

Section 251

Arras

The 1st Battalion April 1917

*After Boom Ravine the 1st Battalion had stayed in the Miramont area. At the end of March they had transferred to XIII Corps along with the rest of 2nd Division.
Continued from section 241*

In the Line at Roclincourt

11th to 18th April 1917

On the 11th April 1917 the Battalion moved from their huts at Etrun to the former German front line opposite Roclincourt to relieve the 1st/6th Seaforth Highlanders. It was a really miserable day with heavy snowstorms in the afternoon and evening.

The next day was even worse. It turned wet and they had to spend all day clearing the trenches and burying the bodies they found. This day the GOC 2nd Division took over command of the line from 12th Division with 5th Bde on the left, 99th Bde on the right and 6th Bde in reserve. While the 99th were clearing their trenches 6th Bde were laying duck boards from Roclincourt.

On the 13th the weather improved somewhat and A and B Coys were employed on road making. The German withdrawal had continued and B Company were able to move up to the 23rd Royal Fusiliers' HQ at 16:00 with SAA and bombs. D Coy followed at 20:00

Next morning at 06:30 battalion HQ with A and C Coys moved up to what had been the German second defence line (Kleeman Stellung) and later that day the Berks relieved the 23rd Royal Fusiliers in the front line trenches at Balleul. At nightfall on the 14th the Division held a line running from about 1000 yards east of Willerval south east for approximately 500 yards in front of the Oppy line to the railway between Oppy Wood and Ballieul and then southwest across hill 80

For a period of nearly 60 hours the battalion could do little other than crouch in the trenches as the Germans kept up a continuous barrage of shelling although they suffered no casualties until it came time to be relieved by the 2nd Ox and Bucks in the evening of the 16th. In the relief 6 men were wounded.

The relief was completed by 07:00 on the 17th when they returned to the support trenches at Kleeman Stellung.

It was still very wet as they rested in the morning and collected salvage in the afternoons until they were able

to retire to huts at Maroeul on the 18th.

Maroeul

18th to 23rd April 1917

On the 19th they were able to get a bath at Maroeul and clean themselves up. The next two days, most of the daylight hours from 07:00 to 17:00 were spent road making and laying down light railway tracks. These tracks were remarkable affairs. They had been designed by a French engineer named Decauville and came in ready assembled sections of around 20 feet length with about 7 metal sleepers. The sections were easily transported and could be manhandled into position and connected with fishplates by a comparatively small gang of men. Once in position they made the job of bringing up heavy shells, ammunition and supplies much easier than trying to get a lorry through the mud.

Roclincourt

23rd to 28th April 1917

Haig decided to resume his attacks on the 23rd and 2nd Division waited as they received news of successes from 63rd Division. On the 23rd the 1st Royal Berks moved to a tent camp at Roclincourt changing places with the 23rd Royal Fusiliers. The next day they moved back into the front line between Bailleul and Willerval relieving the 24th Royal Fusiliers. Battalion HQ was set up at a sugar factory.

The enemy shelled the front line throughout the 25th killing Lt Bacon and 6 other ranks, Lt Massey Finch and 6 more men were wounded. Among those killed were:-

7658 csm George Allen of Blewbury

14960 Pte Henry Bonas of Birmingham

They evacuated the front line during the daytime on the 26th as the British heavy artillery was engaged in cutting wire. At 21:00 they were relieved by the 2nd HLI and returned to the old German front at Roclincourt.

They were able to rest on the 27th.

The Battle of Arleux

28th April 1917

The 1st Battalion's first engagement at Arras was in the Battle for Arleux. Four divisions of the First Army

including the 1st Royal Berkshires in 99th Brigade, 2nd Division and 4 divisions of Third Army, including the 5th Battalion in 12th Division, took part in the battle. From north to south the five divisions were the Canadian, 2nd, 63rd, 37th and 12th over a front of 8 miles. The Canadians were tasked with capturing Arleux and the 2nd with capturing Oppy Wood.

The attack was mounted by 6th Brigade with D Coy of the 1st Royal Berks attached to the 1st Kings Royal Rifle Corps. The Company suffered a severe mauling as the attack was fended off.

