

Section 215

The Battle of Loos

The 5th Battalion (October 1915)

The 5th Battalion were ready for their first major engagement - continued from section 205

Tellers of Tales

Within the 5th Royal Berkshires who fought at Loos there were several who wrote down their experiences later. The Gold brothers and Capt. Rickman wrote almost immediately in their letters home and to Miss Nadine Noble respectively. Lt. Bath wrote very shortly afterwards as he informed Alec Gold in hospital what his men had been up to. Private H Harding wrote down his story much later in 1980 and at that distance in time his memory played tricks about exact dates and times. However what comes through all these accounts is the vividness of the scenes that were imprinted on their memories.

Other men wrote accounts in their letters home, many of which were extracted and reproduced in the local newspapers and for several years afterwards the local papers published accounts of the battle.

At the same time the battalion diarist was keeping the war diary, and though often terse, this diary provides the key chronological framework to the events of late September and early October 1915.

Diversions

25th September 1915

The 5th Battalion were to make their debut at Loos on the 13th October, towards the end of the battle. When the battle opened on September 25th they were still in their training area at Ploegsteert Wood whence they had gone on arrival in France on 31st May.

The role of the Berkshires here was to create a diversion and uncertainty within the German lines in support of the main thrust which was taking place at Loos, to their south. They were aware of the main fighting and were relieved they were not being called upon to take part. Cecil Gold wrote to his sister Stella on the 26th September:

I expect you will have seen from the papers that there is some fighting going on in various places, but all is quiet here so don't let mother get worried. Of course it is possible that they would move us but it is not likely.

Many of the Berkshire's officers were on leave at the time so their optimism was justified. Captain Chadwyck Healy recounted that when the big attack commenced, the Berkshires had orders to light straw in front of their trenches, with paraffin on it at 05:55 on Saturday 25th September, to make the Germans think the British were issuing gas. Lts Pat Gold and Chadwyck-Healey were up all night arranging the straw and paraffin while Lt. Alec Gold was building a new position for his machine guns.

A bombardment by the British guns began at 0500 and the straw was lit promptly. By 0556 there was dense clouds of smoke drifting towards the German lines who replied with rifle fire and artillery, but firing blind through the smoke they caused only a few slight casualties to the Berkshires and parts of the parapets of trenches 118 and 120 were knocked down.

Also part of the instructions was to keep up a rapid rifle and machine gun fire to prevent the Germans sending reinforcements to other parts of the line where the real attack was taking place. Chadwyck-Healey:

Alec Gold was priceless and, I should think, shot thousands of rounds from his gun, although he could see nothing on account of the smoke. The Germans replied and Cecil [Gold], who was in support trenches, got the worst of it as the Germans thought they were going to be attacked and of course fired a good deal over their lines to stop supports from coming up. It was very exciting work, and considering the firing at them, they got off very lightly with three men very slightly scratched.

The afternoon was relatively quiet with sporadic machine gun and bombing attacks.

The Move to Loos

26th - 27th September 1915

On Sunday 26th September they began their move to the Loos area. First they were relieved at 2100 by the 15th Battalion, 2nd Canadian Division and retired to billets at Westhof Farm, to the west of Neuve Eglise. The next morning (the 27th) they marched to Merris where they expected to be in billets. Cecil Gold:

We were glad to hear the Canadians were to relieve us, which they did in the evening. We cleared out and marched about six miles to a rest camp and next day marched to a pretty village called Merris near Bailleul. ... It is a charming place and lovely billets. We arrived there about six o'clock and found a harmonium and were enjoying ourselves. We were told we should be there three weeks, but two hours later we were told we must be ready at 7 o'clock next morning so everything had to be packed up.

28th September 1915

The following day (the 28th) buses arrived to take them to Mont Berchenhof and a short march to Gonneheim where the 35th Brigade, 12th Division were assembling. As well as the 5th Royal Berkshires there were the 7th Norfolks, the 7th Suffolks and the 10th Essex. The other two brigades of 12th Division were concentrating at Busnes and Robecq.

Private H Harding (10402) of A Company wrote down his experiences some time later. His account is somewhat muddled as to exact dates but his descriptions are graphic.

