

Section 244

Interval II

The 2nd/4th Battalion 21st July 1916 to March 1917

After their first blooding at the Second battle of Fromelles, the 2nd/4th Battalion returned to their assigned role of guarding trenches in quiet areas. They had returned to their billets at Rue de la Lys on the 19th July

Continued from 234

Rue de la Lys (20th to 26th July 1916)

At Rue de la Lys they had a few days resting and cleaning up and on the 22nd the GOC arrived for an inspection after which they were able to get a bath.

On the 22nd July, Major R. E. Salkeld took over command. Major Simonds stayed on as 2ic until the 31st August when he left for England.

The morning of the 23rd was taken up with training and at 16:00 marched off to their next billets at Rue du Puits only to find that the battalion already there had had no orders to move on and the 2nd/4th had to improvise until they could move into alternative billets at Riez Bailleul on the next afternoon. Here they had training and fatigues and an inspection prior to going back into the trenches.

Moated Grange (27th July to 1st August 1916)

On the 27th after an inspection by the CO they moved off to Moated Grange to take over trenches from the 2nd/4th Ox and Bucks with 50 men from D Coy attached to the Royal Engineers on fatigue duty. At this point four new officers arrived from England, Capt G O W Willink and 2Lts F D Greenwood, J C Fagan and CC Hedges

Pte Reginald David Bailey [6559] of Ashley was killed on the 27th after some sporadic shelling.

Pte William Piddington [3234] was killed on the 29th: In the Berks Chronicle of 8th August 1916 they reported:-

Private William John Piddington of 25 Eldon Street Reading was killed on July 29. A native of Newbury where his parents reside in Albert Road, the deceased joined up soon after the outbreak of war, prior to which he was in the employ of Mr Bevis, late grocer of Kings Road Reading. For some time he was with Mr Kimber, grocer and provision merchant of Bartholomew Street Newbury where he was a member of the Oddfellows. He was 31 years of age and leaves a widow. He had only been at the front nine weeks.

His captain wrote:- " I very much regret to have to inform you of the death of your husband. He was killed by a rifle grenade whilst on sentry duty being hit in the arm and head and lived only a few seconds. We miss your husband greatly. He was not naturally inclined for the soldier's life, but by set determination he made himself an efficient member of the company and earned the esteem and respect of all with whom he came in contact. During a heavy action on the 19th he behaved with special coolness. Please accept the deep sympathy of all the company with you in your great loss"

His CSM wrote :- " your husband was a very hard worker and very willing, was well liked by all ranks and needless to say is missed very much."

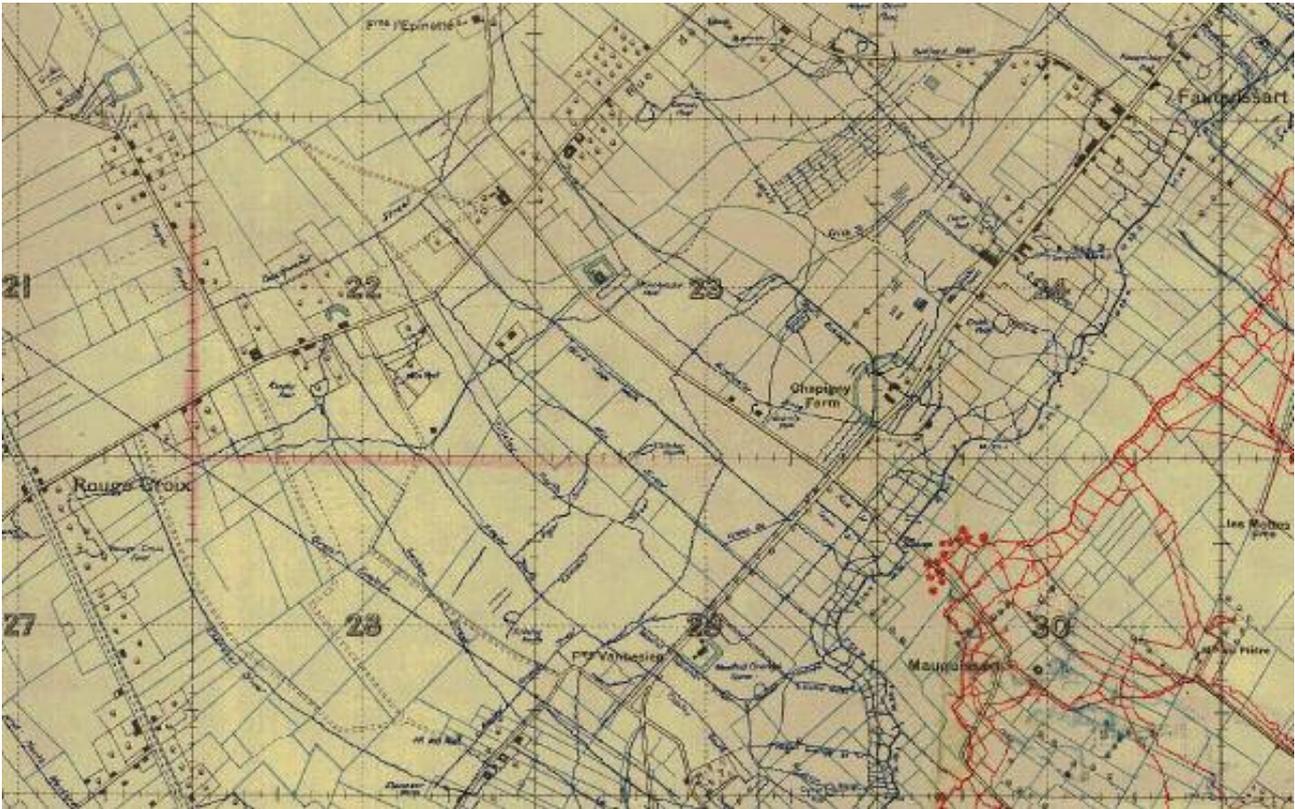
The chaplain wrote to the widow:- "It will, I am sure, be a comfort to you to know that he had a Christian burial and that his grave will be well cared for" [TX01319]

Also killed was 3601 Pte Frederick William Piddick of Wallingford. and 2/Lt Bush was wounded on the 30th.

La Gorgue (1st to 5th August 1916)

On the 1st August they were relieved by the 2/4th Royal Warwicks and returned to billets at La Gorgue

Here it was cleaning up and training as usual. They all went for a six mile route march on the 3rd and another eight miles on on the 4th



The front line in the Fauquissart Sector

They had some night operations on the 4th as a result of which Major T Shields and 2/Lt Gibson were wounded and struck off the strength.

Le Sart (5th to 9th August 1916)

On the 5th another seven miles march to the rear brought them to Le Vertbons Farm near Le Sart where they went into billets. Here Capt C R Allen of the 6th Manchesters joined them also a new draft of 30 ORs. Here they were able to get in some range practice and practice hand to hand fighting.

On the 7th they started for Laventie stopping off for a couple of nights at their old billets at La Gorgue.

Laventie (9th to 15th August 1916)

At Laventie another draft of 24 ORs arrived on the 10th with another two arriving on the 14th.

300 of the men were used by the Royal Engineers on the 11th for carrying supplies.

