

1917.Appendix.October.TRENCHES.

- 11th)
12th)
13th)
- A detail report of the operations undertaken by this Battalion during the above three days is appended in app. "D".
- 14th.
- The relief which commenced in the afternoon of the 13th was not completed until about 5.30 a.m. today. On relief, Companies reported to the CANAL BANK BATHS, where the men bathed and received a clean change of underclothing. Arrangements were made for one cooker to report at No.4 Bridge, CANAL BANK, at 8.30 a.m. for the purpose of providing the Battalion with hot breakfast and a midday meal. At 1.45 p.m. lorries conveyed the Battalion back to billets at DIRTY BUCKET CAMP. During the loading of the lorries, a number of hostile bombing planes appeared and dropped bombs, one of which fell on a lorry and caused several casualties to the 7th R.W.K. No casualties were caused to this Battalion. On return to Camp the Battalion was provided with a hot meal, after which the men had a good rest.
- DIRTY BUCKET CAMP.
- 15th.
- The Commanding Officer inspected Company Organisation during the morning, after which companies were placed at the disposal of Company Commanders for the remainder of the day for cleaning up, etc. A free entertainment was provided at the Church Army Hut during the evening for the benefit of the men who took part in the recent operations. Free cocoa was provided.
- 16th.
- Companies placed at the disposal of Company Commanders for reorganisation of Platoons, and general refitment, etc. In view of the continuation of weather favourable to hostile bombing, special precautions to be taken against Enemy Aircraft were issued to Companies in addition to Fire Orders, etc.
- 17th.
- The Commanding Officer inspected all Companies in clean fatigue dress during the morning, after which Companies were at the disposal of Company Commanders for the remainder of the day.

SECRET.

Appendix "D".8th Ser. Bn. The East Surrey Regiment.ACCOUNT OF THE ACTION ON THE
12th OCTOBER, 1917.

The Battalion moved up on the night of the 10th/11th only one guide being provided by the 32nd Brigade, as far as the MAISON de BULGARE. He lost his way, and the Battalion wandered all night, the first Company arriving at Battalion Headquarters at 4 a.m. The relief was rushed through, but could not be completed properly owing to the dawn.

Maps had been issued to Company Commanders showing forming up line, objectives, etc., but on the morning of the 11th fresh orders were received altering these. It was impossible to see Company Commanders until dark as they could not get to the Battalion Headquarters shell hole in daylight. They in turn had no means of explaining to their Officers and N.C.Os. on the map, and in fact, had great difficulty in finding their Platoons, owing to the darkness and shell-torn ground. No. 5 Platoon under 2/Lieut. M.L. Riddett, could not be found at all, until it was seen getting up and going forward when the barrage started. Under these conditions the men and section commanders had little chance of knowing what their objectives were, and no opportunity of looking at them beforehand in daylight.

The dispositions for attack were as shown in attached copy of orders.

The tape was laid out from GLOSTER FARM to TERRIER FARM by Lieut. K. Bell-Irving, who had no easy task, but it was eventually completed, although the tape was broken several times by shell fire.

Shortly before zero 2/Lieut. R.S. Franks, Commanding "D" Company, was killed, and a few minutes afterwards one of his subalterns, 2/Lieut. C.A. Heath, was severely wounded.

The barrage started at zero minus 4 minutes by Brigade time, and appeared fairly intense, but machine gun fire was immediately opened from guns posted close to our tape, which was not touched by the barrage at all. 2/Lieut. C. Whyntie, the sole remaining officer of "D" Company, was wounded at once, and Captain C.R. Holms, M.C., commanding "A" Company and 2/Lieut. F. Todd of "C" Company were also wounded very soon.

The barrage is described by the N.C.Os. and men, whom I have questioned about it, as being too light. They state that the enemy appeared to be very little inconvenienced by it, and that enemy machine guns were firing the whole time in spite of the barrage. The enemy barrage came down about 4 minutes after Zero about 150 yards behind our tape line. It was not very heavy, and consisted chiefly of crumps with a few small H.E.

