

WAR DIARY

1st BN. THE ROYAL SCOTS

10 - 27 MAY 1940.

1st Bn The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)

A/Lt. Col. H. D. K. Money	Wounded 27 May
Major C.C. Winchester (2 i/c)	Killed 24 May
T/Capt (A/Major) & Adjt J. Bruce	Prisoner 30 May
2/Lt. L.E. Liddell (I.O.)	Wounded 21 May
Lt. P.B. Barker RAMC	Prisoner 27 May
Rev. N. Maclean RACHD	Wounded & Prisoner 27 May
2/Lt. R.M. Carpenter (L.O.) SWB.	Prisoner 30 May

Headquarters Company.

O.C. (Bt Major A.T.M. Mitchell-Innes (Major G. Byam-Shaw	Wounded 14 May
S.O. 2/Lt (A/Capt) C.J.R. Errington	Killed 21 May
Carrier Officer 2/Lt. (A/Capt) F.R.N. Kerr	Prisoner 30 May
M.T.O. 2/Lt (A/Capt) J.A. McGregor	Wounded 19 May
Q.M. Capt. G.W. Read.	

A Company.

Capt. (A/Major) F.M. Bucher	Wounded 26 May
Lt. (A/Capt) W.I.E. Thorburn	Wounded 21 May
2/Lt. R.S. Turcan	Killed 27 May
2/Lt. Page	Killed 27 May
2/Lt. (A/Capt) F.W.M. Edie	

B Company

Capt. S.G. Dickson	Wounded 19 May
Lt. (A/Capt) L.J. Mackinnan	Prisoner 27 May
2/Lt. Kyle	Wounded 21 May
2/Lt. Anderson	Missing 27 May
2/Lt. R.E. GALLIE.	Killed 21 May

C Company.

2/Lt. (A/Capt) E.I.C. Elliott	Killed 27 May
2/Lt. (A/Capt) W.R.L. Thorne	Prisoner 27 May
2/Lt. J. Cruickshank	Wounded & Prisoner 27 May
2/Lt. W.E. Walker	Wounded 21 May

D Company.

Capt. (T/Major) R.G. Watson, M.C.	Killed 27 May
Lt. A.N. Chinary-Haldane T.A. Gentriss	To HQ 2 Div 23 May
2/Lt. C.E. Macduff-Duncan	Wounded 21 May
2/Lt. J.W. Drysdale	Killed 24 May

Awards (prior to 27 May)

A/Lt. Col. H.D.K. Money	- D.S.O.
T/Major R.G. Watson	- D.S.O.
A/Capt. F.R.N. Kerr	- M.C.

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10th May - LECELLES - 0400 hrs (about) AA fire and aerial bombing from the SOUTH. 0600 hrs orders for Plan D to be put into operation, zero hour being 1300 hrs. Morning and afternoon spent in packing up, hand over "Tight in present posn" scheme, keys to blockhouses. All surplus stores of Bde dumped in Fabrie under I.R.S. guard under Cpl. McGreavie. Bn R Gp moved with Bde O Gp at 2115 hrs, remainder of Bn under Major G. Byam-Shaw, in RASC Bus. Coy moved out at 2310 hrs via PONT CAILLOU (S.P.). Enemy aircraft brought down area RUMEGIES about 2100 hrs. Owing to officers being on leave Major Byam-Shaw acted as 2 i/c, Capt. Thorburn as O.C. A Coy and 2/Lt. E.I.C. Elliott as O.C. C Coy. CSM Martin acted as RSM and P.M. Allen as CSM HQ Coy.

Route: RUMEGIES - PONT CAILLOU - ATH - HAL - ESPINETTE - LA HULPE - WAVRE.

Enemy bombing of CENSE DE WAPEMPRE about 2100 hrs - no casualties.

M.T. move was equally badly controlled and most of the Bn Tpt got split up, arriving at their destination in twos and threes during the 17th.

