

RECORD OF THE 2/4TH BATTALION.
1st JULY 1916 to 30th JUNE 1917.
EXTRACTED FROM THE REGIMENTAL CHRONICLES OF
THE OXFORDSHIRE & BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

Although the 184th Infantry Brigade, to which belonged both the 2/4th Battalion and the 2/1st Bucks Battalion of the Regiment, took no part in the actual battle of the Somme, its task of making demonstrations to assist the Somme operations was arduous in the extreme, and its casualties heavy.

At the commencement of the Somme offensive the 2/4th Battalion was at Laventie, holding the trenches and front posts.

From Colonel W. H. Ames's Narrative.

The Battalion was relieved on the 4th July by the 2/4th Gloster Regiment, and went into billets at Riez Bailleul for rest. On the 6th July Captain Scott was instructing some men of D Company in bombing, when a bomb burst prematurely, killing Private Lord, severely wounding Captain Scott and Corporal North, and slightly wounding Lieut. Loewe and Private Williams. At 3 p.m. that afternoon the Battalion was suddenly ordered to march to Croix Barbee, where they relieved the 1st Battalion of the Hertfordshire Regiment and remained in reserve.

On 12th July they relieved the 2/4th Royal Berks Regiment in the Richebourg trenches, and on 13th July the Berkshire Battalion carried out a raid. During the raid a 5.9 shell went into the hospital dug-out, but luckily did not cause any casualties. Lieut. Brown distinguished himself by his work in recovering the wounded on this occasion.

On the night of 12th July an unfortunate accident happened to D Company. They were occupying a part of the trench peculiarly liable to retaliation by trench-mortars, which was always cleared if our trench-mortars contemplated firing. A trench-mortar was fired without any warning to the officer commanding the Company, and a trench-mortar bomb fired by the enemy caught a whole platoon of D Company and made casualties of the lot.

Notification was received on the 14th July that the Military Medal was awarded (for conspicuous gallantry on the 28th-29th June) to No. 3174 Sergeant A. H. Prentice, No. 1333 Private H. V. Gardner, and No. 3125 Corporal A. E. Brereton.

On the 15th July the Battalion was relieved by the 16th K.R. R., and spent the night of the 15th/16th at Lestrem. On the evening of the 16th the Battalion marched to the Rue de Lys just short of Saily, where they were billeted in a brickyard. A big attack was in preparation, and for the next three days the men of the Battalion were busily engaged in fatigue work, carrying ammunition and stores to the various points. Owing to misty weather, which prevented the guns registering, the attack was put off till the 19th.

The 61st Division were to attack on the line from Bedford Row to Bond Street, the 184th Brigade on the front from Sutherland Avenue exclusive to Bond Street inclusive, the 183rd Brigade were on the right, and the Australian Division on the left.

The 2/1st Bucks and the 2/4th Berks were in the trenches and were to make the attack, one Company (C) of the Battalion was in immediate reserve just north of the Rue Tilleloy, and the remainder of the Battalion remained in reserve at their billets. Owing to a misunderstanding of orders, a platoon of C Company, which was destined to carry trench-mortar ammunition across No Man's Land after the attack had been established in the enemy's trenches, was kept in the front line and suffered very heavily in the bombardment. An intense bombardment was kept up from 11 a.m. till 6p.m., when the assault was delivered, but owing to the machine-gun fire of the enemy the assaulting Battalion could not get across No Man's Land and suffered very heavy losses.

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About 7 p.m. the Battalion was loaded on to motor-buses and moved up towards the firing-line, and was sent up to take over the line held by the Berks and the Bucks. The relief was completed by 11, and at 11.30 the C.O., who had been ordered to remain at the Battle Headquarters, received orders to organize an attack with two companies on the Sugar Loaf, being told that he would find a party of Engineers with consolidating material at a certain point for which he was to provide a carrying company. A and D Companies were selected for the attack, and at 2.15 a.m. the Engineer party had not been discovered. The companies were filing out to take up their positions ten minutes later, when the Engineer officer reported, and stated that he had no material at all. The C.O. just at that moment received an order from the Brigade Headquarters that unless everything was ready by 2.30 he was not to start, so the attack was cancelled.

