

CHAPTER 14

THE THIRD WINTER

November 1916

With the capture of Desire Trench the long-drawn out operations on the Somme came to an end. The bad weather which had so seriously hampered their later stages and had prevented the Allies from reaping the full fruits earned in the wearing down process of July and August set in again with increased intensity. Over the greater part of the battle area the condition of the ground absolutely prohibited further attacks and made the maintenance of the advanced position reached and the carrying out of the necessary reliefs quite sufficiently difficult. The strain imposed on the troops in merely holding what had been gained was incredible, it was amazing that men could endure so much; trenches were deep in oozy slime, roads and paths disappeared into morasses, shell-holes pitted the ground in every direction and made movement off the tracks difficult and dangerous; to reach the front line was an achievement, to survive there a struggle against every kind of discomfort, danger and difficulty. But if conditions in the front trenches were indescribable, there was little relief for those in support or immediate reserve. The area in rear of the front line was devoid of shelter, houses and villages were represented by heaps of indistinguishable debris, woods by bare tree-stumps and tangled masses of broken branches.

However, despite the tremendous losses incurred between July and November and the relatively small gains in actual ground the Somme offensive marks a real turning point in the war. The admissions of Ludendorff and Hindenburg, though grudging and reluctant, show clearly how deeply it had affected the Germans, how heavily they had lost, with what difficulty they had maintained their hold and how

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dark the prospect appeared to them. The bad weather of October had helped them greatly—had the Allies been favoured in 1916 with the splendid autumn weather of 1918 the real results achieved on the Somme would have been unmistakably apparent; but naturally the defence had profited by the handicaps imposed on the assailants by rain and mud, and the delays in the Allied advance had allowed time for the construction of new and formidable lines in rear of the battle-front. Still the prospects of the Allies for 1917 looked bright enough, if only the weather should allow of an early resumption of the offensive on the Somme front and of the extension of the battlefront Northward to take advantage of the precarious position in which the Germans between the Ancre and the Scarpe now found themselves. The Allied advance had turned this portion of the German lines into a sharply marked salient which any further advance across the Upper Ancre would render untenable.

To profit by the exhaustion of the Germans, to leave them no breathing space and to keep them in suspense about the time and locality for the resumption of the attack, the British command had resolved on adopting during the winter months as active an attitude as the weather would allow. All along the line, therefore, from Ypres to the Somme a policy of harassing the enemy by artillery activity, raids, gas attacks, mining and other methods was initiated, so that the battalions of The Queen's Own were likely to be kept busy. When the Somme offensive ended the 1st was in the Bethune area, the 6th in the Wailly sector near Arras, the 7th was just leaving the Ancre heights for Abbeville, the 8th had found its way back to the Hulluch area where it had first seen active service, while the 10th and 11th had been sent up to Flanders and had gone into

line S.E. of Ypres before the end of October.

After leaving the Somme the 1st Battalion had moved to the First Army, going into billets at Essars on

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October 1st and taking over the support trenches in the centre of its new Divisional front two days later. This frontage extended for over four miles Northward from the La Bassée Canal, being divided into three sectors, Givenchy on the right, Festubert in the centre and Ferme du Bois on the left. Except on the actual Givenchy spur the line ran through low-lying ground, mostly waterlogged, and was held not with continuous trenches but with breast-works, and in many places only by isolated posts. From the beginning of October to the end of March the battalion remained in this quarter. The difficulty of moving in this swampy wilderness of ditches and old trenches made great activity in the way of raids and local attacks impossible, and the maintenance of the line involved unending labour. When the battalion first arrived in this district things were very quiet; the enemy were anything but aggressive and seemed nervous and apprehensive of attack; casualties therefore were low, under twenty being suffered in the course of October and November, while those for December would have been little higher had not the enemy suddenly indulged in a heavy bombardment on December 19th which inflicted a dozen casualties. In the course of this Pte. Herbert distinguished himself by going back through the shell-swept zone to ask for artillery support; he was wounded but got back to the telephone and got the guns on to the German trench mortars. When he volunteered for this dangerous errand he was due to start in a day or two for a month's leave. Otherwise the chief incident of the closing months of the year was the return in November of Colonel Buchanan-Dunlop, on which Major Lynch White reverted to second-in-command, while in February Major Waring came out from the Depot and became Adjutant.