Final bridge was blown after B Coy withdrew behind it. It was early afternoon about 1500 hrs.

11th May - WAVRE - 0400 hrs Bn R Gp arrived area OVERYSCHÉ, reced debussing point at LA HULPE and proceeded to WAVRE. 0600 hrs - 0800 hrs (about) Bn. arrived and debussed area LA HULPE - OVERYSCHÉ being bombed in process - no casualties and proceeded by march route WAVRE where they arrived about 1100 hrs - 1600 hrs and proceeded to Coy areas - A Coy outposts B Coy right C Coy left D Coy reserve. The town was unevacuated and full of Belgian troops who had been on leave. French DLM moved through town in morning to cover front forward of 4/7 DG. Day spent in digging in and taking over Belgian blockhouses (keys of which were in Brussels) which was NOT very well sited for Bn defence scheme. Local Belgian Command very excited and not very co-operative. News that all was NOT well with Belgian Field Army and Germans were over MAAS. Inhabitants friendly and seemed pleased to see us.

12th May - WAVRE - Day spent in further preparations for defence. Situation was very uncertain and Germans were reported to be attacking Liege. Some evacuation of civilians commenced and on the following afternoon the shattered troops of the Belgian 4th and 7th Divisions began to pour into the town. (These, on the whole, seemed good and some units, who still had their officers, had very high morale). Bn HQ was moved from the town to a house on the outskirts.

13th May - WAVRE - Preparations for defence continued, including demolition of bridges and loopholing of houses in the town. A Coy were withdrawn from outposts and took up a posn on the river behind B Coy. Final evacuation of town was put into operation and by midnight the town was empty. In the evening and during the night the French DLM and the 4/7th D.G. came in through our position - the DLM had suffered some very

severe handling from the German Air Force and some of the 4/7th DG had also suffered but all had their "tails up".

14th May - WAVRE - Preparation of defensive posns were continued and in the morning enemy aircraft bombed the town, during which Bt Major Mitchell Innes and A/C.S.M. Gordon were wounded whilst collecting foodstuffs. B Coy was withdrawn behind the river and to a posn on the right of A Coy, in touch with 13ieme Tirailleurs Algerians. (2/Lt Gallie was in command of an International post at the junction of the units). Bn HQ was moved to a shooting lodge in the BOIS DE BEAUMONT in the evening. Enemy elements appeared on the EAST banks of the river during the day and by evening contact had been gained. During the early part of the night some fairly heavy fighting took place in the town on A and C Coy fronts, during which the Pioneer Platoon, supporting A Coy, reported being fired on from behind. All attacks were repulsed fairly easily, though a reported gas attack by C Coy caused some scare. (This eventually proved to be caused by the breaking of a refrigerating plant in the tower). Ppr Stevenson, attd C Coy was killed.

15th May - WAVRE - BOIS DE BEAUMONT was shelled fairly heavily in early morning destroying all signal lines but causing no casualties, although advanced wagon lines had been established in the wood. The day was fairly quiet except for occasional fire engagements, the enemy having apparently been driven out of the forward edges of the town in the previous night's engagement. The day was perfectly lovely and at battalion HQ, we had our meals in a glade under the trees which might have [been] miles from any war instead of within 1000* of the enemy. In the evening about 1630 hrs information was received that the enemy had broken through the French Lines to the South, and a defensive flank was formed on the Southern edge of the wood by D Coy and Carrier Pl, with Bn HQ in a support line on the road WAVRE-WOO. After dark some shelling recommenced and at 2300 hrs orders were received to withdraw immediately to WOO, final evacuation of FDLs to be completed by 0300 hrs 16th May. Orders had to be given out very quickly - mostly verbally by 'phone and the final orders were not given out until about midnight consequently companies had to commence thinning out immediately and such things as 2" mortars, some anti-tank rifles and in one case Bren Guns had to be destroyed and abandoned. In spite of the hurry, companies carried out their orders well except for another gas alarm (false).