The next few days were occupied in cleaning up and repairing the trenches. 2nd Lieut. Thorne, of the 6th Middlesex, who was attached to the Battalion, made two journeys into No Man's Land during the day, and succeeded in bringing in wounded men on each occasion.

On 23rd July the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Worcesters, and the same day took over the Winchester House Section of the Moated Grange sector from the 11th East Yorks. They remained in this trench till 27th July, when they returned to Riez Bailleul, and on 1st August went to Robermetz for divisional rest. That day Colonel Ames gave up the command of the Battalion, and Major G. P. R. Beaman assumed temporary command.

In July the casualties were 24 men killed, and Captain W. D. Scott, Lieut. Loewe, 2nd Lieut. M. Thorne, and 96 men wounded.

From the Battalion Diary.

August.—The first week of this month was spent at Robermetz, whence the Battalion moved to Laventie, and went into the trenches at Fanquissart on the 9th, remaining there until the 15th, and losing Lieut. Tiddy and 2nd Lieut. Dalton killed.

From the 15th to the 21st at Laventie training, and furnishing working parties and patrols. Then back to the trenches until the end of the month.

Casualties.—2 officers and 1 man killed, 3 officers (2nd Lieuts. Benson, Wood, and Roche) and 25 men wounded.

September.—Until the 10th the Battalion was at Robermetz training, and on the 11th took over trenches in the left sub-section of the Moated Grange sector, coming out on the 19th, and going in again on the 29th. The tours in the line were without incident; 2nd Lieut. Buhner was wounded on the 13th and between the 12th and the 30th two men were killed and six were wounded.

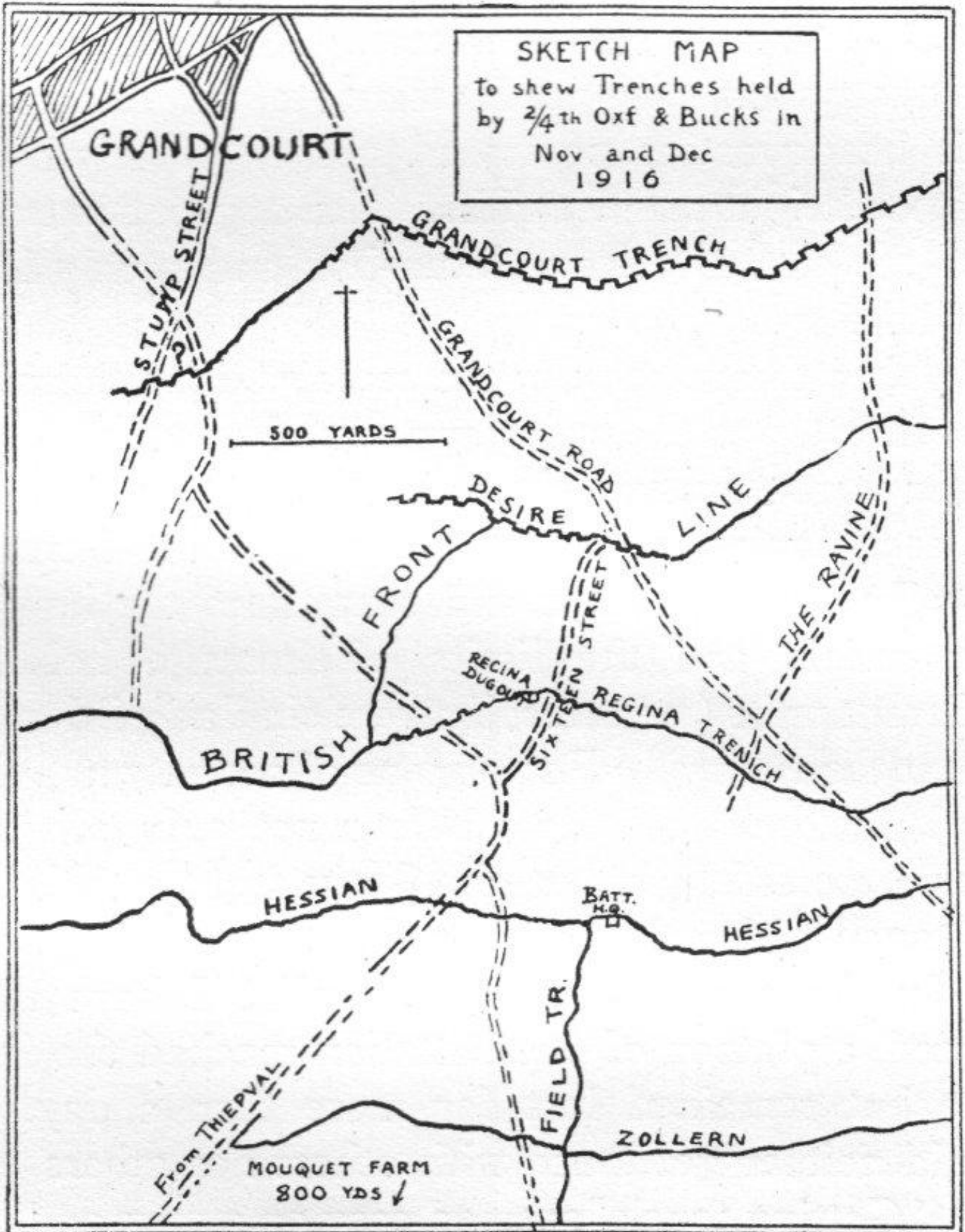
On the 16th Lieut. K. E. Brown was awarded the military cross for good work on the 13th July.