The CO of my company ("A"), Major Bayley and Sergeant Major Davis being on leave, Captain Mount and CQSM Minchin [5374] were our respective leaders as, via Sailly-La-Bourse, with a halt at Philosoph, we made our way to the stricken mining village of Loos. On the way we fought the battle in theory with frequent bayonet charges. Staff officers were much in evidence, but I saw none in the real battle. One morning on our line of march we had our first sight of field punishment. On an embankment tied to a lumber wheel was a victim of army discipline. Happily this procedure discontinued later.

29th-30th September 1915

On the 29th the 35th Brigade marched from Gonneheim to Sailly La Bourse via Hoques, Vaudricourt, Nouex les Mines. The following day (the 30th) they moved into the support trenches at Loos. As they approached Nouex les Mines great cheers went up as they passed batches of German prisoners and captured guns going in the opposite direction. By now the front line had moved almost a mile from the village of Loos towards Hulluch.

Private Harding recounted their march over the battle-field of the 25th.

Many ambulances and walking wounded were leaving the previous days' battle area. On encountering a smashed up transport column we spent the hours of first light in a shallow chalk trench. We then advanced over the ground the previous day's attacking force had taken, as far as the mist of that late September morning would allow - hundreds of British lay dead. They had kept perfect extended order - killed troops and, up the Loos to Lens road, the Durham Light Infantry. Half way towards Lens, with the twin mining shaft towers behind us, we dug into the loose chalk with only our entrenching tools. This gave reasonable cover at about 500 yards towards Lens. We stretcher bearers then moved among the fallen hoping to find some life but there was none. Dozens of pay books were handed to our platoon commander, myself not being allowed to retain some field glasses. No rifle had been fired, no enemy dead. They were in Loos itself which we had by-passed.

The Long Wait

1st-2nd October 1915

The next few days were utter misery for the Berkshire troops. They relieved a guards battalion in trenches about 1200 yards north of Loos on the 1st October. They were in a vast open plain, which today we might describe as a lunar landscape. Hill 70 was 2700 yards to the south east and Hulluch 2000 yards to the north east.

Their trenches were in full view of the Germans who soon got their range and shelled them continually. They were effectively pinned down for most of the day and could move only under cover of darkness.

One private wrote:-

It was a sight going across the ground at night to see the dead lying all over the place. The Germans never gave us a little bit of rest: they shelled us day and night. It was like waiting for your number to come up - as it is with all those in the trench. Where they [the shells] burst they knocked our trenches to blazes. If you made a bit of a shelter it was soon blown down again. That was the worst five days we had but I don't suppose they liked their whacking.

It was no better for the officers, all suffered the same. Capt. APW Rickman wrote:

We were rushed down here at the end of September, just after the fight on the 25th and just when we were hugging ourselves on going to divisional reserve. I wish my Company had the pleasure of joining up our trench with the French. We had to dig all night and by daylight had got down to about two feet. Then breakfast consisting of cold water and cold bacon after which we had to lie down all day as the Huns were shelling us from three sides. No fires were allowed to cook with and we had to start digging again at dark.

A counter-attack was expected at any time and great efforts were put into strengthening the new line. New trenching tools arrived which made the job slightly easier but progress was slow and work could really only be done at night.

Maj. General F D V Wing went up to inspect the new gun positions on the afternoon of the 2nd and was killed by a German shell along with his ADC Lt. CC Tower. The next day Maj. Gen. A B Scott took over command of 12th Division.

3rd-6th October 1915

On the 3rd the Berkshires relieved the Norfolks in the front line trenches on the slopes of Hill 70 and they were themselves relieved on the 6th and able to retire to billets in Noyelles. Private Harding recounts the withdrawal:

On the night of the 4th October we had our orders to retire from our exposed position, taking the route along which our attacking forces of the 25th September had made their advance. A couple of days back at Annequin, a move to cellars in Vermelles and finally the close support trenches.

