

Section 212

The Battle of Loos

The 2nd Battalion - 24th September to 14th November 1915

The 2nd Battalion were not scheduled to play a role in the main Battle of Loos. Their participation was by way of a sideshow.

The Plan

25th September had been chosen to loose the whole offensive force of the Allies against the Germans. The main thrust was to be by the French Armies in Champagne to break down the German lateral communications along the Aisne. The 10th French Army were to attack Vimy Ridge and the BEF's main effort was at Loos to capture the high ground to north and south of Lens to open up the plain of the Scheldt. The 8th Divisions role was a diversionary attack against the Bridoux Redoubt. The objectives was to capture 1200 yards of the German front line to shorten and strengthen the British line.

The artillery bombardment began 4 days before with the intention of destroying the enemy's defences and demoralising his garrisons. The British artillery reported great success although by the 23rd the German retaliation was very severe. The assault was to be preceded by the explosion of two mines to create communication trenches but the charges were insufficient to break up the ground enough.

The Brigadier set out the plan as follows:-

25th Infantry Brigade – B.M.C. 212, 18-9-1915 – Scheme for the Attack

Object. The object of the attack in the first instance is to capture the enemy's 1st & 2nd Line trenches and to hold the 2nd Line whilst the 1st line is consolidated and joined up to our present trenches.

General plan – To deliver 3 assaults, each in the hands of one Battalion, called Right, Centre and Left attacking Battalions respectively. The assault will be delivered at dawn. No mention is made in this paper of artillery action.

1) Right Assault

- a) The men for this (about 1 Company) to be formed up during darkness in the ditch to the left of Well Farm salient, as shown in sketch map and to assault Corner Fort
- b) The bombers of this battalion will be formed up with the Assaulting party and will at once proceed to clear the enemy's trench to right and left and to work down his Communication trenches and clear his 2nd line.
- c) The remainder of this Battalion will be in Support, ready to file across by the ditch leading straight to Corner Fort as soon as the work is taken. They will carry 200 shovels.
- d) The mine from Well Farm to Corner Fort will be exploded at the moment of assault and a section of 2nd Field Company R.E. will file into the crater and convert it into a fire trench.
- e) The enemy's main trench will be blocked just south of Corner Fort.

2) Centre Assault

- a) Bombers of this Battalion will be formed on the Right and Left of the assaulting line and will clear the trenches to the right and left and work down the Communication trenches and clear the 2nd Line
- b) 1 Company will remain in Reserve in the hands of the C.O. and will be ready to file out by the old fire trench, where the assault formed up, carrying 200 shovels.

3) 8th Middlesex Regt – ½ Battalion in 200 yards line from Jay Post to Watling St ½ Battalion in R Lanes behind Tin Barn. Battalion H.Q. in Jay Post H.Q. Dug-out

- 4) R.E. ½ 2nd and ½ 15th Field Company R.E. under Capt Brown R.E. in 250 yards line from City Post to Greatwood Avenue
- 5) M.Gs. (Middlesex Regt, Grenadier Platoons, 1st R. Irish Rifles & 1st London Regt, in Reserve in 250 yards trench from Jay Post to City Road.
- 6) The salients, are occupied by R.E., miners, 2 18 Pounder Guns, Trench Mortars Etc
- 7) Brigade H.Q. – 100 yards to the left of Junction of City Road and Fire trench

18th September 1915 J G Dills, Capt. Brigade Major, 25th Infantry Brigade

Assembly Positions

The Brigadier also set out the planned assembly positions as follows:-

25th Infantry Brigade – B.M.C. 211, 4-9-1915 - Assembly Positions

1) Attacking Battalions = 3 Battalions

Right Battalion – 2nd Rifle Brigade 3 Companies in fire trench + 70 Yards trench from the Chord Line North of Well Farm to the junction of City Road and Fire Trench 1/2 5 Q, 5 R & 5 S

1 Company in Jay Post except Battalion H.Q. dugout which will be H.Q. of Reserve Battalion

Battalion H.Q. and Bombers in the Fire Trench in 5 R

M.Gs. In deep trenches behind Parados in 5 Q, ready to move out of sally-ports.

Centre Battalion – 2nd R. Berks

In the Fire trench and 70 yards trench from Brigade H.Q. (100 yards west of City road) to junction of 6 R & 6 Q and in 250 yards trench between Great Wood Avenue and Battalion H.Q.