Meanwhile the rest of the Battalion was moving into position. At 07:30 20 men went to Anzin to assist 100th Field Ambulance evacuate the wounded and 3 officers with 85 other ranks were on standby to act as stretcher bearers, although their services were not required.

At 13:00 the Battalion moved up into position to attack Oppy Wood. At 21:00 they began relieving units of 6th Brigade who were back at the position they had occupied before the attack.

29th April 1917

On the following day (29th) the remains of D Coy returned to join the rest of the battalion which was itself grossly understrength with the remaining three Companies mustering only 250 men between them. The whole 99th Bde could muster only 47 officers and 814 other ranks with 46 machine guns and was little more than a single battalion in strength.

The 99th Brigade, which also included 22nd Royal Fusiliers (plus a remnant of KRRC) and the 23rd Royal Fusiliers covered a front of 1000 yards and their job was to complete what 6th Brigade had failed to achieve the day before. The 1st Bn on the left were to lead the attack with the 22nd on the right and the 23rd in reserve.

The attack started at 0400 with all four Companies of the Berkshires moving side by side from the shallow jumping off trenches, two companies on either side of the road which led straight across the German trenches.

The History of the 2nd Division takes up the story:-

The Berkshires at once established blocks and flank defences and snipers were pushed forward into Oppy Wood where they also established themselves. Here three enemy machine guns were captured and used with considerable effect upon the retiring Germans. A number of the enemy's troops were also captured, some of whom pretended to be dead until turned over in order to be searched. These prisoners were immediately evacuated.

Thus far the Berkshires held all they had so gallantly won. The right flank of the battalion was heavily counter-attacked. Nothing daunted however, the enemy with great courage came on again and again, his troops being decimated by the splendid marksmanship of the Berkshires. Between 5 and 9.30 am he launched five separate attacks against the battalion. Four were repulsed but during the fifth the supply of grenades gave out and,

almost exhausted and much reduced in numbers, the Berkshires were forced to give ground. And then as the men filtered back through the battered trenches they came suddenly upon a store of German bombs. Arming themselves with these they again faced the enemy and, attacking him furiously, won back all the ground they had lost.

Once more the enemy launched a heavy counter-attack against the right front and centre of the now very thin line of Berkshires. But ever as they came on the enemy's troops were shot down by rifle and Lewis gun fire. and this attack also was bloodily repulsed.

Fresh enemy attacks continued to develop until at last reduced to less than half their original strength and scattered over a front of about 500 yards the gallant Berkshires were compelled to withdraw to the line of the sunken road running south west from the west corner of Oppy Wood.

The left company (C) holding its objectives north of the sunken road, now numbered only 35 other ranks, moved north along the trench taking with them their wounded and three captured machine guns until they joined hands with the 5th Infantry Brigade about B.12, d.0.4 Here the survivors of the company remained.

The remainder of the Berkshires their left flank in the air and all their bombs expended, retired to the old British line and there maintained their ground. No wonder the Brigadier of 99th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General R O Kellett) said in his report to Divisional Headquarters "During this severe fighting the action of the 1st Royal Berks was beyond all praise ... towards the end practically all the Lewis gunners were killed or wounded."

During the day's fighting the Berks had captured about 70 prisoners and 3 machine guns and had killed large numbers of the enemy.

A Company

A Company's battle was retold in the Berkshire Mercury of 17/8/17

They were assailing a position ending in a slight rise and A Company had to take the first trench on the slope beyond the rise. This despite the heavy shelling, they captured. They were soon aware that their possession would be strongly challenged and the Berks men had to withstand heavy counter-attacks. It was desperate work and many men fell on both sides.

In one of the counter-attacks some 300 Germans bore down on the smaller body of Berkshire men but the men of the Royal County used their resources to the best advantage and it is estimated that 200 of the enemy fell before the Berkshire position.

The newly won trench was defended as long as that was possible but with the approach of further German reinforcements it was decided to retire. The Berkshire men with all speed scrambled up the bank, on the other side of which was a sunken road in which they were comparatively immune.