Pte Richard North [3975] of Maidenhead was killed on the 10th

Fauquissart (15th to 20th August 1916)

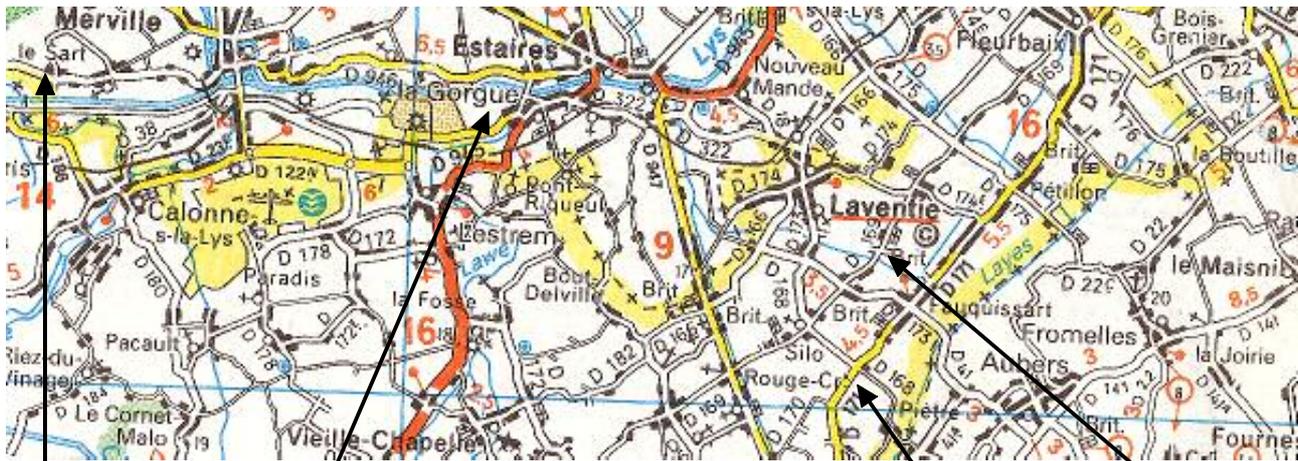
Their next front line service was from the 15th to the 21st August, in the left sub-sector at Fauquissart where they took over from the 2/4th Ox and Bucks.

Four men died on the 18th; 5547 Jabez Frank Ackerman of Bristol, 4626 Thomas Pocock of Reading, 5496 James Victor Rouse of Bristol and 3547 Charles A Wooldridge of Lambourn. Only two were reported killed so two must have died of wounds.

British Artillery was being used to cut German wire and some small scale raids were mounted by troops from other battalions.

More officers joined from the 6th Manchesters on the 18th and 20th and another draft of 12 ORs on the 18th

It was back at Laventie from the 21st to the 27th, when it again went up to Fauquissart.



Le Sart

La Gorgue

The rear area

Moated
Grange FarmLaventie
Military
Cemetery

Laventie (21st to 27th August)

Hostile aircraft were reported overhead on the 23rd

On the 24th the CO Major J H Simmonds sent a detailed list of commendations for gallantry at the 2nd Battle of Fromelles. (see section 234)

On the 24th an unfortunate explosion during bombing practice had wounded Lieutenant O J. Dowson and Second-Lieutenant F D Greenwood and killed a man from the 2/5th Glosters who was nearby.

5769 Charlie Henry Scott of Reading died on the 25th and 5423 Ernest Jefferies of Long Wittenham died on the 27th They are both believed to have been injured in the battle of Fromelles and died in German hands.

Fauquissart

27th August to 3rd September 1916

Back into the trenches again on the 27th relieving the 2/4th Ox and Bucks. A shell dropped onto the reserve trench and killed 3324 Charles Mavies Callaway of Hammersmith and 2258 Ernest A Harding of Maidenhead.

There was a concerted artillery and trench mortar bombardment on the 28th in conjunction with the Australians who were nearby. 5502 William Harold Searle of Bristol was killed. There was more shelling on the 31st with a response of 42s and 59s by the Germans but about 70% of these did not explode and so there were no British casualties. But 2769 Arthur Charles Tull of Cosham was killed on the 2nd.

They were relieved by the 2/8th Royal Warwicks and went off to billets in La Gorgue on the 3rd.

La Gorgue

3rd to 11th September 1916

At La Gorgue it was training and a medical inspection with an opportunity to get in a bit of target practice at Le Sart on the 8th before they ended their front line spell at Fauquissart and moved along the front back to Moated Grange.

Riez Bailleul

11th to 19th September 1916

It was about a two mile march to the new billets at Riez Bailleul but apart from a few comings and goings there was nothing to report while they were there.

Two more men died of wounds, 202513 Herbert Felce of Finedon in German hands on the 15th and 2549 Herbert Sharpe of Caversham at Pont du Hem on the 16th

Moated Grange

19th to 27th September 1916

On the 19th they went back into the trenches, relieving the 2/4th Ox and Bucks suffering two casualties, wounded, in the process. A draft of 30 men joined them on 25th but apart from a few wounded by the sporadic shelling it was very quiet.

The Germans let off a mine under the 2/5th Glosters on the 25th and the 2/1 Bucks raided the German trenches on the 26th.

They were relieved by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks and returned to billets at Riez Ballieul on the 27th.

Riez Bailleul

27th September to 3rd October

The usual training and inspections, but on the 1st they began planning a raid for their next time in the trenches.

Moated Grange

3rd to 9th October 1916

They relieved the 2/4th Ox and Bucks on the 4th. Lt J N Deacon, their medical officer, left to transfer to 31st Division on the 4th and Lt J F C O'Meara joined to replace him.

A preparatory patrol under 2/Lt C C Hedges went out on the night of the 7th to bomb the German wire. Hedges and 3 OR were wounded, one of whom, 6574 James Mayes of Haverhill died of his wounds on the 7th and was buried at La Gorgue Communal Cemetery. five other ORs were missing, presumed taken prisoner.

Three more men died in German hands on the 7th - 201717 George Carpenter of Coventry, 3585 William George Eley of Wallingford and 5644 Christopher Terrile Alec Jeffries of Bristol. Also on the 7th 201060 Charles Henry Walters of White Waltham died but strangely he is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. All the others who had died recently were either buried at Laventie or commemorated on the Loss Memorial if they died in German hands. Many years later in 2008 archaeologists discovered a series of mass graves at Pheasant Wood which is where the Germans buried the dead from the battle of Fromelles. and attempts will be made to identify some or all of the remains.

6013 Edward Blisset of Newnham also died on the 8th and was buried at Pont du Hem. Presumably he was killed as a result of shellfire as another man was reported with shell shock.

The planned raid started at 03:00 on the 9th when a party of five officers and 60 men under 2/Lt G L Worlock set out to attack the German trenches, but the Bangalore torpedo meant to cut the German wire failed to explode and the Brigadier cancelled the operation with three men wounded.

That evening they were relieved, again by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks and retired back to billets in Riez Ballieul.

Riez Ballieul

9th to 15th October 1916

The raid was again planned for the 11th but the Brigadier postponed it yet again.

Lt J C O'Meara the replacement medical officer went back to his Field Ambulance unit when the permanent replacement, Lt W G Coulter arrived on the 13th.

The planned raid took place on the night of the 14th/15th starting at 02:00 on the 15th. The raid was led by 2Lt G L Worlock. The orders for the raid give a considerable insight into the way such raids were planned:-

VERY SECRET NOT TO BE TAKEN OVER OUR PARAPET.

2/4TH BATTALION, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

OPERATION ORDER No 28 dated 12/10/16.

Ref. Trench Map & Enlarged Map.

1.INTENTION.

To attack enemy trenches at M.30.a.8 ½.5, and hold area bounded by Points B.C.E.D. (M.30.a.7.5 - M.30.a.9 ½.5 – M.30.a.9 ½.3 – M.30.a.7.3 ½) until ordered to return.

2.OBJECT.

To kill Germans, obtain identifications, destroy dug-outs, mine shafts and Machine Gun Emplacements, and remain in the enemy trenches for one hour.

3.DATE.

Night 14/15th October, 1916.

4.ZERO TIME

Will be between 1.40 and 2.0 a.m. on October 15th.

5.POINT OF ENTRY

M.30.a.8 ½.5.

6.ATTACKING PARTY

under 2/Lt G.L. Worlock (O.C. Attack).

B Sgt Gilhooley and 10 O.R.

No. I 2/Lt Hutchings and 12 O.R.

II “ Daniels and 14 O.R.

III “ Watson and 10 O.R.

IV “ Hinchliffe and 12 O.r.

