

Report on Operations of The 1/7th. Battalion The Worcestershire Regt.
8th.-9th.-10th. October 1917.

While the Battalion was in rest billets near AUDRICQ at the end of September the Brigadier-General Commanding the Brigade explained the general plan of operations by the Division and the ground over which we should have to fight, and this was so far as practicable communicated to all ranks and practised on marked ground.

On the 5th. October the Battalion marched from BRAKE CAMP to DAMBRE CAMP, and the C.O. was informed that the attack would take place at dawn on the 9th.

On the 6th. October the C.O. and Captain Harris went up near Vale House and considered the ground and the question of H.Q.

On the morning of the 7th. the Battalion moved to the CANAL BANK with the intention of moving to the line that evening and attacking on the 9th. About mid-day however heavy rain set in and continued throughout the afternoon. Brigade warned the Battalion that the Brigade would probably not move up that night and this was stated definitely about 3-30 p.m.

The 8th. broke fine and orders were issued about mid-day that we should move to the line in the evening and take up position for attack at dawn, the 4th. Royal Berks to leave an outpost Coy. to cover our assembly. A copy of Battalion orders and instructions as follows:-

Copy to 7th. Worcs. Op. Ord. No. 4.

8.10.17

1. At a time to be notified later the Battn. in conjunction with 49th. Division on the right and 6th. Glosters on left will continue the offensive.
2. Boundaries and objectives are shown on attached map. The first objective will be attacked, captured, and consolidated by "B" Coy. on the Right and "C" Coy. on the left, and the second objective by "A" Coy. on the Right and "D" Coy. on the left.
3. O.C. Coys. will detail separate parties to deal with each known enemy strong point in their area and will also maintain a reserve against the unexpected and against counter-attack. As objectives are captured O.C. Coys. will thin out their front and consolidate in depth. In particular O.C. "B" Coy. will construct a strong point at ADLER FARM and O.C. "A" Coy. a strong point at VARLET FARM and WALLEMOLEN.
4. O.C. 144 Coy. M.G.C. will detail 2 M.Gs. to move in rear of "B" Coy. to assist in holding their objective at ADLER FARM and 2 M.Gs. to move in rear of "A" Coy. to assist in holding the WALLEMOLEN RIDGE.
5. The retention of the WALLEMOLEN RIDGE is of the utmost importance.
6. The Battalion will be in position with the leading troops in rear of our front line posts at zero minus 30 minutes. O.C. "B" and "C" Coys. will arrange for the laying out of tapes on the night previous to zero and to knot their tapes together and also knot with troops on flanks.
7. The attack will be made under an artillery barrage which will come down at zero 150 yards in front of our line lifting at zero plus 4 minutes. Up to the limit of first objective the barrage will move at 100 yards every 6 minutes when a protective barrage will be formed. At zero plus 1 hour 46 minutes this barrage will lift and creep forward to limit of final objective at rate of 100 yards in 8 minutes.
8. Special parties each of 1 N.C.O. and 3 men will be told off to meet similar parties from 49th. Division as follows:-
By O.C. "B" Coy. at junction of old trenches at D 5 b 51.
By O.C. "A" Coy. on Road N.E. of WALLEMOLEN V 28 c 20.
9. H.Q. will be as follows:-

Brigade H.Q.

Artillery House
with command post at
ARBRE.

6th. Glosters.

WINCHESTER.

7th. Worcs.

VICTORIA HOUSE

D 7 b 33 with

advanced Battn. H.Q. on

STROOMBEEK at D 2 d 17.

and a Battalion visual station will be established at D 2 d 18

Sheet 3.

connecting with rear Battn. H.Q.

Aid Post JANET FARM.

Relay Posts will be notified by the M.O. to all concerned.

10. Acknowledge.

F.M. TOMKINSON Lt.-Col.

1/7th. Worcs. Regt.

Copy 1 retained.

2,3,4,5. Coys.

6 M.G.C.

7. 6th. Glosters.

8 Bde.

9 right Bn.