It was much against the grain to leave the wounded, who included officers, but in the situation it was impossible to get them away; moreover as in their advance they had retaken a party of British wounded and found that they had been wrapped in blankets and carefully tended by the Germans, the Berks men hoped that those who were

left behind might receive good treatment.

In a few minutes the Boche appeared on the top of the hill, but they had such a warm reception they decided that their final objective lay on the other side. That night the Berkshires were relieved but the following day they were again ordered to the firing line where some sanguinary fighting took place. Lt Johnson RFA, the deputy Town Clerk of Reading was with the guns which were covering the advance at Oppy. [TX00128B]

B Company

B Company included Lance Corporal James Welch who was in charge of a Lewis gun section. He was to win a VC and he recounted much of the action later in the Reading Mercury of July 28th. He introduced his account as follows:-

The objective of the battalion was the position in front of Oppy Wood which is situate at Vimy Ridge and a position which had been won and lost by battalions of other regiments. The attack commenced at 4 o'clock in the morning and it it all four companies participated. We went over the top under our own barrage, our artillery had done its work but nevertheless the enemy's machine guns were left in concrete strongholds. The firing was heavy and as a result we were suffering a number of casualties.

Lt Valentine was with B Coy and later recorded that his men treated the attack as an everyday occurrence notwithstanding the fact that they were loaded down like a lot of furniture removers and had suffered a nerve shattering night listening to the screams of the wounded from the previous day's attack. They reached the German trenches with only light casualties as the German machine gunners were firing high.

L Cpl Welch:

The distance which we had to cover to reach the German positions was, I should think, about 300 yards. We had to go over open country and had to fight our way in shell holes. The Germans were in strong force and you can guess we had a very warm time of it.

The task assigned to B Coy was to attack a wood which was on our left. The German trench was running along immediately in front of the wood and this that company entered first as C Coy who were advancing on the left were held up by the enemy's machine guns which were causing casualties.

The position was consolidated and snipers were pushed further into the wood. They soon captured three machine guns which were turned on their unfortunate previous owners as they scuttled into retreat. Many prisoners were taken including several who were pretending to be dead until they came to be searched. Some of them then tried to escape and were shot as they ran for the wood.

Between 0500 and 0930 there were a series of five counter attacks by the Germans. The first four were repulsed.

L Cpl Welch:-

When the Huns commenced their first counter attack I

had to get on to a high point and fire over to the left in order to keep them back. They were being strongly reinforced from their second line of trenches and I being on a high point could discern them coming over. I thereupon changed my position and by rapid firing was able to check their advance with the result that C Coy were subsequently able to get in to the left and captured the three machine guns which had previously been holding them up.

I was firing on my own for upwards of an hour. There were six in the team, but four of these had either been killed or wounded whilst we were taking the first trench. That left me with one, Private Walker. I afterwards left my position to go to the left of the wood to take up a place there for advance. That was where I fetched four snipers in with an empty revolver. Previous to this, on jumping into the enemy's trench I was met with a Hun bomber. After a fierce struggle I killed him and took his dagger.

While consolidating the position the snipers commenced at us all. I noticed four in a shell hole about 100 yards in front of our trench so I made off for them, as some of our men were being hit. When they saw me they endeavoured to get away but I succeeded in capturing them after a game of hide-and-seek. I had to chase them for a distance of about 100 yards into no-mans-land. They were in a nice position and were busily engaged in sniping when I first discovered them. I was fired at when I first started on my errand, but luckily I was not hit.

The worst part was getting them back to our trench which I succeeded in doing, my empty revolver acting as my escort. I handed the Huns over and returned to my duty. During all this time Private Walker was manning the gun.

Meanwhile the Germans were preparing for their second counter attack. L Cpl Welch:-

When they launched it they entered the trench which we had captured on the right. The order came to me to go and search for and collect ammunition and spare parts with the object of keeping my guns in action. While I was engaged in this work the firing was fearfully heavy but I was successful in my task. When on my return I saw my company in danger I promptly took up position so that I could fire along the trench to the right with the object of preventing them from bombing their way down. The Huns succeeded in penetrating the trench for a distance of about 100 yards but were ultimately bombed out again by our bombers.

