

War Diary 2nd Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers March 1918 – Private GF Squires

As Squires died of wounds sustained, it is not possible to pinpoint the particular action in which he was wounded. Given the battalion saw little action until late March, it may have been in the latter part of the month. The first part of March was spent moving and training. They even had time to hold a gymkhana on the 13th March.

However, an intense enemy artillery barrage started at 4.40 a.m. on 21st March.

The battalion counterattacked on the 22nd successfully at first but lost their own trenches as the Germans counterattacked in their turn. The battalion withdrew to HAM. One company used a compass bearing which took them through enemy occupied territory. They were challenged twice but managed to make their way to HAM at 5.00 a.m. to join the rest of the battalion!

After regrouping, another unsuccessful action was fought on the 24th and 25th. Again they were ordered to withdraw. On the 24th a contingent of French troops were added.

The 26th and 27th again saw the battalion attacking the enemy only to be forced to retreat later. On the 28th the diary noted "by 6.00 a.m. only 30 French had arrived in the position which they apparently considered to be an outpost line, but it was decided to hang on." The enemy inflicted many casualties by using a field gun firing at point blank range from 800 yards. The battalion was again withdrawn, and again suffered heavy casualties from machine gun and field gun fire.

Scroll down for images of verbatim war diary. Magnification may help.

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II, and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

OR
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	11.3.18.		Training carried on under Coy. supervision. Co. attends practice counter-attack scheme.	
	12.3.18.		Coy training continued.	
	13.3.18.		Gymkhana held by Battalion outside DURY	
	14.3.18.		Coy training continued. Co. again attends scheme, with Coy. officers.	
	15.3.18.		Coy training. Gen. Sir Douglas Smith visits B ⁿ .	
	16.3.18.		Coy training continued.	
	17.3.18.		Voluntary Labour Services.	
	18.3.18.		B ⁿ marches to ETRAILLERS, via AUBIGNY & FORESTE. Relieves 2 nd YORKS. Regt in defended locality. Practice manning of Battle positions.	
	19.3.18.		Practice manning of Battle positions early in the morning. Quiet day.	
	20.3.18.		Own artillery somewhat active, especially at night.	
	21.3.18.		Intense enemy barrage opens at 4.40 am. ^{21st 176. Knight ^{TO} being wounded} Battle positions manned. Strong attacks develop at 10.0 am. MANCHESTER REDOUBT still holding out at 4.30 pm. fell, presumably about 6.30 pm. as no further news from 16 th inches.	
	22.3.18.		Attack on Battle Zone, held by 2 nd BEDFORDS. 'A' Coy R.S.F. moved up to replace.	

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			<p>counter-attack Coy. of BEDFORDS, involved in the fighting. A Coy of 18th K.L.R. replaces "A" Coy. 'A' Coy makes a successful counter-attack at 1 pm. on benches N. of SAVY-ETREILLERS Road. 2nd LT. J. MURRAY wounded. at 2 pm. enemy again retake bench. New counter-attack under 2nd LT. J. BLAIR temporarily successful, but Coy. is too weak to hold on. 2nd LT. J. BLAIR wounded. Remains of Coy. will draw to ETREILLERS. CAPT. W.C. MAIR, o.c. "B" Coy, killed by a sniper. Enemy driving down on both flanks. Orders received at 4.30 pm to withdraw & proceed to HAM. Withdrawal begun in good order at 4.40 pm. with enemy snipers & M. Gunners making their way thro' ETREILLERS. Bⁿ makes its way in small parties thro' HAM to VERLAINE with orders to bivouac there. LT. HAKEWELL-SMITH & No 5. Platoon of 'B' Coy did not get order to withdraw, & remained in forward position, holding off enemy until dark. They then marched on a compass bearing, thro' VAUX & GERMAINE, already held by the enemy, & though challenged twice by parties of the enemy, made their way successfully to HAM, & passed thro' it at 5 am.</p>	

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23. 3.18			<p>at 4.30 am heavy M.G. rifle fire near HAM aroused Bⁿ which stood to. at 6 am it was decided to take up a defensive position astride VERLAINE - ESMERY. HALLOW Road, 2nd Bedfords on right, ourselves on left. Quiet day, except for a good deal of shelling on positions. orders received to move up to fill up flank towards DOLAN COURT. move postponed.</p>	
24. 3.18.			<p>Bⁿ ordered forward. at 4.45 am. Patrols immediately in contact with enemy 2nd Lt H.S. Bryce wounded. Our immediate ^{left} flank was pierced at 7 am & withdrawal ordered to ESMERY. HALLOW defences. Delaying action fought along the road, heavy casualties being inflicted on the enemy working in force round our left flank. Boys separated from Bⁿ Hdqrs & withdrew in direction of VILLETTE to a position near FLAYY-LE-MELDEUX, where they reorganised, fought a delaying action, & finally under orders withdrew to ROIEGLISE, which they reached at 12 noon 25th & were joined by Bⁿ Hdqrs. late that night. Meanwhile, about 11 am withdrawal was made by Bⁿ Hdqrs along with 2nd Bedfords to ESMERY. HALLOW defences, already under fire from our field guns, & vacated the then</p>	