V “ Worlock and 20 O.R.

6.COMPOSITION & DUTIES OF PARTIES:-

B. Bangalore Party. Sgt Gilhooley, 8 Carriers, 2 R.E. To carry out two Bangalores and Point of Entry, place in position, and return to Point of Assembly – X, and join their respective parties.

Note. Their party must go out and return with the greatest caution to avoid being seen.

I. 2/Lt Hutchings, 4 Bombers, 8 Bayonet men (4 of whom will carry mats). Turn Left and go to Point B. double block and hold on, leaving 4 men to attack M.G.E. in case it is occupied.

II. 2/Lt Daniels, 4 Bombers, 8 Bayonet men, 4 Dug-out guards, Turn Left and go to Point C. (M.30.a.7.3) and hold on, dropping a Dug-out guard at the entrance to any Dug-out passed on the way.

III. 2/Lt Watson. Turn to Right and go through Sally Port to Points D. (M.30.a.5.5) and E (M.30.a.5 ½.4). 5 men (2 Bombers and 3 Bayonet men) to each point.

IV. 2/Lt Hinchliffe, 6 Bombers, 6 Pillagers. Thoroughly search and destroy the area between Points A. and C. Pass back all Prisoners to Point A. and put all documents and identifications into sandbags. On completion of this work, go to Point C. and reinforce party at that Point. 2/Lt Hinchliffe will take all possible steps to obtain identifications.

V. 2/Lt. Worlock (O.C. Attack), 2 Tape men, 2 Signallers, 2 Runners, 4 Bayonet men, 2 Ladder men, 8 Bearers with 4 stretchers. Remain at A. (point of entry), further enlarge gap in wire, fix ladders from enemy parapet to trench. Keep communication with Advanced Battalion Headquarters at M.30.a.4.8 ½, cut all telephone wires in trench below them, and open fire on any enemy showing above ground.

8. PRELIMINARY RECONNAISSANCE.

A Party, composed of Sgt. Taylor, 1 signaller and 2 Snipers, will go to M.30.a.5.5 ½ with a telephone at 7 p.m. on the night of the attack, and will establish itself in a Crater there, and report to Advanced Battalion Headquarters any enemy movement, patrol, M.G. fire, etc, as it occurs.

This party will be relieved at 11 p.m. by a similar party. The Attackers move forward under 18 pounder Barrage and enter enemy trenches.

2.	0.00-0.10	M & Ltm	Wire & parapet	rapid
			point of entry	
3.	0.00-0.15	do	Wire & parapet at	rapid
			M24.d.6.3	
4.	0.00-0.15	do	Wire & parapet at	steady
			M.30.c.5.0½	
5.	0.15-10	do	As 3 and 4	
	mins after			
	withdrawal			

6.	0.10-0.13	18 pounders	parapet 50 yds on either side of point of entry	rapid	
7.	0.13-0.18	do	creep back to box barrage in lifts of 50 yards	steady	
8.	0.18-10 mins after withdrawal	do	Box barrage and strong points	steady	
9.	0.0 - 10 mins after withdrawal	howitzers	Box barrage & strong points	steady	
10.	0.00-0.10	184 MG Coy	Parapet from M30.b.1½.7 to M24.d.9.5, CTs roads and back	bursts of fire	A gun will fire bursts from 11.45 pm to 1.30 am to drown noise of laying of

relief will remain in position until the Attackers have returned to our lines.

9. DUCKBOARD PARTY.

One N.C.O. and 8 men of "B" Coy. will place 4 Duckboards across the ditch at F at 11 p.m. Two of these men will lie up and watch these Duckboards until the attackers have crossed them.

10. BANGALORE PARTY.

Will leave our lines at 11 p.m. and lay a Bangalore at point of entry. At 1 a.m. Sgt. Gilhooley will return to 2/Lt Worlock at Bay 106 and inform him whether or not the Bangalore is ready to be fired. If the Bangalore is not ready, the operations will proceed without it.

11. ATTACK MOVES OUT TO POINT OF ASSEMBLY. X.

At 1.20 a.m. Parties I, II, III, IV and V will move out from Bay 106 and take up their positions at point of assembly. X.

12. ZERO TIME.

BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 1.40 AND 2 a.m. O.C. ATTACK WILL ORDER THE BANGALORE TO BE FIRED. THE FIRING OF THE BANGALORE WILL BE ZERO TIME. IF THE BANGALORE FAILS TO EXPLODE, ZERO TIME WILL BE AT 2 a.m.

13. TIME TABLE OF ATTACK & ARTILLERY FIRE.

No	Time	Guns	Targets	Rate of fire	Remarks
1	0.00-0.10				Attackers lie at Point X.
	0.00-0.13				Attackers move up to Point of Entry.
	0.13-0.18				

The raid worked out reasonably successfully and a lot of useful intelligence was gained. Besides the party with the Bangalore torpedo, there were five parties of from ten to twenty men each (total 5 officers and 60 other ranks) to which tasks, on reaching the German trench, were assigned as follows:

- I. Second-Lieutenant Hutchings to turn to the left along the trench and make a block in it.
- II. Second-Lieutenant Daniels to act similarly towards the right and to deal with dugouts.
- III. Second-Lieutenant Watson to the right and certain named points.
- IV. Second-Lieutenant Hinchcliffe to search the trench for identification.
- V. Second-Lieutenant Worlock, in command of the whole raid, to remain at the point of entry of the trench.

Everything went smoothly till zero hour - 01:56 The 18-pounder barrage then commenced, and ten minutes later the raiders moved out from the assembly trench under its protection. The enemy wire had been well cut by two Bangalore torpedoes fired as the barrage opened.

No. I party, moving to the left, found the German trench almost completely destroyed by the barrage, and had much difficulty in following it.

No.II found the trench they were ordered to follow, and pushed along it to within a few yards of their objective. Here Second-Lieutenant Daniels shot a German officer and three men with his revolver. Then he looked into a dugout and saw five men. Several bombs were thrown into it, but Daniels and two of his men were wounded by a bomb.

No.III met with no opposition, but found the trench badly damaged, and only one dugout, which was empty.

No. IV, searching for identifications of the opposing units, missed the trench taken by Second-Lieutenant Daniels, in which were all the dead Germans.

No. V remained on the parapet in support as ordered. They were fired on by a number of Germans who appeared above ground at a distance of about seventy yards.

A good deal of miscellaneous information regarding the enemy and his trenches was acquired. It was known for certain that eleven Germans had been killed, besides another twenty estimated to have been killed by the bombardment.

The casualties of the Royal Berkshire were:

Second-Lieutenant Daniels wounded, and of other ranks three wounded and one missing, quite a small number for so considerable a raid.

The Battalion report read

Report on Attack. Night 14/16 Oct 1916.

1.PRELIMINARIES.

On Oct 1st.1916 orders were received to carry out an attack on the German Lines. From this date forward a Company was specially trained for the duty.

2.ATTEMPTED ATTACK ON NIGHT 8/9TH OCT.

An attempt was made to carry out the Attack this night, but owing to Bangalore torpedo failing to explode orders were issued postponing it till a later date.

3.CANCELLATION OF ORDERS FOR NIGHT 11/12TH OCT.

Orders had been issued to the effect that the attack should take place this night, but they were cancelled by 184 Brigade at 7 p.m.

3.ATTACK ON NIGHT 14/15TH OCT.

The attack took place this night. Report as under:-

1.DIARY.

9 p.m. Patrol as ordered in Para 8 of order 28 went out with telephone to Crater.

11.30. Bangalore Party (B) went out.

11.45. Enemy wiring party reported in Crater to right of Patrol.

12.43. Bangalore Party report that 2 Bangalorees are in position under enemy wire.

1.23. Attackers move out from our line.

1.56. 2 Bangalorees exploded. Zero starts.

2.12 O.C. Attack reports party into enemy trench.

2.35. O.C. Attack reports he is withdrawing party to place of assembly.

3.4.All men reported "IN".