Left Battalion – 2nd Lincs Regt

1 Company, Bombers and Machine Guns in Chord Line behind Bridoux Salient.

1 Company in the 70 yards trench behind 6 R 7 6 S, left of the Angle behind junction of 6 R & 6 Q

1 Company in old fire trench passing through junction of Queer St with Queen's Avenue

1 Battalion – 1st Royal Irish Rifles – holding from left of No 6 Section to Water farm to Bois Blank Road.

Two Companies and Machine Guns in front Line

Two Companies in Support in R.Des.Layes between Culvert Farm and Shaftesbury Avenue.

Two Battalions in Brigade Reserve

1st London Regt

a) 4 Companies (Less 2 Platoons) in A Layes, between the angle east of Wye Farm and the Bridoux Road.

b) 2 Platoons holding City Post and Emma

c) Battalion H.Q. in The Temple

d) M.Gs. – 2 guns in the angle in Chord Line behind 6 R to fire on the enemy's parapet near the Lozenge and prevent wire mending during bombardment. 2 guns in 6 S to fire on enemy parapet during assault.

This battalion will receive orders to take over part of the front line as they become vacated by the attacking troops.

Left Assault (N.B. the following may be changed if other appliances are available)

1) The mine parallel to and just to the left of the Bridoux Road will be exploded after the assault is over, to form a communication trench.

2) Our wire will be removed on the Bridoux Road and for about 80 yards to the left of it.

3) About 1 Company of the left attacking Battalion will be formed up in the trench in front of our parapet and will assault

Bridoux Fort.

- 4) They will be followed at once by the Bombers of the Battalion who will work to both flanks and down the Communication trenches into the 2nd Line.
- 5) A Section of the 2nd Field Company R.E. will convert the mine crater into a fire trench. The ditch on the left of the Bridoux road will also form a communication trench.
- 6) The enemy's main trench will be blocked just to the left of the Bridoux Fort.
- 7) The remaining three Companies of the battalion will be in reserve in the hands of the C.O., ready to file across by the ditch carrying 200 shovels.

Machine Guns of attacking Battalion will be held in readiness to be taken up to the captured trenches as early as possible and placed to protect the flanks and fire down the Communication trenches (which will be straightened between the 1st and 2nd lines) Their places in readiness are shown in the "dispositions previous to assault".

The remainder of the 2nd Field Co. R.E. will move up to the ditch from Brigade H.Q. to the Lozenge and will be employed in straightening and blocking the enemy's Communications Trenches.

Bombs – Each man in the attacking Battalions will carry 2 bombs = 4,800 bombs

Bombers, of which there will be 50 per Battalion (including the Brigade

Grenadier Company) will carry 20 bombs apiece.

With the bombers of attacking battalions, therefore, there will be 3,000 bombs

With the Reserve Battalion there will be 50 bombers with 20 bombs 1,000 bombs

With the T.F. Battalions in Reserve, 50 bombers with 20 bombs 1,000 bombs

In Brigade reserve at

- 1) In 5 R 1,000 bombs
- 2) Near Brigade H.Q, 1,000 bombs
- 3) Bridoux Salient 1,000 bombs

Trench Mortars to be concentrated in Bridoux and Well Farm Salients

4 September 1915 J G Dill, Capt. Brigade Major, 25th Infantry Brigade

Bois Grenier

24th September

On the arrival of the Battalion on the battlefield of Loos they were made aware that they were to be used in a diversionary attack at a place called Bois Grenier. They were opposed by the 20th Bavarian Reserve Regiment and the ensuing battle between the two units was to be a bloody affair; it turned out to be what can only be described as a "Bombing Battle". The dress for battle was marching order, without packs on, greatcoats, waterproof sheets under the flaps of haversacks which were worn on the back. Each man was to carry two bombs in a sandbag on the belt. 50 men were detached, each with 20 bombs, and organised into bombing parties. The idea was that when a trench was taken, the bombers would bomb their way along the trench and secure it.

On the 24th September the 2nd Royal Berkshire went into the trenches near Bois Grenier at night, and took positions ready for the attack to be made next day on the German position. In this attack the Battalion was under the command of Lieut.-Colonel G. P.S. Hunt, whose report on it is used in the following account: First he described the preparations-

At about 7pm on 24th September the battalion left billets in and near Fleurbaix and proceeded to the trenches occupying the fire trench and 70 yards line from near the Burvery to the Bridouse Salient with D Company in reserve in 250 yards line near White City. A party of 50 men of D Company under No 9125 Sergeant Harrison had been detached to act as carrying party for RE and worked in the Bridouse Salient on 25th.

Parties of B Company carried out Battalion Reserve supplies of Ammunition, Water, periscopes etc to a dug out in the old fire trench during the early part of the night and a party of D Company deepened the ditch leading up to the Dead Tree.

Machine Gun fire was maintain at intervals on the enemy's wire to prevent repairs.