During one of the counter attacks Capt Jerwood of B Coy was wounded. Welch described his efforts:-

Captain E L Jerwood who had previously won the MC was wounded in trench fighting during one of the counter attacks. It was at this time he was leading his men to bomb the enemy out of the trench that he got hit. We had lost part of the trench and, collecting the men up, Capt Jerwood led the charge with successful results. In spite of his being wounded he carried on for quite a while performing splendid work in organisation. His place was taken by Captain Pocock.

It was during the third counter attack that Private Walker was injured leaving Welch on his own.

Then the Germans launched their third counter attack whereupon I went to the left of the wood and took up my position on high ground so that I could man the gun to the right. During that time I had to keep going out to collect ammunition and spare parts in order to keep my

gun in action. I was during one of those journeys that I lost Walker who had either been killed or wounded so that left me absolutely on my own. I kept my gun in action all the time being exposed to very heavy firing at short range. Then I got hit by a piece of shell. However I kept on until I became exhausted through loss of blood and I was compelled to give in taking my gun and handing it over to a chum of my company. When I left the firing had quietened down. The Germans had failed for the third time in their counter attack. On each occasion they had been strongly reinforced without success attending their efforts.

When the fifth counter attack came the 1st Bn found themselves short of bombs and A and B Coys were forced back towards the road which they used to form a defensive flank. Captain Jerwood commanding B Coy was severely wounded although they did manage to repulse the Germans with rifle and Lewis gun fire. By this time the effective strength of the two companies combined was down to 30 men and they were completely out of bombs even though they had been able to hold on for longer having found a supply of German bombs

C and D Companies

C and D Coys were on the north of the road and they too were reduced to 30 or 40 men. They were driven further north towards 5th Brigade leaving the rear of A and B Coys dreadfully exposed so they were forced to retire to their starting point about 1200 where they were able to dig in and hold on.

Lt Valentine was sent out to see whether or not the Germans were retiring but they weren't and he and four men had to hide in a shellhole until dark. The Germans were back in their trench.

Casualties

Both sides had suffered severe losses. One of the Berkshire officers who participated described it as

some of the bloodiest fighting of the war and men who have come through have wondered how they came alive out of that inferno. [TX00128A]

For the Berkshires this included:-

Officers killed - 3 wounded - 4 (Capt V G Stokes, Capt E L Jerwood, 2Lt A P Aveline, 2Lt G M Archdale

OR killed - 15 wounded - 89 missing - 47

The casualties were 151 out of 250 who attacked.

Among those killed were:-

9541 - John Lewis Gigg of Great Bedwyn
 20040 - Robert Jackson of Maidenhead
 21526 - Tom Leslie Annes of Maidenhead
 26000 - Henry Ayres of Bourne End
 11143 - Thomas Staines Baldwin of East Ham
 17328 - William Ewart Barnett of Eynsham

10084 - Thomas Frederick Bell of Clapham Park
 18394 - William Brind of Sonning
 39299 - Wilfred Hall Carlton of St Neots
 8259 - Leonard Clarke of Amersham Common
 33294 - Victor Percival Cobb of Ramsey
 13019 - William Collins of Bagnor
 37680 - Percy Leopold Cox of Furze Platt
 37573 - Aubrey Coxhead of Hamstead Marshall
 9914 - William Davis of East Acton
 10804 - Albert Dicker of Maidenhead
 27007 - Stanley Stuart Dring of Whitby
 37670 - Alfred Fathers of Abingdon
 17394 - James John Freeman of Canning Town
 GI0006 - Horace Austin Gibbs
 21661 - Frederick Henry Gladwell of Reading
 20173 - Alfred Gomm of Bourne End
 25981 - William James Goodchild of Wokingham
 21585 - Bernard Hambleton of Birmingham
 8144 - Harry Hanks of Abingdon
 15826 - Sidney Richard Harris of Harwell
 26083 - Frederick Hicks of Nechells
 10461 - George Hillier of Notting Hill
 27039 - John Wilfred Kemp of Rocester
 10906 - John Kerr of Plaistow
 27140 - Albert Lay of Reading
 20076 - Reginald Marchant of Budleigh Salterton
 25931 - Edward Matthews of Bracknell
 33285 - Frederick George Newell of West Meon
 12121 - Albert Oliver of Southampton
 30132 - Ernest Ostridge of Reading
 33042 - William John Pallett of Kidlington
 8725 - Ernest Palmer of Hammersmith
 28750 - Frank Pennells of Wokingham
 11842 - Herbert Robertson of Homerton
 21911 - James Colwell Robins of Birmingham
 33298 - Robert Paul Ruhen of Willesden
 SI0004 2Lt Marcel Andre Simon
 39264 - Horace Henry Smith of Godmanchester
 30058 - Oliver Taylor of Sulhampstead
 18139 - William Edward Wallin of Cold Ash
 33305 - Albert Edward Warren of Ringwood
 7983 - Henry Watkinson of Dublin
 37574 - George Henry Wells of Slough
 14855 - Alfred Henry Winfield of Coventry
 39262 - George Harry Wright of Wistow

