

Section 231

The Somme

The 1st Battalion - July to November 1916

Since Loos the 1st Battalion had seen only sporadic action. Continued from section 221

1st Royal Scots Fusiliers in Longueval Village and the western end of Delville Wood.

Waiting in the Arras area 6th to 21st July 1916

The 1st July was the first day of the Somme Battle, but the 1st Royal Berkshire were at Gouy Servins near Arras where they heard of the start of the Great Push.

On the 6th they relieved the 2nd S Staffs in Support at Cabaret Rouge. Every available man was deployed on fatigues.

They relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers in the Berthonval North sector trenches on the 9th. The work that had been done in previous weeks meant that they had a good line to defend. Three companies were deployed on the line with one in reserve, but it was pretty quiet except for the occasional burst of German machine gun fire at night. This switched to trench mortar fire on the 11th and 12th and to an artillery bombardment on the 13th when they were relieved by the 22nd Royal Fusiliers at 23:30 and moved into billets at Camblain l'Abbe

They had only just settled into their huts at Camblain when orders came for them to move on to Estree Cauchee which they reached at 18:30 on the 15th. The next day they were off again, marching to Frevillers. Here they spent a good deal of time training and preparing themselves for their move to the Somme.

17168 Pte Archibald Athellone Hobbs of Chilton Foliat was killed on the 18th.

They paraded at 09:00 on the 20th and marched to Dieval where they took a train to Longeau near Amiens and then a 16 mile lorry ride to Morlancourt which they reached at 02:45 on the 21st.

On the Somme 21st to 24th July 1916

The accommodation at Morlancourt was good but they had only three days there. They were addressed by the Brigadier on the 22nd and moved to bivouacs at Sandpit Valley at 10:00 on the 23rd where they trained for 'The Attack'

At 18:00 on the 24th they were off again, this time to Fricourt and then Montauban.

They were soon in the front line trenches, relieving the

Delville Wood 25th to 28th July 1916

They were in position at 06:30 on the 25th with the 1st Gordon Highlanders on their left, and the 1st King's Own Scottish Borderers on their right. Three companies of the battalion were in front line; the fourth (A) in support.

At 20:00 the positions were strengthened with the right company being relieved by a company of the Durhams and the left one by the Shropshires. The two displaced companies (B and C) went to dug outs on the edge of Bernafay Wood.

8888 Sgt Alfred Surrige of Reading was killed on the 25th.

At 10:00 on the 26th the brigadier held a conference at which COs and company commanders were told they would be attacking Delville Wood on the morning of the 27th, the Royal Berks being in support. A Company, which had been in support, was detached and put under the command of 23rd Royal Fusiliers.

The commanders were back at 20:45 to brief their troops who were being subjected to gas shells and they had to wear their gas helmets all night long.

At 02:00 on the 27th the battalion moved off to their positions on the southern edge of Delville Wood, immediately in front of South Street. The left company, A, under Captain Weston, was to support the 23rd Royal Fusiliers, and to be at the disposal of the officer commanding that battalion. Next to A came B (Capt. West), with C (Capt. Gregson-Ellis) on its right, and D (Lieut. Reid) covering the right flank.

The preliminary bombardment of Longueval Village began at 05:10 switching to Delville Wood at 06:10. At 07:10 it ceased when the battalions on either flank went forward. Two minutes later the Royal Berkshire (less A Company), in support of the other two battalions, started its advance in two waves. When the two leading battalions had gained two hundred yards they halted. The Royal Berkshire also halted and began digging in.

At 08:10 the advance was resumed, and the Royal Berkshire finally dug in on their objective, which was Princes Street, the ride running from west to east

through the centre of the wood.

During the advance from South Street to Princes Street, the battalion had encountered considerable, but inaccurate, rifle fire, which did not do serious harm. But a machine gun, enfilading the line from the direction of Longueval on the left, seriously troubled the consolidating parties. This and another in front were silenced just as the battalion reached Princes Street.

At 09:00, when the battalion had dug in, the enemy opened a very accurate high-explosive shell fire enfilading it from right to left. This lasted all day till 20:00, whilst the men were consolidating and suffering much from the heat and from want of water, the original supply of which in their bottles could not be replenished.