About

About Zero plus 3 hours Major G.G.M. Place, M.C. commanding "B" Company, returned wounded to Battalion Headquarters and reported that some of our men had advanced 500 yards or more, but that they had gone past several machine gun posts which were still holding out. If this statement is correct, it would account for our missing N.C.O.'s. and men, but no N.C.O. who survived states that he advanced further than 100 yards from our tape line. Possibly a few groups of men were able to slip through, and it was these that Major Place saw. In particular a post with two guns about 100 yards east of GLOSTER FARM caused a large number of casualties. This was confirmed by Captain Lister, R.A.M.C., who stated that 60 to 100 of our dead were lying in front of GLOSTER FARM.

I have questioned every effective N.C.O. in the Battalion but have got very little information of any value out of them, as they had had no previous opportunity of seeing a map, and were very vague as to their whereabouts. But several of them agree that small parties of the enemy crossed from OXFORD HOUSES to BEEK HOUSES by means of a shallow trench for part of the way, and sniped from BEEK HOUSES. There is very little of these houses to be seen except small heaps of red bricks. There also appears to be a machine gun post about V.26.a.90.75, upon which a Lewis Gun of "A" Company kept up bursts of fire. The mud was so bad that any question of moving rapidly from shell hole to shell hole was quite impossible, and most of our Officer and N.C.O. casualties were incurred in attempting to lead advances by short rushes after the barrage had been lost. The rifles also got covered with mud, and even after they had been cleaned it was difficult to keep them in action for more than a few rounds without cleaning out the breech again, as the men's hands were plastered with mud, and each time that a fresh clip was put in some mud went in with it.

The situation was very obscure for some time, owing to the fact that all the Officers except three, and a large number of the senior N.C.O.'s. had become casualties, and also that no runners could get back over that open ground owing to rifle and machine gun fire. By degrees it became certain that, with the exception of small isolated parties our men had made very little progress, and I sent a message to Brigade asking permission to reorganise my line that evening 100 yards in front of the forming up tape, in order to have some definite mark to guide us.

The 6th Berkshire Regiment had formed up a short distance in rear of the tape, and were digging in there.

About 2 p.m. the Brigade Major came up and informed me that we might be relieved that night by the Berks, but that it was still uncertain, as orders had not come through from the Division.

During the evening I reorganised my posts on the tape line, and was in touch with the Buffs on the left and 9th Division on the right.

During

During the night, Battalion Headquarters, which consisted of a shell hole and two sheets of corrugated iron, were shelled very persistently by a 4.2" howitzer, and at 2.30 a.m. received a direct hit on one end, killing five, and wounding two, of the Headquarters personnel.

I had already searched for some better place for Battalion Headquarters, but there was nothing better to be had, so we stayed where we were, and fortunately had no more casualties, though the shelling continued very close to us all night.

At 4 a.m. not having received any orders, I sent the Adjutant to BULOW FARM, to ring up Brigade. At 8 a.m. I received orders, timed 8.50 p.m. the previous night, to the effect that when the line of posts had been established on the present line and touch regained with Battalions on right and left, the surplus men might be withdrawn to GOURNIER FARM. It being then daylight, it was impossible to withdraw any men from the front line.

Shortly afterwards I received orders to the effect that the Battalion would be relieved that night by the 7th Queens. I arranged the relief with Col. Lenard and Captain Watson of the 7th Queens, and obtained permission to move Battalion Headquarters to BULOW FARM. The relief commenced at 5.30 p.m. and was carried out without incident, except that No.14 Platoon of the Queens were caught by machine gun fire on the way up and suffered several casualties.