The dress was marching order without packs or great-coats, waterproof sheets under the flaps of haversacks which were worn on the back, mess tins in covers on the back of the belts.

Each man carried two bombs in a sandbag on their belt and 50 men with 20 bombs each were organised in bombing parties each with a separate task.

Each company carried 50 shovels. These were carried on their back each shovel in two sandbags the strings of which were passed over the left shoulder and under the right arm and tied in front. This method was satisfactory but the shovels were too large.

A, B and C Companies formed two lines each with two platoons in point line and two platoons in second line which was to follow about 100 yards behind 1st Line.

Bombing parties were detailed as follows and followed immediately behind the 1st line. The first line's duty was to take and consolidate the German 1st trench, the second line was to follow bombing parties and hold the German 2nd line trench.

Bombing Parties.

A Co. Lieut Simmons and 12 bombers to meet the Rifle Brigade on the front line (A).

1 NCO and 6 men to work up (B) Communication trench.

B Co. Sergeant Turvey with 4 bombers and ½ platoon right side of the LOZENGE (C).

Sergeant Johnson with 4 bombers and ½ platoon left side of the Lozenge (D).

Corporal Pearce and 6 bombers Communication trench (E).

C Co. L/c Maher with six bombers up communication trench (F).

Lt Gregory and Sergt Boyd to meet the Lincolns along the first line (G).

There was known to be a wire entanglement between the 1st and 2nd Lines and the second line was therefore to be attacked by means of bombing along communication trenches as soon as that bombardment lifted again.

Preparatory Positions.

At 2.30am on 25th Sept A, B and C Companies began to file out to preparatory positions in the Cinder Track ditch and the old fire trench after an issue of tea and rum.

At 3.30am all were in position and D Company (less 1 platoon) filed into the positions vacated.

Bombardment.

From 21st-24th September the enemy's lines had been bombarded and two batteries of Field Artillery had cut the wire entanglement from the angle to Fifth Point. Machine Gun and rifle fire had been kept up at nights to prevent the enemy mending his wire. At 4.25am on 25th Sept the artillery bombarded the three hostile lines, the first line with Field Guns for 5 minutes, the second line with Field Howitzers for 15 minutes and the third line and communication trenches till 5am.

[TX00709A]

The Terrain

The British trenches facing, in the neighbourhood of Le Bridoux, nearly south, formed a re-entrant semicircle of about one thousand yards diameter from the salient on the Bois Grenier-Le Bridoux Road on the left to the Well Farm salient on the right. The opposing German trenches ran more or less straight from points somewhat over one hundred yards in front of the two salients. From the back of the British re-entrant to the German line was over five hundred yards, but there were old fire trenches within the semicircle in which troops could assemble with a very much smaller distance to pass to the enemy trench.

The Attack

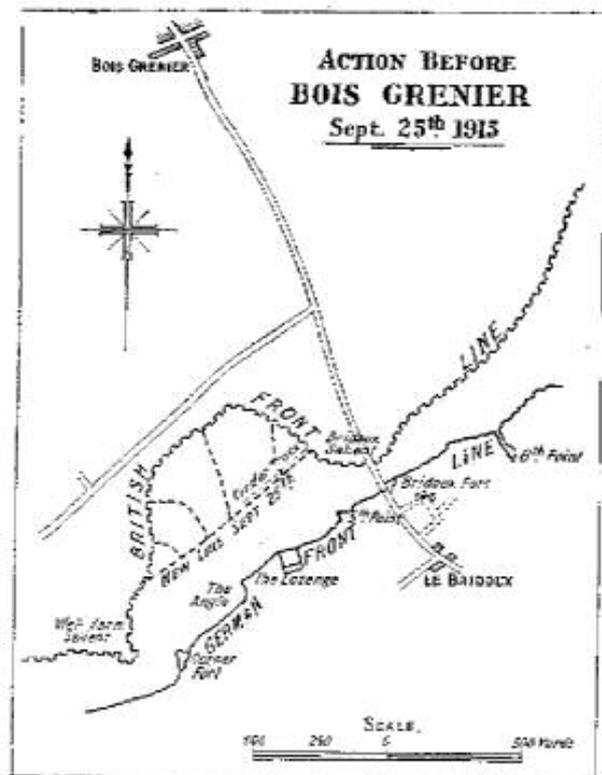
25th September 1915

In these trenches the 2nd Royal Berkshire assembled, with the 2nd Rifle Brigade on their right, and the 2nd Lincolnshire on their left. The three assaulting companies of the battalion were in the order "A," "B," "C" from right to left. The attack took the normal pattern for the first world war: a heavy bombardment intended to cut the German wires and demoralise the enemy with the normal result that much of the wire in front of the German trenches remained intact and the Germans were ready in strength at the end.

