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12th Inf Bde. 4th Division

Battle of the Somme.

1st July 1916.

The Attack.

At 6:30 a.m. the artillery fire became rapid until 7 p.m. when it became intense. It was the most extraordinary sight. The Bosch line could not be seen for smoke and bursting shells. Bosch still hardly answered at all. The first mistake was made at 7:25 a.m. when the Beaumont Hamel line under the Hawthorne Ridge Redoubt went up. This gave the Germans 5 minutes to consolidate the crater which they made use of. Zero hour was at 7:30 a.m.

At 7:30 a.m. the first waves went over and then things began to happen. In spite of the six days bombardment German machine guns got going from every direction. Beaumont Hamel opposite the 29th Division was a veritable Fortress. The 29th Division never got near the Hun Front Line. The 93rd Brigade of the Division on our left never got more than half way over No Mans Land, although the left Brigade of that Division did get into Serre that day. The 11th Brigade got the first line fairly easy. Gen. Prowse left the Headquarters too soon and was killed rushing a machine gun. He was shot in the stomach and died at Maunex. Corps Headquarters that evening. The losses of the Brigade were awful. The Cos. of the Hampshires. The Rifle Brigade and the Somerset Light Infantry were killed and most of the Officers were knocked out. They finally got held up somewhere in the 2nd line.

Meanwhile we were waiting in Brigade Headquarters for news. The Essex and King's Own were going over first with the Lan. Fus. and Dukes in support. The Kings Own and Essex were wonderful. The Kings Own got very nearly to Pendant Copse and the Essex to Munich trench. Martineau the Brigade Signalling Officer went off to raise a forward

signal station which he did somewhere on 63 over and over again we got a message back from him saying the Essex were bombing in Munich trench and wanted more bombs. Of the Kings Own we never heard a word, beyond from the Adjutant who came in to Headquarters with a cracked head. This was the first action in which Steel Helmets were worn and they undoubtedly saved many lives.

Just before the Brigade went over the Division wired us to stop the Battalions and also stop the 10th Brigade. Runners were immediately sent to the Kings Own and Essex. Lan. Fus, Dukes.

They were too late however. The Kings Own and Essex were right on. The Lan. Fus¹ were mostly in the quadrilateral and one Coy. of the Dukes was in the Bosch line.

The result of all this was that the 93rd Brigade having failed on the left and the 29th Division on the right, the German came down from either flank and the Kings Own and Essex were practically missing. Major Bromilow⁺ has not been heard of since. Col. Stirling the C.O. Essex was wounded twice at the beginning and got away. Cadie the Adjutant of the Essex and the Adjutant of the Kings Own were both wounded.

* Body found
August 1917.

Fighting went on all the afternoon. Some of the Seaforths of the 10th Brigade got over and joined up with the Lan. Fus in the quadrilateral. The C.D. of the Seaforths, Hodge, Bertie Ravenscroft, Hall, Watkins, Mansell, and Rougier in the Quad with him and stayed there till 2 a.m. July 2nd. bombing the whole time. C.S.M. Laverick and Sgt. Albon were in there too. These to found a stokes gun and although they had never seen one before worked it till they ran dry of ammunition.

B. Farrow was killed in No Mans Land on his way back having been with the others all the time.

The Roman Road on the afternoon of July 1st. was

ghastly, wounded in every place conceivable coming up all the time. Macdonald with a bullet in his chest and a Bosch Helmet was the only one of the Officers I saw from the Regt. He was quite happy.

I heard nothing of Brain or Firth till well into the afternoon. They reported in writing that they were somewhere near the Quadrilateral and did we know where the others were they lost each other at the beginning of the show.

The attack finally ended as far as the Division was concerned at 2 a.m. July 2nd. when the last of our people came back from the Quadrilateral.

The sum total of the attack was a bad hammering and no ground captured, but from all accounts Bosch lost heavily too.

The following casualties and Officers in the 2nd Ian Fus.:— Sayers, Charlie Robeton, Farrow, Nipper X Kennion, Gammon, and MacIver Killed.

Bertie Ravenscroft, Rougier, Williams, Gregory, Bowes Collis-Browne, Macdonald, Anderson, wounded, Daies Missing reported (prisoner) Firth, Brain, Hodge, Mansell, Watkins, Rougier and Hall came through.

Of these Sayers, Robertson, Bowes and Collis-Browne were hit before reaching our own front line.

The other Battalions except the Dukes had lost, worse than we had. The 110 Brigade practically did not exist.

While the 10th Brigade except for the Seaforths, had had been stopped by the Division and had not lost so badly.

The Bosch showed his fighting powers that day, and he put up a grand fight. It/however nearly all his Officers. The machine Guns in our vicinity were nearly all manned by Bosch Officers and all the prisoners told

the Regt.

I first saw Brain about 5 p.m. the evening of the 12th. he seemed pretty broken up, but had not been hit. John Carr, the C.O.'s Orderly of course had'nt cared a hang for anything. Clegg Brains Orderly got wounded.

The Bosch had put up a very fine Barrage of 5.9 H.E. and Shrapnel. He put up every gun in a clump on to one small bit of the front, using his machine guns elsewhere. After 10 mins. or so he would shift all his guns to another small portion of the front and so on always having a machine gun Barrage where his guns were not firing. It was most effective. He also blew a couple of mines in No Mans Land under our first wave.

Official report of the attack with a map of operations is attached.

August 20th. 1916.

The Bluff terminates on one of the Biggest Mine craters on the front, its about 200 ft. long 80 ft. broad and 60 ft. deep.

Hill 60 was on the extreme left of our line. Bosch was right up at the top of it, we were at the bottom. After all the fighting we had expected rather a sizy hill. Hill 60 was scarcely more than a mound. Behind our lines there were Fir woods, not very deep or thick These were on the slope away from the Bosch and it was quite possible to get anywhere by day. The 10th Bde were on our left and the 12th Canadian Bde on our right. The character of this front line may be gauged from the fact that at one point a notice was stuck up which read "Do not fire at the trench opposite, it is ours". we were in this line from 24th to 31st.

October 10th 1916.

The dispositions in our neighbourhood at present are :-

In Front of Guendecourt 6th Div. From Guendecourt to Les Boeoffs 4th Div. who are in touch with French in front of Les Boeoffs.

Of the 4th Div. 10th & 12th Brigade are in the Line, with 11th Brigade in Trones Wood. Of the 12th Brigade the Bn. and the Duke of Wellingtons were in the line with the King's Own and Essex in the Fiers Line.

It appears that we are in with Le Transloy as our final objective and here we stay until we've got it. We've got to get our jumping off line first, however, so there's two snaps ahead of the Battalion, anyway.

October 11th 1916.

Having spent an extraordinary uncomfortable night in a very small scoop which Johnny Greave and I shared I crept out in the morning rather stiff. The first thing I discovered was that a soup tablet which I had had in my pocket had melted and made a filthy mess of my coat. Whilst scraping the remnants of the said soup tablet from off my person I got a message from H.Q. to say that Co. Comdrs had to meet the C.O. in the Line on the right of "D" Co. in order to reconoitre the trenches with an attack next day as the object of the reconnaissance. I left Johnny in Command and went up to Battalion H.Q. - 3 miles - for the conference, and found only Baks and Brain at H.Q. Blenks was coming up the Line instead of the C.O. so we started off together. After a somewhat venturesome journey we eventually arrived with more or less whole skins and found Daddy Mansell Uncle Salt and Robin waiting for us. Blenks told us the general idea and then as the other three had been in and knew the line, he and I went off along to "D" Co. The trench was simply a courtesy title for a very narrow ditch dug