

Lance Corporal Percy David Wadey
9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment
Killed in Action 25th Sept 1915

By John Commins

This story relates to my second cousin once removed who was tragically killed in France during World War One (WW1)

Percy David Wadey was born 6th September 1893 at 21 Duke St Eastbourne, brother's to Isaac Hubert born 5 Aug 1890 at 46 Laughney Road Eastbourne, and Wilfred John born 8 Sep 1865 at 4 Curtisuas Dwellings, Eastbourne, of parents Isaac Wadey 17 Dec 1865 born Billingshurst and died 1 Oct 1919 at 29 Greys Road Eastbourne, a coachbody maker and his wife Sarah Hoad born Hellingly in 1867 and died 28 Aug 1958 in Cambridge Gardens Tunbridge Wells ,lived at 29 Greys Road Eastbourne. I have found no evidence that either of his brothers served in WW1, and both married and lived to old age.

In the 1901 census Percy is shown as living with his family at 25 Commercial Road, Eastbourne and in the 1911 census is shown with his family at 21 Greys Road Eastbourne age 17 a junior clerk.

At the start of WW1 he joined at Eastbourne as a wartime volunteer to the 9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment which was formed at Chichester in Sept 1914 and became part of 24th Division, which was formed at Shoreham, as part of the Third New Army, with the Infantry units in the Division being largely being drawn from the units within the Eastern Command area, although it never adopted that title.

After formation the Battalion went into camp on the South Downs around Brighton, where it often took part in recruiting marches along the seafront.

Here it became part of the 73rd Brigade of 24th Division, and in Dec 1914. the Battalion moved to Portslade and then in April 1915 to Shoreham ,and in June 1915, a further move was made to Woking Surrey. In August the Division was inspected by Lord Kitchener and King George V , and received orders to move to France with the Battalion on 31st August 1915, landing at Bologne and after the whole Division reassembling between ST POL and ETABLES by the 4th Sept with no further training the 24th Division was sent straight to the front line, and was placed in reserve near BETHUNE in the LOOS area he took part in the opening Battle of Loos on 25th September 1915. With no front line or battle conditions was thrown into the offensive. The 9th Battalion RSR was detached and in reserve had to march a considerable distance to reach the front line, and with them being generally tired after arriving, detached from the main 24th Division with several other battalions and took part in the fighting at Fosse 8, near the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He was killed in action in the fighting and is commemorated on the Loos Memorial

Appendix

Taken from 9th Battalion Royal Sussex war diary for August-September 1915

1915 August 21st to 3rd September

WOKING.- EMBREY & RIMBROVAL FRANCE.

During the week following the 21st August 1915 the Regiment was ordered to proceed over-seas. On Aug 31st the Regiment left Woking

for Southampton in three parties and embarked on the S.S. "La Marguerite" disembarking at Havre on the morning of 1st September 1915 and marching to Camp No 5 Havre. After remaining for 24 hrs the Regiment entrained at Havre during the afternoon of the 2nd inst., and detrained at Maresqual on the morning of the 3rd inst., marching to the billeting area assigned to the Battalion at Embrey and Rimboval arriving at the latter places at 4.0 pm and 4.30 pm respectively. The weather was very bad and it rained in torrents the whole day. The leather equipment stood the wet weather very badly and does not appear to be very durable

EMBREY & RIMBOVAL FRANCE.

4th Still very wet. Every effort was made to increase the comfort of the billets which were mostly in barns and outhouses, the day being occupied in inspection of rifles, iron rations feet etc, digging of latrines and other necessary duties.

5th Being Sunday Church Services were held in Rimoval and Embrey and the day being fine clothes ,blankets etc, were to be dried.

6th (Mon) Was again fine and the Battalion settled down to a fixed programme of work for the week, comprising trench digging musketry, siting trenches by compass at night, bomb throwing, route marching etc. In the afternoon at 2.0 pm the Officers of the Regiment met the Corps Commander (Lieut Gen Haking commanding the 11th Corps) Headquarters 73 rd Brigade Torchy. Genl. Haking congratulated them on their arrival in France and expressed his pleasure of meeting them.