October 1st-31st.—The whole of this month was passed in a similar manner to the month of September, the Battalion being in the Moated Grange trenches and posts from the 1st to the 3rd; in billets at Biez Bailleul from 4th to 9th; trenches again from 10th to 15th; Riez Bailleul, 16th to 20th; trenches, 21st to 27th; and the remainder of the month at Riez Bailleul and Robecq. During the month the casualties amounted to 2 men killed and 11 wounded, and on the 21st 2nd Lieut. Benson was wounded while attached to the Trench-mortar Battery.

November.—From the 1st to the 25th the Battalion constantly moved camp and from the 26th to the 30th was in the trenches, Mouquet left sector, losing 2 men killed and 3 wounded during the month.

December was spent at Hedauville, with one tour in the trenches (Mouquet Farm), when 1 man was killed and 7 men were wounded. On the last day of the year the Battalion received a draft of 102 men.

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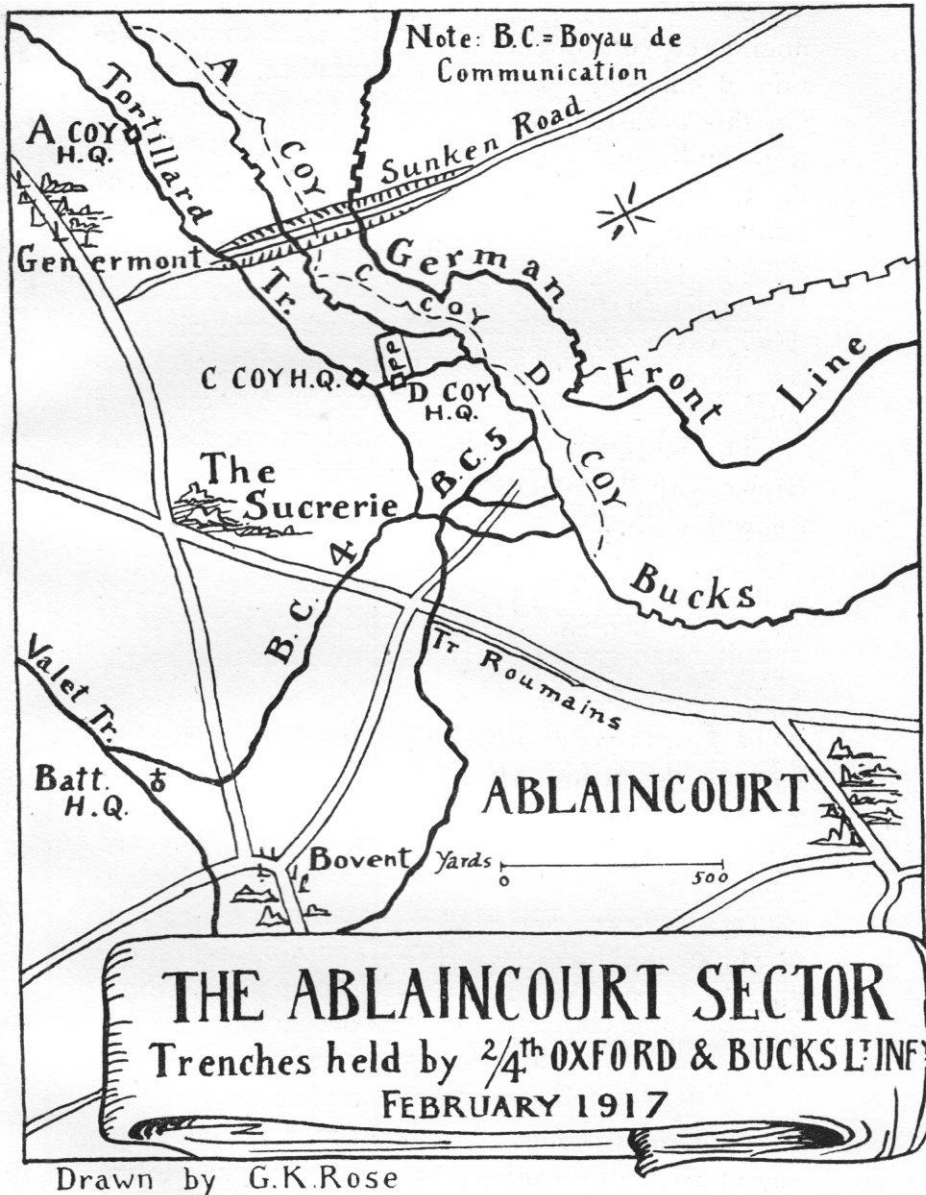
1917.

January 1st-31st.—This month was uneventful. The Battalion was in reserve billets at Hedauville until the 8th, and then moved to support hutments at Martinsart. Marched to Puchevillers on the 15th, to Longvillette on the 17th, Domqueur on the 18th, Maison Ponthieu on the 19th there remaining in rest billets until the 3rd February.

February 4th.—Marched to rest billets at Brucamps, and remained there, undergoing training, until the 12th.

February 13th.—Marched to Longpre, and there entrained at 11 a.m. Detrained at 3 p.m. at Marcelcare, and marched to hutments at Wiencourt, taking over the huts from French troops.