Lt. Jack Bath wrote to his colleague Lt Alec Gold who had been hospitalised just before the move by bronchitis:

.. we went into support in a German communications trench some 1200 yards in the rear of the firing line, absolutely exposed to view and like all communicating trenches much too wide. It also was entirely without dugouts of any kind, so we had to burrow under the parapet with entrenching tools. Add to this that it was in most places only about five feet in depth and you will see that it was a poor place for a holiday. On the first day four of your fellows were knocked out - Jones [12222], who died on the way to hospital, Keys who got a Blighty and Browning and L Cpl. Ward who didn't. Those were our only casualties from shell fire 'till we relieved the Norfolks in the front line after three days. There one of their trenches has been rendered untenable so we had

to dig one in another place during one night and produced a trench about one yard wide, but deep enough for cover. Though we worked all night each night we couldn't get it wide enough for people to pass in without a great deal of blasphemy of the worst type. We had only three casualties there, - Haycroft, [15662] Wills [12299] and Hal - but the last returned to duty after one day. Incidentally Georgie [Arbuthnot] was blesse and insisted on inoculation! I think the battalion had about 60 casualties altogether, .. one of them was Collins the Company Sergeant Major who was shot through the knuckle while looking out of the trench. We had a week in billets in a place full of holes [Philosophe] and during this time a shell burst by the cooker, wounding all the cooks, but not dangerously. Their places were taken by Drewitt [10328], Murdoch and old 'absent' Day. When we moved up to the trenches again old 'absent' was left behind to look after the cooker. He is now the only cook in the Company if we except Straub [10433].

8th October 1915

On the 8th the Germans launched their counter-attack just as the British were about to launch their action. The British infantry repulsed the Germans inflicting very severe losses.

12th October 1915

On the 12th the Berkshires were back in the support trench, having relieved the Coldstream Guards and were ready for the attack on the Hulluch Quarries.

This was part of a plan to capture simultaneously Fosse 8 on the right and Hulluch Quarries on the left. The capture of Fosse 8 was assigned to 37 Brigade and the Quarries to 35 Brigade.

Attack on the Quarries

13th October 1915

Great coats and caps were stacked in the dug outs and smoke helmets were donned at 1000. The 7th Norfolks launched the attack on the quarries and were supposed to take a German trench. The attack was only partly successful with Capt. Ottar and about 60 Norfolks establishing themselves in the trench far to the left of the principal objective. The murderous fire coming from the intended trenches had prevented the Norfolks achieving their objectives. But the message that was passed back indicated that the objective had been reached but that immediate support was needed.

Capt Rickman:

We were then shifted to billets and then back to another lot of trenches where we had a show in which poor Major Bayley was wounded and since then we have heard nothing of him nor of the others, except those who were killed close to our parapet.

"A" Coy of the 5th Battalion under Major Bayley, together with the remnants of the Norfolks were sent over the parapet to support and regain contact with Capt. Ottar. But they too suffered heavy losses by machine gun fire from the trenches which the Norfolks had failed to take. When the 5th realised the situation the attack was called off. But by now it was too late, "A" company was all but wiped out.

Harding :

After a fifteen minute bombardment at 1715 on 13th October, plastered by gas shells against which our gas masks proved useless, intense machine gun and rifle fire raking our departure trench before reaching the enemy wire our attack was halted. Major Bayley, who had shot dead a sergeant who was drunk in the trench on the way up, was himself killed with Lts Reiss and Jimmy James, the MO Lt. Stacey and half a dozen wounded by a direct hit on his Breslau Avenue dressing station. RSM Farmer [5117], CSM Davis and most of "A" Company were either killed or wounded. I expect the sergeant mentioned above was also reported 'Killed in action'.

Sergeant EE Lane [10357] was involved in the hand to hand fighting:

Having got to the German trench I was immediately confronted by the enemy and hand-to-hand ensued for some time. I ended up with a bayonet wound in my mouth and my front teeth knocked out. Nevertheless I had the satisfaction of disposing of my opponent whom I believed to be a Uhlan [disbanded cavalry]. In as much I was able to get his spiked helmet and his Iron Cross from under his top pocket lapel. The helmet was covered with a green cover and numbered 233. We were beaten out of their trench later that day and I lay in a shell hole in No-man's-land amid white chalk until the early hours of next morning when I was able to crawl back to our trench when the stretcher bearers took me to safety and eventually sent home on seven days leave.

The Reading Mercury of 30th October 1915 carried an account of CSM Farmer's death.

It appears that at the time of his death he was with the colonel and Major Arbuthnot. The latter was standing behind Sargeant-Major Farmer who was struck in the forehead and killed instantaneously. As he was falling he fell on top of the major and both went to the ground.

