looking for an opening in the hedge so as to get through. The shells were dropping all round us now and I had just put my hand on Sgt Fortescue's shoulder with the words "*Dick, we are walking into it*", when a shell came crashing through the tree tops and burst 10 yards behind us throwing us through the hedge into the wood, killing six and wounding about a dozen of our platoon including Fortescue and self.

Discipline was very strict in the Battalion at that time and we had orders that men that were not wounded were to carry on and not to attend those that were. So we who were wounded did our best for one another. We were in full marching order which made matters worse. After dressing one another's wounds we made our way back to the road carrying Sgt Fortescue on our backs as he had stopped a shrapnel bullet in the leg and could not walk.

On reaching the road we met Lt Frizell coming up with his Maxim gun team and when he saw the state we were in he put us in a ditch while he saw the stretcher-bearers for us. Later we reached a farm house where we found dozens of wounded laying all round the outside of the walls. We went into a shed at the side of the houses and were dressed by the MO of the 1st Kings.

Our Captain (St John Quarry) also lay with a bullet in the foot. It was nice to hear that he said he was very proud of C Company, the splendid way they had advanced that day. We had had no words of praise from anyone up to that moment so you can guess how pleased his words made us feel.

One of our casualties that night was 6181 Tom White who got a very terrible wound across his face which cost him the sight of one of his eyes. He was one of the best sportsmen the Battalion ever had and also one of its best fighting soldiers. He will be remembered better by his nickname of Bandy White of Swindon fame, who could dribble a football round a host of players.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 24th Rouse 4:30 AM. Stand to Arms all ready to move at a moments notice, 2 letters received from N. advance towards the firing line at a moments notice. Line up in Artillery formation awaiting orders to advance. attack commenced about 3pm, & it continued until after dark, driving the enemy from their trenches. Struck 3 times with stones thrown up by shells & bullets striking the ground close by but fortunately escaped injury dig trenches with own small entrenching tools & remain the night.

Strangely only 8370 Frederick Hunt of Wealdstone is recorded as being killed this day.

### 25th October 1914

The battalion's trenches were heavily shelled all day. One German battery was discovered unlimbered about 600 yards to the NE. The Germans tried to remove it but D Coy managed to shoot all the teams that tried it. The Germans eventually man-handled the guns out of sight but the casualties they suffered was so severe that they moved only five, leaving the sixth in position. During the night Sgt Taylor took a party out and brought this gun in. He won the DCM for this act as did Pte Benson.

By the evening the French too had drawn up into the line but had veered too far to the right and got mixed up in the British lines. B Coy were supposed to have pushed on but the need to secure the flank with the French took precedence and to avoid confusion the Berks stayed put for the rest of the day.

Lt Gross was going down the road towards B Coy's left and met a truculent German officer who was taken completely by surprise to find the British there and he was taken prisoner.

D Coy discovered a German trench at right angles to their own and were able to pin them down. Every German who tried to escape was shot as well as many more in the trench. Eventually they all surrendered and the Berks took in 70 more prisoners.

One 'Black Maria' shell fell on Capt O Steele who was in the process of re-organising his company in their trench. He was blown to pieces but five of his men who were buried by the explosion suffered only shell shock.

Col Graham:-

In the morning we found the right of D Coy was only 6 paces from and behind the flank of some Germans, 70 of them. They all surrendered next day. We killed 151 men and captured one field gun and 10 drums.

On the 25th the Germans gave us the most awful shelling you can imagine, and so it has continued.

I was a few yards from poor Steele when he was hit. The shell knocked me flat and quite silly for the time. I had been knocked down by another just previously and hit on the right knee by a splinter. - all right now [29th]

Sergeant Burningham recounted his wounding in the Berkshire Chronicle of 29/1/15:-

We were in an advance position and we had received orders to hold on until there was a general advance of the enemy, and then retire to our trenches. It was as we were retiring that the shot of a sniper fractured the heel bone of my right foot. I was then acting as Company Sergeant Major, my two senior NCOs having been wounded.

I left Paris on the 11th of December and for a time was in a convalescent home at Ipswich.

He went on to talk about acts of bravery he had witnessed:

I was next to Sergeant Winter when he won his DCM. He left the trenches and retrieved a machine gun after three or four of the gunners had been killed

On the same day Lance Corporal Champion performed another act of bravery by bringing back an engineer who had been wounded whilst engaged in putting up entanglements. The rescue was noticed by the company officer, but I cannot say whether Champion has been decorated yet.

He finished by commenting on other matters:-

When I left the firing line 23 out of the 26 officers who went out with the regiment had been killed or were wounded or missing. The Germans seem to pick out our officers on account of their equipment and of course they are always in the front while those of the enemy direct from the rear.

I was about two yards away from Captain Steele when he was blown to pieces by a shell. The German artillery fire was very good at the beginning of the war but it has deteriorated since and our artillery are now better able to cope with them. I don't think much of their infantry fighting - in fact my opinion is that they have not a lot of fight in them.

The men appreciate the gifts of comforts sent out to them. There are always plenty of cigarettes to be had and needless to say, they are very welcome.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 25th.*-We were heavily shelled all day. - Battye was hit but not badly.

We discovered a Battery in position about 600 yards N.W. of us which the Germans tried to get away; from one of D Company's trenches we shot the horses; the Germans then managed to man-handle five away, but lost so many men that they had to leave one gun on the ground. Thousands of French attacked on our left during the day, and reached the line of our road.

I saw one black Maria pitch in the middle of a French Section about 100 yards behind us; it must have killed about fifteen.

I forgot to mention that in last night's attacks on D Company, two futile efforts were made; the Germans blew our Retire on a bugle, and shouted that they were Belgians. One German Officer was taken prisoner.

D Company during the day discovered a German trench at right angles to one of theirs and not 20 yards away; They shot every man as he ran away and eventually the remaining fifty came in and surrendered. Shells fell all round our trenches all day. During the night we got our wounded away and buried some dead. - The prisoners who came in were mostly mere boys.

Pte Goddard:

The enemy brought some of their big guns into action, but our fire was so deadly that the Germans could gain no advantage whatsoever.

Sgt Taylor:

Saw some splendid artillery work. The French capture about 200 prisoners.

Cpl Wickens:-

Qct 25th Remain in trenches all day. Shells bursting very near worse position we have ever experienced, being within 4 yards of the main road, with houses quite close, & a school just in the rear of us on the other side of the road, all these more or less already reduced to ruins by shell fire, marvellous escape soon after dusk, just leaving the trenches to reform the Coy & form up on the road, when a large shell burst not 2 yards away, nearly filling the trench I had occupied, taking away all the head cover, & blew 3 or 4 yards of the hedge away, the force of the explosion knocking 6 of us over temporarily (sic) stunning & covering us with earth. Our Coy Officer who was standing the other side of the hedge not 2 yards from me being killed instantly, though we did not know until next morning, part of the shell weighing 8 or 10 lbs being scarcely a yard away from us, we tumbled into the trenches again & remained in them all night, rain fell during the night but managed to keep dry with Coat & Waterproof Sheet.

A un-named private reported:-

I remember seeing two of my chums dragging a wounded man who had both his legs blown off, to a ditch. They had no sooner arrived there than both were killed on the spot.