February 15th.—Marched from Wiencourt to reserve billets at Rainecourt, there remained until the 21st, then marched to billets at Herleville.



February 23rd.—The Battalion relieved the 2/4th R. Berks in the left sub-section of the Ablaincourt sector. Dispositions : A Company on the left, C centre, D right, B in support.

February 24th.—Most of the trenches being deep in mud or water, parties were engaged day and night in clearing up. All companies in the line sent out patrols at night.

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February 25th.—1 man killed and 1 wounded.

February 26th.—Our guns shelled the enemy line, but there was no retaliation.

February 27th.—The enemy bombarded our trenches for four hours.

Casualties.—2nd Lieut. A. C. Fry mortally wounded (died next day) and 2 men wounded.

February 28th.—Enemy bombardment of our lines very severe for 3 ½ hours, and at 6.15 p.m. they raided our trenches, penetrating the centre company front. A counter attack was organized, and the enemy driven out, but not before he had inflicted heavy casualties, as follows: Officers, wounded, 2nd Lieut. Constable; missing, 2nd Lieuts. Guildford and Hunt. Other ranks, killed 6, wounded 18, missing 19.

2nd Lieut. Guildford was captured, together with some 20 men of C Company, in a dug-out in a front line trench less than 100 yards from the enemy's lines. 2nd Lieut. Hunt was with Captain Rose and D Company when their dug-out was raided. He was wounded by a bomb, losing a finger, but escaped from the dug-out, only, however, to walk into a German listening post and be taken prisoner.

