Section 224

Interval I

The 2nd/4th Battalion May to June 1916

At long last the 2nd/4th were sent to France to replace units in the northern part of the front which had been sent south to take part in the Somme offensives. Private Ambrose had been included in an earlier draft which was sent to re-inforce the 5th Battalion. Continued from section 114.

The Move to France

25th to 27th May 1916

In May 1915 the C.O. was ordered to proceed to France to take command ie 1/7th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and the battalion was handed to Major Wheeler, the second-in-command.

On the 25th May 1916 the 2/4th Battalion left Parkhouse Camp and entrained at Tidworth in the afternoon for Southampton. Its strength, including about 60 left behind in hospital or for other reasons, was 35 officerss and 850 other ranks, with four Lewis guns.

The officers who embarked at Southampton were:

L W ech ue tm e - m V al, jo in re gl : J . H. Simonds, T. Shields. Captains: I. M. M. Anderson, R. Whitaker, C. J. D. Cave, E. P. Lucas, F. L. Hadden, A. N. Palmer, J. A. Reeves, G. H. Hawkes. Lieutenants: O. J. Dowson, R. V. C. Freeth, G. W. Davies, R. G. Imray, R. Holland. Second-Lieutenants: S H k.. e H r..,o o k a...,m b a r t ., S . R. Webb, H. J. Gale, G. A. Brooke, G. L. Warlock, C. C e A S G.lb , G D.tb , s o A n. , T . H e a t h A D t n c , h i B a k s R , D . H. Bowles, E. C. Aylett. Adjutant: Lieut. F. W. Dilke. Quartermaster: Lieut. W. H. Morris. Medical Officer: Lieut. J. Nissen Deacon, R.A.M.C.

On the 26th May the battalion, less six officers and one hundred and ninety-two other ranks left to load transport, sailed from Southampton, and reached Havre at 7 a.m. on the 27th.

Berguette

28th May to 8th June 1916

Thence they proceeded, in two trains in the afternoon, to the neighbourhood of Merville, where they went into billets at Berguette on the 28th. The battalion was a unit of the 184th Infantry Brigade of the 61st Division. The other battalions of the brigade were the 2/4th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the 2/5th Gloucestershire, and the 2/1st Buckinghamshire. The other brigades of the division were the 182nd and 183rd.

The battalion remained training at Berguette till the 8th June, when it was sent, less transport and sick men, to be attached to other battalions for practical instruction in the mysteries of trench-warfare in trenches near Laventie.

Laventie

6th to 23rd June 1916

Here it met with its first casualties. Second-Lieutenant C. E. Brooke was slightly wounded on the 8th, and three men were killed and as many wounded on the 9th.

By the 10th the whole battalion was in charge of trenches S.E. of Laventie, where it remained, taking its turn with other battalions in front trenches or in support or reserve, and carrying out the usual patrols.

24th June 1916

On the 24th June a patrol, under Second-Lieutenant Skene, had found a gap in the enemy's wire where it was fired on at close range. Second-Lieutenant Skene carried in the only man who was wounded, and was himself slightly wounded, but remained on duty.

26th June 1916

On the 26th Second-Lieutenant Baker was hit in both arms when on patrol, and Second-Lieutenant Haddington (2/6th Gloucestershire, attached 2/4th Royal Berkshire) lost his way and was never seen again. He was believed to have been killed. Besides these two officers, one man was wounded.

27th to 30th June 1916

The rest of June was spent in billets at Laventie.

On the 27th command of the battalion was taken over from Lieut.-Colonel Wheeler by Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Beer, 2/8th Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Sources

Petre pp 174-176