2/Lts Battye and Gross were wounded and 2/Lt Searle went sick.

The men reported killed on the 25th were:-

7954 Pte George Bond of Reading

7424 Pte Henry Brant of Wokingham

7514 Pte William Day of Aldershot

9214 Pte Albert William Dearlove of East Hagbourne

7539 Pte John Fuller

7345 Pte Frederick John Greenaway of Lockinge

7869 LCpl Arthur Percy Hancock of Slough

8017 LCpl Alfred McCullough of Mortimer

9869 Pte William Francis Perry of Wargrave

ST0010 Lt Oliver S Steele

7747 Pte William Telfer

### 26th October 1914

The 2nd South Staffordshire were ordered to pass through the 1st Royal Berkshire and suffered large casualties. The Germans counter-attacked and the 6th Brigade had to dig in to barely 300 yards from the German lines. The net result was only a few extra yards gained by the 6th Brigade. The shelling continued on the 26th and 2Lt Gross was wounded, leaving B Coy with Capt Lucas the only remaining officer.

*October 26th.*-Poor Steele blown to a jelly in the evening [of the 25th] by a black Maria, while trying to reorganise his company behind his trenches. Gross hit in the knee by a bit of shrapnel next morning (26th), leaving me the only officer left out of the two companies.

We buried the rest of our dead in the night, Colonel Graham repeating the service from memory. Sgt. Taylor went out with a party and brought in the German gun. He also brought in two drums from the vacated German trenches in front. I am writing this on the 28th, an attack is at the moment going on through our trenches, by the Connaught Rangers, followed by the rest of the Brigade. Heavy rifle and gun fire is going on at us and at troops behind us; One Officer and one man of the Connaughts have just been killed getting into the trench I am in. I went three nights ago to see the Colonel of a French Regiment to arrange for the distribution of the French and English troops in our trenches.

The scene was exactly like one of the 1870 French battle pictures. I took a French sergeant with me; the Colonel was in a little room in a ruined house; several of the houses around were in flames. There was a row of dead lying covered with straw at the side of the road. The road was a mass of shell craters.

Sgt Taylor recorded that he went forward with a patrol, four miles in front and that in that region the enemy was retiring.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 26th Still in the same trenches, orders issued about 11 am to be ready to move, shells bursting less than 6 yards away bringing earth down on us as we lay in the trenches, but fortunately doing us no damage, firing eased of (sic) after a time, a considerable number of Germans Surrendered themselves to us, having no arms or equipment on them, remain in the trenches again for the night.

The casualties for the 26th included the following men killed:-

7166 Pte Henry Thomas Barrett of Knowl Hill  
 7479 Pte Albert George Bartlett of Reading  
 7349 Cpl Frederick Belcher of Battersea  
 7843 Pte Frederick James Butler of Maidenhead  
 7242 Pte John Richard Chandler of Hartley Witney  
 9430 Pte Harry Albert Richard Fray of Speenhamland  
 8310 Pte George Francis Slade Hague of Basingstoke  
 7190 Pte Herbert Mears of Stockwell  
 7932 Pte Harry George Newman of Birmingham  
 8117 Pte Alfred Parsons of Forest Hill  
 7378 Pte Albert James Payne  
 6653 Pte Edwin Francis Payne of St Albans

8240 Cpl Joseph John Peppiatt of Reading  
 8043 LCpl Edward Pounds of Chaddleworth  
 6658 Pte Henry James Sadler of Wokingham  
 7098 Pte Arthur Thomas Welsh Saunders of Newington Butts Surrey  
 7928 Jesse Stallwood of Charlton  
 10002 Pte Alfred Stroud of Mapledurham  
 7228 Pte Albert Thomas of Sydenham  
 9661 Pte Ernest C Townshend of Lewes  
 8948 Pte Alfred William Warwick of Wokingham  
 7070 Pte John Warwick of Tilehurst

in addition Pte William Brooks [9686] of Wycombe, Pte C Collin [7320] of New Cross and Pte William Fred Evans [9770] of Walthamstow died of their wounds

The Divisional Commander wrote to the Colonel on the 26th:

Your regiment has done very well the last two days. Although others collected the spoils, it was your doing.

### 27th October 1914

The next day the 1st were in support of the South Staffs who managed to advance about 500 yards. They dug in again with the S Staffs on their left and the Liverpools on their right. Between B Coy and the S Staffs was an almost impenetrable wood which left a 200 yard gap in the new line. B Coy under Capt Lucas was detailed to clear this wood but as they approached the NW corner they came under rifle fire from the wood and to the south of it and suffered some casualties. Eventually however they succeeded in clearing the wood and spoilted a line of German trenches about 250 yards away with a small farm building and enclosure on each flank. These defences were taken by successive platoons with the loss of a few casualties. A second line of trenches was now observed being held in strength by the Germans. B Coy stayed where they were but fanned out and connected with the Kings on their right - later, at dusk, a half of A Coy came up to fill in the 400 yard gap to the left to link with the Staffords.

Capt Lucas:-

*October 27th* -Heavy shelling at our trenches again. - We got an order about mid-day to support the right flank of an advance which the Staffords were making, the Connaught Rangers were also attacking. The King's were holding a position but were not too advanced. We dug ourselves in in a partly made German trench and faced south, our left stretching through an almost impenetrable wood, and the Staffords threw their right back into the wood to connect with us. Bromhead was about three hundred yards behind me, During the night half A Company were sent up between us and the Staffords, and B Company joined our right with the King's, in echelon behind us. Coy.Sergt.-Maj. Smith and others were hit during the night. half an hour -after Finch and I left our bomb proof shelter and the K.R.R.C. went in ; they put a Black Maria through the roof and buried 12 men ; all were dug out again.

Writing on the 29th Col Graham recalled:-

The day before yesterday we attacked another lot of trenches and made half mile of ground to the SE.

Sgt Taylor went out with his medical officer to bring in the German wounded, but as they were too far away they went back. Later they left the trenches they were occupying and moved to their right advancing across open country to a wood.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 27th Stand to Arms 4:30 am, move back during the morning to reform, & then advanced under heavy shell fire, afterwards occupying other trenches. Self & Section warned for Escort to Machine Gun during the afternoon. Gun being placed in position about a 1/4 of a mile to the right front of 'D' Coys trenches, in a house. One gun ordered to advance 100 yards down the road to the right during the night, taking up position in a corner house at Cross Roads. Section to remain in a ditch outside on the opposite side to Guard the Road & remain all night

Royal Berks killed in action were:-

7467 Pte James Cook of Wallingford

7157 Pte William Davis of Tooting

8760 Pte Walter George Jessell of Acton

10088 Pte Ernest Somner

7827 Pte Henry Pursey of Wokingham and 6138 Henry Norris of North Kensington died of their wounds.

In the evening the 2nd Division was established from the east of Zonnebeke to Reysel.

### 28th October 1914

On the 28th 5th Brigade were set to move through the lines established by 6th Brigade but never got beyond the front line trenches. B Coy were nicely sheltered for most of the day. They had realised that the forward trench was in full view of the Germans so they moved forward another twenty yards and dug a new one. The earth from that was used to build a parapet for the old one and the Germans, thinking the British were in the new trench wasted all their ammunition on it instead of the, now hidden, trench in which B Coy were actually sheltering. That night the 1st were relieved and went into Brigade reserve at Molenaarsthoek.