At 10:40 an officer of the King's Royal Rifle Corps came over to say that the right flank of his battalion was being bombed and required support. A dozen Berkshire bombers were sent over to help, and a pigeon message was sent back for a fresh supply of bombs. Very fortunately for the supply of ammunition, a dump of British S.A.A. was found fifty yards south of Princes Street. It appeared to have been left there in one of the earlier attacks, and overlooked by the enemy when he got back into the southern part of the wood.

At 11:30 a fresh call for help on the right of the King's Royal Rifle Corps was replied to with twelve more bombers and a Lewis gun team

At 16:00 some men of the King's Royal Rifle Corps reported that their right flank had been slightly driven back and the Berkshires Lewis gun knocked out. The remainder of the support company was sent to help, under Second-Lieutenant R. J. Childs, who was killed just as he reached the position. It became necessary to send a pigeon message to Brigade Head-quarters for reinforcements, as nearly all the supports had been used up

About 17:00 the enemy shelling lessened, and from 21:30 till dawn on the 28th ceased entirely.

By 06.45 on the 28th the King's Royal Rifle Corps had been relieved by a battalion of the 6th Brigade, which was to send another to relieve the Royal Berkshire. Owing, however, to German shelling, it was not practicable to withdraw the battalion to Mine Trench till 17:00, and D Company was so near the enemy that it had to wait till after dusk for relief.

The battalion's reported casualties on these two days were:

Officers. *Killed:* 2nd-Lieut. R. J. Childs. *Wounded:* Capt. Gregson-Ellis; Lieut. Freeman. 2nd-Lieuts. Moore, Parsons, Cecil VereWilson (dow on the 31st). *Missing:* Lieut. J. R. Reid, 2nd-Lieut. H. J. Stidwell (both later recorded as killed).

Other Ranks: *Killed* 37; *Wounded* 182; *Missing* 37.
Total: 8 Officers and 256 Other Ranks.

The men listed as killed were:-

16229 - Percy Ashley of Birmingham
 9402 - William Stewart Badcock of Abingdon
 17903 - Frederick William Bailey of Maidenhead
 20223 - George Samuel James Barlow of Reading
 10985 - Albert Edward Beale of Kings Cross
 8674 - Henry Beckwith of Bethnal Green
 11596 - William Berwick of Plaistow
 9573 - Frederick George Breach
 17867 - Frederick Bright of Reading
 8622 - Robert Bryant of Marlow
 7280 - Francis Joseph John Buckeridge of Reading
 7994 - Ernest Walter Buckland of Oxford
 6274 - Robert Burton of Poplar
 CH0006 - Raydon James Childs of Portsmouth
 16210 - William Collinson of Bracknell
 9667 - Edwin William Culmer of Rotherhithe
 11650 - Charles Edward Daggors of Caversham
 5743 - George Dixey of Wallingford
 16247 - Walter Frederick Franklin of Reading
 16834 - Reuben John Giles of Hungerford
 17042 - Ernest Green of Bradfield
 17822 - Frederick Green of South Stoke
 17513 - George Herbert Hambleton of Arundel
 7259 - Frederick Harris of Bromley
 17979 - Herbert Harris of Hinton Waldrist
 18285 - William Hesketh of Nottingham
 9824 - William Charles Howell of Caterham
 9804 - Charles Ireland of Maidenhead
 9944 - George Frederick Jones of Chelsea
 11113 - Charles Thomas Kimber of Bethnal Green
 19071 - George King of Sipson
 20044 - Kenneth Kirby of Reading
 16592 - Arthur Lainsbury of Burghclere
 16663 - Albert Frederick Lewis of Bow
 9814 - Edward Mattingley of Abingdon
 9730 - Charles Edwin Meller of Southall
 8778 - Walter George Miles of Grazeley
 7987 - George Morse of Henley OT
 8138 - Herbert Alfred Morton of Bowden
 9266 - Henry Newport of Faringdon
 11499 - George Norman of Hampstead
 17626 - William Charles Pearson of Stratford E
 20095 - William Henry Pert of Maidenhead
 11460 - Charles Frederick Henry Preston of Highgate
 7797 - John Randall of Abingdon
 9369 - Lewis Herbert Reeves of Wantage
 RE0003 - James Robert Reid of South Kensington
 8575 - Thomas Rising of Bow