The three companies were to assault each with two platoons in front line and the other two one hundred yards behind them; bombing parties were told off from each company. The attack started at 04.30. Some of the lads managed to get into the enemy trenches, most did not. Those that did get in made their presence felt.

The War Diary reads:-

It was very dark at the time of the assault. In the deep and narrow trenches it was difficult to see what was happening and in the deep dugouts even more so. Some of the enemy fired from dugouts, but it does not seem they hit many men. Some were killed coming out. The men were little inclined to spare anyone and dugouts were cleared by bayonet, revolver or bombs; torches being used in some cases to discover whether they were occupied.



A Company, whether from the wire being imperfectly cut in their front, or from their exposure to view by an enemy searchlight, or from the greater readiness of the Germans in this part failed to get into the enemy's front trench with more than a few men, who were not strong enough to hold on. The losses of the company were heavy Captain W. A. Guest-Williams was killed on the parapet, Lieutenant Vesey badly wounded, and Second-Lieutenant R. L. H. Simmons with the right bombing party was also killed.

B Company in the centre was more successful in breaking into the German trench, where however it found itself separated from A on its right by a gap across which Captain Sawyer immediately began to attack towards the right. The German work known as the Lozenge was also cleared by bombers. The bombers on the left of this company missed the communication trench which they were intended to follow, and got into the Lozenge on their right.

C Company on the left also got into the German front trench and bayoneted or drove out its defenders, but the left platoon suffered rather heavily from a machine gun. Lieutenant G. F. G.

Gregory was killed leading his bombing party on the left which came into touch with the Lincolnshire, who had also got into the front trench.

It had been very dark still when the assault was launched many German dugouts were overrun, and their occupants fired from there on the rear of the troops who had passed. The fight now developed into one mainly of bombs in the front trench which, as we know, had not been taken on the front of "A" Company and there was much shelling, which caused loss to "D" Company in reserve in the assembly trench on the cinder track from which the others had started. The bomb fight swayed backwards and forwards as each side alternately was short of or well supplied with bombs.

The long gap between B Company and the Rifle Brigade was never cleared, owing to the failure of A to get into the German trench. No one on the Berkshire front was successful in getting into the German second-line trench.

About noon "B" and "C" Companies found their outer flanks exposed by the falling back of the troops there. About 13:00 the Lincolnshire on the left found themselves unable to hold the enemy, and their withdrawal necessitated that of the Royal Berkshire. The casualties in retiring to the British line were not nearly so heavy as those in the advance.

Col Hunt's report read:-

At 4.25am both lines began to go forward Capt Sawyer seeing this 1st line off and leading the centre of the 2nd line. The other battalions attacked simultaneously on either flank.

At 4.30am the lines assaulted the enemy's front trench. The enemy put up several flare lights and used a small search light opposite A Company, there was also rifle fire. This company failed to get in and it is not known whether the failure was due to the wire entanglement or other causes. It seems probable that the wire was not so well cut or had been repaired, that the searchlight showed up the attackers and that the defenders were more ready in that part.

Some survivors state that a platoon under Sgt Sherwood attempted to crawl along a shallow trench in front of the parapet to rush from there but were crowded up. Some are said to have surrendered. It is probable that a few got into the trench but were too weak to take it.

Capt Guest-Williams is said to have been killed on the parapet and Lt Vesey was severely wounded and probably died. Lt Simmons leading the right bombing party was killed probably by rifle fire.

The Centre Company got in with a few casualties and soon disposed of the defenders but they found a gap between themselves and A Company and Capt Sawyer immediately proceeded to attack to the right. He made some headway but

bombs ran out and the enemy held the trench in force,

Capt Trotter commanding the company was killed on the parapet.

The two bombing parties made their way along each side of the Lozenge and cleared it.

2nd Lt Russell and Corpl Pearce missed the entrance to Communication trench (E) and lead through a passage running out to the Tram line. Lt Russell was killed there. Corpl Pearce got into the Lozenge and so missed getting into the second line with his bombs.

C. Company.

The Left Company got into the enemy's trench and either bayoneted the occupants or drove them out. A machine gun at Fifth Point caused some casualties to the left platoons and Capt Oke Commanding the Company was killed before he reached the wire, being in the second line.

L/c Maher leading the bombers for (F) was wounded and Sergt Matthews leading the platoon was blown over and stunned.

Lt Gregory got his bombing party in and they joined hands with the Lincolns but he was himself killed.

About 5.15am a party estimated at 200 Germans broke cover towards WHITE HOUSE and the high trees and was heavily fired on by 50 rifles. Many were seen to fall.

