

## 2nd/6th BATTALION EAST SURREY REGIMENT

1940

Appendix

### May ROUELLES NEAR LE HAVRE

May 1st - 15th *See April War Diary*

May 16th "B" Company as the Garrison Mobile Column, was ordered to take up a series of roadblocks in the area of St Romain de Colbosc and to act as a local reserve and flying column to the French Army. Transport was provided by the 4th L of C, MT Company RASC.

May 17th Orders to prepare for the move to Saar were cancelled and the Battalion was instructed to resume its normal role.  
1930: Orders received from the commander of the Havre garrison to the effect that the whole of the Battalion would be mechanised forthwith and would proceed to a position in the area west of Rouen.

May 18th The Battalion moved to the given rendezvous in the following columns:  
First party; 2i/c and Reconnaissance party.  
Second party; "A" and "C" Companies  
Third party; HQ Company  
Fourth party; "B" Company  
Fifth party; Battalion HQ  
Sixth party; "B" Echelon Transport. Four 3 ton lorries had joined for troop carrying purposes, driven by RAOC drivers who were later relieved by RASC drivers.  
0600: First convoy left the Battalion HQ.  
0620: "B" Company, who had withdrawn from St Romain at dawn, arrived at Battalion HQ where a meal awaited them. Kits were packed, reloaded on transport and the Company left at 1000 hours.

### LE MANOIR

1300: Battalion convoy consisting of 116 vehicles arrived at Le Manoir, the unit thus being transformed into a motorised Battalion overnight.

1900: The 4th Buffs arrived at the camp in Le Manoir, and the two Battalions were ordered to form "Beauforce" under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Hesseltine. RF, DSO, MC. Later an order was received that the column was to be ready at 30 minutes notice.

May 19th Orders received that the column would be ready to move at 0600 hours 20 May to take up one of the defensive positions.

May 20th 0230: The Battalion was ordered to move by 0400 hours to a rendezvous and to meet an officer from BEF GHQ. The route to the rendezvous was:- Alizay, Pont St Pierre, Douville, Menesqueville, Lyons La Foret, to rendezvous at crossroads Feuillie.  
0620: The head of the Battalion convoy arrived. The column was parked in the Foret de Lyons.

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Lieutenant Colonel Burgess proceeded to the rendezvous and then met Lieutenant Colonel Marshall commanding the 4th Buffs and the Column Commander.

0830: Officer from the B.E.F. G.H.Q. arrived and conferred with Lt Col. Burgess and Lieutenant Colonel Marshall, and the following instructions were issued: "Beauforce" will proceed to join the B.E.F. in Belgium at the greatest possible speed. Route:- Arqueil, Forges Les Eaux, Neufchatel, Londiniers, Fresnoy, Eu, Abbeville, Montreuil. Further orders to be issued at Montreuil. "D" Company has been left at Fecamp and did not move with the Battalion.

### FORET DE HELLE

Vehicles refuelled and the troops were issued with rations.

### EU

Owing to the panic and congestion encountered it took nearly an hour to get through this town.

### FRESSENNEVILLE

May 20th 1800: Bn. H.Q. arrived. Lt. Col. Burgess was stopped and told to halt his column and report to G.O.C. 12 Div. He met at 12 Division Brig. R.J. P. Wyatt M.C., Commander 37 Brigade, who was acting G.O.C. 12 Division together with G.1. Col. Leeder. The following instructions were received: Company to move to the following places: "A" Company to Gamaches, "B" Company to Translay, "C" Company to Maisiniers, Battalion H.Q. to Helicourt. All Companies had moved in the direction of their area when a large force of enemy bombers appeared. Unopposed they proceeded to bomb Abbeville and Fressenneville. This air raid completely destroyed the town of Abbeville and all the houses close to Battalion H.Q. were severely damaged.

2000: Enemy having crossed the Somme were in Fressenneville and Buigry in the rear of the Battalion. Orders were received from Brigade to cover the withdrawal of the 4th Buffs across the river, and then withdraw across the River Bresle.

0200: Battalion Commander ordered the withdrawal by Companies to Le Treport.

May 21st - 22nd The withdrawal having been completed; covering positions were taken up as follows. "B" and "C" Companies covering the river crossing and bridges. "A" Company on the high ground overlooking Le Treport. Battalion H.Q. and col. at Focques. H.Q. company and "B" Echelon Transport at Criel. The 4th Buffs were in positions at EU, covering the crossings. The orders were then received to take up a line along the river Bethune. During the course of this withdrawal remnants of other regiments were collected and formed into composite platoons and were moved with the Battalion.

**DIEPPE**

The Battalion Commander made his recce of the new positions, and during this time another heavy air raid took place on the town of Dieppe. The enemy dropped a number of heavy bombs and machine-gunned afterwards. The Battalion recce party had to take cover hurriedly. Two hospital ships and a hospital train were destroyed during the raid.

**LE BOIS ROBERT**

May 22nd The Battalion took up the following line in the early morning: St Aubin le Cauf, Martigny, Arques La Bataille, Rouxmesnil. This was a 2 1/2 mile front and orders were to cover all railway crossings. All bridges in the area were prepared for demolition by the 236 Field Company R.E.

During this period of time the enemy were entrenching strongly on the South bank of the river Somme. The German a/c were active during the whole of these operations and very little allied aircraft was seen. For a long time the line held by the Battalion was the front line of the B.E.F. in France, until the 51st Highland Division and the 1st Armoured Division moved forward to the line of the river Bresle. M/c and car patrols were sent forward daily at dawn to the river Somme. Apart from four m/c lost on patrol only one 3 ton lorry was abandoned and left in enemy hands.

**LE BOIS ROBERT**

May 25th "D" Company under Major H.E.P. Spearing rejoined the Battalion.

**BIHOREL**

May 31st The Battalion was relieved by the 1/5 Foresters.  
2030: Battalion assembled at its new area. Orders were then received that the Battalion would rest.