Two men (Pte Albert Edward Crump [6602] of High Wycombe and Pte Albert Edward Dance [9914] of Slough) were killed and aCpl Frederick Jones [7715] died of his wounds. Sgt Tiesteel recalled Cpl Jones:-

Later on at Zonnebeck poor Jones was so badly wounded that he died two days later on the same train which brought your humble down from Poperinghe after being wounded the same night. I have no doubt Jones would have made a name for himself had he been spared to see the war through. He was promoted Corporal for good works in the field on the Aisne. He had represented the Battalion in peace time at shooting (being a Bn shot), centre forward at Hockey and was the Battalion reserve goalkeeper at football, played cricket was a good boxer and a good runner.

Col Graham:-

We were at it all day again.

Capt Lucas:

*October 28th.*-Would have been a fairly quiet day if the 5th Brigade had not attempted to push through us. All that happened was that the Connaughts succeeded in getting as far as our trenches with a certain number of casualties. As the trench we had occupied previously was very visible, we had dug some more about twenty yards in front, with the result that the Germans spent the day firing at the old parapet, and we only had two casualties in the new trenches. We were too close to the German trenches to be shelled. Five of our pack cobs in reserve in the wood behind us were hit.

Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 28th Still escort to Machine Gun which is to remain in the same position. section moved into an house opposite that occupied by M. Gun at daybreak, not sufficient cover in the ditch from Shell fire or snipers, who were very accurate in hitting everything which appeared on that road during the day, remained in house all day without being disturbed. Withdrawn after dark, drew Picks & shovels, as we were ordered to dig out a Gun which had been captured from the enemy by B & D Coy on driving them from their positions at the attack at Zonibeke, proceeded to the spot to find the task completed, did not hear anyone grumbling about it though. Handed in Tools at Batt Hd Qrs, 7 proceeded to trenches occupied before going on escort & awaited the remainder of the Coy, who had advanced to the other trenches during the day, just got settled, as we thought for the night, when they returned & we were given the opportunity of remaining where we were, or going back near Batt Hd Qrs, the chance of making tea if they went back proved irresistible to some, who voted to go back, with the result of the whole Coy going back, fortunate to find some trenches already dug which pleased us considerably, as we were under the impression we had to dig in on arrival, managed to obtain a covered one & soon turned in for what remained of the night.

Berkshire Chronicle:

There was little but shelling on the front and the Berkshires took advantage of the opportunity to improve their trenches. Only 150 yards separated them from their foes, so that the Germans could not do much damage, though there was, notwithstanding, little cessation in their fire.

Casualties for the period 24th-28th were:- One officer killed (Capt O Quarry), five officers wounded (Capt Quarry, Lt Nicholson, Lt Hanbury Sparrow, 2Lt Warner and 2Lt Gross) 29 men killed and 79 wounded.

### 29th October 1914 - Molenaarsthoek

The battalion buried 72 Germans and some of their own men who had been killed in the fighting on the 24th.

The Orders for the day contained a fine appreciation of the recent work:

I, the commanding officer have been directed by the Major-General commanding 2nd Division, to convey to the battalion his very high appreciation of their attack on the 24th October 1914, and of the determined manner in which they subsequently held their ground. During the retirement from Mons between August 21st and September 5th, the 6th Brigade marched 236 miles in 16 days with only one day's halt during that period. The average number of miles

marched per day was 15.7. The Battalion had the smallest percentage of men who fell out in the Brigade. The Gurkhas said that they would storm any position with the Berkshires in support.

#### Capt Lucas

October 29th Spent the day in dugouts behind the ridge. We buried the few dead we had and collected a large amount of equipment and rifles, mostly German.

#### Col Graham:-

At 1 am this morning we were relieved and brought back for a rest. I went to sleep at 3.30 but at 4.30 the General wanted me and now (10.30) we are reserve battn to the 5th Bde attacking.

I can't describe the horrors of the shambles of the past 5 days!. Only 5 Coy officers left -- Capt Steele killed by a shell -- nine officers gone in 5 days.

This has been very exhausting work, living all the time practically among dead and wounded... Since the 20th there is an awful row going on. We have a great number of guns up now - all firing and Germans shooting in reply. Both my horses, groom and orderly never ...[?] I have had five of my ammunition horses shot even though they are 3/4 mile back.

The whole reverse ridge of this ridge is bullet swept, I could do with some sleep; 8 days of almost incessant fighting is tiring, especially with so much shell-fire round one. It is getting horribly cold at night; we can't have fires at any time of course. Sergeant Ashley makes tea miles away and sends it to us in waterbottles.

This place is still a dreadful shambles - dead Germans and dead German horses all over the place. It is as much as I can do to look after my own wounded and bury my own dead as movement is immediately fired on and the moon is rather bright these nights.

Capt Birt has just come back, having recovered from bad rheumatism. I got a wash this morning as ... say, and that and the cold make me feel very shivery.

We have had no mails since the 22nd. The Brigade may be wanted at any moment. The 5th Brigade seem to be making ground.

#### Berkshire Chronicle:

The Germans were massing their forces for the tremendous onslaught which was to open the way to Calais. Early in the morning of Thursday 29th a heavy attack developed against the centre of the line held by I Corps, the principal point of attack being the cross roads one mile east of Gheluveit. After severe fighting, nearly the whole of the corps being employed in the counter-attack, the enemy began to give way at about 2 pm.

#### Sgt Taylor commented:

We could not advance as the French we were being held up upon the right.

#### Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 29th remained in the same trenches all day, Coy all busy making tea & coffee, at least those fortunate enough to posses (sic) it, managed to obtain some, also made a stew of potatoes & cabbage, all fires being made amongst the ruins of some houses close at hand. Tea sent up from the Cookers at night, rain fell during the night, but being in a covered trench remained dry.

Pte Fred Savager [8113] of Thatcham was killed and Pte Aaron Gorton [9627] of Henley and Pte Frederick Thomas Westlake [7726] of Wokingham died of their wounds.

### 30th October 1914

At 06:00, some 50 minutes before sunrise, a German bombardment began. It was a dull morning with a slight mist. About half an hour later German forces attacked the junction of the line held by 6th Brigade and that held by the French 135th Infantry Regiment. It was the 2/South Staffords and 1/KRRC which bore the brunt of the attack which lasted until 09:00. The Germans had advanced and were starting to cut the British wire when they retired. Attacks were repeated at 11:20 and 12:00 however it appeared the Germans were merely feinting an attack. A company of the Berks was sent out to help in the gap between the 2/Connaught Rangers and 2/HLI of 5th Brigade.

This company, which certainly was not B, was commended by the Brigadier for helping to prevent a break through, however the Battalion diary is silent on the subject and it remains a mystery as to which Company it was.

#### Capt Lucas:

*October 30th.* Shelled all day by high explosive shrapnel and common shell. We had 11 men hit. I hear that the German's have lost very heavily in this neighbourhood today and yesterday.

#### Sgt Taylor:

The enemy started shelling our forward position for all they were worth. Then as soon as the artillery finished, the Germans made a general attack but they were repulsed.

#### Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 30th Self & 8 Men of my Section ordered to draw tea from the Cookers about 1 mile in rear, roads in a terrible condition after the rain. Coy busy preparing Stews for dinner ordered to be ready to move at a moments notice, but remained until the afternoon when Self & Section were ordered to go with No 14 Platoon & advance about 1 1/2 miles to trenches just behind a wood, temporarily attached to the Staffords who were occupying the trenches. Advanced under heavy fire but all arrived safely.

Section ordered to advance to the other side of the wood on detached post in standing pits which had water in, & remained all night.

Ptes Albert Munday of Kilburn [3/9111], Robert Henry Parker of Oxford [7875] and Henry Wood [6610] of Twyford were killed. Pte Sidney J Holmes [8284] died of wounds.

### 31st October 1914 - Gheluveit

The 1st Battalion was broken up temporarily with A&B under Major Finch being support for 6th Brigade and C&D forming 2nd Division's reserves. Initially the latter two companies were warned that they might be needed

to strengthen the line between 1st and 2nd Divisions.

The Worcesters and the Guards who had been holding Gheluvelt were being withdrawn on the 31st when some Germans infiltrated their flank. A and B Coys were then in Polygon Wood under the command of Major Finch and were acting as Divisional reserve for 1st Division. They were turned out at 19:30 to eject the Germans who had managed to get into the rear of the Guards.

As they moved up with B Coy leading they were met by heavy fire from behind the embankment of the railway line just west of Gheluvelt. They charged the German positions but found themselves within a foot of them and could hear them shouting and digging. The Berks suffered some casualties including three sergeants and Capt Lucas who suffered a graze from a bullet which went through his clothes.

A Coy were sent around to cross the railway and to try to outflank the Germans on the right. However they were unable to do anything in the thick woods. At midnight orders were received to withdraw, but luckily the Germans themselves had withdrawn or else the Berks could have suffered severe casualties. Everyone was brought out, including the casualties.

#### War Diary

At 11 am A & B Coys under Major Finch were sent off as divn reserve. They moved to the SW corner of the POLYGON wood. The Kings also moved here as reserve. During the day GHELUVELT had been reoccupied by the WORCESTERS and one other battn. About 4PM A & B Coys were ordered to drive out some Germans who had broken through again behind the WORCESTERS past the SW corner of GHELUVELT. B Coy (Capt Lucas) advanced as firing line. A Coy (Lt Woods) in support. The advance was made under heavy shell fire. About 200yds from the YPRES - GHELUVELT road the leading troops came under a heavy rifle fire from the direction of GHELUVELT. B Coy rushed the road. A strong force of Germans were then found to be holding the far side of the road behind the small embankment some 15yds away. It was now dark. B Coy held this line till they were ordered to withdraw at midnight. A continuous fire was kept up by both sides until 11.30pm when the Germans withdrew. A Coy prolonged the line of B Coy to the right, their right resting on the barrier across the road.

As there were no Germans in front of their immediate right, two platoons were sent across the road in the dark to turn the German left. These platoons under Lt Woods could not make much headway owing to a dense spinney in their front and so shortly returned to their original line, having accounted for one German officer whose body they found in the wood. It is impossible to say what other damage they did. At midnight the order was received to withdraw to their original position in reserve. En route the companies collected a number of rifles and sets of equipment which had been left in the trenches which had been vacated during the day. It was subsequently discovered that the Worcesters had withdrawn from GHELUVELT just about the time that our attack developed, which explained why our efforts to gain touch with them during the night had been fruitless.

#### The Official History recounted:-

The two companies of the 1/Royal Berkshire in Polygon

Wood were now ordered up to secure the left flank of the Scots Guards on the left of the South Wales Borderers, where a gap caused by the gradual shrinkage of the line, was threatened by the enemy. As they approached the light railway which runs about a hundred and fifty yards west of the chateau grounds, they were met by heavy fire from the low embankment, but they charged in the dusk and secured it.

#### Cpl Wickens:-

Oct 31st Section retired back to main trenches just before dawn, the whole advancing to same position occupied by Section the previous night, to repel an attack by enemy during the afternoon, returning to trenches again after successfully repulsing the enemy. Retired back & rejoined the Coy (who had moved into other trenches), after dark. This position having been taken by us, now being handed over to the French, the whole Coy moved back to a farm used as Brigade Hd Qrs & turned into Trenched just, just getting settled when warned for guard to mount at once, turned midnight before Sentries were posted, & our Guard quarters were made in condition to lie down in with Straw. Our Quarters on examination proved to be a chicken house, several young chickens being at roost on a basket hanging on the wall, Releive (sic) Sentries every two hours, so not able to get much sleep.

#### The following were killed:-

6509 Pte Mark Harold Ambrose of Maidenhead  
7835 Pte Frederick James Mills of Reading  
7285 Pte John William Salesman of Kentish Town  
8375 Pte Walter Skinner

and Pte Reginald Gordon Whiting [7878] of Twyford died of his wounds.

#### Capt Lucas:

*October 31st.*--Last night the Company moved into trenches on top of the ridge as a reserve. - During the morning two Companies were sent off as a reserve to the 1st Division. We lay in the Polygon wood near the Race Course till 3.30 pm., and were then sent to clear some Germans out who had broken through west of Cheluvalt. As we approached the railway line just west of the town we were met with a heavy fire from the embankment. We charged and got there all right. Here we lay in an exposed position till midnight. We had several casualties including three Platoon Sergeants, and I got a bullet through my clothes. At midnight we got the order to withdraw inside our lines. We got all the men and wounded back without any loss, and got back to our dugouts at 2 a.m., bringing a lot of rifles and equipment. It was bitterly cold and damp lying out on the embankment.

Sgt Taylor received the wound from which he later died.:

At 5pm we moved from our trenches round to the right to support the 2nd Brigade. Whilst following up the attack I was shot in the shoulder and neck.

He lay on the field for four hours and was afterwards conveyed on an ambulance wagon to Ypres being subsequently removed to the Woolwich Hospital where he died on December 6th.

Sgt Major Vesey, CSM Cruise and QMS Knott were commissioned.

Two men won the DCM this day; Pte J Pym [9803] of

Maidenhead and LCpl Frank Cyril John Hill [8900] of Oxford. Pym went alone into a house occupied by a number of the enemy who were firing on his company and cleared them out, only three Germans escaping. He was later wounded and also received a further recognition of £5 for Maidenhead men who won the DCM. Hill led some men through a gap in a hedge on the enemy's front under heavy fire being wounded in so doing. His wounds proved serious and he died of them the following Spring

### 1st November 1914

D Coy were brought up on November 1st to strengthen the detachment under Major Finch. They left Polygon Wood at about 14:00 and moved to some dugouts just East of the wood at Veldhoek in support of 1st Bde. This left 2nd Division with only C Company as its sole reserve. Then C was ordered to relieve one of the South Staffords' companies and Col Graham took over command of the remaining S Staffords and C Coy.

*November 1st.*-We remained in our dugouts all the morning in reserve and were shelled about mid-day, one shell falling between Finch's and Wood's dugouts. At about 3.30 p.m. we were ordered to move to the Chateau at Hooge.

We got settled down just after dark and half an hour later we were told to move forward up the main road and be in reserve there. We were shown some dugouts to occupy, and told to expect to be well shelled the next day. D Company had to go straight into the trenches in the firing line.