Issued 12-30 noon.

Instructions to accompany 7th. Worcs. Op. Ord. No. 4 of 8-10-17

1. 145 Brigade will hold our front with nearly 1 Coy. until after we have passed through them.
2. 145 Brigade M.Gs will be in our front system and will engage any direct targets they see.
3. 2/Lieut. C.L. Dobner will be in charge of the Liaison posts with Right Division.
4. Four tanks may be used on our front, but in no case are troops to await the arrival of the tanks.
5. Contact aeroplanes will fly over objectives at :-
zero plus 1 hour 30 minutes.
zero plus 2 hours 30 minutes.
and when ordered by Corps.

Infantry will be ready to light Red flares (in lines not in groups) at these hours but will not light flares unless called for by KLAXON HORN or dropping white lights.

6. An aeroplane to watch for enemy counter-attacks will be up continuously from zero.
Whenever this plane observes hostile parties of 100 or more moving to counter-attack it will drop a smoke bomb over that portion of the front to which the enemy is moving.
This smoke bomb will burst about 100 feet below the aeroplane into a white parachute flare which will descend slowly leaving a long trail of brown smoke about a foot broad behind it.
7. Before zero O.C. "D" Coy. will draw 20 boxes S.A.A. from the dump on corduroy track about 750 yards EAST of HORNER FARM and take them to advanced Battn. H.Q. on STROOMBEEK. ^{HURNER}
8. All Officers advancing over the open must carry rifles
9. The capture of objectives can be signalled to Battn. H.Q. as follows:-
"B" Coys. objective W.
"C" Coys. objective X.
"A" Coys. objective Y.
"D" Coys. objective Z.
10. Wrap all rifles up as much as possible.
11. Guides to-night will be provided only for the 2 front Coys. and will be 1 per platoon. They will meet us at ARBRE.
12. Captain Butcher is taking up 1 O.R. per platoon this afternoon. O.C. Coys. will also each send up 1 Officer to do further reconnaissance and meet Coys. on arrival.
13. Coys. will move so as to pass commencement of track at Bridge 2 A as follows:-

1/2 Battn. H.Q. 4-30 p.m.
followed by "B" "C" "D" "A"

Coys with 100 yards between platoons.

14. Coys. will report all in position for attack by word RAT.
15. Route up tonight track from Bridge 2 A up to ADMIRAL'S ROAD then to the right along ADMIRAL'S ROAD and take JULIET FARM - SPRINGFIELD - ARBRE track.
16. It is hoped to issue before we move rations for consumption on 10th but Coys. will not wait for these.
17. 1 extra Bandolier per man will be issued under Battalion arrangements and carried.
18. Ref. para 15. 2/Lieut. Wingate will regulate traffic on ADMIRAL'S ROAD where we shall cross the Glosters who are using the ALBERTA TRACK from ADMIRAL'S ROAD.

F.M. TOMKINSON. Lieut.-Col.
1/7th. Worcs. Regt.

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Rations for two days were issued. 120 Tommy Cookers. 85 Autobouillants were issued to Battn. from Brigade and by Battn. to the men. 250 Tommy Cookers made under Battn. arrangements were also issued and found invaluable being preferred by the men to the govt. issue. Captain A.H. Butcher went on in advance with 1 O.R. per platoon to reconnoitre and learn some of the ground. Heavy rain set in at 4 p.m.

The head of the Battn. left the CANAL BANK at 4-30 p.m. and moved up the MOUSETRAP - JULIET FARM - SPRINGFIELD - ARBRE trench board track. The Divisional Commander was met on the track and spoke to the troops words of encouragement.

Battn. H.Q. went to P. House (sometimes called VICTORIA FARM) at D 7 b.32. (a concrete mebus EAST of the LANGEMARCK-GHELUVELT line) arriving there at 6-30 p.m.

The Royal Berks had only been in the sector for 1 day, they worked very hard to facilitate the assembly but it was very wet and dark and several parties went astray.