17890 - John William Rush of Reading
 9959 - Thomas Salter of Walworth
 17911 - Henry Edwin Sewell of Islington
 13529 - Arthur Smith of Woodford
 16531 - Charles Thomas Smith of Longparish
 20067 - David John Spary of Kensington
 10125 - Harry George Stacey of Stratford
 ST0004 - Herbert Jenkins Stidwell of Bickley
 9327 - Joseph Strange of Abingdon
 18185 - John Taylor of Whitechapel
 9988 - William Thomas Thatcher of Abingdon
 9438 - William Thorogood of West Ham
 16035 - Henry Fawcett Turner of Hackney
 Downs
 8853 - William Lewis Vine of Clewer
 17170 - William George Warwick of Twyford
 15821 - Albert Weaving of Garford
 17920 - Frank Whitehead of Ashtead
 8038 - Harry Whiting of Buckland
 17927 - William Bernard Whiting of Bampton
 16619 - Alfred Percy Philip Wickens of Wasing
 18586 - Henry Charles Wilkes of Windlesham
 17631 - Albert Wingfield of Walthamstow

Two Companies

29th July to 4th August

From the 29th July to the 4th August the battalion was in Mine and Mine Support trenches.

On the 30th they took over positions vacated by the 2nd HLI in Bernafay Wood where they were supporting 5th Brigade.

They returned to Mine Support trench on the 1st August and found 200 men for a fatigue duty. They did not return until 06:00 on the 2nd

That day 18398 Pte Robert Clark died of his wounds.

A reinforcement of 44 Other Ranks joined them on the 2nd but again 200 men were drafted to fatigues that night and at 07:30 on the 3rd they marched off to relieve the 23rd Royal Fusiliers in Delville Wood.

17830 Pte James Henry Fretwell of Canning Town and 8777 Pte William Sparrow of Hulme died of their wounds on the 3rd and 20188 Pte William Parkes of Newbury was killed.

As only about two hundred and eighty men were left, the battalion was reorganized in two companies on the 4th by the amalgamation of the remains of A with D and of B with C. Both these companies, reinforced by twenty men each from the transport and drums, were in the front line, with the King's Royal Rifle Corps in support.

During the early morning they were bombarded with trench mortars by the Germans, but British artillery succeeded in putting the out of action although enemy artillery was still active.

At 22:00 on the 4th the battalion were relieved by the 7th Border Regiment but it took until 03:45 on the 5th to complete the withdrawal, whence they marched to Mansel Copse.

Mansel Copse

5th to 8th August 1916

The first night at Mansel Copse saw the men of the battalion digging a new trench between Waterlot Farm and the SE corner of Delville Wood. Captain West who was in charge was accidentally wounded by a bayonet and had to be evacuated. Also 8861 Pte William Welch of Wokingham died of his wounds.

The battalion was reorganised back to four companies on the 7th. On this day 17216 Pte John Smith of Southall died of his wounds

The weather was quite warm but while they were allowed to rest on the 6th after their night of toil, it was training every day.

17794 Pte Alfred James Hyde died of his wounds on the 8th.

On the 8th after training in the morning they paraded at 15:40 and marched off to Sand Pit Valley to new bivouacs.

Sand Pit Valley

9th to 11th August 1916

Here they were reinforced on the 9th by 53 men from the 2/1st Huntingdon Cyclists and 10 other men - They were numbered 39249 to 39311.

Major General Walker, the GOC of 2nd Division, came to address the 99th Brigade on the 10th to congratulate them on the successful capture of Delville Wood.

On the 11th they were paraded at 13:30 and marched off to new bivouacs at Mericourt L'Abbe.

On the Move

11th to 24th August 1916

They arrived at Mericourt at 16:30 on the 11th. Here they were able to fit in some training on the 12th as well as most of the men being able to bathe in the River Ancre

At 08:00 on the 13th they entrained at Mericourt for Saleux.. From there they marched to St Sauveur to very good billets. Lt Col Harris was taken ill and admitted to hospital, command being taken by Major C W Frizzell.

There was more training at St Sauveur. Another draft of 67 joined on the 15th including 47 Hunts Cyclists. They were numbered 39403 to 39470 and the rest were from the Glosters, The East Surreys and the RAMC.

On the 16th they paraded at 13:00 and marched to

Naours where they arrived at 16:30.

The next day they paraded at 09:45 and marched to Authieux which they reached at 13:30.

Early next morning at 05:20 on the 18th it was on to Authie where they had a days rest before moving on to Bus les Artois on the 20th.

They reached their final destination at 08:45 on the 21st when they arrived at Couin.