16th May - WOO - Withdrawal to WOO was unmolested and easily carried out as far as Bde Dispersal point after which transport got very mixed up and maps were found to be inaccurate and the position was not finally occupied until dawn. Situation was very vague all day and no enemy contact was made until evening and then only by outposts. A number of 13th Tirailleurs Algerians came into our position, some having been behind the enemy lines for 48 hours. The withdrawal was continued about 1800 hrs and withdrawal from posns was safely completed in daylight. Withdrawal was through the FORET DE SOIGNIES (which was very badly marked and Coys sometimes went astray), which was a memorable sight with long columns of infantry and transport wending through the dark roads. Brigadier congratulated the battalion on its march discipline especially compared with certain Territorial units, who were appalling - smoking, talking, falling out etc!

17th May - _____ - March was continued after dawn - the roads being packed with transport and infantry - until the CHARLEROI Canal was crossed at LOTH. After concentrating the battalion and getting the men

fed, the battalion was ordered to move to GRAMMONT (Bde Dispersal point). Colin Mackenzie GSO III (Liaison) 1 Corps had breakfast with us. The day was very hot and dusty and columns soon got lost but arrived - somehow - at GRAMMONT about 1400 hrs where orders were received to proceed to [redacted] and billet for the night, although while the battalion was moving in, some troops had already received orders for a further withdrawal. Very pleasant billets were found for the battalion, in the town which had not been evacuated, although evacuation commenced in the evening. Evening was devoted to routine work, especially in checking the losses of stores on the Dyle.

18th May - R. DENDRE - About 0030 hrs orders were received to take up a posn on the river DENDRE by 0830 hrs, to the immediate SOUTH of [redacted]. After a certain amount of mad "rushings about", the posn was occupied. Slight contact was obtained during the day but the day was very easy. Orders for a further withdrawal were issued about 2130 hrs. Posn to be evacuated by dawn.

19th May - FROIDMONT - Withdrawal started during the night and about dawn the last elements were clear of the posn. The Carrier Pl under orders of the Manch R(MG) covered the withdrawal and 2/Lt (A/Capt) F.R.N. Kerr was wounded and 2/Lt F.W.M. Edie was appointed to command the platoon. Bn arrived at RENAIX about 0900 hrs where it was meant to embus. RENAIX was an indescribable chaos with tpt banked four and five abreast and absolutely immoveable. Bn marched through RENAIX and down the road to TOURNAI and eventually the Troop Carrying Company RASC was found and some civilian vehicles were requisitioned about 1100 hrs and at the same moment the German Air Force arrived and bombed the battalion and a refugee column. Bn was bombed periodically during its journey to the billeting area at FROIDMONT and Capt. S.G. Dickson was evacuated and Lt. L.J. Mackinnon took command of "B" Company. Went into very pleasant billets and after getting routine work up to date the battalion had a good evening meal and a long night's rest.

20th May - FROIDMONT - Orders received to recce a position on the R. ESCAUT near CALONNE in which we were to relief the 8th Bn R Warwicks and part of 7th Bn R Warwicks during the night. Bn O Gp after receiving orders at ST. MAUR, where there was some shelling, recced the Warwicks posn. Afternoon was spent in producing orders, packing up etc. Several 5th Column scares, [redacted]

[redacted] Bn moved off at 0100 hrs and arrived at the posn about midnight. Bn was shelled and mortared during the take-over and suffered several casualties including 2/Lt W.E. WALKER.

21st May - R. ESCAUT - A Hellish day! We were mortared and shelled heavily all morning and afternoon and owing to our open right flank Bn HQ had to take up a posn as a support line to D and B Coys who were defending this flank. D Coy and Carriers put in several counter attacks to try and re-establish the line. In the afternoon things got rather easier and the Camerons after liaison with us put in a counter attack and re-established the line to some extent. Had over 150 casualties and had great difficulty in evacuating them; these included Major G. BYAM SHAW and 2/Lt R.E. GALLIE killed Lt (A/Capt) W.I.E. THORBURN wounded 2/Lts L.E. LIDDELL, C.E. McDUFF-DUNCAN and KYLE wounded. Padre managed to bury some of our dead that night.