An advanced Battn. H.Q. was established on the STROOMBEEK in a mebus at D 2 a 17 with Capt. A.H. Butcher in charge.

Lieut. Hancocks and 2/Lieut. Edwards started at dusk to tape out assembly positions for the 2 front Coys.: considerable progress was made but the mud, wet and darkness made it of very little assistance.

The British front line was along the old trench from approx. D 2 b 56 to D 3 c 57: the Battalion was formed up in shell holes as far as practicable in straight lines immediately behind the front line on a depth of 300 yards: leading Coys. "B" on right "C" on left rear Coys. "A" on right "D" on left. The assembly position was so chosen with intent to miss the German barrage which was said to fall on the line of the STROOMBEEK. The assembly was completed by 2 a.m. The assembly area was shelled all night: at times violently and the Battn. suffered about 30 casualties before zero.

The rain ceased about 4 a.m. and a high wind sprang up which was bitterly cold: zero was at 5-20 a.m. which on account of the weather seemed too early as it was almost quite dark the moon being very clouded.

Our barrage appeared to come down 1½ minutes before zero and commenced ragged & weak: in a few minutes it became intense: German S.O.S. went up within 2 minutes of our barrage commencing and the German barrage commenced to fall 5-22 a.m. falling well NORTH of the STROOMBEEK and right on our 2 rear Coys. killing the O.C. right rear Coy. and 1 of his Officers. The troops advanced correct as soon as our barrage began: front lines extended remainder in small columns: rear Coy on Right came forward quickly to clear the German barrage and thereby lost depth. 2 platoons of our left rear Coy. lost direction and advanced into the area of the Battn. on our left (6th. Glosters) while troops of that Battn. also advanced into our area but very little confusion was caused thereby. Before zero we were in trench on both flanks.

Immediately our barrage came down heavy rifle and M.G. fire opened up from the German front and continued notwithstanding our barrage. Enfilade fire in particular came from the direction of VACHER FARM.

It was at once apparent that the Germans were holding their front line in great strength with many M.Gs. The barrage was lost at the start in fact the Battn. were never close up to it at all, the ground NORTH of the STROOMBEEK had certainly been heavily shelled but it was good going compared to the STROOMBEEK valley and ground SOUTH thereof.

The attack progressed for about 300 yards when it was definitely held up about 5-45 a.m.: by this time about 8 of the 12 Officers with Coys. were casualties.

On the left prisoners were captured at the start. About 6 a.m. "A" Coy. (right support) were ordered to push on through "B" Coy. and renewed the attack: "A" Coy. Officers were all casualties and O.C. "B" Coy. Capt. T.C.F. HARRIS personally organised and led this attack making progress eventually with some of his own men to within 50 yards of the German lines.

At this time an officer who had come over from 49th. Division to liaison was killed.

About this time rifle and Lewis Gun targets began to present themselves and the killing of Germans commenced.

About 7-30 a.m. under heavy rifle and Lewis Gun fire from our lines the Germans began to break faintly on the left and targets became better: about 40 prisoners gave themselves up at about D 3 a 08 to the Battn. on our left following immediately by two batches of about

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30 each who surrendered along our front. About the same time parties of our troops entered the German front trench: this trench was eventually found to be a well constructed continuous breast work trench with wooden shelters therein but no concrete. It contained a large number of dead Germans, at least 50, and two dug-outs had had direct hits from shells and each contained 6 dead. We captured in this trench 3 heavy Machine Guns, 7 Light Machine guns and a large quantity of rations.

It was noticed that by each Machine Gun there were about 3 dead mostly killed by bullets in the head.

(It is thought that some of the left front Coy. had in the initial stages penetrated beyond the German front line and that some of our men had reached about V 27 c 41 but they stayed there all day and came back about 6-30 p.m.)

As soon as the trench was taken patrols were pushed out along the front of our line: the trench had a very good view and field of fire for over 300 yards: ADLER FARM contained 1 cellar which had been knocked in and no other cover. Patrols passed beyond ADLER FARM about 10-40 a.m. and the capture of ADLER FARM was reported to Brigade at 11-16 a.m.