2.NARRATIVE.

Questioning of all concerned brings out the following:-

(1). Everything worked smoothly up to Zero.

(2). At 0.10 party moved from point of assembly and worked up close under barrage of 18 pounders.

(3) Wire was found beautifully cut and no bridges were need.

(4) Party 1 moved to left as ordered but found trench entirely wrecked, and had great difficulty in finding the way. The men had to climb out of the trench and this caused some confusion.

(5) Party 2 found the trench they were meant to go up and pushed on to within a few yards of objective. 2nd/Lt Daniels himself shot an Officer and three men with his revolver. He then looked into dug-out shewn in enlarged map and saw 5 men. He threw several bombs into this dug-out. These bombs exploded. He was then wounded by a bomb as were 2 other men with him.

(6) Party 3 met with no opposition whatever but found the trench very badly damaged. A dug-out was found but it had nothing

whatever in it except a table.

(7) Party 4 made endeavours to obtain identifications but missed the dug-out and trench up which 2nd/Lt Daniels had gone and where all the German dead were. They were delayed in getting into the trench by the confusion of one of the parties in front and could not recognise the trench owing to the damage done by T.M.s

(8) Party 5 remained on the parapet and carried out the duties assigned to it.

3.CONDITION OF ENEMY TRENCHES.

In nearly all the parts entered, the trench was literally blown to pieces by our T.M. fire.

Where it could be seen it was revetted well with boards similar to our own. The trench was however a good deal narrower. 2 Funk Holes were seen cut in under the parapet.

4.FACTS ABOUT ENEMY.

One man put up his hands as the leading bayonet man ran at him and was killed. Enemy all wore Steel helmets except the officer who wore a helmet.

A good many enemy appeared overland and fired at our men on the parapet at a range of about 60-70 yards.

The enemy as a whole appeared dazed.

The officer who was shot cried "Kamerad".

Enemy artillery retaliation was practically nil.

No machine gun fire at all was opened on the party.

No rockets or Very lights were fired for 300 yards on either side of point of entry.

A few rifle grenades or L.T.Ms were fired on our left Coy.

5.OUR BOMBARDMENT.

(1) M.T.Ms and L.T.Ms fired extremely well on point of entry and wrecked all the area behind it.

(2) The first M.T.M. opened fire within 1 second of firing of 1st Bangalore.

(3) Shooting of 18 pounders was accurate.

6.BANGALORE.

2 Torpedoes were well laid in spite of bright moon and exploded within 3 seconds of one another. Laid and fired by 2 men of 3/1 Coy R.E. assisted by party B.

7.COMMUNICATIONS.

Communications were exceedingly good all through and constant reports were received at Left Bn.H.Q., transmitted from Bay 106. A wire was broken in No man' Land and mended in a few minutes.

8.GENERAL NOTES.

A telephone wire was laid from 5 yards from Bangalore and given into the hand of leading attacker and served as a good guide to the gap.

9.ENEMY CASUALTIES.

Known enemy killed 11. Estimated at least 20 killed.

This does not include those killed by bombardment.

OUR CASUALTIES.

1 Officer and 3 O.R. wounded.

1 O.R. missing.

15/10/16.(Sd)

R.E. Salkeld

Lt Col 2/4th Bn. Royal Berks Regt. [TX00649]

Moated Grange

15th to 21st October 1916

After the raid the battalion stayed in the front line trenches relieving the 2/4th Ox and Bucks.

On the 16th 2549 Herbert Sharpe of Caversham was killed. and buried at Pont du Hem and on the 20th 3539 Thomas Edward Hollings of Bracknell died of wounds and was buried at Merville. 6571 Charles Henry Calton died of his wounds on the 21st and was also buried at Merville and 6688 John Thomas Pepper of Burton on Trent who had been wounded earlier died and was buried at Regina Trench cemetery.

The 2/5th Glosters attempted a raid on the 19th.

On the 21st The battalion was relieved by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks and returned to Riez Bailleul

Riez Bailleul

21st to 27th October 1916

This was the end of their first tour of front line duty. For a second line unit they had seen much more action than was usual and had justifiably earned praise from above.

136 more ORs joined them on the 23rd and after refitting and company training they were withdrawn into Corps reserve being relieved by the 8th Middlesex.

Robecq

27th October to 2nd November 1916

On the 27th they marched 10 miles to billets at Robecq where they were joined by yet another draft of 19 men on the 29th.

A number of medals were announced:-

2/Lt Dowson of the 6th Manchesters was awarded the MC

3327 Sgt Edwin Daniels, 5140 Cpl M Redwood and 4735 Pte H |St Aubyn were awarded the MM

At the end of the month the Battalion's strength was recorded as 33 Officers and 783 other ranks.

En Route

2nd to 6th November 1916

Their next turn of duty was to take over trenches in the Somme area to relieve the front line troops now that the battles had all but petered out.

They set out from Robecq on the 2nd marching 12 miles to Cauchy la Tour.

Another 12 miles on the 3rd took them to Marquay.

A shorter march of 5 miles took them to Ternas on the 4th.

It was about 9 miles to Rebreuve on the 5th.

The last leg of the journey took them to Outrebois on the 6th where 5 officers joined them from the 4th Devons and a draft of 99 ORs.

Outrebois

6th to 16th November 1916

At Outrebois they had yet more practice every day with a route march on the 9th.

En route again

16th to 19th November 1916

The began the final stage of their march to the Somme area on the 16th with an 8 mile stage to Fieffes.

Next day it was 15 miles to Harponville where they were given a two day rest

The final march took them to Bouzingcourt, a trip of 10 miles where they prepared for their next entry into the trenches.

Trenches in the Somme Area

19th to 30th November 1916

On the 21st they took over trenches from two front line units, the 7th Buffs and the 7th Queens just outside

Bouzingcourt. There was continual artillery bombardment from both sides and on the 21st they suffered 2 men killed and 5 wounded. the two killed were:-

20396 Henry Pound of Bristol

3596 Harry George Whitehorn from Reading.

They were buried locally but their graves were overrun in 1918 so they are commemorated on the Thiepval memorial as are all the other men who were killed in this tour of duty.

Three other men died of their wounds at casualty stations from previous actions.

3391 Harry Hollings of Reading (Laventie MC)

6586 Ellis of Oundle (Stump Rd Cem)

5613 William James Cook of Reading (Contay BC)

Two more men were killed on the 23rd:-

5265 Albert Barnett of Abingdon

6175 Frank Cross of Eastville

and two more on the 24th

5872 Alfred Cannings

5314 Frederick Ernest Edwards of Wyfold Court

While they were in the trenches on the 26th they had an extra heavy day of shelling by which Second-Lieutenant Daniels was again wounded, three other ranks were killed, and four wounded.

The ones killed were:-

5365 Charles Thomas Green of Little Wittenham

3435 Charles Love of Reading

20430 George Henry Browning of Reading

Lieut.-Colonel Salkeld, was taken ill on the 23rd November, and Captain H. S. Bennett commanded temporarily.

They were relieved by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks on the 26th and retired to billets at Aveluy.

Aveluy

27th November to 1st December

At Aveluy space was at a premium so one company went to Fabick, and one company split up with 2 platoons going to Zollern Redoubt, 1 to Mouquet and 1 to Thiepval leaving 2 companies in huts at Aveluy.

Their duties at Bouzingcourt were short lived as on the 30th they were relieved by the 2/6th Glosters and they marched off to Varennes, about 7 miles, on the 1st.

Varennes

1st to 12th December 1916

On the 1st December, the battalion went to Varennes, where it remained till it proceeded, on the 12th, via Bouzincourt to huts in the Martinsart Woods.

Again it was training every day but on the 6th the bathing unit arrived and they had their clothes and kit deloused.

On the 4th December Major G. P. R. Beaman took over command of the battalion from Capt Bennett

Lieut.-Colonel Salkeld, was struck off the strength of the Regiment from the 23rd December.