Decorations

Lance Corporal J Welch was awarded the VC for his part in the action on the recommendation of Capt G A Pocock.. He later wrote to Welch:-

Very many congratulations on the well earned VC and may you live long to enjoy the honour for no one deserves one more than you and this time I was determined to get it through successfully. The account does not even do you justice for your Lewis gun did great damage to the Hun.

In all 13 decorations were won; In addition to Welch's VC there was one bar to MC, One MC, one bar to DCM (7860 A Hainge), three DCMs (Hilden, 3/7950 G Plank, 4983 P B D Rumble) and six MMs. Sgt R J Mortimer (8001) had a bar to his MM.

Summary

The Reading Mercury carried an account of the fighting in its July 28th edition based on a report from an NCO:

The fighting took place on the Arras front near Oppy Woods and the object was to take a trench on the right of the woods. Two companies took part in the attack which was made at a quarter to four in the morning. "When the trench was reached we discovered that the Germans were preparing to attack our position. The fighting which was very severe, consisted chiefly of bombing, and ultimately we were driven out. We stuck very pluckily to our task and eventually were successful in taking the trench."

Describing the fighting a Berks man wrote:

We lost heavily, but for every one of ours who was hit, we accounted for at least two of the Boche. It was a great day in the annals of the regiment and the Divisional General said we fought magnificently against great odds. [TX00128C]

Mr Phillip Gibbs wrote:-

The results of this battle are not to be reckoned either by the number of prisoners or the extent of the ground gained. They are to be reckoned rather by the supreme valour of the men, assaulting positions enormously strong by natural contours of the ground and held in great strength with quantities of machine guns forcing the enemy to retire in several places and then, when our men were almost spent by this great fighting, beating back German counter-attacks delivered by successive waves, preceded by barrage fire and destroying them again and again.

It was fighting of the worst possible kind, because of the extreme difficulty of the ground rising up to high slopes of the German machine-gun redoubts commanding fields of fire from both sides of the Scarpe and from isolated positions thrust between our troops who had to advance upon a very irregular line exposing their flanks to enfilade fire

The gallantry of English battalions has been splendid. Companies and platoons took initiative under the leadership of young officers and held on to important points of ground, or made fierce little attacks which helped to maintain our lines against the increasing pressure of the

enemy

The enemy not only brought up new divisions, massing great reserves, but he dragged up many new batteries of heavy guns which are now firing ceaselessly day and night at long range. He is powerful in 5.9 in which is his favourite weapon for general bombardments and counter battery work.

The strength of his present resistance is not surprising. Forced back too quickly for his safety upon the Hindenburg line, he is throwing in the weight of his main reserves against us in order to prevent our smashing through and imperilling his way of retreat. [TX00128D]

Lance Corporal Welch gave a final summing up.

The enemy's casualties were heavy and as to ours, they were light in comparison. In addition to the three guns which I mentioned, we captured bombs, mortars and other stores, whilst a number of prisoners fell into our hands. The wood was full of snipers, machine guns and in fact all classes of arms and there is no question that the Germans were very strongly entrenched. The whole of the Battalion did remarkably well, this being borne out by the fact that we got thirteen decorations for the affair. Hainge got a bar to his DCM, and Hilden, Plank and Rumble were all given the DCM.

