

## War Diaries 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's royal Riflemen May – July 1915.

The battalion landed in France on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1915. 11 weeks later it was involved in major fighting at Hooge and Hickman along with many fellow riflemen had lost his life. Casualties were numerous but sporadic; Hickman could have been amongst any of the wounded reported in the diaries. The seven images below describe events over those eleven weeks.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May they left Boulogne by train for WOTTON. From then until the 28<sup>th</sup> they marched via MILLAIAN, ZUITPEENE, FLETRE and OUDERDOM. Here they commenced eight days of instruction in trench warfare moving into the trenches at YPRES held by the Manchester Regiment. On the 30<sup>th</sup> May 5 men were wounded whilst trench digging. Next day one man was killed and one wounded in the trench and another 2 were wounded digging. The battalion remained under instruction until 6<sup>th</sup> June when they moved to PIONEER FARM as reserves for the trenches there, which they took over on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

They were relieved on the 13<sup>th</sup> and marched to OUDERDOM to be reserves there. The period from 21<sup>st</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> was spent in camp under regular artillery fire from the enemy but without casualties. They took over some trenches from 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry battalion on 29<sup>th</sup>. The next day one officer and 4 other ranks were killed with one officer and six other ranks wounded.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July The battalion occupied trenches at BELLEWARDE FARM, east of Ypres, until 5<sup>th</sup> July. They were under fire most of the time. So far 1 officer and 11 men had died with 2 officers and 30 men wounded. On 6<sup>th</sup> July they attacked the German trenches. The enemy replied by shelling heavily, especially the support trenches. Two officers were killed with 6 other ranks killed and 16 wounded. The diary records: "... about 10pm a party of 6 under Lieut WHELAN successfully rushed a German listening post bayonetting the occupants. The Germans threw a bomb by which most of the attacking party were wounded – one man was missing."

For the next two days the battalion was in the same trenches. On the 7<sup>th</sup> they lost a further officer killed with one wounded and one other rank killed with 21 wounded. During the night of the 8<sup>th</sup> they were relieved by 43<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade, but not before losing two more men killed and 7 wounded. They were being constantly shelled and enfiladed by a German heavy calibre gun being fired from WYTSCHAETE. "Full use was made of gas shells, particularly on Brigade HQ."

From the 9<sup>th</sup> July until the 29<sup>th</sup> the battalion was undertaking working parties (unspecified objectives), during which time 3 men were killed and six wounded in unspecified circumstances. On the 29<sup>th</sup> the battalion relieved the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion at HOOGE. The process was completed by 1.30 a.m on the 30<sup>th</sup> and at 3a.m. the Germans attacked "under cover of liquid fire and minor weapons". Trenches to the left were lost by "B" Coy hung onto theirs. "D" Coy lost their trench but retook it, only for the successful group to be killed or driven out with the lieutenant in command being killed.

"News gradually reached Bttn HQ that [5 named lieutenants] have been killed and 2 other officers wounded, and that there are many casualties in other ranks. There are at this time 2 platoons of D Coy, 1 platoon of B Coy in support and matters appeared serious when 8th K R Rifles, who had turned round and marched straight back from their intended billets began to arrive. They had then had no sleep and no food. Our own battalion was in the same position. Eventually orders were received that an artillery bombardment would begin at 2p.m. and an infantry attack would be made at 2.45p.m.

2pm, 2.45p.m - This was duly carried out. The infantry counter attack failed being brought to a standstill by heavy machine gun fire, shell fire and rifle fire. Many casualties occurred and there were at the moment only 2 platoon commanders left in the B<sup>n</sup>. 4 [named] officers turned up about this time having been away on a course. They heard of the fight and re turned. As it was getting dark orders were received that the Batt<sup>n</sup> would be relieved by 6DCLI The relief was duly effected under cover of darkness and the men were withdrawn. Trench 9.2 which had been held all day was ordered to be abandoned. The casualties sustained by the Battalion were 5 [named] officers killed, one died of wounds, one missing believed dead, two missing, four wounded. Other ranks killed 35, wounded 187, missing 67.

The chief features of the day were:

- 1 The first use of liquid fire [*flame throwers*] against British troops. \*It appears to have been very effectively handled against the RB (*battalion to the left*) and ineffectively handled against us).
- 2 The quickness with which the Germans consolidated their position
- 3 The ineffectiveness of ¾of an hours bombardment which quite failed to knock out their machine guns or infantry.
- 4 The defence of (trenches) 92 and 91 by A and B Coys under CAOTS WORMALD AND LA TERRIERE when the trenches which were without efficient [*can't read*] got exposed to fire from the rear as well as flanks and front.

B<sup>n</sup> to bivouac arriving about 6a.m. resting."

Next day, 1<sup>st</sup> August, the companies were reorganised and a new draft of officers and men arrived and the GOC VI Corps inspected the troops. The war carried on...

[Facsimile copies of these diaries are available here](#)