Two more men died of their wounds:-

5785 George Tegg on the 10th

5084 Alfred George Farmer of Reading on the 9th

Martinsart

12th to 19th December 1916

On the 12th December the Battalion marched the 5 miles from Varennes to Martinsart Woods via Bouzincourt.

The first thing to do was to make the camp habitable and then generally improve facilities.

There were church services on the 17th.

On the 19th the CO met with his Company Commanders to plan the next visit to the front line trenches.

Trenches

20th - 24th December 1916

On the 20th they relieved the 6th Royal Warwicks and sent out patrols to make contact with troops on their flanks and to secure forward positions.

Again they were subjected to almost continuous shelling and began suffering casualties again. On the 21st 2/Lt Keys was wounded with 3 ORs and two more were killed:-

20250 Albert Little of Bradfield

20382 Francis William Morris of Charfield

A third died on the 23rd

5876 John Leonard Oliver

As before they are all commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. The war diary reports several more killed on the 21st and 22nd but we are unable to identify them

5838 William Henry Rivers of Longworth died of his wounds on the 22nd and was buried at Stump Road Cemetery.

A patrol was sent out on the 23rd to examine some old battery positions and found the dug outs unused and unoccupied.

They were relieved by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks on th 24th and returned to Wellington Huts at Aveluy.

Aveluy

24th to 27th December 1916

Again there was the problem of accomodation space and one company was sent off to Mouquet Farm while another had to make do with dug outs.

Presumably they celebrated Christmas but all the War Diary reports is the arrival of another draft of 76 men and working parties.

Martinsart (27th to 30th December 1916)

On the 27th they marched off to huts at Martinsart leaving one company behind - presumably the one at Mouquet Farm

Varennes (30th December 1916 to 7th January 1917)

The three companies saw the New Year in at Varennes with a church parade on the 31st.

For the next few days it was training as usual with one company on the range each day; the routine was changed on the 4th when they went for a route march.

Another draft of 42 men arrived on the 5th

5666 Ernest William Birth died of his wounds on the 4th and was buried at Varennes Military Cemetery.

Aveluy (7th to 15th January 1917)

It was back to Wellington Huts on the 7th where Major W L Ruthven joined them from the 10th East Yorks as

second in command. However on the 13th Major T M M Anderson from the 10th Royal Scots reported and Major Ruthven returned to his regiment.

March to Noyelles (15th to 19th January 1917)

For the next few weeks the battalion orders have survived and they give considerable insight into how a battalion moved around in 1917.

On the 14th January they moved from Crucifix Corner to Herissart by route march a distance of about 14 miles

SECRET Copy No 3

2/4th Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 50

January 14th 1917.

1.The Battalion will march to PUCHEVILLERS tomorrow, 15th inst.

2.Time:- 7.35 A.M.

3.Starting Point:- CRUCIFIX CORNER.

4.Route:- AVELUY - X ROADS W.1.5.b.9.2 – Road Junction W.3.d.1.2 – NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE – HEDAUVILLE – VARENNE – HARPONVILLE.

5.Order of March:- Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, A. B. C. D. Coys with cookers and Pack Animals in rear of each Coy, Transport. Distances of 200 yards between Coys and between rear Coy. Transport will be maintained, with 500 yards between Units. Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour, and the march resumed at the clock hour.

6.Billeting Party:- 2nd Lt Jewell with CQMS, HQ QMS and 1 man from Transport will proceed to PUCHEVILLERS where they will meet the Staff Captain or his representative at 10 A.M. time of departure and other arrangements will be notified later.

7.Baggage:- All Blankets must be tightly rolled in bundles of 10's (securely tied with string) and be ready at 5.45 A.M. together with all officers valises for collection by Transport. OC Coys and RSM for HQ Coy will each detail 1 NCO and 6 men as loading party and baggage escort. This party will parade outside Coy and Battn HQ at 5.45 A.M. to meet the QM. It will also be responsible for unloading at PUCHEVILLERS. The Mess Boxes will be ready at Battn HQ at 7 A.M. for collection by Mess Cart.

8.Stores:- All Trench and Area Stores will be handed over, receipts being obtained and sent to Battn HQ by 9 A.M. on 19th inst. S.A.A., Grenades – Tools forming mobilisation equipment will be exchanged with the incoming Division.

9.Rear Party:- An officer 1 NCO and 10 men from "D" Coy will remain behind to clear up. They will endeavour to rejoin the Battalion at the first halt.

10.Battn Hd Qtrs will close at WELLINGTON HUTS at 7.15 A.M. after which reports will be made to head of Column.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C.R. Allen Capt and Adjutant

Issued at 5.30 A.M.

2/4th Bn Royal Berks Regt [TX00652]

Diversion to Herissart

This order was amended almost immediately as they were diverted to Herissart

After Order 14th January 1917

1.The Battalion will march tomorrow to HERISSART and will leave the column at TOUTENCOURT, instead of proceeding to PUCHEVILLERS.

2.The Battalion will halt for half an hour from 11.45AM to 12.15PM.

3.All ranks will carry a haversack ration tomorrow.

4.The Rear Party will remain behind to hand over huts, transport lines, QM Stores, ammunition, tools etc to incoming Brigade. On completion of this duty they will make their way to the new area.

(Sd) C.R. ALLEN Capt and Adjutant

2/4th Bn Royal Berkshire Reg [TX00653]

To Gezincourt

After company inspections on the 16th the march continued to Gezincourt on the 17th another 9 miles.

SECRET Copy No 4

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 51 January 16th 1917

1. The Battalion will march to GEZINCOURT tomorrow, 17th inst.
2. Time:- 10.30 AM.
3. Starting Point:- Road Junction 500 yards W of HERISSART CHURCH.
4. Route:- LE VAL de MAISON – Fme DU ROSEL – BEAUVAL – Road Junction 300 yards SW of Station – Road parallel to Railway.
5. Order of March:- Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, B, C, D, A Coys (with Battn closed up), Cookers and Pack Animals in rear of Battn. Cookers and Transport at a distance of 200 yards in rear of Battn, with 200 yards between units. Halts will be made at 15 minutes in the clock hour and march resumed at the clock hour. A halt will be made from 1.15 PM to 2 PM.
6. Billeting Party:- 2/Lt Darby with CQMS will march to PUCHEVILLERS where they will report to Bde HQ at 6.45AM and proceed to GEZINCOURT by lorry. CQMS's will parade at HQ at 6AM to meet Lt Darby.
7. Baggage:- All Blankets will be tightly rolled in bundles of 10 (securely tied with string) and be ready at 9.AM, together with officers valises, for collection by Transport. OC Coys and RSM for HQ Coy will each detail 1 NCO and 6 men as loading party and baggage escort. This party will parade outside respective Coy HQ's AT 9. AM and load under the directions of CSM's who will be responsible for correct loading of limbers and wagons. It will also be responsible for unloading at GEZINCOURT. The Mess Boxes will be ready at 9.AM for collection by Mess Cart.
8. The Transport Officer will collect the limbers and wagons at 9.45. AM and be ready to move off with the Battn.
9. Leather Jerkins will not be worn, but be carried under the flap of the pack.
10. Battn HQ will close at HERISSART at 10.15 AM after which, reports will be made to head of column.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Issued at 7.45 PM.

P R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant [TX00654]

The journey continued to Maison Rolland on the 18th, another 12 miles.