### Cpl Wickens:-

Nov 1st Guard Dismounted at 6 am, ordered to be ready to move at a moments notice, bitter cold without Coats which had to be packed in valises, all trenches were full, so decided to return to Quarters occupied by us during the night, found a fire made by Brigade Hd Qr Staff in a Cart Shed just behind, so sat on a biscuit tin & had a warm, & was fortunate to obtain some tea which they were making, it being warm & comfortable remained there reading the paper & also helped them out with their dinner, which consisted of Chicken (killed at the farm in the early hours), pork, potatoes, onions etc, which was thoroughly enjoyed. Ordered to move at a moments notice shortly after 1 pm, leaving Zonibeke on the move to a fresh position until dark, (shells dropping on either side of us during the march) when we entered the grounds of a large estate, the house being undamaged at present, but unoccupied, must have been a beautiful place in time of peace, prepared to Bivouack for the night, but to be ready to move at once, just settling down when we were ordered to move again, & advance to reinforce the Guards & to fill a gap in the firing line, weary march on muddy roads. Main road to Ypres), plenty of halts while the position we are to occupy is being ascertained, finally filled our Water bottles at an empty farm house, ruined by shell fire, 7 proceeded to the trenches less than 300 yards from those occupied by the enemy, arriving in the small hours. Found a small fire burning amongst the ruins of an house just opposite our trenches, caused by shell fire of the enemy, & a few of us took the daring opportunity to make some tea & fry some bacon while things were a bit quiet, able to obtain the water from a pump close to the fire so did not have to drain our water bottles to make the tea, it would have been quite impossible to do this during the day time being so close to the enemy, afterwards turned in for a

few hours.

The following were killed:-

7592 Pte George Edwards of Marlow  
 7877 Pte Harry Essex of High Wycombe  
 7294 George Eyre of Walworth  
 7996 Pte H Holland of Oxford  
 9231 Pte Reginald Lechbridge P Janaway of Baydon  
 6587 LCpl Victor Emmanuel Martin of Folkestone  
 8956 Pte Charles Frank Randall of Oxford  
 8068 Pte Percy James Smith of Oxford  
 9884 Pte Edward Stacey of Hungerford  
 9745 Pte Frederick Woodley

### 2nd November 1914

The day opened badly for the 1st Battalion. Col Graham was badly injured by a shell at 0800 and Major Finch had to assume command.

From 08:30 the Bavarian 30th Division with XXVII Reserve Corps began a push on either side of the Menin Road. Their path was blocked by D Coy of the 1/Berks, three coys of the 1/KRRC and the 1/Coldstream which had been reduced to the strength of only one company. One coy of the KRRC and A & B Coys of the Berks were in support. The British forces had taken over from 3rd Brigade less than 12 hours earlier and had found only shallow disconnected lengths of trench with no wire or dug-outs. There was just a simple barricade across the road held by the 200 Coldstreams. The men had been too tired the previous night to effect any form of defence and when daylight came they found there was a field of fire only about 50 to 150 yards wide with hedges obscuring the view in many places.

The Germans soon blew away the barricade and managed to get a machine gun into a house beside the road. Another party worked its way through a gap between the Berks and KRRC with a machine gun and opened fire on the KRRC at a hundred yards range. The Berks and the Coldstreams managed to fend off their attackers.

About 11:00 when the British supporting artillery ceased fire, the Germans rushed up and overwhelmed first the Coldstreams and then the KRRC who lost 9 officers and 437 men killed or captured. The two supporting coys of the Berks came into action and held their ground with assistance from 1/Scots Guards, and 1/Black Watch.

An attempt was made in late afternoon to regain the lost trenches, but owing to the lack of officers, the utter tiredness of the men and the lack of reserves the attempt was unsuccessful. At night the Berks were recalled into support.

Despite the plan only one weak French battalion had passed through the British lines and they had been

brought to a halt almost immediately thereafter. A Coy was split with one half under 2Lt Cruise being sent up the left of the Ypres-Menin Road to take up positions lining the road south of the French positions. The other half of A Coy under Lt Woods was sent to retake the trenches to the left of the road but could get no further than 400 yards where they met hedges and enclosures. Here they remained all day.

At dusk after a day of heavy gunfire, and with the Germans not pressing their attack, a whistle sounded to signal a new push to retake the trenches. Men from A Coy together with 40 from the Glosters under Lt Woods advanced on the left and B Coy under Capt Lucas moved up on the right. Major Finch was also with A Coy and the two detachments were supplemented by men from several other units, (including French ones) who had gone astray.

The majority of the men were really in no mood for another attack after the pressures of the day, but the Germans were taken completely by surprise and such was the tenacity of those who still did have heart for a fight, that the Germans were soon running in all directions, many were killed or captured and a considerable portion of the old trenches were retaken.

By now the two motly companies were becoming isolated. Some Germans remained in the trenches and others were trying to work their way around the rear of B Coy from the right. Capt Lucas was sent to deal with the problem by collecting together men from the rear. He met Brig Gen Fitzclarence (Commander of the 1st Guards Brigade) who had collected some 50 such men. These were handed over to Capt Lucas who pushed them forward to about 100 yards from the Germans and then went on back to get more men.

He first tried a farm on his right but this was occupied by Germans although it was supposed to have been in French occupation. With no immediate prospect of finding more men he went back to Major Finch for fresh instructions. He found him holding A Coy trenches with Germans on either side of them at 21:30 and as the Major had just received orders to withdraw back to the morning's dugouts. This was accomplished without further casualties as the Germans were just as exhausted as the British.

Meanwhile D Coy, under 2Lt Stokes, had been holding out in a trench despite heavy enfilade fire. They too were able to withdraw at 21:30 and the line was re-adjusted to run just to the east of Veldhoek wood.

At one point in the engagement one of the machine guns was buried by a shell burst and its crew wounded. Acting Sergeant W Winter [8476] left his trench at great risk to himself, rescued the gun and operated it himself. For this he was awarded the DCM.

Cpl Wickens:-

Nov 2nd Stand to arms before dawn, remained in trenches all day, under Heavy Artillery Fire which dropped shells in & around our trenches. Rifle fire on both sides going on continuously all day, the man in the next trench to me being hit in the knee rather badly with shrapnell some of which came through the head cover of my trench, but did no harm, there being no chance to move him, he had to remain there until after dark, when all the wounded (& there were a good many) were collected & taken back to Hospital. This man subsequently died of Wounds. Five men in my Platoon being killed & several wounded. After dark we were ordered to fill in the trenches we had occupied during the day & move to other trenches on our right. the enemy had made a great attack during the day. 200 of the H.R.R. who were slightly in rear of & on the left of us being captured, we were compelled to leave our position as the enemy were attempting to cut us off. Tea being brought up & served out under cover of a plantation, Being the only N.C.O. left in my Platoon except the Sergt who had been promoted to Coy Quarter Master Sergt, I had to take charge of the Platoon, what few were left, & draw rations for the Coy from Head Quarters about a mile from the Trenches, after rations were issued we got into the Trenches again, but not for long. relief for us coming up, we moved back to the edge of a large wood which we came through on Nov 1 st & dug trenches with our small entrenching tool, it being 4am before we were finished & able to turn in. Major Finch our Commanding Officer being among the number wounded, also 2nd Lieut Knot our one time Coy Qr Master, who had been given a Commission a few days previously, he later died of Wounds: Lt Colonel Graham having been badly wounded while we were at Zonibeke

The 1st Battalion had suffered appalling casualties in the fighting and lost so many officers that a number of NCOs had to be commissioned in the field to replace them. The first of these were Sergeant majors Vesey, Knott and Cruise. 2Lt Knott was wounded on the 2nd.