A large party of Germans from EAST of ADLER FARM came out to surrender, our men held up biscuits to them but they went to the Right Division.

At 11 a.m. the following was received from Brigade:-

"Brigade on right report they are about D 3 b 79

they are sending reserves to clear up situation about D 3b.79"

This report of advance by Right Brigade was not credited by us as the Germans could be seen in numbers in trench D 3 b 11 to D 3 b 71 which was reported to gunners who however could not shoot on account of the reports of Right Brigade.

At 11-15 a.m. Brigade advised Battn. H.Q. that they were moving up 1 Coy. 8th. Worcesters to our support.

Re-organisation of the Coys. and the line was now made: the Coy. of 8th. Worcesters were put in on left in two lines, our "B" on right with "C" in support, our "A" Coy. and 2 Bde. Machine Guns (the other two had been knocked out) in the old British line and the remains of "D" Coy. formed Battn. Reserve.

The Coy. of 8th. Worcs. were ordered to make an attack on INCH HOUSES and this was arranged for 5 p.m., but at this time our guns were shelling INCH HOUSES heavily and the attack could not take place as the shelling did not lift.

Remainder of the day and all night 9/10 were fairly quiet except for a spell of brisk shelling at dusk. 9/Lieut Wingate took out a patrol to near INCH HOUSES collided with a sentry, shot him with his revolver and got clear away.

During the night cocoa, water and rum were sent up to the front line and issued correct.

The Divisional Commander sent up to Battn H.Q. through Bde. 2 bottles of Champagne and some chocolate etc.: this was consumed by Officers in the front line on early morning of 10th. and the thought and action were much appreciated.

At about 5-30 a.m. on 10th. the Germans put down a weak barrage along the ridge NORTH of STROOMBEEK, but thereafter the day was quiet. All our casualties were evacuated, and all our dead who could be found were buried.

At 6 a.m. on 10th. touch in the front line was made by us with 49th. Division at D 3 c 68 where they had a Machine Gun post and in support line touch had always been maintained at KRONPRINZ FARM: this Division did not appear to have advanced any further than we had and were in fact behind us. It is not understood how they claimed on 9th. to be at D 3 b 79.

At dusk in accordance with orders from Brigade posts each of 1 N.C.O. and 5 men were sent out approximately to D 3 a 94 : D 3 a 35- D 3 a 64³⁵; D 3 a 26 to cover the impending relief and the line of the VACHER FARM - ADLER FARM road and such posts were handed over on relief.

The Battn was relieved in the night by 7th. Battn. Seaforth Highlanders 9th. Division who commenced to arrive at 9 p.m.

Relief was complete about Midnight and our Battn. moved to

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IRISH FARM and then to CANAL BANK and to SIEGE CAMP.

We laid out a tape from the STROOMBEEK to D 3 a 3525 for a dividing line between Coys. for the relieving unit.

The bulk of our Battalion arrived at IRISH FARM at 3 a.m. and at SIEGE CAMP 8 a.m. there was some shelling of tracks on way out but not many casualties. 13 of the 16 Lewis Guns taken into action were brought out, the 3 missing ones having been destroyed.

We also handed over to 7th. Seaforth Highlanders the right Coy. front of 6th. Glosters.

Our Casualties were as follows:-

OFFICERS 10.

Killed.	Capt. R.W. HOARE, Lieut. W. HANCOCKS, Lieut. D.S.E. MILLIGAN, 2/Lieut. F.W. GOULD, 2/Lieut. H.J. EDWARDS.
Wounded.	Capt. W.C. CASSELS M.C., Capt. H.C.B. BROWN, 2/Lieut. H.R. FELTON, 2/Lieut. J.A. ACWORTH, 2/Lieut. A.F. WHORTON.

OTHER RANKS.

Killed.	54
Wounded.	135
Missing	22
Wounded and remained	<u>1.</u>
Total	<u>212</u>