March.—The Battalion came out of the trenches on the 2nd, had one more tour in the line from the 9th to the 15th, and then moved quarters several times until, on the 31st, Caulaincourt was reached. Two men were killed and 6 wounded during the month.

April 1st.—C and D Companies moved to Sailor's Wood, in close support to the 2/1st Bucks.

April 3rd.—Moved up to the line and relieved the 2/1st Bucks in the sector east of Soyecourt; D Company in front-line posts;
C in close support;
B at railway embankment at Montolu Wood;
A and Battalion H.Q. at Soyecourt.

April 4th.—Snowing all day. The front posts were heavily shelled during the morning;
1 killed, 2 wounded.

April 5th.—Enemy's artillery less active;
1 man wounded.

April 6th.—The 184th Brigade attacked the enemy's trenches; 2/5th Glosters on the right, 2/4th Oxford and Bucks on the left. "Zero" hour, midnight. A Company was the attacking company. The enemy wire was found to be uncut; two attempts were made to break through, but without success, and the attacking companies, were consequently forced to withdraw.

Casualties.—Lieut. C. J. Barton and 8 men killed; 2nd Lieuts. J. P. Wayte, R. Aitken, A. H. Tilley and 21 men wounded (2nd Lieut. A. H. Tilley afterwards died of his wounds).

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April 7th-8th.—On relief by the 2/1st Bucks, the Battalion moved to Caulaincourt, except B Company, who went into close support at Sailor's Wood.

April 8th.—Captain H. J. Bennett posted to the Battalion as second in command in place of Major W. L. Ruthven.

April 9th.—Moved up into the 182nd Brigade area (Marteville) to consolidate and hold a line of trenches west of Holnon Wood.

April 10th.—Marched to reserve billets at Monchy-Lagache.

April 11th.—To Hombleux, where remained in rest billets, undergoing training until 19th, on which date the Battalion marched to reserve billets at Germaine.

April 20th.—The Battalion moved up to Holnon, and relieved the 16th Northumberland Fusiliers (32nd Division.) in the support line —left sub-section; A Company in close support to the 2/5th Glosters.

April 21st.—Working on the line of resistance. Holnon was shelled during the night, and Battalion H.Q. were driven out during the early hours of the morning.

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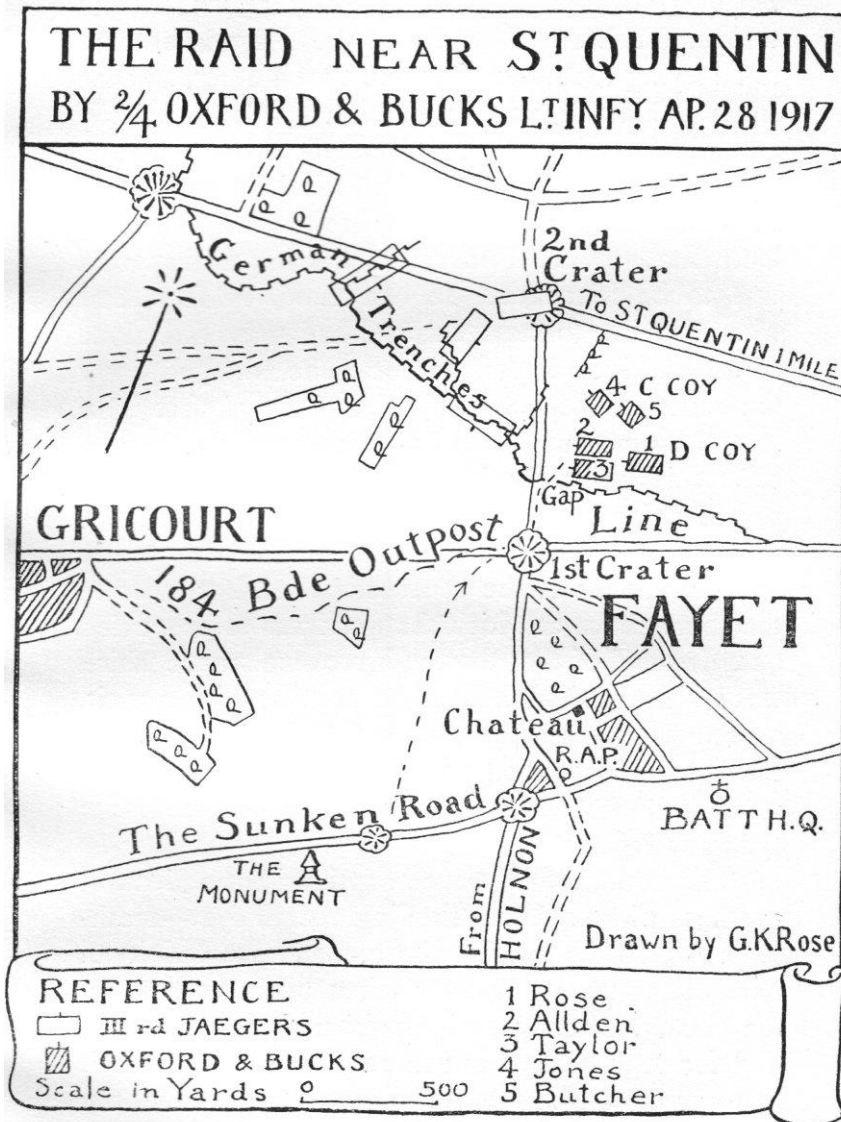
April 22nd-25th.—Remained at Holnon in support, working on the line of resistance. Two men wounded.