Strangely only two men are listed as killed:-

9273 Pte Frederick Richard Briggs of Reading

8027 Pte F H Lake of Fairford

7467 Pte Charles Edward Cook of Ipsden is listed as having died of his wounds at Boulogne. and Lt Laurence Cail Nicholson of Upper Shiplake died in England.

War Diary:-

A French attack on GHÉLUVELT by 9 battns was timed for 9.30am. (Message received from 1st Bde). The right of this attack passed through our reserve dug outs about 11.30 am, but owing to subsequent events never got more than about 200yds beyond. About 11.45 am an urgent message was received for support for a detachment of Coldstream Guards at the barrier on the YPRES - GHÉLUVELT road, the Germans having worked round their flank.

As the French attack had already passed through our lines Major Finch thought it inadvisable and unnecessary to send up his two companies in the middle of the French line. (D Coy had on the previous night taken over some trenches on the right of the 60th S of the YPRES - GHÉLUVELT road.)

Shortly afterwards some men of the Coldstreams came running back through our dug outs, saying their officer had been killed and that they had been driven out of their trenches. At the same time a number of men of the 60th were observed surrendering on the S side of the road some 5 or 600yds to our right post. The two companies at once

turned out. Major Finch almost immediately received a shrapnel bullet in the heel but was able to carry on for the time.

It was now discovered that only one weak French battn had come through us and that they were holding some enclosures just to our front. 1/2 A Coy under 2/Lt Cruise were sent up the left of the road facing S in the vicinity of the French battn. Shortly after the other half of A Coy under Lt Woods were sent up to try and retake the trenches N of the road, but could not get beyond some hedges about 400yds from the trenches. Major Finch then advanced with the whole company and 40 men of the Gloucesters whom he had collected. This party reoccupied the trenches, with the exception of the one immediately N of the main road, which was still occupied by a number of Germans when the order was received about 9.30pm to withdraw to our original dugouts.

When the 2 companies turned out at midday one platoon of B Coy under 2/Lt VESEY was sent to hold the cross roads just S of the V in VELDHOEK where they remained mixed up with some of the French infantry.

The rest of B Coy under Capt Lucas occupied some trenches immediately S of these crossroads in front edge of the wood, the other battn of 60th prolonged to their right, and stray men from various units also jumped into the trench. Here they remained till dusk when the order to advance was given. The line advanced with a feeble cheer which failed to arouse the Germans. About 30 men of B Coy pushed between the trenches and the road (moving up the S side of the road) without knowing it, and came upon the Germans turning out of the houses all round. This party then formed in a semicircle and opened fire on the Germans some of whom were running across their rear into the trench they had passed on their right. This party could make no further headway. Genl Fitzclarence then came up with a party of about 40 stragglers he had collected. These men were sent forward against this trench from the front but could not be got to advance further than a ditch about 100yds from the trench which was now strongly held. The order was received at 9.30pm to withdraw.

D Coy under 2/Lt STOKES held the trenches on the right and next to those abandoned by the 60th throughout the day and were at times subjected to a severe enfilade fire.

When the withdrawal had been completed the line was readjusted to run just E of the wood at VELDHOEK, the battn taking over the section immediately N of the main road. The GOC 1st Bde thanked the battn for their work during the day. Major Finch went back to the dressing station about 10pm. Lt FRIZELL wounded. Lt KNOTT wounded. The machine guns were at this date detached to the 3rd Bgd.

#### Capt Lucas:-

*November 2nd.* - After settling down in our dugouts last night we remained fairly quiet during the morning, waiting for some French Battalions to attack past us and retake Ghulivelt; they should have come through at 9 am, but did not pass us till 11.50 a.m. Just then we got all urgent message that the Germans were getting round the left flank of the Coldstreams, who were in the trenches on both sides of the Ypres-Menin road. As the French had already gone in this direction, Finch thought it would be unwise to push one of our Companies up in the middle of their attack so we waited. A quarter of an hour later a few of the Coldstreams came running back, their only Officer having been killed. We turned out in a hurry; there was some confusion as the units were getting a bit mixed. We saw three companies of the four taken prisoners in the trenches to our right front. Our D Company on their right however stuck to their

trenches and held out. At this moment Finch got a shrapnel bullet in his heel, but he kept going all day. I got as many of my Company as I could into some trenches on the right of the road, whilst Woods pushed A Company forward into some trenches on the left of the road. The Germans did not press the attack further, though the firing was kept up. At dusk General Fitz Clarence arranged that on the sound of the whistle the whole line was to advance and retake our original trenches. Suddenly in the dusk I saw some men pushing forward on my right, though I had heard no whistle, so we all started off. I didn't know where the trenches were that we had to retake but there seemed to be no one in front. Pressing through some houses, I came round the corner of one and saw about eight Germans falling in and two or three more tumbling out of the door not five yards away. We then saw Germans running in all directions all round us. By this time about thirty of our men had collected. These were formed into a semicircle and started firing at anything we saw. Then I saw the trench we were supposed to occupy on our right rear, and a number of Germans running into it. It was very difficult to decide if they were Germans or French or our own men. We eventually decided they were Germans and let them have it. I found a subaltern called Dick-Cunningham, so I left him in charge and went back to try and collect enough men to attack the trench. I got about fifty. I went back intending to rush the trench from the flank but I found that Dick-Cunningham had been withdrawn. We were now in a very exposed position, as we had no idea what was going on on the other side of the road. Hearing that some French were in the farm on our right, I told the men to hold on, and went there to get reinforcements. At the corner of the farm I saw about six Germans standing against the wall; the farm was partly on fire so I withdrew to the road. Here I met a man, who told me that the General had gone down the road to try and collect some more men, and I found Corpl. Summers and ten men in the ditch. I sent them off to join the other party. Then I heard that Finch and Woods were in some trenches on the other side of the road, so went off to see them and fix up some sort of arrangement. I found them but the Germans were in a trench between them and the road. Finch had just got orders for us all to withdraw to the dugouts we had started from. This was about 9.20. I went back and told them to get back to the road, which they did without further loss. B Company was forty-seven short when we got back, and we had to abandon two guns in the farm.

Finch went off to hospital after we got in, so I as senior officer went off to the Brigade Headquarters for instructions, as there now seemed to be no protection between us and the Germans. The General was out. I waited an hour and then went back to the Companies, where I found him reorganising the line. He was very nice about the work our people had put in. We put A and B Companies in the firing line and withdrew D in reserve. Later I heard that Colonel Graham had been badly wounded, away with the 6th Brigade, so that now I am in command of the Battalion.

J A Graham who had received Col Grahams letters wrote on December 12th:-

Col Graham was seriously wounded by a shell on Nov 3rd near Ypres, the shell (shrapnel) bursting only 7 yards away on his left and a large splinter passing through his left leg behind the knee and striking his right leg just above the knee. His right leg has since been amputated, but he is progressing very satisfactorily.

