

Section 266

Interlude III

The 6th Battalion - Spring 1917

This covers the period from the start of the Battle of Arras in April 1917 to the end of June.

Training **March-April 1917**

The 6th played no part in the Battle of Arras, although they almost made it to the third Battle of the Scarpe. Throughout April 1917 the Battalion was in training and resting at Lumbres, Bethune and Noex les Mines before they joined VII Corps of 3rd Army at Beaurains near Arras. Here they went into bivouac.

The 3rd Battle of the Scarpe **3rd-4th May**

On the 3rd May, when the third Battle of the Scarpe opened, the 53rd Brigade was in Divisional Reserve in the old German trenches between Neuville Vitasse and Wancourt. The Brigade was in close support of the ill fated attack, conducted by the 54th and 55th Brigades, on Cherisy. The Battalion was in close support of 55th Brigade and it is unlikely they fired a shot. During the afternoon however they suffered severe casualties (15 killed, 23 wounded and 2 missing) whilst moving forward about a mile behind the front.

During the morning of 4th May the Battalion relieved 55th Brigade in the line opposite Cherisy. A heavy mist had descended and when Capt Rochfort was sent up at 0800 to arrange for the relief, which was timed at 0900, he had great difficulty in finding his way through the crowded trenches. Eventually he was able to mark off the front into two halves using an old door which was whitewashed to make it visible.

The relieving forces had to wait for the trenches to be evacuated above ground as there was not room for everyone in trenches. A and D Coys were on the right and left respectively and B was in support 400 yards behind the line. Battalion HQ was another 200 yards to the rear and C Coy were kept in reserve.

Holding the Line **5th -18th May**

Having taken over the front line the task of the 6th was to hold it for another 5 days. They were on the extreme left of the Divisional front, about 1000 yards west of

Cherisy. Attempts to recover wounded met with little success and the enemy kept up a sporadic bombardment with varying intensity.

On the 5th 2Lt A V Peel was killed by a shell outside Battalion HQ and 2Lts L A Kingham and C H Naylor were injured. Later on the 8th Sgt Major Bartholomew (10298) of Great Bedwyn was blown to pieces by another shell falling on almost the same spot.

The remainder of May was spent in Divisional Reserve between Boisieux and Mont Boxelles and Brigade Reserve at St Martin sur Cojeul.

Casualties during May 1917 were:-

Officers	Killed 1, wounded
3	

Other ranks	Killed 35, wounded 56, missing 5
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The month of June was spent in training; to 16th June at St Martin sur Cojeul and from then until 2nd July in the rest area at St Amand.

Bibliography

Petre pp 272-274