SECRET Copy No 4

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 52 January 17th 1917

1. The Battalion will march to MAISON ROLLAND tomorrow 18 inst.
2. Time:- 8.21AM.
3. Starting Point:- Railway Crossing 300 yards EAST of E in HALTE.
4. Route:- LONGUEVILLETT – FIENVILLERS – BERNAVILLE – LONGUEVILLERS – MESNIL DOMQUEUR.
5. Order of March:- Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, C, D, A, B Coys with Cookers and Pack Animals in rear of each coy. Distances of 200 yards between coys will be maintained with 500 yards between Battalions. Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour and the marched resumed at the clock hour. A halt will be made from 12.30PM to 1.45PM for dinners.
6. Transport:- Transport will be Brigaded under Brigade Transport Officer and will march independently.
7. Baggage:- All Blankets will be tightly rolled in bundles of 10 (securely tied with string) and be ready at 6.45AM together with all officers Valises for collection by Transport. OC Coys and RSM for HQ Coy will each detail 1 NCO and 6 men as loading party and baggage escort. These parties will parade outside respective HQ's at 6.45AM. CSM's will be responsible for correct loading. Loading parties will also be responsible for unloading at MAISON ROLLAND. The Mess Boxes will be ready at Coy HQ's at 7.15AM for collection by Mess Cart.
8. Billeting Parties:- Billeting arrangements will be made by Staff Captain.
9. Battalion HQ will close at GEZINCOURT at 8.AM after which reports will be made to head of column.

ACKNOWLEDGE.

C R Allen Capt and A/Adjutant

Issued at 10.30 PM [TX00655]

They continued to Maison Rolland on the 18th (12 miles) and on to Noyelles en Chaussee on the 19th another 5 miles.

SECRET Order No 3

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 53. January 18th 1917

1. The Battalion will march to NOYELLE-EN-CHAUSSEE tomorrow 19th inst.
2. Time:- 10.21.AM.

3.Starting Point:- MAISON ROLLAND CHURCH.

4.Route:- Cross Roads 400 yards SE of S in COULONVILLERS – YVRENCH.

5.Order of March:- Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, D, A, B, C Coys with cookers and pack animals in rear of each coy, Transport distance of 200 yards between coys and between rear coy. Transport will be maintained with 500 yards between Battalions. Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour and the march resumed at the clock hour.

6.Billeting Party:- 2/Lt Darby with CQMS's (except D Coy) will proceed to Bde HQ at LE PLOUY where they will report at 7.AM.

7.Baggage:- All blankets will be tightly rolled in bundles of 10 (securely tied with string) and be ready at 8.45AM. together with all officers valises for collection by Transport. OC Coys and RSM for HQ Coy will each detail 1 NCO and 6 men as loading party and baggage escort. These parties will parade outside respective Coy HQ's and CSM's will be responsible for correct loading. Loading parties will also be responsible for unloading at NOYELLE. The Mess Boxes will be ready at Coy HQ's at 9.AM. for collection by mess cart.

8.Battalion HQ will close at MAISON ROLLAND at 10.15AM. after which reports will be made to head of column.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt.& A/Adjutant

Issued at 11.0 P.M. [TX00656]

Noyelles (19/1/17 to 4/2/17)

At Noyelles time was spent on training. Lt Col Beaman returned from leave on the 21st and church parades were held each Sunday with a new chaplain, The Rev W L Arrowsmith, arriving on the 2nd.

2415 Robert Sidney Kail of Maidenhead died of his wounds on the 19th and was buried at Terlincthun British Cemetery. 5839 James Edmund Hawkes of Englefield Green died on the 26th and was buried at Hem Communal Cemetery. He was followed by 5797 Philip Wright of St Neots who died on the 27th and was buried at Grandcourt Road Cemetery.

Gorenflos (4/2/17 to 13/2/17)

After their brief rest it was on to Gorenflos on February 4th about 6 miles away.

SECRET Copy No 2

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Order No 54. February 3rd 1917.

1.The Battalion will march to GORENFLOS tomorrow, 4th inst.

2.Time:- 10.7 am.

3.Starting Point:- Cross Roads 400 yards E of NOYELLES-EN-CHAUSSEE CHURCH.

4.Route:- YVRENCH – DOMQUEUR.

5.Order of March:- Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, A, B, C, D Coys, with Cookers and Pack Animals. Lewis guns hand-carts in rear of D Coy Transport, Distance of 200 yards between Coys, and between rear Coy and Transport will be maintained, with 500 yards between units. Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour and the march resumed at the clock hour. Dinners on arrival.

6.Baggage:- All Blankets must be tightly rolled in bundles of tens, securely tied with string and dumped with palliasses outside Coy and Bn HQ by 8.0 am. All Officers valises will be dumped at QM Stores in separate stacks by Coys, by 8.30 am. OC Coys and RSM for HQ Coy will each detail 1 NCO and 6 men as loading party and baggage escort. These parties will parade outside Coy and Bn HQ at 8.0 am. They will also be responsible for unloading at GORENFLOS. The Mess Boxes will be ready by 8.30 am for collection by mess-cart.

7.PALLIASSES:- All palliasses must be taken at 7.0 am to the Hospital and the straw emptied in the shed near it. The empty palliasses will be taken to Coy HQ and be ready for loading with the Blankets at 8.0 am.

8.Battn HQ will close at NOYELLES-EN-CHAUSSEE at 10.0 am after which time reports will be made to head of column.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

Issued at 9.0pm

2/4th Bn. Royal Berks Regt [TX00657]

There was more training at Gorenflos and on the 10th Capt C H Robson took over from Captain T M Jamieson as their RAMC Medical Officer.

202102 Willie Harvey of Perranzbuloe died on the 13th and was buried at Abbeville Communal Cemetery.

The 4th Battalion had been allocated their new 200,000 series numbers in August 1916 but now seemingly for the first time they began to be used at the medical units but it was some time more before they came into use in the Battalion..

To the Trenches at Dernicourt (13/2/17 to 15/2/17)

Their time had come to go back to trench duty and they set out for Dernicourt on the 13th moving first to Wiencourt via Longpre where motor transport took them to Marcelcave with a final march to Wiencourt.

The first leg was to Longpre station on the 13th:-

SECRET Copy No 4

2/4TH BATTALION ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGT.

ORDER NO 55. February 12th 1917

1.The Battalion will march to LONGPRE STATION tomorrow, 13th inst.

2.TIME. 7.5 am.

3.STARTING POINT.GORENFLOS CHURCH.

4.ROUTE.BRUCAMPS – LA FOLIE – L'ETOILE.

5.ORDER OF MARCH.Signallers. Drums, HQ Coy, B, C, D, A Coys, Distances of 200 yards between Coys and 500 yards between battalions will be maintained.

Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour and the march resumed at the clock hour.

Haversack rations will be carried.

6. BAGGAGE.All Blankets of each Coy and HQ Coy will be tightly rolled in bundles of ten's securely tied with string and dumped, together with braziers, outside Coy and Bn HQ respectively, by 5.45 am. All Officers valises will be dumped outside Coy HQ by 6.0 am. OC Coys and RSM for (for HQ Coy) will each detail 1 NCO and eight men as loading party. CSM's will be responsible for the loading. These parties will parade outside Coy and Bn HQ at 5.45 am. Mess-boxes, dixies and all remaining baggage must be at QM Stores by 6.30 am for loading. One Motor Lorry will report to "A" and "D" Coys and another to "B" and "C" Coys. The loading must be done quickly as possible so as to allow the lorries to get to QM Stores.

7. LEWIS GUN HANDCARTS. Two Lewis Gun Teams from each Coy will parade with all Hand-carts outside Bn HQ at 6.45 am under 2nd Lt Coggin and march independently to LONGPRE STATION. These teams will act as a loading party at the station and must report there at 9.45 am.

8. On arrival at the Station, Units will be formed up under the direction of the RTO for the Entraining Officer.

9. UNLOADING PARTY. An unloading party will be detailed on arrival at the detraining station in accordance with further orders which will be issued later.

9.Battalion HQ will close at GORENFLOS at 7.0 am, after which time reports will be made to the head of the Column.

ACKNOWLEDGE.

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant,

Issued at

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regt

[TX00658]

At the station lorries were waiting to take them to Marcelcave from where they marched the final leg to Wiencourt.

They spent the 14th cleaning up before the next leg to Framerville-Raincourt on the 15th another 7 miles.