Second Lt F C James who two or three days later was wounded and taken prisoner, was my platoon officer. He too was responsible for a lot of valuable work in assisting, among other duties, to organise the men and prepare them to meet the enemy's counter attack.

When asked whether he considered himself fortunate to be alive after all he had gone through L Cpl Welch responded:-

I must frankly confess that I am. When you consider that for five hours I was keeping my guns in action, for the most part being in a very exposed position and with shells continually bursting around me, in addition to having to go into the open, exposed to heavy fire at short range I must regard myself as fortunate to have escaped. After all I suppose it is better to be born lucky than rich.

Roclincourt

30th April to 1st May 1917

The Battalion was relieved by the 13th East Yorks beginning at 23:00 on the 29th and returned to their trenches at Roclincourt through a barrage of gas shells without suffering any further casualties.

They rested for most of the next two days. During this time they were reorganised into two companies of 4 officers and 100 men. no 1 coy was commanded by Capt Green and no 2 by Lt Merrick. This was one half of a composite battalion with two similar companies of the Royal Fusiliers under the command of Lt Col Vernon. This composite battalion was sent back to hold the front at 2000 on the 1st and to take part in what has become known as the third Battle of the Scarpe.

Ecurie Camp and Ecoivres

1st to 6th May 1917

While the composite battalion was holding the line Battalion HQ was moved to Ecurie Camp. Lt Col G P S Hunt arrived on the 2nd to take command and reform the Battalion. Immediately HQ was moved to huts at Ecoivres together with the transport section.

The two companies of the composite battalion rejoined at 17:00 on the 4th and Lt Col A E Harries left to take over command of the 13th Essex with temporary command of 6th Brigade..

When they took stock on the 6th they had a ration strength of 16 officers, which included the padre and the MO, and 329 other ranks.

The Composite Battalion

Third Battle of the Scarpe 3rd May 1917

On the 3rd May at 0100 the Composite Battalion were moved up once more into an attacking position finishing up along a taped line to the left of Oppy Wood. The Germans seemed to know the precise location of the Berkshires as they rained down a barrage knocking out Lt Valentine who did not recover consciousness until the attack was all over. As a consequence the attack line was moved up 100 yards and the shells fell behind them. Special parties were detailed to make strong points.

The British barrage opened at 0305 even though the troops were not yet quite ready and the left Company of the Royal Berks suffered a few casualties from their own barrage. The wire had been well cut so when the attack started the Battalion were able to make good progress against weak resistance. There were lots of Germans in their trench but they offered no rifle or machine gun fire and retired rapidly across open ground or down their communication trench, many being shot as they moved.

During the next hour the Battalion consolidated its position but there was no need for the Royal Berks to establish trench blocks as they were in touch with British troops on either side. On the left bombing died down quite soon but on the right a fierce bombing match took place with the British supplies supplemented by German bombs from a store which had been captured.

Between 0500 and 0530 the Berkshires began to make themselves more comfortable with men leaving the packed former German trench to seek refuge in shell holes to their rear. By this time all the available bombs had been used up and there were only three functioning Lewis guns. So when the German counter attack came it could be repulsed only by small arms and bayonet and the Royal Berks were soon driven out of the trench and all forced to seek refuge in the shell holes where they remained until relieved in the evening. They did manage

to inflict heavy casualties on the Germans while most of the casualties they suffered were from machine guns and snipers in the wood and occurred as they were evacuating the German trench.

The action had started with 8 officers and 210 other ranks in the two Berkshire Companies. They finished with 2 officers, both of whom were wounded and 94 other ranks.

