

Volume 8 Section 304**Interlude V****2/4th Battalion December 1917 - March 1918**

The 2nd/4th had been only marginally involved at Cambrai. Continued from section 294

On the Move**7th December 1917 to 15th January 1918**

The 2/4th Royal Berkshire remained on the Cambrai front in front-line, support or reserve until the 23rd December when it went back to Lechelle and thence southwestwards via Cappy to Rosieres-en-Santerre, where it arrived on the 31st.

They stayed at Rosieres, far behind the front till the 6th January, when they again moved forward to Curchy, and on Via Nesle, on the 9th, to Ugny l'Equipee.

By the 14th it was again in front line facing Pontruet, rather in advance of the position it had occupied about the 20th April 1917.

Back in the Front Line**Pontruet 16th January 1918**

On the 16th soon after 03:00, the enemy rushed the small post known as the "International" held by a corporal and two men of the battalion, and two of the 11th Hussars. The rush was made when the post was occupied by only one Berkshire man and two Hussars. The corporal and the other Berkshire man were on patrol towards the post on the left.

18th January 1918

At 02.45 on the 18th, Second-Lieutenant W. H. Smith and Sergeant Austin were passing along a sunken road in the support line when they were attacked by about fifteen Germans, who had cut through the wire and hidden under the bank of the road. Smith at once opened fire with his revolver which drove off some of the enemy, but the rest came on, and Smith and the sergeant had to retire, each supporting the other alternately with his fire. When they were approaching the nearest post, Smith shouted "Stand to," which had the effect of frightening the Germans and driving them off.

20th January 1918

On the 20th a party of C Company in Maissemy suffered severely from three German shells, which killed four and wounded seventeen.

On the Move Again**23rd January to March 2nd**

From the 23rd the battalion was in the Pontruet-Gricourt section till the 27th when it went back south-westwards to Germaine, and stayed there till the 7th February.

On the 8th it went into the right sub-sector opposite St. Quentin, on the 20th was back at Holnon Wood, and on the 23rd at Ugny, in the back area. Here it stayed till the 3rd March, when it moved into the "battle zone" in front of St. Quentin.

St Quentin**11th March 1918**

On the 11th it went into the "forward zone."

13th March 1918

On the 13th a patrol was examining the German wire when an enemy post close to them opened rapid fire, which wounded Second-Lieutenant J. C. Mullin and two men. One man was missing

17th March 1918.

In the night of the 17th raiders went out to try and procure identifications. At 21:00 the intended place of entry of the German trenches was bombarded for three minutes, after which the raiders, under Captain Knott, entered the trench. They found, however, that the part of it enclosed by the "box barrage" had been evacuated and cleared of all means of identification.

18th March 1918

On the 18th the raid of the previous night was repeated, but on this occasion the enemy replied at once to the barrage, and the flanks of the point of entry of the trench were so strongly protected by machine guns and rifles that no entry was effected and the raiders were forced to retire.

The diary does not mention any casualties in either of these raids, but it seems difficult to believe that there were none, at any rate in the second raid.

19th March 1918

The battalion was relieved on the 19th, and on the 21st when the storm of the great German offensive broke upon the 5th Army, it was back in the rear zone at Ugnay.

Sources

Petre pp193-194

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