SECRET Copy No.....

2/4TH BATTALION, ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

ORDER NO 56 14th February 1917

1.The Battalion will march to FRAMERVILLE-RAIN COURT tomorrow.

2.time 10.0 am.

3.STARTING POINT – Road opposite Camp.

4.ROUTE – WIENCOURT – GUILLAUCOURT – HARBONNIERES – VAUVILLERS.

5. ORDER OF MARCH.. Signallers, Drums, HQ Coy, C, D, A, B Coys, Lewis Gun Handcarts. Cookers in rear of each Coy. Water Carts, Mess Cart and Baggage Wagons in rear of battalion Distances of 200 yards between Coys, and 500 yards between Battalions will be maintained.

Halts will be made at 15 minutes to the clock hour, and march resumed at the clock hour.

Dinners on arrival.

6. BAGGAGE. All Blankets of each Coy and HQ Coy will be tightly rolled in bundles of ten's securely tied with string and dumped, together with braziers, outside Coy and Bn HQ respectively, by 5.45am. All Officers valises will be dumped outside Coy HQ by 6.0 am. OC Coys and RSM for (for HQ Coy) will each detail 1 NCO and eight men as loading party. CSM's will be responsible for the loading. These parties will parade outside Coy and Bn HQ at 5.45 am. Mess-boxes, dixies and all remaining baggage must be at QM Stores by 6.30 am for loading. One Motor Lorry will report to "A" and "D" Coys and another to "B" and "C" Coys. The loading must be done quickly as possible so as to allow the lorries to get to QM Stores.

6. BATTALION HEADQUARTERS will close at WIENCOURT Camp at 9.55 am. After which time reports will be made to the head of the column.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Issued at 11 pm.

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

2/4th Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Bn HQ 14/2/17 [TX00659]

They barely had time to rest at Framerville before they were off again, but this time they were going into trenches at Dernicourt to relieve the 124th French Battalion and they had to keep silence so as not to alert the Germans that the French regiment was being relieved.

SECRET Copy No 2

2/4th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment.

AFTER ORDER. 15th February 1917

1. The Starting Point will be Cross Roads FRAMERVILLE.

2. Time – 4.10 pm.

3. Route – RAINECOURT – FOUCAUCOURT – Road through BOIS-DE-SOYECOURT.

4. Order of March – "C" Coy, followed by "A" Coy at 500 yards distance. Two Coys of 2/1 BUCKS will then intervene. At 5.10 pm "D" and "B" Coys will follow 2/1 BUCKS, and maintain a distance of 200 yards. A Cooker will go with "C" Coy and a halt will be made for teas at 5.10 pm. This cooker will go first to "C" Coy and then to "A" Coy.

Another Cooker will go with "D" Coy. A halt will be made at 6.10 pm. By "D" and "B" Coys, and the Cooker will move back to "B" Coy after serving "D" Coy.

5. After passing FOUCAUCOURT Companies will march in Platoons at 150 yards distance.

6. Companies will be responsible for keeping touch with the Company in front of them.

7. Guides will meet Companies as under:-

"C" Coy 6.30 pm.

"A" Coy 6.45 pm.

"D" Coy 7.30 pm.

"B" Coy 7.45 pm.

8. No English must be spoken on the telephone till further orders. Complete silence must be maintained during the relief. This is imperative in the posts and front line, as the enemy can hear and would thus learn that the French Regiment had been relieved.

Bn HQ

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

16/2/17

2/4th Bn Royal Berks Regt [TX00660]

Dernicourt Trenches (16th to 23rd February 1917)

On the 16th February the battalion took over trenches at Denicourt, S.W. of Peronne, from the French 124th Infantry. They began in the reserve trenches but moved up to the front line on the night of the 19th.

SECRET Copy No.....

2/4th Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 58 February 19th 1917

1. "B" Coy 2/4 BERKS will relieve "B" Coy 2/1 BUCKS in the Front Line on the night 19/20th.

2. All details will be arranged between OC Units concerned.

3. Relief to be complete by 6.0 am on 20th inst.
4. Guides from "B" Coy BUCKS to meet "B" Coy BERKS at junction of VALLET TRENCH and BC4 at 5.30 pm.
5. OC BUCKS Coy will have 1 Officer and 2 runners for tonight with BERKS Coy. OC BERKS Coy will do ditto.
6. Carrying for the two left BERKS Coys will be done by BERKS for tonight. "B"? Coy BUCKS will carry "B" Coy BERKS rations and water tonight.
7. Carrying for tomorrow will be arranged between OC Coys concerned.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

2/4th Bn, Royal Berks Regt. [TX00661]

On the 20th 6136 Robert George Hopkins of Bristol was killed by shellfire and on the 23rd 202944 William Hopes of Warmsley, Glos was killed. This time the Germans were firing gas shells and a few men suffered gas poisoning.

They were relieved by the 2/4th Oxfords on the 24th

SECRET Copy No 11

2/4th Bn, Royal Berks Regt

Order No 59 February 22.1917

1. The Battn will be relieved by 4/OXFORDS on night of 23/24th inst and move to RAINECOURT. Relief to be completed by 6.0 AM.

2. The Order of Relief will be as under:-

OXFORDS	BERKS	ROUTE
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D Coy relieve	B Coy via	VALET – BC4
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A Coy	"	A Coy	"	BC3
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C Coy	"	C Coy	"	VALET – BC4
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B Coy	"	D Coy	"	OVERLAND TO 908
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HQ Coy	"	HQ Coy	"	VALET
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3. BERKS "B" Coy will remain in position until OXFORDS "C" Coy is in the trench and will then move out, followed by BERKS "C" Coy via BC4.

4. "A" Coy will move out by BC3 and VALET on completion of relief.

5. East of the line FOUCAUCOURT – HERLEVILLE of distance of 200 yds between platoons will be maintained and 200 yds between Coys when West of that line.

6. Each Coy will send 1 Guide per platoon to B BROM, West Exit of ESTREES at 6.0pm tomorrow. These guides must be reliable men and should reconnoitre the route during the day.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

WVQ [TX00662]

Rainecourt (23rd February to 2nd March 1917)

They were in billets at Rainecourt in the rear on the 24th February. where another draft of 10 men arrived.

Training continued as usual with special emphasis on Lewis gunners, bombers and scouts.

Dernicourt Trenches (2nd to 15th March 1917)

The battalion again went into front line at Deniecourton the 2nd March, relieving the 2/4th Ox and Bucks. Second-Lieutenant C. W. Thornton was wounded while the relief was taking place.

They set to to improve the defences, clearing the trenches of mud, erecting new wire and improving firing positions.

203111 William George Fuller of Calcot died from his gas poisoning on the 5th and was buried at Assevillers New British Cemetery. On the same day Alfred Hurdwell of Wokingham also died but strangely he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

As the days went by more improvements were made to the trenches and two snipers positions were established. Visual signalling was established - this seems to have been more reliable than the field telephones.

More men were injured and gassed by artillery fire until they were relieved by the 2/4th Ox and Bucks and went back to the support trenches.

SECRET COPY NO 10

2/4 BN. ROYAL BERKSHIRE REGIMENT

ORDER NO 61 MARCH 9 1917

1.The Battn will be relieved by the 4/OXFORDS on night of 9/10th inst, and move into Brigade Support. Relief to be completed by 6.00am on 10th inst.

2.The Relief will be as under:-

OXFORDS	from	BERKS	to
A Coy	BOURGEAT	A Coy	PEUPLIERS
B Coy	PEUPLIERS	B Coy	BOURGEAT
C Coy	LETHE	C Coy	BOVENT COPSE
D Coy	BOVENT COPSE	D Coy	LETHE

3.Four Guides will be sent as under:-

For	By	At
OXFORDS A Coy	BERKS A Coy	BOVENT COPSE AT 8pm.
OXFORDS B Coy	BERKS B Coy	RAILHEAD 908 at 9pm.
OXFORDS C Coy	BERKS C Coy	Junction of BC 5 and LETHE at 9.15pm.
OXFORDS D Coy	BERKS D Coy	BOVENT COPSE at 9.15pm.