22nd May - R. ESCAUT - Easier day though still a good deal of shelling. 2/Lt TURCAN took over A Company and 2/Lt R.M. CARPENTER I.O. and O.C. HQ

Company Orders received for withdrawal to GORT LINE by night. Lt MUSEE Officier de Liaison at Bde HQ volunteered to come to Bn as an officer but it was not necessary. Withdrawal successfully carried out under casual shelling.

23rd May - COBRIEUX - After marching all night went into rest until were in COBRIEUX and then took up a posn in Bde Reserve in the GORT LINE but were not engaged. Air Raid in evening but no casualties. Embussed at about 1900 hrs to move to AUBERS RIDGE when the Div was going into BEF reserve! Arrived after uneventful journey and debussed but found no further orders nor anyone to give any so found billets for remainder of the night.

24th May - ESSARS - Re-embussed about 0900 hrs after having found Capt. F.M. BUCHER who had rejoined from leave. Moved to ESSARS near BETHUNE where Bn went into billets. About 1600 hrs shelling commenced and French tanks began coming back through our billets, hastily took up a posn while stores etc were reloaded. D Company put in a counter attack to assist the R.I. Fus. Major C.C. WINCHESTER M.C. and 2/Lt DRYSDALE killed. 2/Lt CRUICKSHANK to D Coy as 2 i/c. The line was re-established by dark and except for some shelling there was a quiet night.

25th May - CALONNE SUR LYS - Moved back into Bde reserve at CALONNE SUR LYS in early morning and went into billets. Very pleasant day spent in sleeping and cleaning up. A fair amount of shelling in p.m. but not on our billets. About 1500 hrs C Company moved up to fill gap between 4th and 6th Bdes and took our first prisoners. Huge enemy air sortie over the Bde posns in evening and heavily bombed our carriers (forming part of a Bde Carrier Coy on a special role). Moved up to support 2 R Norfolk and 1/8 L.F. about 2200 hrs.

26th May - near LE PARADIS - Took up a position near LE PARADIS with C Coy filling the gap on the right of the Bde and A Coy in support of 2 R Norfolk. A peaceful night and morning and in the afternoon Bn HQ moved into LE PARADIS and B Coy took up a position in rear of A Coy. Contact was maintained all day and there was some shelling. Capts Bucher and Bruce to A/Majors Lt. Mackinnon 2/Lts Errington, McGregor, Edie and Thome to A/Cpts.

27th May - LE PARADIS - Information received about 0200 hrs that a large attack was expected on the front on the left of the Bde and that the Bde might expect to receive the flanks of the attack. By 0800 hrs the battalion was heavily engaged, A Coy and C Coy suffering very heavy casualties. A/Lt. Col. Money, A/Major Bucher, 2/Lt. Cruickshank wounded A/Capt. Elliott, 2/Lts Turcan and Page killed. T/Major Watson M.C. took over command of the battalion until about 1000 hrs when Bn HQ was set on fire and he was reported killed whereupon the command devolved upon A/Major and Adjt Bruce. A Coy and C Coy were overrun, after the former had done severe damage to several enemy tanks with grenades.

B Coy (without orders) withdrew to LE PARADIS where they were reformed by A/Capt A Gordon 2 R Norfolk and together with the remnants of D Coy resisted until about 1600 hrs when they were captured. Bn HQ and HQ Coy under A/Major Bruce, A/Capt. Errington, 2/Lt. Carpenter and 2/Lt Anderson maintained their position until nightfall and managed to get A/Capt. Edie back to Bde with information. After dark this party tried to withdraw to our own lines* (orders to this effect had been given by Bde

HQ but NOT received by the battalion) and except for 2/Lt. Anderson, who was missing, were captured at MERVILLE on 30th May.