It was still very dark at the time of assault. In the deep and narrow trenches it was difficult to see what was happening and in the deep dug-outs still more so. Some of the enemy fired from dug-outs but it does not seem that they hit many men. Some were killed coming out. The men were little inclined to spare any and dug-outs were cleared by bayonet, revolver or bombs, torches being used in some cases to discover whether they were occupied.

It is established that the number of German dead in the portion captured by B and C Companies eventually rose to 100. Two wounded prisoners were taken. There was light rain and mist during the night and morning which made the fuses of some of our bombs damp. Those that required fuses to light became useless and the Hales hand grenade seldom detonated on falling in the mud. G.S. Grenades, Pitcher bombs and Mills bombs worked well and the German pattern of time Grenade with a long handle was excellent. About 200 to 300 of these were used in the morning. About 5.30am Capt Sawyer was wounded in several places by a bomb but was able to go back to the Brigadier to report on the way to the dressing station.

Fight during morning.

The fight soon became one of bombs and grenades, and it swayed backwards and forward above the trench according to which side had bombs to throw.

Communication by telephone was seldom available owing to wires being cut by shells.

During the whole morning there was constant shelling in both directions some casualties being sustained by the reserve company (D Company) in the cinder track ditch but none in the German trench. There was little rifle or machine gun fire. About 10am the guns were got onto the right of the Lozenge for a time after which an effort was made to the right but the enemy was too well supplied with grenades and though he was held no progress was maintained for long.

The gap between us and 2nd Rifle Brigade was too long to clear owing to the failure of A Company to get in. None of the second line trench was taken to our front, but parts were temporally held to right and left. About noon pressure began to be felt on both flanks the Lincolns on the left coming in a considerable distance. The trench became so crowded that some had to get over the parapet. 2nd Lieut Lindley lead some few men back to our breastwork.

The supply of bombs became very short owing to communication being interrupted at (X) through hostile fire along the ditch.

About 1pm or soon after the Lincolns were unable to hold the enemy on the left and drew close in.

Toward 2pm a few of the enemy could be seen making their way towards us. They attacked with grenades along all communication trenches and the men were gradually sent back along the ditches a few remaining till bombs fell close on both sides when they were ordered to rush back.

There were few casualties in the retirement to our original lines which were reached about 2.15pm. Most of the equipment being taken back.

During the morning's fight there was a constant call for serviceable bombs and often for men to throw them as the throwers got tired.

Several bombing parties of other regiments and brigades came up to assist during the morning.

The ditches were of great assistance in getting up men and had "A" Company captured their portion of the line the communication would have been uninterrupted as the ditches were deep.

The RE were unable to do anything but improve the ditches owing to the congestion in the narrow trench. The result of the operation besides the casualties inflicted on 20th Bavarian Reserve Regt was that strong reinforcements of guns and infantry were attracted away from the main attack further south.

The battalion machine guns which had been taken into the captured trench were all withdrawn but not without some difficulty. A captured machine gun had to be abandoned in a ditch but the lock had been removed by a machine gunner who was wounded.

The Brigade was relieved at about 11pm by battalions of 24th Infantry Brigade and returned to billets in Fleurbaix.

German prisoners stated that a battalion of 21st Bavarian Reserve Regt which was much demoralised by the bombardment

was relieved by 20th Regt about 3 hours before the assault.

The casualties amounted in all to:

Officers. Killed (7) Capts. R. W. L. Oke, W. A. Guest-Williams. Lieuts. R. H. G. Trotter, G. F. G. Gregory, J. Vesey, M.C. 2nd-Lieuts. R. L. H. Simmons, B. Russell. *Wounded:* Capt. G. H. Sawyer. Lieut. G.E. Hawkins. 2nd-Lieuts. G. W. Lindley, H. T. R. Merrick. *Other Ranks: Killed or Died of Wounds* 124. *Wounded* 201. *Missing* 60.

The losses would perhaps have been even heavier but for the existence of some deep ditches which facilitated the bringing forward of the men, though in the case of a party of A Company a ditch in front of the enemy's parapet was fatal. The men were bombed in it, especially when crowded up trying to rush the parapet.

It seems that throughout the engagement no quarter was asked or given. There was a light rain at the time and many bombs did not go off. At one stage the war diary records that the Battalion used 200-300 of the German stick grenades against their former owners. Bombing parties from other regiments such as the Lincolns joined the "Biscuit Boys" and together they caused so much trouble that it necessary for the Germans to divert some troops from the main battle area. The 2nd Battalion in fact lost more men than some regiments taking part in the main battle - some side show!

The 25th Brigade was relieved by the 24th at 23:00 on the 25th September.