Couin

21st to 25th August 1916

At Couin Lt Col Harris rejoined them from hospital and they were able to prepare for their next spell in the trenches.

The Hebuterne sector which lies about 9 miles north of Albert was a relatively static sector. The British had attacked with the 56th Division on 1st July but had gained little. The two sides faced each other over ground thoroughly churned by artillery but it was really a question of holding ones ground whilst the main fighting was elsewhere.

On the 24th 4 officers and 170 other ranks were employed carrying gas cylinders up to the front line.

Hebuterne

25th to 29th August 1916

On the 25th the battalion paraded at 07:30 and marched to relieve the 22nd Royal Fusiliers in front of Hebuterne. The relief was completed at 11:00 and they settled down to manning the defences.

During the daytime they were deepening trenches and laying duck boards to improve passage. There was very little enemy activity, some MG fire on the night of the 25th/26th and a patrol on the 27th.

This patrol approached the Berkshire's bombing position at Poplar Sap but were easily driven back with light casualties and one man killed.

Sailly

29th August to 3rd September 1916

They were relieved by the 22nd Royal Fusiliers on the 29th at 10:30 and moved back to bivouacs at Sailly au Bois where they were able to get a bath.

The weather had taken a turn for the worse, it was very wet and there was no opportunity for training although officers had to attend lectures. There were working parties on the nights of the 31st and 1st - digging a new trench.

At the end of August the Commanding officer reported the strength of the battalion as 19 officers and 677 other ranks.

On the 3rd Major Frizzell left to take command of the 1st Wiltshires.

Hebuterne

4th to 10th September 1916

Their second tour of duty in the front line began on the 4th when they relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers at 10:00. That day the RE discharged gas on the Berkshire's front at 20:30 but there appeared to be no reaction from the Germans. A patrol was sent out to gain identification but to no avail.

The next day the patrol was repeated and this time they recovered the body of a German from the 170th Regiment.

The Germans mounted a desultory bomb attack at 23:00 on a party of the Royal Berkshires wounding one and capturing two men according to the war diarist, however, seven men were eventually reported killed. They were:-

39292 - Sidney Saunders Berridge of Ramsey
 17046 - Albert Henry Fitt of Plaistow
 9922 - Charles Hatchett of Chesham
 39265 - Herbert Payne of Warboys
 39225 - Alfred Sidney Prosser of Tewkesbury
 9965 - Ernest Robinson of Edgebaston
 11910 - Henry Wales of Kennington

Major Frizzell rejoined the battalion on the 9th. The CO of the 1st Wilts had been shot in the leg on the 3rd and Frizzell had been given temporary command which he assumed on the 5th. Lt Col Finlay came as permanent CO for the Wilts on the 7th releasing Major Frizzell.

They were relieved by the 22nd Royal Fusiliers at 11:00 on the 10th and marched off to billets at Couin.

Deaths in the period (all on the 5th) were:-

39292 Sidney Saunders Berridge of Ramsey
 17046 Albert Henry Fitt of Plaistow
 9922 Charles Hatchett of Chesham
 39265 Herbert Payne of Warboys
 39225 Alfred Sidney Prosser of Tewkesbury
 9965 Ernest Robinson of Edgebaston
 11910 Henry Wales of Kennington

Couin

10th to 16th September 1916

At Couin the battalion formed the Divisional reserve. They were able to get in some serious training with a range available. On the 12th they had an interesting exercise in communicating with an aeroplane; messages sent by the ground panel were successfully received by the aeroplane.

Hebuterne

16th to 20th September 1916

Their 3rd spell in the Hebuterne trenches began at 11:00 on the 16th when they relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers. The weather was mostly wet and conditions were poor. There was a lot of work to be done on the trenches to make them bearable.

On the 18th Major Frizzell left to command the 10th Essex

On the 20th 39th Division took over from 2nd and the 17th KRRC arrived to relieve the 1st Berks who returned to Couin.

Deaths were:-

19739 Joseph George Giddings of Welwyn (16th)
39428 John Robert Emmington of Ramsey St Mary (17th)
18623 Thomas John Wellman of Reading (19th)

Couin

20th to 30th September 1916

Their time at Couin was very quiet. Almost all the time was spent training with a church parade and a second exercise in communicating with an aeroplane on the 24th.