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1916- March
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1st Battalion

See sketch 7

But as time wore on the enemy became more active, attempting several small raids, trying to rush saps and giving good targets to snipers and Lewis guns on

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several occasions. Their chief effort was on February 8th, when a party of about 20 got into one of D Company's saps but were thrust out again after a sharp hand-to-hand fight, leaving several dead behind them. The battalion on its part carried out several minor enterprises and was as active in patrolling as the state of the ground allowed. But its great achievement came in February, when A and B Companies successfully carried out a really big raid against the German lines just N.E. of Givenchy. Its distinctive feature was that it was carried out by daylight and without any preliminary bombardment, though for some days the artillery had been cutting the German wire systematically and the Corps Heavy Artillery had carried out a special programme of counter-battery work designed to ensure that the German gunners should not be at their guns when the raiders went over. In previous tours in the trenches A and B Companies had become specially familiar with their objectives, and just before the attack they had been carefully practised in crossing rough ground, negotiating wire and other obstacles, and had rehearsed their programme over taped-out trenches. No Man's Land was a mass of mine craters and shell-holes, but careful patrolling and reconnaissance by the leaders chosen for the six parties into which the attackers were divided enabled them to

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1st Battalion

See sketch 26

guide their men over the broken and intricate ground.

The morning of the 10th passed quietly, except for some shooting by 4.5 in. howitzers and some trench mortars, which, if anything, helped to put the enemy off the alert as it was finished two hours and more before 3 p.m., the “zero” hour. The attack was a complete surprise. The wire was well cut and the rapidity with which No Man’s Land was crossed on the heels of the barrage enabled the raiders to rush the front line almost without casualties. Such resistance as was offered was speedily quelled. Many Germans were killed, several prisoners taken, and the raiders, pushing

February 10th

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on, stormed the German support line 400 yards further on with equal success. Both A Company (Captain Cobb) on the right and B (Captain Scott) on the left reached their objectives. The trenches were cleared, dugouts discovered and bombed and mine shafts blown up. 2nd Lieut. Jagger, who commanded the left party, was conspicuous for his leadership and his party was specially successful, being much assisted by the skill with which Pte. Thompson, one of the Lewis gunners, covered its advance. 2nd Lieut. Brett and Sergt. Donohu also handled their parties with great skill; the former displayed the greatest coolness in checking his men when he found them getting too near the barrage, and set a splendid example, while Sergt. Donohu guarded the right flank most carefully and was the last man to withdraw. Corpl. Budgeon, one of the “old originals” of 1914, who took over command of another when Sergt. Limes, its commander, was hit, led his men forward most successfully, penetrated further into the enemy’s lines than any other party and inflicted heavy casualties on his opponents. So complete had been the surprise and so effective the counter-battery work that twenty minutes elapsed before any of the enemy’s guns opened in reply and then it was only an ineffective effort by a few odd guns. At 3.30 the raiders withdrew; their casualties came to 70, mostly men slightly wounded from following too close on the barrage, or hit later on after the return to the British trenches, for the enemy, who were evidently shaken by their experience, kept on opening heavy shell-fire at intervals. As against that they had taken nearly 30 prisoners from the 264th (Saxon) Infantry Regiment and had inflicted casualties estimated as at least 150 killed, many of the fugitives being caught in our barrage as they fled. A captured officer remarked that he had seen nothing like it on the Eastern Front and had imagined it was the beginning of the spring offen-

February 10th
1917
1st Battalion

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sive.⁽¹⁾ Indeed “The Royal West Kents’ Givenchy Raid” served as the standard of reference by which the Fifth Division judged similar enterprises in future.