Col Hunt gave further details in his short report dated 25th September 1915 including the exploits of some of the men recommended for medals:-

A, B and C Companies 2nd Royal Berkshire Regt were formed in two lines facing the German lines by 3.30am.

I had just finished going along the line giving the commander in chief's messages when the Bombardment commenced at 4.25am and they went forward.

Captain Sawyer having seen the 1st line start lead the 2nd line in the Centre.

The enemy put up several flare lights and turned a small searchlight on the right company. In this part the enemy was thoroughly alert and A Company was able to get in.

The Centre Company got in and made short work of the defenders but their Commander Lieut R. H. G. Trotter was killed in mounting the parapet.

The left Company suffered some casualties from a Machine Gun at Fifth Point and also lost its commander Capt R. Oke who was wounded three times. They however cleared the front line captured the Machine Gun and bayoneted many Bavarians trying to escape. No 15722 Pte R. Jenkins with the bayonet and No 10049 Pte J. Smith with bombs disposed of these.

The bombing parties followed by the second line then proceeded to clear the flanks. Lieut G.F. Gregory lead the left most gallantly. He returned to the attack after having a wound dressed and I regret to report that he was killed. This party joined hands with the 2nd Lincoln Regt. Meanwhile with the Centre the Lozenge was seized by Bombers under No 8720 Sergt A. Johnson and No 8037 Corporal F. Pearce both of whom did splendid work during the day. 2nd Lieut B. Russell personally lead his men but was killed before he had gone forward many yards. I deeply regret the loss of this brave officer.

Capt Sawyer then ordered 9332 Sergt G. Turvey to bomb the enemy out of the right. This he did for some 6 traverses but was held up from want of grenades and he had to fall back again before the enemy's bombs. But did splendid work. When I reached the German line about 5.30am the fight had become one of bombs. There was very little rifle fire but some 200 Germans in breaking across the open had been heavily fired on at short range, many falling.

Capt Sawyer had been wounded by a bomb and I sent him back to have his wounds dressed and if possible to report to the Brigadier which he did.

Lieut H. Taylor (4th batt attached to) 1st Royal Irish Rifles came up with his men and carried on the attack to the right. I particularly wish to mention this officer for he was indfatigable in organising the bombing on the right. He drove the enemy back three times inflicting great losses on their bombers. The great difficulty was in keeping up the supply of bombs as many became useless in rain. The throwers went on valiently despite fatigue but they had to be given a rest when just men arrived who in turn got tired. Many German grenades were used against the enemy with good effect. About 10am the Guns assisted in making some headway to the right but the enemy came back again later and were again held by Lieut Taylor.

Soon after the pressure began to be felt from the Left and about 1pm Capt Barker 2nd Lincoln Regt came to me to consult. It was apparent that without a constant glow of Grenades or bombs we could not hold on and I made dispositions to clear the communications of all unnecessary men. This was very difficult on a mount of hostile Machine Gun fire down a ditch but Capt and Adjutant A.H.H. Sparrow accomplished much in a very difficult situation.

Towards 2pm the enemy made determined bombing attacks along the Communication trenches and from both flanks and I ordered most of the troops back, holding on a little longer to assist the retirement and until the hostile attack reached within 10 or 20 yards of each side, when the last few men withdrew with me and got away with but few casualties. By that time there were no serviceable bombs left to use.

I estimate the German dead between the right of the Lozenge and Fifth point at 100 in the fire trench many more were killed and wounded to the front.

I particularly wish to recommend the follow NCOs and men besides those mentioned above.

No. 8576 Sergt H. Reeves. No 9338 L/C H. Synett and No. 9264 L/C W. Barnes for coolness and courage in bombing.

No. 10188 Pte H. Burrows for fearlessness in standing on the parapet and shhoting German bombers in spit of his officers orders to jump down.

No. 5383 Sgt B. Boulton, No. 9311 L/C J. Trummer for managing to bring in all the Battalion machine guns in spite of heavy fire and casualties.

No. 9388 L/C W. Rose for constantly going out to repair telephone wires and No. 9301 Pte H. Illeley for coolness in signalling from the parapet with a flag under heavy fire.

No. 11404 Pte Appleby for coolness at the moment of the last retirement and for carrying Major Thackeray No 1 Battery RFA to a place of safety when wounded.

Lieut B. Hays for marked ability and coolness in assisting Capt Sparrow and bringing up bombs at great personal risk on several occasions. It is my duty to report that all ranks of the battalion under my command behaved in an exemplary manner and showed great steadiness during the fight. [TX00710]

On September 26th Major General Herdson, Cmdg 8th Division addressed the 2nd Royal Berkshire Regt His remarks were summarised as:-

On the 25th September one of the biggest battles of the world commenced of which your attack was only a small part. The 8th Division was ordered to contain as many of the enemy's troops as possible. General Stephens was ordered to make plans for our attack. The best of plans depend on the spirit of the men to carry them through. You did not fail in this but fought magnificently and all England will sing with your praise when they hear what you have done. There is no doubt but that implicated for heavier losses than you suffered.