Writing to Mrs Farmer Col Foley said:

... he was such an old personal friend of mine He was buried up on the hill where we were and close to my headquarters and my machine gun officer, Captain Spencer, was buried next to him at the same time. I have had wooden crosses erected over their graves and in time hope to have a suitable stone erected.

The Bombers of Hulluch

Support to "A" Company came from the brigade bombers who succeeded in slithering beneath some barricades with their bombs. The survivors of the battle praised the enterprise of the bomb throwers of whom 32 went forward and not more than 10 returned. *"Each deserved the DCM"* said a Wokingham private. One of the Norfolk bombers distinguished himself also and many there felt he deserved the VC but there was no one left in authority to provide the necessary witness. and as the Colonel was at loggerheads with the Brigadier the reports he sent in were ignored.

The bombers were part of a special mission organised at Brigade level. The 5th Royal Berkshires contributed five parties drawn from the four Companies. Lt. Roger Pollard was the bombing officer leading a small group of 32 men from "B" Company. Their task was to lead the whole attack and to get close to the German trenches in order to lob bombs from the British trenches into the German ones. As they began their attack they were

forced to climb over the bodies of colleagues who had been blown to pieces by a 'Johnson' which had landed in their trench. A machine gun opened fire from the right and Lt. Pollard was hit in the face along with two other men. They reached the first German barricade of seven feet of sand bags. The bayonet men went over first followed closely by Lt. Pollard carrying the bombs. In front of them was a wire entanglement protected by an earth bank only eighteen inches high. The only way forward was to abandon their packs and equipment and crawl beneath the wire pushing their bombs before them. Two men raised their heads and were immediately shot. Then they were able to begin lobbing the bombs. By this time they had been joined by more men from "B" and "D" Companies and those from "A" and "C" were passing the bombs up to them. L Cpl. Redland of "C" Coy, observing that on one was following, went back and returned with three men and a fresh supply of bombs.

The leading bombers of "B" Coy were now exhausted. They fell back but continued to pass up bombs. Their places were taken by Pte Branch of "D" Coy and LCpl Herbert Day [11235] of Pangbourne who, although wounded continued to throw until he was hit a second time. Private Lambert [25536], also wounded, ran up and was wounded again, but continued fighting to the end.

At the point of the main attack the parapet was about four feet high so that the party was exposed to rifle and machine gun fire. Although Lt. Pollard was wounded a second time he propped himself up on the barricades and continued throwing his bombs. His men wanted to carry him back to the casualty station but he refused - "No! fire on lads" he said and carried on until he fell shot through the forehead.

Pte L W Perris, a stretcher bearer, wrote to his mother in Reading:-

I dare say you have heard about the attack on th [25th October] We were in it. I was bombing. We had to start the attack on the German sap. Thirty two went and I think the exact number to come back was ten. We lost Lt R T Pollard, our bombing officer. The first thing we saw when we started was about a dozen of the [Buffs] They were blown to atoms where a Johnson had dropped into their trench. We had to climb over their poor bodies to the German barricade.

Private Albert Mansell [10299] was leading bayonet man in front of the bombers. His job was to protect them and while the British and German bombers were throwing their bombs at each other he stood up amid the shells and shrapnel, shooting the Germans as they stood up to throw. He won the DCM for his efforts.

A group of Germans under an officer attempted to rush the party in the bombing trench but were beaten off by bombs and rifle fire.

Two types of bombs were in use; 'lemons' and 'cricket balls' Unfortunately the pins of many of the lemon

bombs were rendered unserviceable by knocks received as they were carried up from the rear. They were either thrown from hand to hand one at a time or carried in sandbags. The cricket balls required a striker but none had been provided so they were useless. Eventually the supply of lemons ran out and in response to an urgent call for reinforcements four men from the Buffs appeared, one of whom had a striker so the attack could be pressed with the cricket balls.

The Germans had the range of the British trenches but most shells fell 6 yards or so behind them. L/Cpl. William Day [10271] of Culham and Pte Thomas Spokes [10327] of Holyport were wounded by shrapnel at 15:00 but displayed great fortitude as they lay there dying of their injuries. Everyone was praying for darkness and every so often a shell would hit the top of the parapet and it had to be rebuilt. Pte Charles Drewett [10328] took over command of the bombers and went over the top, never to return. Corporal Gee eventually was awarded the DCM for his leadership of them. As one of the survivors, Pte Mansell, wrote "*The hardest part of warfare is to see your own chums fall*" Before withdrawal L/Cpl. Goddard [10563] retrieved Lt. Pollard's watch from his body for return to his family.