April 26th.—The Battalion relieved the 2/1st Bucks in the front line during the night; H.Q. at Fayet; 4 men wounded.

April 27th.—Enemy's artillery active; 4 men wounded.

April 28th.—D Company and 2 platoons of C raided the enemy trenches at 4.20 a.m., and reached the second objective, capturing two machine-guns and one German.

Our casualties were heavy, viz. : 2nd Lieut. T. H. Alden and 16 other ranks killed, 2nd Lieut. H. S. Taylor wounded and missing, 42 other ranks wounded, 9 missing.



April 29th.—Relieved by the 2/4th R. Berks, and marched to reserve billets. Cepy Farm was entered by a strong patrol of our B Company/and had one or two encounters with the enemy, leaving some killed, and obtaining an identification. Two men wounded.

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May 2nd.—Marched into divisional reserve, and billeted at Vaux and Etreillers; H.Q. and A Company at Vaux.

May 3rd-13th.—This period was spent at the above-mentioned places in training and furnishing working-parties.

On the 4th the Military Medal was awarded to 200084 Sergeant G. W. Butcher and 201069 Corporal A. E. Sloper; on the 5th 2nd Lieut. K. E. Brown, M.C., was awarded the bar to the Military Cross ; and on the 9th the Divisional Commander presented Parchment Certificates for good service on a Brigade parade held between Vaux and Germaine.

May 13th.—The Battalion marched to billets at Mesnil St. Nicaise.

May 15th.—Marched to Nestle and entrained. Detrained at Longueau and marched to Rivery.

May 16th.—Captain H. Y. Bennett appointed acting Major while acting second in command.

May 17th.—To La Vicogne.

May 18th.—Captain G. K. Rose, M.C., awarded the bar to the Military Cross.

May 19th.—The Divisional Commander presented Ribbons on a Brigade parade.

May 21st.—Marched from La Vicogne to Neuville.

May 23rd.—To billets at Barly, and next day to huts at Duisans.

May 25th.—Lieut.-Colonel Bellamy relinquished the command of the Battalion, to take command of the Divisional Training School, and on the 26th Lieut.-Colonel H. E. de R. Wetherall, M.C. (Gloucestershire Regiment), joined the Battalion on appointment to command.

May 31st.—After a week's training at Duisans the Battalion marched to Tilloy and went into bivouac.

June 1st.—Relieved the 13th K.R.R.C. in reserve line trenches, Monchy sector.

June 2nd-5th.—The Battalion was employed on working and carrying parties, and had the following casualties: 2nd Lieut. Lindsey killed, and 2nd Lieut. Herbert wounded (both on the 2nd); other ranks, 5 killed and 20 wounded.

