

Volume 8 Section 324

Interlude VI - 2/4th Battalion

April - August 1918

*The 2nd/4th Battalion was moved out of the line of the German attack on 1st April.
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Reinforcements

1st to 24th April 1918

On 1st April the defences for Gentelles were constructed and an outpost piquet furnished. As Gentelles was being shelled the battalion was under intermittent shell fire and had one killed and five wounded.

At 0230 on the 2nd the battalion marched out. They had expected buses at 0400 but eventually lorries turned up at 0900. They went on to Briques-Mesnil for breakfast and ended up in Mericourt, on the Ancre five or six miles below Albert. At last they had an opportunity to take stock of their position and re-organised on the basis of 4 Coys/ 16 platoons and 64 sections so the Battalion appears to have received reinforcements.

On the 3rd they were able to define how many deficiencies they had, hence almost all the men killed in earlier engagements were reported as having been killed on the 3rd.

Whilst it was training there, on the 6th April, command was taken over temporarily by Major G. F. Waterworth, D.S.O. On the 10th command of the battalion passed to Lieut.-Colonel W. G. Oates of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters.

On the 11th the battalion was back at Amiens, and entrained for the northern area again. Detraining at Berguette, north-west of Bethune, it marched to St. Venant in the early morning of the 12th. At 8 a.m. it was ordered to occupy a defensive position in front of Robecq.

It was in this position till the 23rd, when it went into billets in rear. It had had a specially heavy shelling on the 18th, when the casualties of the day rose to six killed and thirty-two wounded.

Back into the line

25th April to 24th May 1918

On the 25th the 2/4th Royal Berkshire were sent into the forward area to relieve the 2/5th Gloucestershire, who had just gained and held some ground. From this date the battalion took its turn in front line, in support or in reserve, in the Robecq neighbourhood for some time.

On the 9th May a patrol under Lieutenant Thorne bombed a German machine-gun post and forced it to withdraw. At least two casualties occurred on the German side, but no identifications were secured.

In the following night, which was very dark, Second-Lieutenant W. H. Fry and two men of the right listening patrol failed to return, and were believed to have lost their way and walked into the enemy lines.

On the 15th Lieut.-Colonel Oates was wounded by a shell, and Major Waterworth again took command on Colonel Oates being sent to hospital. Major Waterworth, in turn, was sent to hospital on the 17th, and command was taken over by Major Christie-Miller of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

The latter part of May was marked by a great deal of aerial activity and some heavy shelling.

On the 3rd June, the battalion being still in the same area, command was taken over by Lieut.-Colonel C. R. C. Boyle, D.S.O., of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

On the 13th, when a garrison for a forward post was going to occupy it, the Germans were found in possession. They were driven out and the post was reoccupied. Nothing is said about casualties.

On the 24th one platoon of D Company raided a German post in an orchard. The enemy put down a barrage in reply to that of the British but it fell mainly on the reserve line. The post was found by the raider to be strongly held, and in the attack many casualties were inflicted on the enemy, with small loss on the British side. Second-Lieutenant Tarrant was wounded and missing, and of other ranks one was killed and two were missing.

25th May to 31st July 1918

After this the Royal Berkshire marched, at 01:00 on the 25th, to Busne Chateau and proceeded by omnibus to Lingham Camp, where they remained in the back area at training, diversified by sports, etc., till the 22nd July when a move was made to a camp N.W. of Pont Asquin.

31st July to 9th August 1918

The battalion moved to Bourecq on the 31st July, and on the 5th August relieved the 1st Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry of the 5th Division in support line in the Nieppe Forest left sub-sector.

On the 7th, Second-Lieutenant Thorne was killed by a shell.

On the 9th the Royal Berkshire relieved the Oxfordshire Battalion in the right front line of the brigade, and next day Captain H. B. Goater was killed by a German sniper.

Sources

Petre pp 198-199

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