Royal Sussex Regiment: Newspaper Articles and Documents

5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (original held at West Sussex Record Office RSR MS 4/64)

War Diary covering the Battle of Aubers Ridge (9th May 1915)

The whole war diary for the 5th Battalion is available on this website on the 'Battalion War Diaries' page.
5TH BATTALION THE ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT

Appendix

1916

May

1st 4.15 a.m.

Violent bombardment particularly of 2nd line & communication trenches & dugouts in rear. Enemy at last silenced by our heavy artillery - 0.9.9. Bull instantly killed by a shell in his dugout - Casualties remarkably slight - men showed great steadiness under extraordinary heavy fire.

2nd

Relieved by Scots Guards - Immediately before relief 2/Lt. W. E. Price instantly killed by a rifle bullet outside his dugout. Marched during the night to GOMMECHI.

3rd 4.30 a.m.

Arrived at 4.30 a.m. & took over rent billets as before. 2/Lt. Price buried in S.W. corner (under crucifix) GOMMECHI Churchyard. Remained here until 5th May when received orders to move tomorrow to MESPLAUX.

6th 6 p.m.

Move completed into close Billets.

7th

Blankets & packs of 1st Div. stored here during the day. Received orders to move off to RICHEBOURG L'AVOUE (section D.2.) ready for attack at dawn on 8th. Move countermanded while Battalion parading.

8th

Moved here in evening into support trenches (C line) behind RUE DE BOIS (Section D.2.) & ordered to attack at dawn.

RICHEBOURG L'AVOUE - AVELETTE - GOMMECHI - BERTHEUX - CAMBRAI.

9th 4 p.m. to 30th

Heavy cannonade commenced in enemy's parapets & barbed wire and on buildings in rear. The battalion had received orders to advance to the attack at 5.40 a.m. after 10 minutes intense bombardment. The line of attack is shown in annexed sketch MAP. The orders as to attack were as follows:

MAP & annexed
9th - 30th (Oct.)

(Reference ILLIES - VIOLAINES - FESTUBERT 1/10000)
The 2nd R.I. Sussex on left - with left on cinder track and the 1st Northamptons on right, with right directed on point 22. The second line were the 8th R.I. Sussex on left and the 2nd King's Royal Rifles on right. The third line were the 1st Loyal N. Lancs. on left & the 9th King's Liverpool on right. The first objective was the trench line between Q.3. & V.1. & when this had been taken to gain the line (F.10.) - building about P.13. - Q.14 & entrench at once, making a strong point of the Farm at Q.10. The second line were ordered to clear the trenches, the K.R.R. to work along to F.8. & protect the right flank & eventually gain the orchard at P.4. Our Battalion was to follow immediately in rear of the assaulting Battalions - feed up them as necessary - clear all hostile trenches still occupied in rear of both assaulting Battalions - secure all prisoners & send them to the rear & then follow in support. The second objective of the left Battalions was FIVE CQUR D'AVOUE (inclu) to Q.12 (inclu.) with all buildings about P.12-13;14;15 & 16 & the ultimate objective of the Brigade the line Q.9. - P.8. - M.9 - M.25. Our Battalion Orders were for A Coy. on the right & C Company on the left to form the first & second lines of the Battalion, & for B Company after following A Coy.into the enemy's trenches to work along towards the right in support of the left of the Northamptons, the K.R.R., having by then moved right handed in their advance towards F.8. The Battalion was ready in the C line & as the bombardment ceased moved A & C Coys into B line & then followed across the open 250 yards to the advanced line after the 2nd R.I. Sussex. Before reaching the advanced trench the Germans had already opened an extremely heavy rifle, machine gun & shell fire, & C Coy had 1 Officer (2/Lt. Haigh) wounded & about 30 men killed or wounded during this preliminary advance - C Company (less 1 Platoon) & A Company (less
1915

May

9th - 20th

(Std.)

1 Platoon) left over the front parapet & advanced most gallantly to the support of the 2nd Sussex, who were already held up by the enemy's fire - B Company (less 1 Platoon) having seen the left companies of the K.R.R. go over the parapet, themselves went over & advanced a quarter left. I immediately stopped the 4th platoons of A & B from advancing as I found the situation impossible & no more men could be advanced. The enemy's fire particularly from Machine Guns near the ground in the salients of his line on our left flank, made it impossible for anyone to advance. The men in front were being hit constantly & the whole ground in front of the advanced breastworks & behind them was under an extraordinary heavy shell fire. I found later that Capt. Courthope had fortunately been able to stop a platoon of C Company from advancing. Lt. Happer was here wounded in the advanced trench. At 7 a.m. orders were received to retire, & those men who could began to come in, many of them wounded. Sergt. Roberts was very brave in going out 3 times with orders to the firing line. Eventually we received orders that we should be relieved temporarily & to collect our men in D line - but to be ready to resume the attack in the afternoon after a further artillery bombardment - we then found 2/Lt. A. Fawcett had been killed, Maj. B. H. Langham, 3/Lts. Dedd, Farry, & Hobart, wounded & Capt. Grant & Stewart Jones & 2/Lts. Powell & Dennis were missing & about 250 other ranks either killed wounded or missing. About 2 p.m. we received orders to move into the D line in support to the 1st Brigade, who were to attack at 4.30. This they did - but although we heard that a few men of the Black Watch & some of the 2nd & 5th R Sussex who got up & joined their advance got into the enemy's trenches, very few got back, & the attack failed as in the morning. At 5 p.m. we were ordered to march to Lt. TOURRET where we should get instructions as to billeting - we formed up in a field behind Chocolat Minier Corner.
1916

May

9th - 20th (Contd.)

told the men off & marched down in
fours through a considerably
disorganised mob of men from other
regiments. At LE TOURET we were
ordered to go to billets at AVELLETTE.

8 p.m.

where we stayed till 8 p.m. & then
marched to GOMMELEM and stayed there
in rest billets until the next day
when we moved to ESTHOR and took
over billets in the Tobacco Factory
in the Rue de Lille. Next day there
as Corps Reserve & then Brigade
Reserve until the 2nd Bde. relieved
the 3rd Brigade in Section 2 which
the latter had taken over from
the French the previous week -
5 of GUINCHY towards VERKELLES -
We moved into Brigade support at
front of the Battalion in the
Village in Billets & A Coy part of
B Coy in dugouts near the MAISON
ROUGE.

CALEDONIA

24th

Relieved 2nd Rl. Sussex in trenches
holding section 2.2, with Ed. Cress
near MAISON ROUGE. Capt. H.A.G. Fazan
appointed temporary Adjutant, vice
Capt. A.W.E. Lloyd to Hospital with
nervous breakdown.

25th

Surgeon Capt. Waugh rejoined from
England.

27th

Capt. E.P. Dawes to Hospital -
nervous breakdown.

28th

Returned to billets in villages
on relief by Rl. Sussex.

31st

Ordered to take over GUINCHY
trenches tomorrow - left section
from the CANAL Bank to PALL NALL -
Reinforcements of Officers & men
badly needed - reduced to 6
Company Officers & about 360
effective rifles for the firing
line - Total Strength only 566
including 8 combatant Officers,
Capt. W. Transport Officer & M.O.

Fred. G. LANGHAY, Lt. Col.
Comd. 5th Rl. Sussex Regt.