June 6th.—Relieved 2/4th R. Berks in the front-line trenches (Monchy); A Company, left front; C, right front; B and D, in support; 3 men wounded.

June 7th.—A Company, pushing forward about 100 yards, under cover of darkness, occupied a line of shell-holes unobserved by the enemy; consolidated them; and dug communication trenches.
Two men wounded.

June 8th.—A patrol of 5 Germans, unaware of A Company's advanced position, walked into it, and were captured.
Two men wounded.

June 9th.—The Battalion, less C Company, was relieved, and returned to reserve-line trenches.

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June 10th.—On relief, the Battalion marched to bivouacs at Tilloy.
One man killed, 2 men wounded.

June 11th.—Marched to billets at Berneville and remained there, resting and training, until the 23rd.

June 23rd.—Marched to Gouy-en-Artois and entrained. Detrained at Auxi-le-Chateau, and marched to billets at Noeux, where the remainder of the month was spent. On the 29th the announcement was made that the Victoria Cross had been awarded to Company-Sergeant-Major E. Brooks, D Company, for gallantry in action at Fayet.

**CASUALTIES IN THE 2/4TH BATTALION.
1st July 1916 to 30th June 1917.**

Killed or Died of Wounds.

Lieut. R J. E. Tiddy.
2nd Lieut. G. H. Dalton.
2nd Lieut. A. C. Fry.
Lieut. C. J. Barton.
2nd Lieut. A. H. Tillby.
2nd Lieut. J. H. Allden,
2nd Lieut. P. Lindsey.
And about 60 Other Ranks.

Wounded.

Captain W. D. Scott.
Lieut. L. L. Loewe.
2nd Lieut. M. Thorne.
2nd Lieut. Benson.
2nd Lieut. E. H. Wood.
2nd Lieut. J. M. Constable.
2nd Lieut. J. P. Wayte.
2nd Lieut. R. Aitken.
2nd Lieut. S. E. Herbert.
And about 280 Other Ranks.

Missing.

2nd Lieut. T. W. F. Guildford.
2nd Lieut. C. B. Hunt.
2nd Lieut. H. S. Taylor (wounded).
And 29 Other Ranks, some of whom were undoubtedly killed.
According to the Report on Prisoners of War, the Germans captured alive only 22, of whom 6 were wounded (3 dying in captivity).

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**HONOURS AND AWARDS.
1st July 1916 to 30th June 1917.**

Victoria Cross.

Company-Sergeant-Major Edward Brooks.

For most conspicuous gallantry. This Warrant Officer, while taking part in a raid on the enemy's trenches, saw that the front wave was checked by an enemy machine-gun at close quarters. On his own initiative, and regardless of personal danger, he rushed forward from the second wave with the object of capturing the gun, killing one of the gunners with his revolver, and bayoneting another. The remainder of the gun's crew then made off, leaving the gun in his possession. Company-Sergeant-Major Brooks then turned the machine-gun on to the retreating enemy, after which he carried it back into our lines. By his courage and initiative he undoubtedly prevented many casualties, and greatly added to the success of the operations.

Before the war Sergeant-Major Brooks who had formerly served in the Grenadier Guards, was employed by an Oxford building firm, and lived at Highfield. He enlisted in the 4th Battalion of the Regiment in October 1914 ; was promoted Sergeant in May 1915 ; went to France, and was promoted Company-Sergeant-Major in November 1916.



CSM Brooks VC

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Bar to Military Cross.

Captain G. K. Rose, M.C.

Lieut. K. E. Brown, M.C.

Military Cross.

Lieut. K. E. Brown.

For conspicuous gallantry. Hearing, after a raid, that two officers and some men were lying wounded in "No Man's Land," he at once led a rescue party of about four men, and, under heavy machine-gun fire, brought in an officer and other wounded men. He went out over the parapet at least three times.—(Gazette, 20th October 1916.)

Military Medal.

3174 Sergeant A. Prentice.

200084 Sergeant G. W. Butcher.

3125 Corporal A. E. Brereton.

201069 Corporal A. E. Sloper.

1758 L-Corpl. T. A. Rowbotham.

1333 Private H. V. Gardner.