

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.

1916

Appendix

May

RICHEBOURG L'AVOUE.

- 1st 4.15 Violent bombardment particularly
a.m. of 2nd line & communication trenches
to & dugouts in rear. Enemy at last
5.30 silenced by our heavy artillery -
a.m. C.S.M. 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 GOMBEHEM.

GOMBEHEM.

- 3rd 4.30 Arrived at 4.30 a.m. & took over
a.m. rest billets as before. 2/Lt.
Price buried in S.W. corner (under
crucifix) GOMBEHEM Churchyard.
Remained here until 5th May when
received orders to move tomorrow
to MESPLAUX.

MESPLAUX.

- 6th 6 p.m. Move completed into close
Billets.
- 7th Blankets & packs of 1st Divn.
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.

RICHEBOURG L'AVOUE.

- 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 -
GOMBEHEM - BETHUNE - CAMBRIN.

- 9th 4 p.m. Heavy cannonade commenced in
to enemy's parapets & barbed wire
20th 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 A
annexed

1915

Appendix

May9th - 20th
(Ctd.)

(Reference ILLIES - VIOLAINE -
FESTUBERT 1/10000) The 2nd Rl.
Sussex on left - with left on cinder
track and the 1st Northampton on
right, with right directed on point
22. The second line were the 5th
Rl. 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
Liverpools on right. The first
objective was the trench line
between Q.2. & V.1. & when this
had been taken to gain the line
(P.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 P.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 FIE COUR 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 Northampton, the K.R.R.
having by then moved right handed
in their advance towards P.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 Rl. 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

1/10000
ILLIES-
VIOLAINE
FESTUBERT

1915AppendixMay9th -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 out 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. Kapper 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 5 line - but to be ready to resume the attack in the afternoon after a further artillery bombardment - we then found 2/Lt. R. Fazan had been killed, Major E.H. Langham, 2/Lts. Dodd, Perry, & Hobart, wounded & Cpts. Grant & Stewart Jones & 2/Lts. Powell & Dennison were missing and about 230 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 6 p.m. we were ordered to march to LE TOURET where we should get instructions as to billeting - we formed up in a field behind Chocolat Minier Corner

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9th - 30th
(Contd.) told the men off & marched down in fours through a considerably disorganized mob of men from other regiments. At LE TOURET we were ordered to go to billets at AVELETTE. where we stayed till 8 p.m. & then marched to GONNEHEM and stayed there in rest billets until the next day when we moved to BETHUNE and took over billets in the Tobacco Factory in the Rue de Lille. Remained there as Corps Reserve & then Brigade Reserve until the 2nd Bde. relieved the 3rd Brigade in Section Z which the latter had taken over from the French the previous week - S of GUINCHY towards VERMELLEES. 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.

CAMBRIN.

24th Relieved 2nd Rl.Sussex in trenches holding section Z.2. with Hd.Qrs. near MAISON ROUGE. Capt. E.A.C. Fazan appointed temporary Adjutant, vice Capt.A.W.K. Loyd to Hospital with nervous breakdown.

25th Surgn.Capt.Vaugh 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 MALL. - 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, Qr.Mr. Transport Officer & M.O.

FRED.G. LANGHAM, Lt.Col.
Comdg. 5th Rl.Sussex Regt.