#### 3rd November 1914 - Veldhoek

On the 2nd November Major H M Finch had had to go to hospital to have his heel attended to, and command of

the battalion passed to Captain Lucas, as next senior officer. Lt Bennett and 2/Lt Waghorn joined the Battalion. They came under 1st Bde with A and D Coys in trenches and B in reserve in the wood

Cpl Wickens:-

Nov 3rd Ghelwoelt [crossed out with a stroke] Stand to arms at 5am after one hours rest, & move back to Reserve Trenches farther in the wood, & remained in them all day resting, still under Artillery fire, but fairly safe from same by keeping under. Moved forward to front line trenches after dark. One Coy & 1 Platoon doing Duty in the trenches for 24 hours, the whole batt being too weak & exhausted to do a longer turn in the trenches

Capt Lucas:-

November 3rd.- One and a half Companies in trenches, one and a half in reserve. Trenches heavily shelled but reserve not worried much. Battalion Headquarters joined us from the 6th Brigade after dark. Isaac sent up some hot water and washing kit so I got a bit of a wash. Find I have got a small cut across both shoulder blades as a result of the 31st. A shell pitched on our telephone dugout, wounded one of the operators and interrupted communication. Not many casualties. Bennett and Waghorn joined from the base. Companies now only eighty strong.

Judging from Capt Lucas' comments the casualty list which recorded 19 deaths on the 3rd, actually referred to the 2nd. The dead were:-

7210 William Amphlett Barber of Camberwell  
 7546 John Biggs of Cowley  
 8374 Albert Buckingham of West Ealing  
 6614 Charles Buries of Parkestone  
 7171 Robert Albert Dodd of Hammersmith  
 9616 Albert Edward Greenough of Lockinge  
 8160 Herbert Howard Grubb of Reading  
 8217 Frederick George Larcombe of Caterham  
 7368 Frederick John Moth of Bagshot  
 7714 Percival V Nye of Hampstead Norris  
 8668 Percy William Panton of Southall  
 8562 Frederick Joseph Prouting of Thatcham  
 7510 Charles Randall of Andover  
 8039 Percy Gerald Shaylor of Buckland  
 7481 Frederick Steptoe of Abingdon  
 7915 Henry Harry Timms of Longworth  
 9923 Edward Horace Turner of Maidenhead  
 8306 William Thomas Ward of Bramley  
 9767 Thomas George Welch of Grove

#### 4th November 1914

C Company, had been under the orders of the officer commanding the South Staffordshire near Broodseinde. It, together with A and B Coys returned to the 6th Infantry Brigade on the 4th.

The shelling was extra heavy on the 4th, and caused twenty-one casualties, including Second-Lieutenant J F

Cruise [CR0007], wounded. Cruise was a former CSM (5063) who had earned a field commission on 30th October.

November 4th.- Trenches heavily shelled C.S.M.- Cruise and twenty-one other casualties. Rained hard from 3 p.m. until well into the night, which made everything beastly. The Companies which came in from the trenches went into a farm for the night instead of going into the dugouts. Fired into the French in the dark, but fortunately only inflicted a few casualties.

Cpl Wickens:-

Nov 4<sup>th</sup> Stand to arms before daybreak, not worried much with Rifle fire, Artillery still going strong all day, rain all afternoon & evening, Lt Cruise being wounded, another who recently received a Commission previously being C.S.M. Relieved after dark & waded through the mud to Reserve trenches in the wood; (these being used by each Coy when in Reserve) then found we were fortunate in being put in an empty house on the side outskirts of the wood for the night, as the trenches were in such a bad condition & half filled with water, not a grand billet by any means, not much room, & no lights allowed as we were so near the enemy, & had a few knocks from the remnant of furniture which was left as it was very dark, but better than lying in water & after having warm tea which had to be carried a considerable distance from the Cookers, & issuing rations, turned in & managed to obtain 3 or 4 hours much needed sleep; this house being used for Batt Hd Qrs

Three deaths are recorded:-

8247 William Billingham Fussell of Dover  
 7802 F C Lockey of Lambourn  
 7742 Albert George Smith of Ludgershall

#### 5th November 1914

Again A B And D Coys were heavily shelled. The French Zouave Battalion on their left left the line and returned to the trenches only after dark.

November 5th.- We only had four casualties during the day. The German fire was concentrated on the trenches and the wood just behind us. The General told me that we would be relieved after dark, but at dusk we were told that the relief could not be arranged. The men took it very well. Our machine gun, which is now with the 7th Brigade, just on our right, has lost Frizell, Sergt. Taylor and three Corporals in the last two days, all wounded. The French Battalion between us and the road has been at breaking strain all day. They had no rations and were short of ammunition. Our men and the 1st K.R.R. provided them with food out of their own rations. During the night this Battalion was relieved by the Zouaves, the result was a tremendous fusillade from the Germans lasting a quarter of an hour.

9803 Frank Pym of Maidenhead was killed.

Cpl Wickens:-

Nov 5th Moved back to trenches in the wood early in the morning as we were in view of the enemy during the day, managed to find one fairly dry after a search, moving up to the firing line trenches after dark, My Platoon being in reserve to remainder of the Coy, did not take up position in the front line trench, but were put to digging communication trenches from the firing line to the wood, it being impossible to reach the wood during the day without going across the open country & so exposing yourself to enemy snipers, also

to those in the trenches quite near our own, this kept us occupied until nearly 2 a.m. afterwards drew & issued rations to the Platoon, letters up, 2 received from N, which I was able to read quite well by moonlight, quite a contrast to the previous evening & night, issued letters to remainder of the Coy in the front line trenches, & then turned in for a few hours in trenches just behind an hedge about 100 yards in rear of the front line, & between them & the wood, managed a few hours sleep.

### 6th November 1914

On the 6th Second-Lieutenant Waghorn [WA0033] was killed by a shell and buried in the wood near the chateau. He had been attached from the West Kents.

Cpl Wickens was wounded. His story is continued in section 167:-

Nov 6<sup>th</sup> In the same trenches in reserve to remainder of Coy in front line, sorted out the letters which could not be delivered, some having previously been killed & some wounded & sent to hospital farther in the rear, marked each letter accordingly tied them in separate (sic) bundles, & placed them in a preserved meat box which I had in the trench with me. Received a shrapnel wound in the left hip about mid-day, the box having saved me from a smashed hip, the box diverting the course of the largest piece of shrapnel which entered the trench, turning it downwards just grazing me instead of striking the hip as it would have done had not the box been there, crawled to the next trench & had it bound up with the Field Dressing which we carry then returned to my own trench, & waited until after dark, then after handing the unissued letter to the O.S.M. was carried on a Stretcher to an house in the wood, which was being used as a dressing Station, afterwards being put in an ambulance with 6 others, & was taken to Poperinghe Station & placed in an hospital train, not sorry to arrive after our 9 mile ride on rough roads, it being impossible to entrain at Ypres as that was being bombarded, our ambulance having a narrow escape while coming through the Square 2 large shells bursting just behind us. Stripped off underclothing on boarding the train, & given a change, a great treat, all wounds dressed immediately by one of the Nurses, covered with a blanket, & given a mug of cocoa between 20f us about 9pm & settled down for a sleep, quite a relief (sic) to be able to sleep without clothes & equipment first time since leaving Aldershot, journey commenced soon afterwards travelling all night

Capt Lucas:-

*November 6th.*- Got a message at about 10 a.m. that we would be relieved at once by the L.N. Lancashires. I wrote in to say that it would entail a large number of casualties if done in daylight, so relief was postponed till 5.30 p.m.. eventually it took place at 10 p.m. under a heavy fire. We had two men killed. We regained the 6th Brigade at 2 a.m., roads deep in mud, woods and trenches were shelled heavily all day. Waghorn was killed by a shell.