The casualties suffered by the Battalion during the period 10th/14th October, 1917, were as follows:-

	<u>Officers.</u>	<u>O.Rks.</u>
Killed	4	52
Wounded	5	137
Missing	<u>Nil</u>	<u>42</u>
	<u>9</u>	<u>231</u>

Attached 1 Officer wounded - Capt. G.A. BIRNIE,
(R.A.M.C.)

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT ATTACK.

(1) An hour before zero our posts should be withdrawn 150 yards, except for posts in concrete shelters. The barrage should then come down on our old front line, and thus eliminate enemy posts close up to our original post line.

(2) Lachrymatory shells should be used on all known machine gun positions shortly before zero, and Stokes Mortars should put smoke screens round the more important ones in the enemy front line system. Once our men get started they usually get on, but both here and at CHERISY, enemy front line posts have held up the whole advance.

(3) Runners of outgoing Brigades should be made to remain in the line for 24 hours after their Brigade is relieved to ensure that the new runners know the various routes.

(4) There should be an officer in charge of all Brigade runner relay posts. Some messages took 12 hours between Brigade and Battalion.

Sd.

Lieut.Col.
Commanding 8/Ser. Bn. East Surrey Regiment.

18.10.17.

SECRET.

Copy No.2.

OPERATION ORDER No. 15.

Ref. Map Sheet POELCAPPELL Ed.4. and Operation Map issued herewith.

1. INFORMATION.

On a date that has been notified to all concerned, the 18th Division will take part in a general advance.

The attack will be carried out by the 55th Infantry Brigade on a Three Battalion front, with 8th East Surrey Regiment on the RIGHT, the 7th Buffs in the CENTRE, the 7th Royal West Kent Regt. on the LEFT and the 7th Queens Regt. in RESERVE.

A Battalion of the 9th Division will attack on the right of the 8th East Surrey Regiment.

2. DISPOSITIONS OF COMPANIES.

The Battalion will attack using the "leapfrog" formation with "B" Company on the RIGHT, and "C" Company on the LEFT. "A" Company will "leap-frog" through "B" Company, and "D" Company through "C" Company.

3. BATTALION BOUNDARY.

On the RIGHT the LEKKERBOTER BEEK to V.21.c.6.0. thence a line drawn from this point to V.22.a.0.0. On the LEFT a line drawn through GLOSTER FARM, inclusive, through bend in road at V.20.d.45.05 to V.21.a.2.3.

Dividing line between Companies - V.26.a.4.9 to road at V.20.d.2.4 and thence along the road through SURREY FARM at V.20.d.6.6 and FRACAS FARM at V.21.c.0.6.

4. OBJECTIVES.

The objective for B. & C. Companies will be a line drawn from V.20.d.25.80 to V.20.d.55.00 without a pause two platoons each of A. & D. Companies will leap-frog through this line to the

Battalion's

(3) Runners of outgoing Brigades should be made to remain in the line for 24 hours after their Brigade is relieved to ensure that the new runners know the various routes.

(4) There should be an officer in charge of all Brigade runner relay posts. Some messages took 12 hours between Brigade and Battalion.

Sd.

Lieut.Col.
Commanding 8/Ser. Bn. East Surrey Regiment.

18.10.17.

SECRET.

Copy No.2.

OPERATION ORDER No. 15.

Ref. Map Sheet POELCAPPELL Ed.4. and Operation Map issued herewith.

1. INFORMATION.

On a date that has been notified to all concerned, the 18th Division will take part in a general advance.

The attack will be carried out by the 55th Infantry Brigade on a Three Battalion front, with 8th East Surrey Regiment on the RIGHT, the 7th Buffs in the CENTRE, the 7th Royal West Kent Regt. on the LEFT and the 7th Queens Regt. in RESERVE.

A Battalion of the 9th Division will attack on the right of the 8th East Surrey Regiment.

2. DISPOSITIONS OF COMPANIES.

The Battalion will attack using the "leapfrog" formation with "B" Company on the RIGHT, and "C" Company on the LEFT. "A" Company will "leap-frog" through "B" Company, and "D" Company through "C" Company.