7th (Tues) Again fine and the Battalion carried out the programme as per syllabus. Nothing further of interest to record.

8th (Wed.) Fine weather again today and still in billets at Rimboval and Embrey. Sites were arranged for ranges at Rimbroval and Embrey for "A" & "B" Companies and "C" & "D" Companies respectively. Special courses of bomb throwing and machine gun firing arranged. The following officers were ordered for a 24 hours tour of the trenches and left Brigade Head Quarters Torcy at 9.30 am Major Langdon, Capt . Melver and Capt. Holloway. Special packets were issued for carrying smoke helmets.

9th (Thurs) Weather very bad. Progress made on both ranges and special courses. Nothing of importance to record.

10th (Fri) Fine weather and very warm. Special courses carried out and ball cartridges at rate of 100 rounds per N.C.O. and man allowed Special rifle course with ball ammunition commenced , "A" Coy on range at Rimboval and "C" Coy on range at Embrey. 2nd Lieut. Armitage appointed Reserve Machine Gun Officer in place of 2nd Lieut Kirkpatrick. Revolver practice carried out at Rimboval by all Officers also 4 N.C.O.s per company attended a demonstration at Divisional Headquarters at Royon at 10.30 am. A Lecture was given first on the effects of gas: all ranks were then ordered to put on their smoke helmets and were passed

through a trench into which gas was being driven. The helmets proved their complete efficiency.

11th (Sat) Fine weather and very hot. The Battalion attended Divisional manoeuvres and formed up at the rendezvous at 8.0 am facing N.W on the north of the Embry-Rimboval road. An assault was carried out by the 72nd Brigade which was ordered to attack Petite Ste Michel and the 73rd Brigade being in reserve. The 7th Northants and 12th Fusilliers were ordered up in support and at 11.30 am the 13th Middlesex and 9th Royal Sussex were ordered to support in the direction of Henoville. The operation ceased at 1.30 pm and the Battalion marched back to billets. Troops paraded without packs in shirt sleeve and wore skeleton marching order with rifles and ammunition. All machine gunners, bombers, snipers and signallers and other specialists paraded with the Battalion. 1st Line Transport was taken.

12th (Sun) Fine and very hot. Church of England services held at Rimboval and Embrey by the Chaplain. Non-Comformists service at Embrey & Roman Catholic Service at Church Rimboval. After Church Service casualties of "A" & "B" Companies fired on the Rimboval range and the casualties of "C" & "D" Companies on the range at Embrey. Nothing further to record.

13th (Mon) Fine and Hot. All companies continued to carry out the rifle course with ball ammunition on their respective ranges. Cpl Ruck Guards Brigade Instructor in bombing commenced a course of instruction in bombing at 9.am this morning. 2nd Lieut. Stewart & 2nd Lieut. Langlands visited the Grenade School at St. Omer for a short course of instruction leaving Rimboval at 4.30 am.

14th (Tues) Wet. Divisional exercise at Beubers les Hesmond. The Battalion fell in at 7.30 am and marched to the place of rendezvous in rear of the 12th Royal Fusilliers arriving at 9.15 am. Owing to the inclement weather the operation was postponed and the Battalion marched back to billets. Lieut. Hensage Grenadier Guards delivered a lecture to the headquarters of the 12th Royal Fusilliers at Embrey which the Bombing Officer and Bombing N.C.O.s were present. At 5.30 pm he gave another lecture at Brigade Headquarters at Torcy at which the C.O, 2nd in Command and Adjutant were present. A reading and writing room for N.C.O.s and men was opened for the first time by the Chaplain.

15th (Wed) Fine. Companies carried out Musketry Course as arranged on ranges at Rimboval & Embrey. All machine gunners, bombers, signallers, snipers and other specialists underwent special instruction. Transport arranged daily. Lieut. Godwin and 2nd Lieut Armitage, Machine Gun Officers left for a tour of 24 hours in the trenches and were attached to the Canadian Division. Nothing further to report.

