

War Diary of 20th Battalion London Regiment
 Period June 1915

Ref WO/95/2738

Date	Place	Time	Summary of Events & Information	Comments
01 June			In billets at Le Proel till 9.00pm. Paraded by coys. Met with transport at 9.30pm. Marched to Sailly les Bourse.	
02 June			Orders received in morning to relieve troops in Y tonight. HQ officers and coy commanders reconnoitre trench during day. Relief of 1 st Cameron Highlanders commenced after dark and completed at 11.00pm. Heavy firing by French troops on left all night.	
03 June			These are quite the most comfortable we have been in. the German lines are for the most part some little way off and beyond a certain amount of sniping and a moderate amount of shellfire the Bosches do not bother us much. The French who built these trenches are past masters in the matter of comfort in dugouts. Some of these are palatial to what we provisionally have had. Nearest point for transport is Vermelles and that by night only. It takes 1½ hours to get a party down to there and back with rations. Water also has to be brought from the same place. Three coys in firing line and one in the support trenches. The latter does all fatigues. Usual trench routine carried out night and day	Flies very trying
04 June			Ditto	
05 June			Usual trench routine carried out night and day. Working parties and patrols out in front at night. Trenches reconnoitred by 2 nd Coldstream Guards.	
06 June			Relieved at midnight by 2 nd Coldstream Guards. All clear of trenches by 02.00am. Platoons proceed to Verquin independently as soon as clear of the trenches. Casualties for the five days; 1 killed, 1 wounded.	
07 June			Arrived in billets at Verquin by 04.00am. Left Verquin 7.30pm and march, HQ less 2 nd in command with A and C coys to Mazingarbe. 2 nd in command with B and D coys to Philosophe. Arrived 11.30pm. A slow trying march owing to number of troops moving in the other direction and night very dark.	
08 June			In billets as above. 600 men sent up at night as working parties for RE digging new trenches in front of the present firing line in front of X1 which at present has a very irregular front.	
09 June			Ditto, ditto. Working parties under Lt Young driven in by enemy flares and fire – rifle and grenade. Casualties; 1 killed and 16 wounded, 2 or 3 very severely. Loss probably would have been heavier, but for the coolness of Lt	

			Young who remained out till last wounded man brought in although badly bruised by trench mortar explosion.	
10 June			In billets as above. No working party supplied tonight.	
11 June			In billets as above till 4.00pm when we took over sub sector XI of fire trenches from 18 th London. (XI is immediately west of Loos, distant therefore 1500 yards). Trenches in bad condition and began working on them at once and kept at it all night and next day until relieved.	
12 June			In trenches as above till 5.00pm when relieved by the 6ht London. Casualties for 24 hours; 1 killed, 1 wounded. Both of them men who came with last draft and were in trenches for the first time. Relief completed by 9.00pm. Bttn returned to billets at Mazingarbe.	
13 June			In billets at Mazingarbe. Bttn forms part of Divn reserve according to programme for next six days, which, with luck, means 6 days rest.	
14 June			In billets as above. HQ officers reconnoitre place of assembly of Divn reserve in event of alarm and I have various routes to W and X. two working parties of 150 men each sent to work under RE during night.	
15 June			In billets as above. Working parties same as last night.	
16 June			In billets as above till 8.30pm when orders received to be ready to move at moments' notice. 9.10pm order to take up position at Fosse No 6, Le Brebis as arranged. Leading platoon of C coy moved off at 9.20pm followed by rest of the Bttn with intervals of 100 yards between platoons. C coy to trenches north east of slagheaps. The remaining 3 coys with MG on line fire step adjacent slagheap. It appears that information had been received leading authorities to think there might be an attack by Germans along Lens Vermelles road and if so we were to counter attack.	
17 June			Nothing happened during the night and about 04.00am when we were thinking we might be sent back to billets a thick fog came down and it was not till 9.30am that it had lifted and we got our orders to return to billets.	
18 June			In billets at Mazingarbe. Platoon drills as usual while in reserve. Six platoons sent out as night working parties under RE. About 8.30pm orders received for Bttn to take over trench sub sector W2 east of Gronay Saturday night from 22 nd London.	
19 June			In billets as above, usual drills etc as above. CO and Adjt reconnoitre W2 during morning. 2 nd in C, MO and Sig O during afternoon. Billets unpleasantly shelled during afternoon. Luckily only two casualties, both very slight. Night working party, 6 platoons supplied.	