Two of the bombers, Pte Wigmore and Pte Thomas turned up the next morning uninjured. They reported that they had become so fatigued that they relieved each other and fell asleep in the middle of the battle.

Lt. Bath's Account

Lt. Jack Bath gave his view of the fighting in his letter to Alec Gold dated 19th October, by which time he had moved into reserve.

We were pushed up for a fight at Hulluch Quarries. Our orders being to take line 2 when the Norfolks had line 1. There was a proper box up of course, and in the end they entered line 1 and lost it again owing to bombs. We didn't leave the trenches but "A" did for some reason, and lost all their Officers and some 100 men as well. Our losses amounted to about 30 men and one officer [Lt. Pat Gold] whose arm was pierced, as I say by a knife or stone, though he claims it to have been shrapnel. Anyway he stuck it for some time but became faint later and had to go. He left the trench with Monty [Lt. Montgomery of the 7th Norfolks] who had got it badly in the leg and was moaning. We couldn't possibly have attacked, for reasons which cannot, or must not, be put on paper, so we had to hang on in an open trench, while Fritz gave us some of his best. I never felt so helpless, especially when Pat cleared off, followed shortly after by Teagle, who had a nasty cut over the eye. They got one direct hit on our parapet and buried Walland [10823] too deeply for him to be saved in time. Several men were wounded by that particular shell which was a big one. Little Cox was splendid with his men but eventually he got one too in the thigh and went. I have a confused idea of Splam [10624] and Goode going out and getting in a wounded man - of these both being wounded, one on that enterprise, the other by Walland's shell - of dirt all over myself and Howe, a new man who is in "B" one of the best too - of Woodbridge (L L) and Benkirk and a whole crowd of No 7 [Platoon]. all more or less badly hurt. All this time I was in command and the Old Man [Capt. Rickman] had gone to see the CO for orders and had been knocked down and out by a shell, which only kept him out of it for half an

hour or so.

The Company was in all three parts of an N shaped trench and it was hard to keep up with all the casualties - thus while I was with 7 [Platoon] I lost seven of my own men, among them Bluey, Dale and Dyer. Sibley [11374], of yours was wounded and died in the evening. It was beastly to see him dying and be unable to do anything. The men behaved awfully well and were much helped by a splendid Gunner Major who was observing in the trench.

In the evening we had to clear up the place and dig again part of a trench we had taken, which the guns had practically levelled. This meant removing many dead and wounded, all of them in a horrible state, for they had been bombed. The next morning we moved a bit down the line and were a bit quieter, but there were lots of dead and wounded in our trench who had to be cleared. The RAMC didn't help until late on in the afternoon the second day - I believe they had an awful lot to do at dressing stations, but it is a bit thick that the organisation wasn't better, as many men would have been saved with proper treatment at the time. We lost altogether 10 Officers and about 180 to 200 men. Of the Officers none of "A" Company have been found, except Reiss, his body was out between the trenches.

Roger [Pollard] was killed while bombing after being wounded twice. The whole tale of our bombers is one of the most splendid tales of heroism of this war. Many of them are being recommended for honours. Spencer went out to see a wounded man and was killed. Stacey was buried by a shell and went off his head, ditto Horsford, but he wasn't buried. There remains Pat [Gold] who, as I say, was slightly wounded and is I suppose home now and Hudson, who went over the parapet with "A" and has not been seen since.

A prisoner said they got 400 English men among them an English Captain, badly wounded. of course this may be one of our fellows or a Norfolk or Buff for they all copped it badly. The prisoner was a miserable little fellow who I suspect wanted to surrender, but anyhow two days ago I heard shouts of "here hold your hands up that man" and saw a figure with uplifted hands coming towards our trench in the semi-darkness just after stand-to. He said he was looking for wounded and had lost himself - a thing not difficult to do. Waite and House took the little man to HQ where Georgy [Arbutnot] immediately put out the light of the Mess in case the prisoner should escape and betray it to the Huns. He hadn't much information, except about their prisoners, and told us that his regiment, which had come from Messines, has been badly messed up by our guns.

Pat Gold's Account

Pat Gold was a temporary Captain, second in command of B Coy at the time. He wrote his experiences some 30 years later.

