

1st Battalion

bivouacs wet, but tents and tarpaulins having been issued, the men got under cover and the Battalion Diary records that: "Sir T. D'O. Snow and Capt. Allfrey (our new Corps Commander and his A.D.C.), both of the Regiment, came to see us in bivouac. We are in the VII Corps of the Third Army."

29th July

On 29th July the Battalion marched to Englebelmer and billeted, and on the following day the C.O., Adjutant and Company and Platoon Commanders reconnoitred the defences and billets in Mesnil, which the Battalion had been ordered to take over from the French.

"The village is in a state of defence, and there is a second line of trenches on the ridge immediately north of the village. The defences are not completed and the work is not very thorough; and a great deal is still to be done. The billets are dirty."¹

For several days work on the defences in and about Mesnil occupied the Somerset men, but at 8.30 p.m. on 5th August, moving off by companies, the Battalion marched off to relieve the Rifle Brigade in the left sub-sector, the relief being completed by 11.30 p.m. A, B and C Companies went into the front line, leaving H Company in the support dug-outs.

The quietude of the sector to which the Somersets had been transported was almost unbelievable after the noisy unrest of the Ypres Salient.

"Since we have been here," reads the Battalion record, "the enemy's guns have been more active, but there is practically no sniping. All observations can leisurely be made from above the parapet without disturbance. But it seems incredible that this state of things can last for any length of time."

14th August

With the exception of the arrival of Major J. A. Thicknesse, Somerset L.I., on 14th August, to take over command of the Battalion, and greetings from General Snow on 26th (the first anniversary of Le Cateau), the month passed without incident. Indeed, there is little to record for the remainder of the year, but strenuous work in the front-line trenches, patrol work,² periodical rests out of the line, and the gradual change of the heat of summer to the biting cold winds, rain, frosts and snow of winter.

31st December

6TH BATTALION

4th October

Whilst billeted at Brielen Houses the 6th Somersets received orders on 4th October to occupy trenches at St. Eloi, and the Battalion left camp at 5 p.m., relieving the 7th Yorkshire R. The relief was completed by midnight. But after a quiet tour the Battalion was relieved on 14th and moved to a rest camp at Poperinghe. A week later the 14th Division was placed in Corps Reserve, the 43rd Brigade to remain in its present billets. At the end of October the

¹ The Battalion at this period was temporarily commanded by Capt. G. Fleming, Col. Compton having been evacuated sick to Hospital.

² Lieut. H. G. A. Fellowes, 11th K.E.O. Lancers (Probyn's Horse) attached 1st Bn. S.L.I. and Corpl. E. A. E. Cox displayed most conspicuous gallantry during one of these patrols, on the night of the 7th October. The former was awarded the M.C. and the latter the D.C.M.