By your conduct you fully maintained the highest traditions of your Regiment. [TX00711]

Several of the men were awarded Military Medals. Among them were 9301 Cpl Harry Illsley and 9264 L/cpl Willam Barnes, the latter was awarded his medal posthumously in February 1917 after he had been killed in August 1916. 10188 Pte Harry Burrows and 9311 L/Cpl J Trimmer won the DCM

In Reserve

26th September to 8th October 1915

During the period from the 26th September to the 21st November the battalion, and the rest of the 8th Division, continued to occupy the trenches in the neighbourhood of Bois Grenier, but, thanks to the arrival from England of many new formations for service in the front line, it was possible to reduce the extent of front held by the division, and so to allow each unit a longer time in Divisional reserve at Bac St. Maur, and Brigade reserve at Fleurbaix.

The 2nd Bn spent the 26th and 27th at Fleurbaix and moved back to Bac St Maur on the 28th where a draft of 92 other ranks arrived and eight men who were discharged from hospital. Over the next several days further men returned from hospital.

They returned to Fleurbaix on the 3rd October and were joined by a further draft of 123 men before they relieved the 2nd Lincolns in the trenches at Bois Grenier on the 6th After four days they returned to Fleurbaix and another draft of 104 men.

Amalgamation and Reorganisation

9th October to 22nd November 1915

Between the 9th and the 22nd October the battalion was amalgamated temporarily with the 8th York and Lancaster Regiment, eight platoons of the latter being attached to the 2nd Berkshire and vice versa. There seems no explanation of this. The War Diary records the return of the platoons to their original battalions on the 22nd but no mention is made of the amalgamation process.

They were visited by a party of munitions workers from England on the 23rd but what the purpose of the visit was is not clear.

On the 24th October there was a change in the constitution of the 25th Brigade. The 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment and 2nd Rifle Brigade left it for the 70th Infantry Brigade, from which it received in exchange the 11th Sherwood Foresters and 8th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. This exchange was, however, reversed on the 9th November.

Over the next few weeks they were on the usual repetitive cycle from front line to reserve:

20-22 Oct Bac St Maur

23-27 Oct Bois Grenier trenches

28 Oct - 4 Nov Bac St Maur

5-8 Nov Fleurbaix - billets

9-12 Nov Bois Grenier

13-16 Nov Fleurbaix

17-18 Nov Bois Grenier

19-22 Nov Bac St Maur

During this period there was virtually no action and no casualties. Men continued to trickle back from hospital.

At 16:00 on the 22nd they set out from Bac St Maur to march to billets at Vieux Berquin and next day began the longer march to Sercus in the Steenberque area where they joined the 1st Army Reserve.

Roll of Honour

Those who were killed at Loos

surname	forenames	Regt No	town
Abinger	Bernard Russell	2Lt	
Allum	George	10118	Reading
Anderson	Alexander	10608	Sandhurst
Anderson	George Thomas	11555	London
Bailey	Albert John	9523	Mortimer
Barrett	Edward Walter	16338	Kintbury
Beales	Edward Ernest	10259	Spencers Wood
Bew	Harry	10320	Epsom
Bishop	Leonard William	9532	Swindon
Bishop	Stanley	16648	Enborne
Bitmead	Albert Arthur	9631	Islington
Blatch	James	8425	Woodspeen
Blissett	Harry John	11466	Islington
Bolton	Victor Alma	9007	Marcham
Bone	Edmund George	8416	Shaldon
Bradley	Arthur Alfred	9219	Twickenham
Britnell	Albert	10105	High Wycombe
Brown	Edmund George	8416	Shaldon
Burton	William Arthur (jack)	15864	Kintbury
Buxcey	Reginald	10080	Wallingford
Clarke	George	18323	Napton
Cook	Charles	9623	East Dulwich
Cook	George Ernest	9503	Dockhead
Cooper	John	10070	Ecchinswell
Cooper	Sidney	10098	Oxford