A meeting was called by the Brigadier of all officers in the Brigade. This was viewed with some apprehension when we found a field laid out with sandbags representing the trench we were to occupy and the German trench which it was proposed we, with the Norfolks, were to capture. An elaborate scheme was then expounded whereby A and C Coys were to open the attack; B and D Coys moving up to the jumping off position to await orders for our turn. It was a long harangue by our lugubrious C O, his final words being "I should like to shake you gentlemen by the hand as I don't expect to see any of you again" With this cheerful farewell we departed to brief our NCOs and men in preparation for the morning of October 13th. We were promised an intense bombardment which would cut the German wire and stupify the opposing troops. After a troubled night in a German dugout I was called by my batman, Bayliss, with a mug of tea laced with whiskey. I emerged into the trenches to await the thunderous bombardment which would cut the wire, drive the defenders mad only to surrender in droves. Instead there was an intermittent salvo from an 18 pounder battery bursting high above the German

trenches, the Germans chuckling in the 30 ft deep chalk dugout, whilst the barbed wire was not touched and remained intact. After a few minutes a whistle sounded, the range of the guns lengthened to the support trench and the thin khaki line of A Coy advanced with bayonets fixed. What followed will never be erased from my memory.

The German machine gunners having manned their trench, the steady monotonous thudding of their numerous guns commenced and our men fell in sheaves. Their supports followed and suffered the same fate. B Company meanwhile had moved to the assault position and were awaiting the signal to advance when the C O, who had watched this with horror, ordered the attack to cease.

I had a few minutes before being struck by a large fragment from a 'coal box' shell on the wrist which left the arm useless and it was being attended to by a Red Cross orderley when a German whizbang exploded behind my head and I felt a sharp stab in my right upper arm. The M O examined this and said the shrapnel bullet was still there lodged against the bone and, as both arms were practically hors de combat, ordered me to find my way back to the dressing station.

After the Battle

14th October 1915

The battalion had fought itself to a standstill, as had the Germans before them. The next few days were spent clearing up.

Sgt Perris reported

"The morning after the attack I went over the parapet with a sergeant and a pal to see if there were any wounded. No sooner did we get out than they opened fire on us and shot poor young Collins straight through the heart. We went out without our rifles and equipment, so they could see we were unarmed, but they simply put their machine guns on us. Never mind, they shall pay dearly for this"

Lance Corporal Hale of Wokingham was lucky to get back:

Early in the encounter I was cut off, and it was only after 36 hours exposure on the field that I returned to the trenches to find all but one in good spirits. I shall never forget how I crept about that field trying to find my line. I was so done for that I had to be taken right into reserve so that I could have food and rest.

Lt. Pollard, Pte LW Perris [10286] and L/Cpl. A Histed [10563] were all Mentioned in Despatches for their part in the affair.

Pte A Mansell [10299] received the DCM - *for conspicuous gallantry. As bayonet man he continued to fire and killed several of the enemy after he himself was wounded.*

Pte F Holford [10977] also received the DCM which was presented to him by Gen. Sir Charles Munro, CO of 2nd Army on 18th March 1916. -The citation reading: *For conspicuous gallantry on several occasions, notably when, with five others, he went to the assistance of men lying wounded in the open, bringing several to safety. Two of his party were killed and one wounded, but Private Holford refused to return until he had brought his wounded man in.*

Acting Cpl. F Powell [10633] won the DCM - *For conspicuous gallantry. He rallied men by his cool example and led them to the assistance of a few bombers who were hard pressed in the front and held on until ordered to retire.*

Pte Lawrence Perris [10555] got his MM rather belatedly. after having been buried alive by an aerial torpedo in early 1916, spending time in hospital in Manchester, being transferred to the 1st/4th Bn on the 20th December 1916 as 20618, renumbered 203812 and then sent to an Agricultural Works Company of the 13th Devons for a while before returning to the 10th Royal Berks as 35533 on the 2nd April 1917. He was finally presented with his medal by Maj Gen W B Western of Southern Command on the 25th June 1917. One gets the impression that officialdom had problems in keeping track of him!