(* Actually this withdrawal was not attempted until the night 29/30th May, the intervening time having been spent in waiting for a counter attack which was understood to be coming. At this time the battalion had received no information regarding the withdrawal from Dunkirk and orders were given for the battalion i.e. some 30 men, to lie up over the LE PARADIS position to support the counter attack by fire).

J. Bruce, Major
1st Bn. The Royal Scots.
Posn 1941.

REPORT BY MAJOR J. BRUCE OF THE ACTIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION
DURING THE PERIOD 27TH TO 30TH MAY 1940.

Sir,

I have the honour to render the following report on the actions of the 1st Bn The Royal Scots during the period 27th - 30th May 1940.

On the 27th May, the battalion was in a defensive position in and around the village of LE PARADIS and was acting as support battalion of the 4th Infantry Brigade. During the night 26th/27th information had been received from a Liaison Officer that an attack was expected at dawn on the formation on our left but that we might anticipate receiving its left flank - and further that in the course of the day, French formations and the Army Tank Brigade would relieve us in our position.

Soon after dawn the forward companies were engaged with the enemy and Bn HQ was "standing-to". Lt. Col. H.D.K. Money was wounded and evacuated and about 0800 hrs (?) Major R.G. Watson M.C. (O.C.D. (Reserve) Coy) assumed command of the battalion. At this time, the battalion situation was as follows:-

A Coy (2 Lt. R.S. Turcan), B Coy (A/Capt. L.J. Mackinnan) and C Coy (A/Capt. E.I.C. Elliott) were all heavily engaged with infantry and tanks, in positions forward of LE PARADIS. A Coy had suffered heavy casualties and was reported to be about 20 strong. C Coy was acting to link the right flank of 4th Inf Bde with 6th Inf Bde, and was out of touch of Bn HQ. B Coy was withdrawing to LE PARADIS. D Coy (C.S.M. Wittet), HQ Coy (2/Lt. R.M. Carpenter S.W.B.), Carrier Pl (3 or 4 Carriers) (A/Capt. F.W.M. Edie) and Bn HQ (C.S.M. Martin A/RSM) were in or to the left flank of LE PARADIS and were not yet engaged.

All communications with the battalion were in a bad way and runner was the normal, though uncertain, means of communication. A No. 11 W/T Set was working to Bde.

Capt. A.L. Gordon 2nd Bn R Norfolk who had come from O.C. 2 R Norfolk with a message was asked by Major Watson to take command of all troops in LE PARADIS, which were B Coy, some of D Coy and Carrier Pl.

At about 1000 hrs (?) a mechanised column appeared in front of Bn HQ from the EAST. For some minutes it could not be decided if this column was enemy or French relieving troops. Fire was however directed at Bn HQ which immediately went into action. I spoke to the Brigade Major by R/T informing him of the situation. He sounded sceptical. I assured him that the battalion would hold on in its present position, pending further orders. I had just finished speaking when a shell or mortar bomb fell on the wireless and destroyed it.

I reported to Major Watson that I had seen the R.A.P. (about 100 yds EAST of Bn HQ) being rushed. Bn HQ opened fire on it but all the occupants, including Lt. P.B. Barker, R.A.M.C., Rev. N. Maclean C.F. (4th Cl) and A/L.M. Martel, were taken prisoner. The house was set on fire and I understand some wounded, who could not be moved, were burned in it.

At this time Bn HQ farm was also on fire, and Major Watson ordered its evacuation. He took some of the personnel and joined HQ D Coy; I took

the remaining personnel and eventually reached the farm in which HQ Coy was situated. On my way to this farm I was passed by Sgt. Hamilton and Cpl. Bruce, both signallers, whom Major Watson had ordered to try and get through to Brigade. They were showing great bravery in crossing very open ground under heavy fire. I did not see them again.