16th (Thurs) Fine. Musketry was again carried out (bombing, sniping, courses etc, siting trenches by night & wood fighting). Nothing of interest to report.

17th (Fri) Fine. The days programme was identical with that of yesterday & there is nothing of interest to report.

18th (Sat) Fine. Musketry was again carried out on both ranges, together with special courses for bombers & snipers, 2nd Lieut. Stewart, two N.C.O.s and 5 men were detailed to attend a course at the Divisional Grenade School at QUILEN and left at 3.0 o'clock. A lecture was given by Col. Stewart to the Officers at Royal Fusiliers Head Quarters at Embrey. Nothing further of interest to report.

19th (Sun) Fine. Church Parades were carried out. The Battalion was thoroughly practised in "embussing" and "debussing" at Embrey, special attention being paid to the best method of allotting men fully armed & equipped to buses & getting them on and off in a rapid and orderly manner. Average time taken for loading 35 seconds.

20th (Mon) Fine. Route march to Hurqueliers 1st Line Transport exercised with the Battalion. It was with news was received that 2nd Lieut Stewart had been killed by a explosion of a bomb at the School at QUILEN. He was a very promising & gallant Officer and his death will be a great loss to the Regiment. Orders were received in the course of the afternoon that the Battalion would move from billets the following day and preparations were made for the move.

21st Tues) Fine. The Battalion marched from billets at 6.15 pm joining up with the Brigade at CREQUY & marched to LAIRES arriving there at 1.0 am. The following morning.

LAIRES.

22nd (Wed) Fine. The Battalion left LAIRES at 7.30 pm marching into billets at BUSNES arriving at 2.30 am the following morning. It was a very tiring march a great part of the way being over pane and the Battalion behaved excellently.

23rd (Thurs) Wet The Battalion changed billets remaining in the same area.

BEUVRY.

24th (Fri) Fine. The Battalion marched late into billets at BEUVRY arriving there at about 2.0 am on the morning on the 25th.

IN THE TRENCHES.

25th (Sat) Fine. Orders were received at 10.0 am for the Battalion to march and the Regiment proceeded to SAILLY les BOURSES. On arrival there the Brigade was informed that it had been transferred to the 9th Division and was ordered to proceed via VERMELLES to the trenches, arriving there at 12.30 pm. An attack had been carried out by the Highland Brigade and at about 3.0pm in the afternoon the Regiment was ordered to take cover in the support trenches near K1 where it remained

until 9.30 pm when a Staff Officer came with the Brigade Major and ordered the Battalion to advance with the Fusiliers on FOSSE 8. This was carried out in column of Companies at 30 paces interval. The Battalion arrived at the FOSSE at about 11.30pm and formed up while the guiding officer and the Adjutant Capt. Stokes went forward round the EAST side of the FOSSE to reconnoitre and to further guide the Regiment. The guiding officer and Capt. Stokes returned about 12.30.am. A Co then started round the EAST side of FOSSE to occupy trenches there, Meanwhile Brig Gen'l Oswald came up and directed the remaining 3 Companies right over the FOSSE to occupy & take up positions on the left of A Company. The order of the Companies was then from the left B, D, C, and A Company. The Battalion Head Quarters was established just in rear of the East end of the FOSSE. Major Porter proceeded with B D and C Companies. Both machine guns under Lt. Godwin were with A Company. Several# attacks were made by the enemy during the night of 25th Sept 1915 and the morning of the 26th , the enemy snipers & bombers being particularly active. Orders were received that the FOSSE was to be held at all costs and notwithstanding the fact that the men were without food or water the position was held until the evening of the 27th when orders were received that the Brigade was being relieved by the 85th Brigades

During the whole of the period of occupation of the FOSSE the Regiment was subjected to increased artillery & machine gun fire and notwithstanding the losses sustained the Battalion behaved with the utmost gallantry. It is regretted that before being launched into such a desperate action steps had not been taken to accustom the men to war conditions.