Withdrawal to Reserve

17th -20th October 1915

On the 17th October The Guards on the left launched a further bombing attack, supported by fire from 35 Brigade. The German retaliation caused a further killed and 24 wounded. However on the following day, (18th) the CO of the Guards Division sent a message to the Berkshires *"Well done neighbours. Stick to it!. Sincere thanks for co-operation yesterday and today."*

On the 19th the Berkshires were at last relieved by the 9th Royal Fusiliers (part of 36 Brigade) and retired to billets in Vermelles. The next day (20th) the whole of 12th Division were withdrawn from the line and retired to the Bethune area. The Berkshires were billeted in the Orphanage there for 6 days.

Casualties

There was a great loss; 11 officers were reported killed wounded or missing. All the missing were later reported killed.

37 Other ranks were reported killed with 22 missing and 91 wounded. The final death toll on the day was 65 with many more dying of wounds later.

The dead were:-

11221	Allaway	Frederick of Clapham
Major	Bayley	William Kercheval of Reading
16785	Bone	William Henry of Camberwell
10605	Brindle	William James of Knowl Hill
13592	Bryan	William
16201	Bunting	Thomas of Ramsden
16876	Chandler	Thomas of Newbury
11062	Chisnall	William of Ipswich
10924	Colesby	Louis George of Finsbury
11350	Collins	Ernest Charles of Marlow
17770	Collins	Arthur Augustus of London
10959	Cook	Frederick George of Hackney
10547	Coward	George Reading

11122	Coyle	Edward of Walthamstow
10388	Cripps	George William of Reading
10640	Crockford	Richard Frederick of Reading
10477	Dawes	James Frederick of Birmingham
11106	Day	Henry of Didcot
11379	Eagling	Clifford of Lambeth
15646	Eldridge	Herbert Arthur of Warborough
5117	Farmer	Stephen Bertie of Reading
11229	Franklin	Frederick of Wantage
10344	Gale	Albert of Shiplake
12221	Goulder	John Edward of Henley on Thames
10961	Grant	William of Hackney
11355	Grey	Omar of Market Harboro
10557	Griffin	Charles of Knowl Hill
10807	Hanstead	Walter Thomas of London
11110	Headon	Alfred George Homerton
7100	Hines	John of Bow
15475	Holmes	Jesse of Little Baldon
10671	Howes	Charles of Bow
Capt	Hudson	Thomas Heylyn of Reading (adjutant)
11027	Humphries	Ernest Henry of Faringdon
10718	Jeans	William F Sandhurst
10937	King	John of Hoxton
11255	King	Alfred John of Poplar
10872	Lait	Fred of Newbury
10386	Langan	James of Lambourne
10417	Lewington	Francis of Reading
10676	Matthews	Frederick James of Poplar
12219	Moore	Harold of Gipsy Hill
Capt	Mount	Francis of South Kensington
10692	Nason	Arthur John of Smethwick
10636	Noble	Alexander Irwin of Custom House
11293	Pauling	Joseph of Faringdon
Lt	Pollard	Roger Thompson of Wimbledon (bombing officer)
9940	Pope	Ernest William of Thatcham
Lt	Reiss	Stephen Lacy of Streatley
10776	Robbins	Thomas of Lambeth
6179	Robson	Charles of Barnsbury
10360	Seymour	Arthur of Iver Heath
11374	Sibley	Charles of Barking
10831	Slater	John William of East Ham
10881	Smith	Henry James of Reading
Capt	Spencer	Sydney Gurton of Wandsworth Common (MG officer)
11303	Swaine	Herbert of Chalvey
10701	Taft	George Thomas of Southfields
Lt	Trewartha-James	Derric Vernon of Reading
11265	Vicat	Richard of Limehouse
16777	Walby	John Lewis of Hoxton
10823	Walland	Eugene Laurence of Canning Town SE
11269	White	Thomas George of Plaistow
11181	Williams	Charles William of Clapham
10262	Wyatt	Norman of Reading

The 91 were wounded included LCpl Smith, Pte Harrison, Pte A Mansell [10299], Sgt EE Lane [10357], Pte Lambert, Pte Smith. LCpl H Day [11235]

Lt. EC Stacey RAMC was badly crushed in the back when the roof of the dressing station he was working in collapsed.

Sources

Petre pp 209-213

History of 12th Division pp12-25

Reading Mercury

Berkshire Chronicle

Gold Papers

War Diary of 5th Bn

Registers of the Royal Berks Regt

Soldiers Died in the Great War

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