The Royal Berks men killed were:-

- 18380 - Joseph Alcock of Eastleigh
- 20177 - William Walter Bagley of Moseley
- 9178 - Cpl Francis John Barlow of Boxford
- 18889 - George Belsham of Custom House
- 8869 - Thomas Owen Bishop of Hayes
- 12835 - Cpl Albert W Blackall of Twyford
- 17131 - Stanley George Blazeby of Forest Gate
- 14968 - Peter Francis Brown of Cranleigh
- 11752 - Lcpl Frederick Charles Bushnell of Mortimer
- 33045 - Ernest Collins of Oxford
- 39303 - John William Crowe of St Neots
- 17004 - Lcpl Arthur Francis Donnelly of St Georges in the East
- 17607 - Timothy Donovan of Poplar
- 10480 - Sgt Richard Finlan of Saltley
- 10177 - Cpl Frederick Augustus (Thomas) Freeth of Reading
- 15850 - Lcpl Harry Gealer of Shrivenham
- 37570 - James William Giles of Abingdon
- 19250 - William Godwin of Sunningdale
- 33024 - William Gomm of Bedworth
- 25237 - George Haines of Winchester
- 39422 - Burrus James Hales of Wistow
- 10206 - George Hancock of Maidenhead
- 33039 - Lsgt Charles Harris of Leighton Buzzard
- 17009 - Charles Harris of Chisbury
- 19383 - George Hessey of Windsor
- 39401 - William Higginson of Wolverhampton
- 8802 - Lcpl Frederick Hill of Borough
- 33287 - E C (Bert) Hiscock of Christchurch
- 21782 - Ernest Walter Hopkins of Farnham
- 22626 - Frederick Huggins of Wokingham
- 28818 - Arthur Richard Mitchell of Loudwater
- 30133 - Thomas George Morton of Reading
- 37539 - Harry Parkes of Birmingham
- 37565 - Thomas Pilcher of Padworth
- 33310 - Thomas Plowman of Christchurch
- 30434 - Walter Jesse Read of Kintbury

33289 - Frank Rossi of Newport
 33316 - Harry Edward Sherwood of Fratton
 19441 - Stephen Kingsley Skinner of Godstone
 37575 - Lcpl William Slade of Wantage
 21315 - Harry Smith of Ramsbury
 11776 - Cpl John Strong of Keswick
 12181 - George James Sullivan of Leyton
 37672 - Frederick Watmore of Reading
 39259 - Percy Edward Watts of St Neots
 18179 - Albert Victor Webb of Custom House
 11496 - James Edward Webb of Camden Town
 NW
 39418 - William Wright of Sawtry
 33057 - Frank Young of Oxford

La Compte

6th to 10th May 1917

On the 6th the remains of the battalion moved to La Compte which they reached at 16:30, having eaten their dinners on the march.

Here 1 warrant officer with 52 other ranks joined as reinforcement on the 6th. Capt Bishop, 2Lt Astley, 2Lt Denham and 32 ORs rejoined the battalion from XIII Corps training depot and a further 122 ORs came as reinforcements to bring the strength back to around 530 men.

For the rest of the battle of Arras the 1st Royal Berkshires kept their two company organisation but saw no further action as they were in reserve trenches between Arleux and Oppy.

St Nicholas

11th to 23rd May 1917

On the 10th they moved first to Bray and then next morning at 11:45 moved on to Les quatre vents, a camp to the north of St Nicholas where they formed part of Corps Reserves.

There was some coming and going of officers to training schools and the men were kept busy with training and parades until the 14th when they were required for fatigue duties, building roads. Specialised training for Lewis gunners snipers and rifle grenadiers continued. The weather was very hot.

Arleux

23rd to 29th May 1915

On the 23rd there was a change of scenery as they moved up into reserve trenches behind Arleux with Lt Col Hunt taking command of the 99th Brigade. They were still considerably below strength and so A and B

formed no 1 Coy with C and D forming no 2 Coy. They relieved the 2nd KOSB.

During their stay in these trenches working parties of 100-150 men were detailed to work under the orders of the 22nd Royal Fusiliers to carry wire and stakes up to the front line. They suffered two wounded on the 24th but otherwise saw no more casualties until the 28th when a working party on its way up to the front line was hit by a shell wounding 14 men, one of whom died of his wounds the next day. [Pte Charles Ida 10111 of Acton Vale].

By now the Battle of Arras was pretty well over and the Royal Berkshires played no part in the few scirmishes which took place around Bullecourt in June.

Sources

Petre pp 33-36

Everard Wyrall - *History of 2nd Division Volume II*

Reading Mercury 28/7/1917, 18/8/1917

Berkshire Chronicle 17/8/17

War Diaries

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