This was the outstanding event of the winter months for the 1st Battalion, though there was an interesting episode in December when two French soldiers turned up on leave from the Somme and asked permission to dig for a box of valuables which they had buried in 19 14 near a farm between the support trenches of the Festubert section and what had been the old British front line before May 1 915. After some disappointment they succeeded in unearthing the box containing money and valuables worth 15,000 francs and departed in a state of jubilant satisfaction. The battalion remained in the Bethune area till the middle of March, moving thence to Auchel to spend the rest of that month in training for a new offensive. During the battalion’s stay in the Bethune area

February –
March
1917
1st battalion

there had been many changes among the officers, company and platoon commanders varied with the exigencies of courses, leave and the return of recovered wounded, though Colonel Buchanan-Dunlop and Majors Lynch White and Waring all continued with the battalion till the new offensive opened in April. In December Lieut. Thorne came out from the 3rd Battalion to take over the Quarter Master's position, and the battalion was very lucky in escaping with few casualties or invalidings among the officers. Fairly substantial drafts were received in November, nearly 250 in all, and another large draft joined in January; but the losses in the Givenchy raid had not been made good when the Fifth Division left the area. (2)

(2) Captain Cobb and 2nd Lieuts. Brett and Jagger received the Military Cross for their services in this raid, while D.C.M.'s were awarded to Sergt. Donohu, Corpl. Budgeon and Pte. Thompson.

(2) At this time there were present with the battalion 42 N.C.O.'s and men who had landed with it in August, 1914, and had served consecutively with it ever since, while another 40 "old originals" were still present who had only been away for quite short periods.

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Meanwhile the 6th Battalion had spent two very quiet months in its now familiar Wailly sector. This part of the line had never been "active" since the British had taken it over, and though keeping the trenches in repair involved plenty of work the period was barren in incidents of note. Still this gave it plenty of time for assimilating the large drafts, nearly 400 in all, with which its depleted ranks had been filled up. On November 20th Colonel Owen left the battalion to take command of the 36th Brigade—the only C.O. the 6th had in France who did not come from The Queen's Own he had given the battalion of his best and had been a vigorous and effective commander. He was succeeded by Major Dawson, who, though only a substantive Captain, had thus achieved the distinction of rising from junior subaltern to Lieut-Colonel and battalion commander in little over two years. This appointment gave great satisfaction to all ranks; Dawson had already given ample proof of his capacities and had shown himself fully equal to his new position. Captain Alderman became second-in-command in his place with the rank of Major, and Captain Dove succeeded to the Adjutancy. The New Year found the 6th out of the line at Sombrin, where it remained till the middle of January, when it took over part of the new Divisional front. This was in the actual suburbs of Arras, extending Southwards from the Scarpe on the left to the Arras-St. Quentin Road.

November 1916
March 1917
6th Battalion

The German trenches here were mostly about 200 yards away, though at Blangy, which was included in this sector, they were much nearer, less than 20 yards off in places; this closeness, however, had advantages, the Germans could not bombard the British front line for fear of hitting their own front trench, and the front line was consequently much safer than the support trenches 150 yards away, which were constantly obliterated. It was a curious bit of the line; it ran right through the ruins of Blangy so that there No Man's

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Land was a chaotic tangle of bricks, bits of broken roofs and wire, on the left the line ran backwards along the Scarpe and there was an outlying post in the reeds from which the sentries used at intervals to call across to the Australians on the further bank. The trenches here were necessarily shallow and gave the German snipers many chances, and as both sides were active with artillery and trench-mortars it was a more "lively"

November 1916
March 1917
6th Battalion

portion of the front than Wailly. Cold and wet weather at first, followed by hard frost, made life in the trenches very uncomfortable, but the good quarters available for supports and reserves in close proximity to the front made things much more endurable. The remarkable feature about Arras was that though the front line ran through its suburbs and the town was continually under fire, it looked at first sight quite normal, and the population continued to carry on with their daily routine in surprising fashion. Still, many houses which outwardly seemed intact proved on closer inspection to be badly damaged, and by day the town seemed a city of the dead, the only people to be seen in the streets being officers and orderlies on duty. Big cellars abounded, and these had been connected up, and an extensive system of tunnels developed, giving underground communication which proved of enormous value when the great attack was launched.