4. The following are the Routes to be followed:-

BERKS A Coy - BC 3

BERKS B Coy - BC 4 – VALET – junction at T.7.c.5.9 – overland and due W to T1 Central.

BERKS C Coy – VALET – C 4.

BERKS D Coy – VALET – LETHE.

5. Disposition, sketches, complete list (in duplicate) of Trench Stores handed over will be sent to Bn HQ by 2.30pm on 10th and 11th inst respectively.

5.Code for Relief "WATER HAS COME".

6.Bn HQ will be moved on completion of Relief to PC PARC at S.6.c.5.7.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt. & A/Adjutant

2/4 Bn. Royal Berks

While they were in support there was still lots of work to be done in improving the trench system.

A billeting party was sent on to Harbonniers on the 14th while the reminder continued clearing up and practice. Each company was inspected by its CO.

SECRET Copy No.....

2/4th Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment [TX00666]

Order No 62. March 14 1917

Map Ref

ROSIERES Combined & TRENCH MAPS

1.The Battn will be relieved by the 7/WARWICKS on night of 15/16th March and march to HARBONNIERES. Relief to be completed by 6 am.

2.ROUTE:- B BRAM – FOUCAUCOURT – ROAD JUNCTION Q. 30. D. 9 ½ - 3 – HARBONNIERES.

3 The Order of Relief will be as under:-

BERKS	WARWICKS
D Coy by	D Coy via BC.4
A Coy by	C Coy via DENIECOURT CROSS

ROADS

C Coy by B Coy via do do
 B Coy by A Coy via SOYECOURT CROSS

ROADS.

4. Each Company (except B Coy) will send 1 Guide per platoon to HQ, 1 Guide to be B BRAM at 5.45 pm. On 15th inst to meet incoming unit. B Coy will send 1 Guide per platoon to SOYECOURT X RDS at 5.45 pm.

5. The following distances will be maintained:-

E of FOUCAUCOURT – 200 yds between platoons.

W of do - 200 yds between Companies

6. All maps (except 1/10000 and 1/20000 Regular Series French Maps) Trench and area stores will be handed over and receipts taken in duplicate. The latter must be sent to Bn HQ by 6pm. On 16th.

7. Transport at HQ Stores will move to the same billets at Battn.

8. A Billeting Party of CQMS's and 1 NCO for transport will proceed in advance under 2/Lieut DARBY on the 15th at a time to be detailed by him. This party will meet the Battn on its arrival and guide Coys to their Billets.

9. Code for Relief:- LIMBER HAS COME.

ACKNOWLEDGE

C R Allen Capt & A/Adjutant

Issued

2/4 BN ROYAL BERKS REGT [TX00665]

Harbonnieres (15th to 17th March 1917)

They were relieved by the 2/7th Royal Warwicks on the 15th and marched off to Harbonnieres to billets.

After all the work they had done in improving the trenches and defences at Dernicourt they suddenly found that the Germans were retreating and their efforts had been in vain. On the 17th they received orders to move to Rainecourt.

Rainecourt (18/3/1917)

The British exhilaration at the German retreat rapidly turned to dismay as they realised the Germans had merely retired behind the Hindenburg line which was much more defensible. On the way they had destroyed almost everything they could, leaving the British to reconstruct roads and build a completely new trench system.

The pause at Rainecourt was very brief and they spent the time repairing the Vermand Owillers to Chaulnes road.

Pertain (19th to 25th March 1917)

On the 19th they advanced to Pertain, which had recently been evacuated by the enemy who had destroyed everything as he went so the first task was to build shelters

A Coy worked on the Pertain to Morchain road which the enemy had severed with mine craters 60 feet across and 20 feet deep. They had it ready for heavy traffic by 17:00 on the 21st. B, C and D Coys repairing the Omiecourt to Morchian road. B Coy tackling an even bigger crater 100 feet across and 30 feet deep. C Coy built a diversionary road around the crater and had it open for traffic by 18:00 on the 22nd.

On the 22nd they began building strong points on the west bank of the Somme east of Mortain. Each company split into two shifts which relieved each other so the work could carry on continuously.

On the 23rd one man was injured by a German grenade left as a booby trap.

They crossed the Somme on the 25th to Ennemain, east of the river where it flows from the south towards the bend at Peronne.

SECRET Copy No.

2/4th Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 63. March 24th 1917

Map Ref ROSIERES Combined FRANCE 62 c

- 1.The Battalion will march to ENNEMAIN tomorrow 25th via LICOURT – CIZAINCOURT- ST CHRIST.
- 2.Starting Point :- PERTAIN CHURCH. Time 8.30 AM.
- 3.Order of March:- C, D, B, A, Hd Qrs. A distance of 200 yards will be maintained between coys. Cookers will follow their companies.
- 4.Lewis Guns will be packed in Limbers and Handcarts by 8 AM.
- 5.Transport with mobile SAA will be follow in rear of the Battalion.
- 6.Officers valises will be dumped outside Battn HQ by 8 AM.
- 7.Move to be complete by 12 noon.
- 8.The Battalion will be clear of the bridge crossing Somme at ST CHRIST by 11 AM.
- 9.The village of ENNEMAIN will be placed in a state of defence and wired. Coy Commanders will meet the Commanding Officer at 12.30 PM. At ENNEMAIN CHURCH to arrange for this.

ACKNOWLEDGE

G Darby 2/Lieut & A/Adjutant

Issued at.

2/4th Bn Royal Berks Regt [TX00664]

Ennemain (25th to 30th March 1917)

Their main task at Ennemain was to set up proper defences for the village. Again B & C Coys had to build diversionary roads around craters on the Ennemain to Fourques Road and the Enneman to Falvy Road while D Coy were setting up outposts. and A Coy were repairing the Fourques to Devise road and erecting a bridge over the river Omignon to replace the one which had been destroyed by the Germans.

All the streets in Ennemain were renamed after streets in Reading using makeshift boards placed at all the intersections. Battalion HQ was named St Mary Butts (where the 4th Battalion had their drill hall.)

Raid at Caulaincourt (30th to 31st March 1917)

They moved on to Caulaincourt on the 30th, was utterly destroyed, not a wall nor a cellar was intact.

SECRET Copy No 14

2/4th Bn, Royal Berkshire Regiment

Order No 64. March 30th 1917

- 1.The Battn will march to CAULINCOURT today 30th inst via DEVISE – MERAUCOURT – TERTRY.
- 2.Starting point:- ENNEMAIN CRATER. Time 18.15 pm.
- 3.Order of March:- HdQrs, A, D, C Coys. A distance of 200 yards will be maintained between coys. Cookers and Lewis Gun Handcarts in rear of their coys. Transport in rear of the Battalion at 200 yards distance.
- 4.Lewis guns will be packed in Limber and Lewis Gun Handcarts by 11.30 am.
- 5.Officers Valises and Mess Boxes will be collected at 11 am.
- 6.Halts will be made 10 minutes to the clock hour and the march resumed at the clock hour.
- 7 Dinners on the way
- 8 Battn HQ will close at ENNEMAIN at 12.10 pm. After which reports to head of column.

ACKNOWLEDGE [TX00062]

In the evening of the 30th a patrol of twenty men, under Captain Whitaker and Second-Lieutenant Brain, was sent to reconnoitre as far as Vermand Cemetery, a mile and a half further on, and to hold on there. A Company following close behind was to occupy Vermand as soon as the cemetery was secured. This was accomplished without opposition at 04:00 on the 31st, when C Company came up to consolidate the new position. Battalion Head-quarters were in Vermand by 06:00

Sources

Petre pp 176-181

Berkshire Chronicle

Reading Mercury

War Diary WO95/3065

Continued with section 264