

## Section 206

# The Build Up

## The 6th Battalion July to October 1915

### Arrival in France

#### 26th July to 2nd August 1915

The 6th Battalion arrived in France from Folkestone at Boulogne on the 26th July 1915 at 02:30. They arrived in the pouring rain and marched to Ostrahove Rest Camp where they rested for the day in tents.

Later that day at 20:45 they marched out and an interpreter joined them at the station. Their train left Boulogne Central Station at 22:00 and they arrived at Bertangle at 04:00 on the 27th. From here they marched six miles to Rubempre, a ruined village north of Amiens. They arrived at 09:00 and moved into billets where they were at last able to get some breakfast. The MG and Transport Sections had arrived from Le Havre the previous day.

It was not until the 30th however that the last party arrived under Lt E C Nicholson. The time had been spent on route marches and bombing practice, and the weather had improved considerably.

On the 31st an officers conference was held at Brigade HQ and they were able to meet their new Corps Commander General Ivor Maxse.

### To the Front Line

#### 2nd to 12th August 1915

After a week, awaiting their transport coming from from Havre, they moved to Bouzincourt, north west of Albert. On the 5th August, whilst training in trench warfare with the 154th Infantry Brigade, they sustained their first casualty; Private S Danby of 'C' Company was wounded by a shell.

On the 13th August the Battalion moved to Daours where they were inspected by the President of France. They moved on the 21st August to Bray sur Somme where Private A J Gosling noted *'I found out what it was like to have vermin creeping all over you'*

### First Action

On the 22nd August 1915 the 6th Battalion moved for the first time into trenches opposite Mametz, three miles north of Bray. It was here the following day that two members of the Battalion were killed. Privates Wenman and Morrell of 'B' Company were 'killed by a sniper opposite a mining area'

### Trench Warfare

The Battalion continued the ordinary routine of trench warfare in this neighbourhood until the 16th September when they marched to Albert. One soldier reported *'The Madonna on the cathedral spire was hanging over the road'*. They took over trenches 112 to 120 in 'E' Sector opposite La Boiselle with a battalion of 53 Brigade on their left and one of 55 Brigade on their right. In many places they were less than 15 yards from the enemy.

There was a great deal of mining on both sides and there were many craters formed by the explosions. The Battalion provided 112 men for mining duties, in four shifts of 112 men, working 6 hour shifts.

### Private Arman's account

Pte W Arman [12476] had been attached to the Royal Engineers but where he was exactly is not clear. He wrote home to his parents in Swindon in September:-

It is grand weather out here at present, though rather cold nights and mornings. We have been in action. Last Wednesday night, our battalion, the Royal Berks had it pretty warm, for a lot of the Germans started shelling us in all direction for about an hour. The Germans, thinking we were all done in, started to advance towards our trenches in massed formation. They came within 20 yards of our trenches and they had it hot from our rifles, machine guns and artillery. You ought to have seen them falling down like chaff before the wind. There were not many that escaped. It was like hell for a short time. We had a few casualties, but the Germans lost nearly a battalion of men. We called them the Saxons. They are half German and half English. They have been very quiet since that night. They thought they had a soft job on, but they were mistaken for once.

I am getting used to bully beef and biscuits now. I am getting short of a razor. I cant get one for love or money. You ought to see my face! I have not had a shave for three weeks. We get pay this week - 15 francs, that is about 4s 2d to a franc. If God spares me I will send it home because I can't spend it out here. Could you send me a razor out? It looks so bad asking everyone for loan of a razor. It would not cost much for for postage. We are sleeping in old dugouts what the French used to sleep in. We never have our clothes off, but always sleep in them.

With the exception of a short spell of 'rest' in billets at Buire, in the middle of October, where the men could visit the 18th Division cinema at Maricourt, the Battalion remained back at Albert and in front of La Boiselle until March 1916. During this period stretches