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24.3.18	(continued)		<p>went down thro the village, intending to make for the Canal defences at LIBER MONT. On the way thro the village, CAPT. R. H. THOMAS, R.A.M.C. was killed. Immediately west of ESMERY. HALLON, elements of 90th Bde were formed, with other mixed units, into three or four skirmishing lines, & these gave mutual protection until the bridge at LANNOY FARM was safely crossed. The new line was immediately organised, into posts of mixed units under such senior officers as were available, the 90th Bde sector being E. of LANNOY FARM. Sector, S. of the bridge was relieved by elements of French troops during the night.</p>	
25.3.18.			<p>about 11 am. the battle developed along the whole front, but a strong resistance was made, though the position was heavily enfiladed by M.G. & Field Gun fire. About 2.30 pm. the French on our right retired, & the left flank being turned, orders were received from Bde to withdraw. This was done, but was very difficult owing to the marsh & canal behind, & the heavy enfilade fire. Two rallies were attempted, but nothing could be done, & the elements of the Division withdrew by SOLENTE.</p>	

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25.3.18	(cont ^d)		to ROIEGLISE, where B ⁿ Hdqrs & Coys. permitted were reorganised. B ⁿ bivouaged here. Bde conveyed by bus to ARVILLERS	
26.3.18			At 11 am. B ⁿ was ordered to advance along the ROYE-AMIENS Road, & take up a defensive position at LE QUEENNOY. Enemy was in possession, & it was decided to make a stand at BOUCHOIR, with 89 th Bde on left & BEDFORDS, R.S.F. astride the road, & 36 th Div. on the right. All afternoon, cavalry patrols re were visible in front of the position. Towards nightfall, transport, infantry & artillery were seen crossing our front in the direction of ERCHES, about 3000 ^x from our outposts. At 11 pm. a section of transport missed their way, & came into our lines, the personnel killed or taken prisoner, & 1 field kitchen, 1 water cart, & two G.S. wagons captured.	
27.3.18.			about 10 am. a strong attack developed both right & left, and by 12 noon both flanks being turned, we had to withdraw to about 800 ^x west of ARVILLERS-LA FOLIE road. A counter attack was immediately organised, and under heavy M.G. fire, advance was made to a position 40 ^x west of the road, with outposts on it &	

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27-3-18	(Contd)		in front of it towards BOUCHOIR. During the advance LT HAKEWELL SMITH, LT K. MACKENZIE, 2 nd Lts J. SANGSTER, ^{2nd Lt N.A. McMillan} and P. MARION were wounded. By nightfall the position was organised, with 18 th Kings L.R. on left, R.S.F centre, & BEDFORDS right. During the night the French were to relieve us.	
28-3-18.			By 6.0 am. only 30 French had arrived in the position, which they apparently considered as an outpost line, but it was decided to hang on. Strong attacks developed on LA FOLIE (left) & ARVILLERS right by 10.0 am & our front was pressed from 11.0 am. many casualties being caused by a field gun firing point blank at 800 ^{yds} . Word was received from the 89 th Bde on left that they were to consider themselves relieved & withdraw at once. Our right flank was turned, but a defensive flank was formed, & a strong rifle fire was brought to bear on the enemy until about 2 pm. S.A.T. ammunition was practically exhausted. Word was now received that we were relieved, & were to withdraw, but to minimise casualties, it was decided to hang on till dark. Immediately afterwards it was found that the BEDFORDS	

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28.3.18.	(Cont'd)		9 R.S.F. were alone in the trenches, with the enemy far round on the right; & the order to withdraw was given. During this, we suffered numerous casualties from M.G. & field gun fire, & 2nd Lts. A.R. DOUGAL & W. TEMPLETON were missing. The B ⁿ marched to ROVREL, & remained here in close billets all next day.	
29.3.18.			at ROVREL, in reserve to 4 th French Cavalry Division. Ordered to take up CANTONNEMENTS des ALERTES at MAILLY. Order cancelled.	
30.3.18.			at 8.30 am ordered to march to SALEUX, where Division entrained for ST. VALERY. S. SOMME.	
31.3.18.			Arrived at S. VALERY at 1.0 am & marched 8 kilos to AAREST.	

J. Hutton-Riley

LIEUT. COLONEL,
COSTS, and METAL BOOTS FUSILIERS.