On arrival at HQ, HQ Coy, I was informed that Major Watson had been killed. I, therefore, assumed command. The situation, so far as I could ascertain was as follows:

With me, there were A/Capt. Errington (S.O.), A/Capt. Edie (with one remaining carrier), 2/Lt. Carpenter and P.M. Allen A/CSM with about 30 ORs of HQ Coy and GSM Wittet with a few ORs of D Coy. There were also 30 - 40 wounded in the farm cellar.

In LE PARADIS under Capt. A.L. Gordon 2 R Norfolk were B Coy (A/Capt. Mackinnon) and some of D Coy.

The enemy was between my position and LE PARADIS. There was one Bren gun and one A.T. Rifle in the farm. I organised all round defence of the farm which was under heavy small arms and light artillery fire. 2/Lt. Carpenter, C.S.M. Wittet and P.M. Allen particularly distinguished themselves at this time but the bearing and conduct of all ranks was exemplary.

About 0500 hrs (?) a message was received from Capt. A.L. Gordon asking for orders. I replied that he was to hold on till nightfall when we would attempt to withdraw. This message was not delivered and about 0600 hrs (?) we saw that the enemy were in LE PARADIS and also that they had captured several prisoners, though one platoon (I think, P.S.M. Marshall's) was seen to make a successful withdrawal.

The situation at our position had quietened and with LE PARADIS taken, the enemy swept past our right flank, offering good targets of which Cpl. Waterson took full advantage with the Bren.

2/Lt. Anderson and L/Sgt. Bruce (B Coy) arrived in the position. About 1730 (?) hrs I decided to send A/Capt. Edie to Brigade HQ in his carrier to report what the situation was and he departed over completely open country held by the enemy.

As the enemy were now ignoring our position and circumventing it, I decided on the following plan.

1. After nightfall we would evacuate our present position, leaving the wounded, and move to another farm where we would remain concealed, until the expected attack by the Army Tank Bde developed and then we would be in a position to engage the enemy in their rear.
2. The wounded were to remain in the present position until the following day when they would surrender.

Consequently after dark 4 officers (Maj. Bruce, Capt. Errington, 2/Lt. Carpenter and 2/Lt. Anderson) and about 30 ORs (including Pte. Peach who was wounded but insisted on staying with us) moved to another farm about 400 yards EAST. On the way 2/Lt. Anderson and L/Sgt. Bruce (and possibly one or two others) disappeared and were not seen again. The new position was reached about midnight 27/28 May and we were left there

undisturbed for that night and the following day. We had very little food and there was practically none in the farm.

In the evening of the 28th May, as no counter attack had developed, I decided to withdraw and gave permission for any man who wanted to try by themselves to do so and about 2000 hrs we set off. Almost immediately heavy artillery fire opened to the NORTH and I, wrongly, assumed this to be preparatory to the counter attack, so ordered the battalion back to our position. Firing later died down and we remained for the following day, the 29th. By this time we were hungry having had only some indifferent soup that day.

On the night 29th/30th May we again withdrew and by dawn, we had crossed the RIVER LYS at MERVILLE and were "lying up" in some empty cottages where we were surprised and captured at about 0930 hrs, information as to our position having been given to the enemy by a Frenchman.

In addition to those officers and ORs already mentioned, I would like to mention that the following also contributed great assistance and behaved with distinction during the fighting of this period:

The 2 signalmen, R.C. of Sigs with the No.11 Set.

3 Guardsmen (2 Coldstream and 1 Grenadier) who had been picked up by the battalion on the ESCAUT about May 20th and had remained with us.

L/Sgt. Turner (Sgt. Clerk, Bn HQ), L/C Aust (Clerk, Bn HQ), C.S.M. A/RSM Martin (killed), Piper Neish and Pte. Brown (Offrs Mess Cook) - all of whom showed particular gallantry in the initial defence of Bn HQ on 27th May.

The bearing and inspiration of Major Watson was of incalculable benefit to all ranks and his death meant a great loss to the battalion.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd). J. Bruce, Major
The Royal Scots.