3. BATTALION BOUNDARY.

On the RIGHT the LEKKERBOTER BEEK to V.21.c.6.0. thence a line drawn from this point to V.22.a.0.0. On the LEFT a line drawn through GLOSTER FARM, inclusive, through bend in road at V.20.d.45.05 to V.21.a.2.3.

Dividing line between Companies - V.26.a.4.9 to road at V.20.d.2.4 and thence along the road through SURREY FARM at V.20.d.6.6 and FRACAS FARM at V.21.c.0.6.

4. OBJECTIVES.

The objective for B. & C. Companies will be a line drawn from V.20.d.25.80 to V.20.d.55.00 without a pause two platoons each of A. & D. Companies will leap-frog through this line to the

Battalion's

Battalion's first objective, shown as dotted blue line on Operation Map issued herewith.

At Zero plus one hour and 40 minutes the remaining two Platoons of both A. & D. Companies will leap-frog through this line to the Battalion's final objective, shown by blue line on Operation Map.

After capture of the Battalion's final objective a Unit of the 53rd Infantry Brigade will form up on this line and at zero plus 2 hours and 30 minutes will be ready to advance and leap frog through to the Divisional final objective.

Officers Commanding A. & D. Companies will ensure that a proper line of posts is established for the 53rd Brigade to form up on at Battalion final objective.

5. FORMING UP LINE.

Companies will form up on a line running from V.26.a.6.5 to V.20.c.2.3.

Lieut. K. Bell-Irving will mark out this line with discs and taps at dusk on Y/Z night. He will take special care that the tape connects with those of the Battalions on the left and right.

Company Commanders will report to the Adjutant that their Companies are in position at latest at zero minus 2 hours.

Forward battalion report centre will be established at FRACAS FARM V.21.c.0.6. as soon as conditions permit after zero hour.

After the capture of objectives, they will be consolidated by means of a system of posts organised in depth.

An addendum will be issued showing Platoons & Units detailed to take and construct strong points etc.

6. FORWARD MEDICAL STATION.

A forward medical aid post station will be established at GLOSTER FARM at V.20.c.4.3.

7. LIAISON.

In order to maintain touch companies will detail parties of 1 N.C.O. and 4 men to meet similar parties from Units on the flanks as follows:-

A.Co. On Track at V.21.c.9.5.
D.Co. On road at V.20.d.45.95 and at
hedge at V.21.a.15.35.

Immediately these parties have met a runner is to be sent back to Battalion Headquarters to report the fact.

8. AMMUNITION ETC.

S.A.A., Bombs, Flares, Tools etc. to be carried on the same scale as carried into this sector by the Battalion.

Blankets. Each section will dump its blankets in its shell hole. They will be collected by the Field Ambulance Bearers.

9. ARTILLERY ARRANGEMENTS.

The Artillery barrage will open at Zero on a line 150 yards in front of the forming up line.

It will lift at Zero plus 8 minutes and will move forward by lifts of 100 yards in 8 minutes.

The protective barrage on the first objective will lift at Zero plus 1 hour and 40 minutes, that in front of the second objective at zero plus 3 hours.

10. AEROPLANE CONTACT.

Contact planes will fly over the objective at Zero plus 2 hours and 30 minutes, Zero plus 4 hours and 30 minutes, Zero plus 7 hours.

11. TIME.

All watches will be synchronized at Battalion Headquarters at 10 p.m. Y/2 day.

12. ZERO.

Zero hour will be notified later.

13. DISCIPLINE.

Anyone using the word "retire" will be treated as an enemy and shot at once.

14. ACKNOWLEDGE.

F.B. WHITEHURST

Captain & Adjutant,

8/Ser. Bn. East Surrey Regiment.

Issued at 6 p.m.

11.10.17.

Copies to:-

1. C.O.
2. File.
3. 4. 5. & 6. "A" "B" "C" & "D" Companies.