Deaths were:-

39266 Charles Taylor of Warboys (24th)
22607 John Oakshott Nash of Newbury (26th)

Serre

30th September to 6th October 1916

2nd Division went back into the line on the 30th with the 1st Royal Berks relieving the 17th Notts and Derbys in the Serre sector.

The trenches at Serre were in a bad state owing to the weather and required lots of work. The British were apparently learning from the Germans and on the 3rd 144 men were put to work building a deep dug out like had been found on the German lines.

The first part of this tour of duty was quiet but by the 3rd the German trench mortars were active, reacting to British TM fire. The TM exchanges continued for the rest of the tour. In addition British 15 pounders were cutting the German wire in front of Serre village.

They were relieved by the 17th Royal Fusiliers of 5th Brigade at 17:00 on the 6th and marched to camp in a wood south of Maily Mallet.

Arqueves

7th to 17th October 1916

The next day, the 7th, 300 men were employed on trenches in the Serre and Redan sectors.

At 13:40 on 8th the Battalion paraded at Maily Mallet and set on for Arqueves which they reached at 17:00.

The 2nd Division were training at Arqueves either at battalion or brigade strengths with a divisional attack practiced on the 13th.

114 Other ranks joined them as reinforcements on the 14th. receiving numbers in the range 39470 to 39551. They came from many different regiments including a number from other Royal Berks Battalions plus a group of new recruits, most of whom would stay with the regiment after the war.

Deaths during this period were:-

10517 Francis Edgar Pearse of Burghfield Common (3rd)
39263 Hatton Lincoln Wilders of Peterborough (3rd)
39437 J Benjamin Harrison of Easton Hunts (4th)
17505 Arthur William Hillier of Marlborough (4th)
18010 Sidney Ostridge of Reading (4th)
10045 John Huntley of Reading (5th)
36436 Leonard J Rudd of St Albans (8th).
8919 Frederick Godfrey of Abingdon (13th)

Maily Wood

17th to 20th October 1916

They paraded at Arqueves at 10:00 on the 17th and marched to bivouacs in Maily Wood where they trained and sent out working parties.

Their bivouacs were shelled between 04:00 and 06:00 on the 20th but there were no casualties.

Serre

20th to 22nd October 1916

Another short tour of trench duty followed. They relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers at 17:00 on the 20th.

The British artillery were very active on the 21st, cutting holes in the German wire. Four patrols were sent out after dark.

Relief by the 17th Middlesex of 6th Brigade came at 17:00 on the 22nd.

Three men died in this period:

15704 Robert Stanley Butler of Upton
20060 Kenneth Walter Webb of Bedford
20038 William Charles (Jack) Oliver of Theale

Bertrancourt

23rd to 30th October 1916

It was quite cold when they got to billets in Bertrancourt. They were able to rest and clean up on the 23rd but for most of the rest of their stay it was too wet to do much outdoors.

They went for a short march on the 25th and on the one fine day, the 26th were able to practice trench attacks.

During this period two men died:-

39269 Arthur Wyman Garton of Wistow
20022 John Joseph May of Yattendon

Mailly Maillet

30th October to 2nd November 1916

They moved back to Mailly Maillet village on the 30th. 180 men were on fatigue duties on the 1st and they suffered some minor shell fire on the village.

On the 2nd they relieved the 22nd Royal Fusiliers in the Serre Sector.

Serre

2nd to 5th November 1916

The fighting on the Somme was drawing to a close, but on this tour the battalion suffered several casualties as a result of artillery exchanges. On the 2nd one man was wounded, on the 3rd Pte James Dawson (27008) of Newcastle OT was killed, on the 5th one man was wounded and Cpl Horace Brown (39293) of Warboys and Lance Sgt Joseph Lewis (11735) of Warfield were killed. All three were buried in Euston Road cemetery.

They were relieved by the 22nd Royal Fusiliers on the 5th and returned to Mailly Maillet.

Arqueves

7th to 12th November 1916

They had one day at Mailly Maillet devoted to cleaning and drying clothing and equipment. 320 men were on fatigues.

On the 7th they were ordered to proceed to Acheux Wood but on arrival were sent on to Arqueves. 2nd Lt Aveline and 46 men joined on the 7th. Most of these were new recruits numbered between 39585 and 39611.

At Arqueves most of the time was spent on training. On the 11th they moved to Bertrancourt where company commanders met with the CO who passed on the orders from the Brigadier. There was to be another push forwards.

