

Extract from War Dairy/Intelligence Summary
6th Battalion Queens Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)
1 – 7 May 1917

Source: National Archive Catalogue Reference WO/95/1861. Image Ref 477

Place	Date	Summary of Events and Information
Orange Line [Near Arras]	1st May 1917	Day passed quietly. Moved up from Orange Hill at 10.20pm & took over trenches vacated by 7 th Bn. East Surrey Rgt in Happy Valley.
Happy Valley	2nd	Vicinity of trenches kept under intermittent shelling throughout the day. Fine weather.
Happy Valley	3rd	At 2.30am Battalion moved up into position for the attack. B & D Coys in support of 7 th Bn East Surrey Rgt. A & C Coys in support of 6 th Bn The Buffs. Attack on Brown Line started at 3.45am. Attack came under heavy machine gun fire & was repulsed. The Battn not called on for support. Orders received in late afternoon for Battn to capture Brown Line starting at 9.45pm. The attack was unsuccessful being beaten back by intense machine gun fire from both flanks & from the front. Casualties 12 officers and 250 OR [Other Ranks]. Officers casualties :- Lieut Col WRA Dawson DSO wounded. Killed 2 nd Lieut MJL Walker. Wounded missing Lieut HB Antill. Wounded Capt BF Friend, Lieut GW Hill, 2 nd Lieut HM Thurnburn. Missing Capt ET Williams, 2 nd Lieut FL Pynke (?), 2 nd Lieut LW Browning, 2 nd Lieut H Hibbett, 2 nd Lieut EN Allen, 2 nd Lieut EJW Ely.
Trenches North of MONCHY	4th	Before dawn elements of Battn holding front line were relieved by 6 th Bn Queens Regt & were placed in support. Trenches shelled intermittently throughout the day. At 11pm the Battn was relieved by 7 th Bn Norfolk Regt.
Brown Line	5th	One relief Battn returned to Brown Line (behind FEUCHY RD.). Day spent in reorganising, checking rolls etc. Carrying party of 2 Officers and 125 ORs found at night.
Brown Line	6th	Fitting out for another tour of the trenches.
Brown Line	7th	Relieved 7 th Bn R Sussex Regt in left sub sector from River SCARPE to H25 C 88 20. Relief delayed on account of gas & tear shells. Relief completed 1.30am 8/5/17.

Transcriber's notes: This short section covers not only the period within which Frank Exell was killed it also illustrates the scale of casualties and ensuing chaos, eg the need to check rolls, and parties of 125+ being 'found' at night. It also highlights the continuing threat of poison and tear gas as well as the need for relief movements to be carried out in darkness.

Elsewhere the diary records that the Battalion's strength was nominally around 1,000 though it was often well below, sometimes down to 600+. Even if the Battalion had been at full strength on 3rd May the loss of 250 men represented a huge proportion.

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