Cox	Albert	9472	Farnham
Cox	Frederick	10231	Maidenhead
Cresswell	Arthur	11685	Basildon
Crockford	Frederick Easter	11840	Plumstead
Dearlove	Frederick	16654	Steventon
Easden	Herbert	9220	High Wycombe
Edwards	Edward	9055	Warfield
Eldred	Edward Henry	10525	Marlow
Eldred	Edward Henry	10525	Thatcham
Eltham	Ernest	5694	Wantage
Englefield	William John	9806	Eastney
Fairminer	Edward James	16615	Farnham
Farnorth	William	8122	Nottingham
Frankum	George	8969	Reading
French	John	5531	Newbury
Gaisford	Dudley	8257	Bethnal Green
Gardiner	William Bigg	8199	Bethnal Green
Garlick	Albert Brice	9765	Shaw
Goodchild	Walter John	9589	Reading
Gordon	Robert	9793	Toronto
Gregory	Geoffrey Francis	Lt	Hook
Guest-Williams	Wynne Austin	Capt	
Gylby	Leonard William	9532	Lambourne
Hedges	Frederick Mortimer	8400	Reading
Hemley	Alexander James	9294	Southmoor
Hemming	Albert	15018	Abingdon
Higson	Morris	11520	Nelson
Hillier	Reuben Ernest	10626	Kennington
Hobbs	Alfred	15788	Great Shefford
Hobbs	William	9454	Niagara Falls NY
Holmes	Charles Edward	11965	Battersea
Homer	Arthur Thomas	8130	
Horwood	Christopher William	9228	Wembley
Housham	George Jackson	9373	Bexhill
Howard	Walter	8606	Farnham
Hutchins	Allan	14011	Steventon
Hyde	George William	15465	Cheltenham
James	Frederick Herbert	15815	West Bromwich
Jarrad	Charles William	11826	Oxley

Jenkins	Richard James	15722	Ecchinswell
Jennings	John	16185	Smethwick
Jones	William	10174	Wallingford
Josey	John	5699	Reading
King	Charles Edward George	16280	Kintbury
King	John	16341	Kintbury
Knight	Bertie	7868	Portsmouth
Lanigan	William Joseph	11639	Custom House
Lee	Joe	8696	
Leonard	George	9194	
Lewis	Thomas Frederick Hawkes	15374	Faringdon
Light	Harry	9816	Crazies Hill
Litchfield	Thomas	8292	High Wycombe
Lloyd	James Ambrose	9081	Windsor
May	Frank	16769	Battersea
Mayho	Ernest Archibald	8737	Reading
Meshner	George	16139	Great Marlow
Morse	Tom	16629	Tennant
Nightingale	George Frank	9199	Walthamstow
Norvall	Charles George Hughes	10464	Boscombe
Oke	Robert William Leslie	Capt	
O'Regan	James	9818	Upper Holloway
Partridge	Joseph	11447	Camden Town
Payne	Herbert	6342	Marlow
Perry	Thomas Edward	16832	Pewsey
Poole	George	9722	Bampton
Powell	Percy	7752	Chippenham
Rawlings	William	9081	Oxford
Rawlins	William	9081	Oxford
Richards	Alfred	12574	
Rogers	George Charles	16310	Thatcham
Rowland	Francis Joseph	9796	Maidenhead
Russell	Bernard	2Lt	real name Abinger
Ryan	William Kennedy	2229	Bromley by Bow
Simmons	Russell Louis Harry	2Lt	
Slatter	Victor John	9147	Abingdon
Smith	Victor Robert	11775	Crowthorne
Southgate	George	8634	Leyton
Sparkes	Victor	9812	Camberley

Speller	James	9862	Ealing
Steele	Albert	10262	Stratfield Turgis
Street	William John	16835	Thatcham
Stroud	Leonard	16342	Kintbury
Sullivan	Thomas	9793	Toronto
Swain	Albert	9727	Newbury
Swain	Arthur	18365	Walsall
Tedder	Matthew	9567	Feltham
Thomas	Albert Edward	6547	Battersea
Townsend	Arthur	8892	Highclere
Trim	Frank	9349	Aberkenfig
Trotter	Ronald Herbert Gillett	Lt	Whitchurch
Turner	Horace Arthur	5586	Shaw
Vesey	James	Lt	London
Waite	Ernest Steven (Herne)	16372	Fawley
Waite	Frederick Charles	6510	Henley OT
Warman	Alfred George	8778	Acton
Webb	Bertie Thomas	10053	Cippenham
Weston	Frank	5648	Long Wittenham
Wheeler	William James	8029	Sunninghill
White	Charles	11592	Bethnal Green
Wickens	Stephen	9912	Tilehurst
Wilks	Albert	9493	
Williams	Albert	8968	East Ilsley
Williams	William John	5748	Burnham
Willis	Frederick	9896	Binfield
Wilson	Arthur	11877	Binfield
Witherell	Thomas Edward	10173	Reading
Woodbridge	Arthur	15840	
Woodward	Joseph	9212	Birmingham
Wyer	Percy E	5408	Reading

Sources

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