Serre

12th to 13th November 1916

Between 08:30 and 12:00 on the 12th the Battalion moved into trenches in the right of the Serre sector. The enemy artillery was very active.

At 04:45 on the 13th Battalion HQ moved from Ellis Square to a dugout at the corner of Egg and Vallade trenches. The troops moved forward at 05:00 to take up positions in Borden and Stirling trenches.

They stayed in that position until 11:00 in appalling conditions. The enemy artillery was considerable and there were minnenwerfers, machine gun fire and snipers. To cap it all the trenches were knee deep in liquid mud.

At 11:00 they moved to Vallade Trench where they stayed until next morning, suffering 9 men killed and 23 wounded

The men killed were:-

19926 Sidney Blackall of Twyford
24884 George Harris of Cookham Dean
10010 Albert Haynes of Old Marston
11929 Alfred Heffer of Kentish Town
22142 Thomas Jeynes of Birmingham
19826 Frederick Lawrence of Ecchinswell
24879 Albert Littleton of Maidenhead
19440 George Marlow of Burghfield
24803 James Saxton of Rudgeway, Glos
17894 Frederick Smith of Newbury

14th November 1916

On the 14th the battalion took part in an attack from trenches captured from the Germans and known as the "Green Line" which was in front of Vallade trench, then occupied by the battalion. Its strength was only four hundred and thirty-five other ranks, and it was assigned a broad front of eight hundred yards, with the King's Royal Rifle Corps on its right. In support of each of the outer flanks of this line were two companies of the 23rd Royal Fusiliers. It had been intended to attack in four waves, but, owing to the width of the front, it was found necessary to reduce them to two.

At 01.15 the battalion began moving forward, and at 05:00 formed up, with its leading wave fifty yards in front of Beaumont Trench. The two halves of the battalion were ordered to move by their outer flanks which was held by the brigade to be justified, though it must apparently tend to create a gap between them.

As they moved across No Man's Land, there were some casualties from machine-gun fire, and the two right companies alleged that the British barrage started short and did them some harm. They had no less than one hundred and sixteen casualties amongst one hundred and fifty-nine men who left the "Green Line." With such heavy losses as these, it is hardly surprising to find the Battalion diary saying that, by the time the right half-battalion reached the German trenches, it had not enough men to cope with the enemy there. The remains worked partly towards the directing right flank, and partly leftwards to keep in touch with the left half-battalion so that the anticipated gap formed in the centre of the right half-battalion instead of between the two halves. Only ten or fifteen men of the leading wave of the right half reached Munich Trench, their objective. These, led by Second-Lieutenants Astley and Stoneham, forced their way through the German wire and into the trench. Second-Lieutenant Stoneham and some of the

men were killed. Second-Lieutenant Astley saw some Germans on the fire-step holding up their hands. Leaving two men to guard them, he went southwards along the trench in search of his comrades, but finding none, returned to his men.

The British barrage had now lifted and Germans issuing from dug-outs commenced bombing and shooting. Astley thereupon got out of the trench, collected some twenty men of his (2nd) wave, who were twenty or thirty yards in rear, and proposed going on again. At this moment about fifty Germans with hands up emerged from Munich Trench and were handed over to the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Not long after this many Germans got on to the fire-step and, moving down Crater Lane on the right, took the right company in flank as well as front. The position being untenable, the Berkshire men retired back into Crater Lane, which they blocked. Of the right half-battalion, the company on the right had all its officers killed, the other had three out of four wounded.

Meanwhile, the left half-battalion had moved forward with its left on Lager Alley. This having been almost obliterated and being untenable, they moved northwards on Serre Trench, which they afterwards handed over to the 14th Brigade which relieved them. This trench also was much battered, but in it were found and recaptured one officer and eleven men of the King's Liverpool, all wounded.

Of Germans, a medical officer and about thirty-five men were taken, with a trench mortar and a machine gun.

Shortly after this many men were seen moving N.E. from the German work known as the Quadrilateral, and fire was opened on them. It was stopped under the impression that they might be British, but it is certain that they were Germans evacuating the trenches, owing to the works on their south and east flanks having been taken.