The battalion was still in this sector when the spring offensive started in April and had, therefore, the advantage of attacking over ground with which it had become thoroughly familiar. It was by this time well up to strength, although of the 43 officers and 1,080 men on its rolls at the end of March 11 officers and over 200 other ranks were not actually with the battalion, being mainly absorbed by the multifarious divisional and brigade employments, courses and schools. It had carried out one raid in March, but the repeated raids which the Twelfth Division had made had put the enemy on the alert; two of the parties pene-

trated successfully into the enemy's trenches to find the front line evacuated and the enemy manning the support line in strength. The main purpose of identification was, therefore, not achieved, though the raiders were withdrawn without many casualties and had reason to believe they had inflicted some loss in the exchange of bombs and rifle-fire with the enemy.

March 1917
6th Battalion

The 7th had enjoyed more than two months of respite after its long spell of fighting and hard work on the heights above the Ancre. After arriving in the Abbeville neighbourhood at the end of November it did not return to the line till the middle of February, though it shifted its billets more than once. Training was energetically carried on and the smartness of the battalion appears to have made a great impression on a large draft which joined in January, one of whom wrote home in some awe of the standard required. "As for guard mounting," he added, "I guess it would beat Guard changing at Whitehall easily." During this period there were many changes among the officers. Captain Anstruther was in temporary command when the battalion was withdrawn from the line, but early in January Lieut.-Col. E. M. Liddell, of the Duke of Wellington's, was definitely appointed to the command. Captain J. B. B. Ford, who had been invalided home from the 2nd Battalion, came out in December and took over A Company; in January Captains Latter and J. B. Matthews rejoined, while the arrival of a dozen subalterns and a draft of nearly 200 men went some way to repair the losses of the autumn, though the battalion was still much below establishment.

November 1916
February 1917
7th Battalion

When the 7th returned to the front line it found itself holding part of Desire Trench, but somewhat to the left of the line which it had attacked on November 18th. Part of Grandcourt Trench was in British hands, but the continuation of that trench Eastward was still in German keeping, and A Company was accordingly detailed to attack it. The attack, launched

See sketch 25

in the early hours of February 14th in two waves, with 2nd Lieuts. Dix and Beckett commanding the leading platoons, at first seemed to go well, and at 7.20 a.m. a report reached Battalion Headquarters that the objective had been taken but that Captain Ford was wounded and 2nd Lieuts. Dix and Beckett killed. Colonel Liddell, therefore, detailed Captain Matthews to take up a platoon of C to reinforce A, and shortly afterwards went up to the front himself to investigate. It then appeared that the whole objective had not been taken; in the darkness direction had been lost, the attackers had got into the left of their objective only and the right platoon had run into uncut wire in front of the strong point which formed the Eastern end of the objective (1) and had been shot down almost to a man. The attack thus resulted in a very limited success and casualties were deplorably heavy; Captain Ford died of his wounds shortly afterward and Captain Matthews was killed in organizing the defence of the portion of the objective taken. He had apparently gone forward to reconnoitre the obstructing strong point as his body was subsequently found quite close to it.

February 14TH
1917
7TH Battalion

This unlucky enterprise was the 7th's chief operation during the winter months. It was resting when, on February 17th, the 53rd and 54th Brigades made a most successful attack on the high ground overlooking Miraumont, and on its next tour in the front line (February 19th-23rd) its patrols, which were extremely enterprising and most successful in collecting useful information, found that the enemy were beginning to retire from the pronounced salient which his positions on the Ancre now presented. This withdrawal was only a preliminary to the general retreat three weeks later out of the larger salient from the Ancre to Arras; but in this beginning of semi-open warfare the 7th had no very active part, though the Eighteenth Division

February– April
1917

(1) This was the same "strong point" from which D Company had suffered such heavy losses on November 18th.