20 June			<p>Orders received during morning postponing relief of 22 London for 24 hours. The whole Bttm going out as working party tonight. 5 45pm orders received cancelling working party and to take over sub sector W2 from 22nd London as order of 18/06/15.</p> <p>Relief completed at midnight. Shortly after relief completed enemy commenced shelling communication trenches and road leading to same.</p>	
21 June			<p>Continuous working on trenches which need a lot of repair. Traverses and parapets badly weatherworn especially the second line which is in a very incomplete state.</p> <p>The enemy's trenches are at an average distance of from 350 to 500 yards from our front line and during the first 5 days of our occupation of this sub section. There was very little sniping from the enemy's lines. Their artillery, however, treated us daily to what we called the 'morning, afternoon and evening hate', with a occasional 'night hate' thrown in. we were, however, extremely fortunate as during the whole 8 days we occupied this sub section we only had two men wounded by shellfire and one of those not sufficiently wounded to send to hospital and the damage to the trenches was easily made good on ever occasion. Our artillery (mostly French) invariably gave the Germans a good deal more than they gave us.</p> <p>HQ dugouts are situate in a deep depression in the middle of the slagheaps of a coal mine; 'Fosse No 5 de Bethune' and look like a stage setting for a scene at the Brigade Stronghold. Quite picturesque especially at night. There is a large colony of miners' houses quite a short distance in rear of the trenches which, strange to say, the French authorities have allowed the inhabitants to continue to occupy. A most undesirable thing for many reasons, not the least of which is the question of spies and the fact that almost daily there are amongst the civil population, mostly women and children as they are comparatively few men. Orders have, however, been given for these houses to be evacuated and the work has commenced. One sees some pitiable sights in the process, but is necessary and the lesser of two evils.</p>	
22/24 June			<p>Work same as Monday. Ground in front of trenches patrolled every night. On two occasions evening working parties located and afterwards disposed dispersed by MG and rifle fire.</p>	
25 June			<p>Same as previous days and in addition during afternoon very heavy rain and thunderstorm which caused a culvert in the village in rear to burst and the whole of the surface drainage to rush down into the trenches occupied by C coy, which it completely flooded. The water in some parts being as much as 3</p>	

			feet deep. By keeping the men working hard all night, by morning an outlet had been constructed which diverted most of the still incoming water and the water in the trench had been had been reduced by about 18 inches. There is a quantity of long grass and standing crop between our front line and the Germans and officers and men out on patrol this night came in soaked to the skin as effectively as if they had bathed in their clothes.	
26 June			Work etc as yesterday continued. Water in C coy's trench cleared in parts and depth in rest reduced to about 6 inches. Enemy's hates today were somewhat more violent than usual, but our luck still holds and the casualties were nil. Seven of the heavy HE's they sent over today were duds. Four of which came consecutively. Let's hope that means their ammunition is deteriorating. Think there must have been a change in regiments offered to us as there has been a good deal of sniping all day and up to now we had none here.	
27 June			Work etc same as yesterday. In the 'morning hate' the Bosches sent us 5 blind shells. Inaccuracy quite encouraging. Let's hope for more of the same.	
28 June			Work etc same as yesterday. A cold rainy day. At 10.30am orders received that we were to be relieved brought by 18 th London and that we were to go into Brigade reserve. Taking over billets in Les Brebis. Relief commenced at 9/30pm, completed at 11.30. Total casualties for the 8 days; 4 wounded, one of which was accidental and so slight that man was not sent to hospital.	
29 June			In billets at Les Brebis. Washing and resting all day. Night working party under Res. Two of 50 each. Each under an officer.	
30 June 1915			Day working party of one officer and 25 men supplied to RE. 8 additional men per coy being trained as bombers and rest of Btn less guards, fatigues etc occupied in constructing bomb proof shelters in rear of billets as Bosches have taken to the habit of sending a few shells into the village daily. The other night they landed one in a billet occupied by some of the 17 th London and killed 4 men and wounded 16. The 1 st Army has now been reorganised. It now consists of the Indians, the 1 st and 4 th corps. Indian Corps comprises 51 st Divn and Lahore Divn and Meerut Divn. The 1 st Corps comprises of the 2 nd , 7 th and 9 th Divns and the 4 th Corps of the 1 st , 47 th and 48 th Divns. Night working parties under RE. 6 officers and 420 men.	