Serre Trench was of great value, on account of its command. The Royal Berkshire lost cruelly. The casualty list gave *Officers*, 2 killed, 3 wounded, and 1 missing. *Other Ranks*, 29 killed, 106 wounded, 62 missing; altogether 204 out of an initial strength of 435. Officers' names were not given in either the Battalion or the Brigade Diary, except in the case of Second-Lieutenant Stoneham. The only other name we can trace is that of Second-Lieutenant Frank Clifford James who was captured and died of wounds as a POW on 4/5/17.

Those killed on this day were:-

25111 Ernest Ballard of Newbury
 17368 Joseph Charles Ballard of Bishopsgate
 8668 Joseph Blagrove of Oxford
 8790 Harry Blake of Cheshunt
 17612 Albert Edward Blakeney of East Dulwich
 39291 George Henry Bowland of Sawtry
 17546 Thomas Clarke of Wolverhampton

19322 Henry William Deacon of Eton
 13590 Albert Reginald Dean of Broadmoor
 10792 Arthur Denbow of Blackfriars
 2nd Lt Herbert William Dobbie
 26049 Herbert Arthur Edwards of Reading
 16665 Percy Edwards of Brentwood
 27014 Alfred William Gilbert of Ansley
 19990 Frederick Gray of Reading
 9821 Albert Hall of Aldworth
 17079 Alfred Hammond of Southall
 17896 Edward Harris of Maidenhead
 9807 R Harrison of Padworth
 8605 William Arthur Henderson of Camberwell
 17627 Zachariah Hine of Ilford
 27020 Ernest Holden
 20240 William Henry Holloway of Wokingham
 8828 Frederick Humphries of Letcombe Regis
 9617 Arthur Jackson of Windsor
 27037 James Benskin Johns
 10892 Charles William Jones of Birmingham
 19815 Charles Jordan of Abingdon
 20233 Amos John Keep of Didcot
 16407 Francis William King of Hermitage
 19020 Thomas King of Lechlade
 39413 William Thomas Lewin of Northampton
 27042 Walter Lewis of West Bromwich
 10466 Villiers John Middleton of Mortimer
 26050 Mark Mills of Reading
 21733 Frederick Minns of Faringdon
 17589 Ernest Stanley Moss of Shepherds Bush
 8024 John William Horwood Palmer of Camberwell
 17119 Joseph Polden of Earlsfield
 16454 Joseph Sawyer of Shrivvenham
 23770 Albert Josiah Seeby of Wallingford
 17020 Alfred George Skeates of Wallingford
 ST0009 Greville Cope Stoneham of Kensington
 16150 Reginald Swatton of Newbury
 18098 George Edward Thatcher of Reading
 25123 Frederick George Wheeler of Mortimer
 8800 William White of London

15th November 1916

During the 15th the left half-battalion, which had consolidated Serre Trench on the previous day, bombed along part of Munich Trench, which was in a sunken road, gained about fifty yards, and established a block with a post and a Lewis gun. From this post they fired on some Germans retreating across the open from an attack on the right by 112th Brigade

During the day enemy fire was very slight but at dusk the enemy artillery opened up and were very active on the Battalion's positions.

At 19:00 the Manchester Regiment tried to relieve the battalion but were unable to cross the open ground. It had already been proven impossible to bring up rations

and supplies of wire.

Two men were reported killed and 11 wounded this day.

Those killed were:-

- 19685 Albert Challis of Chelsea
- 9164 Albert Grafton of Islington
- 17101 Sidney Soper of Millwall
- 16982 Henry James Westall of Curridge

16th November 1916

At 03:00 on the 16th the enemy artillery opened up again and maintained a heavy barrage until 07:30, following which all was quiet until 17:00 when they opened up again close to battalion HQ. This caught some men of the Dorset Regiment who were moving up to relieve another unit of 99th Brigade.

The battalion managed to get supplies of water brought up at 09:15 and at 17:00 the Manchesters tried again, completing the relief at midnight.

During the day the battalion lost 2 men killed, 5 wounded and one missing according to the casualty list.

Those who died on this day were:-

- 22614 Henry Braxton of Liverpool
- 39274 George Garner of Brampton
- 19600 Frederick Hall of Wokingham
- 10277 Harry Roberts of Reading

17th November 1916

The battalion moved to billets in Mailly Maillet where 46 men joined them as reinforcements. In the afternoon they boarded motor lorries for Terramesnils. The Somme offensive had ground to a halt and was officially called off.

Sources

Petre pp 25-29

War Diaries WO95/1371

Soldiers Died

Continued in section 241