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shared in the capture of Irlles on March 10th, which immediately preceded the main withdrawal. The 7th had only just had the satisfaction of leaving the desolated area on the heights above the Ancre for the grass and growing crops around Achiet le Grand when, on March 21st, it was withdrawn for another period of training, mostly spent at Wittes, which lasted till nearly the end of April. In February it had had the ill luck to lose Colonel Liddell, who was wounded: his tenure of command had been brief but long enough to show his great capacities as a leader and commander. He had at once won the heart and confidence of everybody in the battalion. On his being wounded, as Major Phillips was away, Captain Anstruther was again in command until Colonel Hickson joined early in April. He had been serving in East Africa at the outbreak of war, having been seconded to the King's African Rifles, and had been invalided home early in 1916, but had now been passed fit for service again.

February– April
1917
7th Battalion

The rest which the 8th Battalion enjoyed after its exertions on the Somme was not of long duration but it gave time for the re-organization necessary after the recent fighting and losses. Major Whitty was now in command, as after struggling against ill health all the summer Colonel Parker had been evacuated sick. Lieut. H. S. Brown was Adjutant and Captain Wenyon, 2nd Lieut. E. G. Brown, Lieut. Sir H. W. Hawley and 2nd Lieut. Lock were the company commanders. When the battalion returned to the fighting front it found itself in the First Army, and after one turn in the Berthonval sector, near the Vimy Ridge, was moved up to a quarter with which it was only too familiar. On October 25th it relieved a battalion of the Fortieth Division near Hulluch and had its

October 1916 –
March 1917
8th Battalion

See sketch 11

front line just West of that Lens and La Bassée Road the battalion had crossed on September 26th, 1915.

The 8th found its opponents “very much out of hand,” using trench mortars with much freedom,

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particularly from Posen Crater, a prominent tactical feature on our right where the enemy were only 100 yards away, though No Man’s Land widened to nearly 300 yards further to the left. There followed a desperate duel for supremacy in which the 8th plied their opponents with rifle-grenades so assiduously that the enemy soon found they were getting as good as they gave. To their “rum jars” and “pineapples” retaliation in the shape of rifle-grenades was so quickly forthcoming that they gradually desisted from their activities, ceased to start “strafes,” and left No Man’s Land almost uncontested to the active patrols of the 8th. The battalion spent nearly four months in this sector, six days in the line were usually followed by six in support, another six in the line and then six in reserve. It was a strenuous time, for the line needed constant work, but as the battalion always returned to the same trenches it could carry on a continuous programme and casualties were kept astonishingly low, while though the weather was very cold, trench life was really more endurable in frost than in wet. Just before the end of the year a big draft filled up the gaps left by the Somme fighting, while in January Colonel Parker returned and resumed command.

In February the Division enjoyed a fortnight’s rest after which it relieved the Canadians in the line from the Souchez River to just South of Loos. Here the 8th were in the middle of a mass of mining villages, pitheads and dumps of mine refuse. The 72nd Brigade had the left or Calonne sector, which included a post on the N.W. end of the famous “Double Crassier” of Loos. Here the enemy were in close proximity, within 50 yards, though in the centre their trenches were 600 yards away, being nearer again on the right. The trenches were in an awful state but this was soon remedied by hard work in which the Divisional Pioneers, the 12th Sherwood Foresters, co-operated notably. The chief event of the battalion’s stay

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in this area was a German attack on the Double Crassier post on March 19th, which was beaten off by No. 13 Platoon of D Company under 2nd Lieut. Proctor, largely thanks to L/Cpl. Dent, who bombed back a party which was working round at the base of the mound. (1) Several Germans were killed and the repulse apparently discouraged them, for they did not repeat the attempt and made little effort to dispute No Man’s Land, which remained practically the territory of the battalion’s patrols.