Others reported killed were:-

- 7480 Henry James Holmes of Oxford
- 8351 Fred Lawrence of Echinswell
- 7217 Richard Painter of Caversham
- 7542 A Wilkes of Flackwell Heath
- 9988 Christopher Thomas Willoughby of Reading

### 7th November 1914

On the 7th there were two alarms of Germans breaking through, but no fighting was required of the Royal Berkshire.

*November 7th.*- Headquarters were in a farm and the men in dugouts all round. C Company still in the same old trenches in the firing line, but had suffered very little; as they were still about 140 strong, while the other there Companies only averaged about 65 each. We had to turn out at 8 a.m. to support the H.L.I., but were not required as the H.L.I. repulsed the German attack, and took about 60 prisoners. Another alarm at 4.30 to support the Connaughts

Had a hot bath today.

Deaths:

- 7205 Henry Bernard Axton of Wantage
- 8899 Albert Reginald Haines of Cricklade

### 8th November 1914

Capt Lucas:-

*November 8th* - Breakfast, 9 a.m. Peaceful day; no shell within a hundred yards. Went into the trenches after dark to see C Company, Belcher and Bishop. They have a really safe spot, too close to the Germans to be shelled, and they have a fair supply of dead Germans lying out in front. There was an attack away on our right at 6 p.m., and we were warned to be ready to turn out, but all went well. B Company relieved one Company of the HLI in the trenches.

Deaths

- 9756 Albert Henry Bell of Reading
- 7612 Harry Branson of Abingdon
- 9093 Albert Wiggins of Reading

### 9th November 1914

A and D Coys relieved the HLIs and the battalion now had all four coys in the front line with the S Staffords on their left and 60th Rifles on their right.

Capt Lucas:-

*November 9th.*- Another peaceful day and another hot bath. A and D Companies and the survivors of the KRR relieved the rest of the HLI The Headquarters moved up into dugouts on the ridge. A bitterly- cold night and the relief took six hours.

Deaths:-

- 9635 William Francis Cartland of Reading
- 6657 Harry Kennedy of Wokingham

### 10th November 1914

Capt Lucas:-

*November 10th.*- Not much-doing all companies now in the trenches. Went and saw Bennett (B Company),

Deaths:-

- 9683 Oliver James Dobson of Marlborough

7793 William Hamblin of Cold Ash  
8619 Albert Edward King of Hillingdon

### 11th November 1914

Lt Isaac was the transport officer. He collected a party of stragglers from a variety of units and used them to fill a gap on the Ypres to Menin road.

Capt Lucas:-

*November 11th.* Shelling all along the trenches, Feu de joie and three cheers arranged all along the line to celebrate the sinking of the Emden. Our week-end cottage destroyed by shell fire. We have now nowhere to go at night.

Deaths

7008 Charles Harman of Swindon  
10008 Charles Harris of Kintbury  
8695 Frederick James Ponting of Windsor

### 12th November 1914

On the 12th, the French on the left of the South Staffordshire lost some trenches and were driven back about five hundred yards, exposing the left flank of the 6th Brigade line beyond the Broodseinde to Becelaere Road, and necessitating its withdrawal in the night to a fresh line just east of that road.

Pte E Harris [7601] was awarded the DCM for his actions in carrying messages under fire at great risk to himself.

Capt Lucas:-

*November 12th.*- The French line was broken at Zonnebecke cross roads. They came running back at about 8 a.m. We then saw about 500 Germans advance over the high ground at the cross roads. About 150 of them got into a trench in front of the cross roads and the remainder began to withdraw over the skyline, but came in for a heavy artillery fire, which did a lot of damage. This means that the Germans have now worked round behind the left of the South Staffords trenches, which were on the right of the original French line. The H.L.I. and two Companies of Coldstreams came up to support us, also some French troops.

### 13th November 1914

The day was marked by an almost incessant shower of both rain and shells.. D Coy were driven out of their forward position around 13:00 and withdrew back into reserve with a few casualties. Second-Lieutenant Vesey [VE0001] was wounded on the 13th, so that all the three NCOs who had received field commissions on the 30th October had now been wounded.

Capt Lucas:-

*N o v e m b e r 1 3 t h .* We all withdrew to the new line just east of the main road (Zonnebecke-Beclaere) at 3 a.m. without a shot from the Germans. A few advanced posts were left out; they came in later. Six men in one trench held on till the Germans entered it, and three platoons (D) in the wood remained there till

they were almost surrounded and then got away. We had our second machine gun in the trenches to-day.

The six men referred to were led by Acting Corporal G Badcock [7775] who was later awarded the DCM for his efforts.

Deaths:-

7093 Reginald Blagrove of Abingdon  
7417 Robert Carter of Cookham Dean  
8219 James Casseltine of Paddington  
10183 Harold Ernest Goodenough of Shillingford  
6975 James George Longman of Marylebone  
7671 Arthur William Pearce of Silchester  
10023 George Pearce of Newbury  
7502 Robert Robins of Faringdon  
9558 Charles John Walls of Ascot

### 14th November 1914

Acting Corporal W Nilen [7997] won the DCM after he left the trenches under fire and cut away a tree which had been obscuring the sight of British guns.

Capt Gregson-Ellis arrived with the 5th reinforcement of 250 men.

*November 14th.*- Ellis arrived with a draft of 250. A, B and half C in trenches; shelled unmercifully. H.L.I. shelled out of their trenches in the morning and lost several Officers. We turned out half C Company to reoccupy them, but the General sent us back.

Deaths:-

7599 Stephen John Belcher of Harwell  
5422 Stephen Fisher of Maidenhead  
6360 James Henry Gates of Bromley  
7167 Stephen Edward Mears of Walthamstowe  
7010 William Arthur Oakden of Chelmsford  
7434 Harry Umpton Poynter of Christchurch  
6581 Frank Harry Wells of Wickham  
8395 Ernest Burton Winstone of Bisham

### 15th November 1915

It was a really miserable day, cold, raining and incessant shellfire. At 21:00 they were relieved by the 169th Regiment of the French 9th Division and marched off to Divisional Reserve at Hooze. Before they were relieved Acting Corporal H Day [5018] left his trench under fire to get water for an injured comrade. Although wounded himself he brought back the water. He was later awarded the DCM.

Deaths

8134 Edward George Dollyer of Ash  
7705 Peter Eustace of Blaina  
8929 Charles Thomas Fackney of Stepney

7703 Edward James Hazell of Swindon  
7872 Charles Frederick Heath of Bracknell  
7318 Maurice William Kirby of Lambeth  
7760 Alfred James Minchin  
8984 Walter Simpson of Stanford in the Vale  
9713 Thomas Wells of Reading  
7625 Albert White of Andover

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