The Forty-First Division had moved far afield after quitting the Somme. It had at first enjoyed a few days spent in rest and re-organization, by the 10th R.W.K. at Dernancourt, by the 11th at Ribemont, where it received a draft of 250 men from the 2nd line of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles—most magnificent material apart from the welcome addition to its depleted numbers (2) The Division then moved by rail to Flanders and found itself by the end of October near Reninghelst. The frontage on which the 10th and 11th were now to serve was that S.E. of Ypres, already so familiar to the 1st Battalion. The months which had passed since any of The Queen’s Own had held this sector had not seen any change for the better in it. The trenches, which had been left in very bad condition by their last occupants, lay on a slope with the Germans

October 1916 –
March 1917
8th Battalion

See sketch 52

February –
March 1917
8th Battalion

October 1916 –
March 1917
10th & 11th
Battalions

on the crest above them and overlooking the approaches. Even to those who had fought on the Somme this sector was emphatically one to be reckoned notable for its mud, and the task of getting up to the trenches the large quantity of materials required to keep them in repair was as difficult as was that of repairing the trenches when the materials at last reached them. It was astonishing what an appetite for R.E. stores the trenches seemed to possess; the more stuff used in their maintenance the more seemed needed.

(1) He received the M.M.

(2) Some officers joined at the same time, among them Major Beadle, who was to have a long spell of service with the battalion.

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The 10th and 11th were to have ample opportunities for becoming accustomed to this area. It was not only the closing months of 1916 which they were to spend there, 1917 was three parts gone before they finally quitted "the Salient." For both battalions the winter and spring of 1916 - 1917 was an active time. The 11th came in for the larger number of notable incidents in the way of raids and bombardments, but its casualties were nearly twice as high. On the whole, however, the wastage of both battalions was moderate, neither sickness nor battle-casualties being responsible for anything like the numbers of the first winter of the war; while both were kept fairly well up to strength. Several officers who had been wounded on the Somme returned, notably Colonel Wood-Martyn, who rejoined the 10th on January 1st and took over command from Colonel Soames. Captain Jiminez rejoined the 11th in April and resumed duty as Adjutant, relieving Captain Puttick.

October 1916 –
April 1917
10th & 11
Battalions

The outstanding feature of this period as far as the 10th were concerned was the splendid "liaison" it established with the artillery covering its sector. This brigade was commanded by Lieut.-Col. Simons, an ex-naval officer, and its gunners were the closest of friends with the 10th. It was arranged that if the enemy seemed restive and inclined to try a raid a codeword should be sent to the guns direct from the front line and not via Battalion Headquarters. This arrangement worked splendidly; three times the Germans started to raid the 10th, but each time the barrage came down so instantaneously and effectively that on every occasion the Germans were stopped at their own wire. To this the 10th were largely indebted for the lightness of its casualty list, which only came to five officers and just over 100 men, including two officers, Lieut. Tennyson Smith and 2nd Lieut. Hodges, killed on patrol. Moreover, when the Germans followed up one unsuccessful attempt at a raid by repeating it at the same

10th Battalion

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place and hour, the 10th had the satisfaction of taking two prisoners, the first the Division had captured for months, and of killing all the rest of the party. The battalion's snipers and patrols were busy enough and had the best of several minor encounters, while it behaved with conspicuous steadiness when heavily bombarded at the beginning of May, and the excellence of its work was fully recognised by its Divisional commander, General Lawford.

October 1916 –
April 1917
10th Battalion

The story of the 11th during these months was perhaps marked by rather more outstanding incidents: it was three times subjected to heavy bombardments followed by German raids; and after one fairly satisfactory raid in January, when it was holding

11th Battalion

the Spoil Bank sector near the Ypres-Comines Canal, was most successful in a second attempt. This was on February 8th when 2nd Lieut R. S. French took a party over, got well into German trenches, obtained a valuable identification by capturing 12 prisoners from the 65th Reserve Infantry Regiment of the 208th Division, and inflicted many casualties on the enemy. Though wounded 2nd Lieut. French accounted for three of the enemy himself and, aided by Sergt. Cozens, whose gallantry and good leading were conspicuous, he brought his party back with a loss of only four killed and a dozen wounded. (1) ^{it} was arranged to repeat the raid six hours later, but this time the enemy were decidedly on the alert and the raiders failed to get into the trenches, though they withdrew without casualties.

February 8th
1917

The three German attacks which the 11th experienced all occurred within about a month. The first was on March 24th, when the Germans were apparently attempting a much bigger raid which was disorganized by the promptness and efficiency of our artillery retaliation. A small party of raiders came over but was easily beaten off without obtaining any identifications, and the

March 24th
1917

(1) 2nd Lieut. French received the M.C. and Sergt. Cozens the D.C.M.

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way in which Colonel Corfe appreciated and handled the situation was highly commended by the Divisional commander. The battalion's casualties came to some 30, including Lieut. Aylett wounded. The second attempt, on April 7th, was apparently in retaliation for a raid by the Forty-Seventh Division. The battalion was then in the St. Eloi sector, not in the Spoil Bank. The bombardment began about 4 p.m. and worked from the centre outwards. Captain T. C. Wright observing this, skilfully moved his men from the danger zone in a way which minimized their casualties although the trenches were much damaged. When the enemy came over, just before 7 p.m., they actually entered the trenches, but were quite unsuccessful in obtaining any prisoners or Lewis guns or other spoil, and were quickly driven out. In retiring to their own lines they were caught in the British barrage and suffered severely, while the 11th were lucky to escape with only 20 casualties. Captain Wright was among the wounded, but his coolness and grasp of the situation well deserved the M.C. he received.

March 1917
11th Battalion

April 7th

The third German attack was the most serious. It came on April 20th when the battalion was again in the St. Eloi trenches, though this time in the right sub-sector. In the support line at this point there was an important mineshaft, part of the elaborate mining preparations for the projected big attack by the Second Army, and there was little doubt that this was the main objective of the attack. The bombardment began about 7.30 p.m. and continued till 9 p.m. with great intensity, almost obliterating the front trenches and doing special damage to a crater in front, the whole garrison of which was missing. Captain Frazer, who was in command, rose splendidly to the occasion; he set a fine example of bravery and displayed much tactical skill and resource. He had moved his men to the flanks of the shelled area or sheltered them in the mine-shaft, and directly the barrage lifted he brought them up and

April 20th 1917
11th Battalion

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posted them so adroitly that when the raiders came over they were met with a most effective rifle and Lewis gun fire from the support line, which prevented them getting

April 1917
11th Battalion

near the mineshaft and sent them promptly to the right about. As they went back they were caught by the British counter-barrage and suffered heavily both from that and from the Lewis guns of the 15th Hampshires, who got into them from the flank, so that the enterprise ended badly for them. The 11th had nearly 30 casualties; 2nd Lieut. Rodney, who had only joined ten days before this, was killed, but the gallantry of the men and the resourcefulness and skill of Captain Frazer, who received the M.C., were warmly praised by the Divisional commander.

The 11th had certainly added considerably to its reputation by the steadiness and gallantry it had displayed in these actions, and the D.S.O., which was conferred on Colonel Corfe in the June 3rd Honours List was a well-merited recognition both of the battalion's excellent record and of its commander's personal share in bringing it up to its high standard of efficiency and imbuing it with his own fighting spirit and energy. In its first year of active service it had already earned an unusual number of honours and distinctions. The next few months were to make its record in this respect quite remarkable. But before the 10th and 11th were to take part in any major operation other battalions of The Queen's Own had been heavily engaged in the first major offensive of the year, the desperate fighting of April and May 1917 on the Arras front.

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